

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS - HISTORY

SEMESTER-IV

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY (UPTO 650 A.D.):

POLITICAL HISTORY

ELECTIVE 403

BLOCK-1

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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FOREWORD

The Self-Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY(UPTO 650):POLITICAL HISTORY

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BLOCK-1 ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY (UPTO 650): POLITICAL HISTORY

Introduction to the Block

In this block we will go through Nandas and Mauryas Empire, Ashokan Edicts , Kautilya's Arthashastra, Post Mauryan Development, State Formation In Central India, Kushanas , Society, Religion, Sangam Age, Guptas, Vakatakas and Vardhanas

Unit 1 focuses on Nandas and Mauryas Empire, Nature and Extend of the Empire, Trade and Trade Routes.

Unit 2 focuses on Ashokan Edicts , Kautilya's Arthashastra, Dhamma Megasthene's Indica.

Unit 3 focuses on Post Mauryan Development, Indo-Greek and Saka-Pallavas, Sungas and Kanvas

Unit 4 focuses on State Formation In Central India and The Deccan, Satvahanas and Western Khastrapas

Unit 5 deals with on , Society, Religion, Buddhism and Tantricism.

Unit 6 focuses on Sangam Age, Chiefdom, Society and Culture

Unit 7 focuses on Guptas, Vakatakas and Vardhanas, Political Consolidation

UNIT-1 NANDAS AND MAURYAS EMPIRE

STRUCTURE

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Nature and Extend of The Empire

1.3 Political Consolidation

1.4 Economy

1.5 Trade and Trade Routes

1.5.1 Grand Trunk Road:

1.5.2 Inland Roads:

1.5.3 Sea-Borne Trade:

1.6 Currency and Coin age

1.7 Let us sum up

1.8 Keywords

1.9 Questions For Review

1.10 Suggested Readings And References

1.11 Answers To Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand Nature and Extend of The Empire
- Able to understand Political Consolidation
- Able to understand Economy
- Able to understand Trade and Trade Routes
- Able to understand Currency and Coin age

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The conquest of the Nanda Empire under Dhana Nanda by a force under Chandragupta Maurya in the 4th century BC led to the establishment of the Maurya Empire. Little is known for certain of the conflict.

The story of the main figures involved and the conquest is obscure. The Nanda Empire, led by Dhana Nanda, was based in Magadha and containing many of the kingdoms in the Ganges basin.

Chandragupta was said to have been a kshatriya of noble background with military experience. The knowledge of statecraft and warfare was taught to Chandragupta by his guru or teacher Chanakya, who is referred to as Kautilya. Kautilya's Arthashastra was a science of politics intended to teach a wise king how to govern. Chanakya taught the young king a wide-ranging discussions on war and diplomacy. Chanakya's work included; his wish to have his king become a world conqueror, his analysis of which kingdoms are natural allies and which are inevitable enemies, his willingness to make treaties he knew he would break and retain, his doctrine of silent war or a war of assassination against an unsuspecting king, his approval of secret agents who killed enemy leaders and sowed discord among them, his views of men and women as weapons of war, his use of religion and superstition to bolster his troops and demoralize enemy soldiers, the spread of disinformation, and his humane treatment of conquered soldiers and subjects. The economy of the Mauryans was another big accomplishment. Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, international trade was thriving. The Silk Road provided a way to get their goods to other areas, and the Khyber Pass, located on the modern border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, developed into a strategically important place of trade and contact with the rest of the world. Through the Khyber Pass on the Silk Road the Mauryans could trade with Greece, Hellenic kingdoms, and the Malay Peninsula in West Asia.

1.2 NATURE AND EXTEND OF THE POWER

After Alexander went back to Babylon in 324 BC, a man named Chandragupta was able to overthrow the old Aryan kingdom of Nanda and form a big new empire over all of northern India and into Afghanistan. When people asked him how he had done it, he said (according to Greek historians) that he got the idea from Alexander. Chandragupta conquered the Indus valley back from the Greeks and as part of the peace treaty he married the daughter of Seleucus, who had succeeded Alexander.

The Nanda King, Dhanananda, had by his tyrannical ways created many enemies, and one of these, a proud and fiery man of the high Brahmin class whom he had thoughtlessly insulted in Court, was to soon enough cause his ruin. This was Chanakya, who, under the pseudonym Kautilya, later wrote the famous political book 'Arthashastra'. An unforgiving opponent, he had vowed not to tie his hair in the customary Brahminical top-knot until he had avenged his insult. This didn't particularly worry Dhanananda – what could a single Brahmin do anyway? He exiled him from Pataliputra and considered it the end of the matter.

Travelling in exile through the Vindya mountains afterwards, Chanakya met Chandragupta Maurya, a young man who too had deep personal grudges against the Nandas. Chandragupta Maurya's background is obscure. He was either the son of a Nanda prince and a maid-servant called Mura, or came from the Moriya Tribe of Peacock-tamers; the last might explain why the Peacock later on became his principal emblem. Anyway, whatever his origin, Chandragupta's spirited personality impressed Chanakya and he decided that he would make a far better King than the oppressive and debauched Dhanananda.

Together they set about provoking the people of Magadha against Dhanananda and, as there happened to be many amongst the populace that Dhanananda had offended in some way, it was not long before they had managed to amass a considerable force. The new Mauryan Army was still numerically inferior to that of Dhanananda, but, under its

inspired leaders, lacked neither in courage nor persistence. Which was just as well as success came only after many severe setbacks – and also apparently after Chanakya overheard a mother telling her child to eat his hot meal from the sides inwards. Taking hint, the Mauryan Army stopped trying to seize Pataliputra and began attacking first the outlying regions of Magadha instead. The tide turned in their favor now. By 321 B.C. Chandragupta had succeeded the Nandas and the long reign of the Mauryans had begun.

The advent of the Mauryans brought them into conflict next with the Greek General Seleucus I Nicator, who had inherited both Alexander's Asian holdings and his Empire-building dreams. These, Chandragupta shattered in 303 B.C. The resulting treaty gave the loser 500 war-elephants and granted to the victorious Chandragupta the Seleucid Provinces of Trans-Indus (Afghanistan), Seleucus's daughter Helen in marriage, and the future Court presence of the Seleucid Ambassador Megasthenes. The latter's fascinating account of his tenure, 'Indika', has survived in fragments down the centuries.

Extending from Afghanistan to Bengal to Mysore, the Mauryan Empire became the subcontinent's first centralized power and also its most extraordinarily well-administered one, guided as it was by the authoritarian State-craft philosophy of Chanakya's 'Arthashastra'. The State owned all the farms, forests, mines, and industries, maintained a standing army and efficient spy system, followed a fair if strict judicial policy and a free religious one, had trade and diplomatic relations with foreign powers like Egypt, Syria, Rome, Greece, and China, encouraged art and culture, and patronized the famous Universities of Taxila and Pataliputra. The citizens, in general, were prosperous and content, and remained so for the next 136 years.

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara who also proved to be an able ruler and greatly extended the Empire's boundaries. His successor was Ashoka, who, according to legend, came to the throne after a fratricidal struggle for ascension and seemed initially at least to be as much of an Empire-builder as his predecessors. However, he changed tracks after a savage war with the Kalinga Empire that took an

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unprecedented toll of life and property. Racked with guilt, Ashoka forswore war and adopted the tenets of Buddhism. The most religious person, they say, is the newest convert, and Ashoka was no exception to this. The rest of his reign was spent in taking comprehensive steps to propagate Buddhism throughout the Indian subcontinent and also abroad. He established tree-lined highways, rest-houses, schools, colleges, even veterinary clinics, gave alms to the poor and the sick, and did many other things that he thought would benefit his subjects. For this he is considered the greatest of the Mauryan Kings. There was a downside to all this unlimited benevolence though. By choosing Buddhism over warfare and rejecting the practical Arthashastra policies, he unfortunately weakened the kingdom for his descendants, and they, far less capable men, were unable to cope with the disintegrating forces. In 185 B.C., with the murder of the last Emperor, Brihadratha, the Mauryan Empire was no more.

1.3 POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION

Much of what is known about the conquest comes from accounts written long after the war itself. Ancient historian, Plutarch (AD 46 – AD 120) gives an account of parts of the conquest. The conquest was fictionalized in *Mudrarakshasa*, a political drama in Sanskrit by Vishakadatta composed between 300 CE and 700 CE. The history is also briefly recounted in *Vishnu Purana* (unknown date), which emphasizes the importance of Chanakya in the destruction of the Nanda empire. In another work, *Milinda Panha* (dating from 100 BCE), Bhaddasala is named as a Nanda general during the conquest.

Estimates of the number of soldiers involved are based in part on ancient Roman sources. Plutarch estimates that Chandragupta's army would later number 600,000 by the time it had subdued all of India, an estimate also given by Pliny ((23 AD–79 AD)). Pliny and Plutarch also estimated the Nanda Army strength in the east as 200,000 infantry, 80,000 cavalry, 8,000 chariots, and 6,000 war elephants. These estimates were based in part of the earlier work of the Seleucid ambassador to the Maurya, Megasthenes. One 21st-century author, Suhas Chatterjee, suggests that "Chandragupta had to engage all his military strength, even Greek

mercenaries from Punjab in his conquest of the Nanda king" and according to references about the conquest in the Milinda Panha "One lakh of soldiers, 10,000 elephants, 100,000 horses and 5,000 charioteers were killed in the encounter".

In Mudrarakshasa, Chandragupta was said to have first acquired Punjab, and then combined forces with Chanakya and advanced upon the Nanda Empire. Similarly, Plutarch writes that he first overthrew Alexanders Prefects in the northwest of India. P. K. Bhattacharyya concludes that the war would have consisted of gradual conquest of provinces after the initial consolidation of Magadha. In Mudrarakshasa, he laid siege to Kusumapura (or Pataliputra now Patna), the capital of Magadha, with the help of north-west frontier tribe mercenaries from areas already conquered. The siege may have begun in 320 BCE. By 312 BCE he had conquered all of north and north-west India.

In the war, Chandragupta may have allied with the King of Simhapura in Rajputana and Gajapati King of Kalinga (modern day Orissa). The prior experience of his mercenaries from the Punjab were likely important in his military success. It is also suggested that Chandragupta's campaign was laid out by using popular guerrilla tactics, as the Nanda Empire was large and had been able to wield large armies that would have been overwhelming to oppose by an upstart. The war brought an end to the Nanda Dynasty and established the Maurya Empire with Chandragupta Maurya as its leader.

Maurya consisted of at least four provinces at the end of Chandragupta's conquests: Avantirastra (capital: Ujjayini), Dakshinapatha (capital: uncertain, perhaps Suvarnagiri), Uttarapatha (capital: Taksasila), and Pracya (capital: Pataliputra). Chanakya later became Chandragupta's prime minister.

Chandragupta eventually expanded his empire to southern India and warred with the Seleucid Empire over control over all of north western India and parts of Persia. The Maurya Empire eventually became the most extensive empire in India seen up to the date of when he abdicated

Check your progress-1

Notes

1. Discuss the Political Consolidation.

2. Write about the of the Maurya Empire.

1.4 ECONOMY

For the first time in South Asia, political unity and military security allowed for a common economic system and enhanced trade and commerce, with increased agricultural productivity. The previous situation involving hundreds of kingdoms, many small armies, powerful regional chieftains, and internecine warfare, gave way to a disciplined central authority. Farmers were freed of tax and crop collection burdens from regional kings, paying instead to a nationally administered and strict-but-fair system of taxation as advised by the principles in the Arthashastra. Chandragupta Maurya established a single currency across India, and a network of regional governors and administrators and a civil service provided justice and security for merchants, farmers and traders. The Mauryan army wiped out many gangs of bandits, regional private armies, and powerful chieftains who sought to impose their own supremacy in small areas. Although regimental in revenue collection, Maurya also sponsored many public works and waterways to enhance productivity, while internal trade in India expanded greatly due to new-found political unity and internal peace.

Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, and during Ashoka's reign, an international network of trade expanded. The Khyber Pass, on the modern boundary of Pakistan and Afghanistan, became a strategically important port of trade and intercourse with the outside world. Greek states and Hellenic kingdoms in West Asia became important trade partners of India. Trade also extended through the Malay peninsula into

Southeast Asia. India's exports included silk goods and textiles, spices and exotic foods. The external world came across new scientific knowledge and technology with expanding trade with the Mauryan Empire. Ashoka also sponsored the construction of thousands of roads, waterways, canals, hospitals, rest-houses and other public works. The easing of many over-rigorous administrative practices, including those regarding taxation and crop collection, helped increase productivity and economic activity across the Empire.

In many ways, the economic situation in the Mauryan Empire is analogous to the Roman Empire of several centuries later. Both had extensive trade connections and both had organizations similar to corporations. While Rome had organizational entities which were largely used for public state-driven projects, Mauryan India had numerous private commercial entities. These existed purely for private commerce and developed before the Mauryan Empire itself.

1.5 TRADE AND TRADE ROUTES

The economy of the Mauryans was another big accomplishment. Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, international trade was thriving. The Silk Road provided a way to get their goods to other areas, and the Khyber Pass, located on the modern border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, developed into a strategically important place of trade and contact with the rest of the world. Through the Khyber Pass on the Silk Road the Mauryans could trade with Greece, Hellenic kingdoms, and the Malay Peninsula in West Asia. The main exports sent to those empires were silk, textiles, spices and exotic foods. Technology and science ideas were also exchanged with Europe and West Asia. Because of the peace and tranquility that the Mauryan dynasty was experiencing, internal trade within the empire flourished as well. The political unity allowed people from different areas of Mauryan India to travel and sell their merchandise at markets around their domain. The trade and economy of the Mauryan dynasty was one of their most influential achievements.

The State had a special responsibility in the matter of Trade. Its revenue depended upon a profitable disposal of the vast quantities of various

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goods which were constantly accumulating in its hands in its factories and workshops under circumstances described. The State thus became the biggest trader in the country, and had to control its entire trade to safe-guard its own interests. The control of trade was based on the State control of Prices.

The system of control was based on certain inevitable provisions. Goods could not be sold at the place of their origin, field, or factory. They were to be carried to the appointed markets (panya-sala) where the dealer had to declare particulars as to the quantity, quality and the prices of his goods, which were examined and registered in the books. Every trader had to get a license for sale. A trader from outside had to obtain a passport in addition.

The Superintendent of Commerce (Panyadhyaksha) fixed the whole-sale prices of goods as they were entered in the Customs House. He allowed a margin of profit fix the retail prices. Smuggling and adulteration of goods were severely punished. Speculation and cornering to influence prices were not allowed. Strikes of workmen to raise wages were declared illegal.

The State had to undertake a heavy and irksome responsibility in protecting the public, customers and consumers, against unauthorised prices and fraudulent transactions. It had to post an army of spies or market inspectors on the trade-routes to detect false declarations as to goods and apprise merchants of same (II. 21). Apart from the State control of prices was the State control of weights and Measures.

The official standard was made a little lower than the public so as to provide a convenient source of revenue in the difference which amounted to a vyaji of 5 per cent. It was like the seignorage charge on the minting of coins. Trade was taxed all along its way by export and import duties, octroi and excise. Its progress through the country was punctuated by halts enforced for payment of taxes at different stages.

The foreign merchants were mulcted of their profits on the frontiers, by road taxes (vartani) and tolls, and by octroi at the gates of cities, which were carefully guarded by officers in charge of the Customs Houses

provided even with a dounane and a place for detention for merchants evading the law. But if Trade was thus taxed, it received compensation in the protection assured to it in those olden days when life and property were not secure everywhere.

The transit of goods was guarded all along its way. Any loss suffered in transit was to be made good by the Government officer in charge of the locality through which they passed. In the village, the responsibility was that of its head-man (Grama-Svami or Grama-mukhya); beyond the village; the Vivitadhyaksha; beyond his jurisdiction the responsibility was that of the government Police, the Chorarajjuka; and beyond him was Sima-Svami, the chief of the frontier.

Trade had to be protected in those days against the gangs of dacoits who were abroad (chora-ganas), the turbulent Mlechchha tribes (like the Kiratas) and the wild people of the forests (Atavikas) who were all out for plunder (VII. 10). We have already referred to the rural police.

But every village was directly guarded against thieves (taskara) by the hunters and keepers of dogs (luhdhaka- svaganinah) already mentioned, whose method of dealing with them was to collect people by sounding alarm by conch shell or drum from a height, hill, or tree, unperceived, or by running fast to give information to the village.

Trade-Routes:

Trade depended upon its routes, which presented a problem for a continent like India.

1.5.1 Grand Trunk Road:

The Greeks tell of the Royal Road leading from the North West Frontier to Pataliputra, the Grand Trunk Road of those days, with a length of 10,000 stadia = about 13,000 miles (Strabo XV. 1, 11). Megasthenes refers to Government officers in charge of roads and how signboards were set up at intervals to indicate turnings and distances. It may be noted that Megasthenes refers to the Royal Road from the North West to Pataliputra as the road existing in earlier times.

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As he entered India, Megasthenes was struck by this Royal Road leading from the Frontier to Pataliputra down which he must himself have travelled in prosecution of his mission. It is stated to have been constructed in eight stages, the distances between which were measured up to the Hyphasis (Beas) by Alexander's survey officers named Baeto and Diognetus, while the distances from the Hyphasis to the Ganges are supposed to have been measured for Seleukos Nikator by Megasthenes and other Greek visitors.

These stages are thus described:

1. From Peukelaotis (Sans. Pushkalavati, the capital of Gandhara, modern Charsadda) to Taxila.
2. From Taxila across the Indus to the Hydaspes (Jhelum)
3. Thence to the Hyphasis (Beas) near the spot where Alexander erected his altars.
4. From the Beas to the Hesidrus (Satlej).
5. From the Satlej to the Iomanes (Jumna).
6. From the Jumna via Hastinapura to the Ganges.
7. From the Ganges up to a town called Rhodopha (said to be Dabhai near Anupshahar).
8. From Rhodopha to Kalinapaxa (probably Kanyakubja or Kanauj).
9. From Kanauj to Prayaga at the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna.
10. From Prayaga to Pataliputra.
11. From Pataliputra to the mouth of the Ganges probably at Tamralipti.

Every mile of the road was marked by a stone indicating the by-roads and the distances. The road was in charge of the officers of the P.W.D. who were responsible for its up-keep, repairs, and for erection of mile-stones and sign-posts at every ten stadia (Pliny, Natural History, VI, 21).

1.5.2 Inland Roads:

The inland trade was carried on by carts and caravans. Anathapindika's caravans travelling south-east from Savatthi to Rajagaha and back (about 300 miles) (Jat., i. 92. 348), and also to the "borders", probably towards Gandhara (Ib. I, 377 f). To ensure easy fording of rivers, this route must have passed along the foot of the mountains up to Kusinara between which, and Rajagaha, lay halts at twelve intermediate stations (gamas or nagaras) including Vesali, with a single crossing of Ganges at Patna according to the recorded itinerary of the Buddha's last ministering journey (Digha, IT, Suttanta, XXI. 81. ff).

Another important route led south-west from Savatthi to Patitthana (Paithan) with six intermediate halts (Sutta-Nipata, 1011-13) and frequent crossing of rivers. We read of boats going up the Ganges to Sahajati (Vinaya Texts, iii, 401) and up the Yamuna to Kosambi (Ib. p. 382), There were no bridges in those days but only fording-places and ferries for crossing rivers (Jat., iii, 228). Manu speaks of cart- ferries (viii- 404 f.). Setu was not a bridge but only an embankment.

A third route led west-wards to Sind, the home of horses and asses (Jat. i, 124, 178 181; ii, 31, 287) and to Sovira (Vimana Vatthu (Comm.), 336) and its ports, with its, capital called Roruva (Jat., iii, 470), or Roruka (Digha, ii, 235; Divyavadana, 544) or Roruka. We read of overland Caravans going "east and west" (Jat. 1, 98, f.), and across deserts requiring days to cross (the deserts of Rajputana), steering in the coolness of nights by the stars, under the land-pilot, Thalaniyyamaka. (Ib. 1, 107). Beyond the western ports, merchants went "out of sight of land" into the ocean and traded with Baveru (Babylon).

Lastly, there was the great north-west over-land trade- route linking India with Central and Western Asia by way of Taxila and cities of the Gangetic Valley like Saketa, Savatthi, Benares, or Rajagaha (Vi. Texts, ii, 174, ff.; Mahavagga, viii, I, 6 ff.). As a much frequented road, it was free from dangers. We read of students travelling in numbers to Takkasila, unattended and unarmed (Jat, ii, 277) for education.

1.5.3 Sea-Borne Trade:

There is some evidence as to the sea-borne foreign trade of those days, though it is scanty. We read of Prince Mahajanaka sailing from Champa for Suvannabhumi (Ib. vi, 34 f.) of Mahinda from Pataliputra to Tamalitti and thence to Ceylon (Vin. iii, 388 (Samantapasadika)). A whole-village of defaulting wood-rights is described as escaping at night down the Ganges in a “mighty ship” from Benares out to the sea (Jat. IV, 159).

An accomplished helmsman brings safe by ships “passengers for India from off the sea to Benares by river” (Ib. ii, 112). We read of traders coasting round India from Bharukachchha to Suvannabhumi (Ib. iii, 188), touching at a port of Ceylon on the way (Ib. ii, 127 ff.). The cargo of a newly-arrived ship attracts a hundred merchants to buy it up (Ib., I, 122). The ships of the times were large enough to accommodate “hundreds” of passengers. We read of 500 traders on board ill-fated ships (Ib. 128; v, 75) and of 700 under the safe pilotage of Supparaka (Ib., iv, 138, ff) (Hindu Civilization, pp. 302-304).

1.6 CURRENCY AND COIN AGE

The Maurya Empire was based upon a money-economy. The literary references to the use of coins are older than their actual finds. The Vedic term for a coin is taken to be Nishka Rv. I, 126, 2. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad speaks of a gift made to Yajnavalkya in the form of five padas of gold with which the horns of 1000 cows were hung, a total gift of 10,000 padas.

Weights of gold and probably a gold currency are indicated in such terms as Ashtaprad (Kathaka Samhita, Chapter XI, 1) or Satamana defined as “a weight of 100 krishnalas”, The Satpatha also refers to payment of sacrificial fee in terms of gold (hiranya) whether Suvarna or Satamana.

Gold (hiranya) being obtained from the beds of rivers like the Indus, or extracted from the earth (Av. XD, 1, 6, 26. 44) or from ore by smelting or from washings.

Panini (c. 500 BC) in his Grammar testifies to the continued use of some of these Vedic terms for coins. He knows of the gold coins Nishka,

Satamana and Suvarna. Things valued in terms of Nishka are called Naishkika, Dvinaishkika, and so forth . A man of 100 Nishkas was called a Naishka-Satika, a man of thousand a Naishka-Sahasrika . An article bought for a Satamana is called a Satamanam .

It is interesting to note that Mr. Durga Prasad of Varanasi who had specialised in the study of punchmarked silver coins and handled thousands of them so far discovered, ascertained that 39 silver coins which were found in the earliest layers at Taxila weighed 100 rattis each =180 grains. These coins cannot be taken to be the double Persian sigloi mentioned below, for the Persian sigloi weighed not more than 36.45 grains and a double weighed 172.9 grains. They, therefore, are to be taken as indigenous coins called aptly Satamana coins in our texts.

It may be further assumed that weights of these coins followed a decimal system. The Satamanas had their Padas which may also be identified with certain broad pieces punched with 4 symbols and weighing 25 rattis or 1/4 of Satamanas.

Panini also refers to objects valued in terms of Suvarna taken as a coin. He also knows of a gold coin Sana . In the Charaka-Samhita 1 sana = 4 mashas. Kautilya, as we have seen , takes 1 Suvarna=16 Mashas and a pada of Suvarna = 4 mashas, the equivalent of a Sana.

The Karshapana, the established coin of ancient India, is fully known to Panini who refers to transactions made in terms of money taken to be the Karshapana . He also knows of 1/2 (ardha) and 1/4 (pada) as denominations of Karshapana . Karshapana, as the standard coin, was in silver. Kautilya uses the form pana. Panini again knows of the small coin called Masha , Kautilya takes Masha as 1/16 of Karshapana, and as a copper coin .

It would be too small in size in silver, though even some specimens of the silver Masha have been found at some places like Taxila. Therefore, as a copper coin, it admitted of smaller denominations known as 1/2 Mashaka, 1 Kakani = 1/4 Masha and 1/2 Kakani = 1/8 Masha. Kakani and Ardhakakani are known to Katyayana and also to Patanjali. Panini also uses the term Vimsatika in terms of Karshapana of twenty parts.

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This coin was in circulation in the country in some parts, along with the Karshapana of 16 parts, as known to Kautilya.

That these coins were issued by a government authority and not by private individuals, there is not the slightest doubt. Only a central authority could have carried out such an apparently complicated, but no doubt—if we had the clue—simple, system of Stamping the coins in regular series.

The regular recurrence of five symbols on the obverse naturally suggests a Board of Five, such as Megasthenes says was at the head of most departments of Mauryan administration. It can hardly be that the symbols are those of the five officials actually concerned in the issue of each piece, as some symbols like the sun and the six-armed symbol occur over a wide range of coins.

Since a part of the Punjab came under the dominion of the Achaemenian (Hakhamani) Emperors of ancient Persia, it was natural that their money must have come into India in the wake of their conquest. But it is not easy to prove it by actual finds of Persian coins in India.

The standard gold coin of ancient Persia was the Daric, weighing about 130 grains, probably first minted by Darius who first annexed to his empire the valley of the Indus. This coin is marked by the portrait on its obverse of the great king, armed with bow and spear, in the act of marching through his dominions.

The gold coin of Persia could not, however, obtain wide circulation in India for an important economic reason. India was known for its abundance of gold, so much so that its value relatively to silver was very low, as low as 1:8 as compared with the ratio of 1:13.3 maintained by the Imperial Persian Mint.

Therefore, the Darics that would find their way into India appeared to be an artificially inflated currency and would find no place in the India currency system, and would be exported at once. There was no profit in holding such Darics in India when they could be exchanged for more silver elsewhere. Therefore, Persian gold coinage has not been found in any appreciable quantity in India.

As regards the corresponding Persian-silver coinage, it consisted of what were called Sigloi or Shekels of which twenty were equivalent to a Daric. They weighed about 86.45 grains. Such silver coins would find their way into India where they had more value and would buy more gold.

Check your progress-2

3. Write on Grand Trunk Road.

4. Write a short note on Coin Age.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

The conquest of the Nanda Empire under Dhana Nanda by a force under Chandragupta Maurya in the 4th century BC led to the establishment of the Maurya Empire. Little is known for certain of the conflict. The story of the main figures involved and the conquest is obscure. The Nanda Empire, led by Dhana Nanda, was based in Magadha and containing many of the kingdoms in the Ganges basin. The Nanda King, Dhanananda, had by his tyrannical ways created many enemies, and one of these, a proud and fiery man of the high Brahmin class whom he had thoughtlessly insulted in Court, was to soon enough cause his ruin. This was Chanakya, who, under the pseudonym Kautilya, later wrote the famous political book 'Arthashastra'. The Mauryan army wiped out many gangs of bandits, regional private armies, and powerful chieftains who sought to impose their own supremacy in small areas. Although regimental in revenue collection, Maurya also sponsored many public works and waterways to enhance productivity, while internal trade in India expanded greatly due to new-found political unity and internal peace. The economy of the Mauryans was another big accomplishment.

Notes

Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, international trade was thriving. The Silk Road provided a way to get their goods to other areas, and the Khyber Pass, located on the modern border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, developed into a strategically important place of trade and contact with the rest of the world. Through the Khyber Pass on the Silk Road the Mauryans could trade with Greece, Hellenic kingdoms, and the Malay Peninsula in West Asia. The main exports sent to those empires were silk, textiles, spices and exotic foods. Technology and science ideas were also exchanged with Europe and West Asia. Because of the peace and tranquility that the Mauryan dynasty was experiencing, internal trade within the empire flourished as well. The political unity allowed people from different areas of Mauryan India to travel and sell their merchandise at markets around their domain. The trade and economy of the Mauryan dynasty was one of their most influential achievements. As regards the corresponding Persian-silver coinage, it consisted of what were called Sigloi or Shekels of which twenty were equivalent to a Daric. They weighed about 86.45 grains. Such silver coins would find their way into India where they had more value and would buy more gold.

1.8 KEYWORDS

- **Empire:** The conquest of the Nanda Empire under Dhana Nanda by a force under Chandragupta Maurya in the 4th century BC led to the establishment of the Maurya Empire.
- **Economy:** The economy of the Mauryans was another big accomplishment. Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, international trade was thriving.
- **Trade:** The trade and economy of the Mauryan dynasty was one of their most influential achievements
- **Coin Age:** Panini also refers to objects valued in terms of Suvarna taken as a coin.

1.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe about the Nandas and Mauryas Empire.
2. Analyse the role of economy of the period.

3. Briefly discuss the Trade Routes of the Nandas and Mauryas Empire.
4. Explain the Currency and Coin age of Mauryas Empire.

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5. Dyson, Tim (2018), A Population History of India: From the First Modern People to the Present Day, Oxford University Press, p. 16-17, ISBN 978-0-19-882905-8
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1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. In Mudrarakshasa, Chandragupta was said to have first acquired Punjab, and then combined forces with Chanakya and advanced upon the Nanda Empire. Similarly, Plutarch writes that he first overthrew Alexanders Prefects in the northwest of India.
2. The Nanda King, Dhanananda, had by his tyrannical ways created many enemies, and one of these, a proud and fiery man of the high Brahmin class whom he had thoughtlessly insulted in Court, was to soon enough cause his ruin. This was Chanakya, who, under the pseudonym Kautilya, later wrote the famous political book 'Arthashastra'.

Notes

3. Trade-Routes:

Trade depended upon its routes, which presented a problem for a continent like India.

4. The Maurya Empire was based upon a money-economy. The literary references to the use of coins are older than their actual finds. The Vedic term for a coin is taken to be Nishka Rv. I, 126, 2. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad speaks of a gift made to Yajnavalkya in the form of five padas of gold with which the horns of 1000 cows were hung, a total gift of 10,000 padas.

UNIT-2 ASHOKAN EDICTS, KAUTILYA'S ARTHSASTRA

STRUCTURE

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Edicts of Ashoka

2.2.1 The Edicts

2.2.2 Content of The Edicts

2.3 Kautilya's Arthsastra

2.4 Dhamma Scripts

2.4.1 Definition

2.4.2 Hinduism

2.5 Megasthenes Indica

2.6 Let us sum up

2.7 Keywords

2.8 Questions For Review

2.9 Suggested Readings And References

2.10 Answers To Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand Edicts of Ashoka
- Able to understand Kautilya's Arthsastra
- Able to understand Megasthenes Indica
- Able to understand Dhamma Scripts

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE. Ashoka used the expression Dhamma Lipi ("Inscriptions of the Dharma") to describe his own Edicts. These inscriptions were dispersed throughout the areas of modern-day Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and provide the first tangible evidence of Buddhism. The edicts

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describe in detail Ashoka's view about dhamma, an earnest attempt to solve some of the problems that a complex society faced. According to the edicts, the extent of Buddhist proselytism during this period reached as far as the Mediterranean, and many Buddhist monuments were created.

These inscriptions proclaim Ashoka's adherence to the Buddhist philosophy which, as in Hinduism, is called dharma, "Law". The inscriptions show his efforts to develop the Buddhist dharma throughout his kingdom. Although Buddhism as well as Gautama Buddha are mentioned, the edicts focus on social and moral precepts rather than specific religious practices or the philosophical dimension of Buddhism. These were located in public places and were meant for people to read.

In these inscriptions, Ashoka refers to himself as "Beloved of the Gods" (Devanampiya). The identification of Devanampiya with Ashoka was confirmed by an inscription discovered in 1915 by C. Beadon, a British gold-mining engineer, at Maski, a village in Raichur district of Karnataka. Another minor rock edict, found at the village Gujarra in Datia district of Madhya Pradesh, also used the name of Ashoka together with his titles: "Devanampiya Piyadasi Asokaraja". The inscriptions found in the central and eastern part of India were written in Magadhi Prakrit using the Brahmi script, while Prakrit using the Kharoshthi script, Greek and Aramaic were used in the northwest. These edicts were deciphered by British archaeologist and historian James Prinsep.

The inscriptions revolve around a few recurring themes: Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism, the description of his efforts to spread Buddhism, his moral and religious precepts, and his social and animal welfare program. The edicts were based on Ashoka's ideas on administration and behaviour of people towards one another and religion.

2.2 EDICTS OF ASHOKA

The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE. Besides a few inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic (which were only discovered in the 20th century), the Edicts were mostly written in the

Brahmi script and sometimes in the Kharoshthi script in the northwest, two Indian scripts which had both become extinct around the 5th century CE, and were yet undeciphered at the time the Edicts were discovered and investigated in the 19th century.

The first successful attempts at deciphering the ancient Brahmi script were made in 1836 by Norwegian scholar Christian Lassen, who used the bilingual Greek-Brahmi coins of Indo-Greek king Agathocles to correctly and securely identify several Brahmi letters.[8] The task was then completed by James Prinsep, an archaeologist, philologist, and official of the East India Company, who was able to identify the rest of the Brahmi characters, with the help of Major Cunningham. In a series of results that he published in March 1838 Prinsep was able to translate the inscriptions on a large number of rock edicts found around India, and to provide, according to Richard Salomon, a "virtually perfect" rendering of the full Brahmi alphabet. The edicts in Brahmi script mentioned a King Devanampriya Piyadasi which Prinsep initially assumed was a Sri Lankan king. He was then able to associate this title with Asoka on the basis of Pali script from Sri Lanka communicated to him by George Turnour.

The Kharoshthi script, written from right to left, and associated with Aramaic, was also deciphered by James Prinsep in parallel with Christian Lassen, using the bilingual Greek-Kharoshthi coinage of the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian kings. "Within the incredibly brief space of three years (1834-37) the mystery of both the Kharoshthi and Brahmi scripts (were unlocked), the effect of which was instantly to remove the thick crust of oblivion which for many centuries had concealed the character and the language of the earliest epigraphs".

2.2.1 The Edicts

The Edicts are divided into four categories, according to their size (Minor or Major) and according to their medium (Rock or Pillar). Chronologically, the minor inscriptions tend to precede the larger ones, while rock inscriptions generally seem to have been started earlier than the pillar inscriptions:

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Minor Rock Edicts: Edicts inscribed at the beginning of Ashoka's reign; in Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic.

Minor Pillar Edicts: Schism Edict, Queen's Edict, Rummindei Edict, Nigali Sagar Edict; in Prakrit.

Major Rock Edicts: 14 Edicts (termed 1st to 14th) and 2 separate ones found in Odisha; in Prakrit and Greek.

Major Pillar Edicts: 7 Edicts, inscribed at the end of Ashoka's reign; in Prakrit.

The Minor Rock Edicts (in which Ashoka is sometimes named in person, as in Maski and Gujarra) as well as the Minor Pillar Edicts are very religious in their content: they mention extensively the Buddha (and even previous Buddhas as in the Nigali Sagar inscription), the Samgha, Buddhism and Buddhist scriptures (as in the Bairat Edict).

On the contrary, the Major Rock Edicts and Major Pillar Edicts are essentially moral and political in nature: they never mention the Buddha or explicit Buddhist teachings, but are preoccupied with order, proper behaviour and non violence under the general concept of "Dharma", and they also focus on the administration of the state and positive relations with foreign countries as far as the Hellenistic Mediterranean of the mid-3rd century BCE.

Minor Rock Edicts

The Minor Rock Edicts of Ashoka (r.269-233 BCE) are rock inscriptions which form the earliest part of the Edicts of Ashoka. They predate Ashoka's Major Rock Edicts.

Chronologically, the first known edict, sometimes classified as a Minor Rock Edict, is the Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription, in Greek and in Aramaic, written in the 10th year of his reign (260 BCE) at the border of his empire with the Hellenistic world, in the city of Old Kandahar in modern Afghanistan.

Ashoka then made the first edicts in the Indian language, written in the Brahmi script, from the 11th year of his reign (according to his own inscription, "two and a half years after becoming a secular Buddhist", i.e. two and a half years at least after returning from the Kalinga conquest of the eighth year of his reign, which is the starting point for his remorse towards the horrors of the war, and his gradual conversion to Buddhism).

The texts of the inscriptions are rather short, the technical quality of the engraving of the inscriptions is generally very poor, and generally very inferior to the pillar edicts dated to the years 26 and 27 of Ashoka's reign. There are several slight variations in the content of these edicts, depending on location, but a common designation is usually used, with Minor Rock Edict N°1 (MRE1) and a Minor Rock Edict N°2 (MRE2), which does not appear alone but always in combination with Edict N°1), the different versions being generally aggregated in most translations. The Maski version of Minor Rock Edict No.1 is historically particularly important in that it confirmed the association of the title "Devanampriya" with the name "Asoka", thereby clarifying the historical author of all these inscriptions. In the Gujjarra version of Minor Rock Edict No.1 also, the name of Ashoka is used together with his full title: Devanampiya Piyadasi Asokaraja.

There is also a unique Minor Rock Edict No.3, discovered next to Bairat Temple, for the Buddhist clergy, which gives a list of Buddhist scriptures (most of them unknown today) which the clergy should study regularly.

A few other inscriptions of Ashoka in Aramaic, which are not strictly edicts, but tend to share a similar content, are sometimes also categorized as "Minor Rock Edicts". The dedicatory inscriptions of the Barabar caves are also sometimes classified among the Minor Rock Edicts of Ashoka.

The Minor Rock Edicts can be found throughout the territory of Ashoka, including in the frontier area near the Hindu Kush, and are especially numerous in the southern, newly conquered, frontier areas of Karnataka and southern Andhra Pradesh.

Minor Pillar Edicts

The Minor Pillar Edicts of Ashoka refer to 5 separate minor Edicts inscribed on columns, the Pillars of Ashoka. These edicts are preceded chronologically by the Minor Rock Edicts and may have been made in parallel with the Major Rock Edicts.

The inscription technique is generally very poor compared for example to the later Major Pillar Edicts, however the Minor Pillar Edicts are often associated with some of the artistically most sophisticated pillar capitals of Ashoka, such as the renowned Lion Capital of Ashoka which crowned the Sarnath Minor Pillar Edict, or the very similar, but less well

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preserved Sanchi lion capital which crowned the very clumsily inscribed Schism Edict of Sanchi. According to Irwin, the Brahmi inscriptions on the Sarnath and Sanchi pillars were made by inexperienced Indian engravers at a time when stone engraving was still new in India, whereas the very refined Sarnath capital itself was made under the tutelage of craftsmen from the former Achaemenid Empire, trained in Perso-Hellenistic statuary and employed by Ashoka. This suggests that the most sophisticated capitals were actually the earliest in the sequence of Ashokan pillars and that style degraded over a short period of time.

These edicts were probably made at the beginning of the reign of Ashoka (reigned 268-232 BCE), from the year 12 of his reign, that is, from 256 BCE.

The Minor Pillar Edicts are the Schism Edict, warning of punishment for dissent in the Samgha, the Queen's Edict, and the Rummindei Edict as well as the Nigali Sagar Edict which record Ashoka's visits and Buddhist dedications in the area corresponding to today's Nepal. The Rummindei and Nigali Sagar edicts, inscribed on pillars erected by Ashoka later in his reign (19th and 20th year) display a high level of inscriptional technique with a good regularity in the lettering.

Major Rock Edicts

The Major Rock Edicts of Ashoka refer to 14 separate major Edicts, which are significantly detailed and extensive.[31] These Edicts were concerned with practical instructions in running the kingdom such as the design of irrigation systems and descriptions of Ashoka's beliefs in peaceful moral behavior. They contain little personal detail about his life. These edicts are preceded chronologically by the Minor Rock Edicts. Three languages were used, Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic. The edicts are composed in non-standardized and archaic forms of Prakrit. Prakrit inscriptions were written in Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts, which even a commoner could read and understand. The inscriptions found in the area of Pakistan are in the Kharosthi script. Other Edicts are written in Greek or Aramaic. The Kandahar Greek Edict of Ashoka (including portions of Edict No.13 and No.14) is in Greek only, and originally probably contained all the Major Rock Edicts 1-14.

The Major Rock Edicts of Ashoka are inscribed on large rocks, except for the Kandahar version in Greek (Kandahar Greek Edict of Ashoka), written on a stone plaque belonging to a building. The Major Edicts are not located in the heartland of Mauryan territory, traditionally centered on Bihar, but on the frontiers of the territory controlled by Ashoka.

Major Pillar Edicts

The Major Pillar Edicts of Ashoka refer to seven separate major Edicts inscribed on columns, the Pillars of Ashoka, which are significantly detailed and extensive.

These edicts are preceded chronologically by the Minor Rock Edicts and the Major Rock Edicts, and constitute the most technically elegant of the inscriptions made by Ashoka. They were made at the end of his reign, from the years 26 and 27 of his reign, that is, from 237-236 BCE. Chronologically they follow the fall of Seleucid power in Central Asia and the related rise of the Parthian Empire and the independent Greco-Bactrian Kingdom circa 250 BCE. Hellenistic rulers are not mentioned anymore in these last edicts, as they only appear in Major Rock Edict No.13 (and to a lesser extent Major Rock Edict No.2), which can be dated to about the 14th year of the reign of Ashoka circa 256–255. The last Major Pillar Edicts (Edict No.7) is testamental in nature, making a summary of the accomplishments of Ashoka during his life.

The Major Pillar Edicts of Ashoka were exclusively inscribed on the Pillars of Ashoka or fragments thereof, at Kausambi (now Allahabad pillar), Topra Kalan, Meerut, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauria Nandangarh, Rampurva (Champaran), and fragments of these in Aramaic (Kandahar, Edict No.7 and Pul-i-Darunteh, Edict No.5 or No.7 in Afghanistan)However several pillars, such as the bull pillar of Rampurva, or the pillar of Vaishali do not have inscriptions, which, together with their lack of proper foundation stones and their particular style, led some authors to suggest that they were in fact pre-Ashokan.

The Major Pillar Edicts (excluding the two fragments of translations found in modern Afghanistan) are all located in central India.

The Pillars of Ashoka are stylistically very close to an important Buddhist monument, also built by Ashoka in Bodh Gaya, at the location where the Buddha had reached enlightenment some 200 years earlier: the

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Diamond Throne. The sculpted decorations on the Diamond Throne clearly echo the decorations found on the Pillars of Ashoka. The Pillars dated to the end of Ashoka's reign are associated with pillar capitals that tend to be more solemn and less elegant than the earlier capitals, such as those of Sanchi or Sarnath. This led some authors to suggest that the artistic level under Ashoka tended to fall towards the end of his reign.

2.2.2 Content of the Edicts

The Dharma preached by Ashoka is explained mainly in terms of moral precepts, based on the doing of good deeds, respect for others, generosity and purity. The expressions used by Ashoka to express the Dharma, were the Prakrit word Dhamma, the Greek word Eusebeia (in the Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription and the Kandahar Greek Edict of Ashoka), and the Aramaic word Qsyt ("Truth") (in the Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription).

Right behaviour

Benevolence

Ashoka's Dharma meant that he used his power to try to make life better for his people and he also tried to change the way people thought and lived. He also thought that dharma meant doing the right thing.

Kindness to prisoners

Ashoka showed great concern for fairness in the exercise of justice, caution and tolerance in the application of sentences, and regularly pardoned prisoners.

Respect for Animal life

The Mauryan empire was the first Indian empire to unify the country and it had a clear-cut policy of exploiting as well as protecting natural resources with specific officials tasked with protection duty. When Ashoka embraced Buddhism in the latter part of his reign, he brought about significant changes in his style of governance, which included providing protection to fauna, and even relinquished the royal hunt. He was perhaps the first ruler in history to advocate conservation measures for wildlife. Reference to these can be seen inscribed on the stone edicts.

2.3 KAUTILYA'S ARTHSASTRA

The Arthashastra is the title of a handbook for running an empire, written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya, c. 350-275 BCE) an Indian statesman and philosopher, chief advisor and Prime Minister of the Indian Emperor Chandragupta, the first ruler of the Mauryan Empire. The title Arthashastra is a Sanskrit word which is normally translated as The Science of Material Gain, although Science of Politics or Science of Political Economy are other accepted translations for Kautilya's work.

The Arthashastra summarizes the political thoughts of Kautilya. This book was lost for many centuries until a copy of it, written on palm leaves, was rediscovered in India in 1904 CE. This edition is dated to approximately 250 CE, many centuries after the time of Kautilya, but the main ideas in this book are largely his. The book contains detailed information about specific topics that are relevant for rulers who wish to run an effective government. Diplomacy and ancient Indian warfare (including military tactics) are the two points treated in most detail but the work also includes recommendations on law, prisons, taxation, irrigation, agriculture, mining, fortifications, coinage, manufacturing, trade, administrations, diplomacy, and spies.

The ideas expressed by Kautilya in the Arthashastra are completely seen in the ideas of Kautilya a combination of Chinese Confucianism and Legalism.

Kautilya's book suggests a detailed daily schedule for how a ruler should structure his activities. According to his view, the duties of a ruler should be organized as follows:

First 90 minutes, at sunrise, the ruler should go through the different reports (revenue, military, etc.).

Second 90 minutes, time for public audiences.

Third 90 minutes for breakfast and some personal time (bath, study, etc.).

Fourth 90 minutes for meeting with ministers.

Fifth 90 minutes for correspondence.

Sixth 90 minutes for lunch...

Kautilya goes on to describe an exhausting schedule in which the king has roughly four and half hours to sleep and the rest of the time is almost entirely involved in running the kingdom.

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The Arthashastra offers a list with the seven components of the state: the king the ministers the country (population, geography and natural resources) fortification treasury army allies Kautilya goes on to explain each of these individual components and stresses the importance of strengthening these elements in one's kingdom and weakening them in the enemies' states by using spies and secret agents.

One of the most interesting ideas presented by Kautilya is the "Mandala theory of interstate relations". A mandala is a schematic visual representation of the universe, which is a common artistic expression in many Asian cultures. Kautilya explains that, if we can imagine our kingdom in the centre of a circular mandala, then the area surrounding our kingdom should be considered our enemies' territory. The circle surrounding our enemies' territories belongs to our enemies' enemies, who should be considered our allies since we will share many interests with them. The circle surrounding our enemies' enemies' territory will be the allies of our enemies. Kautilya then goes on analysing twelve levels of concentric circles and offers detailed advice on how to deal with each state according to the layer they belong to in the mandala construct.

Kautilya was a pioneer in diplomacy and government administration. His merit was based not only on coming up with very important practical advice for government, but also in organizing his theories in a systematic and logical fashion. Kautilya's political vision had a heavy influence on Chandragupta, the first Indian ruler who unified Northern India under a single political unit for the first time in history. Even today, the Arthashastra is the number one classic of diplomacy in India and, within this category, it is one of the most complete works of antiquity. A number of institutions in India such as universities and diplomatic offices have been named after Kautilya in honour of his work. Even important political figures like Shivshankar Menon, who became the National Security Advisor of India in 2010 CE, have been influenced by Kautilya's ideas.

Check your progress-1

- 1 Discuss the content of the Edicts.

2 Diacuss the concept of Arthsastra of Kautilya.

2.4 DHAMMA SCRIPTS

Dharma is a key concept with multiple meanings in Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and others. There is no single-word translation for dharma in Western languages.

In Hinduism, dharma signifies behaviors that are considered to be in accord with Ṛta, the order that makes life and universe possible, and includes duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues and "right way of living". In Buddhism, dharma means "cosmic law and order", and is also applied to the teachings of Buddha. In Buddhist philosophy, dhamma/dharma is also the term for "phenomena". Dharma in Jainism refers to the teachings of tirthankara (Jina) and the body of doctrine pertaining to the purification and moral transformation of human beings. For Sikhs, dharma means the path of righteousness and proper religious practice.

2.4.1 Definition

The concept of dharma was already in use in the historical Vedic religion, and its meaning and conceptual scope has evolved over several millennia. The ancient Tamil moral text of Tirukkural is solely based on aram, the Tamil term for dharma. The antonym of dharma is adharma.

Dharma is a concept of central importance in Indian philosophy and religion. It has multiple meanings in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is difficult to provide a single concise definition for dharma, as the word has a long and varied history and straddles a complex set of meanings and interpretations. There is no equivalent single-word synonym for dharma in western languages.

There have been numerous, conflicting attempts to translate ancient Sanskrit literature with the word dharma into German, English and

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French. The concept, claims Paul Horsch, has caused exceptional difficulties for modern commentators and translators. For example, while Grassmann's translation of Rig-veda identifies seven different meanings of dharma, Karl Friedrich Geldner in his translation of the Rig-veda employs 20 different translations for dharma, including meanings such as "law", "order", "duty", "custom", "quality", and "model", among others. However, the word dharma has become a widely accepted loanword in English, and is included in all modern unabridged English dictionaries.

The root of the word dharma is "dhri", which means "to support, hold, or bear". It is the thing that regulates the course of change by not participating in change, but that principle which remains constant. Monier-Williams, the widely cited resource for definitions and explanation of Sanskrit words and concepts of Hinduism, offers numerous definitions of the word dharma, such as that which is established or firm, steadfast decree, statute, law, practice, custom, duty, right, justice, virtue, morality, ethics, religion, religious merit, good works, nature, character, quality, property. Yet, each of these definitions is incomplete, while the combination of these translations does not convey the total sense of the word. In common parlance, dharma means "right way of living" and "path of rightness".

The meaning of the word dharma depends on the context, and its meaning has evolved as ideas of Hinduism have developed through history. In the earliest texts and ancient myths of Hinduism, dharma meant cosmic law, the rules that created the universe from chaos, as well as rituals; in later Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the Epics, the meaning became refined, richer, and more complex, and the word was applied to diverse contexts. In certain contexts, dharma designates human behaviours considered necessary for order of things in the universe, principles that prevent chaos, behaviours and action necessary to all life in nature, society, family as well as at the individual level. Dharma encompasses ideas such as duty, rights, character, vocation, religion, customs and all behaviour considered appropriate, correct or morally upright.

The antonym of dharma is adharma meaning that which is "not dharma". As with dharma, the word adharma includes and implies many ideas; in

common parlance, adharma means that which is against nature, immoral, unethical, wrong or unlawful.

In Buddhism, dharma incorporates the teachings and doctrines of the founder of Buddhism, the Buddha.

2.4.2 Hinduism

Dharma is an organising principle in Hinduism that applies to human beings in solitude, in their interaction with human beings and nature, as well as between inanimate objects, to all of cosmos and its parts. It refers to the order and customs which make life and universe possible, and includes behaviours, rituals, rules that govern society, and ethics. Hindu dharma includes the religious duties, moral rights and duties of each individual, as well as behaviours that enable social order, right conduct, and those that are virtuous. Dharma, according to Van Buitenen, is that which all existing beings must accept and respect to sustain harmony and order in the world. It is neither the act nor the result, but the natural laws that guide the act and create the result to prevent chaos in the world. It is innate characteristic, that makes the being what it is. It is, claims Van Buitenen, the pursuit and execution of one's nature and true calling, thus playing one's role in cosmic concert. In Hinduism, it is the dharma of the bee to make honey, of cow to give milk, of sun to radiate sunshine, of river to flow. In terms of humanity, dharma is the need for, the effect of and essence of service and interconnectedness of all life.

In its true essence, dharma means for a Hindu to "expand the mind" as the scholar Devdutt Pattnaik suggests in his treatises in Hinduism. Furthermore, it represents the direct connection between the individual and the societal phenomena that bind the society together. In the way societal phenomena affect the conscience of the individual, similarly do the actions of an individual may alter the course of the society, for better or for worse.

In Hinduism, dharma includes two aspects – sanātana dharma, which is the overall, unchanging and abiding principals of dharma and is not subject to change, and yuga dharma, which is valid for a yuga, an epoch or age as established by Hindu tradition.

In Vedas and Upanishads

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The history section of this article discusses the development of dharma concept in Vedas. This development continued in the Upanishads and later ancient scripts of Hinduism. In Upanishads, the concept of dharma continues as universal principle of law, order, harmony, and truth. It acts as the regulatory moral principle of the Universe.

In the Epics

The Hindu religion and philosophy, claims Daniel Ingalls,[50] places major emphasis on individual practical morality. In the Sanskrit epics, this concern is omnipresent.

In the Second Book of Ramayana, for example, a peasant asks the King to do what dharma morally requires of him, the King agrees and does so even though his compliance with the law of dharma costs him dearly. Similarly, dharma is at the centre of all major events in the life of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman in Ramayana, claims Daniel Ingalls. Each episode of Ramayana presents life situations and ethical questions in symbolic terms. The issue is debated by the characters, finally the right prevails over wrong, the good over evil. For this reason, in Hindu Epics, the good, morally upright, law-abiding king is referred to as "dharmaraja".

In Mahabharata, the other major Indian epic, similarly, dharma is central, and it is presented with symbolism and metaphors. Near the end of the epic, the god Yama, referred to as dharma in the text, is portrayed as taking the form of a dog to test the compassion of Yudhishtira, who is told he may not enter paradise with such an animal, but refuses to abandon his companion, for which decision he is then praised by dharma. The value and appeal of the Mahabharata is not as much in its complex and rushed presentation of metaphysics in the 12th book, claims Ingalls, because Indian metaphysics is more eloquently presented in other Sanskrit scriptures; the appeal of Mahabharata, like Ramayana, is in its presentation of a series of moral problems and life situations, to which there are usually three answers given, according to Ingalls: one answer is of Bhima, which is the answer of brute force, an individual angle representing materialism, egoism, and self; the second answer is of Yudhishtira, which is always an appeal to piety and gods, of social virtue and of tradition; the third answer is of introspective Arjuna, which falls between the two extremes, and who, claims Ingalls, symbolically

reveals the finest moral qualities of man. The Epics of Hinduism are a symbolic treatise about life, virtues, customs, morals, ethics, law, and other aspects of dharma. There is extensive discussion of dharma at the individual level in the Epics of Hinduism, observes Ingalls; for example, on free will versus destiny, when and why human beings believe in either, ultimately concluding that the strong and prosperous naturally uphold free will, while those facing grief or frustration naturally lean towards destiny. The Epics of Hinduism illustrate various aspects of dharma, they are a means of communicating dharma with metaphors.

2.5 MEGASTHENES INDICA

Indika is an account of Mauryan India by the Greek writer Megasthenes. The original book is now lost, but its fragments have survived in later Greek and Latin works. The earliest of these works are those by Diodorus Siculus, Strabo (*Geographica*), Pliny, and Arrian (*Indica*).

Megasthenes' *Indica* can be reconstructed using the portions preserved by later writers as direct quotations or paraphrase. The parts that belonged to the original text can be identified from the later works based on similar content, vocabulary and phrasing, even when the content has not been explicitly attributed to Megasthenes. Felix Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* contains 36 pages of content traced to Megasthenes.

E. A. Schwanbeck traced several fragments to Megasthenes, and based on his collection, John Watson McCrindle published a reconstructed version of *Indica* in 1887. However, this reconstruction is not universally accepted. Schwanbeck and McCrindle attributed several fragments in the writings of the 1st century BCE writer Diodorus to Megasthenes. However, Diodorus does not mention Megasthenes even once, unlike Strabo, who explicitly mentions Megasthenes as one of his sources. There are several differences between the accounts of Megasthenes and Diodorus: for example, Diodorus describes India as 28,000 stadia long from east to west; Megasthenes gives this number as 16,000. Diodorus states that Indus may be the world's largest river after Nile; Megasthenes (as quoted by Arrian) states that Ganges is much larger than Nile. Historian R. C. Majumdar points out that the Fragments I and II attributed to Megasthenes in McCrindle's edition cannot originate from

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the same source, because Fragment I describes Nile as larger than Indus, while Fragment II describes Indus as longer than Nile and Danube combined.

Schwanbeck's Fragment XXVII includes four paragraphs from Strabo, and Schwanbeck attributes these entire paragraphs to Megasthenes. However, Strabo cites Megasthenes as his source only for three isolated statements in three different paragraphs. It is likely that Strabo sourced the rest of the text from sources other than Megasthenes: that's why he attributes only three statements specifically to Megasthenes.

Another example is the earliest confirmed description of Gangaridai, which appears in the writings of Diodorus. McCrindle believed that Diodorus' source for this description was the now-lost book of Megasthenes. However, according to A. B. Bosworth (1996), Diodorus obtained this information from Hieronymus of Cardia: Diodorus described Ganges as 30 stadia wide; it is well-attested by other sources that Megasthenes described the median or minimum width of Ganges as 100 stadia.

According to the text reconstructed by J. W. McCrindle, Megasthenes' *Indica* describes India as follows:

India is a quadrilateral-shaped country, bounded by the ocean on the southern and the eastern side. The Indus river forms the western and the north-western boundary of the country, as far as the ocean. India's northern border reaches the extremities of Tauros. From Ariana to the Eastern Sea, it is bound by mountains that are called Kaukasos by the Macedonians. The various native names for these mountains include Parapamisos, Hemodos and Himaos (the Himalayas). Beyond Hemodos, lies Scythia inhabited by the Scythians known as Sakai. Besides Scythia, the countries of Bactria and Ariana border India.

At the extreme point of India, the gnomon of the sundial often casts no shadow, and the Ursa Major is invisible at night. In the remotest parts, the shadows fall southward, and even Arcturus is not visible.

India has many large and navigable rivers, which arise in the mountains on its northern border. Many of these rivers merge into Ganges, which is 30 stadia wide at its source, and runs from north to south. The Ganges empties into the ocean that forms the eastern boundary of

Gangaridai. Other nations feared Gangaridai's huge force of the biggest elephants, and therefore, Gangaridai had never been conquered by any foreign king.

Indus also runs from north to south, and has several navigable tributaries. The most notable tributaries are Hupanis, the Hudaspes, and the Akesines. One peculiar river is Sillas, which originates from a fountain of the same name. Everything cast into this river sinks down to the bottom - nothing floats in it. In addition, there are a large number of other rivers, supplying abundant water for agriculture. According to the native philosophers and natural scientists, the reason for this is that the bordering countries are more elevated than India, so their waters run down to India, resulting in such a large number of rivers.

In the primitive times, the Indians lived on fruits and wore clothes made of animal skin, just like the Greeks. The most learned Indian scholars say that Dionysus invaded India, and conquered it. When his army was unable to bear the excessive heat, he led his soldiers to the mountains called Meros for recovery; this led to the Greek legend about Dionysus being bred in his father's thigh (meros in Greek). Dionysus taught Indians several things including how to grow plants, make wine and worship. He founded several large cities, introduced laws and established courts. For this reason, he was regarded as a deity by the Indians. He ruled entire India for 52 years, before dying of old age. His descendants ruled India for several generations, before being dethroned and replaced by democratic city-states.

The Indians who inhabit the hill country also claim that Herakles was one of them. Like the Greeks, they characterize him with the club and the lion's skin. According to them, Herakles was a powerful man who subjugated evil beasts. He had several sons and one daughter, who became rulers in different parts of his dominion. He founded several cities, the greatest of which was Palibothra (Pataliputra). Herakles built several places in this city, fortified it with water-filled trenches and settled a number of people in the city. His descendants ruled India for several generations, but never launched an expedition beyond India. After several years, the royal rule was replaced by democratic city states, although there existed a few kings when Alexander invaded India.

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Gold, silver, copper and iron are abundant on Indian soil. Tin and other metals are used for making a number of tools, weapons, ornaments, and other articles.

India has very fertile plains, and irrigation is practised widely. The main crops include rice, millet, a crop called bosporum, other cereals, pulses and other food plants. There are two crop cycles per year, since rain falls in both summer and winter. At the time of summer solstice, rice, millet, bosporum and sesamum are sown. During winter, wheat is sown.

No famines have ever occurred in India because of the following reasons:

The Indians are always assured of at least one of the two seasonal crops. There are a number of spontaneously growing fruits and edible roots available.

The Indian warriors regard those engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry as sacred. Unlike the warriors in other countries, they do not ravage farms during war conquests. Moreover, the warring sides never destroy the enemy land with fire or cut down its trees.

Society

Because of its large size, India is inhabited by many diverse races, all of which are indigenous. India has no foreign colony, and Indians have not established any colonies outside India. The Indians are of above average stature, because of abundant food, fine water and pure air. They are well-skilled in art.

Check your progress-2

3 What is Dhamma Scripts.

4 Write about the concept of Megasthenes Indica.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE. Besides a few inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic (which were only discovered in the 20th century), the Edicts were mostly written in the Brahmi script and sometimes in the Kharoshthi script in the northwest, two Indian scripts which had both become extinct around the 5th century CE, and were yet undeciphered at the time the Edicts were discovered and investigated in the 19th century. The Arthashastra is the title of a handbook for running an empire, written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya, c. 350-275 BCE) an Indian statesman and philosopher, chief advisor and Prime Minister of the Indian Emperor Chandragupta, the first ruler of the Mauryan Empire. The title Arthashastra is a Sanskrit word which is normally translated as The Science of Material Gain, although Science of Politics or Science of Political Economy are other accepted translations for Kautilya's work. Dharma is a key concept with multiple meanings in Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and others. There is no single-word translation for dharma in Western languages. Indica is an account of Mauryan India by the Greek writer Megasthenes. The original book is now lost, but its fragments have survived in later Greek and Latin works. The earliest of these works are those by Diodorus Siculus, Strabo (Geographica), Pliny, and Arrian (Indica).

Megasthenes' Indica can be reconstructed using the portions preserved by later writers as direct quotations or paraphrase. The parts that belonged to the original text can be identified from the later works based on similar content, vocabulary and phrasing, even when the content has not been explicitly attributed to Megasthenes. Felix Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* contains 36 pages of content traced to Megasthenes.

2.7 KEYWORDS

- **Edicts:** The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars, as well as boulders and cave walls,

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attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE.

- **Arthashastra:** . The Arthashastra is the title of a handbook for running an empire, written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya, c. 350-275 BCE) an Indian statesman and philosopher.
- **Dhamma:** . Dharma is a key concept with multiple meanings in Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and others.
- **Indica:** Megasthenes' Indica can be reconstructed using the portions preserved by later writers as direct quotations or paraphrase.

2.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe about the meaning and edicts of Ashoka.
2. Analyse about the dhamma scripts.
3. Explain about the arthashastra of Kautilya.
4. Discuss critically about the purpose of Megasthenes Indica.

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Calcutta : Printed at the Baptist Mission Press [etc.] 1838.

2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE.
2. The Arthashastra summarizes the political thoughts of Kautilya. This book was lost for many centuries until a copy of it, written on palm leaves, was rediscovered in India in 1904 CE.
3. Dharma is a key concept with multiple meanings in Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and others. There is no single-word translation for dharma in Western languages.
4. Indica is an account of Mauryan India by the Greek writer Megasthenes. Megasthenes' Indica can be reconstructed using the portions preserved by later writers as direct quotations or paraphrase.

UNIT-3 POST MAURYAN DEVELOPMENT

STRUCTURE

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The Sungas

3.2.1 Successors of Pusyamitra Sunga

3.2.2 Importance of the Sunga Period of Indian History

3.3 The Kanvas

3.3.1 Magadha after the Kanvas

3.4 The Rise of the Sungas Dynasty After the fall of Mauryas

3.5 Indo Greeks

3.5.1 Importance of the Indo Greek Rule

3.6 The Shakas

3.7 Social Condition

3.8 Let us sum up

3.9 Keywords

3.10 Questions For Review

3.11 Suggested Readings And References

3.12 Answers To Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand The Sungas of post Mauryan period
- Able to understand The Kanvas of post Mauryan period
- Able to understand Indo- Greeks of post Mauryan period
- Able to understand the Social Condition of post Mauryan period

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The five centuries that passed between the fall of the Mauryas and rise of the Guptas witnessed a lot of political instability and upheaval in the North of India. The South however remained fairly stable.

As the maps suggest, many kingdoms came up in North India. Despite being foreign rulers, they were assimilated in our culture and influenced it in many ways. The 3 most important among them were

1. Sunga Empire (185BCE–73 BCE) – East India

2. They succeeded the Mauryan Empire in Magadha. Pushyamitra Sunga was the first king of this dynasty.

3. Indo-Greek Kingdom (180BCE – 010AD) – North West India

The Greeks were the first foreign power in the sub-continent. After Alexander left, his generals stayed back. Hence the term Indo-Greek. They brought the Greek culture. Menander(165-145 BC) was the most important king in this time. In Pali Literature he is known as Milinda.

4. Indo-Scythian or Sakas (200 BC–400 AD) – West India

Sakas or Scythians were nomadic Central Asian tribes who destroyed the Indo-Greek rule in north-western India. They were pushed out from Central Asia and came to India. The Sakas were divided in five branches. Around 100AD, they give rise to Kushana Empire and Western Kshatrapas.

Kanishka is the most celebrated king of Kushana empire. At its peak, his empire extended from Khotan in the northwest to Benaras in the east and Kashmir in north to Saurashtra and Malwa in the south. The capital of his empire was Purushapur i.e. modern Peshawar.

3.2 THE SINGAS

With the fall of the Mauryas we enter into a broken, desultory period of Indian history the unity of which is lost for the time being, through the north-western gates of India hordes of outlanders poured in and established aggressive monarchies in Gandhara, Western Malwa, and the Punjab.

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The Andhras and the Kalingans had tore off from the empire. The connection of Madhyadesa, i.e., Central India with the valleys of the Indus and the Godavari had been snapped.

The continuity of the history of India would have been broken but for our sources of information such as the Puranas, Gargi, Samhita, the fllahabhasya of Patanjali, the Vedic Literature, the Divyavadana, the Mahavikagnimitra of Kalidasa and the Harshacharit of Bana etc.

The story given by the Puranas of the assassination of the last of the imperial Mauryas, Brihadratha by Pushyamitra, while the former was inspecting the muster of the imperial army is corroborated by Bana in his Harshacharit, a work about eight centuries later. Lack of direct evidences, such inscriptions, etc., has made the lineage of Pushyamitra a subject of controversy among scholars. The origin of the regicide family is wrapped up in mystery.

Panini traces the origin of Pushyamitra Sunga to the Brahmana class of Bharadwaja. The association of the Sungas with the ancient priestly families is proved by the Vedic literature. In the Brihaaranyaka Upanishad the Saungayani., i.e., the descendant of the Sungas, is mentioned as a teacher in the Vamsa Brahmana. This view is also held by Keith and Macdonell. Kalidasa in his Malavikagnimitra refers, to Pushyamitra as belonging to the Baimbaka family of Kashyapa clan. This also supports the view that the Sungas were Brahmanas.

Divyavadana, however, calls Pushyamitra a scion of the Maurya family. One writer even goes to the extent of calling the Sungas as Iranians because their names ended with 'Mitra' i.e., worshippers of Mithra (the Sun) like the Iranians. The Puranas mention Pushyamitra as belonging to the Sunga family. The balance of opinions is definitely in favour of the Brahmanical origin of the Sungas.

The assassination of Brihadratha in the very presence of the army and there being no reaction on the latter proves that Pushyamitra was preparing for the event from some time back and had the tacit support of the army behind. Pushyamitra's accession does not seem to have led to

any mentionable opposition and the people seem to have acquiesced in the change of Dynasty as the later Mauryas had proved unworthy of rule and incapable of stemming the tide of the Greek invasion and keeping the parts of the empire together.

Yet the astute statesman took adequate measures to ensure against all eventualities. It was as a part of the scheme that a minister of late King Brihadratha was imprisoned. The Crown-prince Agnimitra was appointed Viceroy at Vidisa. Another Viceroy at Kosala was probably a relation of Pushyamitra. Agnimitra's brother-in-law Virasena (wife's brother) was placed in charge of a fortress on the frontier of the Kingdom on the bank of the Narmada.

From Malavikagnimitra it is learnt that Yajnasena, brother-in-law (Sister's husband), a minister of Brihadratha established an independent kingdom in Vidarbha when there was the overthrow of the Maurya rule by Pushyamitra. This made him a natural enemy of Pushyamitra. Yajnasena arrested and imprisoned his cousin Madhavasena who was the governor of the frontier and a personal friend of Agnimitra.

The latter asked Yajnasena to release Madhavasena but Yajnasena agreed on condition that his relation, a former minister of Brihadratha, who had been imprisoned by Pushyamitra must also be released. This enraged Agnimitra who marched against Yajnasena who surrendered. Vidarbha was divided between Yajnasena and Madhavasena and both acknowledged the suzerainty of Pushyamitra. This extended the sphere of influence of the Sunga King upto the Narmada region.

Pushyamitra's dominions comprised only the central portions of the Murya Empire. The north-western boundary was ill-defined but tradition credits the house of Pushymitra with having exercised con-Madhavasena and both acknowledged the suzerainty of Pushyamitra, was still the capital of the Sungas. Vidisa formed one of the vice-royalties under the Crown-Prince Agnimitra.

Pushymitra was now the undisputed master of Northern India and in order to proclaim his sovereignty he undertook the performance of the

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asvamedha, i.e., horse sacrifice. In Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva, Pushyamitra is said to have performed two horse-sacrifices. No ruler can let loose the sacrificial horse unless he was sure of its safe return and any ruler or monarch who would feel himself stronger might catch hold of the horse which would lead to war with the King who has let loose the sacrificial horse and naturally no-king aspires after a horse-sacrifice ceremony if he were not sure of his strength and supremacy.

The second horse sacrifice seems to have taken place at an advanced age of Pushyamitra, for his grandson, Prince Vasumitra, son of Agnimitra, was an already grown up Prince to lead the escorting force along with a hundred princes who guarded the sacrificial horse. While the horse was wandering on the right banks of the Indus it was seized by a squadron of Greek horsemen of Menander, a relative of the Bactrian monarch Eukratides and King of Kabul and the Punjab who having formed a design to emulate Alexander, advanced with a formidable force into the interior of India.

The horsemen who seized the, sacrificial horse of Pushyamitra must have been an advance column of Menander. In a hotly contested battle between the Greeks and Vasumitra, the former were completely routed and the Greek King was obliged to retire to his own country. The sacrificial horse was brought back to Pataliputra and the horse-sacrifice was held. This means, that the territories of Pushyamitra extended upto the Sindhu, i.e., the Indus.

There is a sharp difference of opinion with regard to the identity of this river Sindu referred to in *Malavikagnimitra*. Prof. Rapson identifies it with Kali Sindhu, a tributary of the river Chambal near Chitor. But Dr. H. C. Raichaudhuri adducing strong arguments, has conclusively proved that the river referred to is the Indus.

Pushyamitra is, however, supposed to have met with two reverses. According to Prof. Rapson, he lost Ujjaini to Andhra King Satakarni. He has come to this conclusion by identifying Sata with Satakarni. But recent discoveries have proved Prof. Rapson's identification Sata with

Satakarni as incorrect, since Sata is an abbreviation of Satava-hana and not Satakarni.

On the basis of a statement in the Hatigumpha inscription of Kharvela of Kalinga, it has been suggested that Kharvela attacked Magadha and defeated Bahasatimita who is identified with Pushyamitra. But R. P. Chanda and Allan have demonstrated the incorrectness of the suggestion on the basis of epigraphical and Philological grounds. According to Allan the name cannot be read as Bahasatimita.

Again Prof. Rapson's suggestion that Sakala, i.e., Punjab was wrested by Menander during Pushyamitra's life-time is untenable on the ground that reference to Greek invasion in the mahabhasya and Yugapurana must have been the invasion of Demetrius.

Pushyamitra ruled for 36 years (187—151 B.C.). According to Dr. Smith, his horse-sacrifices with all formalities of Brahmanical worship marked the early stage of Brahmanical reaction. The exaggerated regard for the sanctity of animal life and prohibition of bloody sacrifice during Asoka's reign led to this Brahmanical reaction under Pushyamitra, which developed fully after a few centuries under Samudragupta.

On the basis of semi-mythological stories of the Buddhist writers, Pushyamitra was not content with the peaceful revival of Hindu rites, but indulged in a savage persecution of Buddhism. He is said to have burnt Buddhist monasteries and put to death monks from Magadha to Jalandhar. Many Buddhist monks who escaped his sword took shelter in the Kingdoms of other rulers.

Dr. Smith observes that "It would be rash to reject this tale as wholly baseless, although it may be exaggerated". N. N. Ghosh as, also K. P. Jayaswal are of the opinion that Pushyamitra cannot be exonerated from the blame attributed to him about persecution of the Buddhists. Jayaswal mentions the pitiless policy pursued by Pushyamitra against the Buddhists in the north. At Sakala Pushyamitra set a price of 100 gold pieces on the head of every Buddhist.

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N. K. Sastri is, however, of the opinion that religious persecution in ancient India was an exception and when it is kept in mind that Buddhist writers have a general tendency to distort facts, for example, in characterising Asoka, we cannot give same credence to their stories as some writers have done while it may be conceded that some Buddhists, particularly the monks, may have suffered from certain disabilities the story of a general persecution of all and sundry is evidently the invention of frustrated minds which found that the State patronage was rapidly being shifted to the Brahmins, and were aghast at the revival of ancient Vedic ritual of the asvamedha.

It is also suggested by N. K. Sastri that the overthrow of the Maurya Dynasty which was a bulwark of Buddhism made the Buddhist irreconciled to the rule of Brahman Pushyamitra and this may have been political cause of their discomfiture.

From K. P. Jayaswal's reference to pitiless persecution of the Buddhists at Sakala which was a base of Menander, raises the presumption that the Buddhists there may have allied themselves with the Greeks and thereby earned the punishment all traitors deserve.

Had it been a policy of senseless persecution, how one can account for the survival of Sanchi Stupas, Bharut from Pushyamitra's fury? On the contrary some of the beautiful railings of these monuments were made during the Sunga rule, and a donation was made to Stupa at Bharut.

Dr. H. C. Raichaudhuri points out that Pushyamitra Sunga did not dispense with the services of his Pro-Buddhist ministers and the Court of his son was graced by Pandit Kausiki. Mahavamsa testifies to the existence of numerous monasteries in Bihar, Oudh, Malwa and adjacent provinces between 101—77. B.C. Dr. Raichaudhuri observes that Though staunch adherents of orthodox Hinduism, the Kings of the line of Pushyamitra do not appear to have been as intolerant as some writers represent to be.

3.2.1 Successors of Pusyamitra Sunga:

There is divergence of opinion about the date of the death of Pushyamitra. But according to generally accepted chronology his rule ended in 148 B.C. (according some 151 B.C.) and his son Agnimitra succeeded him in the same year.

Agnimitra was Viceory of Vidisa during the reign of Pushyamitra and reduced Vidarbha to submission to Pushyamitra's suzerainty. He is the hero of the playwright Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra*. For eight years he ruled over the Sunga dominions, but no events of this period are known. Unless the copper coins bearing the inscription Agnimitrasa in Brahmi scripts, discovered at Panchala can be ascribed to him no evidence of his time has been found.

Agnimitra was succeeded by Sujyeshtha who ruled for seven years. No information about his period is available. He was in his turn, succeeded by Sumitra in 133 B.C. Sumitra has been identified with Vasumitra, Pushyamitra's grandson who led the escort with one hundred princes, guarding the sacrificial horse let loose by Pushyamitra and when an advance column of Mierander's cavalry seized the horse, he defeated them.

After his accession to the throne he, already a middle aged man, lost his vigour and martial spirit of his youthful days and gave himself up to ease and pleasure. This offered an opportunity to the forces of disintegration and disruption of the empire which began to raise their ugly heads. According to Bana Sumitra, i.e., Vasumitra met with the tragic end of life being assassinated by one Mitradeva or Muladeva, while he was enjoying a concert. Muladeva or Mitradeva was the lord of Kosala' who after killing his suzerain made himself fully independent.

According to N. K. Sastri this was the first secession from the empire and with this loss the Sunga hold on the west of Magadha was lost. Kosala was not the only part of the empire to secede. We come across coins, of rulers of Panchala, Kausambi and Mathura of about this period which presupposes that these areas also tore off from the Sugna Empire

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about this period. The Sugna Empire was thus reduced to only Central Indian Territories and Magadha.

According to the Puranic list the next three kings were Andhraka, Pulindaka and Ghosha. But scholars are of opinion that these names were inserted in the list due to some confusion of the editor of these texts. In fact, these three were not Sunga kings. Vasumitra was succeeded by Vajramitra in 123 B.C. and not by Andhraka. Nothing is known of the reign of Vajramitra.

He was succeeded by Bhagavata in 114 B.C. From an inscription of a fragment of a stone pillar of Bhagavata discovered at Bhilsa one Gautamiputra is credited with the setting up of a flag-staff in the honour of God Vishnu in the most important temple at Bhilsa. At Besnagar, a place two miles away from Bhilsa, on a Garuda Pillar there is an inscription which refers to the setting up of this pillar in honour of Lord Vishnu by Heliodorus, a Greek, who was sent by the Greek king Antialcidas of Taxila, in the fourteenth year of king Bhagavata.

The Garuda Pillar set up by a Greek shows the friendly relations between the Indo-Greek kings in the Punjab and the Sungas, but also the vitality of the Indian culture that influenced the highly civilised Greeks who became devotees of Indian gods. Bhagavata ruled for 32 years and was succeeded by Devabhuti in 82 B.C.

According to Bana Devabhuti was of dissolute nature, fond of women's company. He was murdered at the instance of his minister Vasudeva, by the daughter of a female attendant disguised as a queen. Devabhuti ruled for ten years before he was assassinated in 73 or 72 B.C. The curse that had descended on the Sungas with the murder of Brihadratha by Pushyamitra pursued the dynasty and it also met with the same fate of a tragic end at the instance of another traitor regicide.

Vasudeva after contriving the murder of his master ascended the throne and founded the Kanva or Kanvayana dynasty. The Sunga dynasty was not, however, totally swept out. Vasudeva permitted the Sunga kings to rule in obscurity in the corner of their former dominions.

3.2.2 Importance of the Sunga Period of Indian History:

Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri observes that “The rule of the emperors of the house of Pushyamitra marks an important epoch in the history of India in general and Central India in particular.

(i) The Greek dynasties on the borderland of north-western India sought to emulate Alexander in invading India after the fall of the -imperial Mauryas and by renewed incursions they threatened to submerge whole of Central India. But they received a check at the hands of the Sungas and had to revert to the friendly and peaceful policy during the whole of the Sunga period, of their Seleukidan precursors.

(ii) Pushyamitra’s rule is important not only for stemming the tide of foreign (Yavana) invasion but also for arresting the disintegration of the Magadhan empire which throughout the century of Sunga rule extended upto Bhilsa in central India and perhaps upto the banks of the Indus.

(iii) The Sunga period saw the beginning of the Brahmanical Hinduism as is exemplified by two horse-sacrifices at the time of Pushyamitra, which after a few centuries reached full development under the Guptas. The exaggerated stories of the cruel persecution of the Buddhists by Pushyamitra have been refuted by historians by pointing out that pro-Buddhist officers were allowed to serve under the Government and the Buddhist monuments at Bharut, Sanchi, etc. remained undemolished; on the contrary the railings of Sanchi Stupa had been added to under the Sungas. Punishment to the treacherous Buddhists who may have sided with Greeks was well deserved. The Sungas were orthodox Hindus no doubt, but there is nothing to show their intolerance to Buddhists or any other religious sect.

(iv) The inscriptions discovered at Vidisa and Ghosundi testify to the growing importance and prevalence of Bhagavata religion. Although the Sungas did not indulge in missionary activities on behalf of Hinduism, the influence of Bhagavata religion spread on the Greeks as is

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exemplified by the setting up of a Garuda column by a Greek named Heliodorus at Besnagar.

(v) In both art and literature the Sunga period left impress of its genius on the history of India, comparable to the glory of the Guptas. Vidisa (Besnagar) grew into an important centre of ivory and stone-carving. The ornamental stone gate at the Sanchi Stupa was the work of the artists of Vidisa. Foucher remarks that “it was the ivory workers at Vidisa who carved, in the immediate vicinity of the town, one of the monumental gates of Sanchi”.

Rockcut stupa at Bharut is the most famous monument of the Sunga period. “They (the Sungas) were responsible for the fine gateway railings which surround the Sanchi Stupas built by Asoka.” The gate and railings of the Sanchi Stupa stand even today as excellent specimens of lithic ornamental art of the Sunga period.

The Sunga period also witnessed a revival of literature specially in central India. Gonarda was the birth place of Patanjali, the greatest literary genius of the period. His Mahabhashya, a commentary on Panini’s grammar is a celebrated piece of Sanskrit literary work. This period also saw the development of Sanskrit language which gradually reached the peak under the Guptas.

3.3 THE KANVAS

The plot which killed the dissolute Sunga king Devabhuti brought the contriver of the plot Vasudeva, his Brahmana minister, on the throne of Magadha. Vasudeva’s dynasty came to be known as Kanva or Kanvayana after the name of his gotra.

The chronology of the Kanva dynasty is a matter of controversy. According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Kanva dynasty should be regarded as contemporaneous with the Sungas. But the distinct testimony of the Puranas and Bana prove that the rois faneant of the Sunga stock who lingered to rule in a corner of the former Sunga empire have not been

considered as the Sunga kings the last of whom, Devabhuti, was killed by Vasudeva.

Vasudeva was succeeded by three of his descendants and the entire dynasty comprising the rule of four kings covered a total period of forty-five years. Vasudeva was succeeded by Bhumimitra, Narayana and Susarman. According to Dr. Smith the short period of forty five years covered by four reigns indicates that the times were disturbed and the succession to the throne was often affected through violent means.

Although in the Puranas it is mentioned that the Kanvas would keep the neighbouring kings in subjections and would rule righteously, nothing really is known about the reign of any of the Kanva kings.

3.3.1 Magadha After the Kanvas:

Dr. Raychaudhuri observes that very little is known about the history of Magadha proper after the fall of the Kanvas and the veil of obscurity is not lifted till the rise of the Guptas. It is, therefore, difficult to reconstruct the history of Magadha in the intervening period of nearly three hundred years.

A number of copper coins have been discovered in Rohilkhand with names ending with 'Mitra', such as Agnimitra, Jethamitra, Bhumimitra as also Bhadrachosa. These kings have been identified, with the Sunga and Kanva kings of the same name. But these identifications although plausible are not definite.

It is not known in what relation these Mitra kings stood with the families of the Sungas and the Kanvas. The kings with names ending with Mitra seem to have been replaced eventually by the Scythian Satraps both in Pataliputra and Mathura, and the Scythians themselves were ultimately supplanted by the Naga and the Gupta kings.

It may, however, be concluded that some of the Mitra kings might have ruled in Magadha after the fall of the Kanvas. In any case, it will be reasonable to hold that a large number of independent states flourished in Northern India during this period.

3.4 THE RISE OF THE SUNGAS DYNASTY AFTER THE FALL OF MAURYAS

When Asoka Maurya breathed his last, there was no able successor of that great emperor to keep the vast Maurya Empire united and strong.

It was a tragedy with the ancient system of monarchy that the entire structure of administration centered around the personality of the monarch.

As long as the king was a capable ruler, the government worked successfully. But, when the person of the king showed signs of weakness, the system of governance also decayed into weakness. This is exactly what happened to the Maurya monarchical establishment when Asoka died, leaving behind him no worthy successor to govern the first all-India great empire.

Owing to this weak succession, the remote areas of the Asokan empire soon became independent. Elsewhere, the foundation of the administration began to crumble. Asoka's successors were so unworthy that within less than fifty years of the death of that mighty monarch, the Maurya empire disintegrated to a vanishing point. It is gathered from some Puranic descriptions as well as from the famous work 'Harsha Charita', written by Bana several centuries later, that the last King of the Maurya Dynasty named Brihadratha was killed by his own General named Pushyamitra Sunga in 185 or 186 B.C.

With that incident, Pushyamitra captured the throne of Magadha and founded a new dynasty known as the Sunga Dynasty. By that time, the empire of Magadha was not as vast as it was before. Distant regions of the empire were already independent. The territory of Kalinga which Asoka conquered with great difficulty was no longer under Magadha. So was case with some other territories of the earstwhile Magadhan empire. As far as it is known, when Pushyamitra came to the throne of Pataliputra, the Magadhan territory extended from Jalandhar in the north to the river Narmada in the south.

Much is not known about the origin of the Sungas. It is understood from some sources like Panini's writings that the Sungas were Brahmins by caste. In those days, Brahmins were entitled to undergo military training like the Kshatriyas and enter into the royal armies. That being so, the Brahmin Pushyamitra could join the Maurya army, and by virtue of heroic deeds, he could become the supreme commander of the royal forces. It is mentioned in Bana Bhatta's Harsha-Charita' that one day General Pushyamitra invited the worthless Maurya Emperor Brihadratha to observe an army parade, and killed him there.

Check your progress-1

1 Write about the importance of the Sunga period of Indian history.

2 Write about the Kanvas.

3.5 INDO-GREEKS

The first to invade India were the Greeks or Bactrian Greeks who were called the Indo-Greeks or Bactrian Greeks in the early second century B.C. The history of the Indo-Greeks has been reconstructed mainly on the evidence of their coins bearing legends in Greek and later in Brahmi as well.

Demetrius, son of Euthydemus, king of Bactria was perhaps the first foreign (Indo-Greek) king after Alexander who carried Greek arms into the interior of India. He reduced to submission a considerable portion of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Sind.

The best remembered of the Indo-Greek kings was Menander, (165-145 D C.) who, as Milinda, attained fame in the Buddhist text Milindapanho or the question of Milinda-a catechismal discussion in Buddhism

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supposedly conducted by Menander and the Buddhist philosopher Nagasena, resulting in Menander's conversion to Buddhism.

Menander stabilised Indo-Greek power, in addition to extending its frontiers in India.

He had his capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot) in Punjab. There is little doubt that he attempted to conquer territory in the Ganges valley, but he failed to retain it. He may well have attacked the Sungas in the Yamuna region, if not Pataliputra itself. A Brahmi inscription engraved on a Garuda Pillar found at Besnagar near Bhilsa records that Antialkidas of Taxila sent an ambassador, named Heliiodorus, to the court of Kasiputra Bhagabhadra, identified with the last but one Sunga, Bhagavata.

Heliiodorus in this inscription professes to be a follower of Vasudeva, associated with the God Vishnu. Hemaesus was the last Indo-Greek ruler who has to maintain his precarious hold against the advancing menace of the Sakas, Parthians and the Yuechis.

3.5.1 Importance of the Indo-Greek rule:

The Indo-Greeks were the first to issue coins which can be definitely attributed to the kings. They were the first to issue gold coins in India which increased in number under the Kushans.

The Greeks also introduced the practice of military governorship called strategos for maintaining the power of the new rulers over the conquered people.

2. The Greek rule introduced features of Hellenistic art in the North-west frontier of India. The Gandhara art was largely Hellenistic in the beginning, but as time passed the style became more and more Indian and less and less Greek. The idea of representing the Buddha as a human being (idol worship) originated with the Greeks.

3. The Greeks contributed to the development of the Indian theatre by the use of curtains (known as Yavanika, Sutradhara (stage manager), Nepathya (back stage, etc.)

4. Indian astrology came to be influenced by Greek ideas, and from the Greek term horoscope was derived the term horasastra used for astrology in Sanskrit.

3.6 THE SHAKAS

The decline of the Greek kingdoms in the north-west coincided with an attack on Bactria itself by nomadic tribes from central Asia. These tribes included the Scythians, who were primarily responsible for destroying Bactrian power.

The pressure of the consolidated Chinese empire under Shi Huang Ti, who built the Great Wall, as well as the drying up of their pastures drove central Asian nomadic tribes including the Yuechis westward. Pressed from the north and east, the Scythians attacked Bactria and occupied it.

Close on their heels were the Yuechis. Therefore the Scythians, known in the Indian sources as Shakas, moved from Bactria and invaded Iran and then the Greek kingdoms in India. By the middle of the first century B.C. only a few Greek chiefs ruled in India, and the Shaka power extended as far interior into the country as Mathura, There were five branches of the Shakas with their seats of power in different parts of India and Afghanistan.

One branch settled in Afghanistan. The second branch settled in Punjab with Taxila as its capital. The third branch settled in Mathura, where it ruled for about two centuries. The fourth branch established its hold over western India where the Shakas continued to rule until the fourth century A.D. The fifth branch of the Shakas established its power in the upper Deccan.

The first Shaka king in India was Maues or Moga (C. 80 B.C.), who established Shaka power in Gandhara. Maues issued a large number of coins mostly in copper, and a few in silver. Maues adopted the title Maharaja Mahatma, the great king of kings, an exact Prakrit translation of the title basileos megalou adopted by several Indo-Greek kings.

His rule extended on both sides of the Indus, from Pushkalavati on the on the west to Taxila on the east. Numismatic evidence suggests that Maues

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was succeeded by Azes I who was followed by Azilises and Azes II. Azilises introduced coins with a typical Indian deity, Abhishekha – Lakhshmi. After Azes II the Saka territory passed into the hands of Gondophernes, a Parthian.

3.7 SOCIAL CONDITION

Megasthenes mentioned in his book Indica that there existed seven castes in India which included Philosophers, Soldiers, Brahmanas, Craftsmen, Herdsmen, Farmers, Magistrates.

Megasthenese based his inference upon occupation rather than birth. The polygamy was prevalent in Royal classes. The women were entitled to Stridhana which included bridal gift.

Slavery was not enforced. The people used to work as “Dasa”, out of their own compulsions.

Stupas were built across the Mauryan Empire to preserve the relics of Buddha. The most famous Stupas are at Bharhuta and Sanchi. The royal palace of Chandragupta Maurya (discovered in Kumharar, Patna), Ashokan pillars, four lion capital at Sarnath (later adopted as national emblem) and Sanchi are fine specimens of Mauryan art and architecture.

The artisans of Mauryan period carved caves from rock as a residing place for monks.

Check your progress-2

3 Write a short note on the importance of the Indo-Greek rule.

4 Discuss the Social Condition of Post Maryan period.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

With the fall of the Mauryas we enter into a broken, desultory period of Indian history the unity of which is lost for the time being, through the north-western gates of India hordes of outlanders poured in and established aggressive monarchies in Gandhara, Western Malwa, and the Punjab. The Andhras and the Kalingans had tore off from the empire. The connection of Madhyadesa, i.e., Central India with the valleys of the Indus and the Godavari had been snapped. The continuity of the history of India would have been broken but for our sources of information such as the Puranas, Gargi, Samhita, the fllahabhasya of Patanjali, the Vedic Literature, the Divyavadana, the Mahavikagnimitra of Kalidasa and the Harshacharit of Bana etc. The story given by the Puranas of the assassination of the last of the imperial Mauryas, Brihadratha by Pushyamitra, while the former was inspecting the muster of the imperial army is corroborated by Bana in his Harshacharit, a work about eight centuries later. Lack of direct evidences, such inscriptions, etc., has made the lineage of Pushyamitra a subject of controversy among scholars. The origin of the regicide family is wrapped up in mystery. Vasudeva, his Brahmana minister, on the throne of Magadha. Vasudeva's dynasty came to be known as Kanva or Kanvayana after the name of his gotra. The chronology of the Kanva dynasty is a matter of controversy. According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Kanva dynasty should be regarded as contemporaneous with the Sungas. But the distinct testimony of the Puranas and Bana prove that the rois faneant of the Sunga stock who lingered to rule in a corner of the former Sunga empire have not been considered as the Sunga kings the last of whom, Devabhuti, was killed by Vasudeva. The decline of the Greek kingdoms in the north-west coincided with an attack on Bactria itself by nomadic tribes from central Asia. These tribes included the Scythians, who were primarily responsible for destroying Bactrian power. The pressure of the consolidated Chinese empire under Shi Huang Ti, who built the Great Wall, as well as the drying up of their pastures drove central Asian nomadic tribes including the Yuechis westward. Pressed from the north and east, the Scythians attacked Bactria and occupied it.

3.9 KEYWORDS

- **The Sunga:** traces the origin of Pushyamitra Sunga to the Brahmana class of Bharadwaja. The association of the Sungas with the ancient priestly families is proved by the Vedic literature.
- **The Kanva:** The chronology of the Kanva dynasty is a matter of controversy. According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Kanva dynasty should be regarded as contemporaneous with the Sungas.
- **Indo-Greek:** The decline of the Greek kingdoms in the north-west coincided with an attack on Bactria itself by nomadic tribes from central Asia.
- **The Shaka:** The decline of the Greek kingdoms in the north-west coincided with an attack on Bactria itself by nomadic tribes from central Asia. These tribes included the Scythians, who were primarily responsible for destroying Bactrian power.

3.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe about the Sungas of post Mauryan period.
2. Explain the rise of the Sungas dynasty after the fall of Mauryas.
3. Briefly discuss the Kanvas of post Mauryan period.
4. Analyse the Shakas of of post Mauryan period.

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri observes that "The rule of the emperors of the house of Pushyamitra marks an important epoch in the history of India in general and Central India in particular.

2. The chronology of the Kanva dynasty is a matter of controversy. According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Kanva dynasty should be regarded as contemporaneous with the Sungas. But the distinct testimony of the Puranas and Bana prove that the rois faneant of the Sunga stock who lingered to rule in a corner of the former Sunga empire have not been considered as the Sunga kings the last of whom, Devabhuti, was killed by Vasudeva.

3. The first to invade India were the Greeks or Bactrian Greeks who were called the Indo-Greeks or Bactrian Greeks in the early second century B.C. The history of the Indo-Greeks has been reconstructed mainly on the evidence of their coins bearing legends in Greek and later in Brahmi as well.

4. Megasthenes mentioned in his book *Indica* that there existed seven castes in India which included Philosophers, Soldiers, Brahmanas, Craftsmen, Herdsmen, Farmers, Magistrates.

UNIT-4 STATE FORMATION IN CENTRAL INDIA AND IN THE DECCAN

STRUCTURE

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Western Kshatrapas

4.2.1 Successors of Pusyamitra Sunga

4.2.2 Importance of the Sunga Period of Indian History

4.3 Satavahana Dynasty

4.3.1 Early Satavahana

4.3.2 Later Satavahana

4.4 Satavahana Administration

4.5 Society during Satavahana period

4.5.1 Social Condition

4.5.2 Economic Condition

4.5.3 Religious Condition

4.5.4 Literature

4.5.5 Architecture

4.6 Land Grants and Agriculture

4.7 Trade and Trade Routes

4.8 Post Mauryan Coinage

4.9 Let us sum up

4.10 Keywords

4.11 Questions For Review

4.12 Suggested Readings And References

4.13 Answers To Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand The Western Kshatrapas
- Able to understand Satavahana Dynasty
- Able to understand post Mauryan Coinage

- Able to understand the Lands Grands and Agriculture

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The most important political developments of the Post-Maurya period was the onslaught of foreigners from the north-west.

The first among them were the **Bactrian Greeks**, known in earlier Indian literature as Yavanas; the word was derived from the Old Persian from Yauna, signifying originally Ionian Greeks but later all people of Greek nationality.

The first to invade India were the Greeks or Bactrian Greeks who were called the Indo-Greeks or Bactrian Greeks in the early second century B.C. The history of the Indo-Greeks has been reconstructed mainly on the evidence of their coins bearing legends in Greek and later in Brahmi as well.

Demetrius, son of Euthydemus, king of Bactria was perhaps the first foreign (Indo-Greek) king after Alexander who carried Greek arms into the interior of India. He reduced to submission a considerable portion of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Sind.

The best remembered of the Indo-Greek kings was Menander, (165-145 D C.) who, as Milinda, attained fame in the Buddhist text Milindapanho or the question of Milinda-a catechismal discussion in Buddhism supposedly conducted by Menander and the Buddhist philosopher Nagasena, resulting in Menander's conversion to Buddhism.

Menander stabilised Indo-Greek power, in addition to extending its frontiers in India.

He had his capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot) in Punjab. There is little doubt that he attempted to conquer territory in the Ganges valley, but he failed to retain it. He may well have attacked the Sungas in the Yamuna region, if not Pataliputra itself. A Brahmi inscription engraved on a Garuda Pillar found at Besnager near Bhilsa records that Antialkidas of Taxila sent an ambassador, named Heliodorus, to the court of Kasiputra Bhagabhadra, identified with the last but one Sunga, Bhagavata.

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Heliodorus in this inscription professes to be a follower of Vasudeva, associated with the God Vishnu. Hemaesus was the last Indo- Greek ruler who has to maintain his precarious hold against the advancing menace of the Sakas, Parthians and the Yuechis.

4.2 WESTERN KSHATRAPAS

The Western Kshatrapas, or Western Satraps, (35 - 405 AD) were Saka rulers of the western and central part of India (Saurashtra and Malwa: modern Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh). They were contemporaneous with the Kushans who ruled the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, and the Satavahana who ruled in Central India.

Though they are known as Sakas in the literature, they are commonly referred to as Western Kshatrapas due to their reign in the western region of India and Malwa. The shorter lived of the two dynasties is the family Kshaharata of which only the rulers Abhiraka, Bhumaka and Nahapana are known, that too through their coinage. Though there is no concrete evidence other than through their coins, it would seem that Nahapana was probably the last ruler of the dynasty Kshaharata. His territory included Gujarat to Ujjain and Nasik. But soon, he lost his territory to Satavahanas due to the conflict with the kingdoms of the northern Deccan and the Ganges valley.

Another Saka chieftain, Chastana, laid the foundation of his dynasty around 78 AD in the kingdom of Malwa. The dynasty is referred to as Chastana. Here they dramatically burst into the Indian politics in the mid second century under the reign of Rudradaman. With the declining Kushana power, he strengthened his reign and took up the title Mahakshatrapa, but soon had to invite troubles from the Satavahanas. The conflict became so gruelling between Rudradaman and Satavahanas, that in order to contain the conflict, a matrimonial relationship was concluded by giving Rudradaman's daughter to the Satavahana king. But that did not stop Rudradaman from raging a war against Satavahanas and in fact Satavahanas were defeated twice in his hands. Such was the greatest of the Saka ruler and Chastana's grandson Rudradaman-I.

After the death of Rudradaman, the Sakas entered a political quietude until the end of fourth century AD. Damajadasari was the son and successor of Rudradaman-I. However it was Rudrasimha-I, the brother of Rudradaman ascended the throne instead of his son Jivadaman. Rudrasena-I, the son of Rudrasimha-I was the next Saka Satrap. He was followed by many insignificant satraps. Although it is known from the records that Rudrasimha-III, the Saka member was killed by Chandragupta-II (Vikramadhitya) while sacking the Saka capital in 388 AD, It is doubtful that the dynasty was important. The dynasty seems to have ended with the death of Visvasena, the son of Bhartridaman.

4.3 SATAVAHANA DYNASTY

In the north-western Deccan on the ruins of the Mauryan empire arose the kingdom of the Satavahanas in the first century B.C., with its centre at Pratishtana (modern Paithan in Maharashtra).

The Puranas speak only of the Andhra rule and not of the Satavahana rule. On the other hand the name Andhra does not occur in the Satavahana inscriptions. There is a lot of controversy regarding the original home of the Satavahanas.

The kings represented in epigraphic records are mentioned in the Puranas as Andhras, Andhra – bhriyah and Andhrajatiyah. The Aitareya Brahmana speaks of them as the degenerate sons of Visvamitra. Pliny the Elder refers to the Andhras as a powerful race which supplied the king with an army of 1, 00,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants.

The Satavahanas were also called/the Andhra dynasty, which has led to the assumption that they originated in the Andhra region, the delta of the Krishna and Godavari rivers on the east coast, from where they moved westwards up the Godavari river, finally establishing their power in the west during the general political confusion on the breaking up of the Mauryan empire.

A contrary opinion has also been put forward that the family originated in the west and extended its control to the east coast, finally giving its name, Andhra, to this region. Since the earliest inscriptions of the

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Satavahanas are found in the Western Deccan, the later view may be correct.

The Andhras held a position of importance as early as the Mauryan period, since they are specifically mentioned by Asoka amongst the tribal people in his empire.

4.3.1 Early Satavahanas:

The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka. He and his successors established their authority from the mouth of the Krishna to the entire Deccan plateau. According to the Puranas, the Satavahana king killed the last Kanva ruler of Magadha and presumably took possession of his kingdom.

The earliest of the Satavahana kings to receive wide recognition was Satakarni I, and this was due to his policy of military expansion in all directions. He is the Lord of the west who defied Kharavela of Kalinga and against whom the latter campaigned. His conquests took him north of the Narmada into eastern Malva, which at the time was being threatened by the Shakas and the Greeks.

Satakarni I gained control of the region of Sanchi, and an inscription there refers to him as Rajan Shri Satakarni. His next move was in the southerly direction and on conquering the Godavari valley he felt entitled to call himself Lord of the Southern Regions' (Dakshina – pathapati).

The description of Satakarni I as ('Dakshina -pathapati) in the Nanaghat inscription of Nayanika proves that the Satavahana dominion was not confined to western Deccan alone, but included other areas of the Deccan and beyond Satakarni I performed two Asvamedha sacrifices and one Rajasuya sacrifice.

4.3.2 Later Satavahanas:

After the reign of Satakarni I, the Satavahanas were driven out of the western Deccan by the Shakas of the Kshaharata clan. Coins and inscriptions of the Shaka Chief Nahapana have been found around Nasik, indicating the Shaka dominance in the area towards the close of the first century A.D. or the beginning of the second.

But it must have been soon after this that the Satavahanas regained their western possessions, for the coins of Nahapana are often found overstruck by the name Gautamiputra Satakarni, the king who was responsible for re-establishing Satavahana power in this region by driving out the Shakas.

Gautamiputra Satakarni (A.D. 106 -130) is said to have destroyed the power of the Shakas and the pride of the Khasatriyas, promoted the interests of the twice-born and stopped the mixing of the four varnas. His achievements are recorded in glowing terms in the Nasik prasasti by his mother Gautami Balasri.

He ruled over a wide area extending from the Krishna in the south to Malwa and Saurashtra in the north and from Berar in the east to the Konkan in the west. To the Buddhists he made munificent donations. His patronage to Brahmanism is revealed by the epithet 'Ekabrahmana'.

4.4 SATAVAHANA ADMINISTRATION

The Satavahana coins, inscriptions and literature are the rich source of our knowledge about their administrative system. In this period the South was ruled over by the monarchies. King was the highest official of the Government and his office was hereditary.

They did not assume high sounding titles. Similarly, the Satavahana rulers did not believe in divine rights of a king and they carried administration in accordance with the directives of the Dharma Shastras and the social customs. The king himself led his armies in the battle-field and was commander-in-chief of his forces.

There was also a council of ministers to aid and advise him for carrying out the administration properly. The king was the head of the Government as well as the protector to his people. The Satavahana kings regarded their subjects as their own children and always looked after their welfare.

The Satavahana Empire was very vast. Their administrative system was feudal. They had divided their empire among a number of feudal chiefs

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who managed the land revenue system and looked after the administration.

There were three grades of feudatories – the ‘Raja’, the ‘Mahabhoja’ and the ‘Maharathi or ‘Senapati’’. The ‘Raja’ belonged to the highest grade. He had the right to impose taxes and to strike coins. The kingdom was divided into provinces and ‘Janapadas’ for administrative efficiency.

The high-est official in a province was ‘Amatya’ or minister. His office was not hereditary. Men of proven ability were appointed to this official. Each unit had several villages. A village was administered by a ‘Gramika’. There were several officials to help the king. Out of them, the most important were ‘Senapati, ‘Mahabhoja’, ‘Koshadhyaksha’, ‘Rajadoof, ‘Amatya’ etc.

There was also a special official called ‘Uparakshita’ who was charged with the duty of building caves etc. for the monks. The ‘bhikshus’ (monks) and Brahmanas were held in high esteem and they too observed and preached high standards of conduct. They were beyond the ordinary laws of the Government.

In this period, the local administration had its own importance. There were separate organization to look after the administration of the towns and the villages. The towns were administered by a body called the ‘Nagarsabha’ while in villages there were ‘Gram Sabhas’. These organizations carried their functions independently without any interference.

The military administration of the Satavahanas was also quite efficient. Their army consisted of foot soldiers, cavalry and elephants. Foot soldiers or infantry was the backbone of the army and they formed the vanguard and were flanked on either side by horses and elephants. The soldiers used swords, spears, axes and armours as weapons of war.

It was by dint of efficient military administration that the Satavahanas succeeded in expanding their empires. They kept a regiment posted in each village for maintaining peace and order. They were maintained at the expense of the rural inhabitants.

Check your progress-1

1 Write a short note Western Kshatrapas.

2 Discuss the Satavahana Administration.

4.5 SOCIETY DURING SATAVAHANA PERIOD

The coins, sculpture and literature of the Satavahana period are the source of our knowledge not only in respect of the contemporary administration but also about the political, social, economic and religious and cultural conditions.

4.5.1 Social Condition:

The Satavahana society was divided into four classes. This division was based on economic activity and status. The first class consisted of high officials and feudatory chief who ruled over provinces and districts. The second class included petty officers like Amatyas Mahamatras and wealthy traders. In the third class were the middle class peoples such as Vaidyas or physicians, writers, peasants, goldsmiths, perfumers etc.

The fourth and the last class were constituted of the lowest vocations such as carpenters, blacksmiths, fishermen and gardeners. There were the four divisions of the society. The smallest unit was the family in which the eldest living member commanded the greatest respect. He was called the 'Grihapati and was obeyed by all the other members of the family.

Women were honoured. They were given higher education and they took part in religious functions. Some of the rulers even added their mother's name to their own name, such as Gautamiputra, Vashishthiputra, Pulumavi, Kaushakiputra etc.

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This practice itself reveals that the status of women was much high. Sometimes, women assumed guardianship of their minor sons and acted as their regents. They also took part in the Ashvamedhas. The Satavahanas were Brahmanas.

Therefore, Brahmanism made rapid strides under their rule. The Brahmanas were accorded the highest place. Effort was also made to revise the Varna system. In their bid to exalt Brahmanism the Smritis declared that a ten years old Brahman would be more revered than a 100 years old Kshatriya.

Mixed marriages were considered obnoxious though there are some instances of such marriages. Vashishthiputra Pulumavi himself married the daughter of the Saka ruler Rudradaman thus giving respectability to such marriages. In this period, inter marriages among the Hindus and foreign tribes of the Sakas, the parthians and the Greeks were freely consummated so that these foreigners were absorbed forever in the Hindu social order.

4.5.2 Economic Condition:

Agriculture and trade were prosperous. Life of the common man was happy as he was well- provided with all facilities of life. They were economically well-off. They inherited many traits of the material culture of the Mauryas and made their life better and well off. There was a free fusion of local elements and northern ingredients under them.

They learnt the use of coins, burnt bricks and ring wells from the Mauryas and added much to the advancement of their material life. Under the Satavahanas, agriculture was prosperous and the village's economy was developed. Rice was cultivated in the territory between the Krishna and Godavari rivers. Cotton was also produced. The peasants used implements made of iron which were extensively used particularly in Carnatic. There were also wells for irrigation.

Encouragement was given to trade and industry. The traders and those engaged in other professions had their own guilds or 'sanghas'. Coin dealers, potters, oil pressers and metal workers had their own guilds. These guilds looked after the collective interests of their trade and

worked for their common uplift. These guilds were recognized by the Government and worked as bankers also.

Both internal and external to trade and industry. The external or foreign trade was carried through the famous ports of Supara, Broach and Kalyan. India and trade relations with countries like Arabia, Egypt and Rome. In the far eastern countries, Indian traders established their own settlements and preach Indian culture.

They referred to these countries as 'Swargabhoomi' or paradise. India exported cotton, textiles, spices etc. India imported wine, glass and items of luxury. The inland trade was also prosperous. Travel between the north and south of India were much easy as the roads and transport were better.

Several towns sprang up in Maharashtra during this period. Paithan, Nasik and Junar were big markets and centers of trade. In the south-east Vijaypur and Narsela were well-known trade centers. There were guilds of traders as well and they carried trade in groups. To encourage trade, the Satavahna kings struck numerous coins of gold, silver, copper and bronze.

4.5.3 Religious Condition:

During the Satavahana period, both Hinduism and Buddhism spread rapidly. The Satavahana rulers were the followers of Brahmanism. They performed Aswamedha Yajnas and gave donations to Brahmanas. Indra, Surya (The Sun God), Chandra, (the Moon God), Vasudeva, Krishna, Pasupati and Gauri etc. were various Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the people. Shaivism and Vaishnavism were most popular form of Hinduism. Beautiful temples were built. The Brahmins occupied the highest position in the society.

The Satavahana kings were Brahmanas but they showed tolerance towards other faiths such as to Buddhism as well. They gave similar donations to Buddhism as they did for the Hinduism. Consequently, Buddhism too spread in this period. At many places, the Buddhist caves, chaityas and stupas were built.

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Almost all the caves in the south belonged to the Buddhists. Sometimes, grants of land were made for the maintenance of these chaityas, viharas and stupas as well as for the monks or bhikshus. In this period, there were several sects of Buddhism in the south and various classes of monks were always busy to preach the Buddhist doctrines.

One significant development of this period was the admission of the foreign races of the Sakas, Greeks, Kushans and Abhiras to the folds of Hinduism or Buddhism. They became an integral part of the Indian society. They were quite tolerant and exchanged gifts on religious festivals and other occasions.

4.5.4 Literature:

The Satavahana rulers were lovers of literature. Under their patronage, great progress was made in the field of literature. Most of the Satavahana rulers were themselves learned and had special interest in literature. In this period, the Prakrit language and literature developed significantly.

They extended patronage to the Prakrit language and wrote most of their inscriptions in that language. The Satavahana King Hala was a poet of high order. He composed 'Gatha Saptasatf in Prakrti.

It has 700 shloakas. He also patronized several scholars who lived in his court. Gunadhya, the great scholar who wrote 'Brihat Katha' lived in his court. Another scholar Sarva Varman wrote a treatise on the Sanskrit Grammar.

4.5.5 Architecture:

Marked progress was made in the field of architecture as well. The Satavahana rulers took interest in building caves, viharas or monasteries, chaityas or large halls with a number of columns and stupas.

Most of the rock caves in the Deccan were cut during this period. These caves were big and beautiful. The caves, monasteries, chaityas and stupas of Orissa, Nasik, Karle and Bhuj are fine specimen of contemporary architecture and decoration.

Chaitya was a large hall with a number of columns. The Vihara had a central Hall. One could enter this hall by a doorway from a varandah in front. The Chaitya of Karle was most famous. It is 40 metres long, 15 metres wide and 15 metres high. It has rows of 15 columns on each side.

Each of these columns is built on a stair like square plinth. Each pillar has a capital figure of an elephant, a horse or a rider on the top. The roof-tops are also decorated with elegant carvings. The viharas were meant as places of residence for the monks. At Nasik, there are three viharas carrying the inscriptions of Gautmiputra and Nahapana.

The most famous of these monuments are the stupas. Among them the Amravati Stupa and the Nagarjunakonda Stupa are most famous. The stupa was a large round structure built over some relic of the Buddha.

The Amravati Stupa measures 162 metres across the base and its height is 100 feet. Both these stupas are full of sculptures. The Nagarjunakonda town contains not only the Buddhist monuments but also some ancient Hindu brick temples.

Many sculptures were made during this period. Most of the sculptures of this period depict scenes from the life of the Buddha. At Amravati, there is a beautiful scene showing Buddha's feet being worshipped. The scene, showing Buddha preaching at Nagarjunakonda, is pervaded with serenity and calm.

4.6 LAND GRANTS AND AGRICULTURE

The above description of flourishing trade and craft industries and growing importance of guilds may give the impression that agriculture had taken a back seat in Indian economy. This was not the case in fact.

The result of two hundred years of Mauryan rule and efforts could be seen only in the post- Mauryan period. Ashoka claims that hunters and fishermen had given up killing and practised dharma.

This means that food gatherers were persuaded to take to a sedentary agricultural life thus increasing the agrarian population. However, important changes took place during the post- Mauryan period. In this

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period state control over the agricultural sector ended and individual farmers owning and practising agriculture became the norm. The extension of the area of cultivation was the result of individual efforts.

The Milindapanho states that the person who brings the land under use is called the owner of the land. According to Manu, land belongs to him who clears it first. The Divyavadana refers to individual farmers in large numbers working hard and engaged in agriculture. Thus, it seems that the private ownership of land was well accepted by this time.

Power of gift, sale and mortgage is the ultimate test of ownership. The legal literatures attribute the right of alienation of land to individuals and a number of inscriptions record gifts of land by private individuals. All such inscriptions are found in western India under the Satavahana sway.

However, there is no record of transfer of land for non- religious purposes. The state or the king was theoretically the owner of everything situated on the earth which shows general territorial sovereignty. The kings could grant land to any person or institution.

In India the earliest inscriptional evidence of land grant belongs to the first century BC, when a village was granted by the Satavahanas to the priests as a gift. Such grants were free from taxes. The administrative rights were first abandoned by the Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni. We have some evidence to show that a few grants were meant to bring the uncultivated land under cultivation. A Satavahana inscription states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not settled.

One of the important features of the Satavahana and Kushana land system was the custom of akshayanivi.

It has been variously explained as signifying perpetual enjoyment without the right of alienation or a perpetual endowment o

Almost all the grants are religious in nature. They do not refer to grants of land to administrative officers. But Manu supports the assignments of land to revenue officials in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand villages. Till now not a single reference to intermediaries has

been found in the agrarian system. It seems the agricultural revenue was collected by the officials with the help of village headmen (gamasamika)

The exact amount of revenue to be collected varied. In Manu we find that the king could take as annual revenue $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{8}$ or $\frac{1}{12}$ part of the produce, but he was advised to draw little by little as the leech, the bee and the calf do. It is believed that one of the grounds of differentiation of revenue was the type of land to be taxed. However, it seems that in ancient India $\frac{1}{6}$ of the crops was the rate of taxation for a long time and that is why the king came to be addressed as *sadbhagin* i.e., one who took $\frac{1}{6}$ part of the produce.

The state collected regular revenues from forests, mines and herds, apart from agriculture. Manu refers to *Kara* and *pratibhaga* among other kinds of levies. *Kara* was probably a periodical tax, primarily imposed on agricultural land, over and above the king's normal grain share.

Pratibhaga was a daily present consisting of fruits, flowers, roots and the like. In the Junagarh rock inscription we find such terms as *Kara*, *visti* and *pranaya*. From the context, it seems that these were various irregular oppressive taxes that the people had to bear occasionally. *Visti* was unpaid labour and *pranaya*, according to the *Arthashastra*, is an emergency tax when the state suddenly runs into financial stringency

4.7 TRADE AND TRADE ROUTES

The economy of the Mauryans was another big accomplishment. Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, international trade was thriving. The Silk Road provided a way to get their goods to other areas, and the Khyber Pass, located on the modern border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, developed into a strategically important place of trade and contact with the rest of the world. Through the Khyber Pass on the Silk Road the Mauryans could trade with Greece, Hellenic kingdoms, and the Malay Peninsula in West Asia. The main exports sent to those empires were silk, textiles, spices and exotic foods. Technology and science ideas were also exchanged with Europe and West Asia. Because of the peace and tranquility that the Mauryan dynasty was experiencing, internal trade within the empire flourished as well. The political unity allowed people

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from different areas of Mauryan India to travel and sell their merchandise at markets around their domain. The trade and economy of the Mauryan dynasty was one of their most influential achievements.

Trade-Routes:

Trade depended upon its routes, which presented a problem for a continent like India.

4.7.1 Grand Trunk Road:

The Greeks tell of the Royal Road leading from the North West Frontier to Pataliputra, the Grand Trunk Road of those days, with a length of 10,000 stadia = about 13,000 miles (Strabo XV. 1, 11). Megasthenes refers to Government officers in charge of roads and how signboards were set up at intervals to indicate turnings and distances. It may be noted that Megasthenes refers to the Royal Road from the North West to Pataliputra as the road existing in earlier times.

As he entered India, Megasthenes was struck by this Royal Road leading from the Frontier to Pataliputra down which he must himself have travelled in prosecution of his mission. It is stated to have been constructed in eight stages, the distances between which were measured up to the Hyphasis (Beas) by Alexander's survey officers named Baeto and Diognetus, while the distances from the Hyphasis to the Ganges are supposed to have been measured for Seleukos Nikator by Megasthenes and other Greek visitors.

These stages are thus described:

1. From Peukelaotis (Sans. Pushkalavati, the capital of Gandhara, modern Charsadda) to Taxila.
2. From Taxila across the Indus to the Hydaspes (Jhelum)
3. Thence to the Hyphasis (Beas) near the spot where Alexander erected his altars.
4. From the Beas to the Hesidrus (Satlej).
5. From the Satlej to the Iomanes (Jumna).

6. From the Jumna via Hastinapura to the Ganges.
7. From the Ganges up to a town called Rhodopha (said to be Dabhai near Anupshahar).
8. From Rhodopha to Kalinapaxa (probably Kanyakubja or Kanauj).
9. From Kanauj to Prayaga at the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna.
10. From Prayaga to Pataliputra.
11. From Pataliputra to the mouth of the Ganges probably at Tamralipti.

Every mile of the road was marked by a stone indicating the by-roads and the distances. The road was in charge of the officers of the P.W.D. who were responsible for its up-keep, repairs, and for erection of mile-stones and sign-posts at every ten stadia (Pliny, Natural History, VI, 21).

4.7.2 Inland Roads:

The inland trade was carried on by carts and caravans. Anathapindika's caravans travelling south-east from Savatthi to Rajagaha and back (about 300 miles) (Jat., i. 92. 348), and also to the "borders", probably towards Gandhara (Ib. I, 377 f). To ensure easy fording of rivers, this route must have passed along the foot of the mountains up to Kusinara between which, and Rajagaha, lay halts at twelve intermediate stations (gamas or nagaras) including Vesali, with a single crossing of Ganges at Patna according to the recorded itinerary of the Buddha's last ministering journey (Digha, IT, Suttanta, XXI. 81. ff).

Another important route led south-west from Savatthi to Patitthana (Paithan) with six intermediate halts (Sutta-Nipata, 1011-13) and frequent crossing of rivers. We read of boats going up the Ganges to Sahajati (Vinaya Texts, iii, 401) and up the Yamuna to Kosambi (Ib. p. 382), There were no bridges in those days but only fording-places and ferries for crossing rivers (Jat., iii, 228). Manu speaks of cart-ferries (viii- 404 f.). Setu was not a bridge but only an embankment.

A third route led west-wards to Sind, the home of horses and asses (Jat. i, 124, 178 181; ii, 31, 287) and to Sovira (Vimana Vatthu (Comm.), 336) and its ports, with its, capital called Roruva (Jat., iii, 470), or Roruka

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(Digha, ii, 235; Divyavadana, 544) or Roruka. We read of overland Caravans going “east and west” (Jat. 1, 98, f.), and across deserts requiring days to cross (the deserts of Rajputana), steering in the coolness of nights by the stars, under the land-pilot, Thalaniyyamaka. (Ib. 1, 107). Beyond the western ports, merchants went “out of sight of land” into the ocean and traded with Baveru (Babylon).

Lastly, there was the great north-west over-land trade- route linking India with Central and Western Asia by way of Taxila and cities of the Gangetic Valley like Saketa, Savatthi, Benares, or Rajagaha (Vi. Texts, ii, 174, ff.; Mahavagga, viii, I, 6 ff.). As a much frequented road, it was free from dangers. We read of students travelling in numbers to Takkasila, unattended and unarmed (Jat, ii, 277) for education.

4.7.3 Sea-Borne Trade:

There is some evidence as to the sea-borne foreign trade of those days, though it is scanty. We read of Prince Mahajanaka sailing from Champa for Suvannabhumi (Ib. vi, 34 f.) of Mahinda from Pataliputra to Tamalitti and thence to Ceylon (Vin. iii, 388 (Samantapasadika)). A whole-village of defaulting wood-rights is described as escaping at night down the Ganges in a “mighty ship” from Benares out to the sea (Jat. IV, 159).

An accomplished helmsman brings safe by ships “passengers for India from off the sea to Benares by river” (Ib. ii, 112). We read of traders coasting round India from Bharukachchha to Suvannabhumi (Ib. iii, 188), touching at a port of Ceylon on the way (Ib. ii, 127 ff.). The cargo of a newly-arrived ship attracts a hundred merchants to buy it up (Ib., I, 122). The ships of the times were large enough to accommodate “hundreds” of passengers. We read of 500 traders on board ill-fated ships (Ib. 128; v, 75) and of 700 under the safe pilotage of Supparaka (Ib., iv, 138, ff) (Hindu Civilization, pp. 302-304).

4.8 POST MAURYAN COINAGE

Post-Mauryan coinage refers to the period of coinage production in India, following the breakup of the Maurya Empire (321–185 BCE).

The centralized Mauryan power ended during a Coup d'état in 185 BCE leading to the foundation of the Shunga Empire. The vast and centralized Maurya Empire was broken into numerous new polities. In the east, the newly formed Sunga Empire utilized the industries pre-established in Pataliputra.

Yona kings, which were once incorporated by or allied with the Mauryan Empire, settled in the Indus forming Indo-Greek Kingdoms bringing new coinage practices. These techniques were utilized by the Indo-Scythian Kingdoms and Kushan Empire.

In the south the Satavahana Empire appeared, all with their specific coinage. The unified coinage, made of punch-marked coins, also broke up. In the northwest, several small independent entities were formed, which started to strike their own coins.

Check your progress-2

1. Write about the Literature.

2. Discuss the Post Mauryan Coinage.

4.9 LET US SUM UP

The most important political developments of the Post-Maurya period was the onslaught of foreigners from the north-west. The Western Kshatrapas, or Western Satraps, (35 - 405 AD) were Saka rulers of the western and central part of India (Saurashtra and Malwa: modern Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh). They were contemporaneous with the Kushans who ruled the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, and the Satavahana who ruled in Central India. The Satavahana coins, inscriptions and literature are the rich source of our

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knowledge about their administrative system. In this period the South was ruled over by the monarchies. King was the highest official of the Government and his office was hereditary. They did not assume high sounding titles. Similarly, the Satavahana rulers did not believe in divine rights of a king and they carried administration in accordance with the directives of the Dharma Shastras and the social customs. The king himself led his armies in the battle-field and was commander-in-chief of his forces. In India the earliest inscriptional evidence of land grant belongs to the first century BC, when a village was granted by the Satavahanas to the priests as a gift. Such grants were free from taxes. The administrative rights were first abandoned by the Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni. We have some evidence to show that a few grants were meant to bring the uncultivated land under cultivation. A Satavahana inscription states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not settled. Post-Mauryan coinage refers to the period of coinage production in India, following the breakup of the Maurya Empire (321–185 BCE).

The centralized Mauryan power ended during a Coup d'état in 185 BCE leading to the foundation of the Shunga Empire. The vast and centralized Maurya Empire was broken into numerous new polities. In the east, the newly formed Sunga Empire utilized the industries pre-established in Pataliputra.

4.10 KEYWORDS

- **Kshatrapas:** The Western Kshatrapas, or Western Satraps, (35 - 405 AD) were Saka rulers of the western and central part of India (Saurashtra and Malwa: modern Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh).
- **Satavahana:** A Satavahana inscription states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not settled.
- **Agriculture:** We have some evidence to show that a few grants were meant to bring the uncultivated land under cultivation.

4.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Briefly discuss Satavahana Dynasty.
2. Explain about the Land Grants and Agriculture.
3. Write about the Trade Routes of Post Mauryas Period.
4. Discuss about the Satavahana Administration.

4.12 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

1. A Maharaja named Amoghabhuti, who was the Raja of the Kunindas, is known from coins of the Indo-Greek module with legends sometimes in both Brahmi and Kharoshthi, but in some cases in Brahmi only." in The History and Culture of the Indian People - Volume 2 by Ramesh Chandra Majumdar - 1951 - Page 161
2. The Coins Of India, by Brown, C.J. p.13-20
- 3.The Coins Of India, by Brown, C.J. p.13-20
- 4.Ancient Indian Coinage, Rekha Jain, D.K. Printworld Ltd. p.137
5. Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History Book Review Trust, New Delhi, Popular Prakashan, 1995, p.151
- 6.Ancient Indian Coinage, Rekha Jain, D.K.Printworld Ltd, p.114

4.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The Western Kshatrapas, or Western Satraps, (35 - 405 AD) were Saka rulers of the western and central part of India (Saurashtra and Malwa: modern Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh). They were contemporaneous with the Kushans who ruled the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, and the Satavahana who ruled in Central India.
2. The Satavahana coins, inscriptions and literature are the rich source of our knowledge about their administrative system. In this period the South was ruled over by the monarchies. King was the highest official of the Government and his office was hereditary.

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3. The Satavahana rulers were lovers of literature. Under their patronage, great progress was made in the field of literature. Most of the Satavahana rulers were themselves learned and had special interest in literature. In this period, the Prakrit language and literature developed significantly.

4. Post-Mauryan coinage refers to the period of coinage production in India, following the breakup of the Maurya Empire (321–185 BCE).

The centralized Mauryan power ended during a Coup d'état in 185 BCE leading to the foundation of the Shunga Empire. The vast and centralized Maurya Empire was broken into numerous new polities. In the east, the newly formed Sunga Empire utilized the industries pre-established in Pataliputra.

UNIT-5 KUSHANS, SOCIETY, RELIGION

STRUCTURE

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Origin of Kushan
 - 5.2.1 Early Kushans
- 5.3 Kushan Society
- 5.4 Main Kushan Rulers
- 5.5 Kushan and Buddhism
- 5.6 Kushan Coinage
- 5.7 Interactions With Central and Western Asia
- 5.8 Syncretic Elements in Indian Society
- 5.9 Let us sum up
- 5.10 Keywords
- 5.11 Questions For Review
- 5.12 Suggested Readings And References
- 5.13 Answers To Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand Origin of Kushan
- Able to understand Kushan and Buddhism
- Able to understand Interactions With Central and Western Asia
- Able to understand Syncretic Elements in Indian Society

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Kushan Empire was a syncretic empire, formed by the Yuezhi, in the Bactrian territories in the early 1st century. It spread to encompass much of Afghanistan, and then the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent at least as far as Saketa and Sarnath near Varanasi (Benares), where inscriptions have been found dating to the era of the Kushan Emperor Kanishka the Great. Emperor Kanishka was a great patron of Buddhism. He played an important role in the establishment of Buddhism in the

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Indian subcontinent and its spread to Central Asia and China. The Kushans were most probably one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation, an Indo-European nomadic people of possible Tocharian origin, who migrated from Gansu and settled in ancient Bactria.

The Kushans possibly used the Greek language initially for administrative purposes, but soon began to use Bactrian language. Kanishka sent his armies north of the Karakoram mountains. A direct road from Gandhara to China remained under Kushan control for more than a century, encouraging travel across the Karakoram and facilitating the spread of Mahayana Buddhism to China.

The Kushan dynasty had diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire, Sasanian Persia, the Aksumite Empire and the Han dynasty of China. The Kushan Empire was at the center of trade relations between the Roman Empire and China: according to Alain Daniélou, "for a time, the Kushana Empire was the centerpoint of the major civilizations".[25] While much philosophy, art, and science was created within its borders, the only textual record of the empire's history today comes from inscriptions and accounts in other languages, particularly Chinese.

The Kushan empire fragmented into semi-independent kingdoms in the 3rd century AD, which fell to the Sasanians invading from the west, establishing the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom in the areas of Sogdiana, Bactria and Gandhara. In the 4th century, the Guptas, an Indian dynasty also pressed from the east. The last of the Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian kingdoms were eventually overwhelmed by invaders from the north, known as the Kidarites, and then the Hephthalites.

Syncretism was common during the Hellenistic period, with rulers regularly identifying local deities in various parts of their domains with the relevant god or goddess of the Greek Pantheon, as a means of increasing the cohesion of the Kingdom. This practice was accepted in most locations, but vehemently rejected by the Jews who considered the identification of Yahwe with the Greek Zeus as the worst of blasphemy.

A wide variety of people came to populate the steppes. Nomadic groups in Central Asia included the Huns and other Turks, as well as Indo-

Europeans such as the Tocharians, Persians, Scythians, Saka, Yuezhi, Wusun, and others, and a number of Mongol groups. Despite these ethnic and linguistic differences, the steppe lifestyle led to the adoption of very similar culture across the region.

5.2 ORIGIN KUSHAN

Chinese sources describe the Guishuang i.e. the Kushans, as one of the five aristocratic tribes of the Yuezhi. There is scholarly consensus that the Yuezhi were a people of Indo-European origin. A specifically Tocharian origin of the Yuezhi is often suggested. An Iranian, specifically Saka, origin, has also has some support among scholars. Others suggest that the Yuezhi might have originally been a nomadic Iranian people, who were then partially assimilated by settled Tocharians, thus containing both Iranian and Tocharian elements.

The ethnonym "ΚΟΨΑΝΟΝ" (Koshshanoy, "Kushans") in Greek alphabet (with the addition of the letter Ψ, "Sh") on a coin of the first known Kushan ruler Herais (1st century CE).

The Yuezhi reached the Hellenic kingdom of Greco-Bactria (in northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan) around 135 BC. The displaced Greek dynasties resettled to the southeast in areas of the Hindu Kush and the Indus basin (in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan), occupying the western part of the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

In India, Kushan emperors regularly used the dynastic name ΚΟΨΑΝΟΝ ("Koshano") on their coinage. Several inscriptions in Sanskrit in the Brahmi script, such as the Mathura inscription of the statue of Vima Kadphises, refer to the Kushan Emperor as Gupta allahabad ku.jpg Gupta gujarat ssaa.jpg Gupta ashoka nn.svg Ku-shā-ṇa ("Kushana"). Some later Indian literary sources referred to the Kushans as Turushka, a name which in later Sanskrit sources was confused with Turk, "probably due to the fact that Tukharistan passed into the hands of the western Turks in the seventh century. Yet, according to Wink, "nowadays no historian considers them to be Turkish-Mongoloid or 'Hun', although there is no doubt about their Central-Asian origin."

5.2.1 Early Kushans

Some traces remain of the presence of the Kushans in the area of Bactria and Sogdiana in the 2nd-1st century BCE, where they had displaced the Sakas, who moved further south. Archaeological structures are known in Takht-i Sangin, Surkh Kotal (a monumental temple), and in the palace of Khalchayan. On the ruins of ancient Hellenistic cities such as Ai-Khanoum, the Kushans are known to have built fortresses. Various sculptures and friezes from this period are known, representing horse-riding archers, and, significantly, men such as the Kushan prince of Khalchayan with artificially deformed skulls, a practice well attested in nomadic Central Asia. Some of the Khalchayan sculptural scenes are also thought to depict the Kushans fighting against the Sakas. In these portrayals, the Yuezhis are shown with a majestic demeanour, whereas the Sakas are typically represented with side-wiskers, and more or less grotesque facial expressions.

The Chinese first referred to these people as the Yuezhi and said they established the Kushan Empire, although the relationship between the Yuezhi and the Kushans is still unclear. Ban Gu's Book of Han tells us the Kushans (Kuei-shuang) divided up Bactria in 128 BC. Fan Ye's Book of Later Han "relates how the chief of the Kushans, Ch'iu-shiu-ch'ueh (the Kujula Kadphises of coins), founded by means of the submission of the other Yueh-chih clans the Kushan Empire."

The earliest documented ruler, and the first one to proclaim himself as a Kushan ruler, was Herais. He calls himself a "tyrant" in Greek on his coins, and also exhibits skull deformation. He may have been an ally of the Greeks, and he shared the same style of coinage. Herais may have been the father of the first Kushan emperor Kujula Kadphises.

5.3 KUSHAN SOCIETY

In the 1st century BCE, the Guishuang gained prominence over the other Yuezhi tribes, and welded them into a tight confederation under yabgu (Commander) Kujula Kadphises. The name Guishuang was adopted in the West and modified into Kushan to designate the confederation, although the Chinese continued to call them Yuezhi.

Gradually wresting control of the area from the Scythian tribes, the Kushans expanded south into the region traditionally known as Gandhara (an area primarily in Pakistan's Pothowar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region) and established twin capitals in Begram and Peshawar, then known as Kapisa and Pushklavati respectively.

The Kushans adopted elements of the Hellenistic culture of Bactria. They adopted the Greek alphabet to suit their own language (with the additional development of the letter Ϸ "sh", as in "Kushan") and soon began minting coinage on the Greek model. On their coins they used Greek language legends combined with Pali legends (in the Kharoshthi script), until the first few years of the reign of Kanishka. After the middle of Kanishka's reign, they used Kushan language legends (in an adapted Greek script), combined with legends in Greek (Greek script) and legends in Prakrit (Kharoshthi script).

The Kushans "adopted many local beliefs and customs, including Zoroastrianism and the two rising religions in the region, the Greek cults and Buddhism". From the time of Vima Takto, many Kushans started adopting aspects of Buddhist culture, and like the Egyptians, they absorbed the strong remnants of the Greek culture of the Hellenistic Kingdoms, becoming at least partly Hellenised. The great Kushan emperor Vima Kadphises may have embraced Shaivism (a sect of Hinduism), as surmised by coins minted during the period. The following Kushan emperors represented a wide variety of faiths including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Shaivism.

The rule of the Kushans linked the seagoing trade of the Indian Ocean with the commerce of the Silk Road through the long-civilized Indus Valley. At the height of the dynasty, the Kushans loosely ruled a territory that extended to the Aral Sea through present-day Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan into northern India.

The loose unity and comparative peace of such a vast expanse encouraged long-distance trade, brought Chinese silks to Rome, and created strings of flourishing urban centers.

5.4 MAIN KUSHAN RULERS

Kushan rulers are recorded for a period of about three centuries, from circa 30 CE, to circa 375 CE, until the invasions of the Kidarites. They ruled around the same time as the Western Satraps, the Satavahanas, and the first Gupta Empire rulers.

Kujula Kadphises (c. 30 – c. 80)

These conquests by Kujula Kadphises probably took place sometime between 45 and 60 and laid the basis for the Kushan Empire which was rapidly expanded by his descendants.

Kujula issued an extensive series of coins and fathered at least two sons, Sadashkana (who is known from only two inscriptions, especially the Rabatak inscription, and apparently never ruled), and seemingly Vima Takto.

Kujula Kadphises was the great-grandfather of Kanishka.

Vima Takto or Sadashkana (c. 80 – c. 95)

Vima Takto is mentioned in the Rabatak inscription (another son, Sadashkana, is mentioned in an inscription of Senavarman, the King of Odi). He was the predecessor of Vima Kadphises, and Kanishka I. He expanded the Kushan Empire into the northwest of South Asia.

Vima Kadphises (c. 95 – c. 127)

Vima Kadphises (Kushan language: Οοημο Καδφισης) was a Kushan emperor from around 95–127 CE, the son of Sadashkana and the grandson of Kujula Kadphises, and the father of Kanishka I, as detailed by the Rabatak inscription.

Vima Kadphises added to the Kushan territory by his conquests in Bactria. He issued an extensive series of coins and inscriptions. He issued gold coins in addition to the existing copper and silver coinage.

Kanishka I (c. 127 – c. 150)

The rule of Kanishka the Great, fourth Kushan king, lasted for about 23 years from c. 127 CE. Upon his accession, Kanishka ruled a huge

territory (virtually all of northern India), south to Ujjain and Kundina and east beyond Pataliputra.

His territory was administered from two capitals: Purushapura (now Peshawar in northwestern Pakistan) and Mathura, in northern India. He is also credited (along with Raja Dab) for building the massive, ancient Fort at Bathinda (Qila Mubarak), in the modern city of Bathinda, Indian Punjab.

The Kushans also had a summer capital in Bagram (then known as Kapisa), where the "Begram Treasure", comprising works of art from Greece to China, has been found. According to the Rabatak inscription, Kanishka was the son of Vima Kadphises, the grandson of Sadashkana, and the great-grandson of Kujula Kadphises. Kanishka's era is now generally accepted to have begun in 127 on the basis of Harry Falk's ground-breaking research.[70][71] Kanishka's era was used as a calendar reference by the Kushans for about a century, until the decline of the Kushan realm.

Huvishka (c. 150 – c. 180) Edit

Huvishka (Kushan: Ooηḗκἰ, "Ooishki") was a Kushan emperor from the death of Kanishka (assumed on the best evidence available to be in 150) until the succession of Vasudeva I about thirty years later. His rule was a period of retrenchment and consolidation for the Empire. In particular he devoted time and effort early in his reign to the exertion of greater control over the city of Mathura.

Vasudeva I (c. 190 – c. 230)

Vasudeva I was the last of the "Great Kushans". Named inscriptions dating from year 64 to 98 of Kanishka's era suggest his reign extended from at least 191 to 225 AD. He was the last great Kushan emperor, and the end of his rule coincides with the invasion of the Sasanians as far as northwestern India, and the establishment of the Indo-Sasanians or Kushanshahs in what is nowadays Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwestern India from around 240 AD.

Vāsishka (c. 247 – c. 267)

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Vāsishka was a Kushan emperor who seems to have had a 20-year reign following Kanishka II. His rule is recorded at Mathura, in Gandhara and as far south as Sanchi (near Vidisa), where several inscriptions in his name have been found, dated to the year 22 (the Sanchi inscription of "Vaksushana" – i.e., Vasishka Kushana) and year 28 (the Sanchi inscription of Vasaska – i.e., Vasishka) of a possible second Kanishka era.

Little Kushans (270-350 CE)

Following territory losses in the west (Bactria lost to the Kushano-Sasanians), and in the east (loss of Mathura to the Gupta Empire), several "Little Kushans" are known, who ruled locally in the area of Punjab with their capital at Taxila: Vasudeva II (270-300 CE), Mahi (300-305 CE), Shaka (305-335 CE) and Kipunada (335-350 CE).[72] They probably were vassals of the Gupta Empire, until the invasion of the Kidarites destroyed the last remains of Kushan rule.

5.5 KUSHANS AND BUDDHISM

The Kushans inherited the Greco-Buddhist traditions of the Indo-Greek Kingdom they replaced, and their patronage of Buddhist institutions allowed them to grow as a commercial power. Between the mid-1st century and the mid-3rd century, Buddhism, patronized by the Kushans, extended to China and other Asian countries through the Silk Road.

Kanishka is renowned in Buddhist tradition for having convened a great Buddhist council in Kashmir. Along with his predecessors in the region, the Indo-Greek king Menander I (Milinda) and the Indian emperors Ashoka and Harsha Vardhana, Kanishka is considered by Buddhism as one of its greatest benefactors.

During the 1st century AD, Buddhist books were being produced and carried by monks, and their trader patrons. Also, monasteries were being established along these land routes that went from China and other parts of Asia. With the development of Buddhist books, it caused a new written language called Gandhara. Gandhara consists of eastern

Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Scholars are said to have found many Buddhist scrolls that contained the Gandhari language.

The reign of Huvishka corresponds to the first known epigraphic evidence of the Buddha Amitabha, on the bottom part of a 2nd-century statue which has been found in Govindo-Nagar, and now at the Mathura Museum. The statue is dated to "the 28th year of the reign of Huvishka", and dedicated to "Amitabha Buddha" by a family of merchants. There is also some evidence that Huvishka himself was a follower of Mahāyāna Buddhism. A Sanskrit manuscript fragment in the Schøyen Collection describes Huvishka as one who has "set forth in the Mahāyāna."

5.6 KUSHAN COINAGE

The coinage of the Kushans was abundant and an important tool of propaganda in promoting each Kushan ruler. One of the names for Kushan coins was Dinara, which ultimately came from the Roman name Denarius aureus. The coinage of the Kushans was copied as far as the Kushano-Sasanians in the west, and the kingdom of Samatata in Bengal to the east. The coinage of the Gupta Empire was also initially derived from the coinage of the Kushan Empire, adopting its weight standard, techniques and designs, following the conquests of Samudragupta in the northwest. The imagery on Gupta coins then became more Indian in both style and subject matter compared to earlier dynasties, where Greco-Roman and Persian styles were mostly followed.

Check your progress-1

- 1 Write a short note on Early Kushans.

- 2 Describe the two main Kushan Rulers.

5.7 INTERACTIONS WITH CENTRAL AND WESTERN ASIA

The history of Central Asia concerns the history of the various peoples that have inhabited Central Asia. The lifestyle of such people has been determined primarily by the area's climate and geography. The aridity of the region makes agriculture difficult and distance from the sea cut it off from much trade. Thus, few major cities developed in the region. Nomadic horse peoples of the steppe dominated the area for millennia.

Relations between the steppe nomads and the settled people in and around Central Asia were marked by conflict. The nomadic lifestyle was well suited to warfare, and the steppe horse riders became some of the most militarily potent people in the world, due to the devastating techniques and ability of their horse archers. Periodically, tribal leaders or changing conditions would cause several tribes to organize themselves into a single military force, which would then often launch campaigns of conquest, especially into more 'civilized' areas. A few of these types of tribal coalitions included the Huns' invasion of Europe, various Turkic migrations into Transoxiana, the Wu Hu attacks on China and most notably the Mongol conquest of much of Eurasia.

The dominance of the nomads ended in the 16th century as firearms allowed settled people to gain control of the region. The Russian Empire, the Qing dynasty of China, and other powers expanded into the area and seized the bulk of Central Asia by the end of the 19th century. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union incorporated most of Central Asia; only Mongolia and Afghanistan remained nominally independent, although Mongolia existed as a Soviet satellite state and Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in the late 20th century. The Soviet areas of Central Asia saw much industrialization and construction of infrastructure, but also the suppression of local cultures and a lasting legacy of ethnic tensions and environmental problems.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, five Central Asian countries gained independence — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan,

Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In all of the new states, former Communist Party officials retained power as local strongmen.

Anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) reached Central Asia by 50,000 to 40,000 years ago. The Tibetan Plateau is thought to have been reached by 38,000 years ago. Populations who lived in Siberia during the Last Glacial Maximum have also contributed significantly to the populations of both Europe and the Americas.

The term Ceramic Mesolithic is used of late Mesolithic cultures of Central Asia, during the 6th to 5th millennia BC (in Russian archaeology, these cultures are described as Neolithic even though farming is absent). It is characterized by its distinctive type of pottery, with point or knob base and flared rims, manufactured by methods not used by the Neolithic farmers. The earliest manifestation of this type of pottery may be in the region around Lake Baikal in Siberia. It appears in the Elshan or Yelshanka or Samara culture on the Volga in Russia by about 7000 BC. and from there spread via the Dnieper-Donets culture to the Narva culture of the Eastern Baltic.

In the Pontic-Caspian steppe, Chalcolithic cultures develop in the second half of the 5th millennium BC, small communities in permanent settlements which began to engage in agricultural practices as well as herding. Around this time, some of these communities began the domestication of the horse. According to the Kurgan hypothesis, the north-west of the region is also considered to be the source of the root of the Indo-European languages. The horse-drawn chariot appears in the 3rd millennium BC, by 2000 BC, in the form of war chariots with spoked wheels, thus being made more maneuverable, and dominated the battlefields. The growing use of the horse, combined with the failure, roughly around 2000 BC, of the always precarious irrigation systems that had allowed for extensive agriculture in the region, gave rise and dominance of pastoral nomadism by 1000 BC, a way of life that would dominate the region for the next several millennia, giving rise to the Scythian expansion of the Iron Age.

Scattered nomadic groups maintained herds of sheep, goats, horses, and camels, and conducted annual migrations to find new pastures (a practice

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known as transhumance). The people lived in yurts (or gers) – tents made of hides and wood that could be disassembled and transported. Each group had several yurts, each accommodating about five people.

While the semi-arid plains were dominated by the nomads, small city-states and sedentary agrarian societies arose in the more humid areas of Central Asia. The Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex of the early 2nd millennium BC was the first sedentary civilization of the region, practicing irrigation farming of wheat and barley and possibly a form of writing. Bactria-Margiana probably interacted with the contemporary Bronze Age nomads of the Andronovo culture, the originators of the spoke-wheeled chariot, who lived to their north in western Siberia, Russia, and parts of Kazakhstan, and survived as a culture until the 1st millennium BC. These cultures, particularly Bactria-Margiana, have been posited as possible representatives of the hypothetical Aryan culture ancestral to the speakers of the Indo-Iranian languages (see Indo-Iranians).

Later the strongest of Sogdian city-states of the Fergana Valley rose to prominence. After the 1st century BC, these cities became home to the traders of the Silk Road and grew wealthy from this trade. The steppe nomads were dependent on these settled people for a wide array of goods that were impossible for transient populations to produce. The nomads traded for these when they could, but because they generally did not produce goods of interest to sedentary people, the popular alternative was to carry out raids.

A wide variety of people came to populate the steppes. Nomadic groups in Central Asia included the Huns and other Turks, as well as Indo-Europeans such as the Tocharians, Persians, Scythians, Saka, Yuezhi, Wusun, and others, and a number of Mongol groups. Despite these ethnic and linguistic differences, the steppe lifestyle led to the adoption of very similar culture across the region.

In the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, a series of large and powerful states developed on the southern periphery of Central Asia (the Ancient Near East). These empires launched several attempts to conquer the steppe people but met with only mixed success. The Median Empire and

Achaemenid Empire both ruled parts of Central Asia. The Xiongnu Empire (209 BC-93 (156) AD) may be seen as the first central Asian empire which set an example for later Göktürk and Mongol empires.[9] Xiongnu's ancestor Xianyu tribe founded Zhongshan state (c. 6th century BC – c. 296 BC) in Hebei province, China. The title chanyu was used by the Xiongnu rulers before Modun Chanyu so it is possible that statehood history of the Xiongnu began long before Modun's rule.

Following the success of the Han–Xiongnu War, Chinese states would also regularly strive to extend their power westwards. Despite their military might, these states found it difficult to conquer the whole region.

When faced by a stronger force, the nomads could simply retreat deep into the steppe and wait for the invaders to leave. With no cities and little wealth other than the herds they took with them, the nomads had nothing they could be forced to defend. An example of this is given by Herodotus's detailed account of the futile Persian campaigns against the Scythians. The Scythians, like most nomad empires, had permanent settlements of various sizes, representing various degrees of civilisation. The vast fortified settlement of Kamenka on the Dnieper River, settled since the end of the 5th century BC, became the centre of the Scythian kingdom ruled by Ateas, who lost his life in a battle against Philip II of Macedon in 339 BC.

Some empires, such as the Persian and Macedonian empires, did make deep inroads into Central Asia by founding cities and gaining control of the trading centres. Alexander the Great's conquests spread Hellenistic civilisation all the way to Alexandria Eschate (Lit. “Alexandria the Furthest”), established in 329 BC in modern Tajikistan. After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his Central Asian territory fell to the Seleucid Empire during the Wars of the Diadochi.

In 250 BC, the Central Asian portion of the empire (Bactria) seceded as the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, which had extensive contacts with India and China until its end in 125 BC. The Indo-Greek Kingdom, mostly based in the Punjab region but controlling a fair part of Afghanistan, pioneered the development of Greco-Buddhism. The Kushan Kingdom thrived across a wide swath of the region from the 2nd century BC to the

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4th century AD, and continued Hellenistic and Buddhist traditions. These states prospered from their position on the Silk Road linking China and Europe.

Likewise, in eastern Central Asia, the Chinese Han Dynasty expanded into the region at the height of its imperial power. From roughly 115 to 60 BC, Han forces fought the Xiongnu over control of the oasis city-states in the Tarim Basin. The Han was eventually victorious and established the Protectorate of the Western Regions in 60 BC, which dealt with the region's defence and foreign affairs. Chinese rule in Tarim Basin was replaced successively with Kushans and Hephthalites.

Later, external powers such as the Sassanid Empire would come to dominate this trade. One of those powers, the Parthian Empire, was of Central Asian origin, but adopted Persian-Greek cultural traditions. This is an early example of a recurring theme of Central Asian history: occasionally nomads of Central Asian origin would conquer the kingdoms and empires surrounding the region, but quickly merge into the culture of the conquered peoples.

At this time Central Asia was a heterogeneous region with a mixture of cultures and religions. Buddhism remained the largest religion, but was concentrated in the east. Around Persia, Zoroastrianism became important. Nestorian Christianity entered the area, but was never more than a minority faith. More successful was Manichaeism, which became the third largest faith.

Turkic expansion began in the 6th century; the Turkic speaking Uyghurs were one of many distinct cultural groups brought together by the trade of the Silk Route at Turfan, which was then ruled by China's Tang Dynasty. The Uyghurs, primarily pastoral nomads, observed a number of religions including Manichaeism, Buddhism, and Nestorian Christianity. Many of the artefacts from this period were found in the 19th century in this remote desert region.

5.8 SYNCRETIC ELEMENTS IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. Syncretism also occurs commonly in expressions of arts and culture (known as eclecticism) as well as politics (syncretic politics).

Overt syncretism in folk belief may show cultural acceptance of an alien or previous tradition, but the "other" cult may survive or infiltrate without authorized syncretism nevertheless. For example, some Conversos developed a sort of cult for martyr-victims of the Spanish Inquisition, thus incorporating elements of Catholicism while resisting it.

The Kushite kings who ruled Upper Egypt for approximately one century and the whole of Egypt for approximately 57 years, from 721 to 664 BC, constituting the Twenty-fifth Dynasty in Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*, developed a syncretic worship identifying their own god Dedun with the Egyptian Osiris. They maintained this worship even after being driven out of Egypt. A temple dedicated to this syncretic god, built by the Kushite ruler Atlanersa, was unearthed at Jebel Barkal.

Syncretism was common during the Hellenistic period, with rulers regularly identifying local deities in various parts of their domains with the relevant god or goddess of the Greek Pantheon, as a means of increasing the cohesion of the Kingdom. This practice was accepted in most locations, but vehemently rejected by the Jews who considered the identification of Yahweh with the Greek Zeus as the worst of blasphemy. The Roman Empire continued this practice, first by the identification of traditional Roman deities with Greek ones, producing a single Graeco-Roman Pantheon, and then identifying members of that pantheon with the local deities of various Roman provinces. Allegedly, an undeclared form of syncretism was the transfer of many attributes of the goddess Isis - whose worship was widespread in the Later Roman Empire - to the

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Christian Virgin Mary. Some religious movements have embraced overt syncretism, such as the case of melding Shintō beliefs into Buddhism or the supposed amalgamation of Germanic and Celtic pagan views into Christianity during its spread into Gaul, the British Isles, Germany, and Scandinavia. In later times, Christian missionaries in North America identified Manitou - the spiritual and fundamental life force in the traditional beliefs of the Algonquian groups - with the God of Christianity. Similar identifications were made by missionaries at other locations in the Americas and Africa, whenever encountering a local belief in a Supreme God or Supreme Spirit of some kind.

Indian influences are seen in the practice of Shi'i Islam in Trinidad. Others have strongly rejected it as devaluing and compromising precious and genuine distinctions; examples of this include post-Exile Second Temple Judaism, Islam, and most of Protestant Christianity.

Syncretism tends to facilitate coexistence and unity between otherwise different cultures and world-views (intercultural competence), a factor that has recommended it to rulers of multi-ethnic realms. Conversely, the rejection of syncretism, usually in the name of "piety" and "orthodoxy", may help to generate, bolster or authenticate a sense of un-compromised cultural unity in a well-defined minority or majority.

Check your progress-2

- 3 Write about the Kushan Coinage.

- 4 Write a short note on Syncretic elements in Indian Society.

5.9 LET US SUM UP

The Kushan Empire was a syncretic empire, formed by the Yuezhi, in the Bactrian territories in the early 1st century. It spread to encompass much of Afghanistan, and then the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent at least as far as Saketa and Sarnath near Varanasi (Benares), where inscriptions have been found dating to the era of the Kushan Emperor Kanishka the Great. Emperor Kanishka was a great patron of Buddhism. He played an important role in the establishment of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent and its spread to Central Asia and China. The Kushans were most probably one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation, an Indo-European nomadic people of possible Tocharian origin, who migrated from Gansu and settled in ancient Bactria. Kushan rulers are recorded for a period of about three centuries, from circa 30 CE, to circa 375 CE, until the invasions of the Kidarites. They ruled around the same time as the Western Satraps, the Satavahanas, and the first Gupta Empire rulers. The Kushans inherited the Greco-Buddhist traditions of the Indo-Greek Kingdom they replaced, and their patronage of Buddhist institutions allowed them to grow as a commercial power. Between the mid-1st century and the mid-3rd century, Buddhism, patronized by the Kushans, extended to China and other Asian countries through the Silk Road. The history of Central Asia concerns the history of the various peoples that have inhabited Central Asia. The lifestyle of such people has been determined primarily by the area's climate and geography. The aridity of the region makes agriculture difficult and distance from the sea cut it off from much trade. Thus, few major cities developed in the region. Nomadic horse peoples of the steppe dominated the area for millennia. Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

5.10 KEYWORDS

- **Kushan:** The Kushan Empire was a syncretic empire, formed by the Yuezhi, in the Bactrian territories in the early 1st century.
- **Central and Western Asia:** The history of Central Asia concerns the history of the various peoples that have inhabited Central Asia. The lifestyle of such people has been determined primarily by the area's climate and geography.
- **Syncretic Elements:** Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

5.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Briefly discuss the Origin of Kushan.
2. Explain about the Kushan and Buddhism..
3. Write about the interactions with Central and Western Asia.
4. Discuss about the Syncretic elements in Indian Society.

5.12 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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2. Burton Stein (2010). A History of India. John Wiley & Sons. p. 86. ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1.
3. Peter Robb (2011). A History of India. Macmillan International Higher Education. p. 55. ISBN 978-0-230-34549-2.
4. Hermann Kulke; Dietmar Rothermund (2016). A History of India. Taylor & Francis. ISBN 978-1-317-24212-3.

5. Di Castro, Angelo Andrea; Hope, Colin A. (2005). "The Barbarisation of Bactria" in *Cultural Interaction in Afghanistan c 300 BCE to 300 CE*. Melbourne: Monash University Press. pp. 1–18, map visible online page 2 of Hestia, a Tabula Iliaca and Poseidon's trident. ISBN 978-1876924393.

6. The Kushans at first retained the Greek language for administrative purposes but soon began to use Bactrian. The Bactrian Rabatak inscription (discovered in 1993 and deciphered in 2000) records that the Kushan king Kanishka the Great (c. 127 AD), discarded Greek (Ionian) as the language of administration and adopted Bactrian ("Arya language"), from Falk (2001): "The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the Kuṣāṇas." Harry Falk. *Silk Road Art and Archaeology VII*, p. 133.

7. The Bactrian Rabatak inscription (discovered in 1993 and deciphered in 2000) records that the Kushan king Kanishka the Great (c. 127 AD), discarded Greek (Ionian) as the language of administration and adopted Bactrian ("Arya language"), from Falk (2001): "The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the Kuṣāṇas." Harry Falk. *Silk Road Art and Archaeology VII*, p. 133.

5.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Early Kushans

Some traces remain of the presence of the Kushans in the area of Bactria and Sogdiana in the 2nd-1st century BCE, where they had displaced the Sakas, who moved further south.

2. Kujula Kadphises (c. 30 – c. 80)

Vima Taktu or Sadashkana (c. 80 – c. 95)

3. The coinage of the Kushans was abundant and an important tool of propaganda in promoting each Kushan ruler. One of the names for Kushan coins was Dinara, which ultimately came from the Roman name Denarius aureus.

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4. Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

UNIT-6 sangam age

STRUCTURE

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Sangam Kingdom

6.2.1 Sangam Polity

6.2.2 End of Sangam Age

6.3 Sangam Period:Literature

6.3.1 Earliest Tamil Works

6.3.2 Period of Sangam Literature

6.4 Sangam Society and Religion

6.5 Sangam Society and Culture

6.6 Indo-Roman Trade

6.6.1 Indian Ports

6.7 Let us sum up

6.8 Keywords

6.9 Questions For Review

6.10 Suggested Readings And References

6.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand Sangam Kingdom
- Able to understand Literature
- Able to understand Sangam Society and Culture
- Able to understand Indo-Roman Trade

6.1 INTRODUCTION

South of the Deccan plateau, the land between the Venkatam hills and Kanyakumari is known as the Tamilaham. The sangam texts mention three chiefs the Chola, Chera and Pandya. each of them had two strongholds both in the interior as well as on the coast.

Sangams provide a account of the society and polity of those times. There were three successive assemblies of Sangams and the work of the

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last sangam has survived. Sangams were held in the town of Madurai. At the sangams eminent scholars assembled and functioned as the board of censors and the choicest literature was rendered in the nature of anthologies. These literary works were the earliest specimens of Dravidian literature.

The heroic poems and other works of the Tamil literature are testimony to the prevalent literary culture of the early Tamilian people. It is also a sign of the early maturity of the Tamil culture and language.

Sangam age tells us about the literary and societal state of the sangam society. It also tells us about the economy and society but doesn't give sufficient information about the political life and political establishments.

The Society - Sangam Age

Sangam literature tells us that the Tamilaham represents a combination of diverse ecological zones which comprised of hilly regions, river valleys, coastal areas and grasslands etc. Each had its own level of production, social division of labor and lifestyle. However there was an interaction and interdependence between different ecozones which led to development of larger ecozones.

The land were controlled by chiefs and among them the chiefs of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas were regarded as kings because they controlled the agrarian lands and river valleys which had coastal ports which were becoming popular because of lucrative trade.

The cultivators were required to pay taxes and this was collected through them by use of force. However, the taxation system isn't known and information is insufficient. The regular system of taxation wasn't known. The major concern of these groups was war and bringing the independent chiefs under their subjugation. War was celebrated as a noble heroic act and was institutionalized. War heroes and martyrs were celebrated as noble heroic acts.

The continuous wars had a havoc on the lives of poor peasants. The fields were looted and cattle slain or captured. The peasant was defenceless in these wars. Agriculture was the main occupation and other rudimentary

occupation was crafts. Artisans like blacksmiths and weavers were known and mentioned in the literature.

The character of the society is tribal with tribal rituals and customs. But as the society became agriculture based, a complex caste system like the brahmanical varna system emerged. Buddhism too was taking roots in this society.

Thus, the tamil society as mentioned in the sangam period ranged from simple chiefdom of clans to complex chiefdoms of ruling houses. A full fledged state organization was yet to take shape.

The society was composed of unevenly developed components that shared a common culture.

6.2 SANGAM KINGDOM

Sangam period drew to a close in about the end of the 3rd Century. The history for the next 300 years is obscure. The early history of the Pallavas belongs to this period. The Pallava rule was effectively in Kanchi region however a mountaineous tribe named Kalabhra pushed them from this land to the north. The Kalabhras put an end to the rule of chola, chera and pandyas during the sangam period. They were against brahmanical institutions but favored buddhism and jainism. Their threat extended till the Chalukya kingdom in North Karnataka.

The Kalabhra period ended and the region was now involved in a triangular conflict between the Chalukyas of Badami, Pandyas of Madurai and the Pallavas of Kanchipuram. The Pallavas had conquered the eastern part of the Satvahana empire which was the delta between krishna and godavari. The Chalukya had established their kingdom on the ruins of Vakatakas in western deccan. The Vakatakas had previously setup their empire on the ruins of the Satavahanas.

Pallavas defeated the Kalabhras in Kanchi and extended their empire to the borders of chalukya. Pandyas also defeated Kalabhras in Madurai. However, the city of Vengi lying between Godavari and Krishna was a major cause of conflict between Chalukyas and Pallavas. Pandyas were weak and would join the conflict occasionally.

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The relationship between the Pallavas and Cheras who dwelt in the coastal strip of Malabar was however amicable.

Chalukya were able to defeat the King Harshavardhan at river Narmada and prevent his advance in the south. They also defeated Pallavas for a short while by capturing Vengi. However, the Pallavas soon attacked Vatapi, the Chalukya capital and conquered it. Both the Pallavas and the Chalukyas were evenly matched and could not defeat each other.

Chalukyan kingdom in the western Deccan saw conflict with the Arabs. However, their feudatories Rashtrakutas declared independence and soon captured and destroyed the Chalukya dynasty. Pallavas survived for a century more but they also came into attack by the Pandyas and their feudatories Cholas. Cholas defeated and captured the Pallava kingdom and the Pallavas survived for a short while as the feudatories of the Cholas before fading out.

Chalukyas are known for granting asylum to the Zoroastrians who had fled from Persia to escape forcible conversion by the Arab invaders. The descendants of these Zoroastrians are the Parsi community.

Chalukya kings gave a large sum for building of temples and cave shrines in the Deccan hills. The Jain temples at Mt Abu, Buddhist shrines at Ajanta and the Hindu and Buddhist temples at Ellora are the most impressive of these. Rock cut temples at Elephanta island are also attributed to the Chalukyas. Rashtrakutas are credited with construction of the Kailasnath temple at Ellora, a rock cut structure made out of a single large rock.

This period saw the extension of land under cultivation and settlements through land grants to Brahmanas which was exempt from various taxes and dues. Most of these lands were virgin forests but grants were also made for regions which were already under cultivation. The ruling families derived economic advantage as when such lands were brought under cultivation it would lead to increase in resource base.

Grants ensured that the rulers received support from the Brahmins. The religious texts also sanctioned such grants. This was to ensure that the

brahmins received their subsistence. Land grants were also given to non brahmin religious establishments such as buddhists and jain temples.

Land gifts to officials also became prominent during the Gupta and the Post Gupta period. Land grants led to new class of land owners emerging. Kings who had been defeated continued to rule over their lands after accepting the suzerainty of the new powers. This meant that the king would become a vassal and send tribute to the new lord by sharing revenue from the land.

The reach of water resources was an important consideration in the spread of rural areas. There was increase in canals, lakes, wells and irrigation facilities like tanks. These were referred using different names like Keres (tanks, Nadi (river), Araghatta (wells), Srota (water channel) and Vapis (step wells). Land grants paved the way for emergence of a feudal system in India.

Emergence of hierarchical landed intermediaries who were vassals, intermediaries, officers of state, secular assignees and had military titles or feudal titles. These intermediaries increased the distance between the producer and the king. The administrative structure also became like lord vassal relationship.

Due to the greater claims for rights over land by the intermediaries, peasants suffered a loss of the land rights and became tenants at will. They were also required to be slaves or forced labors of these new land lords. Earlier this authority would be only with the king but now it was given to the numerous intermediaries. Surplus was extracted by various measures and actual quantity left with the tillers was pretty less.

A closed economy was created in the village between the villagers and the artisans who remained attached to the village. Each supported the others needs and goods were exchanged on barter. The shortage of coins and other mediums of exchange further strengthened this system.

Agriculture continued to be the chief of the occupations practiced. The cultivation of many crops and cash crops is recorded. Trade of high valued goods continued but due to shortage of coins barter system was prevalent for daily use goods. The irrigation technology also improved

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and many implements were used for agriculture. Thus there was an advancement in agriculture and irrigation and this led to unprecedented increase in production.

The Sangam age was a glorious period for south India.

The Sangam is an Academy of Poets and great literary work emerges out of them. The Sangam flourished under the patronage of the Pandya's dynasty.

The probable dates of Sangam era were decided as 3rd century BC – 3rd Century AD.

6.2.1 Sangam Polity:

Hereditary monarchy was prevalent. But king had advisors to assist him.

Each ruler had a regular army.

Land revenue was the chief source of income and customs duty was imposed on foreign trade. War booty was also a source of income. Roads and highways were protected from thieves.

Murugan was the chief god. Even deceased who had died in wars were worshipped.

Caste system was known. Women had respect and allowed to pursue intellectual pursuits. But condition of widows was bad. Sati was prevalent. But women were allowed to choose their partners.

Art, music and dancing were popular in Sangam age. Highly developed forms of music and dance were known.

Trade and agriculture flourished in this period. Internal trade was on barter system. External trade was carried with Greek civilisation using naval vessels.

Agriculture was the main occupation. Handicrafts, metal works and garments were famous in internal and external trade. Roman Empire too traded with them and roman merchants were present in Tamil country. Gold and silver roman coins are found here.

6.2.2 End of Sangam age:

The Kalabra's occupied entire Tamil country for 250 years. Jainism and Buddhism grew to prominence in their rule. Finally the Pallavas and Pandya's drew them out of Tamil country and re-established their rule again.

6.3 SANGAM PERIOD: LITERATURE

The Sangam Age in South India is a landmark in her history. The word sangam is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word Sangha which means a group of persons or an association. The Tamil Sangam was an academy of poets and bards who flourished in three different periods and in different places under the patronage of the Pandyan kings. It is believed that the first Sangam was attended by gods and legendary sages, and its seat was Ten Madurai. All the works of the first Sangam have perished.

The seat of the second Sangam was Kapatpuram, another capital of the Pandyas. It was attended by several poets and produced a large mass of literature, but only Tolkappiyam (the early Tamil grammar) has survived.

The seat of the third Sangam was the present Madurai. It has also produced vast literature, but only a fraction of it has survived. It is this fraction which constitutes the extant body of Sangam literature. The Age of the Sangam is the age to which the Sangam literature belonged. The Sangam literature constitutes a mine of information on conditions of life around the beginning of the Christian era.

According to Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, the Sangam literature which combines idealism with realism and classic grace with indigenous industry and strength is rightly regarded as constituting the Augustan age of Tamil literature. It deals with secular matter relating to public and social activity like government, war charity, trade, worship, agriculture etc.

Among the poets and thinkers of the Sangam age Tolkappiyar, Tiruvalluvar, Illango Adigal, Sittalai Sattanar, Nakkirar, Kapilar, Paranar, Auvaiyar, Mangudi Marudanar and a few others are outstanding. Sangam literature consists of the earliest Tamil works (such

as the Tolkappiyam), the ten poems (Pattupattu), the eight anthologies (Ettutogai) and the eighteen minor works (Padinenkilkanakku), and the three epics. The chief merits of the sangam works is their absolute devotion to standards and adherence to literary conventions.

6.3.1 Earliest Tamil Works:

Tolkappiyam is the oldest extant Tamil grammar written by Tokkappiyar (one of the 12 disciples of Saint Agastya.) It is divided into three major parts, each consisting of nine iyals (sub-parts) and has a total of 1612 sutras. Other earliest Tamil works were the Agattiyam (a work on grammar of letters and life) by Saint Agattiyar, Pannirupadalam and the Kakkipadiniyam.

Ten Poems Pattupattu:

Murugarruppadai (by Nakkirar), Sirupanarruppadai (by Nattattanar), Perumbanarruppadai, Maduraikkanji (by Mangudi Marudam), Pattinappalai (by Kannan), and other works, come in this category.

The poetry in the Pattupattu was divided into two main groups: Aham (deals with matters strictly limited to one aspect of subjective experience viz., love) and Puram (deals with matters capable of externalization or objectification).

Eight Anthologies Ettutogai:

1. Aingurunuru, compiled by Gudalur Kilar, consists of 500 erotic poems.
2. Agananuru, compiled by Rudrasarman, consists of love poems.
3. Narrinai comprises 400 short poems on love.
4. Kurunttogai has 400 love poems.
5. Purananuru consists of 400 poems in praise of kings. The Nandas and Mauryas are referred in one of the poems.
6. Kalittogaicomprises love poems.
7. Paripadal has 24 poems in praise of gods.

8. Padirrupattu is a short collection of 8 poems in praise of the Chera Kings.

The eight anthologies (Ettutogai) also are in two groups, the Aham and the Puram.

Eighteen Minor Works Padinenkilkanakku:

These works are called 'minor works' because the poems in these are shorter in form than those in the Ettutogai and Pattuppattu. The most important among these are the Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar (known as the Bible of Tamil Land', it is a compound of the Dharmasastra, the Arthasastra and the Kamasutra), the Naladiyar, the Palamoliby Munnururai Araiyaar, the Acharakkovaietc.

The Epics:

The epics Silappadikaram (The Jewelled Anklet) and Manimekalai belong to the early centuries of the Christian era.

1. Silappadikaram was written by Mango Adigal (grandson of Karikala, the great Chola King) in the second century A.D. It is a tragic story of a merchant, Kovalan of Puhar who falls in love with a dancer Madhavi, neglecting his own wife, Kannagi, who in the end revenges the death of her husband at the hands of the Pandyan King and becomes a goddess.

It marks the beginning of Kannagi cult or Pattini cult that is worship of Kannagi as the ideal wife. There is also a reference to the Ceylonese king Gajabahu being present on the occasion of the installation of a Kannagi temple, the Goddess of Chastity, by Chera king Senguttuvan.

2. Manimekalai was written by poet Sattanar. It is the story of Manimekalai, the daughter of Kovalan, and Madhavi of the earlier epic. The main aim of this epic seems to be to expound the excellence of the Buddhist religion through the medium of the travails of Manimekalai consequent on the loss of the city of Puhar when the sea eroded into the coast. This epic is the only important ancient work which gives glimpse of the development of the fine arts in the Sangam age.

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In both these epics, a good deal of social and historical information is found

3. Sivaga Sindamani, written by Tiruttakkadevar a Jaina ascetic, is the story of Sivaga or Jivaka

6.3.2 Period of Sangam literature:

The earliest script that the Tamils used was the Brahmi script. It was only from the late ancient and early medieval period, that they started evolving a new angular script, called the Grantha script, from which the modern Tamil is derived.

Some of the contents of the Sangam literature are corroborated by the writings of some Greek and Roman classical writers of the first and second century A. D, leading us to fix the period of Sangam age roughly between third century B.C. to third century A.D. So most of the Sangam literature also must have been produced during this period. The Sangam literature was finally compiled in its present form in circa A.D. 300-600.

Check your progress-1

1 Discuss the End of Sangam Age.

2 Write about the Period of Sangam literature.

6.4 SANGAM SOCIETY AND RELIGION

The society in the southern kingdoms chiefly consisted of agriculturists or those who depended indirectly on the land. Besides, the peasants there were landless labourers, carpenters, gold-smiths, hunters and fishermen.

The Brahmanas came there much later from the northern India. But in the ancient times, they followed neither the Varna system nor the

Ashram system. Broadly speaking, there were chiefly two classes of people in the early Tamil society – those who tilled the land themselves and those who got it tilled by others. The latter were wealthier and this very fact introduced inequalities in the social system. Gradually, the Varna System also started.

The people lived chiefly in villages. Mostly they were poor who lived in huts and humbler structures. The forest tribal were very poor. The rich lived in houses of bricks and mortar. The town-people were generally rich and they led happy and prosperous life. The towns were surrounded by a wall for protection from invaders. Forts were also built.

The women in the Tamil society were free. Polygamy was practiced, though on a limited scale. Prostitutes and dancing girls lived in towns. Dhoti and turban were the chief attire. Women were fond of ornaments. The chief diet consisted of meat and rice. They also drank wine.

In the beginning, Brahmanism grew popular in these kingdoms, though its influence was limited. The kings performed Vedic Yajnas and the Brahmanas held discourses with the Jain and the Buddhist scholars. The four chief deities worshipped by them were Shiva, Vishnu, Balram and Krishna. Marugan was the local God.

During Chandragupta's reign Jainism spread in the South. In this period, the Buddhism was on the decline. The growing popularity of Shaivism and Vaishnavism, however, caused a setback to Jainism. The people were tolerant and the followers of the various religions lived together peacefully. The practice of cremating the dead had started.

6.5 SANGAM SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The religion of the ancient Tamils closely follow roots of nature worship and some elements of it can also be found in Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta traditions. In the ancient Sangam literature, Sivan was the supreme God, and Murugan was the one celebrated by the masses; both of them were sung as deified Tamil poets ascending the Koodal academy. The Tamil landscape was classified into five categories, thinais, based on the mood, the season and the land. Tolkappiyam, one of the oldest grammatical

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works in Tamil mentions that each of these thinai had an associated deity such as Kottravai (Mother goddess i.e. Kali) and Sevvael (Murugan) in Kurinji (the hills), Thirumal (Maayon) in Mullai (the forests), Vendhan (Wanji-ko or Seyyon i.e. Indra) in Marutham (the plains i.e. Vayu), and Kadaloan (Varuna) in the Neithal (the coasts and the seas). Other ancient works refer to Maayon (Maal) and Vaali.

The most popular deity was Murugan, who has from a very early date been identified with Karthikeya, the son of Siva. Kannagi, the heroine of the Silappatikaram, was worshiped as Pathini by many Tamilians, particularly in Sri Lanka. There were also many temples and devotees of Thirumal, Siva, Ganapathi, and the other common Hindu deities.

Calendar

The ancient Tamil calendar was based on the sidereal year similar to the ancient Hindu solar calendar, except that months were from solar calculations, and originally there was no 60-year cycle as seen in Sanskrit calendar. The year was made up of twelve months and every two months constituted a season. With the popularity of Mazhai vizhavu, traditionally commencement of Tamil year was clubbed on April 14, deviating from the astronomical date of vadavazhi vizhavu.

Festivals

Pongal the festival of harvest and spring, thanking Lord El (the sun), comes on January 14/15 (Thai 1).

Peru Vaenil Kadavizha, the festival for wishing quick and easy passage of the mid-summer months, on the day when the Sun or El stands directly above the head at noon (the start of Agni Natchaththiram) at the southern tip of ancient Tamil land. This day comes on April 14/15 (Chithirai 1).

Mazhai Vizhavu, aka Indhira Vizha, the festival for want of rain, celebrated for one full month starting from the full moon in Ootrai (later name-Cittirai) and completed on the full moon in Puyaazhi (Vaikaasi) (which coincides with Buddhapurnima). It is epitomised in the epic Cilapatikaram in detail.

Puyaazhi (Vaikaasi) visaagam and Thai poosam, the festivals of Tamil God [Muruga]'s birth and accession to the Thirupparankundram Koodal Academy, coming on the day before the full moons of Puyaazhi and Thai respectively.

Soornavai Vizha, the slaying of legendary Kadamba Asura king Surabadma, by Lord [Muruga], comes on the sixth day after new moon in Itrai (Kaarthigai). It is sung about in Thirumurugatrupadai and Purananuru anthology.

Vaadai Vizha or Vadavazhi Vizha, the festival of welcoming the Lord Surya back to home, as He turns northward, celebrated on December 21/22 (Winter Solstice) (the sixth day of Panmizh[Maargazhi]). It is sung about in Akanuru anthology.

Semmeen Ezhumin Vizhavu (Aathi-Irai Darisanam) or Aruthra Darishanam, the occasion of Lord Siva coming down from the ThiruCitrambalam and taking a look at the Vaigarai Thiru Aathirai star in the early morning on the day before the full moon in Panmizh. Aathi Irai min means the star of the God (Siva) on the Bull (Nandi).

Thiruonam or Onam, considered to be the birthday of Mayon, by the people of Pandya kingdom and was celebrated for 10 days. That was mentioned in '[Maduraikanji]' one of the 'Pathupaatu' book, 'Thirupallandu' by Periyazhwar and from the song of Thirugnanasambandar in Thevaram. On this day, Keralites celebrate Onam as the state's harvest festival. Onam is observed for 10 days, ending in Thiruvonam (or Thirounam).

6.6 INDO-ROMAN TRADE

Roman trade with India through the overland caravan routes via Anatolia and Persia, though at a relative trickle compared to later times, antedated the southern trade route via the Red Sea and monsoons which started around the beginning of the Common Era (CE) following the reign of Augustus and his conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE.

The route so helped enhance trade between ancient states of India and Rome, that Roman politicians and historians are on record

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decriing the loss of silver and gold to buy silk to pamper Roman wives, and the southern route grew to eclipse and then totally supplant the overland trade route.

Roman and Greek traders frequented the ancient Tamil country (present day Southern India) and Sri Lanka, securing trade with the seafaring Tamil states of the Chola, Pandyan and Chera dynasties and establishing trading settlements which secured trade with India by the Greco-Roman world since the time of the Ptolemaic dynasty a few decades before the start of the Common Era and remained long after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. They also outlasted Byzantium's loss of the ports of Egypt and the Red Sea (ca. 639-645 CE) under the pressure of the Muslim conquests. Sometime after the sundering of communications between the Axum and Eastern Roman Empire in the 7th century, the Christian kingdom of Axum fell into a slow decline, fading into obscurity in western sources. It survived, despite pressure from Islamic forces, until the 11th century, when it was reconfigured in a dynastic squabble.

The Seleucid dynasty controlled a developed network of trade with India which had previously existed under the influence of the Parthian Empire. The Greek Ptolemaic dynasty, controlling the western and northern end of other trade routes to Southern Arabia and India, had begun to exploit trading opportunities with India prior to the Roman involvement but, according to the historian Strabo, the volume of commerce between India and Greece was not comparable to that of later Indian-Roman trade.

The Ptolemaic dynasty had developed trade with India using the Red Sea ports. With the establishment of Roman Egypt, the Romans took over and further developed the already existing trade using these ports.

Prior to Roman expansion, India had established strong maritime trade with other countries. The dramatic increase in Indian ports, however, did not occur until the opening of the Red Sea by the Greeks and the Romans and the attainment of geographical knowledge concerning India's seasonal monsoons. In fact, the first two centuries of the Common era indicate this increase in trade between western India and Rome. This

expansion of trade was due to the comparative peace established by the Roman Empire during the time of Augustus (23 September 63 BC – 19 August AD 14), which allowed for new explorations. Thus, archeologists, with evidence from artifacts and ancient literature, suggest that a significant commercial relationship existed between ancient western India and Rome.

The west coast of India has been mentioned frequently in foreign literature, such as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*. The area was noted for its severe tidal currents, turbulent waves, and rocky sea-beds. Although many ships have attempted to sail outside it in order to prevent shipwrecks, many ships were still drawn inside the gulf. As a result of the difficulties, the entrance and departure of ships were dangerous for those who possessed little sea experience. The anchors of the ship would be caught by the waves and quickly cut off, which could overturn the ship or ultimately cause a wreck. Stone anchors have been observed near Bet Dwarka, an island situated in the Gulf of Kachchh, due to these frequent shipwrecks. More importantly, the number of discovered anchors and numerous artifacts suggest that Indo-Roman trade and commerce was significant during the early centuries of the Common era.

Onshore and offshore explorations have been carried out around Bet Dwarka Island since 1983. The finds discovered include lead and stone objects buried in sediment and considered to be anchors due to their axial holes. Though it is unlikely that the remains of the shipwreck's hull survived, 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. The remains of the seven amphoras were of a thick, coarse fabric with a rough surface, which was used for exporting wine and olive oil from the Roman Empire. Archeologists have concluded that most of these were wine amphoras, since olive oil was in less demand in India.

Since the discoveries at Bet Dwarka are significant for the maritime history of India, 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

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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 pearls and used a supply of herbs, spices, pepper, lyceum, costus, sesame oil and sugar for food. Indigo was used as a color while cotton cloth was used as articles of clothing, Furthermore, India 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 must sail against the narrow gulfs of western India, special large boats were used and ship development was demanded. 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 (Pliny and Pluriplus), indicate India's 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 India possessed a stable sea borne 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 demise of the Indo-Roman trade. The sea-

route between Rome and India was shut down, and as a result, the trading reverted back to the time prior to Roman expansion and exploration.

The replacement of Greece by the Roman empire as the administrator of the 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 and manipulated for trade in his time.

There existed an exotic animal trade between India Ocean harbours and Mediterranean harbours. The evidence of this we can find in the mosaics and frescoes of the remains of Roman villas in Italy. For example Villa del Casale has mosaics depicting the capture of exotic animals in India, Indonesia and in Africa. The intercontinental trade of exotic animals was one of the sources of richness of the owners of the villa. In the Ambulacro della Grande Caccia, the hunting scenes and capture of live animals is well represented by such details that it is possible to identify the species. There is a scene that shows a technique to distract a mother Tiger in order to take her cubs by using a shimmering ball of glass or mirror. It is also represented the hunt of Tiger with red ribbons serving as a distraction. In the mosaic there are also numerous other animals such as a Rhinoceros, an Indian Elephant (recognized from the ears) with his Indian conductor and the Indian Peafowl, along with other exotic birds. There are also numerous animal from Africa. We know from sources that lot of Tigers, Pantheras as well as the Asian and African Lion were used in the arenas or in circuses. The European Lion was already extinct. Probably the last that lived in Balkan Peninsula were hunted to stock arenas. The birds and monkeys entertained the guests of many villas. Also in Villa del Tellaro there is a mosaic with tiger in a jungle that is attacking a man with roman clothes, probably a careless hunter. The animals were transported in cages and loaded in a ship arrived to Alexandria harbour, all that is represented in the mosaic.

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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.

The Ptolemaic dynasty exploited the strategic position of Alexandria to secure trade with India. 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 were 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 Hermos. The navigation to the northern ports, such as Arsinoe-Clysma, became difficult in comparison to Myos Hermos 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.

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 (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 Qesir el-Quadim at the end of a fortified road from Koptos on the Nile. The Qesir 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.

6.6.1 Indian ports

In India, the ports of Barbaricum (modern Karachi), Barygaza, Muziris in Kerala, Korkai, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu on the southern tip of 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.

Muziris is a lost port city in the South Indian state of Kerala which was a major center of trade in Tamilakkam between the Chera Empire and the Roman Empire. Large hoards of coins and innumerable shards of amphorae found in the town of Pattanam have elicited recent archeological interest in finding a probable location of this port city.

The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* mentions a marketplace named Poduke (ch. 60), which G.W.B. Huntingford identified as possibly being Arikamedu in Tamil Nadu, a centre of early Chola trade (now part of Ariyankuppam), about 2 miles from the modern Pondicherry. Huntingford further notes that Roman pottery was found at Arikamedu in 1937, and archeological excavations between 1944 and 1949 showed that it was "a trading station to which goods of Roman manufacture were imported during the first half of the 1st century AD".

The Rome-India trade also saw several cultural exchanges which had lasting effect for 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 cotton and silk fabrics 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

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Alexandria mentions the Buddha in his writings and other Indian religions find mentions in other texts of the period.

Christian and Jewish settlers from Rome continued to live in India long after the decline in bilateral trade. Large hoards of Roman coins have been found throughout India, and especially in the busy maritime trading centers of the south. The Tamilakkam kings reissued Roman coinage in their own name after defacing the coins in order to signify their sovereignty. Mentions of the traders are recorded in the Tamil Sangam literature of India. One such mention reads: "The beautiful warships of the Yavanas came to the prosperous and beautiful Muchiri (Muziris) breaking the white foams of 'Chulli', the big river, and returned with 'curry' (kari, the black pepper) paying for it in gold.(from poem no. 149 of 'Akananuru' of Sangam Literature)"

Following the Roman-Persian Wars, the areas under the Roman Byzantine Empire were captured by Khosrow II of the Persian Sassanian Dynasty, but the Byzantine emperor Heraclius reconquered them (628). The Arabs, led by 'Amr ibn al-'As, crossed into Egypt in late 639 or early 640 CE. This advance marked the beginning of the Islamic conquest of Egypt and the fall of ports such as Alexandria, used to secure trade with India by the Roman world since the Ptolemaic dynasty.

The decline in trade saw the ancient Tamil country turn to Southeast Asia for international trade, where it influenced the native culture to a greater degree than the impressions made on Rome. However, knowledge of India and its trade was preserved in Byzantine books and it is likely that the court of the emperor still maintained some form of diplomatic relation to India up until at least the time of Constantine VII, seeking an ally against the rising influence of the Islamic states in the Middle East and Persia, appearing in a work on ceremonies called *De Ceremoniis*.

The Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in the 15th century (1453), marking the beginning of Turkish control over the most direct trade routes between Europe and Asia. The Ottomans initially cut off eastern trade with Europe, leading in turn to the attempt by Europeans to

find a sea route around Africa, spurring the Age of Discovery, and the eventual rise of Mercantilism and Colonialism.

Check your progress-2

1 Write a short note on Indian Ports.

2 Write about the calendar of the Sangam Society.

6.7 LET US SUM UP

Sangam period drew to a close in about the end of the 3rd Century. The history for the next 300 years is obscure. The early history of the Pallavas belongs to this period. The Pallava rule was effectively in Kanchi region however a mountaineous tribe named Kalabhra pushed them from this land to the north. The Kalabhras put an end to the rule of chola, chera and pandyas during the sangam period. They were against brahmanical institutions but favored buddhism and jainism. Their threat extended till the Chalukya kingdom in North Karnataka. The society in the southern kingdoms chiefly consisted of agriculturists or those who depended indirectly on the land. Besides, the peasants there were landless labourers, carpenters, gold-smiths, hunters and fishermen. The religion of the ancient Tamils closely follow roots of nature worship and some elements of it can also be found in Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta traditions. In the ancient Sangam literature, Sivan was the supreme God, and Murugan was the one celebrated by the masses; both of them were sung as deified Tamil poets ascending the Koodal academy. The Tamil landscape was classified into five categories, thinais, based on the mood, the season and the land. In India, the ports of Barbaricum (modern Karachi), Barygaza, Muziris in Kerala, Korkai, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu on the southern tip of

India were the main centers of this trade, along with Kodumanal, an inland city.

6.8 KEYWORDS

- **Sangam:** Sangam period drew to a close in about the end of the 3rd Century. The history for the next 300 years is obscure.
- **Trade: Roman trade with India** (see also the spice trade and incense road) through the overland caravan routes via Anatolia and Persia, though at a relative trickle compared to later times, antedated the southern trade route via the Red Sea and monsoons which started around the beginning of the Common Era (CE) following the reign of Augustus and his conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE.
- **Society:** The society in the southern kingdoms chiefly consisted of agriculturists or those who depended indirectly on the land.
- **Literature:** Some of the contents of the Sangam literature are corroborated by the writings of some Greek and Roman classical writers of the first and second century A. D, leading us to fix the period of Sangam age roughly between third century B.C. to third century A.D.

6.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe about the Sangam Period.
2. Analyse the role of Sangam Society and Religion.
3. Briefly discuss the Indo- Roman Trade.
4. Explain the Sangam Literature.

6.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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6.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The Kalabra's occupied entire Tamil country for 250 years. Jainism and Buddhism grew to prominence in their rule. Finally the Pallavas and Pandya's drew them out of Tamil country and re-established their rule again.

2. Period of Sangam literature:

The earliest script that the Tamils used was the Brahmi script. It was only from the late ancient and early medieval period, that they started evolving a new angular script, called the Grantha script, from which the modern Tamil is derived.

3. Indian ports

In India, the ports of Barbaricum (modern Karachi), Barygaza, Muziris in Kerala, Korkai, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu on the southern tip of

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India were the main centers of this trade, along with Kodumanal, an inland city.

4. Calendar

The ancient Tamil calendar was based on the sidereal year similar to the ancient Hindu solar calendar, except that months were from solar calculations, and originally there was no 60-year cycle as seen in Sanskrit calendar.

UNIT-7 GUPTAS, VAKATAKAS AND VARDHANAS

STRUCTURE

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 The Early Guptas

7.2.1 Chandragupta 1

7.2.2 Samudragupta

7.2.3 Chandragupta 2

7.2.4 Kumargupta 1

7.2.5 Skandagupta

7.3 The Last Days of The Gupta Empire

7.3.1 Fall of the Empire

7.4 Gupta Administration

7.5 Vakataka Empire Structure

7.6 Extension of the Empire of Harsha Vardhana

7.7 Administration under Harsha Vardhana

7.8 Let us sum up

7.9 Keywords

7.10 Questions For Review

7.11 Suggested Readings And References

7.12 Answers To Check Your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Able to understand The Gupta Empire
- Able to understand The Vakataka Empire
- Able to understand The Empire of Harsha Vardhana

7.1 INTRODUCTION

After centuries of political disintegration an empire came to be established in A.D. 319, under the Guptas. Although the Gupta Empire was not as large as the Maurya Empire, it kept north India politically united for more than a century, from A. D. 335 to 455.

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The ancestry and early history of the Gupta family are little known, and have naturally given rise to various speculations.

But very likely they were initially a family of landowners who acquired political control in the region of Magadha and parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh seems to have been a more important province for the Guptas than Bihar, because early Gupta coins and inscriptions have been mainly found in that region.

Hence Uttar Pradesh seems to have been the place from where the Guptas operated and fanned out in different directions. Probably with their centre of power at Prayag they spread in the neighbouring regions. The Guptas were possibly the feudatories of the Kushanas in Uttar Pradesh, and seem to have succeeded them without any wide time-lag.

The Guptas enjoyed certain material advantages. The centre of their operations lay in the fertile land of Madhyadesha covering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They could exploit the iron ores of central India and south Bihar. Further, they took advantage of their proximity to the areas in north India which carried on silk trade with the Byzantine Empire.

On account of these favourable factors, the Guptas set up their rule over Anuganga (the middle Gangetic basin), Prayag (modern Allahabad), Saket (modern Ayodhya) and Magadha. In course of time this kingdom became an all-India empire.

The Vakataka Empire was a dynasty from the Indian subcontinent that originated from the Deccan in the mid-3rd century CE. Their state is believed to have extended from the southern edges of Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south as well as from the Arabian Sea in the west to the edges of Chhattisgarh in the east. They were the most important successors of the Satavahanas in the Deccan and contemporaneous with the Guptas in northern India.

After the murder of his elder brother Rajya Vardhana, Harsha Vardhana ascended the throne of Thaneshwar with the consent of councillors of the State. He proved himself as the greatest ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. Of course, he has not been accepted as one of the great Indian rulers, yet

he occupies an important place in Indian history as a capable, just and benevolent ruler.

The first task before Harsha Vardhana was to avenge the murder of his brother and free his sister Rajyasri from the captivity of Deva Gupta. He swore vengeance on Sasanka and marched towards Kannauj with a large army. In the way, he met an emissary of Bhaskara Varman, king of Kamrupa and entered into an alliance with that State.

7.2 THE EARLY GUPTAS

An inscription tells us that Sri Gupta was the first king and Ghatotkacha was the next to follow him with the title Maharaja. This title was often borne by feudatory chiefs. The Poona copper plate inscription of Prabhavati Gupta describes Sri Gupta as the Adhiraja of the Gupta dynasty.

In the Riddhapura copper plate inscription, it is stated that Sri Gupta belonged to the Dharan Gotra.

7.2.1 Chandragupta I (A.D. 319-320 to 335):

The first Gupta ruler of consequence was Chandragupta I, son of Ghatotkacha. By marrying a Lichchhavi Princess Kumaradevi he sought to gain in prestige, though Vaishali does not appear to have been a part of his kingdom. His rule remained confined to Magadha and parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh (Saketa and Prayaga). He took the title of Maharajadhiraja, and his accession in about A.D. 319-20 marked the beginning of Gupta era.

7.2.2 Samudragupta (A.D. 335-380):

Chandragupta I was succeeded by his son Samudragupta probably in A.D. 325. Samudragupta became the ruler after subduing his rival Kacha, an obscure prince of the dynasty. His conquests are known from a lengthy eulogy composed by his court-poet Harishena and inscribed on an Asokan pillar at Allahabad. This account contains a long list of states, kings and tribes which were conquered and brought under various degrees of subjugation.

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The list can be divided into four categories:

1. The first category includes the twelve states of Dakshinapatha with the names of their kings who were captured and then liberated and reinstated. They were Kosala, Mahakantara, Kaurata, Pishtapura, Kottura, Erandapalli, Kanchi, Avamukta, Vengi, Palakka, Devrashtra and Kushthalpura.

2. The second category includes the names of the eight kings of Aryavarta, who were violently exterminated; prominent of them were Rudradwa, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, etc.

3. The third category consists of the rulers of the forest states (atavirarajyas) who were reduced to servitude and the chief of the five Border States (pratyantas) and nine tribal republics that were forced to pay all kinds of taxes obey his orders and came to perform obeisance.

The five Border States were Samtata (South-east Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam), Nepala (Nepal), Davaka (Assam) and Kartipura (Kashmir). The nine tribal republics were the Malavas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Arjunayanas, Sarakinakas, Kavas and Kharaparikas.

4. The fourth category consists of the Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi (Kushanas), the Shaka-, Murundas, the dwellers of Sinhala (Ceylon) and all the other islands who paid tribute to the King.

Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta rightly describes him as the hero of a hundred battles, and Vincent Smith calls him the 'Napoleon of India'. But in spite of his preoccupation with political and military affairs, he cultivated music and poetry. Some of his gold coins represent him as playing on the lyre.

The Guptas were followers of the Brahmanical religion and Samudragupta performed the Asvamedha sacrifice. However, he fully maintained the tradition of religious toleration. According to a Chinese source, Meghavarman, the ruler of Sri Lanka was granted permission by Samudragupta to build a monastery at Bodha Gaya.

7.2.3 Chandragupta II (A.D. 380-412):

Samudragupta was succeeded by his younger son Chandragupta II. But, according to some scholars, Samudragupta who died shortly before A. D. 380 was succeeded by his elder son Ramagupta. The drama *Devichandraguptam* of Vishakhadatta suggests that Ramagupta suddenly attacked by the Sakas, made peace with them on condition that his queen Dhruvadevi was to be surrendered to the Saka chief.

This infuriated his younger brother Chandragupta, who went himself in the disguise of the queen to the Saka chief and killed him. Then he murdered his royal brother Ramagupta and married the queen. The official records of the Guptas, however do not refer to Ramagupta and trace the succession directly from Samudragupta to Chandragupta II.

7.2.4 Kumaragupta I (412-454 A.D.):

Chandragupta II died about A.D. 413 and was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta who enjoyed a long reign of more than forty years. He performed the *Asvamedha* sacrifice, but we do not know of any military success achieved by him.

He maintained intact the vast empire built up by his two predecessors. Towards the close of his reign the empire was menaced by hordes of the *Pushyamitras* probably a tribe allied to the *Hunas* which were defeated by the Crown prince *Skandagupta*.

7.2.5 Skandagupta (454-467 A.D.):

Skandagupta, who succeeded *Kumaragupta I*, was perhaps the last powerful Gupta monarch. To consolidate his position he had to fight the *Pushyamitras*, and the country faced *Huna* invasion from across the frontiers in the north-west. However, *Skandagupta* was successful in throwing the *Huns* back.

This heroic feat entitled him, like *Chandragupta II*, to assume the title of *Vikramaditya*. It appears that these wars adversely affected the economy of the empire, and the debased gold coinage of *Skandagupta* bears testimony to these. Moreover, he appears to have been the last Gupta ruler to mint silver coins in western India.

The Junagarh inscription of his reign tells us about the public works undertaken during his times. The Sudarsana lake (originally built during the Maurya times) burst due to excessive rains and in the early part of his rule his governor Parnadatta and his son Chakrapalita got it repaired. The last known date of Skandagupta is 467 A.D. from his silver coins.

7.3 THE LAST DAYS OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

Skandagupta died about A.D. 467 and the line of succession after him is very uncertain. Purugupta, a son of kumaragupta, ruled for some time and was succeeded by his son Budhagupta whose earliest known date is A. D. 477 and the latest A.D. 495. He was succeeded by his brother Narasimhagupta Baladitya.

A king named Kumaragupta II is known to have reigned in A.D. 474. This indicates internal dissension which continued after the end of Budhagupta's reign. He was succeeded by his son and grandson, Kumaragupta III and Visnugupta – the three reigns covered the period A.D. 500-550. Two other kings, Vainyagupta (A.D. 507) and Bhanugupta (A.D. 510) ruled in Samatata and Nalanda and in Eran respectively. The Guptas continued to rule till about 550 A.D., but by then their power had already become very insignificant.

7.3.1 Fall of the Empire:

The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the Hunas from Central Asia in the second half of the fifth century A.D. Although in the beginning, the Gupta king Skandagupta tried effectively to stem the march of the Hunas into India; his successors proved to be weak and could not cope with the Huna invaders. By 485 A.D. the Hunas occupied eastern Malwa and a good portion of Central India. Thus, the Huna attacks caused a major blow to the Gupta authority particularly in northern and western regions of the empire.

The Huna power was soon overthrown by Yashodharman of Malwa, who successfully challenged the authority of the Guptas and set up, in 532 A.D., pillars of victory commemorating his conquest of almost the

whole of northern India. Yashodharman's rule was short-lived, but it meant a severe blow to the Gupta Empire.

The policy adopted by the Guptas in the conquered areas was to restore the authority of local chiefs or kings once they had accepted Gupta suzerainty. In fact, no efforts were made to impose a strict and effective control over these regions. Hence it was natural that whenever there was a crisis of succession or a weak monarchy within the Gupta Empire these local chiefs would re-establish their independent authority.

Divisions within the imperial family, concentration of power in the hands of local chiefs or governors, loose administrative structure of the empire, decline of foreign trade, growing practice of land grants for religious and other purposes, etc. contributed towards the disintegration of the Gupta Empire.

7.4 GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

Unlike the Mauryas, the Guptas adopted such pompous titles as Parameshvara Maharajadhiraja, Paramabhattaraka, etc., which imply the existence of lesser kings with considerable authority within the empire. Besides, the Guptas added other epithets claiming for themselves super-human qualities which raised them almost to the level of gods. In fact, in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Samudragupta is referred to as a god dwelling on earth. Kingship was hereditary, but royal power was limited by the absence of a firm practice of primogeniture.

The Guptas continued the traditional machinery of bureaucratic administration but it was not as elaborate as that of the Mauryas. The Mantri (chief-minister) stood at the head of civil administration. Among other high imperial officers were included the Mahabaladikrta (commander-in-chief), the Mahadandanayaka (general) and the Mahapratihara (chief of the palace guards).

The Mahabaladhikrta, probably corresponding to the Mahasenapati of the Satavahana kings, controlled a staff or subordinate officers such as the Mahashvapati (chief of cavalry), Mahapilupati (officer in charge of elephants), Senapati and Baladhikrta. A high ranking official, heard for

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the first time in the Gupta records was the Sandhivigrahika (the foreign minister).

A link between the central and the provincial administration under the Guptas is furnished by the class of officers called Kumaramatyas and Ayuktas. The Kumaramatyas were the high officers and the personal staff of the emperor and were appointed by the king in the home provinces and possibly paid in cash. Recruitment was not confined to the upper varnas only and several offices came to be combined in the hands of the same person, and posts became hereditary.

This naturally weakened the royal control. The Ayuktas were entrusted with the task of restoring the wealth of kings conquered by the emperor and sometimes placed in charge of districts or metropolitan towns.

The numerical strength of the Gupta army is not known. In contrast to the Mauryas, the Guptas do not seem to have possessed a big organized army. Probably troops supplied by the feudatories constituted the major portion of the Gupta military strength. Also, the Guptas did not enjoy a monopoly of elephants and horses, which were essential ingredients of military machinery.

All this lead to the increasing dependence on feudatories, who wielded considerable authority at least on the fringes of the empire. Chariots receded into the background, and cavalry came to the forefront.

The Mahabaladhikrta (commander-in-chief) controlled a staff or subordinate officers as mentioned above. The army was paid in cash and its needs were well looked after by an officer-in-charge of stores called Ranabhandagarika.

Check your progress-1

1 Write about the Chandragupta 2.

2 Write about the fall of the Gupta Empire.

7.5 VAKATAKA EMPIRE STRUCTURE

The Vakataka dynasty was a Brahmin dynasty. Little is known about Vindhyashakti (c. 250 – c. 270 CE), the founder of the family. Territorial expansion began in the reign of his son Pravarasena I. It is generally believed that the Vakataka dynasty was divided into four branches after Pravarasena I. Two branches are known and two are unknown. The known branches are the Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch and the Vatsagulma branch. The Gupta emperor Chandragupta II married his daughter into Vakataka royal family and with their support annexed Gujarat from the Saka Satraps in 4th century CE. The Vakataka power was followed by that of the Chalukyas of Badami in Deccan.

The Vakatakas are noted for having been patrons of the arts, architecture and literature. They led public works and their monuments are a visible legacy. The rock-cut Buddhist viharas and chaityas of Ajanta Caves (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) were built under the patronage of Vakataka emperor, Harishena.

he founder of the dynasty was Vindhyashakti (250-270), whose name is derived from the name of the goddess Vindhya. The dynasty may be originated there. Almost nothing is known about Vindhyashakti, the founder of the Vakatakas. In the Cave XVI inscription of Ajanta he was described as the banner of the Vakataka family and a Dvija. It is stated in this inscription that he added to his power by fighting great battles and he had a large cavalry. But no regal title is prefixed to his name in this inscription. The Puranas say that he ruled for 96 years. He was placed variously at south Deccan, Madhya Pradesh and Malwa. K.P. Jayaswal attributes Bagat, a village in the Jhansi district as the home of Vakatakas. But after refuting the theory regarding the northern home of the Vakatakas, V.V. Mirashi points out that the earliest mention of the name Vakataka occurs in an inscription found on a fragment of a pillar at Amravati which records the gift of a Grihapati (householder) Vakataka

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and his two wives. This Grihapati in all probability was the progenitor of Vidhyashakti. It appears from the Puranas that Vindhyasakti was a ruler of Vidisha (in the present day Madhya Pradesh state) but that is not considered to be correct.

As per Dr Mirashi, who has rejected the identification of Rudra deva in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta with Rudra sena I. He has also pointed out there are no coins of Vakataka and there are no inscriptions of them in the north of Vindhyas. Hence, a south home of Vakatakas is correct. However, it is true that they have ruled on some of these places, since the epigraphs were available in MP etc.

The next ruler was Pravarasena I (270-330), who maintained the realm as a great power, he was the first Vakataka ruler, who called himself a Samrat (universal ruler) and conducted wars with the Naga kings. He has become an emperor in his own right, perhaps the only emperor in the dynasty, with his kingdom embracing a good portion of North India and whole of Deccan. He carried his arms to the Narmada in the north and annexed the kingdom of Purika which was being ruled by a king named Sisuka. In any case, he certainly ruled from Bundelkhand in the north (though Dr Mirashi does not accept that he has crossed the Narmada) to the present Andhra Pradesh in the south. The puranas assign him a reign of 60 years.

As per V.V. Mirashi, it is unlikely that he made any conquest in Northern Maharashtra, Gujarat or Konkan. But, he may have conquered parts of North Kuntala comprising Kolhapur, Satara and Solapur districts of Maharashtra. In the east, he may have carried his arms to Dakshina Kosala, Kalinga and Andhra. He was a follower of Vedic religion and performed several Yajnas (sacrifices) which include Agnishtoma, Aptoryama, Ukthya, Shodasin, Atiratra, Vajapeya, Brihaspatisava, Sadyaskra and four Asvamedhas. He heavily donated to the Brahmins during the Vajapeya sacrifice as per the Puranas. He also took up the title of Dharmamaharaja in addition to Samrat. He called himself as Haritiputra. His prime minister Deva was a very pious and learned Brahmin. The Puranas say that Pravarasena I has four sons. He married his son Gautamiputra to a daughter of King Bhavanaga of the powerful

Bharashiva family, which might have proved to be helpful. However, Gautamiputra predeceased him and he was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamiputra. His second son, Sarvasena set up his capital at Vatsagulma (the present day Washim). Nothing is known about the dynasties set up by the other two sons.

Branches of Vakataka dynasty

It is generally believed that the Vakataka ruling family was divided into four branches after Pravarasena I. Two branches are known and two are unknown. The known branches are the Pravarpura-Nandivardhana branch and the Vatsagulma branch.

Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch

Ruins of Nandivardhana fort

The Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch ruled from various sites like Pravarapura (Paunar) in Wardha district and Mansar and Nandivardhan (Nagardhan) in Nagpur district. This branch maintained matrimonial relations with the Imperial Guptas.

Rudrasena I

Not much is known about Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamiputra, who ruled from Nandivardhana, near Ramtek hill, about 30 km from Nagpur. There is a mention of Rudradeva in the Allahabad pillar inscription, bundled along with the other rulers of Aryavarta. A number of scholars, like A.S. Altekar do not agree that Rudradeva is Rudrasena I, since if Rudrasena I had been exterminated by Samudragupta, it is extremely unlikely that his son Prithivishena I would accept a Gupta princess (Prabhavatigupta) as his daughter-in-law. Secondly, no inscription of Rudrasena I has been found north of the Narmada. The only stone inscription of Rudrasena I's reign discovered so far was found at Deotek in the present-day Chandrapur district, so he can not be equated with Rudradeva of the Allahabad pillar inscription, who belonged to the Aryavarta.

Prithivishena I

Notes

Rudrasena I was succeeded by his son named Prithivishena I (355-380), and Prithivishena I was succeeded by his son named Rudrasena II.

Rudrasena II, Divakarasena and Pravarasena II

Remains of the Pravareshvara Shiva temple built by Pravarasena II at Mansar

Rudrasena II (380–385) is said to have married Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of the Gupta King Chandragupta II (375-413/15). Rudrasena II died fortuitously after a very short reign in 385 CE, following which Prabhavatigupta (385 - 405) ruled as a regent on behalf of her two sons, Divakarasena and Damodarasena (Pravarasena II) for 20 years. During this period the Vakataka realm was practically a part of the Gupta Empire. Many historians refer to this period as the Vakataka-Gupta age. While this has been widely accepted more than 30 years ago, this line of argument has no proper evidence. Prabhavati Gupta's inscription mentions about one "Deva Gupta" who is her father and the historians equated him with Chandra Gupta II. However, there is no other source to prove that Deva Gupta is really Chandra Gupta II. This is questionable more since the dating of Vakatakas is more or less established while that of Guptas is sometimes predated to that of Greek invasion of Alexander by the Indeginists.

Pravarasena II composed the Setubandha in Maharashtri Prakrit. A few verses of the Gaha Sattasai are also attributed to him. He shifted the capital from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura, a new city of founded by him. He built a temple dedicated to Rama in his new capital.

The highest number of so far discovered copperplate inscriptions of the Vakataka dynasty (in all 17) pertain to Pravarasena II. He is perhaps the most recorded ruler of ancient India after Ashoka the Great. See: Shreenand L. Bapat, A Second Jamb (Khandvi) Copperplate Grant of Vakataka Ruler Pravarasena II (Shravana Shuddha 13, Regnal Year 21), Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 91, pp. 1–31

Narendrasena and Prithivishena II

Pravarasena II was succeeded by Narendrasena (440-460), under whom the Vakataka influence spread to some central Indian states. Prithivishena II, the last known king of the line, succeeded his father Narendrasena in c. 460. After his death in 480, his kingdom was probably annexed by Harishena of the Vatsagulma branch.

The Vatsagulma branch was founded by Sarvasena, the second son of Pravarasena I after his death. King Sarvasena made Vatsagulma, the present day Washim in Washim district of Maharashtra his capital. The territory ruled by this branch was between the Sahyadri Range and the Godavari River. They patronized some of the Buddhist caves at Ajanta.

Painting of Padmapani and Vajrapani from Cave No. 1 at Ajanta Caves.

Sarvasena

Sarvasena (c. 330 - 355) took the title of Dharmamaharaja. He is also known as the author of Harivijaya in Prakrit which is based on the story of bringing the parijat tree from heaven by Krishna. This work, praised by later writers is lost. He is also known as the author of many verses of the Prakrit Gaha Sattasai. One of his minister's name was Ravi. He was succeeded by his son Vindhyasena.

Vindhyasena

Vindhyasena (c. 355 - 400) was also known as Vindhyashakti II. He is known from the well-known Washim plates which recorded the grant of a village situated in the northern marga (sub-division) of Nandikata (presently Nanded) in his 37th regnal year. The genealogical portion of the grant is written in Sanskrit and the formal portion in Prakrit. This is the first known land grant by any Vakataka ruler. He also took the title of Dharmamaharaja. Vindhyasena defeated the ruler of Kuntala, his southern neighbour. One of his minister's name was Pravara. He was succeeded by his son Pravarasena II

Pravarasena II (c. 400 - 415) was the next ruler of whom very little is known except from the Cave XVI inscription of Ajanta, which says that he became exalted by his excellent, powerful and liberal rule. He died after a very short rule and succeeded by his minor son, who was only 8

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years old when his father died. Name of this ruler is lost from the Cave XVI inscription.

Devasena

This unknown ruler was succeeded by his son Devasena (c. 450 - 475). His administration was actually run by his minister Hastibhoja.

Harishena

Harishena (c. 475 - 500) succeeded his father Devasena. He was a great patron of Buddhist architecture, art and culture. The World Heritage monument Ajanta Caves is surviving example of his works. The rock cut architectural cell-XVI inscription of Ajanta states that he conquered Avanti (Malwa) in the north, Kosala (Chhattisgarh), Kalinga and Andhra in the east, Lata (Central and Southern Gujarat) and Trikuta (Nasik district) in the west and Kuntala (Southern Maharashtra) in the south. Varahadeva, a minister of Harishena and the son of Hastibhoja, excavated the rock-cut vihara of Cave XVI of Ajanta. Three of the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, two viharas - caves XVI and XVII and a chaitya - cave XIX were excavated and decorated with painting and sculptures during the reign of Harishena.

Harishena was succeeded by two rulers whose names are not known. The end of the dynasty is unknown. They were probably defeated by the Kalachuri of Mahismati

The Dashakumaracharita version of the end

Foreign dignitary in Persian dress drinking wine, on ceiling of Cave 1, at Ajanta Caves, either depicting the Sasanian embassy to Pulakesin II (610–642 CE), or simply a genre scene during the Vakataka Dynasty if the 460-480 CE dating is retained (photograph and drawing).

According to the eighth *ucchvāsaḥ* of the *Dashakumaracharita* of Dandin, which was written probably around 125 years after the fall of the Vakataka dynasty, Harishena's son, though intelligent and accomplished in all arts, neglected the study of the *Dandaniti* (Political Science) and gave himself up to the enjoyment of pleasures and indulged in all sorts of vices. His subjects also followed him and led a vicious and dissolute life.

Finding this a suitable opportunity, the ruler of the neighbouring Ashmaka sent his minister's son to the court of the Vakatakas. The latter ingratiated himself with the king and egged him on in his dissolute life. He also decimated his forces by various means. Ultimately, when the country was thoroughly disorganised, the ruler of Ashmaka instigated the ruler of Vanavasi (in the North Kanara district) to invade the Vakataka territory. The king called all his feudatories and decided to fight his enemy on the bank of the Varada (Wardha). While fighting with the forces of the enemy, he was treacherously attacked in the rear by some of his own feudatories and killed. The Vakataka dynasty ended with his death.

7.6 EXTENTION OF THE EMPIRE OF HARSHA VARDHANA

Though the inscription at Nalanda and Banskhera and coins of that age also provide us some information regarding Harsha's reign, the most useful information is provided by Harsha Charita of Banabhatta and the description of the Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang. Hiuen Tsang described that Harsha conquered the entire country within the first six years of his reign.

However, the statement is not to be taken seriously. Harsha did not occupy even North India completely nor his wars and conquests were limited to the first six years of his reign. Harsha first invaded Bengal. The campaign was not very successful because evidences prove that Sasanka continued to rule over the greater part of Bengal and Orissa till 637 A.D. It was only after the death of Sasanka that Harsha succeeded in his mission.

The armies of Harsha and Bhaskara Varman, king of Kamrupa, attacked Bengal after the death of Sasanka and succeeded. East Bengal was occupied by Bhaskara Varman and West Bengal was occupied by Harsha. Dr R.C. Majumdar has expressed the view that Harsha conquered Magadha and Orissa as well, after the death of Sasanka.

Hiuen Tsang described that Harsha ruled over Kannauj from the beginning of his reign. But it is not correct. He first carried on the

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administration of the kingdom of Kannauj in the name of his sister, Rajyasri and it was six years after the beginning of his reign that he united the kingdom of Kannauj with that of his own at the request of its ministers. He then also transferred his capital to Kannauj which, thereafter, became the centre of gravity of politics in Northern India.

Towards the West, the Malavas, the Gurjaras and the rulers of Gujarat were the hereditary enemies of Harsha. Harsha first succeeded against Dhruvasena II or Dhruvabhata of Gujarat (Vallabhi) but Dhruvasena revived his strength with the help of the Gurjaras and other neighbouring rulers.

However, the rivalry between the two kingdoms ended with the marriage of Dhruvasena with the daughter of Harsha. Dr D.C. Sarkar has opined that the rulers of Gujarat accepted the sovereignty of Harsha while Dr R.C. Majumdar says that Gujarat remained an independent kingdom.

the progress of Harsha towards the South was checked by the Chalukya king Pulakesin II who was trying to be the sovereign of the Deccan. The battle between Harsha and Pulakesin II took place near the bank of the river Narmada or most probably much further towards the north. Harsha had taken the aggressive step but he failed to defeat Pulakesin and retreated.

There occurred certain border disputes between Harsha and the rulers of Sindh, Kashmir and Nepal but these kingdoms remained independent of the influence of Harsha.

Thus, the attempts of Harsha to create an extensive empire in India succeeded only partially. Hiuen Tsang has made frequent references to campaigns of Harsha though he has not given their details. Banabhatta also gives us an impression that the entire Northern India was included in his empire. Some modern historians have also accepted this view.

Dr K.M. Panikkar describes that the empire of Harsha extended from Kainrupa in the East to Kashmir in the West and from the Himalayas in the North to the Vindhyas in the South. But Dr R.C. Majumdar has strongly refuted this view. He has maintained that the empire of Harsha included only Eastern Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and

Orissa, though his power was recognised by his neighbouring states in North India as was the case with the rulers of Vallabhi, Kutch and Kamrupa.

However, Kashmir, Western Punjab, Sindh, Rajputana, Nepal and Kamrupa were certainly independent states in his days. Yet, Harsha has been regarded as a powerful emperor who, certainly, succeeded in providing unity to a large part of Northern India after the fall of the great Guptas.

7.7 ADMINISTRATION UNDER HARSHA VARDHANA

Harsha maintained the administrative set-up of his empire on the model of previous great Hindu rulers. He himself was the head of the state, and all administrative, legislative and judicial powers were concentrated in his hands. He was also the first Commander-in-Chief of his army. Harsha assumed the titles of Maharajadhiraja and Param Bhattaraka. He was a benevolent ruler and supervised the administration personally.

He was not only a capable ruler but was also very hard working. Hiuen Tsang writes, "He was indefatigable and the day was too short for him." He regarded the welfare of his subjects as his foremost duty and, except the rainy season, constantly travelled over different parts of his empire to see things with his own eyes. He was in touch with his village-subjects to look after their welfare.

The king was assisted by a council of ministers which was quite effective. It advised the king both in matters of foreign policy and internal administration. Harsha was offered the throne of Thaneswar and, later on, the throne of Kannauj by the then ministers of the respective states. Besides the ministers there were many other important officials of the state of whom a detailed list has been given by Banabhatta in his Harshacharita.

Among the high imperial officers were a Mahasandhivigrahadhikrita, a Mahabaladhikrita and a Mahapratihara. Besides, Avanti was the officer

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who looked after the affairs of war and peace; the Commander-in-Chief of the army was called the Singhanada; Kuntala was the head of the cavalry; Skanda Gupta was the head of war-elephants; and the head of the civil administration was called the Samanta-Maharaja.

Check your progress-2

3 Write about the Sarvasena of Vakataka Empire.

4 Write a short note on Harsha Vardhana Administration.

7.8 LET US SUM UP

An inscription tells us that Sri Gupta was the first king and Ghatotkacha was the next to follow him with the title Maharaja. This title was often borne by feudatory chiefs. The Poona copper plate inscription of Prabhavati Gupta describes Sri Gupta as the Adhiraja of the Gupta dynasty. In the Riddhapura copper plate inscription, it is stated that Sri Gupta belonged to the Dharan Gotra. After centuries of political disintegration an empire came to be established in A.D. 319, under the Guptas. Their state is believed to have extended from the southern edges of Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south as well as from the Arabian Sea in the west to the edges of Chhattisgarh in the east. They were the most important successors of the Satavahanas in the Deccan and contemporaneous with the Guptas in northern India. After the murder of his elder brother Rajya Vardhana, Harsha Vardhana ascended the throne of Thaneshwar with the consent of councillors of the State. He proved himself as the greatest ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. Of course, he has not been accepted as one of the great Indian rulers, yet he occupies an important place in Indian history as a capable, just and benevolent ruler. The first task before Harsha

Vardhana was to avenge the murder of his brother and free his sister Rajyasri from the captivity of Deva Gupta. He swore vengeance on Sasanka and marched towards Kannauj with a large army. In the way, he met an emissary of Bhaskara Varman, king of Kamrupa and entered into an alliance with that State. Harsha maintained the administrative set-up of his empire on the model of previous great Hindu rulers. He himself was the head of the state, and all administrative, legislative and judicial powers were concentrated in his hands. He was also the first Commander-in-Chief of his army. Harsha assumed the titles of Maharajadhiraja and Param Bhattaraka. He was a benevolent ruler and supervised the administration personally. He was not only a capable ruler but was also very hard working. Hiuen Tsang writes, "He was indefatigable and the day was too short for him." He regarded the welfare of his subjects as his foremost duty and, except the rainy season, constantly travelled over different parts of his empire to see things with his own eyes. He was in touch with his village-subjects to look after their welfare.

7.9 KEYWORDS

- **Guptas:** After centuries of political disintegration an empire came to be established in A.D. 319, under the Guptas.
- **Vakatakas:** After centuries of political disintegration an empire came to be established in A.D. 319, under the Guptas.
- **Harsha Vardhana:** Harsha maintained the administrative set-up of his empire on the model of previous great Hindu rulers.

7.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Describe about the the last days of the Gupta Empire.
2. Explain the rise of the Gupta Administration.
3. Briefly discuss the Vakataka Empire Structure.
4. Analyse the Administration under the Harsha Vardhana.

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7.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Chandragupta II (A.D. 380-412):

Samudragupta was succeeded by his younger son Chandragupta II. But, according to some scholars, Samudragupta who died shortly before A. D. 380 was succeeded by his elder son Ramagupta. The drama Devichandraguptam of Vishakhadatta suggests that Ramagupta suddenly attacked by the Sakas, made peace with them on condition that his queen Dhruvadevi was to be surrendered to the Saka chief.

2. The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the Hunas from Central Asia in the second half of the fifth century A.D. Although in the beginning, the Gupta king Skandagupta tried effectively to stem the march of the Hunas into India; his successors proved to be weak and could not cope with the Huna invaders. By 485 A.D.

3. Sarvasena

Sarvasena (c. 330 - 355) took the title of Dharmamaharaja. He is also known as the author of Harivijaya in Prakrit which is based on the story of bringing the parijat tree from heaven by Krishna. This work, praised by later writers is lost. He is also known as the author of many verses of the Prakrit Gaha Sattasai. One of his minister's name was Ravi. He was succeeded by his son Vindhyasena.

4. Harsha maintained the administrative set-up of his empire on the model of previous great Hindu rulers. He himself was the head of the state, and all administrative, legislative and judicial powers were concentrated in his hands. He was also the first Commander-in-Chief of his army. Harsha assumed the titles of Maharajadhiraja and Param Bhattaraka.