INDIAN HISTORY - 1
(HIS3B04)

STUDY MATERIAL

III SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

B.A. HISTORY
CBCSS UG
(2019 Admission onwards)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
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MODULE I
TOWARDS CIVILISATION

Pre- History

Palaeolithic Culture

Old Stone Age (2,50,000 to 10,000 B.C) Robert Bruce Foote established the science of pre-history in India when in 1863 he discovered the first Palaeoliths. Subsequently, in the next two decades many prehistoric sites were reported in the southern peninsula. But it was only in the 1930s when H.de Terra and T.T. Paterson undertook a detailed survey of Kashmir, Potwar and Jammu areas, that the prehistoric research gained importance and a number of archaeologists began focusing their attention on the discovery of new prehistoric sites, construction of cultural sequences and reconstruction of palaeo environments. By the 1960s Indian prehistorians could confidently divide the Palaeolithic industries of the Pleistocene (Ice-Age), into Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic on the basis of the shape, size and methods of manufacture of the principal artifact types.

Lower Palaeolithic

The Lower Palaeolithic is characterized by hand axes, cleavers, chopping tools, and related artefact forms. The tools were all made by removing flakes from a block or core of stone until it reached the required size and shape. Bori in Maharashtra is considered to be the earliest Lower Palaeolithic site. Lower Palaeolithic stone tools have also been found in the

Soan valley (now in Pakistan), and several sites in Kashmir and the Thar Desert. These were known as the Soanian industries (while the artefacts found over much of the rest of India were known as Acheulian or Madrasian) and were dominated by pebble or core tools and characterized as a predominantly chopper/chopping tools. The Acheulian industries was characterized by bifacially flaked artefacts-hand axes and cleavers – along with den- ticulates, scrapers, spheroids, and picks amongst other tools. The Acheulian artefacts were made principally on hard and durable quartzites. In the Hunsgi valley of Karnataka, limestone was used; at Lalitpur in Central India, pink granite was chosen while in parts of Maharashtra and Central India basalt was preferred. Belan valley in Uttar Pradesh, desert area of Didwana in Rajasthan, Chirki- Nevasa in Maharashtra, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh are some of the important sites which have yielded Lower Palaeolithic tools. The caves and rock shelters of Bhimbetka near Bhopal also show features of the Lower Palaeolithic age. Majority of Lower Palaeolithic artefacts found in all parts of the subcontinent are made of quartzite. The rivers – Tapti, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna have yielded a large number of Palaeolithic sites. The distribution of Palaeolithic sites is linked up with ecological variation like erosional features, nature of soils etc. The Tapti trough has deep regur (black soil), and the rest of the area is covered mostly by medium regur. There is scarcity of Palaeolithic sites in the upper reaches of Bhima and Krishna. From Malprabha, Ghatprabha and affluent of the Krishna a number of Palaeolithic sites have been reported. In Ghatprabha basin in

Karnataka Acheulian hand axes have been found in large numbers. Anagawadi and Bagalkot are two most important sites on the Ghatprabha where both early and Middle Palaeolithic tools have been found. The rivers Palar, Penniyar and Kaveri in Tamil Nadu are rich in Palaeolithic tools. Attiranmpakkam and Gudiyam (in Tamilnadu) have yielded both Early and Middle Palaeolithic artefacts like handaxes, flakes, blades, scrapers etc.

Middle Palaeolithic

Middle Palaeolithic industries are characterized by smaller and lighter tools based upon flakes struck from cores, which in some cases are carefully shaped and prepared in advance. There was an increase in the Levallois and discoidal core techniques. In most region, quartzites continued to be used, and in such cases, Lower Palaeolithic elements continued into the Middle Palaeolithic. However, fine-grained siliceous rocks such as chert and jasper, were now preferred for tool-making, and raw mate- rial was often transported over several kilometers. Middle Palaeolithic hominids largely continued to occupy areas inhabited during the Lower Palaeolithic. But, in some parts of India such as Tamil Nadu, rock shelters began to be occupied for the first time. The artefacts of Middle Palaeolithic age are found at several places on the river Narmada, and also at several sites, south of the Tungabhadra river. The Belan valley (UP), which lies at the foothills of the Vindhyas, is rich in stone tools and animal fossils including cattle and deer. These remains relate to both the Lower and Middle stone age. The Wagaon and

Kadamali rivers in Mewar are rich in Middle Palaeolithic sites. A variety of scrapers, borers and points have been discovered in this area. Middle Palaeolithic artefacts have been reported from Chirki near Nevasa and Bhandarpur near Orsand Valley. At Bhimbetka, the tools representing the Acheulian tradition were replaced at a later stage by the Middle Palaeolithic culture. By and large open-air sites along streams on hill slopes, stable dune surfaces and rock-shelters continued to be used as is evident from the finds from Sanghao cave in Modern Pakistan, Luni river basin in Rajasthan, the sand dunes of Didwana, the Chambal, Narmada, Son and Kortallayar river valleys, the plateaus of Eastern Indian and the Hunsgi valley in the south. Dates for this period range from around 1,50,000 to 30,000 before present (BP), a period characterized in general by aridity. Perhaps the most remarkable group of Middle Palaeolithic sites in the subcontinent are those in the Rohri hills of upper Sind. The industry is based upon the large nodules of chert that cap this group of the flat-topped limestone hills. These vast expanses of chert were extensively exploited in Middle and Upper Palaeolithic times and again in Chalcolithic period; but they appear to have been largely neglected during the Lower Palaeolithic and again during the Mesolithic, probably for climatic reasons. Extensive spreads of quartzite boulders, cobbles and pebbles in the Potwar region in the northern Punjab were used by Middle and Upper Palaeolithic tool makers.

Upper Palaeolithic

Towards the end of the Pleistocene, around 30,000

years ago, there was a distinct change in tool types and technology, which could be related to either changes in hunting methods, or to a more general shift in the utilization of resources, or a response to environmental change. The technique of making parallel-sided blades from a carefully prepared core, is an essential basic element of all Upper Palaeolithic industries of the subcontinent, which were contemporary with the final arid phase. Artefact types include a wide range of scrapers, backed blades, points, choppers and burins, and regional variability in blade technology and assemblage structure may now be clearly identified. For the first time, bone tools appear in limestone caves of Kurnool. Although aridity restricted settlement in the interior dunes of Rajasthan, elsewhere Upper Palaeolithic sites are abundant. Tools were made on a wide range of raw materials and were for the most part on long thin blades. Evidence for long distance transport of fine grained chert and chalcedony is widespread, testifying to the vast distances traversed by, or interaction between Upper Palaeolithic communities. The Upper Palaeolithic industries are generally, characterized by parallel sided blades and burins and other lighter artefacts. The presence of Upper Palaeolithic artefacts has been reported in the Thar regions (though they are more sparsely distributed then those of the Middle Palaeolithic), at Sanghao caves in the North West Frontiers Province and in the Potwar plateau of the northern Punjab (both in Pakistan), from parts of South India, central Gujarat and north-western Kathiawar. An Upper Palaeolithic blade and burin industry from a group of sites near Renigunta in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh was also

found. The faunal remains of the Palaeolithic period suggest that the people were primarily in a hunting and gathering stage. The Palaeolithic people subsisted on animals such as ox, bison, nilgai, chinkara, gazelle, black buck antelope, sambar, spotted deer, wild bear, a variety of birds, and tortoises and fishes and on honey and plant food like fruits, roots, seeds and leaves. Hunting is reflected as the main subsistence pursuit in the Rock paintings and carvings found at Bhimbetka. The earliest paintings at Bhimbetka belong to Upper Palaeolithic when people lived in small groups.

Palaeolithic Culture- An Analysis

In this period, most of the land was under glacial; however, large forest tracts were also there. In this period, the man hunted big games like Elephants, wild cattle, Rhino etc. During Upper Palaeolithic period, the humans were attracted towards large meadows or pastureland. Now, he started hunting relatively small games, like, deer and white-footed antelopes. So far, his settlement pattern is concerned; the Lower Palaeolithic man selected various types of places for his residence. It seems that he took shelter in caves as well as selected an open ground. Besides, he also lived nearby the area of raw material.

Stone Tools: It should be remembered that the man, during various phases of his progress, was changing tools, their techniques and required raw material. The Early Palaeolithic people, by using locally available stone, made chopping tools from pebbles and hand axes from flakes. Then, the Middle Palaeolitihic people used flakes and Upper

Palaeolithic people used blades to make tools. They used crypto crystalline rock for the purpose.

Social Life: During the entire Palaeolithic period, people were nomadic, wandering here and there for hunting fishing and gathering. Earlier they used to hunt big games like rhino, elephants etc., then after developing their tool kit they started hunting speedy and small animals, like, wild boar, white-footed antelope. Their food stock also comprised of turtles and fish; whereas, he used to gather honey, fruits, roots, seeds and leaves to subsist on. It should be noted that the Palaeolithic people preferred the gathering to hunting in this period. So far, their subsistence pattern is concerned; he never had completely finished his resources; instead, he used to reserve some areas for the future use. When we consider his residence, it seems that, even from the earliest times they were thinking about some place to take shelter. An oval shaped rammed floor, encircled by granite-boulders, discovered from Lower Palaeolitihic Hunasgi. Besides, a stone-partition wall found in one of the rock-shelters of Bhimbetka. The people, though still nomad, selected rock-shelters and raise thatched hut for their den. The people of Luni culture constructed thatched hut for their protection from fast-flowing winds. Due to lack of evidences, it is difficult to comment on their social structures. However, large factory sites indicate their capability to fulfil the requirements of distant communities, which, in turn roughly delineate some sort of social relations of Palaeolithic people.

We can presume something about their belief-system.

A carved piece of bone is discovered from Lohanda Nala (Belan valley, U.P.), identified as mother-goddess. Besides, a bored toot of animal discovered from Karnul caves. This tooth probably used as a pendent. In the same period, a bead of ostrich shell discovered from Patane. All these things indicate to the belief-system of Palaeolithic people. A triangular stone, placed in the centre of round stone, discovered from Bagor (M.P.). According to the scholars, this was the part of Palaeolithic ritual. Today also, tribes like Kol and Baiga (found nearby Bagor) follow similar kind of ritual.

Mesolithic Culture: Middle Stone age (10,000 to 4000 B.C) The Mesolithic and other stone industries of the Holocene (c.9000 B.C.) in the subcontinent represent a further contribution of the developmental process of the Palaeolithic. Changes in climate (which became warm and rainy) resulted in changes in flora and fanna. The hunter-gatherer communities spread rapidly over India. Microlithic industries associated with what appear to be the cultures of hunting people, fishermen, pastoralists or people practicing some form of agriculture, have been found widely throughout the subcontinent. Microlithic or small stone tools (their length ranging from 1 to 8 cm) comprised of tools made on blades and bladelets and include burins, lunettes, crescents, triangles, points, trapeze etc. which were subsequently hafted onto bone or wooden handles to form composite tools. Mesolithic sites abound in Rajasthan (Bagor, Tilwara, etc.), Uttar Pradesh (Sarai Nahar Rai, Morhana Pahar, Lekhahia etc.) Central India (Bimbetka, Adamgarh etc.) eastern India (Kuchai

in Orissa, Birbhanpur in west Bengal, Sebalgiri-2 in Garo hills of Meghalaya etc.) and slo south of the river Krishna (Sangankallu, Renigunta etc.) There is a rich concentration of microlithic sites in the Narmada, Mahi and Sabarmati valley of Gujarat. The primary excavated site is Langhanaj which has revealed three cultural phases, the phase I producing microlithic, burials and animal bones. Pottery appears in later phases at the sites of Lekhahia and Baghai Khor. Faunal remains of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo, pig, boar, bison, elephant, deer, jackal, wolf and a number of aquatic animals have been found. Since the Mesolithic age marked a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic age and the Neolithic age, the first tentative steps towards domestication occurred. At Bagor (Rajasthan), bones of domesticated sheep and goat, are dated to around the 5th Century B.C. We can have an idea about the social life and economic activities of the Mesolithic people from the art and paintings found at sites like Bhimbetka, Adamgarh, Pratapgarh and Mirzapur. Mesolithic rock paintings depict people hunting game, gathering plant resources, trapping animals, eating together, dancing and playing instruments. Animals are the most frequent subjects. Other subjects include animal headed human figures; squares and oblongs partly filled in with hatched designs which may represent huts or enclosures and what appears to be pictures of unusual events, such as the chariots waylaid by men armed with spears and bows and arrows at Morhana Pahar group of rock shelters near Mirzapur. The colours and brown painted net traps for fishing, and for hunting small game, highlight the richness of

material culture of which no trace survives in the archaeological record. The Mesolithic culture paved the way for the Neolithic, where pastoralism and agriculture supplemented hunting-gathering as the prevalent mode of subsistence. In the Indian context, there emerges a broad overlap in the chronology of the so-called Mesolithic cultures and the earliest agricultural settlements now coming to light in the Indus basin. But by and large the Mesolithic culture continued to be important roughly from 10,000 to 4000 B.C.

Mesolithic Culture-An Analysis

Holocene starts from this period, which was reflected in a slowly rise in temperature and general dryness of climate. Naturally, that clearly affected the Ecology, too. Various kinds of transformations witnessed in the types, shapes and families of flora and fauna of India. Although man remained nomadic hunter-gatherer, he made changes in his tool kit and hunting-techniques. He started using composite tools, largely, which were speedier and more accurate. For that purpose, he started making microliths. With the help of those, now, he could easily hunt smaller and faster games like that of deer-family and flying birds. His place of abode can be found at various places, like, rock-shelters (cave), open ground/slopes, hilltops, sand-dunes, alluvial and rocky-uplands, coastal areas and scatters. In short, Mesolithic man successfully controlled environment and made any kind of environmental condition suitable for him. Hence, we can find his distribution across all kind of geographical regions.

Social Life: The population increased in this period, hence, it

forced people to explore and make relationships with more new environmental regions and cultures of India. They, still nomad and were subsisting on the hunting-gathering mode of life. However, for some months he was using thatched huts and rock-caves for shelter. So far, their food is concerned; they still used to hunt big games, like, wild buffalo, camel, rhino etc. However, due to microliths he could more easily hunt small and faster animals, like that of deer-family, wolves, turtles, rabbits, mongoose etc. Their diet also comprised of wild roots, fruits, seeds, honey and edible grass. From many Mesolithic sites, ring stones, rubble, Muller, querns, big hearths discovered; it shows that he was somewhat aware of the importance of vegetables and grains. In this period, they were resorted to little bit of Pastoralism and exchange on limited scale.

Mesolithic Rock-Art: Mesolithic Rock-art was a milestone in the developing process of early people. During 1867-68, A.C.L. Carlyle of Archaeological Survey of India discovered traces of Mesolithic Rock-art in the rock-shelters of Sohagighat in the mountain range of Kaimur (Dist. Mirzapur). Since then, around 150 such rock shelters discovered which again can be classified among 19 types. Among these, most of the rock-shelters (3/4) are located in the Vindhya-Satpura ranges in Madhya Pradesh. The Rock-art of Bhimbetka (45 km from Bhopal) is a much more noteworthy and widely appreciated. V.S. Vakankar found these rock-paintings in 1957. At here, we see 642 rock-shelters in its periphery of ten km and seven mountains. Due to ample rains, perennial supply of water, raw material in large quantity, dense forest holding a diversity

of animals; Bhimbetka remained favourite choice of Prehistoric man to reside.

Mathapal classified these painting in three stages. In earliest five sub-stages, we find Mesolithic rock- paintings. These paintings drawn on the ceilings and walls of the caves in this area. For this, he used 16 types of natural colours and their shades, comprising of Red (from red oxide), White (lime-stone), Green (Green Chalcedony) in various shades and brush from tails of animals. The colours made out of natural minerals, found locally. They mixed animal fat, white part of egg and natural gum in colours to increase their life.

These paintings are mostly in line drawings, of which, art historians identified around twelve styles. Some of them are in single colour and some are in multicolour. Sometimes we find geometrical design on the paintings of animals. Some of made in 'X-Ray-style' i.e. when showing an animal, an embryo was also shown. Animals and hunting-scenes are most favourite subject matter in these paintings.

The animal-cache, comprising 29 types, included tigers, leopard, elephant, rhino, deer, wild boar, monkey, rabbits, foxes, squirrels etc. in various movements. Snake is absent from these paintings. They filled their bodies with various geometrical designs. The hunting-scenes comprised of mob as well as individual hunting and catching games with the help of trap. The hunters shown horn-headed. They also shown wearing ornaments, like, neck-less, bangles, armlets etc. The scenes also reflect his tool-kit, which found from various Mesolithic sites, like, composite tools with microliths, bow-

arrow, sticks, catapult etc. Sometimes, the hunters were shown in company with dogs.

Apart from hunting, the animals were shown in various activities/movements, like, the pregnant animal, father-mother playing with their kids, deer chasing birds, jumping rabbits and monkeys, animal grazing etc. The paintings also depict various modes of subsistence of Mesolithic people like, honey gathering and fishing. Their lifecycle also shown; showing birth of baby, their cuddling, their growth and their mortuary practices.

We also find 'division of labour' among these people. We see that the male members were engaged in hunting whereas the women undertook gathering and food-preparation. The paintings also show the dress and hairstyle of these people. We find that Men used under-garments made out of tree-bark or animal-hide. They are shown with free hair whereas women had their hair bound in rounded fashion. Some of the men were designed in geometrical lines indicating their special status in the society. Similar to Bhimbetka, we find many rock-paintings in other parts of India, too. Around 55 rock-shelters discovered from the districts of Sundargarh and Sambalpur in Orissa. However, the paintings over there of geometrical nature besides the paintings of people and animals are quite rare. In the 'Yezuthu rock-shelter' in Kerala, display paintings of animals but not of humans. A special mention should be made of 'rock-painting' of Jaora caves (M.P.). From this painting, we can understand the concept of Mesolithic people about the creation and nature of universe.

Here we find a whole world comprising of animal-human world along with wind, water etc.

It seems that these paintings mostly done for some religious purpose. For, the caves where the paintings drawn; never utilized for residence. Besides, the outlines were repeatedly drawn. It indicates the ancient concept of getting the desired animal through drawing repeatedly on the same painting. In sum, it seems that this man was relatively more socially organized and systematic than his predecessors. Besides, he also made use of various modes of subsistence. Through these factors, he might have controlled any sort of environment to which he was exposed. That is why he can now turn to the unproductive matters like 'art'.

Neolithic Culture: New Stone Age (6000 to 1000 B.C) The concluding phase of the Stone Age, the Neolithic Age, which followed the Mesolithic, heralded the beginning of food production. Scholars have long debated the onset of this fundamental, lifestyle altering development in human prehistory - what was the catalyst that moved humans in vastly separated parts of the world to adopt agriculture and animal domestication? While convincing hypothesis have been put forward for all three schools of thought, it is today generally agreed that it was a combination of the three i.e. climatic change at the beginning of the Holocene, increasing population density and evolving cultural and technological strategies of human groups that ushered in this transformation. So what is it about the Neolithic that it is at once, the last leg of the Stone Age and also the link or platform on which all

subsequent civilizations arose? That it is a Stone Age culture can be established by the use of stone tools. But unlike the lighter and sharper tools of the Palaeolithic or Mesolithic, the Neolithic tool kit was com- posed of heavy ground tools – pestles, mortars, grinders and pounders – as also axes and sickles which have a characteristic sheen on them, the result of harvesting wild or domesticated plants and grasses. But besides the use of stone tools, the Neolithic people had little in common with their predecessors. The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic humans were mobile hunter-gatherers who travelled long distances to procure their food. On the other hand, Neolithic populations all over the world have relied on agriculture or food production and the domestication of animals for their dietary needs. Interestingly, all of the largest and most complex civilizations throughout history have been based on the cultivation of one or more of just six plant genera – wheat, barley, millet, rice, maize and potatoes and these have thus been called the main 'engines of civilizations'. Sedentism is another feature that distinguishes the Neolithic period. Somewhere between 10,000 and 3,500 years ago, people all over the world, without any apparent connection, began settling down in agricultural communities and gave rise to villages, towns and then cities. The use of pottery and the wheel and the subsequent invention of crafts like spinning, weaving and bead-making also serve to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Neolithic phase. Most Neolithic cultures start as a ceramic or pre-pottery Neolithic. However, soon enough, sherds of hand-made pottery are found, often followed by wheel-thrown pottery. The

technological breakthrough of the wheel enabled developments like spinning and by the time of the bronze age civilizations, the use of the wheel in carts. It was a consideration of all these developments that made the prehistorian Gordon V. Childe designate this phase as the 'Neolithic Revolution'. However, his critics were quick to point out that the term 'revolution' is synonymous with sudden or abrupt change, often accompanied by bloodshed and that the Neolithic was a gradual unfolding of developments, the culmination of the Stone Age. While the significant socio-economic impact of the Neolithic cannot be denied, it is today generally viewed as a 'transformation' 'evolution' rather than a 'revolution'. The second point in Childe's hypothesis, which has direct bearing on the advent of the Neolithic in the Indian subcontinent, is the presumption that farming was first invented in a single 'nuclear region' – the Fertile Crescent in Mesopotamia or the Near-East from where it spread or was diffused to other parts of the world. This diffusionist paradigm propounded that the 'idea' of agriculture arose here and then spread to other regions depending on their proximity to this core region.

Onset of Agriculture in India

India was thus, for a long time seen as having borrowed the idea of food production from its western neighbour, Mesopotamia, via the Iranian plateau. Modern research on the subject, especially since the 1970s, has discredited this viewpoint. It is now generally believed that agriculture in India was an independent, indigenous development rather than an import from outside. A remarkable coincidence, it has

been proved for three of the main staples of the subcontinent-the discovery of wheat and barley in Mehrgarh, Pakistan grown almost contemporaneously with the Fertile Crescent sites cancels the possibility of diffusion into India. Similarly, the discovery of rice from Koldihwa in Uttar Pradesh and millet from sites in South India have put a question mark on the diffusion of these two crops from South China and South Africa respectively. The occurrence of food production in India was spread over a few millennia-from the 8th millennium BC to c.1000 BC. A Neolithic celt was discovered as early as 1842 by Le Mesurie in the Raichur district of Karnataka, and later by John Lubbock in 1867 in the Brahmaputra valley of Upper Assam. Today, as a result of vast explorations and excavations, the distribution and nature of the Neolithic in the subcontinent has been brought to light. Some scholars, like R.S. Sharma, divide the Neolithic settlements into three groups - north western, north-eastern and southern, based on the types of axes used by the Neolithic settlers. Others, for e.g., V.K.Jain, argue for as many as six different geographical regions, each with its own distinctive features and chronological time-span. These regions are, (i) North-western i.e. Baluchistan and its adjoining area in Pakistan (7th to mid-4th millennium BC), (ii) Northern i.e. Kashmir Valley (2500- 1500 BC), (iii) Central India, i.e., Vindhyan region, south of Allahabad (4000 BC-1200 BC), (iv) Mid-Gangetic basin, i.e., eastern U.P. and Bihar (2000 BC–1500 BC), (v) Eastern India, i.e., Bengal, Orissa and Assam, (vi) Peninsular or South India, i.e., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (2500 BC–1500 BC). An

overview of the above time frame will indicate that the Neolithic phase in India did not develop everywhere at the same time nor did it end simultaneously. In fact, there were many Neolithic cultures which were coexisting with the copper using, urban Harappan Civilization (2600-1900 BC). These cultures, besides having different time frames, exhibit some regional variations too. For example, in the northeast region, Neolithic tools have been found but there is no evidence so far of plant cultivation. Similarly, while most of the Neolithic cultures evolved out of the preceding Mesolithic cultures, no such evidence is reported from the Kashmir Valley. Bone tools have only been recovered from sites in Kashmir and from Chirand in Bihar and in terms of cereal consumption, while wheat and barley predominate in Mehrgarh in Pakistan, it is rice from Central India and millet and ragi cultivation from the South Indian Neolithic sites (Jain 2006: 78-79). The corpus of evidence gathered so far suggests that while each region responded to its specific geographical setting, the tapestry that finally emerged had distinct parallels. This was the rise and growth of agriculture and the beginning of settled village life. In the next part, we shall try to understand the dynamics and nature of this massive change in human lifeway across the length and breadth of the country.

Regional Distribution of Neolithic Cultures North-West India:

Comprising the province of Baluchistan and the Indus plains in Pakistan, this area represents the earliest evidence of the Neolithic Culture in the subcontinent, indicated by the

growth of farming and animal husbandry. Basically, an inhospitable mountainous region, with a climate of extremes, Baluchistan has nevertheless revealed many traces of early settlements in its valley pockets. The important sites are Mehrgarh in the Kachhi plain, Kili Gul Muhammad in the Quetta Valley, Rana Ghundai in the Loralai valley and Anjira in the Surab valley. The Indus plains provide a sharp contrast in the archaeological setting from that of Baluchistan. The lifeline of the area, the Indus is a highly unstable river, which flows through a wide alluvial flood plain. Neolithic sites start appearing in the North-West Frontier Province - Gumla, Rehman Dheri, Tarakai Qila and Sarai Khola; Jalilpur in Punjab.

Mehrgarh: The earliest evidence of agricultural life based on wheat, barley, cattle, sheep and goat in the subcontinent comes from the site of Mehrgarh on the bank of the Bolan river in the Kachhi plain of Baluchistan. Its convenient chronological point is c. 7000 BC. For thenext two to three millennia the evidence of this type of agriculture seems to be limited to Baluchistan, although by the end of this period it is found spread all over its major areas. Mehrgarh is essential for any discussion on the Neolithic, not only because it has yielded the earliest evidence for this phenomenon but also because the inter-disciplinary and scientific approach to the excavations and the regular publication of the results have provided us with a very clear picture of the Neolithic way of life there. Excavations at the site began in 1974 under the leadership of J.F.Jarrige and continued into the 1980s and

later. These have revealed an uninterrupted continuity in the growth and consolidation of village life in the area. Spread over about 200 hectares of land, this imposing site bears evidence of occupation in different periods, having been given separate numbers, such as MR 1, MR 2, MR 3 etc. In all, there are seven periods of which only the first three, I-III, are regarded as Neolithic. The time frame for each of these is as follows: Period I from 7000-5500 BC; Period II, from 5500-4500 BC; and Period III, from 4500-3500 BC. The earliest level of occupation, Period I, marks the transition from nomadic pastoralism to agriculture. It was an aceramic level with stone tools consisting of polished axes, chisels, querns and microliths and bone tools comprising awls, needles etc. The Neolithic character of the site is reflected in bones of cattle, sheep and goat, indicating their domestication as also the bones of water buffalo, which is the earliest instance of the domestication of this animal in the sub- continent. Evidence of plant domestication comes from the charred seeds of wheat and barley as also Indian jujube (*ber*) and dates. The beginning of sedentism can be gleaned from foundations of mud- brick houses and small cell-like compartments which might have been used for storage of grains. But perhaps the most surprising piece of information concerns long distance trade and craft production. As part of grave goods were found, turquoise beads, probably from the Nishapur mines of Iran; shell bangles, with the seashell being from the Arabian Sea coast and beads of lapis lazuli, procured from the Badakshan region of Afghanistan. This clearly demonstrates that the Neolithic people of Mehr- garh, Period I, were not an isolated

community but engaged in exchange activities with other contemporary cultures. Period II is characterized by an intensification and diversification of the economic base. Some coarse handmade pottery is found in the lower levels which becomes plentiful in the later part of the period. Towards the end, wheel-made and painted, as well as basket marked sherds are found having parallels with Kili Gul Muhammad I in the Quetta Valley. Houses became larger and one structure on the site has been termed a 'granary'. The stone industry continued, with the addition of sickle like tools, substantiating the agricultural basis of the economy. Charred cotton- seeds indicating cotton plantation and perhaps, spinning and weaving; ivory-making, presimed from an elephant tusk bearing groove marks; terracotta human figurines; a steatite workshop and beads of lapis lazuli and turquoise, all testify craft production, trade and the co-Neolithic stage of human evo- lution. Period III at Mehrgarh, spanning from c. 4500 to 3500 BC, represents the final stage of the Neolithic phase. Surplus production was achieved through a consolidation of agriculture and animal rearing activities. Vast quantities of pottery have been found, many of which bear painted motifs, which particularly in the later stages of this period, resemble those of Kili Gul Muhammad II and III. A continuity in the long-distance trading pattern can be assessed from the beads of lapis lazuli, tur- quoise and fragments of conch shell. Copper objects found on the surface and traces of the metal found in crucibles suggest that the Neolithic people of Mehrgarh were familiar with copper smelting. A picture of continuous growth of village life also emerges from a number of collective graves

that appear in this period and indicate an increase in population.

Kili Gul Muhammad: The site of Kili Gul Muhammad in the Quetta Valley was excavated from 1949-51 by the American Archaeological Mission headed by W.A.Fairservis, Jr. The first three levels of occupation are ascribed to the Neolithic period. Beginning as an aceramic site around 5500 BC or earlier, its inhabitants lived in wattle-and-daub and/or mud houses. Animal remains of cattle, sheep, goat, and horse/wild ass have been found and the tool kit comprises microliths, a few ground tools, bone points and spatula. The transition from Period II to Period III can be discerned from the evolution of a crude, handmade and basket-marked pottery to a fine wheel made black-on-red ware with simple geometric designs.

Rana Ghundai: Situated in the Anambar valley, Rana Ghundai lies in the ecological transitional zone between the Baluchi hills and the Indus plains. The Rana Ghundai sequence was established, after brief excavations, by Brigadier E.J.Ross in 1946. Periods I-III belong to the Neolithic phase and lasted from 4500 to 3100 BC. The remains of Period I attest the presence of a semi-nomadic community‘ and consist of handmade plain pottery, bones of domesticated animals like ox, sheep, goat and maybe a wild ass. A mixed tool kit, of stone and bone, comprised of microlithic chips and blades and bone points and eyed needles. Developments in pottery fabric, shapes and designs continued as the Neolithic became a well-established

phenomenon here, a way of life.

Gumla: The site of Gumla in the Gomal valley began as a small, one-acre encampment. Period I is aceramic and shows microliths, domesticated cattle bone, and large shallow pits used for cooking/roasting. Period II has a wide range of painted wheel-made pottery, microlithic tools, a limited amount of copper and bronze and terracotta bangles, gamesmen, toy carts and cattle and female figurines (Chakrabarti 1999: 138).

Rehman Dheri: A large site, spread over more than 20 hectares, Rehman Dheri shows a clear tran- sition from the Neolithic to the Kot Dijian and finally the Indus civilization phase. The site is fortified right from the beginning, with a 1.2 m wide mud and mud brick wall. Remains of wheat, barley, fish and domesticated cattle, sheep and goat give us clues as regards their diet. Pottery was used from the very first settlement at the site and most of the pottery specimens are of Kot Dijian forms and designs. The calibrated date range of Rehman Dheri is c. 3400-2100 BC.

Amri: A prominent pre-Harappan site in Sind, Amri is located at the edge of a cultivated alluvial plain, 2 km of the right bank of the Indus. Period I begin with a typical handmade red/beige pottery with geometrical designs painted in black and often with red fillings. People lived in mud-brick houses and domesticated remains of cattle, sheep, goat and donkey have been found. Pieces of copper, shell, terracotta bangles, sling stone and parallel-sided blades are other archaeological remnants collected from the site. The Neolithic period of

occupation, starting in the early to mid-fourth millennium BC was followed by an intermediate phase and finally the Indus civilization phase.

North India: Evidence for the north Indian Neolithic cultures comes mainly from the Kashmir Valley and is represented by a large number of sites above the flood plains of River Jhelum. The three principal sites of the area are: Burzahom, northeast of Srinagar; Gufkral, southeast of Srinagar and Kanishkapura or modern Kanispur, in the Baramulla district. All three are multi-cultural sites, where prolific Neolithic remains are followed by evidence of megalithic and historical periods. An important feature of the northern Neolithic is the absence of a preceding Microlithic/Mesolithic phase and the development of this phenomenon occurred between 3500-1500 BC.

Gufkral: Literally meaning, the cave of the potter, the site of Gufkral, started as an aceramic Neolithic site, probably around 3000 BC. From Period IA were discovered large dwelling pits surrounded by storage pits and hearths and with post-holes around the mouths of the pits and hearths. Remains of domesticated sheep and goat as well as barley, wheat and lentil along with wild sheep, goat and cattle, deer, ibex, wolf and bear indicate the transition from a hunting to a food producing economy. Polished stone tools, including a large quern, bone/horn tools, steatite beads and a terracotta ball make up the rest of the archaeological repertoire. Periods IB and IC witnessed an intensification of the Neolithic handmade crude grey ware followed by wheel-made

pottery, abundance of stone querns, pounders, double-holed harvesters etc along with domesticated sheep, goat, cattle, dog and pig.

Burzahom: The Neolithic people of Burzahom, beginning with Period I around 2700 BC, lived in circular or oval-shaped lakeside pit dwellings and subsisted on a hunting and fishing economy, being familiar also with agriculture. The sides of the dwelling pits were plastered with mud and both ladders and steps were used to get inside the large pits. Storage pits containing animal bones, stone and bone tools have been found close to the dwelling pits. The site has yielded mostly coarse and hand-made grey, buff and red pottery. The bone industry at Burzahom is most developed of all the Neolithic cultures of India and comprises harpoons, needles, arrowheads, spear-joints, daggers etc. Another distinctive feature is the burials-graves, both of humans and animals, especially dogs, have been found. Sketchy evidence for ritual practice can be gathered from stone slabs depicting hunting scenes, or another representation of the sun and a dog. Two finds from Period II, dated around second millennium BC show contact with the Indus plains-a pot with carnelian and agate beadsand another pot which bears the Kot Dijian horned deity motif.

Central India: The focus of the Central Indian Neolithic is, broadly speaking, the Vindhyan and Kaimur hill ranges of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh i.e. the area, having as its periphery River Ganges in the north and River Son in the south. The important Neolithic sites are Koldihawa and

Mahagara in Allahabad district, Sinduria in Mirzapur district and Kunjun in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh. The dating of the Neolithic horizon for this area remains problematic – some suggesting the beginning of the Neolithic culture at Koldihawa to c. 6000 BC, while others assign it to a time range of 4000 –2500 BC or 3500-1250 BC.

Koldihawa: Situated in the Belan valley of Uttar Pradesh, Koldihawa has a rich prehistoric sequence down to the Mesolithic phase. The site's claim to fame is the earliest evidence of rice. Domesticated rice comes from the earliest, metal-free level of Koldihawa and occurs in a context of wattle-and- daub houses, polished stone celts, microliths and three types of handmade pottery – cord marked and incised ware, plain red ware with ochre slip on both sides and a crude black-and-red ware. Rice occurs as husks embedded in the clay of the pottery. The overlap of the microlithic and the Neolithic is testified by the presence of blades, flakes, lunates as well as polished and ground axes, celts, querns and pestles. Evidence of animal husbandry comes from the bones of cattle, sheep, goat and deer and fishing can be gleaned from the bones of turtles and fish. G.R. Sharma has dated rice cultivation at Koldihawa to around 5500 BC. Other scholars like F.R. Allchin and D. K. Chakrabarti feel that these dates need to be re-examined on the basis of fresh evidence. But consensus seems to be growing that rice cultivation was an indigenous, post Ice Age phenomenon that occurred independently in Central India and in Koldihawa can be dated to the fifth millennium BC.

Mahagara: Almost contemporaneous with Koldihawa, the site of Mahagara has yielded some bone implements along with a tool kit of Mesolithic and Neolithic tools made of materials such as chalcedony, agate, quartz and basalt. This site has also reported a cattle pen, which indicates the domestication of cattle. The pottery used by the Neolithic folk was handmade and poorly fired; with straw and rice husk being used as tempering agents. The principal pottery type is the corded or cord-impressed ware though sometimes incised designs are also seen.

Mid-Gangetic Basin: Covering the areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the mid-Gangetic basin encapsulates the Ganges in its expansive, midstream flow, carrying along with it, the drainage of its tributaries like the Saryu and the Ghaghra. Predictably then, most of the Neolithic sites dotting the area are found on banks of rivers and streams – Narhan, on the banks of River Saryu; Imlidih, on Kuwana stream; Sohagaura, on the banks of River Rapti; Chirand, on the banks of River Ghaghra; besides other sites like Teradih and Senuwar. Chirand, considered to be the representative site of the area has revealed a cultural assemblage going back to the Neolithic phase, dated from 2100 to 1400 BC.

Chirand: The 1 km long mound of Chirand lies at the confluence of the Sarayu and the Ganga and according to D. K. Chakrabarti, the beginning of occupation at the site may even be earlier than the middle of the third millennium BC. From Period I or the Neolithic deposit of Chirand have been recovered coarse earthenware, comprising red, grey and

black handmade wares, some with post-firing painting and graffiti. Terracotta objects including figurines of humped bull, birds, snakes and bangles, beads, sling balls etc. have been found. People lived in circular and semi-circular wattle- and-daub huts with post-holes and hearths. For subsistence, they relied on plant cultivation and animal domestication. Among the crops are rice, wheat, barley, moong and lentil – which may indicate the raising of two crops a year, winter and autumn. Animal remains include a wide range from domesticated cattle to elephants and rhinoceros. Chirand is the only other site in the country, besides Burzahom in Kashmir that has given a substantial range of bone and antler objects such as needles, scrapers, borers and arrowheads. Bone ornaments like pendants, bangles and earrings have also been discovered. Stone tools consist of microliths, Neolithic axes and other implements, such as stone pestles and querns. Evidence of beads made of agate, carnelian, jasper, steatite, faience etc. and also the rich terracotta, bone and antler assemblage mentioned above suggest a movement towards craft production and possibly, exchange of commodities.

Eastern India: Eastern India comprises the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa and the Neolithic here caps a rich prehistoric past. Important sites include Kuchai and Golbai Sasan in Orissa; Pandu Rajar Dhibi, Bharatpur and Mahisdal in West Bengal; and Barudih in Jharkhand. Since no rigorous excavations have been undertaken, only a tentative picture of the Neolithic way of life can be hinted at and dating too remains a problem.

Kuchai: The existence of a Neolithic level at Kuchai near Mayurbhanj in Orissa was established on the basis of polished stone tools like celts and axes.

Golbai Sasan: The site of Golbai Sasan situated on the left bank of River Mandakini was excavated between 1990-92. Period I at the site is Neolithic and shows a range of dull red and grey handmade pottery with cord or tortoise shell impressions in association with a few worked pieces of bone and traces of floors and post-holes.

Pandu Rajar Dhibi: Pandu Rajar Dhibi in the Ajay Valley was the first site to clearly demonstrate the Neolithic base of later developments like the chalcolithic. Excavations at the site link Period I of occupation to the Neolithic phase. This is characterized by a handmade grey ware with rice husk impressions, painted red pottery, some sherds of black-and-red ware, ground stone tools, microliths and bone tools. The coexistence of microliths and ground stone tools and bone tools reveal the emergence of the Neolithic from an underlying Mesolithic matrix.

North Eastern India: The entire north-eastern region has yielded a rich haul of polished Neolithic tools but no consolidated picture of a Neolithic level has yet emerged. The spread of the Neolithic is considered by some to be an import from South East Asia on account of the use of shouldered axes and also cord-impressed pottery, which has close affinity with the pottery from China and South East Asia. On the basis of this link, D. P Agrawal has dated the Neolithic cultures of north-eastern India between 2500-1500 BC. The important

sites of the region are Daojali Hading and Sarutaru in Assam, Napchik in Manipur & Pynthorlangtein in Meghalaya.

Daojali Hading: Situated in the North Kachhar hills of Assam, Daojali Hading revealed a 45 cm thick occupation deposit. The site has yielded Neolithic stone and fossil wood axes, adzes, hoes, chisels, grinding slabs, querns, mullers, handmade grey to dull red cord marked pottery as well as dull red stamped pottery and plain red pottery. No domesticated cereals have been recovered but the presence of mullers and querns in the artefactual repertoire establishes the practice of agricultural activity.

South India: The South Indian Neolithic culture, spread over the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, has given us the largest number of Neolithic settlements, because of the easy availability of stone. The geographical terrain of this culture is that part of the Deccan plateau bound by River Bhima in the north and River Kavery in the south, with a major concentration of sites being in the Raichur and Shorapur Doabs. Besides the profusion of sites, what makes the South Indian Neolithic remarkable is the issue of ash mounds and the location of settlements on the flat-topped or castellated granite hills or plateaux of the region. Ash mounds are vast mounds of burnt cattle dung ash accumulated as a result of periodical burnings and F.R Allchin in 1960 suggested a West Asian origin for these. However today, their growth and development is viewed in the context of earlier indigenous stone age traditions. Some of the important Neolithic sites of the region are: Sangankallu, Hallur, Tekkalakota, Brahmagiri,

Maski, and Piklihal in Karnataka; Utnur, Palavoy, Kodekal and Budihal in Andhra Pradesh; and Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu. The chronological bracket for these sites ranges from about 2400 to 1000 BC. The location of Neolithic settlements near hills or plateau seems to have been motivated by access to perennial water in the form of streams or rivers, plentiful game, pasture for grazing animals and raw materials like stone and wood. Both campsites and habitation sites have been discovered where people lived in circular wattle-and-daub huts. Hearths and storage areas have been found in practically all the huts. Subsistence was primarily on a mixed economy – rudimentary farming and animal husbandry. Charred grains of millet, barley, horse gram, black gram and green gram have been found and scholars were earlier of the opinion that millet might have been introduced in south India from South Africa. But recent research negates this hypothesis and favours an indigenous growth of these crops. Fish bones and charred and split animal bones show that fishing and hunting contributed substantially to dietary requirements.

Sangankallu: Sangankallu presents a picture of a long occupation, beginning with the palaeolithic phase. Palaeoliths are followed by a microlithic industry of quartz flakes, cores and lunates. The classic Neolithic industry of polished stone tools features next in the sequence but not before a sterile dark brown soil was formed at the site suggesting a time-gap between the Neolithic and the earlier microlithic levels. Coarse grey, red pottery was discovered which was either handmade or produced on a slow wheel. Storage pits have

given remains of charred grains and bones of domesticated animals like cattle, sheep and goat.

Piklihal: The site of Piklihal is essentially an ash-mound situated in District Raichur in Karnataka. The Neolithic people who occupied the site were cattle herders who had domesticated animals like cattle, sheep, goat etc. A mobile group, they set up seasonal camps surrounded by cowpens made with wooden posts and stakes in which they gathered dung. When it was time to move, the entire camping ground was set afire and cleared for the next session of camping. An overview of the expanse and variety of Neolithic cultures in the subcontinent helps us to understand the larger and local dynamics, which shaped this phenomenon. While profuse microlithic remains precede the Neolithic at some sites, others give a silent testimony and reveal only a full-blown Neolithic phase. Yet, all across the country between the fifth and first millennium BC, people were moving towards a Neolithic way of life- settled hutments, practice of agriculture and animal husbandry, pottery and beginning of craft production. But the story of human cultural evolution did not stop here, for this was just the base on which, the next chapter i.e. of large-scale civilizations was to arise.

Neolithic Culture- An Analysis

The word Neolithic was used earlier by Sir John Lubak in his work 'Prehistoric Times' (1865). The highlights of this period comprised of polished stone-tools, the discovery of farming, Pastoralism, permanent residence, emergence of earliest villages etc. Besides such cultural processes, we find,

developed pottery, polished stone-tools, bone tools and weapons, beads of semi-precious stone etc. Neolithic period is a revolutionary milestone in the progress of early man in India. In this period, man, started cultivation and settled by constructing houses for him. These Neolithic sites were located in specific types of environment, having specific kind of regional peculiarities. The Neolithic people at Mehergarh was pastoralist, however, then, they started cultivating wheat (of three types) and Barley (of two types); besides dates, too. Besides, they also constructed rectangular houses of sun-dried bricks. They also constructed communal wear-houses of multi-rooms to store grains. Such structures indicate beneficial pre-conditions for the Harappan Civilization in later period. They were in contact with West and Central Asia. These contacts helped the Indian Neolithic people with various types of discoveries like wheat, pastoralism etc. It should be noted that, although Neolithic people discovered farming, they continued their earlier ways of subsistence like hunting, fishing and gathering. For, they were getting more proteins through these modes than the farming of that period.

The people of Neolithic Kashmir, to get protection from cold weather used to live in pit-dwellings (Burzahom). On the ground, it is circled by cone-shaped thatched hut around the opening of pit. In due course of time, he started living in rectangular wattle-daub huts and houses of sun-dried bricks. This man has successfully domesticated animals of the families of Bulls-horse and Sheep. He made use of buffalo and Ass (horse family) to carry heavy loads. Besides, he also

started farming Wheat, Barley, Linseed, although in a primary way.

The people started using polished and long stone tools (Celt), bone tools (arrowhead) and harvester (Gufkaral). They were in closed contacts with other cultures. The pit-dwellings and Harvester with Dog's bones as grave-goods testify his contacts with the Chinese Neolithic. In short, in Kashmir-region, we find the emergence of one village with houses, surrounded by cattle-pen, farms and pasture land. We also find an emergence of 'family-man' who follows agriculture and Pastoralism, has some beliefs and loves to live in society. He also connected with North-western India, Central Asia and China through regular contacts.

We find ‘division of labor’ in the Neolithic period, which was based on gender. Earlier, the hunting and gathering were divided between men and women, respectively. Naturally, through gathering, women came to understand the cycle of nature. Thus, they started experimenting in agriculture. That is why we say that women were the inventor of agriculture in the world. Thus, in Neolithic period, we find women engaged in agricultural activities. The agricultural production generates need of grain storing. For the purpose, women engaged in pottery making. Men, like earlier, engaged in hunting and fishing.

From ‘ash-mounds’, of South Indian Neolithic site we find some types of belief-system of Neolithic people. Some statues of mother-goddess discovered from Neolithic sites. We also find indications of 'community-festivals' in this period.

The butchering-place at Budhihal indicates its importance as a communal-butchering of animals. We also find that Neolithic people had some belief in the after-life. Hence, we find grave-goods in the burials. The treatment to the burials and the grave-goods also indicated variety of concepts among these people. Like, the corpses coloured red at Mehergarh, whereas, corpse accompanied with dogs at Burzahom. We also find common-burials at some places. Such was the Neolithic period who presupposes the progress of India, which would be witnessed in the Harappan period.

Chalcolithic (4000-900 B.C.)

The Neolithic age was followed by the age of metals. The transition from stone to metal was a slow and gradual process. This is proved by the fact that the use of stone and metallic implements is found side by side. There is also a close resemblance in the shape of early metal and Neolithic implements. However, there is no uniformity regarding the use of metals in different parts of India. In the case of northern India, copper replaced stone as the ordinary materials for tools and weapons and gradually iron overpowered copper. Whereas in south India Iron Age immediately succeeded Neolithic age. In Indian context the first metal used by its inhabitant was copper. In the subsequent paragraphs a brief sketch on the various metal using cultures of Indian subcontinent with their characteristic features in chronological order has been given. The first nomenclature used for the culture where both stone and copper was used is the Chalcolithic culture. On the basis of appearance, we may divide Chalcolithic cultures of India

into Harappan Urban Chalcolithic culture and Non-Harappan rural chalcolithic cultures.

Chalcolithic groups were primarily rural farming communities living in different parts of the country. Evidences of their settlement has come from many places. The important ones are Ahar, Gilund, and Balathal in Rajasthan, Kayatha and Eran in Western Madhya Pradesh, Jorwe, Nevasa, Daimabad, Chandoli, Songaon, Inamgaon, Prakash and Nasik in Western Maharashtra. Narhan in eastern Uttar Pardesh, Pandur Rajar Dhibi and Mahisadal in West Bengal. In southern India also, many sites of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have yielded a Chalcolithic horizon.

The term chalcolithic means the period or cultural phenomenon, where both copper and stone was in use. The word chalcolithic derived its name from two words that are Chalco-copper and lithic-stone. The Indian scenario of Chalcolithic culture includes non-urban, non-Harappan culture characterized by the use of copper and stone. These cultures make their appearance at the turn of second millennium B.C and eventually replaced by the iron-using cultures. Unlike the Harappan culture which was marked by a striking uniformity despite its spread over a vast area, these cultures show a distinct regional identity probably determined by smaller ecological unit. The main differences among these cultures lie in their characteristic ceramics, though economically they have a similar status. A limited amount of copper and an abundance of lithic blades mark most of these cultures.

Since, the accidental discovery of Jorwe in 1950,

many chalcolithic cultures have been discovered during the last three decades in different parts of the country in general and central and western India in particular. These chalcolithic cultures of India share certain common features. They are all characterized by a painted ceramic, usually black-on-red, a specialized blade/flake industry of the siliceous material like chalcedony and copper which was restrictedly used. Their economy was based on subsistence agriculture, stock raising and hunting fishing. They were all rural cultures which did not develop into an urban status obviously because of inadequate technology for exploiting the environment. Their main focus was the great Indian plateau which is characterized by black-cotton soil.

The most important distinguished features of the Chalcolithic cultures is their distinct painted pottery. The Kayatha culture is characterized by a sturdy red slipped ware painted with designs in chocolate, a red painted buff ware and a combed ware bearing incised pattern. The Ahar people made a distinctive black-and-red ware decorated with white designs. The Malwa ware is rather coarse in fabric but was a thick buff slip over which designs were executed in dark brown or black. The chalcolithic cultures of India have a chronological sequence as follow.

- Kayatha Culture - C. 2000-1800 B.C
- Ahar or Banas Culture - C. 2000-1400 B.C
- Malwa Culture. - C. 1700-1200 B.C
- Chirand Culture. - C. 1600-600 B.C
- Pandu rajr Dhibi. - C. 1700-700 B.C

- Golabai sasan - C. 2200-700 B.C
- Nagarjuna Konda. - C. 2000-1000 B.C
- Brahmagiri. - C. 2000-1000 B.C

The entire chalcolithic cultural site in India flourished in the outskirt of 3rd millennium B.C and lasted up to 1st millennium B.C, up to the emergence of Iron Culture. The south Indian chalcolithic also chronologically matches with their northern and western counterparts though culturally differ in some respect.

Chalcolithic means during this period people were using copper tools along with stone tools. Indian Chalcolithic called as 'Age of Early Farmers', running from 3000 BC to 700 BC. It succeeds Neo-lithic period. During this period, India dotted with villages of early farmers. In those, the villages in the Indus-Sarasvati valley comparatively developed more. Hence, in this part we witness the emergence of first urban civilization, called as 'Harappa Civilization'.

According to geographical variations, we find sub-cultures of Indian Chalcolithic, viz. Ahar/Banas culture of Rajasthan, Kayatha-Ahar-Malawa culture of Madhya Pradesh, Jorwe culture in Maharashtra etc. Whereas, Chalcolithic culture in Karnataka developed alongside the Neolithic culture over there. These cultures connected with each other through the exchanges.

Highlights of Chalcolithic People:

Salient features of the Chalcolithic cultures in India are as follows:

- These people used to live in rectangular/circular houses

made of mud and mud bricks. The houses were of more rooms and of rammed floor and thatched roof.

- They followed alternative mode of subsistence, agriculture, pastoralism, hunting and fishing. Farming was done with wooden/bony plough and by adopting irrigation technologies. They were cattle-pastoralists, however, during adverse climatic condition, they followed sheep-goat pastoralism. They acquired expertise in copper-craft. However, as copper was rare and mined only in the areas of Rajasthan, they used bones and stones to make tools.
- Pots held significant position in their daily life-style; hence, we find quality and specialization in pot-making. These are Black-on-red painted ware; however, show different traits according to different sub-cultures.
- They also undertook exchanges with other communities hence we find foreign goods/tools in their areas.
- They were followers of 'Bull' and 'Mother-Goddess' cult. Besides, they also believed in 'After-life'. Hence, the dead found their final resting place either in their homes or close to their homes.

Megalithic Culture

The culture in which large stones used to mark out the burials is called as 'Megalithic Culture'. The evidence of their settlements is rare; however, their burials were profusely discovered in all parts of Deccan. The Megalithic culture shows its existence in Deccan from 1000 BC and is gradually declined in 300 BC. Iron technology, horse, use of stones for

burial marking, black-&-red ware etc. are the main highlights of Megalithic culture.

Babinton discovered earliest Megalithic burial in the Malbar region of southern India (1823). So far Maharashtra is concerned, we find evidence of this culture in the areas of Vidarbha only. Hundreds of burials discovered from the region in which only four to five places indicate remains of their settlements. The Megalithic culture was not a uniform one. It holds various subcultures; hence, we find various kinds of burial-types, like, Cairn circles, cist & cairn circles, dolmen/chamber, Menhir, Topic-Kal, urn-burials, sarcophagus, rock-cut cave etc. Among these, we find mainly cairn circles in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The other types discovered from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Settlement:

We have comparatively less remains of their settlements than to their burials. The Megalithic people were mainly nomadic one. Instead of farming, they relied on hunting and pastoralism. Their diet also consists more of roots, fruits and meat. The remains of their settlement discovered from different part of south India. These settlements were of seasonal nature. They lived in rectangular, square or circular huts. The floor rammed and lime-plastered, the walls made of mud with thatched roof. They used storage bins to store the grains. The kitchen had hearth in it.

Craft:

The Megalithic people were expert artisans; especially

in iron technology. It should be noted that their iron-tools show use of pure iron i.e. 99%. They made various tools and equipment from iron, like, swords, dagger, spearheads, arrowheads, chisel, axe, plough, sickles, tripod, plates, armlets, cauldron, nail cutter, nails, lamps, stirrups etc. They were also expert copper-smiths. They made various equipment from copper like earrings, bangles, bells, mirror, horse-ornaments. They also made various ornaments from silver and gold, like, rings, bangles, earrings, armlets, pendants, belts etc.

So far pottery is concerned, they made a typical pottery, known as 'Black-&-Red Ware'. They made bowls, basins, plates out of that. They also used to make red pots. It is informed that, either they, themselves prepare such pots or they got those from the villagers in exchange of iron-tools. They also made beautiful beads from semi-precious stones, like, carnelian, lapis lazuli, shell etc.

Contacts:

Being nomadic they always encountered with various people. They maintained these contacts through exchange in various items, like, lapis, shell, gold, silver. These were foreign objects to them. It is not exactly known who were these Megalithic people? On the basis of similarity in burial practice, some attribute their origin to the Mediterranean Sea. It should be noted that modern studies have concluded that the Megalithic people of India were hailed from India only. However, as they were living in various geographical regions, they belonged to different subcultures. Regarding their life

styles, scholars like Dhavalikar states that the Megalithic people were originally nomadic pastoralists. They had expertise in iron-metallurgy. During their journey, they used to settle near any village, temporarily. Then, they provide iron-equipment as per the requirement of those villagers. Then they marched forward. Such frequent journey and regular stops were utilized for their burial sites. The variety in their burial systems (types of burials) indicates the interaction among various tribes, belong to the same Megalithic culture.

Harappan Civilisation Introduction

The name Indus civilization evokes the urban, literate culture of the 3rd and early 2nd millennia BC that flourished in the area around the Indus river and its tributaries. Its first known cities, Harappa on the banks of a dried-up bed of the Ravi river, an Indus tributary, and Mohenjodaro, 570 kilometres downstream, in the vicinity of the Indus river itself. Geographically, however, this civilization (also called the Harappa, its first known site) included much more than the Indus zone; it was a combination of riverine lowlands that stretched to the east and southeast, highland areas to the north, and the coastal belt towards the southwest and southeast of the Indus system. This period witnessed the first experiments in urbanism in the subcontinent.

Discovery of the Civilization

In 1827 Charles Masson, a rather colourful character was the first recorded European to visit Harappa on his way to the Punjab after deserting the army of the British East India

Company. Four years later, another soldier and explorer Sir Alexander Burnes visited Harappa after mapping the Indus River. The activities and reports of these early explorers eventually came to the attention of Sir Alexander Cunningham the first director of the Archaeological Survey of India. He visited the site twice, once in 1853 and later in 1856. However, by the time of his second visit much damage had been done from the removal of bricks used to build the bed for the Lahore-Multan railway in what is now Pakistan. He concluded that the material was related to the ruins of nearby 7th Century AD Buddhist Temples.

Some minor excavation followed with some pottery, carved shell and a seal depicting either a one horned bovine animal, or the side-profile (Marshall 1931: 68) of a more probable two-horned animal with only one horn showing- one of the so-called unicorn seals. No more work was carried out until the early 1920s. The first real indications that there was a civilisation rivalling that of Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt came during trial excavations during which Sir John Marshall, the second director general appointed R.Sahni at Harappa in 1921 and at Mohenjo-daro- D. R. Bhandarkar in 1911 followed later by R.D.Banerjee in 1922.

Later excavations have shown that this culture encompassed many other rivers and extended to a wide area over what are now modern North Western India and Eastern Pakistan. Satellite imaging has also revealed previously thought mythical Saraswati River flowed alongside of some the settlements of this culture. Its mature, developed period

lasted for only about 500 years between c. 2400- 1900 BC. Later the culture became known as the Harappan Civilisation in order to de-emphasise what early archaeologist thought was a civilization solely geographically linked to the Indus River and also to remove the false assumption that the Indus Valley Civilisation was a superior, non-Indian culture. Today, the terms — Indus Valley Civilisation‖ or — Harappan Civilisation are interchangeable and largely free of imperialist or anti-imperialist sentiment.

Wider excavation in India, that started after the independence of India and Pakistan and still continues sporadically today, revealed that there are, at the current count, possibly over a thousand Harappan, or at least Harappan related unconfirmed sites spanning modern Pakistan and North West India and other major rivers, deltas and coastal areas. The major rivers included the Indus, Saraswati, Hakra-Ghaggar and their tributaries. This makes it the most geographically extensive of all ancient civilisations thus discovered. Far larger, in fact, than both Egypt and Mesopotamia together.

Background and Origin

Indus settlements mainly, though not exclusively, flourished in the part of the Indian subcontinent, which lies west of the Delhi-Aravalli-Cambay geographical axis. Several segments of that zone had seen the birth and development of agricultural communities, between c. 7000 BC and the genesis of urban centres in the first part of the third millennium BC. The subsistence pattern that is widely seen at Harappan sites- a combination of wheat and barley cultivation and domesticated

animal species in which cattle was most preferred-goes back to Mehrgarh in the Kachhi plain of Baluchistan which has also yielded the earliest evidence of agricultural life in South Asia (c. 7000 BC). From the 5th millennium BC onwards, this pattern is found spread all over the major areas of Baluchistan, from the Zhob-Loralai region in the northeast to Las Bela towards the south. At the same time, a majority of classic Indus sites are in riverine lowlands and the manner in which settlements and subsistence patterns had evolved in those areas, over a span of more than a thousand years prior to the efflorescence of the Harappan civilization, is central to understanding its evolution. In several lowland areas, there was a long period of antecedence. At the beginning of the fourth millennium BC, the Cholistan tract saw a well-defined phase of occupation, known as the Hakra ware culture, named after the river around which its distinctive ceramic assemblage was first discovered. Although the largest concentration of sites is around the Hakra river, its spread included Jalipur in Multan and Kunal in Haryana. Most of the sites seem to be small camps with a few permanently established settlements of substantial size (such as Lathwala in Cholistan, with an area of 26.3 hectares). The Hakra horizon is the first culture of the lowlands, which utilized both the desert and the riverine environments, using a variety of stone and copper tools. There are also occasional manufactured goods in raw materials that were not locally available, as is indicated by Jalilpur's repertoire of semi-precious stone, coral and gold beads.

Towards the western fringe of the Indus lowlands, the fourth millennium BC witnessed the birth of another culture, known as the Amri culture (after the type site of Amri) which dominated the Kirthar piedmont and Kohistan. What is most significant is that some Amri sites are marked by an sacro-sanctum/lower town division, a settlement plan that can be witnessed subsequently, in a highly developed and sophisticated form, in the layout of Indus cites. The spatial exclusiveness of the sacro-sanctum is emphasized by a highly elevated, conically shaped hill with encircling, terraced stone walls and remnants of ramps/stairways. The general habitation area, which was lower town, possibly contained domestic structures. The immediate backdrop to the Indus civilization is formed by the next phase, known as the Kot Diji culture, when elements of a common culture ethos can be seen across the Indus-Hakra plains and the Indo-Gangetic divide. There are several planned and fortified settlements; the construction of habitational areas aligned around a grid of north-south and east-west streets at Harappa, and the use of mud bricks in the Indus ratio of 1:2:4, along with a drainage system based on soakage pits in streets at Kunal are especially noteworthy. There is also an extensive but partly standardized repertoire of ceramic designs and forms (some of which are carried over into the Indus civilization), miscellaneous crafts and a sophisticated metallurgy that includes the manufacture of silver tiaras and armlets as also disc-shaped gold beads (typical of the Indus civilization), wide transport and exchange of raw materials, square stamp seals with designs, the presence of at least two signs of Indus writing at Padri and Dholavira (both in Gujarat)

and ritual beliefs embodied in a range of terracotta cattle and female figurines. Considered in totality, the term 'early Harappan' is appropriate for this phase since a number of features related to the mature Harappan period (a designation used for the classic urban, civilizational form) are already present. Several of these features also evoke the presence of commercial and other elite social groups. When one considers the intensification of craft specialization, dependent on extensive networks through which the required raw materials were procured, or the necessity of irrigation for agriculture in the Indus flood plain, without the risk of crop failure, for which a degree of planning and management was essential, the emergence and the character of the controlling or ruling elites becomes clear. On the whole, where is little doubt that the Indus civilization had indigenous roots and that its cultural precursors were the chalcolithic cultures of the northwest that flourished in the fourth and third millennia BC. Contrary to the views of some early scholars, Indus cities were not created either through the dissemination of the idea of civilization or by migration of population groups from West Asia.

Chronology

It is unlikely that civilizational efflorescence was a simultaneous process in all parts of the Harappan distribution area. By 2600 BC, this civilization was in existence, as it had clear contacts, at that point of time, with Mesopotamia. It appears increasingly probable that it matured first in lower Sind, Cholistan and presumably, the Kutch region, which was linked by a river to the Cholistan area. Cities like Harappa,

Kalibangan and Banawali came up a little later. The end was also staggered in time. Urban decline at Mohenjodaro had set by 2200 BC and by c. 2100 BC, it had ceased to exist as a city. However, the civilization continued after c. 2000 BC in other areas and at some sites survived till c. 1800 BC.

Geographical Distribution

Indus settlements are spread over a wide area of northwest India and Pakistan and their distribution illuminates the various ways in which this varied geographical areas was exploited. In the lower Indus basin of Larkana, Mohenjodaro dominated the flood plain, agriculturally the richest part of Sind. Larkana is also marked by lake depressions, such as the Manchhar, where fishing settlements existed. Towards the west, there were clusters of sites in the foothills of the Kirthar mountain range and the Kohistan. There, agriculture must have depended on spring water and rains. Routes linking up with Baluchistan also passed through this area. In upper Sind, the Sukkur-Rorhi hills saw settle- ments of workmen in and around flint quarries, the raw material from which Harappan blades were manufactured. The course of the Indus river in the third millennium BC was more southeasterly and it flowed into the Arabian sea in the vicinity of the Rann of Kutch. The Indus river adopted its present course only between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries AD. As one moves west, Baluchistan is reached where Harappan settlements are found in a variety of terrain-across the northern, mountain rim, on the flat Kacchi plain, in the district of Las Bela towards the south and along the coastal country known as the Makran. In the latter area,

the fortified sites of Sutkagendor and Sotka-koh were important in terms of the Indus civilization's sea trade with the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. Both were suitable landing places for maritime traffic and from these points, convenient routes linked up with the interior. In other parts of Baluchistan, Indus sites are found in areas that are still agriculturally viable and lie on arterial routes. Pathani Damb, for instance, was near the Mula pass, from where a route went across the Kirthar range while Naushahro was in the general vicinity of the Bolan, through which a major route led to Afghanistan. Such routes were important because through them, Baluchistan's metallic-ferrous ores (copper and lead) and semi-precious stone (lapis lazuli and turquoise) could be procured by the resource-poor Indus valley. The northernmost site of the Indus civilization, Shortughai, is in northeast Afghanistan. Shortughai provided access to Badakshan's la-pis lazuli and possibly to the tin and gold resources of Central Asia. To the northeast of Sind is the Pakistan province of Punjab. A large part of the province is comprised of doabs or tracts lying be- tween two rivers. Of these, the Bari doab (or land between the Ravi and an old bed of the Beas) sites are noteworthy, especially the sprawling city of Harappa. There are no settlements in the interfluves of the Jhelum and the Indus or that of the Jhelum and Chenab. South of the Sutlej river, is Bahawalpur. Part of it is made up of the desert trace of Cholistan, through which the Hakra river flowed. The largest cluster of Indus settlements is found here. Geographically, this tract connects the Indus plains with Rajasthan, which was vast copper deposits. There were several exclusive, industrial sites in Cholistan, marked by

kilns, devoted to large-scale craft production that included the melting and smelting of copper. East of the Sutlej is the alluvial terrain of the Indo-Gangetic divide, a transitional area between the Indus and the Ganga river systems, made up of the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Ghaggar river course in Rajasthan. A large part of the riverine and stream drainage from the Siwalik ridge between the Sutlej and Yamuna used to converge into the Ghaggar, the Indian name for the river known as the Hakra in Pakistan. There were several provincial urban centres in this region such as Kalibangan and Banawali although Rakhigarhi (in the Hissar district of Haryana) was the largest city and is said to be as large as Harappa. Classic Indus sites are also found in the Yamuna- Ganga doab, with a preponderance in its most northerly portion around Saharanpur. Finally, the spread of the Indus civilization included the quadrilateral of roughly 119,000 square kilometers between the Rann of Kutch and the Gulf of Cambay. Dholavira was the city par excellence of the Rann, with its vast expanse of tidal mud flats and dead creeks. Further east, the great mass of Kathiawad, now known as Saurashtra, is formed of Deccan lava and on its eastern edge flourished the port town of Lothal. The mainland of Gujarat is alluvial, formed by the Sabarmati, Mahi and minor parallel streams, actively prograding into the Gulf of Cambay. Here, Bhagatrav, on the estuary of the Kim river, forms the southernmost extension of the Indus civilization.

Settlement pattern of the Civilization

The settlement pattern was a multi-tiered one with urban

and rural sites that were markedly varied in terms of size and function. There were cities of monumental dimensions like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Dholavira and Rakhigarhi that stand out on account of their size (more than 100 hectares each) and the character of their excavated remains. While the older premise that such cities were based on a gridiron system of planning has been shown by recent research to be invalid, there is impressive evidence of centralized planning. City space was divided into public and residential sectors. At Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the separation of the largely (though not exclusively) public administrative sector from the residential part of the city took the form of two separate mounds. Dholavira's city plan was more intricate. At its fully developed stage, it had three parts made up of the citadel which was divided into a castle and a bailey area, the idle town and the lower town, all interlinked and within an elaborate system of fortification.

The character of some of the structure is also worth considering. Mohenjo-Daro's citadel, for instance, was constructed on a gigantic artificial platform (400 x 100m) made of a mud brick retaining wall (over 6m thick) enclosing a filling of sand and silt. This platform, after being enlarged twice, attained a final height of 7 metres and provided a foundation on which further platforms were built in order to elevate important structures such as the Great Bath and the granary, so that the highest buildings were about 20 metres above the surrounding plains and could be seen on the horizons for miles around. Another architectural marvel is

Dholavira's system of water management, crucial in an area, which is prone to frequent droughts. Rain water in the catchment areas of the two seasonal streams – Manhar and Mansar - was dammed and diverted to the large reservoirs within the city walls. Apparently, there were 16 water reservoirs within the city walls, covering as much as 36 percent of the walled area. Brick masonry walls protected them, although reservoirs were also made by cutting into the bedrock. Furthermore, drains in the castle-bailey area carried rainwater to a receptacle for later use.

The intermediate tier of the urban hierarchy was made up of sites that in several features recall the layout of the monumental cities of the civilization but are smaller in size. Kalibangan, Lothal, Kot Diji, Banawali and Amri are some of them and they can be considered as provincial centres. Kalibangan, like Mohenjodaro and Harappa, comprised of two fortified mounds-the smaller western one contained several mud brick platforms with fire altars on one of them. Most of the houses on the eastern mound had fire-altars of a similar type. Lothal was also a fortified town with its entire eastern sector being taken up by a dockyard (219x13m in size) which was connected with the river through an inlet channel. In its vicinity was the acropolis where the remains of a storehouse, in which clay sealings, some with impressions of cords and other materials on them, were discovered. Lothal's urban morphology also suggests that there is no necessary relationship between the size of a city and its overall planning. Mohenjodaro was at least 25 times the size of Lothal but the

latter shares with it the presence of two separate areas, burnt brick houses, and regularly aligned streets and drains. In fact, its paved streets and lanes are unrivalled in the Indus context. The third tier of the Indus settlement hierarchy is made up of small, urban sites. These show some evidence of planning but no internal sub-divisions. Notwithstanding their size and structurally unprepossessing character, they had urban functions. Allahadino in Sind is one such site, which had a diameter of only 100 metres but was an important metal crafting centre. Similarly, Kuntasi in Gujarat is a small Harappan fortified settlement where semi-precious stones and copper were processed.

Finally, urban centres were supported by and functionally connected with rural hinterlands of sedentary villages and temporary / semi-nomadic settlements. While the latter are generally small with thin occupational deposits, in the case of villages, outlines of huts and relatively thick deposits have been encountered. Kanewal in Gujarat, for instance, is 300 square metres and its cultural deposit (of 1.5 metre thickness) is suggestive of a secure village settlement. Similarly, the archaeological deposits of the Harappan phase in the Yamuna-Ganga doab-1.8 metres at Alamgirpur and 1.4 metres at Hulas-indicates that the pioneer colonizers of that area lived there for a long period of time. What is worth remembering is that, on the basis of size, it is not wise to distinguish rural and urban sites of the Indus civilization. In Cholistan, there are a few large sites, one of which covers 25 hectares (and, thus, is large than Kalibangan), which have

been described as nomadic settlements, not urban ones. On the other hand, Kuntasi was only 2 hectares in size but has been rightly classified as an urban settlement because of its functional role as a provider of craft objects.

Subsistence Pattern of the Civilisation

A stable system of agriculture, supplemented by animal husbandry, hunting and plant gathering, provided economic sustenance to urban networks. In view of the widely differing ecological conditions of the distribution area of this civilization, the subsistence strategy is not likely to have been a single or uniform one. The Harappans were familiar with the plough. Terracotta ploughs have been found at Indus sites in Cholistan and at Banawali and a ploughed field was revealed through excavation at Kalibangan. Though it belonged to the early Harappan period, there is no reason to doubt that the pattern continued during the mature Harappan period.

The Kalibangan field contained two sets of furrows crossing each other at right angles, thus forming a grid pattern, and it is likely that two crops were raised in the same field. In modern fields in that zone, mustard is grown in one set of furrows and horse gram in the other. Mixed cropping is suggested by other evidence as well as, for instance, in the mixture of wheat and barley at Indus sites. Such missed cropping is practiced even today in many parts of north India as an insurance against weather hazards so that wheat fails to ripen, the hardier barley is sure to yield a crop. Earlier, a broad division of cultivated crops among those areas in and around the Indus valley on the one hand and Gujarat on the other

hand, used to be recognized. In the Indus area, the cereal component was considered to be exclusively of wheat and barley while in Gujarat, rice and millets were more important. However, both rice and finger millet have now been discovered in Harappa. There is a range of other cultivated crops including peas, lentils, chickpeas, sesame, flax, legumes and cotton. The range suggests cotton. In Sind, cotton is usually a summer crop and such crops have generally been cultivated with the help of irrigation. This is because rainfall is extremely scanty, at about 8 inches. In any part of the Indian subcontinent which has less than 10 or 12 inches of rainfall, if agriculture on any scale has to be carried out with a substantial reduction of the risk factor, it can only be done with irrigation. Cattle meat was the favourite animal food of the Indus people and cattle bones have been found in large quantities at all sites that have yielded bones. In addition to their meat, cattle and buffaloes must have supported agricultural operations and served as draught animals. Among other things, this is suggested by their age of slaughter.

At Shikarpur in Gujarat, a majority of the cattle and buffaloes lived up to the age of maturity (approximately three years) and were then killed at various stages till they reached eight years of age. Mutton was also popular and bones of sheep/goat have been found at almost all Indus sites. Hunting of animals was not a negligible activity; the ratio of the bones of wild animals in relation to domesticated varieties is 1:4. The animals include wild buffalo, various species of deer, wild pig, ass, jackal, rodents and hare. The remains of fish and marine

molluscs are frequently found as well as. As for food gathering, wild rice was certainly consumed in the Yamuna-Ganga doab although the most striking evidence comes from Surkotada in Gujarat where the overwhelming majority of identified seeds are of wild nuts, grasses and weeds. In general, the Indus food economy was a broad-based, risk-mitigating system - a pragmatic strategy, considering the large and concentrated population groups that had to be supported.

Artisanal Production and Trade

A spectacular range of artisanal production is encountered at Indus cities. On the one hand, specialized crafts that had roots in the preceding period became more complex in terms of technological processes, and on the other hand, the combinations of raw materials being used, expanded. Along with the widespread urban demand for shell artefacts, semi-precious stone and steatite beads, faience objects, and implements as also jewellery in base and precious metals. It is now reasonably clear that the Indus civilization was not, in the main, a bronze using culture. Pure copper was the dominant tradition. Additionally, there was a variety of alloys ranging from low to high grade bronzes to copper-lead and copper-nickel alloys. Some of the crafted objects are quintessentially Indus, in the sense that they are neither found prior to the advent of the urban civilization nor after its collapse. Indus seals (inscribed, square or rectangular in shape, with representations of animals, most notably the unicorn for example, are rarely found in the late Harappan

and post-Harappan contexts since the commercial transactions for which they were used had dramatically shrunk. This is also true for the series of Indus stone statues of animals and men, of which the most famous is that of the Priest King. These appear to have had a politico-religious significance and are in a sculptural idiom that is very much within the realm of High Art. The disappearance of this stone carving tradition can be linked to the abandonment of urban centres, along with the migration and transformation of elite groups. Similarly, long barrel carnelian beads are a typical Indus luxury product, which were primarily manufactured at Chanhundaro. Their crafting demanded both skill and time; the perforation in a 6 to 13 cm length bead required between three to eight days. Evidently, the largely deurbanized scenario that followed the collapse of cities could not sustain such a specialized production.

One of the most striking features of the Indus craft traditions is that they are not region-specific. Shell objects were manufactured at Nagwada and Nageshwar in Gujarat and at Chanhundaro and Mohenjodaro in Sind. Similarly, metal artefacts were produced at Lothal in Gujarat, at Harappa in the Bari doab of Punjab and at Allahadino and Mohenjodaro in Sind. While craft objects were manufactured at many places, the manufacturing technology could be surprisingly standardized. In the case of shell bangles, at practically all sites they had a uniform width of between 5 mm and 7 mm and they were almost everywhere sawn by a saw that had a blade thickness of between 0.4 mm and 0.6mm. What is equally

striking about the wide distribution of craft production is that, in a number of cases, manufacture depended on raw materials that were not locally available. At Mohenjodaro, shell artefacts were manufactured from the marine mollusc, Turbinella pyrum, found along the Sind and Baluchistan coast which was brought in a raw state from there. Similarly, there is impressive evidence of manufacture of copper-based craft items at Harappa ranging from furnaces to slag and unfinished objects, even though the city was located in a minerally poor area. Such craft production could survive and prosper because of a highly organized trading system. Indus people had the capacity to mobilize resources from various areas ranging from Rajasthan to Afghanistan and, considering the scale of manufacture, it is likely that there were full-time traders that helped in providing the necessary raw materials. Most of these resource-rich areas also show evidence of contact with the Indus civilization. For example, at Chalcolithic Kulli culture sites, Harappan unicorn seals and pottery have been found. Similarly, the exploitation of Rajasthan's raw materials is underlined by Harappan pottery at some sites of the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura chalcolithic complex and by the strong stylistic similarities in the copper arrowheads, spearheads and fish hooks of the two cultures.

In addition to raw materials, other types of objects were trades. On the one hand, there was trade in food items as is underlined by the presence of marine cat fish at Harappa, a city that was hundreds of kilometres away from the sea. Craft items were also traded. Small manufacturing centres

like Nageshwar were providing shell ladles to Mohenjodaro which also received chert blades from the Rohri hills of Sind. It is now possible to visualize the exchange of finished objects between the monumental cities of the Indus civilization as well. For instance, stoneware bangles-a highly siliceous, partially sintered ceramic body with low porosity – manufactured at Mohenjodaro have been found 570 kilometres north, at Harappa. The nature of the social process involved in this exchange is unknown but is unlikely to be a case of satisfying an economic demand, since Harappa was also producing such bangles. Possibly, the unidirectional movement of some bangles from Mohenjodaro to Harappa is related to social transactions among related status or kin groups in the two cities.

The Indus civilization had wide ranging contacts with cultures and civilizations to the northwest and west of its distribution area. Indus and Indus-related objects have been found in north Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, north and south Iran, Bahrain, Failaka and the Oman Peninsula in the Persian Gulf, and north and south Mesopotamia. The objects include etched carnelian and long barrel-cylinder carnelian beads, square/ rectangular Indus seals, pottery with the Indus script, Indus motifs on local seals, ivory objects, and various terracotta such as ithyphallic specimens that have strong Indus analogues. Externally derived objects and traits have been found at Indus sites such as seals with Mesopotamian and Persian Gulf affinities, externally derived motifs on seals and steatite/ chlorite vessels. At the same time, the importance that

has been attached in Indus studies to the regions west of Baluchistan as the main areas from which the Indus civilization procured its raw materials, whether it is copper from Oman or carnelian of Persian Gulf origin is somewhat misplaced. There is an abundance of raw materials on the peripheries and within the area where Indus cities and settlements flourished. Before the advent of Indus urbanism, these raw materials were being used by the various culture that were antecedent to the Indus civilization and subsequently as well, they continued to be a part of the repertories of late/post-Harappan horizons, albeit on a reduced scale as compared to the situation during the civilizational phase. While, there may have been some raw materials involved in long distance trade, there is no reason to argue that the Indus civilization was in any way either solely or significantly dependent on the regions to the west for such resources.

Religious Beliefs

One of the most complex issues concerning ancient history is to determine past ways of thought and beliefs, especially in the case of the Indus civilization where these must be inferred from material remains, since its writing has not been satisfactorily deciphered. The archaeological indicators here are mainly portable objects of various kinds, figural representations and a few areas within settlements which seem to have been set apart for sacred purposes. There are no structures at Indus sites that can be described as temples nor are these any statues, which can be considered as images that were worshipped. A few structures reflect a

connection between concepts of cleansing through water relation to ritual functions. The sunken, rectangular basin known as the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro is one such instance. The cult connection of this water using structure is evident from its method of construction which had three concentric zones around it, including streets on all four sides (making it the only free-standing structure of the city), for the purpose of a ritual procession leading into it. The bathing pavements and well in the vicinity of the offering pits on Kalibangan's citable also underline this connection. As for beliefs connected with fertility, it is possible that some terracotta Mohenjodaro and Harappa. At towns like Kalibangan and Surkotada, female figurines are practically absent. Even at Mohenjodaro, the fact that only 475 of the total number of terracotta figurines and fragments represented the female form means that this was not as common a practice as it has been made out to be. Several of the female figurines were utilized as lamps or for the burning of incense. Fertility in relation to the male principle has also been evoked not merely in the context on the Siva Pasupati' seal but also with reference to the phallic stones that have been found at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Dholavira as also with regard to a miniature terracotta representation of a phallic emblem set in a ovular shaped flat receptacle from Kalibangan. Religious sanctity was associated with particular trees and animals as well. The presence of part human-part animal characters on Indus seals and a human personage on a pipal (ficus religiosia) tree, in fact, suggest a shamanistic component in Harappan religion. None of these features, however suggest a trans-regional Indus

religion with cult centres and state dominated rituals, of the kind that is writ large on the architectural landscape of Bronze Age West Asia and Egypt.

Decline and Devolution of the Civilisation

The process of urban decline appears to have unfolded in various ways. At Mohenjodaro there was a steady deterioration, apparent in the fact that the walls of the terminal level structures are frequently thin walled, haphazardly laid out, made of unstandardized bricks. This is also true of Dholavira whose progressive impoverishment was hastened by two spells when the city was deserted. As urbanism crumbled, rickety, jerry-built structures and the reused stones robbed from older structures came to be commonly encountered on the other hand, Kalibangan was abandoned relatively suddenly and the same is true for Banawali. In other words, it is not one even but different kinds of events that must have led to the disappearance of urban life. There is, however, no unanimity about these events or about their relative importance. In fact, the collapse of the Indus civilization continues to be a focus of large historical speculation and debate.

The earliest formulations for urban collapse revolved around the hypothetical Aryans and the allusions in the Rigveda to the destruction wreaked on forts/cities by them. This idea continued to remain a popular one till the 1940s when archaeological proof of Aryan invasions was claimed to have been discovered at Mohenjodaro, on the one hand, in the assortment of scattered skeletons (apparently sings of a

massacre) and at Harappa, on the other hand, in the form of deliberate blocking of entrances and a culture (Cemetery H) overlying the mature Harappan phase which was supposed to represent the conquerors. Since the 1950s, however serious doubts have been raised about the historicity of an Aryan invasion. Among other things, it has been demonstrated that the massacre evidence was based on very few skeletons that cannot be dated to the same stratum.

Increasingly, greater attention has been paid to the question of the environment in the Indus distribution area and the role of rivers and climate in the decline of an urban culture. At several Indus cities such as Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro and Lothal, there are silt debris intervening between phases of occupation and these underline the possibility of damage being caused by the inundations of swollen rivers. It has been suggested that the excess river water was a product of earthquakes, although this has not been consequence not of excessive but insufficient river water. The river in question is the Ghaggar-Hakra, often been identified with the Vedic Saraswati, which was drying up number of sites dramatically shrank in the phase that post-dates the urban one. The reduction in the flow of the Ghaggar-Hakra was a consequence of river diversion and, according to one group of scholars it was the Sutlej that abandoned its channel and began to flow westwards, while others have contended that the Yamuna was diverted from the Indus into the Ganges system.

The impact of the Harappans on their environment is

also a factor that has been considered as contributing to the collapse of the Indus civilization. A possible disequilibrium between urban demand and the carrying capacity of the land, leading to a fodder requirements and fuel for firing bricks are among the explanations that have been offered. However, the archaeological scaffolding for supporting such arguments remains to be systematically worked out. In the stretch that lies roughly east of Cholistan, the absence of long-term cultural roots has been highlighted. It has been suggested that since the Indus phenomenon there did not evolve through a long process but was imposed on a hunting-gathering economic context, its presence over time came to be thinly stretched and eventually, could not be sustained. The question of the absence of a long antecedence for the civilization in the Indo-Gangetic divide and Gujarat may require modification in the context of the discovery of cultures antedating the mature Harappan phase in Kutch and Saurashtra on the one hand, and in the Hissar area of Haryana on the other. At the same time, in the period following the demise of the urban form, chalcolithic village cultures as also microlithic hunter-gatherers are encountered, an indicator that such cultures were economically sustainable in those regions. However, the highly complex system of an urban civilization, which delicately balanced different social and economic sub-system, was no longer viable.

What followed the collapse of Indus urbanism was a variety of late/post Harappan cultures the Cemetery H culture in Punjab and Cholistan, the Jhukar culture of Sind, the

Rangpur IIB and Lustrous Red Ware phases of Gujarat. In this latter phase, a few elements of the Harappan tradition, by which one means features whose genealogy can be located in the mature Harappan period, persisted to a greater or lesser degree, medicated by other cultural elements. However, the civilization had ended and even though aspects of this tradition continued, it was in a landscape whose cultural diversity contrast sharply with that of the preceding, mature Harappan period. What does the end of the Indus civilization mean in relation to the character of the cultural developments that followed? Urban settlements, for example, did not disappear completely- Kudwala in Cholistan, Bet Dwaraka off the coast of Gujarat and Daimabad in the upper Godavari basin are three of them. But they are relatively few, and certainly there is not city that matches the grandeur and monumentality of Mohenjodaro and Harappan cities, these are now few and far between, although baked bricks and drains are present in the Cemetery H occupation at Harappa while at Sanghol there was a solid mud platform on which mud houses stood. Writing is occasionally encountered but remains generally confined to a few potsherds. The same holds true for seals, which became rare, and at Daimabad and Jhukar are circular, not rectangular like the typical Indus specimens. The Dholavira specimens, on the other hand, are rectangular but without figures. The other indicator of a reduction in the scale of trade is the relatively sparse evidence of interregional procurement of raw materials. On the whole, one would say that elements emblematic of the urban tradition of the Indus civilization dramatically shrank and finally disappeared.

Not everything that is associated with the Indus civilization disappeared, as it were, without a trace. A few craft traditions survived urban collapse and are found in the makeup of the late/post-Harappan mosaic. Faience was one such craft and ornaments fashioned out of this synthetic stone are commonly found in the post-Harappan period. A similar continuity can be seen in the character of metal technology, although there was a general decrease in the use of copper. The bronzes from Daimabad in Maharashtra made by the *lost wax* process and the replication of a marine shell in copper at Rojdi in Gujarat are evidence of this and underline the continuation of the technical excellence of the Indus copper and copper alloy traditions. There was also an extension of multi-exponential expansion in agriculture, settlements of late/post-Harappan lineage in the aftermath of the Indus phenomenon there was no cultural cohesion or artefactual uniformity of the kind that was a hallmark of that civilization. Instead of a civilization, there were cultures, each with its own distinct regional identity.

Character of the Indus civilization

In order to understand what set it apart from other contemporaneous cultures in the Indian subcontinent and from the Bronze Age civilizations of West Asia and Egypt, it is necessary to be clear about the character of the Indus civilization.

The Indus phenomenon is called a civilization because it incorporated within itself the social configurations and organizational devices that characterize such a cultural form. It was the only literate sub-continental segment of its time.

More than 4000 Indus inscriptions have been found, and even though they remain undeciphered, the script was used for mercantile purposes (as suggested by the seals and sealings), personal identification (in the form of shallow inscriptions on bangles, bronze implements etc.) and possibly for civic purposes (underlined by the remains of a massive inscribed board at Dholavira). The civilization‘s essence was a settlement pattern in which cities and towns were particularly prominent. That such urban centres contained monumental structures whose construction required large outlays of labour and resources, and were marked by heterogeneous economic activities, are other conspicuous indicators. Earlier, Mohenjodaro and Harappa had alone stood out as the civilization’s large cities today we know of many more whose dimensions qualify them for a similar status. These are fairly spread out Ganweriwala in Cholisatan, Dholavira in Kutch and Rakhigarhi in Haryana are such centres- and symbolize the creation of aggregates of population on a scale previously unknown. The largest variety and quantity of jewellery, statuary and seals, are found in urban centres and indicate that craft production was, in the main, geared to the demands of city dwellers. Further, the characters of planning, the necessity of written transactions, and the existence of a settlement hierarchy in which urban and rural settlements of various sizes and types were functionally connected in important ways all indicate administrative organization on a scale that was unprecedented in relation to other protohistoric sub-continental cultures. Many of these are archaeological indicators of a state society as well. Whether

there were several states or a unified empire in Harappan times remains unclear. Urban settlements may have functioned as city-states since their layout and character suggests the presence of local aristocracies, merchants and craftspeople. The Indus civilization, while sharing many general features with the contemporary Bronze Age cultures such as the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia and Old Kingdom Egypt, had its own distinct identity. For one thing, with a geographical spread of more than a million square kilometers, this was the largest urban culture of its time. Unlike Mesopotamia and Egypt, there were no grand religious shrines nor were magnificent palaces and funerary complexes constructed for the rulers. Instead, its hallmark was a system of civic amenities for its citizens rarely seen in other parts of the then civilized world-roomy houses with bathrooms, a network of serviceable roads and lanes, an elaborate system of drainage and a unique water supply system. Dholavira's network of dams, water reservoirs and underground drains and Mohenjodaro's cylindrical wells, one for every third house, epitomize the degree of comfort that townspeople enjoyed in relation to contemporary Mesopotamians and Egyptians who had to make do with fetching water, bucket by bucket, from the nearby rivers.

Conclusion

We can say that the rise of the Harappans was a gradual development from pastoral nomads to farm- ing villages in Baluchistan, spreading to the Indus plain and ending in the refinement of Harappan cities. Uniquely among Old World

Civilisations towns were planned to a similar formula that included a surrounding wall, a citadel, granaries, housing and sophisticated water control systems. Agriculture was organised with granaries for storage, animals were domesticated as represented on seals and use of irrigation systems widespread. Long distance trade existed as is evidenced from presence of nonlocal material, the Akkadian/ Indus intercultural seals and references in Sumerian texts. There was a shared typology of artefacts such as- elaborate beadwork, pottery, statuary (both crude and sophisticated), toys, stone, copper and bronze tools and a common seal script written language. Most evidence suggests that there was no sudden fall, rather a combination of environmental factors was the most likely reason for decline. We are also left with a general consensus of opinion among most scholars that the legacy of the Harappans was to influence the development of early Hindu culture.

Harappan Script

Examples of Harappan writing has been found on seals and seal impressions, pottery, bronze tools, stoneware bangles, bones, shells, ladles, ivory and on small tablets made of steatite, bronze and copper. Square stamp seals are the dominant form of Harappan writing media; they are normally an inch square (2.54 centimetres) displaying the script itself on the top and an animal motif at the centre. They are chiefly made of steatite, some of them include a layer of a smooth glassy-looking material, but there are also examples of seals made of silver, faience and calcite. The seals were pressed on a

pliable surface (e.g. clay) in order to replicate its image.

Since the Harappan Script has not been deciphered yet, its use is not known with certainty and all that we think we know is based on archaeological evidence alone. Some of the seals may have been used as amulets or talismans, but they also had a practical function as a marker for identification. Since writing in ancient times is generally associated with elites trying to record and control trans-actions, it is also believed that the Harappan Script was used as an administrative tool. There are also examples of this script being used on clay tags attached to bundles of goods that were traded between merchants; some of these clay tags have been found in the Mesopotamia region, well outside the Harappan Valley, a testimony of how wide goods travelled in ancient times.

The Harappan Script was also used in the context of 'narrative imagery': these images included scenes related to myths or stories, where the script was combined with images of humans, animals and/or imaginary creatures depicted in active poses. This last use resembles the religious, liturgical and literary use which is well attested in other writing systems.

Decipherment attempts of the Harappan Script

Slightly over 400 basic signs have been identified as part of the Harappan Script. Only 31 of these signs occur over 100 times, while the rest were not used regularly. This leads researchers to believe that a large amount of the Harappan Script was actually written on perishable materials, such as palm

leaves or birch, which did not survive the destruction of time. This is hardly surprising considering that palm leaves, birch and bamboo tubes were widely used as writing surfaces in south and south east Asia. Some researchers have argued that the roughly 400 symbols can actually be reduced to 39 elementary signs, the rest being merely variations of styles and differences between scribes.

There are a number of factors preventing scholars from unlocking the mystery of the Harappan Script. To begin with, some of the languages of ancient times, such as Egyptian, were deciphered thanks to the recovery of bilingual inscriptions, that is by comparing an unknown script with a known one. Unfortunately, no bilingual inscriptions have yet been found to allow the Harappan Script to be compared to a known writing system.

Another obstacle for its decipherment relates to the fact that all of the inscriptions found so far are relatively short, fewer than 30 signs. This means that analysing recurring sign patterns, another technique that can help to unlock the meaning of a writing system, cannot be successfully performed for the Harappan Script.

The last important reason why the Harappan Script remains undeciphered, and possibly the most debated of all, is that the language (or languages) that the script represents is still unknown. Scholars have suggested a number of possibilities: Indo-European and Dravidian are the two language families most commonly favoured, but other options have been proposed as well, such as Austroasiatic, Sino-Tibetan, or

perhaps a language family that has been lost. On the basis of the material culture associated with the Harappan Valley Civilization, a number of scholars have suggested that this civilization was not Indo-European.

What is it known about the Harappan script?

Although decipherment of the Harappan Script has not been possible yet, the majority of the scholars who have studied it agree on a number of points:

The Harappan Script was generally written from right to left. This is the case in most examples found, but there are some exceptions where the writing is bidirectional, which means that the direction of the writing is in one direction on one line but in the opposite direction on the next line.

The representation of certain numerical values has been identified. A single unit was represented by a downward stroke, while semicircles were used for units of ten.

The Harappan Script combined both word signs and symbols with phonetic value. This type of writ- ing system is known as "logo-syllabic", where some symbols express ideas or words while others represent sounds. This view is based on the fact that roughly 400 signs have been identified, which makes it unlikely that the Harappan Script was solely phonetic. However, if the hypothesis that the hundreds of signs can be reduced to just 39 is true, that means that the Harappan Script could be solely phonetic.

Asko Parpola

Asko Parpola (born. 1941) is a Finnish Indologist and

Sindhologist, current professor emeritus of Indology and South Asian Studies at the University of Helsinki. He specializes in the Indus script. Professor Parpola's contributions to Harappan studies are truly monumental, and these are not confined merely to the study of the Indus script. He has published a long series of brilliant papers to establish the fact of Aryan immigration into South Asia after the decline of the Indus Civilisation. As a Vedic scholar-turned-Dravidianist, he has the best academic credentials to prove that the Indus Civilisation was pre-Aryan and that its writing encoded a Dravidian language. In addition to his linguistic skills and deep scholarship of Vedic Sanskrit and the Dravidian languages, he has harnessed the computer in one of the earliest scientific attempts to study the structure of the Indus texts through computational linguistic procedures. Professor Parpola has produced the first truly scientific concordance to the Indus inscriptions. His concordance is accurate and exhaustive and has become an indispensable tool for researchers in the field.

Equally impressive, and again truly monumental, are the publications inspired and co-authored by Professor Parpola, of two volumes of the Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions. These volumes reproduce in amazing clarity and detail all the Indus seals (and their newly-made impressions) and other inscriptions. I happen to know personally the enormous difficulties Professor Parpola faced in publishing these volumes, nudging and goading the slow-moving bureaucracy in India and Pakistan to make available the

originals, most of which were photographed again by the expert whom Professor Parpola sent from Finland for the purpose.

He published his magnum opus in 1994, Deciphering the Indus Script. The book contains the best exposition of the Dravidian hypothesis relating to the Indus Civilisation and its writing. Even though the Indus script remains undeciphered, as Professor Parpola readily admits, his theoretical ground-work on the Dravidian character of the Indus Civilisation and the script, and the fact of Aryan immigration into India after the decline of the Indus Civilisation, have been accepted by most scholars in the world.

Most of the Early Dravidian speakers of North and Central India switched over to the dominant Indo-Aryan languages in Post-Harappan times. Speakers of Aryan languages have indistinguishably merged with speakers of Dravidian and Munda languages millennia ago, creating a composite Indian society containing elements inherited from every source. It is thus likely that the Indus art, religious motifs and craft editions survived and can be traced in Sanskrit literature from the days of the Rigveda, and also in Old Tamil traditions recorded in the Sangam poems. Professor Parpola is aware of the Harappan heritage of both Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, the former culturally and the latter linguistically. His profound scholarship in both families of languages enables him to mine the Indian cultural heritage holistically in his search for clues to solve the mysteries of the Indus script.

Iravatham Mahadevan

Iravatham Mahadevan (1930-2018) was a pioneer in the research on the Tamil-Brahmi script and the Indus script and the connections between the two civilisations

His first scholarly interest was early Tamil inscriptions found in caves and rock shelters in many sites in Tamil Nadu, which described mostly place names and the names of donors related to Jainism. It was Mahadevan who recognised that they were in Tamil-Brahmi script and that they belonged to the Sangam Age. He saw that Brahmi had been adapted to Tamil and christened the language of these lithic records Tamil-Brahmi. The first phase of this study lasted from 1961 to 1967. He was actively involved with the International Association of Tamil Research (IATR). He published papers on the inscription of the Cheras of the Sangam age, found in Pugalur; and of the Pandyas of the Sangam Age, found in Mangulam. He copied the inscriptions by setting up scaffolds to reach the cave roof.

In 1967, he made a path-breaking presentation on Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions at the International Tamil Conference in Chennai, organised by the IATR, of which he was the administrative officer. He established his reputation as a scholar to be reckoned with in the field. He also traced the origin of the "dot" (pulli) in Tamil, for which he used numismatic evidence. It is this humble dot that kept each Tamil letter independent and words from becoming a string of letters.

He calculated that Tholkappiam, the Tamil grammatical treatise, was written in the second century CE. F.W. Ellis had translated Tirukkural earlier and had concluded that the author of this ethical work was a Jain. He had a gold coin issued, which depicted a Jain monk, in commemoration of the author. It was Mahadevan who identified the gold coin and brought it to the notice of the world.

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MODULE II

SOCIO-POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN THE INDO-GANGETIC PLAINS

Introduction

After the decline of Harappan civilization, near about 1500 BC, we find a new culture in the *Sap- tasindhu* region, which was of nomadic nature. They were pastoralists who used to speak a different language, i.e. Sanskrit. They believed in nature-worship; and through, sacrifices, i.e. *Yajnyas*, expressed their faith. For worshiping, they created prayers (*richa/shloka*), and used to recite these prayers while performing sacrifices. The collection of these prayers was called as 'Veda'. And the language group who spoke Sanskrit (in which the Vedas were created) was called as 'Aryans'. The population of Aryans was of mixed one; however, spoke same language. Whereas, the culture in which the Vedas were created is known as 'Vedic Culture'.

At the outset, the Aryans were wandering in the areas of *Saptasindhu* region, i.e. north-western part of India. The region is traversed by seven rivers, viz. Indus, Ravi, Sutlej, Beas, Jhelum, Chenab, Sarasvati; hence the name *Saptasindhu*. At that stage, they had certain kind of uniform culture. However, after two-three centuries, in search of pasture, they migrated in more internal part of India. At this stage, they met various tribes, communities those were foreign to them. Such new relations influenced their culture; and, in

this period, we find Aryans following some different kind of culture. Thus, regarding Vedic culture, we find two stages of its development, termed as 'Early Vedic Period' (*Saptasindhu* region) and 'Later Vedic Period (more internal part of India). The literature, they had created in these two periods indicate the cultural change through which the Vedic Aryans went.

Vedic Literature

The 'Aryans' were followers of nature-worship', and through sacrifices, they express their faith. In order to express their faith, they created vast body of literature in Sanskrit. Various Vedic scholars created the prayers. In the beginning, these were not written. However, through the tradition of 'Teacher and Disciple', the prayers or the literatures were passed by from one generation to another through oral tradition. Obviously, the rules of correct pronunciation were strictly followed in this transmission.

To understand the Vedic Culture, we have only this 'Vedic literature' at our disposal. These are comprised of Vedas (Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sam-Veda, Atharva-Veda) and their appendices (Brah- manas, Aranyakas, Upanishads) and some explanatory books of Vedas (Vedanga, Shad-darshanas). Together they are known as 'Vedic literature'.

The Vedas: Rig-Veda

The Rig-Veda is the earliest of Vedic literature. It was created when Aryans were wandering in the region of *Saptasindhu*. It had 10 mandalas, however, in this period, i.e. Early Vedic period, 2 to 9 mandalas were part of the Rig-

Veda. It is a collection of prayers, credited to specific scholars. The prayers, called as 'Richas', are devoted to various powers in nature, like, rain, fire, wind, sun, dawn etc. Such powers were deified as *Indra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Marut*, *Surya*, *Usha* etc. Some Gods are be- nevolent whereas some are malevolent.

Vedic literature in Later Vedic Period

Before and during this period, Aryans were migrated to more eastern part/internal part of India. Due to relations with foreign lands and communities, they undergone through various changes in their culture. We can understand this 'cultural change' through the literature they have created in this period of transition.

Rig-Veda (1 and 10^{th} mandalas): Remaining mandalas like 1 and 10^{th} were created in this period. The 10^{th} mandals comprised of one 'Purush-sukta'. In this sukta, we find early reference of the division of Vedic society, like, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

Yajur-Veda: As we know, the prayers in Rig-Veda were recited at the time of sacrifices. Yajur-Veda was created to explain the methods of such sacrifices. Hence, most of the prayers in Yajur-Veda were taken from Rig-Veda. The Yajur-Veda has two parts, viz. Shukla and Krishna

Sam-Veda: Sam-Veda was created to explain the methods of recitation of prayers in Rigveda. Hence, most of the prayers of Sam-Veda are taken from Rig-Veda. The Sam-Vedas has two parts, viz. *Archic* and *Uttararchik.*

Atharva-Veda: This is the last of the four Vedas dealing with

various types of subjects, like, mysticism, magic and black magic, treachery etc. ii. Appendices of Vedas (Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads) The Vedic Aryans created another body of prose literature in order to explain the knowledge in the Vedas. Hence, each Veda has its own Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads, like:

Rig-Veda has its *Aiterya* and *Kaushitaki* Brahmanas, *Aiterya* and *Kaushitaki* Aranyakas and *Aiterya* and *Kaushitaki* Upnishadas. Yajur-Veda has its *Taitariya, Shatapath* Brahmanas, *Taitariya, Brihad* Aranyakas and *Aitariya, Kaushitaki* Upanishads. Sam-Veda has its *Tandya, Jaiminiya* Brahamanas and *Chandogya, Jaiminiya* Upnishadas Atharva-Veda has its *Mundak, Prasha* Upanishads.

The Brahmanas deal with rules of sacrifices, whereas, Aranyakas and Upanishads discuss philosophical and spiritualistic issues from the Vedas, like, structure of universe, relations between one's soul and god, one's own existence etc.

Explanatory books of Vedas (Vedangas, Shada-darshanas**)**

Vedangas: To understand the knowledge of the Vedas in a proper and systematic manner, the Vedangas were created, like, *Shiksha* (to pronounce prayers correctly), *Kalpa* (the rules to perform sacrifice in a proper manner), *Vyakarana* (gramer), *Nirukta* (etymology of words in the Vedas), *Chanda* (to musical rules of recitation), *Jyotisha* (proper time to perform sacrifices).

Shad-darshanas: To understand the philosophical content of Vedas, the Shad-darshanas were created, like, *Nyaya* (of

Gautama, explaining logic), *Sankhya (*of Kapil, explaining the unity of soul with God), *Yoga* (of Patanjali), *Vaiseshika* (Kananda, regarding atoms), *Purva-mimasa* (Jaimini, Vedic rituals), *Uttara-mimasa* (Badarayana, structure of universe, spiritualism) etc.

Original Home of Aryans

Until now we are unable to know the original home of the Aryans. Many theories have been put forward regarding this, according to some they have come from out of India, whereas, some look their roots in India. Here, we would take a brief note on this debate.

Early Philological Attempt: In 1786 Sir William Jones, the founder of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, discovered the close relationship between Sanskrit, the language of these Indo-Aryans, and Greek, Latin, German and Celtic languages. His epoch-making discovery laid the foundation for a systematic philological study of the Indo-European family of languages which as we know by now includes many more members than Jones had once assumed. The serious scholarship of the early philologists who discovered these linguistic affinities was later on overshadowed by nationalists who tried to identify the speakers of these ancient languages with modern nations whose origins were to be traced to a mythical Aryan race. In the late nineteenth century scholars had already agreed that the original home of the Aryans could be traced to the steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. But in the twentieth century nationalist German historians and, more recently, also Indian nationalists have staked out a claim for

their respective countries as the original home of the Aryans. In India this has become a major issue in contemporary historiography.

North Pole: Based on the attraction of Aryans for the dawn and description of long nights and days in Rig-Veda, Tilak claimed that the original home of Aryans lay in arctic region of North Pole.

Scandinavia: Based on similarity in language, German scholars that both belong to same group, called as 'Indo-European' and hence, originally were resided in Scandinavian country.

Central Asian Origin Theory: During the last decades intensive archaeological research in Russia and the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union as well as in Pakistan and northern India has considerably enlarged our knowledge about the potential ancestors of the Indo-Aryans and their relationship with cultures in West, Central and South Asia. Excavations in southern Russia and Central Asia convinced the international community of archaeologists that the Eurasian steppes had once been the original home of the speakers of Indo-European language. Since the fourth millennium BC their culture was characterised by the domestication of horses and cattle and by the use of copper and bronze tools and weapons and horse drawn chariots with spoked wheels. In the third millennium BC this Kurgan culture's spread from the steppes in the west of the Ural eastwards into Central Asia. Tribes of this nomadic population located in the area of present-day Kazakhstan

which belonged to the timber-grave culture are now considered to be the ancestors of the Indo-Iranian peoples. By the end of the third millennium the Indo-Aryan tribes seem to have separated from their Iranian brothers.

Although the eventual arrival of the Iranian and the Indo-Aryan speaking people in Iran and north- west India is well documented by their respective sacred hymns of the *Avesta* and Veda, the details and the chronology of their migrations from Central Asia are still a matter of controversy among archaeologists, historians and scholars of Indo-Iranian languages. Earlier historians had believed that there was a clearly identifiable gap of about five centuries (eighteenth to thirteenth centuries BC) between the end of the Indus civilisation and the coming of the Aryans. These scholars concentrated their attention on the Vedic Aryans, but more recent archaeological research has changed our knowledge about this period nearly as dramatically as in the case of our knowledge about the antecedents of the Indus civilisation. The alleged gap between Late Harappan and Early Vedic India is no longer considered to be as clearly defined as it used to be. On the one hand it becomes more and more clear that in some regions of South Asia Late Harappan traits continued right up to the Early Vedic period, whereas, on the other hand, intrusive elements which are ascribed to early Indo-Aryan migrations into South Asia can be traced in Late Harappan sites. Excavations in Baluchistan (e.g. Mehrgarh VIII and nearby Nausharo III) brought to light a considerable number of new cultural elements around 2000 BC. These findings indicate a

close relationship with the contemporary Bronze Age culture of Greater Iran which is known from archaeological sites like Namazga V in southern Turkmenistan and Teppe Hissar III in northwest Iran. This culture may have been controlled by a semi-nomadic elite which is assumed to have belonged to the speakers of the Indo-Iranian languages.

In case the Indo-Aryan identity of the people of these early migrations in the early second millennium BC could really be proven; it is evident that some Indo-Aryan groups must have come into a direct and even active contact with the urban civilisation of the Indus cities which was still flourishing at that time. Such an identification however does not necessarily imply that these early Indo-Aryans have to be regarded as the direct ancestors of the (later) Rigvedic people. As will be discussed below, the Rigveda, the oldest Vedic text, reflects a socio-economic and cultural context which does not show any evidence of urban life. Scholars who accept an Indo-Aryan identity of these early Central Asian migrants in the Late Harappan period therefore assume that these early carriers of the Greater Iranian Bronze Age Culture (Parpola) were soon absorbed by the Indus civilisation. This hypothesis is corroborated by the observation that the traces of these carriers of the Central Asian and Iranian Bronze Age end in northwest India around the sixteenth or fifteenth century BC. However this absorbed population may have become the upholder of an Indo-Aryan cultural synthesis, combining Indo-Harappan (and therefore perhaps also Dravidian) elements with their Central Asian Aryan heritage. It

is quite likely that this population was responsible for the continuity of certain traits of Harappan civilisation like the worship of animals and trees which changed and enriched the Vedic culture during the subsequent two millennia.

India: To some scholars the Aryans were not migratory instead India was their original home. The basis of their opinions is: there was no mention of any other geographical regions other than India in Rig-Veda; there was no mention of 'coming from- outside' in Rig-Veda, the references of geographical places in Rig-Veda only found in India.

The Boghazkoy Evidence: However, the first clearly documented historical evidence of these Vedic Aryans comes neither from Central Asia nor from India but from upper Mesopotamia and Anatolia. About 1380 BC a Mitanni king concluded a treaty with the Hittite ruler Suppiluliuma I in which the Vedic gods *Mitra, Varuna, Indra* and the *Nasatyas* were invoked. Moreover, among the tablets which were excavated at Boghazkoy, the Hittite capital, a manual about horse training was found which contains a large number of pure Sanskrit words. There can be no doubt about the very direct cultural and linguistic relationship of the ruling elite of the Mitanni kingdom with the Vedic Aryans in India. But this does not necessarily mean that these West Asian Vedic Aryans originated from India. It is more likely that Vedic tribes started more or less simultaneously separate migrations from their mutual homelands in southern Central Asia to India and West Asia. As in the case of the Vedic Aryans in India, their brothers in West Asia, too, appear to have had some earlier

Aryan predecessors. In the early sixteenth century BC, the names of the Kassite rulers of Babylon may have been of Aryan origin, but they show no link with Sanskrit, the language of Vedic Aryans.

The arrival of several groups of a new population in South Asia which were speakers of Indo-European languages therefore can be dated quite safely in the first half of the second millennium around 2000 to 1400 BC. The general chronological framework of these migrations has thus been consider- ably extended in the course of the last decades. But a large number of questions still remain unsettled. This is particularly true with regard to the cultural and historical background of the migration of the Vedic Aryans. Their early hymns do not contain any reference to toponyms of Central Asia or Iran while they do mention some names of rivers in eastern Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, e.g. the *Kubha* and *Suvastu* rivers which are now known as Kabul and Swat rivers. In this region archaeologists have traced the Gandharan Grave Culture with distinctive traits of new burial rites, fire altars, horses and the use of bronze and copper. But in this case, too, archaeologists are divided on the issue whether these findings can be ascribed to the early pre-Rigvedic Aryans or already to groups of Vedic Aryans who were on their way to the plains of the Indus valley. In this respect the earlier verdict of scholars is still correct who pointed out that there is as yet no evidence which permits us to identify separate pre-Vedic and Vedic waves of migration. The Vedic texts, and in particular the Rigveda, still remain our

major source concerning the early phases of Vedic culture in northwest India.

Early Vedic period (circa 1500-1200 BC)

Around 1500 BC, we find Vedic Aryans wandering in the region of *Saptasindhu*. They were pastoral nomads with basic kind of polity. In this section, we would understand the life in Early Vedic period.

Polity

The Vedic Aryans were nomads hence; they were grouped in one tribe. We find various such tribes of Vedic Aryans.

Units of Vedic Tribe: Each tribe consisted of group of families. A family was called as *Kula* (head- *Kulapa*). The group of such *Kula*s was called as *Vis* (head-*Vishpati*). That means, the *Vis* was total people of that specific tribe; which was called as *Jana* (*Janapati*). The larger form was the *Rashtra* (*Raja*). The place where the tribe resided was called as *grama*; and the larger form of *grama* was called as *janapada*. Thus, the basic physical structure was the *Grama* and basic-social structure was the *Kula.*

Emergence of King and polity: Such tribes (or the *Janas*) were always busy in fighting with each other. As we have seen, the wars/fights were related to the issue of cattle-theft and defend from cattle-theft; in total called as *gavishti*. The warrior people of Vedic tribes used to undertake the responsibility to fight such wars. In due course of time, these warrior people got related with each other through matrimonial alliances.

Thus, a separate class of warriors was emerged from within the Vedic tribe. Such linage of warrior was called as *rajanya*.

The regular fights/wars created the need of one brave leader who could lead the warriors in the battlefield. Hence, a need of king was felt by the Vedic people. Hence, the *Sabha* (or the assembly of people-*Vis*) decided to select a king. The king was selected from the linage of warriors. He was assigned the duty to wage war or defend the tribe from other attacks. As his payment, the people decided to give gifts to him, voluntarily.

Thus, a king was emerged. He was coroneted with ceremony. He had to take oath that he would rule by the laws of canons. His duties comprised of to protect his tribe and capture maximum amount of cattle from other tribes. He was the leader of his tribe, however, controlled by many constraints, like, *Sabha-Samiti* (for, he was depended upon them for his selection), People/*Vis* (for, they gave him gifts or payment), *Rajan*yas/lineage of warrior class (for, he was selected among them) and *mantri* (for, they gave him advices). He was also depended upon the priestly class of his tribe. For; the priests used to coronate him and give religious legitimacy to his power. As he was so controlled that, if he deviated from his responsibilities, his post was snatched away from him and then another person was selected as a king.

Administrative System:

The king ran his administrative system with the help and control of Ministry and *Sabha-Samiti*.

Ministry: For the smooth governance, the king was assisted with ministers or *mantris*. This ministry comprised of *Purohit* (priest) He was the main minister of the king. He was appointed to give political and religious advices to the king. Besides, he was the one who give religious legitimacy to the king. Hence, his position was quite powerful. Besides, he was expected to guide people in the areas of religion. *Senapati* (commander) He was in-charge of military. He was expected to defend, to wage war, to arrange war-camps etc.

Duta (spy) For smooth flowing of information, the spies were appointed. He was the chief of those spies. As a *duta*, he was in-charge of foreign affairs. *Gramini* (village-headman) Considering the limited area under the control of king, the *Gramini* also appointed in the ministry of King. It was expected from the king to rule by the consent and advices from these ministers.

***Sabha* and *Samiti*:** The *Vis* (or the people), to govern their *grama*, used to gather at some specific place in their *grama*. The place or the gathering was called as *Sabha* and *Samiti*. The *Samiti* was an assembly of all the people (Vis) of that tribe. There, the people used to gather, discuss various issues and matters of concern, play, eat and drink. The meetings of *Samiti* took place regularly and discussion was taken openly on the issues of administration. Hence, it can be equated to the legislative assembly of modern days.

Whereas, the '*Sabha*' was of limited people and discussed issues of confidential nature. Here, the executing decisions were taken, like, to wage war or to go under treaty; to

help king in judicial matters, to create laws regarding weights-measures etc. The king was selected through *Sabha* and *Samiti*, hence, both the assemblies possessed controlling authority over the King.

Taxation System

There was no specific taxation system; instead the government (and their salary) was based upon the gifts, given voluntarily by the vis/people. The raids were another source of income. Such income was come in the form of cattle, food-grains, gold, horses etc.

Judiciary

The King used to solve judicial matters with the help of his ministry and *Samiti*. The source of law was Vedic literature, tradition and experiences of elder people. The crimes included theft, banditry, forgery, cattle-lifting, indebtedness and subjected to severe, capital punishments.

Military System

Besides, there are references of military, comprising infantry, cavalry, war chariots however, they were not of permanent nature and not properly systemized. The weapons comprised of, mainly the bow and arrow, swords, mace, spears, swing ball etc. We also get references of armours; however, they may be of leather.

Economy

Pastoralism: The Early Vedic people were of pastoral community. For milk-products, wools, leather, agriculture,

drawing chariots, the animals were raised. They were resorted to cattle Pastoral- ism; hence, 'cattle' was the wealth for them. Their total culture was revolved around the wealth in the form of cattle. Hence, the unit of family was called as *gotra* (lit. means cattle pen). That means, the families were identified on the name of their specific cattle pen, e.g. Vasisthta Gotra, Bharadvaj Gotra. The time of returning of cattle from pastures was perceived as auspicious time. Thus, ceremonies were performed at this time, called as *goraja muhurta*. The wars were mainly fought for cattle-lifting or defending-the-cattle lift. Hence, the word for war was *gavishti*. The basic food-content of Aryans was milk-products. To identify cattle, their ears were cut in specific manner. They had special pastureland, owned by community.

Agriculture: We find reference of some areas brought under cultivation. The land was owned by families. The farming was undertaken with the help of bulls. The Vedic Aryans knew basic agricultural techniques, like, to add fertilizers, to cut crops with the help of sickles, to arrange water-sources etc. The main crops consisted of Wheat and Barley, whereas, the cultivation of Rice/paddy was in early stage. However, it should be noted the cultivation of this stage was only of subsistence-type.

Craft-industry: We find reference of various crafts in the Early Vedic period; however quite of limited nature. These comprised of, carpentry i.e. to make agricultural equipment, chariots, bullock carts, boats, homes, toys etc.

Weaving: Vedic Aryans used to wear colourful cloths of

cotton and wool. The colours were added by dyers. Such colorful cloths were then embroidered by women, known as *peshaskari*. The weaver is called as *Vaya*; whereas the Charkha is called as *Tasar*.

Smithy: the smithy was related to copper only. Iron was not entirely unknown (*krishna-ayas*), however, the metallurgy was not known. The Goldsmith was called as *Hiranyakar*. He used to make jewellery of gold, both for human and horses.

Cobbler: Cobbler used to make water bags, shoes, bridle, whips, thread for bows etc.

Pot-making: There was no social division at this early stage; hence, anybody could take up any occupation. Fishing was also part of the occupation.

Trade: The trade was on the levels of exchanges only and that was of barter-system. Generally, cloths and leathers were items of such exchanges. It was undertaken with the help of bullock-carts, pack-bulls; sometimes boats were also used. The people involved in trade were called as *Pani*. The unit of exchange was cattle; however, we find reference of incipient currency like *nishka*, which was of gold. It was used for both coins and ornaments.

Society

Family life: The Vedic family was joint and patriarchal, i.e. organized under the headship of the eldest person (*grihapati*) in the family. The head of the family looked after the religious duties, economical duties and hospitality of the guests. It is expected that all the members should follow obedience towards

the family-head. The family strictly followed moral of the society. The prestige of the family held first above all any persons in the family.

Education: The learning conducted at teachers' houses and funded by rulers. The doors were open for both the boys and girls, a separate women-teacher also provided in the case of later. In such *gurukulas*, the students received vocational education, as also of learning in moral values. There were no evidences of writing; however, the knowledge was preserved through oral tradition.

The Social Division or Varna system: During their stay in the area of seven-rivers, we do not find any kind of division in their society. However, when they entered into more internal part of India, they came into contact with the indigenous people. Hence, we find the earliest evidence of social division, mentioned in the *purusha sukta* (of 10^{th} mandala) of Rig-Veda. In this sukta we witness a clear division of society into four Varnas, like, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra. However, it should be noted that this mandala is actually belonged to the later Vedic period, for except this mandala, we never met with the latter two Varnas in any other mandala of Rig-Veda. It seems that in the early period, there was no clear-cut discrimination in the society. Initially, the entire community called as Vis. Then, based on occupation, two powerful categories emerged out of Vis, viz. *the brahmans* and *rajanyas* (Kshatriya). Besides, references are scattered mentioning various occupation groups in the society, like, weavers, ironsmiths, cobbler, chariot-makers etc.

Diet: As the early Vedic people followed pastoralism, naturally, their main diet comprised of various milk produces and meat. They also used various items in their diets, viz. oilseed, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits etc. Generally, the non-vegetarian feast organized at the time of ceremonies, festivals, marriages etc. They also regularly consumed intoxicated liquids. However, the Vedic literature condemns such type of intoxication.

Houses: Originally, the early Vedic people were pastoralists and always travel in search of fresh pasture. For the search of pastures, they settled in the area of seven rivers in northwest India. They were living in wattle-and-daub huts. Some affluent families live in wooden houses. Such hoses comprised of rooms for various purposes, like, hall, bedroom for women, room for worship (where *yajnyabhumi* located) and a spacious courtyard.

Dress & Hairstyle: Vedic people wore cloths made from cotton, wool and animal hide. The cloths were called as *niv, vasam, adhivasam, drapi* etc. They are coloured with natural colours. They wore upper (a long piece of cloth: *uparane*) and lower garments (*dhoti)* and a headgear (of soft cloth). We find various types of hairstyles in this period. The men regularly cut the hair, whereas some tied their hair in a single knot. Some kept beards some removed. Women made different hair styles by using combs. They tied their hair with a specific ornament called as *Kurir*.

Ornaments: Generally, both women and men were fond of various types of ornaments. The ornaments made of bronze,

ivory, gold and jewels. Women wore bangles, earrings, rings, armlet etc.

Entertainment: Generally, Vedic people enjoyed themselves with race and fights of animals. They also went for hunting for amusement. They were fond of music. We find reference of various musical instruments, like, string-instruments, percussion instruments, made of animal hide. They also like community-dance. Both men and women participated in common-dance during the period of festivals. Besides, gambling was the favourite pass-time. Hence, we find reference of gambling in any kind of gathering.

Religion

The Early Vedic people were worshipper of nature. They personified and deified the benevolent and malevolent powers of nature and offered prayers to them.

Indra: Indra was perceived as God of wars. Being pastoralist, cattle was considered as wealth among Vedic people. Hence, we find frequent incidence of cattle-raids and cattle-protection in this period. Naturally, 'wars-on-cattle' was a point of concern; hence, Indra grew in importance among all other Gods.

Varuna: According the belief of Vedic people, the whole universe runs with some kind of rules, called as 'Rita'. Varuna was perceived as a controller of that 'Rita'. Hence, to maintain the order in the Universe, Varuna worshiped by the Vedic people.

Agni (fire): It is perceived that '*yajnya*' is a medium through

which food can reach to the Gods. Hence, to satisfy the Gods Vedic people used to give oblation into *yajnya*s. Naturally, *yajnya* held inevitable part in the daily/occasional religious rites/rituals of Vedic people. Domestic as well as communal activities perceived as incomplete without the performance of *yajnya*. Hence, Agni (fire), perceived as a connecting link between people and God hence it was venerated by the Vedic people. They called it as the replica of Sun on the earth.

Surya (Sun): Sun is worshipped as 'Mitra' (friend) by Vedic people. It is perceived as source of energy. In later period, the Surya became prominent God and merged with the Vishnu.

Usha (dawn): Usha is perceived by the Vedic people as the source of enthusiasm and inspiration. Many verses in Rig-Veda are devoted to the 'Usha'.

Prithvi (earth): Pritvi was worshipped, as she is the mother of all living being.

Yama: Yama is a god of death. He was worshipped not for his favour but to avoid him.

Rudra: Rudra was a god of storms. Similar to Yama, he was worshiped to avoid his wrath.

The religious concepts of Vedic people: Vedic people were simple, nomadic pastoralists. They could not comprehend the 'causation' behind natural favours/calamities. They personified these calamities/favours into Gods. They either feared of them or expected regular favour from them. For this purpose, they worshipped these Gods.

Again, as they were simple people, they thought the

Gods might reside in the sky or above the earth. We know that smoke from fire goes above to the sky. Hence, the Vedic people took 'smoke' as a connection link between earth and sky i.e. Gods. Thus, we find the importance of fire/Agni in their religious life.

Connecting to that, Vedic people thought that if they submit food in the fire/Agni, it, in the form of smoke, would reach to the Gods. It would satisfy the Gods and, either they favour them or stop troubling them. Thus, Agni became a medium between Gods and people. Hence, it became an inevitable part in the religious life of Vedic people. Thus, the Fire/Agni became sacrifice/*yajnya* and entire religious rites (and prayers) accompanied these *yajnya*s.

Similar to Agni, Surya (Sun) is also important, as it is a symbol of *yajnya* in the sky. Hence, after some centuries, another minor God like 'Vishnu' merged with the Sun and became a prominent God among the others.

The main corpus of Rig-Veda is the collection of prayers to these Gods. These prayers recited at the sacrificial priers. The sacrifices or yajna perceived as the medium for the manifestation of one's faith upon his God. Generally, it performed to get success in wars and to acquire cattle and sons. Every Vedic family or kula performed those scarifies at their home. It should be noted that these prayers and sacrifices were not performed for gaining spiritual bliss or satisfying one’s philosophical thirst. It was performed clearly to achieve simple material benefits from those who were perceived as powerful and uncontrollable.

Later Vedic period (circa 1200-600 c. BC) Polity

In the later Vedic period, the Aryans were migrated more internal lands of India. Thus, they had near about control over vast and extensive areas. During their migration, they exposed to various types of communities, tribes and polities. In short, now the situation got wider and complex; and, increased both in quality and quantity. Emergence of King as an autocrat and kingship, divine. The wars also became wider in scope and dangerous in nature. Hence, the need of king became very crucial regarding the changed scenario. The king drew benefits of such situation. He, to keep power in his hands, along with the priests, devised a system of polity.

He started performing large-scale sacrifices like *Rajasuya*, Ashvamedha and making heavy donations to priests. The performing priests (as they were benefited from such sacrifices through large donations) gave divine status to the king. Thus, the king was equated with the Gods; or perceived as embodying elements of heavenly Gods. Thus, there emerged the concept of 'Divine Kingship'. Thus, the king and his own lineage became a powerful class in the Vedic society. The Aiterya Brahmana describes King of Later Vedic period as *Adhiraja, Rajadhiraja, Samrat, Ekrat, Virat* etc. His tribe was started identified with the name of king and his lineages, like, Kuru, Puru, Turvashu etc. And, as the legitimacy of the king was depended upon the priestly class, the later became powerful.

To keep power in the hands of King/ruling class and the priests, they devised a system of Varna, which was based

on the birth. Thus, the children of ruling class and of priestly class automatically became king or priests, respectively. Thus, through Varna System, the power was rested with two classes (ruling and priestly) and a due care was taken of the permanent supply of tax (from Vaishya) and manual labour (from Shudras). Such system was again got fixed with the theory of 'Rebirth'; in which, no chance of freedom was attributed to the class of Vaishyas and Shudras.

Administrative System

Ministry: The king was assisted by advisors in the administration. The early ministers were remained there but some new ministers were included, like, *Mahishi*, Main Queen of King, *Purohit* (priest), *Senani* (commander), *Sangrahit* (treasurer) to look after income & expenditure of the kingdom, *Bhagdut* (tax-collector), *Gramini* (Village-headman), *Suta* (Chariot-driver). He was a driver of King's chariot. He used to accompany the king in the travels for every purpose, like, hunting, rides, wars etc. Thus, he was quite close to the king. As he was personally attached to the king and witnessed many incidents, he was full of stories of King and his related matters. Hence, he was invited to tell the story of his masters. These stories, later, became main corpus of epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Thus, we find a systematic ministry of king of later Vedic period. However, it should be noted that, as he was responsible solely to the Gods, there was no need to pay attention to such advices. The advices were not remained compulsory to follow. Thus, the previous control of *Mantris*

was no more found.

Sabha and *Samiti*: As the king was divine, naturally, the power became hereditary and remained in his family. Thus, no need was remained for him to get sanctions from *Sabha-Samiti*. Now there was no selection per se. Hence, the importance of *Sabha* and *Samiti* dwindled. Due to the vastness of the ruled area, it was also not possible to take meetings of the assembly as regularly as before. Hence, within some years, the *Sabha* and *Samiti* were no longer heard.

Income

Due to hereditary status and divine kingship, now King became responsible solely to the Gods. Now he could compel the *vis* to give him gifts. Thus, the gifts became no-more voluntarily, they trans- formed into tax. He introduced a systematic taxation system. Thus, the previous control of *Vis* on the King was dissolved. However, there was still need of support of people. Hence, the king, started redistributing whatever gifts he had received on the occasion of sacrifices. Such taxes became main source of income for the kingdom. Along with it raids, loots were other sources.

Judiciary

He also became supreme of the people; hence, all the powers were rested into him. Thus, he could prepare laws, execute them and punish the criminals.

Military System

The frequency of wars forced King to systemize his military system. Thus, in this period, a proper military system

was introduced. A hierarchy was created and rules were formed. His military comprised of sections like infantry, cavalry, archers, elephants and war-chariots. A concept of *Dharmayudha* was developed meantime. Death of battlefield became heroic whereas running away from the battle-field became point of disgust and great humiliation. The attacks on women, children and un-armed were seen as unethical. Besides, to fight before Sunrise and after Sunset was perceived as unlawful.

Economy

Although Pastoralism was the main occupation of Vedic people; however, most of them were oriented towards agriculture.

Agriculture: Now the agricultural technology was developed. All the stages were undertaken thoroughly and systematically like, ploughing, seeding, cutting, thrashing etc. The farmers started ploughing lands with the help of 6 to 24 bulls. Rivers and streams were bunded and water were preserved for the entire year. Due to development in agro-irrigation technology, now a farmer could take crops of various varieties, like, Wheat, Barley, Rice/paddy, cotton, vegetables, pulses, oil-seeds, fruits etc. Now Vedic Aryans started producing considerable surplus. Hence, now, they had to think about its investment. Thus, the growth in agricultural surplus paved way for the development of crafts and trade.

Craft/industry: The earlier crafts were continued in addition more specialization can be seen in this stage. However, the

nature of such crafts was mostly of cottage type. The weaving and dying industry was flourished. So like the leatherwork. By using cane and grass the mats and carpets were made. Besides, we came across to some other artisans like musicians, astrologers, cooks, drivers, messengers, etc. However, due to rigid varna/caste system, we find hereditary occupation and its compartmentalization/specialization in relation to castes.

Trade: The growth of agricultural produce and consequent development of crafts led the trade to progress. Now, the Vedic Aryans controlled extensive region than earlier. Hence, with regions, the markets were also expanded. Now, the exchange of pervious period developed into proper trade in goods, like, goats, leather, cloths, ornaments etc. The development of trade compelled traders to unite. Hence, we find the beginning of early trading-organization or proto-guilds in this period. Against the backdrop of increased trade, we find introduction of early coins, *like Nishka & Karshapana* in India; however, limited to smaller transaction. The tool of measuring was called as 'Krishnal'. The trade was carried out with the help of bullock carts; now, the waterways were also being utilized. We find the sea-trade through 100 ships.

The barter system was not altogether finished in this period. To manage such situation and for the sake of convenience, we find the rise of central places in vast areas. These centres, basically, were craft and trade centres. However, this development in later Vedic period was of an early stage, hence, necessary modalities were waiting. Nevertheless, in this period, an infrastructure was laid on which the second

urbanization of sixth c. BC was made possible.

Society

In later Vedic period, the people dispersed in various parts of India. New contacts were made with different types of cultures. This affected social structures of Vedic people and made it more complex. Against this background, the Vedic jurist felt a need to bind the society with some concert and strict rules and regulations. They created various types of social systems for this purpose, like, Varna- system, ashram-system, marriage-system, samskara etc.

Patriarchal Family System: Similar to previous period, the Vedic people followed patriarchal family system. The eldest of male members of the family, perceived as the head of family, called as *grihapati*. He holds total control over the family. Based on this system at micro level like family, the idea of Kingship developed on more macro level like state.

Concept of *Purushartha*: It was expected from every man to follow four main duties in his life, viz. *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*.

Dharma: He was expected to follow religious rules/ regulations, prescribed by Vedic canons. Besides, he should perform sacrifices, regularly in his life. Thus by following 'Dharma' he could become free from the 'Rina' (lit.=loan; the responsibility) of Gods.

Artha: He was also expected to follow some kind of occupation and earned money in his life. Kama He was expected to marry and generated progeny. It is perceived that

by the marriage and giving birth to children he could become free from the 'Rina' of his parents.

Moksha: After 'kama' and 'artha', he also expected to strive for Moksha or salvation. While performing his duties, he should always keep his eye on his ultimate goal, i.e. freedom from illusions of mundane life and uniting himself to the Gods. This is moksha.

In short, it was expected from Vedic people to follow domestic duties honestly. At the same time, he had the responsibility of the society hence he had to follow his duties in the society. Besides, he should also perform religious duties in order to maintain Vedic system.

Concept of Varna: Due to the cultural cohesion, the spiritual authority codified the social discrimination and came up with a clear-cut division of the society, termed as Varna. In the 10^{th} mandala, in *Purushsukta* of Rig-Veda we can witness the earliest mention of social division. According to this system various duties assigned to each Varna, like,

Brahmana: Teaching, learning, performance and hosting of sacrifice. Hence, they became the sole authority on the religion of this period. As their authorization was necessary for the rulers to rule, the rulers also gave large sum donations to the Brahmans for the religious legitimization to their power.

Kshatriya: Learning, hosting sacrifice and protection of people and land. Mostly the rulers and war- lords/warriors belong to this Varna. To maintain this power into their hands, the Kshatriya, legalized their status with the help of Brahmans.

The real political power lies with this Varna.

Vaishya: Trade and agriculture; the agriculturists, traders and artisans belonged to this Varna. As the economic power rested with this Varna, they were prominent Varna in the Vedic society. They were the taxpayers in the society. However, the traders and artisans, although economically powerful, never received cent percent respect in Vedic religious system. Hence, they resorted to non-Vedic religions in later centuries.

Shudra: submission of service to upper three classes; this was the lowest of the Varna-ladder and had no powers and no rights in the society. They had no hold on any kind of mode of production and subsequent production. According to some historians the people belonged to this Varna were native people of the land.

Following are the highlights of Varna-system of later Vedic period:

- The Varna-System, in few centuries, became or made hereditary that means, the membership of Varna based on birth in specific Varna. Thus, Varna transformed into Jati (group based on birth) i.e. caste. Thus, we find the emergence of castes in this period.
- The Varna system was hierarchical. As there was no mobility or flexibility in such system, in this period, it became rigid and remained favourable only to the first three Varnas.
- In this period, the sacrifices became important, hence the

Brahmans, who possessed the sole au- thority on the religion, received higher status in the society.

- The emergence of pre-State situation (although on a level of lineages) in this period made Kshatriya powerful in the society
- The taxpayers, agriculturist and trader class, i.e. Vaishya, also became powerful.
- The three (Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya) in combination perceived as men of higher Varnas i.e. *traivarnikas.*
- However, the Shudras remained powerless and required to provide labour to the *traivarnikas.*
- Along with these four Varnas, a class of untouchables started emerging from the concept of purity.

Concept of Ashrama: To curb the rebellious nature of some people and strengthen the family institution and one's social commitment, the system of ashrama provided to the society. In this system, a person's life divided into four parts and he was assigned some duties with respect to his age. Like,

Brahmacharya-ashrama: During this ashrama, the importance of education was stressed. In this ashrama, he was expected to spend his childhood at his teacher's hermitage. The entrance in this ashrama sanctified with the religious sacrament (samskara) of 'upanayana' when he was 8-year-old. After upanayana he was expected to remain in the teachers' hermitage up to 12 to 14 years. Here, he learned various knowledge-systems of this period, viz. the Vedas, literature, warfare, political science, trade etc. Here, the

singular method of instruction was followed i.e. learn-by-heart. He should learn, at the same time, provide manual labour to his teacher. Thus, after his education now he was ready for the second phase of his life, *Grihasta-ashrama*.

Grihastha-ashrama: During this ashram, he was expected to follow his duty in family and commitment towards society. He was expected to marry and became father of sons. Besides, he should perform those duties, which assigned to him by the scriptures. Four *purushararhtas* or duties assigned to him, like, *dharma* (socio-religious duties), *artha* (occupation), *kama* (marital life), *moksha* (to strive for union with God). He was expected to perform first three duties during this ashrama; whereas, in the next two ashramas he was required to thirst for moksha, the fourth one. He should take care of his parents and committed to the society. In addition, through *Vanaprastha-ashrama* and *Sanyasa-ashrama* a space provided for his rebellious nature.

Vana-prastha-ashrama: During this ashrama, he was expected to relieve himself from all household tasks and assign his duty to his son. He could live in his house, but should spend more time in the seclusion, remembering God.

Sanaysa-arshram: This is the last phase of his life. During this period, he was expected to leave his home and spent rest of his life in forests or at the feet of God.

This system of ashrama helped a lot in the maintenance of social order in this period, like:

- All the needs of human being were honoured and properly

timed which made his life healthy and satisfactory

- Through *grihastha ashrama*, the family institution was maintained and strengthened. It also took care of the aged people in the family. It became a support for the society. Hence, society also maintained through this ashrama. Thus with the completion by domestic and social duties, the entire Vedic society was maintained and sustained in this period.
- Through last two ashrama, the tensions emerged among different generations resolved and the issue of generation gaps regularized.

The system of Marriage: Marriage was considered as main duty of Vedic people and hence it became a point of religious importance. After *brahmacharyashrama*, a person entered into *grihastashrama*. He is expected by the canons to get married in this ashrama. We know that It is perceived that through marriage and giving birth to children one could became free from the 'rina' (lit. loan=responsibility) of his parents. It was one of the 16 important religious sacraments (*samskar*) of Vedic religion. In this period, inter-Varna marriages were disliked, whereas 'similar-gotra/family marriages' were forbidden. Hence, they had to marry in the own Varna but in other families than theirs.

However, we find instances of inter-Varna marriages in this period. The majority of such instanced pressed Vedic jurists to devise some alternative system to accommodate and legalized such 'inter-Varna' marriages. Hence, they came forward with two types of legalized structures of marriages, viz.

Anuloma marriage (between bridegroom from higher Varna and bride from lower Varna) and *Prati- loma* marriage (between bridegroom from lower Varna and bride from higher Varna)

Besides, as we know, in this period, the Vedic people encountered other cultures in India. The Vedic society deeply influenced by the customs and institutions of these people within some years. It shook the fundamental structure of Vedic society. Hence, to assimilate these communities or their influ- ences in their fold, they had to allow and accommodate the institutions of these people. Thus, we see eight types of marriages, which were prevalent in the society. These types clearly reflect contacts of Vedic people with different kinds of cultures. Like

Brahma-vivaha: Father gives his daughters hand to the knowledgeable and well-behaved bridegroom with proper rites and rituals, *Daiva-vivaha*: Father gives the bride's hand to the priest, engaged in sacrifice, *Prajapatya-vivaha*: Father greets bridegroom and appeal the couple to follow religious duties, *Arsha-vivaha*: After receiving a pair of cattle from the Groom, father gives the bride's hand to the bridegroom, *Gandharva-vivaha*: marriage-at-will i.e. through the consent of bridegroom and bride only, *Asura-vivaha*: Bridegroom gives money to the father and relatives of bride and purchases her for marriage, *Rakshasa-vivaha*: Forceful abduction of a crying girl and marring her, *Paishacha- vivah*: With force making the girl unconscious and violet her chastity. The Vedic jurists only recom- mended the first four types of marriage. However, to

make the patriarchal system strict, the marriages-at-will disrespected by the jurists. Besides, there were references of inter-caste marriages like *Anuloma* (son of higher Varna with daughter of lower Varna) and *Pratiloma* (son of lower Varna with daughter of higher Varna) vivaha.

The marriages in this period now controlled by the patriarchal head of the family and the religion. Hence, 'marriage-at-will' of early period disliked in this period. At the same time, the age of mar- riages decreased. Besides, the polygamy became prominent feature of this period.

Thus, the marriage system of Later Vedic people shows radical changes in erstwhile simpler society of early period. The 'self-willed' domestic marriages of early period, now controlled by many systems like patriarchy, society and religion. Thus, it became an important 'institution' of the society, prevailed until today.

The Concept of Samskaras: To provide socio-religious sanctions to every phases of physical & psychological development of a person and need of his social commitment, the jurists provided the system of samskara to the society. Every stage of his life, from his embryo status up to his death, sanctified with such samskara, which, by tradition are 16. Some of them can be classified as follows:

Garbhadan-Embryo stage (to give support to the pregnant woman) to pray for good child.

Simantonnayana-to make the mind of pregnant woman peaceful and fresh

Jatkarma-immediately after the birth of child, it is fed with honey and butter. After this samskara, it is allowed to fed by mother.

Namkarana-13 days after the birth, the child is named.

Nishkramana-After four years, child is allowed to take outside the home.

Karnavedha-The ears of child pierced.

Annaprashana-First bite of food by the child

Upanayana-Before going to teacher's hermitage for learning, child should go through this sacrament.

Keshanta-Removal of hair before entering into education system

Samavartana-End of his education and *brahmacharyashrma.*

Grihashta-ashrama-vivaha-Marriage,

Aginiparigrhaana-Placing sacrificial-fire at home and worship it regularly

Anteysthi-Funeral Education

Later Vedic people understood the importance of education in the development of personality and society. The hermitage of learned sages became the centre of education in this period. It is called as 'Gurukul'. The rulers and affluent people provided generous donations and patronage to these centres. A child was expected to take education by residing with the teacher at the teacher's place. He was provided food and shelter in the teachers' place only.

With the sacrament of *Upanayana* the child enters in to *Gurukula*. Such centres inclined to developed the overall personality of a child. Here he was expected not only to learn but also to do manual work. Thus, he could cherish the respect for physical labour in the society. The day at these centres started with cleaning the campus of hermitage, milking the cows, carrying wood, filling up water-tanks etc. Then, the whole day went into learning. In the evenings, he had to serve his teachers and then went to sleep.

The knowledge was imparted through oral-method i.e. learn by heart. Besides, discussions, debates, practical are the education aids of these centers. The subjects comprised of Vedas and their appendices, war-fare, administration, political science, logic, trade, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicines, medical science, moral values etc. The teachers were of four types, viz. *Acharya, Pravakta, Shrotiya and Adhyapak.*

Dress: People of this period wore coloured cloths of cotton, woollen, silk etc. The soft cotton cloth was weaved in gold and provided with beautiful embroidery. The dressing style remained similar to previous period.

Dietary Habits: The dietary habits in early period continued in this period, too. However, the proportion of non-vegetarian food increased in this period. This was the period of large and time-consuming Vedic sacrifices. Hence, considerable number of animals sacrificed during such occasion. Thus, no festival could complete without the meat of animals. Rather, it became a part of religious rituals.

Entertainment: Similar to the previous period, the Vedic people amused themselves with various kinds of items and activities. This was the period of big rulers and time-consuming festivals. Subsequently, in this period, the proportion of entertainment increased bigger and hence, race, hunting, gambling became part of every gathering of people. Besides, during long sacrifices, the bards invited to present eulogies on the exploits of rulers. Crowds of people gathered to listen this poetry, which subsequently legalized rulers' position/status. It should be noted that from the collection of such bardic eulogies, the epics were emerged in this period.

Religion

As we know, Vedic people faced changes in the Later Vedic period. The religion became very com- plex in this period.

Changes in Deities and ways of worships: The prominent deities in Early period witnessed unim- portance in this period. The Gods like Indra, Varuna and Surya became unpopular. Whereas there emerged new Gods like Vishnu, Rudra, Shiva. The people started worshipping such Gods in devotional way. Hence, we found the emergence of 'devotional worship' or *bhakti* in this period; however at primary stage. Due to social contacts with various types of cultures, new deities and rites found place in Vedic pantheon and rituals. This gave birth to various types of idol-worship, animism magic, superstitions etc. in Vedic culture. Besides, magic, superstitions, concepts of women and blind faith became part of religious life. Besides, to provide social sanctions to various

changes in person's life, the concept of 16 samskara emerged. Whereas, to regulate the person's life in society, similar to the ashrams, the concept of four *purusharthas* was put forth, viz. *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*.

Prominence of Sacrifices: The sacrifices varied and codified with various types of rules and regu- lations, i.e. *karmakanda*. Earlier the sacrifices perceived as a mere medium between person and God. In this period, the sacrifices and their complicated rules became prominent. The people were told that if they follow the rules of scarifies, the Gods would be compelled to bestow their favour on the performers. Obviously, the sacrifices took place of God in the religion of Later Vedic period. Hence, the religion was concentrated in the correct performances of those sacrifices. Subsequently, the priest class became prominent who possessed the sole authority to perform the sacrifices in a systematic manner. The right of performance of sacrifices was snatched off from *kulapati* and it became the monopoly of the priest class. Consequently, the sacrifices became varied, so as the types of priests. Obviously, large amount of wealth-time-violence was involved in these scarifies. Thus, the system of accommodating increasing numbers of priestly class institutionalized in this way. However, the religious rigidity and complexity of this period witnessed, some sort of reactions within the Vedic society itself. The Upanishads condemned waste of money, time and violence, engaged in sacrifices. They searched the truth of religion in introspecting one's self and meditating on the relationship of one's soul

with the supreme-soul, the God. They tried to replace the material base of religion with spiritual one.

To sum up, it seems that, the Vedic people, the resident of land of seven rivers, in the later period, migrated to other parts of India. They met various types of cultures, societies, economies and belief systems. This led to social cohesion and complexity in Vedic society. On one hand, the economy diversified and developed through agriculture, crafts and trade, on the other, to keep its identity in- tact, the jurists made social and religious laws tight and rigid. For monopolizing powers, the Kshatriya and Brahman made the Varna-system birth-based and rigid. To legitimize this process, the religion took prominent place in society. It manifested into various types of rites and rituals, involving large amount of wealth and scarifies therein. However, the taxpayer Vaishya Varna and labourer Shudra Varna, who provided labour and service, thrown away from various types of rights and socio-religious sanctions.

Against this background, India stepped into Early Historic period. The mixed economy of agriculture, trade and craft of Vedic period evolved into large amount of activities in the Early Historic period. That gave birth to the second urbanization of India. At the same time, to protest the sacrificial nature of Vedic religion, based on prominence of Brahmans and involving large amount of wealth and violence; the heterodox religions like Jain, Buddhist, Ajivakas were emerged. These cults provided legitimization to the Vaishya and Shudra Varna, who earlier discarded by Vedic religion.

Position of Women

Early Vedic Period: The position of women was reasonably well in this period. They received respects both in the family and in society. They participated in all the domestic works including religious rites/rituals along with men on equal footing. As they were educated, they could perform Vedic rites in perfect manner. Hence, we find examples of their performance of Vedic sacrifices. It is informed that the *richa*s in Samveda performed especially by women. Some sacrifices were prescribed only for the women, like, sita *yajnya*, rudrabali *yajnya*, rudrayag *yajnya*, svasti *yajnya* etc. These were meant to acquire good crops and children, to marry, for husband to win the wars etc. Women could perform all religious and domestic duties in the absence of their husbands. Similar to men, women, too, participated in education, social activities and politics, too. They had right to education. Women were allowed to go through the mandatory rite of upanayana (i.e. entrance rite for education) before entering into education. We find evidences of women who remained un-married for the sake of learning and received great respect in the society, viz. Ghosha, Apala, Vishvavara, Lopamudra, Sikata, Nivavari, Godha, Aditi etc. The marriages of women took place only after their maturity. Besides, their consent perceived as important in the decision regarding their marriage. There were provisions of adult-marriages, marriage-at-will, and widow-remarriages in the early Vedic society.

Later Vedic Period: The social interaction with newer

communities forced Vedic jurists to impose restriction on the women. The rigid patriarchal family system also snatched off various rights of women in this period. The religion sanctified these newer restrictions on women. Thus, we find the negation of the rights of women of 'marriage-at-will'. Her age of marriage decreased. As she was married in her early age, her right of education cancelled. She was considered as a tool of regeneration only. Besides, to maintain the patriarchal family-structure, cent percent chastity was expected from women (but there was no such compulsion on male). Restrictions also imposed on her social mobility, which jailed her in her house. She was compelled to remain at home and work as home-maker. Her remarriages also prohibited and hence forced to live the life of widow unto her death. In the home, she was forced to follow domestic duty and help husband in generating progeny. Her erstwhile status of accompanying husband in rituals was also finished. The negation of her right to education, disallowed her rite to perform Vedic rites. Thus, we can see the position of women deteriorated in this period.

Factors responsible for Growth of Non-Vedic Cults

There are some causes of the emergence of Non-Vedic cults, as follows:

Proliferation of Sacrifices

During Later Vedic period, the sacrifices became mandatory for receiving favour of God or fulfilling any wish. The scriptures suggested various types of sacrifices, which

were time-money consuming and filled with violence. Besides, similar to the sacrifices, various types of specialized priests and crowd of Gods also emerged in the society. In all, the entire system became very complex and, except favourable to priest class, beyond the limits of common person.

Discriminatory institutions

The later Vedic culture based on rigid caste-system. The Vedic culture represented with the hierarchy of castes, proliferation of castes and sub castes, humiliating condition of women and Shudras etc. The non-Kshatriya rulers and economical superior trader class, along with common person, found no prestigious place or respect in this system.

Ambiguous scriptures

The Vedic literature was varied and specialized. However, it was written in ambiguous Sanskrit language, which was known to only Brahmans. Hence, it was necessary for the common person to know their religion in understandable and clear language and literature.

Need of New Thoughts

Even among Vedic people, many thinkers were dissatisfied by the ritual extremity of Later Vedic period. Hence, they created a different kind of Vedic literature, i.e. the Upanishads. The Upanishads preferred meditation and introspection to the extravagant sacrifices of Vedic scriptures. However, the meditation of Upanishads was revolving around the subjects like atman, Brahma, dvait-advait etc.; even more abstract than the rituals themselves.

Hence, people were in need of a new, unambiguous, simple thought or belief systems. Against the background of such complex nature of Later Vedic rituality, a need was felt of such belief system, which would give simple-clear thought and would suggest cheap, manageable rituals in understandable language. Besides, economically superior Varna like Vaishya and politically superior non- Kshatriya rulers and people were in need of socio-religious sanctions to them or legitimacy in society. Hence, in 6^{th} c BC, Non-Vedic cults emerged who fulfilled all the requirements mentioned above and provided legitimacy to Vaishya and non-Kshatriya powerful people and rulers.

Jainism

By tradition, Jainism is an anadi religion, i.e. the all time/ever-existed religion, and, through tirthankaras, it is retold from time to time. Rishabhdeva was the first among 24 tirthankaras, in which, Neminath was 22nd, whereas, Parshvanatha was 23rd. Parshvanath was the son of Ashvasena, ruler of Banaras and queen Vama. He, at the age of 30, left the throne and resorted to penance. He lived for 100 years and spent his life for the propagation of Jainism. He gave stress on four principles, like, Satya, Brahmacharya, Asteya and Aparigraha. The followers of Parshvanatha, wearing white cloth, consisted of 8 gana, 8 ganadhara and 1000 Shramanas. Vardhaman Mahavir was the 24th tirthankara and most venerated preacher of Jain religion.

Vardhaman Mahavira (540 BC to 474 BC): His Life

Vardhaman born at Kundagrama in dist. Muzaffarpur

(in present Bihar). He was the son of Siddhartha, king of dnyatrik republic and Trishaladevi, sister of Lichchavi king. Since his childhood, Vardhaman was detached from worldly pleasures and always engaged in meditation. He was married to one Yashoda and had a daughter. After the death of parents, at the age of 30, he took permission from his elder brother and submitted himself to the life of sanyasa (ascetic). Initially he wore cloths, however after 12 months left cloths and remained clothless. He resorted to painstaking penance (tapas) for 12 years. On the 13th year, he received enlightenment of supreme knowledge on the banks of Rijipalika at village Jrimbhika and thus become kevalin or arhat. He successfully gained control on all his senses (indriyas). Hence, he is called the Jina, i.e. Jitendriya (who won over his senses). As he was freed from all the bondages, he was called as Nigranth. Afterwards, he propagated his thought in public up to 72 years. Then, at Pavapuri he received Nirvana.

His Work

Mahavira reinterpreted the then existed philosophy and code of conducts of Jainism. He contributed a new principle of non-violence (ahimsa) to the four principles, told by Parshvanatha. He, based on non-violence, framed a new set of philosophy and codes of conduct. Then, he consolidated his disciples. Besides, he refreshed Jain monachism (monasticism) and put rules of hierarchy of Jain-preachers or Shramanas. Besides, he provided such rules, which would be suitable for the laymen. For the propagation of his religion, he accepted ardhamagadhi - a language of people as a medium

of preaching and methods of dialogue and debates to preach. Due to his simple codes of conducts and use of people-language, Mahavira could successfully propagated Jainism, which, within a short span of time, received popularity among common person - as also among kings and traders. Hence, Mahavira considered as an actual founder of Jainism.

Basic Principles of Jainism

The basic principles of Jainism surmised as follows:

- Negations of Vedas, Vedic rituals, sacrifices and its concept of God
- To achieve moksha, one should control his own senses instead of depending on the favours of God
- Universe is created due to *jiva* (soul) which is immortal
- To achieve *moksha, jiva* should be freed from actions
- Belief in equality

The Philosophy of Jainism

The centre of Jainism is the concept of atman; the basic philosophic approach is the stress on ahimsa, and its foundation is *anekantavada*. Jainism or the philosophy of Jain revolved around these basic concepts. Here, we would take a brief review of the philosophy of Jainism and its major contributions to the Indian culture, like, *syadavada* and tools of moksha.

Foundation: The *Anekantavada* (multi-dimensional, inclusive approach)

The concept of *Aneka-anta-vada* is the foundation of

Jaina philosophy, at the same time; it is an inclusive approach to look at the world. According to this concept, no single definite, decisive or conclusive aspect (*ek-anta*) of anything is existed; on the contrary, various kinds of possibilities or meanings (*aneka-anta*) were existed when we make a statement about anything.

According to Jain, if we wish to make statements about anything-say X, instead of one decisive argument, seven kinds of possible statements can be made. This concept is called as 'Syadavada'. According to this concept, our knowledge about anything is always one-ended, i.e. one-sided (*ek-antaka*). However, the truth about any thing is, in actual, multi-dimensional or open-ended (*aneka-anta*). That is why; we can explain the truth in many possible ways. Hence, a common person who is bounded by his actions or delusions (the *karmabaddha jiva*) should abstain himself from making extreme or decisive comments of any things. Instead, he should be compassionate in his approach to the world.

In short, the concept appeals compassion and inclusive spirit among us and thus protests the fanatics who excludes. It is an elaboration of the concept of ahimsa, which appeals to remain abstained from violation of thoughts or views of other people.

The Concept of *Jiva* (soul) & its travel towards *Moksha* (true knowledge)

The Jain believed that every living thing on earth has a *jiva* (soul) in its body or physical structure. According to

them, the soul is bounded by various actions and hence it is originally impure. To gain true knowledge (Moksha), it has to be pure or unbound itself from those actions which pollute it and make it impure. When, it is freed from any bound, it receives the knowledge (*keval-dnyana*). Then only, it can receive true knowledge of any thing, i.e. the stage of Moksha. However, to reach to the stage of understanding of the true knowledge, the soul has to travel through some stages, like, Jiva *Jiva* means soul, which is different from the body, which is full of senses. The soul encourages one to engage in activities, which are good or bad. It also suffers from the effects of its actions, good or bad.

A-jiva: *A-jiva* means unconscious and life-less. *A-strava* Various kinds of actions/deeds (*karma*) flows *(strava*) to the soul *(jiva*) and pollute it. Such flow of activities or pollution is called as a-strava. However, if the actions which bound the soul are good *(shubha*)-effecting then it is called as Punya. In other case, it is pap. Bandha Due to the flow of activities or pollution, the soul became bounded, called as Bandha.

Sanvara: To control and stop the flow of such activities which pollutes and bound the soul is called as *Sanvara*. *Nirjara* However, by stopping only the flow does not mean that the soul is freed from any bondage. It should clear those actions, which was already stored and bounded the soul. This is called as *Nirjar*a. After a great penance, a *nirjara* can be achieved. Moksha After clearing the stored pollution (*nirjara*) and stopping the flow of activities or pollution (*sanvara*), the soul

is freed from the bondage. This stage is called as 'Moksha'. That means the Moksha is equal to *nirjara* and *sanvara*.

The Tools to achieve Moksha

Every soul which was bounded and polluted by actions should always try to free himself and achieve the true knowledge of his being i.e. *Moksha*. We have understood its travel through various stages to achieve its goal. In this journey, we are helped with some tools or methods. Like the Triratnas

Samyaka Darshana: To have faith on the wisdom of tirthankara and the seven stages of journey to moksha as preached by him

Samyaka Dnyana: A knowledge or comprehension about the nature of jiva and ajiva

Samyaka Charitra: Righteous behaviour consisting of vrata (maha-vrata, anuvrata, guna-vrata, shiksha-vrata), samiti and gupti. Samiti means to take precautions to avoid breach of principles or vratas; whereas the Gupti means to put restrictions on ourselves to protect (gopan) our soul. The samiti and gupti meant for Jain monks and nuns only.

The Vratas

a. Maha-vrata & anu-vrata

Ahimsa: This is the centre-thought of Jainism. It means to abstain from troubling any living thing with any sort of violence, like, physical, verbal and mental.

Satya: To speak truth and create such a situation in which

other would speak truth.

Asteya: Not to possess the thing, which is not belonged to us **Aparigraha**: To possess only those things, which are most needed **Brahmacharya:** Abstain from sexual relations

These five principles were mandatory for Jain monks and nuns. Hence, these are called as 'maha- vrata'. However, it is not possible for laymen to follow such strict codes of conduct. Hence, Jainism made provision of the same principles for them but in a soft or limited form. They are called as 'anu-vrata', like ahimsa-anuvrata, satyaanuvrata etc.

b. Guna-vrata

To inculcate patience and sacrifice among laymen and women (*shravaka* and *shravika*), three *guna- vrata* were provided for them, like, *Dig-vrata* While traveling one should limit his directions and maintain that limitation.

c. Shiksha-vrata

To increase the tendency of detachment from worldly pleasures and for the social-health, some principles are told, like,

Samayika: To follow habit of seating calmly at one place and meditate

Proshadhopavasa: To observe fast on fifth (panchami), eighth (ashtami), fourteenth (chaturdashi) day of every fortnight; or, on eighth and fourteenth day during chaturmasa (Ashadh to Ashvin i.e June-September/rainy season) On the day of fast one should seat in Jain temples and recite scriptures and follow

meditation.

Bhogopabhoga parinama: Decide limitation on food consumption and pleasure for each day and follow that limitation.

Types of Disciples

According to Jainism, there are five types of disciples, comprised of 1. *Tirthankara* (free), 2. *Arhata* (a soul flowing to nirvana), 3. *Acharya* (Great Disciple), 4. *Upadhyaya* (Teacher), 5. *Sadhu* (general disciple)

Jain Scriptures

According to tradition, the original preaching of Mahvira compiled in 14 volumes, called as Parva. In the first grand-assembly, held at Pataliputra, Sthulabhadra classified Jainism into 12 *Anga*. These Angas included famous angas like *Acharanga sutra* and *Bhagavati sutra*. Further in the second grand-assembly, held at Vallabhi, these supplemented by the Upangas. The original Jaina canons comprised of sutragrantha (41), prakirnakas (31), Niyukti/Bhashya (12), Mahabhashya (1). These are called as Agama, written in ardhamagadhi script.

The Spread of Jainism

By tradition, Jainism was existed before Mahavira. However, due to tenuous efforts of Mahavira and his new contributions like consolidation, reinterpretation of philosophy and codes of conduct, a separate set of codes for laymen, hierarchical systemized monachism; he was credited as an actual founder of Jaina religion. Among his 11 disciples or

ganadharas, Arya Sudharma became the first main preacher or *thera*. During the period of Nanda dynasty, Sambhutavijaya propagated Jainism. Bhadrabahu, the sixth thera, was contemporary to Chandragupta Maurya. The basic reason of the spread of Jainism was the support and favours of contemporary rulers. Great rulers like Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Chandragupta Maurya, Kharvela (north) and southern dynasties like Ganga, Kadamba, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Shilahara accepted Jainism as their personal and royal religion. They extended their support to Jain for their propagation and consecutive spread. The Jain were mainly concentrated in the region of Mathura; however, due to the favour of Chalukya rulers of Gujarat and notable dynasties of South, it spread in Gujarat and south India.

Apart from rulers, the trader and artisan's class also accepted Jainism. It spread on the financial base provided by these classes. Due to the favour of rulers, Jaina literature and art also flourished. Vast collections of Jaina literature created in the public-language like ardhamagadhi and then Sanskrit, too. Besides, caves-viharas-temples constructed to accommodate the worshipers for large congregations. These places served as educational centres where renowned works and researches on Jainism were undertook by various scholars, like, Mathura and Shravanbelagola were the most renowned research institutions of Jainism.

The stress of Jainism on the adherence of strict codes of conduct hampered its spread; however, on the other hand, by these, it could retain its oldest form until today. Especially,

the concept of 'ahimsa' and 'anekantavada', were the immortal gift of Jainism to the India culture.

Grand Assemblies

During the draught of 12 years in Magadha, Bhadrabahu, with his disciples departed to Shravanbel- agola, in South India, whereas, some Jain, mostly Shvetambaras, remained in Magadha under the leadership of Sthulbahubhadra. Around 300 BC, he organized first grand assembly at Pataliputra. The assembly came up with the classification of Mahavira's preaching in 12 Angas. When, Jain from south India, mostly Digambaras, returned to Magadha, they refuted these Angas and stated that all the original scripture was lost. After many years, in 512 AD, second grand assembly was held at Vallabhi (Gujarat) presided by Deavardhimani Kshamashramana. Meanwhile, the 12th Anga was lost. Hence, the assembly tried to consolidate and compile the scripture. They created new texts like Upanga and supplemented to remaining Angas.

Dissensions

Earlier, Jaina remained without cloths. During Chandragupta Maurya's time, most of the Jaina under the leadership of Bhadrabahu left Magadha towards south India. After some period, they returned to Magadha. Meanwhile, the Jaina at Magadha were resorted & become habitual to cover their body with white cloth. Besides, they have softened some codes of conduct, like permission of women in Jain monachism, whereas, the Jaina, who returned from south were

attached to earlier strict rules and remained cloth-less. Obviously, their arrival created dissensions among Jaina. It divided between the two cults, the Shvetambaras (clad in white-dress) and Digambaras (cloth-less). The Digambara Jaina believed remaining cloth-less and they are against permitting women in the fold of religion, whereas, the Shvetambara Jaina supports participation of women and accepted the white (shveta) cloth to wear. In due course of time, both these major cults came up with their own version and scriptures of Jainism. Generally, the Digambaras were mostly concentrated in the southern part of India whereas north populated by the Shvetambaras.

Contribution of Jainism to Indian culture

Teachings of Mahavira became very popular among the masses and different sections of society were attracted to it. One of the important causes for the success was the popular dialect (Prakrit) used in place of Sanskirt. The simple and homely morals prescribed to the masses attracted the people. The royal patronage by the rulers of Magadha later made Mathura and Ujjain great centres of Jainism. Jain councils collected the material of the sacred texts to write them down systematically, in Ardhamagadhi. But in the absence of popular religious preachers after the death of Mahavira, its division into two important sects, absence of protection by the later rulers, revival of Hinduism under the Guptas, Cholas, Chalukyas and Rajput kings also contributed to its slow decline. But its contri- bution to Indian culture particularly literature, architecture and sculpture has been remarkable.

Though the language of its religious texts had been Prakrit, it helped in giving a literary shape to some spoken languages of India. The temples and idols still existing in various cities as Mathura, Gwalior, Junagarh, Chittor, Abu have been accepted as some of the best specimens of Indian architecture and sculpture particularly the temples of Abu, the Jaina tower at Chittorgarh, the elephant caves of Orissa and the 70 feet high idol of Bahubali in Mysore.

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha (566 to 486 BC): His life

Siddhartha was born at Lumbini in present Nepal. He was son of Shuddodana, the King of Shakya gana of Kapilvastu and Mayadevi, princess of Koliya gana. In his childhood he was taken care by Gautami, hence he also called as Gautama. After his enlightenment, he called as Buddha. Shud- dodana provided all kinds of comforts and pleasure to Siddhartha. However, since his childhood, Siddhartha was detached from worldly pleasure and engrossed in meditation. When he arrived to his youth, he deeply moved by the misery and agony of human life. Traditions inform us about the effects on Siddhartha of the sight of old man, a sick man, a dead body and meditative sage. He became restless to seek the cause of such agony and real meaning of truth. Hence, at 29, he left his wife Yashodhara and son Rahul and, moved to forests to know the real meaning of truth and reason of sorrow. His departure from material pleasure for the welfare of humanity engraved in history as maha-bhi-ni-shkramana. He spent his six years on

experimenting in various methods of penance supervised under various scholars. However, he felt such methods as fruitless hence left them. At the end, on the banks of Uruvela, at Gaya, he received enlightenment under the pipal (bodhi)-tree. He became the Buddha-the enlightened one and Tathagath-who knew the truth.

He refuted the known methods and authority of knowledge and put forth his new version of truth. He decided to share his knowledge with the people, based on simple code of conducts and in the languages of people, i.e. Pali. He gave his first sermon at Sarnath and introduced his dhamma. This sermon refuted the earlier versions of truth and introduced a new beginning in the philosophical history of Indian culture; and hence, memorized as dhamma-chakra-parivartana. His knowledgeable, simple and sacrificial character and his teaching in simple tone impressed people. Initially there were five disciples-Ashvajit, Upali, Mogalalana, Shreyaputra and Anand. However, within a short span of period crowds and crowds of people gathered around him and accepted his knowledge. He was fol- lowed by, along with common person, wealthy merchants-traders, artisans and kings like Ajatshatru (Magadha), Prasenjit (Kosala) and Udayana (Kaushambi) of that time. Then, Buddha organized his disciples into a specific monachism rested on definite rules and codes of conduct. This is called the Sangha. The Buddhists express their devotions by submitting themselves to Buddha, his Sangha and his dhamma.

After painstaking propagation and travels through

distant lands, in the age of 80, Buddha rested at Kusinagar (Kasaya, dist. Devriya, present Uttar Pradesh) in peace. His departure commemorated as maha-pari-nirvana.

Philosophy of Buddhism

The Buddhist philosophy comprises of four *arya-satya, ashtang-marga, panchashila, four brhama- vihara* and classical concepts like *pratityasamutpada, anityavada, anatmavada*. Let us understand the highlights of Buddhism.

Arya-satya

Buddhism introduces its philosophy with four *arya-satya* or truths.

- dukkha (Sorrow): Human life is full of sorrow which would remain up to its end.
- dukkha-samudyaya (reasons of sorrow) (the reason): Sorrow is caused by desire.
- dukkha-nirodha (stopping sorrow): The end of desire is the end of sorrow.
- dukkha-samudaya-nirodha-marga (way of stopping) (solution):To end desire (that means to end sorrow), one should follow the ashtangamarga.

Ashtanga-marga (eightfold ways)

For putting an end to the desire and in turn removing sorrow from human life, Buddha suggested ashtanga-marga or eight ways. He called them samyaka i.e. right or middle (not extreme) Samyak drishti knowledge of four arya-satyas

Samyak sankalpa good will, good wish and love for all living beings Samyaka vacha abstaining from untruth, using words that hurt others and non-sense talking Samyaka karma non-violence, non-stealing, controlling senses Samyaka ajivika follow occupation with righteous way Samyaka vyayama consistent efforts to replace bad thoughts with good thoughts Samyaka smriti always remember that everything is full of sorrow, changing and time-being Samyaka samadhi experiencing peace after going through various stages of meditation

Pancha-shila

The Buddhist monks expected to follow certain moral values, like, Ahimsa not to trouble any living being by violence Satya leaving of false speech and thoughts Asteya not to wish which is not belong to us or given to us Brhamacharya to remain abstain from sexual relationships Aparigraha not to possess which is not needed Brahma-vihara For cleansing our soul, Buddha suggested following methods, like, Maitri sustaining kindness towards all leaving beings and leaving of anger, jealousy and breach of trust Karuna to be sensitive towards the sorrow of others Mudita to be glad towards the happiness or progress of others Upeksha awareness of the bounded life of human being with his actions, which create happiness and misery, In short, to put an end to the desires and attain moksha, Buddha provided logic of arya-satya, and then suggested solutions in the forms of ashtanga-marga, panchashila and Brahma-vihara.

Other philosophical contribution of Buddhism

Pratityasamutpada (the concept of cause-effect) According to Buddhism, every things or action has some causes behind them; and, both, the cause and its effect are separate entities. They say,

- Initially, the entity which we call as cause is finished then the entity, called as action emerged
- The cause holds no power to produce any action.

This concept refutes the atmavadi's principle according to which, the powers in causes gave birth to actions which is happened through some kind of external principle

Anityavada

According to Buddhists, everything/being/action/ quality is mortal and existed only for time being. Besides, nothing is stable and always succumbs to changes. Thus, it refutes the concept of Vedic culture of stability of soul, which is caused by some immortal principle.

Anatmavada

Anatmavada questions the existence of soul. According to Vedic everything/being has soul, which is stable and everlasting. Buddhist refutes this concept. They state that 'this so-called soul' cannot be experienced, hence, we must agree to such principles, which can be experienced. In short, Buddhism refutes the claim of Vedic that everything has some stability and definite principles behind them. Instead, they suggested that there is no stable, immortal principle like soul; in fact,

everything is changing & mortal (anatmavada) and independent from the other one as stated in Pratityasamutpada.

Such logical thinking of Buddhist and their adherence to the knowledge-byexperience, on one hand refuted abstract concepts of Vedic and on another influenced large mass of population.

Buddhist Monachism or Sangha

For the propagation of Buddhism, Buddha created a disciplined mechanism of missionaries, called as Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. He organized the missionaries and his disciples in a specific organization, called as Sangha.

Membership of Sangha (Monastery)

Any person (male or female) who is above 18 and left his possessions could become member of Sangha based on equality. Initially women were not permitted in Sangha, but thanks to persistent efforts and convincing by Ananda (disciple) and Gautami (foster mother); the doors were opened for women. Besides, after the permission of owner, slaves, soldiers and debtors could also become member of Sangha. However, criminals, lepers and contagious patients not permitted into Sangha. At the outset, one has to take oath (loyalty towards Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha), then shave his head (mundana) and wear yellow dress. Then, after one month, he could take a diksha called as upasampada. In addition, after upasampada he is taken as a member of Sangha. However, the member is expected to follow the codes of conduct (dasha-shila), comprised of, abstaining from:

consuming alcohol, taking untimely food, dance-songs, using perfumes, using mattress for sleep, wearing gold & silver ornaments, indulging in adultery etc.

Rules for Bhikshu (monks)

Some codes of conducts expected from monks which to be followed:

- Remain abstain from greed, malpractices, corruptions.
- Residing in forests and then in viharas.
- Possession of only eight things: kopin, kaphani, chati, bhikshapatra, upavastra, kamarbandha, needle, razor
- To live on the alms only and eat for subsistence
- Control of senses
- Mediation after lunch and on first and third prahara of night
- Follow 227 rules, written in Vinaya pitaka Highlights of Sangha

The Sangha comprised of dedicated missionaries who aimed at moral upliftment of human being.

- It refuted discriminatory systems like gender, Varnas, castes or any other and followed equal- ity among them.
- Nobody in Sangha possessed any special privileges; every opinion had the same value.
- These Sangha worked as learning-centre in which, not only the missionaries, but the common people also received learning in Buddhism. These learning centres, in due

course time, became renowned universities of Ancient India.

- Due to the modest characters of missionaries, simple codes of conducts, preaching in simple-clear manner and people's language and favour-financial support by wealthy traders-crafts-men and kings, Buddhism expanded to distant parts of India and abroad.

The organizational base of Sangha was a democratic one. The monks are expected to travel for eight months for the propagation of Buddhism. Then, during the four months of rainy season, they gathered at one place, called as *varshavasa*. During *varshavasa*, they discuss, share their experiences, and gave confessions, take *prayashcita* (expiation). Hence, they were expected to frequently gather, behave unanimously and respect the elders in Sangha.

The monks assemble in *upasabhas* on specific days like eighth, fourteenth, full moon, no-moon days of the month. They submitted their reports, gave confessions and-in a situation of breach-of-rules, follow *prayaschita*. Due to such a disciplinary and chaste character of monks, they received a great respect in the society. It helped the increase in Buddhism in large population. Besides, the Sangha also functioned as a socio-religious legitimization for the traders, for which, the latter generously gave donations for the constructions of Buddhist place of worships and residence. In need of support of superior economical class of that period and the support of religion of people, the rulers also provided favours, donations and protections to the Sangha.

Buddhist Scriptures

Buddha's preaching collected and classified into three volumes, collectively called as pitakas.

Sutta-pitaka: It is a collection of Buddha's preaching in dialogue form, which mainly made for common people. It has five nikayas, in which, the stories of Buddha's rebirth (the jatakas) collected in the fifth nikaya.

Vinaya pitaka: It is a collection of rules and codes of conduct for Buddhist monks and nuns.

Abhi-dhamma-pitaka: It is a collection of Buddha's philosophical thought in the form of Question & answers. It mainly meant for scholars of Buddhism.

Dharmaparishadas: The Grand Assemblies

After the *mahaparinirvana* of Buddha, Buddhism witnessed the crowd of various versions of Bud- dha's preaching. Hence, to remove such discrepancy and reach to unanimous platform, a need was felt to rearrange and compile Buddha's original preaching and codify them. For this purpose, grand assemblies of Buddhist followers organized from time to time.

Immediately after the death of Buddha, around 483 BC, during the reign of Ajatshatru of Haryaka dynasty, the first grand assembly organized in the caves of Saptaparni, close to Rajgriha. It was presided by Mahakashyapa. The assembly came up with collection of Buddha's preaching in pitakas. Under the supervision of Upali, Vinaya Pitaka compiled whereas Sutta-pitaka compiled under the

supervision of Ananda.

Then during the reign of Kalashoka of Shishunaga dynasty, in 387 BC, second grand assembly organized at Vaishali. In this, monks of Pataliputra and Vaishali introduced some rules, however, debated by monks of Avanti and Kaushambi. The debate not reached to any conclusion; hence, Buddhism witnessed its first major division under the names of Mahasanghika and Sthavirvadis. The Mahasanghik supported new rules whereas the Sthavirvadi decided to stick to the rules, compiled under Vinaya pitaka.

During the reign of Ashoka of Maurya dynasty, in 251 BC, third grand assembly organized at Pataliputra, presided by Moggaliputta Tisya. The assembly came up with the collection of Buddha's philosophy under the volume called as Abhidhammapitaka. The assembly also drove away 60000 monks who were not following Buddha's rules.

In the background of waves of new thinking, Kanishka of Kushana dynasty called the fourth grand assembly at Kundalvana (Kashmir). The assembly came up with the collection of treaties on three pitakas. However, due to the debates between new thinking and traditional scholars, the earlier division was dissolved and united under the name of Hinayana, whereas the new thinkers known as Mahayana.

Reasons for the spread of Buddhism

Within a short span of period, Buddhism spread into distant lands of India and abroad. Some of reasons of such popularity can be summarized as follows: Ideal Personality of

Buddha Buddha left his worldly possession and strived in search of truth and solution for human misery. Such a sacrifice was the ideal for the common people. After receiving enlightenment, Buddha shared his knowledge to the common people in their own language and with simple method. Such a chaste, sacrificial, knowledgeable character of Buddha remains an ideal for the common people.

Stress on People's-language

The Vedic knowledge and religion was in Sanskrit language, which was ambiguous to the common person, whereas Buddha preached in people's language, i.e. Pali. Hence, people could easily under- stand Buddha's preaching and codes of conduct. Obviously, they could identify their own religious thirst to Buddhism, more comfortably.

Philosophy

Due to complex and ritualistic nature of Vedic religion and ill systems like that of Varna, common man, as also the trader and ruler class were remained out of is purview. Against this background, Buddha preached in understandable language and provided simple codes of conduct, largely based on universal moral values. Hence, large crowds gathered around Buddha.

Contribution of Sangha

The mechanism of Buddhist Sangha provided a framework and constant supply of missionaries to the people. These missionaries were renowned by their scholarship and chaste-simple characters. They used to mix with public and

propagate Buddhism in understandable manner. The people were attracted to this concept and showed respect to the Sangha.

Support of economically powerful classes

The traders and artisans, although economically superior in society, kept away from Vedic fold. Buddhist gave socio-religious sanctions and legitimization to them. In turn, they supported the Sangha in generous manner. They provided large sum of funds to Buddhist religious constructions and propagation. The missionaries traveled with the caravans of traders, hence their journey became secured and fruitful which helped in propagation.

Favour of rulers

Buddhist religion was the religion of mass. Besides, economically powerful class of traders and artisans were followers of Buddhist religion. Hence, to gain support from mass and economically prosperous class, the rulers showered favour upon Buddhist religion. Besides, it should be noted that, many of the rulers of the contemporary India were not of Kshatriya origin. Hence, they disrespected by the Vedic religion. Buddhist sanctioned legitimacy to such non-Kshatriya Kings. Obviously, rulers favored Buddhism, which caused its growth.

In short, due to Buddha's charismatic personality, his universal philosophy in peoples' language, simple codes of conduct based on good-behaviour, the dedication of Sangha and missionaries and sanctioning of religious legitimacy to

prosperous classes and non-Kshatriya kings; Buddhism expanded throughout large areas of world.

Dissensions

During second grand assembly at Vaishali, Buddhism witnessed its major dissensions due to the intense arguments by the monks of Kaushambi and Avanti and those of Pataliputra and Vaishali. They are called as Sthavirvadis (those who stressed on strict observance of Vinaya-rules) and Maha-sanghikas (those who wished to introduce new rules and changes), respectively. After Mauryas, the rulers started favoring Vedic religion than Buddhism. Besides, Vedic religion, in reaction to the popularity of Buddhism, started introspecting itself and making improvisation in their philosophical and practical approaches. At this time, foreign rulers and concepts of art were making entry into Indian soil. Besides, to enlarge mass base, every belief systems were adhering to the process of deification and idol-worship. Hence, these systems started considering Sanskrit language for their scriptures to compete Vedic religion.

Against this background, forth grand assembly was organized at Kundalvana. Many Buddhists thinkers, to enlarge mass base were inclined to idol-worship and appealing for other drastic changes in Buddhism. To oppose them, the earlier divisions of Sthavirvadis and Mahasanghikas united under Hinayana, whereas, the new thinkers were called as Mahayana.

By this time, Buddhism was already divided into eighteen important sects but the two most important and major

ones were Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle and the Mahayana the Great Vehicle. The Hinayanists believed in the original teachings of Lord Buddha and did not want any relaxation in them. Whereas Mahayanists accepted many Buddhisattvas who were in the process of obtaining but had yet not obtained Buddhahood. Both the sects agreed that the Buddha had taken birth several times and in several forms as bodhisattvas before the attainment of Buddhahood and would take birth in future also. But both differed with regard to the cause of these births and deaths. According to Hinayanism, the different births were simply different stages of progress of the Buddha till salvation. Thus they believed that Buddha was a man and his birth as Gautama was his last stage in the attainment of Nirvana. But Mahayanism believed that Buddha was an incarnation of God. He took birth several times not to attain Nirvana for himself but to help others in the attainment. Secondly, whereas the Hinayansim regarded the salvation of one's own self as the highest goal, Mahayanism believed that the greatest ideal is to help the society in self-elevation. Thirdly, Hinayanism regarded Nirvana as a state of permanent bliss or peace away from the cycle of birth and death while the Mahayanism regarded it as the union of an individual with Adi Buddha,an idea quite simpler to the union with the Brahman of the Upnishadas. Fourthly, Hinayana did not regard the Buddha free from the bond of birth and death while Mahayana regarded the Buddha as God and believed in his different incarnations, all free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Fifthly, Hinayanism believed in the practice of self-culture and good deeds as the only way to salvation.

Mahayanism was based on faith and devotion to various Buddha to attain salvation. Finally, while the religious texts of Hinayanism were written in Pali, those of Mahayanism were written in Sanskrit. The Mahayanism remained closer to the concepts of Hinduism with regard to Nirvana, Brahma, incarnations of God, faith, devotion etc. thus forming a bridge between the old Buddhism and modern Hinduism.

Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture

Buddhism remained one of the foremost religions of not only India but the whole of Asia for many centuries but slowly it lost its hold over Asia and practically became non-existent in India. Corruption had crept in Buddhist Samghas because of the free entry of wealth and women in the monastic order. The division of the Buddhism into different sects also contributed to the destruction of the image of the movement among the people. The adoption of Sanskrit as language of the Buddhist texts made Buddhism lose popular contact and hold over the masses, since Sanskrit was not the language of the masses. The moral corruption of monks led to intellectual bankruptcy of the Samgha and when Hinduism was reviewed particularly under the patronage of Gupta rulers, Buddhism failed to meet its intellectual challenge and therefore lost popular support. Moreover, Buddhism basically was an atheistic system which did not regard God as an essential creator and preserver of the Universe. On the other hand, Hinduism a strong faith based on the existence of God preached the masses about the God as Saviour and perpetual merciful helper of mankind. The ruling class also realised might as the order

of the day and need of the time where non-violence and other teachings were becoming increasingly irrelevant, and thereby withdrew its support to Buddhism. Hinduism bounced back with the spirit of toleration and the acceptability of new ideas in its fold. But the final blow to Buddhism came with the invasion of Hunas and the Turks. Thus, Buddhism lost its control over the country of its birth.

Nevertheless, Buddhism made positive contribution to Indian culture. It gave to Indian people a simple, economical and popular religion. It rejected rituals and sacrifices, authority of the Brahmanas which had made Hinduism unpopular. The monastic system or the organisation of religious devotees in disciplined communities or orders was another contribution of Buddhism to India. It also provided religious unity to Indian people by raising the public morality by its adherence to a high moral code. At the same time, it gave serious impetus to democratic spirit and social equality. The philosophers of Buddhism had a rational approach towards religion and individualistic in its approach. It preached that the self-emancipation could alone help an individual to attain Nirvana. As far as the Indian education and literature is concerned, the Samghas became the centres of learning and Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila became centres of Buddhist learning. In the domain of architecture, sculpture and painting, the stupas of Sanchi, Sarnath, Nalanda, Amravatiand Ellora are regarded as the best specimens of Indian architecture. The famous lions of the Sarnath columns, the beautiful bull of Rampurva column, the carvings on the gateways of the great

Buddhist sites at Bharhut, Ganga and Sanchi are remarkable specimens of sculpture. The schools of Gandhara and Mathura produced the first images of Buddha which are appreciable pieces of art. The statues of Buddha carved in stone, copper and bronze are also some of the best examples of Buddhist art. The mural paintings of Ajanta caves earned world-wide fame. Thus, Indian architecture, sculpture and painting owe a large debt to Buddhism. Finally, the power to assimilate foreigners into its fold and the spirit of toleration has been a source of great inspiration from Buddhism to Indian society.

Decline of Buddhism

As mentioned earlier, Buddhism witnessed clash of philosophy and stress on codes among various versions. In due course of time, it gradually declined and, around the end of 7th century, became almost invisible from the Indian land. What were the causes of such a decline? Let us find out. Shift of kings'-favor As we know that the favour and support of rulers were one of the causes for the spread of Buddhism. However, after the Mauryas, India was mushroomed with those kings who favoured Vedic religion. In fact, the rulers and their officers started resurrecting Vedic religion by performing huge sacrifices and giving donations. It hampered the support of Buddhism.

Conclusion

From the above discuss we come to know that, the cities of the Harappan Culture had declined by 1500 B.C. Consequently, their economic and administrative system had

slowly declined. Around this period, the speakers of Indo-Aryan language, Sanskrit, entered the north-west India from the Indo- Iranian region. Initially they would have come in small numbers through the passes in the north- western mountains. Their initial settlements were in the valleys of the north-west and the plains of the Punjab. Later, they moved into Indo-Gangetic plains. As they were mainly cattle keeping people, they were mainly in search of pastures. By 6^{th} century B.C., they occupied the whole of North India, which was referred to as Aryavarta. This period between 1500 B.C and 600 B.C may be divided into the Early Vedic Period or Rig Vedic Period (1500 B.C -1000 B.C) and the Later Vedic Period (1000B.C -600 B.C).

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MODULE III

MAURYAN AND MUVENDAR

Introduction

In the Age of the Buddha one for the first time comes across the existence of a series of territorial states in northern India in general and the Gangetic plains in particular. These are known as the sixteen *mahajanapadas*. Peninsular India was beyond the pale of any such development in the middle of the first millennium B.C. Similarly, there were many other cultural backwaters in the sub-conti- nent. States such as Anga, Magadha, Vatsa, Kasi, Kosala, Kuru, Pancala, Surasena, Matsya, Gandhara, Kamboja, Cedi, Avanti, Asvaka, Malla and Vajji flourished during these periods. All of them were not of the same type, they included both monarchies and what has come to be popularly known as republics. Vajji and Malla are good examples of the latter. Actually, they represented non-monarchical forms of government or to use the expression known from the sources Gana-Samgha political systems. While in the monarchies the king was raised above the society, exercised unfettered power and the individual was subordinated to the state and varna order, in the Gana Samghas the dominant kshatriya group exercised power to the exclusion of the other sections in society. These societies compared to the monarchical order were less stratified and took time to develop complex forms and varna hierarchy. With the establishment of monarchies and the so-called

republics the details of early Indian history emerge with greater clarity. Before we get into details discussion on the emerging polity of territorial state, we should look into the process of formation of territorial states in this period.

From Chiefdom to State

It is difficult to simplify the origin of states because they are products of the convergence of numerous processes of change. Nevertheless, one has to address the issue because the state as an institution did not exist from time immemorial. Before proceeding any further on the matter, one may briefly dwell on the question of what are the core issues. One may begin by defining the term state, search for its correlates in ancient Indian texts and then move on to see how and when the constitutive elements came together, leading to the emergence of states. The *saptanga* theory of state in the Arthasastra can be a convenient point of reference and, flowing from it, one could investigate the emergence of kingship, crystallisation of varna divided society, evolution of private property in land, the idea of a sense of belonging to a territory and the introduction of taxes, fortified settlements, administrative machinery and the standing army to make the general point that these variables promoted the cause of the state. Alternatively, one can focus on the processes to show how complex were the developments and why and how ultimately the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas emerged as the power elite, enjoying a significant part of the societal surplus, while others agreed to pay taxes and render labour.

Early Vedic Stage

During the early part society was characterised by kin organisation. Terms such as *gotra, vratya, sraddha* and even *grama* denoting groups of people were actually kinship terms. Such groups reared their cattle, went for a hunt and fought the enemy as a unit. These kin groups, possibly resembling band living, were based on the need for collective subsistence. Each of these units was headed by its chief, who need not be confused with the later day king. In the later part of the Rig Vedic stage, we are told, one encounters larger kin units like jana and vis, which are comparable to tribes and clans respectively. The chiefs came to be known as janasya gopta, gopa janasya or vispati. These terms emphasised their role as herdsmen or protectors. There is evidence for intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts which, it is said, strengthened the position of the chiefs because of the role they were called upon to play in such situations. Both in the event of victory and defeat, as also the weakening of kin loyalty, the chiefs had to provide for some kind of order and cohesion. Such role (functions) apart, the chiefs also presided over the Rig Vedic assemblies viz., the Sabha, Samiti, Vidhatha and Gana. Community wealth, including the booty from successful raids, was distributed equally among the members of the tribe. Individual members on various occasions gave a part of what they had to the chief largely owing to the latter's leadership functions. The chiefs usually redistributed such gifts during community feasts. Since the economy was predominantly pastoral and it was difficult to accumulate wealth, therefore,

Rig vedic society was largely egalitarian in nature. Notwithstanding the reference to the four varnas in the *Purushasukta* at the end of the Rig Veda, which is usually considered to be a later interpolation, society continued to be egalitarian. However, in so far as the political developments were concerned the chiefs gained in status both owing to their leadership role as well as the hymns composed in their praise by bards who received gifts (*dana)* from them.

Later Vedic Stage

The Later Vedic period was an important transitional stage, marked by the sharpening of developments in certain areas, leading to the threshold of state systems. The scene of activity shifted eastward, to western Uttar Pradesh and the adjoining regions of Haryana and Rajasthan. Based on the chronological and spatial parallel between later Vedic literature and the **Painted Grey Ware culture (PGW)** which are dated to the first half of the first millennium B.C., it is envisaged that the authors of the texts and the archaeological culture were the same people. Flowing from it the material culture of the times is constructed on the basis of the combined testimony of the two sources. The people practiced agriculture and reared cattle. Wheat, rice, pulses, lentil. etc., were known. The assured food supplies sustained major and minor sacrifices (yajna), and the Doab became the cradle of sacrifices. Royal sacrifices such as the rajasuya and asvamedha went on to influence kingship ideology for more than a thousand years. Apart from the fertility element inherent in these rituals, which had something to do with placating the earth and augmenting

production, they also helped to raise the status of the chief and his associates. One comes across the term *rajan* and its expanded forms such as *rajan*ya, *rajan*ya-bandhu, as also kshatriya. While *rajan* meant the chief, the term kshatriya, deriving from the word kshatra (power) represented the group of the people wielding power. The sacrifices involved community feasts which the *rajan* alone could organise and the successful performance of these rituals implied the bestowal of divine boons and attributes on the performer i.e., the *rajan*. These developments emphasised his importance.

The *rajan* or kshatriya's rise to power was not all that smooth, it was the result of long drawn processes. A whole range of imageries and rituals were played out in public to achieve the ascendancy of the *rajan* and subordination of the community (vis). The king ritually lent his hand to agricultural operations at the beginning of the season and practiced commensality with the members of the vis to signify common identity. Simultaneously the texts through the clever use of similes highlighted his exalted position. For example, the *rajan* and vis were compared with deer and barley or the horse and other ordinary animals respectively. The ambivalent attitude focusing on solidarity with the community on the one hand and differentiation on the other sums up the transitional nature of the times. The *rajan* was a part of the community and yet had to be above it to execute decisions of common interest. Such compulsions were attempted to be overcome through ritual means. With the rise of the *rajan*ya/kshatriya there was a corresponding enhancement in the status of the

brahmana. It was they who officiated at the rituals and were thus instrumental in the elevation of the *rajan*. That perhaps explains the brahmana-kshatriya relationship (involving legitimation for one and patronage for the other) and the emergence of the power elite in early India. The proper conduct of sacrifices was prescribed in the Brahmana texts to ensure brahmana kshatriya dominance and the subservience of the vis.

Rituals such as the upanayana ceremony were performed to emphasise varna and gender inequality. Women like sudras were kept out of it. There were differences in observance of the matters related to detail by the upper three varnas, signifying hierarchy. Similarly, groups from outside the kin were ritually roped in which weakened kin ties and helped the process of the emergence of differentiation, which was necessary for state formation. However, given the dependence of the elite on the lower varnas, pretensions of solidarity were maintained by involving members of the lower varnas in aspects of rituals or, for example, referring to the vaisyas as arya. These, however, did not prevent the emergence of varna divided society. While in theory chiefs continued to be elected the Brahmanical literature prescribed formulas for preserving the office of chief over generations in the same family. It suggests that the idea of hereditary succession was gaining ground. However, it was the favoured son, and not necessarily the eldest, who succeeded the father. That the idea of territory or territorial affiliation was acquiring currency can be seen from the prevalence of terms such as rashtra and janapada.

However, taxes were not yet formally collected. Bali, the gift of affection of the earlier period, was possibly acquiring an obligatory character. The absence of officials and administrative functionaries to assess and collect revenues is quite clear. It is difficult to perceive the *ratnins*, who had a role to play in the coronation ceremony, as some kind of nascent officialdom.

When it came to the defense of the realm the vis in the absence of an organized army, did it collec- tively. At the end of the later Vedic period certain attributes of the state were in place or to put it differently peasant communities were on the threshold of state formation, but the state had not yet fully emerged. It is argued that iron was yet to enter the productive process, agriculture had still not yielded the necessary surplus and sacrifices like the Asvamedha and Vajapeya, among others, involved the slaughter of animals and wasteful consumption. Together they held back the rise of the state.

Origin of Territorial States in the Age of Buddha

As one enters the age of the Buddha many of these limitations were overcome. The introduction of iron in agriculture helped deeper ploughing and the breaking of the hard soil in the mid-Ganga plains. Iron was also used in various crafts and the making of metallic money, i.e., the punch Marked coins. Almost simultaneously wet paddy transplantation came to be practiced in this naturally rice growing area. Cumulatively these developments led to surplus produce, which in turn sustained trade, taxes and the emerging stratified society, with its administrative

functionaries, ideologues and wage labourers. Dharmasutra literature justified varna divisions and institutionalised inequality. Vaisyas and sudras bore the brunt of carrying out production and provided the necessary revenue and labour to uphold the king's men, army personnel, priests, ideologues and so on. Buddhism too recognised and endorsed many of these developments. There are references to ministers and armies in the context of Magadha and Kosala. The presence of officials such as *balisadhaka* and *karakara*, for example, suggests that taxes like *bali* and *kara* were collected. Thus, by the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. territorial states emerged in northern India. The above-mentioned perspective had been criticized largely on two counts. First, it is said that the final emergence of states has been explained with reference to some kind of technical determinism in what appears to be an iron-productivity surplus-state formation line of argument. Secondly, the emergence of the varnas and their assigned roles, either as receivers of taxes and gifts or providers of produce and labour, has not been fully explained.

Romila Thapar while explaining the emergence of states refers to anthropological concepts like lineage society and house-holding economy to explain the evolution of the hierarchically structured varna society, and her emphasis is on the interplay of multiple processes of change, bearing on state formation. It is said that Vedic literature is replete with references to lineage terms, viz., *gotra*, *vraja*, etc. Lineage groups comprise members of the senior (*rajan*ya) and junior (vis) lineage. The senior lineage both controlled and had

greater access to community resources, though in principle there was collective ownership of land by the lineage group. In course of time by characterising the seniority based on genealogical superiority as one premised on the ideology of patrilineal descent the *rajan*ya asserted its authority. It emphasised endogamy to claim purity, and flowing from it asserted its ex- clusivity and superiority. The differentiation between members of the senior and junior lineage in- creased with the transition to the later Vedic period.

The emergence of a socio-economic form approximating what is known as householding economy is seen to have hastened the process of internal differentiation and the dissolution of lineage organi- sation during the Later-Vedic times. The household comprised three to four generations of family members who may have resided in one or more than one house, but for purposes of production, consumption and rituals formed one single unit. The extended family gradually began to exercise right on the land it cultivated, theoretically though such land was initially allotted to the community for its use in cultivation. In situations where the extended family labour was not sufficient to work the land, the non-kin members who were not related to the family by Kinship ties were roped in for agricultural activities. These people need not be confused with wage labour. They were practically a part of the family, participated in all family activities except the family rituals. In the long-term as land allotted for cultivation was transformed into private property such retainers, who were some sort of family inheritance and

may have emerged out of defeated and dispossessed peoples, were reduced to family servants. The *rajan*ya/kshatriya and vaisya evolved from the senior and junior lineages respectively. Those relegated to the position of labourers and artisans become Sudras. Because the extended families within the given socio-economic structure generally incorporated three-four generations it allowed younger generations to move out, clear and settle in new lands in conditions of population pressure. There are literary references to the fissioning off among communities as a consequence of such developments. Such tendencies facilitated the process of agrarian expansion and extended the frontier of peasant activity. Thus, within the framework of the house-holding economy one comes to understand the transition from lineage society to a complex society and the state.

Environment, technology, social stratification, surplus, urbanisation and ideology, among others, were important factors in the making of the state, but it is difficult to prioritize them or identify the single most important factor. Surplus, for example, was related to social and political hierarchies and the need of the non-producers to live off the produce of others. Similarly, it was linked to the distribution of the produce. In brief, society does not produce a surplus simply because of the availability of a given technology. It is the result of a combination of factors. The relationship between social differentiation, urbanisation and ideology too are quite complex. Powerful contemporary religious ideas and systems (Buddhist) played an important role in shaping the nature of

the emerging state systems-gana sanghas and monarchies. The Buddhist Sangha (monastic institution) characterised by its egalitarian ideas was useful to the early states because it was able to integrate the varied groups across caste and clan lines. The Sangha too depended for its sustenance on the existence of a strong state. Kings like Ajatsatru of Magadha and Ashoka Maurya extended patronage to Buddhism. In this analysis it is also argued that the mahajanapadas were either gana-sanghas or monarchies. While in the so called republics of Northeastern India (Malla, Vajji) the process of transition to powerful centralised state was slow owing to the common ownership of land by the kshatriya clans (which blocked the possibility of land revenue appropriation) whereas the territorial states in the upper Ganga plains (Kurus) could not easily shake off the later Vedic legacy of rituals, cattle sacrifice and wasteful consumption (which hindered the rise of strong states), those like Kosala and Magadha which were located in the mid-Ganga plains were characterised by no such limitations. In addition, Magadha had the advantage of rich soil, gentle gradient towards Ganga, a history of rice cultivation, good rainfall, irrigated land, Bandhs used as water reserves, several rivers like the Son, Gandak, etc., which could also be used for communication and trade, and it was close to the mines and minerals of Dhalbhum and Singhbhum. The forest of Rajmahal hills were used for procuring timber and were also the habitat of elephants. Magadha controlled the Dakshinapath (trade route) and all routes on the southern bank of the Ganga were linked to Magadha. The states that emerged in this part of northern India were evidently more viable and stronger.

They could sustain greater populations and generate the necessary taxes to meet the requirements of the state.

Categories of Territorial States in the Age of Buddha

During the sixth century BC, India came to be divided into a number of independent states and even north India had no single paramount power. The Buddhist and Jain religious texts are more informative regarding them as compared to the Hindu religious texts. The Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya which is a portion of Sutta-Pitaka gives a list of sixteen Mahajanapadas in the time of Buddha. Another Buddhist text Mahavastu enumerates a similar list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Bhagavati Sutra, a Jaina work gives a comparatively different list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas while including Vanga and Malaya. However, the number sixteen seems to have been acceptable and conventional but the list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas varied because the regions important to the Buddhist and Jains had some variation. The list includes a gradual shift of focus to the middle Gangetic valley because of the location of most of these Mahajanapadas in this area. So far as nature of government is concerned the early literature inform us that most of these states were monarchical but quite a large number of them had republican or oligarchic constitutions.

The Gana-Sanghas

In post Vedic period the geographical focus shifted to the middle Ganga valley and migration and settlement of people took place along two routes: Northern originated from

the Himalayan foothills and moved south to merge into the southern route near Pataliputra. The Buddhist sources as well as Ashtadhyayi of Panini give us information about middle Ganga valley and Gana sanghas respectively. It was the gana-sanghas of the middle Ganga valley such as Vrjjis which contained the constituent features of state formation. Monarchy was initially established in Kosala, Magadha, Gandhara, Kasi and Kausambi. There were the two categories of state systems as they emerged in the Age of the Buddha: Gana-sanghas and Monarchies.

The origin of the gana-sanghas is related to migration to middle Ganga valley. Migration resulted due to population pressure and also due to a process of fission in lineage systems. Due to fissioning off among Kshtriya clans in later Vedic period the members of Rajakula migrated to some other area and established a new janapada. Janapada referred to a territory named after a Kshtriya clan. A group of clans formed a jana and the area where they settled was called janapada literally meaning the place where the tribe puts its feet. This is how Sakya, Koliya and Licchavi clans came into being. Some of the gana-sanghas comprised of single clan units like Sakyas, Koliyas and Mallas. Some were confederacies of clans of which important were Vrjji of whom Licchavis were most important. In the gana-sanghas the system of clan (vis) holdings was prevalent. Therefore, Gahapatis (family [three to four generations] as owners of holdings) are rarely referred to as agriculturists in gana-sanghas. In the gana-sanghas the Kshtriya lineages were regarded as owners of cultivable land.

The name of the territory was derived from the Kshtriya lineage who had earlier cultivated land on a family basis but now used labour when the size of holdings became too big to be manageable. The clan held the land jointly on the criteria based on birth and the produce was therefore distributed among its members.

The gana-sanghas were the assemblies of Kshtriya lineages. They were established by the younger members of the established Kshtriya lineages. In the gana-sanghas ownership of land was vested in the Kshtriya lineage. Non-kin groups provided labour for working on the land of Kshtriya lineage. There was very little scope for rituals. Gana-sanghas have been variously interpreted as republics, oligarchies and chiefdoms. The members of the ruling lineages were referred to as rajas, rajakulas or consecrated Kshtriyas. The head of each household was raja. The symbols of the gana-sanghas were embossed on punch marked coins which indicates the beginnings of the use of coined money. Decisions were arrived at through the method of voting. Within the rajakulas all members were regarded as equal. Thus, chiefdoms have a centralised command structure in which status to leadership is decided by birth and ancestry and genealogies become important. There is reference to military and fiscal offices. They did not possess a standing army nor did they have any regular system of revenue collection. However, the sources do refer to taxes imposed on traders. Varna organisation did not determine social status in Ganasangha areas. Rituals were not important and two broad categories in this area were those

who owned land and those who laboured on it. All these features indicate the existence of an incipient state or stratified society. Difference among the members of the gana-sanghas would lead to fission among groups. These groups would settle fresh areas. However in such a situation if one segment of the clan would seize power then the janapada (gana-sangha) could turn into a monarchy.

Monarchies

With the establishment of the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala the term janapada included villages, markets, towns and cities which meant existence of a system of administration and revenue. Power came to be vested in the hands of certain families, who did not possess the highest status. Pasenadi the king of Kosala legitimised his position as a king by performing asvamedha, vajapeya, etc. in which hundreds of animals were killed. The rituals were now a mere symbolism to legitimize power and not a method to part with wealth acquired in raids. In Kosala and Magadha land was owned by gahapatis and they cultivated it themselves or used the labour of others (tenants). State also undertook cultivation of land. Wasteland was brought under cultivation and with the expansion of agrarian economy a large surplus was released in the monarchical states. The ritual gifts granted to Brahamnas at the time of Yajna were fewer and instead the practice of gifting of land to Brahamnas was initiated. The tax collection machinery was well established in Kosala. Bali now meant a tax but could also mean an offering at a sacrifice. *Bhaga* and *ardha* constituted a share of total and *sulka* meant customs duty

Reference to *karsapana* points to the introduction of coinage. Panini mentions taxes prevalent in the eastern area including land tax. The importance of *Kosa* (treasury) is indicated. This was necessary for maintaining a standing army an essential condition for emergence of a state system. Rulers of Magadha paid due attention to army organisation which included recruitment and training of soldiers and the innovation in armoury. In the campaign against Vrjjis Magadha used two new techniques *ratha-musala* (chariot with knives) and *maha-silakantika* (catapult for throwing stones). Now raids were replaced by planned campaigns.

The 16 Mahajanapadas

As discussed above, during the sixth century B.C., India came to be divided into a number of inde- pendent states and even north India had no single paramount power. Most of these states were monarchical but quite a large number of them had republican or oligarchic constitutions. The Buddhist and Jain religious texts are more informative regarding them as compared to the Hindu religious texts. The Buddhist text such as Anguttara Nikaya which is a portion of Sutta-Pitaka, Mahavastu and Jain text Bhagavati Sutra, gives us a list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Although, the number sixteen seems to have been acceptable and conventional but the list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas varied in the above texts because the regions important to the Buddhist and Jains had some variation. The list includes a gradual shift of focus to the middle Gangetic valley because of the location of most of these Mahajanapadas in this area. The above mention text

furnished the following list of sixteen Mahajanapadas in the time of Buddha.

Kashi: Of the sixteen Mahajanapadas Kashi seems to have been the most powerful in the beginning. Since it was at first the most powerful, it played important part in the subversion of the Videhan monarchy. Located in and around the present-day Varanasi district its capital Varanasi is referred to as the foremost city of India situated on the confluence of the Ganges and the Gomati river and in the middle of the most fertile agricultural areas. The economic importance of Kashi lay in the fact that it had emerged as a leading centre of textile manufacture in the time of the Buddha. The *Kashaya* (orange brown) robes of the Buddhist monks are said to have been manufactured here. Kashi was not only famous for its cotton textiles but also for its market for horses. Excavations at the site of Rajghat which has been identified with ancient Benaras have not yielded any impressive evidence for urbanisation in the sixth century B.C. It seemed to have emerged as a major town around 450 BC. But by the time of Buddha, it had emerged as a centre for commercial activity. Several kings of Kashi are mentioned as having conquered Kosala and many other kingdoms. Dasaratha Jataka also mentions Dasaratha and Rama as kings of Kashi and not of Ayodhya. The father of Parsva, the twenty third teacher (Tirthankara) of the Jains is said to have been the king of Benaras. The Buddha also delivered his first sermon after enlightenment in Sarnath near Benaras. All the important religious traditions of ancient India are associated with Kashi.

However, by the time of the Buddha the Kashi Mahajanapada had been annexed by Kosala and was a cause of war between Magadha and Kosala.

Kosala: The Mahajanapada of Kosala was bounded on the west by the river Gomati, on the south by the Sarpika or Syandika (*Sai*) which defined its southern boundary. To its east flowed the river *Sadarvira* (Gandak) which separated it from Videha Janapada. Towards the north, it skirted the Nepal hills. Literary references indicate how Kosala emerged out of an assimilation of many smaller principalities and lineages. For example, we know that the Sakyas of Kapilvastu were under the control of Kosala. The Buddha calls himself as Kosalan in the Majjhima Nikaya. But at the same time, the Kosala King Vidudhaba is said to have destroyed the Sakyas. It would only indicate that the Sakya lineage was under the normal control of the Kosala. The newly emergent monarchy established a powerful centralized control and put an end to the autonomy of the Sakyas. Hiranyanabha, Mahakosala Prasenjita and Suddhodhana have been named as rulers of Kosala in the sixth century BC. These rulers are said to have ruled from Ayodhya, Saketa, Kapilvastuand Sravasti. Ayodhya or the Saryu associated with the Rama story in Ramayana, Saketa adjoining it and Sravasti (modern Sahet-Mahet) on the borders of the Gonda and Bahravich districts of Uttar Pradesh, were three important Kosala cities, though excavations indicate that none of them was settled on any considerable scale before the sixth century BC. Probably in the early years of the sixth century BC, the area of Kosala was under the control of many

smaller chiefs who were ruling from small towns.Towards the close of the sixth century BC, Kings like Prasenjita and Vidudhabha succeeded in bringing all chiefs under their control.They ruled from Sravasti. Thus, Kosala emerged as a prosperous and power kingdom having Ayodhya, Saketa, Sravasti under its control. Kosala also managed to annex Kashi in its territory. The Kings of Kosala favoured both Brahmanism and Buddhism. King Prasenjita was a contem- porary and friend of the Buddha. In the years to come Kosala emerged as one of the most formidable adversaries to the emergent Magadha empire.

Anga: Anga on the east of Magadha was separated from it by the river Champa and comprised the modern districts of Munger and Bhagalpur in Bihar. It may have extended northwards to the river Kosi and included some parts of the district of Purnea. It was located to the west of the rajamahal hills. Champa was the capital of Anga. It was located on the confluence of the rivers Champaand the Ganga. Champa has been considered one of the six great cities in the sixth century BC. It was noted for its trade and commerce and traders sailed further east through the Ganga from here. By mid-sixth century B.C., Anga was annexed by Magadha. A large number of North Black Polished ware has been unearthed at Champa near Bhagalpur.

Magadha: Between Anga and Vatsa, there lay the kingdom of Magadha corresponding to modern Patna and Ganga districts. It was protected by the rivers Son and Ganga on its north and west. On the south, it was bounded by the Vindhya outcrop

and it had reached upto the Chotanagpur plateau. In the east, the river Champa separated it from Anga. Its capital was called Girivraja or Rajagriha. Rajagriha was an impregnable place protected by five hills. The walls of Rajagriha show the earliest evidence of fortification in the history of India. In the fifth century BC, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra which was the seat of the early Magadha Kings. In the Brahmanical texts, the Magadhans were considered inferior because of their mixed origin. This was probably because the people in this area did not follow the varna system and had no faith in Brahmanical traditions and rituals. On the other hand, the Buddhist tradition attaches great importance to this area. It was here that Buddha attained enlightenment. Rajagriha was a favourite place of the Buddha. The Magadhan monarchs Bimbisara and Ajatshatru were Buddha's friends and disciples. Magadha also gained importance because the fertile agricultural tracts of this area were best suited for wet rice cultivation. Moreover, it had control over the iron ore deposits of south Bihar. Finally, the open social system of the Magadhan empire made it the most important kingdom in the years to come. Its control over the trade routes of the Ganges, Gandak and Son rivers provided it substantial revenues. The Magadhan King Bimbisara is said to have called an assembly of the Graminis of 80,000 villages. This shows that Bimbisara's administration was based on the village as a unit of administration. The Gamini were not his Kinsmen but chiefs or representatives of villages. Therefore, through his conquests and diplomacy, Bimbisara made Magadha most important kingdom in the subsequent history.

Magadha as a kingdom kept prospering with its extension of power over the Vajji of Vaishali under the control of Ajatshatru. This was to culminate in the Maurya empire in the fourth century B.C.

Vajji: Centred around the Vaishali district of Bihar, the Vajjis (literate meaning pastoral nomads) were located north of the Ganga. This Mahajanapada stretched as far as the Nepal hills. Its western limit was the river Gandak which separated it from Malla and Kosala. In the east, it extended upto the forests on the banks of the river Kosi and Mahanadi. Unlike the Mahjanapadas previously discussed, the Vajjis had a different kind of political organisation. The contemporary literature refers to them as Ganasamgha, a term which wsa earlier used for a republic or an oligarchy. The Ganasamgha of this period represented a joint rule by a group of Kshatriya chiefs and not a rule by a single all-powerful king. This ruling class, members of which were called rajas, were now differentiated from different non-kshatriya group.

The Vajji state is said to have been a confederation of eight clans (*atthakula*) of whom the Videhas, Licchavis and the Jnatrikas were the most well-known. The Videha had their capital at Mithila which has been identified with Janakpur in Nepal. The Ramayana associated it with the King Janaka, the Buddhist sources consider it a chiefship. Licchavis, the most well known of the ancient Indian Ganasamghas had their headquarters at Vaishali which was a large and prosperous city. The Jhatrikas were another clanwhich settled somewhere in the suburbs of Vaishali. To this clan belonged the Jain

teacher, Mahavira. The other members of confederacy were the clans of the Bhogas, Kauravas, Ugras, Aiksavaras. Vaishali seems to have been the metropolis of the entire confederacy. Their affairs were managed by an assembly but they had no standing army or a proper system of collection of revenue from agriculture. According to a Jataka story, the Vajjis were ruled by many clan chiefs. In all likelihood the Vajji confederation took form after the decline and fall of the Videhan monarchy and was a flourishing non-monarchial state in the time of Mahaviraand Gautama Buddha. The Magadhan King Ajatshatru is supposed to have destroyed this confederacy. He sowed discord among the chiefs by seeking the help of his minister Vassakara and then attacked the Licchavis.

Mallas: The territory of the non-monarchical Mallas supposed to have been ruled by five hundred chiefs was divided into two parts each having its own capital. It is another Kshatriya lineage referred to as Ganasamghas in ancient texts. They seem to have several branches of which two had their headquarters in the towns of Pawa possibly identical with Pawapuri in Patna district and Kushinara identified with the site of Kasia in the Gorakhpur district of UP. The Malla territories are said to have been located to the east and south-east of the territory of the Sakyas. The Mallas like the Videhas had at first a monarchical constitution, which was replaced by what has generally been described as a republican form of government. Literary writings refer to some kind of alliance between the Mallas, the Lichchavis and the clan chiefs

of Kashi-Kosala. This joining of hands could be against the rising threat of the Magadhan ascendency.

Chedi: The Chedi territory roughly corresponds to the eastern parts of the modern Bundelkhand and adjoining areas and their kings'lists occur in the Jatakas, the Buddhist birth stories. It might have stretched upto the Malwa plateau. Sisupala the famous enemy of Krishna was a Chedi ruler. Both figure in the well-known epic, the Mahabharata, the latter being the most prominent among its different characters. The staying of the forms became the central theme of a long poem written by a later poet, Magha. According to the Mahabharata, the Chedis seem to have been in close touch with the chiefs of Matsya beyond the Chambal, the Kasis of Benaras and the Karusas in the valley of the river Son. Its capital was Sotthivati (*Suktrimati*) probably located in the Banda district of Madhya Pradesh. Other important towns in this territory were Sahajati and Tripuri.

Vatsa: Vatsa was one of the most powerful principalities of the sixth century BC with its capital at Kaushambi (modern Kosam) which lay at some distance from Allahabad on the bank of the Yamuna. This means that the Vatsas were settled around modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.

The Puranas say that the descendent of the Pandavas, Nichakshu shifted his capital to Kaushambi after Hastinapur had been washed away by floods. The dramatist Bhasa, has immortalized one of the kings of the Vatsas named Udayan in his plays. These plays are based on the story of the romantic affair between Udayana and Vasavadatta, the Princess of

Avanti. These plays also indicate the conflicts among the powerful kingdoms of Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti. Probably, Vatsa lost its importance in the ensuing struggle because the later texts do not refer to them with great importance.

Kuru: The Kingdom of the Kuru was centred around the Delhi – Meerut region. The kings of the Kurus were supposed to belong to the family of Yudhisthira. The Arthshastra refers to the Kuru kings as Raja Sobadopajivinah i.e carrying the title of kings. This indicates some kind of a diffused structure of chiefship. Many political centres in this area prove that they did not have absolute monarchy. Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Isukara are mentioned separately as the capital of the Kurus with their own chiefs. We all know about the Kurus from the epic, Mahabharata. This epic relates the story of the war of succession between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.Earlier phases were characterised by cattle raids for personal gains but with the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, large scale wars started. The Mahabharata narrates the war between two Kshatriya lineages. It is with the emergence of the early historic periodthat the social economic and political interaction increased among the Mahajanapadas.

Panchala: The Panchal Mahajanapada was located in the Rohilkhand and parts of central Doab (roughly Bulandshahr, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Aligarh, Badaun etc.) The ancient texts make reference to the existence of two lineages of the Panchala – the northern Panchalas and the southern Panchalas with the river Bhagirathi dividing the two. The northern Panchalas had their capital at Ahichchatra located in the

Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh. The southern Panchalas had their capital at Kampilya. They seem to have been closely linked to the Kurus. The Kurus allied with the Panchalas and their trade centre is said to have been visited by the Buddha. Very little information is available about them but they too are called Samgha. By the sixth century BC, they seem to have become an obscure power.

Matsya: Not much information is available about Matsya who are traditionally associated with modern Jaipur – Bharatpur – Alwar region of Rajasthan. Their capital was at Viratnagara. The famous hiding place of the Pandavas. Mahabharata refers to this place as suitable for cattle rearing that is why when the Kaurawas attacked Virat they took away cattle as booty. Since it was primitive, Matsya could not compete with the powers which had settled agriculture as their base. It was therefore absorbed by the rising Magadhan empire.Some of the most famous Ashoka edicts have been found in Baurat (Jaipur district), the ancient Virat.

Surasena: The Surasena, Kingdom, with its capital at Mathura, on the bank of the river Yamuna, was inhospitable because of uneven roads, excessive dust, vicious talks and demons. The Mahabharata and the Puranas refer to the ruling family of Mathura as belonging to the Yadava clan with which is associated the spic hero Krishna. The Yadava clan was divided into smaller clans like the Andhakas,Vrishani, Mahabhogas, etc. They two had a Samgha form of government.Mathura was strategically located at the junction of thetwo famous ancient Indian trade routes i.e. the Uttarapatha

and the Dakshinapatha. This was because Mathura represented the ancient zone between the Gangetic plains having settled agriculture and the sparsely populated pasture lands jutting into the Malwa plateau. It could emerge as a powerful kingdom because of its varied landscape and splintered political structure. The chiefs could not give it a cohesive form of control.

Assaka: The Assaka lived on the bank of the river Godavari near modern Paithan in Mahabharata. Paithan has been identified with ancient Pratishthana, the capital of the Assaka. The Kaksina Patha or the southern route is supposed to have connected Pratishthana with the cities of the north. Our information about this region is quite meager because of vague references to the kings of the Assakas. Probably, with passage of time, the territory of Assakas became commercially important.

Avanti: In the sixth century B.C. Avanti was one of the most powerful Mahajanapadas. The central area of this kingdom would roughly correspond to Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, extending upto the river Narmada. Its important city Mahismati is sometimes referred to as its capital. Divided into two parts, its southern capital was Mahasmati and its northern Ujjain, which became more important of the two. The Puranas attribute the foundation of Avanti to one of the clans of the Yadavas called the Haihaya. Located in a very fertile agricultural region and controlling the trade among from the south, this clan of the Yadavas here developed into a centralized monarchy. The Avanti King Pradyota is famous in

legends according to which from an enemy he became father-in-law of Udayen who ruled over Vatsa kingdom.

Gandhara: Gandhara was located between Kabul and Rawalpindi in the North Western Province. Some parts of Kashmir might have been included in this territorial limit. In the early Vedic times, it was of considerable importance but in the Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions of the later phases it was not given any importance. The capital Taxila was an important city for learning and trading. In the sixth century BC, Gandhara was ruled by a king Pukkusati who was a friend of Bimbisara but by late sixth century BC, the kingdom was conquered by Persians. According to Greek historian Herodotus, Gandhara formed the twentieth province of the Archaemenid empire and was the most populous and wealthy, it supplied men and material to the persona army fighting against the Greek.

Kambhoja: Kambhoja was located close to Gandhara probably around Afghanistan. The Kambhojas were regarded as uncultured by the Brahmanical texts of the seventh century BC. The Arthashastra calls them Varta-Sastropajivm Samgha meaning a confederation ofagriculturists, herdsmen, traders and warriors.

Thus, the above mentioned sixteen territorial states are the prominent political entity flourished in the age of Buddha. Some of them are oligarchy and most are monarchical. In the end of 5^{th} century B.C., the political condition witnessed change as the Magadhan empire was growing at a rapid state. Finally, the emerging and powerful Magadha engulf most of

these states and established herself as the paramount power of entire Gangetic valley.

Urbanisation in the Ganges valley

The period from the 6th century B.C. onwards witnessed the emergence of the cities in ancient India for the second time, the first being the Harappan cities. The second urbanization is more important in Indian history because it endured for a long time and it shows the beginning of a literary tradition. Contemporary Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts refer to several cities like Benares, Kasi and Sravasti. After the decline of the Indus cities small village settlements emerged in the Gangetic basin.

The spread of agricultural settlements, developments of iron technology and surplus production of grains enabled the growth of market centres, small towns and other type of settlements.

In the Mahajanapadas, the basic unit of settlement was the Gama meaning village Agriculture was the main occupation of people in agriculture settlements. This shows a transition from pastoral and nomadic economy to an agricultural and settled economy. References to villages of cattle keepers, ironsmiths, woodworkers indicate specialization of crafts by now. Increasing trade and prosperity of the economy is reflected by the engagement of villagers not only in agriculture but is diversified arts and crafts. Barter system and regular exchange of goods became an integral part of the economic life of the people. Specialisation of crafts

along with localization of the people led to a major change in the socio-economic and political life of the sixth century BC. This historic phase is associated with settlements using a pottery called the Northern Black Polished Ware. Increased trade and developing economies led to massive fortification of the cities like Kaushambi, Ujjain, Rajghat (Vanaras), Rajgir etc. These cities emerged as the centres of power and control over the Mahajanapadas. In the wake of growing economy, the use of coinage made the position of the merchant class stronger. Thus, one notices that the period starting with the sixth century BC saw the emergence of cities in ancient India for the second time. This urbanisation was more significant since it endured for a longer time and saw the beginning of a literate tradition. This tradition is embodied in Buddhism, Jainism and many strands of Hinduism. It is not only big cities which emerged at this time. Along with agriculture-based villages there existed market centres, small towns, big towns and other types of settlements.

Factors responsible for Urbanization

In order to understand the rise of cities in the sixth century B.C. one would like to emphasise on the need of establishing new centres of political power and activity in the wake of changing socio-economic milieu. The establishment of urban centres need not necessarily mean the increase in population of a particular area. Urban centres or cities are undoubtedly larger in size where people not only engage themselves in agriculture related activities but diversified non-agricultural activities also. Moreover, an urban centre

functions in relationship to a large hinterland. In other words cities are able to harness the resources of the countryside. Or else cities could provide administrative, economic or religious services to the rural areas where the population residing is much larger than the physical space of the city. This could lead to the emergence of a class of kings, priests, merchants living in the cities who may turn out to be wealthier and more powerful than a common man. To lessen the economic disparity between different groups of people and to keep in check the hostilities between the rich and the poor, the centralized machinery of the state is needed. This kind of social structure also implies the coming into being a state society. It is against this background that the study of urban society and the rise of cities characterised by the presence of craft specialists, rich and poor people and a state administration, should be studied.

By the sixth century B.C., the position of the Brahmins who specialized in ritual activity became questionable. The warrior class or Kshatriyas surfaced as a class of landowners. They desired a settled life based on agriculture and thus the introduction of the iron technology proved a boon for augmentation of agricultural surplus and clearing of forests. The middle Gangetic valley became the focus of increasing use of iron tools and wet rice cultivation. Larger food production made it possible to sustain increased production which is reflected in an increase in the number of settlements in the archaeological records of the period between sixth century to fourth century B.C. The groups that grew up controlling surplus wealth became the ruling class of

the newly emergent kingdoms. And on the foundation of this wealth were born the cities of the sixth century B.C.

The rise of cities in the sixth century B.C. is mentioned in the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts of the times. It was this period which saw the beginning of the written tradition in ancient Indian literary history. This evidence of the emergence of cities is corroborated by the archaeological sources. In the upper Gangetic valley, people used a particular kind of pottery called the painted grey ware, whereas in middle Gangetic plains, black and red pottery was known. By about the sixth century BC people of this entire zone started using Northern Black Polished Ware which is representation of the broad cultural uniformity in the Gangetic towns in the sixth century BC. Punch marked coins made of silver and copper, probably issued by merchants, reflect organised commerce by this time. The introduction of money in turn led to the emergence of the class of money-lenders. The use of terms Pura and Durga to denote fortifications to protect urban centres and separate them for rural areas is an important indication for the rise of cities not only as seats of political power but as centres of commercial activity. The use of term Nigama in Pali literature meant a township of specialized craftsmen. The term Nagara was commonly used for towns or cities which combined the political functions of the Pura and commercial functions of the Niagrama. The Buddhist literature refers to six Mahanagaras located in the middle Gangetic valley namely champa, Rajgriha, Kashi, Sravasti, Saketa and Kaushambi.

Thus, several factors contributed for the second urbanization in ancient India. However the most significant factor which basically paved the way for the growth of urban centres was the use of iron and the development of technology. The use of iron and the development of technology helped the spread of agriculture and the increase of agricultural production. The surplus was utilized for the maintenance of non-food producing classes, particularly craftsmen of various types. The specializations of crafts and the use of iron initiated trading activities. Thus, surplus production and trade played a crucial role in the second urbanisation in ancient India. The specialisation of crafts and trade developed simultaneously and both these turned out to be the important aspects of urban economy.

The rural people provided food and raw materials to the people in the urban centres and in turn they received finished goods, protection and services from the urban people. The growth of an urban centre is marked by the increase of population also. There was a steady migration of the village people to the cities. The urban centres absorbed the surplus rural population. All urban centres originated in diverse circumstances, apart from the primary factors mentioned above. Some of them developed as trading centres and markets, some as religious centres, some as educational centres, some due to its geographical location and some others at the initiative of the rulers.

There are certain terms used in the contemporary literature to denote urban centres. These terms include Pura,

Durga, Nigama and Nagar.The term Pura, in the beginning was referred to a fortified settlement or the residents of the ruling family or families. In course of time the Pura simply meant a city. Durga was another term used to denote a fortified city, usually the capital of the king. The capital was often fortified in order to separate it from the neighbouring rural areas as well as to make it easier for the ruler to control the activities of the people in the city. The term Nigama is used to denote a town in Pali texts. Nigama is believed to have been a merchant town where sale and purchase of goods took place. Some scholars believed that Nigama was the part of a city where specialised craftsmen lived together. The most commonly used term for a city or a town in the literature is Nagar or Nagara. Political and commercial activities were going on in the Nagara together and king, merchants and artisans lived in the city. The Buddhist literature refers to six Maha Nagaras namely, Champa, Kasi, Sravasti, Kausambi and Rajyagreha.All these cities were located in the Gangetic basin.

Role of Urban centers in the emerging polity.

The rise of the mahajanapadas was directly connected with the emergence of the early urban centres of the Gangetic plains in the period after 600 B.C. Five of the six major cities in the central Gangetic plains were capitals of mahajanapadas: Rajagriha (Magadha), Varanasi (Kasi), Kausambi (Vatsa), Sravasti (Koshala) and Champa (Anga). Only the sixth city, Saketa, was not an independent capital but was located in Koshala. It must have been the centre of an earlier janapada

which merged with Koshala. In central India there was Ujjain (Avanti) and in the northwest there was Taxila (Gandhara) or rather the recently discovered early town which preceded both Taxila and the nearby township on the Bhir Mound which dates back to the period of Persian occupation around 500 BC. There seems to be a correlation between political development and urbanization in this period of the sixth to the fifth centuries B.C.

The most remarkable contrast between the new cities in the Gangetic plains and earlier towns like Hastinapura is that of the system of fortification. Whereas the earlier towns were not fortified, these new cities had moats and ramparts. The ramparts were made of earth which was covered in some cases with bricks from about the fifth century BC onward; later on, they were even replaced by solid brick walls. A millennium after the decline of the Indus civilisation, one encounters once more bricks made in kilns. Kausambi had the most impressive fortification, its city walls are about 4 miles long and at some places 30 feet high. The archaeologist G. R. Sharma, who excavated Kausambi in the 1950s, thought that these walls resembled those of the Indus cities. There were also public buildings like assembly halls in these early Gangetic cities, and after the rise of Buddhism they also contained monasteries and stupas. City planning with regard to the network of streets seems to have started again only in the fourth century B.C.

An important indicator of the growth of an urban economy are the punch-marked coins which have been found in those Gangetic cities. There were also standardised weights

which provide evidence for a highly developed trade in the fifth century B.C.

Rise of Magadha

The period from 6th century B.C. to about 400 B.C., was marked by far reaching changes in almost every aspect of life in India. This period saw the spread of agriculture over large parts of the country, the rise of cities and the formation of states. The Varna system, the system, of social organization popularly known as the caste system, which had arisen in the vedic age now became well-established and gradually became the dominant form of social organization throughout the country. The rise of cities, crafts and trade also furthered the process of cultural unity. The focus of the Aryan civilization had now moved to Magadha, Vatsa, Kosala and Avanti, eastwards. During this period of all the sixteen principal states, only four great kingdoms and the Vajji Republic of the Lichchhavis survived. Among the four kingdoms, in Avanti, an outstanding ruler Pradyota was ruling. He was a very powerful King. His daughter Vasavadatta was married to Udayana, the ruler of Vatsa. In the beginning of the 4^{th} century B.C. Sisunaga, a ruler of Magadha, destroyed the power of the rulers of Avanti. Udayana, was the most famous ruler of Vatsa. He married the daughters of the rulers of Magadha, Anga and Avanti, and thus increased his powers. But his career was meteoric. He left no worthy successor. In the end, ruler of Avanti annexed it to his own kingdom. In the days of Lord Buddha, Prasenajit was the ruler of Kosala. He gave his sister Kosaladevi in marriage to Bimbisara, the ruler of

Magadha and gave a part of Kasi to her as pin-money. After death of Prasenjit, finally Kosala was assimilated with Magadha. Again, it was during the days of Ajatasatru, the Vajjis lost their power and eclipsed in Magadhan imperialism.

Causes for rise of Magadha

Ultimately it was the kingdom of Magadha which eclipsed the power of the other three kingdoms. There were a number of factors which contributed to the growth of Magadha as the most powerful monarchy from the sixth century B.C. to the fourth century B.C. This kingdom occupied a strategic position between the upper and lower parts of the Gangetic plain and it was a very important centre for trade and commerce. Though half in size in comparison to Kosala it had abundant forest resources, metal and prosperous agriculture. Its people were not orthodox in the social matters. Herein, a Brahmana could live on friendly terms with the Vratyas or degenerate Kshatriyas and the Kshatriyas could even marry Sudras girls. The ruler of Magadha built an impregnable mountain fort and organized a strong army because they had sufficient resources in men and money. They also had the wisdom of establishing an efficient system of government on the basis of regular officials and standing army devoid of tribal life. The bards of Magadha inspired the people and with their support, the rulers realized the ideal of establishing an empire under a Chakravarti ruler which had been the goal that many of the authors of the Brahmanas and the Upanisadas in pre-historic times had set for the rulers.

Brief History of Magadha Polity

Of all the kingdoms of north India, Magadha emerged powerful and prosperous. It became the nerve centre of political activity in north India. Magadha was endowed by nature with certain geographical and strategic advantages. These made her to rise to imperial greatness. Her strategic position between the upper and lower part of the Gangetic valley was a great advantage. It had a fertile soil. The iron ores in the hills near Rajgir and copper and iron deposits near Gaya added to its natural assets. Her location at the centre of the highways of trade of those days contributed to her wealth. Rajagriha was the capital of Magadha. During the reign of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, the prosperity of Magadha reached its zenith.

Bimbisara (546 - 494 B.C.)

Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara who belonged to the Haryanka dynasty. He was a contemporary of the Buddha. He became king sometime in the second half of the 6^{th} century B.C. The most notable achievement of Bimbisara was the annexation of the neighbouring kingdom of Anga (East Bihar) which had its capital at Champa near Bhagalpur. He placed it under the vice royalty of his son Ajatasastru. The conquest of Anga was of much significance. Anga controlled the trade and the routes to the sea ports in the Gangetic Delta which in turn had commercial contacts with the coast of Burma and the East coast of India.

Bimbisara strengthened his position by marriage alliances. He took three wives. His first wife was the daughter of the king of Kosala. The Kosalan bride brought him as dowry a Kasi village yielding a revenue of 1,00,000. The marriage put an end to the hostility of Kosala and gave him a free hand in dealing with other states. His second wife Chellana was a Lichchavi Princes from Vaisali.And his third wife was the daughter of the chief of the Madra clan of Punjab. These marriage relations gave enormous diplomatic prestige and paved the way for the expansion of Magadha Westward and Northward. Magadha's most serious rival was Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. Its king, Pradyota Mahasena fought Bimbisara but ultimately the two thought it wise to become friends. Later when Pradyota was attacked by Jaundice, Bimbisara sent the royal physician, Jivaka to Ujjain.

Through his conquests and diplomacy Bimbisara made Magadha the paramount power in the 6th century B.C. His kingdom is said to have consisted of 80,000 villages. He was the earliest of Indian kings to stress the need for efficient administration. Officers were divided into various categories according to their work. The building of roads was recognized as essential to good administration. Bimbisara is credited by a Chinese pilgrim with having built a new city at the foot of the hills lying to the north of Girivraja, which he named Rajagriha or the King' house, the modern Rajagir, in Patna district. It was surrounded by five hills, the openings of which were closed by stone walls on all sides.

Ajatasatru (494 - 462 B.C.)

According to Buddhist chronicles Bimbisara ruled for 52 years roughly from 544 B.C to 492 B.C under him Magadha became a flourishing kingdom which attracted the most enlightened men of the age. Both Mahavira and Budha preached their doctrines during the time of Bimbisara. As a patron of Buddhism, Bimbisara made a donation of the park called Veluvana to the Budha and the Sangha. Bimbisara also showed due reverence to Jainism. He was murdered by his son Ajatasatru, who was impatient to rule Magadha. Ajatasatru was determined to continue his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. He strengthened Rajagriha and built a small fort, Pataligrama in the vicinity of the Ganges (this was later to became the famous Mauryan metropolis of Pataliputra). His father having conquered the eastern state, Ajatasatru turned his attention to the North and the West. On Bimbisara's tragic death, his wife Kosala Devi died of grief. In consequence the Kosalan king, Presenajith revoked the gift of the Kasi village, which was granted to Bimbisara as dowry. The result was the outbreak of hostilities between Magadha and Kosala, which continued with varying fortunes for a long time. In the end, peace was concluded between the two, Presenajith restoring the disputed village of Kasi to Ajatasatru and giving his daughter Bajira in marriage to him.

The conflict with the Lichchavis was the next important event of Ajatasatru's reign. Though his mother was a Lichchavi princess, he did not resist from waging war with the Lichchavis. The excuse was that the Lichchavis were

the allies of Kosala. He created dissension in the ranks of the Lichchavis and finally destroyed their independence by invading their territory and defeating them in battle. It took him full sixteen years to destroy Vaisali. Finally, Magadha was victorious and was recognized as the most powerful force in eastern India. The victory of Magadha was a victory for the monarchical system, which was now firmly established in the Gangetic plain. Ajatasatru faced a stronger rival in the ruler of Avanti. Avanti had defeated the Vatsas of Kausambi and now threatened an invasion of Magadha. To meet this danger, Ajatasatru began the fortification of Rajagir. But the invasion did not take place in his life time.Thus the foundations of the Magadhan empire laid by Bimbisara was now firmly established as a result of subtle diplomacy of Ajatasatru.

Ajatasatru is represented in the Jain texts as a Jain and in the Buddhist texts as a Buddhist. He paid frequent visits to Mahavira both at Vaisali and Champa and expressed his faith in the teachings of Jainism. In his later days he became a covert to Buddhism and found solace for his tormented soul. Partaking the bulk of the relics of Budha. Ajatasatru enshrined them in a single sthoopa at his capital, Rajagriha. He repaired at Rajagriha 18 Mahavihars which were forsaken after Buddha's death. He promoted the cause of Buddhism by association himself with its first general council, at Rajagriha which was attended by 500 eminent Bikshus. The account of the reigns of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru show that they were the first Indian kings who sought to establish a far-flung empire in historic time. According to Pali sources, Ajatasatru was

succeeded by his son Udayibhadra in C.459 B.C. He founded the city of Patliputra on the confluence of the Sone and the Ganges. Udayibhadra's successors were Anurudha, Munda and Nagadasaka. They were weak and unpopular rulers. Hence Sisunaga the minister of the last ruler seized the throne.

Sisunaga dynasty

Sisunaga destroyed the power of the ruler of Avanti and thus became the undisputed ruler of almost the whole of Madhyadesa, Malwa and other territories in the north. The genealogy and chronology of the Saisunagas are not clear. After Sisunaga, the mighty empire began to collapse. His successor was Kakavarman or Kalasoka. During his reign the second Buddhist Council was held at Vaisali. Kalasoka was killed by the founder of the Nanda dynasty.

Nanda Dynasty

About the middle of the fourth century B.C. the Sisunaga dynasty was overthrown by the first Nanda ruler Mahapadma. There are different traditions about his origin. According to the Puranas, he was born of a Sudra woman. In the Jain works, he is described as the son of a courtesan by a barber and according to a Greek writer Curtius, Mahapadma was the son of a barber who by is good looks had won the queen's heart and who subsequently assassinated the ruler of Sisunaga dynasty (probably Kalasoka Kakavarna). All these accounts show that Mahapadma was of low origin, and succeeded in capturing the Magadhan throne by political intrigue of subterfuge.

The fame of Magadha scaled new heights under the Nanda dynasty. Their conquests went beyond the boundaries of the Gangetic basin and in North India they carved a well-knit and vast empire. Mahapadma Nanda was a powerful ruler of the Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma is said to have uprooted the Ksahtriyas by defeating the Iksvakus, Kurus, Panchalas, Kasis, Surasenas, Maithlas, Kalingas, Asmakas and Haihayas. There may be some exaggeration in this tall claim but it is certain that almost the whole of Madhyadesa and Malwa region formed parts of Sisunaga's empire. From the "Katha-sarit-sagar" we know that Kosala formed a part of Magadhan empire and the Hathigumpha inscription refers to the excavation of a canal by a Nandaraja who has been identified with Mahapadma. In view of this the Nanda control over parts of Kalinga, the conquest of Asmaka and other regions lying further south does not seem to be altogether improbable. On the Godavari, there is a city called Nav Nand Dehra. This also suggests the inclusion of a considerable portion of the Deccan in the Nanda domains. According to Pliny, the Prasi (Easterners) surpassed in power and glory every other people all over India. This shows the high reputation which the Namdas enjoyed at that time. The eight sons of Mahapadma are said to have ruled for twelve years in succession. The last Nanda ruler was probably Dhananada. According to Greek writer Curtius, he maintained a strong army consisting of 2,00,000-foot soldiers, 2000 horses, 20,000 chariots and 4,000 elephants and had immense riches. But he was irreligious (adharmika), and of tyrannical disposition. He was, therefore, very unpopular. After Alexander's departure Chandragupta

Maurya took advantage of the situation and destroyed the power of the Nandas of Magadha (C.320-21 B.C).

Magadha had thus step by step emerged as the premier kingdom in northern India, and henceforth its history merged with the history of India itself. The glamour of the Nandas had been dimmed by the greater splendour of the Mauryas. But we should remember that it was they who for the first time united the petty states of northern India, who were generally at war with one another, into one strong military unit. In other words, it was the Nandas who established a strong and unified political authority which covered most of northern India excluding Bengal.

The Rock Edicts of King Asoka

With the rediscovery and translation of Indian literature by European scholars in the 19th century, it was not just the religion and philosophy of Buddhism that came to light, but also its many legendary histories and biographies. Amongst this class of literature, one name that came to be noticed was that of Asoka, a good king who was supposed to have ruled India in the distant past. Stories about this king, similar in outline but differing greatly in details, were found in the Divyavadana, the Asokavadana, the Mahavamsa and several other works. They told of an exceptionally cruel and ruthless prince who had many of his brothers killed in order to seize the throne, who was dramatically converted to Buddhism and who ruled wisely and justly for the rest of his life. None of these stories were taken seriously-after all many pre-modern cultures had legends about "too good to be true" kings who

had ruled righteously in the past and who, people hoped, would rule again soon. Most of these legends had their origins more in popular longing to be rid of the despotic and uncaring kings than in any historical fact. And the numerous stories about Asoka were assumed to be the same.

But in 1837, James Prinsep succeeded in deciphering an ancient inscription on a large stone pillar in Delhi. Several other pillars and rocks with similar inscriptions had been known for some time and had attracted the curiosity of scholars. Prinsep's inscription proved to be a series of edicts issued by a king calling himself "Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi." In the following decades, more and more edicts by this same king were discovered and with increasingly accurate decipherment of their language, a more complete picture of this man and his deeds began to emerge. Gradually, it dawned on scholars that the King Piyadasi of the edicts might be the King Asoka so often praised in Buddhist legends. However, it was not until 1915, when another edict actually mentioning the name Asoka was discovered, that the identification was confirmed. Having been forgotten for nearly 700 years, one of the greatest men in history became known to the world once again.

Asoka's edicts are mainly concerned with the reforms he instituted and the moral principles he recommended in his attempt to create a just and humane society. As such, they give us little information about his life, the details of which have to be culled from other sources. Although the exact dates of Asoka's life are a matter of dispute among scholars, he was

born in about 304 B.C. and became the third king of the Mauryan dynasty after the death of his father, Bindusara. His given name was Asoka but he assumed the title Devanampiya Piyadasi which means "Beloved-of-the-Gods, He Who Looks on With Affection." There seems to have been a two-year war of succession during which at least one of Asoka's brothers was killed. In 262 B.C., eight years after his coronation, Asoka's armies attacked and conquered Kalinga, a country that roughly corresponds to the modern state of Orissa. The loss of life caused by battle, reprisals, deportations and the turmoil that always exists in the aftermath of war so horrified Asoka that it brought about a complete change in his personality. It seems that Asoka had been calling himself a Buddhist for at least two years prior to the Kalinga war, but his commitment to Buddhism was only lukewarm and perhaps had a political motive behind it.

But after the war Asoka dedicated the rest of his life trying to apply Buddhist principles to the ad- ministration of his vast empire. He had a crucial part to play in helping Buddhism to spread both throughout India and abroad, and probably built the first major Buddhist monuments. Asoka died in 232 B.C. in the thirty-eighth year of his reign.

Asoka's edicts are to be found scattered in more than thirty places throughout India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ashokan edicts are of three types-rock edicts (major rock edicts and minor rock edicts), pillar edicts and cave inscriptions. Rock edicts consist of fourteen major rock edicts located at Kalsi, Mansehra, Shahabazgarhi, Girnar,

Sopara, Yerragudi, Dhauli and Jaugada; and a number of minor rock edicts and inscriptions at Bairat, Rupanath, Sahasram, Brahmagiri, Gavimath, Jatinga-Rameshwar, Maski, Palkigundu, Rajula-Mandagiri, Siddapura, Yerragudi, Gurjarra and Jhansi. Seven pillar edicts exist at Allahabad, Delhi-Topra, Delhi-Meerut, Lauriya-Araraja, Lauriya-Nandangarh, and Rampurva. Other inscriptions have been found at the Barabar Caves (three inscriptions), Rummindei, Nigali-Sagar, Allahabad, Sanchi, Sarnath, and Bairat. Recently a minor inscription in Greek and Aramaic was found at Kandahar. The language of Ashokan inscriptions is Pali and the script is Brahmi though two major rock edicts at Mansehra and Shahbajgarhi are inscribed in Kharosthi, a script derived from the Persian Aramaic. Most of them are written in Brahmi script from which all Indian scripts and many of those used in Southeast Asia later developed. The language used in the edicts found in the eastern part of the sub-continent is a type of Magadhi, probably the official language of Asoka's court. The language used in the edicts found in the western part of India is closer to Sanskrit although one bilingual edict in Afghanistan is written in Aramaic and Greek. Asoka's edicts, which comprise the earliest decipherable corpus of written documents from India, have survived throughout the centuries because they are written on rocks and stone pillars. These pillars in particular are testimony to the technological and artistic genius of ancient Indian civilization. Originally, there must have been many of them, although only ten with inscriptions still survive. Averaging between forty and fifty feet in height, and weighing

up to fifty tons each, all the pillars were quarried at Chunar, just south of Varanasi and dragged, sometimes hundreds of miles, to where they were erected. Each pillar was originally capped by a capital, sometimes a roaring lion, a noble bull or a spirited horse, and the few capitals that survive are widely recognized as masterpieces of Indian art. Both the pillars and the capitals exhibit a remarkable mirror-like polish that has survived despite centuries of exposure to the elements. The location of the rock edicts is governed by the availability of suitable rocks, but the edicts on pillars are all to be found in very specific places. Some, like the Lumbini pillar, mark the Buddha's birthplace, while its inscriptions commemorate Asoka's pilgrimage to that place. Others are to be found in or near important population centers so that their edicts could be read by as many people as possible.

There is little doubt that Asoka's edicts were written in his own words rather than in the stylistic language in which royal edicts or proclamations in the ancient world were usually written in. Their distinctly personal tone gives us a unique glimpse into the personality of this complex and remarkable man. Asoka's style tends to be somewhat repetitious and plodding as if explaining something to one who has difficulty in understanding. Asoka frequently refers to the good works he has done, although not in a boastful way, but more, it seems, to convince the reader of his sincerity. In fact, an anxiousness to be thought of as a sincere person and a good administrator is present in nearly every edict. Asoka tells his subjects that he looked upon them as his children, that

their welfare is his main concern; he apologizes for the Kalinga war and reassures the people beyond the borders of his empire that he has no expansionist intentions towards them. Mixed with this sincerity, there is a definite puritanical streak in Asoka's character suggested by his disapproval of festivals and of religious rituals many of which while being of little value were nonetheless harmless.

It is also very clear that Buddhism was the most influential force in Asoka's life and that he hoped his subjects likewise would adopt his religion. He went on pilgrimages to Lumbini and Bodh Gaya, sent teaching monks to various regions in India and beyond its borders, and he was familiar enough with the sacred texts to recommend some of them to the monastic community. It is also very clear that Asoka saw the reforms he instituted as being a part of his duties as a Buddhist. But, while he was an enthusiastic Buddhist, he was not partisan towards his own religion or intolerant of other religions. He seems to have genuinely hoped to be able to encourage everyone to practice his or her own religion with the same conviction that he practiced his.

Scholars have suggested that because the edicts say nothing about the philosophical aspects of Buddhism, Asoka had a simplistic and naive understanding of the Dhamma. This view does not take into account the fact that the purpose of the edicts was not to expound the truths of Buddhism, but to inform the people of Asoka's reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral. This being the case, there was no reason for Asoka to discuss Buddhist philosophy.

Asoka emerges from his edicts as an able administrator, an intelligent human being and as a devoted Buddhist, and we could expect him to take as keen an interest in Buddhist philosophy as he did in Buddhist practice.

The contents of Asoka's edicts make it clear that all the legends about his wise and humane rule are more than justified and qualify him to be ranked as one of the greatest rulers. In his edicts, he spoke of what might be called state morality, and private or individual morality. The first was what he based his administration upon and what he hoped would lead to a more just, more spiritually inclined society, while the second was what he recommended and encouraged individuals to practice. Both these types of morality were imbued with the Buddhist values of compassion, moderation, tolerance and respect for all life. The Asokan state gave up the predatory foreign policy that had characterized the Mauryan empire up till then and replaced it with a policy of peaceful co-existence. The judicial system was reformed in order to make it fairer, less harsh and less open to abuse, while those sentenced to death were given a stay of execution to prepare appeals and regular amnesties were given to prisoners. State resources were used for useful public works like the importation and cultivation of med- ical herbs, the building of rest houses, the digging of wells at regular intervals along main roads and the planting of fruit and shade trees. To ensue that these reforms and projects were carried out, Asoka made himself more accessible to his subjects by going on frequent inspection tours and he expected his district officers to follow his example. To the same end, he

gave orders that important state business or petitions were never to be kept from him no matter what he was doing at the time. The state had a responsibility not just to protect and promote the welfare of its people but also its wildlife. Hunting certain species of wild animals was banned, forest and wildlife reserves were established and cruelty to domestic and wild animals was prohibited. The protection of all religions, their promotion and the fostering of harmony between them, was also seen as one of the duties of the state. It even seems that something like a Department of Religious Affairs was established with officers called Dhamma Mahamatras whose job it was to look after the affairs of various religious bodies and to encourage the practice of religion.

Arthashastra of Kautilya: The key to Chandragupta's worldly successes lay in the help and advice he received from his chief minister, Kautalya. While, after 1793, Chandragupta became a figure of importance in the pages of world history, Kautalya remained, for a further century and more, a marginal figure. In the old Vedic, Jainist and Buddhist sources, and in the later Itihasa-Purana, the genealogical records, he was known as Chanakya, the one who was the chief minister of Chandragupta. This was all that was known, and except for a very strange twist of history the memory of his name would have remained confined within those sources. One day, in 1904, an anonymous pandit, a learned man from the Tanjore district, came to the Mysore Government Oriental Library and handed over to the librarian, Dr Shamasastry, a palm-leaf manuscript of an ancient text. This text, which is now known

as Kautalya-Arthashastra, was translated by the librarian in the pages of the Indian Antiquary in 1905. With the encouragement of the Maharaja of Mysore, Dr Shamasastry published the full text as Volume 37 of the Bibliotheca Sanskrita of Mysore in 1909. Thus was resurrected the fame of Chandragupta's adviser, Kautalya, and his great text, the Arthashastra.

Date of Arthasastra: There has been much controversy, among scholars, about the dating of the Arthashastra. Several believe that the present text is from a later period and that it may also have been written by more than one person. This is an understandable argument, because in ancient India there was quite often multiple authorship of the texts; also, the texts were refined and embellished long after the core sections had been written by the original author. This work would be undertaken with great love and respect for the memory of that original author, and could have happened in the case of the Arthashastra too. Indeed, in the very first sentence of Chapter 1 in Book I, we are told that the Arthashastra is made as a compendium of almost all the Arthashastras, which, in view of acquisition and maintenance of the earth, have been composed by ancient teachers'. Kautalya, therefore, modestly eschews the claim of complete originality. At the same time, every chapter and book in the text ends with the phrase. Thus ends Chapter X from Book Y of the Arthashastra of Kautalya'. When the overall message, rather than the technical language, of the text of the Arthashastra is closely examined, it is indeed very striking that it greatly confirms the picture of the early

Mauryan world and society that is corroborated from other Indian and foreign sources. On the other hand, the name of Chandragupta Maurya is not once mentioned-which, of course, leads to an understandable uncertainty among historians as to whether the Arthashastra describes the Mauryan, the pre-Mauryan or the post-Mauryan society. The translation of the Kautalya-Arthasastra, by Dr Shamasastry, is a well-established standard work, published in Mysore.

Historical Information from Arthasastra: This work is one of the most important documents concerned with diplomatic skills, political economy and general secular knowledge to come out of ancient India. It is a guidebook for monarchs and a rulebook for citizens. While it is not a text of political philosophy, it deals with the issues of political craftsmanship in great detail. It is also concerned with civil and political institutions and the ways the ruler can operate them. Above all, it is a primer of secular law; after reading the precepts of the Arthashastra, no one can claim that ancient India was a lawless place. Dr. Shamasastry's translation of the Sanskrit text is laid out in fifteen books, each with a number of chapters. The English text has approximately a quarter of a million words. In addition to the names of people and places, the index to the text lists 430 different items and issues, ranging over a wide spectrum of subjects and experiences in which humanity is involved. Although the entire text is concerned with material and worldly issues and contains very little on religious matters, the philosophical premise of the work is entirely Vedic in outlook. The Vedic ideas of a social

hierarchy, for example, along with the dominance of the brahmans and kshatriyas, are The paradox of Mauryan imperialism taken for granted. Heterodoxy is shunned, as can be evidenced in the following injunction: when a person entertains, in dinner dedicated to god or ancestors, Buddhists, Ajivakas, Sudras and exiled persons, a fine of 100 panas shall be imposed.

Because of what is written in the Arthashastra we can surmise that Kautalya must have advised Chandragupta in the arts of war and peace. There is a great deal of originality in his ideas on the relationship between a monarch and his neighbouring states. For example, he tells us that there are only two forms of policy for a king to choose in his dealings with other kings: war or peace. The operation of these two policies can take six different forms: agreement with pledges is called peace; offensive operation is war; indifference is neutrality; making preparations is marching; seeking the protection of another is alliance; and making peace with one and waging war with another is termed a double policy. Kautalya deals at considerable length with the complexities and duplicities required for a king to pursue his relationships with his peers. The collecting of intelligence was particularly vital. It was the specific task of officially employed spies, informants and secret service agents, and its diligent use was of the utmost importance to the ruler. What is generally termed Machiavellian in the context of historic rivalries of dynasties and ruling elites in European history was very much grounded in Kautalya's thinking eighteen centuries before

Machiavelli himself. A large part of the text is also concerned with the duties of a king. Many of the personal qualities recommended for the king would be considered admirable in any age. The king is advised to avoid betaking to others' women, appropriating others' wealth and injuring others; long sleep, fickleness, falsehood, gaudy dress, associates of low character and unrighteous actions are all condemned. This emphasis on the king's personal discipline is part of the wider rule of law that Kautalya prescribes for society in general. A quite harsh and unforgiving environment of rules and regulations is to be maintained by an extremely efficient and organised bureaucracy, whose officers wield great authority over every aspect of the lives and occupations of the people. The legal relationships between husbands and wives, debtors and creditors, employers and workers, masters and servants, traders and customers-in all these relationships a severely retributory regime is invoked as soon as one party is deemed to have broken the contract. The index to the text lists 336 different offences for which fines are to be levied. The offences and fines, in a sense, tell us about one highly placed person's criterion for a well-governed society based on Vedic codes of conduct.

Extent of Asokan Empire

Asoka mentions Magadha, Pataliputra, Khalatikapavata (Barabar Hills), Kosambi, Lummini-gama, Kalinga (including Tosali, Samapa and Khepimgalapavata or the Jaugada Rock), Atavi (the forest tract of Mid-India perhaps identical with Alavi of the Buddhist texts), Suvarnagiri, Isila, Ujjayini and

Takshasila expressly as being among those places which were under his rule.

Beyond Takshasila the empire stretched as far as the confines of the realm of "Amtiyako Yonaraja," usually identified with Antiochos II Theos of Syria (261-246 B. C.), and included the wide territory round Shahbazgarhi and Mansahra inhabited by the Yonas, Kambojas and the Gandharas. The exact situation of this Yona territory has not yet been determined. The Mahavamsa evidently refers to it and its chief city Alasanda which Cunningham and Geiger identify with the town of Alexandria (Begram, west of Kapisa) founded by the Macedonian conqueror near Kabul. Kamboja, as we have already seen, corresponds to Rajapura or Rajaur near Punch in Kasmira and some neighbouring tracts including Kafiristan. The tribal territory of the Gandharas at this time probably lay to the west of the Indus, and did not apparently include Takshasila which was ruled by a princely Viceroy, and was the capital of the province of Uttarapatha. The capital of Trans-Indian Gandhara was Pushkaravati, identified by Coomaraswamy with the site known as Mir Ziyarat or Bala Hisar at the junction of the Swat and Kabul rivers.

The inclusion of Kasmira within Asoka's empire is proved by the testimony of Hiuen Tsang's Records and Kalhana's Rajatarahgint: Kalhana says: "The faithful Asoka, reigned over the earth. This king who had freed himself from sins and had embraced the doctrine of the Jina covered Sushkhetra and Vitastatra with numerous Stupas. At the town

of Vitastatra there stood within the precincts of the Dharmarayya Vihara a Ghaitya built by him, the height of which could not be reached by the eye. That illustrious king built the town of orinagari. This sinless prince after removing the old stuccoed enclosure of the shrine of Vijayesvara built in its stead a new one of stone. He...erected within the enclosure of Vijayem, and near it, two temples which were called Aiokesvcvra." The description of Asoka as a follower of the Jiwa, i.e., Buddha, and the builder of numerous stupas leaves no room for doubt that the great Maurya monarch is meant. We are' told by Kalhana himself that he is indebted for much of the above account to an earlier chronicler named Ohhavillakara.

The inscriptions near Kalsi and those on the Rummindei and the Nigali Sagar pillars prove the inclusion of the Dehra-Dun District and the Tarai within the limits of Asoka's Empire, while the monuments at Lalitapatan and Rampurwa attest his possession of the valley of Nepal and the district of Champaran. Further evidence of the inclusion of the Himalayan region within Asoka's empire is possibly furnished by Rock Edict XIII which refers to the Nabhapamtis of Nabhaka, probably identical with Na-pei-kea of Fa Hien, the birthplace of Krakuchchhanda Buddha, about 10 miles south or southwest of Kapilavastu. According to Blihler, Rock Edict XIII also mentions two vassal tribes Visa (Besatae of the Periplus) and Vajri (Vrijikas). More recent writers do not accept Buhler's reading and substitute (Raja) Visayamhi, 'in the (king's) territory,' in its place. There is, thus no indubitable reference

either to the Vrijikas or the 'Besatae‘ in the inscriptions of Asoka.

We learn from the classical writers that the country of the Gangaridae, i.e., Bengal, formed a part of the dominions of the king of the Prasii, i.e., Magadha, as early as the time of Agrammes, i.e., the last Nanda king. A passage of Pliny clearly suggests that the "Palibothri," i.e., the rulers of Pataliputra, dominated the whole tract along the Ganges. That the Magadhan kings retained their hold on Bengal as late as the time of Asoka is proved by the testimony of the Divyavadana and of Hiuen Tsang who saw Stupas of that monarch near Tamralipti and Karnasuvarna (in West Bengal), in Samatata (East Bengal) as well as in Pundravardhana (North Bengal). Kamarupa (Assam) seems to have lain outside the empire. The Chinese pilgrim saw no monument of Asoka in that country.

Asoka and South India

We have seen that in the south the Maurya power at one time, had probably penetrated as far as the Podiyil Hill in the Tinnevelly district. In the time of Asoka the Maurya frontier had receded probably to the Pennar river near Nellore as the Tamil Kingdoms are referred to as "Prachamta" or border states and are clearly distinguished from the imperial dominions (Vijita or Rajavisliaya), which stretched only as far south as the Chitaldrug District of Mysore. The major part of the Deccan was ruled by the vice-regal princes of Suvanjagiri and Tosali, the Mahamatras of Isila and Samapa and the officers in charge of the Atavi or Forest Country. But in the belt of land on either side of the Nerbudda, the

Godavari and the upper Mahanadi there were, in all probability, certain areas that were technically outside the limits of the empire proper. Asoka evidently draws a distinction between the forests and the inhabiting tribes which are in the dominions (vijita) and peoples on the border (anta avijita) for whose benefit some of the special edicts were issued. Certain vassal tribes are specifically mentioned, e.g., the Andhras, Palidas, Bhojas and Kathikas (Rashtrikas). They enjoyed a status mid-way between the Provincials proper and the unsubdued borderers. The word Petenika or Pitinika mentioned in Rock Edicts V and XIII should not, according to Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar and some other writers, be read as a separate name but as an adjective qualifying Rishtika (Edict V) and Bhoja (Edict XIII). Certain passages in the Anguttara Nikaya mention the term Pettanika in the sense of one who enjoys property given by his father. The view that Pitinika is merely an adjective of Rathika (Ristika) or Bhoja is not, however, accepted by Dr. Barua who remarks that "it is clear from the Pali passage, as well as from Buddhaghosha's explanations, that Batthika and Pettanika were two different designations."

The Andhras are, as we have already seen, mentioned in a passage of the Aitareya Brahmana. The Bhojas are also mentioned in that work as rulers of the south. Pliny, quoting probably from Megasthepes, says that the Andarae (Andhras) possessed numerous villages, thirty towns defended by walls and towers, and supplied their king with an army of 100,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants. The earliest

Andhra capital (Andhapura) was situated on the Telavaha river which, according to Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, is either the modern Tel or Telingiri, both flowing near the confines of the Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces. But the identification is by no means certain. The Palidas were identified by Bulhler with the Pulindas who are invariably associated with the Nerbudda (Reva) and the Vindhyan region. Their capital Pulindanagara lay not far from Bhilsa and may have been identical with Rupnath, the find-spot of one recension of Minor Rock Edict I. The association with the Andhras in Asokan inscriptions suggests that in the Maurya period they may have been in the Deccan. But the matter must be regarded as not definitely settled. It is interesting to note in this connection that a river Parada (identified with the Paradi or Par rivet in the Surat District) is mentioned in a Nasik inscription.

The Bhojas and the Rathikas (Ristikas) were evidently the ancestors of the Mahabhojas and the Maharajhis of the Satavahana period. The Bhojas apparently dwelt in Berar, and the Rathikas or Ristikas possibly in Maharashtra or certain adjoining tracts. The former were, in later ages, connected by matrimonial alliances with chieftains of the Kanarese country. In the west Asoka's Empire extended to the Arabian Sea and embraced all the Aparantas including no doubt the vassal state (or confederation of states) of Surashtra the affairs of which were looked after by the Yavanaraja Tushaspha with Girinagara (Girnar) as his capital. Dr. Smith says that the form of the name shows that the

Yavanaraja must have been a Persian. But according to this interpretation the Yavana Dhammadeva, the Saka Ushavadata (Risahabha-datta), the Parthian Suvisakha and the Kushan Vasudeva must have been all native Hindus of India. If Greeks and other foreigners adopted Hindu names there is no wonder that some of them assumed Iranic appellations. There is, then, no good ground for assuming that Tushaspha was not a Greek, but a Persian.

Asoka's Foreign Relation

Like his father, Asoka also maintained a good foreign relation. He sent ambassadors (duta) to the distant countries of the West. As a unique event in Indian history the kings of these distant countries are mentioned by name in the thirteenth rock edict: the king of the Greeks (Yona), Antiyoka (as mentioned above), Tulamaya (Ptolomaios II, Philadelphos, 285-247 BC), Antekina (Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, 276-239 BC), Maka (Magas of Cyrene, c. 300-250 BC), Alikasudala (probably Alexander of Epirus, 272-255 BC). The independent states of southern India and Sri Lanka were once again visited by ambassadors and also some of the tribes in areas within the empire (e.g. the Andhras). The frequency of inscriptions in the border regions of the northwestern and southern provinces is an eloquent evidence of Ashoka's missionary zeal.

This activity of imperial missions was unique in ancient history. Of greater consequence than the establishment of direct contact with the Hellenistic world was, however, the success of missions in the south and in Sri

Lanka. There Ashoka's son Mahinda personally appeared in order to teach right conduct. The northwest was also deeply affected by this missionary zeal. From southern India, Buddhism later travelled to Southeast Asia and from northwest India it penetrated Central Asia from where it reached China via the silk road in the first century A.D.

Conclusion

We have reviewed the political conditions prevailing in India of the sixth century B.C. The Mahajanpadas which emerged as distinct geographical units witnessed new kinds of socio-political developments. What seems to be important is the fact that seven of them i.e. Anga, Magadha, Vajji, Malla, Kasi, Kosala and Vatsa were located in the middle Gangetic valley. These Mahajanapadas emerged as regions in different geographical zones reflecting the nature of the economy there. Since middle Gangetic valley is a rice growing area and the fact that in traditional agricultural system of India, rice output exceeded the wheat output, it was natural that the density of population would be more in these areas. Further, Mahajanapadas like Magadha had easy access to natural resources like metal ores. These factors may have contributed to the emergence of the middle Gangetic valley as the focus of politico-economic power. It also provided a convenient ground for a ruler to consolidate his power because of its flat terrain and the continuity of settlements. No wonder Magadha one of the powers in this zone, emerged as the most powerful kingdom in the subsequent period.

Sangam Age

The Sangam Age constitutes an important chapter in the history of South India. According to Tamil legends, there existed three Sangams (Academy of Tamil poets) in ancient Tamil Nadu popularly called Muchchangam. These Sangams flourished under the royal patronage of the Pandyas. The first Sangam, held at Then Madurai, was attended by gods and legendary sages but no literary work of this Sangam was available. The second Sangam was held at **Kapadapuram** but the all the literary works had perished except *Tolkappiyam*. The third Sangam at Madurai was founded by Mudathirumaran. It was attended by a large number of poets who produced voluminous literature but only a few had survived. These Tamil literary works remain useful sources to reconstruct the history of the Sangam Age. Historians and Indologists regard the Sangam period as the 'classical age' of the Tamils analogous to the age of the classics in Greece and Rome and to that of the Renaissance of later period in Europe. Some even consider the Sangam age as the 'Golden age' of the Tamils, which marked a unique epoch in the history of the **Tamilakam**. The archaeological sources found from different explored or excavated sites throw light on the various aspects of the political, social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Sangam age people. However, the precious literary finds of this period discovered from various places in South India provide us with the significant information in this regard. In other words, the Sangam literature is the major source for the study of the Sangam age.

The term 'Sangam'

The term **Sangam** literally means 'confluence'. However, in the context of early South Indian history this term can be rendered into English as an assembly, a college or an academy of learned people, held under the patronage of the Pandyan kings, who were great lovers of literature and the fine arts. The Sangam was a voluntary organisation of poets. It was similar to a Round Table Conference, which allowed sitting room only to an authentic poet. This academy or assembly of learned people including the Sangam poets produced literary works of high quality.

Period of Sangam Literature

There is controversy among the scholars regarding the chronology of the Sangam age. The main reason behind this is the lack of unanimity concerning the age of the Sangam works, which are of great historical value for the study of the Sangam age. On the basis of the composition of Sangam literature K.A.N. Sastri traces the Sangam age to the period A.D. 100-250. According to tradition, the *Tolkappiyam* is the oldest among extant Tamil works. M. Arokiaswami holds that as Tolkappiar, the author of *Tolkappiyam,* flourished sometime in the 4th or 3rd B.C., the same date can be assigned to this literary work. The sheet anchor of Sangam chronology lies in the fact that Gajabhagu II of Sri Lanka and Cheran Senguttuvan of the Chera dynasty were contemporaries. This is confirmed by Silappathigaram as well as the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*. Also, the Roman coins issued by Roman emperors of the first century A.D were found in plenty in

various places of Tamil Nadu. The corroboration of the literary sources with archaeological data enables us to place the Sangam age in the chronological span of roughly about 600 years from c. 300 B.C to A.D 300.

The Tradition of the three Sangams

The theory of the three Sangams establishes that these were successive and not contemporary. The traditional accounts of Iraiyanar Ahapporul mention that there were three Sangams (I, II and III) held, which flourished for 9990 years at frequent intervals. These were attended by 8598 scholars. Sage Agastyar was the founding father. The *Ahapporul* commentary also mentions about their successive order and the deluges occurring during the intervals between them. These Sangams or academies were patronized by 197 Pandyan kings. According to the tradition, of the three successive Sangams the first two belong to prehistory. All the three were held in the capital of the Pandyas. As the capital was shifted from time to time, old Madurai was the headquarters of the first Sangam, and the second academy was held at Kapatapuram. Both these centres were washed away by the sea during successive deluges. The third Sangam was located in modern Madurai.

The date of the third Sangam can be established with more probability than the other Sangams. This date is taken to be the first two centuries of the Christian era and probably the century immediately preceding the Christian era. The age of Tolkappiar is believed to be in the second Sangam era and the third Sangam era coincides with the Indo-Roman trade

with the contemporary Imperial Rome. This dating is based on the evidence available in the accounts of the Greek writers of the time. There are several references to the overseas trading activities between the Mediterranean world and Tamil region. The same is also attested by the Sangam literature. Thus, the third Sangam witnessed the production of numerous extant works. The Sangams can be compared to the French Academy in Europe in modern times, which aimed at maintaining the purity of the language and literary standards. In the beginning, admission to the Sangam was by co-option, but later it was by means of miraculous contrivance by the Lord Siva, who was the permanent president of this august body.

The Corpus of Sangam Literature

As mentioned earlier, the Sangam works contain mines of information for the study of early history of Tamilakam. They reflect the matter of great historical importance. *Tolkappiyam*, a treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics, composed probably during the second Sangam, is the oldest extant literary work in Tamil. Whereas, the earliest Tamil poetry now available, generally known as Sangam poetry, is said to have been produced during the period of the third Sangam.

Modern scholarship use the term 'Sangam Literature' for only those works in verse (prose is of much later origin), which are comprised in the *Ettutogai* (Eight collections), *Pattupattu* (Ten songs) and *Patinenkilkanakku* (The Eighteen Minor Works), which are judged to have been produced in

that order during the period A.D 150-250. The so called "Five Epics" (the five great poems) include *Jivakachintamani, Silappadikaram, Manimekalai, Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi*. These are assigned much later dates. Of these the last two are not extant. So, of the three 'great poems' that we now have, *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* are called the "twin epics" because they form a continuous story narrating the story of a single family-Kovalan (the rich merchant prince of Puhar), Kannagi (Kovalan's chaste wife), Madhavi (the dancer) with whom Kovalan lived in wedlock and Manimekalai, the child of this wedlock.

Ilango Adigal was the author of *Silappadikaram*. In the epic, Ilango is mentioned as the brother of the reigning Chera king Senguttuvan. *Manimekalai* was written by Sathanar mainly to propound the Buddhist doctrine among Tamils. Nonetheless, these poetical works describe about the social, reli- gious, economic and political conditions of Tamilakam with the focus on the cities like Madurai, Puhar (Poompuhar/ Kaveripattinam), Vanji (Karur) and Kanchi. While the individual poems included in the above mentioned three groups may be taken to have been produced within the first three centuries of the Christian era, they were very probably collected and arranged in the order in which they are now found, at a much later date. Length of the poem was one of the very important bases for the classification into three broad divisions. The poems in the "Eight collections" run from three to thirty-one lines, whereas in the "Ten Songs", the shortest poem runs to 103 lines and the longest has 782 lines. The

"Eighteen Minor Works" include the ethical and didactic literature. The didactic literature, which includes the world famous *Tirukkural* is mostly in stanzaic form, the stanza having from two to five lines.

The Sangam collections at present consist of 2279 poems of varying lengths from 3 lines to about 800 lines. Some of these works are attributed to a single author, while others like the Naladiyar, contain the contributions of many poets. This Sangam poetry available to us runs to more than 30,000 lines. These were composed by 473 poets including women besides 102 being anonymous. Among the poets nearly 50 were women poets. These works reflect fairly advanced material culture. They also show that by the Sangam age, Tamil as a language had attained maturity and had become a powerful and elegant medium of literary expression. The language is inevitably archaic, though not perhaps more difficult to understand for the modern Tamil.

The Sangam poems are of two varieties, though scholars have divided them into various categories on the basis of their subject matter. The two varieties are – the short ode and the long poem. For a historian the short odes are of greater value than the long lyrics. However, generally the historical value of these sources is irrespective of their length. The odes are collected in 9 anthologies. The anthologies in which these are collected include – *Ahananuru, Puranānuru, Kuruntogai, Narrinai, Kalittogai, Paripadal, Aingurunuru,* and *Patirrupattu*. These are collectively called *Ettutogai*. The ten long lyrics or descriptive poems (10 idylls)

known as *Pattupattu* is said to be the ninth group. These consist of – *Tirumurugarruppadai, Sirupanarruppadai, Porunarruppadai, Perumbanarrup- padai, Nedunalvadai, Kurinjippattu, Maduraikkanji, Pattinappalai, Mullaippatu* and *Malaipaduka- dam.* Of these *Tirumurugarruppadai* is a devotional poem on Lord Muruga; *Sirupanarruppadai* deals with the generous nature of Nalliyakkodan who ruled over a part of the Chola kingdom; *Pe- rumbanarruppadai* describes about Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan and his capital Kanchipuram; *Po- runarruppadai* and *Pattinappalai* sings in the praise of Karikala, the great Chola king; *Nedunalvadai* and *Maduraikkanji* deal with Talaiyalanganattu Nedunjeliyan, the great Pandyan king; *Kurinjippattu* portrays the description of the hilly regions and hill life; and *Malaipadukadam* refers to the Chieftain Nannan and also to the music and songs to encourage the army, to celebrate the victory won by the king in a war, etc. Nevertheless, these works reflect the worth of the poets in Sangam age.

In addition to the Sangam literature, the Greek authors like Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy mention the commercial contacts between the West and South India. The Asokan inscriptions mention the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers on the south of the Mauryan empire. The **Hathikumbha inscription of Kharavela** of Kalinga also mentions about Tamil kingdoms. The excavations at Arik-kamedu, Poompuhar, Kodumanal and other places reveal the overseas commercial activities of the Tamils.

Political History

The Tamil country was ruled by three dynasties namely the Chera, Chola and Pandyas during the Sangam Age. The political history of these dynasties can be traced from the literary references.

Cheras

The Cheras ruled over parts of modern Kerala. Their capital was Vanji and their important seaports were Tondi and Musiri. They had the palmyra flowers as their garland. The **Pugalur** inscription of the first century A.D refers to three generations of Chera rulers. *Padirruppattu* also provides information on Chera kings. Perum Sorru Udhiyan Cheralathan, Imayavaramban Nedum Cheralathan and Cheran Senguttuvan were the famous rulers of this dynasty. Cheran Senguttuvan belonged to 2^{nd} century A.D. His younger brother was Elango Adigal, the author of *Silappathigaram.* Among his military achievements, his expedition to the Himalayas was remarkable. He defeated many north Indian monarchs. Senguttuvan introduced the **Pattini** cult or the worship of Kannagi as the ideal wife in Tamil Nadu. The stone for making the idol of Kannagi was brought by him after his Himalayan expedition. The consecration ceremony was attended by many princes including Gajabhagu II from Sri Lanka.

Cholas

The Chola kingdom of the Sangam period extended from modern Tiruchi district to southern Andhra Pradesh.

Their capital was first located at Uraiyur and then shifted to Puhar. Karikala was a famous king of the Sangam Cholas. *Pattinappalai* portrays his early life and his military conquests. In the **Battle of Venni** he defeated the mighty confederacy consisting of the Cheras, Pandyas and eleven minor chieftains. This event is mentioned in many Sangam poems. **Vahaipparandalai** was another important battle fought by him in which nine enemy chieftains submitted before him. Karikala's military achievements made him the overlord of the whole Tamil country. Trade and commerce flourished during his reign period. He was responsible for the reclamation of forest lands and brought them under cultivation thus adding prosperity to the people. He also built *Kallanai* across the river Kaveri and also constructed many irrigation tanks.

Pandyas

The Pandyas ruled over the present-day southern Tamil Nadu. Their capital was Madurai. The earliest kings of the Pandyan dynasty were Nediyon, Palyagasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaludhi and Mudathirumaran. There were two Nedunchelivans. The first one was known as Aryappadai Kadantha Nedunchelivan (one who won victories over the Aryan forces). He was responsible for the execution of Kovalan for which Kannagi burnt Madurai. The other was Talaiyalanganattu Cheruvenra (He who won the battle at Talaiyalanganam) Nedunchelivan. He was praised by Nakkirar and Mangudi Maruthanar. He wore this title after defeating his enemies at the **Battle of Talaiyalanganam**,

which is located in the Tanjore district. By this victory Neduncheliyan gained control over the entire Tamil Nadu. *Maduraikkanji* written by Mangudi Maruthanar describes the socio-economic condition of the Pandya country including the flourishing seaport of Korkai. The last famous Pandyan king was Uggira Peruvaludhi. The Pandyan rule during the Sangam Age began to decline due to the invasion of the Kalabhras.

Minor Chieftains

The minor chieftains played a significant role in the Sangam period. Among them Pari, Kari, Ori, Nalli, Pegan, Ay and Adiyaman were popular for their philanthropy and patronage of Tamil poets. Therefore, they were known as Kadai Yelu Vallalgal. Although they were subordinate to the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers, they were powerful and popular in their respective regions.

Sangam Polity

The Sangam poems present a sketch reflecting the evolution of the state system in South India for the first time. These works indicate the process of historical evolution in which we find the tribes decreasing in number but existing as well-established units by the side of the king. So, the evidences suggest that state as an organised political structure had come into existence although it was not yet stable. Though the democratic conception of the state government had not yet become established the administration of the times partook of the character of the monarchy tempered by the best effects of the democratic principle.

Kingship

Of the three *muventars* (three crowned monarch) the Cholas controlled the fully irrigated fertile Cauvery (Kaveri) basin with their capital at Uraiyur, the Pandyas ruled over the pastoral and littoral parts with the capital at Madurai, and the Cheras had their sway over the hilly country in the west with Vanji (Karur) as the capital. The Sangam works mention the names of so many kings that ascertaining both their genealogy and chronology are highly problematical. However, the genealogy of the Chola kings Uruvaphrer Ilanjetchenni, his son Karikala and his two sons, Nalankilli and Nedunkilli have been confirmed to a great extent by the scholars. The kings of other two dynasties include Muthukudumi Peruvaludi, Ariyapadaikadantha Nedunjeliyan, Verrivercheliyan and Talayalankanathu Ceruvenra Nedunjeliyan among the Pandyas and Imayararamban Nedumceralatan, Cheran Senguttuvan and Mantaram Cheral Irumporai among the Cheras.

Monarchy was the prevalent form of government. The ―king was called *ventan*. He was the head of the society and government. As the head of the society, he took the lead in every event of social importance like the festival of Indra, inaugurations of dance performances, etc. The ―king assumed important titles at the time of coronation. He was equated with gods so as to provide divine sanctity. The ancient Tamils considered the drum, the sceptre and the white umbrella as the three great insignia of his office. According to the Sangam classics, kingship descended by heredity from father to son.

The king was responsible for maintaining the law and order in the state. He also looked after the welfare of his subjects, worked hard for their good and frequently toured the country to put things in order. The king also had recourse to advisers in the course of his administration. The literature fre- quently mentions them as *surram* which literally means the men who always surrounded the king giving him advice whenever needed.

Chieftains

This was not only a period of great kings but also of great chieftains who were subordinate to the kings. They are divided into two – *velir* and non-*velir*. Some of them were great patrons of letters. Some of the great chieftains of the period included Palayan Maran of Mohur (near modern Madurai), Nannan Venman and Villavan Kothai (both of the West Coast of the Peninsula), Nalliyakodan of Oimanadu (in modern South Arcot), Tithyan (Tinnevelly region) and the whole band of Velir chief- tains like Pari of Parambunad, Vel Pegan of the Palni region, Vel Evvi of Pudukottai region, Vel Avi and Irukkuvel of Kodumbalur and others. The later Sangam period witnessed greater consolidation of monarchical power with the reduction of the traditional chieftains to the position of royal officers. However, in the post-Sangam period the royal officers grew stronger and the centre became weak gradually.

Administration

Now, let us discuss the administrative machinery as

described by the Sangam texts. The policies of the king were controlled by a system of checks and balances in the councils. *Silappadikaram* refers to the two types of councils — *Aimperunkulu* and *Enperayam*. The *aimperunkulu* or the council of five members was the council of the ministers. The enperayam or the great assembly (*perayam*) consisted of 8 members (government officers). This worked as an administrative machinery of the state. These two assemblies that of the Five and that of the Eight functioned as administrative bodies, though their function was generally advisory in character. However, their advice was rarely rejected by the king. Their important function was judicial though the *aimperunkulu* seems to have been solely in charge of it as described by *Maduraikkanji.*

It is important to note that in spite of all the glory attached to the ancient king, the ethos of Indian administration has been in the direction of limited or popular monarchy. This can be observed in South India from very early times even more than in the north and each followed its own model of administration. Every local unit, however small and in whatever corner it was situated, was admin- istered by a local assembly. The *avai* and the *manram* are the terms used for this unit in Sangam works. Such assembly is commonly referred to as *arankuravaiyam*, which were known for its just decision. These can be taken to be the forerunner of our modern panchayat.

Defence

Major ruling dynasties and chieftains maintained large

standing army. The wars were frequent and were fought not only for defence but also with a desire to extend one's territories or to save suffering people of neighbouring kingdoms from tyranny or misrule. Sometimes the wars occurred for matrimonial alliances. Such was the mental state of the people that almost everyone trained himself for war and besides the army maintained by the king's potential soldiers were all over the country to join the royal force in times of need. Even kings trained themselves in such activities.

The king maintained all the four kinds of armies mentioned in Sangam literature — the chariot, the elephant, the cavalry and the infantry. There are references to the navy of the Chera that guarded the sea-port so well that other ships could not enter the region. The Sangam texts also mention about the army camp on the battle field. The king's camp was well made and even in camp he slept under his white umbrella and many soldiers slept around him mostly without sword. The camps of ordinary soldiers were generally built with the sugarcane leaves on the sides and cut paddy crop on the top with paddy hanging from it. Generals and officers of high rank were accompanied by their wives on the campaign and stayed in the special camps built for the officers. The king frequently visited the camp of soldiers and officers to enquire about their welfare. He did so even in the night and in pouring rain.

Tamil people had a great respect for the warrior and particularly the hero who died in the battle field. Suffering a back-wound was considered as highly disreputable as there are instances of kings who died fasting because they had

suffered such a wound in battle. The hero stones were erected to commemorate heroes who died in war. There was the provision for the prison which indicate the coercive machinery of the state.

Sangam polity was influenced by the North Indian political ideas and institutions in many aspects. Many rulers sought their origin and association with deities like Siva, Vishnu and ancient sages. Many kings are said to have participated in the Mahabharta war like their North Indian counterparts. The rulers of Sangam age were also the patrons of art, literature and performed *yajnas* (sacrifices).

Sangam Society

The earliest phase of Sangam society as described by *Tolkappiyam* was based on the fivefold classification of the land — the hill, the pastoral, the agricultural, the desert and the coastal. Different kinds of people inhabited these various classified lands and developed certain fixed customs and ways of life as a result of their interaction with respective environment. The ecological variations also deter- mined their occupations such as hunting, cultivation, pastoralism, plunder, fishing, diving, sailing, etc.

Social Composition

Anthropological studies have shown that the earliest social element consisted of Negroid and Australoid groups with mixture of another racial stock which migrated from the earliest Mediterranean region. In its early phase these societies had small population and social classes were

unknown. As a result, there existed great unity among the people of each region, who moved freely among themselves and their ruler. The only classification Tamil society knew at this time was that of the *arivar, ulavar,* etc. based on their occupation such as the soldiers, hunters, shepherds, ploughmen, fishermen, etc. The existence of numerous tribes and chieftains was seen in the latter half of the Sangam age. The four Vedic varnas were distinctly of a later period. But it is interesting to note that though the varna system was brought in by the immigrating Brahmanas (1st c.A.D), it did not include Khastriyas as in the north. Only the brahmins were the *dvijas* (twice born) who qualified for the sacred thread. There are references to the slaves known as *adimai* (one who lived at feet of another). The prisoners of war were reduced to slavery. There existed slave markets.

Women

The women like men, enjoyed certain freedom and went around the town freely, played on the sea-shore and river beds and joined in temple festivals as depicted in Sangam poems such as Kalittogai. However, the status of women was one of subordination to men, which was an aspect of the general philosophy of the contemporary period. This is well reflected in Kuruntogai which mentions that the wife was not expected to love the husband after evaluating his qualities but because of the fact of his being her husband. In other words, it was not possible for a wife to estimate her husband. Though there are references to women being educated and some of them becoming poetesses, this can not be applied to the general

mass. They had no property rights but were treated with considerations. Women remained a widow or performed sati, which was considered almost divine. Marriage was a sacrament and not a contract. *Tolkappiyam* mentions eight forms of marriage of which the most common was the Brahma marriage. However, there are references to wooing or even elopements, which were followed by conventional marriage. Prostitution was a recognised institution. However, the prostitutes were taken to be the intruders in peaceful family life. But they figure so prominently in the poems and enjoy such a social standing that there could be no doubt that the harlots of the Sangam age were not the degraded prostitutes of the modern times. Though texts like *Kuruntogai* refer to the harlots challenging wives and their relations, seducing men, the harlots gave their companions more of a cultural enjoyment than anything else.

Dress, Ornaments and Fashion

The upper strata of society used dress of fine muslin and silk. Except for nobles and kings, men were satisfied with just two pieces of cloth — one below the waist and another adorning the head like a turban. Women used cloth only to cover below the waist. The tribal population was not in a position to do that even. The tribal women used leaves and barks to cover themselves.

The men and women of Sangam age were fond of using oil, aromatic scents, coloured powders and paints, while the sandal paste was heavily applied on their chests. According to *Silappadikaram* women had pictures drawn on

their bodies in coloured patterns and had their eyelids painted with a black pigment. The ornaments were worn round the neck and on arms and legs by both, the men and women. The chiefs and nobles wore heavy armlets and anklets while the ordinary women wore various other kinds of jewels. Valuable ornaments of gold and precious stones were used for decoration by men and women of upper strata whereas the poor class used bracelets made of conch-shell and necklaces made of coloured beads. *Silappadikaram* refers to a ceremonial hot bath in water heated with five kinds of seeds, ten kinds of astringents and thirty-two kinds of scented plants, the drying of the hair over smoke of *akhil* and the parting of it into five parts for dressing. Men also grew long hair and wore the tuft tied together with a knot which was sometimes surrounded by a string of beads. Tamils were very much fond of flowers and women used to decorate their hair with flowers, especially water lily as described by Kuruntogai.

Dwellings

People lived in two kinds of houses – those built of mud and the others built of bricks. According to the Sangam texts the second category of houses were built of *suduman*, which literally means burnt mud. The poor lived in thatched houses covered with grass or leaves of the coconut or palmyra. Windows were generally small and made like the deer's eye. The literary works describe the well-built storeyed houses of the rich people, which had gopurams for the entrance and iron gates with red paint to prevent from rusting. *Silappadikaram* mentions that these houses were lighted with

beautiful artistic lamps often from Greece and Rome. They were burned with oil extracted from fish.

Entertainments

There were numerous amusements and plays in which people participated for entertainment. The sources of entertainment included dances, musical programmes, religious festivals, bull-fights, cock-fights, marble-game, hunting, dice, wrestling, boxing, acrobatics, etc. Women amused themselves with the religious dances, playing the dice and *varippanthu* or cloth ball. Playing in swings made of palmrya fibres was common among girls. *Narrinai* refers to the games played with decorated dolls. *Kuruntogai* mentions about children playing with toy-cart and with the sand houses made by them on the seashore.

Dance and music were other popular sources of entertainment. The Sangam poems mention various kinds of dances. *Silappadikaram* mentions eleven kinds of dances, which are divided into seven groups. It also gives minute details about music. There are further references to the different kinds of musical instruments such as the drums, flute and *yal* sold in shops at Puhar and Madurai. The performing arts also included the art of drama. The dramas were mostly religious in character but sometimes these were enacted to commemorate great event or persons. Bardism and the system of wandering minstrels going from place to place with their musical instruments singing the glory of either a person or a great event commanded great popularity in the Sangam age. Initially, the bard (*porunar*) began as an

individual to whip up the martial spirit of the soldiers engaged in war and to sing of their victory when the battle was won. However, their activities were not confined to encourage the soldiers in the battle-field alone but also to carry messages from there to the people at home. They had high respect in society and were even honoured by the kings. Besides the *porunar* were the *panar* who performed for the common people.

Fine Arts

Poetry, music and dancing were popular among the people of the Sangam age. Liberal donations were given to poets by the kings, chieftains and nobles. The royal courts were crowded with singing bards called *Panar* and *Viraliyar*. They were experts in folk songs and folk dances. The arts of music and dancing were highly developed. A variety of *Yazhs* and drums are referred to in the Sangam literature. Dancing was performed by *Kanigaiyar*. *Koothu* was the most popular entertainment of the people.

Religion: Beliefs and Rituals

The literary evidence presents a picture of elaborate religious development in the Sangam age. The faiths like Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism coexisted in the Tamil region during this period. Buddhism and Jainism entered the region in the first centuries of the Christian era. The sects of Brahmanism such as Saivism and Vaishnavism were also well-known religions during the period.

The advent of Vedic people and the interaction of their faith with that of the Tamils is well reflected by the Sangam

works. Silappadikaram mentions about the ―triple sacred fire the ―twice born nature the ―six duties and other ideas associated with the Brahmanas. *Tolkappiyam* also refers to the six Brahmanic duties. Brahmanical rites and ceremonies were very much in practice. For example, the Pandyan king is described as ―having various sacrificial halls‖ in many Sangam poems.

The four important deities as mentioned by *Tolkappiyam* were—*Murugan, Tirumal, Vendan* (Indra) and *Varunan*. Indra was worshipped as the rain god and a festival in his honour was celebrated every year. In *Pattinappalai* worship of *Muruga* is mentioned. *Muruga* is the son of Siva. Besides these deities, Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), *Mayon* (later Vishnu) as guardian of the forest region, Baladeva, *Kaman* (the god of love), the moon-god, sea-god and other divinities were also worshipped.

The people of Sangam age also believed in ghosts and spirits. There is the mention of the ―*bhuta* in *Silappadikaram.* Many believed in demons residing on tress, battle-fields and burning ghats ―drinking blood and combing their hair with hands soaked in blood. The same text also refers to minor deities like guardian deities of Madura and Puhar. They also believed in the village gods, totemic symbols and bloody sacrifices to appease ferocious deities. Animism is clearly reflected in their tradition of worshipping the deities believed to be residing in trees, streams and on hill tops. The dead heroes, satis and other martyrs were also defied.

The advent of Buddhism and Jainism in the first

centuries of the Christian era influenced the philosophical thoughts of the Tamils in the Sangam age. These ideologies placed knowledge before matter. The Buddhists and Jains called on people to look to the world beyond matter. Many scholars have expressed their views that the two great epics of the period, *Silappadikaram* was Jain and *Manimekalai* was Buddhist.

Saivisim and Vaishnavism were also important faiths. The term Saivism is mentioned only in *Manimekalai*. Though Siva as a deity is not mentioned in other texts, he is referred to by his attributes like –the ancient first Lord, —the Lord with the blue beautiful throat and —the god under the banyan tree. So, in early times both Saivism and Vaishnavism seem to have existed in the Tamil region only in principle and not by name. Though *Tolkappiyam* refers to the god *Muruga* (son of Siva) and *Mayon* (earlier name of Vishnu), there is no clear reference to Saivism and Vaishnavism. Probably, the transition of these cults to these two different sects was taking place during the Sangam age.

The Sangam age people also believed in dreams and influence of planets on human life. Certain ominous signs were popularly observed. For example, the cawing of the crow was considered as an omen of the coming guest, who was eagerly waited. *Kuruntogai* mentions that the crow was considered a good harbinger and was fed with rice and ghee. Sneezing was held inauspicious.

The sophisticated aspect of the Sangam religion was the worship of gods and goddesses in temples. Temple dedicated

to Siva, Muruga, Baladeva, Vishnu, Kaman and moon-god are clearly mentioned in various Sangam texts. Manimekalai refers to a very big brick called Cakravahakottam. However, in many cases, as till today, the deities were often set up under trees. The method of worship generally consisted of dancing and offering flowers, rice and meat to the gods. Silappadikaram mentions about the stone images of gods. This is also attested by the archaeological discovery in the form of the lingam dating to the centuries B.C by T.A. Gopinatha Rao. The Tamils of Sangam age believed in the ritual uncleanliness on occasions of birth and death. Dead were disposed either by cremation, burial or by being left in open to vultures or jackals. Burning grounds are mentioned in *Manimekalai* where dwelled different kinds of spirits.

Economy of the Sangam Age

The vast corpus of Sangam literature along with some classical literature such as *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* as well as archaeological sources inform us about the prosperous economic condition of South India during Sangam Age.

Agriculture

The prosperity of people in the Sangam age was rooted in the fertility of agriculture and expansion of trade. The Maduraikkanji refers to the agriculture and trade as the main forces of economic development. Agriculture was the main source of revenue for the state. The importance attached to cultivation is also seen in the interest people showed in cattle rearing. The Sangam poems frequently refer to milk and milk-

products such as curd, butter, ghee and butter milk. The importance of cattle is also attested by the cattle raids on enemy country mentioned in the literary works. One of the primary duties of the king was to protect the cattle of his kingdom. The cattle wealth in turn enhanced the wealth of the farmer. Silappaddikaram also relates the happiness and prosperity of the people to the agriculture.

The paddy and sugarcane were the two important crops cultivated in a large quantity. Besides these chief crops, other varieties of crops and fruits included gram, beans, roots like Valli (a kind of sweet potato), jack-fruit, mango, plantain, coconut, arecanut, saffron, pepper, turmeric, etc.

Tolkappiyam refers to the five-fold division of lands- *Kurinji* (hilly tracks), *Mullai* (pastoral), *Marudam* (agricultural), *Neythal* (coastal) and *Palai* (desert). The people living in these five divisions had their respective chief occupations as well as gods for worship.

- *Kurinji* - chief deity was Murugan - chief occupation, hunting and honey collection.
- *Mullai* - chief deity *Mayon* (Vishnu)- chief occupation, cattle-rearing and dealing with dairy products.
- *Marudam* - chief deity Indira-chief occupation, agriculture. Neythal-chief deity *Varunan* – chief occupation fishing and salt manufacturing.
- *Palai* - chief deity *Korravai* – chief occupation robbery.

The kings of the Sangam age took great measures for

the development of agriculture. It is well- known that Karikala Chola dug tanks for irrigation and his embankment of the river Cauvery (Kaveri) proved to be very useful for agriculture. Tank irrigation helped in feeding agriculture as mentioned in many poems. For example, Maduraikkanji mentions ―rivers filling the tanks as they run towards the eastern ocean‖. From the sources it is very evident that the prosperity of the king very much depended on the prosperity of the land.

Industry

The Sangam age also witnessed the industrial activities on a large scale. The poems refer to various kinds of craftsmen including the goldsmith, the blacksmith, the coppersmith, the potter, the sculptor, the painter and the weaver. Manimekalai mentions the collaboration of architects from Maharashtra, blacksmiths from Malwa, carpenters from Greece and Rome and jewellers from Magadha with their counterparts of the Tamil region. The occupation or profession was generally hereditary or handed down from father to the son. According to Silappadikaram, men of different occupation lived in different streets. This led to progress in various trades and industries and also resulted in making these men skilled in their art.

The art of building reached a high level during this period. In this context the works of carpenters are noteworthy. This can be observed in the use of boats with face of the horse, elephant and lion mentioned by Silappadikaram. Moreover, the thriving trading activities

with the Mediterranean world and other distant lands could have been facilitated only with well-built and highly seaworthy ships. Other building activities included the construction of moats, bridges, drainage, lighthouse, etc.

The painter's art was commonly practised and appreciated by people. Paripadal refers to the existence of a museum of paintings in Madura (Madurai) and the sale of pictures is mentioned by Silappadikaram. The walls of houses, roofs, dress, bed-spreads, curtains and many other articles of day-to-day use were painted and were in great demand. The art of weaving, however, commanded popularity not only among the Tamils but also among the foreigners. Garments with woven floral designs are frequently mentioned in Sangam literature. Dresses were woven not only from cotton, silk and wool but also from rat's hair and colouring yarn was known. The Indian silk, for its fineness, was in great demand by the Roman merchants. However, the weaving industry was a domestic industry in which all the members of the family, especially women, took part.

The leather-workers, potters and other craftsmen also contributed to the industrial development. But one of the most noteworthy fact in this regard is the introduction of Greek sculpture and other foreign workmanship into South India during this period. Literary works like Nedunalvadai, Mullaippattu and Padiruppattu refer to the beautiful lamps made by the foreigners, Roman pots and wine jars etc. The Graeco-Roman influence in the contemporary period can also be seen in the sculptures of Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh) and

Ceylon.

Trade

The Tamils of the Sangam age had trading contacts with the Mediterranean world (Greece and Rome), Egypt, China, Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. The literary works like Silappadikaram, Manimekalai and Pattinappalai frequently refer to the contact with the Greek and Roman traders. This period marked the height of the Indo-Roman trade. The Periplus of Erythrean Sea and other accounts of foreigners such as those of Pliny, Ptolemy, Strabo and Petronius mention various ports and the articles traded during the period. The archaeological excavations and explorations at various sites have also yielded the artefacts confirming to the trading relations between the Tamil regions and other countries. The discovery of coin hoards at many places also attest this fact.

The Sangam texts mention prominently only the ports of Musiri, Puhar (Kaveripattinam) and Korkai, the three great ports of the three great rulers of the times. However, the Periplus refers to the ports of Tondi, Musiri and Comari (Cape Comorin / Kanyakumari), Colchi (Korkai), Poduke (Arikamedu) and Sopatma. According to Periplus there were three types of vessels in use in South India. These included small coasting vessels, large coasting vessels and ocean-going ships. There is also the mention of large vessels called Colandia sailing from the Tamil Coast to the Ganges.

The commodities exported to Rome fetched high returns. Living animals like tiger, leopard, monkeys and peacocks were

exported to Rome. The chief animal products of export included ivory and pearl. Plant products like aromatics and spices (pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves, nutmegs, etc.), coconut, plantain, jaggery, teak wood, sandal wood, cotton cloth of special variety called argaru (from Uraiyur) were also among the chief exports. Mineral products like diamonds, beryl, steel, semiprecious stones, etc. were also exported from South India.

The main articles of import from Rome consisted of the coins, coral, wine, lead, tin and jewellery. The beads manufactured at many sites in South India in the contemporary period have been found at several sites of Southeast Asia. This suggests the maritime contacts between the two regions. There were settlements of the foreign traders in many towns. However, it was not only the external trade, which added to the prosperity of the Tamils. Internal trade also flourished in the region with local networks of trade connecting different urban centres. Silappadikaram refers to the bazaar (marked) streets of Puhar while Maduraikkanji describes the market at Madurai, the Pandyan capital. Besides the coastal ports or towns, the Tamil region also witnessed the growth of urban centres in the inland regions. The prominent among these were Madurai, Karur, Perur, Kodumanal, Uraiyur, Kanchipuram and others. While Korkai on the East Coast was famous for pearl fishing, Kodumanal in the interior part was known for its beryl. However, the trade was not confined to cities alone. The remotest villages were also linked with the trading network. The carts were the important mode of transport for

inland trade. These were in use for either carrying goods or people including the traders.

The trade was mostly conducted through barter. The geographical diversity of the Tamil region necessitated the exchange of goods/products between the different regions. However, the use of coins for trading purpose can not be ruled out even in the context of internal trade. Trade was a very important source of the royal revenue. Transit duties were collected from merchants who moved from one place to another. Spoils of war further added to the royal income. But the income from agriculture provided the real foundation of war and political set-up. However, the share of agricultural produce claimed and collected by the king is not specified.

End of the Sangam Age

Towards the end of the third century A.D., the Sangam period slowly witnessed its decline. The Kalabhras occupied the Tamil country for about two and a half centuries. We have little information about the Kalabhra rule. Jainism and Buddhism became prominent during this period. The Pallavas in the northern Tamil Nadu and Pandyas in southern Tamil Nadu drove the Kalabhras out of the Tamil country and established their rule.

Conclusion

Thus, the picture that emerges from the study of Sangam literature reflects that the period witnessed the conception of state for the first time in South India. However, it was still in the process of crystallisation. Sangam polity was

characterised by the patriarchal and patrimonial systems in which the administrative staff system and various offices were directly controlled by the rulers. We also notice social inequalities with the dominance of the Brahmanas. But the acute class distinction, which appeared in later times, were lacking in Sangam age. Agriculture was the backbone of Sangam economy. The trading activities, especially trade relations with the Mediterranean World enriched their economy. The foreign elements also influenced the socioeconomic and cultural life of people. The beliefs and customs practised by Sangam people suggest the complex nature of their religion. Both, animism and idol worship, were followed during the Sangam age. Many of the traditions of the age continued and survived in the later periods and some exist even till today.

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MODULE IV

INTO A FEUDAL SOCIETY

The Satavahanas

In the Deccan, the Satavahanas ruled for about 450 years. They were also known as the Andhras. The Puranas and inscriptions remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas. Among the inscriptions, the Nasik and Nanaghat inscriptions throw much light on the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni. The coins issued by the Satavahanas are also helpful in knowing the economic conditions of that period. The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka.

The extent of the Satavahana empire fluctuated continually according to the political vicissitudes of the times. At its zenith, their empire stretched from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian sea in the west and embraced the entire region between the Narmada in the north and the Krishna in the south. There is also archaeological evidence regarding the Satavahana conquest of Malwa and the Puranic evidence for their control over the ancient imperial capital of Magadha, i.e. Pataliputra. Being the political successors of the Mauryans, they borrowed much from the Mauryan administrative system. Their government was based upon hereditary absolute monarchy. They were not content with the simple title of Raja.

Gautamiputra Satakarni bore the imperial title 'Rajarano' i.e. of King of Kings. The rulers regarded

themselves as the guardians of social and political order and the welfare of their subjects. For administrative purposes, the empire was divided into a number of *Aharas* or *Rashtras* (Govardhana, Sopara. Manrrala, Satavahana etc.), each of which consisted of at least one central town (Nigama) and a number of villages. The *Amatyas* governed these *Aharas*. The *Maharathis* and the *Mahabhojas*, the feudatory chieftains, were superior in rank and power to the *Amatyas*. The inscriptions refer to officers like *Mahassnapati, Heranika, Bhandagarika, Mahamatra, Lekhaka* and *Nibandhakaras*. *Gramas* (villages) and *Nigamas* (towns) were the lowest administrative units. Considerable autonomy was there in managing the affairs of these units. The trade and merchant guilds (*srenies*) played an important part in this regard.

Revenue administration of Satavahanas

The Satavahanas were also the first rulers to make land grants to Brahmanas, although we find more instances of such grants being made to Buddhist monks. The various grants give some idea of the internal economy of an average middle-sized village and the undisturbed life of the people even when there was big political change at the centre. The Karadkhed, Ganeshwadi, Dalimb Inscription record land grants for the benefit of the temples built at the sites and feeding houses for ascetics and students who were learning in the *salas* at these places. Sometimes lands were granted and occasionally the revenue and income from all sources was granted to the Brahmanas. The watch and ward arrangement for the continuance of the maintenance of the endowments is most

interesting. It is stated that all the local offices and some *Settis* were supposed to maintain the donation, At Karadkhed the gift was entrusted with Jnanesvara Pandita, the acharya of the college.

It seems that Aya and Sunka were the two types of revenue, the latter being generally a contribution of some kind levied on goods, particularly those in transit. *Aya* can be classified Into Siddhaya, Pannaya and Dandaya of Inonme. The Pannaya was income from merchandise, Including octroi duties. It was to be collected either in kind or its equivalent in money. The Dandaya was income from fines, but not recorded in the epigraohs of this region. Levies of the Suhka variety are three. Our epigraphs mention only two of them, Perjjunka or Herjunka and Manneya Sunka were collected by the district agencies through the Sunkaverggade, i.e. Collectors of the Taxes. Even the cattle and the things like chattra, flywhisks etc, vrere taxed in those days. The epigraph of Andur speaks of the repealing of both these taxes.

Land Grants During the Gupta Period

The sources of the Gupta period suggest that certain important changes were taking place in the agrarian society. Feudal development surfaced under the Guptas with the grant of fiscal and administrative concessions to priests and administrators. Started in the Deccan by the Satavahanas, the practice became a regular affair in Gupta times.

Religious functionaries were granted land, free of tax, forever, and they were authorised to collect from the peasants

all the taxes which could have otherwise gone to the emperor. Religious grants were of two types: Agrahara grants were meant for the Brahmanas which meant to be perpetual, hereditary and tax-free, accompanied with the assignment of all land revenue.

The *Devagrahara* grants were made to secular parties such as writers and merchants, for the purpose of repair and worship of temples. The secular grants were made to secular parties and are evident from a grant made by the Uccakalpa dynasty. According to it, two villages were bestowed as a mark of favour, in perpetuity with fiscal and administrative rights upon a person called *Pulindabhatta*. Epigraphic evidence of land grants made to officers for the administrative and military services is lacking, though such grants cannot be ruled out. In fact, certain designations of administrative officers such as bhagika and *bhogapalika* suggest that some of the state officials may have been remunerated by land grants.

As a result of land-grants and some other factors gave birth to independent, self-sufficient economic units. The beneficiaries of land-grants enjoyed the several economic rights which cut the economic ties between Central authority and the donated areas. They were more dependent on the central government for the continuity and development of their economy. The Central idea behind this was to preserve the self-sufficient village economy by typing down the peasants and artisans.

Furthermore, the conditions of the villagers, which were independent of the beneficiaries of land-grant and were

placed under the charge of the village headman were not dissimilar. The Headman might compel the peasants and women not only to work in his fields but also to spin yarn so that his clothes might be supplied to him locally "according to Vatsyayana's "Kamasutra". In this way, some of the commodities produced were put on safe to cater to the simple needs of the villagers.

Decline of commerce is demonstrated by tire paucity of coins in the post-Gupta period. The gold coins which were so abundant during the periods of the Kushanas and Gupta went out of circulation after the sixth century A.D. The absence of silver and copper coins also attracts attention. However, the period under study was characterised by unprecedented agrarian expansion and this alone would have normally necessitated more metallic money. Secondly, decline of internal trade and consequently producing the local commodities to meet local needs and other weakening the power at the centre.

Naturally and gradually, the milers adopted the method of paying officials by grants of revenue or in kind. Unless the compulsions were serious enough, no ruler would have willingly forgone the privilege of minting coins in his own name. It is indicative of the growing disuse of coins during the post-Gupta age the religious assignments which were made in cash by the princes and individuals in first two centuries of the Christian era replaced by grants of land.

In the post Harsha period hardly, any coin can be ascribed without any doubt to any ruling house. Although

legal text refers to the use of coins land charters indicate taxes levied in "hiranya" and some inscriptions speak of the cost of construction and purchase in terms of currency, but few actual finds can be assigned to this period. In fact, several scholars have noted the absence of coins during the period 600 to 900 A.D. It is therefore evident that the coins were in general form from the time of Harshavardhana onwards. This leads us to the conclusion that trade suffered a decline and Urban life began to disappear.

The important changes in the Gupta and post- Gupta period was the decline of trade, both internal and external. Indian foreign trade registered a peak during the post-Mauryan period, when India traded with the Roman empire, Central Asia and South East Asia. However, commercial decline set in during the Gupta period. It became more pronounced by the middle of the sixth century A.D. The inflow of Roman coins into India stopped after the early centuries of the Christian era.

Further Roman empire itself broke up at a later date. It seems that in the first half of the sixth century A.D. silk was as good an earner of bullion for India as spices in the first century A.D. The emergence of the Arabs and the Persians as competitors in trade did not augur well for Indian merchants.

Some Byzantine coins ranging up to sixth century have been found in Andhra and Karnataka. Silk and spices were important items in the Indo-Byzantine trade. The Byzantine however, learnt the art of growing silk worm in the middle of the sixth century A.D. Consequently, the silk trade was badly

affected.

The migration of silk weavers from Gujarat and their taking to other vocations, acquires meaning in this context. Gupta ruler's ties with Central Asia were also weak. Whatever the little left of the contacts with Central Asia and Western Asia were completely wiped off by the invasions of Hunas. The decline of foreign trade may also be by the expansion of Arab under the banner of "Islam". The Arabs expansion on the North-West frontiers of India in the seventh and eighth centuries. Their presence in the region made overland routes unsafe for Indian merchants. In this way, the coastal towns of India carried on some trade with countries of South-East Asia and China. However, this interaction does not appear to have been of any intense kind. There is evidence for the spread of many cultural influences from India to South-East Asia in early historical and early medieval times but there is no evidence of pottery, coins or other objects of this kind to suggest vigorous commercial interactions.

After fourth century A.D. there is no evidence of trade in beads etc. with the areas of South-East Asia. Thus, we have clear indications of the decline of the foreign trade of North-Western India from the end of the Gupta age, and particularly from the first half of the seventh century A.D.

Whatever the internal trade and commerce existed had to be fitted into the emerging feudal structure. This evident from the detailed rules laid down in the law books regarding the functioning of the guilds of artisans and merchants. Internally the fragmentation of political authority and the

dispersal of power to local chiefs, religious grantees etc. seems to have had an adverse effect. King is required not only to observe the laws of the guilds but also to enforce them.

What actually existed can be concluded from three charters granted to guilds of merchants by the rulers of coastal areas of Western India. The first charter was issued at the end of sixth century A.D. while second and third charters were issued at the beginning of the eighth century A.D. by Bhagaski, the Chalukya king of the Konkan area.

On the basis of these charters we can make the following observation about the condition of merchants and their guilds in the post Gupta-period. According to the Charters, a few merchants were elevated to the position of managers of the endowment or the town as the case might be. They tied down the merchants to the management of villages, which in one case were attached to a temple and in another to the rehabilitated town. The merchants enjoyed practically the same privileges and immunities as were enjoyed by priests. Perhaps by some feudal barons in the villages granted to them.

But since they were burdened with the management of villages, they could not pay full attention to their trade and commerce. Therefore, the charters show the feudation of merchants by turning them into some type of landed intermediaries. In this way the activities of every guild were restricted to its locality so that it had no freedom of competition which was a characteristic of the restricted-closed economy of Europe in the Middle Ages.

Feudalism in Indian Society

The notion of feudalism has European origins. Indeed, in Europe too its history is rather recent, going back at the most to the seventeenth century, long after the phenomenon characterised as feudalism had been dead and gone. From here it, along with many other concepts, spread out to the rest of the world in the wake of European expansion. Understandably then, as the concept evolved and changed in European historiography, its shape in the world's other regions too changed accordingly.

Initially, European feudalism was perceived entirely in the customary law binding the lord and the vassal. It was also seen as a backward, rigid, and slow-moving system. The view was somewhat expanded to equate feudalism with a system of government where power was highly decentralised, resting in the hands of feudal lords even as a nominal ruler was publicly acknowledged as a sovereign.

It was not for too long that the concept of feudalism remained confined to the lord-vassal relation ship. Gradually, other aspects of study began to evolve. Marxism in particular brought to attention the question of production, i.e. the relationship between land and labour. From-lord-vassal relation- ship, the perspective shifted to the lord-peasant relationship. Economy also brought into focus questions of technology, trade, money, etc. Historiography of the *Annales* School opened up areas of the history of the family, gender relations, ideas and mentalities.

The early medieval period spanning from c.600 C. E .to 1300 C. E. is to be situated between the early historical and medieval. Historians are unanimous on the fact that this phase in Indian history had a distinct identity and as such differed from the preceding early historical and succeeding medieval. This in turn brings home the presence of the elements of change and continuity in Indian history. It is identified as a phase in the transition to the medieval. Perception of a unilinear and uniform pattern of historical development is challenged. Changes are identified not merely in dynastic upheavals but are also located in socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. One of the richest historical debates i.e. the feudalism debate revolves around this period. It is dubbed by B. D. Chattopadhyaya as a period which long remained a much-maligned period of Indian history. This period is seen in Marxist historiography as a breakdown of the civilizational matrix of early historic India. Breakdown is envisaged in terms of social crises. Another issue that saw much disagreement among historians relates to the nature of the polity in the period. Different genres of historians agree that there was a shift in the nature of polity of the post 600CE phase from that of the pre 600 C.E. days but the causative factors responsible for this changing scenario are not unanimously identified.

Marxist scholars like R. S. Sharma, BNS Yadav and the likes view early medieval polity as one of decentralization and disintegration in sharp contrast to early historical polity which encouraged forces of centripetality. According to this

historiography decentralization and disintegration is to be posited against the backdrop of the emergence and crystallization of Indian feudalism. B. D. Chattopadhyaya does not however see the making of early medieval India in terms of the crisis of a pre-existent, pan Indian social order. He is not in favour of perceiving early medieval phase only in terms of feudal formation. On the other hand, he identifies three major processes which were operative throughout Indian history viz a) the expansion of state society through the process of local state formation b) peasantization of tribe and caste formation and c) cult appropriation and integration.

Feudalism Debate:

It will be in order to briefly discuss the contours of the feudalism debate that has shaped up in Indian history. The concept of feudalism is a borrowing from European historiography. Combined with the notion of social formation it is the seminal empirical writings of Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch which have perhaps served as models for those who began seriously working out empirical validation of feudalism as a social formation in Indian history.

The first assimilation of 'feudalism' in the Indian context occurred at the hands of Col. James Todd, the celebrated compiler of the annals of Rajasthan's history in the early part of the nineteenth century. For Todd, as for most European historians of his time in Europe, lord-vassal relationship constituted the core of feudalism. The lord in medieval Europe looked after the security and subsistence of his vassals and they in turn rendered military and other

services to the lord. A sense of loyalty also tied the vassal to the lord in perpetuity. For him the pattern was replicated in Rajasthan.

D. D. Kosmabi gave feudalism a significant place in the context of socio-economic history. He conceptualised the growth of feudalism in Indian history as a two-way process: from above and from below in his landmark book, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, first published in 1956. From above the feudal structure was created by the state granting land and rights to officials and Brahmins; from below many individuals and small groups rose from the village levels of power to become landlords and vassals of the kings.

The hierarchical structure of society, as opined by R. S. Sharma, was the political fall out of the deep-seated social crisis, better known as Kaliyuga crisis in and around 4th century CE. This crisis is reflected in the ability of rulers to exercise their coercive authority (*danda*) and to collect resources by revenue measures. The political authority therefore took recourse to the issuance of land grants to religious donees - largely brahmanas - who were not only endowed with landed wealth but also with administrative and judicial rights. The donees therefore emerged as landed intermediaries between the ruler and the actual peasantry. The landed intermediaries, thus, grew as local power base. Subsequent to religious donees, secular donees emerged, as dearth of metallic courrency, according to Sharma, forced the ruler to assign lands to state officials in lieu of cash. He

visualised the decline of India's long distance trade with various parts of the world after the fall of the Guptas; urbanisation also suffered in consequence, resulting in the economy's ruralisation. Along with land, the state also gave away more and more rights over the cultivating peasants to this new class of 'intermediaries. The increasing subjection of the peasants to the intermediaries reduced them to the level of serfs, their counterparts in medieval Europe. This process lasted until about the eleventh century when the revival of trade reopened the process of urbanisation. The decline of feudalism is suggested in this revival, although R S Sharma does not go into this aspect in as much detail. The one element that was missing in this picture was the Indian counterpart of the Arab invasion of Europe; however, Professor B N S Yadava, another eminent proponent of the Indian feudalism thesis, drew attention to the Hun invasions of India which almost coincided with the beginning of the rise of feudalism here. The oppressive feudal system in Europe had resulted in massive rebellions of the peasantry in Europe; in India R S Sharma suggested that the Kaivartya rebellion in Bengal was an evidence of peasant protest. B N S Yadava and D N Jha stood firmly by the feudalism thesis.

The feudal formulation was based on the basis of land grants alone and any such formulation is open to question. Thus, it has been effectively questioned whether the transfer of revenue to the donee would at all amount to the corrosion of the rulers' economic prerogatives. D.C.Sircar criticized the Marxist historians for their inability to distinguish landlordism

and tenancy in India from feudalism. Harbans Mukhia, a committed practitioner of Marxist history writing in an address entitled "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" questioned the Indian feudalism thesis at the theoretical plane and then at the empirical level by comparing the medieval Indian scenario with medieval Europe. The empirical basis of the questioning of Indian feudalism in a comparison between the histories of medieval Western Europe and medieval India, pursued at three levels: the ecological conditions, the technology available and the social organisation of forms of labour use in agriculture in the two regions. With this intervention, the debate was no longer confined to feudalism/trade dichotomy.

While the debate critically examined the theoretical proposition of the universality of the concept of feudalism or otherwise – with each historian taking his own independent position – on the question of Indian historical evidence, R S Sharma, who was chiefly under attack, reconsidered some of his earlier positions and greatly refined his thesis of Indian feudalism, even as he defended it vigorously and elegantly in a paper, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?" He had been criticised for looking at the rise of feudalism in India entirely as a consequence of state action in transferring land to the intermediaries. He modified it and expanded its scope to look at feudalism as an economic formation which evolved out of economic and social crises in society, signifying in the minds of the people the beginning of the Kaliyuga, rather than entirely as the consequence of state action. This enriched his argument

considerably. R S Sharma has lately turned his attention to the ideological and cultural aspects of the feudal society; and included some new themes such as "The Feudal Mind", where he explores such problems as the reflection of feudal hierarchies in art and architecture, the ideas of gratitude and loyalty as ideological props of feudal society, etc. D. N. Jha, in an edited volume, “The Feudal Order”, has included papers exploring the cultural and ideological dimensions of what he calls the feudal order, itself a comprehensive term. One of the major dimensions so explored is that of religion, especially popular religion or Bhakti, both in north and south India and the growth of India’s regional cultures and languages. Even as most scholars have seen the rise of the Bhakti cults as a popular protest against the domination of Brahmanical orthodoxy, the proponents of feudalism see these as buttresses of Brahmanical domination by virtue of the ideology of total surrender, subjection and loyalty to a deity. This surrender and loyalty could easily be transferred on to the feudal lord and master.

Several historians criticized the notion of the decline of trade and urban centres. D N Jha had criticized R S Sharma for relying too heavily on the absence of long-distance external trade as the cause of the rise of feudalism in India. B.D. Chattopadhyay has shown that there are enough evidence to show urban development and not decay in early medieval India.to have happened at least a century earlier. Ranabir Chakravarti has brought forward ample evidence of flourishing trade, different categories of merchants and market centres in

the concerned period. The monetary anaemia thesis, fundamental to the formulation of Indian feudalism, has also been put under severe strain by recent researches of B D Chattopadhyay and B. N.Mukherjee.and John S Deyell who seriously undermined the assumption of the scarcity of money.

Debate on the nature of polity

With regard to the difference of opinion regarding the nature of polity, the multiplicity of regional powers distinguished the polity of early medieval India from the situation prevailing in the pre-600 CE days. The causative factors responsible for this changing scenario are not unanimously identified. At present there exist at least three different structural models for the early medieval Indian kingdoms.

i) the conventional model of a rather unitary, centrally organized kingdom with a strong central bureaucracy

ii) the Indian Feudalism model of decentralized feudal states

iii) the model of a segmentary state

These three models depict the early medieval Indian kingdom either as a strong and centralized state or as one of decentralization and disintegration or as a state which has not yet reached the position of a strong and centralized state though it did have some of its characteristics in its core around the capital. According to the conception of Indian feudalism, state formation after the Gupta period had a decidedly negative character, since the many local kingdoms and principalities had developed at the cost of the former larger

political entities. The processes which worked towards administrative decentralization are essentially seen to have derived from a) the practice of making land grants along with administrative privileges. b) the breakdown of the state's monopoly over the army. The understanding of the feudal political set up is also linked up with the changing socioeconomic and cultural situations in the early medieval times. The puranic narration of the weakening of the political authority, non-observation of the varnasrama dharma and other things is taken to have represented a deep-seated social crisis. The political fallout of the crisis is seen in the inability of the rulers to exercise their coercive authority (danda) and to collect resources by revenue measures.

The hall mark of the early medieval polity is placed in the *samanta* system. The term *samanta* originally denoted a neighbouring king. But gradually it assumed the sense of a vassal. No less than seven grades of *samanta*s are represented in the Harshacharita. The sharp changes which the term *samanta* went through over time reflects fundamental changes in Indian polity, reinforcing the image of a hierarchical political structure. The evidence of the growing number and influence of the *samanta*s in early medieval polity is seen as both the cause and effect of the centralized political power. The feudal polity is symptomatic of the absence of a paramount power and synonymous with political fragmentation. The construction of feudal polity would suggest that it is primarily based on data pertaining to north India. The proponents of Indian Feudalism, however, consider

this to be an all India phenomenon, with regional variations.

A major disadvantage of the theory of Indian feudalism is the preponderance of its conceptual frame-work of decentralization and political fragmentation. The period which followed the disappearance of the Gupta empire in the 6th century CE can be interpreted as a period of political fragmentation in North India and parts of Central India. But this fragmentation certainly was not caused through land donations either to secular or religious donees. A structural interpretation of the early medieval period reveals that this period of North Indian decentralization coincided with a very intensive process of state formation on the local sub regional and regional level in some part of northern India, many parts of central India and in most parts of southern India. It was during this time that a process of indigenous state formation took place in many parts of India.

A major trait of the individuality of the early medieval south Indian polity can be seen in the vital local self-bodies of the Pallava and the Chola regime. The local self-bodies made their presence strongly felt in the political life within a monarchical set up. The general tendency in a monarchical set up is to undermine the vitality of local self-bodies and to wipe out their existence. N.K. Sastri opined that the Chola monarchy was an intelligent juxtaposition of an extremely powerful monarchy at the apex level and the overwhelming presence of local self-bodies at the villages.

This proposition has been negated by an alternative explanation of the phenomenal presence of local self-bodies in

south Indian polity. The theoretical model known as the Segmentary State theory, also questions the inadequacy of the feudal model as a tool to explain the prevailing polity in south India. Inspired by the studies of East Africal Alur society by A. Southhall, Burton Stein located the segmentary polity from Pallava times. The Segmentary theory view the king as having enjoyed only limited territorial sovereignty. The element of centrality existed only in the core area even where the presence of quasi-autonomous foci of administration was tolerated by the Cholas. The real foci of power are suggested to have been the locality level centers or nadus. Stein distinguishes sharply between actual political control on one side and ritual sovereignty on the other. All the centers of the segmentary state do exercise actual political control over their own part or segment, but only one center the primary center of the ruling dynasty has the primacy of extending ritual sovereignty be- yond its own borders. The absence of an organized bureaucracy forced the Chola monarch to fall back instead on ritual sovereignty in which the position of the ruler required to be legitimized and validated by the brahmana priest. Stein confines ritual sovereignty mainly to the state cult exemplified in the royal Siva cult of Rajaraja‟s Rajarajesvara temple at Tanjore. The construction of massive temples is interpreted not as a mark of the stupendous power of the Chola rule, but as a symptom of political uncertainties, the king being the principal ritualist. Moreover, the inscriptions are also looked at by Stein as a clear evidence of ritual sovereignty. Hermann Kulke has questioned Stein's concept of ritual sovereignty. According to him in a traditional society,

particularly in India, ritual sovereignty seems to be an integral part and sometimes even a pace maker of political power. These inscriptions were documents of a systematic ritual policy which was as much a part of the general "power policy" as, for instance, economic or military policies.

A key element of the segmentary state theory was also the so-called Brahmana-peasant alliance at the *nadu*. This does not have any parallel in Indian history. On the contrary, the peasant is always known to have been exploited by the Brahmana and Kshatriya combination. The creation of *vala nadu* - larger than the *nadu* but smaller than a *mandalam*, by Rajaraja and Kulottunga I is an indicator of the administrative innovations and hence directs intervention by Chola Central authority.

The feudal polity and the segmentary state theory highlight the traits of disintegration and fragmentation as opposed to a centralized state structure. According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya, the segmentary state model or the concept of ritual sovereignty cannot in fact resolve the problem of the political basis of integration since a rigid use of the segmentary state concept relegates the different foci of power to the periphery and does not really see them as components of state structure. The phenomenon of different foci of power was not peculiarly south Indian but cut across all major political structures of the early medieval period.

These models have been challenged by a group of scholars clubbed together as "non aligned historians" by Hermann Kulke. This non-aligned group is reluctant to

accept any models. On the other hand, their focus is on structural developments and changes within a given state system.

According to them the multiplicity of local and regional power is the result of the extension of monarchical state society into areas and communities tribal, non-monarchical polity. In their opinion early medieval polity is perceived as an "integrative polity". The integration of the tribes in the jati system was further given a momentum by the simultaneous absorption of tribal/folk cults into the sectarian Brahmanical Bhakti cults. Bhakti, from the stand point of the state could be an instrument of integration, much more effectively than Dharmasastra oriented norms. Thus modes of integration formed an important aspect of state formation in early medieval India

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For Further Reading

Module I

- D.N Jha. Ancient India an Introductory Outline
- Shareen Ratnagar. Understanding Harappa
- M.K Bhavalikar. Cultural Imperialism
- R.S. Sharma. India's Ancient Pasts
- Upinder Singh. A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India

Module II

- R.S. Sharma. Material Culture and Social formations in Ancient India. India's Ancient Past
- RomilaThappar. From Lineage to State Early India
- Upinder Singh. A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India

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- K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. Age of Nandas and Maurya
- Romila Thapar. Ashoka and Decline of the Maurya ……. Maurya Revisited
- Upinder Singh. A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India
- N. Subrahmanyan. Sangam Polity
- RajanGurukkal. Social Formations in South India
- Kailasapati. Tamil Heroic Poetry

- Rajan Gurukkal. Rethinking Indo-Roman Classical Trade

Module IV

- R.S. Sharma. Indian Feudalism. Early Medieval Indian Society
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