

# **HISTORY OF INDIA UPTO 1206 AD**

**BA [History]  
First Semester  
Paper I**

**[English Edition]**



**Directorate of Distance Education  
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# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

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Syllabi	Mapping in Book
<b>Unit 1</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sources of Ancient Indian History: Literary and Archaeological</li><li>2. Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic Civilization: Feature of Indus Valley, Causes of decline; Early and Later Vedic period.</li><li>3. Protest Movements: Causes, Jainism and Buddhism.</li><li>4. The Mauryan Empire: Administration, Asoka's Dhamma</li></ol>	<b>Unit 1:</b> Introduction to Ancient India <b>(Pages: 3-66)</b>
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# INTRODUCTION

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India is recognized as having a unique and intriguing history and culture. Historical records trace the beginning of Indian civilization to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. It is also called the Harappan Civilization as Harappa was the first site to be excavated. The sources of evidence about this civilization are the artifacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. Man began to use metals which continued into the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages. This was followed by the arrival of the Vedic Age which occupies an important place in Indian history. The religion, philosophy and social customs of the Hindus who constitute the majority of our country have their principal source in the Vedic culture. However, with the passage of time, Vedic religion had become quite ritualistic and the caste system had become predominant. This resulted in regional dissent among the masses, which led to the emergence of new classes and the rise of Jainism and Buddhism. Jainism and Buddhism represent a remarkable phase in the religious and cultural development of India. This was followed by the emergence of cities and territorial states, especially the Magadha Empire and the Nandas.

Further, the small cities and territorial states were brought under the control of Chandragupta Maurya who laid the foundation of the Mauryan Empire. The decline of the Mauryan Empire led to the arrival and emergence of Indo-Greeks, Shungas, Kharavelas, Kushanas and Satvahanas. India was once again politically united in the Gupta Period. The Gupta Age is marked as an era of unprecedented progress in all aspects of polity, religion, art and literature. The disintegration of the Gupta Period led to the emergence of regional kingdoms like the Palas and the Senas in the North and the Cholas and the Pallavas in the South. This was followed by the arrival of Arabs and Turks in India.

The book entitled has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with 'Introduction' to the topic followed by 'Unit Objectives'. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' questions to test the reader's understanding of the topic. A list of 'Questions and Exercises' is also provided at the end of each unit that includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The 'Summary' and 'Key Terms' section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

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# UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT INDIA

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## NOTES

### Structure

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Information about the past is based on several sources, each contributing a part in our attempt to visualize the complete picture. There are two primary types of source material for studying ancient Indian history, namely literary and archaeological. For a

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comprehensive understanding of historical events, it is essential to analyse both literary and archaeological sources, wherever possible. These sources will help you analyse various facets of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is also called the Harappan civilization as Harappa was the first site to be excavated. The sources of evidence about this civilization are the artefacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. Some tablets and seals of this civilization have certain symbols engraved on them. However, these symbols have not been deciphered till now. Therefore, the main evidences of this civilization are the archaeological excavations. The unit will begin with a discussion on the sources of ancient Indian history. It will then turn to the Vedic period.

Vedic culture occupies the most prominent place in Indian history. Its impact on modern India is widely prevalent. The religion, philosophy and social customs of the Hindus who constitute a majority of India have their principal source in Vedic culture. The contribution of Vedic culture to human progress has far exceeded that of the Indus Valley culture and this factor alone is sufficient to justify its superiority. The authors of this culture were the Indo-Aryans, an anglicized version of the original word Aryan.

The Aryans settled down in tribes, led a semi-nomadic life and fought among themselves and with other non-Aryan tribes for cows, sheep and green pastures. By the Later Vedic Age, the Aryans had moved further into the Ganga Valley, a process facilitated by the use of iron implements, which helped them to clear the thick forests with greater ease. Gradually, many of the Aryan groups further evolved into larger political entities by capturing more and more land. These came to be known as *Mahajanapadas*. The discussion will then turn to the Mauryan Empire.

During the second half of the 6th century BC, the Persian emperor Cyrus became successful in capturing all the land between the Indus and Kabul rivers. One of his successors, Darius I, however, annexed Gandhara and the Indus Valley. The Indus Valley or 'India' as they called it paid a tribute of gold to the Persian empire. During the rule of Mahapadma Nanda, India was invaded by the Greek conqueror Alexander. Alexander set out to conquer the world after having conquered Greece. Alexander defeated the Persian ruler. Next, he overran the Afghanistan and entered India through the Khyber Pass in 326 BC. At this time, north-west India was divided into small kingdoms. By destroying the small kingdoms of the north-west, Alexander paved the way for the establishment of Maurya dynasty's rule. Alexander's army was tired and reluctant to move further ahead and face the fierce army of Chandragupta Maurya. They turned back and headed for Babylon, where Alexander breathed his last in 323 BC. Chandragupta Maurya, thus, was able to lay the foundation of the empire that would ultimately change the course of ancient Indian history.

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### 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the characteristic features of the people of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Assess the settlement patterns and town planning of the people belonging to the civilization
- Describe the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley Civilization

- Describe the Early Vedic polity
- Describe the technological and economic development prevalent during the Early Vedic times
- Examine the characteristics features of Mauryan Administration
- Discuss the various aspects of the rule of Chandragupta Maurya
- Discuss the various aspects of the rule of Asoka, including his Dhamma and the Battle of the Kalinga
- List the reasons that led to the downfall of the Mauryan empire

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### 1.2 SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

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There are many 'sources' through which we come to know about our past. They can be divided into:

- Archaeological evidence
- Literary evidence

#### **Archaeological Evidence**

Archaeologists and historians study the remains of past civilizations. Archaeology is the study of the remains of our past like monuments, tools, pottery, coins, weapons, paintings and other artefacts. Thus, archaeology provides us direct evidence from the past, which serves as clues to reconstruct the past.

Most of our information about pre-historic man, the Indus Valley people and other ancient civilizations is based upon archaeological findings. Archaeological findings usually have the following forms:

- Inscriptions
- Coins
- Monuments
- Artefacts

#### ***Inscriptions***

In ancient times, rulers engraved important messages for people on rocks, pillars, stone walls, clay tablets and copper plates. These writings are known as inscriptions. The study of inscriptions is called epigraphy. A study of these inscriptions throws light upon the language of the people, names of the rulers, the years they ruled, their military achievements, the religious and social conditions of the people and many other details. For example, the edicts of Ashoka are a collection of 33 inscriptions on the Pillars of the Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty (269 BC to 231BC). An edict was a formal announcement of the ruler to inform the public. The Ashokan edicts on pillars give us information about the extent of his empire.

#### ***Coins***

The study of coins is called numismatics. Coins are made of metals like gold, silver and copper and are therefore not easily destroyed. They have the names and images

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of rulers stamped upon them. They give information such as the date of accession and death of the ruler. For example, Roman coins discovered in India gives us an idea about the existence of contacts with the Roman empire. The principal source of information of the Bactarian; Indo-Greeks and Indo-Parthian dynasty is numismatics. The coins of these dynasties throw light on the improvement in the coin artistry of India. Portraits and figures, Hellenistic art and dates on the coins of the western satraps of Saurashtra are remarkable sources for reconstructing the history of this period. The history of the Satavahanas is ascertained from the Jogalthambi hoard of coins. The circulation of coins in gold and silver during the Gupta empire provides a fair idea of the economic condition during the rule of the Guptas.

### **Monuments**

Ancient buildings like temples, palaces and forts are known as monuments. They give us information about the life and times of the people. For example, the carvings on the panels of Qutub Minar tell us about the reign of the early Delhi Sultans, and the carved panels on the walls and railings of the Sanchi Stupa tell stories from the life of the Buddha.

### **Artefacts**

An artefact is something made or given shape by man, such as a tool or a work of art, specially an object of archaeological interest. The ancient artefacts help historians form a picture of cultural and religious life of ancient societies. For example, the artefacts of Harappan civilization with motifs relating to asceticism and fertility rites suggest that these concepts entered Hinduism from the earlier civilization. The stone tools, pottery, buttons, jewellery and clothing found at various sites provide information about the life of early man.

### **Literary Evidence**

It took humans a long time to develop the art of writing. Before paper was invented, people wrote on palm leaves and the bark of birch trees. These written records which include both religious and secular literature, are called manuscripts.

The Vedas, the oldest recorded text of the Aryans, and the Buddhist texts are written sources, which tell us about the past. But since these scripts are associated with rituals or religious practices of the past, these are called religious sources. Other examples are the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* and the *Puranas*. However, there could be books written in the past, e.g., accounts of foreign travellers who came to India and wrote about Indian society. The literature not connected with the religion of the times is called 'secular'. For example, the *Arthashastra*, which was written by Kantilya. The book deals with legal issues and state craft.

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## 1.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

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Up to 1920, nothing was known about the Indus Valley Civilization. Construction workers at a railway track near Harappa were using the bricks from a nearby ruin, when it was realized that the bricks probably belonged to a very old civilization. The

railway authorities informed the Archaeological Survey of India. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhal Das Banerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the European had flourished in India. This generated great enthusiasm, not only in India but in other countries as well. Further excavations at Lothal, Ropar and Kalibangan revealed that the Indus Valley Civilization flourished beyond the River Indus. The area that it covered at that time was approximately 1.3 million square kilometres.

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Figure 1.1 shows us some of the important sites of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is estimated that the Indus Valley Civilization existed between 2500 and 1500BC almost at the same time as the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese civilizations.

It is true that all the civilizations of the world have originated and developed in the valleys of rivers. A common feature of all civilizations is the river, which provided fertile soil for the civilizations to develop in its valley. When rivers flooded the banks, the water left deposits of fine silt, which made it possible for farmers to produce abundant crops. Floodwater was used to irrigate fields in the dry season. Rivers provided humans with additional source of food in the form of fish. Rivers also served as waterways for the transport of people and goods from one place to another. The Sumerian, Babylonian and Asirian civilizations developed on the banks of Dajla-Farat, the Egyptian civilization on the banks of the river Nile and the Harappan civilization on the banks of the Indus.



Fig. 1.1 Important Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

## NOTES

The Indus Valley Civilization was an ancient civilization that had disappeared hundreds of years ago leaving its ruins. Most of the remains of the Indus Valley Civilization have been found in the valley of river Indus, from where the civilization derives its name. The city of Mohenjodaro was 640 km away from Harappa. The term 'Mohenjodaro' means 'the mound of the dead, which was a local name of a high mountain located on the fields of Larkana. In the context of the Indus Valley Civilization, author and historian Ramashankar Tripathi states, 'Till so far our way has been full of obstacles but now we can see the horizons of the Indian Civilization.' It has been established by the remains of the Indus Valley Civilization that hundreds of years before the Aryans there was a pre-established civilization in India.

### 1.3.1 Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization

According to the Australian archaeologist and Philologist Vere Gordon Childe 'The geographical area of the Indus Civilization was much more expanded than the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Persian Civilizations.'

The remains of the expansion of this Civilization have been found in North India from Ropar of Ambala district to Rangpur district in Kathiawad; from Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra to Ghazipur, Varanasi, Buxar and Patna in the east. This proves that the Harappan Civilization was spread across Punjab and Sindh, in the valleys of north-western frontiers mainly Kathiawad, Rajasthan and Doab. The following are the chief regions of the Indus Valley Civilization:

- 1. Baluchistan:** This region was important from the perspective of trade and commerce. The main places that were extremely important include Sukagendor (at the origin of river Dashak), Sotakakoh (at the beginning of Shadi Kaur) and Balakot (in the east of Son Miyani at the origin of river Vindar).
- 2. North-Western Border:** Significant artefacts have been discovered from this area in the Gomal valley.
- 3. Sindhu:** Several remains have been found in the Sindhu region but many sites have been destroyed on the banks of this river. Several remains have been found at the sites of Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Judeirjo-daro, Amri.
- 4. Western Punjab:** This area has the most important Harappan site which is located on river Ravi.
- 5. Eastern Punjab:** An important site of this area is Ropar. In recent excavations remains have been found in Sanghol.
- 6. Haryana:** In Hisar and Banvali important remains of the Indus Civilization have been found.
- 7. Doab of Ganga and Yamuna:** The remains of Indus Valley Civilization are spread across from Meerut to Aalamgir. Recently remains have also been found at Hulas in Saharanpur.
- 8. Gujarat:** There are several Indus Valley Civilization sites at the peninsula of Kutch and Kathiawad and the mainlands of Gujarat. Important sites at these peninsula are Sutkotada and Lothal, respectively.
- 9. Other sites:** Important remains have also been found at the sites of Bahawalpur, Jammu and Northern Afghanistan.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the two main sources of ancient Indian history?
2. When was the Indus Valley Civilization discovered?

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## 1.4 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

The cities belonging to Indus Valley Civilization were divided into a lower town area and the citadel. Historians believe that there was some kind of difference between people who lived in the lower town area and those who lived near the citadel. Occupational groups lived in the lower town area and the nobility comprising the king and his nobles lived in the citadel. Nevertheless, there must have been some controlling authority, otherwise the uniformity of the town plan, standardization of weights and measures, collection of taxes and grains would have been impossible. One would probably get a better idea about the social and political life of the Indus Valley Civilization once the script is deciphered.

### Dress and Ornaments

The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton to make clothes. Besides cotton, they wore woollen clothes. Men wore a piece of cloth round their waists and a shawl over their shoulders, while women wore a skirt and do not seem to have worn blouses. Archaeologists have unearthed an idol of a man covered with a shawl (see Figure 1.2). The shawl was tied under the right arm and went across the left shoulder, which left the right hand free. A cloth similar to the *dhoti* worn in rural India was worn at the bottom.

The discovery of needles at the excavation site points towards the fact that the people of this civilization were familiar with sewing. Both men and women wore ornaments. These were made of metal, bone, shell and beads. The Indus people loved ornaments. The chief ornaments worn by women included necklaces, armlets, bangles, earrings, nose-rings, rings and waistlets.



Fig. 1.2 Man Covered with a Shawl

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The ornaments of rich people were made of gold, silver and precious stones whereas the ornaments of poor people were made of bones, copper and baked clay. Sir John Hubert Marshall who was the Director General of Archaeology in India stated, 'seeing the shine and design of gold ornaments it seems that they are brought from an ornament shop of Bond Street (London) and not from a pre-historical house of five thousand years ago.' Figure 1.3 illustrates a bronze dancing girl.



*Fig. 1.3 Bronze Idol of Dancing Girl*

### **Farming and Cattle Rearing**

Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people of the Indus valley. The climate and seasons were conducive for farming and annual flooding of the rivers made the land fertile. This facilitated the growth of crops. The chief crops that were grown were wheat, barley, cotton, maize and millet. They also grew fruits and vegetables. Different methods of irrigation were in use. Channels and embankments were also built to control the flow of water into the fields. Ploughs and sickles were commonly used agricultural tools.

According to Dr Basham, the people did not know how to cultivate rice but the remains of rice at Lothal and Rangpur have proved this conception wrong. Similarly Dr Lal has said that the cultivation of cotton was the specialty of Indus people. Grinding machines of wheat, barley and crushing machines and storehouses reflect their proficiency in agriculture. Adequate irrigation facilities were developed for agriculture.

### **Domestication of animals**

Agriculture being the chief occupation the Indus people used to domesticate buffaloes, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, oxen, etc. The people also earned their living by domestication of animals, which were also helpful in agriculture.

### **Pottery and Trade**

Next to agriculture, pottery seems to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel. Reddish-brown clay was

baked, glazed and decorated with various designs in black. Some broken bits of pottery found in the excavation sites have geometric designs and animal motifs. They speak of the excellent craftsmanship and artistic skills of the Harappan people.

Trade, both by land and by sea, thrived in the Harappan society. A number of seals of Indus origin have been found at various sites in Mesopotamia (Sumer). This indicates that trade flourished between the two civilizations. In order to measure articles, they used a stick with markings on it. They also used various kinds of weights and measures. Figure 1.4 shows samples of the ornaments, pottery and seals prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization.

More than 2000 seals have been found at various sites. The seals were made of terracotta and steatite, a soft stone. Most of the seals are rectangular but some are circular in shape. Some of them have a knob at the back, which contains a hole. It is believed that different guilds or individual merchants and traders used these seals for stamping their consignments. They have a carved picture with some inscription on the other side. These seals throw light on the religion, customs and economic activities of the society. The animal shown in the seal may be a sacred bull. Small-scale industries were also chief sources of living.



*Fig. 1.4 Indus Ornaments, Pottery and Seal*

Carpenters, potters, weavers, goldsmiths, connoisseurs, sculptors, etc., constitute the different professions of the time. Potters made a good living by making earthen toys. The Indus Valley Civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport by bullock-driven carts as well as boats. Most of these boats were probably small and had flat-bottoms, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today. Archaeologists have discovered a big canal and docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal. The artefacts of this civilization found at the sites of other ancient civilizations suggest trade links with portions of Afghanistan, the coastal regions of Persia, Northern and Central India, and Mesopotamia.

### **Social Life in Indus Civilization**

On the basis of things found during excavation, it can be said that social conditions during the Indus Valley civilization were excellent. The people of this civilization were resourceful and affluent. The following are certain characteristics of the people belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization:

- 1. Social organization:** The social organization of the people was divided chiefly into four sections. The first section consisted of the intellectuals, brahmins,

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astrologers and doctors. The second section included warriors or soldiers. Industrialists, traders, sculptors and artists belonged to the third section. The fourth section comprised labourers, farmers, servants, etc. The society was matriarchal, and the people of this civilization led a comfortable and prosperous life.

2. **Food:** The chief food items included wheat, barley, meat, rice, peas, milk, vegetables and fruits. People were vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian.
3. **Cosmetics:** Both men and women had great interest in cosmetics. Women used to apply lipstick, perfumes, soot, powder, etc., and made different kinds of buns and plaits. Men preferred to keep their hair long and were clean shaven. Combs and dressing boxes were made of elephant's tusk and brass. The amount of goods and services common man used here seem to be better than the other places of the contemporary civilized world.
4. **Sources of entertainment:** This civilization had developed several sources of entertainment. Chess was the favourite game of its citizens. Discovery of rattles, whistles, sound-creating elephant and clay toys points towards the presence of several varieties of toys. Hunting, cock fighting and music were the chief sources of entertainment. The citizens took special care in the physical development and entertainment of their children.
5. **Scientific knowledge:** The citizens used a script, which was primarily pictorial. Unfortunately, it has not been deciphered. Stone weights were usually of hexagonal shape but the heavier ones were spherical and sharp. After examining the authenticity of weights and measures, it can be concluded that the citizens were familiar with algebra, the decimal system and geometry.
6. **Medicine:** Indus people had a knowledge of medicinal plants and they used natural medicinal plants for treating human diseases. The evidences of surgery have also been found.
7. **Tools of household:** Several earthen pots, knives, chisels, axes, pitchers, plates and glasses have been found from the excavation sites. Pots were beautified by ornamentation.
8. **Last rites:** Evidences show that three techniques were used to perform the last rites for the dead. These are as follows:
  - (i) **Absolute meditation:** As per this technique, the dead were buried in the earth.
  - (ii) **Partial meditation:** As per this technique, the dead bodies were left in open so that they became food for birds and animals. The leftovers were then buried.
  - (iii) **Cremation:** In this technique, the dead bodies were burnt and the ashes were collected in pots and buried.

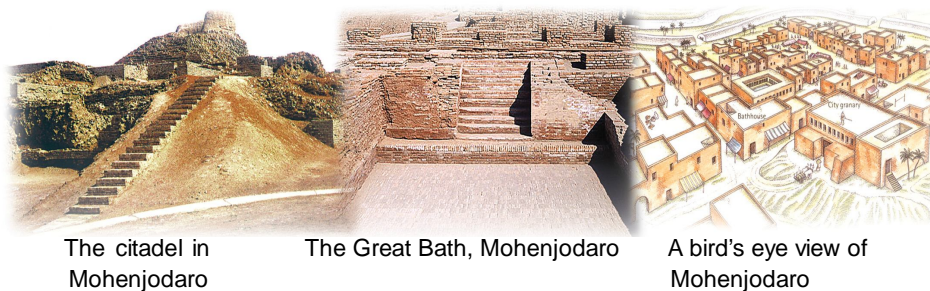
### 1.4.1 Settlement Patterns and Town Planning

One of the most remarkable features of the Indus Valley Civilization was its meticulous town planning. This is especially evident in the city of Mohenjodaro.

## Architecture in the Indus Valley Civilization

Evidence of town management of this time is found from the remains of Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibanga, Lothal, etc. Towns were so well managed and organized that it is still a matter of wonder. The roads were very broad. The drainage system was very fine. Figure 1.5 illustrates the citadel, the Great Bath and the city of Mohenjodaro. The remains of Mohenjodaro are proof of the unparalleled art of the ancient cities, their cleanliness and construction. It is quite clear from studies that cleanliness was given a lot of importance.

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*Fig. 1.5 Mohenjodaro*

The shape of the city was rectangular. The roads cut each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block, there was a network of narrow lanes. The drainage system was magnificent and lights were arranged on roads. It seems that the town planning was the work of efficient engineers.

### Art of Making Buildings

The houses, built of burnt bricks, were constructed on both sides of the roads. There were covered drains along the roads, in which sewage from the houses flowed. Some houses had only one or two rooms while others had several, indicating different living quarters for the rich and the poor. The Indus people were excellent constructors. There are other things related to architecture and idol making, which are living examples of their efficiency. The interiors of these buildings prove that the Indus people were definitely aesthetically inclined. Of all the remains of the Indus Civilization, the best is the Great Bath. Its walls are cemented. There are stairs on the corners. In order to keep the water safe and the foundations strong, the masons worked cleverly. The system of filling and emptying the water tank was no doubt extraordinary. There was also a system for hot water, which was probably used by the priests. The biggest proof of the durability of the bath is that it was constructed in 5000BC and is till today totally intact.

### Town Planning

Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro reveal that all these cities were similarly planned. They were divided into two parts—a raised area with large buildings called the citadel at the western end and a lower town. The roads ran at right angles, bringing out the grid pattern of the township. The citadel was built on a raised platform, constructed with bricks and stones, about 12 metre high and rectangular in

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shape, and surrounded by a huge brick wall with watchtowers. This protected the buildings and the people from the recurrent flooding of the river Indus. The citadel was probably the seat of the government and overlooked the lower town. The ruler or the administrator lived here along with the nobles. It also had public buildings such as the granaries, the assembly or town hall and important workshops. At Mohenjodaro, which means 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi, the most remarkable feature was the Great Bath. It was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres. A flight of steps led down to the pool at two ends. Broad corridors on four sides with a number of rooms surrounded the pool. It is the finest specimen of the engineering skill of the Harappan people.

In Harappa, archaeologists found the Great Granary located in the citadel. It measured 61.5 by 15.5 metres and consisted of two similar blocks with a wide passageway between them. Each block had six halls further divided into smaller rooms and compartments with openings for ventilation. The largest granary was found in Mohenjodaro. Close to the granaries at Harappa, circular brick platforms have been found. According to archaeologists, these were used for threshing grain. Grain was brought by boats along the rivers. The grain collected as tax was safely stored to be used in times of crises like floods or famine. The granaries prove that the land was fertile.

### **Town hall**

A huge structure almost 70 metres long and over 23 metres wide with walls about 1.5 metres thick has been excavated in Mohenjodaro. It has twenty pillars made of burnt bricks, arranged in four rows of five each. Archaeologists believe that this great hall may have been used as an assembly hall, a prayer hall or as a hall for cultural shows.

### **Residential area and houses**

Below the citadel was the residential area of the town where the merchants, artisans and craftsmen lived. The whole area was divided into blocks by wide roads, which formed a grid. Sun-dried and baked bricks were used for construction of houses. They were single or double storeyed. All houses had a courtyard around which there were rooms. Every house had a well and a hearth for cooking. The main entrances opened onto the lanes or side alleys instead of the main street in order to keep out dust and to ensure privacy. Within the houses, the rooms were built around a central courtyard. Some houses also had wells to supply water. Several *pukka-kutchra* and big-small buildings have been found during the excavations of the remains. Houses were well ventilated. The roofs of the houses were flat and made of wood. Each house had its own bathroom with drains, which were connected to the drains in the street.

### **Streets**

The streets and lanes ran straight from north to south and east to west, cutting each other at right angles. They were 4 to 10 metres wide. Roads were paved and suitable for movement of bullock carts. Ruins of lamp posts suggest that there were street lights. Dustbins were provided at regular intervals to keep the roads clean.

## **Drainage system**

Another striking feature of the Indus towns was their drainage system. It was the best drainage system known to the world in ancient times. Drains were constructed on either side of the roads connected to a drain from each house. They were lined with bricks and were covered with slabs of stone, which could be removed in order to clean them. This shows that the dwellers had great concern for health and sanitation.

## **1.4.2 Religious Beliefs and Practices**

No temples or shrines of the Harappan Civilization have been found. Our knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Harappans is based on the information derived from the seals and the terracotta and bronze figures. Seals engraved with the figures of animals like the humped bull, elephant and rhinoceros suggest that these animals were probably considered sacred. The image of a three-headed male God sitting cross-legged and surrounded by animals, like the lion, the rhinoceros, the buffalo and the elephant with two deer under his seat is found on many seals. There is evidence that the peepul tree and the serpent were also worshipped. The terracotta figure of a female deity has been identified as that of the Mother Goddess who represented fertility and prosperity. Some statues also bear soot marks at the base, indicating that incense was burnt as a part of the ritual. These evidences show that Harappan people worshipped images.

Like their contemporaries—the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people—the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea. Examples of this script are found on the seals, most of which bear an inscription. Figure 1.6 shows the idol of the Mother Goddess.



*Fig. 1.6 Mother Goddess*

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Although the Indus Valley Civilization has declined and disappeared, its influence on Indian culture remains. The worship of the Mother Goddess in image form as the symbol of female power or *shakti* was introduced in the Later Vedic Age. The bullock carts still seen in Indian villages today are similar to the carts of the Harappan cities. The realistic carving of animals on the seals can also be seen on Ashoka's Lion Capital at Sarnath.

The religious knowledge of the people of the Indus is based on the findings of seals, inscriptions on copper plate, idols, etc. We do not have any knowledge of their philosophy due to lack of clear and readable written material. According to most historians, the Mother Goddess and Lord Shiva were the most important deities.

The primary features of their religion are as follows:

- **The worship of mother goddess:** Mother Goddess or Nature Goddess was the main religious deity of the time. In one of the idols, a plant is seen coming from a woman's abdomen and, in another, a woman is sitting with legs crossed. Sacrifices were also in vogue to please the Mother Goddess.
- **The worship of Lord Shiva:** The tradition of praying to Lord Shiva was also much prevalent. In one of the seals, a yogi is surrounded by animals and has three faces with a crown of two horns. This image is considered to be that of Lord Shiva. Historians accept Shaivism as the oldest religion after finding its origin in the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **The worship of the womb:** Along with the worship of Shiva, the worship of the *lingas* or the womb was also in practice. Several rings have been found during excavations, which were made of shell, stone, clay, etc. Structures in the shape of female organs of reproduction have been found from the Indus area as well as in Baluchistan.
- **The worship of trees or nature:** Coins reveal that worship of trees was also in practice. It had two forms—(i) worshipping trees in their natural form (ii) worshipping trees in the symbolic form, i.e., worshipping trees while considering them to be a place of residence of God. The Banyan tree was considered to be a sacred tree by the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.
- **The worship of animals:** Animal worship was a popular practice of the Indus people. They considered the ox, bull, snake, sheep, buffalo and lion as holy animals.
- **Other traditions:** There are evidences, which prove the worship of rivers and the sun. Idol worship was practised but historians have differences with regard to the existence of temples. Most probably prayers were offered at sites consisting of pillars and the sign of the swastik. From the discovery of an idol depicting a naked woman, it is assumed that the devadasi system was in practice.

The religious beliefs of the Indus civilization had a lot in common with modern Hinduism. This proves that the Hindu religion is very ancient and is till today practised with little changes. The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. Its affinity to peace is till today the central character of our culture. The



tradition of Indian culture which was started by the Indus Valley civilization is till today constantly flowing. Indian culture is indebted to the Indus Civilization especially in the field of religion and art.

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## **1.5 DECLINE OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

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Like other unanswered questions about the Indus Valley Civilization, the question of its devastation, of how, when, and why it disappeared, is unanswered. Many historians have given their own opinion. Seven layers have been found during excavations at different sites, which inform us that the Indus Valley Civilization would have been established and devastated a number of times. The chief reason being the floods in the Indus river. The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.

Another opinion regarding the decline of the Indus Valley civilization is geographical in nature including scarcity of rainfall, change in the course of the river, drought and earthquake, which may have devastated this developed civilization. In the opinion of a few scholars, this civilization was devastated due to the attack of the Aryans. Religious books clarify that there is mention of forts and towns of non-Aryans in the Rigveda which were probably ravaged in these attacks. The use of horses and chariots made these attacks successful. However, it has not been completely clarified as to how this civilization met its end.

The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits. Though this civilization began to decline by 1500BC, the exact causes of the decline are not known. However, historians have made various suggestions based on evidence, and they can be summed up as follows:

- The most commonly accepted theory is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or changes in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration.
- Some historians are of the opinion that epidemics or fire destroyed the cities.
- Others believe that foreign invasions (probably of the Aryans) led to its decline.
- Yet another theory is that ecological changes due to deforestation led to the land becoming dry and uninhabitable.

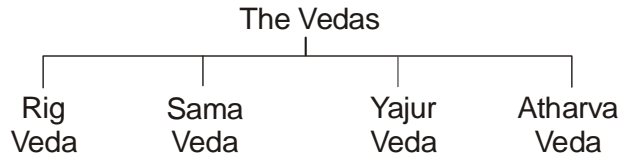
### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

3. How were the cities of the Indus Valley civilization divided?
4. What was the main occupation of the people of the Indus Valley Civilization?
5. What is the most commonly accepted theory among historians as to the reason why the Indus Valley Civilization declined?

## 1.6 VEDIC PERIOD

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The Aryans first settled in the area around the seven rivers, the Indus and her tributaries known as the *Sapta Sindhu* (seven rivers), between 1500BC and 1000BC.



*Fig. 1.7 The Four Vedas*

They named this place as *Brahmavarta* or ‘Land of the Vedic Period Gods’. As their number increased, they began to move eastward and settled in the Ganga-Yamuna plains which now came to be called *Aryavarta* or ‘Land of the Aryans’. Gradually, they occupied the whole of northern and western India up to the Vindhya mountains. Our information about the early Aryans is based on the excavations at Bhagwanpura in Haryana and three other sites in Punjab, which have revealed many pottery pieces dating from 1500BC to 1000BC. However, our chief source of information is the Rig Veda, which was composed in 1500BC. The Vedas are the earliest literary records of the Aryans. Since, our main source of information about the Aryans is Vedic literature, this period is also called the Vedic Age. The Early Vedic period extends from 1500BC to 1000BC. There are four Vedas—Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda (Figure 1.7). The word ‘veda’ means knowledge. The Rig Veda is the oldest of the Vedic literature. It was composed in about 1500BC. It consists of 1,028 slokas, which are divided into ten books. At first it was transferred orally from one generation to the other along with the other Vedas and is therefore called *Sruti* or ‘that which is heard’. Many centuries later, it was written down. The Rig Veda gives us an insight into the political, social, economic and religious life of the Early Vedic period. The Early Vedic polity was structured as follows:

- **The King:** The highest officer of the nation was the king. The morality of the king was very high. Kingship was hereditary. The chief work of the king was to safeguard his nation and citizens. He had to be proficient in the management of soldiers and very just. There were many officers for assisting the king in his administrative work. He had many functionaries, including the *purohita* and *Senani*. The main job of *purohita* was to give advice to the king and practice spells and charms for success in war where as *senanis* fought for him in the war.
- **The ministers of the king:** The king appointed various ministers for running the administration efficiently. The foremost among them was the *Senani*, the supreme commander of the armed forces.
- **Warriors:** The chief warrior in the army was the second highest officer. He was appointed by the king himself. His work was to take care of the warriors’ organization and to lead the army in the absence of the king. Apart from the warriors, the *Gramani* was also an important officer. He used to be the chief

of villages. Apart from these office bearers, the diplomats and secret agents also played very important roles in the Early Vedic polity.

- **Organizations and committees:** Organizations and committees were very important in that age. They were created to check the despotism of the king and to discuss the problems of the nation. There were two bodies the 'sabha' and the 'samiti'. The Atharv Veda refers to them as the two daughters of *Prajapati* or Brahma. Earlier the *sabha* was responsible for performing only judicial functions. However, historians came to believe that it served as a centre for social gathering. Some considered it to be the village assembly while some considered this as a committee of selected seniors or elders. The *samiti* on the other hand was probably the bigger or central assembly.
- **Judiciary:** Only assumptions can be made regarding the judicial system due to non-availability of proof. The chief justice was the king himself.

The administrative system of the Vedic period continued with little changes. In the later Vedic period several strong monarchies evolved, which developed a feeling of imperialism. Slowly, the powers of the king increased and his post became hereditary. He even increased his officials and ministers.

The Aryans first settled in the region of Punjab. This is proved by the fact that the rivers Kuruman, Kabul and other western tributaries of the Indus are mentioned in the Rig Veda. The Indo-Aryans settled in the region of the waning Indus Valley Civilization, i.e., across the river Indus. Gradually they moved eastwards along the river Ganga. The Aryans brought with them horses and chariots. They subjugated the original inhabitants of the Ganga-Yamuna doab, and reduced them to the status of slaves or *dasyus* who performed all the menial jobs.

### 1.6.1 Technological and Economic Development

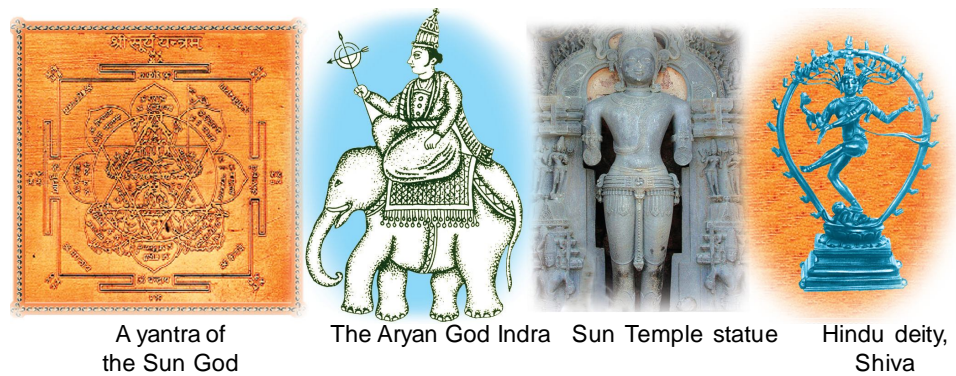
Agriculture and cattle rearing were the main occupations of the early Aryans. They grew barley, wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables. Agriculture was the basis of the economy in the Vedic age. The land where two crops could grow in a year was considered fertile and was coveted for.

Agriculture had developed greatly in the later Vedic period. By then, the Aryans had started using new tools, manure and seeds. Irrigation was done with the help of canals and the plough was also in use. They ploughed their fields with the help of wooden ploughs drawn by oxen. Agriculture being the chief occupation, rearing of animals was necessary. Oxen, horses, dogs, goats and sheep were mainly domesticated. The cow was considered to be pious and important. It was a source of valuation and exchange and it was regarded as a sign of prosperity.

The Aryans introduced the horse in India from Central Asia. They were used to draw chariots and to ride during battles as well as during peacetime by the *rajan* and the nobles and therefore, greatly valued. Hunting, pottery, spinning, weaving, carpentry, metallurgy (copper and bronze) and leatherwork were other important occupations. Shipping was limited to the navigation of rivers for the inland trade. Gold and oxen were used as money during trading. Figure 1.8 illustrates various artifacts of the Early Vedic period.

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**Fig. 1.8** Artifacts of the Early Vedic Period

The most important thing of Vedic period was that no profession was considered to be small except fishing and hair cutting, which were looked down upon.

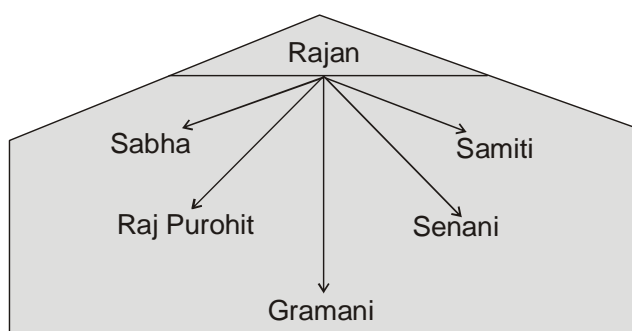
In the later Vedic period carpentry, metallurgy, tanning, pottery, weaving, etc. started developing. They proficiently started using gold, iron, silver etc. after the spread of knowledge of metals, which made life more prosperous.

Both imports as well as exports were carried on during the Vedic period. The traders are known as 'Pani'. Clothes, bed sheets, leather, etc., were mainly traded. Trading was done on bullock carts.

### 1.6.2 Political Relations

The Aryans gave up their nomadic life and settled down in the north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent in the form of different tribal settlements known as *janas* and the land where they settled was called *janapada*. These tribes were constantly involved in battle with one another, either to protect their cattle or their land. A village or *grama* was the smallest unit of the *jana*. A *grama* would comprise a number of families. Each tribe had a chieftain called *rajan*, who was chosen for his wisdom and courage and he ruled each tribe. His chief function was to protect the tribe from the external attacks and maintain law and order. For his service, the people made voluntary contributions of gifts. A *rajan* could be removed from power if he was inefficient or cruel. He was helped by a number of officials in the work of administration. There is also a reference to two tribal assemblies – namely the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* (as mentioned in the previous section) which checked the power of the king and also advised him on all-important matters. The *senani* or commander-in-chief assisted him in warfare.

A *raj purohit* or high priest performed religious ceremonies and also acted as an adviser. The *gramani* or the village headman looked after the village. Figure 1.9 illustrates the political structure of the Early Vedic period.



**Fig. 1.9** Political Structure of the Early Vedic Period

The political life of the Vedic age was classified as follows:

- **Family:** The smallest unit of the administration was the family, which was headed by the oldest person in the home. The tradition was to have a joint family.
- **Village:** Several families made a village. The head of the village was called the ‘Gramani’. The root of the village administrative system was the Gramani but the Rig Veda is silent on the matter of its election system.
- **Vish:** Several villages made a Vish. The highest officer of the Vish was called Vishpati.
- **Jan:** Several Vishs made a Jan. The highest officer of the Jan was called Gop. Usually, the king himself would be a Gop.
- **Nation:** The highest political unit was the nation. A country was called nation or *rashtra* (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1** Political Life of the Vedic Age

Unit	Head
Rashtra	Rajan/Gopa/Samrat
Janas/janapada	Jyeshta
Vish	Vishpati
Gram	Gramani

### 1.6.3 Social Stratification and Emergence of the Caste System

The early Vedic society consisted of four *varnas*—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. There was no complication in the *varna* system. The basis of *varna* was perhaps work rather than birth. It is mentioned in the Rig Veda that, ‘I am a sculptor, my father is a doctor and my mother grinds cereals in the house.’ The early Aryans differentiated between themselves according to the occupations each followed. The

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word 'varna' was later used to refer to the social division, dividing society into the following four occupational groups:

- The brahmins or the priests performed religious ceremonies and prayers and imparted education.
- The kshatriyas or warrior class (to which the king also belonged) fought wars and protected the tribe from danger.
- The vaishyas carried on agriculture, industry and trade, producing goods for the society.
- The sudras, comprising the *dasas*, were the labourers and did menial jobs. They were dark-skinned.

This system was flexible and there were no restrictions with regard to the occupation, intermarriage and inter-dining between these classes.

Thus, the work of a brahmin was to give education. The work of a kshatriya was to save and defend. The work of a vaishya was to trade and the work of a shudra was to serve. But till the later Vedic period the varna system had become complex. By now the basis of varna changed to birth from work or profession.

The Ashrama system was established keeping in mind the age of man to be 100 years. It was said that 100 years were required for all round development and to achieve the goal of religion, material pleasure and salvation in life. During the first twenty-five years, a student acquired knowledge with much hardship in the ashram of his guru. This was known as the Brahmcharya Ashram. From the age of twenty-five to fifty years (in adulthood) he observed family life, which was called Grihasth Ashram. From fifty to seventy-five years of age he observed Vanprasth Ashram while denouncing family life. From seventy-five to hundred years he left all worldly pleasures and attained salvation in the devotion of god, which was called Sanyas.

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## 1.7 LATE VEDIC PERIOD

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The history of the later Vedic period is based mainly on the Vedic texts, which were compiled after the age of the Rig Veda. The collections of Vedic hymns or mantras are known as the Samhitas. The Rig Veda were set to tune, and this modified collection was known as the Samaveda. In the post Rig Vedic times, two other collections, the Yajurveda Samhita and the Atharva Veda Samhita were composed. We have to depend upon the Samhitas of the Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharva Veda, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads, all religious works for the later Vedic period which, roughly speaking, comes down to about 600BC. Figure 1.10 illustrates the Later Vedic Civilization.



Fig. 1.10 Later Vedic Civilizations

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During the later Vedic period, the Aryan civilization gradually extended towards the east and the south. The centre of culture shifted to Kurukshetra, and Madhyadesa. The land of the Yamuna and the Ganga came into prominence. Kosala, Kasi, Videha and Ayodhya rose as great urban centres in the east. Literature also mention the Andhras for the first time and other outcaste tribes like the Pundras of Bengal, the Sabaras of Orissa and the Pulindas of south western India. Thus, nearly the whole of northern India from the Himalayas to the Vindhya and perhaps even beyond had come within the rule of the Aryans.

### 1.7.1 Settlement Patterns

As mentioned earlier, between 1000BC and 600BC, the Aryans had moved eastward from the land of the seven rivers into the Gangetic plain. Some crossed the Vindhya mountains into the southern region of India. The Aryans moved eastward probably because of an increase in population. Some of the chieftains carved out kingdoms for themselves and their tribes were called the *janapadas*. The Kurus occupied the region around Delhi and called it Kurukshetra. Hastinapur was their capital. The Kurus combined with the Panchalas (ruled over the region of Bareilly, Badaun and Farukhabad) to establish their authority over Delhi and the Doab region. The Kauravas and the Pandavas belonged to the Kuru tribe. The battle of Kurukshetra is believed to have been fought in about 950BC. Towards the end of 600 BC, the Aryans had spread further eastward. A number of *janapadas* combined to form large independent kingdoms called *mahajanapadas*. By the sixth century BC, sixteen *mahajanapadas* were established. These sixteen kingdoms were engaged in the war to capture each other's territory. Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha were the four most important ones, which eventually remained and reigned. Finally, Magadha established its stronghold over the whole of the Gangetic plain from 500–300BC.

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### 1.7.2 Technological and Economic Development

The Vedic Aryans were well known for their technology related to the tanning of leather, fermentation of grains and fruits, and dyed scale production of copper, iron and steel, brass, silver and gold and their alloys. Indian steel was believed to be of very high quality in the ancient world and it was exported in large quantities. Tin and mercury were imported from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Alchemy was also referred to in literature. They made a special kind of polished grey pottery (known as P.G. ware). Radio-carbon dating dates it back to 1000–800 BC. Other varieties of pottery, for example, red or *black-polished* pottery were also made by them.

Farming remained the most important occupation. Taxes were collected by the king, which earned him revenue. Wheat, rice, vegetables, cotton and oil seeds were grown. Besides agriculture, many crafts like weaving, leatherwork, pottery, jewellery designing and carpentry developed. Apart from gold, silver, copper, lead and tin, they had discovered the use of iron. Many agricultural implements and weapons of war were made of iron. Artisans and craftsmen produced goods of fine quality. They were organized into guilds which regulated the prices. These professions became hereditary with time and constituted subcastes or *jatis*. Many more towns started emerging during these times. Trade also flourished. Goods were sent as far as Taxila, Central Asia and European countries. The barter system was discontinued and money in the form of gold and silver was used. In other words, the economic activities became more complex. The earliest coins of India are commonly known as punch-marked coins. As the name suggests, these coins bear symbols of various types punched on pieces of silver of specific weight. The earliest Indian coins have no defined shapes and were mostly uniface. Secondly, these coins lack any inscriptions. Two well known numismatists, D.B. Spooner and D.R. Bhandarkar, independently concluded that the punching of various symbols representing animals, hills, trees and human figures followed a definite pattern and these coins were issued by the royal authority.

Both literary and archaeological evidences confirm that the Indians invented coinage somewhere between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. A hoard of coins discovered at Chaman Huzuri in 1933 contained forty-three silver punch-marked coins (the earliest coins of India) with Athenian (coins minted by Athens, a city of Greece) and Achaemenian (Persian) coins. The Bhir (Taxila) hoard discovered in 1924 contained 1055 punch-marked coins in a very worn out condition and two minted coins of Alexander. This archaeological evidence clearly indicates that the coins were minted in India long before the fourth century BC, i.e., before the Greeks advanced towards India (Alexander's invasion of Persia and India). There is also a strong belief that silver as a metal, which was not available in Vedic India, became abundantly available by 500–600 BC. Most of the silver came from Afghanistan and Persia as a result of international trade.

### 1.7.3 Social Stratification

During the Later Vedic period, the earlier distinctions in society based on varna or occupation became rigid and hereditary. A person's birth became more important



than his skill or merit. Each caste had its own code of laws and marriage outside the caste was forbidden. Brahmins occupied a very high position in society as they were learned. They alone could perform the rituals and sacrifices. Only the select few amongst them could advise the king. The common people held them in high esteem.

The position of women also began to deteriorate and they were thought to be inferior to men. They were not allowed to read Vedic literature. Their main duty was to look after the house.

The family shows the increasing power of the father who could even disinherit his son. Women were generally given a lower position. Although some women theologians took part in philosophical discussions and a few queens participated in rituals, women were considered to be inferior and subordinate to men.

There is a mention of the *Ashramas* or the four stages of life—that of *brahmacharya* or bachelor student, *grihastha* or householder, *vanaprastha* or hermit and *sanyasi* or ascetic who completely renounces worldly life. Only the first three were clearly defined in the later Vedic texts; the last or the fourth stage was not well-established, though, ascetic life was not unknown.

## NOTES

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What was the main occupation of the early Aryans?
7. What was a janapada?
8. What was the chief function of a rajan in Vedic society?
9. What is the history of the Late Vedic period based upon?

## 1.8 PROTEST MOVEMENTS: JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

In the ancient Indian period, two major social movements emerged in response to the rigidity of Hindu customs. These movements went on to become important religions, i.e., Jainism and Buddhism. Let us study these two religions in detail.

### 1.8.1 Jainism

Jainism had left an indelible impact on the social and cultural development of India. The general belief among the common people is that the founder of Jainism is Mahavira. However, Jainas believe that their religion is the product of teachings of 24 *Tirthankaras* (a saviour who has succeeded in crossing over life's stream of rebirths and has made a path for others to follow). There is no detailed information available about the first 22 *Tirthankaras*. The Jainas hold that their religion is as old as the Rig Veda and their first Tirthankara Rishabha was the father of Bharata, the first Vedic *Chakravartin* king of India. Rishabha was followed by 23 *Tirthankaras*. Very little is known about these *Tirthankaras* except the last two.

## NOTES

The 23rd Tirthankara was a historical figure known as Parsavanath. Parsavanath probably lived in eight century BC, and probably died 250 years before the death of Mahavira. He was a Kshatriya and the son of king Ashvasena of Vanaras. For thirty years, he led the life of an ordinary householder and then became an ascetic. He meditated for 84 days continuously and attained the highest knowledge. The next seventy years of his life were spent in spreading the highest knowledge to the people. His main four principles were as follows:

- (a) Non-injury to life
- (b) Truthfulness
- (c) Non-stealing
- (d) Non-possession

Parsava's teachings were not that rigid as that of his successor, Mahavira. He permitted his followers to lead a married life and allowed them to wear clothes to cover their body.

### Early life of Mahavira

The real founder of Jainism was its 24th Tirthankara, Vardhamana Mahavira. His childhood name was Vardhamana. According to one tradition, Mahavira was born in Kundagrama about 540 BC. He was the son of Siddhartha, who was the chief of a Kshatriya clan called Jnatrikas. His mother Trishala was the sister of Chetaka, an eminent Lichchhavi prince of Vaisali. Vardhamana was given education in all branches of knowledge, was married to Yasoda and had a daughter called Priyadrasana. After the death of his parents, he renounced the worldly life and became a monk at the age of 30. He left worldly life with the permission of his elder brother Nandivardhana and became an ascetic.

### Life of Asceticism

According to followers of the Jain religion, for twelve years, Mahavira roamed about as a naked monk doing all types of penances. During this period, he fully subdued his senses. He was attacked and ridiculed; however, he never lost his patience, nor indulged in feelings of hatred and revenge against his enemies. Within these twelve years of penance, meditation and severe asceticism, he prepared himself for the attainment of highest spiritual knowledge.

During this period, he met an ascetic called Gosala Makkhaliputta at Nalanda. For six years, Makkhaliputta lived with Mahavira practising severe asceticism after which he separated himself from Mahavira and set up a new religious order called Ajivikas.

In the 13th year on the 10th *Vaisakh*, Mahavira acquired what Jains believe is the ultimate spiritual knowledge (Kevalya) under a sala tree on the bank of river Rijupalika near the village Jrimbikagrama, whose identification is uncertain. Mahavira now possessed the four infinites, which were as follows:

- Infinite knowledge
- Infinite power

- Infinite perception
- Infinite joy

Thus, he became a 'Jina' (a conqueror) or Mahavira (a great hero) at the age of 42 and began his career as a religious reformer. Since then, he entered upon a new stage of life. He became a religious teacher and the head of a sect called *Nirgranthas* (free from all bonds) or 'Jains'.

Later he met the king of Magadha, Ajatashatru, and is said to have converted him. However, the Buddhists say that the king of Magadha followed Buddhism and not Jainism. Mahavira did not have many followers because of the rigorous form of life he recommended to his followers. He asked his followers to remain naked, and said that the noblest act in the life of a Jaina was death by starvation. It is known from *Kalpasutra* that he spent his time at Champa, Mithila, Sravasti, Vaisali, etc. and after 30 years of preaching, he died at Pawa near Rajagriha. We do not know the exact date of passing away of Mahavira. However, Professor Jacobi and some other eminent historians have proved that his death occurred probably in 468 BC.

The religious texts written in Pali language do not recognize Mahavira as the originator of a new religion, but as a reformer. Mahavira accepted most of the religious doctrines of Parsavanath though he made some alterations and additions. Parsavanath emphasized self-control and penance and advised his followers to observe the following four principles:

1. *Satya* (truth)
2. *Ahimsa* (non-violence)
3. *Aparigraha* (non-possession of property)
4. *Astheya* (not to receive anything, which is not freely given)

To these Mahavira added one more, i.e., *brahmacharya* (celibacy).

The Jaina philosophy shows a close affinity to Hindu Samkhya Darshana (or Samkhya philosophy). They ignored the idea of God, accepted that the world is full of sorrows and believed in the theories of Karma (action) and transmigration of souls. According to Mahavira, salvation can be achieved by freeing the soul from earthly bondage. This can be achieved by means of right faith, right knowledge and right action. These are called *Ratnatraya* or three jewels of Jaina religion.

Mahavira advocated a dualistic philosophy, according to which man has two-fold nature, earthly and spiritual or *Ajiva* (matter) and *Jiva* (soul). While *Ajiva* is destructible, *Jiva* is indestructible and salvation is possible through the progress of *Jiva*.

Jaina philosophy states that if one desires to attain Nirvana or salvation, it is necessary for him to destroy Karma. One can do so gradually by avoiding evil Karmas. For this, one must observe the five principles, namely:

1. *Satya*
2. *Ahimsa*
3. *Aprigraha*

## NOTES

4. *Astheya*

5. *Brahmacharya*

Through this process, one could attain final liberation of the soul.

**NOTES**

Mahavira did not believe in the supreme creator or God. He believed that no deity has created, maintains or destroys the world; however, it functions only according to universal law of development and decay. He advocated a holy ethical code, rigorous asceticism and extreme penance for the attainment of highest spiritual state. He regarded the highest state of the soul as God. He believed man is the architect of its own destiny and could attain salvation by leading a life of purity, virtue and renunciation.

He also rejected the infallibility of the Vedas and objected to the Vedic rituals and Brahminical supremacy. He denounced the caste system.

**Principle of non-injury**

The Jaina philosophy believes that not only man and animals but plants also possess souls (Jiva) endowed with various degree of consciousness. Jainas believe that the plants possess life and feel pain and thus lay great emphasis on the doctrine of *Ahimsa* or non-injury to any kind of living beings. The vow of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) was practiced to the point of irrationality. Even an unconscious killing of an insect while walking was against Jain morals. The Jains would not drink water without straining it for fear of killing an insect. They also wore muslin mask over the mouth to save any life floating in the air. They had forbidden not only the practice of war, but also of agriculture, as both involve the killing of living beings.

Commenting on this extreme form of non-injury, eminent historian V. Smith said, 'The strange doctrine affirming the existence of Jivas in objects commonly called inanimate extends the Jain idea of *Ahimsa* far beyond the Brahminical and Buddhist notions.'

**Jain sects**

The main sects of Jainism are Svetambaras and Digambaras. The Svetambaras wear white robes whereas the Digambaras use no clothes. The Svetambaras are the followers of the 23rd Tirthankara Parsavanath while the Digambaras are followers of the 24th Tirthankara Mahavira.

**Religious texts**

Original texts of Jains were called Purvas and were 14 in number. In the third century BC, a Jain council was held at Pataliputra and arranged these Purvas in 12 parts, and named them *Angas*. The last *Anga* was lost and a Jain council held at Balabhi in the fifth century AD rearranged the remaining 11 *Angas*. These books were written in Prakrit language. However, the Digambara sect of Jainism did not recognize the *Angas* and constituted its own sacred texts.

There were several causes, which led to the rise, spread and decline of Jainism. The main ones are as follows:

## Causes of the Rise of Jainism

During the time of Mahavira, there arose a discontent amongst the common people against the traditional Vedic religion, as a number of weaknesses and shortcomings had crept in the latter. The Vedic religion or Hinduism had become quite ritualistic and the caste system had become predominant. Therefore, the people were disgusted and started working hard to save the society and culture from these evils. At that time, Jainism came as an alternative to the Vedic religion. It tried to clean the society and religion by introducing a number of reforms. Therefore, common people showed interest in adopting its principles.

Secondly, it has also proved to be closer to the more popular religion Hinduism and with the passage of time, the Jainas also adored Jaina *Tirthankaras* in temples and by the middle ages, their worship was very near to the Hindus with offering of flowers, incense, lamps, etc. Thus, Jainism proved more accommodating to Hinduism and did not offer any serious hostility.

Thirdly, Jainism possesses a tolerant spirit of accommodation with other religions, which helped in its progress and was responsible for its rise. Apart from it, the charismatic personality of Mahavira, simple philosophy of the religion, acceptance of common spoken language of that time as the medium of propagation and patronization of influential rulers were the major factors responsible for the rise of Jainism.

## Spread of Jainism

Jainism never spread all over India or beyond its boundaries, yet it became a popular religion at that time, and still exists in many parts of the country. During the life time of Mahavira, it spread in Magadha, Vaisali and its nearby areas, but later, the chief activity of Jainism was shifted to Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana and Karnataka where they are still an influential Jain community. The members of this community have also played an important role in the early literary development of South India.

## Causes of the decline of Jainism

Various factors were responsible for the dramatic decline of Jainism in India. After the demise of Mahavira, Gautama Buddha emerged as a great socio-religious reformer of that period. The teachings of Buddha were simpler and people friendly. Therefore, Buddhism posed a great challenge for the existence of Jainism.

Secondly, Jainism was divided into two sects i.e. Svetambaras and Digambaras, which weakened the religion from its core.

Thirdly, the most important cause of its decline was the great revival of Hinduism. Under the Guptas, Cholas, Chalukyas and Rajput kings, Hinduism got much needed attention and patronization of the ruling class. Reforms came in Hinduism and it became the most popular religion in India. That was the main reason due to which Jainism was confined to some pockets of India.

Apart from it, the absence of popular religious preachers after the demise of Mahavira, the absence of protection by the later rulers and its hard principles led to the decline of Jainism.

## NOTES

Jainism could not occupy the position of a main religion in India or outside India. However, it has contributed enormously in the field of art, architecture, literature and philosophy and has made valuable contributions to the Indian culture.

## NOTES

### 1.8.2 Buddhism

Another great religious reformation movement of sixth century BC was Buddhism, which gave the biggest challenge to Brahmanism. Gautama Buddha, a contemporary of Mahavira, was the founder of Buddhism. He was the son of Suddhodan, the chief of the kshetrya clan of Shakyas and the Raja of Kapilavastu in the Nepal *terai*. His mother was Mahamaya. Gautama was born in 563 BC.

The *Jatakas* contain the Buddhist traditions about the birth of Buddha. They tell us that Buddha's life did not begin with his birth in the Lumbini Garden. On the other hand, Buddha was the product of an infinitely long evolution through various form of life. Before he descended into this world, he lived in the Tusita heaven. He was then a Bodhisattava and his name was Sumedha. He was greatly touched by Buddha Dipankar, the Buddha of the previous world, and wanted to become like him. He therefore left Tusita heaven and decided to be reborn through Mahamaya.

Jatakas tell us that before the birth of Buddha, Mahamaya had a dream of white elephant with six tusks entering into her body. The astrologers were called to interpret the dream and they told Suddhodan that according to this dream, his wife would give birth to a very great man, a prophet or an emperor. In 563 BC, when she was returning from her father's house to Kapilavastu, Mahamaya gave birth to Buddha under a sala tree in the village of Lumbini. Later on in 250 BC, Ashoka set up a commemorative pillar there and in the inscription he stated 'Here, Buddha was born, the sage of the Sakyas "*(Hida Budhe jate sakya muniti)*". However, unfortunately after seven days, Buddha's mother Mahamaya died and his stepmother and aunt, Prajapati Gautami, then brought up Siddhartha (Buddha's childhood name).

From his childhood days, Siddhartha exhibited signs of a contemplative frame of mind. The royal pleasure and amusements failed to attract his mind. He was married at an early age to a beautiful girl Yasodhara, the daughter of a Shaky noble. However, the pleasures of the palace did not bind him to the worldly life. He led a happy married life for some time and even got a son Rahul from his union with his wife. A few incidents, which Buddhists call four great signs, occurred and they exercised tremendous influence on the future of Gautama. One evening, his charioteer Channa drove him in the city and he came across an old man. Next, he saw a man suffering from disease; however, it was the sight of a dead man, which touched the deepest chord of Gautam's heart. The fourth sign was that of a mendicant, who had renounced the world and was moving about in search of truth.

#### Great renunciation

Gautama decided to find out the cause of all suffering and wanted to know the truth. His hatred towards the world was intensified and he realized the hollowness of worldly pleasure. After the birth of his son, Rahul, he made up his mind and decided to leave his palace and his family. One night, accompanied by the charioteer Channa and his favourite horse Kanthaka, he left home at the age of 29. This is called

*Maha-Bhinishkramana* or the great renunciation; thereafter, Gautama became a wandering ascetic looking for the supreme truth.

### **Enlightenment**

For six continuous years, he lived as a homeless ascetic and sought instructions from Alara Kalama. His next teacher was Udraka Ramaputra. His new teachers failed to satisfy him. He spent some time in the caves near Rajagriha, the capital of Magadh. From Rajagriha, he went to the forest of Uruvela and spent a few years in self-mortification. He then meditated with five ascetics named Kondana, Vappa, Bhadiya, Mahanama and Assagi.

Gautama practised continuous fasting until he was reduced to a mere skeleton. He then realized that mere suffering and sacrifice could not lead to truth. He thought that he had wasted six years. The five disciples also left him alone. At last one day he sat under a Pipal tree (*Asvattha*) on the banks of River Niranjana (the modern Phalgu) at Gaya and took a vow, 'I will not leave this place till I attain the peace of mind, which I have been trying for all these years.' Finally, Gautama attained supreme knowledge and insight. He found out the truth and the means of salvation from human sufferings. He got the highest knowledge or *bodhi*. Gautama thus became the Buddha, 'the enlightened one' or Tathagata.

### **The turning of the wheel of law**

After attaining supreme knowledge, Buddha decided to impart the knowledge to the common people. From Gaya he went to Saranath near Banaras and he gave his first sermon to his five disciples in the deer park. These five disciples were once his comrades when he was doing penance and fasting. They hated Buddha because he had left the path of suffering. They are known as the five elders. This first sermon by which, he started converting people to his faith is known as turning of the wheel of law or '*dharma chakra Pravartana*', which formed the nucleus of all Buddhist teachings.

For the next 45 years, he preached his gospel and message of salvation to the common people. He visited different parts of the country, spoke to the people in their local languages and illustrated his teachings. He made large conversions at Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. He also converted his father, his son and other relatives at Kapilavastu. Kings like Prasenjit of Koshala, Bimbisara and Ajatashatru of Magadha became his followers. He died in 483 BC at Kushinagar in the district of Gorakhpur at the age of 80. Thus, Buddha attained *Parinirvana*. After his death, his remains were divided into eight parts and distributed among his followers who were spread in different parts of the country. *Stupas* or mounds were built on these remains to preserve them.

Buddha realized the truth by following a life of purity and discipline and asked his followers to follow the same path. His teachings were simple and he explained them in simple ordinary man's language illustrating them with common tales. He never tried to establish a new religion but he propounded a new way of life free from dogmas and rituals.

### **NOTES**

## NOTES

Buddha pointed out various paths by which one could attain *Nirvana* or salvation from the cycle of birth and death. He denied the authority of Vedas and denounced the method of sacrifice and hegemony of priestly class. Unlike the Brahminical religion, he did not consider Sanskrit as a sacred language, nor rituals an essential part of religion. He was not in support of offering of prayer to god to win his favour. The philosophy of Buddha was rational in its nature. Like Jainism, Buddha denied the infallibility of the Vedas. He rejected the supremacy of the priestly class. Buddhism dislodged the principles of social immobility, inequality and injustice. It upheld the sanctity of human intellect and freedom; people irrespective of their position, caste and colour, were allowed to embrace the new religion.

### Four Noble Truths

After attaining enlightenment at Bodhgaya, Buddha held that there was misery and sorrow all around. Man turned to god and religion to find a cure or an escape from such sorrow and trouble. To escape from the sorrow and miseries of life, he discovered the truth and its cure. His teachings begin with the four great truths relating to sorrow, the causes of sorrow, the remedy for sorrow and the ways for the removal of sorrow. These four truths are; first, there is suffering and sorrow in the world namely old age, disease and death. This sorrow or suffering is due to the existence in the world. Secondly, everything has a cause and the cause of all types of sorrow is *Trishna*, i.e., desires and cravings. Man is a bundle of cravings and desires and so long as he is a slave to these desires, he cannot escape from pain and sorrow. Third is the remedy or cessation of sorrow. This pain of sorrow can be removed by suppressing desires and yearning for possession. Fourth and the last is the true way to conquer desires and removal of sorrow. Buddha says that the desire or *Trishna* cannot be conquered in an ordinary manner. It requires a disciplined life, which he called the middle path or the noble eight-fold path.

### Eight-fold path

Buddha prescribed the noble eight-fold paths or the '*Astangamarga*', which every Buddhist is to follow in order to get deliverance from sufferings. These values included in the eight-fold path are as follows:

- (i) Right views
- (ii) Right aspirations
- (iii) Right speech
- (iv) Right action
- (v) Right living
- (vi) Right efforts
- (vii) Right mindfulness
- (viii) Right contemplation or meditation

According to the eight-fold path, the first step is the proper vision leading to the realization that the world is full of sorrow, the basis of life is sorrow and sorrow can end by controlling desires. Second step is right aspiration where one must resolve to abstain from material pleasure. Right speech is the third step and it implies the



practice of truthfulness. The fourth step is right action, which means one should be vigilant while acting in life and it must ensure that nobody gets hurt mentally or physically by our actions. Right living is the fifth step, which means to earn by pure and honest means. Right efforts is the sixth step which indicates mental exercise to avoid evil thoughts and in their place to cultivate good thoughts. The seventh step is right mindfulness or correct vigilance. According to this, by self-examination and self-study, control over mind is to be acquired. The last step is right contemplation or meditation. According to this, Buddha says one can still not attain salvation without meditation. Thus, right contemplation is the final and the crown of the eight-fold path. Anyone who would follow this noble eight-fold path would attain *Nirvana* or salvation, which meant freedom from the cycle of birth and death irrespective of its social origin.

### **Ahimsa**

One of the cardinal beliefs of Buddha was *Ahimsa*. He held that violence and cruelty against animate beings was a sin. He condemned religious sacrifices and eating of animal flesh. He said that one should cultivate love for all beings. He was opposed to all types of violence because it was against the principle of law. However, unlike Mahavira, he did not carry the *Ahimsa* principle to an extreme.

### **Law of Karma**

Buddha however accepted the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*. He believed in the law of *Karma*, its working and transmigration of soul. He held that one of the key features of the universal law of *dharma* is 'as a man acts so shall he be', i.e., man gets the reward of its own action. The *Karma* doctrine implies that thoughts, actions and feelings of the past have determined our present and our present deeds will determine the future when we are reborn. No person can escape the consequences of his or her deeds. The deliverance from rebirth can be attained through good *Karma*, which again requires a strict moral life. According to his doctrine, not only man, but animals and supernatural spirits like angels, gods are subject to the great law of *Karma*.

### **Morality**

Buddha laid out some principles for practical morality. He gave emphasis on purity of conduct, truthfulness, love and benevolence, respect for older and service to the humanity. Buddha considered non-violence and non-injury towards life in thought, words and deed as an integral principle of morality. Therefore, Buddhism was primarily a religion of conduct and not a religion of observances, rituals and sacrifices. This was the principal reason for the rapid spread of his teachings.

### **Denounced Caste System**

Like Mahavira, Gautama Buddha also denounced the caste system existing in the society. He denied the caste distinctions and by that raised the status of the lower class people of the society. Therefore, Buddhism spread to different parts of India and the world. In the subsequent period, the common people came closer towards this religion and, due to this; it got patronization from various liberal emperors like Ashoka, Harsha, etc.

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

The teachings of Buddha reveal that he originally did not establish any new religion. All what he taught was contained in the Hindu Upanishads but the difficulty was that these were written in Sanskrit and its philosophy was not followed by the masses. Buddha's greatness lies in simplifying the Upanishadic philosophy and presenting it before the common men in the language they understood and placed practical examples before them from his own life. He organized a monastic order to carry out his teaching to the different corners of the country. The monks who carried the message of Buddha to the masses led the life of a Hindu Brahmana and in course of time a new set of rules were evolved for the Buddhists and at that point, eventually, Buddhism became a separate religion.

### Religious texts

Buddhist religious texts were written in Pali and are collectively known as *Tripitika* (three baskets). The first part is *Vinayapitaka*, which lays down rules for the guidance of the monks and the general management of the Buddhist place of worship. The second part is *Suttapitakas*, a collection of the religious discourses of Buddha and the third is the *Abhidhammapitaka*, which contains an exposition of the philosophical principles of Buddhism. Later, the Mahayana sect of Buddhism, created its own texts. Besides authoritative commentaries on the sacred texts, the Jatakas or the stories relating to different births of Buddha also added much to the religious literature of Buddhism.

### The Main Buddhist Sects

After the demise of Buddha, Buddhism was sharply divided into two sects, namely Hinayana and Mahayana. The followers of Hinayana Buddhism believed in the original teachings of Gautama Buddha and did not want any relaxation. This sect was also known as the lesser vehicle; whereas, the beliefs of Mahayanism were different from the former. The one basic belief of Mahayanism is acceptance of many Bodhisattavas, i.e., persons who were in the process of attaining Buddhahood. The belief in the Bodhisattavas and their prayers, which has been regarded as the basic features of Mahayanism, had developed much earlier than its formal establishment during the period of Kanishka in the first century AD. However, it became a completely different sect after the fourth general council of Buddhism and the credit for the establishment of this sect goes to Nagarjuna. There was no difference between the followers of Hinayanism and Mahayanism with regard to the rules of Sangha and code of conduct or morality. Both lived together in the same Sanghas. However, there were differences in philosophy and principles among them.

Hinayanism did not regard Buddha as a god free from the cycle of birth and rebirth while Mahayanism regarded Buddha as god and believed in his different incarnations to be all free from the cycle of birth. Hinayana regarded *Nirvana* as a state of permanent peace free from cycle of birth while Mahayanism regarded it as the union with *Adi Buddha*. The religious texts of Hinayanism were written in Pali; whereas, the text of Mahayanism was written in Sanskrit. The Mahayanism remained closer to the concept of Hinduism with regard to *Nirvana*, Brahman, incarnation of god, faith, etc., while Hinayanism was distinct from Hinduism.

Let us discuss the causes of rise and fall of Buddhism.

### Causes of the Rise of Buddhism

Buddhism started as a protest movement against the complex system of Hinduism. It tried to reform the existing religious practices, social systems and dislodged the principles of social immobility, inequality and injustice. Moreover, it upheld the sanctity of human belief and its freedom. For its simplicity and people friendly principles, Buddhism spread all over India in a very short span of time.

Various causes are responsible for the spectacular rise of Buddhism in India and abroad. Due to the magnetic personality of Gautama Buddha, his simple and uncomplicated doctrine attracted many followers. During the emergence of Buddhism, the Brahminical religion had more or less stagnated with superstitions, sacrifices and predominance of priestly class. Buddha, with his simple preaching, freed the religion from all expensive and complicated rituals and enabled the poor to observe their religion with proper spirit.

His life was a living example of all that he preached and thus the rational philosophy of Buddha not only appealed to the masses, but the ruling class and the upper strata of the society as well.

Second, during that time, Hinduism had lost its appeal and people failed to understand the religion due to its complexities. Hence, the masses found an alternative in Buddhism. Buddha prescribed a middle path for the attainment of *Nirvana* by observing simple rules of morality, which did not exist in Hinduism.

Third, Buddhism did not believe in caste system. It rejected the supremacy of the priestly class. It prescribed social equality and even women got their desired position in the Buddhist ashram system as nuns. People irrespective of their position, caste and colour were allowed to embrace the new religion. This acceptance of social equality attracted a large number of Hindus into the fold of Buddhism.

Fourth, Buddha preached in the language of the common man. During that period, Sanskrit was the medium and the common man had no idea of Sanskrit language. In contrast, Buddha preached his doctrine in Pali and Magadhi languages, a method that was easily accepted by the lower strata of the society.

Fifth, Buddhism enjoyed the royal patronage of the kings like Ashoka and Kanishka and many royal families. Ashoka elevated the religion to occupy the position of state religion during his reign. He sent Buddhist missionaries to different parts of the world to spread the message of Buddha. Even he sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon with the message of Buddha. He engraved the teachings of Buddha in various pillars and rock inscriptions in different part of his empire. Powerful kings like Kanishka, Harsha, Bimbisara and Ajatasatru of Magadh, Prasnjit of Koshala and many other patronized Buddhism for which it spread in all directions during their reign.

Sixth, Buddhist Sanghas proved to be the best instruments in the propagation of Buddhism. The sanghas were also the centres of Buddhist activities, learning and spiritual exchange for the monks. They also prepared religious preachers or monks who worked for the propagation of Buddhism in India and abroad.

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Seventh, after the demise of Buddha, host of Buddhist scholars and monks worked for the propagation of the teachings of Buddha. In addition, various scholars like Nagarjuna, Asanga, Basumitra, Basubandhu, Dinang, Dharamakirti, Chandrakirti etc., produced vast literature of Buddhism, which provided the base for its rise.

Apart from this, the relaxation of strict rules for masses, absence of any rival sect and lastly the great centres of higher learning like Taxila and Nalanda Universities and several other institutions played a vital role in the progress of Buddhism and established it as a global religion.

### **Causes of the Fall of Buddhism**

For many centuries, Buddhism remained as one of the foremost religions not only in India, but also in many parts of Asia. However, slowly and steadily it lost its hold and became non-existent in the place of its origin, India. Many factors were responsible for the decline of Buddhism.

First, the Buddhist Sanghas, which were created as the centres of learning activity for the nuns and monks, became centres of moral corruption. Huge wealth donated by the ruling class, and women found their entry into the Sanghas. The wealth and women completely ruined the moral character of monks.

Second, the Mahayanism, a sect of Buddhism, which introduced image worship, prayers, religious festivals and processions, brought in ritualism. Thus, effective use and display of wealth was possible. This led to the loss of moral, intellectual and spiritual strength of Buddhism. These were the primary source of strength of Buddhism and when these were lost, its very basis was lost and the entire structure crumbled.

Third, Buddhism was divided into various sects even prior to its great split into Mahayanism and Hinayanism. Each of these sects preached different philosophies and different codes of conduct, which created confusion among its followers and the rivalry between these sects destroyed the image of Buddha among the masses.

Fourth, in contrast to the practice of Buddha, the Buddhist religious texts of the Mahayanism were written in Sanskrit. As Sanskrit was not the language of common people, Buddhism lost its popular contact with the masses.

Fifth, the moral corruption of monks and nuns led to intellectual bankruptcy in Buddhism and resulted in its decline.

Sixth, after facing challenges from both Jainism and Buddhism, the great revival of Hinduism started under the protection of Sunga dynasty, and the efforts of Gupta rulers led the religion to its former glory. Scholars like Shankaracharya, Kumaril Bhatta and many others scholars of the time established the philosophical and intellectual supremacy of Hinduism. The emergence of the Puranic traditions in Hinduism, its tolerant and liberal spirit proved its greatest asset. Even when Buddhism created the cult of Buddha, they failed to create a parallel to the God or *Brahma* of Hinduism.

Seventh, apart from these developments, many Hindu scholars simplified the language of the Hindu religious texts, reformed the society and it got the attention from the ruling dynasties. With these attractions in Hinduism, there hardly remained

any difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Therefore, Hinduism attracted the masses to its fold and once again became the principal religion in India.

Finally, the successors Ashoka did not support Buddhism and other dynasties like Sungas, Guptas and Rajputs strongly supported Hinduism. Invaders like Hunas and Turks destroyed Buddhist sanghas, monasteries, libraries, etc., and thus gave a serious blow to Buddhism. Buddhism thus lost its hold over its country of birth. The foreign invaders were only partly responsible for it but primarily its own weakness and the great revival of Hinduism were responsible for its dramatic fall.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. According to Jainism, who was the 23rd Tirthankara?
11. What are the values included in the eight-folded path?
12. What are the two major Buddhist sects?

## 1.9 MAURYAN EMPIRE

In 322BC, Magadha, under the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, began to assert its power over neighbouring areas. Situated on rich alluvial soil and near mineral deposits, especially iron, Magadha was the centre of bustling commerce and trade. The primary source of our knowledge about the Mauryan empire is based on the *Arthashastra* by Chanakya or Kautiliya, which is a treatise on statecraft. It gives us a picture of the administration, society and the economy of the country. In the book, he explains how a strong and an efficient government should be organized and what the duties of a ruler are. Chanakya was Chandragupta's Chief Minister and mentor. The Sanskrit play *Mudrarakshasa* by Visakadatta is a political literature revealing the struggle undertaken by Chandragupta Maurya with the help of Chanakya to overthrow the Nandas. It is also an insight into Chandragupta's life. The *Jataka* tales of the Buddhist literature and the *Indica* written by Megasthenes, the Greek traveller to Chandragupta's court, gives an account of the Mauryan capital, its administrative system and social life. The Ceylonese chronicles, the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*, give the accounts of the conversion of Ceylon to Buddhism. They have also helped in reconstructing the history of Asoka. The rock edicts of Asoka provide information about the Mauryan rule. According to them, India constructed a new world on the basis of peace, brotherhood and cultural unity under the rule of the Mauryans.

The arrival of the Mauryans was an important incident in the Indian history. Considering the unfavourable conditions in which the foundations of this dynasty were laid down and became strong, it can be said that its place was really very high. The Mauryan empire marked a new epoch in the history of India. It was a period of unification of the territories, which were fragmented kingdoms under different rulers. Moreover, trade routes between Europe and India over land and sea paved the way for contact with the outside world. It was a period when politics, art, trade and commerce flourished.

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### 1.9.1 Chandragupta Maurya

Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan empire. After establishing himself firmly on the throne of Magadha, Chandragupta set out to expand his empire. He conquered the whole of northern India up to the river Indus. Chandragupta had vast resources; hence he could maintain a huge army. In 305BC, he defeated Seleucus Nikator and north-western India was liberated from Greek control. Seleucus surrendered Afghanistan and Baluchistan and also gave his daughter Helen's hand in marriage to Chandragupta. In return, Chandragupta presented Seleucus with 500 war elephants. Seleucus sent Megasthenes as an ambassador to the court of Chandragupta.

Megasthenes stayed with Chandragupta for over five years, travelling through the Mauryan empire and wrote an account of his travels in the book *Indica*. Chandragupta, who ruled from 324 to 297BC, was the architect of the first Indian imperial power whose capital was Pataliputra, near modern-day Patna in Bihar. The rule of this remarkable king came to an end in 297BC. After ruling for twenty-four years, Chandragupta abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Bindusara, and became a Jain ascetic. According to a Jain text, he starved himself to death in order to attain *nirvana*. His son, Bindusara, extended the empire into central India and parts of southern India. Only the kingdom of Kalinga was unconquered at the time of his death. His son, Asoka, succeeded him in 273BC.

#### Early Life of Chandragupta Maurya

Though much is not known about the earlier life of Chandragupta, inscriptions suggest that he was born in 345BC in a Kshatriya family residing between present Gorakhpur and the Terai in Nepal. A number of Indian historians are of the view that Chandragupta was the illegitimate son of a king from the Nanda dynasty of Magadha from a maid named 'Mura'. The dynasty was named after Chandragupta's mother. Chanakya, a teacher in the Takshasila University found him playing with his friends, where he pretended to be their king. The devout wisdom in the boy impressed Chanakya who was amazed at his leadership skills and decided to make him a disciple. Chanakya trained Chandragupta in warfare and statecraft. They conquered Magadha and established a new rule in Gandhara.

Chandragupta was a great commander and an efficient warrior. The talent and ambitious attitude of Chandragupta combined with the shrewd politics of Chanakya were enough to face any opposition efficiently. Chandragupta fought many battles during his reign. He took over Magadha, fought against the Greeks, the Nanda dynasty of the east. By the time he was twenty years' old, his kingdom stretched from the Bay of Bengal in the east to River Indus in the west to the Arabian Sea in the south. Under Chandragupta Maurya, many kingdoms freed from barbaric administration on one hand and on the other hand also released from the clutches of foreign slavery. His political and soldierly achievements were great. He accepted Jainism and relinquished the throne for his son Bindusara in 320BC.

## Economy under Chandragupta Maurya

Under the Mauryan empire, India was an agricultural country. According to Megasthenes, majority of the population consisted of agriculturists. They neither participated in warfare nor did they participate in the state affairs. They were not harmed during wars. The tillers of the soil carried on their work uninterruptedly. The land was rich and fertile. The means of irrigation were simple. Therefore, people never saw disasters caused by famines. There were two seasonal rainfalls in India, and farmers reaped harvest twice a year. Besides, there were orchards of myriad kinds. Kautilya has given a description of ploughed, fallow and rocky lands. The land was tilled with the help of oxen. The state paid special attention towards the methods of irrigation. Many officials were appointed for inspecting the towns. According to the Junagarh inscription, Pushpagupta, an official of Chandragupta got Sudarshana Lake constructed for irrigation in Saurashtra.

The following were the means of irrigation as given in *Arthashastra*:

- Canals, tanks, wells, ponds and rivers bullocks
- Water was drawn from the wells with the help of buckets, and big leather bags
- Building dams over the river

Kautilya also refers to manure made of the mixtures of ghee, honey, fats, cow dung and powdered fish. It was used in order to increase the fertility of the soil. Wheat, sugar, maize, rice, barley, sugarcane, mustard, peanuts, cotton, tobacco, potatoes, watermelons, etc., were the main crops of the Mauryan times. Fruits like mangoes, grapes, lemons were aplenty.

### Occupations

During the Mauryan times, the cloth industry had greatly developed. The main clothes centres were Kashi, Vatsa, Madura, Vanga, Apranta, etc. Spinning was done by the spinning wheels and big looms were used for weaving clothes. According to *Arthashastra* and Megasthenes, cotton was produced in great quantity the weavers of cotton clothes worked round the clock. Jute too, was utilized for weaving. Magadha and Kashi were well known towns for jute productions.

During those days clothes were prepared out of the leaves and bark of the trees and the fibres of many kinds. *Arthashastra* presents an elaborate description of woollen clothes and blankets. They were made in different ways. The woollen garments were made of wool of many colours and with strong threads. Nepal was the main centre of blanket trade. Megasthenes has pointed out that the Indians dressed in costly and beautiful attires. The people of Bengal had the chief occupation of producing muslin cloth, which was in great demand for making clothes. While cotton was grown in the country, silk clothes were imported from China.

### Metallurgy

According to Megasthenes, during the Mauryan age, there was an enormous quantity of gold and silver in India. Iron, copper and brass was also available in large quantities.

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Iron was used for manufacture of arms. Ordinarily, the work of mining was done by the state officials. The state representative who was in-charge of the mines was known as Akradhayaksha. During the Mauryan times, ornaments were worn by members of both the sexes. The wealthy section of the society wore ornaments made of ivory.

Diving and finding pearls, jewels, shells, diamonds from the sea was the most difficult task. Ornaments studded with pearls and beads were in much demand. The Mauryans wore clothes embroidered with golden threads. The utensils were made of metal; the process of making pots out of metal, its casting and softening is also given in the Arthasastra.

Forests, in this period, constituted the property of the state. There were efficient methods of cutting and loading the wood. Bamboo, leaves and bark was used for making a number of everyday things. Wood of an excellent quality was required for making ships. *Arthasastra* gives a description of skins of different animals used for manufacturing things. During the Mauryan Age, a brisk wine trade flourished too. There is a mention of six types of wine in *Arthasastra*. Wine trade was under the complete control of *Suradhyabha*.

The state paid avid attention to the progress of every trade and occupation and traders enjoyed the security of the state. People blinding or chopping off the hands of any sculptor or craftsman was given life sentence. Traders had the privilege of enjoying feasible profit but anyone who indulged in making graft money, cheating, gaining undue profit and adulterating everyday products was severely punished. Kautilya followed the middle path in state affairs and a mutual one in professional sphere.

The external and internal trade had developed sufficiently during the Mauryan period. The internal trade was carried through safe land routes. The roads going from Pataliputra to western India was 1,500 miles long. In southern India there were important busy land routes. According to Kautilya, the southern roads going through the mines were very significant. They involved less exertion and labour. Another road ran from Pataliputra to the east. Besides these major routes there existed many minor land routes that connected the small cities with the main roads. On the main roads there were milestones at a distance of every half kilometer.

Judges were appointed for the regular inspection and supervision of these roads. The internal trade was also carried through rivers. Small boats and vessels were used for this purpose. In the entire Kingdom every town was known for its particular product. Nepal was famous for woollen clothes, the Himalayan area for skin industries, Magadha for tree bark and clothes, Kashi for all types of clothes, Bengal for fine muslin, Kerala for pearls. The people of the professional class travelled to far off lands to sell their wares.

According to *Arthasastra*, during the Mauryan times active trade was carried on by sea routes in big ships known as *Pravana*. There were ports and harbours. The management of the ports was under a port official. The person in charge of the port had to rescue ships caught in the stormy waves of perilous seas. Pearls were imported from China. There were good commercial relations between Egypt and



India. Sikandria was the chief port of Egypt and three land routes connected it with India. The existence of a special assembly for receiving the foreign ambassadors in the royal court of Mauryas indicates that there existed close relations between India and countries abroad. Thus, during the Mauryan times, kings had to maintain foreign relations and formulate the appropriate external policies.

### Coinage

The following were the Mauryan coins:

- Gold coins known as *Sauvamik*
- Silver coins called *Kashaparna*
- Copper coins called *Mashaka*
- *Kakni* was also a copper coin which was less valuable to *Mashaka*

Kautilya has divided the Mauryan coinage into two parts. These are as follows:

1. **Legal tender:** In this category were the coins collected in the state treasury. They were used for state taxation and export and import or exchange.
2. **Token money:** This was a token currency used by the people or their daily transactions. Such coins were not deposited in the royal treasury. The coins were made by the state foundries. But anyone could cast the coins at his own cost. There was no paper currency. The chief of the foundry was called *Suvarnika* or *Lakshanadhyaksha*.

Chandragupta Maurya started his career from a very humble position and there are differences of opinion regarding his family. It is now the accepted view of a majority of scholars that Chandragupta belonged to the Kshatriya clan called the Moriyas originally ruling over Pippalivana, which probably lay in modern Uttar Pradesh.

After the death of her husband, the mother of Chandragupta shifted to Pataliputra for safety where she gave birth to her illustrious son. Chandragupta was first brought up by a cowherd and then by a hunter. Chanakya, his mentor marked out Chandragupta for the twin tasks of winning the entire India and killing Dhana Nand. It is now generally believed that Chanakya and Kautilya, the author of *Arthashastra*, were the names of the same person.

The classical writers have described that Chandragupta had visited Alexander who felt offended by his behaviour and gave orders to kill him. However, Chandragupta managed to escape. After the return of Alexander, he with the help of Chanakya, raised an army by recruiting soldiers mostly from the warlike people of the republican states of Punjab who had given fierce resistance to Alexander. He kept before the people the idea of turning the foreign Greek invaders out of the country and succeeded. He was supported by Parvataka—a hill-tribe chief who became his friend. Probably, Chandragupta started his war of liberation in the lower Indus Valley, before 321 or even before 323 BC and finally succeeded. By 317 BC, no Greek governor remained in India and Punjab and Sindh were occupied by Chandragupta. The desire of the Greek *Satrap* and their soldiers to go back to their own country, their mutual conflicts, the revolt of the Indian *Satrap*s and the assassination of Philippos of the Upper

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Indus Valley in 325 BC and the death of Alexander in 323 BC facilitated the work of Chandragupta of turning the Greeks out of the Indian Territory.

The next task of Chandragupta was to conquer Magadha. He failed to achieve this objective probably once or twice but ultimately grabbed the throne of Pataliputra and killed Dhana Nand. The incompetence of Dhana Nand, his unpopularity amongst his subjects, the astute diplomacy of Chanakya and the bravery and military skill of Chandragupta were mainly responsible for the downfall of the Nanda dynasty. Chandragupta also kept Pataliputra as his capital.

### **Extension of the Empire**

When Chandragupta was busy in the extension and consolidation of his empire, Seleucus, one of the able generals of Alexander who had obtained possession of the Eastern Empire of his master, proceeded towards India to recover the lost possession of the late emperor. He reached India in around 305 BC where Chandragupta faced him in a battle. The Greek writers do not give the details of the conflict. It is also not certain whether a decisive battle took place between the two or not. But, in view of the terms of peace between the two, it is definite that Seleucus failed miserably in his expedition. He had not only to abandon the idea of re-conquering Punjab but had to surrender to Chandragupta a part of his territories in the East with its capital cities Herat, Kandahar and Kabul and also the territories of Baluchistan.

Thus, this settlement between the two extended the territories of Chandragupta in the North-West up to the borders of Persia and also secured his frontiers in that direction.

No written record is available of the other conquests of Chandragupta, yet it is certain that he ruled over a vast empire. Bindusara, his successor is not known to history as a conqueror while Ashoka conquered only Kalinga.

Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the empire of the Mauryas, (which is believed to have extended from the border of Persia in the North-West to Bengal in the East and from Kashmir in the North to Mysore in the South), was mostly built up by Chandragupta.

In his last days, Chandragupta went South with the Jain monk Bhadrabahu. The hill where he lived during the last days of his life is known as Chandragiri where a temple known as Chandragupta Basti was also erected by his grandson, Ashoka. It is in Mysore.

### **Chandragupta an an Administrator**

Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror but also a capable administrator. The way he carried on the administration of his empire was pursued by his successors and no change was felt necessary except that Ashoka tried to liberalize it further and elaborated the public duties of the state officials. The basic principles of the administration of the Mauryas remained the same as established by Chandragupta till subsequently the weaker Mauryas lost their hold over it. Primarily, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and the description of Megasthenes give us a fair idea of the administration of Chandragupta.

## The polity

By the time of the Mauryas, the office of the king had become hereditary and the divine origin of monarchy had attained maturity and had given the king wide powers. But, strictly speaking, as Hindu political theory vests sovereignty in the dharma or law in the widest sense of the term and the state is separated from the king who is a part of it, no king could be tyrannical or a wielder of absolute personal powers. Of course, the necessity of a strong king was stressed but it was equally emphasized that he had to rule according to the dharma and for the establishment of the dharma, which was conducive to the highest good.

The dharma actually upheld an ideal that elevated the soul to the loftiest heights and, therefore, the function of the state was to create those conditions of life which would help every citizen attain this goal. It also meant that the state would enjoy all the embracing powers. Therefore, its scope of activities was unlimited and no distinction was made between the personal and the civic rights and duties, or between the moral principles and positive law. Everything that had any bearing upon the moral, spiritual or material condition of a citizen came within the scope of the state activities. The state had the right to regulate the family life of the citizens, to promote true religion and control all professions and occupations as well. Thus, the state held the ring for the interplay of social forces, intellectual influences, economic enterprises and above all the spiritual tradition. But in no case, the extensive activities of the state and the divine origin of the monarchy meant to support the divine right of the king. Therefore, the power of the king has increased but not without an increase in his corresponding duties. No wicked son of a king was allowed to become the successor and, consequently, the right of the people to rebel against a wicked and tyrannical king was also recognized. For the same purpose, special care was taken to impart sound education and moral training to the future king and if the prince failed to reach a requisite standard, he forfeited his right to the throne.

Regarding the inter-state relations, the *Arthashastra* states that the normal relations between the states can only be that of mutual hostility and material interests alone should guide the relations of one state with another. A ruler should adopt the policy which is calculated to increase the power and wealth of his state, irrespective of any legal justice or moral consideration and for this purpose; he should adopt any or all the four instruments, viz. *Sama* (conciliation), *Dama* (gift), *Danda* (aggressive action) and *Bheda* (sowing dimensions in a hostile state or among different enemy states).

## The king

Sometimes, the king could be elected but hereditary kingship was the established practice. Females were not excluded from the right of kingship but in practice it was rarely to be found. The king was the supreme head of the state and performed military, judicial, executive and legislative functions. His permanent duty was to protect the people and seek their welfare. In *Arthashastra*, it is mentioned that the happiness of the king lies in the welfare and the ultimate good of his subjects. Therefore, the king was the busiest person in the kingdom. The twenty-four hours of each day and night were divided into eight parts and in each part he performed

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different duties punctually. Chandragupta could sleep hardly for six hours. Even when he was dressed and his hair being combed, he used to listen to the reports of his spies and assign them their duties. Besides, he was easily accessible to his subjects. The king was paid in the form of taxes by his subjects in return for his services to the kingdom. He lived in a large and comfortable palace, which was highly praised by Megasthenes. He was protected by lady bodyguards and every precaution was taken to protect his life from treachery and poisoning.

### **The council of ministers and the state council**

According to Kautilya, there were two committees to assist the king in the administration. He says, 'Sovereignty is possible only with assistance.' It implied that these committees were not only necessary but also effective in administration as well. The council of ministers was a small body consisting of 3–12 members. Each of them was the head of one or a few of the administrative departments and sometimes, one of them could be appointed as the chief or prime minister. All of them were appointed by the king on merit and could also be dismissed by him. All the administrative measures were preceded by deliberations in the council of ministers. Each minister had free access to the king but in policy matters they advised the king as a body. The State Council was a large body and the number of its members varied between 12, 16 or 20 and, according to Kautilya, it could include as many members as the need of the state required. These councils played an effective role in the administration of the kingdom. Kautilya has clearly distinguished the two and has given pre-eminence to the Council of Ministers as compared to the State Council. Of course, the king had the legal power to refuse to work on their advice but, in practice, he hardly did so.

### **1.9.2 Ashoka (269–232BC)**

Ashoka has an unmatched place in the history of ancient India. He is not only famous for the vastness of his empire but also for his personal character, aims and ideals. He was an able ruler and an ideal human being. Not every age and every country can give birth to such a king. Ashoka cannot be compared even today with any other ruler from the history of the world.

#### **Ashoka's Reign**

Ashoka was a great king not only in the history of India but also across the whole world. We possess a lot of information about him from his inscriptions and the Buddhist literature. According to the Buddhist tradition, Bindusara had sixteen wives and 101 sons. Sumana or Susima was the eldest son, Ashoka the second and Tishya the youngest son. In the northern tradition, the name of Ashoka's mother is mentioned as Subhadrangi, but in the southern tradition she is named Dharma. When Ashoka was only eighteen, he was appointed by his father the Viceroy of Rashtra with its capital at Ujjayini. It was there that Ashoka married Mahadevi and his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra were born.

There was a rebellion in Taxila and Ashoka was sent to suppress the same. There was another rebellion at Taxila which its Viceroy Susima failed to suppress. It

is stated that when Bindusara died Ashoka captured the throne with the help of the Ministers headed by Khallataka or Radhagupta. That led to a war of succession between Ashoka and Susima. Yuvaraja Susima, was helped by his other 98 brothers except Tishya. The story is that Ashoka killed all his 99 brothers and waded through blood to the throne and thereby got the notorious title of *ChandAshoka*. There are many stories giving details of the cruelty of Ashoka before he ultimately ascended the throne.

While it is conceded that there might have been a struggle for power, it is not admitted that Ashoka was responsible for the murder of all of his brothers except Tishya. Dr. Smith regards the story of the slaughter of his brothers as something absurd and false. He points out that even the inscriptions of Ashoka prove that his brothers and sisters were alive in the 17th and 18th years of his reign and their households were the object of his anxious care. It is pointed out that the fifth rock edict refers to the family establishments of his brothers as existing. This does not necessarily mean that his brothers were also alive. But there is nothing to show that his brothers were dead.

It is difficult to settle the controversy regarding the first four years of the reign of Ashoka. However, it is certain that Ashoka was consecrated after four years after his accession to the throne.

Ashoka took up the title of Devanampiya Piyadasi or the beloved of the gods and was of an amiable nature. The name Ashoka is found in literature and also in the Makti Edict of Ashoka and the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaman I. The name DharmAshoka is found on the Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi. Not much is known about the early years of the reign of Ashoka. His personal reminiscences shows that he lived the life of his predecessors, consuming food freely, enjoying the pleasures, and encouraging festive assemblies accompanied by dancing and drinking. During his first thirteen years, he carried on the traditional policy of expansion within India and maintained friendly relations with foreign powers. He was aggressive at home but a pacifist abroad. He exchanged embassies with the foreign countries. He employed Yavana officials like Tushaspa.

### **The Edicts of Ashoka**

King Ashoka, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty, has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary rulers in world history. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history ... the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star.' Although Buddhist literature preserved the legend of this ruler — the story of a cruel and ruthless king who converted to Buddhism and thereafter established a reign of virtue — definitive historical records of his reign were lacking. Then in the nineteenth century there came to light a large number of edicts, in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. These edicts, inscribed on rocks and pillars, proclaim Ashoka's reforms and policies and promulgate his advice to his subjects. The present rendering of these edicts, based on earlier translations, offers us insights into a powerful and capable ruler's attempt to establish an empire on the foundation of righteousness, a reign which makes the moral and spiritual welfare of his subjects its

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primary concern. The Australian Ven. S. Dhammika, the compiler of the present work, is the spiritual director of the Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society in Singapore.

### **The extent of the Ashoka's empire**

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Ashoka himself has given quite an explicit list of the places which were under his rule. These include Magadha, Pataliputra, Barabar hills, Kaushambi, Lumbini-gama, Kalinga, Atavi (the forest tract of mid India), Suvarnagiri, Isila, Ujjaini and Taxila. Even beyond Taxila, Ashoka's kingdom included the areas around Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra, which were adjacent to the eastern boundaries of the realm of Amityako Yonaraja (Antiochos II Theos of Syria). Exact location of this Yona country has now been confirmed as Arachosia. Apart from this, the north-west frontier of Ashoka's Empire also included Kamboja, which corresponds to Rajapur or Rajaur near punch in Kashmir, and also Gandhara, territory now west of Indus with its capital Pushkaravati. The inclusion of Kashmir in the dominions of Ashoka has been confirmed both by Hiuen-Tsang and also by Kalhana in his Rajtarangini. Kalhan mentions a number of stupas and viharas built by Ashoka. Ashoka also founded the city of Srinagara.

Apart from this, we have a clear proof that Gangaridai, i.e., the area of Bengal was under Ashoka but Kamarupa was out of his dominions. In south India, the areas up to the river Pennar near Nellore formed the frontier of Ashoka's kingdom. There is a mention of some Tamil kingdoms beyond this, which are explicitly addressed as the neighbouring states.

#### **Early life**

Though Ashoka is known as the greatest king of India, historians learned about him only in the nineteenth century. In 1837, a British scholar named James Prinsep deciphered the inscriptions on the pillars and rocks that are found in many parts of India. It was in Brahmi script. From these inscriptions, it was concluded that Ashoka and the ruler named *Devanampiya Priyadarsi* were one and the same person. An inscription discovered by Prinsep in 1915 used the name Ashoka along with the other name. These inscriptions gave historians valuable information about Ashoka's rule and the extent and condition of his empire. The land he ruled stretched from the Himalayas in Nepal and Kashmir to Mysore in the south, from Afghanistan in the northwest to the banks of the River Brahmaputra in the east. In the west his territory covered Saurashtra and Junagarh. Kalinga was one of the kingdoms, which remained unconquered and hostile when Ashoka succeeded to the throne. It was important to Ashoka from a geographical point of view, since the route to south India both by land and by sea passed through it. It would also bring added prosperity to the Mauryan Empire. It was for these reasons that Ashoka attacked Kalinga.

#### **Battle of Kalinga**

Kalinga was a prosperous little kingdom lying between the river Godavari and Mahanadi, close to the Bay of Bengal. It had an infantry of 60,000 men, 10,000 horsemen and 600 elephants. Ashoka wanted to capture this fertile land, and so had it surrounded. A fierce battle followed in which an enormous amount of life and property was lost. Kalinga surrendered and, for the first time in the Indian history,

almost the whole sub continent except the extreme south was under a single ruler. However, this battle affected the king deeply.

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**Fig. 1.11** Mauryan Empire under Ashoka

In the midst of the battlefield, Ashoka stood with the wounded, crippled and the dead all around him. The sight of the terrible carnage and the miseries of war filled Ashoka with remorse. He vowed never to make war again. The war drums (*Bherighosh*) were silenced forever and henceforth were heard only the reverberations of the *Dhammaghosh* (the call to non-violence and universal peace).

**Ashoka’s Dhamma**

The word ‘dhamma’ was derived from the Sanskrit word ‘dharma.’ Ashoka followed the principles of Buddhism—that of truth, charity, kindness, purity and goodness. He wanted his people to lead pure and virtuous lives, irrespective of their religion or culture. He considered all subjects his children. He explained his ideas in his edicts by engraving his principles on pillars throughout his kingdom. The edicts were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common people, so that they could understand and follow them. Some of the edicts such as those in Afghanistan were composed in Greek for the same reason. The purpose of the edicts was to inform the people of Ashoka’s reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral. He strictly prohibited animal slaughtering in the kingdom and asked people to be respectful of each other. People should respect nature, their parents, everything living as well as non-living. Brahmins should be treated with respect and servants should be treated as equals. Donating alms to the poor and the needy was practiced

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and advised by the state. He preached harmony and peace and advised people to get rid of anger, jealousy, cruelty and arrogance. According to Romila Thapar, an Indian historian whose principal area of study is ancient India, 'Dhamma was a way of life which was based on the social and moral responsibilities.'

Ashoka was an able administrator, an intelligent human being and a devout Buddhist. He attempted to spread this religion to Syria, Egypt and Macedonia, and also sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka. The Buddhist *Sangha* of the time decided to send missionaries to many places, like modern day Burma and Sri Lanka.

Following are the important aspects of Dhamma through the study of the scripts:

- Earliest signals of Dhammalipi are seen in the Minor Rock Edict I and II (MREI and II).
- The core of Ashoka's Dhamma is enshrined in the first and the second Minor Rock Edict. Minor Rock Edicts (now onwards MREI and II) refer to following important points:
  - o Gujarran version of MRE-I mentions that both rich and poor should be encouraged to practice Dhamma.
  - o Brahmagiri version of MRE-II has the following points. Beloved of the god (Ashoka) said that:
    - (a) Mother and father should be obeyed and likewise the elders.
    - (b) Steadfastness (in kindness) should be shown towards the living beings.
    - (c) The truth must be spoken.
    - (d) Teachers should be honoured by the pupil.
    - (e) Relatives should be respected.

These principles have been engraved just after the mention of Ashoka's Dhammayatra and form the core of his Dhamma.

- The concept of Dhamma was based upon the ancient values and customs. They have been repeated and stressed a number of times. There is a special stress on the following:
  - o Abstention from slaughter of life (lives) (*Arambho prananam*).
  - o Avoidance of injury to the creatures (*Avihisa Bhutanam*).
- In REIII the Government officials are asked to preach the following:
  - o Obedience to father and mother is an excellent thing.
  - o Liberty to friends, acquaintances and relatives and to Brahmins and Sramanas is an excellent thing.
  - o The abstention from slaughter of living creatures is an excellent thing.
  - o Tendency towards spending little and storing little is an excellent thing.
  - o RE IX and XI advocate a proper courtesy even towards the slaves and servants. RE VII speaks to show courtesy to miserable and wretched (*Kapanivalakesu*).



Now, dealing with the important part, let us understand the constituents of the Dhamma policy. Dhamma is clearly defined in PEII as consisting of the following:

- Freedom from sins (or few sins): *Apasinave*
- Many virtuous deeds: *Vahukayane*
- Compassion: *Daya*
- Liberality (or making gifts): *Dana*
- Truthfulness: *Satya*
- Purity (of mind): *Sochye*

PEVII adds gentleness (*Sadhve*) to the mentioned list.

According to PE VII, people of all sects should be obliged to have the following:

- Self control (*Sayame*)
- Mental purity (*Bhava shuddhi*)
- Gratefulness (*Kilanala*)
- Firm devotion (*Didhabhalila*)

PE III says that man should guard himself against those passions which lead to sin. These are as follows:

- Fierceness (*Chamdiye*)
- Cruelty (*Nilhuliye*)
- Anger (*Kodhe*)
- Pride (*Mane*)
- Jealously (*Irshiya*)

Though in the conduct of *Dhamma* (Law of Piety) the renouncement of killing, non violence, non-injury, self-control was a prominent part but that does not suggest that Ashoka totally renounced war.

Ashoka's *Dhammayatra* was initiated with Ashoka's visit to Sambodhi when he had been consecrated for ten years. He, in course of *Dhammayatas* or *Dharmayatra* visited *Brahmanas* and *Sramanas* and offered gifts. He visited elders and offered gifts of gold and made contact with the people of countryside and instructed them in *Dhamma*.

### **Nature of Dhamma**

Scholars are not totally unanimous about the exact explanation of the nature of *Dhamma*. Rhys Davids understands it, as a whole, as the duty of laymen while Smith says that the character of Ashoka's teaching is purely human and severely practical. He also identifies the ethics in the edicts as Buddhist rather than Brahmanical. Dr. C. Sircar says that *Dhamma* was a code of morals preached by Ashoka. It was basically extracted from the teachings of Buddha. According to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Ashoka's *Dhamma* embraced all the living beings as it was based upon the ethics of benevolence.

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In the light of this comparative analysis you may infer that the crux or core of Ashoka's *Dhamma* was to enhance the ethics and moral standards of people by preaching non-violence, respect for other sects, and respect for people in general, etc. What also seems pertinent to note here is that *Dhamma* was also driven by political and geographical compulsions. It was rather a political philosophy based upon the ancient customs to maintain peace, tranquillity and harmony in such a vast empire. This seems to be an important reason for creating an administrative machinery for the dissemination of the concept amongst the people.

### Foreign Policy After Kalinga

After Kalinga, Ashoka renounced the path of warfare, and this is amply evident by the fact that he made no attempt to annex his neighbouring countries namely, Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputra, Kerelaputra, Ceylon and the realm of Amtiyako Yonaraja, who is identified with Antiochos II Theos, king of Syria and western Asia. The concept of *Digvijaya* was replaced by the concept of *Dhammavijaya*.

*Dhamma* of Ashoka brought him in contact with the Hellenistic powers. Ashoka looked towards these countries for the expansion of *Dhamma* through *Dhammavijaya*. He says, 'My neighbours too, should learn this lesson.' The text of the Rock Edict XIII says, 'Conquest of the Law of Piety... has been won by his sacred Majesty ...among all his neighbours as far as six hundred leagues, where the king of Greeks named Antiochos dwells, and beyond (the realm) of that Antiochos (where dwell) the four kings severally Ptolemy (*Turamayo*), Antigonus (*Amekina*), Magas (*Maga*), and Alexander (*Alikasudara*) (like wise) in the south (*micha*), the Cholas and the Pandyas as far as Tambapani... ... Even where the duties of his sacred Majesty do not penetrate, those people, too are hearing his sacred Majesty's ordinance based upon the Law of Piety and his instruction in the law, practice and will practice the law.'

Due to such serious efforts undertaken by Ashoka, Buddhism did make a progression in the region around west Asia. Ceylonese chronicles also mention that envoys were sent to Ceylon and Suvarnabhumi (lower Burma and Sumatra). Mahendra, perhaps the younger brother or son of Ashoka along with his sister Sangamitra, went to Ceylon and successfully secured the conversion of *Devanampiya Tissa* and many more people.

The last major recorded event in the life of Ashoka is the issuance of seven Pillar Edicts in around 242 BC. The council of Pataliputra may be placed around 240 BC. The main purpose of the council was to stop heresy, and supervise publication of special edicts to stop the schisms in the *sangha*. Some sources tell us that during his old age, Ashoka wasted huge resources of the empire to give charity to the monks and the *Sanghas*. Some others tell us that he abdicated to pursue devotion but it is not corroborated through evidence.

Though the exact knowledge as to where and how he died is not available but he died sometime around 232 BC after a reign of almost forty years. A Tibetan source tells us that he left for his heavenly abode at Taxila.

The Junagadh rock contains inscriptions by Ashoka (fourteen of the Edicts of Ashoka), Rudradaman I and Skandagupta.

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Ashoka ruled for an estimated forty years. After his death, the Mauryan dynasty lasted just fifty more years. Ashoka had many wives and children, but many of their names are lost to time. Mahindra and Sanghamitra were twins born by his 2nd wife, Devi, in the city of Ujjain. He had entrusted to them the job of making his state religion, Buddhism, more popular across the known and the unknown world. Mahindra and Sanghamitra went to Sri Lanka and converted the King, the Queen and their people to Buddhism. They were naturally not handling state affairs after him.

In his old age, he seems to have come under the spell of his youngest wife Tishyaraksha. It is said that she had got his son Kunala, the regent in Takshashila, blinded by a wily stratagem. The official executioners spared Kunala and he became a wandering singer accompanied by his favourite wife Kanchanmala. In Pataliputra, Ashoka hears Kunala's song, and realizes that Kunala's misfortune may have been a punishment for some past sin of the emperor himself and condemns Tishyaraksha to death, restoring Kunala to the court. Kunala was succeeded by his son, Samprati, but his rule did not last long after Ashoka's death.

The reign of Ashoka could easily have disappeared into history as the ages passed by, and would have had not left behind a record of his trials. The testimony of this wise king was discovered in the form of magnificently sculpted pillars and boulders with a variety of actions and teachings he wished to be published etched on stone. What Ashoka left behind was the first written language in India since the ancient city of Harappa. The language used for inscription was the then current spoken form called Prakrit.

In the year 185 BC, about fifty years after Ashoka's death, the last Maurya ruler, Brhadrata, was assassinated by the commander-in-chief of the Mauryan armed forces, Pusyamitra Sunga, while he was taking the Guard of Honor of his forces. Pusyamitra Sunga founded the Sunga dynasty (185 BC–78 BC) and ruled just a fragmented part of the Mauryan Empire. Many of the northwestern territories of the Mauryan Empire (modern-day Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan) became the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

In 1992, Ashoka was ranked 53 on Michael H. Hart's list of the most influential figures in history. In 2001, a semi-fictionalized portrayal of Ashoka's life was produced as a motion picture under the title *Ashoka*. King Ashoka, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty, has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary rulers in world history. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines, almost alone, a star.'

### **Buddhist Kingship**

One of the more enduring legacies of Ashoka Maurya was the model that he provided for the relationship between Buddhism and the state. Throughout Theravada Southeastern Asia, the model of rulership embodied by Ashoka replaced the notion of divine kingship that had previously dominated (in the Angkor kingdom, for instance). Under this model of 'Buddhist kingship', the king sought to legitimize his rule not through descent from a divine source, but by supporting and earning the approval of

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the Buddhist *sangha*. Following Ashoka's example, kings established monasteries, funded the construction of stupas, and supported the ordination of monks in their kingdom. Many rulers also took an active role in resolving disputes over the status and regulation of the sangha, as Ashoka had in calling a conclave to settle a number of contentious issues during his reign. This development ultimately led to a close association in many Southeast Asian countries between the monarchy and the religious hierarchy, an association that can still be seen today in the state-supported Buddhism of Thailand and the traditional role of the Thai king as both a religious and secular leader. Ashoka also said that all his courtiers were true to their self and governed the people in a moral manner.

### Ashoka Chakra

The Ashoka Chakra (the wheel of Ashoka) is a depiction of the Dharmachakra or Dhammachakka in Pali, the Wheel of Dharma (Sanskrit: Chakra means wheel). The wheel has 24 spokes. The Ashoka Chakra has been widely inscribed on many relics of the Mauryan Emperor, most prominent among which is the Lion Capital of Sarnath and the Ashoka Pillar. The most visible use of the Ashoka Chakra today is at the centre of the National flag of the Republic of India (adopted on 22 July 1947), where it is rendered in a Navy-blue colour on a white background, by replacing the symbol of Charkha (Spinning wheel) of the pre-independence versions of the flag. Ashoka Chakra can also be seen on the base of Lion Capital of Ashoka which has been adopted as the National Emblem of India.

The Ashoka chakra was built by Ashoka during his reign. Chakra is a Sanskrit word which also means cycle or self repeating process. The process it signifies is the cycle of time as how the world changes with time.

A few days before India became independent on August 1947, the specially constituted Constituent Assembly decided that the flag of India must be acceptable to all parties and communities. A flag with three colours, saffron, white and green with the Ashoka Chakra was selected.

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## 1.10 MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

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The Mauryas maintained a vast empire. The whole empire was divided into many provinces, which, in turn were divided into districts (towns). The lowest unit of administration was village. The Mauryas had developed a well-organized judicial, police and espionage systems. Let us study these in detail.

### 1.10.1 Central Administration of the Mauryan Empire

The central administration had the following parts:

1. **King:** The form of the Mauryan kingdom was monarchical. Kautilya maintains in the *Arthashastra*: 'The king should behave like a father.' The king was expected to be an efficient warrior, descendant of a high family, an able provider of justice and a wise administrator. Megasthenes opined that the king had to be just during his leisure. The king was the commander of the

army and chief justice but his powers were not absolute. According to Kautilya, 'The king is not one who only enjoys the kingship but the king is one who does welfare of his subjects.'

- 2. Council of ministers:** There used to be a council of ministers to provide assistance to the administrative work of the huge Mauryan empire. The king selected only efficient people to his council. Kautilya believed that the vehicle of administration could not function on one wheel. In order to function effectively, the king had to have the council of ministers to help him administer the vast kingdom. Therefore, the king should appoint and take advice from his ministers. These ministers used to be honest, faithful and clever. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes about eighteen ministers with specific portfolios. Every minister used to head his department. The eighteen ministers were: 1. Prince, 2. Chief Minister, 3. Commander, 4. *Dauvarik*, 5. *Purohit*, 6. *Antarveshik*, 7. Jailer, 8. *Samaharta*, 9. *Sannidhata*, 10. *Pradestha*, 11. *Nayak*, 12. *Paur*, 13. Chief Justice, 14. *Karmantik*, 15. Head of Council, 16. *Dandpal*, 17. *Durgpal* and 18. *Antapal*. There used to be small committee of ministers to advise the king. Each committee consisted of 3–4 ministers called *Mantrids*. According to Smith, written 'The Mauryan kingdom was clearly divided into departments and minutely into category of workers whose works were defined in absolute terms.'

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### 1.10.2 Administration of the Provinces

The vast empire was divided into the following six provinces called *chakra*:

- 1. Uttarapath:** This province included the cities of Gandhar, Kambhoj, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Punjab. The capital was Taxila.
- 2. Madhyadesh:** This province included modern day Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar. The capital was Pataliputra.
- 3. Dakshinapath:** This province included Vindhyaachal and all the states of south India. The capital was Suvarnagiri.
- 4. Avantirashtra:** Kathiawad, Gujarat, Rajputana and Malwa constituted this province. The capital was Ujjain.
- 5. Kalinga:** It included modern Orissa and parts of Andhra Pradesh. Its capital was Toshali.
- 6. Griharajya:** It covered the capital region of the empire. Its administration was looked after by the king with the help of *Mahamatras*.

The provincial administration was efficient and well organized. Every province was divided into several commissioners and each commissioner was further divided in districts and towns.

### 1.10.3 Town Administration

The town administration of the Mauryan empire had a very special place in ancient Indian history. Each town was under a chief called *Nagarak*. *Gop* and *Sthanik* were the officials to assist the *Nagarak*. Megasthenes' description of Pataliputra

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may be sited in this regard. 'This was a very big town of India. This was established on the banks of Ganga and Son rivers. Its length was 9 ½ miles and breadth 3 or 4 miles.' For the administration of town, there were six committees of five people each. Each committee had its work schedule. These committees were Artisan committee, Foreign committee, Population committee, Commerce committee, Trade committee and Tax committee.

### 1.10.4 Village Administration

Village was the basic unit of administration, where the chief official was called *Gramik*. According to the *Arthashastra*, the senior president of *Gramik* was called *Gop* who had look to after the administration of 5–6 villages. A *Sthanik* was superior to a *Gop*. The administration of village and the quality of life of the villagers were also satisfactory. The *Gramik* used to be elected by the villagers by a show of hands.

### 1.10.5 Penal and Judicial System

The Mauryas had an efficient and effective judicial system with the king as the supreme judge. According to Kautilya, 'If the king punishes anyone wrongly, then he himself should be punished three times the same punishment.' The courts were of two kinds: *Dharmasthaniya* courts, which were equivalent to modern civil courts, and *Kantakshodhan* courts, which heard criminal matters. Apart from these two courts, the village panchayats also worked in their initial stages.

The penal system was very harsh. Big punishments were given even for small crimes. Megasthenes has written that Indians had no written laws but due to harsh penal system, death penalty was awarded even for petty crimes.

**Army:** The highest commander of the army was the king. The Mauryan dynasty was established on bloodshed and hardships and in order to maintain it; the same discipline was required. A huge and well organized army was required for this purpose. Chandragupta maintained it religiously. The army was divided into six parts: (i) Infantry, (ii) Navy, (iii) Cavalry, (iv) Chariot, (v) Elephant riders and (vi) Services. Plini has written that the huge army was maintained by a commissioner.

There were five forts: (i) stable fort, (ii) water fort, (iii) forest fort, (iv) hilly fort and (v) desert fort. There were several factories for manufacturing arms and weapons. Megasthenes maintains: 'The soldiers got enough wages so that they could live life comfortably. Chandragupta with the help of powerful army succeeded in establishing the vast empire.'

### 1.10.6 Police and Espionage Systems

The Mauryan espionage system was very efficient. Its chief official was *Mahapatra Pasarp* to whom secret agents called *Char* reported. The secret services comprised:

- **Sansthas:** They stayed at one place and delivered secret news and consisted of students and common men.
- **Sancharas:** They travelled from one place to another and gathered news. Apart from this, secret writing was also known.

### 1.10.7 Socio-economic Changes Under the Mauryan Empire

The chief source of revenue was the land. The income from the state's land was called *sita*, while the income from the farmers' land was called *bhag*. 1/6 part of a farmer's total produce was taken by the state as revenue. The income from the towns was called *durg*. People were generally affluent and behaved kindly with the have-nots.

#### Welfare measures

The Mauryan state carried out welfare activities for the needy and cared for the holistic upliftment of people at large. The state developed transportation facilities and constructed rest houses on highways. It also arranged for shadowy trees and drinking water for travellers. Apart from these, the state also constructed hospitals for the poor.

The Mauryan administration was very well organized. The Mauryas formed a kind of administrative set up that the Gupta rulers followed in the later times. Raichaudhary opines: 'In order to unite the bits and pieces of India, to give a practical form to the ideals of the universal king and to bring this country with the rest of the world, a courageous and gallant man was needed and it was the luck of this country that very soon it got such a universal king called Chandragupta. He founded a well organized kingdom.'

#### Mauryan society

The Mauryan period is famous for the organization of the society in the Indian history. The chief specialties of the social organization of this time may be discussed under the following heads:

- **Social condition:** People were happy and affluent during this period. Not only the necessities of personal life but the pleasure of social life was also available to these people.
- **Varnashram system:** The society was divided into various *varnas*. According to *Arthashastra*, the society was divided into four *varnas*: Brahmanas, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, but Megasthenes has written that the society was divided into seven castes. These castes were farmer, philosopher, *gop shikari*, labourer, kshatriya, president and minister or *sabhasad*. Once someone relinquished his profession, he was not allowed to practise the profession again. The description of seven castes by Megasthenes does not seem proper, but it was definite that the caste system had become complex. Life was divided into four *Ashramas*: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasthashram*, *Vanprasthashram* and *Sanyas*. According to Kautilya, truth, *suchita*, non-violence, compassion, forgiveness, etc., were necessary for all the *varnas*. Slavery was also in vogue.
- **Marriage:** The basis of family life was marriage. The main reason for marriage was the production of children. Usually marriages took place within the same castes. It was considered to be a main ritual. Marriage was of eight types: *Brahma*, *Dev*, *Arya*, *Prajapatya*, *Aasur*, *Gandharv*, *Rakshas* and *Paisach*.

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- **Condition of women:** The condition of women in the Mauryan age was worse as compared to the Vedic period. Sati and widow remarriage was practised. After the death of husbands, the wives happily burnt themselves on the pyre of their husbands and those who restrained from doing so were not considered respectful. Women had no individual, civil or political rights. There are also evidences of prostitution. Kautilya maintained that a prostitute gave a part of her income as tax. Women had right to basic education.
- **Sources of entertainment:** The abundance and variety of sources of entertainment reflect the affluence of the materialistic life of the common people during the Mauryan period. The chief sources of entertainment were hunting, wrestling, chariot racing, horse racing, animal fights, dance, *chaupad* and music. People celebrated many festivals.

### **Economic condition**

The economic life during the Mauryan period had prospered abundantly. Agriculture, trade and industry developed and strengthened the economic conditions of people. The chief occupation in the Mauryan period was agriculture. The economic life was dependent on agriculture. There were three types of lands: *krista* (arable land), *akrista* (non-arable land) and *sthal* (barren land). The chief produces were wheat, rice, legume, cotton and sesame, of which a certain percentage was taken by the state as tax. Megasthenes has written that India had never experienced famine; the farmers were affluent and happy.

### **Religious life**

The foundation of the Mauryan Empire witnessed a major transformation in religious beliefs of the Indians. In this period, brahminical religion was in dominance. People believed in rituals promoted by the Brahmins and prayed to various Vedic gods and goddesses like Indra, Varun, Skandh, Shiv and Vishnu. Yagna and other rituals were performed for personal benefits. Buddhism became famous due to Ashoka's propagation of it. Apart from Buddhism; Jainism was also practised. One other religion which was constantly growing during this period was *Bhagwat* religion, which gave more emphasis on the complete devotion and surrender to one's own divine.

### **Trade and commerce in the Mauryan period**

The Mauryan period saw an unprecedented development of trade and industries. Kautilya's accounts state that homemade silk and Chinese silk industry was quite developed during the Mauryan period. Apart from these, the industries producing metal and ivory objects were also developing. Pot makers, blacksmiths and carpenters had also diversified their profession.

### **Commerce**

Imports as well as exports were in vogue during this period. Clothes, jewellery, artefacts, scent, horses, etc., were exported. According to Greek writers, trade was carried out on land as well as sea routes. Mention of weaver and blacksmith



organizations, which had political and economic powers, is also available in contemporary accounts. The foreign and inland trade got promotion from affluent industries.

### Trade

The growth of agriculture and different professions gave a great fillip to trade. There was a brisk internal trade. Fa-Hein's description reveals that traders were given full freedom. They could easily move from one place to another. During this period, a good trade relation existed with foreign countries also. For internal trade, there were good means of transportation. The people carried their goods from place to place through seas and land routes. In those days, Ujjain, Banaras, Vaisali, Gaya, Prayaga, Pataliputra and Mathura were the important centres of trade. These towns were linked through a network of roads. The roads were safe and Fa-Hien did not come across any road accident. The merchants carried their goods on bullock carts. Rivers Ganga, Krishna, Godavari and Brahamaputra were utilized for trade. Trade commodities are not known definitely but it can at least be said that it must have been carried on in cloth, wheat, spices, salt, diamonds and precious stones.

Trade through rivers proved cheap and comfortable. During this period, the ship-building industry also flourished. Tamralipti, a port in Bengal, was an important centre from where trade was carried on with the eastern countries like China, Ceylon, Java and Sumatra. In Andhra, there were many ports on the banks of rivers Godavari and Krishna. Tondai was a famous port of the Chola state. These ports not only helped trade flourish but also carried Indian culture and civilization in all parts of Asia. Ports also helped trade with western countries. There are various evidences on the basis of which it can be said that the Roman merchants used to trade through these ports. On important places, lighthouses were erected for sailors' convenience. Kalyana, Chol, Broach, Cambay were the important ports of South India through which pearls, precious stones, clothes, scents, spices, medicines, coconut and ivory were exported. Copper, tin, lead, dates and horses were other important articles of import.

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## 1.11 CAUSES FOR THE DECLINE OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

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In 184 BC, the last Mauryan king Brihadratha was killed by his commander Pushyamitra Shunga, who then established the Shunga dynasty in Magadha. Several reasons were responsible for the decline of the Mauryan empire. Some of them are discussed as follows:

- **Monarchical type of government:** Monarchical type of government in itself is a great weakness. A day is bound to come when strong kings will be followed by weak ones and the empire will inevitably decline. Dr J.N. Sarkar, a prominent historian, has pointed out, 'If we turn the pages of Indian history we shall not come across even a single dynasty which might have produced more than five powerful kings. So a day is bound to come when strong kings

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will be followed by weak kings and the empire would decay.' Asoka too was succeeded by weak kings who neither possessed the same personality nor the same prowess, so the empire followed the path of disintegration.

- **Asoka's propagation of ahimsa:** Some writers ascribe the downfall of the Mauryas to Asoka's policy of Ahimsa. Asoka, after the Kalinga war, did not wage war and instead of conquest of territories, he began with the conquest of dharma. As a result of which, the military strength of the Mauryan empire declined, the militant attitudes also began to be absent from the minds of the people. Asoka's successors too followed the path of Ahimsa which further rendered the empire militarily impotent. It was due to this reason that Mauryan empire could not survive long after Asoka's death.
- **Oppressive attitude of the official:** In the outlying provinces of the Mauryan empire the governors tyrannized and oppressed the people due to which revolts were a common occurrence. During the reign of Bindusara the people of Takshasila rose into rebellion against the maladministration and the oppressive rule of the governors. Such revolts were there even during the reign of Asoka. After the death of Asoka, Takshasila was the first province to declare its independence.
- **Wide extent of empire:** The Mauryan empire had become sufficiently vast which could only be controlled by a strong hand like Asoka or Chandragupta Maurya. Asoka's successors, as weak they were, could not control such a vast empire. Moreover, the lack of the means of transportation and communication also loosened the hold of central authority on far-off cities. The result was the disintegration of the entire empire.
- **Division of empire:** Asoka's death was followed by the division of empire amongst his sons and grandsons. While Jalauka became the ruler of Kashmir, Virasena established his sway over Gandhara. The remaining empire was divided between Samprati and Dasratha. This division sounded the death knell of the Mauryan empire.
- **Lack of law of succession:** There existed no definite law of succession in the Mauryan empire, as a result of which there followed a war of succession amongst the sons and grandsons of Asoka. The palace had become a virtual centre of conspiracies. It is believed that as a result of such conspiracy, Kunala was blinded by his stepmother.
- **Disloyalty of the officials:** During the later Mauryan kings, the court and the palace had become centres of conspiracies and the officials had become disloyal. The example of Pushyamitra is a testimony to this belief.
- **Deterioration in financial conditions:** Now it is also believed that proper care was not taken to collect the revenues as a result of which the later Mauryan kings had to face a financial crisis. The internal rebellions too emptied the treasury. The administration also suffered and so the empire became weak.
- **Ambition of Pushyamitra:** Pushyamitra Sunga was the Commander-in-Chief of the last Mauryan king, Brihadratha. He was an ambitious man. He

took full advantage of the weak position of the king and killed him, thereby becoming the ruler. He also laid the foundation of the Sunga empire in Magadha.

### Shastri's theory of the Mauryan decline

In 1910, Haraprasad Shastri, a Bengali historiographer and academician, propounded this theory of the Mauryan decline according to which Brahminical reaction sapped the vitality of Mauryan authority and shattered its very foundations. Shastri has advanced the following arguments in support of his theory:

- The first and the foremost cause of the alienation of the Brahminas was Asoka's edicts against the animal sacrifice. Shastri maintains that these edicts were directed against Brahminas as animal sacrifice formed an important part of Brahminical rituals. As a result of which the Brahminas felt offended and they revolted against the Mauryas.
- Having referred to the prohibition of animal sacrifices, Shastri goes on to say, 'this was followed by another edict in which Asoka boasted that those who were regarded as gods on earth have been reduced by him into false gods. If it means anything it means that the Brahminas who were regarded as Bhudevas or gods on earth had been shown up by him.'
- The appointment of Dharma-Mahamatras, i.e., Superintendent of Morals was a direct invasion on the rights and privileges of Brahminas, which the Brahminas could not tolerate.
- Another cause of the alienation of Brahminas was a passage where Asoka insisted upon his officers strictly observing the principles of Danda-Samata and Vyavahara-Samata. Shastri takes his expressions to mean equality of punishment and equality in law-suits irrespective of caste, colour and creed, and adds that this order, was very offensive to the Brahmins who claimed many privileges including immunity from capital punishment.
- In conclusion, Pandit Shastri refers to the assassination of the last Maurya king Brihadratha by Pushyamitra Sunga. He says, 'We clearly see the hands of the Brahminas in the great revolution.' Pushyamitra killed Brihadratha because he was a Brahmin.

### Raychaudhuri's objections

Dr Hemachandra Raychaudhuri has not accepted the arguments advanced by Haraprasad Shastri in support of his theory. He has criticized all the arguments in the following manner:

- As regards the first point, Dr Raychaudhuri has pointed out that prohibition of animal sacrifices did not necessarily imply hostilities towards the Brahminas. Long before Asoka, the Sruti literature contain references against sacrifices and in favour of Ahimsa. In the *Chhadogya Upanisad*, Ghora Angirasa lays great stress on Ahimsa and non-killing of animal. If Asoka prohibited animal sacrifice there was no question of the alienation of Brahminas.

### NOTES

## NOTES

- As regards the second argument advanced by Pandit Shastri, Raychaudhri says that the former has not followed the correct interpretation. The meaning of the entire passage is ‘during that time the men in India who had been unassociated with the gods became associated with them.’ There is thus no question of ‘showing up’ anybody.
- The appointment of *Dharma Mahamatras* was not a direct invasion upon the privilege of the Brahmanas. Because first of all they were not simply superintendents of morals, they also had other enormous duties. Moreover, there is nothing to show that the Dharma Mahamatras were wholly recruited from non-Brahminas.
- By *Danda-Samata* or *Vyavahara Samata* (equality of treatment or punishment) Asoka did not want to infringe the rights and privileges of the Brahminas; rather, he was desirous of introducing uniformity in judicial procedure in his empire. It is to be understood in connection with the general principles of decentralization. It did not necessarily infringe on the alleged immunity of the Brahminas from capital punishment.
- As regards the fifth argument advanced by Pandit Shastri, there is no denying the fact that the last Mauryan King Brihadratha was put to death by Pushyamitra who was a Brahmin, but we must not forget that Pushyamitra was also the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Mauryas, and he took advantage of his position. Such rebellions are numerous in history. Moreover, if the relations of the Mauryas and the Brahmanas would not have been cordial, how could it be possible that a Brahmin might assume the office of the Commander-in-chief?

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. What is the primary source of our knowledge on the Mauryan Empire?
14. What were the main centres of clothes under the Mauryan Empire?
15. List the various coins that were minted under the Mauryan Empire?

## 1.12 SUMMARY

- There are two primary types of sources of history: literary and archaeological.
- Literary sources refer to written accounts. Archaeological sources refer to concrete objects from the past which have survived over the years. These include ruins of buildings, bits of pottery, jewellery or pieces of stone.
- The Indus Valley Civilization also called Harappan Civilization, flourished from about 3,000BC to 1,500BC.
- Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal and Ropar were some of the important sites of the Indus Valley Civilization.

- In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhal Das Banerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the European had flourished in India.
- Maximum remains of the Indus Valley Civilization have been found in the valley of the river Indus, from where the civilization derives its name.
- The Harappan Civilization was spread across Punjab and Sindh, in the valleys of North-western frontiers mainly Kathiawad, Rajasthan and Doab.
- The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton. They wore cotton and woollen clothes.
- Agriculture being the chief occupation, the Indus people used to domesticate buffaloes, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, oxen, etc. The people also earned their living by domestication of animals, which were also helpful in agriculture.
- Next to agriculture, pottery seems to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel.
- The shape of the city was rectangular. The roads crossed each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block, there was a network of narrow lanes.
- At Mohenjodaro, which means 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi, the most remarkable feature was the Great Bath. It was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres.
- Like their contemporaries, the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people, the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea.
- Although the Indus Valley Civilization declined and disappeared, its influence on the Indian culture remains.
- The worship of the Mother Goddess in image form as the symbol of female power or *shakti* was introduced in the Later Vedic Age.
- The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits. Though this civilization began to decline by 1500BC, the exact causes of the decline are not known. The most commonly accepted theory is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or changes in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration.
- The information about the early Aryans is based on the excavations at Bhagwanpura in Haryana and three other sites in Punjab, which have revealed many pottery pieces dating from 1,500BC to 1,000BC.
- Since the main source of information about the Aryans is the Vedic literature, this period is also called the Vedic Age.
- The Early Vedic period extends from 1,500BC to 1,000BC.

## NOTES

## NOTES

- The Aryans first settled in the region of Punjab. This is proved by the fact that the rivers Kuruman, Kabul and the other western tributaries of the Indus are mentioned in the Rig Veda.
- The Indo-Aryans settled in the region of the waning Indus Valley Civilization, i.e., across the river Indus.
- The agriculture was the chief occupation of the Aryans. They also reared animals. Oxen, horses, dogs, goats and sheep were mainly domesticated. by them and they considered cow to be pious and important.
- The early Vedic society consisted of four varnas—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. There was no complication in the varna system. The basis of varna was occupation rather than birth in the beginning.
- The earliest evidence of iron covering a time span of 1300–1000BC is from southern Rajasthan, marking the advent of iron. This age was associated with specific culture traits, particularly painted grey ware, black and red ware and megalithic graves.
- During the Later Vedic period, the Aryan civilization gradually extended towards the east and the south. The centre of culture shifted to Kurukshetra, and Madhyadesa. The land of the Yamuna and the Ganga came into prominence.
- The Vedic Aryans were well known for their technology related to tanning of leather, fermentation of grains and fruits, and dyed scale production of copper, iron and steel, brass, silver and gold and their alloys.
- During this period most of the agricultural implements and weapons of war were made of iron. Artisans and craftsmen produced goods of fine quality. They were organized into guilds. The guilds regulated the prices. These professions became hereditary with time and constituted subcastes or *jatis*.
- The 23rd Tirthankara was Parsavanath, who was a historical figure. Parsavanath probably lived in eight century BC, and probably died 250 years before the death of Mahavira.
- Another great religious reformation movement of sixth century BC was Buddhism, which gave the biggest challenge to Brahmanism.
- Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan empire. The rulers of the Mauryan period organized the administration system, which resulted in the all round development of India. India constructed a new world on the basis of peace, brotherhood and cultural unity under the rule of the Mauryas.
- Under the Mauryans, India was an agricultural country. According to Megasthenes, majority of the population consisted of the agriculturists. They neither participated in warfare nor did they participate in the state affairs. They were not harmed during wars. The tillers of the soil carried on their work uninterruptedly.
- During the Mauryan times the cloth industry had greatly developed. The main clothes centres were Kashi, Vatsa, Madura, Vanga, Apranta, etc.

- Spinning was done by the spinning wheels and big looms were used for weaving clothes. According to *Arthashastra* and Megasthenes, cotton was produced in great quantity; the weavers of cotton clothes worked round the clock.
- Various kinds of coins were used in the Mauryan era. Some of them were as follows:
  - o Gold coins known as *Sauvamik*
  - o Silver coins called *Kashaparna*
  - o Copper coins called *Mashka*
  - o *Kakni* was also a copper coin which was less valuable than *Mashka*
- Though Asoka is known as the greatest king of India, historians learned about him only in the 19th century.
- In 1837, a British scholar named James Prinsep deciphered the inscriptions on the pillars and rocks that are found in many parts of India. The script was identified as Brahmi and it was concluded that Asoka and the ruler named Devanampiyasa Priyadarsi were one and the same person. An inscription discovered by James Prinsep used the name Asoka along with the other name. These inscriptions gave historians valuable information about Asoka's rule and the extent and condition of his empire.
- The land Asoka ruled stretched from the Himalayas in Nepal and Kashmir to Mysore in the south, from Afghanistan in the northwest to the banks of the River Brahmaputra in the east. In the west his territory covered Saurashtra and Junagarh.
- Kalinga was one of the kingdoms, which remained unconquered and hostile when Asoka succeeded to the throne.
- The word 'dhamma' was derived from the Sanskrit word 'dharma'.
- Asoka followed the principles of Buddhism—that of truth, charity, kindness, purity and goodness. He wanted his people to lead pure and virtuous lives, irrespective of their religion or culture. He considered all subjects his children. He explained his ideas in his edicts by engraving his principles on pillars throughout his kingdom. The edicts were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common people, so that they could understand and follow them.
- The causes for the downfall of Mauryan dynasty were many, among which the most important were the vastness of the empire; incapable successors; deteriorating financial position and disloyalty of the chief army officials.

## NOTES

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### 1.13 KEY TERMS

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- **Citadel:** A raised part of a city surrounded by walls for protection
- **Granary:** An area for storage of grains
- **Seal:** An engraved piece of metal used as a stamp for identification
- **Pictograph:** A picture representing a word or phrase

## NOTES

- **Varna system:** The system of division of the society on the basis of occupation
- **Brahmins:** Priests and teachers who performed religious ceremonies
- **Kshatriyas:** Warriors who fought to protect the people
- **Janas:** Different tribal settlements of the Indian subcontinent in the Vedic age
- **Gramas:** A village or the smallest unit of the *jana* comprising a number of families
- **Sabha:** A small committee of selected elders
- **Samiti:** A general assembly of the whole tribe
- **Guilds:** A society of people with similar jobs, interests or aims
- **Stupa:** A mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics, typically the remains of Buddha

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### 1.14 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. The two main sources of ancient Indian history are:
  - (a) Archaeological evidences
  - (b) Literary evidences
2. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhaldas Bannerjee, carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the European had flourished in India.
3. The cities belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization were divided into a lower town area and the citadel.
4. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people of the Indus Valley.
5. The most commonly accepted theory among historians as to the reason why the Indus Valley Civilization declined is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or changes in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration.
6. Agriculture and cattle rearing were the main occupations of the early Aryans.
7. The Aryans gave up their nomadic life and settled down in the north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent in the form of different tribal settlements known as janas and the land where they settled was called Janapada.
8. A village or grama was the smallest unit of the jana. A grama would comprise a number of families. Each tribe had a chieftain called a rajan, whose chief function was to protect the tribe from external attacks and maintain law and order.
9. The history of the later Vedic period is based mainly on the Vedic texts, which were compiled after the age of the Rig Veda.
10. The 23rd Tirthankara was a historical figure known as Parsvanath.



11. The values included in the eight folded path are:
  - (i) Right views
  - (ii) Right aspirations
  - (iii) Right speech
  - (iv) Right action
  - (v) Right living
  - (vi) Right efforts
  - (vii) Right mindfulness
  - (viii) Right contemplation or meditation
12. After the demise of Buddha, Buddhism was sharply divided into two sects, namely Hinayana and Mahayana.
13. The primary source of our knowledge on the Mauryan Empire is based on the *Arthashastra* by Chanakya, which is a treatise on statecraft.
14. The main centres of clothes under the Mauryan Empire were Kashi, Vatsa, Madura, Vanga, Apranta, and so on.
15. The following were the Mauryan coins:
  - Gold coins known as *Sauvamik*
  - Silver coins called *Kashaparna*
  - Copper coins called *Mashaka*
  - *Kakni* was also a copper coin which was less valuable to *Mashaka*

## NOTES

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### 1.15 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the different sources of ancient Indian history.
2. What was the geographical expanse of the Indus Valley Civilization?
3. What are the varnas? How are they classified?
4. Who was Megathenes?
5. How was the Vedic polity structured?
6. What is the earliest source of information about the Aryans?
7. What effect did the Battle of Kalinga have on Asoka?
8. What were the causes for the decline of the Mauryan Empire?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the dress and ornaments used by the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.
2. What were the trade practices that were prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization?
3. What are the characteristic features of Indus Valley Civilization?

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4. Discuss the architecture of the Indus Valley Civilization.
5. Explain the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley people.
6. What were the major occupations of Aryans in the Early Vedic period?
7. Explain the political structure of the Early Vedic age.
8. Write a note on the economic conditions of India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya.
9. What are the basic principles of Asoka's 'dhamma'?

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**1.16 FURTHER READING**

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## **UNIT 2 KUSHANAS EMPIRE AND THE GUPTA AGE**

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### **NOTES**

#### **Structure**

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Kushanas Empire
  - 2.2.1 Kanishka
- 2.3 Satavahanas
  - 2.3.1 Origin and Chronology
  - 2.3.2 Important Rulers
  - 2.3.3 The Contribution of the Satavahanas
- 2.4 The Gupta Age
  - 2.4.1 Important Rulers of the Gupta Period
- 2.5 Gupta Administration
  - 2.5.1 Decline of the Guptas
- 2.6 Socio-Economic and Cultural Life of the Guptas
  - 2.6.1 Development of Science During Gupta Period
  - 2.6.2 Social Conditions
- 2.7 Educational Institutions in Ancient India: Vikramsila and Nalanda
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Key Terms
- 2.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.11 Questions and Exercises
- 2.12 Further Reading

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### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

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The decline of the Mauryan Empire was a setback to the political unity of India. As the vast empire began to disintegrate, many small kingdoms emerged throughout the country. Taking advantage of this weakness, many tribes and powerful rulers from outside began to make inroads into the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent. In the course of time, they adopted Indian culture and became a part of the Indian population. One of these kingdoms was the Kushanas. During this period, the Satavahanas also emerged a major power in South India. However, the most important period after the Mauryans were most definitely the Gupta period.

The Gupta Dynasty, famed as 'Golden Age' of ancient India, has a special importance in the history of India. The Gupta rulers re-established the political unity that existed during the Mauryan period, and ruled over a large principality of northern India. The Gupta Age is marked as an era of unprecedented progress in all aspects of polity, religion, art and literature. The lifestyle and culture of the Gupta dynasty is known through the availability of various ancient coins, scriptures, inscriptions, texts, etc. belonging to that era.

## NOTES

The most striking development of the Gupta period was the thriving trade and commerce between India and the rest of the world. India imported from the Roman Empire things like topaz, linen, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, wine, wheat, etc. The Romans also exported to India wine and red glazed Arretine ware. They also sent to India a large number of gold and silver coins. A large number of guilds were also formed during this period. They brought members of the same profession or craft together, regulated their business on mutual goodwill and served as banks giving loans and receiving deposits on interest. Indian history is proud of the Gupta emperors who nurtured Indian culture and protected Indian nationalism.

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### 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the administrative set-up of the Gupta empire
- Assess the causes of disintegration of the Gupta Empire
- Analyse Kanishka's achievements as an able ruler
- Discuss the Satavahanas of southern India

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### 2.2 KUSHANAS EMPIRE

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The Kushanas played an important role in the history of early Indian culture. According to Chinese historians, the Kushanas were a part of the Yueh-chi race constituted by nomadic groups that inhabited the borders of modern China. They were driven out from the lands which they had conquered from the Sakas and were forced to resume their march. They occupied the valley of the Oxus and had subjugated its peaceful inhabitants. It is possible that the Yueh-chi dominion extended over Bactria to the south of the Oxus. By 10 BC the Yueh-chi lost their nomadic habits and settled down.

#### 2.2.1 Kanishka

Kanishka was undoubtedly the most striking figure from the Kushana Dynasty. A great conqueror and a patron of Buddhism, he combined in himself the military abilities of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Asoka. However, there is no unanimity among scholars regarding the date of his accession of the throne even though most of them believe that Kanishka was the founder of the Saka era which started in 78AD. He ascended to the throne in the same year.

## **Conquests**

Kanishka's empire included Afghanistan, a large part of Sindh, Parthia, Bactria and Punjab. His predecessor had suffered a defeat at the hands of the Chinese. Kanishka was confident of his military strength and wanted to reclaim his territory. Kanishka can be given credit for having completed in his earlier years the subjugation and annexation of Kashmir. However, we do not have any details of this war with the ruler of Kashmir. It is believed that Kanishka built a number of monuments and also founded a town known as Kanishkpura which is now the village of Kanispor. There is no reliable evidence to show that Kanishka waged any war against the ruler of Magadha. However, it is stated in the Buddhist literature that after the capture of Pataliputra, Asvaghosha, the great Buddhist philosopher was captured by Kanishka. There is no doubt that Asvaghosha was one of the luminaries in Kanishka's court.

Kanishka is said to have waged war against the western satraps of Ujjain. He defeated Chastitan, the Saka ruler, who acknowledged Kanishka's supremacy and surrendered a portion of Malwa to him. Kanishka had also engaged in a successful war with the Parthians too. It is said that Kanishka completed the Kushana conquest of upper India and ruled over a wide realm which extended from Kapisa, Gandhara and Kashmir to Banaras. His empire extended over north-western India probably as the Vindhyas in the South, as well as over the remote regions beyond the Pamir pass. Kanishka ruled over this vast empire from his capital at Peshawar or Purushpur.

## **Kanishka's public works**

Like Asoka, Kanishka was a great builder of Stupas and cities. He erected in his capital a monastery and a huge wooden tower in which he placed some relics of the Buddha. An important relic of this period is a statue of Kanishka with a missing head. Besides the Shah-ji-ki dheri at Peshawar, his important buildings and works of art are found in Peshawar, Mathura, Kanishkapura and Takshasila. Mathura became an important centre of art during the time of Kanishka. Kanishka beautified the city with a large number of monasteries, statues and sculptures.

## **Kanishka's religion**

The question of Kanishka's religion is a controversial one. He helped in the spread of Buddhism, many old monasteries were repaired and many new ones were also built. Kanishka invited scholars for the fourth Buddhist Council which was attended by five hundred monks. The truth is that before his conversion to Buddhism, he believed in many gods, which is clearly reflected in his earlier coins. However, he ultimately embraced Buddhism and promoted it as the state religion.

## **NOTES**

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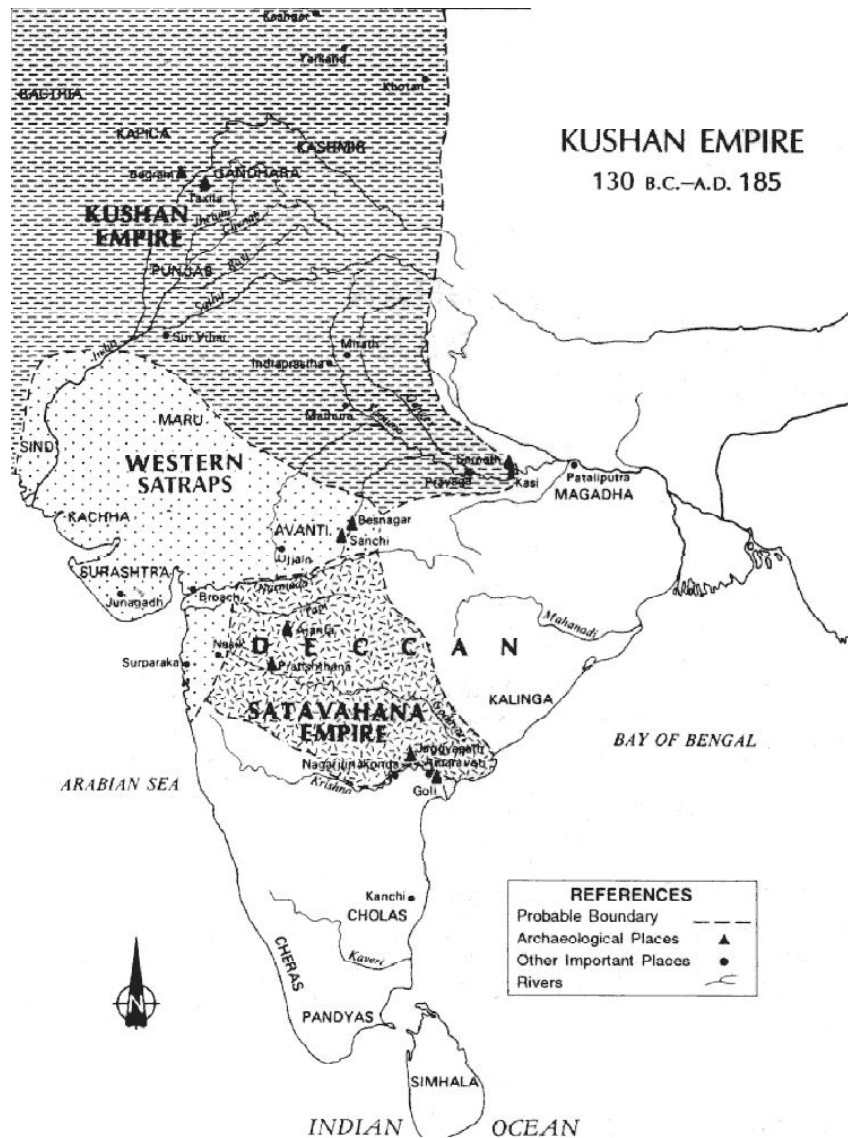


Fig. 2.1 Expanse of the Kushana Empire

**Kanishka’s estimate as a ruler**

Kanishka was undoubtedly one of the greatest kings of ancient India. He was an excellent warrior, an efficient empire-builder and a brilliant patron of art and learning. No Indian ruled over such a vast empire as was done by Kanishka. He was the only Indo-Asiatic king whose territories extended beyond the Pamirs.

Kanishka occupied a unique position in Indian history. He was not only a great conqueror, but also a great administrator. It is worthy of note here that not a single revolt was reported during his reign.

**Downfall of the Kushana Empire**

The mighty Kushana Empire reached its zenith during the time of Kanishka I. Under him, the Kushanas were feared not only in India, but also in Central Asia. However,

his successors failed to maintain his feat. Vasishka, the successor of Kanishka I, is stated to have ruled only over Mathura and its surrounding regions. Probably, he had the Sanchi region also under his control. As no inscription of Vasishka has been discovered in any other part of India, it is concluded that he lost control over the distant parts of the Kushana Empire. No cause is given for the collapse of the Kushana power during his reign, but it is contended that the collapse was merely a temporary one.

Kanishka was succeeded by Huvishka and the latter is stated to have recovered the fortunes of the Kushanas during his long and prosperous rule lasting for more than thirty years. Inscriptions showing references to Kanishka well found not only in the Mathura region but in North-West frontier India and also in eastern Afghanistan. It is contended that the region lying about thirty miles to the west of Kabul was included in Huvishka's empire. He is described as Maharajadhiraja Huvishka. Kanishka II is also stated to have ruled at the same time as a contemporary of Huvishka.

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudeva I. Even though there is no evidence regarding the exact limits of his empire, it is assumed that his rule did not extend beyond a parts of modern Uttar Pradesh. Almost all the Brahmani inscriptions have been found in Mathura and its neighbourhood. It appears that the imperial Kushanas of India had by this time lost their hold over the extreme northern and north-western parts of India. It is possible that the local chiefs took advantage of the weakness of the central power and declared independence. The last known date of Vasudeva is around AD 176-77 and soon after his death the mighty Kushana Empire dissolved away.

It is practically impossible to give an orderly account of the successors of Vasudeva I. Our only sources of information are the coins and they do not give us any definite information. However, it is maintained that Vasudeva was succeeded by Kanishka III who is believed to have ruled from about AD 210 to 230.

The final breakup of the Kushana Empire seems to have happened during the reigns of the successors of Vasudeva II. Most of the territories in the interior of India were lost to the Indian chiefs. Most important of them were the Nagas, the Yaudheyas, Malavas and the Kunindas. The evidence from the inscriptions tells us that the Nagas came into prominence more than a century before the reign of Chandragupta II. The early Nagas held control over Padmavati and Mathura which were formerly included in the Kushana Empire. The Puranas tells us that seven kings had already ruled at Mathura and nine at Padmavati when the Guptas came to power. All these must have been done by the Nagas at the expense of the Kushanas and that partly explains the disappearance of the Kushana Empire.

The Yaugheyas, a martial tribe, also had a significant role in the destruction of the Kushana Empire. Their rule over the areas on the banks of the Sutlej as far as the borders of Bahawalpur lasted for more than a century. The copper coins of the Yaudheyas are similar to those of Kushanas. It appears that the Yaudheyas made these coins after the Kushanas were overthrown.

## NOTES

## NOTES

The Malavas and the Kunindas became independent after successfully revolting against the authority of the Kushanas. They divided between themselves the territories formerly held by the Kushanas. While the Malavas made Malvanagar in Rajputana their capital, the Kunindas occupied the territory between the Yamuna and the Sutlej as well as the upper courses of the Beas and the Sutlej.

Another cause of the downfall of the Kushana Empire was the rise of the Sassanian Satraps and the Satavahana power in Iran. The Sassanian Empire was founded in AD225-26 by Ardeshir I and from the very beginning its rulers turned their attention towards the East. Ardeshir I came as far as Khorasan. It is stated that the Kushana Shah or ruler sent his envoy to Ardeshir I to acknowledge his suzerainty. Gradually, the Sassanian power extended towards Seeistan. In course of time, it spread over parts of western and central India and the north-western regions and borderlands of India. The Sassanian expansion towards western and central India was made at the expense of the Western Satraps and the Satavahanas. Not only Bactria, but also the whole of north-western India became important provinces in the eastern division of the Sassanian Empire. An attempt was made by the Kushanas to become independent of the Sassanians in the time of Emperor Varhram II (AD276–93) but this seems to have failed. It is obvious that the rising power of the Sassanians dealt a severe blow to the declining strength of the Kushanas in the northern and western parts of India and beyond.

It appears that, in course of time, the Kushanas on the border of India and also in Punjab intermingled with other tribes. They continued their chequered existence even up to the time of Samudra Gupta and the latter subdued them. They are described in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi. In the later part of the 4th century and early 5th centuries, the Kushanas got a new title— Kidara. Their existence has been proved by the discovery of a large number of coins. However, it is difficult to say anything about the exact period of their rule, their order of succession and even the limits of their territory.

### **Kushana administration**

A critical study of the coins and inscriptions of the Kushanas helps us to gather an idea of India under the Kushanas. We find that the administrative systems of the Kushanas were a mix of both foreign elements and Indian elements. The important foreign element was the government by *satraps*. The latter were viceroys or governors of the provinces. There were some functionaries who had foreign names. The name *strategos* stood for a general or military governor, while *meridach* represented district magistrate. *Amatyas* and *mahasenapatis* were officers of Indian origin. The officers having foreign names were stationed in the North-West, while officers having Indian names were stationed in the interiors.

Kingship was the prevailing type of polity, although there are references to republics also. The Kushana rulers took up such titles as *Mahisvara*, *Devaputra*, *Kaiser* and *Shahi-Sahanushabi*. There was a tendency to deify ancestral kings. The Mathura inscription of Huvishka refers to a *devakula* or a shrine where the statue 'the grand father of Kanishka' was installed. A strange system of two kings ruling at the same time also prevailed during the Kushana period. It is also known



that Kanishka II and Huvishka ruled jointly. It is possible that this institution was borrowed from the Indo-Greeks.

The Kushana kings are said to have had unfettered powers. Although there is a reference to an advisory body to assist the king in Buddhist literature, it is not safe to assert that such a council existed in the Kushana period as there is no reference to such a body in the Kushana records.

The satrapas in India were called *mahakshatrapas* and *kshatrapas*. Some of them are mentioned as *rajan mahakshatrapas*. These officials had powers to issue coins. The assumption of the title points its conferment by some overlord. The term *kshatrapas* in Sanskrit literature is used in the sense of dominion, rule and power, as exercised by gods and men. It is used in the sense of a ruler in the Rig Veda. Even before the Kushanas, there were *Kshatrapas* of Kapisa and Abhisara Prastha and of Mathura. The Kushana rulers followed the system of their predecessors. Kanishka's *kshatrapas* enjoyed a position different from that of the western *kshatrapas*. It is pointed out that if the *kshatrapas* had been independent, their names would have occurred in the inscriptions and not those of Kanishka or Huvishka alone.

The terms *dandanayaka* and *maha dandanayaka* formed a link in the Kushana administrative machinery. These terms occur for the first time in the Kushana records. The term *dandanakaya* has been translated as 'magistrate', 'the leader of the four forces of the army,' a fortunate general, 'commander of force', a 'judge', 'administrator of punishment', 'criminal magistrate', 'the great leader of the forces', 'prefect of police' and 'Commissioner of Police'. It is maintained that *dandanayakas* were feudatory chiefs who were appointed by the king. They owed allegiance to the king and were required to render civil and military service. The civil aid was in the form of personal service for maintaining law and order. The Kushanas were the first to introduce this system which was later followed by the Guptas. The names of all the *kshatrapas*, *mahakshatrapas* and *mahadandanayakas* appear to be foreign and that explains the absence of Indian official heads at the higher level.

There are references to *gramikas* and *padrapalas*. The term *gramika* was used for the head of the village while *padrapala* was a local head. Some historians hold the view that the Kushana administration must have ensured safety as there are references to people coming to Mathura from Abhisar, Nagara, Odayana and even Wokhana or Badakshan. The administration was responsible for the safety and security of the common people that helped in the progress and prosperity of the country. This was evident from the life of the people in general and a large number of welfare schemes that were initiated by the rulers of the state.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who were the Kushanas?
2. Under whose reign did the Kushana Empire reached its zenith?
3. Who were the Yaugheyas?

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## 2.3 SATAVAHANAS

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### NOTES

#### 2.3.1 Origin and Chronology

The word Satavahana represents a *kula* or family while Andhara is the name of a *jati* or tribe. The Satvahana family of Andhra *jati* established an independent kingdom in the West and East of South India in the first century AD. It has also been said that originally the Satavahanas did not belong to the Andhra stock. But when in later times their political authority was confined to the territory at the mouth of the river Krishna, the name Andhra was applied to them.

However, there is no doubt that the Satavahanas belonged to the Dravidian stock and, later on, were accepted within the Aryan fold. Dr K. Gopalacharya has regarded Satavahana rulers as Kshatriyas while Dr Raychaudhuri has stated that they were Brahamins with a little admixture of Naga blood. A majority of scholars have accepted them as Brahamins.

There is a difference of opinion amongst scholars regarding the chronology of Satavahanas. The Matsya-Purana states that the family ruled for 400 years and had 30 kings though it names only 19 of them. The Vayu-Purana states that it ruled for 300 years and had only 19 rulers. Therefore, Dr Raychaudhuri has concluded that the main family ruled for 300 years and had 19 rulers while some off shoots of the family ruled for another hundred years and had 11 more rulers. However, it is generally accepted that after the downfall of the Mauryas, the Andhras established an independent kingdom in the South-West. Simuka, in the late first century BC, laid the foundation of this great family and it ruled up to the middle of the third century AD.

#### 2.3.2 Important Rulers

The founder of the dynasty was Simuka. He established his independent kingdom in the later period of the first century BC and ruled for 23 years. He destroyed the Kanvas of Magadha and, later, the Sungas of Vidisha and occupied a part of Central India. Simuka was succeeded by his brother Krishna who ruled for 18 years. He included Nasik in his kingdom. Krishna was succeeded by his son Satkarni-I. He proved himself an illustrious king and performed one Rajasuya and two Asvamedh *yajans*. He conquered western Malwa, Vidbarbha (modern Eerar) and parts of the South and assumed the title of *Dakishna-Pathapati*. It is believed that the Satavahanas ruled over vast territories for about a century which included South India except the Kalinga and the kingdoms of the far South, a part of the kingdom of Magadha, entire Malwa and the larger part of Central India. This great empire was established primarily by Satkarni-I. However, after his death the empire lost its strength. The widow of Satkarni, queen Nayanika, ruled for some time as a guardian of her sons Saktarsi and Vedsri but could not become much successful. Besides, the Satavahana rulers had to battle with the Greeks, the Sakas and the Parthians at that time. The Sakas conquered Malwa and Kathiawar and in the later part of the first century AD they succeeded in snatching away from Satavahanas the North Western

part of the South including Nasik. Thus, not only the greatness of the Satavahanas was lost but, at that time, it seemed that the entire South India would be lost to foreigners.

The situation was saved by Gautamiputra Satkarni (AD 106-130) who proved to be the greatest ruler of the Satavahanas and saved South India from the onslaught of the Sakas. The Central point of the politics of South India at this time was the conflict between the Sakas and the Satavahanas. Gautamiputra succeeded in this conflict. The Saka *satrap* (king) Nahapana had successfully damaged the prestige and power of the Satavahanas. But, now, Gautamiputra defeated him near about AD 124-125 and occupied most of his territories. He also overthrew the Greeks and the Parthians. Thus, he succeeded in defeating all these foreigners and snatched away from them Gujarat, Kathiawar, Western Rajputana, Malwa, Berar and North Konkan. Besides, he was successful in extending his kingdom towards the South as well. Thus, he restored and further extended the power and prestige of the Satavahanas and built up a strong kingdom in the South, which extended over the whole land from the river Krishna in the South to Malwa and Saurashtra in the north and from Berar in the east to the Konkan in the west. Probably, the rulers of the far South accepted him as their overlord because he claimed a sort of suzerainty over the whole of trans-Vindhyan India. He assumed the title of *Rajaraja* and the lord of the Vindhya. Besides, being a conqueror, Gautamiputra was a good administrator and a just ruler. In a contemporary inscription he has been described as a social reformer as well. Therefore, Gautamiputra has been regarded as the greatest Satavahana ruler. But during his last days he became invalid and therefore the Sakas again became aggressive. Probably, the Sakas recovered most of their territories from him before his death in AD 1300.

Gautamiputra was succeeded by his son Puloma i.e. Vasishtiputra Pulumavi. Puloma ruled for nearly 29 years (AD 130-159). During his rule, the pressure of the Sakas from the North-West increased. Some modern scholars think that he was defeated twice by his father-in-law, the great Saka *satrap* Rudradaman. Certainly, he failed to resist the Saka invasions and, therefore, Saurashtra, Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana and North Konkan were lost to them. However, Puloma extended the territories of his kingdom towards the South-East, and Andhra Pradesh was conquered by Puloma. It is probable that while Gautamiputra began the conquest, it was completed by Puloma. That is why Puloma has been regarded as the first Andhra King. Puloma certainly increased the strength of the navy of the Satavahanas which resulted in increased foreign trade through the sea and, thereby, also the economic prosperity of the kingdom. Puloma built up the city of Navalagarh and the *stupa* of Amravati was renovated and enlarged during his time.

There were probably four or five more Satavahana rulers after Puloma but their time did not prove glorious. Their power was reduced by the growing power of the Sakas with whom they had now matrimonial relations. The last important ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was Yajnasri Satkarni (AD 174-203). He certainly ruled over Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and north Konkan. His weak successors, however, lost what he had achieved. The internal conflicts and the attacks of the

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foreigners contributed towards the disintegration of the Satavahana kingdom. By the middle of the third century AD, the Satavahana kingdom was divided into five small kingdoms though the function of each kingdom claimed to be the descendent of the great Satavahana dynasty. Afterwards, the Vakatakas rose into prominence in South India and the Satavahans did not play any part in the politics of the South.

A controversy exists regarding the origins of the Satavahanas. Kings referred to as Satvahanas and Satakarnis (in inscriptions and coins) are given the name of Andhra, Andhra-*bhrityan* and Andhrajatiya in the Puranas. From this, scholars have come to the conclusion that the Satavahanas or the Satakarnis were identical with the Andhras. The Satavahanas lost their northern and western possessions and were often confused with the people of Andhradesa whom they ruled. The Puranas thus called them not only the ruler of Andhradesa, but also gave them the title of Andhra kings. Figure 2.2 shows the coins of Satvahanas.



*Fig. 2.2 Coins of Satvahanas*

### Gautamiputra Satakarni

Simuka was the founder of the Satavahana dynasty. Gautamiputra Satakarni was the most famous king of this dynasty. He not only restored the fallen fortunes of his dynasty, but also brought vast territories under his rule. He overthrew the Sakas, Yavanas and Pallavas, destroyed the Ksharatas and re-established the glory of the Satavahana race. Gautamiputra also held sway over Rishika, Asmaka Mulaka and Vidarbha. They roughly belonged to modern Gujarat, Saurashtra, Malwa, Berar, North Konkan and the region around Pune and Nasik. He described himself as the lord of Vidhyas, Rikshavat, Pariyatra, Sahya, Mahendra and other mountain ranges encircling the Indian peninsula. He took up the title of *Tri-Samudra-toya*, Pita, Vahana, which means 'one whose charges drank the waters of the three seas'—the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It appears that before his death, Gautamiputra Satakarni lost most of his territories conquered by him from Nahapana. He lost these territories to Kardamak of another Scythian dynasty. The latter's record prove that he ruled for at least twenty-four years. Figure 2.3 shows the image of Gautamiputra Satakarni engraved in a coin.



*Fig. 2.3 Image of Gautamiputra Satakarni Engraved in a Coin*

Before discussing the importance and contributions and importance of the Satvahanas, we would be discussing briefly about the great Saka ruler Rudradaman.

### **Rudradaman**

Rudradaman I (Figure 2.4), the grandson and successor of Chastana was the most outstanding Saka of Ujjain. His exploits are described in the Junagadh rock inscription dated 50 AD. It represents him as having won the title of Mahaksatrapa. He conquered the 'proud' Yaudheyas and twice vanquished Satakarni, lord of Saksinapata. The fact that these claims were not mere boasts is evident from the homes of lands, where his authority was recognized. They included northern Gujarat, Saurashtra, lower Indus valley, north Konkan, Mandhata-region eastern and western Malwa, Kukara and Meru, that is, a part of the Rajputana Empire. Another important event of his reign was the bursting of the embankment of the Sudarsana lake. However, it was rebuilt three times stronger mainly by the efforts of his Pallava governor of 'the whole of Anarta and Surastra' named Suvisakha, who was the son of Kulaioa. It is also known that Rudradaman bore the expenses of its repair and did not resort to the usual royal device of imposing additional tax on his subjects. This incident exemplifies his empathetic nature as a ruler who was indeed worried about the welfare of his people.

Not much is known about Rudradaman's successors. Damajada or Damajadasari was the son and successor of Rudradaman. He was succeeded by Rudrasena I. The last saka satrap of Ujjain was Rudrasena III who was defeated and killed by Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty.

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Fig. 2.4 Rudradaman

### 2.3.3 The Contribution of the Satavahanas

The credit of establishing the first Empire in South India goes to the Satavahanas. Except the far South, the territorial South of the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra where the Pandyas, the Cholas and the Cheras had their kingdoms, the entire South India and a part of North India were conquered by the Satavahanas at the time of the zenith of their power. No such Empire ever existed in South India prior to the Satavahanas. They defended the South for quite a long period from the invasions of the foreigners, particularly the Sakas, which was a creditable achievement.

The Satavahanas provided a sound administration to their Empire. The head of the state was the king and all powers were concentrated in him. But the Satavahana were not cruel despots and did not rule according to their personal desires. They ruled according to the laws of Dharmasastras. The rulers did not either support the divine rights of kings or assumed high titles. They were satisfied with the titles of Raana, Rajaraja or lord of the Vindhya though some of them were good conquerors and even performed Rajasuya and *Asvamedh yajnas*. The primary duties of the king were that of the extension of the kingdom, protection of its territories and commanding the army in the battle. The king was helped in the administration by the ministers called Amatyas. Only sometime we find a reference to ministers designated as Rajamatyas and Mahamatyas.

The kingdom was divided into Janapadas (provinces), which were further subdivided into Aharas (districts) for the purpose of administration. Rajyaputra, Maharathi, Mahabhoj and several other officers looked after the administration of Janapadas and Aharas. The city administration was looked after by the municipal-boards while village-assemblies looked after the administration of the villages with the help of local officers called Gramikas. Every district had a cantonment where the soldiers were kept permanently to maintain order and peace in the district. The taxation system of the Satvahanas was liberal and it did not put any heavy financial

burden upon the subjects. Land-revenue, monopoly of salt-trade and gifts from dependent rulers were the primary sources of income of the state while a large part of it was spent on the army, civil administration and personal expenditure of the king. Most of the scholars agree that Satavahana rulers had succeeded in providing a good administration to their subjects. They had drawn something from the Mauryan administration and themselves made certain successful innovations and all that proved so successful that the Gupta rulers of North India and the Pallava rulers of South India followed some of their administrative measures as model examples.

The pattern of social divisions was somewhat mixed. The basis of social divisions seemed to be economic as well as hereditary and caste based. Thus, the society was divided into four castes as well as on the basis of class specific professions. In the first section were the central, provincial district officers like *Mahasenapati, Mahabhoj, Maharathi*, etc., in the second were included *Amatyas, Mahapatars, Sresthin* and businessmen etc., the third constituted of doctors, men of learned professions, goldsmiths, and the fourth included carpenters, weavers and blacksmiths. The primary unit of the society was the family. The eldest male member of the family was the master of the family (*Grahapati*) and every member of the family followed his instructions. Women commanded good respect in the society, which is clear from the fact that Satavahana rulers included the names of their mothers along with theirs. Women participated in the administration also. The widow of Gautamiputra, Satakarni looked after the administration of the state as the guardian of her sons. Not only inter-caste marriages were prevalent but marriages with foreigners were also permitted and they were accepted within the Hindu society. Satavahana rulers themselves had entered into matrimonial alliances with the Sokas. Even widows were respected in the society. There were no restrictions on foreign travel. Rather, due to the increased maritime activities, people, particularly those belonging to the business community, paid frequent visits to distant foreign countries.

The attitude of the people in general was liberal and progressive and the Satavahana society was free from many narrow attributes, which had found their place amongst the people in the society of the North. The people enjoyed economic prosperity during the period of the Satavahanas. Agriculture, trade and handicrafts were the main professions of the people. However, the primary reason of the increased economic prosperity was foreign trade. A large part of the sea-coast, both in the East and the West, was within the territories of Satavahana rulers, which helped in the increased foreign trade with the countries of the West and South-East Asia. Bharoach, Kalyan, Sopal, etc. were the important ports within the Satavahana Empire while Vajyanti, Nasik, Junnar, etc. were the centres of the internal trade. The state had provided safety to trade and commerce and had built up roads connecting various parts of the Empire to facilitate communication and transport. The main items of foreign trade were cotton cloth, silk, spices, medicinal herbs, skins of animals, ivory, pearls, etc. They brought large assets to the Empire. The traders had their organized guilds, which served the purpose of modern bank also. These guilds gave money on varied rates of interest to different castes. From the Brahmanas, the interest charged was only 2%, paid 3% interest, Vaisyas paid 4% and the Sudras paid 5% interest. The workers, too, had their separate guilds to look after their interests. There were

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coins of gold, silver and copper for the purpose of exchange. The gold coin was called Suvarna while the silver and copper coins were called Karsapana. The most popular religions at that time were Hinduism and Buddhism. The different religious sects co-existed with each other and their mutual relations were based upon tolerance.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism drew large converts from amongst foreigners and this factor proves the liberal religious spirit of the age. The Satavahana rulers were also tolerant towards all faiths. All of them followed Hinduism, yet protected all the other sects and gave them liberal grants of money and land. The cave dwelling of Nasik was built by Balsri mother of Gautamiputra Satkarni for the purpose of Bhadrayan. Buddhist Sangha and the cave-dwelling of Karle were built up by Vasisthaputra for the purpose of Mahasanghika Buddhist Sangha. Literature and fine arts also developed during the period of the Satavahanas. The kings mostly gave encouragement to Prakrit language.

Amongst the literary text of this period, the grammar of Prakrit language prepared by Saraverma, Gathasaptasati of king Hala and Brihatkatha of Gunathya are the most prominent. Among fine arts, particularly architecture, the cave-dwellings and Chaityas (Prayer-halls) of Karle, Nasik and Kanaheri have been regarded as fine specimens of art of this age. A few Stupas and images of males and females of this period have also been found.

Thus, the Satavahana rulers made a significant contribution towards the history and culture of India. The Mauryas had built the first great Empire in North India. The credit of building up the first Empire in the South went to the Satavahanas. The Satavahanas also fought against the foreign invaders and, particularly, were successful in checking the penetration of the Sakas in the South. Besides, the foreigners were absorbed into the Indian society, a clean administration was provided to the subjects. A liberal social order, which gave an honourable place to women was supported. Foreign trade and maritime activity was encouraged, Prakrit language was revived, religious toleration was practised and fine arts was encouraged under the active patronage of the rulers. All this was a fair contribution of the rule of the Satavahana dynasty towards the history and culture of India.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Who was the founder of the Satavahana dynasty?
5. List one credible achievement of the Satavahanas.

## 2.4 THE GUPTA AGE

The Guptas came to the center of the political stage, as it were, by the will of God. They were not among the powers that challenged the Kushanas; they did not come up in consequence of their decline. Among their contemporaries, they were undoubtedly the only power determined to restore to the country its lost political unity. They brought the region between 'the Godavari and the Sutlej' under their direct authority and also indirectly ruled over most of other parts of the country.



They commanded respect for their powerful war machine, military process and political acumen. They massacred the Huns. No one else could do it anywhere in the contemporary world. Their government was based on the accepted principle of centralization and progressive decentralization. The central government was powerful, yet in 'the district headquarters, the officials of the Central Government were assisted and controlled by popular councils, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell its own wasteland. Villages had their own popular councils which administered almost all the branches of administration, including collection of taxes and settlement of village disputes.' The local opinion was given due cognizance, laws were effective and humane. Public welfare was attended to; poor and sick were provided relief. Roads were well protected. 'Gupta peace' brought in its wake all-round prosperity. Agriculture improved, industry progressed, commerce expanded, shipbuilding and foreign trade gained new dimensions. Gold and silver flowed into the country from abroad. Coins of precious metals were in circulation; people lived in comfort. As evidenced by the contemporary literature and paintings, they used fine clothes and ornaments.

The improved means of communication and transport, movement of men and ideas and the enrichment of urban life stimulated de-linking of varna and vocation, encouraged caste mobility, brought about the transformation of tribes into castes and the assimilation of the foreign racial stocks into the social whole. The position of women remained distinct. The emphasis on the concept of 'ideal wife' inculcated deeper and there was a wider sense of family correspondence and social intercourse.

The orthodox and heterodox religions existed side by side everywhere, at all levels and even in the individual families. Freedom of belief and expression was valued and cherished. Thinkers and writers, debaters and preachers by their erudite postulation of dogmas and theories presented a feast of intellectuality and rationality to the interested. Conflict of views was assumed. Mutuality and harmony among the believers in the rival dogmas prevailed as a measure unknown anywhere in human civilization. It was accepted as part of the social order. The harmony of beliefs stimulated bhakti. It developed as the concomitant of people's religious belief. Religion was understood to be for the good of all. Preachers carried this message to the people beyond the heights of mountains and the expanses of the oceanic waters.

Education received full attention. The endowment of Agrahara villages made the local institutions financially independent. Scholars discussed the contributions of other people in learning. They looked out for new ideas, appreciated others' points of view and were completely free from 'self-complacency and narrowness of the outlook'. The intellectual urge of the age strengthened the rational attitude in matters that were ecclesiastical and temporal.

Sanskrit language was the vehicle of this great intellectual efflorescence. Immense literature was produced on numerous disciplines. This language was adopted as the medium of expression in quarters where Prakrits had all along held the sway. It became the link language between India beyond the frontiers and the people here.

Art touched a high standard; *sundaram* and *roopam* characterized it. It was worshipped in order to deepen the consciousness of the soul and awaken it to a new

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sense of spiritual joy and nobility. Kalidasa, the supreme genius and poet of this age, has expressed this attitude of life devoted to beauty in a sentence addressed to *Parvati*, the goddess of personal charm, by her consort *Shiva*: 'O fair damsel, the popular saying that beauty does not lead to sin is full of unexceptional truth.' The path of virtue is the path of beauty—this appeared to be the guiding impulse of life in the Gupta age. 'To create lovely forms and harness them to the needs of higher life—this was the golden harmony that made Gupta art a thing of such perpetual and inexhaustible attraction.'

All over the country, there developed a peculiar uniformity of social pattern, domestic order and of individual role in a particular situation; of religious practices and social ethics; ritual and ceremony and of manners and behaviour. People acquired a spirit of oneness and a sense of belonging—the hallmark of heritage. They impressed this on everything they touched and carried it along wherever they went.

The origin and the early history of the Guptas are not clear. The locality they ruled remains unspecified. The first two kings of the dynasty, Sri Gupta and his son Sri Ghatotkacha are called *Maharaja*. It has made several historians say that they might have been feudatories; but, their paramount ruler is not mentioned. It is, therefore, held that they may have been petty rulers, and like some of that class assumed the title *Maharaja*. The son of Maharaja Sri Ghatotkacha, however, assumed a higher title of *Maharajadhiraja*, implying obviously that he was more powerful ruler than his predecessors. He may have given extension to his patrimony, gained greater authority and thus assumed a higher title.

I Tsing, who travelled to this country during 671–695AD, referred to a king Sri Gupta who happened to have raised a temple for Chinese pilgrims in Magadha. Some scholars identified him with the founder of the dynasty of the same name, traced the temple in Magadha and consequently, placed his kingdom in Magadha. There is, however, no justification for the view that the temple which this king built for the Chinese was situated in Magadha. 'The bearing and the distance given by the Chinese Pilgrim place it in the western borders of northern or central Bengal and this is corroborated by some other details mentioned by him. We may, therefore, hold that Sri Gupta's kingdom comprised a portion of Bengal.'

### Sources of information

The sources of information for the Gupta period comprise both literary and archaeological sources. These are found all over the country from Bengal to Kathiawar. They are comparatively richer and fuller in content and character and have proved very helpful in reconstructing the main outline of the history and chronology with greater degree of certainty.

**Literary sources:** The Puranas, especially the *Vayu*, *Brahmanda*, *Matsya*, *Vishnu* and the *Bhagvat Purana* are a rich source of information. They indicate the extent of the domination of Chandragupta I; make a distinction between the territory that the Guptas had under their direct control and over which they exercised paramount control and provide information on the princes subordinate to them and on their contemporaries. The Puranas, infact, received their touch during this period. The *Smritis* of Vyasa, Pitamaha, Pulastya and of Harita though assigned to this

period are available only in the quotations found in the Dharmasastras. Among the Dharmasastras, those of Katyayana, Narad and of Brihaspati belong to this period. They provide rich information on the social and religious conditions of the people.

Some dramatic works with political bearing on the Gupta period are obviously helpful. Thus, the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* depicts the political condition of Magadha during the beginning of this period. It is of considerable importance for the origin and the rise of the Gupta power. The *Devichandraguptam* by Vishakhadatta throws light on the manner in which Chandragupta II came to the throne and married Dhruvadevi. It is available, however, only in quotations. Another work of the same author, the *Mudrarakshas*, though an important source of information on the rise of Chandragupta to power, mentions people and tribes such as the Yavanas, Sakas, Kiratas, Cambojas, Bhalikas, Parasikas, Khasas, Gandharas, Cinas, Kaulutas, Maghas and others who existed during the reign of Chandra Gupta II. The *Kamandaka Nitisara*, said to have been the work of Sikhara, the chancellor of Chandragupta II, upholds the murder of the Saka king through disguise.

The accounts left by the Chinese travellers are a rich source of information. Fa-Hien travelled across this country in the reign of Chandragupta II and his record and *Fo-Kuo-ki or Record of Buddhist Kingdom* throws considerable light on the condition of the country during the period.

**Archaeological sources:** Numerous archaeological source materials on the Gupta period are available. The numerous types of coins that the Guptas issued throw great light on their rise and fall and on the economic condition of the people. The coins both of the early and of the later Guptas have been listed in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*. In the book of Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasty, you can see a systematic study of the coins.

The epigraphic evidence available from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription and the Eran Stone Inscription throws light on the military strength and the territorial expansion of Samundragupta. The Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription refers to one king Chandra, who defeated a confederacy of enemies, conquered the Vanga countries and defeated Vahliskas across the seven mouths of river Sindhu. He thus achieved sole supremacy in the world.

The Mathura Stone Inscription, the Sanchi Stone inscription, the Gadhwa Stone Inscription and the Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II give ample information on several aspects of his polity. Some details about Kumar a Gupta I are available from the Gadhwa Stone Inscription, the Bilsad stone Pillar Inscription and the Mankuwar Stone image Inscription. The Junagadh Rock Inscription, the Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription, the Indore Copper Plate Inscription, the Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription in two parts and the Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription refer to Skandagupta. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta records his fight with Pushyamitra and probably also with the Huns during the reign of his father Kumar a Gupta I.

A large number of seals recovered at Vaishali (in the Muzaffarpur district) give an idea of the provincial and local administration of the period and provide a nomenclature of the officers.

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Of the Gupta architecture and art, whatever has come down to us remains a rich source of information. The temples at Udayagiri, Pathari, Deogarh and Aihole reveal much about the evolution of temple architecture and point to the popular gods and goddesses. The sculptural remains are indicative of both their artistic richness and aesthetic appeals and hence of cultural maturity.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What was the principle of the government of the Gupta empire?
7. What are the sources of information of the Gupta Age?

#### 2.4.1 Important Rulers of the Gupta Period

##### (i) Chandragupta I

After Ghatotkach, his son Chandragupta I (AD 319–324) became king of this dynasty. He was the first independent ruler of this dynasty as the previous Gupta rulers were feudatories/vassals. He adopted the title of ‘Maharajadhiraja’. He was an imperialist and an important ruler than his predecessors. Chandra of Maharauli is also equated with Chandragupta I, but unfortunately, not much information is available about him.

The main event of the age of Chandragupta was to enter into marital alliance with the Lichchhavis, who were very powerful during that time. He strengthened his position by establishing matrimonial relationship with the Lichchhavis and expanded his empire from Awadha and Magadha to Prayaga in the coastal areas of the Ganges. Chandragupta married Lichchhavi princess Kumar Devi. This marriage had political importance. There are several evidences of this marriage. This marriage not only increased immensely the power and grandeur of the Guptas but it also made Kumar Devi the princess of the Lichchhavi kingdom which she inherited from her father. As a result, the entire Lichchhavi kingdom came under the control of Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta not only received Vaishali on account of his marriage but also expanded his kingdom. Mehrauli pillar informs that he, having crossed Sindh, fought a severe battle with Bactria and conquered it. On one side its boundary touched Bengal while on the other side it touched Central India and Punjab. This victory over the Northwest and Balkh took Chandragupta from Indus to Saurashtra.

Chandragupta started a new era, known as Gupta Samvata. Although, controversial, it is believed that Chandragupta began his accession to the throne by founding a samvata, the first year of which was AD 319–320.

##### (ii) Samudragupta

After Chandragupta, his son Samudragupta (AD 325–375) became king of the Gupta dynasty. He established a vast kingdom by conquering different battles and strengthened the Gupta dynasty for centuries. On account of his immense talent, Chandragupta chose his successor in his own life. Samudragupta was an able emperor, skilled commander and a man of great personality. He was a great conqueror;

hence, he is compared with Napoleon. It is popularly said that Ashoka is famous for his peace and non-violence while Samudragupta is famous because of his victories.

### Conquests of Samudragupta

Samudragupta, having established political unity, united entire India under one umbrella. He not only conquered North India but also hoisted his flag of victory over South India including some principalities of abroad. His victories are described as follows:

**First expedition of Aryavarta:** The land between the Himalayas and Vindhya was called Aryavarta. It is known that Samudragupta launched victorious expeditions twice over Aryavarta. In his first expedition, he vanquished the following kings:

- **Acyuta:** The first king Samudragupta defeated in Aryavarta was Acyuta. He was the king of Ahichchhatra. His kingdom was around modern Ram Nagar in Bareilly.
- **Nagasena:** It is known from the coins of Naga dynasty of Narwar, situated in Gwalior that he was the king of Naga dynasty and his capital was Padmavati. In Prayaga Prashasti, the letters before 'ga' has been destroyed but the letter 'ga' is readable. Perhaps he might have been the ruler Ganapatnaga.
- **Kotakulaja:** Samudragupta defeated this Kota king as well.

But, several scholars have expressed their views regarding the first Aryavarta expedition. Some scholars consider that the first Aryavarta battle was not his expedition of victory but a defensive battle.

**Second expedition of Aryavarta:** In his second expedition, he defeated many kings. Some of them are described as follows:

- (a) **Rudradeva:** King Rudradeva was king Rudrasena I of Kaushambi.
- (b) **Matila:** A coin has been found in Bulandashahara, which contains the symbol of Matil and Naga. Probably he was a king of the Naga dynasty.
- (c) **Nagadatta:** He was a king of Mathura and belonged to the Naga dynasty.
- (d) **Chandraverma:** There is a dispute regarding this entry. Some consider him the king of Pusakarana while others consider him the king of Eastern Punjab.
- (e) **Ganapatnaga:** He was a ruler of Vidisha and belonged to the Naga dynasty.
- (f) **Balaverma:** He was a predecessor of king Bhaskarverma of Kamrupa.
- (g) **Nandi:** It is mentioned in the Puranas that Shishunanda Shivanandi was the King of Central India and belonged to the Naga dynasty.

It is mentioned that Samudragupta defeated all the dynasties of North India. He annexed all these kingdoms to his empire.

He made all the kings of *vana* (forest) his slaves. When he proceeded to conquer South India after his conquest of North India, he subjugated all Atavika kings lying on his way to southern conquest. It is assumed that Atavika state was spread from Gazipur to Jabalpur.

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### South expedition

Samudragupta conquered south after his first expedition of Aryavarta. He defeated twelve kings of the south and thereafter he returned their kingdoms and made them his loyalists. Thus, on one hand, these kings were independent while on the other, they accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta. Samudragupta's conquest had three features: to imprison enemies, to free them and to return the kingdoms of the defeated king after the acceptance of conqueror's suzerainty. These kings were as follows:

- **Mahendra of Kaushal:** Mahendra was the king of Kaushal. Modern districts of Raipur, Sambhalpur and Vilaspur were included in it.
- **Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara:** Vyaghraraja was the king of Mahakantara, which was the forest area of Orissa.
- **Mantaraja of Korai:** It was the central part of Orissa and Tamil Nadu and the king of this area was Mantaraja.
- **Mahendragiri of Pishtapur:** Pishtapur in Godavari district is modern Pithapurama.
- **Swamidatta of Kottura:** Kottura is equated with Coimbatore.
- **Daman of Erandapalla:** Erandapalla is considered as Erandola of Khanadesh. Its relationship is also established with Erandapalla near Chinkokole on the coast of Orissa.
- **Vishnugopa of Kanchi:** It was the capital of Pallava. Modern Kanjeevaram near Madras is Kanchi.
- **Nilaraja of Avamukta:** It was a small kingdom in the neighbourhood of Kanchi and Vengi states. Its king Nilaraja was a member of the Pallava confederacy.
- **Hastivarman of Vengi:** It was in existence near Peduvengi in Ellore. Its king belonged to Shalankayana dynasty.
- **Ugrasena of Palakka:** It was near Palakollu on the coast of Godavari.
- **Dhananjaya of Kusthalapur:** Kusthalapur, situated in Arakar district, was Kusthalapur.
- **Kubera of Devarashtra:** It was Yellamanchili in Andhra Pradesh. Some historians believe that southern rulers formed a confederation against Samudragupta and halted Samudragupta near a famous lake, known as Kolekha. Samudragupta conquered this confederation.

**Subjugation of frontier states:** It is clear that the frontier states, having seen the conquest-expedition of Samudragupta, accepted his suzerainty. These states were: Samatata, Davaka, Kamrupa, Nepal and Karttripur.

There were nine republics on the western frontier which accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta. These were Malava, Arjunayana, Yodheya, Madraka, Abhira, Prarjuna, Sanakanika, Kaka and Kharaparika.

**Policy towards the frontier states:** Samudragupta adopted three kinds of policy against these states, such as *Sarvakara*, i.e., these states accepted to pay all types

of tributes, *Ajnakarana*, i.e., these states carried out the order of Samudragupta, and *Pranamakarana*, i.e., they appeared individually and greeted the king.

### **Conquest of foreign states**

Some of the foreign states, such as Daivaputra, Shahi, Shanushahi, Shaka, Murunda, Saimhal, etc., were also conquered by Samudragupta. They accepted defeat and offered their daughters to him.

### **Extent of Samudragupta's kingdom**

Samudragupta's empire extended from the Himalayas in the north to Vindhyas in the south and from Bay of Bengal in the east to Eastern Malawa in the west. He had indirect influence over Gujarat, Sindh, Western Rajaputana, West Punjab and the frontier states of Kashmir, and he had friendly relations with Saimhala and the other islands. Samudragupta adopted the policy of expansion of his empire. The main aim of his conquest was to hoist his flag of victory.

### **Horse-sacrifice**

Samudragupta performed horse-sacrifice in the beginning of his reign. His coins also carry depiction of horse sacrifice.

### **Estimate of Samudragupta's reign**

Samudragupta's name is lettered in golden ink in Indian history for his talent and conquests. He was an extraordinary warrior, victor of thousands of battles and emerged invincible during his time. He was a valiant and brave king; able politician and warrior; famous musician; and well-versed and a good-hearted poet. Although he inherited a very small kingdom from his father, he expanded the boundaries of his kingdom beyond India by his talent and valour. He is regarded as the first Indian king who defeated southern and foreign rulers by his prowess. He was considered a unique emperor. The strength of his arms was his only companion in the different battles he ably fought. He was famous for his valour and his body was adorned with several wounds.

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*Fig. 2.5 Samudragupta's Gold Coins*

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### (iii) Chandragupta II

Ramagupta ascended to the throne after the death of Samudragupta but he could not hold on to his empire. Therefore, Chandragupta II (AD 380–412) ascended to the Gupta throne in AD 380. Like his father he proved to be a brave, valiant, invincible and able emperor. He was adorned in his coins with the titles of Devashri Vikramanka, Vikramaditya, Simha, Vikrama, Ajivikram, Simha-chandra Apratiratha, etc. Although there is no unanimity regarding the date of accession of Chandragupta II, his reign is considered from AD 380 to 412.

#### Matrimonial alliances

Chandragupta II adopted both the policy of matrimonial relationship as well as war for strengthening his empire. His contemporary Naga dynasty was very strong and had influence over several regions of North India. Establishment of matrimonial relationship with the Nagas helped him much in strengthening his sovereignty over the newly established empire. Matrimonial alliances with Vakatakas helped him a lot. Therefore, Chandragupta II gave his daughter Prabhavatigupta in marriage to Vakataka king Rudrasen II. Vakataka King had control over such geographical region where from he could have assisted or opposed the Northern aggressor against the Shaka vassals of Saurashtra. This matrimonial alliance proved much important for him. It is evident from the Talgund inscription that the princess of Kuntal, King Kakustha Verma was married in the Gupta dynasty.

#### Conquests of Chandragupta II

Like his father, Chandragupta II expanded his empire by conquering many states. The most important victory of Chandragupta II was over the Shaka. The kingdom of the Shakas was spread in Gujarat, Malwa and Saurashtra. Having defeated the great Shaka vassal Rudrasimha III, Chandragupta II took the title of Shakari. Chandragupta II's war minister has written in the Udayagiri cave inscription that he came to Eastern Malwa along with his master (Chandragupta II) who aspired to conquer the whole world. With this victory, he not only ousted the foreigners from India but also ensured its monopoly over western trade by extending his empire upto the western coastal ports.

There were several small republics such as Madra, Kharapatika, etc. He conquered them and ended their existence by annexing them into his empire. It is known from the Mehrauli iron pillar that Chandragupta II conquered Vahlikas by crossing over five mouths of Indus: Bengal and other eastern states formed a confederation due to the inability of Ramagupta. Chandragupta II conquered this confederation.

#### Horse-sacrifice

Several evidences maintain that Chandragupta II performed horse-sacrifice. A stone-horse has been discovered from Varanasi on which the word Chandraguh (Chandragupta) is inscribed. Besides, Punadanapatra referred to the donation of several cows and thousands of coins (*aneka gau hiranya koti sahasra padah*) by Chandragupta II from which it seems that Chandragupta might have organized horse-sacrifice after his conquests.





Fig. 2.6 Chandragupta II on Horseback as Depicted on a Coin

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### Extent of Chandragupta II's empire

The empire of Chandragupta Vikramaditya was larger than that of Samudragupta. His empire expanded from the Himalaya in the north to river Narmada in the south, and from Bengal in the east to Arabian Sea in the west. Many famous trading cities and ports were included in his vast empire. Due to the expansion of his empire, he made Ujjain his second capital.

### Estimate of Chandragupta II

Chandragupta II was one of the greatest rulers of India. Under him, the governments, expansion of empire, art, economic or social aspects of life were at its zenith. 'Chandragupta tested the sharpness of his sword against the wicked and unrighteous Shakas and defeating them, he expanded his empire immensely and by conquering the unconquered states, he increased the extent of his empire more than the extent of his father's empire. He destroyed the Shakas and restored the glory of Hindu civilization and culture. The reign of Chandragupta II is also considered as the golden age of the Gupta period. Chandragupta II took his empire to a new era of maturity of political greatness and cultural revival. The governance of India had never been better than the rule of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya.

### (iv) Skandagupta

Skandagupta (AD 455–467) ascended to the throne after the death of Kumaragupta. His reign was full of difficulties and upheavals. He had inherited such a vast empire that it was difficult to keep it intact. He was a great conqueror, the liberator of the nation, the restorer of the pride of imperial Guptas and above all the founder (head) of benevolent administration. It was said if Samudragupta was *Sarvarajochcheta* and Chandragupta was *Shakati*, Skandagupta was Huna-conqueror. He was in no way less than any other Gupta kings. Skandagupta had proved his talent during the lifetime of his father when he defeated Pushyamitras, but he had to face more fierce battles during his reign.

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### Victory over Hunas

After his victory over Pushyamitras, he fought a fierce battle against the Hunas. The Hunas were barbarians. They had, over the years, become terrors for kingdoms in Asia and Europe. The Bhitari inscription maintains that 'when the Hunas faced Skandagupta in battle the earth began to tremble by his valour of the strength of arms and there raised a great whirlpool.' Finally, the Guptas defeated the Hunas. It is difficult to say at which place and where the Hunas were defeated, but this victory made him famous all over. Skandagupta deserved the highest praise as he was the first brave warrior of Europe and Asia who defeated the Hunas. Skandagupta made a great service to the nation by stopping the destruction of the nation by the Hunas for the next fifty years.

The Junagarh inscription referred to defeat of the serpent kings by Skandagupta. Vakatakas had captured Malwa during Skandagupta's reign by taking advantage of the numerous wars that Skandagupta was fighting simultaneously. Therefore, Skandagupta had to remain satisfied by appointing Pranadatta in the region. Govindgupta was the son of Chandragupta II and he was the governor of Vaishali. Historians believe that he revolted after the death of Kumaragupta in western Malwa, but Skandagupta crushed his rebellion successfully.

### Extent of Skandagupta's empire

His empire was spread from the Himalayas to Narmada and from Saurashtra to Bengal. In one of the inscriptions it is mentioned that heads of hundreds of kings bowed to his feet. He was the emperor of hundreds of kings. He was equivalent to Indra and was the founder of peace in his empire. It is mentioned in the Junagarh inscription that he established his suzerainty over the earth surrounded by four seas. Praising him, it is said that his brave actions justified the title Vikramaditya which he assumed like his grandfather.

### Estimate of Skandagupta's reign

Skandagupta was the last powerful and effective emperor. He always worked for the integrity of his empire. He was a brilliant example of courage. Valour ran in his blood. His image of chivalry frightened even his strongest enemies.

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## 2.5 GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

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The Gupta administrative system was based on the earlier historical tradition to which several amendments had been made to adapt it to the contemporary situation. Gupta administration featured elements of the administrative systems of the Mauryas, the Satvahanas, the Scythians and the Kushanas. According to Chinese accounts, 'The Gupta administrative system was always appreciable because it was liberal and in public interest and the kings could not have been unrestrained and autocratic in spite of having limitless power.' Undoubtedly, the Gupta governance was of high quality. The fifth century Chinese monk *Fa-Hien* wrote about this period, 'The people were happy and prosperous. They had to give neither the account of small things in their houses nor the attendance before any justices or kings.'

The Gupta government had the following two bases:

- **Monarchy:** The nature of the Gupta administration was monarchical, with the emperor as the supreme authority. In the Prayaga Edict, Samudragupta has been referred to as a king who lived on earth like god.
- **Feudal system:** The Gupta empire was vast and, therefore, ruling over it was very difficult without decentralization. Hence, the feudal system was introduced.

Central government consisted of the following:

- **King:** The king was the axis of the central government because it was a monarchy. He was the highest official in the government, army, justice and other aspects of administration. According to the Prayaga edict, 'It is the duty of the king to provide good governance. An ideal king is one who has the firm resolve to provide his people from the core of his heart all comfort and happiness.' Officials were appointed and sacked by the king. There was no such concept that the king had the right to be autocratic on account of having a divine character. In spite of having a divine character, serving in the battlefield and obtaining suitable education were essential for the king. The king took up numerous titles such as *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshwara Paramamdaivat* and *Rajadhiraja*.
- **Council of ministers:** There was a council of ministers to advise and assist the king in the administrative affairs. As a basis for governance, Kautilya's concept that the discharge of royal functions should be done with mutual co-operation and goodwill was recognized. Therefore, it was expedient for the king to appoint a council of ministers to get co-operation and proper advice. Ministers were appointed on the basis of their qualifications. However, this position later became hereditary. Names of some prominent ministers have come down to us. They include *Mahadandanayaka*, *Mahapratihara*, *Mahasandhivigrahika*, *Bhandagaridhikrita*, *Mahapaksapatalika* and *Dandapashika*. Although the king took their advice, he was not bound to accept it.
- **Provincial administration:** The Gupta empire was very vast. Direct control of such a vast empire was not possible. Hence, it was divided into several provinces. Provinces were known as *bhukti*, *bhoga* and *pradesha*. Such a division of the government was an indication of the administrative intelligence and wisdom. Provincial rulers were appointed by the king. They were known as *uparika maharaja*. They generally belonged to the royal family. Their duties were maintenance of peace, law and order in the empire, public interest, and obeying the emperor.
- **Visaya (district) administration:** The province was divided into *visayas* (districts). The head official of the visaya was called *visayapati*. He was appointed by the king or *uparika*. Other officials of the province included *sarthavaha*, *prathamakulika*, *prathama kayastha* and *pustapala*.
- **Town administration:** There were several towns in a province. The chief of the town was known as *nagarapati*. He was appointed by the *visayapati*.

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Each town had a council, the functions of which were to collect tax, take care of the public health and run the town administration.

- **Village administration:** The village was the smallest unit of administration. The area of a village was fixed. The head of the village was called *gramapati* or *mahattar*. A grama panchayat was indeed a small democracy. People in the grama panchayat performed acts of simple officials. Sub-committees were constituted in the panchayats if there was more work. There were separate committees for the management of irrigation, agriculture, religion, etc.
- **Judicial system:** The judicial system was highly competent. It is evident from Narada Smriti that there were four types of judicial courts; *royal, puga, guild* and *family*. According to *Fa-Hien*, 'The punishment during the Gupta age was not severe. Capital punishment or punishment by amputation was rarely carried out.' He adds that there were few crimes and criminals were only given medium or high economic punishment. The decision of the king was final. However, according to Kalidasa and Visakhadatta, punishments were very severe.
- **Military organization:** A big and strong army was necessary for the defense of such a vast empire. The government of the Gupta kings was based on military power. The army had four parts; *infantry, chariot, cavalry* and *elephants*. The smallest unit of infantry was called *chamuya*. The chief of the army was known as *mahasenapati* or *mahabaladhikrita*. 'The highest official of the army was the *senapati* (general). *Mahadandanayaka, ranabhandagarika, mandashvapati* were under him. No discrimination was made in the military service in respect of any specific caste. The army was under the control of the king. Provinces had some army and they helped the king in the time of need.' There was an armoury to store weapons.
- **Revenue system:** The main source of income was land-tax. The share of produce, which was given to the king or state, was called *bhaga*. There were five kinds of tax that made up the income of the state; controlled tax such as land-tax, periodical tax, economic penalty, income from the state's wealth and income from the subjugated feudal. It is evident from Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha* that the ideal of the tax-collection of the Gupta king was people's welfare. One-sixth of the produce was levied as land-tax. The Guptas' empire was an ideal Hindu state, and they adopted the ancient system to run it. During this time, state tax was not a kind of punishment.

### Demerits of the Gupta administration system

The Gupta administration was extremely competent. Its organization in the centre and provinces was very able. The Gupta emperors expanded their empire and established a very high quality of balanced and appreciable administration in the conquered regions, the parallel of which can hardly be found.

However, it suffered from a few demerits as well. It was, above all, a feudal system. Feudal rulers became autocratic. As the provincial rulers were conferred more powers, this proved to be disastrous for the Gupta empire in the course of time.

## **Causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire**

The Gupta empire which was built up by the bravery of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II began to decline and ultimately collapsed towards the end of 6th century AD. The decline and fall of the Gupta Empire can be attributed to many causes.

Skandagupta had to exert himself strenuously to maintain the integrity of the empire against the attacks of the Pushyamitras and the Hunas. There was a lot of confusion in the country after his death. The result is that it is practically impossible to give a definite account of the history of the Imperial Guptas after his death. We have the names of many kings but it is difficult to ascertain their dates and their relations with one another. There was no law of primogeniture for succession to the throne and it is possible that there may have been a struggle for the same. It is suggested that there were rival Gupta rulers ruling the country at the same time from their respective capitals. The only rulers of any importance after Skandagupta were Purugupta, Kumargupta II and Buddhagupta as the others did not exercise much influence. The result was that they were not able to check the decay that had set in and no wonder the Gupta Empire fell.

The foreign invasions also played their part in bringing about the downfall of the Gupta Empire. The stability of the Guptas was seriously threatened by the Pushyamitras in the time of Kumaragupta I. However, they were beaten back by Skandagupta. Later on, the Hunas appeared on the scene. It is true that the Gupta kings were successful against the Hunas, but that does not mean that the Hunas invasions had absolutely no effect on the fortunes of the Gupta Empire. Their repeated attacks must have exhausted the resources of the Gupta Empire. It is generally believed by the historians that Huna invasions were the principal cause of the downfall of the Gupta Empire. However, Dr. R.C. Majumdar does not subscribe to this view. According to him, the gates of India were barred successfully against the Hunas throughout the 6th century AD. In spite of the temporary successes of Tormana and Mihirkula, the Hunas were never counted as a permanent factor in Indian politics except in Kashmir and Afghanistan which were outside the frontiers of the Gupta Empire.

According to Dr. Majumdar, the death blow to the Gupta Empire was dealt not by Hunas but by the ambitious chiefs like Yasodharman. It is true that the Hunas caused destruction on a large scale but the force of their success was spent up very soon. However, the rift caused by Yasodharman widened gradually and ultimately the Gupta Empire was completely smashed. To begin with, Yasodharman was merely a local chief. He took advantage of the troubled situation in Malwa and established his independent authority. He became so strong that he not only defeated Mihirkula but was also able to defy the Gupta Emperor. He might have made many conquests at the cost of the Gupta Empire although their exact nature and extent is not known. It is stated in the Mandasor inscription that his suzerainty was acknowledged over the area bounded by the Himalayas in the North, the ocean in the West, the Brahmaputra in the East and Ganjam district in the South. It appears that Yasodharman could not maintain his position for a long time. He rose and fell like a meteor. However,

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his dazzling military success led others to follow his example. If Yasodharman could defy the Gupta Empire, there was no reason why others could not do likewise. In such an atmosphere, the future of the Gupta Empire was doomed.

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Many chiefs revolted against the Gupta Empire. The Maukharis gradually rose to power in Uttar Pradesh and were successful in setting up an independent kingdom towards the middle of 6th century AD. The Maukhari dynasty was founded by Harivarman. About the year 554, Isanavarman measured swords with the Guptas and probably also with the Hunas. He also took up the title of *Maharajadhiraja*. For about a quarter of a century from AD 554 to 580, Isanavarman wrested a large portion of the territory from the Guptas. He defeated the Andhras and got a portion of their territory. He also conquered a part of Bengal.

In the time of Skandagupta, Saurashtra was governed by a Goptra named Parnadatta. He was himself appointed by Skandagupta as the Viceroy. However, after some time, Bhatarka, a chief of the Maitrika clan, established himself in this region as a military governor with his capital at Valabhi. Dharasena I was his immediate successor. Both Bhatarka and Dharasena I took up the title of *Senapati*. However, the next successor named Dronasimha took up the title of Maharaja and the same was recognized by the Gupta king. A branch of the dynasty established itself in the Western part of Malwa in the latter half of the 6th century AD and made extensive conquests. Another branch continued to rule at Valabhi. Dhruvasena II of Valabhi married the daughter of Harsha. His son Dharasena IV took up the title of *Parambhattara Parmeswar Chakravartin*. It is clear from above that the Maitrikas became independent of the Gupta Empire and that was bound to affect adversely the fortunes of the Gupta Empire.

The later Guptas ruled in Malwa and Magadha. To begin with, they were feudatories of the Imperial Guptas and perhaps fought to save the Gupta Empire. However, later on, they set themselves up as independent rulers at the same time as the Maukharis did.

It was at the same time that Vanga, South and East Bengal, shook off the Gupta suzerainty. Vainyagupta ruled in East Bengal with the title of *Maharaja* at the beginning of the 6th century AD. Later on, the rulers of Vanga took up the title of *Maharajadhiraja* and issued gold coins in their own names like the Gupta emperors.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, Bengal acknowledged the suzerainty of the Gupta emperors. In the Allahabad pillar inscription, there is a reference to Samatata as a border state. Northern Bengal or Paundravardhana Bhukti was a part of the Gupta Empire in the time of Kumaragupta I. However, the Gaudas rose into prominence in Bengal and shook off the Gupta yoke in the second half of the 6th century AD. We have little information about the early kings of the Gaudas. The names of the Gauda kings were Dharamaditya, Gopachandra, Samacharadeva and Jainaga. Sasanka, a contemporary of Harsha, belonged to the Gauda line. The very fact that these Gauda kings took up the title of Maharajadhiraja shows that they did not acknowledge the suzerainty of the Gupta kings and acted as independent rulers.

It is well-known that the earlier Gupta kings were the patrons of Hinduism in a militant form. However, some of the later Gupta kings such as Buddhagupta,

Tathagatagupta and Baladitya came to have Buddhist leanings. This new development was bound to affect the fortunes of the Gupta Empire in an adverse manner. Like the Mauryas after Asoka, proper emphasis was not put on military efficiency. In the absence of such a thing it would have been impossible to maintain the integrity of the empire. Hiuen Tsang tells us that when Mihirkula was ruling at Sakala or Sialkot, he proceeded to invade the territory of Baladitya, the Gupta king. It is stated by Hiuen Tsang that Mihirkula was made a prisoner but was allowed to go on the request of the mother of Baladitya. It is not possible to say how far the story of Baladitya as stated by Hiuen Tsang is true but it is clear that these Gupta kings did not possess much courage or military strength. Their kindness and piety was bound to affect adversely the fortunes of the Gupta Empire. Some rulers could not maintain their supremacy in country and were bound to be thrown into the background.

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### 2.5.1 Decline of the Guptas

The Gupta dynasty had the distinction of providing to the country a galaxy of great kings. Comparatively, they stayed longer at the top. They trained their successors well in the art and science of maintaining a huge empire, peace and fighting wars; and kept the inevitable at bay. They avoided the pitfalls such as neglect of training the successors, single-track approach in polity, dominance of ideology to the neglect of other vital interests, concentration of power at the top, state monopoly in trade, top heavy and expensive bureaucracy and neglect of the war machine. On the political front, however, there is nothing to distinguish the Gupta monarchs from those who preceded and succeeded them. They did not discard the ancient belief that the local power in the interest of total unity should be eradicated and institutions should be developed to train leadership and to encourage the people to participate in decision-making at higher levels. It appears that the people had no direct role in administration and politics. They seem to have been mute witnesses to the succession or elimination of kings and to matters of peace and war. Over the time, the dynasty suffered loss of vitality, vigour and authority. And, as the succession conflicts, internal challenge and external pressure developed, there followed the squeezing of the empire territorially to nothingness and with it, its grandeur too obscured. The causes of disintegration of the Gupta Empire are as follows:

- **Internal dissensions:** The post-Skandagupta period was characterized by internal dissensions within the reigning family. Though the records are silent on the course of events, it is in view of the available information assumed that the dissensions created factions, generated divided loyalties, weakened the political system, rendered the central authority weak and lowered the prestige of the emperor. The death of Samundragupta was tantamount to the removing of the cornerstone of the edifice.
- **Confused succession:** In the present state of knowledge, scholars have not been able to fix among the later Guptas the order of succession and duration of the reigns of several kings whose names have been revealed by the coins and inscription. Some appear to have ascended the throne only to be removed later. The stress and strain under which the political system and administration must have operated is imaginable. It must have caused severe weakness to the system.

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- **Short reigns and quick successions:** The later Guptas present a spectacle of short reigns and quick successions. The reigning heads must have been unable to consolidate their position and make their authority felt. Especially, in view of the situation that a king was the pivot around whom everything moved, and that his personality influenced the policy and administration, short reigns and quick success of kings must have wrecked the system in several directions.
- **Centrifugal tendencies:** Factionalism was thus dominant and its impact was percolative. Once the central authority developed infirmities, local chiefs asserted their strengths. Thus, Budhagupta, though acknowledged as the paramount authority, had to make an awkward compromise to maintain the apparent in installing a successor of Bhatarka to the royal status in Malwa. It could never have been to his pleasure. The other provincial heads too made their offices hereditary. Some among them assumed royal titles. The emperor in his high position must have felt his empire crumbling and imagined the inviolable. The centrifugal forces thus demolished the empire steadily.
- **Inability of the reigning heads:** None among the later Guptas had the ability to check the rot that the system had developed from within. The crowned heads failed to stand up to the challenge and arrest the forces of decline. They were mute witnesses to the tragic spectacle.
- **Lack of political comprehension and mental vigour:** The later Gupta kings lacked these qualities substantially. Budhagupta, Baladitya and the others had hardly any leadership qualities. They were unable to play their rightful role. The case of Baladaliya is highly illustrative in this connection. On coming to know that an attack by Mihirakula, the Hun was imminent, he summoned his ministers and as narrated by Hiuen Tsang, told them: 'I hear that these thieves are coming and I cannot fight with them (their troops;) by the permission of my ministers I will conceal my poor person among the bushes of the morass.' The story may or may not be correct, but it is obvious that the later Guptas did not have the qualities to sustain their authority and integrity of the empire. Their political thinking and military ability was not in agreement with the requirement of their high office.
- **Depredations caused by Toramana and Mihirakula:** The Guptas, unlike the Mauryas neglected the defense of the north-western region. They did not maintain effective control over the mountain passes and the plains of the Punjab. Thus, the Huns came down to the plains unhindered. They caused devastation in the region and had to be fought back on the plains. Later, the region fell to the depredations of Toramana and Mihirakula for the same reason. The wars they engendered and the devastation they caused weakened the central authority and the political system. The depredations caused by Toramana and his son Mihirakula exhausted the nerve of the empire even though both of them were ultimately defeated. Yet it humiliated royalty and frustrated the common man. It must have torn apart the prestige of the great empire in a tragic way. The western part of the empire was most subjected to the barbaric vandalism.



- **Economic disruption:** The depredations caused by Toramana and Mihirakula must have disrupted the economic activity, destroyed security and arrested social mobility. The scarcity of gold coins brought in circulation by Budhagupta and his later debasement of the gold coins indicates that the economic prosperity had suffered a severe dent. The western part of the country had been rendered unsafe.
- **Challenge and rebellions:** The disruption and insecurity was rendered worse by the challenge the rebels threw to the emperor. Harisena (AD 475–510), the Vakataka ruler was the first to unfurl his standard of rebellion. He occupied Malwa and Gujarat. Yasodharman, a local chief of Malwa, established independent authority and carried raids all around and wrecked the empire. Others followed the course. It is difficult to say which of the several causes were more significant than the rest that brought about the end of the empire. It is clear, however, that the story commenced with the internal dissensions. The crowned heads did not show the ability to meet the challenge. The adverse effect of the raids of Toramana and Mihirakula on the course of events cannot be denied. It is, however, obvious that the decline was not sudden. It followed its natural course.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. The administration of the Gupta Empire featured elements from which previous kingdoms?
9. What was the main sources of income of the Gupta Empire?

## 2.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE GUPTAS

The Guptas rule witnessed many wonderful developments in the field of science and technology.

### 2.6.1 Development of Science During Gupta Period

The Guptas emerged as a paramount power in India in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. With the advent of the Guptas, the period of confusion, conflict and disintegration came to a halt and India became politically united. The Guptas ushered a new era in the history of India. Their rule lasted for more than two centuries. Several powerful and benevolent Gupta rulers infused new hope in the Indian civilization and the country developed in all spheres of life. The benevolent Gupta rulers took keen interest in the development of art, architecture, science, technology, education, literature, philosophy, etc.

The advancement of science and technology was the most notable feature of this period. Due to the patronization of the Gupta rulers, the country produced outstanding scholars of repute in various fields like education, science and technology, art and

architecture, which rose to the pinnacle of their heights during the period. So, the Gupta period is also known as the Classical Age or the Golden Age of ancient India.

### Progress of Science and Technology

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Like several other fields, the field of science and technology made tremendous progress during the Gupta period. Many scholars of science, astronomy, astrology, medicine, metallurgy and geometry emerged during the Gupta period and they contributed immensely to the development of science and technology of this age.

The great scholars of the period not only occupied a high place in history of India, but also of the whole world. Their researches in arithmetic, astronomy and medicine guided scientists in other countries for centuries, which exercised a direct influence on scientific thought in Arabia, and other central Asian countries and indirectly influenced European countries.

Among the notable astronomers and mathematicians of the Gupta age, Aryabhata has been accepted as the most prominent. A few of his works such as *Aryabhatiyam*, *Dasagitikasutra* and *Aryashtasata* have come down to us. He was the first to treat mathematics as a distinct subject of science. His most prominent achievement was the discovery of the principals of the place value of the first 9 numbers and the use of 'Zero', which simplified arithmetic calculations and brought a revolution in this field. He gave a value for 'pie', 3.1416, more accurate than any one suggested before him. He also calculated the length of the solar year to 365.3586805 days. It is remarkably close to the recent estimates.

It was largely due to his efforts that astronomy was recognized as a separate discipline from mathematics. He was the first Indian astronomer to declare that the earth was a sphere, which revolves round the sun and rotates round its axis. He was also the first Indian scientist who described the true causes of solar and lunar eclipses and the method of calculating them precisely. His calculation of the size of earth is very near to that estimated by modern astronomers.

Among his writings, the *Aryabhatiyam* became the most famous in which he found solutions to many problems of algebra, geometry, trigonometry, etc. It is also believed that the decimal system was discovered during this period either by Aryabhata or Varahmihira as both of them have described it in their works. Due to these great scientific discoveries, Aryabhata has been deservedly called the father of the astronomical science in India.

Bhaskara I wrote commentaries on the writings of Aryabhata and several other independent works also. Among his writings, the *Mahabhaskarya*, the *Laghubhaskarya* and the *Bhasya* became more renowned. Certain other scholar, such as Lata, Pradyumna, Vijayanandin, contributed further to what Aryabhata did and ultimately Varahmihira took all that to the peak.

Varahmihira was second only to Aryabhata in Indian astronomy. His work on astrology the *Brihatsamhita* is an encyclopaedia of information in various branches of knowledge. Among his other writings, the *Panchsiddhantika*, the *Brahmajataka* and the *Laghujataka* are noteworthy.

In his *Panchsiddhantika*, he has given a description of the five systems of astronomy in use in his time. His work on astrology, *Brihatsamhita*, is a compendium of all available knowledge on technical sciences like architecture, metallurgy, physiognomy, etc. Varahmihira was a man of such a comprehensive mind that there was hardly any branch of natural sciences to which he did not make any contribution.

Brahmagupta, who composed the *Brahmasiddhanta*, was another famous astrologer of this age. His other works are *Brahmasphuta* and *Khandakhayaka*. These works deal with arithmetical equations, square and cube roots and their rules, geometry, elementary and simple algebraic identities. He taught the easier methods of compilation of the longitude of the planets. He anticipated Newton when he declared that 'all things fall to the earth by a law of nature, for it's the nature of earth to attract and keep things'.

Besides this, many scholarly works, such as the *Shatpanchasika* and the *Vaisistasiddhanta*, were also prepared during this age.

### Medicine

General medicine, along with veterinary and Ayurvedic medicine, made enormous advancement during the Gupta period. The Indian surgeons were well versed in the art of dissection, plastic surgery, veterinary surgery and even in special branches of surgery as that of eye, ear and nose. Bone setting reached a high degree of skill and plastic surgery developed far beyond anything known elsewhere at that time. In this respect, Indian surgery remained well ahead of European until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Though Indian doctors conceived very early the existence of microscopic forms of life, it was never realized that this might cause diseases. However, the physicians knew the symptoms of many diseases. Vagabhata was the eminent writer of medical sciences of the time. He wrote *Astanga-sangraha*, which is a systematic summary of *charaksamhita* and *Susrutasamhita*.

The knowledge of medical science, which progressed in this period, was available to young man of all castes. Taxila was the centre of advanced learning of medical sciences of the period. The study of medical sciences in this age comprised diverse aspects, such as pathology, medicine, surgery, toxicology, blood test, study of bones, etc.

The whole science was divided into two parts—*Shastra* (theory) and *Prayoga* (practice). The student of medicine was required to acquire proficiency in both the aspects. At that time, great emphasis was given on the treatment of *Shalya* (surgery). Though students received instructions in surgery and medicine from individual teachers, there were institutions with important hospitals attached to them for practical training. In ancient India, the surgeons and physicians had a very high standard of knowledge and their name spread even to distant foreign countries. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Khalif of Arabia had invited physicians to undertake teaching of medical science in state hospitals. Khalifa Harun also sent several scholars to India to study Hindu medicine and pharmacology and induced about 20 doctors to come to Baghdad to become chief medical officers of state hospitals and to translate ancient Indian Sanskrit medical works into Arabic. Most celebrated among them was Manaka

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(Manikyā), who was originally invited to cure an ailment of Sultan Harun, which challenged the skill of Arabic physicians. He succeeded in his treatment and was later induced to become the director of state hospitals and translate the work of Susruta into Arabic. The Arabic system of medicine owes a great deal to the Indian Ayurvedic system.

### Veterinary Science

Along with medicine, the veterinary science also progressed considerably during that period. However, veterinary science had been developed in India much before the Gupta period. During Gupta period, it got proper attention of researchers.

Since animals were regarded as a part of the same cosmos as humans, it is not surprising that animal life was keenly protected and veterinary medicine was a distinct branch of science with its own hospitals and scholars. Salihotra was the great scholar of this science. It is believed that the two Pandava brothers, Nakula and Sahdeva, were the experts of the diseases of the horse and their cure.

During that period, Palakapya wrote *Hastyayurveda* (the Science of Prolonging Elephant Life), a treatise on the diseases peculiar to elephants and their treatment. *Asvasastra* was another great work in the field of medical science and it is a treatise on the diseases of animals, which proves that veterinary science progressed tremendously during the Gupta period. However, some historians believe that during Gupta age, there was no regular veterinary institutions to impart education in it. Probably students learned it from the experts of veterinary science.

According to Stanley Wolpert, 'Veterinary science had developed into an Indian medical specialty by that early era, and India's monarchs seem to have supported special hospitals for their horses as well as their elephants. Hindu faith in the sacro-sanctity of animals as well as human souls, and belief in the partial divinity of cows and elephants, helps explain perhaps what seems to be far better care lavished on such animals.'

### Ayurveda

The knowledge of ayurveda flourished during this period, which is still practised by the physicians of the present day. The basic concept of Indian medicine was believed to be the humours (*dosha*). Most ayurvedic practices taught that health was maintained through the even balance of three vital fluids of the body wind, gall and mucus. The following five winds (*Vayu*) maintained the bodily functions:

1. *Udana* (emanating from the throat and causing speech)
2. *Prana* (in the heart and responsible for breathing and swallowing of food)
3. *Samana* (fanning the fire in the stomach, which cooks and digests the food and divide it into its digestible and indigestible parts)
4. *Apana* (in the abdomen and responsible for excretion and procreation)
5. *Vyana* (a generally defused wind causing the motion of the blood and the body)

The system of ayurveda of this period describe that the food digested by the *Samana Vayu* proceed from the heart and the essence of the food proceed to the liver where its essence is converted into blood. The blood in turn is converted into flesh and the process continues through the series of fat, bone, marrow and the semen. The semen when not expelled produces energy, which returns to the heart and is diffused over the body. This process of metabolism is believed to take place in thirty days, which is still practical in the modern day medical science. Probably, Dhanavantari, the most renowned physician of ayurvedic medicines, flourished during this age.

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### **Metallurgy, Chemistry and Physics**

The science of metallurgy, chemistry and physics also flourished during the Gupta period. Unfortunately, no books on these subjects have been discovered, but there is absolutely no doubt that metallurgy and chemistry made a remarkable progress during the Gupta period. The famous Iron pillar near Qutab Minar in Delhi belongs to this age. This Iron pillar is a living example of the progress in the field of metallurgy of the period. This huge pillar is made up of iron, 24 feet high, and weighs seven and half tones. It is so skilfully manufactured that in spite of its exposure for centuries to sun and rain, it shows no sign of rusting and corrosion, which is surprising to even modern metallurgists as to how it was prepared. This is the best proof of the progress made in the field of metallurgy during the period. The discovery of several gigantic copper status of Buddha also represents the advanced metallurgical skill of the Gupta age.

During this period, the use of mercury and iron with proper treatment for the preparation of medicines was prevalent. Writers like Varahamihira have mentioned this in his treatises. The close association of medicine and chemistry, which was to achieve great progress in the later period, began during the Gupta period. Nagarjuna, the famous Buddhist scholar, was also a great scholar of medicine, chemistry and metallurgy. He discovered many new medicines.

Thus, the Gupta age witnessed the highest progress in the field of science in general and astronomy and medicine in particular. It was an age of intellectualism, which led to remarkable progress, new inventions and innovations in every field of learning and specifically in the field of sciences.

### **2.6.2 Social Conditions**

In the Gupta age, it was the joint family system that prevailed. A separate and nuclear family system was inconceivable. The family was managed by a patriarch who was shown profound respect. All the members of the family obeyed his orders and all family traditions were maintained by him. The father was the owner of all property but it was also shared by the sons and the brothers.

During the age of the Guptas, the society was divided in the conventional pattern into the four *Varnas* namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Also existed in this period the concept of four Ashramas and the maintenance of

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*Varnashramadharma* as the basic pillar of the social structure was still considered a responsibility of the king and it was of a paramount importance. *Abhayadatta* the governor of a province, is described as the protector of castes. His successor was described as the checker of the mixture of castes or *Dharmadosha*. Still, the society in the Gupta period was not similar to any preceding age. It underwent a number of vibrant changes and it can be said that the social expansion which started in this age persisted for many centuries. There were certain factors responsible for this social transition. Assimilation of foreign elements, de-tribalization of many tribal states, emergence of a feudal set up because of extensive land-grants, segregation of Varna from profession, emergence of caste system were some such elements which provided a stable platform and an impetus to the process of social expansion. We may now turn our attention towards understanding each one of them in some detail.

### **Position of women**

The position of women had deteriorated during the Gupta age. Women had to live under various restrictions throughout their lives. In childhood, they had to obey their father, in youth their husband and in old age their sons. They had no individual liberty. Girls were married off at an early age and could rarely attain any higher education. They had no choice when it came to their marriage. According to the law of Manu, a father had to get his daughter married before maturity and if he failed to do so, he shall go to hell. Women were barred from attaining Vedic injunctions or religious education. This, however, does not mean that women were completely uneducated. Many women were experts in dancing, painting and playing musical instruments. They also understood verse. Very importantly, remarriage of widows was allowed. Chandragupta himself married his brother's widow Dhruvswamini. The sati system prevailed but in a mild form. Sculptural representations assert that the purdah system was not in vogue, but it is believed that women of noble families used veils when they went out.

### **Caste system**

During the Gupta age, the caste system had become the very foundation of society. The Sudras were looked down upon by members of the upper castes. The Gupta period was an age of revival of Hinduism and Brahminism. It was an age of manifold rites and rituals, customs and ceremonies. The Brahmins occupied a respectful place in the society and art and literature flourished. The Brahmins were split into different categories on the basis of the study of the Vedas. A Brahmin who studied the Rigveda was called Rigvedin and others were called Yajurvedin, Samavedin and Atharvavedin. Vaishyas had also organized themselves into different sections. As they were prosperous and wealthy, they commanded respect.



*Fig. 2.7 Gupta Art depicts Costumes and Hairstyles of the Period*

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### Slavery

Slavery was common in Gupta society. Slaves included prisoners of war, bankrupts and gamblers who had lost their freedom. Their servitude, however, was not permanent.

### Food and drinks

Vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals were popular. *Fa-Hien* writes that the people did not consume alcohol, onions, meat and garlic and it was believed that only the untouchables ate such things and reared poultry and pigs. But *Fa-Hien's* accounts cannot be completely relied on. His observations are most likely limited to Buddhist society. According to the literature of the age, people consumed fish, meat and alcohol and according to the *smritis*, only women were restricted from their consumption, especially those whose husbands were not residing at home. The *smritis* particularly allowed meat for sick persons. In southern India, especially in the aristocratic families, a variety of meat dishes were known to have been prepared. People also chewed betel leaves after meals.

### Dress and ornaments

Literary evidence and art throws light on the dress and ornaments in vogue during the Gupta age. The men wore *dhotis* and covered themselves with a shawl. Although Central Asian communities such as Scythians had brought coats and trousers with them, the Guptas continued using *dhotis*. The men also wore turbans.

Female attire comprised blouses, saris and petticoats. Scythian women wore jackets, blouses and long skirts. The Scythian dress was popular among dancing girls but was otherwise not in use.

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Cotton clothes were the most popular, although woolen and silk clothes were also worn, depending on the weather. Silk was imported from China and was highly prized. Ornaments were also very elaborate. Women wore rings, bracelets and necklaces. Men were also fond of rings and necklaces. The ornaments were mostly made of gold, silver and ivory. Like today, fashions in hairstyle changed over periods. Head dresses were popular and both men and women even wore artificial hair. Women used to embellish their hair with flowers (Figure 2.5).

### **Games and amusement**

Games were a major form of recreation for the people of the Gupta period. There were many sources of amusement. The king and people were fond of hunting. Their love for games is revealed not only in literary evidence but also in coins, which bear a portrait of Samudragupta killing a tiger. The people also entertained themselves witnessing elephant or buffalo fights.

Theatre, music and dance were also popular in cities.

### **Assimilation of foreign elements**

In the Post Maurya period, a number of tribal groups attacked India, like Bactrians, Scytho-Parthians, Kushans etc. They were a distinct foreign race but their occupation of the north western territories of India resulted in an influx of people from their native areas to the newly conquered Indian territories. These tribes were culturally not so rich as to impose their cultural habits on Indians, rather with time they themselves adapted to Indian culture and then started the process of assimilation. In the Brahmanic fold of things, they were given a position of fallen or impure Kshatriyas (Vratya Kshatriyas). That there was no taboo on the intermarriages between the Indians and the foreigners is exemplified by the marriage of Ikshavaku kings who were Brahmin with the Shaka ladies, who were of a foreign stock. Even Satavahanas had done similar things before. Not just in terms of marriages but even in the sphere of life styles, beliefs and vocations we find that Shakas in western India were no different from other Indians. They even started to keep typical Indian names.

### **De-tribalization of the tribal states**

We know that there was an impetus, in the post Mauryan period which continued in the Gupta period, to increase the land under agriculture, also there was an unprecedented increase in the trading activities and hence jungles were cut and trade routes were built through them, so those tribal states which hitherto confined themselves to deep and dense forests were exposed to the vibrant social life of the already settled areas. Moreover, the access of men and commodities to these interior areas induced the people of these tribes with the new perception of social exposure which indeed helped them to urbanize themselves. The conquest of Samudragupta of the republican and forest states, and their subsequent annexation in the empire, may have had an accelerating impact on this process.

### **Segregation of profession**

Though *Varnashramadharm*a, ideally, was still a force to reckon with but in reality we find numerous examples which suggest that people did change their professions.



This may have been prompted by the socio-economic changes brought about by the land endowments and increased trade and commerce in the early centuries to the Christian era. There is a reference in the *Dharmashastras* of *Apad Dharma* or conduct during the period of distress. This term clearly indicates that it was possible for a person to shift his profession, which was dictated to him on the basis of his Varna, when it was difficult for him to carry on with it during the times of financial or social distress and it seems that even '*Dharmashastras*' approved of it. This new change certainly added to the complexities in the social Structure and constitution. We, thus, find that Matrivishnu, who was the great grandson of a saint Indravishnu, became a governor Buddhagupta in Airikina Vishaya in central India. Mayurasarman, who was a took up the profession of a Kshatriya and founded the Kadamba dynasty in the region of Kuntala. We also find an inscription referring to two Kshatriya merchants in the region of upper Ganga. Another inscription from the same region refers to a body of weavers who shifted to Malwa and settled there with a new profession. The Guptas were Vaishya and Vindhyaashakti, the founder of Vakataka dynasty was a Brahmin. The fact that both inter-married shows that the rigidity of Varna was not the paramount priority of the royal families. Finally, we must note that Sudras were in fact benefitted with this delinking of profession and Varna as we find some Sudras taking up the work of a farmer. Even the rulers of Matipura and Sindh were Sudras. So, it must be conceded that life and profession underwent a huge transition in this period, and because *Varnashramadharm*a was generally considered as impregnable as a rock, so this new concept was very important for the further development of the society.

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### Expansion of caste mobility

Varna, as we know, consisted of four classes and with time the Jati system also became a part of Indian society. Successive Smriti writers increased the number of mixed castes. These mixed castes kept on increasing and hence the expansion of castes continued. But how this expansion took place? *Dharmashastras* mention that these mixed castes (Varnasamkara) were the result of Anuloma and Pratiloma marriages. The Anuloma marriage was the one in which bride groom was of a higher Varna than that of the bride and it was the other way round in the case of the Pratiloma marriage. In *Varnashramadharm*a, in the initial stages, marriage out of Varna was strictly prohibited but with changing times the Anuloma marriage generally came to be accepted. With the Changing social perspectives, especially in the Pre-Gupta and Gupta times, even Pratiloma marriages came to be accepted, though quite reluctantly, especially by the Brahmins. For Brahmins, there was a great danger of the destruction of *Varnashramadharm*a because of all kinds of marriages taking place. So, it was thought by the Brahmin law givers to assign a new caste and name to the progeny of all types of inter-caste or inter-varna marriages. These new castes were initially known as *Antyaja* (the lowest castes) but afterwards they came to be called as mixed castes (*Varnasamkara*). That is the reason why we hear of around sixty mixed castes from Manu which increased to around a hundred in the *Brahmvaivarta Purana*, a work of early medieval age. Nishada was the caste assigned to the progeny of a Brahmin husband and a Sudra wife; similarly, *Chandala* was the result of the marriage of Sudra father and Brahmin mother. Even the

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offsprings by the inter-caste marriage of one parent of mixed caste and other of a Varna or of the parents of different mixed castes were assigned a new name. This explains the rapid expansion of the institution of caste in the later ancient and early medieval India. The concept of mixed castes, was also used, to a great extent, to accommodate foreign and indigenous tribes in the caste hierarchy. Even at the higher levels of social structures, inter-caste marriages were in vogue quite casually. We hear of the marriage between Prabhavatigupta, daughter of Chandragupta II, who was a vaishya with Radrasena II, the Brahmin king of the Vakataya dynasty; daughters of Kakusthavarman, the king of the Kadamba dynasty, who was a Brahmin, were married to the house of the Guptas who were Vaishyas; Brahmin Soma, an ancestor of the Vakataka king Devasena, had Brahmin and Kshatriya wives. At the lower levels, inter-castes marriages must have been more common. Marriage of a male of higher Varna with a Sudra female was though looked down upon by the Smriti writers but still they recognized it to the extent that the male offspring of such marriage had a stake in his father's property. Hence, inter-caste marriage gave rise to the caste system and felicitated caste mobility to a great extent.

### **The supremacy of the twice borns**

Brahmins and Kshatriyas still maintained their supremacy. Though some Brahmins did change their profession, but a substantial chunk of them still followed religious and literary pursuits. We find a number of them writing legal treatises which were given due cognizance even by the king in the day to day business. The class as a whole continued to derive respect in the society. Kshatriyas also, on account of their prestige and power that they possessed were held in high esteem. Their relations with Brahmins were generally cordial.

They were mainly involved in warfare. The condition of Vaishyas was also not as bad as it became in the later centuries when they were reduced to the position of Sudras. Trade and commerce was also flourishing though not to the extent that it was in the Post Mauryan period.

The condition of Sudras actually became a little better in the period. The Smriti writers allowed them to become traders, artisans, and agriculturists and they even enrolled themselves in the army and rose sometimes, by sheer dint of merit, to higher positions.

On the basis of the Vedas they studied, were divided into different shakhas. Yajurvedin Brahmins were powerful and strong in the regions of Orissa, Telengana, Kosala, and Malwa, while Uttar Pradesh and Kathiawar was the stronghold of Samavedi Brahmins. Royal families generally had their preceptors from the class of Brahmins.

### **The *chandals* and the slaves**

*Chandalas* were compelled in this age to perform the meanest of works like cremating dead bodies and executing criminals. They were supposed to live outside the general settlement and they, while entering the town, had to inform the people by striking a piece of wood. Some of the aboriginal forest tribes were incorporated into the caste

fold as *Chandalas*. The Sabharas, one such tribe, offered human flesh to their deity, kidnapped women for marriage and drank wine and ate meat.

During the Gupta period, slavery existed but not as an institution and its incidence was also mild. Katyayan mentions that a Brahmin can never be enslaved. A free woman, if married to a slave, was liable to become a slave. If a slave woman conceived an issue of her master, she, along with her offspring, attained freedom. 'Once a slave, always a slave' was not the rule of the day and under certain conditions emancipation was possible.

## NOTES

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. Why is the Gupta age known as the Golden Age of Ancient India?
11. What kind of family system prevailed during the Gupta Age?
12. What was the position of women in the Gupta age?

## 2.7 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ANCIENT INDIA: VIKRAMSILA AND NALANDA

Let us now study two of the most prominent educational institutions in ancient India.

### Nalanda University

Nalanda was an acclaimed Buddhist monastery in ancient Magadha. The site is located about 95 kilometres southeast of Patna near the city of Bihar Sharif, and was a centre of learning from the AD 5th century to AD 1200. 2,000 Teachers and 10,000 students from all over the Buddhist world lived and studied at Nalanda. It is considered the first residential international university of the world. The seat of learning under the patronage of the Guptas as well as emperors like Harsha and later, the rulers of the Pala Empire. At its height, the school attracted scholars and students from as far away as Tibet, China, Korea, and Central Asia. It was supposedly destroyed by an army of the Mamluk Dynasty under Bakhtiyar Khilji in AD 1200.



*Fig. 2.8 Ruins of Nalanda University*

## NOTES

Nalanda saw the rise and fall of many empires and emperors who contributed in the development of Nalanda University. Many monasteries and temples were built by them. Kingarshwardhana gifted a 25m high copper statue of Buddha and Kumargupta endowed a college of fine arts etc. Nagarjuna- a Mahayana philosopher, Dinnaga- founder of the school of Logic and Dharmapala- the Brahmin scholar, taught here.

The famous Chinese traveller and scholar, Hieun-Tsang stayed here and has given a detailed description of the situations prevailing at that time. Careful excavation of the place has revealed many stupas, monasteries, hostels, stair cases, meditation halls, lecture halls and many other structures which speak of the splendour and grandeur this place enjoyed, when the place was a centre of serious study.

The Gupta kings patronised these monasteries, built in old Kushan architectural style, in a row of cells around a courtyard. Ashoka and Harshavardhana were some of its most celebrated patrons who built temples and monasteries here. Hiuen Tsang had left ecstatic accounts of both the ambiance and architecture of this unique university of ancient times.

During the Gupta age, the practice and study of the mahayana, especially the madhyamaka, flourished in Nalanda. However, from 750 AD, in the Pala age, there was an increase in the study and propagation of the tantric teachings. This is evidenced by the famous pandit Abhayakaragupta, a renowned tantric practitioner who was simultaneously abbot of the Mahabodhi, Nalanda and Vikramashila monasteries. Also Naropa, later so important to the tantric lineages of the Tibetan traditions, was abbot of Nalanda in the years 1049-57.

Much of the tradition of Nalanda had been carried into Tibet by the time of the Muslim invasions of the twelfth century. While the monasteries of Odantapuri and Vikramashila were then destroyed, the buildings at Nalanda do not seem to have suffered extensive damage at that time, although most of the monks fled before the desecrating armies.

### **Vikramasila University**

Alongside Nalanda, Vikramasila University was one of the two most important centres of Buddhist learning in India during the Pala empire. The centre of learning was established by King Dharmapala (AD 783 to AD 820) in response to an apparent decline in the quality of scholarship at Nalanda University. The remains of the university are located at about 50 km east of Bhagalpur and about 13 km north-east of Kahalgaon. The seat of learning prospered for about four centuries before it was destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khilji during fighting with the Sena dynasty along with the other major centres of Buddhism in India around AD 1200.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

13. During the Gupta age, what was studied and practiced in Nalanda?
14. Where are the remains of the Vikramsila University located?

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## 2.8 SUMMARY

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- Chinese historians tell us that the Kushanas were a section of the Yuehchi race. The Yueh-chi race were constituted of nomadic groups that inhabited the borders of modern China. They were driven out from the lands which they conquered from the Sakas and were forced to resume their march. They occupied the valley of the Oxus and reduced to subjugation its peaceful inhabitants. It is possible that the domination of the Yueh-chi extended over Bactria to the south of the Oxus. Around 10BC, the Yueh-chi lost their nomadic habits and settled down.
- Kanishka was the most striking figure from the Kushan Dynasty of India. A great conqueror and a patron of Buddhism, he combined in himself the military ability of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Asoka. Most scholars believed that Kanishka was the founder of the Saka era. He ascended the throne in 78AD.
- A critical study of the coins and inscriptions of the Kushanas helps us to gather an idea of India under the Kushanas. We find that the administrative systems of the Kushanas had both foreign elements and Indian elements in them. The important foreign element was the government by satraps. The latter were viceroys or governors of the provinces.
- There were some functionaries who had foreign names. The name strategos stood for a general or military governor, while meridach stood represented a district magistrate. Amatyas and mahasenapatis were officers of Indian origin. The officers having foreign names were stationed in the North-West, while officers having Indian names were stationed in the interiors.
- The main source of information regarding the Satavahana lies in the Sangam literature.
- Sangams were assemblies, where bards and poets gathered to share their talents. Mythology holds that the first assembly was attended by gods though the poetry composed during this period could not stand the test of time.
- The Sangam age refers to the period during which voluminous Tamil literature, known as the Sangam literature was produced. The Sangam was the society of the learned in ancient Tamil. It appears that the word Sangam was used by the Buddhists and Jains as an euphemistic substitute for the earlier Tamil word kudal. All three Sangams are said to have flourished in the Pandyan kingdom and patronized by kings.
- There is a controversy regarding the origins of the Satavahanas. Kings called Satavahanas and Satakarnis in inscriptions and coins were given the name of Andhra, Andhra-bhrityan and Andhrajatiya in the Puranas. From this, scholars have come to the conclusion that the Satavahanas or the Satakarnis were identical with the Andhras.

## NOTES

## NOTES

- The Satavahanas lost their northern and western possessions and were often confused with the people of Andhradesa whom they ruled. The Puranas thus called them not only the ruler of Andhradesa, but also gave them the title of Andhra Kings.
- Important rulers of this period were Gautamiputra Satakarni and Rudradaman I.
- The Guptas came to the center of the political stage just by chance. But they were the only power in those times who wanted to restore to the country its lost political unity.
- The area between 'the region and the Sutlej' was under the direct authority of the Guptas. They commanded respect for their powerful war machine, military process and political acumen.
- The Guptas massacred the Huns and their government was based on the accepted principle of centralization and progressive decentralization.
- During the rule of the Guptas, the central government was powerful, but in 'the district headquarters, the officials of the Central Government were assisted and controlled by popular councils, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell its own wasteland.
- Villages during the Gupta period had their own popular councils which administered almost all the branches of administration, including collection of taxes and settlement of village disputes.
- Gupta administration was divided into provinces, districts, towns and villages.
- Internal dissension, weak central authority, lack of proper succession laws, brought about the disintegration of this empire.
- The Gupta age saw a revival of Hinduism and Sanskrit, and Gupta rulers were mainly
  - followers of Vaishnavism.
  - Freedom and educational opportunities for women were limited during the Gupta age.
  - Agricultural land was not owned by the state but by the individual families.
  - Trade relations existed with foreign countries and internal trade was made possible by good transportation and road networks and also sea routes.
  - Traders and merchants were organized in guilds.
  - Nalanda was an acclaimed Buddhist monastery in ancient Magadha.
  - 2,000 Teachers and 10,000 students from all over the Buddhist world lived and studied at Nalanda. It is considered the first residential international university of the world.
  - Alongside Nalanda, Vikramasila University was one of the two most important centres of Buddhist learning in India during the Pala empire.

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## 2.9 KEY TERMS

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- **Satrap:** A Persian word used for heads of provinces
- **Suzerainty:** Sovereign or state having some control over another state that is internally autonomous
- **Huns:** Group of semi-nomadic people who, appearing from east of the Volga, migrated into Europe and built an enormous empire
- **Ayurveda:** It is the traditional Hindu system of medicine (incorporated in Atharva Veda, the last of the four Vedas), which is based on the idea of balance in bodily systems and uses diet, herbal treatment, and yogic breathing.
- **Metallurgy:** The branch of science and technology concerned with the properties of metals and their production and purification.

## NOTES

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## 2.10 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. According to Chinese historians, the Kushanas were a part of the Yueh-chi race constituted by nomadic groups that inhabited the borders of modern China.
2. The Kushana Empire reached its zenith during the time of Kanishka I.
3. The Yaugheyas were a martial tribe who ruled over the areas on the banks of the Sutlej as far as the borders of Bahawalpur during the time of the Kushana Empire.
4. The founder of the Satavahanas dynasty was Simuka.
5. The Satavahanas defended the South for quite a long period from the invasions of foreigners, particularly the Sakas, which was a creditable achievement.
6. The government of the Gupta Empire was based on the accepted principle of centralization and progressive decentralization.
7. The sources of information for the Gupta period comprise both literary and archaeological sources. These are found all over the country from Bengal to Kathiawar.
8. Gupta administration featured elements of the administrative systems of the Mauryas, the Satavahanas, the Scythians and the Kushanas.
9. The main source of income of the Gupta Empire was land-tax.
10. The advancement of science and technology was the most notable feature of the Gupta period. Due to the patronization of the Gupta rulers, the country produced outstanding scholars of repute in various fields like education, science and technology, art and architecture, which rose to the pinnacle of their heights during the period. So, the Gupta period is also known as the Classical Age or the Golden Age of ancient India.
11. In the Gupta age, it was the joint family system that prevailed.

## NOTES

12. The position of women had deteriorated during the Gupta age. Women had to live under various restrictions throughout their lives. In childhood, they had to obey their father, in youth their husband and in old age their sons. They had no individual liberty. Girls were married off at an early age and could rarely attain any higher education. They had no choice when it came to their marriage. According to the law of Manu, a father had to get his daughter married before maturity and if he failed to do so, he shall go to hell. Women were barred from attaining Vedic injunctions or religious education. This, however, does not mean that women were completely uneducated. Many women were experts in dancing, painting and playing musical instruments. They also understood verse. Very importantly, remarriage of widows was allowed.
13. During the Gupta age, the practice and study of the mahayana, especially the madhyamaka, flourished in Nalanda.
14. The remains of the Vikramshila university are located at about 50 km east of Bhagalpur and about 13 km north-east of Kahalgaon.

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## 2.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Who was Gautamiputra Satakarni?
2. Who succeeded Rudradaman?
3. Discuss the literary sources for the early Guptas?
4. Who were the important rulers of the Satavahanas?
5. What were the demerits of the Gupta system of administration?
6. Discuss the caste system during the Gupta Age?
7. Write short notes on Vikramsila and Nalanda.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Give an overview of the administrative set-up of the Gupta empire
2. What were the causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire? Analyse any three in detail.
3. Discuss the importance of the Satavahanas to ancient India.
4. Analyse Kanishka's achievements as an able ruler.
5. Write a note on the administrative excellence of the Kushanas.
6. Explain briefly the causes of the downfall of the Kushanas.
7. Why is the Gupta period called the classical age of ancient India?



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## **2.12 FURTHER READING**

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## **NOTES**



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## UNIT 3 POST-GUPTA PERIOD

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 History of Bengal: Rise of Gauda
- 3.3 Vardhana Empire: Harsha
- 3.4 The Palas
  - 3.4.1 Kaivarta Revolt
- 3.5 The Senas
- 3.6 Socio-Economic and Cultural Conditions in the Sena and Pala Age
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key Terms
- 3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.10 Questions and Exercises
- 3.11 Further Reading

### NOTES

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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By the time the Gupta dynasty declined, the Huns were also sent back and as a result, the whole of North India was left without any strong dominance. This situation led to the domination of small independent kingdoms in the whole of the fifth century. One such kingdom that rose as a power centre was the Kingdom of Thaneshwar, a major part of Srikantha Janpada. According to the writings of Bana, the author of *Harsha Charita*, one person named Pushyabhuti, a great devotee of lord Shiva, was responsible for setting up the Kingdom of Thaneshwar. Even though his clan was known as the Pushyabhuti dynasty, it was here only that Parbhakarvardhan, the first king of the Vardhana dynasty, came to the throne in 580 AD. Parbhakarvardhan also assumed the titles of *Parmabhatarka* and *Maharajadhiraj*. The new king proved himself to be a warrior of great worth. However, the greatest king of the Vardhana dynasty was none other than Harshavardhana, the younger son of Parbhakarvardhan. This unit will talk about the establishment and the expansion of the Vardhana Empire and the achievements of the illustrious king, Harshavardhana. The unit will also discuss the Pala and Sena kingdoms of Bengal.

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### 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the history of the Gauda Kingdom
- Discuss the establishment and expansion of Vardhana Empire
- Examine the rise of Harshavardhana
- Describe the history of the Pala and Sena Kingdoms
- Discuss the social life of the people during the Pala period

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## 3.2 HISTORY OF BENGAL: RISE OF GAUDA

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### NOTES

After the decline of the Gupta Empire, the region of Bengal gained its independence and was known as the Gauda kingdom, although the kingdom did not include all of Bengal. The various regions which were later joined together as Bengal were known as Pundra Vardhana, Gauda, Dandabhukti, Karna Subarna, Varendra, Rarh, Summha Desa, Vanga, Vangala, Harikela, Chandradwipa, Subarnabithi, Navyabakashika, Lukhnauti, and Samatata. The Gauda Kingdom had its capital at Karnasuvarna, close to Rajbadidanga in the Murshidabad district of present day West Bengal.

The first recorded independent king of the region of Gauda was a tribal leader named Shashanka. Historians estimate his reign from AD 600- AD 625. Shashanka pulled together different sections of his kingdom at some point around the start of the seventh century, and was also a contemporary and adversary of King Harshavardhana. Shashanka and his allies in fact went to war with King Harsha and his allies. The results of the war appear to be inconclusive as Shashanka is thought to have held onto his control of the Bengal region. Throughout his rule Shashanka fought periodic battles with Harsha and became known for his bravery. You will learn about Harshavardhana in the subsequent section.

Although Shashanka was called the Lord of Gauda, his empire included more than just the region of Gauda. By the end of Shashanka's rule, his domain stretched from Vanga to Bhuvanasha while in the east, his kingdom bordered Kamarupa. Before the rise of Gauda under Shashanka, Bengal was divided into three regions, Banga, Samatata and Gauda and was ruled by a feeble ruler belonging to the later Gupta dynasty known as Mahasenagupta. Shashanka was one of his chieftains who rose to power taking the advantage of the weak ruler. After Mahasenagupta's death, Shashanka drove the later Guptas and other prominent nobles out of the region and established his own kingdom with a capital at Karnasubarna.

Following Shashanka's death, his kingdom passed on to his son Manava. However, it was short-lived. Historians estimate that within eight months, Harsha and his allies annexed the Gauda Kingdom under their rule.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who was the first and most important king of the Gauda Kingdom?
2. Who ruled Bengal before the rise of Gauda?

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## 3.3 VARDHANA EMPIRE: HARSHA

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After the decline of the Gupta Empire, the political unity of India was once again disintegrated. Anarchy prevailed everywhere in the country. Kings started fighting among themselves for the sake of their own interests. In such a situation there arose the Vardhana dynasty in Thaneshwar (*Shrikantha Janapada*, near Delhi).

Pushyabhuti was the founder of this dynasty. Because of this, the Vardhana dynasty was also known as the Pushyabhuti dynasty. However, Nara Vardhana is considered as the first acknowledged king of this dynasty because the existence of Pushyabhuti could not be found in the inscriptions or literary sources. From the discoveries made in Sonapat, Nalanda, Madhubana, we know the genealogy of the Vardhana dynasty, was as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** Kings and Queens of Vardhana Dynasty

King	Queen
Nara Vardhana	Vajrini Devi
Rajya Vardhana	Apsara Devi
Aditya Vardhana	Mahasenagupta Devi
Prabhakara Vardhana	Yashomati Devi

Prabhakara Vardhana was the first powerful king of the Vardhana dynasty. He had two sons, Rajya Vardhana and Harsha Vardhana, and a daughter, Rajyashri. In the last days of Prabhakara Vardhana, the Huns attacked. Rajya Vardhana was sent to face the Huns. During this battle, Prabhakara Vardhana expired.

### **Rajya Vardhana**

When Rajya Vardhana returned to his capital after defeating the Huns, he got the news of his father's death, which made him sorrowful. So he started thinking of renouncing the worldly life. In the meantime, he was informed by his servant that the king of Malwas had killed Grihaverma and his wife and Rajya Vardhana's sister Rajyashri had been imprisoned. He heard the speculation that the king of Malwa wanted to attack his kingdom since the king had expired. Rajya Vardhana attacked Malwa and became victorious in the battle. However, King Shashanka of Gaur killed him.

### **Rise of Harshavardhana**

After the death of his brother Rajyavardhana, Harshavardhana (606–647 AD) ascended the throne at the age of sixteen in 606 AD. After his accession to the throne, he vowed to destroy Gaur and kill Shashanka. Harsha was moved by his father's and brother's death. His first priority was to free his sister Rajyashri from the imprisonment of the king of Malwa and to punish Shashanka. His army commander Simhanada said to a disturbed and grieving Harsha 'Leaving aside your cowardice grief, keep your parental heritage and royal powers under your possession as a lion keeps fawn under its control.' Ultimately, Harsha gave up his grief and decided to seek revenge.

*Harshacharita*, written by Banabhatta, mentions that Harsha marched with a powerful army to take his revenge against Shashanka. On his way, he was informed by his army commander that a king named Gupta had captured Kannauj and his sister Rajyashri had fled from the prison. Handing over the command of his army to his chief commandant and an order to attack Gaur, he personally went in search of his sister Rajyashri. Harsha stopped her from entering into a funeral pyre and brought her back to camp. What happened after Harsha dispatched his commander to attack

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

Gaur, is an issue on which, however, *Harshacharita* is silent. It is evident from the Ganjam inscription that Harsha's army forced Shashanka to return to Gaur. Defeating Shashanka, Harsha annexed his empire. It is written in the *Arya Manjusri Mulakalpa* that a king (Harsha) whose name begins with letter 'H' defeated a king who bears the name of 'Soma.'



*Fig. 3.1 Harsha's Statue in Kannauj*

### **Problems of Kannauj**

Kannauj King Grihaverma had died and he had no son. Hence, the question of a successor arose. When the throne was vacant after the death of childless Grihaverma, his throne was happily handed over to Harsha by his courtiers. Huen-Tsang's account also corroborates this action. But Harsha did not accept this proposal. Perhaps the real fact, which is mentioned in the Chinese text *Phangchi*, is that he (Harsha) ruled over Kannauj with his sister.

### **Harsha's conquests**

Harsha wanted to hoist his flag of victory over the entire India. He had proclaimed at the time of his accession, 'All kings upto Udayanchal...Subela ....Astagiri.....Gandhamadan should be ready to pay him tax or to take up arms to face him in the battle.' Huen-Tsang wrote, 'Soon he took revenge of his brother's death and became master of India.' Harsha was a great and powerful emperor. He shifted his capital from Thaneshwar to Kannauj for administrative convenience. King Bhaskarverma of Kamrupa sent a proposal of a treaty, which was accepted delightedly by Harsha. It was a diplomatic move. The treaty was in the mutual interest of both as they were common enemy of Shashanka. When Harsha attacked Vallabhi, King Dhruvasena II sought refuge under the Gujars. Making a diplomatic move, Harsha gave his daughter in marriage to Dhruvasena. It is known from Huen-Tsang that Harsha had a desire to conquer his neighbouring states. Hence, he proceeded towards the east and became victorious after waging war for six years. The five states that Harsha conquered were Punjab, Kanyakubja, Bengal, Bihar

and Orissa. Thus, he got control over North India. Harsha plundered Sindh's wealth after conquering it.

### War with Chalukya King Pulakeshin II

Once Harsha had conquered North India, he turned his attention towards south. Huen-Tsang wrote, 'He collected an army from Pancha Bharata (the five states of North India), invited the best commanders from all states and himself took over the command of the collected army and marched to defeat Pulakeshin.' But, Harsha was defeated by Pulakeshin II. According to the Aihole inscription, Harsha's elephantry massacred soldiers, but he still could not win the war. The battle in which Harsha was defeated was fierce. The famous battle occurred perhaps between 630 to 634 AD.

### Nepal conquest

It is evident from *Harshacharita* that Harsha collected tax from the 'mountain region of white snow'. He had conquered Nepal. So, Nepal was definitely under the suzerainty of Harsha.

### Kashmir conquest

Huen-Tsang wrote that Harsha had heard that one of the teeth of Buddha was in Kashmir. So, he went to Kashmir and asked permission to see the Buddha-tooth. The Buddhist order granted him permission. Kashmir king initiated mediation and he himself presented the Buddha-tooth in front of Harsha. Having seen the Buddha-tooth, Harsha was overwhelmed with joy and took away the Buddha-tooth forcefully.

### Control over Uttar Pradesh and Magadha

It is evident from the inscriptions found from Banskhera Madhubana (in modern Uttar Pradesh) that Harsha captured Mathura, Govishana, Ayodhya, Prayaga and Kaushambi. After that Harsha took the title of *Magadharaja*.

### Relation with China

Harsha sent his ambassador to China with a proposal of friendship. Besides, he also had diplomatic relationship with Iran (*Pharasa*). These kings exchanged gifts with each other.

### Extent of Harsha's empire

Harsha's empire was very vast. Pannikar, an Indian Historian associated with the Marxist school of historiography, mentions that Harsha was the undisputed master of North India. The areas from the Himalayas in north to the Vindhya mountain ranges in south, and Kamarupa in east to Saurashtra in west were included in his empire. Harsha was the last Hindu King of the ancient India. Harsha was called '*Savachakravartinam dhaureye*' and '*Chatuh samudradhipati*'. He had inherited a small kingdom from his father but he established his control over almost the entire India by means of his talent and ability. Harsha extended his suzerainty over the areas from the bank of Shatadru on the north to Narmada on the south and from the frontier state of Western Malwa to the regions near the Himalayas (Figure 3.2).

## NOTES

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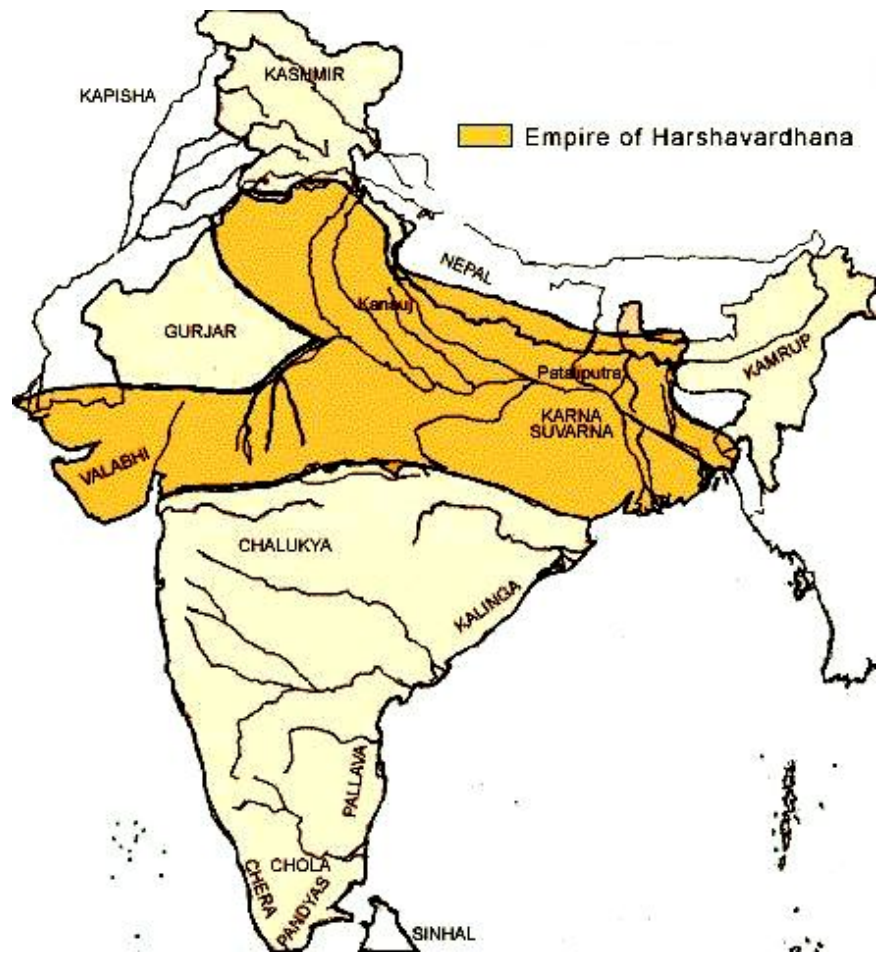


Fig. 3.2 Extent of Harsha's Kingdom

**Cultural achievements of Harsha**

Harsha was undoubtedly one of the greatest rulers of the ancient Indian history. According to Panikkar, Harsha has a high place in the Indian History as a ruler, poet and religious king. He was not only brilliant as a ruler and conqueror but more efficient as an ambassador of peace. Harsha's achievements in the cultural field are immense.

**Kannauj assembly**

The first example of the cultural achievements of Harsha was organizing the Kannauj Assembly. Harsha is the only king in the Indian history who is credited with holding public assemblies at regular intervals for religious and cultural purposes. According to Huen-Tsang's accounts, Harsha wished to hold great assemblies in Kanyakubja. All Brahmins, Sramanas and non-Budhhists were ordered to join the assembly so that they would relate to the religious principles of Mahayana Buddhism.

The kings of eighteen countries, 3,000 Brahmins, 3,000 Jains, and 1,000 monks of Nalanda Buddhavihara participated in the assembly of Kannauj, which was chaired by Huen-Tsang. A huge pavilion and 100 feet high *chaitya* were built on the bank of



River Ganges. A human sized golden image of the Buddha was installed in it. When Huen-Tsang wrote about the proceeding of the assembly, he mentioned that a three feet high image of the Buddha, kept on an elephant was taken out daily in a procession. The procession reached the assembly hall where the image was installed on a throne and offering was made to that image. Thereafter, the scholars entered into the assembly hall. First of all, the principles of Mahayana were eulogized. Then Huen-Tsang made an announcement 'If any person proves my proposal logically wrong or creates doubt about it in debate, I will cut off my head on rival's assertion to this effect.' But, Harsha immediately announced for the protection of Huen-Tsang 'If any one touches or hurts the religious teacher, he would be condemned to death and who would speak against him his tongue would be cut off.' Huen-Tsang was given the title of *Mahyanadeva* or *Moksadeva*. In such a situation no one dared to speak against him.'

Brahmins reacted sharply at the promotion of Buddhism. They put the hall on fire and a conspiracy was hatched to make an assassination bid on Harsha. But Harsha survived. He captured five hundred Brahmins and expelled them. An announcement was made in the entire empire of Kannauj that the Chinese pilgrimage traveller established the doctrines of Mahayana after refuting the principles of other religions. No one could dare debate it.

### **Prayaga assembly**

Harsha organized a great assembly in Prayaga. He organized this assembly in every five years. Eighteen kings including Huen-Tsang participated in the this assembly. According to Huen-Tsang, 'Harshavardhana worshipped the Buddha statue and offered it all his precious gems. Thereafter, he donated all this offering to the priests living therein. Harsha distributed all his property among students, orphans, widows and the poor. When nothing was left to him, he donated his gem imbedded crown and garland. When all the accumulated wealth of five years was finished he distributed all his personal ornaments and clothes, and then wore old clothes, which he asked for from his sister Rajyashri. Wearing it he worshipped the Buddha in all the ten directions...' It is believed that Harsha established a unique record in the individual charity in the world. Harsha wanted to donate all his wealth for the welfare of humanity in order to receive blessings from Buddha. According to Dr Ishwari Prasad an Indian historian who dealt mainly with the Muslim rulers and the governments of India, 'Harsha had forgotten the partiality of religious intolerance, what he demonstrated in the Kannauj assembly by his expressed charity and liberality in Prayaga assembly.'

### **Literary interest of Harsha**

Harsha is famous not only for his victories but also for his books. He demonstrated the best example of his literary talent by composing Sanskrit dramas, *Priyadarshika*, *Nagananda* and *Ratnavali*. Banabhatta called him adept in composing beautiful poetry. Harsha was not only a patron of the learned scholars, but, used his pen as skillfully as he used his sword. Banabhatta was his royal poet. Besides, he patronized scholars like Shilabhadra, Jayasen, Matanga Divakar Mayur, etc.

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**Harsha's religious belief**

There is a dispute regarding the religion that he followed. It is evident from *Harshacharita* that Harsha and his ancestors were Shaivites. Although Harsha was bent towards Buddhism, he had faith in Shiva and Surya also. But, seeing his support for Buddhism, some scholars considered him Buddhist as well. Perhaps he had accepted Buddhism in his later life. Huen-Tsang and Kannauj religious assembly are evidences to it. But it is not entirely clear.

**Harsha's administration**

Harsha's administrative system was well managed and organized like the Guptas. According to Huen-Tsang, 'Harsha was hard-working and used to forget to take even his food and sleep.' The main features of his administration were as follows:

- **King:** King was the highest official of the administration. He took the titles of *Maharajadhiraja*, *Prameshwara*, *Paramabhattaraka*, *Paramadevata*, etc. The responsibility of the entire governance was on the king. Harsha personally supervised his subjects' welfare. He was the supreme judge and supreme commander of his army. Apart from the administrative activities, he was also involved in religious activities and public welfare. According to the Madhubana edict, 'Harsha divided his daily activities into three parts of which one part was reserved for the administrative activities and the remaining two parts were reserved for his personal and religious acts.'
- **Council of ministers:** The king had a council of ministers to assist him in the administrative affairs. The Council of ministers had an important place in the empire as it had control over the autocratic behaviour of the king. Central administration was divided into several departments. These departments acted under the control of ministers or chairpersons. The important officials were *Mahasandhivigrahaka*, *Mahabaladhikrita*, *Senapati*, *Rajasthaniya* (Foreign Minister), *Uparika Maharaja*, etc. Huen-Tsang had written that the administration of the country was under the control of these officials.
- **Provincial administration:** Harsha's empire was very vast. Therefore, for the sake of the administrative convenience, it was divided into provinces, which were known as *Bhukti* or *Desha*. Its chief official was known as *Uparika Maharaja*. A member of the royal family was appointed to this post. Every province was divided into district (*visaya*). Its head was called *Visayapati*. The *Visayapati* was appointed by the *Uparika Maharaja*.
- **Local or village administration:** Every district or *visaya* was divided into several *pathaka* (circles), and the *pathak* was divided into several *gramas* (villages). *Gramas* was the smallest unit of the administration. An official, known as *Mahattara* was referred to among the village officials, who perhaps looked after the village administration. But, we do not know for certain whether he was a state official or respected elderly villager. *Gramika* was perhaps the head of a village.

- **Revenue system:** The main source of income was *Udranga* (land-tax). Besides, the other taxes were *Uparikara*, wealth, gold, etc. According to Huen-Tsang, royal land had four parts. One part was spent on religious activities and government works. Second was spent over public works and officials. The third part was spent to provide reward and salaries to the scholars and the fourth was spent on donation and meritorious acts. One-sixth of the produce was taken as land-tax.
- **Judicial system:** Huen-Tsang has written that there were no criminals as the administration was run with honesty and the mutual relation between the government and people was cordial. During the time of Harsha, punishment was severe. Hence, the criminals were afraid of committing any crime. The *Harshacharita* states that the criminals were set free on the occasions of festivals, ceremonies, etc. *Dandika* or *Dandapashika* was the title of the chief judicial officer.
- **Department of Defense:** To protect the vast empire, there was a need to have a very efficient and large army. It is evident from the accounts of Harsha that he organized a huge army as well as increased its numbers after extending his empire. The numbers of elephant army were 60,000 and that of mounted army were 100,000.
- **Espionage system:** The espionage department was under the control of the Department of Defence. This department discovered secretly any disruptive activities taking place within or without the kingdom.
- **Activity of public welfare:** Harsha executed several acts of public welfare because of which he is often compared with Asoka. He donated his wealth every five years. Besides, he also built several *chaityas*, stupas and temples. He worked for the development of the Nalanda University and other educational centres.

### Estimate of Harsha's reign

Harsha's characteristic had the mixture of the qualities of Ashoka and Samudragupta. Like Samudragupta, he launched the campaign of conquest in different parts of the country and attained the status of emperor and also achieved historical unity of the country. Harsha occupies a special place in the Indian history on account of his valour, able leadership, religious tolerance, literary love and charity. He was a distinct person and should be counted among great kings like Ashoka and Akbar. As an administrator of public welfare, literary patron and an accomplished dramatist, etc., he should be mentioned in the pages of history as a talented and attractive king. Harsha, on the basis of his talent, extended his empire in the whole of India and, thus, united it into a political unity.

### Huen-Tsang's account of India

Huen-Tsang had praised the administrative system of Harsha. He considered Harsha as a king endowed with all qualities. According to him, Harsha had a strong control over his administration, which was well-organized. The subjects were affluent and

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contented. Crime was negligible, and the punishment was so severe that none had the courage to commit any crime. The economic life of the society was primarily dependent on the agriculture but there were many industries and business settlement in addition to agriculture. Huen-Tsang writes that every person fulfilled his needs peacefully. One-sixth of the produce of land was paid as tax. Golden and silver coins were in vogue. Huen-Tsang was especially attracted to the religious condition of India. He found mostly Brahmins in this country. So, he called it 'the country of Brahmins.' Brahmins and the others used Sanskrit language and were divided into several categories. Some appeared with shaved head, garland of skulls, knotted hair or with the ash-painted bodies. Recluses led a life of sacrifice. Huen-Tsang has also talked about the eighteen sects of Buddhism. According to him, Harsha was a follower of Buddhism but there were also several other religions in India at that time. Brahminism was in a developed condition. Most of the people were either the followers of Shaiva or Vaishnava thoughts.

### **Social condition**

In the social sphere, Huen-Tsang praised Brahmins and Kshatriyas. According to him, there was caste system in the society. Traditionally, there were four divisions in the caste system. Four castes had religious-rites-based purity in different quantity. The first caste was Brahmina, which was famous for knowledge and moral conduct. The second was Kshatriya, which participated in the administration. The third was Vaishya. They traded in and outside the country. The fourth was Shudra, who did menial jobs. Each person married in his own caste. Women did not remarry. Sati system and polygamy were prevalent in the society.

Huen-Tsang categorized the character of the inhabitants of each state in the following way:

'The people of Kashmir are cheats and cowards. The people of Mathura are learned and the best in moral conduct. The inhabitants of Kannauj are beautiful. The inhabitants of Malwa are learned and polite. The inhabitants of Kamrupa are aggressive and they respect the scholars. The inhabitants of Chola are fearful and wicked. The Dravidians are faithful, courageous and lovers of letters. The inhabitants of Maharashtra are grateful, egoist, war-lovers and self-sacrificers.'

The Indians were dutiful, truthful and talented. They always had care of the vice and virtue, and mundane and supra-mundane. Their conducts were polite and matured. There was less crime. Even for simple crime, the punishment was amputation. To prove their innocence, the criminals had to undergo tests of water, fire and poison. There were physicians and several medicines in the country. Corpses were cremated or disposed of in water. Not being cured of diseases, the old would commit suicide by immersing themselves into the Ganges. It was a pious duty. Education was mandatory for higher castes and every child had to learn grammar, art, medicine, logic and spirituality. Brahmins were respected due to their knowledge and piety.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

3. Who was the first powerful king of the Vardhana dynasty?
4. Where and why did Harsha shift the capital of his empire?
5. What was the extent of Harsha's empire?
6. What was the main source of income in Harsha's empire?

**NOTES****3.4 THE PALAS**

Another great empire in Northern India was established by the Palas in the middle of the eighth century AD. Nothing is certain about the antecedents of the Palas but it is quite confirmed that their homeland was Bengal. The Palas contested for the sovereignty of Kannauj against the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and established an extensive empire with Bengal as its base. They provided it unity, prosperity and glory for about four centuries.

**Gopala (AD 750-775)**

Sasanka, the contemporary ruler of emperor Harsha, had established a powerful empire in Bengal. But after his death, anarchy prevailed in Bengal for about a century. The absence of a powerful king remained its primary cause. Being troubled by the unsettled state of affairs of Bengal, the nobles elected Gopala as their leader who laid the foundation of the mighty empire of the Palas in Bengal. Gopala was a Kshatriya by caste and had proved his valour and capability as a successful leader prior to his election as king. His original kingdom was Vanga or east Bengal. He was a devotee of Buddha but pursued the policy of war and conquest to extend his empire. Even after him, the Pala rulers kept their faith in Buddhism though they fought against their rivals to safeguard and extend their empire.

**Dharmapala (AD 770-810)**

Dharmapala was the son and successor of Gopala and proved to be a great ruler. He understood the feeling of sacrifice and devotion of the people of Bengal and utilized it properly by successfully converting the kingdom of Bengal into one of the foremost empires of northern India. When he ascended the throne, the Pratiharas who had established their power in Malwa and the Rajputana were gradually extending its power towards the east. Moreover, the newly established power of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan desired to possess the plains of north India. Each of them tried to capture Kannauj which was regarded as the key-centre and a prestigious state of north India at that time. Dharmapala desired the same and, therefore, came in conflict with both the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. Dharmapala first fought a battle against the Pratihara ruler Vatsaraja in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and was defeated. But before Vatsaraja could exploit the situation in his favour the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva attacked north India and forced Vatsaraja to seek safety in Rajputana.

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Dhruva proceeded and defeated Dharmapala as well but he retreated to the south soon.

The attack of Dhruva in the north and even his own defeat did not harm Dharmapala. On the contrary, it helped him indirectly. Dhruva had given a powerful shock to the growing power of the Pratiharas, which helped Dharmapala in consolidating his power in the northern India. Dharmapala attacked Kannauj, deposed Indrayudha and placed Chakrayudha on the throne under his sovereignty. Though details are not available about the wars of conquest of Dharmapala, yet it is certain that Bengal and Bihar were under his direct rule. The ruler of Kannauj was under his suzerainty and many other rulers of the Punjab, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar also acknowledged his overlord-ship.

Dharmapala's position was again challenged by the Pratihara ruler Nagabhata II, the son and successor of Vatsaraja. Nagabhata attacked Kannauj and turned out Chakrayudha who was under the sovereignty of Dharmapala. Therefore, Dharmapala had to fight against Nagabhata. The battle between the two was fought near Monghyr (Bihar) in which Dharmapala was defeated. But, once again, the interference of the Rashtrakutas in the politics of the north proved effective. The Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III, attacked north India. Chakrayudha and Dharmapala accepted his suzerainty without fighting. Probably, both of them had invited the Rashtrakuta king to avenge their defeat at the hands of Nagabhata who fought against Govinda III but was defeated. Again, the defeat of the Pratiharas by the Rashtrakutas gave Dharmapala an opportunity to consolidate his power in the north. The power of the Pratiharas being shattered, he again asserted himself after the retirement of Govinda to the south and gained large territories for his empire. He left a large empire to his son and successor Devapala.

Dharmapala was a capable king. Of course, the transformation of Bengal from a kingdom to an empire was the creation of the spirit of self-sacrifice and political wisdom displayed by the people of Bengal at that time. But, the credit of this achievement goes to king Dharmapala as well. He was a courageous commander and a good diplomat. He fought many battles, was defeated by the Pratiharas twice, yet he kept up his courage and determination to create an empire. He took great advantage of the conflict of the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas in the politics of north India and succeeded in establishing an empire and also governing it well. He assumed the high sounding titles of *Parmeswara*, *Paramabhattacharak* and *Maharajadhiraja*. For the first time he certainly assigned the empire of Bengal a significant position in the politics of north India. Reverend historian Dr R.C. Majumdar holds the opinion that Dharmapala managed to integrate the divided and segregated territories of northern India. Dharmapala distinguished himself in the peaceful pursuits of life as well. He founded the famous Vikramsila monastery which afterwards developed into a great centre of Buddhist learning. He also founded a great Buddhist *Vihara* in the Rajshahi district. In his old age Dharmapala married Rannadevi, the daughter of the Rashtrakuta king Parabala, who gave birth to his son and successor Devapala.

**Devapala (AD 810–850)**

Devapala was a worthy son of a worthy father. He not only kept intact the empire which he inherited from his father but also extended it further. Devapala followed an aggressive imperialist policy and spent a great part of his life in military campaigns. Again, the main rival to the Palas proved to be the Pratiharas. The Pratihara ruler Nagabhata II had occupied Kannauj. Devapala forced him to retreat and then proceeded to conquer north India. It has been suggested that he made attacks from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya in the south. In the north-west he attacked the territories of Kamboja and Punjab. He forced the rulers of Assam and Utkal to accept his suzerainty, attacked the boundaries of the empire of the Pratihara ruler Nagabhata and, probably, fought wars against the Rashtrakutas or the Pandyas of the south. He also defeated the Pratihara ruler Mihirbhoj. Thus, his military campaigns were successful. Certainly his direct rule was limited to the territories of Bengal and Bihar but most of the rulers of northern India acknowledged suzerainty while the Pratiharas, his powerful rival in the North, failed to check his progress. The Pratihara ruler Mihirbhoj could get success and restore the glory of the Pratihara Empire only after the death of Devapala.

Devapala ruled for nearly forty years. Leaving apart the success of military campaigns, he has been accepted as a patron of Buddhist religion, literature and fine arts. The Arab traveller Sulaiman described him as comparatively more powerful than his contemporary Pratihara and Rashtrakuta rulers. Devapala succeeded more than his father. Dr R.C. Majumdar writes that the reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal.

**The Period of Downfall (AD 850–988)**

The successors of Devapala proved weak and pursued a peaceful policy which led to the weakening of the Pala Empire. Vigrahapala I, the successor of Devapala, ruled for a very short period. Vigrahapala I was succeeded by his son, Narayanapala, who ruled between the periods AD 854-908. He was a man of religious disposition and pursued a pacific policy. This encouraged the enemies of the Palas and both the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas took advantage of it. The policy was followed by the feudatory chiefs of the Palas as well. After AD 860, the Rashtrakutas defeated the Pala ruler. The Pratiharas also took advantage of the weakness of the Palas and their rulers Mihirbhoj and Mahendrapala gradually extended their power to the east. Narayanapala not only lost Magadha but north Bengal as well for some time. The feudatory chiefs of Assam and Orissa also got the opportunity to throw off the yoke of the Palas and asserted independence. Thus, the Palas lost their glory and territories and, for a time, the rule of Narayanapala was confined to a part of Bengal only. However, he succeeded in recovering Magadha and north Bengal from the Pratiharas during the later part of his life. This was, probably, due to the Rashtrakuta invasion of the Pratihara dominions, Narayanapala was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II as well, but peace was established and, probably, strengthened by a marriage alliance. Narayanapala was succeeded by Rajyapala, Gopala II and Vigrahapala, respectively. Put together, they ruled for nearly eighty years. But each of them proved to be an incapable ruler and whatever was left by Narayanapala

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was lost by them. The Chandellas, the Kalachuris and the Kambojas attacked and conquered different territories of the Palas, while the south and east Bengal was occupied by the Chandra dynasty. The disintegration of the Pala Empire was, thus, complete.

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### **Mahipala I and His Successors and the Revival of the Pala Power (AD 988–1120)**

Mahipala I succeeded the throne of his father Vighrahapala II in about AD 988. By that time, the territories of the Palas had remained limited to Magadha or south Bihar. The Palas had lost even their ancestral kingdom in Bengal. Mahipala once revived the power and prestige of the Palas. He ruled during AD 988-1038 and constantly engaged himself in wars. He succeeded in capturing north, west and east Bengal and, towards the west, extended his territories up to Banaras. But his power was seriously shattered by an attack on Bengal by one of the commanders of the Chola king called Rajendra sometime during AD 1021–1023. Bengal was also invaded by the Kalachuri ruler Gangeyadeva towards the close of the reign of Mahipala. This reduced the extent of the territories of Mahipala yet he was able to keep control over the larger part of Bengal and Bihar. Mahipala not only saved the Pala kingdom from impending ruin but also restored, to a large extent, the lost glory and power of the Palas. That is why he has been justly regarded as the founder of the second Pala Empire. Mahipala constructed and repaired a large number of religious places, towns, and tanks at different places.

Mahipala was succeeded by his son Nayapala who ruled during AD 1038-1055. The most important event of the region of Nayapala was the protracted war between Nayapala and the Kalachuri ruler Karna. Karna desired to push up the boundary of his empire further to the east till the coast of the Palas. This led to a long-time enmity between the Palas and the Kalachuris. However, during the period of Nayapala, after severe conflicts, peace was restored between the two powers primarily because of the efforts of reconciliation by the famous Buddhist monk Dipankara Srijnana. Nayapala was succeeded by Vighrahapala III who ruled during AD 1055-1070. During his period, Bengal was attacked by different powers. First, the Kalachuri king Karna revived the hostilities and attacked the boundary of western Bengal. However, peace was restored and Karna even got his daughter married to Vighrahapala. Afterwards, the Chalukya ruler Vikramaditya VI attacked Bengal and defeated Vighrahapala. Mahasiva Gupta Yayati, the ruler of Kosala, also raided the territories of Bengal. These foreign attacks weakened the power of Vighrahapala and independent kingdoms were established at different places out of the territories of the Palas. With much difficulty, Vighrahapala was able to keep Gauda and Magadha under his rule.

In AD 1100 Mahipala II, the son of Vighrahapala III, ascended the throne. He proved quite incapable. His nobles revolted against him and killed him. One of them known as Divya or Divoka occupied Varendri (North Bengal).

Mahipala II had imprisoned his brothers-Surapala and Ramapala. During the period of revolt against Mahipala they fled from the prison and established themselves in Magadha. Surapala ruled there for a couple of years and was then succeeded by



his younger brother Ramapala in AD 1077. Ramapala restored the lost prestige of the Palas and proved to be the last capable ruler of dynasty. He defeated Bhima, the successor of Divya and ruler of Varendri (North Bengal) and occupied his kingdom. He defeated and forced the ruler of Assam to accept his suzerainty. He interfered in the politics of Orissa and tried to check the growing influence of the ruler of Kalinga there. He entered into a matrimonial alliance with Govinda Chandra, king of Kannauj, and successfully resisted his ambitions towards the east. He could also check the power of the Senas of the West Bengal and that of Nanyadeva, ruler of north Bihar, so that none of them could interfere in his kingdom. Thus, both by diplomacy and war, Ramapala succeeded in restoring and maintaining the power of Palas in a large part of Bengal and Bihar. He died in AD 1120 and that resulted in the fall of Palas.

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### The Extinction of the Pala dynasty

Kumarpala, Gopala III and Madanapala ruled in succession for thirty years after the death of Ramapala. During this period, internal dissensions revolts of the nobles and foreign attacks destroyed the Pala kingdom. During the reign of Kumarpala there occurred a revolt in Kamarupa. Kumarpala sent his minister Vidyadeva to suppress the revolt. Vidyadeva suppressed the revolt but declared himself an independent ruler there. In the same way, Bhojavarman declared himself an independent in east Bengal. Foreign invasions also took place at that very time. Anantavarman, the king of Kalinga, captured Orissa and attacked Bengal deep up to the Hooghly while Govindachandra, the ruler of Kannauj, occupied Patna. However, the Senas and the Nanyas proved to be the worst enemies of the Palas. The Sena ruler Vijayasena snatched away Gonda from them and Gangeyadeva occupied north Bihar. Thus, the power of Madanapala, the last ruler of the Palas, was restricted to central Bihar. Nothing is known about the successors of Madanapala. Thus by the middle of the twelfth century AD the power of the Palas was finished and their last ruler, Madanapala, died as an ordinary noble.

### The Importance of the Palas

The Pala emperors established an extensive empire in north India which kept up the importance of Bengal for nearly 400 years. The Palas were the patrons of Buddhism and, therefore, encouraged Buddhist learning, literature, religion and fine arts. They contributed to the growth of Buddhism and formation of Tantric sect in Buddhism. They constructed and repaired many Buddhist monasteries and *Viharas*. The University of Vikramasila was established with their support and all possible help was given to the University of Nalanda. They also helped in the growth of Bengali literature and developed a unique art of architecture, sculpture and painting which influenced the arts of even South- East Asia. Thus, the Palas helped in enriching the Indian culture and also in extending it beyond the frontiers of India.

### 3.4.1 Kaivarta Revolt

The Kaivarta Revolt was a revolt that occurred in Bengal during the rule of Mahipala II. A source on the revolt is the work *Ramacharita*. As you have learned, Mahipala II had his brothers Surapala and Ramapala imprisoned. This act resulted in a revolt against Mahipala II's rule by the vassal chiefs and the feudatories. Without paying

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heed to the advice of his ministers and without making any preparations, Mahipala faced the revolted chiefs and was consequently killed. After Mahipala II's death, a high official of Mahipala II and a Kaivarta by caste, Divya assumed the royal authority. He became the master of Northern Bengal and for sometime established a new dynasty.

Historians describe the Kaivarta Revolt as a popular revolt against an oppressive tyrant. Mahipala II was a tyrant and a war monger, the most oppressed people in his reign were people belonging to the Kaivarta caste. In Divya, they found a liberator. However, there are historians who take a different view of Divya. Some of them suggest that Divya disguised his personal ambition to become a 'liberator' of the Kaivartas. However, Divya could rule only parts of northern Bengal.

After Mahipala II's death, the feudatories declared their independence. As a consequence, Bengal once again became politically disunited and fractured. A situation that only improved after the coming of the Senas in the latter half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Who founded the Vikramsila monastery?
8. According to historian R.C. Majumdar, the reign of which two kings constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal?
9. Who is regarded as the founder of the second Pala Empire?
10. What was the religion of the Pala Empire?

## 3.5 THE SENAS

After the Palas, the Senas succeeded in establishing an empire in Bengal. The Senas called themselves Karnata-Kshatriya or Brahma-Kshatriya. Probably, the original home of the Senas was in the Kannada-speaking region in the south. The earliest known member of the Sena dynasty was Samantasena, who established his rule at Radha in Bengal. His son, Hemantasena, consolidated his position in Radha during the troublesome times that followed the occupation of that country by the Kalachuri king Karna and declared his independence by the end of the eleventh century. However, the greatest ruler of the Sena dynasty was his son Vijayasena.

### Vijayasena (AD 1095-1158)

Vijayasena was an ambitious, courageous and a diplomatic king. He converted a small principality of Radha into the strong empire of Bengal. He married Vilasadevi, a princess of the Sura family, and entered into an alliance with Anantavarman, king of Kalinga. He tried to take advantage of the disintegration of the Pala kingdom after the death of its ruler Rampala and desired to conquer the whole of Bengal. His ambition brought him in conflict with his neighbouring rulers but mostly he succeeded. He defeated the rulers of Kotatavi and Kausambi, led a naval expedition in the west

along the course of the Ganga (probably against Govindachandra, the ruler of Kannauj) and on this very occasion defeated Nanyadeva, the ruler of Mithila. He occupied Gonda and forced the last Pala ruler Madanapala to seek safety in Magadha. In the middle of twelfth century, he defeated Bhojavarman and conquered East Bengal. Thus, the entire Bengal was united under his rule. He also defeated Raghava who, after the death of his father Ananta Varman, had become the king of Kalinga. The ruler of Kamarupa was also defeated by him. Probably he snatched away south Bihar as well from the Pala ruler Madanapala.

Thus, Vijayasena was the real founder of the Sena dynasty of Bengal. He ruled for nearly 60 years and brought about peace and prosperity in Bengal which was ruined because of the disintegration of the Pala dynasty. He was a devotee of Siva and built a temple in the Rajshai district. The poet Umapatidhara lived at his court and composed the famous *Deopara-Prasasti* from which the details of high reign are known to us.

### **Vallalasena or Ballallasena (AD 1158-1178)**

Vijayasena was succeeded by his son, Vallalasena. It is suggested that he conquered Mithila and north Bihar. But his reign remained mostly one of peace and prosperity. However, it is certain that he kept the parts of the empire intact which he had inherited from his father.

### **Lakshmanasena (AD 1178-1205)**

Lakshmanasena sat on the throne at the ripe age of sixty years. He was a great military leader and fought many victorious battles during the reign of his father and grandfather. After ascending the throne, he fought against Jayachandra, the ruler of Kannauj. He succeeded in defeating him and made an attack up to Banaras and Allahabad. He included the larger part of Bihar in his kingdom. He also successfully defended his kingdom against the attacks of the Kalachuris.

But the kingdom of Lakshmanasena began to disintegrate in the closing years of the twelfth century. A few nobles of Lakshmanasena were successful in asserting their independence. And, while the kingdom was thus weakened by internal disruptions, Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji attacked its capital Nadia and occupied it in a surprise move. Lakshmanasena fled to east Bengal for safety. He continued to rule over east and south Bengal even afterwards but failed to recover his power and prestige. He died shortly after AD 1205.

### **The Successors of Lakshmanasena and the fall of the Sena dynasty**

Lakshmanasena was succeeded by his son, Visvarupasena, who ruled for about 14 years. He was succeeded by his brother Kesavasena who probably ruled over east Bengal up to AD 1245. After him, east Bengal was occupied by the Deva-dynasty ruler Dasarathadeva. The rest of Bengal remained in the hands of the Turks.

### **Importance of the senas**

The credit of safeguarding Bengal from anarchy after the fall of the Pala dynasty goes to the Senas. The Senas believed in Hinduism. They contributed towards the

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revival of Hinduism and Sanskrit literature in Bengal. Vallalaseña and Lakshmanaseña were great intellectuals and both patronized scholars and education. Jayadeva, the writer of *Halayudha* and *Gita Govinda*, was patronized by them.

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### 3.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS IN THE SENA AND THE PALA AGE

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The long rule of the Pala kings and the Sena after them forms a glorious chapter in the ancient history of Bengal. The Pala empire had an excellent administrative system, ruling policy oriented towards welfare of the people, unprecedented excellence in fields of art and cultivation of knowledge and literature. During the Pala and the Sena period, feudalism emerged proper in Bengal. With the emergence of feudalism, hero cult and bravery in warfare also was developed.

Although the Pala Kings were Buddhists, the social organization of the people was based on Brahmanical notions. However, Brahmanical orthodoxy underwent a radical transformation during the Sena and Pala age. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas were no longer important in the social life, their place was taken by the Karana Kayasthas. As Buddhists, the Pala kings gave a lot of patronage to Buddhism. Thus, they were able to restore Buddhism from the depths it had sunk in India in the seventh century. However, this revival was only temporary.

Under the Palas, Hinduism was transformed because of the high popularity of the Vaishnavism and Shakti cult. The concept of Vishnu became more humanised all through the Pala period, which gave way to the cult of Krishna. Similarly, the cult of Saraswati and Lakshmi also developed. The most significant aspect of Pala rule was their policy of public welfare. As they were Buddhists while their subjects mostly Hindu, the Palas advocated religious tolerance. In fact they even provided patronage to Hindu gods and goddesses and the Brahmins.

The condition of women in the Pala and Sena social order was no better than that of the previous periods. Upper class ladies living in towns lived in enough pomp and lavishness. But the village women lived a simple, unsophisticated life. Poor women also had to participate in domestic duties with their male partners. Polygamy was still widely prevalent during the Palas. Dowry system was the general practice. Even a groom of the upper class did not hesitate to marry a lower caste bride, if he could draw a good amount from her. Widows were oppressed in Pala society and were forced to live a life of penance. The idea of womanhood prevalent throughout the Pala society, was to be a good and devoted wife, a caring mother and to be able to suffer the sins committed by her husband. Women from lower caste suffered the most. Self-respect and freedom of women were curtailed in a male predominated society.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

11. Where do historians believe was the original home of the Senas?
12. List one significant aspect of Pala rule.

**NOTES****3.7 SUMMARY**

- After the decline of the Gupta Empire, the region of Bengal gained its independence and was known as the Gauda kingdom, although the kingdom did not include all of Bengal.
- The first recorded independent king of the region of Gauda was a tribal leader named Shashanka.
- After the decline of the Gupta Empire, the political unity of India got disintegrated once again and anarchy prevailed everywhere in the country.
- The Vardhana dynasty in Thaneshwar (*Shrikantha Janapada*, near Delhi) came up after the demise of the Gupta Empire. Pushyabhuti was the founder of this dynasty.
- Prabhakara Vardhana was the first powerful king of the Vardhana dynasty. He had two sons, Rajya Vardhana and Harsha Vardhana, and a daughter, Rajyashri.
- In the last days of Prabhakara Vardhana, the Huns attacked and Rajya Vardhana was sent to face the Huns. During this battle, both Prabhakara Vardhana and Rajya Vardhana expired.
- After the death of his brother Rajyavardhana, Harshavardhana (AD 606–647) ascended the throne at the age of sixteen in AD 606.
- Harsha wanted to hoist his flag of victory over the entire India. He shifted his capital from Thaneshwar to Kannauj for the administrative convenience.
- Once Harsha had conquered north India, he turned his attention towards the south. But, he was defeated by Pulakeshin II. According to the Aihole inscription, Harsha's elephantry massacred soldiers, but he still could not win the war.
- Harsha's Empire was very vast. He was the undisputed master of north India and the areas from the Himalayas in north to the Vindhya mountain ranges in south, and Kamarupa in east to Saurashtra in west were included in his empire. He was also the last Hindu King of the ancient India.
- Harsha has a high place in the Indian History as a ruler, poet and religious king. He was not only brilliant as a ruler and conqueror but also more efficient as an ambassador of peace. His achievements in the cultural field were also immense.

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- Harsha was the highest seat of justice and power in the country. He was assisted in the administration by a Council of ministers and regional officials.
- Huen-Tsang has written that there were no criminals as the administration was run with honesty and the mutual relations between the government and people were cordial.
- Another great empire in Northern India was established by the Palas in the middle of the eighth century AD. They contested for the sovereignty of Kannauj against the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and established an extensive empire with Bengal as its base and provided it unity, prosperity and glory for about four centuries.
- The main rulers were Gopala, Dharamapala and Devpala. The pursuit of a peaceful policy with reference to the neighbouring states and a series of weak, inept successors could not maintain the glory and might of the Pala dynasty. Mahipala I tried to revive the lost empire and, to some extent, succeeded in the effort but the downfall was quite inevitable.
- After the Palas, the Senas succeeded in establishing an empire in Bengal who called themselves Karnata-Kshatriya or Brahma-Kshatriya. The earliest known member of the Sena dynasty was Samantasena who established his rule at Radha in Bengal.
- Vijaysena, Vallalasena and Lakshmanasena were the prominent rulers. The dynasty was short lived and during the later years Bengal was occupied by Turks and Deva dynasty.
- The long rule of the Pala kings and the Sena after them forms a glorious chapter of ancient history of Bengal.
- As Buddhists, the Pala kings gave a lot of patronage to Buddhism. Thus, they were able to restore Buddhism from the depths it had sunk in India in the seventh century.
- The most significant aspect of Pala rule was their policy of public welfare. As they were Buddhists while their subjects mostly Hindu, the Palas advocated religious tolerance.
- The condition of women in the Pala and Sena social order was no better than that of the previous periods.

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### 3.8 KEY TERMS

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- **Revolt:** Revolt means to rise up against an authority in an act of rebellion.
- **Accession:** The attainment or acquisition of a position of rank or power is known as accession.
- **Marxist:** A follower of the philosophy of Karl Marx.
- **Historiography:** It is the study of the writing of history and of written histories.

- **Autocratic:** It relates to a ruler who has absolute power and refers to someone who does not take into account other people's wishes or opinions.
- **Successor:** A person who succeeds another in a position, or the like.

**NOTES****3.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'**

1. The first recorded independent king of the region of Gauda was a tribal leader named Shashanka. Historians estimate his reign from AD 600- AD 625.
2. Before the rise of Gauda under Shashanka, Bengal was divided into three regions, Banga, Samatata and Gauda and was ruled by a feeble ruler belonging to the later Gupta dynasty known as Mahasenagupta.
3. Prabhakara Vardhana was the first powerful king of the Varshana dynasty.
4. Harsha shifted his capital his capital from Thaneshwar to Kannauj for administrative convenience.
5. The areas from the Himalayas in north to the Vindhya mountain ranges in south, and Kamarupa in east to Saurashtra in west were included in Harsha's empire.
6. The main source of income in Harsha's empire was Udranha or land tax.
7. Dharmapala, ruler of the Pala Empire, founded the famous Vikramsila monastery.
8. According to R.C. Majumdar, the reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal.
9. Mahipala is regarded as the founder of the second Pala Empire.
10. The Palas were the patrons of Buddhism and, therefore, encouraged Buddhist learning, literature, religion and fine arts. They contributed to the growth of Buddhism and formation of Tantric sect in Buddhism.
11. It is believed that the original home of the Senas was in the Kannada-speaking region in the south.
12. The most significant aspect of Pala rule was their policy of public welfare.

**3.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES****Short-Answer Questions**

1. Write a short note on the rise of the Gauda Kingdom in Bengal.
2. What was the Kaivarta revolt?
3. Discuss the origins of the Vardhana Empire.
4. Discuss the importance of the Sena and the Pala Empire.
5. Discuss the origin of the Sena Kingdom.

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**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Discuss the rise of Harshavardhana.
2. Examine the cultural achievements of Harshavardhana.
3. Why is the Pala Empire considered the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal?
4. Discuss the reasons for the downfall of the Pala Empire.
5. What were the social conditions during the time of the Pala Empire?

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**3.11 FURTHER READING**

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## **UNIT 4 THE CHOLAS AND THE PALLAVAS**

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### **NOTES**

#### **Structure**

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 The Pallavas
  - 4.2.1 Pallava Administration
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  - 4.3.1 The Rulers
  - 4.3.2 Importance of the Cholas
- 4.4 The Chalukyas
  - 4.4.1 The Chalukyas of Badami
  - 4.4.2 The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi
  - 4.4.3 The Western Chalukyas of Kalyani
  - 4.4.4 Features of the Chalukyas Administration
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  - 4.6.1 Alberuni
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  - 4.7.1 Successors of Mahmud Ghaznavi
  - 4.7.2 Causes for the Downfall of the Ghaznavi Empire
- 4.8 Ghoris and Their Impact
  - 4.8.1 India on the Eve of the Invasion of Muhammad Ghori
  - 4.8.2 Indian Invasions of Muhammad Ghori
- 4.9 Causes for the Success of the turks
- 4.10 Summary
- 4.11 Key Terms
- 4.12 Answer to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.13 Questions and Exercises
- 4.14 Further Reading

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### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

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In the previous unit, you read about the kingdoms of the Palas and Senas. You also learnt the various reasons responsible for their disintegration. In this unit, you will learn in detail about the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. You will also come across the Cholas and the extensive empire established by them. The unit will conclude by looking at the arrival of the Arabs and the Turks to India.

During 6–12 centuries AD, the Chalukya dynasty controlled large parts of southern and central India. During this period, they ruled as three related yet independent dynasties. These dynasties were the Chalukyas of Badami, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Eastern Chalukyas of Bengi.

The Cholas rose in importance following the downfall of the Rashtrakutas. Rajaraja and his son Rajendra I were the greatest Chola rulers. Both were known

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for their expansionist policies. Rajaraja destroyed the Chera Navy at Trivandrum and annexed Sri Lanka to the northern part of his empire. Rajaraja and Rajendra I erected temples of Siva and Vishnu to mark their victories. The Chola administration is famous in Indian history for its local self-government system.

In the 10th and 11th centuries, small regional kingdoms emerged in north India. Beyond the north-west frontiers of India, in Central Asia, kingdoms and empires were rising to prominence under Islamic influence. During that process, two kingdoms emerged prominent around the two cities of Ghazna and Ghur. The situation in Central Asia brought the rulers of these two kingdoms to India which led to the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206.

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### 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the administration, art and literature of the Pallava era
- Discuss the various invasions of Mahmud Ghaznavi
- Analyse the causes of downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire
- Describe the invasions of Muhammad Ghori
- Classify the Chalukya rulers of Badami, Kalyani and Vengi
- Discuss the rise and fall of the Chola kingdom
- Assess the contribution of the Cholas towards the socio-economic advancements

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### 4.2 THE PALLAVAS

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There are different opinions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. The famous historian and author Dr V.A. Smith considers them to be Parthians while some other scholars accept them as Kadama or Pahlava. Historians, however, are anonymous in believing that they were Kshatriya by caste.

#### Early Kings

The first known king of the Pallava dynasty was Simhavarman. It is evident from an inscription, written in Prakrit, that it was Simhavarman who founded the Pallava dynasty. Simhavarman was succeeded by Skandhavarman who was perhaps his son. Initially, he was a yuvaraja (prince) and later took the title of Maharajadhiraja. He made Kanchi his capital and performed horse sacrifices, Agnistoma and Vajapeya Yajnas. His kingdom extended up to the river Krishna in the north and the Arabian Sea in the west. The name of Vishnugopa also comes up as the king of the Pallava dynasty. During his reign, Samudragupta attacked and defeated him. There is little knowledge about the history of the Pallava dynasty. The history of the Pallava dynasty after Vishnugopa is determined by the edicts of the Ganga kings who had mentioned the Pallavas as their contemporary. An account entitled *Lokavibhaga* helps in determining the chronology of the Pallava dynasty.

### **Simhavishnu**

The first great king of the Pallava dynasty was Simhavishnu. He founded a new dynasty. The Pallava culture was at its zenith during his time. He expanded his power in south India and defeated the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Malawas. He was a follower of the Bhagavat religion. During his time, many temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma were built. He made every effort to disseminate the Sanskrit language and the Bhagavat culture. Bharavi, the writer of *Kiratarjuniya*, and Dandin were his court poets. Simvishnu was a worshipper of Lord Vishnu.

### **Mahendravarman**

After the death of Simhavishnu, his son Mahendravarman became the king. The most memorable part of his rule was that he was the first king who developed the art of building temples by carving out hard rocks. Moreover, the epic *Kiratarjuniya* was written during his time. In his rule, people were happy and affluent and lived in peace. Although the Pallava–Chalukya and Pallava–Pandya wars began in his time, there was an immense development in the field of arts. Not only was he a contemporary of Harshavardhan and Pulakesin, he was also a liberal king, patron of art, culture and architecture. Mahendravarman established political unity by conquering all the small states in the south of the River Krishna. He took several titles like Mattavilasa, Gunabhara, Paramamaheshwar, Mahendravikrama and Cettakari.

### **Narasimhavarman**

Narasimhavarman was the son of Mahendravarman. He became king in the second half of the 7th century and was brave and brilliant like his father. He defeated Pulakesin II and captured his capital, Vatapi. After this victory, he took the title of Vatapikonda. Following his father's footsteps, Narasimhavaraman built several temples and promoted art and culture. He built temples at Chitranapalli by carving out rocks. He also founded a town named Mahabalipuram.

### **Parameshwarvarman**

Parameshwaravarman was the son of Narasimhavarman. He was defeated by the Chalukya king Viramaditya. However, this victory is disputed as contemporary accounts fail to provide any definite detail on this. He ruled from AD660–680.

### **Narasimhavarman II Rajsimha**

Narasimhavarman II became king after Parmeshwaravarman. He built the Kailash temple, Shora temple (at Mahabalipuram), Airavateshwar temple (at Kanchi) and Panamalai temple. His rule was an era of literary activism.

### **Nandivarman Pallavamala**

Narasimhavarman succeeded Nandivarman II Pallavamala. In his rule the war between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas was revived. Nandivarman's rule was a history of military activities, expeditions, attacks and counter-attacks. He built the Mukeshwar and Baikuntha temples at Kanchi and ruled for sixty-five years.

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### Dantivarman and his Successor

Dantivarman was the son of Nandivarman. The Rashtrakutas attacked Kanchi during his reign and he was succeeded by Nandivarman III. He extended his empire by conquering the Pandyas and married a Rashtrakuta princess. Nripatungavarman, his son, succeeded him to the throne. He defeated the Pandya king Srimara. Aparajitavarman was the last king of the Pallava dynasty. The Chola king Aditya I defeated him and ended the Pallava dynasty.

### 4.2.1 Pallava Administration

The Pallavas established a well-organized administrative system. The monarch was the head of the state and administration. There was a council of ministers, known as *Rahasyakid* to advise the king. Other pillars of administration were provincial governors and departmental ministers. R. Gopalan (well-known author) opines, 'The administration of the Pallavas reminds me of some aspects of the Maurya and some aspects of the Gupta administrations.'

The Pallava Empire was divided into *rastras* or *mandalas*. Its chief was known as *visayaka*. A *rastra* was subdivided into *kottam* and *nadu* (village), the rulers of which were known as *deshatika* and *vapitta*. There was also a village-assembly, which managed the village administration by sub-committees. A complete, written account of the land was also maintained. About eighteen different types of taxes were collected from the village.

### Pallava Literature

The Pallava kings were active patrons of literature and culture and they patronized several scholars. Due to this, literature grew immensely under the Pallavas. Kanchi, the capital of the Pallavas was a famous centre of Sanskrit learning since the ancient times. Bharavi, the writer of the *Kiratarjuniya* was the court-poet of Simhavishnu. King Mahendravarman himself wrote *Mattavilasaprahasana*. Renowned scholars like Bhasa, Shudraka and Dandin have contributed immensely to this period. Sanskrit was the state language.

The Pallava kings were tolerant towards other religions though they themselves followed Vedic rituals. They performed several sacrifices and patronized Sanskrit. The famous Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller, Hieun Tsang writes, 'There were about hundred Buddhist monasteries and over one thousand monks in Kanchi. They belonged to the Mahayana sect and studied the doctrines of the Sthavira sect.' Mahendravarman was the first Jain in the dynasty. While the famous Shaivites, Appara and Tirujnana Sambandara helped spread Shaivism in south India, Alwar saints spread Vaishnavism.

### Pallava Art

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Pallava age gave birth to several arts. This age witnessed an immense growth in the arts. Rock-cut architecture was introduced in south India by the Pallavas. They were the first people to encourage the Kandara style or *dari* temple, an example of which is present in Trichinapalli or

modern Tiruchirapalli. After this, *ratha* temples in Mahabalipuram were built. In the Pallava age, artists were skilled in several arts.

The four art styles that were prevalent during the Pallava age were the following:

### **(i) Mahendra style**

The style of the temples at Dalavanapur, Pallavaram and Vallam were developed by Mahendravarman I. This new style was called the Mahendra style. In it, the pillars of the gateway are constructed in a row. The features of the temples are spherical phalluses, extraordinary doorways, arched gateways and triple-mouthed pillars.

### **(ii) Mammal style**

Since this style was developed in Mammalapuram, it is called the Mammal style (Figure 4.1). In this style, pavilions or chariots were carved out in a rock-cut temple. Ten pavilions were built in this style. The ratio of decorations on the pillars are especially beautiful. The depiction of the descent of the Ganges, Vishnu lying on the serpent king, Varahavatar, etc., in rock-cut hills are brilliant examples of this style. The chariots in the Mammal style is known as Saptapagoda. There are eight such chariots, named Draupadi ratha, Arjuna ratha, Bhima ratha, Dharmaraja ratha, Sahadeva ratha, Ganesh ratha, Pindari ratha and Valaiyana kuttai ratha. All these were perhaps Shaiva temples. The roofs of some of the rathas have been shaped like pyramids.



*Fig. 4.1 Mammal Style of Architecture*

### **(iii) Rajasimha style**

In Rajasimha style, rock-cut temples were built. The shrines of these temples face the sea. There are six temples in this style; of them three are in Mammalpuram, one in Pamalai and the remaining two are in Kanchi. The Kailash temple of Kanchi and Saptapagoda, and Shor temple of Dala are examples of this style.

### **(iv) Aparajita style**

The Aparajita style is named after the Pallava king Aparajitavarman. The Pallava culture had developed fully by this time. This style is more ornate, resembling the Chola architecture. A few temples built in this style are found at Dalavanur. The

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noteworthy feature of some shrines is that they are adorned by beautiful life-like images of Pallava kings and their queens. They are unique in the history of the temple architecture. The influence of the Pallava style can be clearly seen on the arts of the eastern islands like Java, Cambodia, etc. During this period, a tradition of cultural growth was seen in most parts of south India.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the origin of the Pallavas?
2. Who was the head of the state and administration of the Pallavas?
3. What was the state language of the Pallava dynasty?

## 4.3 THE CHOLAS

The Chola kingdom was a very ancient one. There is a reference to the Cholas in the *Mahabharata*. They are also mentioned in the account of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Asoka. Katyayana also refers to the Cholas. The *Mahavamsa* refers to the relations between the Cholas and the rulers of Ceylon. Ptolemy also refers to the Cholas. The *Sangam* literature refers to many Chola princes who were models of justice. The *Periplus* gives us information about Porus and inland towns of the Chola territory. The kingdom of the Cholas included modern Madras, several others districts of Tamil Nadu and the greater part of the Mysore State.

### 4.3.1 The Rulers

The important Chola rulers and their achievements are discussed as follows:

#### Vijayalaya (AD 850–871)

The founder of the Chola dynasty of Tanjore was Vijayalaya. He was a feudatory chief of the Pandyas. He also conquered the valley of Kosala and the lower valley of Kaveri.

#### Aditya I (AD 871–907)

The independent kingdom of the Cholas was created by Aditya I, the son and successor of Vijayalaya. Aditya helped his overlord, the Pallava king Aparajita, against the Pandyas but did not remain loyal to him for long. Near about AD 893, he fought against Aparajita and killed him in a battle. He then occupied the entire territory of Tondaimandalam and became a sovereign ruler. He also occupied most of the territories of the Pandyas and the Western Gangas. He made Tanjore his capital, beautified it, and built several temples of Siva there. Thus, the foundation of the greatness of the Cholas was laid by Aditya I.

#### Parantaka I (AD 907–953)

Parantaka I was an ambitious ruler and engaged himself in wars of conquest from the beginning of his reign. His main conquest was that of Madura. The Pandya ruler,

Rajasinha II, sought the help of the Ceylonese king. Yet, he could not defend his kingdom against the attacks of Parantaka. It was a difficult task but Parantaka succeeded in capturing Madura and reduced it to obedience and order though the task kept him busy for many years. Parantakas also defeated the Bana Country with the help of his ally Prithvipati II, the Western Ganga ruler. Thus, by his successive victories, he established an extensive empire.

The Rashtrakutas could not tolerate the new rising power of the Cholas in their neighbourhood. The Rashtrakuta king Krishna III attacked Parantaka I and defeated the Cholas in a decisive battle at Takkolam in AD 949. This defeat gave a rude shock to the imperialist ambitions of the Cholas. Rather, for the next thirty-two years they remained an insignificant power in the politics of the south, though sometime during the reign of Sundara Chola or Parantaka II, the successors of Parantaka I, the Cholas, probably, succeeded in recovering Tondaimandalam from the Rashtrakutas.

### **Rajaraja the Great (AD 985–1014)**

The credit for reviving the lost glory of the Cholas went to Rajaraja who proved himself as the great ruler of the Cholas. He pursued a policy of war and conquest and defeated the Western Gangas, the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the Pandyas of Madura, the Gangas of Kalinga, and the Cheras of Kerala and, thus, extended his empire and influence to the far south. Rajaraja also laid the foundation of the greatness of the navy of the Cholas. He conquered Kurga, the entire Malabara coast and a part of Ceylon, with the support of its navy. He also conquered the Maldives islands and attacked the islands of the south-east. He befriended King Tungavamana of Srivijaya Empire of the South-East Asia. He placed Vimaladitya, the younger brother of Saktivarman I, on the throne of Vengi and married his daughter to him which ultimately prepared the way for the union of the Eastern Chalukyas and the Cholas. Thus, Rajaraja succeeded in the establishment of a fairly extensive empire in the far south.

Rajaraja was one of the greatest rulers of south India. He was a conqueror, an empire builder, a good administrator and a patron of art and literature. He laid the foundation of the greatness of the navy of the Cholas who, afterwards, became one of the foremost naval powers in south east Asia. He also laid the foundation of the local self-government in the administration of the Cholas. The navy and the local self-government were primarily the contributions of Rajarara to the Chola Dynasty. Rajaraja was a Saiva. He constructed the saiva-temple of Rajmajeshwari which has been regarded as a remarkable specimen of Tamil architecture. But he was a pious and a tolerant ruler. He also patronized Buddhist *Viharas* and monasteries.

### **Rajendra I (AD 1014–1044)**

Rajendra pursued the policy of conquest and annexation adopted by his father and raised the power and prestige of the Cholas to its highest. His period was the period of zenith of the glory of the Cholas. He defeated and annexed the kingdoms of the Pandyas and the Cheras of the extreme south, he conquered Ceylon, though, in AD 1029 south Ceylon became free from his control. He foiled the attempt of the

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Chalukya Jayasimha to conquer Vengi and, during his later years, attacked and plundered the kingdom of the Chalukya king, Somesvara I. The Western Chalukyas accepted the river Tungabhadra as the dividing line between their boundary and the boundary of the Chola kingdom. Proceeding through Kalinga, Orissa and Bastara, Rajendra attacked West Bengal and defeated the Pala ruler Mahipala. But he annexed no territory in north India. His main purpose in attacking the north was to get fame. His navy attacked the Srivijaya Empire which was a great naval power in South-East Asia at that time and forced it to accept his suzerainty. Thus, he increased the prestige of his naval power in the Arabian sea and succeeded in safeguarding the trade of his empire on high seas.

Rajendra, thus, was a great conqueror. He was the first Indian ruler who established the supremacy of the Indian Navy in the Arabian Sea. Besides, he was a capable ruler and a good administrator. He patronized art and learning. He gave liberal grants to educational institution. He founded the city of Gangaikondacholapuram and made it his capital. Therein he built beautiful palaces and temples and a lake named Cholagangam which was sixteen miles in length. Rajendra proved even greater than his father, Rajaraja the Great, and expanded the glory of the Cholas which was established by his father.

### **Rajadhiraj I (AD 1044–1052)**

Rajendra was succeeded by his son Rajadhiraj I. Mostly, he remained busy in suppressing the revolts in Ceylon and the Pandya territory. In AD 1052, he succeeded in defeating the Chalukya ruler Somesvara but was himself killed during the course of the battle. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Rajendra II.

### **Rajendra II (AD 1052–1063)**

Rajendra fought against the kings of Ceylon and the western Chalukyas and succeeded in defending the frontiers of his empire.

### **Virajendra I (AD 1063–1070)**

Rajendra II was succeeded by his younger brother Virajendra I. He kept his suzerainty over Ceylon and Srivijaya empire and defeated the Chalukya rulers Somesvara I and Somesvara II.

### **Athirajendra**

He succeeded his father Virajendra but he was soon killed in a rebellion. The main dynasty of the Cholas ended with the death of Athirajendra. After him Kulottunga I (AD 1070–1118) the great-grandson of Rajaraja I, ascended the throne. Kulottunga I defeated the ruler of the Pandya kingdom and that of Kerala. He married his daughter to a Ceylonese Prince and kept diplomatic relations with Kannauj, Kamboja, China and Burma. He also brought prosperity to his empire.

### **Kulottunga I**

He was succeeded by Vikram Chola, Kulottunga II, Rajaraja II, Rajadhiraja II, Kulottunga III, Rajaraja III and Rajendra III respectively, who, put together, ruled



for more than a century. But the powers of the Cholas gradually declined during their reign. The neighbouring rulers of Pandya, Hoysala, Kakatia and Eastern Gangas constantly threatened their territory and went on occupying parts of it. Ultimately, in AD 1258, the Pandya ruler Sundara forced the Chola Rajendra III to accept his suzerainty and that finished the independent status of the Cholas.

### 4.3.2 Importance of the Cholas

The Chola dynasty was one of the most important ruling dynasties in ancient India. It maintained a well organized administrative system. It is famous for its promotion to local-self government.

#### The central and provincial administration

The king was the head of the administration and all powers were concentrated in his hands. The Chola king assumed high sounding titles. Tanjore, Gangaikondacholapuram, Mudikondan and Kanchi remained the various capitals of different Chola rulers at various times. The Chola Empire was extensive and prosperous and the rulers enjoyed high powers and prestige. The images of the kings and their wives were also maintained in various temples which indicated that they believed in the divine origin of kingship. Yet, the Chola rulers were not despotic rulers. They accepted the welfare of their subjects as their primary duty. The Chola rulers started the practice of electing their successor or *Yuvaraja* and of associating him with administration during their life-time. That is why there were no wars of succession among the Cholas. The position of the king was hereditary and, normally, the eldest son of the king was nominated as the successor. But sometimes, if the eldest was found incompetent, the successor was chosen from amongst the younger sons or the brothers of the king.

The king was assisted by ministers and other high officials of the state in administration who were given high titles, honours and lands as *Jagirs*. The Cholas had organized an efficient bureaucracy and their administration was successful.

#### Army and warfare

The Cholas maintained powerful armies and navies. The infantry, the cavalry and the war elephants constituted the main parts of the army of the Cholas. It seems that the Cholas had seventy regiments. Probably, the army consisted of 1,50,000 soldiers and 60,000 war elephants. The Cholas spent huge amounts to maintain an efficient cavalry and imported the best horses from the Arab countries to equip their army. During peace time, the army remained in cantonments where proper arrangements were made for its training and discipline. The kings kept their personal bodyguards, called the *Veiaikkaras*, who were sworn to defend the person of the king at the cost of their lives. The soldiers and the officers, who distinguished themselves in war, were given titles like *Kshatriyasikhamani*. The credit of maintaining a strong navy, both for offensive and defensive purposes, went first to the Cholas among Indian rulers. The Cholas attacked and forced the kings of Ceylon and Srivijaya Empire to accept their suzerainty, defended their trade on high seas and became the masters of the Bay of Bengal. But, the Cholas did not observe the

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Hindu morality of warfare, i.e., *Dharma Yudha*. The Chola army caused much injury to the civil population, including women. The soldiers engaged themselves in loot, destruction, killing of civil population and dishonouring of woman during warfare.

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### Revenue system

The primary source of the income of the state was land revenue. Rajaraja I took one-third of the produce as land revenue from his subjects. The revenue was collected both in cash and kind. The land was divided into different categories on the basis of its productivity and it was measured and revenue was charged upon the actual produce. The revenue was charged directly from the cultivators but, in certain cases, from the entire village as one unit. The officers observed severity while collecting the revenue. But the Cholas also tried their best to develop artificial means of irrigation. They built several dams on the river Kaveri and also made lakes for the purposes of irrigation. Besides land revenue, taxes on trade, various professions, forests, mines, irrigation, salt etc. were other sources of the income of the state. The main items of expenditure of the State were the expenses of the king and his palace, the army, the civil services and public welfare works.

### Administrative divisions

The empire was divided into *Mandalas* for the convenience of administration. They were either seven or eight in number. The *Mandalas* were divided into *Nadus* and *Nadus* into *Kurrams* or *Kottams*. Every *Kurram* had several villages, which were the smallest units of administration.

### Local self-government

The arrangement of local self-government has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas. Probably, no other ruling dynasty of either the north or the south had such an extensive arrangement of local self-government at different units of the administration as the Cholas. The *Mahasabha* of the village played an important role in the administration of the village. Besides, there was a provision of representative bodies at the level of *Kurram*, *Nadu* and *Mandal* as well, which all helped in the administration. An assessment can be made of the nature of the local self-government by the rights and duties of the *Mahasabha* of the village.

For the formation of *Mahasabha*, first a village was divided into thirty wards. The people of each ward used to nominate a few people possessing the ownership of about an acre and a half of land, residence in a house built at one's own site, aged between thirty-five and seventy, possessing knowledge of one Veda and a *Bhahsya*. Moreover, he or any of his relations must not have committed any wrong or received punishment. Besides those who had been on any of the committees for the past three years and those who had been on the committee but had failed to submit the accounts, were excluded from being the nominees. From among the persons duly nominated, one was chosen from every ward to be the member of the *Mahasabha*. At this stage the members were not chosen by election but by the lot-system. Names

of persons were written on palm-leaf tickets which were put into a pot and shuffled and a young boy was directed to take out the ticket. The same procedure was followed for the formation of the different committees of the *Mahasaha*. Thus, the *Mahasabha* of a village was constituted of educated and economically independent persons of the village and in all, had thirty members. There were also different committees of the *Mahasabha* to look after different things concerning the village like the judicial committee, the garden committee, the committee to look after tanks and irrigation etc.

The *Mahasabha* enjoyed wide powers. It possessed proprietary rights over community lands and controlled the private lands within its jurisdiction. The Central or the provincial government consulted the *Mahasabha* of the village concerning any change in the management of the land of the village. It helped the officials of the government in the assessment of production and revenue of the village. It collected revenue and, in cases of default, had the power to sell the land in question by public auction. It looked after the reclamation of waste land and forest which were within its jurisdiction. It imposed taxes and appointed paid officials to look after the administration of the village. The judicial committee of the *Mahasabha*, called the *Nyayattar*, settled cases of disputes, both civil and criminal. It looked after the roads, cleanliness, lighting of temples, tanks, rest-house and security of the village.

Thus, the *Mahasabha* looked after the civic, police judicial, revenue, and all other functions concerning the village. It was an autonomous body and functioned mostly independently. The central government interfered in its working only when it was felt absolutely necessary. Thus, the villages under the administration of the Cholas were practically 'little republics' which drew admiration from even British administrators. Dr K.A. Nilakanta Sastri maintains that it was an able bureaucracy which in various ways fostered a lively sense of citizenship. There was a high standard of administrative efficiency and purity. The highest ever attained by the Hindu state.

### **Social condition**

Society was based upon *Varnaashramdharma* but different Varnas or castes lived peacefully with each other. Inter-caste marriages were permitted and it had led to the formation of different sub-castes. The position of women was good. They were free from many restrictions which came to be imposed on them by the Hindu society later on. There was no *purdah* system and women participated freely in all social and religious functions. They inherited and owned property in their own right. There were stray cases of *Sati* but it was not a widely practiced system. Normally monogamy was the prevalent rule but the kings, the Samantas and the rich people kept several wives. The *Devadasi* system was also in vogue and there were prostitutes in cities. The slave system was also prevalent.

### **Economic condition**

The Chola Empire enjoyed a widespread prosperity. The Cholas had arranged for proper means of irrigation which had helped in the reclamation of waste land and

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increased agricultural production which provided the base for the prosperity of both the rulers and the ruled. The Cholas maintained peace and security within their territory, constructed well-connected roads, provided safety to travellers and traders and, above all, kept a strong navy on high seas. In such conditions, trade, both internal and external, grew which resulted in increased prosperity of the state. The traders had brisk trade with China, Malaya, Western gulf and the island South-East Asia. Industries also grew up under the protection of the Cholas. Cloth, ornaments, metals and their different products, production of salt and constructions of images and temples were a few important industries which grew and prospered under the protection of the Cholas.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Who was the founder of the Chola dynasty of Tanjore?
5. Who was the Chola ruler who established the supremacy of the Indian navy in the Arabian Sea?
6. What is the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas?

## 4.4 THE CHALUKYAS

It is not clear whether the Chalukyas of Gujarat were in some way related to the Chalukyas of south India. Most probably, it was a different dynasty which existed prior to the rise of the Chalukyas in the south. The dynasty grew into prominence and assumed imperial dignity during the rule of its founder ruler, Mulrajaa I, who conquered large territories and made Anhilwara his capital. In his old age, Mulraja abdicated his throne in the favour of his son, Vallabharaja and, after his death, to his second son Durlabharaja. During the later period of his reign, Durlabharaja gave his throne to his nephew Bhimraja I. By that time, the empire of the Chalukyas had become quite powerful in northern India.

The Chalukyas grew powerful in the Deccan towards the middle of the sixth century AD. As to who they were is a matter of great controversy. Different scholars hold different opinions regarding the origin of the Chalukyas. The inscriptions reveal that the Chalukyas originally lived in the north. Smith considers the Chalukyas as the descendents of a foreign race, Gurjara. But Indian scholars do not agree with him. There is no evidence to prove them as foreigners; they were most probably Indian. According to the traditional legends and myths, the Chalukyas took their origin from the palm of Brahma in order to safeguard and protect religion. But from the historical point of view, these legends do not hold much importance. Dr. Ray Chaudhary has observed that inscriptions distinguished between the Chalukyas and the Gurjaras.

Dr. D.C. Sarkar also disagrees with the view and opines that the Chalukyas belonged to the Kannad family. They professed themselves to be Kshatriyas. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang also holds the opinion that the Chalukyas were Kshatriyas. However, the rule of the Chalukyas of south began in the 6th century

AD. From 6th to 8th century A.D, the Chalukya dynasty was one of the powerful dynasties of the south. There were three main branches of the Chalukyas:

- (i) The Chalukyas of Badami or the early Western Chalukyas
- (ii) The Later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani
- (iii) The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

*The Chalukyas of Badami* or Vatapi or the early Western Chalukyas ruled for two centuries till the middle of the 8th century. Thereafter, their rule came to an end as they were defeated by the Rashtrakutas. Towards the later part of the 10th century, the later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani established their rule after defeating the Rashtrakutas and ruled up-to the end of the 12th century. The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi ruled from 7th Century AD to eleventh century AD. Jayasimha the son of Ranaraga was the first Chalukya king. The great works of Jayasimha are not very informative but he was the son of Krishna, and thereby, re-established the Chalukya dynasty. Since there is no reference of it in the Aithole inscription, it cannot be fully accepted.

#### **4.4.1 The Chalukyas of Badami**

Pulakesin I and Pulakesin II were the two most important kings of this dynasty.

##### **Pulakesin I**

Pulakesin I was the founder of the majestic grandeur of the Chalukyas of Vatapi. He is said to have captured Vatapi and made it his capital. He performed a horse-sacrifice after his accession to power. His sons, Kirtivarman I and Mangalesa extended the empire in all directions by defeating the neighbouring rulers including the Mauryas of Konkan, the Kadambas of Vijayanti and the Kalachuris of Northern Maharashtra and Malwa.

##### **Pulakesin II**

The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Pulakesin II, who came to the throne in the beginning of 7th century AD and ruled for 34 years (AD 608–642). He was a contemporary of Harsha of Kannauj (AD 606–647). He greatly extended the extent of his empire by his all round conquests. The Aihole Inscription (dated AD 634) mentions that he defeated the Latas of Gujarat, Gangas of Mysore, Alupas of Malabar, Mauryas of North Konkan, the Malwas and Gurjaras of Brigu-Kacha. But his greatest achievement was his victory against Harshavardhan of Kannauj in AD 620. This victory greatly enhanced his prestige and made him an undisputed master of South. The rulers of Kosala and Kalinga became so terror stricken that they at once submitted to him. Pulkesin II established diplomatic relations with Persia also. It was during his reign that Hiuen Tsang visited the Chalukya Empire.

The kingdom having enormously grown in dimensions, Pulkesin II entrusted the administration of the eastern territories to his younger brother Kubja Vishnuvardhan in about AD 615. The latter made some additions to his charge by his conquests but he does not appear to have broken away from Vatapi. It was perhaps his son Jayasimha

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I who asserted his independence towards the South. Pulkesin II defeated the Pallava king and threatened his capital Kanchi. As a result of this victory, his power and influence greatly increased. Now he was regarded as the most powerful ruler in the South. He also subjugated the Cheras and the Pandyas of the deep South.

Pulkesin II had not only distinguished himself in warfare but also cultivated the softer art of diplomacy to strengthen his position. According to the Arab writer Tabari, Pulakesin II maintained friendly relations with Khusrau, the second king of Iran or Persia, who received from his Indian contemporary a special envoy in 625 AD bearing letters and presents. The Persian sovereign, too, sent an embassy to the Chalukya court, and it is generally supposed by the scholars that the reception of the Persian mission is portrayed in one of the Ajanta cave paintings. This view is, however, doubted by noted orientalist Dr. Sten Konow.

Hiuen Tsang visited *Mo-ha-Iacha* (Maharashtra) in about AD 640 when Pulkesin II was on the throne of Chalukyas. The Chinese pilgrim speaks very favourably of the administration and economic condition of the country and the proud and war-like spirit of the people who were undaunted in war, revengeful for wrongs and grateful for the favours of the king. He says that *Pu-Lo-Ke-she* (Pulkesin), a Kshatriya by birth and the head of the valiant people, was an object of fear to his neighbours, but the benevolent nature of his administration made them vassals of his dominions and the kings served him with loyalty and devotion. The last days of the Chalukya monarch were inglorious, for the Pallavas now paid off all the old scores under the leadership of Narasimhavarman I, who after several successful campaigns stormed the Chalukya capital Vatapi in AD 642 and probably killed Pulkesin II.

### **Pulkesin II's successors**

Pulkesin II's death was followed by the temporary decline of the Chalukya power. His son Vikramaditya I (AD 655–668) succeeded in recovering his paternal dominions from the grip of the Pallavas. Pallava's capital was plundered and the power of Chalukyas army was once more felt by the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas. His successors, Vinayditya and Vikramaditya II, whose reigns cover the period AD 681–733, were powerful rulers. During the reign of Vikramaditya (AD 733–746) the Pallavas were once more defeated and their capital was plundered by the Chalukyan army. The Cholas, the Pandya and the people of Malabar submitted to him. The Arab of Sindh invaded Lata (South Gujarat) which was then included within the Chalukya dominions but they were repulsed. Thus, South India was saved from the Arab menace. Kirtivarman II (AD 743–75) was the last ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami.

The constant fighting of the Chalukyas against the Pallavas had sapped their strength. Kirtivarman could not pay attention to his governors of the northern provinces. Among them, one Rashtrakutta governor, Dantidurga, asserted his independence and occupied large portions of the kingdom of Kirtivarman and laid the foundation of the empire of the Rashtrakutas. Kirtivarman tried to recapture the lost part of the kingdom after the death of Dantidurga but failed. Instead, Krishna I,

the successor of Dantidurga, snatched away even the rest of his kingdom from him and thus destroyed the empire of the Chalukya of Badami for ever (AD 757).

#### 4.4.2 The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

Pulkesin II of Vatapi entrusted to his younger brother, Kubja Vishnuvardan, the government of the eastern portions of his dominion. Jayasimha I, the latter's son and successor declared his independence. Thus, an independent principality grew up with its centre at Vengi. The Eastern Chalukyas ruled over the Andhra country and some parts of Kalinga for more than four centuries. Vijayasitya II and Vijayaditya III, whose reigns covered almost the whole of the ninth century are said to have defeated the Rashtrakutas, the Gangas and the other neighbouring powers. Towards the last quarter of the tenth century, the eastern Chalukya kingdom was overrun by the Chola ruler, Rajaraja I. In the eleventh century, the Eastern Rajendra Chola II, also known as Kulottunga I, united the Chola kingdom with the kingdom of Vengi.

#### 4.4.3 The Western Chalukyas of Kalyani

This dyansty was founded by Taila of Tailapa. The last Rashtrakuta king was overthrown in AD 973 by Taila, who laid the foundation of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyani and captured large territory. Taila was its first great king and ruled from AD 973–997. The next king of this dynasty was Jayasimha II who was a brave warrior and founded the city of Kalyani which became the capital of the Western Chalukyas. The last great king was Vikramaditya IV, who started the Chalukya-Vikrama Era. The decline of this dynasty began with the death of Vikramaditya. The last ruler of the line, Someshwara, a weak and incompetent man, was overthrown by the Yadavas of Deogiri in AD 1190.

#### 4.4.4 Features of the Chalukyas Administration

The Chalukyas were brave rulers and good administrators. After coming to power they established their supremacy over the large parts of South and East for about 200 years. During this long period they had to fight many battles with the Cholas, Pallavas, Cheras, Gangas and many others. They had to face the onslaught and aggression of Harsha as well. But the credit goes to them that they not only repulsed all these attacks but followed aggressive and expansionist policies. Many of their rulers won many territories both in the South and the East. The very fact that they ruled with glory for about 400 years shows that they were capable, efficient and good rulers. They brought glory to their family first under the Chalukyas of Badami for nearly 200 years and then for nearly the same period of time under the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Many rulers of this dynasty fought against the mighty rulers of both the South and the North of India and succeeded many times. They assumed high titles like '*Parmeswara*', '*Param Bhattaraka*', etc. and governed their empire well. Thus, this dynasty played an important part in the politics of South India for quite a long time. They tried to improve the economic condition of their country by establishing trade relations with foreign countries like Persia.

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## Religious toleration

The Chalukyas followed the policy of toleration. During their reign Jainism and Brahmanism flourished together.

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### Architecture

The art of architecture made a great progress under the patronage of the Chalukya kings. A new style of architecture known as the Chalukya style, which was different from the Gupta style, was developed during this period. At Aihole alone, we come across 700 Temples. In addition to Aihole there were temples at Badami and Pattadakai. Aihole has rightly been called 'the cradle of Indian temples architecture'. It represents the best of the Chalukyan architecture. Three temples at Aihole are particularly important and their names are the Ladh Khan Temple, the Durga Temple and Huchimalli (gudi) Temple. Durga Temple (Piya) was another experiment seeking to adapt the Buddhist chaitya to a Brahmanical Temple. This temple, perhaps of the eighth century, is an apsidal structure. With a large portico, it is 24 feet deep on its eastern front thus making its entire length 44 feet. The temple stands on a high plinth with many mouldings. Another temple very similar to the Durga temple is the smaller and simpler Huchimalli (gudi) which contains one new feature namely a vestibule or *Antarala* between the cellar and the main hall, one of the fairly early temples to be built. At Aihole was the Jaina temple of Meguti which shows some progress in the erection of the structural temples. It is unfinished and its shrine is detached from the backwall of nearly the same date.

### Paintings

It is estimated that some of the caves of Ajanta and Ellora were built during the Chalukya period as in a cave painting of Ajanta, Pulakesin II, the Chalukya ruler has been painted receiving an ambassador of Persia. It shows that the art of painting was also popular during this period.

### Literature

The Chalukyas were great patrons of literature. Most of the rulers of this dynasty had scholars in their court. Bilhan and Gyaneshwar were the famous scholars in the court of Vikramaditya II. Bilhan wrote the '*Vikramadevcharit*' and Gyaneshwar composed the '*Mitantera*'. The Chalukyas were the lovers of art and literature.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. What were the three main branches of the Chalukyas?
8. Who was the most important ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami?
9. Which place is known as the cradle of Indian temple architecture?



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## 4.5 CONDITIONS IN INDIA BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE ARABS AND TURKS

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Though trade relations existed between Arabia and India from very ancient times and a lot of mutual give and take was there, after the rise of Islam in Arabia the Arabs tried to conquer India through Sind after their conquest of Iran. It is said that the first unsuccessful attempt in this direction was made by the Arabs at the time of Caliph Umar in AD 636, however, it was successful. The first successful attack was carried out in AD 712.

The political, social, religious and economic condition of the time in India can be described as follows:

- (i) **Political Conditions:** The political condition of India was very miserable at the time of the Arab invasion. There was no strong central government in the country. After the death of Harshvardhan, the country had become divided into many small kingdoms. These states carried out constant warfare for supremacy, a policy that was followed by the major kingdoms of the time.
  - (a) **Kannauj:** This kingdom was ruled by Yasovarman who constantly quarrelled with his neighbouring states for the expansion of his empire. He was eventually defeated and killed by Lalitaditya of Kashmir. He was a contemporary of king Dahir of Sind.
  - (b) **Kashmir:** At the time of the Arab invasion (AD 712), Kashmir was ruled by the Karkot dynasty. The ruler was Chandrapida. His successor was Lalitaditya who defeated Yasovarman. But in the later ninth century, around AD 855, Avantivarman of the Ulpala dynasty seized power from the Karkotas.
  - (c) **Sind:** It was ruled by a Brahmin named Dahirat during the time of the Arab invasion. It is said that a majority of the population was the follower of Buddhist religion. It was this ruler who had to face the Arab invasion under the leadership of Muhammad-bin-Qasim.
  - (d) **Afghanistan:** It was called Gandhar at the time. At the time of Hiuen-Tsang's visit, the kingdom was being ruled by a Kshatriya dynasty which ruled over it till the end of the ninth century. It is said that the last ruler of this dynasty, Trilochanapala was dethroned by a Brahmin minister of his who seized power.
  - (e) **Nepal:** Just before the Arab invasion of Sind, Nepal became independent of the ruler of Kannauj through the cooperation of Tibet. It was then under the control of Tibet. Though Nepal had close cultural and religious contacts with India it took no interest in the Indian politics at the time of the Arab invasion.
  - (f) **Assam:** Bhaskarvarman proclaimed Assam as an independent kingdom during the reign of Harshvardhan. But soon after, he was dethroned

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by a tribal leader Sitstambh. Since Assam was situated very far it had no influence on the general policy of India.

- (g) **Bengal:** After the death of Shashank it was first conquered by Bhaskarvarman and later on by Yasovarman of Kannauj. After his death, disorder was unleashed and taking advantage of the situation their feudal lords proclaimed one of them, Gopal, as the king. He is supposed to be the founder of the Pala dynasty. It ruled in Bengal till the 12th century. It is clear that the condition of this kingdom was not stable when the Arabs invaded India.
- (h) **Malwa:** The Pratihara dynasty was ruling over this kingdom at this time. Its capital was Kannauj. The Rastrakuta ruler Dantidurga is said to have defeated the ruling Pratihara prince. Pratihara rulers came into conflict with the Arabs many times between AD 725 to 740 but the Pratihara ruler Nagabhata defeated them.
- (i) **Vakataka dynasty:** The Vakatakas had been ruling over the Deccan from the fourth century AD onwards. Their power had declined at the time of the Arab invasion.
- (j) **Pallavas:** The Pallavas ruled over southern and lower Deccan. Their capital was Kanchi. At the time of the Arab invasion of Sind, the Pallava ruler was Narsimhavarman II (AD 695-722). He was probably more interested in literature and art and did not evince any interest in the politics of Northern India.
- (k) **Pandayas:** The Pandaya kingdom included modern Trichinopoly, Tinnevely and Madurai. They were in constant conflict with the other kingdoms of south India.
- (l) **Chola Kingdom:** They ruled over the eastern part of Madras and most of Mysore. They were continuously fighting against the Pandayas and the Cheras.
- (m) **Chera kingdom:** They ruled over most of modern Kerala. They kept on fighting against the Pandayas.

In brief, India was divided into many kingdoms. The country lacked political unity and a powerful central government. The kingdoms which were powerful neither took the initiative in helping king Dahir of Sind against the Arabs; nor perhaps Oahu might have asked them to help him. Perhaps because he was a Brahmin, he did not get that love from his Buddhist subjects which a popular ruler enjoys. Probably he did not behave very well with the Jats inhabiting Sind. The Arabs naturally profited from such a miserable state of affairs in India.

### (ii) Social Conditions:

- (a) **Many castes:** Socially as well, the condition of India was deplorable. After the seventh century many new castes arose, a phenomenon ascribed by the historians to various causes. The older caste system had divided society into four castes viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas

and Sudras. According to a Purana ascribed to the eighth century, the matrimonial relations between the men belonging to lower castes with the women belonging to Vaisya or other higher castes led to the growth of many mixed castes. This meant that the Sudras and the scheduled castes had been divided into thousands of sub-castes. Similarly, even the Brahmins and the Ksatriyas got divided into many mixed castes. The economic factors also led to the growth of various sub-castes. Many new occupations developed and castes were named after these occupations. In the economic set up of that time, people could not move from one place to other but within their place of residence they got divided into many sub-castes. Besides this, many tribals got incorporated into the Hindu society because of the land grants given to the Brahmins in the tribal areas. The tribals were incorporated mostly in the Sudra or the mixed castes. Every tribe became a separate caste within the Hindu fold.

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- (b) **Untouchability:** The evil practice of social inequality and untouchability prevailed in the Hindu society. Dining with a Sudra, mixing with him, sitting with him or getting education from him were that even the shadow of a Sudra was considered polluting. The people of higher castes looked down upon the people of lower castes because of which there was no feeling of brotherhood in the society.
- (c) **Birth of the new caste of Rajput:** During this period we find the mention of a new caste, the Rajputs. Historians differ in their opinion about the origin of the Rajputs. Many Rajputs trace their origin to the sun and moon dynasties during the time of the *Mahabharata*. Other scholars consider them to have descended from the foreign invaders like the Hunas and the Scythians. Some of the Rajputs consider themselves to have originated from the Yajna performed by Rishi Agastya on Mount Abu. Some scholars ascribe their origin to the Vaisyas, Ksatriyas or Brahmins who either ruled themselves or showed exemplary bravery in the army of kings. A majority of scholars agree that these brave soldiers were called 'Rajputras' (son of ruler) by the then kings to begin with, which later on got changed to Rajputs.
- (d) **Position of women:** During this period there was a continuous decline in the position of women. They were considered a species of lower intelligence. A woman was considered as a mere serving maid of the husband. They were debarred from reading the Vedic scriptures. They were the victims of the rapacity of men folk. They were married at an early age with the result that they basically remained illiterate. They were the victims of social evils like polygamy and *Sati*. Generally, a woman did not enjoy the right to remarry except when she was divorced by her husband or in case, her husband had renounced the world or he was impotent. It was only under these exceptional circumstances that she could remarry.

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**(iii) Economic Conditions:** On the whole, the economic condition of the country was good. With the rise of Islam in Arabia, Indian foreign trade had again started growing. The Arab empire comprised of many such areas where gold was extracted from the mines. The foreign trade benefited the regions of Malwa and Gujarat. In Malwa, new cities like Hamparan grew up. On the other hand, internal trade was not very prosperous due to several factors. The forest-tribes and some plundering tribes used to loot the traders because of which the traders often proceeded in *Caravans* or under military security. There were no bridges on the rivers. Roads and trade routes were disrupted during the rainy season. Trade guilds had become weak. Self-sufficiency in the villages was on an increase which led to a decline in trade.

Agriculture was in a good condition. Many Arab travellers visiting India have spoken of the fertility of the Indian soil and the capabilities of its farmers but there was a great disparity in the country's economy. The practice of the land grant led to the rise of a class which can be called the landlord class. They used to lead a very luxurious life. They emulated the style of the rulers and got constructed three to five storey buildings for their residence. The wealth of the country was concentrated either with a few wealthy families or with the temples. The vast wealth of the country attracted foreign invaders. Indian industry was progressive.

**(iv) Religious conditions:** During this period, Buddhism and Jainism declined and Vedic or Brahman religion attained predominance. It was adopted not only by the tribes and the aboriginals but also by many foreigners. Many new gods were adopted amongst which prominent ones were Lord Vishnu and Shiva. The new doctrine of incarnation also developed in the Hindu religion during this time. Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna and many other Gods were being worshipped as incarnations of God Almighty. So much so that Buddha also came to be counted as one of Lord's incarnations. But the selfish priests and Brahmins again started encouraging many rituals which made the nature of religion complicated. The immorality amongst the ruling and the priestly class was enough to take the country towards decline. Many Hindu philosophers criticized the caste system and the prerogative enjoyed by the Brahmins, e.g., the Nathpanthi followers of Gorakhnath.

Briefly, except for the economic condition, all the other spheres such as political, social and religious were in a deplorable state in India. Lack of a powerful central government and the absence of a feeling of nationalism prevented adequate attention being paid to the security of the Northwest frontier region due to which the Arabs could gain success in Sind.

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## 4.6 THE ADVENT OF THE ARABS AND THE TURKS

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Towards the end of the ninth century, feudal lords of Persian origin ruled over Transoxiana, Khorasan and some parts of Iran. They had to engage constantly in a

fight against the Turkish tribes on their northern and eastern frontiers. This conflict led to the emergence of a new type of soldier known as Gazi. The Turks were mostly worshippers of natural forces and so were Kafirs in the eyes of the Muslims. Therefore, the Gazi soldiers fought against them for political and religious causes. With the passage of time, many Turks became Muslims and started propagating and protecting Islam. They came into conflict with the non-Muslim Turkish tribes. A Turkish slave of the Samanid dynasty named Alaptigin who was the governor of Khurasan supported the opposing faction in the struggle for succession in Bokhara. Fearing punishment, he proceeded towards Ghazni and subsequently consolidated his position there. He occupied certain parts in Central Asia and laid the foundation of an independent dynasty at Ghazni and started ruling from Ghazni as his capital.

On the other side, the Samanid dynasty fell and the Gaznavids undertook the task of protecting the Islamic regions against the non-Islamic tribes of central Asia. After Alaptigin, his son Abu Izhak and then slaves such as Baltagin, Pirai and Subuktugin became his successors. Subuktugin was the only one who was successful. Subuktugin (977–999) turned his attention towards India. Around AD 980, he dispatched a Turkish army against Jaipal in which Jaipal's army had to suffer a heavy loss and he was forced to surrender for peace. He is said to have occupied the whole of Balkh Khurasan, Afghanistan and in addition, the north-western frontier of India before his death. He was succeeded by his son Mahmud (999–1030) to the throne of Ghazni. With his accession, a new chapter started in the history of Islam. He defeated the ruler of Seistan, Khalif-bin- Ahmad and obtained the title of Sultan. Though his empire and his title enjoyed the sanction of the Khalifa but the basis of his power was conquest. Medieval Indian historians consider Mahmud of Ghazni as a soldier of Islam because of his struggle against the tribal invaders of Central Asia.

Many scholars consider him as the first Sultan-i-Azam. This title is not found inscribed on his coins where he is simply referred to as Amir Mahmud and also, this title was not given to him by the Khalifa. The saying of Barthold appears to be correct that in the times of Mahmud Ghazni the Ghaznavid Empire appeared in its best form. He first obtained the province of Mansur from Caliph Kadir and then acquired legal recognition and prestige for his empire. The sentiment of Ghazni became more consolidated during his reign. Besides, at this time, the Turks gained predominance in the army and administration taking place at this time. The proud Persians had never accepted the language and culture of the Arabs. Thus, before their advent in India, the Turks had not only become the followers of Islam but also had become Persianised. This very culture was propagated by them in India from AD 1200 onwards. Between AD 1000 and AD 1026, Mahmud of Ghazni carried out seventeen invasions of India. His chief invasions were against the Hindushahi rulers of Punjab – Jaipal (AD 1000– 1001) and Anandpala (1008–1009), against Nagarkot (Kangra) (1009), Thanesar (AD 1014), Mathura and Kanauj (1018–1019), against Kalinjar (1021), and Somnath in AD 1020. Mahmud Ghazni died in AD 1030 (see Figure 4.2).

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Fig. 4.2 Empire of Mahmud of Ghazni

Historians do not agree on the motives inspiring Mahmud of Ghazni for his Indian invasions. Some historians describe him as a soldier in the cause of Islam and say that he exhibited his religious fanaticism by breaking the idols of Hindu Gods and forcibly converting people to Islam. However, nowadays this opinion is not accepted. Actually, his main ambition was to acquire wealth even though he was a breaker of idols. He had no wish to squander away this wealth in India itself. He wanted to utilize it for establishing a vast central Asian empire. This is accepted without any controversy that he had no wish to establish a permanent empire in India because he always returned to Ghazni. He made no arrangements regarding his conquered areas nor did he annex the conquered areas to his empire. Only Punjab and Multan were made an integral part of his Ghaznavi Empire.

The question now arises that if Mahmud had so desired, he could have established his empire in India. It is not easy to answer this question. From one point of view, it can be said that it was impossible for him to do because neither did he desire it himself nor perhaps was it possible then to keep a vast country like India under control. There were no Muslim settlements at that time. The small number of people who had embraced Islam had not perhaps done so willingly and apart from other problems, language itself presented a serious problem. Probably his soldiers also did not want to stay permanently in India. Under such circumstances, it was not possible for him to set up a permanent empire in India. On the other hand, seeing the contemporary political conditions, it can be maintained that if he wanted he could

have done it because there was no powerful Central Government in India at that time. The country was divided into many small states and they were jealous of each other. The feeling of nationalism was totally absent and they gave more importance to their selfish interests than to the national interest. Hindu society was suffering from many evils like the caste system; the special prerogatives were acceded to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This also could have been a boon for Mahmud. But the historical fact is that Mahmud could not take advantage of this. The credit for this goes to Ghori and his successors. In fact, Mahmud was a conqueror and not an empire builder. So neither did he evince any interest in it nor could he do it.

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### 4.6.1 Alberuni

Coming to India at the time of Mahmud Gaznavi's Indian invasion, Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name was Muhammad bin Ahmad. He was originally an inhabitant of Khiva in the kingdom of Khwarizam. He was born in AD 973. Mahmud had captured him during his Khwarizam campaign in AD 1017. He wrote a book called *Tehkikat-e-Hind*. He remained in India for many years and studied Indian philosophy, astrology and Sanskrit language. He translated many Sanskrit works into Persian. He wrote a book *Alkanunal-Masudi* on astrology. In his work *Tehkikat-e-Hind*, he has beautifully analysed Indian mathematics, history, geography and astronomy.

#### Alberuni's description of India

- (i) **Social conditions:** Alberuni writes that the contemporary Indian society was ridden with the rigid caste system. The country was suffering from many evil practices like child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, Sati and Johar. There was no feeling of unity and equality in the Indian society. In his *Tehkikate- Hind* he mentions the narrow outlook of Indians as saying that Hindus are of the belief that there is no country like India, no king like theirs and no science like theirs. The caste system had reached its peak during the time of Mahmud's invasions. Alberuni mentioned that in the society only Brahmins had the right to attain salvation. Apart from getting high posts, Brahmins were exempted from payment of taxes. However, it is the caste system that helped the Turks to achieve success in India. The system was bad even from individual and social angles. It led to the degradation of the individual and social interests and also infused hatred in the minds of the individuals towards each other.
- (ii) **Religious conditions:** Alberuni's account tells us that at that time, idol worship was prevalent in the country and there was a lot of wealth in the temples. Common people believed in many gods but the scholars and educated people believed in the unity of the Godhead. Alberuni writes that the Hindus believed in one God who is permanent, all powerful and all pervading. Speaking about the evils of Brahmanism, he says that the Brahmins have the sole privilege for many things like offering prayers, reading the Vedas and performing sacrifices before the fire. These things could not be done by anybody else. If it was revealed that the Sudras and the Vaishyas had tried to read the Vedas, they were considered guilty and their tongues were cut.

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- (iii) **Political conditions:** It is clear from Alberuni's account that the country was divided into many small parts at that time, more famous among them being Kanauj, Kashmir, Sind, Malwa, Gujarat and Bengal. In the South also there were many small kingdoms. All these kingdoms were independent, jealous of each other and were constantly engaged in quarrels against one another. According to him, the Hindushahi dynasty ruled in Kabul and Punjab. In the ninth century, the place of Hindushahi was taken by Brahmanshahi whose important ruler was Anandpala. Alberuni makes a mention of the absence of the feeling of nationalism among the Indians and that they gave more importance to their individual selfish interest as compared to the national interests. About the Indian judicial system he writes that the criminal law was mild in India and the Brahmins were exempted from death punishment. The limbs of serious offenders were amputated. The judges dispensed justice based on the evidence of the witness. Punishment was given according to the cost of the theft committed. About the land system and taxation, Alberuni mentions that the king was not the owner of the land; he took only the land tax. The king took from the peasants 1/6th of the produce as tax but the Brahmins were exempted even from this.
- (iv) **Indian philosophy:** Alberuni has unreservedly praised Indian philosophy. He was especially impressed by the Upanishads and the spiritual philosophy propounded in the Bhagvad Gita. But he also mentioned that the Indians did not evince much taste for writing chronological history. According to him, the Indians knew very little about the chronology of historical events and if pressed too much, they start narrating stories. He also points out towards the fact that the Indians do not give much importance to the exchange of knowledge. In brief, Alberuni was a great scholar of his time. He was accorded great honour in the court of Mahmud. His description is very useful. His descriptions about India and his other works are of great value. That is why, in November 1971, the scientists, historians, linguists and sociologists of Asia in a conference held at New Delhi had requested UNESCO to get his works translated in all-important languages of the world. Till now many of his works have been translated into many languages of the world. Alberuni's account of India is very useful for the students of Indian history.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. Who were Mahmud Ghaznavi's chief invasions in India against?
11. What was Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name?

## 4.7 GHAZANAVIS

As you learned, Mahmud Ghaznavi carried out 17 invasions of India between AD 1000 and 1028. A brief description of which is as follows:



## **Invasion of the Frontier Regions**

Mahmud Ghaznavi established his control over some cities of the north-western frontier and a few forts in the vicinity of Peshawar for the first time in AD 1000. After making administrative arrangement for them, he went back to Ghazni.

### **Attack on Peshawar**

In AD 1001 Mahmud invaded Peshawar, an important part of Jaipal's dominions. Jaipal sent a big army of 12000 horses, 30000 infantry and 300 elephants to face 15000 horses of Mahmud but Jaipal was defeated and imprisoned along with a few of his soldiers. He concluded a treaty with Mahmud by which he promised 25 elephants and 25000 Dinars to Mahmud. Due to a feeling of severe humiliation, Jaipal could not survive for long and he committed suicide after giving over the kingdom to his son, Anandpal.

### **Attack on Mera and Bhatinda**

In AD 1004 Mahmud attacked Mera and Bhatinda. The ruler Biji Raj defended the fort bravely for 3 days but had to surrender on the fourth day. He had to hand over to Mahmud 280 elephants and enormous wealth. Like Jaipal, he also ended his own life.

### **Attack on Multan**

In AD 1005-6, Mahmud attacked the ruler of Multan – Abul Fath Daud (who was a follower of the Ismaili sect which Mahmud considered a rival sect). Abu Fath was defeated and gave 20000 gold Dirhams to Mahmud. Mahmud handed over the administration of Multan to the grandson of Jaipal called Sevakpala or Sukhpala who embraced Islam and got the name of Naushashah.

### **Attack on Naushashah of Multan**

Naushashah gave up Islam after Mahmud went back and declared himself as an independent ruler with the name of Sukhpala. So Mahmud had to invade Multan again. Sukhapla paid him 40000 Dirhams but Mahmud kept him as a prisoner throughout his (Sukhapala's) life.

### **Attack on Anandpala**

In AD 1008, Mahmud attacked the ruler of Lahore, Anandpala. At the latter's behest the rulers of Gwalior, Kalinjar, Kanauj, Ujjain, Delhi and Ajmer formed a military confederacy. About 30,000 Khokhars of Multan also joined them. According to the historian Farishta, a severe battle took place and within a short time the Khokhars murdered about 5,000 Muslims. However, an arrow hit the eye of Anandpal's elephants and he ran away from the battlefield carrying Anandpala with him. With the defeat in this battle, the joint efforts of the Hindushahis failed. The Indian people and the rulers were now terrified of Mahmud.

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### **Attack on Nagarkot**

In AD 1009, Mahmud launched an attack on Nagarkot (Kangra). He plundered enormous wealth from its temples.

### **Attack on Daud, the ruler of Multan**

In AD 1011, Mahmud Ghaznavi again attacked Daud because he had declared himself independent. He was defeated and imprisoned by Mahmud.

### **Attack on Thaneswar**

In AD 1014, Mahmud attacked Thaneswar, plundered its temples and broke its idols. He brought the fort under his control.

### **Attack on Trilochanpala**

In AD 1013, Mahmud attacked Nandan, the capital of Anandpala and his successor, Trilochanpala (near the salt mines of Khakda on Jhelums). He was defeated and his kingdom was annexed to Mahmud's empire.

### **Attack on Kashmir**

In AD 1015, Mahmud proceeded against Bhimpala, the son of Anandpala, in Kashmir. Kashmir was plundered and thousands of persons were taken away as slaves.

### **Attack on Mathura and Kanauj**

In AD 1018, Mahmud attacked Mathura. At that time it was the most thickly populated and prosperous city of northern India. Mahmud ransacked the city and after despoiling the temples and idols proceeded to Kanauj. The King of Kanauj, Rajpala fled from the city upon hearing about the arrival of Mahmud here also. Mahmud exhibited his barbarism. He took away from this city 2 crore Dirhams, 53000 prisoners and 350 elephants.

### **Attack on Kalinjar and Gwalior**

In protest against the cowardice exhibited by the ruler of Kanauj, king of Kalinjar and his son Vidyadhar entered into a treaty with the king of Gwalior and attacked Kanauj. When Mahmud heard of this development, he attacked Kalinjar and Gwalior and established his control over them.

### **Attack on Punjab and its incorporation into the Ghaznavid Empire**

In AD 1021, he attacked those areas of Punjab which were free till that time. Many people were robbed, murdered or forced to embrace Islam. After this, Punjab was fully annexed to the Ghaznavid Empire.

### **Attack on Kalinjar**

In AD 1022, Mahmud again attacked Kalinjar with the object of acquiring wealth. Laden with enormous wealth he again went back to Ghazni.

## Attack on Somnath

Among the invasions of Mahmud Ghaznavi, his invasion of Somnath (Kathiawad) is the most famous. He proceeded from Ghazni at the head of a big army on 17 October, 1024. In January 1025, he reached Anilwara, the capital of Gujarat, from where he proceeded towards the famous Shiva temple of Somnath. Famous historians have described the glory of Somnath on the basis of contemporary accounts saying that more than 1 lakh pilgrims used to assemble every day, one thousand priests used to perform the worship ceremony, thousands of devdasis performed dances and songs. Various kings of India had granted about 1000 villages to the temple. The temple had about fourteen beautiful golden minarets. It is said that Bhimdev, the king of Gujarat ran away without resisting Mahmud. The common people gave resistance for three days. After fierce bloodshed, Mahmud entered the temple. The priests repeatedly sent requests to Mahmud to take away as much wealth as he liked but to spare the Sivalinga but Mahmud paid no heed to this and broke the idol of Siva into pieces. The loot of the temple yielded wealth worth more than 20 lakh Dinars. But on way back he faced resistance by the Jats. He reached his Capital Ghazni in 1026.

## His last attack against the Jats

In AD 1027, Mahmud attacked the Jats inhabiting the area between the Indus river and Multan with the help of a navy. Jats fought bravely but were defeated. After loot and plunders, Mahmud reached Ghazni. He died there in AD 1030. At that time, he was 59 years of age.

## Motive behind Mahmud's invasions

- (i) **Acquisition of wealth:** Most historians are of the opinion that the major aim of Mahmud's Indian invasions was the acquisition of wealth with which he aimed to establish an empire in Central Asia. That was the reason behind his making the temples and idols the target of his attack. The temples were the repositories of gold, silver, diamonds and cash money. Famous historians Habib and Zafar are the propagators and supporters of this view. According to Prof. Habib it was not strange that like the Catholic Church of Europe, the Hindu temples also attracted powerful and cruel invaders to do some unholy act. To call Mahmud's invasions 'Jihad' would be a big mistake. It would be more appropriate to say that he carried out terrible raids on the temples in order to seek their wealth. This fact can be corroborated by the fact that during peacetime no raids on temples were carried out. It was only at the time of the war that the temples were deserted in order to win the sympathy and support of the Muslims and Mahmud took away enormous wealth. Similarly, historian Zafar writes that Mahmud was more a conqueror than a religious propagator. To say that he carried out repeated attacks on India in order to spread Islamic religion would be wrong both historically and psychologically.

Lanepoole also expressed similar views and wrote that if Mahmud could hope to acquire wealth by looting Baghdad, he would have attacked and

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plundered that famous seat of Caliphate in the same cruel manner as he attacked and looted the Hindu temple of Somnath. Now the most important object of Mahmud's attacks is considered to be his ambition to acquire wealth. Some other objectives are as follows:

- (ii) **Religious motive:** According to contemporary Muslim historians, the object of Mahmud's Indian invasions was the propagation of Islam. According to them, Mahmud had vowed at the beginning of his reign that he would carry out an annual invasion on India to propagate his religion. The court historian of Mahmud, Utbi, has written that Mahmud at first wanted to attack Seistan but later on thought it proper to carry on a Jihad against India. Many historians agree with this and hold that because of this motive, Mahmud carried out seventeen invasions of India, attacked the temples and broke the idols. He forced many non-Muslim people to embrace Islam. It is said that the contemporary Muslim world praised these efforts of Mahmud. The Caliph held a special Durbar to felicitate him. But modern historians Muhammad Habib, Khalik Ahmad Nizami and Zafar have disproved this theory by citing many examples. Prof. Habib writes that the barbaric acts of Mahmud did not help in the propagation of Islam but downgraded it in the eyes of the world. Habib and Nizami, at other places, said that there is no principle in Islamic law which supports or encourages temple destruction. Mahmud attacked India thinking that it would prove his faith towards Islam and he would acquire prestige in the Muslim world. Still, the basic motives behind his invasions were the acquisition of wealth and political motives.
- (iii) **To gain elephants:** Some historians consider that the acquisition of elephants from India was an additional cause behind his Indian invasions. They say that in all his invasions of India after AD 1000 Mahmud made use of elephants. Therefore, it can be surmised that Mahmud attacked India to in order acquire elephants for his army. From India he got both the elephants and the 'Mohave's'.
- (iv) **Ambition for prestige:** Another point of view is that Mahmud carried out repeated attacks on India inspired by his desire to acquire prestige. He had come to know of the weakness of Indian rulers during the lifetime of his father. He had full hope of success in India. Many Muslim travellers had been to India before the Indian invasions of Mahmud. From them he had acquired the necessary geographical information which was helpful to him in carrying out his Indian invasions. Like many other conquerors, Mahmud also was desirous of extending his empire and acquiring prestige. He had annexed many parts of western Punjab to his empire with this explicit purpose only.
- (v) **Acquisition of artisans:** Some scholars held that one object of Mahmud's invasions was the acquisition of skilled artisans. He was very fond of constructing beautiful buildings. With this aim he had carried with him many skilled artisans.
- (vi) **Political motives:** Many historians hold that the basic and real motive of Mahmud's invasions was political. Their contention is that his Indian invasions

were a mere instrument for the acquisition of wealth. The ultimate objective was the establishment of a Turk-Persian empire in Central Asia. This has been proved undoubtedly that Mahmud's aim was definitely not the establishment of a permanent empire in India. He used to return to Ghazni after every successful invasion. In fact, Mahmud considered it impossible to rule over two empires – that of Ghazni and India. Even a fertile land like Punjab was annexed by him to his Ghaznavid Empire as late as AD 1021–1022.

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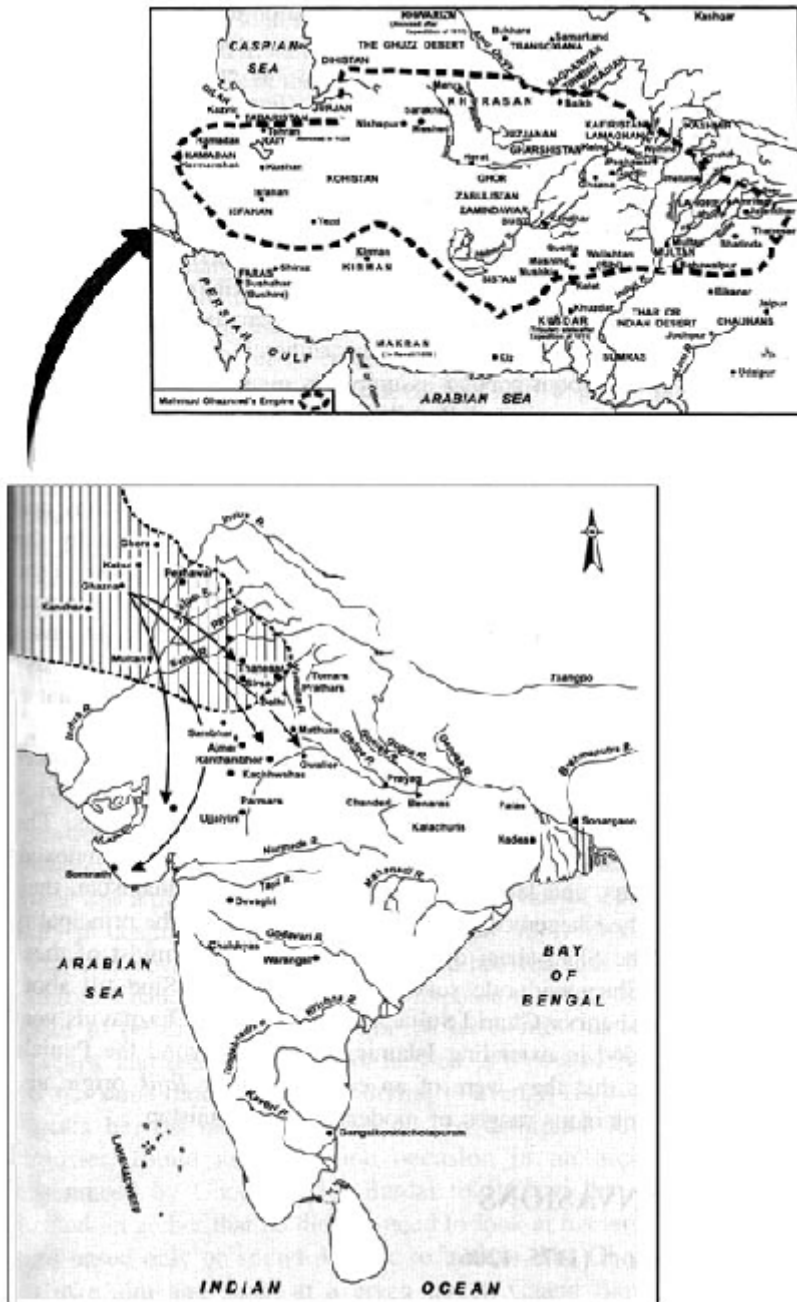


Fig. 4.3 Campaigns of Mahmud Ghaznavi and his Empire

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In essence, it can be said that the nature of Mahmud Ghaznavi's Indian invasion was not religious. His purpose was to amass wealth from India to gain assistance for the establishment of a vast and permanent Ghaznavid empire in Ghazni. He did not try to establish an empire in India. He made no permanent administrative arrangement for his conquered territory. In his reign of 27 years, he carried out 17 invasions in India. Thus, he could not literally fulfill his ambition of an annual invasion of India because many a times he got entangled in the wars in Central Asia. From every Indian invasion he got enormous wealth. He invaded areas from Kashmir in the north to Kalinjar in the south and Kanauj in the east to Somnath in the west. He was most vigorously opposed by the Shahi ruler Jaipal. His invasions of Nagarkot, Mathura, Kanauj and Somnath yielded him enormous wealth.

### **Historical importance or the effects of Mahmud's invasions**

It would not be correct to label Mahmud as a mere plunderer and ignore his role. His invasions had many effects chief amongst which are the following:

- (i) **Political effects:** Though the Muslim empire in India was not founded in the wake of Mahmud's Indian invasions, yet it would not be improper to say that his invasions opened the way for it. The political condition of India underwent a change with the conquest of Punjab and Multan by Mahmud Ghaznavi. These areas came to be under direct control of the Turks and they could invade the Ganges plain any time after crossing the hills protecting the north western frontier of India. Though for the next 150 years the Turks could not bring this area under their control, it would have to be accepted that Mahmud Ghaznavi's invasions made the task of Muhammad Ghori easier.
- (ii) **Acquisition of wealth:** The effect of Mahmud's invasions on Indian cities and temples was not favourable. Almost every time he left laden with gold, silver, diamonds, etc., and that helped him to maintain a powerful and large standing army. It protected his empire from the Central Arabic powers and helped him to expand it. From Punjab and Multan he got a vast sum of money every year as tax.
- (iii) **Effect on Islam:** Mahmud's invasions definitely led to the spread of Islam in Punjab, Multan and a few other areas of India. Equally, his atrocities also inspired hatred towards Islam. But, later on, this religion was spread gradually by the saints and missionaries who had come with Mahmud. In fact, because of these invasions the Turks came to be the propagators of Islam. Later on, this religion affected Indian policies and society. Zafar writes that the Muslim invaders were accompanied by the Muslim saints as well those who worked for spreading Islam in India.
- (iv) **Destruction of art pieces in India:** Because of the 17 invasions of Mahmud, many beautiful temples, idols and artistic pieces were destroyed. He destroyed prosperous cities like that of Nagarkot, Mathura, Kanauj and Somnath. Many skilled artisans were either done to death or were carried away by him as slaves. This adversely affected the progress of these artistic pieces.
- (v) **Adverse psychological effect on the Rajputs:** Some historians are of the

opinion that the morale of the Rajput rulers was weakened because of their continuous defeat at the hand of Mahmud Ghazni and they made no effort to gain back Punjab and Multan. But this view does not seem to be very correct because for the next 150 years the Turks could not establish their empire in India and in the first battle of Tarain in 1191, Muhammad Ghori was defeated by Prithviraj Chauhan. However, there is no doubt that the Rajputs of the period did not give up their traditional rivalries and jealousies and did not try to save Punjab from the clutches of the invaders.

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- (vi) **Spread of Indian art in central Asia:** Mahmud took with him many artisans. Through their creations, they not only gave prestige to Mahmud but also enriched Central Asia by contributing Indian culture.
- (vii) **Description of Alberuni:** With Mahmud of Ghazni also came Muhammad bin-Ahmad who is generally known as Alberuni. His work *Kitab-ul-Hind (Tehkikat-e-Hind)* is a valuable source of information about India. In it, Alberuni had given a critique of Indian social, religious and political condition, Indian philosophy, mathematics, geography and astronomy.
- (viii) **Spread of Persian culture:** After Mahmud's invasion, Lahore gradually became the centre of Persian culture. From Punjab many Persian scholars, missionaries, traders, etc., began to travel to other parts of India. In course of time, Indo-Persian administrative institutions developed in India.
- (ix) **Appointment of Indians to military posts:** Some historians hold that Mahmud and his successor Mansur gave livelihood to many Hindus in the army. It is said that Mansur's army comprised 50 per cent Indians. Some of them like Tilak and Sewand Ram were appointed even at the higher posts.
- (x) **Effect on royal houses:** Mahmud Gaznavi's invasions had a very adverse effect on the royal houses. Many of them were so weakened that they could not retain their hold for long and some were extinguished totally.

### 4.7.1 Successors of Mahmud Ghaznavi

#### Masud

Mahmud Ghaznavi died in AD 1030. There followed a struggle for succession between his two sons Masud and Muhammad. Mahmud is said to have expressed this wish before his death that Muhammad should rule over Ghazni and his Indian empire while Masud should get Khurasan, Iraq and Iran. After Mahmud's death, his courtiers raised Muhammad to the throne. Masud, who was in Iraq at the time, attacked Ghaznavi, imprisoned and blinded Muhammad. Thus, Masud declared himself the king in AD 1037. Indian historian, Ishwari Prasad, says that Masud was truly like his father, full of ambition, bravery and a crusading spirit. But he was a great drunkard and a corrupt man. The affairs of kingdom were looked after by his able minister Khwaja Ahmad Maimandi. In the very beginning of his reign, his Governor in Lahore – Eriarik declared himself independent. Masud defeated him and kept him prisoner. In his place, Ahmad Niyaltigin was appointed as the governor of Punjab who attacked Benaras successfully and plundered enormous wealth. But one of his associates

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Qazi Shiraz became jealous of him and instigated the Sultan against Niyaltigin. To punish him, the Sultan sent forces. Niyaltigin was defeated and done to death. In October 1037, Masud invaded India and advanced as far as Hansi as the head of a large army. He looted Sonipat as well and went back carrying enormous booty. But in the absence of Masud of Ghazni, the Turks of the Seljuk Empire invaded Khurasan and on 24 March AD 1040, Masud was defeated by the Seljuk Turks at a place called Dandankan and fled to Lahore.

### **Muhammad**

Masud's army revolted against him and after deposing him raised his blind brother Muhammad to the throne. Masud was imprisoned and murdered in AD 1041. Muhammad ruled for some time but soon after the son of Masud, called Maudud, took revenge of his father's death. He got his uncle Muhammad murdered and himself became the Sultan with the help of a few of his chiefs.

### **Maudud**

He ruled from AD 1041 to 1049. Undoubtedly, he succeeded in strengthening his position in Punjab but he could not suppress the Seljuk Turks. The Ghaznavid Empire now remained confined only to Ghazni and Punjab. The Hindu rulers of Delhi seized Hansi and Thanesor from him.

### **Successors of Maudud**

Maudud died in AD 1049. From then to about AD 1186, twelve different Sultans of the Ghaznavid dynasty ruled over their empire. Though the Gaznavids occasionally came and plundered the Gangetic plain and the Rajputana but they were no longer a military threat to India. During this period a struggle started between the Ghaznavid Sultans and the rulers of Gor (Gor was a hilly kingdom between Ghazni and Herat). The last Sultan of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Khusru Malik was defeated by the Gorido ruler Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam also known as Muhammad Ghori. Khusru Malik took refuge in the Ghaznavid area of Lahore but here also the Gorids established their control and finally in AD 1192, Muhammad Ghori got Khusru Malik murdered.

### **4.7.2 Causes for the Downfall of the Ghaznavi Empire**

There are many causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavi Empire which are as follows:

- (i) **Lack of foresightedness on the part of Mahmud Ghaznavi:** One significant cause of the downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire was that Mahmud had paid no attention towards the consolidation of administration alongside conquest. British orientalist and archeologist Stanley Lane-Poole has written rightly that Mahmud did not have a creative mind. One does not hear of any institution which Mahmud initiated. He only tried to maintain external security in his empire and never made any plans for organizing and consolidating his empire. That is why he left behind him only an uncoordinated and disorderly empire. As soon as he breathed his last, the empire started disintegrating.
- (ii) **Absence of any law of succession:** There was no definite law of succession in the Ghaznavid Empire. Therefore, after his death, there was constant



warfare and intrigues in the reign of his successors. This dealt a blow to the prestige and stability of the empire.

- (iii) **Incompetent successors:** Mahmud Ghazni had established a rigid military dictatorship. This sort of regime can go on only till one capable and powerful ruler succeeds another. Mahmud's successors were all incapable sovereigns. All of them were lazy and addicted to luxury. Therefore, they could not stop the advance of the Seljuk Turks and their increasing influence.
- (iv) **Increasing power of the Seljuk Turks:** Mahmud's death was followed by the rise of another powerful empire, that of the Seljuks. This empire included Syria, Iran and Trans-Oxiana. This empire came into conflict with the Gaznavids for control over Khurasan. In a famous battle Ghaznavid Maudud was badly defeated and fled for refuge to Lahore. Next Ghaznavi Sultan Bahram became a puppet in the hands of the Seljuks. Actually, it was because of the Seljuks that the Ghaznavid influence became confined only to Ghazni and Punjab.
- (v) **Rise of the kingdom of Ghor:** Ghor was situated between Ghazni and Herat. This small kingdom presented a big danger to the declining empire of Ghaznavi. In 1155, its ruler Alauddin Hussain invaded Ghazni, plundered it and burnt it to ashes. After the shrinking of the Ghaznavid Empire to Ghazni and Punjab only, Ghor became all the more powerful. Muhammad Ghori who had been appointed by his brother as the ruler of Ghazni gradually conquered Punjab and in AD 1192, imprisoned and murdered the Ghaznavid Sultan Khusru Malik.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

12. What was the major aim of Mahmud's invasions of India?
13. What effect did Mahmud's invasions of India had on Islam in South Asia?

## 4.8 GHORIS AND THEIR IMPACT

Muhammad Ghori (who is also known as Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam) was the younger brother of the ruler of Ghor, Ghiyas-ud-din. He was raised to the throne of Ghazni in AD 1173. Still, he remained loyal to his brother and kept good terms with him. Though he ruled over Ghazni virtually as an independent ruler till AD 1206, he got his brother's name inscribed on his coins and behaved towards him as a feudatory does towards his lord. He carried on many invasions of India only as his brother's associate and opened the way for the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

### 4.8.1 India on the Eve of the Invasion of Muhammad Ghori

Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori was appointed as ruler of Ghazni by his brother Ghiyas-ud-din in AD 1173. Between AD 1175 and 1205, Muhammad Ghori carried out a number of invasions to deal with the enemies of the Ghor kingdom viz.,

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Ghaznavids of Lahore and the rulers of Khwarizam. The political condition of India was as unstable at that time as it had been at the time of the last invasion by Mahmud Ghazni in AD 1027 (about 148 years before). The dominance of Gurjar Pratiharas had come to an end and there was no defector or demure monarch in India. The whole country was divided into many small kingdoms which were engaged in mutual jealousy and conflict. For the sake of convenience of study, we can divide the states of the time into three parts namely,

- (a) Muslim kingdoms
- (b) Rajput kingdoms and other states
- (c) States of southern India

### (a) Muslim states of the north

- (i) **Ghaznavid kingdom of Ghazni:** In the north the Ghaznavids were ruling over Punjab and their capital was at Lahore. Their hold extended from Peshawar in the northwest to Jammu in the northeast. The Southern boundary of the kingdom was unstable. They had snatched the regions of Hansi and Bhatinda from the Chauhans of Delhi. At the time of Ghori's invasion the rein of this kingdom was in the hands of an incapable and luxury loving ruler Khusru Malik.
- (ii) **Multan:** The chief city of the southern part of the Indus Valley was Multan ruled at that time by Ismailia Shias. At the time of the invasion of Ghori, Carmethian dynasty ruled over his part.
- (iii) **Sind:** The kingdom of Sind was under a local dynasty, the Sumras. They were also Shia Muslims. Any Muslim invader was not likely to experience much trouble in invading and conquering the above mentioned kingdoms because not only were their resources limited but also they lacked popular cooperation. The rulers of these kingdoms were all incapable and luxury loving and for the other people of these areas the success of any Muslim conqueror merely meant the replacement of one Muslim state by the other.

### (b) Rajput and the other kingdoms of north

Apart from the three Muslim kingdoms, there were many small Rajput kingdoms in the east and north of India. The following four were more prosperous of the states of north India and there were some others as well.

- (i) **Chauhans of Delhi and Ajmer:** At the time of Muhammad Ghori's Indian invasions, Delhi and Ajmer were being ruled by the Chauhan ruler Prithviraj III. He was also famous as Rai Pithora. The account of Prithviraj's conquest available in Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso* is not to be wholly believed; still it appears that he had impressed upon his neighbouring kingdoms his bravery and courage. He defeated and humiliated the Chalukya kings of southern India, seized Mahoba from its Chandel ruler Paramdev. The frontier forts of this kingdom were Hansi, Pakpottan and Bhatinda. Prithviraj III had forcibly carried away from the swayamvar, Sanyogita, the daughter of his neighbour king, Jaichand of Kanauj and so Jaichand harboured intense hostility towards him.

- (ii) **Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kathiawad:** The most important kingdom was those of the Chalukyas in western India. Anhilwara (Paatan) was their capital. The most famous king of this dynasty was Jai Singh Siddharaj (AD 1102–1143). He defeated the Paramaras of Malwa and Guhilots of Chittor. After that, the kingdom disintegrated and only Gujarat and Kathiawad were left. At the time of Muhammad Ghori's Indian invasions, the ruler was Kanauj II.
- (iii) **Gahadwalas or Rathors of Kanauj:** The kingdom of Kanauj comprised Kashi, Benaras, Allahabad, Kanauj, Oudh etc. Jaichand was its ruler when Muhammad Ghori invaded India. He had intense enmity with the ruler of Delhi and Ajmer, Prithviraj Chauhan.
- (iv) **Chandelas of Bundelkhand:** In the Chandela kingdom were included Mahoba, Kalinjar, Khajuraho, Jhansi, Ajaygarh, etc. In the last quarter of the century, its ruler was Parmardidev. Prithviraj Chauhan of Ajmer had defeated him and annexed quickly a large part of his kingdom. Apart from the above mentioned four Rajput States, Pala and Sena kingdoms were other States of northern India which deserve to be mentioned.
- (v) **Pala kingdom of North Bengal (Modern Bihar):** At one time the Palas ruled over entire Bengal and Bihar but their power declined in the twelfth century. Later, kings of this dynasty like Kumarpala (1126–1130), Madavpala (1130–1150) were all very weak. Many parts of the kingdom became independent. At the time of Muhammad Ghori's attack, the dominance of the Palas was limited to some parts of Bihar only.
- (vi) **Senas of Bengal:** The Senas are said to have come from South India and settled in Bengal. Originally they were feudatories of the Palas. In the eleventh century they declared themselves independent in eastern Bengal. When Muhammad Ghori attacked India, Lakshman Sena (1170–1206) was ruling over eastern Bengal.

### (c) Kingdoms of South India

At the time of Muhammad Ghori's invasions, the Yadavas were ruling over Devgiri, the Kakatiyas in Warrangal and the Hoysalas in Dowlasamudra. In the far south, the Cheras were ruling in Kerala and the Pandyas in Madura. All the kingdoms of south were mutually jealous of each other. They had no interest in the politics of north India and therefore no influence as well. In brief, then, at the time of Muhammad Ghori's invasion India was divided into many states. Every kingdom was busy extending its area and influence. Despite invasion by the foreign Turks, they did not apply common sense of putting an end to mutual quarrels in which case they might have sent their spies to read the internal situation in the Turkish kingdom. The Rajputs did not do this. The outlook of the ruling Rajputs was so narrow at the time that even at the time of external danger staring at their faces, they felt happiness at defeating their neighbouring king with the help given by the invader. This foolishness of the Rajputs became one of the causes of their downfall.

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### **Social condition of India**

The social condition of India was very defective at the time of Ghori's attack. Though in this period, a brave caste was born in the form of the Rajputs but they were often luxury-loving and fond of dance and wine. They were excessively proud by temperament. Exhibiting cunningness in war, according to them, was a very wrong thing. They never wanted to deviate from their self-imposed ideals. Indian society was ridden with untouchability, caste system, sati custom, etc. Brahmins still enjoyed a privileged position. Unity and mutual cooperation were totally lacking in the Indian society.

### **Religious conditions**

Even before Muhammad Ghori, Islam had become popular in Sind, Multan, Lahore, etc. In rest of India, Hinduism prevailed. With the efforts of Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Kumaril Bhatt and Mahadevacharya etc., Hinduism had just been reinvigorated. Other religions were Buddhism and Jainism but both of them were declining. Many orthodox people believed that God will come to their aid at the time of war or danger. In the twelfth century, a progressive and popular movement started in India known as the Lingayats who were the devotees of Shiva. They strongly criticized the caste system and boycotted practices like sacrifice, keeping fasts and going on pilgrimages. In the social sphere, they opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage. But the influence of this sect was very limited.

### **Cultural conditions**

Rajput rulers patronized and encouraged architecture, dancing, music and literature etc. During this period many works were composed in Sanskrit and regional languages. The capital of Paramara's Ujjain, and Vikramshil and Vikrampur etc., were important centres of education. Buddhist monasteries were also performing a useful function in this direction. Many of the Rajput kings themselves composed literary pieces. King Bhoj of Dhar was a great scholar. The famous Chalukyan minister, Bhima was not only a patron of scholars but also a great writer himself. The Jain scholars of the period also made important contributions. Most famous amongst them was Hemchandra who composed in Apabhramsh language apart from Sanskrit. After the Brahmins rose to power, Sanskrit took the place of Apabhramsh and Prakrit among higher classes. Despite this, such languages which were very close to the popular language remained prevalent and work were composed in them. Among them, popular languages like Rajasthani, Brij, Bangla, Marathi, Hindi language etc., of northern India developed. The Rajput kings constructed many temples, as well as and water reservoirs for the purpose of irrigation. In South India as well there was a period of flowering of Indian civilization and culture. In the Chola period many temples were constructed in the Dravidian style. The Kailashnath temple of Kanchipuram is its best example. After the decline of the Cholas, the Chalukyas and the Hoysolas continued the task of construction of temples.

Many temples were constructed during this period in Dharwar district and in Helevid, the capital of the Hoysalas. The most beautiful among them is the Hoysaleswar temple. It is the best example of the Chalukyan style. In this period,

apart from statues of gods and goddesses, Yakshas and Yakashinis such as 'chitrapatas' were also constructed in the temples in which various aspects of life like love, war, music, dance, hunting etc. are portrayed. They exhibit the deep relationship existing between the social and religious life during that period. For the common people the temple was not only a place of worship but also a centre of social and cultural life. In south India, many works were composed in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada languages. The period between the later half of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, also referred to as the age of Kamban, was the golden age of Tamil language. The *Ramayana* composed by Kamban is a classic piece of Tamil language. In this period, the literary form of Kannada language came into prominence. The Chalukyas and the Hoysalas extended their patronage to the Kannada literature also along with Telugu literature. A scholar, Nannaiya Begaa began translating the *Mahabharata* into Telugu in the time of the Chalukyas. The work was completed by Tikkana in the thirteenth century.

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### 4.8.2 Indian Invasions of Muhammad Ghori

Muhammad Ghori launched his first attack on India in AD 1175. Passing through the Gomal Pass, he came as far as Multan and Uchh and brought these two areas under his control.

#### Unsuccessful attempt to invade Gujarat

In AD 1178, he invaded India a second time through the Rajputana desert in Gujarat. But the ruler of Gujarat (Mulraj II or Bhimdeva I) defeated him badly near mount Abu and he fled for his life. After this, the defeated Ghori came to the conclusion that it was essential to have Punjab as the base for the conquest of India.

#### Conquest of Peshawar, Lahore, Deval and Sialkot

In AD 1179, Muhammad Ghori began his efforts to end the dominance of the Gaznavids in Punjab. At that time, the Ghaznavid ruler of the Punjab was Malik Khusru. Muhammad defeated the luxury loving and incapable ruler very easily and in AD 1179–1180 established his control over Peshawar. Now, his target was Lahore. After a number of military campaigns, he finally occupied Lahore and Sialkot as well. By AD 1190, the whole of Punjab had been made a part of the Ghor Empire and Ghori began to make preparations for attacking Delhi and the Doab.

#### First battle of Tarain (AD 1191)

After his conquest of Punjab the frontiers of Ghori's empire had reached up to Delhi and Ajmer ruled by Prithviraj Chauhan or Prithviraj III. Like Muhammad Ghori, Prithviraj was also an expansionist. He had brought under his control not only the smaller states of the Rajputana but also the Chandela king of Mahoba. The first battles between the two adversaries were fought for the ownership of Tabarhind or Bhatinda. Prithviraj was supported by many Rajputs but Jaichand kept aloof. Muhammad Ghori's army suffered a defeat in the battle of Tarain near Thaneswar. Muhammad Ghori's life was saved by a Khilji horseman. Prithviraj next advanced towards Bhatinda and after a siege of about 13 months brought it under his control.

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Prithviraj became rather contented with this conquest and did not make any further efforts to drive out the Gaznavids from Punjab completely. Shahabuddin ascribes this defeat of his to the carelessness of his Afghan, Khilji and Khurasani leaders. He humiliated many of them and imprisoned them. It is said that for one whole year Muhammad Ghori made preparations to wipe out the blot caused by his defeat in the first battle of Tarain.

### Second battle of Tarain

Muhammad Ghori launched another attack on Prithviraj Chauhan in AD 1192 to avenge his defeat in the first battle of Tarain. This time he is said to have with him about 120,000 soldiers most of were armed cavalymen and 10,000 were horse-men carrying bows and arrows with them. Prithviraj Chauhan sent an appeal for help to all Rajput kings. This time all the other Rajput kings also joined Prithviraj with the exception of Jaichand. Prithviraj's army is said to have comprised about 30,000 soldiers and 300 elephants, soldiers comprising horse-men as well. The Turkish army this time was much more organized. Muhammad Ghori divided his army into 5 parts, four flanks to attack the Rajputs and one kept in reserve. (See Figure 4.4) Minhaj-us-Siraj wrote, 'Sultan stationed his army according to a well laid out plan. This strategy led to the defeat of the Kafirs. Allah made us victorious and enemy forces ran away.' Many Indian soldiers were killed in this battle. The Turkish army occupied the forts of Hansi, Sursuti and Samana and also conquered Ajmer. Prithviraj Chauhan was captured near Sursuti or Sirsa and was murdered either immediately or sometime after.

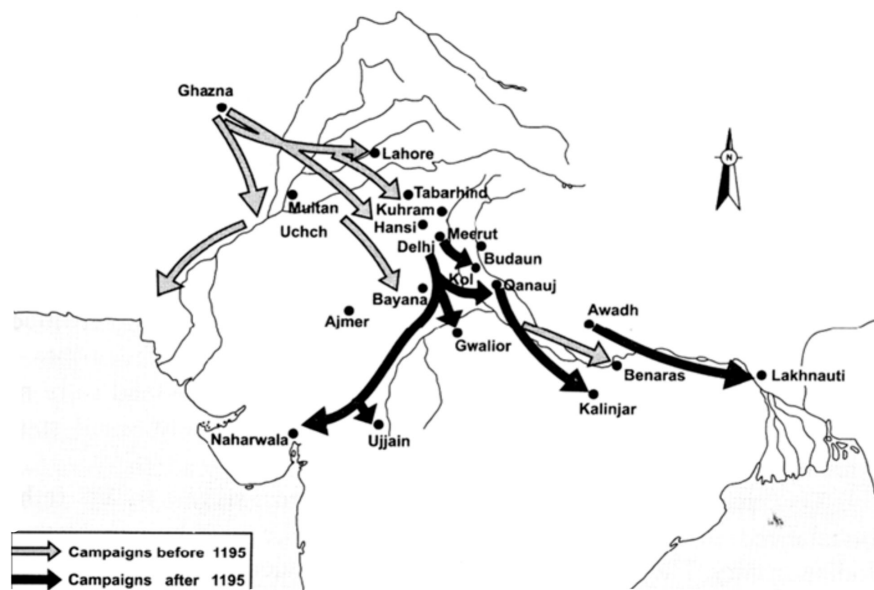


Fig. 4.4 Effects or Consequences of the Wars

The Second Battle of Tarain is very significant historically because it gave a new turn to Indian history. Delhi and Rajasthan came under the occupation of the Turks after this battle. This conquest made the determination of Ghori to establish his empire in India almost definite. The power of the Chauhans having been broken, the predominance of the Turks increased rapidly. Because of this victory, the military

phase of the Turkish conquest ended and the way was now opened for the administrative organization of the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad Ghori went back after this victory leaving the Indian possession in charge of his faithful slave, Qutubuddin Aibak. Subsequently, a central organization was established which went on till a long time. Between AD 1192 and 1206, the Gangetic – Jumna Doab was occupied by the Turks and, soon after, they conquered Bengal and Bihar as well. After establishing their hold in the Doab, the Turks had first to deal with the king of Kannauj, Jaichand. Within the next two years Qutubuddin Aibak conquered Meerut, Baran and Koil (Aligarh) as well. Subsequently, the Turks consolidated their southern frontiers by conquering Bayana and Gwalior. Then Aibak took away from the Chandelas their territories of Kalinjar, Mahoba and Khajuraho. He also defeated Bhim-II-the ruler of Gujarat and Anhilwara and plundered many cities. At the time when Aibak was busy effecting the conquest of Central India, another general of Ghori Khliyasruddin Bakhtiyar Khilji (AD 1197) conquered Chunar and attacked Uddandpur, the Capital of Bihar. The ruler Indravarman surrendered and accepted his sovereignty without giving any fight. Aibak ordered Khilji to carry on the administration of the area. Then Khilji conquered Bengal from Lakshman Sen. Muhammad Ghori inherited the empire. Ghori, after the death of his brother (AD 1202), attacked the Shah of Khwarizam but he had to face defeat (AD 1203). Hearing the news of Ghori's defeat, the Khokhars of Punjab revolted against him but the rebellion was suppressed by him with the help of Qutubuddin Aibak.

From here, Ghori proceeded to Lahore and after establishing the administrative arrangement in Punjab sent Aibak for the Delhi region and himself proceeded towards Ghazni. On his way to Ghazni, when he was offering his evening prayer on the bank of Indus at a place called Damyak, Ghori was suddenly attacked by a few persons and killed. These people included the Khokhars and the Shias among them. After his death, his Central Asian Empire was usurped by the Shah of Khwarizam. His military chiefs established the Muslim empire in India. After him, for about 50 years the Mamluk Sultans remained busy in consolidating the Muslim empire in India. That empire progressed for about 150 years, though the royal dynasties changed.

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### 4.9 CAUSES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE TURKS

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The failure of the Indian states ruled by the Rajputs to withstand the Turkish onslaught has assumed historical significance. In a short span of fifteen years (AD 1192–1206), the major states of northern India surrendered before the Turkish army. The failure is explained due to many causes which are put together under the four heads of political, social, religious and military. We will discuss some of the major factors here.

#### **Political causes**

- (i) **Political division and natural conflict and disunity:** Before the invasion of the Turks, India was divided into many states. Their rulers constantly fought against one another for the extension of their empire and the prestige of their dynasty. This resulted in an intense jealousy against each other. Due to this

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mutual jealousy, they could not combine against the Turks and because of their mutual conflict they became hollow from inside. The Rajputs considered it as humiliating to accept the suzerainty of any other dynasty than their own. In AD 1192, Jaichand of Kanauj did not give any help to Prithviraj against Ghori. The mutual jealousy and disunity amongst the Indians raised the morale of Shahabuddin in the same manner as the German states were defeated by Napoleon.

- (ii) **Wrong criteria of choosing the rulers and administrative officials:** In India, the succession was hereditary. A person related to the ruling family only could become a king howsoever incapable he might be and a person unrelated to the ruling dynasty could not become the ruler how so ever capable he might be. According to the Islamic law the choosing of a ruler was necessary. Anybody could become a ruler if he was capable. Thus, under the Turks only those persons could enjoy power who were either capable themselves or enjoyed the loyalty of the faithful followers. These Turkish rulers invaded India. Under the Rajputs, even the basis of selection of the administrative officials was wrong. Only Rajputs or the Brahmins were appointed to high posts in the administration and in the army and that too on the basis of hereditary succession. This bred indifference among the common people towards the administration and led to the appointment of incapable persons on administrative posts on the basis of hereditary success. As against this, Turks considered all the Muslims equal without any difference on the basis of birth or caste and gave them equal opportunities. Therefore, the Turkish Sultan got the cooperation of everybody as also the suitable officials for various posts as well.
- (iii) **Neglect of popular welfare activities:** Rajput rulers spent a major portion of their income not on popular welfare but on the maintenance of the army and meeting their administrative expenditure. This cut them off from their people and the public naturally remained unconcerned towards the impending danger to the state at the time of foreign invasions.
- (iv) **Feudal system:** Rajput states were influenced by the feudal system. Under every ruler, there were certain areas which were under the vanquished rulers who always thought of declaring their independence. Besides, there were such officials who considered their land as their hereditary possession. They gradually assumed many administrative functions under themselves. Feudal system led to the weakening of the power of the king. He gradually became dependent on those feudal lords who had their independent armies. The armies furnished by different feudal lords did not have uniformity and after the defeat they went back to their respective areas. Since the Rajput kings did not establish diplomatic relations with the foreign countries, neither they nor their feudatories could learn the latest war strategy or tactics.

### **Social causes**

- (i) **Caste system:** Due to the caste system, Indian society was divided into many castes and subcastes. Practices like untouchability and inequality had



really weakened the society. One particular section of the society had to constantly suffer the hatred of other sections. Untouchability rendered the task of division of labour in the army also impossible. It forced one single person to do all the jobs from actual fighting to filling water. The feeling of racial superiority engraved in the Rajputs made them brave and self-confident on the one hand but also made them quarrelsome, insolent and proud on the other. These factors aided in the defeat of their self imposed dignity. Rajputs very often cared only to die in the battlefield which was admirable from the point of view of a war strategy.

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- (ii) **Other social evils:** During the Rajput period, evil social practices like drinking, polygamy, gambling, inferior social position of women, Sati, Jauhar, female infanticide, etc., had considerably weakened the society. They adversely affected the capacity and character of the official and ruling class.
- (iii) **Exploitation of landless farmers:** During the Rajput period, many landowners exploited the agriculturist's peasants and labourers. This exploited class could not be expected to fight to the best of their capacity against the foreign invaders for the defence of the country or state.
- (iv) **Separatist tendencies:** The society of Rajput period having boycotted foreign contact and considering itself as the best civilization in the whole world opened the way for its cultural decline as well. The account of Alberuni who had come to India during the period of Mahmud Ghazni was clear proof that Indians during this period had become very separatist and narrow minded. He wrote that the Hindus believed firmly that there was no country like theirs and no scriptures like theirs; their ancestors were not so narrow minded as the contemporary generation was. He wrote that if they travelled and met others, their view would change. This separatist tendency dealt a blow to the progress of knowledge and science.
- (v) **Defective basis of social division:** During the Rajput period, division of work was not according to aptitude and capability but on the basis of family and caste and so the defence of the country was the sole work of the kshatriyas. As war was considered the special function of one particular class only, a majority of population became indifferent to it. This resulted in the lack of general feeling of nationalism and so the Turks had to fight not against Indians but only a few ruling dynasties rendering their task of conquest easy.

### Religious causes

- (i) **Religious enthusiasm of the Turks:** Many historians ascribe the defeat of the Rajputs and the victory of the Turks to the religious enthusiasm of the Muslims which according to these historians gave them a new vigour and spirit. But historians like Habib and Nizami do not agree with this view and say that it would be a historical mistake to search in the religious enthusiasm of the Muslims the cause of their success. The religious spirit of the Arab conquerors was not an inspiring factor for them anymore. It was a temporary rather than a permanent feature or the inspiring motive of their military campaigns. About this, it can be said that many a time the leaders encouraged

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the soldiers by playing upon their religious sentiments though they generally did not have that religious enthusiasm which the initial Arab invaders possessed.

- (ii) **The qualities of the followers of Islam:** Sir Jadunath Sirkar says that Muslims were successful because Islam had imbued some good qualities in them viz., equality and social unity, fatalism born out of complete reliance on the will of Allah and abstinence from drinking. These qualities aided to some extent the success of the Muslims and the defeat of the Rajputs.
- (iii) **Ahimsa and simplicity of nature:** Some historians like Elphinston say that the Turks were by nature war like whereas Indians were by nature non-violent and simple minded. Therefore, the Turks defeated them easily. But Prof. Habib says that the argument that Indians were defeated because they were peace loving and hated war does not appear to be correct historically because in the time of the Rajput's Buddhism and Jainism had declined and in Hindu religion it was the duty of the Kshatriyas to fight. Therefore, the opinion of Elphinston does not appear to be correct. Actually, Rajputs were also war loving. The history of India during the Rajput period is a history of continuous struggles.
- (iv) **Religious diversities and fatalistic attitude:** The Turks had a common religion – Islam. India was religiously divided into many religious sects so India did not have that religious and cultural unity which Islam had given to Turks. Indian religions had enjoined the theory of reward or retribution for one's acts and their fatalistic philosophy had made the Indians habituated to tolerate the miseries. This attitude of fatalism leads to many Hindu chiefs just not offering any resistance to the Turks. This also made the task of the Turks easier.

### Military Causes

- (i) **Absence of any permanent standing army or feudal basis of the army:** According to the modern historians, the causes of the defeat of the Rajputs are military in character. The basis of the Rajput army was feudal. The various feudal contingents who together formed the Indian army made it heterogeneous whose nature or loyalty was not uniform. On the other hand, the Turks had developed a well-organized army. They recruited their soldiers at one place, trained them together, one lord disbursing the pay to all of them or the Sultan assigned an Iqta to a general to manage the army. That army was loyal only to one commander or one Sultan.
- (ii) **Defective war strategy:** Undoubtedly, many of the Rajput kings (Jaipal, Bhima, Ganaj, Bhoja, Paramara, and Prithviraj Chauhan III) were no less brave than the Turks but their war tactics were backward as compared to the Turks. Habib and Nizami have written correctly that from the point of view of force, war tactics, Indian army was not aware of the development in the war strategy, taking place in the Central Asia. Mahmud Ghazni as well as Muhammad Ghori kept before them the ideal of crusade because of which

the Rajputs came to be inferior commanders in their comparison. There was a difference between the organization of the armies on the battlefield and the principles of their warfare. The Turks used to divide their armies into many divisions and brought them against the enemy in turns. The Rajputs thrust their entire army in the battlefield together. Many a times the reserve army of the Turks launched a fresh assault against tired Rajput army. They encircled the Rajputs killing them in large numbers.

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- (iii) **Use of cavalry and use of bows and arrows by the Turks:** The basic principle of the military organization of the Turks was mobility. That was an age of horses and the greatest demand of the time was a mobile cavalry. Turkish army was greatly adept at bowmanship. Turkish horses were of a superior breed as compared to the Indian horses. Rajput army was slow and depended more upon the elephants. The Turks made an easy prey of elephants with their bows and arrows. Very often, the wounded elephants ran back trampling their own army under their feet. No doubt, even the Turks made use of the elephants in the battlefield but they used them only in the last phase of the war for the face conflict.
- (iv) **Neglect of frontier security by the Rajputs:** The Turks invaded India from north-west frontier side. The Rajputs had paid no attention towards the north western frontier so it was not easy for the Turks to establish control over the fertile land of Punjab. After the occupation of Punjab, they could easily occupy other areas because if an enemy checked at the frontier itself his morale becomes low. The Rajputs neither built forts nor did they make adequate arrangement for the security of the frontier. They themselves never invaded any country outside the natural frontiers of India. They did not give importance to the fact that offense is the best defence.
- (v) **Idealist attitude of the Rajputs on the battlefield:** The Rajputs considered it a great cowardly act to run away from the battlefield even in the event of defeat. For them war was a sport. Unlike the Turks whose strategy was to extricate as many of their soldiers to safety as possible, the Rajputs considered it a great quality to fight till the last. This consistently weakened their military power. The last soldier of the Rajput army used to die on the battlefield. Following just hollow ideals, the Rajputs considered it against their pride to attack any wounded, unarmed or fleeing enemy. The Rajputs remained struck to these ideals whereas the Turks gained victory over them.

Briefly then, it can be said many political, social, religious and military factors helped in the victory of the Turks and the defeat of the Rajputs. However, the military superiority of the Turks, their superior war strategy, mobile cavalry, skill in archery and new technique of warfare in Central Asia viz., scientific division of the army, keeping a part of the army in reserve, sudden attack on the enemy in order to encircle the enemy pretending to run away themselves were some of the factors which played a role in the defeat of the Rajputs.

**NOTES**

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

14. When did Muhammad Ghori launch his attack on India?
15. Why is the Second Battle of Tarain significant historically?

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**4.10 SUMMARY**

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- There are different opinions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. Dr V.A. Smith considers them as Parthians while some other scholars accept them as Kadama or Pahlava. Historians, however, are anonymous in believing that they were Kshatriya by caste. The first known king was Sinhavarman. Other important kings were Simhavishnu, Mahendravarman, Narasinhavarman, Parameshwarvarman and Narasimhavarman II.
- The Cholas were the most prominent rulers of south who claim a semidivine lineage. Aditya I, Rajaraja, Rajendra I and Rajendra II were some major Chola kings who maintained the might of their kingdoms. They ruled over south for a long period of time and established their control over trade and commerce from the Arabian Sea.
- The powerfully organized naval and armed forces defined the reign of the Cholas. Apart from this, Chola rulers paid due attention towards the upliftment of every section of the society.
- Chola rulers had a peaceful and tolerant attitude towards religion. Women were more liberated during the Chola rule. The economic condition was sound and administration was perfect. Architecture, academic section and trade with foreign countries also grew under their rule.
- The genealogy of the Chalukyas is controversial, though they successfully ruled over the Deccan for a long period of time. They were divided into three branches—Badami, Kalyani and Vengi. Some of the prominent Chalukya rulers were Pulakesin I and Pulkesin II.
- Chalukyas also contributed significantly towards the cultivation of a strong empire, a fair administrative system and a religiously tolerant society.
- Towards the end of the ninth century, feudal lords of Persian origin ruled over Transoxiana, Khorasan and some parts of Iran. They had to engage constantly in a fight against the Turkish tribes on their northern and eastern frontiers.
- Coming to India at the time of Mahmud Ghaznavi's Indian invasion, Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name was Muhammad bin Ahmad. He was originally an inhabitant of Khiva in the kingdom of Khwarizam.
- Mahmud Ghaznavi established his control over some cities of the north-western frontier and a few forts in the vicinity of Peshawar for the first time in AD 1000. After making administrative arrangement for them, he went back to Ghazni.

- There are many causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire.
- Muhammad Ghorī (who is also known as Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam) was the younger brother of the ruler of Ghor, Ghiyas-ud-din. He was raised to the throne of Ghazni in AD 1173.
- Muhammad Ghorī launched his first attack on India in AD 1175. Passing through the Gomal Pass, he came as far as Multan and Uchh and brought these two areas under his control.
- The failure of the Indian states ruled by the Rajputs to withstand the Turkish onslaught has assumed historical significance. In a short span of fifteen years (AD 1192–1206), the major states of northern India surrendered before the Turkish army.

## NOTES

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### 4.11 KEY TERMS

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- **Visayaka:** Chief of a province under Pallavas.
- **Devadasi:** A religious tradition in which girls are dedicated to a deity or to a temple.
- **Nadu:** One of the important administrative units of the Cholas.
- **Veiaikkaras:** The personal bodyguards of the Cholas Kings who were sworn to defend the person of the king at the cost of their lives.
- **Nayattar:** Judicial committee of Mahasabha during the Chola administration.
- **Fanaticism:** Belief or behaviour involving uncritical zeal, particularly for extreme religious or political causes.
- **Plunder:** Steal goods typically using force and in a time of war or civil disorder.
- **Polygamy:** The practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.
- **Separatist:** A person who supports the separation of a particular group of people from a larger body on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or gender.
- **Annex:** Adding a territory to one's own territory by appropriation.

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### 4.12 ANSWER TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. There are different opinions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. The famous historian and author Dr V.A. Smith considers them to be Parthians while some other scholars accept them as Kadama or Pahlava. Historians, however, are anonymous in believing that they were Kshatriya by caste.
2. The monarch was the head of the state and administration of the Pallavas.
3. Sanskrit was the state language of the Pallava dynasty.
4. The founder of the Chola dynasty of Tanjore was Vijayalaya.

## NOTES

5. Rajendra I was the first Indian ruler who established the supremacy of the Indian Navy in the Arabian Sea.
6. The arrangement of local self-government has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas.
7. There were three main branches of the Chalukyas:
  - (i) The Chalukyas of Badami or the early Western Chalukyas
  - (ii) The Later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani
  - (iii) The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi
8. Pulakesin II was the greatest ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami.
9. Aihole is considered to be the cradle of Indian temple architecture. It represents the best of Chalukyan architecture.
10. Mahmud Ghaznavi's chief invasions were against the Hindushahi rulers of Punjab – Jaipal (AD 1000– 1001) and Anandpala (1008–1009), against Nagarkot (Kangra) (1009), Thanesar (AD 1014), Mathura and Kanauj (1018–1019), against Kalinjar (1021), and Somnath in AD 1020.
11. Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name was Muhammad bin Ahmad.
12. Most historians are of the opinion that the major aim of Mahmud's Indian invasions was the acquisition of wealth with which he aimed to establish an empire in Central Asia.
13. Mahmud's invasions definitely led to the spread of Islam in Punjab, Multan and a few other areas of India.
14. Muhammad Ghori launched his first attack on India in AD 1175. Passing through the Gomal Pass, he came as far as Multan and Uchh and brought these two areas under his control.
15. The Second Battle of Tarain is very significant historically because it gave a new turn to Indian history. Delhi and Rajasthan came under the occupation of the Turks after this battle. This conquest made the determination of Ghori to establish his empire in India almost definite.

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## 4.13 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the origins of the Chalukyas?
2. What were the motives behind Mahmud's invasion?
3. Write a short note on the various successors of Mahmud Ghaznavi.
4. What were the causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavid empire?
5. Write a note on the three branches of Chalukyas.
6. Write a short note on Pulakesin II.

### **Long-Answer Questions**

1. Discuss the situation of India on the eve of invasion of Muhammad Ghori.
2. Describe the various Indian invasions of Muhammad Ghori.
3. Discuss the causes of the success of the Turks.
4. What was the significance of the Pallava administration?
5. Discuss the progress of art under the Pallavas.
6. Do you agree that the Chola kingdom was the most powerful empire of the South? State your reasons for the same.
7. Give an account of the socio-economic and political conditions of the Chola Empire.
8. Discuss the features of the local self-government system under the Cholas.

### **NOTES**

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### **4.14 FURTHER READING**

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