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ANCIENT INDIA

A Textbook for Class XI

RAM SHARAN SHARMA

विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते

एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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Foreword

The present book is meant for use in Class XI, which is the first year after a general education up to Class X At the Higher Secondary stage (Classes XI and XII), the student is given advanced knowledge in a few subjects of his choice so as to enable him to pursue higher education, if he wants it, or to enter into some occupation.

The NCERT had entrusted the responsibility of preparing courses and textbooks in history to the History Editorial Board consisting of Professor Satish Chandra (Chairman), Professor R. S Sharma, Professor Barun De, Professor Sumit Sarkar, Professor M G. S. Narayanan, Shri S H. Khan and Shri Arjun Dev (Convener). The Board had finalized the courses and prepared a series of textbooks The NCERT is grateful to the members of the Board for sparing their valuable time ungrudgingly in developing the new courses and textbooks in history within the short time that was given to them

This textbook dealing with a historical survey of ancient India was prepared by Professor R S Sharma and was first published in 1977 The present volume is the first revised edition of the textbook which had been out of stock since early 1978 The NCERT is grateful to Professor R. S Sharma for preparing the original as well as the present revised edition The NCERT is also grateful to many other persons, both belonging to the NCERT and outside, and organizations for their help and cooperation. Our special thanks are due to Dr. G L Adhya of the NCERT and Km Arundhoti Banerji of the Archaeological Survey of India for their help in supervising the preparation of illustrative materials, to Shri A K Ghosh for the drawings and the maps, and to the Archaeological Survey of India for making available to us photographs which have been included in this book

This volume on Ancient India is the first in the series of textbooks which have been brought out by the NCERT for the Higher Secondary stage. This volume covers the syllabus in ancient Indian history for the Higher Secondary stage Volumes dealing with the syllabus in medieval and modern periods of Indian history have also been brought out.

The NCERT would be grateful for any comments, suggestions and criticisms on any aspect of the present volume.

SHIB K MITRA
Director
National Council of
Educational Research and Training

New Delhi
August 1980

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Preface to the First Edition

History forms a part of an undiversified curriculum in general education for the first ten years of schooling. The course in history up to this stage is, therefore, aimed at acquainting the pupil with important trends and developments in the history of India and of the world. The courses at the 'plus two' stage have been framed keeping in view the foundations to be laid during the ten years of general education Their main purposes are to broaden and deepen the historical knowledge of the pupil, to introduce him to the rigours of the discipline, and to prepare him for higher academic studies in the subject.

The courses in history at the 'plus two' stage which have been framed by the Editorial Board are the results of discussions with teachers, teacher-educators and experts. Presently the Board is engaged in preparing four textbooks for the four semester courses in history. The syllabus includes optional courses on the history of regions outside India, and textbooks on these courses would be prepared when these courses are introduced in schools.

The present volume covering the course for the first semester deals with the history of ancient India from prehistoric times to about the eighth century. An effort has been made in this book to highlight the forces and factors behind the rise and spread of civilization and culture in India rather than present details of dynastic history. The growth and diffusion of various aspects of civilization such as social classes, state formation, and political institutions have been treated clearly. The book points out the significant changes and marks the main stages in the development of Indian society in ancient times Attention has been paid to the contribution of ancient Indians to polity, art, literature, philosophy, religion, and science and technology.

The Editorial Board is grateful to Professor R. S. Sharma for undertaking the writing of this book The Board also sincerely thanks all the other persons for their help in connection with the publication of this book

SATISH CHANDRA
Chairman
History Editorial Board

New Delhi
July 1977

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Author's Acknowledgements

No single historian can speak with authority on various phases and facets of ancient Indian history. I have therefore utilized the works of numerous scholars not all of whose names appear in the bibliography. I took various kinds of help from Dr. Pratipal Bhatia, Dr. D. K. Chakrabarti, Shri George Jacob, Shri V. K. Jain, Shrimati Vijaya Nath, Dr. Sitaram Rai, Kumari Snehlata and Dr. P. D. Tripathi. Shri Arjun Dev of the NCERT helped me in finalizing the preparation and publication of the book with ability, devotion and keen interest. They all deserve my sincere thanks At one stage it seemed that the book would not appear again I am therefore happy to see its second edition. I gratefully acknowledge the support and suggestions received from a wide circle of renowned historians including Dr. G. L. Adhya, Professor A. L. Basham, Professor B. D. Chattopadhyay, Professor R. N. Dandekar, Shri R. K. Choudhary, Professor D. N. Jha, Dr. Suvira Jaiswal, Professor B. N. Mukherjee. Professor M. G. S. Narayanan, Professor A. M. Shastri, Professor S. Settar. Professor G. R. Sharma, Dr. K. M. Shrimali, Shri R. P. Singh, Professor K. K. Sinha, Professor D. C. Sircar, Professor Upendra Thakur, Professor Romila Thapar and Professor B. N S. Yadava.

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CHAPTER 1

The Importance of Ancient Indian History

The study of ancient Indian history is important for several reasons. It tells us how, when and where people developed the earliest cultures in our country. It indicates how they started agriculture which made life secure and settled. It shows how the ancient Indians discovered and utilized natural resources, and how they created the means for their livelihood We come to know how they took to farming, spinning, weaving, metal-working, and so on; how they cleared forests, and how they founded villages, cities, and finally large kingdoms.

People are not considered civilized unless they know writing The different forms of writing prevalent in India today are all derived from the ancient scripts This is also true of the languages that we speak today The languages we use have roots in ancient times, and have developed through the ages.

Ancient Indian history is interesting because India proved to be a crucible of numerous races. The pre-Aryans, the Indo-Aryans, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Hunas, the Turks, etc., made India their home. Each ethnic group contributed its mite to the making of Indian culture All these peoples mixed up so inextricably with one another that at present none of them can be identified in their original form

India has since ancient times been the land of several religions Ancient India witnessed the birth of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, but all these cultures and religions intermingled and acted and reacted upon one another in such a manner that though people speak languages, practise different religic observe different social customs, th certain common styles of life throug country. Our country shows a deep u unity in spite of great diversity.

The ancients strove for unity. The upon this vast subcontinent as one l name *Bharatavarsha* or the land of was given to the whole country, after of an ancient tribe called the Bharata people were called *Bharatasantati* or tl dants of Bharata Our ancient poets, ph and writers viewed the country as an int They spoke of the land stretching fron alayas to the sea as the proper domain universal monarch The kings who trie lish their authority from the Himala Cape Comorin and from the valle Brahmaputra in the east to the land b Indus in the west were universally pra were called *chakravartins*. This kind c unity was attained at least twice. In century B C Asoka extended his er the whole country, except for the extr Again, in the fourth century A.D. Sam carried his victorious arms from the the borders of the Tamil Land. In t century the Chalukya king, Pulakesi Harshavardhana who was called tl the whole of north India. In spite political unity political formations a country assumed more or less the s

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The idea that India constituted one single geographical unit persisted in the minds of the conquerors and cultural leaders. The unity of India was also recognized by foreigners. They first came into contact with the people living on the Sindhu or the Indus, and so they named the whole country after this river. The word *Hind* is derived from the Sanskrit term *Sindhu*, and in course of time the country came to be known as 'India' in Greek, and 'Hind' in Persian and Arabic languages.

We find continuous efforts for the linguistic and cultural unity of the country. In the third century B.C. Prakrit served as the *lingua franca* of the country. Throughout the major portion of India, Asoka's inscriptions were written in the Prakrit language Later Sanskrit acquired the same position and served as the state language in the remotest parts of the country. The process became prominent in the Gupta period in the fourth century A.D. Although politically the country was divided into numerous small states in the post-Gupta period, the official documents were written in Sanskrit.

Another notable fact is that the ancients epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were studied with the same zeal and devotion in the land of the Tamils as in the intellectual circles of Banaras and Taxila. Originally composed in Sanskrit these epics came to be presented in different local languages. But whatever the form in which Indian cultural values and ideas were expressed, the substance remained the same throughout the country

Indian history deserves our attention because of a peculiar type of social system which developed in this country. In north India arose the varna/caste system which came to prevail almost all over the country. The foreigners who came to India in ancient times were absorbed in one caste or the other The caste system affected even the Christians and the Muslims. The converts belonged to some caste, and even when they left Hinduism to join the new religion they continued to maintain some of their old caste practices.

EXERCISES

1. Point out the importance of ancient Indian history.
2. In what ways does ancient Indian history show the basic unity of India ?

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CHAPTER 2

The Construction of Ancient Indian History

Material Remains

The ancient Indians left innumerable material remains The stone temples in south India and the brick monasteries in eastern India still stand to remind us of the great building activities of the past But the major part of these remains lies buried in the mounds scattered all over the country. Only a few have been exposed to give us some knowledge of the life of the ancient people.

Since most sites have been dug vertically they provide a good chronological sequence of material culture. Horizontal diggings, being very expensive, are very few in number, with the result that excavations do not give us a full and complete picture of material life in many phases of ancient Indian history

Even in those mounds which have been excavated the ancient remains have been preserved in varying proportions. In the dry climate of western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and north-western India antiquities are found in a better state of preservation, but in the moist and humid climate of the middle Gangetic basin and in the deltaic regions even iron implements suffer corrosion and mud structures become difficult to detect. It is only in the phase of burnt brick structures or stone structures that impressive and large-scale remains are found in moist and alluvial areas Excavations have brought to light the cities which the people established around 2500 B.C. in north-western India. Similarly they tell us about the material culture which was developed in the Gangetic basin. They show the layout of the settlements in which people lived, the type of pottery they used, the form of house in which they dwelt, the kind of cereals they used as food, and the type of tools and implements they handled. Some people in south India buried along with the dead, their tools, weapons, pottery and other belongings in the graves, which were encircled by big pieces of stone. These structures are called *megaliths*, although all megaliths do not fall in this category By digging them we have come to learn of the life which people lived in the Deccan from the iron age onwards. The science which enables us to dig the old mounds in a systematic manner, in successive layers, and to form an idea of the material life of the people is called *archaeology*.

Material remains recovered as a result of excavation and exploration are subjected to various kinds of scientific examination. Their dates are fixed according to the radio-carbon method, for which facilities exist in India. The history of climate and vegetation is known through an examination of plant residues, and especially through pollen-analysis. Thus on this basis it is suggested that agriculture was practised in Rajasthan and Kashmir as far back as 6000 B.C. The nature and components of metal artifacts are analysed scientifically, and as a result the sources from where metals were obtained are

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located and the stages in the development of metal technology are identified. An examination of animal bones enables us to find out whether the animals were domesticated, and also to point out the uses to which they were put.

Coins

Although a good number of coins and inscriptions have been found on the surface, many of them have been unearthed by digging. The study of coins is called *numismatics*. Ancient Indian currency was not issued in the form of paper, as is the practice these days, but as coins because paper came to be used in India much later, in the fourteenth century. Ancient coins were made of metal—copper, silver, gold, or lead. Coin moulds made of burnt clay have been discovered in large numbers. Most of them belong to the Kushan period, i.e., the first three Christian centuries. The use of such moulds in the post-Gupta period almost disappeared.

Since there was nothing like the modern banking system in ancient times, people deposited money in earthen ware and also in brass vessels, and maintained them as precious hoards on which they could fall back in time of need. Many of these hoards, containing not only Indian coins but also those minted abroad such as in the Roman empire, have been discovered in different parts of the country. They are preserved mostly in museums at Calcutta, Patna, Lucknow, Delhi, Jaipur, Bombay and Madras. Many Indian coins are found in the museums of Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since Britain ruled over India for a long time, British officials succeeded in transferring many of the Indian coins to private and public collections in that country. Coins of the major dynasties have been catalogued and published. We have catalogues of coins in the Indian Museum at Calcutta, of Indian coins in the British Museum in London, and so on. But there is a large number of coins which have yet to be catalogued and published.

Our earliest coins contain a few symbols, but the later coins mention the names of kings, gods or dates. The areas where they are found indicate the region of their circulation. This has enabled us to reconstruct the history of several ruling dynasties, especially of the Indo-Greeks who came to India from north Afghanistan and ruled here in the second and first centuries B.C.

Coins also throw significant light on economic history. Some coins were issued by the guilds of merchants and goldsmiths with the permission of the rulers. This shows that crafts and commerce had become important Coins helped transactions on a large scale and contributed to trade. We get the largest number of coins in post-Maurya times These were made of lead, potin, copper, bronze, silver and gold. The Guptas issued the largest number of gold coins. All this indicates that trade and commerce flourished, especially in post-Maurya and Gupta times. But the fact that only a few coins belonging to the post-Gupta period have been found indicates the decline of trade and commerce at that time.

Coins also contain religious symbols and legends which throw light on the art and religion of the time.

Inscriptions

Far more important than coins are inscriptions. Their study is called *epigraphy*, and the study of the old writing used in inscriptions and other old records is called *palaeography*. Inscriptions were carved on seals, stone pillars, rocks, copper plates, temple walls and bricks or images.

In the country as a whole the earliest inscriptions were recorded on stone. But in the early centuries of the Christian era copper plates began to be used for this purpose. Even then the practice of engraving inscriptions on stone continued in south India on a large scale. We have also in that region a large number of inscriptions recorded on the walls of the temples to serve as permanent records.

Like coins, inscriptions are preserved in the various museums of the country, but the largest

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number may be found in the office of the Chief Epigraphist at Mysore. The earliest inscriptions were written in the Prakrit language in the third century B.C. Sanskrit was adopted as an epigraphic medium in the second century A.D and its use became widespread in the fourth and fifth centuries. Even then Prakrit continued to be employed. Inscriptions began to be composed in regional languages in the ninth and tenth centuries Most inscriptions bearing on the history of Maurya, post-Maurya and Gupta times have been published in a series of collections called *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.* But not too many inscriptions of post-Gupta times have appeared in such systematic compilations. In the case of south India topographical lists of inscriptions have been brought out Still there are more than 50,000 inscriptions, mostly of south India, which await publication.

The Harappan inscriptions, which await decipherment, seem to have been written in a pictographic script in which ideas and objects were expressed in the form of pictures Asokan inscriptions were engraved in the Brahmi script, which was written from left to right. But some were also incised in the Kharosthi script, which was written from right to left However, the Brahmi script prevailed in the whole country, except for the north-western part Greek and Aramaic scripts were employed in writing Asokan inscriptions in Afghanistan Brahmi continued to be the main script till the end of Gupta times. An epigraphist can decipher most inscriptions of the country up to about the eighth century, if he has carefully learnt Brahmi and its variations. But afterwards we notice strong regional variations in this script, which is called by different names.

The earliest inscriptions are found on the seals of Harappa belonging to about 2500 B.C. They have not been deciphered so far. The oldest inscriptions deciphered so far were issued by Asoka in the third century B.C. An Asokan pillar inscription was found by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in Meerut. He brought it to Delhi and asked the pandits of his empire to decipher it, but they failed to do so. The same difficulty was faced by the British when in the last quarter of the eighteenth century they discovered Asokan inscriptions. These epigraphs were first deciphered in 1837 by James Prinsep, a civil servant in the employ of the East India Company in Bengal

We have various types of inscriptions. Some convey royal orders and decisions regarding social, religious and administrative matters to officials and people in general. Asokan inscriptions belong to this category Others are votive records of the followers of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Saivism, etc., who put up pillars, tablets, temples or images as marks of devotion. Still other types eulogise the attributes and achievements of kings and conquerors, and never speak of their defeats or weaknesses. To this category belongs the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta. Finally, we have many donative records which refer specially to gifts of money, cattle, land, etc., mainly for religious purposes, made not only by kings and princes but also by artisans and merchants.

Inscriptions recording land grants, made mainly by chiefs and princes, are very important for the study of the land system and administration in ancient India. These were mostly engraved on copper plates They record the grants of lands, revenues and villages made to monks, priests, temples, monasteries, vassals and officials. They were written in all languages, such as Prakrit, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu.

Literary Sources

Although the ancient Indians knew writing as early as 2500 B.C., our most ancient manuscripts are not older than the fourth century A.D., and have been found in Central Asia. In India they were written on birch bark and palm leaves, but in Central Asia, where the Prakrit language had spread from India, manuscripts were also written on sheep leather and wooden tablets.

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These writings are called inscriptions, but they are as good as manuscripts. When printing was not known, manuscripts were valued immensely. Although old Sanskrit manuscripts are found all over the country, they mostly belong to south India, Kashmir and Nepal. At present inscriptions are mostly preserved in museums, and manuscripts in libraries. Most ancient books contain religious themes. The religious literature of the Hindus includes the Vedas, the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the Puranas, etc. They throw welcome light on the social and cultural conditions of ancient times but it is difficult to make use of them in the context of time and place. The *Rig Veda* may be assigned to *circa* 1500-1000 B.C., but the collections of the *Atharva Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads belong roughly to 1000-500 B.C. Almost every Vedic text contains interpolations, which generally appear at its beginning or end but are not rare in its middle. The *Rig Veda* mainly contains prayers, while the later Vedic texts mainly comprise not only prayers but also rituals, magic and mythological stories. However, the Upanishads contain philosophical speculations.

The two epics and the major Puranas seem to have been finally compiled by *circa* A.D. 400. Of the epics the *Mahabharata* is older in age and possibly reflects the state of affairs from the 10th century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. Originally it consisted of 8800 verses and was called *Jaya Samhita* or the collection dealing with victory. These were raised to 24000 and came to be known as *Bharata*, named after one of the earliest Vedic tribes. The final compilation brought the verses to 100,000 which came to be known as the *Mahabharata* or the *Satasahasri Samhita*. It contains narrative, descriptive and didactic material. The main narrative which relates to the Kaurava-Pandava conflict may belong to later Vedic times, the descriptive portion might be used for post-Vedic times, and the didactic portion generally for post-Maurya and Gupta times. Similarly, the *Ramayana* originally consisted of 12000 verses, which were later raised to 24000. This epic has also its didactic portions which were added later. As a whole the text seems to have been composed later than the *Mahabharata*.

In post-Vedic times we have a large corpus of ritual literature. Big public sacrifices meant for princes and men of substance belonging to the three higher varnas are laid down in the Srautasutras, which provide for several pompous royal coronation ceremonies. Similarly domestic rituals connected with birth, naming, sacred thread investiture, marriage, funerals, etc., are laid down in the Grihyasutras. Both the Srautasutras and the Grihyasutras belong to *circa* 600-300 B.C. Mention may also be made of the Sulvasutras, which prescribe various kinds of measurements for the construction of sacrificial altars. They mark the beginnings of geometry and mathematics.

The religious books of the Jainas and the Buddhists refer to historical persons and incidents. The earliest Buddhist texts were written in the Pali language, which was spoken in Magadha or south Bihar. They were finally compiled in the second century B.C. in Sri Lanka, but the canonical portions reflect the state of affairs in the age of the Buddha in India. They tell us not only about the life of the Buddha but about some of his royal contemporaries who ruled over Magadha in north Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. The most important and interesting portion of the non-canonical portion is provided by the stories of the previous births of Gautama Buddha. It was believed that before he was finally born as Gautama, the Buddha passed through more than 550 births, in many cases in the form of animals. Each birth story is called a *Jataka* which is a folk tale. These Jatakas throw invaluable light on social and economic conditions ranging from the fifth to the second century B.C. They also make incidental references to political events in the age of the Buddha.

The Jaina texts were written in Prakrit and

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were finally compiled in the sixth century A.D in Valabhi in Gujarat They however contain many passages which help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the age of Mahavira The Jaina texts refer repeatedly to trade and traders.

We have also a large body of secular literature. To this class belong the law-books called the Dharmasutras and Smritis, which together with their commentaries are called Dharmasastras The Dharmasutras were compiled in 500-200 B.C , and the principal Smritis were codified in the first six centuries of the Christian era They lay down the duties for different varnas as well as for kings and their officials. They prescribe the rules according to which property is to be held, sold and inherited. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of theft, assault, murder, adultery, etc

An important law-book is the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya The text is divided into fifteen books, of which Books II and III may be regarded as of an earlier date They seem to have been the work of different hands. This text was put in its final form in the beginning of the Christian era, but its earliest portions reflect the state of society and economy in the age of the Mauryas It provides rich material for the study of ancient Indian polity and economy.

We also possess the works of Bhasa, Kalidasa, and Banabhatta. Apart from their literary value, they mirror the conditions of the times to which these writers belonged The works of Kalidasa comprise *kavyas* and dramas, the most famous of which is the *Abhijnanasakuntalam*. Besides being great creative compositions, they provide us with glimpses of the social and cultural life of northern and central India in the age of the Guptas

In addition to Sanskrit sources we have some of the earliest Tamil texts found in the corpus of the *Sangam* literature. This was produced over a period of three to four centuries by poets who assembled in colleges patronised by kings. Since such a literary assembly was called *sangam*, the whole literature is known as the *Sangam* literature The compilation of the corpus is attributed to the first four Christian centuries, although final compilations may have been completed by the sixth century. The *Sangam* literature is a very major source of our information for the social, economic and political life of the people living in deltaic Tamil Nadu in the early Christian centuries What it says about trade and commerce is attested by foreign accounts and archaeological finds.

Foreign Accounts

Indigenous literature can be supplemented by foreign accounts. To India came the Greek, Roman and Chinese visitors, either as travellers or religious converts, and they left behind accounts of the things that they saw It is remarkable that Alexander's invasion finds no mention in Indian sources, and it is entirely on the basis of the Greek sources that we have to reconstruct the history of his Indian exploits.

The Greek visitors mention Sandrokottas, a contemporary of Alexander the Great who invaded India in 324 B C. Prince Sandrokottas is identified with Chandragupta Maurya, whose date of accession is fixed at 322 B C This identification has served as the sheet-anchor in ancient Indian chronology The *Indika* of Megasthenes, who came to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, has been preserved only in fragments quoted by subsequent classical writers. These fragments, when read together, furnish valuable information not only about the system of Maurya administration but also about social classes and economic activities in the Maurya period. The *Indika* is not free from credulity and exaggerations, but this is true of many other ancient accounts.

Greek and Roman accounts of the first and second centuries A.D mention many Indian ports and enumerate items of trade between India and the Roman empire. The *Periplus of*

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the Erythrean Sea and Ptolemy's *Geography*, both written in Greek, provide valuable data for the study of ancient geography and commerce. The date ascribed to the first ranges between A.D. 80 and 115, while the second is attributed to about A.D. 150. Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, which belongs to the first century A D. was written in Latin, and tells us about trade between India and Italy.

Of the Chinese travellers mention may be made of Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang Both of them were Buddhists, and came to this country to visit the Buddhist shrines and to study Buddhism. The first came in the beginning of the fifth century A.D., and the second in the second quarter of the seventh century A.D. Fa-hsien describes the social, religious and economic conditions of India in the age of the Guptas, and Hsuan Tsang presents a similar account of India in the age of Harsha.

Historical Sense

Ancient Indians are charged with the lack of historical sense. It is obvious that they did not write history in the manner it is done now, nor did they write history in the way the Greeks did We have a sort of history in the Puranas, which though encyclopaedic in contents, provide dynastic history up to the beginning of the Gupta rule. Statements about events are made in future tense, although they were written much after the events had happened. The authors of the Puranas were not unaware of the idea of change, which is the essence of history. The Puranas speak of four ages called *krita, treta, dvapara* and *kali*. Each succeeding age is depicted as worse than the preceding, and as one age slides into the other moral values and social institutions suffer degeneration. The idea of time, which is another vital element in history, is found in inscriptions. They specify the years during the reign of a king in which important events take place Several eras, according to which events were recorded, were started in ancient India. The Vikrama Samvat began in 58 B.C., the Saka Samvat in A.D 78, and the Gupta era in A D 319. Inscriptions record events in the context of time and place, and the Puranas and biographical works discuss the causes and effects of an event. All these are indispensable to historical reconstruction, but they are not found in any systematic form in the Puranas

Indians display considerable historical sense in biographical writings which started with the composition of the *Harshacharita* by Banabhatta in the seventh century. It is a semi-biographical work written in ornate style, which became the despair of later imitators It describes the early career of Harshavardhana Although full of exaggerations, it gives an excellent idea of the court life under Harsha and the social and religious life in his age. Later several other *charitas* or biographies were written Sandhyakara Nandi's *Ramacharita* narrates the story of conflict between the Kaivarta peasants and the Pala prince Ramapala, resulting in the latter's victory. Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacharita* recounts the achievements of his patron, Vikramaditya VI (1076-1127), the Chalukya king of Kalyan Even the biographies (*charita*) of some merchants of Gujarat were written in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries A.D But the best example of the earliest historical writing is provided by the *Rajatarangini* or 'The Stream of Kings' written by Kalhana in the twelfth century It is a string of biographies of the kings of Kashmir, and can be considered to be the first work which possesses several traits of history as it is understood in our times.

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EXERCISES

1. Indicate the sources of ancient Indian history
2. What is meant by archaeology?
3. Why are the foreign accounts of India useful?
4. Mention the languages which were in use in ancient India.
5. "Early Indians lacked historical sense." Discuss

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CHAPTER 3

The Geographical Setting

The history of India cannot be understood without some knowledge of its geography. The Indian subcontinent is as large in area as Europe without Russia. Its total area is 4,202,500 square kilometres. The subcontinent is divided into three countries—India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. India has 650,000,000 people, Pakistan 50,000,000 and Bangladesh 75,000,000. India comprises twenty-two States and nine Union Territories. Some of the States are larger than many European countries. For instance, Bihar is as large in area as England, and Madhya Pradesh is larger than several European countries.

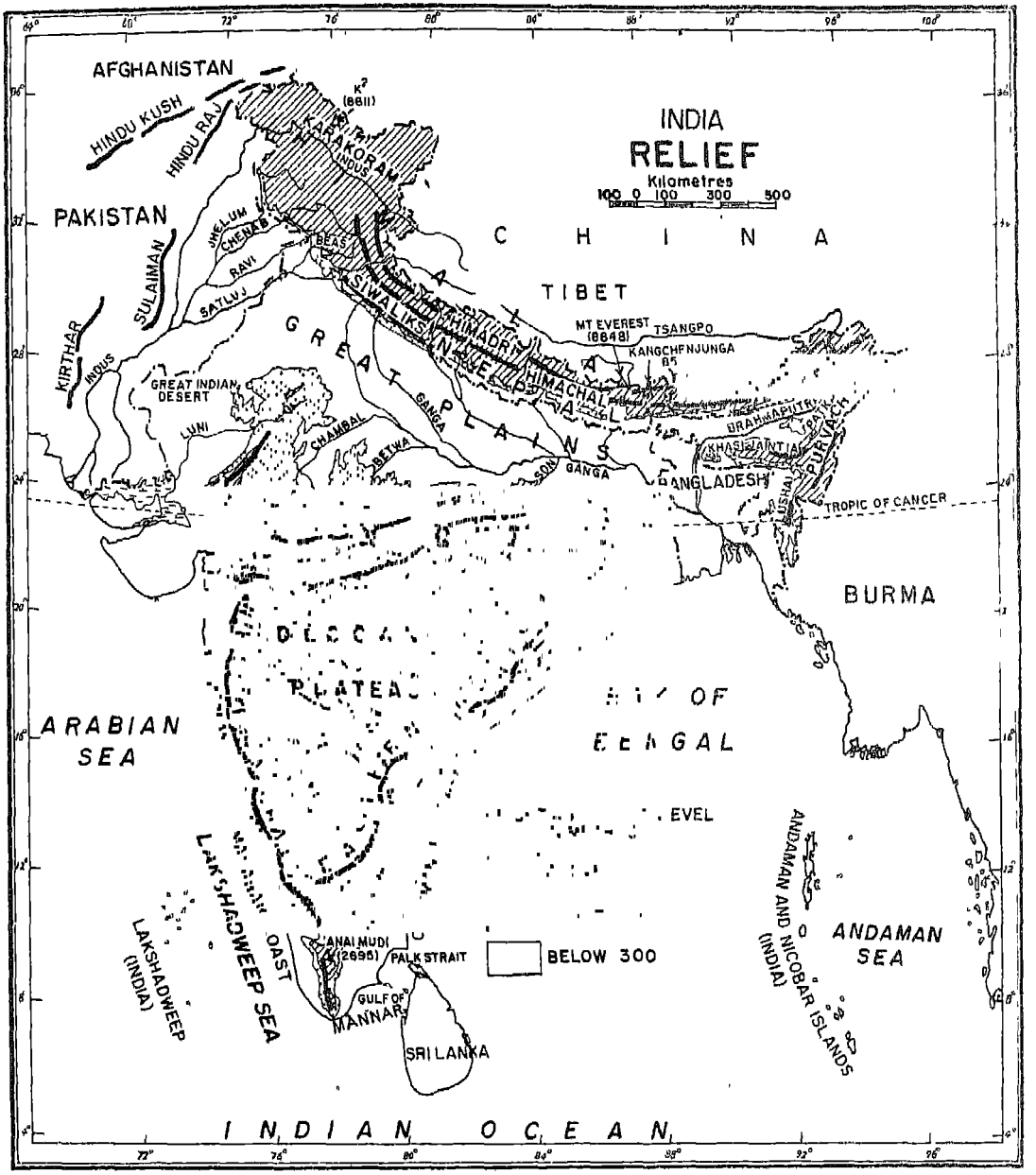
The Indian subcontinent is a well-defined geographical unit, mostly situated in the tropical zone. It is bounded by the Himalayas on the north and seas on the other three sides. The Himalayas protect the country against the cold arctic winds blowing from Siberia through Central Asia. This keeps the climate of northern India fairly warm throughout the year. Since the cold is not so severe in the plains, people do not need heavy clothing and can live in the open for longer periods. Secondly, the Himalayas are high enough to shield the country against invasions from the north This was specially true in pre-industrial times when communications were very difficult. However, on the north-west, the Sulaiman mountain ranges which are in southward continuation with the Himalayas, could be crossed through the Khyber and Gomal passes. The Sulaiman ranges are joined southward in Baluchistan by the Kirthar ranges which could be crossed through the Bolan pass. Through these passes two-way traffic between India and Central Asia has been going on from prehistoric times. Various peoples from Iran, Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia came to India as invaders and immigrants and *vice versa* Even the Hindukush, the westward extension of the Himalayan system, did not form an insuperable barrier between the Indus system and the Oxus system. The passes facilitated trade and cultural contacts between India on the one hand and Central Asia and West Asia on the other.

Nestled in the Himalayas are the valleys of Kashmir and Nepal. Surrounded on all sides by high mountains, the valley of Kashmir developed its own way of life. But it could be reached through several passes. Its winter compelled some of its people to go to the plains and its summer attracted the shepherds of the plains. Economic and cultural interaction between the plains and the valley was continuous The Pamir plateau did not prevent it from becoming a transmitting centre of Buddhism for the adjacent areas of Central Asia. The valley of Nepal, smaller in size, is accessible to the people of the Gangetic plains through a number of passes. Like Kashmir it also became a centre for cultivation of Sanskrit. Both the valleys became the repositories of the largest number of Sanskrit manuscripts.

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 1 *India—Physical Features*

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The foothills of the Himalayas lent themselves to easier clearance than the jungles on the alluvial soil of the plains It was easy to cross rivers in these areas because of their smaller width, and hence the earliest routes skirted along the foothills of the Himalayas from the west to the east and *vice versa* Naturally the earliest agricultural settlements and states were founded in the foothills in the sixth century B.C., and trade routes followed the *terai* route.

The heart of historical India is formed by its important rivers which are swollen by the tropical monsoon rains These consist of the plains of the Indus in the north-west, the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* in the middle, the middle Gangetic basin in the east and the Brahmaputra basin in the extreme east. As we proceed from the plains of the Indus system through the Gangetic basin to the Brahmaputra basin we find the annual rainfall gradually increasing from 25 cm to over 250 cm The Indus vegetation based on 25 to 37 cm rainfall and possibly the western Gangetic vegetation based on 37 to 60 cm rainfall could be cleared with stone and copper implements and made fit for cultivation, but this was not possible in the case of the middle Gangetic vegetation based on 60 to 125 cm rainfall, and certainly not in the case of the lower Gangetic and Brahmaputra vegetation based on 125 to 250 cm rainfall. The thickly forested areas, which also contained hard soil, could be cleared only with the help of the iron implements which appeared at a much later stage. Therefore the natural resources of the western area were utilized first, and large-scale human settlements generally spread from west to east.

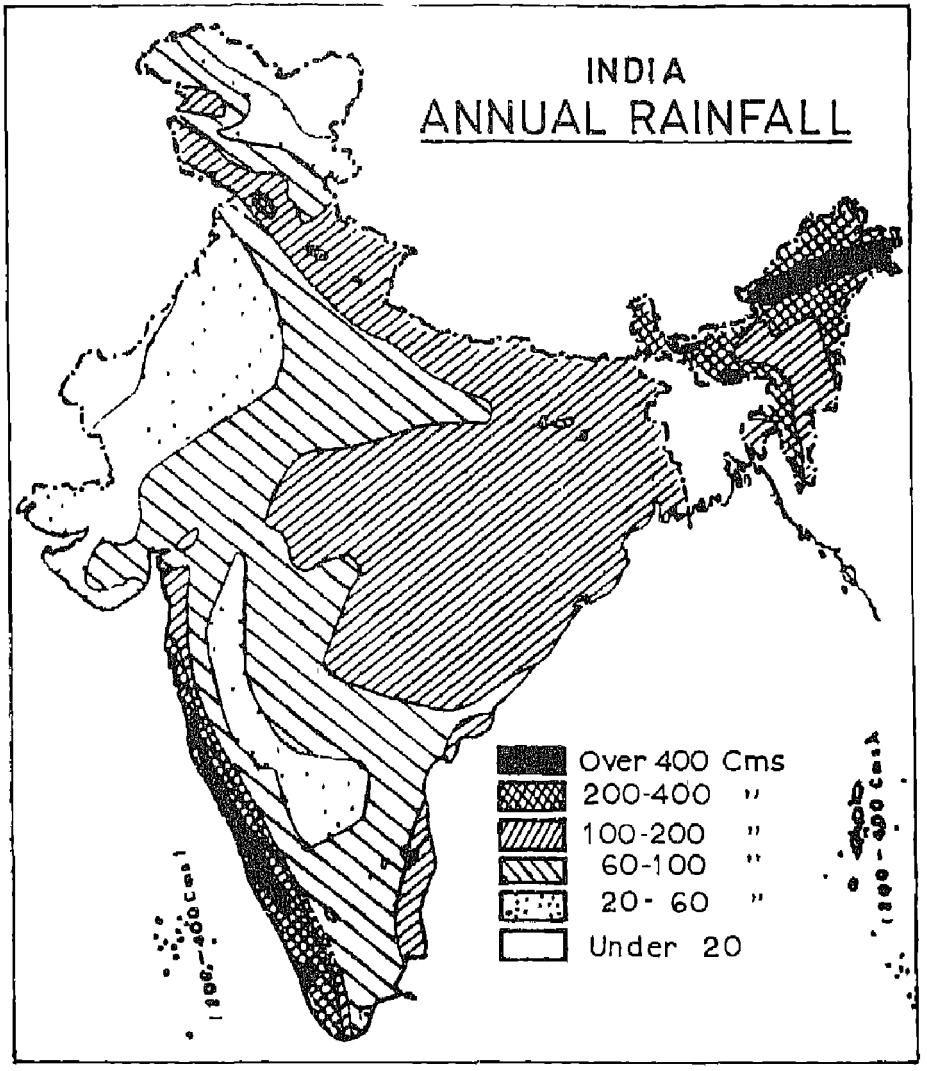
Once brought under cultivation, the Indus-Gangetic plains produced rich crops and supported successive cultures. The Indus and the western Gangetic plains mainly produced wheat and barley, while the middle and lower Gangetic plains mainly produced rice, which also became the staple diet in Gujarat and the south of the Vindhyas. The Harappan culture originated and flourished in the Indus valley, the Vedic culture originated in the Panjab and flourished in the western Gangetic basin; the post-Vedic culture, mainly based on the use of iron, thrived in the middle Gangetic basin. The lower Gangetic valley and north Bengal first came into limelight in the age of the Guptas, and, finally, the Brahmaputra valley covering Assam gained importance in early medieval times. Important powers fought for the possession of these plains and valleys. Especially the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* proved to be the most coveted and contested area.

The rivers served as arteries of commerce and communication. In ancient times it was difficult to make roads, and so men and material were moved by boat. The river routes therefore helped military and commercial transport Evidently the stone pillars made by Asoka were carried to different parts of the country by boat The importance of rivers for communication continued till the days of the East India Company. Further, the rivers inundated the neighbouring areas and made them fertile; they also supplied water to the canals cut from them. However, they caused heavy floods which periodically destroyed towns and villages in the northern plains, and so many ancient buildings have been washed away beyond recovery. Nevertheless, important towns and capitals such as Hastinapur, Prayag, Varanasi, Pataliputra, and others, were situated on the banks of the rivers In modern times urban sites are selected on the railway and road junctions or in the industrial or mining zones But in pre-industrial times towns were mostly situated on river banks.

Above all, the rivers provided political and cultural boundaries; these were also formed by mountain barriers. Thus in the eastern part of the Indian peninsula the area known as Kalinga, covering the coastal belt of Orissa, was situated between the Mahanadi on the north and the Godavari on the south. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh mostly lay between the Godavari on

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve miles measured from the appropriate base line

Figure 2 *India—Annual Rainfall*

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the north and the Krishna on the south. The deltaic plains formed by these two rivers at their mouths shot into historical importance by the beginning of the Christian era when they became studded with towns and ports under the Satavahanas and their successors. Finally, Tamil Nadu was situated between the Krishna on the north and the Kaveri on the south. The Kaveri delta extended in the south roughly to the Vaigai river, and in the north to the South Pennar river. It formed a distinct geographical zone and became the seat of the Chola power a little before the beginning of the Christian era. This area was different from north Tamil Nadu, which consisted of uplands and came into prominence under the Pallavas in the fourth-sixth centuries A D. The eastern part of the peninsula is bounded by the Coromandal coast. Although the coastline is flanked by the Eastern Ghats or the steps, the Ghats are not very high and have several openings caused by the eastward flow of the rivers into the Bay of Bengal Thus communication between the eastern coast on the one hand and the other parts of Andhra and Tamil Nadu on the other was not difficult in ancient times. The port cities of Arikamedu (modern name), Mahabalipuram and Kaveripattanam were situated on the Coromandal coast.

In the western part of the peninsula we do not have such distinct regional units But we can locate Maharashtra between the Tapti (or Damanganga) on the north and the Bhima on the south. The area covered by Karnataka seems to have been situated between the Bhima and the upper regions of the Krishna on the north and the Tungabhadra on the south. For a long time the Tungabhadra provided a natural [illegible] powers lying to [illegible] the Chalukyas of [illegible] found it difficult to extend their sway to the south of the Tungabhadra, so also the Pallavas and Cholas found it difficult to extend their authority to its north The coastal area in the extreme south-west of the peninsula was covered by the modern State of Kerala. The sea-coast along the western part of the peninsula is called the Malabar coast. Although the coast came to have several ports and small kingdoms, communication between this coast and the adjoining areas of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala was rendered difficult by the high Western Ghats which do not have too many passes

In between the Indus and the Gangetic systems in the north and the Vindhya mountains on the south lies a vast stretch of land, which is divided into two units by the Aravalli mountains. The area west of the Aravalli is covered by the Thar desert, although a part of Rajasthan also lies in this region The vast expanse of the desert made human settlements impossible in ancient times. However, a few fertile oases scattered in the desert were settled, and from early times it has been possible to cross the desert by means of camels. The south-eastern portion of Rajasthan has been a comparatively fertile area since ancient times, and because of the existence of the Khetri copper mines in this region human settlements arose in this area in the chalcolithic period.

Rajasthan shades off into the fertile plains of Gujarat, which are drained by the waters of the Narmada, the Tapti, the Mahi and the Sabarmati. Situated at the end of the north-western portion of the Deccan plateau, Gujarat includes the less rainy region of Kathiawar peninsula. The coastal area of this State is fairly indented allowing the existence of several harbours. Therefore from ancient times Gujarat has been famous for its coastal and foreign trade, and its people have proved to be enterprising traders.

South of the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*, and bounded by the Chambal river on the west, the Son river on the east, and the Vindhya mountains and the Narmada river on the south, lies the State of Madhya Pradesh. Its northern part

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consists of fertile plains. At present Madhya Pradesh is the largest State in the country, and can be broadly divided into two parts, eastern and western. The eastern part, mostly covered by the Vindhyas, did not become important historically till Gupta times in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. But western Madhya Pradesh includes Malwa, which has been the scene of historical activities from the sixth century B.C. onwards. Malwa served as an important hinterland for the Gujarat ports, and many wars were fought between the Deccan and the northern powers for the possession of Malwa and Gujarat. The Sakas and the Satavahanas fought for the possession of this key area in the first and second centuries A.D., and the Marathas and the Rajputs in the eighteenth century.

Each one of the areas bounded by rivers, and in some cases by mountains, and sometimes identical with deltas and plateaus, constituted a political and administrative unit in which different ruling dynasties rose and fell. On account of difficult communications in a vast country and the defensibility of the natural frontiers, it was not easy for the ruling class of one region to establish its rule over all the other regions. In course of time every region grew into a distinct cultural unit having its own style of life and language. But in northern and western India most languages were derived from the same Indo-Aryan stock, and hence held many elements in common. What is further important, almost all over the country Sanskrit came to be cultivated and understood.

The Vindhya mountains cut right across the country from west to east and form the boundary between north and south India. The speakers of the Dravidian languages lived south of the Vindhyas, and of the Aryan languages north of it. In between lived primitive peoples in the Vindhya regions where they are still found. The coastal areas along the Eastern and Western Ghats attracted settlers and traders, and the south carried on a flourishing foreign trade. The Vindhyas do not constitute insurmountable barriers. In ancient times in spite of the difficulties of communication people moved from north to south, and *vice versa*. This led to a give-and-take in culture and language. Again and again the northern powers moved down to the south, and the southern rulers moved up to the north. So also did the traders, missionaries and cultural leaders, particularly the brahmanas. The two-way traffic remained constant and helped the development of a composite culture.

Although most regions had well-defined natural frontiers, not every region possessed the resources necessary to keep life going. Therefore from prehistoric times the common need for metals and other resources had produced a network of interconnections between the different regions of the country.

The utilization of the natural resources of the country has an important bearing on its history. Until human settlements developed on a large scale the Indian plains abounded in thickly forested areas, which provided game and supplied forage, fuel and timber. In early times, when burnt bricks were not much in use, timber houses and palisades were constructed. They have been found in Pataliputra, the first important capital of India. For construction and tool-making all kinds of stones including sandstone are available in the country. The earliest human settlements are naturally found in India in the hilly areas and in those river valleys which are situated between the hills. In historical times there were more temples and sculptures made of stone in the Deccan and south India than in the plains of northern India.

The country abounds in copper mines. The richest copper mines are found in the Chotanagpur plateau, particularly in the district of Singhbhum. The copper belt is about 130 km long and shows many signs of ancient workings. The earliest people who used copper implements in Bihar exploited the copper mines of Singhbhum and Hazaribagh, and many copper tools have

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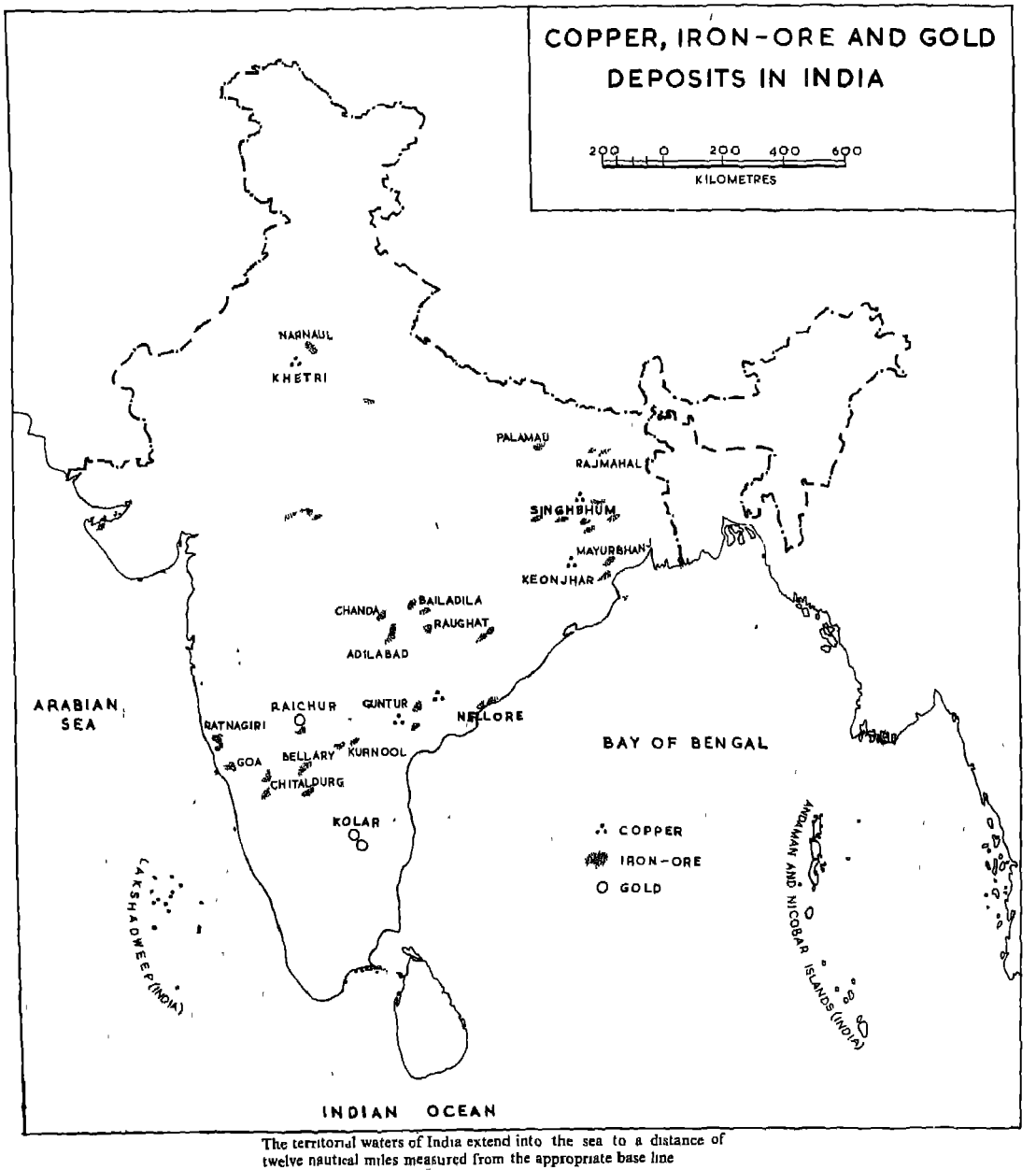


Figure 3 *India—Copper, Iron-ore and Gold Deposits*

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been discovered in south Bihar and parts of Madhya Pradesh. Rich copper deposits are also found in the Khetri mines in Rajasthan. These were tapped by both pre-Vedic and Vedic people, who lived in Pakistan, Rajasthan, Gujarat and the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* Numerous copper celts have been found in the Khetri zone, and they seem to belong to a period anterior to *circa* 1000 B C. Since copper was the first metal to be used, it is invested with great purity by the Hindus, and copper utensils are used in religious rituals.

The country today produces no tin, this was scarce even in ancient times. There is reason to believe that it was found in Rajasthan and Bihar, but its deposits have been used up. Since bronze can be made only by mixing tin with copper, we do not find many bronze objects in prehistoric times. The Harappans possibly procured some tin from Rajasthan, but their main supply came from Afghanistan, and even this was limited. Hence although the Harappa people used bronze tools, their number compared with those found in Western Asia, Egypt and Crete is very small, and their tools carry a smaller percentage of tin Therefore India had no proper Bronze Age, that is, an age in which tools and implements were mostly made of bronze. From the early centuries of the Christian era India developed intimate connections with Burma and the Malaya Peninsula which possessed plenty of tin. This made possible the use of bronze on a large scale, especially for the statues of the gods in south India. Tin for the Bihar bronzes of Pala times was possibly obtained from Gaya, Hazaribagh and Ranchi, for in Hazaribagh tin ores were smelted till the middle of the last century.

India has been rich in iron ores, which are found particularly in south Bihar, eastern Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka Once the art of smelting, using bellows (and making steel) was learnt, iron could be used for war, and more usefully, for the clearance of jungles and for deep and regular cultivation. The formation of the first empire in Magadha in the sixth to fourth centuries B C owed much to the availability of iron just south of this region. The large-scale use of iron made Avanti, with its capital at Ujjain, an important kingdom in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. The Satavahanas and the other powers which arose south of the Vindhyas may have utilized the iron ores of Andhra and Karnataka.

Andhra possesses resources in lead, which explains the large numbers of lead coins in the kingdom of the Satavahanas, who ruled over Andhra and Maharashtra in the first two centuries of the Christian era

The earliest coins, called the punch-marked coins, were made largely of silver, although this metal is rarely found in the country However, silver mines existed in early times in the Kharagpur hills in the district of Monghyr, and they are mentioned as late as the time of Akbar. This accounts for the use of the white metal in the earliest punch-marked coins found in Bihar.

Gold is found in the Kolar goldfields of Karnataka. A very early trace of gold has been found at a New Stone Age site of around 1800 B.C in Karnataka. We have no indication of its exploitation till the beginning of the second century A.D Kolar is considered to be the earliest capital of the Gangas of south Karnataka. Much of the gold used in early times was obtained from Central Asia and the Roman empire Gold coins therefore came into regular use in the first five centuries of the Christian era. As the local resources were not sufficient to maintain the gold currency over a long spell of time, once the supply from outside stopped, gold coins became rare.

In ancient times India also produced a variety of precious stones, including pearls, especially in central India, Orissa and south India. Precious stones formed an important item of trade in the articles which were eagerly sought for by the Romans in the early centuries of the Christian era.

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EXERCISES

1. Describe the principal geographical regions of India.
2. Give an account of the main river systems of India
3. Mention the important metals found in India. To what use were they put in ancient times?

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CHAPTER 4

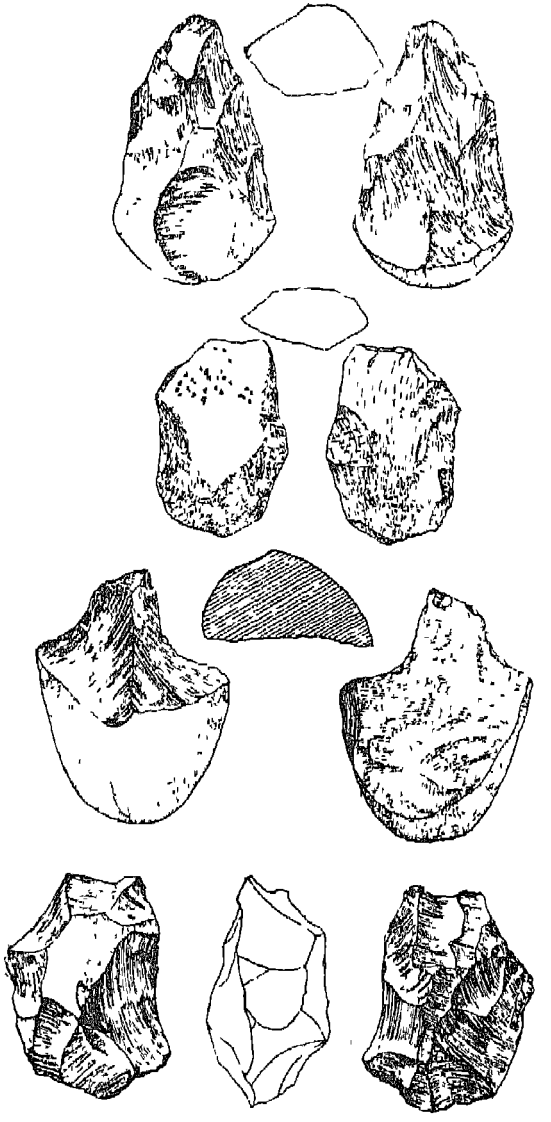
The Stone Age

The Old Stone Age

Man has been living in India roughly from 500,000 B.C He used tools of unpolished, undressed, rough stones, which have been found in south India and in the Soan or Sohan river valley in Pakistan. Palaeolithic sites have also been discovered in Kashmir The chips of stone were pebbles used for hunting, cutting and other purposes In this period man barely managed to gather his food and lived on hunting. He had no knowledge of cultivation and house building This phase generally continued till 8000 B C.

Palaeolithic tools, which could be as old as 100,000 B C., have been found in the Chotanagpur plateau Such tools belonging to 25,000 B C —10,000 B.C have been found in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh about 55 km from Kurnool. In association with them bone implements and animal remains have also been discovered Animal remains found in the Belan valley in Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh show that goats, sheep and cattle were domesticated around 25,000 B.C. However in the earliest Palaeolithic phase man lived on hunting and food gathering The Puranas speak of people who lived on roots and fruits; some of these people have been living in the old way in the hills and caves till modern times.

The Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic culture of India developed in the Pleistocene period or the Ice Age, which is a geological period. The



4.1 *Palaeolithic Tools. Hand-axes, Choppers and Cleavers*

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Pleistocene period comes immediately before the geological period called Holocene or recent period, in which we live and which began about 10,000 years ago. We do not know when the Pleistocene period exactly began, but human remains associated with stone tools have been dated in east Africa as early as 3.5 million years ago In India the first human occupation, as suggested by stone tools, is not earlier than the Middle Pleistocene, which perhaps began about 500,000 years ago In the Pleistocene period ice sheets covered a great portion of the earth's surface, particularly in the higher altitudes and their peripheries. But the tropical regions, excepting the mountains, were free from ice. On the other hand they underwent a period of great rainfall.

Phases in the Palaeolithic Age

The Old Stone or the Palaeolithic Age in India is divided into three phases according to the nature of the stone tools used by the people and also according to the nature of change in the climate. The first phase is called Early or Lower Palaeolithic, the second, Middle Palaeolithic, and the third, Upper Palaeolithic. The Lower Palaeolithic or the Early Old Stone Age covers the greater part of the Ice Age. Its characteristic feature is the use of hand-axes and cleavers. The axes found in India are more or less similar to those of Western Asia, Europe and Africa. Stone tools were uesd mainly for chopping. The Early Old Stone Age sites are found in the valley of river Soan in Panjab, now in Pakistan. Lower Palaeolithic tools have also been found in the Belan valley in Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh. The Belan sites contain caves and rockshelters which would have served as seasonal camps for human beings. Hand-axes have been found in a deposit of the time of the second Himalayan glaciation. In this period climate became less humid.

The Middle Old Stone Age or Middle Palaeolithic industries are all based upon flakes. These flakes are found in different parts of India and show regional variations. The principal tools are varieties of scrapers made of flakes. We also find a large number of borers and blade-like tools The Middle Old Stone Age sites in India are found in the Soan Valley Here we notice a crude pebble industry in strata contemporary with the third Himalayan glaciation. The artifacts of this age are also found at several places on the river Narmada, and also at several places south of the Tungabhadra river.

The Upper Palaeolithic phase was less humid. It coincided with the last phase of the Ice Age when climate became comparatively warm In the world context it is known for the appearance of new flint industries and of men of the modern type. In India we notice the use of blades and burins which have been found in Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bhopal and Chotanagpur plateau. Caves and rockshelters for use by human beings in the Upper Palaeolithic phase have been discovered at Bhimbetka, 40 kms south of Bhopal Hand-axes and cleavers, blades, scrapers and a few burins have been found there. An Upper Palaeolithic assemblage, characterised by massive flakes, blades, burins and scrapers has also been found in the upper levels of the Gujarat dunes.

It is difficult to estimate the beginnings of the Palaeolithic Age. It is said that in the world context human remains associated with stone tools are as old as 3 5 million years. But it seems that through several stages the modern human being (*Homo sapiens*) first appeared in the Upper Palaeolithic Age.

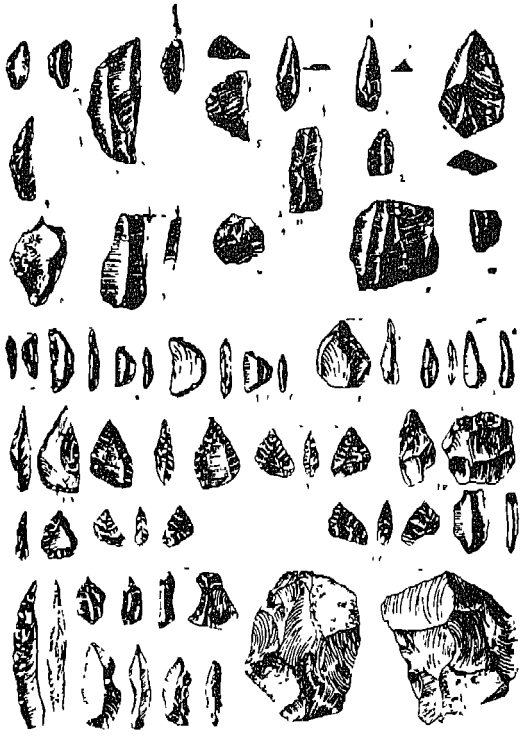
It would thus appear that the palaeolithic sites are found in practically all parts of the country except the alluvial plains of the Indus and the Ganga.

The Late Stone Age

The Upper Palaeolithic Age came to an end with the end of the Ice Age around 8000 B C, and the climate became warm and dry. Cli-

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4.2 *Mesolithic Tools from Burbhanpur (West Bengal) and Tinnevelly (Tamil Nadu)*

matic changes brought about changes in fauna and flora and made it possible for human beings to move to new areas Since then there have not been any major changes in climatic conditions. From 8000 B.C. began an intermediate stage in stone age culture, which is called the Mesolithic Age. It intervened as a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic Age and the Neolithic or New Stone Age, and is also called the Late Stone Age. In the case of India it started about 8000 B C. and continued up to about 4000 B C.

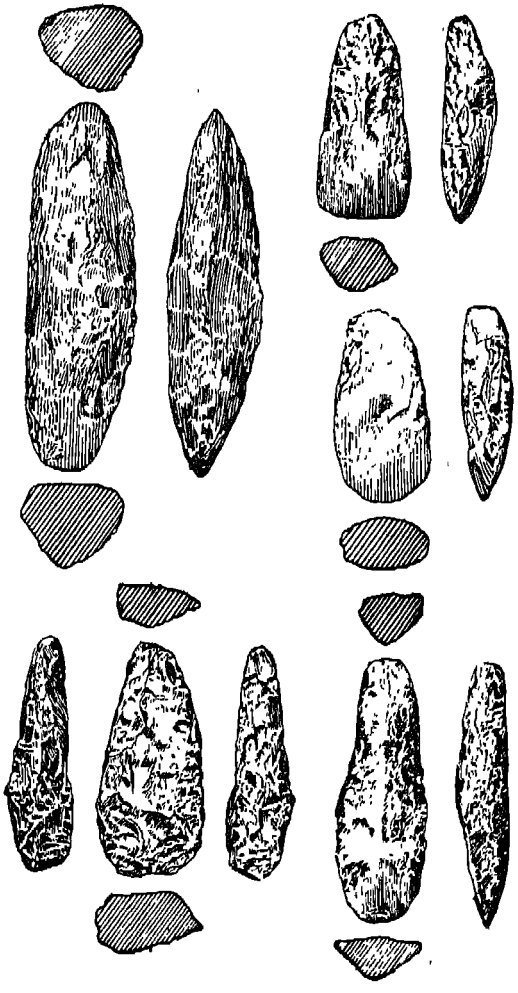
The characteristic tools of the Late Stone Age are microliths. The Late Stone Age sites are found in good numbers in Chotanagpur, central India, and also south of the river Krishna.

So far only a few finds of the Late Stone Age have been dated scientifically, but there is no doubt that these finds preceded the Neolithic Age.

It is interesting to note that on the northern spurs of the Vindhyas in the Bélan Valley all the three phases of the Palaeolithic followed by the Mesolithic and then by the Neolithic have been found in sequence.

The New Stone Age

Although in the world context the New Stone



4.3 *Neolithic Tools*

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Age began much earlier, in 7000 B.C., neolithic settlements in the Indian sub-continent are not older than 6000 B.C. Some settlements found in south India and eastern India are as late as 1000 B.C.

The people of this age used tools and implements of polished stone. They particularly used stone axes, which have been found in large numbers throughout the greater part of the country. This cutting tool was put to various uses by the people, and in ancient legends Parasurama became an important axe-wielding hero

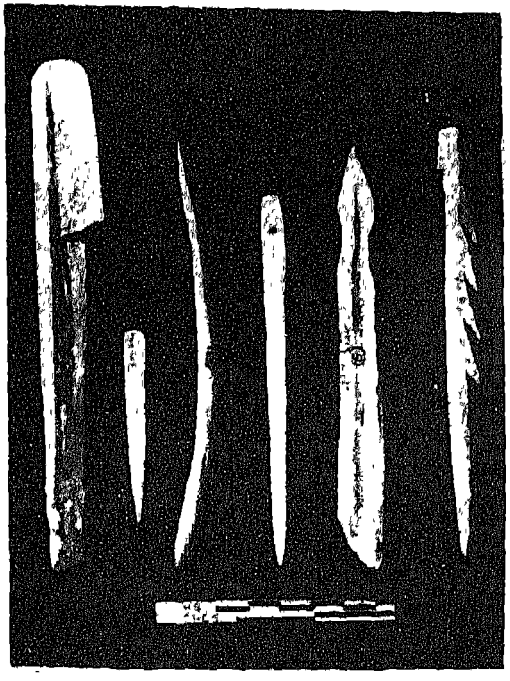
Based on the types of axes used by neolithic settlers, we notice three important areas of neolithic settlements. One area is to be found in the north in the valley of Kashmir at a place called Burzahom at a distance of about 20 km from Srinagar. The neolithic people lived there on a plateau in pits, and probably had a hunting and fishing economy. They did not seem to have been acquainted with agriculture or domestication of animals. They used not only polished tools of stone, but what is more interesting, they used numerous tools and weapons made of bone. The only other place which has yielded considerable bone implements in India is Chirand, which is 40 km west of Patna on the northern side of the Ganga. These bone implements have been found in a late neolithic setup in an area with about 100 cm rainfall. The settlement became possible because of the open land available on account of the joining together of four rivers, Ganga, Son, Gandak and Ghaghra at this place

The people of Burzahom used coarse grey pottery. It is interesting that the Burzahom domestic dogs were buried with their masters in their graves. Pit dwelling and the placing of domestic dogs in the graves of the masters do not seem to be the practice with neolithic people in any other part of India. The earliest date for Burzahom is about 2400 B.C., but the bones recovered from Chirand cannot be dated earlier than 1600 B.C. and they possibly belong to a stone-copper phase.

The second group of neolithic people lived in south India south of the Godavari river. They usually settled on the tops of granite hills or on



4.4 *Burzahom Pit Dwelling*



4.5 *Neolithic Bone Tools from Burzahom*

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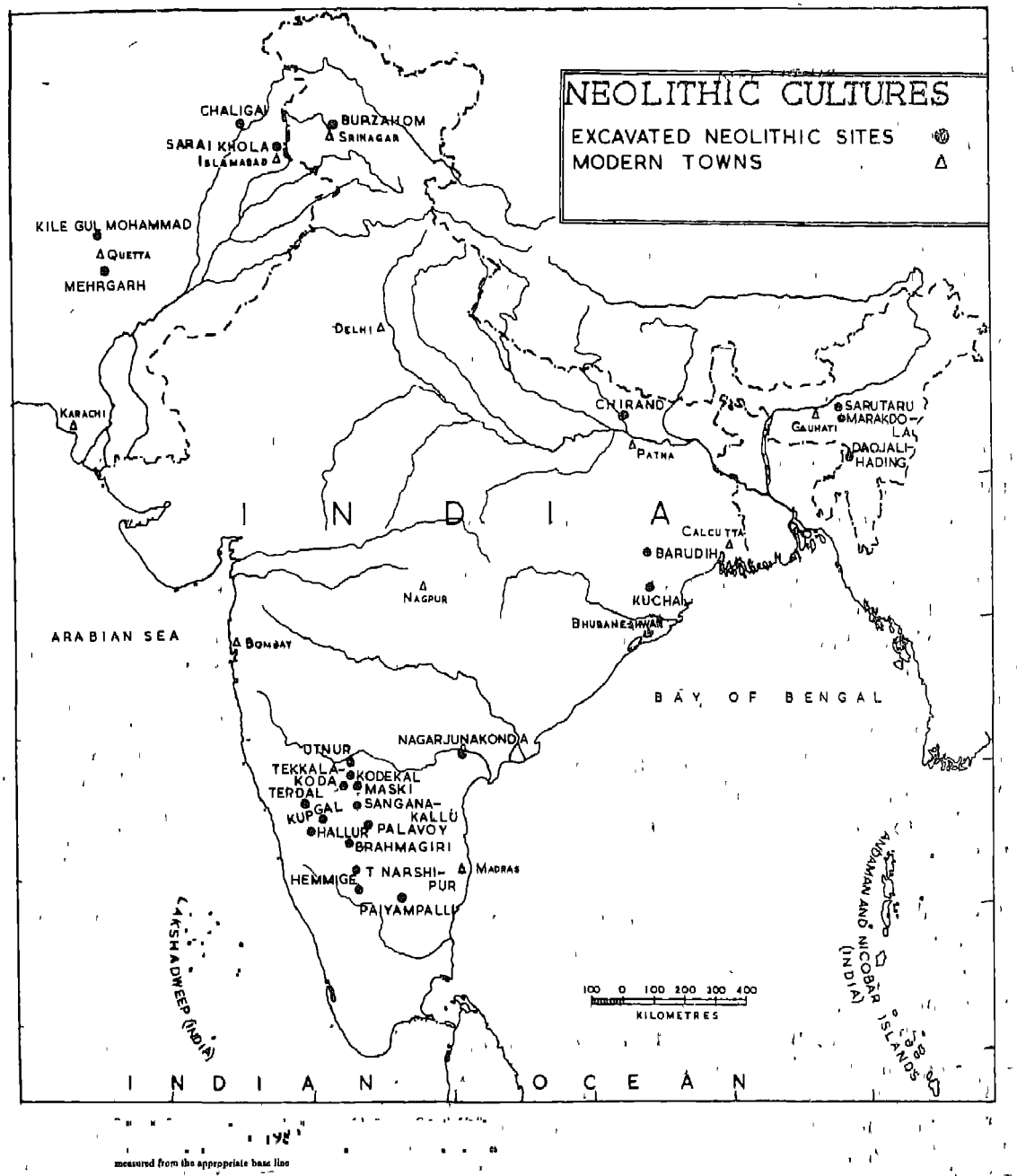


Figure 4 *Neolithic Cultures*

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plateaus near the river banks. They used stone axes and also some kind of stone blades Fire-baked earthen figurines suggest that they kept a large number of cattle. They possessed cattle, sheep and goats. They used rubbing stone querns, which shows that they were acquainted with the art of producing grains

The third area from which neolithic tools have been recovered is in the hills of Assam. Neolithic tools are also found in the Garo hills in Meghalaya on the north-eastern frontier of India. We have no means of dating them. In addition to this we also find a number of neolithic settlements on the northern spurs of the Vindhyas in Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of Uttar Pradesh. Neolithic sites in Allahabad district are noted for the cultivation of rice in the sixth millennium B.C. Those found in Baluchistan also seem to be fairly old..

Some of the important neolithic sites or those with neolithic layers that have been excavated include Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur, Kodekal, Sanganakallu, T. Narsipur and Takkalakota in Karnataka, and Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu. Piklihal and Utnur are important neolithic sites in Andhra Pradesh. The neolithic phase seems to have covered the period from about 2500 B.C. to 1000 B.C. although the earliest scientifically determined date for Utnur is 2300 B.C.

The neolithic settlers in Piklihal were cattle-herders. They domesticated cattle, sheep, goats, etc. They set up seasonal camps surrounded by cowpens made with posts and stakes. In these enclosures they accumulated cow dung. Then the entire camping ground was put to fire and cleared for camping in the next season. Both ash mounds and habitation sites have been discovered in Piklihal.

The later neolithic settlers were agriculturists, who lived in circular or rectangular houses made of mud and reed. It is held that the primitive people living in circular houses owned property in common. In any case these neolithic people led a settled life. They produced *ragi* and horsegram (*kulathi*). Their polished tools also included microlith blades.

Since in the neolithic phase several settlements came to be acquainted with the cultivation of cereals and the domestication of animals, they needed pots in which they could store their foodgrain and milk. They further needed pots for cooking and eating. Hence hand-made pottery is found in the early stage. Later they used footwheels to turn up pots.

Neolithic celts have also been found in the Orissa hill areas, and it is likely that rice cultivation and small-scale settlements began in this part of the country quite early.

The period between 9000 B.C. and 3000 B.C. saw a remarkable progress of technology in Western Asia, because the people developed the arts of cultivation, weaving, building houses, domestication of animals, etc. But the Neolithic Age in Indian subcontinent began around the sixth millennium B.C. Some of the important crops, including rice, wheat and barley, came to be cultivated in the subcontinent in this period and a few villages appeared in this part of the world. It appears that the people were now on the threshold of civilization.

The people of the Stone Age suffered from one great limitation. Since they had to depend entirely on tools and weapons made of stone, they could not found settlements far away from the hilly areas They could settle down only in the hilly river valleys. Further, even with great effort they could not produce more than what they needed for their bare subsistence.

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EXERCISES

1. How old is man in India? How did he live in the Old Stone Age?
2. Trace the various phases in the Palaeolithic Age of India.
3. What is meant by 'neoliths'? Give an account of the material life of the neolithic people in India.
4. How did the neolithic culture differ from the palaeolithic culture?

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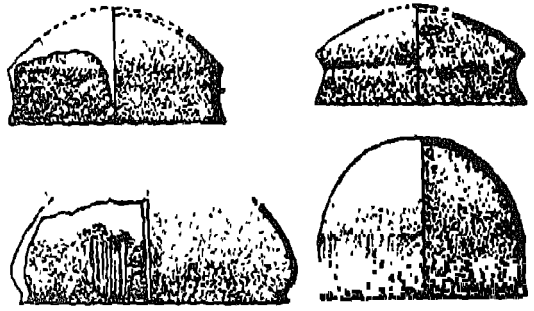
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CHAPTER 5

The Stone-Copper Phase

Chalcolithic Settlements

Towards the end of the neolithic period began the use of metals. The metal to be used first was copper, and several cultures were based on the use of stone and copper implements. Such a culture is called *chalcolithic*. The earliest settlements belonging to this phase are found in south-eastern Rajasthan, the western part of Madhya Pradesh, western Maharashtra and also in eastern India. In south-eastern Rajasthan two sites, one at Ahar and the other at Gilund, have been excavated. They lie in the dry zones of the Banas valley. In western Madhya Pradesh, in Malwa, Kayatha and Eran have been exposed. But the most extensive excavations have taken place in western Maharashtra. Several chalcolithic sites, such as Jorwe, Nevasa, Daimabad in Ahmadnagar district, Chandoli, Songaon and Inamgaon in Pune district, and Nasik have been excavated. All these Maharashtra sites were located in semi-arid areas mostly on brown-black soil which had *ber* and *babul* vegetation but fell in the riverine tracts. In addition to these we have Navdatoli situated on the Narmada. Some chalcolithic ingredients intruded into the neolithic sites in Andhra Pradesh, but copper objects are not found there. Several chalcolithic sites have been found in the Allahabad region presumably on account of their proximity to the Vindhyas. In eastern India, besides Chirand on the Ganga, mention may be made of Pandu Rajar Dhibi in Burdwan district and Mahishdal in Midnapore district in West Bengal.



5.1 *White-painted black-and-red Ware from Ahar, circa 1500 B.C.*

Chalcolithic Cultures

The people belonging to this culture used small tools and weapons made of stone in which the stone blade occupied an important position. In many places the stone blade industry flourished although stone axes continued to be used. It is obvious that such areas were not situated far from the hills, but at the same time many are found in riverine tracts. In certain settlements copper implements are found in good numbers. This seems to be the case with Ahar and Gilund, which lay more or less in the dry zones of the Banas river valley in Rajasthan. At Ahar stone axes or blades are completely absent. On the other hand axes and other objects made of copper are numerous because raw cop-

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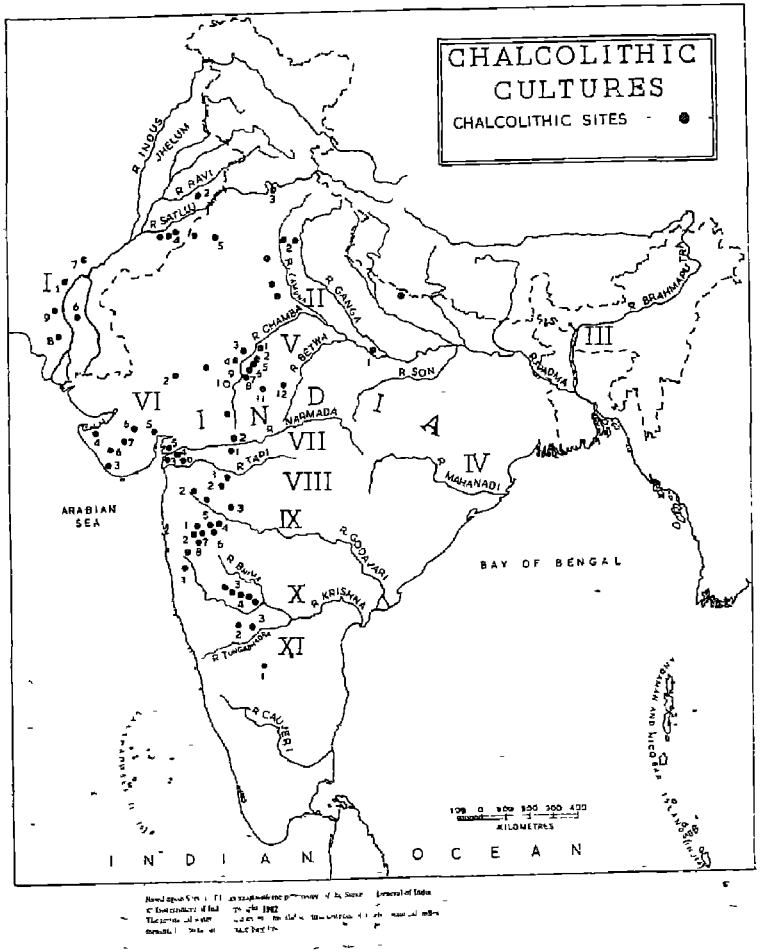


Figure 5 *Chalcolithic Cultures*

The following Chalcolithic sites are shown region-wise :

I. INDUS SYSTEM
1 Mohenjo-daro 2. Harappa 3 Ropar 4. Suratgarh
5 Hanumangarh 6 Chanhu-daro 7 Jhukar 8 Amri
9 Jhangar

II. GANGES SYSTEM
1 Kausambi 2 Alamgirpur

III. BRAHMAPUTRA SYSTEM

IV. MAHANADI SYSTEM

V. CHAMBAL SYSTEM
1 Pseva 2 Nagda 3 Paramar-Kheri
4 Tungni 5 Metwa 6 Takraoda
7. Bhilsuri 8 Maori 9. Ghata-Bilod
10 Betwa 11 Bilawali 12 Ashta

VI. RAJPUTANA-SAURASHTRA
1 Rangpur 2 Ahar 3 Prashas Patan 4. Lakhabawal
5 Lothal 6. Pithadia 7 Rojdi 8 Adkot

VII. NARMADA SYSTEM
1 Navdatoli 2 Maheshwar 3. Bhagatrav
4 Telod 5 Mehgam 6 Hasanpur

VIII. TAPI SYSTEM
1 Prakash 2 Bahal

IX. GODAVARI-PRAVARA SYSTEM
1 Jorwe 2 Nasik 3. Kopargaon 4 Nevasa
5 Daimabad

X. BHIMA SYSTEM
1 Koregaon 2 Chandoli 3 Umbraj
4 Chanegaon 5 Anachi 6 Hingni
7 Nagarhalli

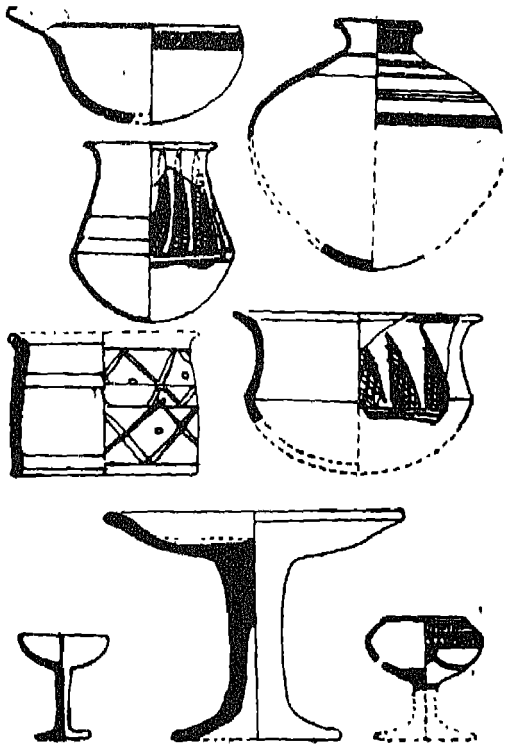
XI. KARNATAKA
1 Brahmagiri 2 Piklihal 3 Maski

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per is locally available. But in Gilund we find a stone-blade industry. Flat, rectangular copper axes are found in Jorwe and Chandoli in Maharashtra, and copper chisels at Chandoli.

The people of the stone-copper phase used different types of pottery, one of which is called black-and-red and seems to have been widely prevalent. It was thrown on wheel and occasionally painted with white lineal designs. This is true not only of settlements in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra but also of habitations found in Bihar and West Bengal. People living in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra produced channel-spouted pots, dishes-on-stand and bowls-on-stand. It would be wrong to think that all the people who used black-and-red pottery possessed the same culture. We can notice differences in their forms of pottery and implements.

The people living in the stone-copper age in south-eastern Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh and western Maharashtra domesticated animals and cultivated foodgrains. They kept cows, sheep, goats, pigs and buffaloes, and hunted deer. Remains of the camel have also been found. It is not clear whether they were acquainted with the horse. Some animal remains are identified as belonging either to the horse or donkey or wild ass. People certainly ate beef, but they did not take pork on any considerable scale. What is remarkable is that these people produced wheat and rice. In addition to these staple crops they also cultivated *bajra*. They produced several pulses such as the lentil (*masur*), black gram, green gram, and grass pea. Almost all these foodgrains have been found at Navdatoli situated on the bank of the Narmada in Maharashtra. Perhaps at no other place in India so many cereals have been discovered as a result of digging. The people of Navdatoli also produced *ber* and linseed. Cotton was produced in the black cotton soil of the Deccan, and *ragi*, *bajra* and several millets were cultivated in the lower Deccan.



5.2 *Pottery from Navdatoli, circa 1500 B C.*

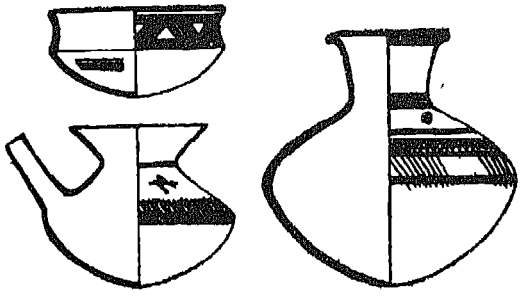
In eastern India fish hooks have been found in Bihar and West Bengal, where we also find rice. This suggests that the people belonging to the stone-copper phase in the eastern regions lived on fish and rice, which is still a popular diet in that part of the country.

The chalcolithic people were generally not acquainted with burnt bricks, which were seldom used. Occasionally their houses were made of mud bricks, but mostly these were constructed with wattle and daub, and seem to have been thatched houses. At Inamgaon, in the earlier chalcolithic phase in western Maharashtra, large mud houses with ovens, and circular pit houses, have been discovered. In the later phase (1300-1000 B.C) we have a house with five rooms, four rectangular and one circular. This would

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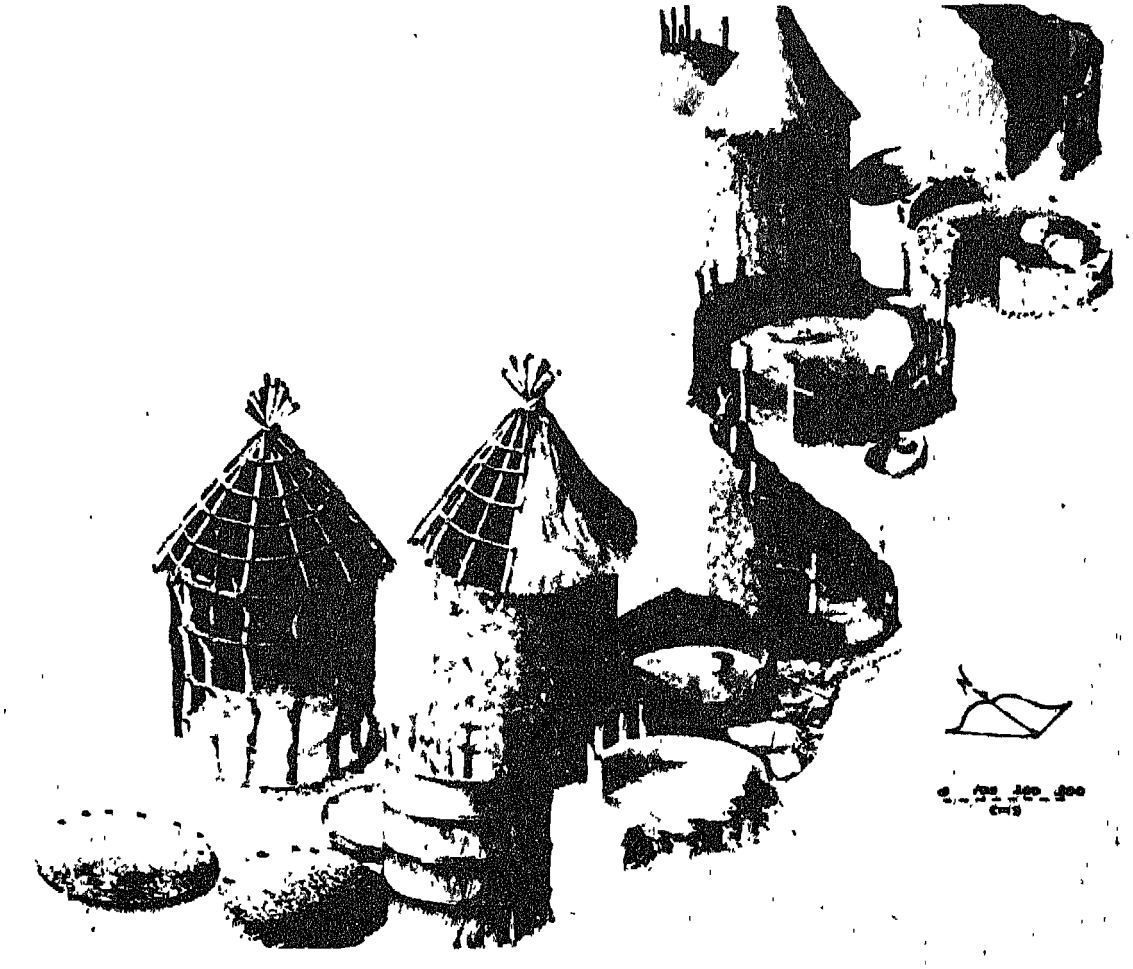
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5.3 *Painted Pottery black-on-red, Jorwe, circa 1200 B.C.*

suggest that families were large. Settlements became stable and widespread in this phase, which is called the Jorwe culture. The culture is so called, because its type-site is provided by Jorwe, a village situated on the Pravara river. A good number of sites possess the traits of the Jorwe culture. Every Jorwe village was a nucleated settlement with more than 35 houses of different sizes, circular or rectangular in shape. The chalcolithic economy therefore was a village economy. Some settlements, such as Inamgaon and those at Eran and Kayatha in central and



5.4 *Inamgaon Isometric Reconstruction of Houses*

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western Madhya Pradesh, were fortified and surrounded by a moat, but it is obvious that these people had no urban civilization.

We do not know much about their arts and crafts. They were clearly expert copper smiths and also good workers in stone. To this culture belong a large number of very small sized stone tools which are called *microliths*. People knew the art of spinning and weaving because spindle whorls have been discovered in Malwa. Cotton, flax and silk threads have been found in Maharashtra. This shows that these people were well acquainted with the manufacture of cloth

Regional differences in regard to cereals, structures, pottery, etc., appear in the stone-copper phase Eastern India produced rice; western India cultivated barley and wheat. Chronologically certain settlements in Malwa and central India, such as those in Kayatha and Eran, were the earliest; those of western Maharashtra and eastern India were of a much later date.

We can form some ideas about the burial practices and religious cults of these people In Maharashtra people buried their dead in urns under the floor of their house in the north-to-south position. They did not use separate cemeteries for this purpose, as was the case with the Harappans. Pots and some copper objects were deposited in the graves obviously for the use of the dead in the next world. Terracotta figures of women suggest that the chalcolithic people venerated the mother goddess. Some unbaked nude clay figurines were also used for worship. A figure of the mother goddess similar to that found in Western Asia has been found in Inamgaon. In Malwa and Rajasthan stylized bull terracottas show that the bull served as a religious cult.

In the stone-copper phase we find the beginnings of social inequalities. In the graves at Chandoli and Nevasa in western Maharashtra some children were buried along with copper-bead necklaces around their necks; other children had grave goods consisting only of pots. At Inamgaon an adult was buried with pottery and some copper. In one house in Kayatha were found 29 copper bangles and two unique axes. At the same place were found in earthen pots necklaces of semi-precious stones such as steatite and carnelian beads. It is evident that those who possessed these objects were affluent

The dates, which have been scientifically established, show that this phase of culture was not older than 1800 B.C, and it seems to have continued in some areas till 1000 B.C. and in other areas till 800 B.C or even later. The old tools continued till they were ultimately replaced by iron tools. But in many parts of the country the black-and-red pottery continued till the second century B.C.

Importance of the Chalcolithic Phase

Except for the alluvial plains and the thickly forested areas, traces of chalcolithic cultures have been discovered almost all over the country. In this phase people mostly founded rural settlements on river banks not far removed from the hills As stated earlier, they used microliths and other stone tools supplemented by a little use of copper tools. It seems that most of them knew the art of copper smelting. Almost all chalcolithic communities used black-and-red wheel-turned pots. They were the first to use painted pottery. Their pots were meant for cooking, eating and storing. They used the *lota*, but there is no trace of the *thali* In south India the neolithic phase imperceptibly faded into the stone-copper phase, and so these cultures are called *neolithic-chalcolithic*. In other parts, especially in western Maharashtra and Rajasthan the chalcolithic people seem to have been colonisers. Their earliest settlements appear in Malwa and central India, such as those in Kayatha and Eran; those in western Maharashtra appeared later; and those in West Bengal were perhaps the last to emerge.

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The chalcolithic communities founded the first villages in India and cultivated far more cereals than is known in the case of the neolithic communities. In particular they cultivated barley, wheat and lentil in western India, and rice in southern and eastern India. Their cereal food was supplemented by non-vegetarian food In western India we have more of animal food, but fish and rice formed important elements in the diet of eastern India. More remains of structures have been found in western Maharashtra, western Madhya Pradesh and south-eastern Rajasthan. The settlements at Kayatha and Eran in Madhya Pradesh and at Inamgaon in western Maharashtra were fortified On the other hand, the remains of structures in Chirand and Pandu Rajar Dhibi in eastern India were poor, giving indications of postholes and round houses. The burial practices were different In Maharashtra the dead body was placed in the north-south position, but in south India in the east-west position Almost complete or extended burial obtained in Maharashtra, but post-extraction or fractional burial prevailed in West Bengal

Limitations of Chalcolithic Cultures

The general weakness of chalcolithic cultures is evident from the burial of a large number of children in western Maharashtra In spite of a food-producing economy the rate of infant mortality was very high. We cannot identify its causes which might include lack of nutrition, absence of medical knowledge or outbreak of epidemics. At any rate the chalcolithic social and economic pattern did not promote longevity.

The stone-copper culture had an essentially rural background. During its phase the supply of copper was limited, and as a metal copper had its limitations. By itself a tool made of copper was pliant. People did not know the art of mixing tin with copper and thus forging the much stronger and useful metal called bronze. Bronze tools facilitated the rise of the earliest civilizations in Crete, Egypt and Mesopotamia, but they were practically absent in the chalcolithic phase in the major part of India.

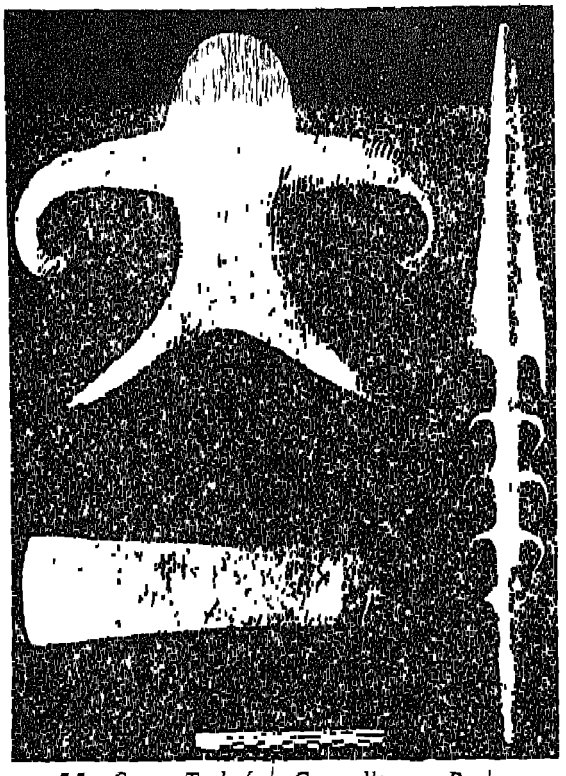
The people of the Stone-Copper Age did not know the art of writing; nor did they live in cities as the people of the Bronze Age did. We notice all these elements of civilization for the first time in the Indus region of the Indian subcontinent Although most Stone-Copper Age cultures existing in the major part of the country were younger than the Indus valley civilization, they did not derive any substantial benefit from the advanced technological knowledge of the Indus people.

The Copper Age in India

More than forty hoards consisting of copper objects have been found in a wide area ranging from the Chotanagpur plateau to the upper Gangetic basin But nearly half of them are concentrated in the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*, in other areas we encounter stray finds of such hoards. The copper hoards comprise celts, harpoons, antennae swords and anthropomorphic figures. These artifacts served several purposes They were meant not only for fishing, hunting and fighting but also for artisanal and agricultural use They presuppose good technological skill and knowledge on the part of the coppersmith, and cannot be the handiwork of nomadic people or hunters. At several places in the upper Gangetic basin these objects have been discovered in association with ochre-coloured pots and some mud structures. This shows that the people who used the copper hoards led a settled life, and were one of the earliest primitive agriculturists and artisans to settle in a good portion of the *doab*. Most ochre-coloured pottery sites are found in the upper portion of the *doab*, but copper hoards are found not only in this area but also in the plateau areas of Bihar and the neighbouring regions. Many copper celts have

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5.5 *Copper Tools from Ganga-Yamuna Doab*

been found in the Khetri zone of Rajasthan.

The period covered by the ochre-coloured pottery culture is roughly placed between 2000 B.C. and 1800 B C. When the ochre-coloured settlements using copper objects disappeared, the *doab* does not show much habitation till about 1000 B.C. We learn of some habitation by people using black-and-red ware, but their habitation deposits are so thin and antiquities so poor that we cannot form a clear and distinct idea of their cultural equipment. In any case in the upper portion of the *doab*, in the upper Gangetic basin, the Metal Age really begins with the settlements of the copper-using ochre-coloured pottery people However, at no place did these settlements last for more than a century or so; nor were they considerable in size and spread over a very wide territory. Why and how these settlements came to an end is not clear, but the sanctity and religious purity attached to copper vessels, utensils, etc., in Hindu religion may have started in the Copper Age.

The copper-hoard people were contemporaries of the Harappans, and the ochre-coloured pottery area in which they lived was not far removed from that of the Harappans. We may, therefore, expect some give-and-take between these copper-using people and the bronze-using Harappans.

EXERCISES

1. Which metal did the Indians use first? How did it affect their life?
2. Give an account of the Indian culture in the Stone-Copper phase.

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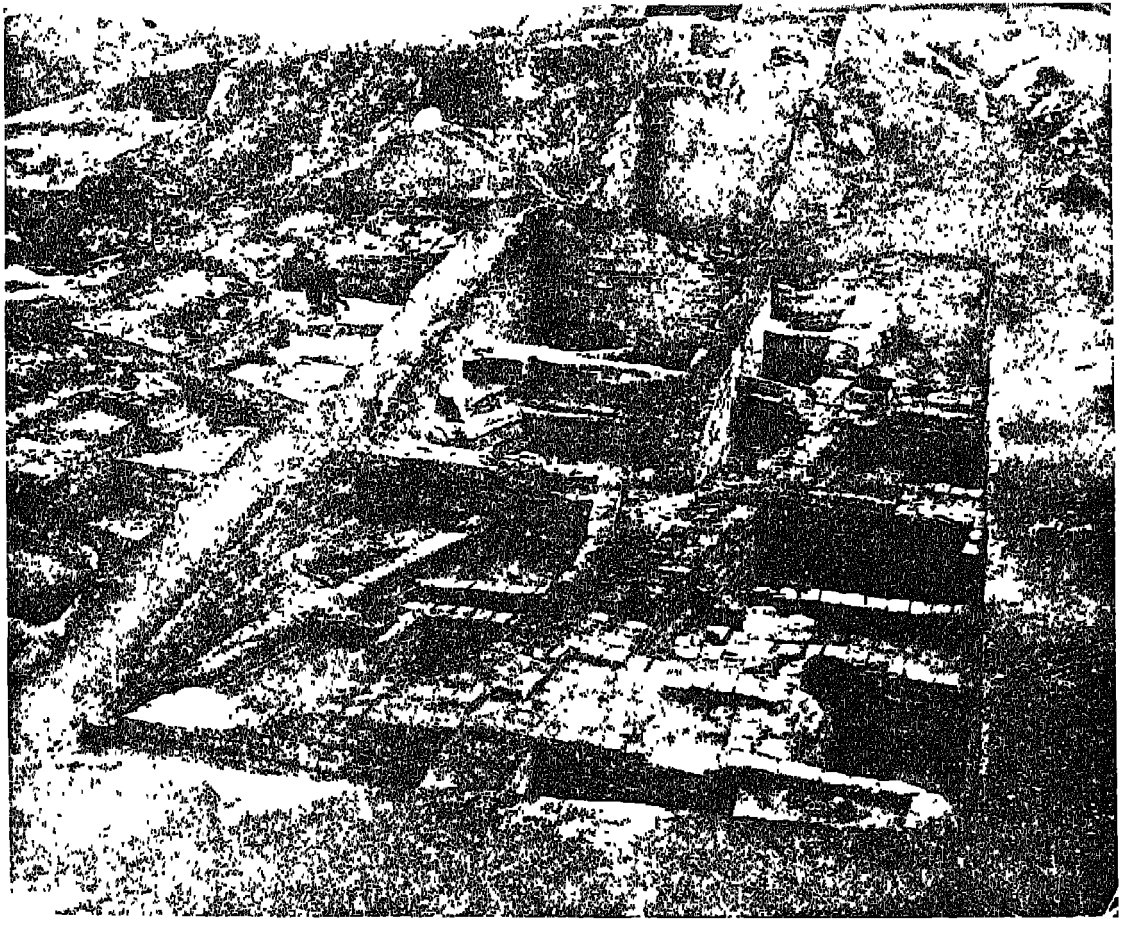
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CHAPTER 6

The Harappan Civilization

Geographical Extent

The Indus or the Harappan culture is older than the chalcolithic cultures which have been treated earlier, but it is far more developed than these cultures. It arose in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. It is



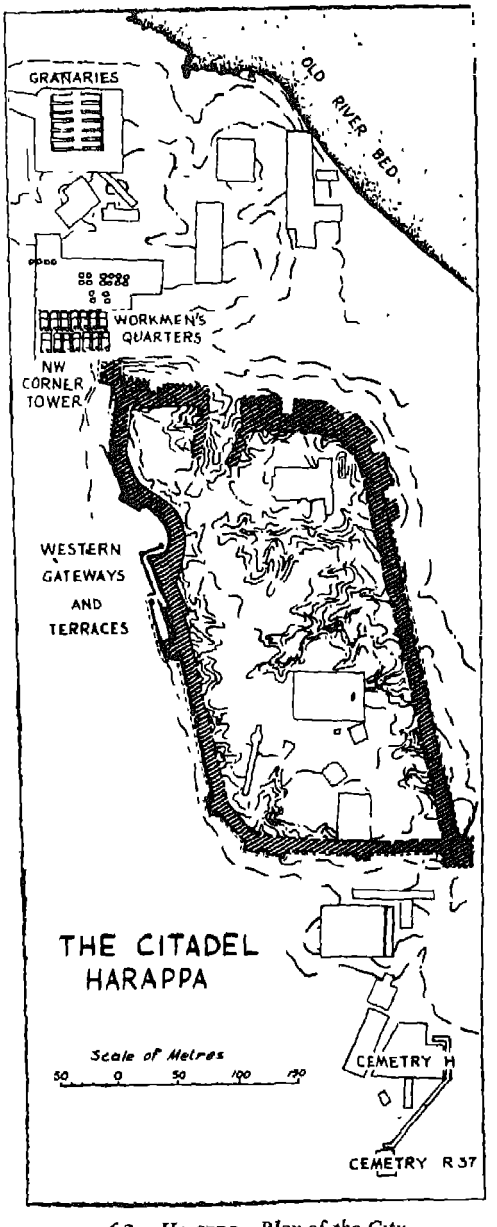
6.1 *Kalibangan : General View showing Excavated Trenches*

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called Harappan because this civilization was discovered first in 1921 at the modern site of Harappa situated in the province of West Panjab in Pakistan. The Harappan culture covered parts of Panjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the fringes of western Uttar Pradesh. It extended from Jammu in the north to the Narmada estuary in the south, and from the Makran coast of Baluchistan in the west to Meerut in the north-east. The area formed a triangle and accounted for about 1,299,600 square kilometres, which is larger than Pakistan and certainly bigger than ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. No other cultural zone in the third and second millennium B.C. in the world was as large as the Harappan zone.

Although over 250 Harappan sites are known, only six can be regarded as cities. Of these the two most important cities were Harappa in Panjab and Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, both forming parts of Pakistan. Situated at a distance of 483 kilometres they were linked together by the Indus. A third city lay at Chanhu-daro about 130 km south of Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, and a fourth at Lothal in Gujarat at the head of the Gulf of Cambay. A fifth city lay at Kalibangan in northern Rajasthan. A sixth called Banwali is situated in Hissar district in Haryana It saw two cultural phases, pre-Harappan and Harappan, similar to that of Kalibangan. To the Harappan period belong the remains of mud-brick platforms, and of streets and drains. The Harappan culture is noticeable in its nature and flourishing stage at all these six places. It is also found in its mature phase in the coastal cities of Sutkagendor and Surkotada, each one of which is marked by a citadel. The later Harappan phase is found in Rangpur and Rojdi in the Kathiawar peninsula in Gujarat.



6.2 *Harappa—Plan of the City*

Town Planning and Structures

The Harappan culture was distinguished by its system of town-planning. Harappa and Mohenjo-daro each had its own citadel or acropolis, which was possibly occupied by

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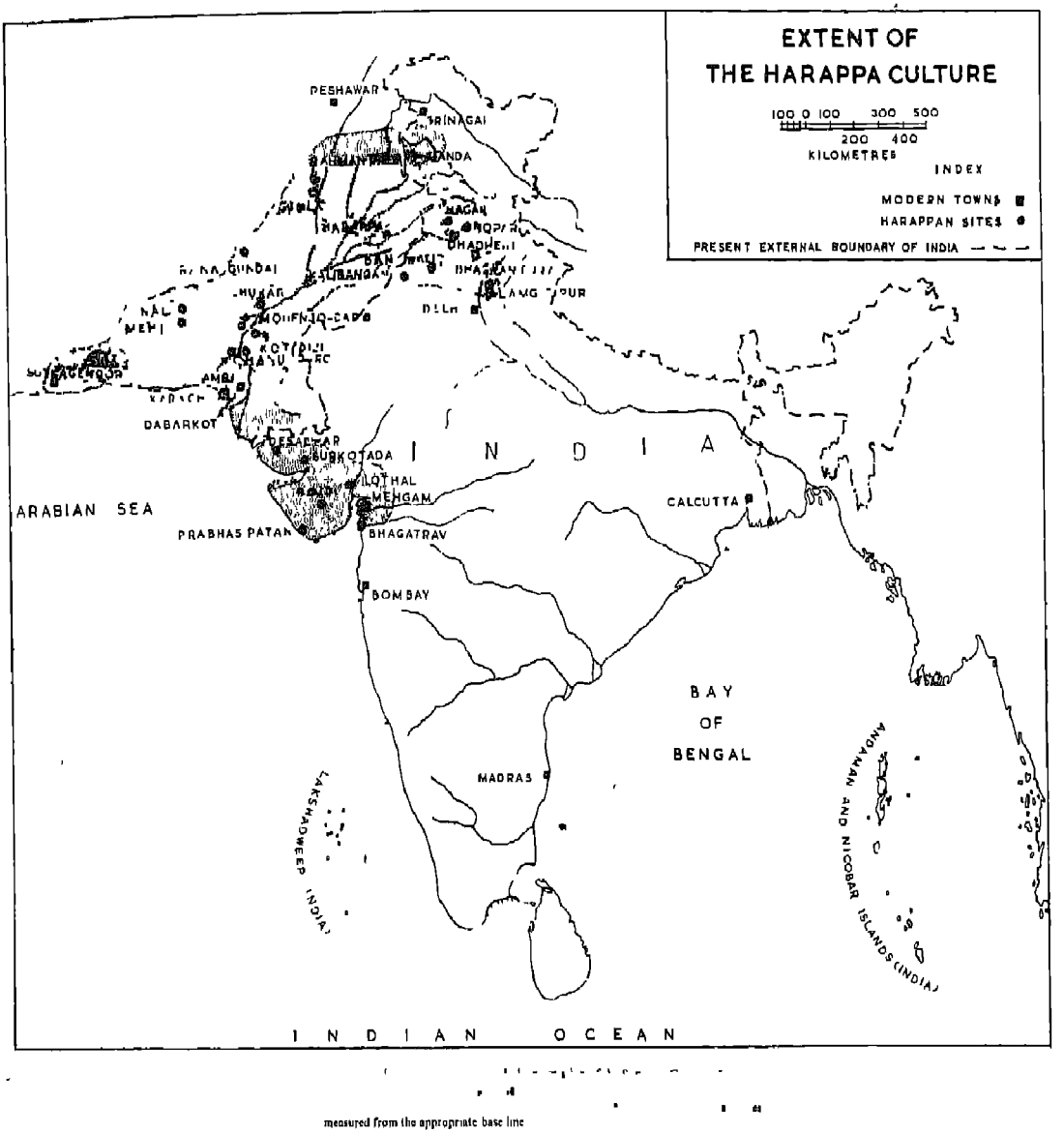


Figure 6 *Harappa Culture*

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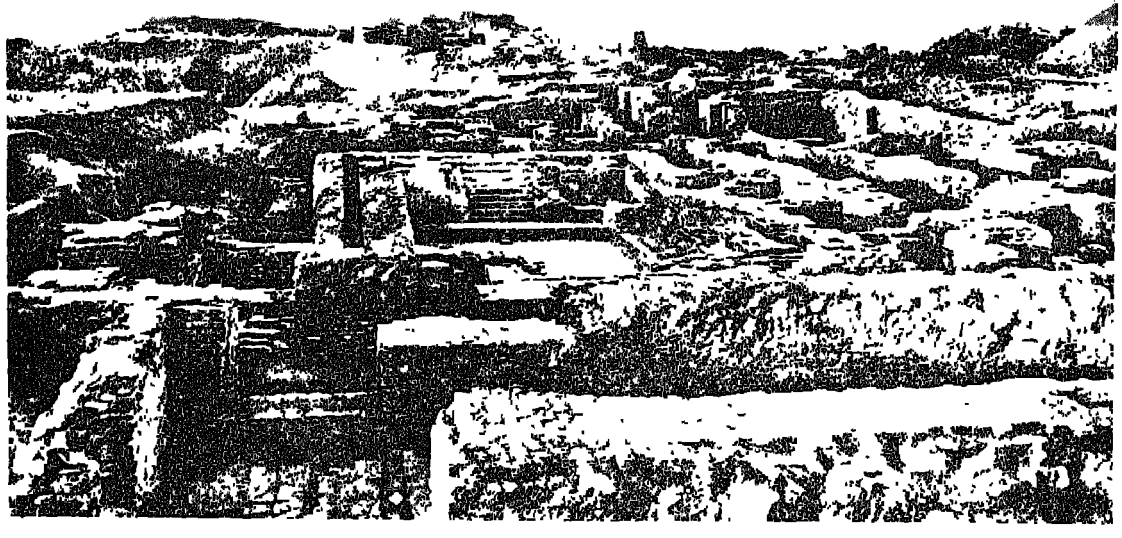
members of the ruling class. Below the citadel in each city lay a lower town containing brick houses, which were inhabited by the common people. The remarkable thing about the arrangement of the houses in the cities is that they followed the grid system. This is true of almost all Indus settlements regardless of size. Roads cut across one another almost at right angles, and the city was divided into so many blocks.

The most important public place of Mohenjo-daro seems to be the Great Bath, comprising the tank which is situated in the citadel mound. It is an example of beautiful brickwork. It measures 11.88x7.01 metres and 2.43 metres deep. Flights of steps at either end lead to the surface. There are side rooms for changing clothes. The floor of the Bath was made of burnt bricks. Water was drawn from a large well in an adjacent room, and an outlet from one corner of the Bath led to a drain. It is suggested that the Great Bath served ritual bathing, which was so vital to any religious ceremony in India.

In Mohenjo-daro the largest building is a granary, which is 45.71 metres long and 15.23 metres wide. But in the citadel of Harappa we find as many as six granaries. We come across a series of brick platforms which formed the basis for two rows of six granaries. Each granary measured 15.23 metres x 6.09 metres and lay within a few metres of the river's bank. The combined floor space of the twelve units would be about 838.1025 square metres. Approximately it had the same area as the Great Granary at Mohenjo-daro. To the south of the granaries at Harappa lay working floors consisting of the rows of circular brick platforms. These were evidently meant for threshing grain because wheat and barley have been found in the crevices of the floors. At Harappa were also built two-roomed barracks, which possibly accommodated labourers.

At Kalibangan also we notice in the southern part brick platforms, which may have been used for granaries. Thus it would appear that granaries constituted an important part of the Harappan cities.

The use of burnt bricks in the Harappan cities is remarkable, because in the contemporary buildings of Egypt dried bricks were mainly

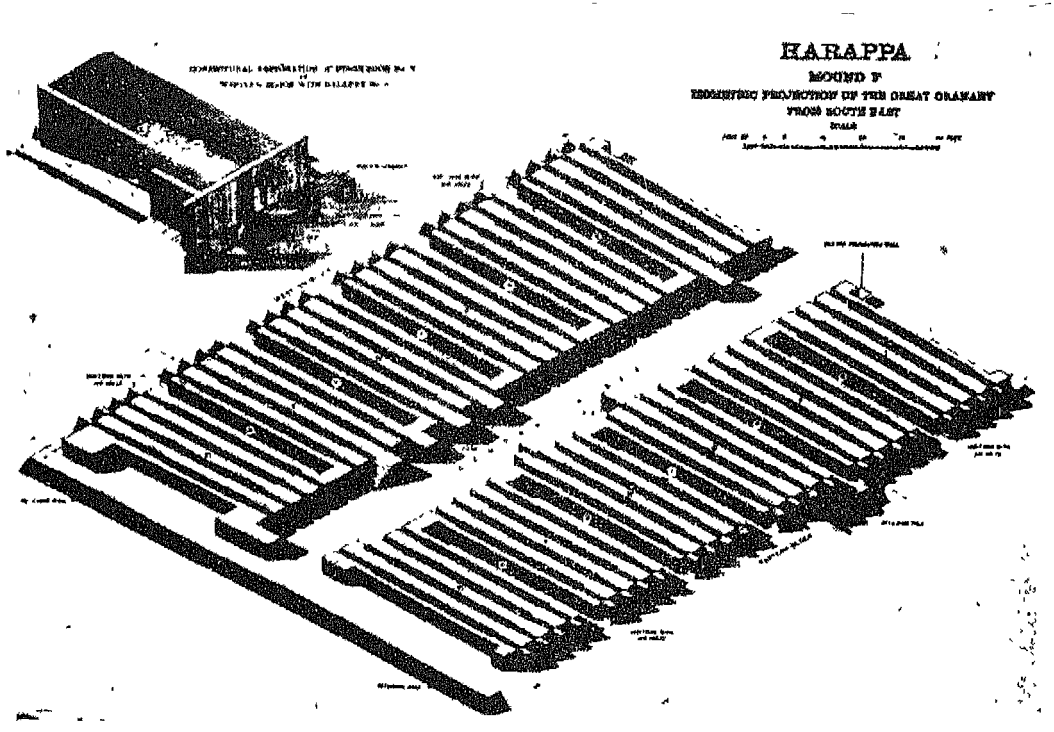


6.3 *Great Bath, Mohenjo-daro*

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6.4 *Isometric Projection of the Granary at Harappa*

used. We find the use of baked bricks in contemporary Mesopotamia, but they were used to a much larger extent in the Harappan cities.

The drainage system of Mohenjo-daro was very impressive. In almost all cities every big or small house had its own courtyard and bathroom. In Kalibangan many houses had their wells. Water flowed from the house to the streets which had drains Sometimes these drains were covered with bricks and sometimes with stone slabs. The street drains were equipped with manholes. The remains of streets and drains have also been found at Banwali. Altogether the drainage system and the quality of the domestic bath-rooms and drains are remarkable, and the drainage system of Harappa is almost unique Perhaps no other civilization gave so much attention to health and cleanliness as the Harappan.

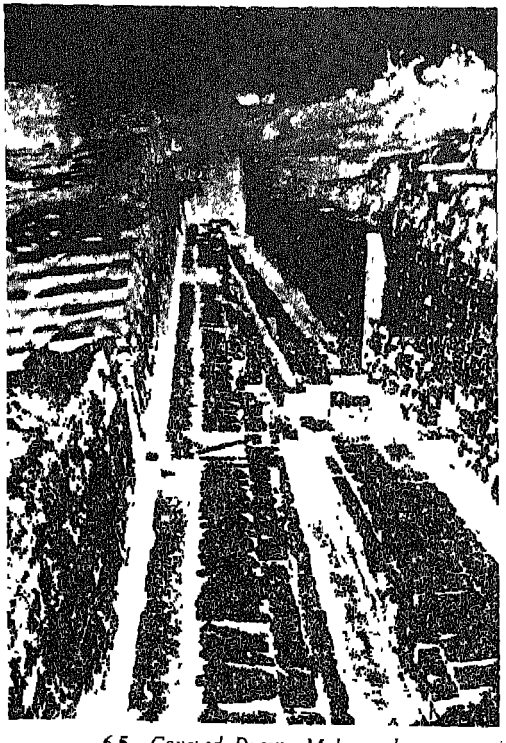
Agriculture

Comparatively rainless, the Indus region is not so fertile these days. Its prosperous villages and towns show that it was fertile in ancient times At present it has only a rainfall of about 15 cm. In the fourth century B.C. one of the historians of Alexander informs us that Sindh was a fertile part of the country. In earlier times the Indus possessed more natural vegetation which attracted more rainfall It supplied timber fuel for baking bricks on a large scale, and also for construction. In course of time, natural vegetation was destroyed by the extension of agriculture, large-scale grazing, and supply of fuel A far more important reason for the fertility of the area seems to have been the annual inundation in the Indus river. Walls made of burnt bricks raised for protection show that floods took place annually The Indus

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6.5 *Covered Drain, Mohenjo-daro*

carried far more alluvial soil than the Nile in Egypt and deposited it on the flood plains Just as the Nile created Egypt and supported its people, so also the Indus created Sindh and fed its people The Indus people sowed seeds in the flood plains in November, when the flood water receded, and reaped their harvests of wheat and barley in April before the advent of the next flood. No hoe or ploughshare has been discovered, but the furrows discovered in the pre-Harappan phase at Kalibangan show that the fields were ploughed in Rajasthan in the Harappan period The Harappans probably used the wooden ploughshare. We do not know whether the plough was drawn by men or oxen Stone sickles may have been used for harvesting the crops *Gabarbands* or *nalas* enclosed by dams for storing water were a feature in parts of Baluchistan and Afghanistan, but channel or canal irrigation seems to have been absent. The Harappan villages, mostly situated near the flood plains, produced sufficient foodgrains not only to feed themselves but also the town people. They must have worked very hard to meet their own requirements as well as those of the artisans, merchants and others, who lived in the city and who were not directly concerned with food-producing activities.

The Indus people produced wheat, barley, *rai*, peas, etc. They produced two types of wheat and barley. A good quantity of barley has been discovered at Banwali. In addition to this, they produced sesamum and mustard. But the position seems to have been different with the Harappans at Lothal. It seems that as early as 1800 B C., the people of Lothal used rice whose remains have been found Foodgrains were stored in huge granaries in both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and possibly in Kalibangan. Probably, cereals were received as taxes from peasants and stored in granary for the payment of wages. This can be said on the analogy of Mesopotamian cities where wages were paid in barley. The Indus people were the earliest people to produce cotton Because cotton was first produced in this area the Greeks called it *sindon*, which is derived from Sindh.

Domestication of Animals

Although the Harappans practised agriculture, animals were kept on a large scale Oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs were domesticated The humped bulls were favoured by the Harappans From the very beginning dogs were regarded as pets Cats were also domesticated, and signs of the feet of both dogs and cats have been noticed They also kept asses and camels, which were possibly used as beasts of burden. Evidence of the horse comes from a superficial level of Mohenjo-daro and from a doubtful terracotta figurine from Lothal. The remains of the horse have been reported from Surkotada, situated on the west of Gujarat, and belong to around 2000 B C., but it is clear

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that this animal was not in regular use in Harappan times. Elephants were well known to the Harappans, who were also acquainted with the rhinoceros The contemporary Sumerian cities in Mesopotamia practically produced the same foodgrains and domesticated the same animals as the Harappans did But the Harappan people in Gujarat produced rice and domesticated elephants, which was not the case with the people of Mesopotamian cities.

Technology and Crafts

The Harappan culture belongs to the Bronze Age The people of Harappa used many tools and implements of stone, but they were very well acquainted with the manufacture and use of bronze. Bronze was made by the smiths by mixing tin with copper. Since none of the two metals was easily available to the Harappans, bronze tools are not prolific in Harappa The impurities of the ores show that copper was obtained from the Khetri copper mines of Rajasthan, although it could also be brought from Baluchistan Tin was possibly brought with difficulty from Afghanistan although its old workings are stated to have been found in Hazaribagh in Bihar. The bronze tools and weapons recovered from the Harappan sites contain a smaller percentage of tin However, the kit of bronze goods left by the Harappans is considerable, which suggests that the bronzesmiths constituted an important group of artisans in the Harappan society. They produced not only images and utensils but also various tools and weapons such as axes, saws, knives and spears. Several other important crafts flourished in the Harappan towns. A piece of woven cotton has been recovered from Mohenjo-daro, and textile impressions found on several objects. Spindle whorls were used for spinning Weavers wove cloth of wool and cotton. Huge brick structures suggest that brick-laying was an important craft. They also attest the existence of a class of masons The Harappans also practised boat-making. As will be shown later, seal-making and terracotta manufacture were also important crafts The goldsmiths made jewellery of silver, gold and precious stones; the first two may have been obtained from Afghanistan and the last from south India. The Harappans were also experts in beadmaking

The potter's wheel was in full use, and the Harappans produced their own characteristic pottery, which was made glossy and shining.

Trade

The Harappan cities did not possess the necessary raw material for the commodities they produced. They did not use metallic money. We have no idea about their currency. Most probably they carried on all exchanges through barter In return for finished goods and possibly foodgrains, they procured metals from the neighbouring areas by boats and bullock-carts. They practised navigation on the coast of the Arabian Sea They knew the use of wheel, and carts with solid wheels were in use in Harappa. It also appears that the Harappans used some kind of modern *ekka.*

The Harappans had commercial links with Rajasthan, Afghanistan and Iran. Their cities also carried on commerce with those in the land of the Tigris and Euphrates. Many Harappan seals have been discovered in Mesopotamia, and it seems that the Harappans imitated some cosmetics used by the urban people of Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian records from about 2350 B.C refer to trade relations with Meluha, which was the ancient name given to the Indus region. The Mesopotamian texts speak of two intermediate trading stations called Dilmun and Makan, which lay between Mesopotamia and Meluha. Dilmun can probably be identified with Bahrain on the Persian Gulf. Thousands of graves await excavation in that port city

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Political Organization

We have no clear idea about the political organization of the Harappans. In sharp contrast to Egypt and Mesopotamia no temples have been found at any Harappan site We have no religious structures of any kind except the Great Bath, which may have been used for ablutions. Therefore it would be wrong to think that priests ruled in Harappa, as they did in the cities of Lower Mesopotamia. There are some indications of the practice of fire cult at Lothal in Gujarat in the later phase, but no temples were used for the purpose. Perhaps the Harappan rulers were more concerned with commerce than with conquests, and Harappa was possibly ruled by a class of merchants.



6.6 *Mother-goddess, Mohenjo-daro*

Religious Practices

In Harappa numerous terracotta figurines of women have been found. In one figurine a plant is shown growing out of the embryo of a woman. Probably the image represents the goddess of earth, and it was intimately connected with the origin and growth of plants The Harappans therefore looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess and worshipped her in the same manner as the Egyptians worshipped the Nile goddess Isis. But we do not know whether the Harappans were a matriarchal people like the Egyptians. In Egypt the daughter inherited the throne or property, but we do not know about the nature of inheritance in the Harappan society.

Some Vedic texts show reverence to the earth goddess, although she is not given any prominence. It took a long time for the worship of the supreme goddess to develop in Hinduism. Only from the sixth century A D. various mother-goddesses such as Durga, Amba, Kali, Chandi, etc , came to be regarded as goddesses in the Puranas and in the Tantra literature. In course of time every village came to have its own separate goddess.

The Male Deity in the Indus Valley

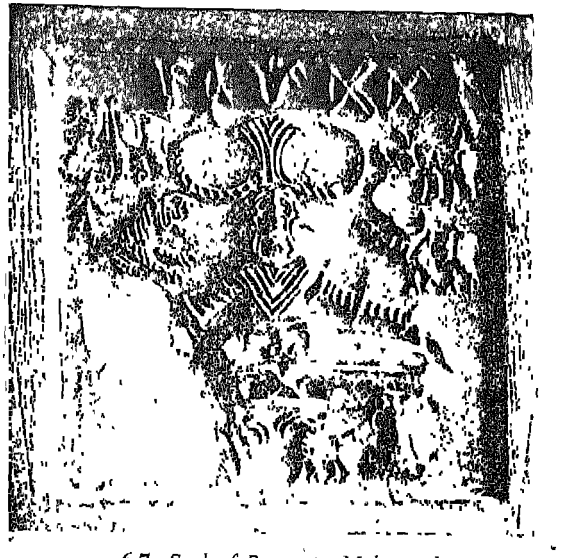
The male deity is represented on a seal. This god has three heads and has horns. He is represented in the sitting posture of a *yogi*, placing one foot on the other. This god is sur-

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rounded by an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros, and has a buffalo below his throne. At his feet appear two deer The seal immediately recalls to our mind the traditional image of Pasupati Mahadeva. The four animals surrounding the god look towards the four directions of the earth. They may have served as vehicles for gods, because in later Hinduism every god is supposed to have his own conveyance for his movements In addition to the use of the image of Siva, we also come across the prevalence of the phallus worship, which became so intimately connected with Siva in later times. Numerous symbols of the phallus and female sex organs made of stone have been found in Harappa. They were possibly meant for worship. The *Rig Veda* speaks of the non-Aryan people, who were phallus worshippers. The phallus worship which started in the days of Harappa came to be recognized as a respectable form of worship in Hindu society.



6.7 *Seal of Pasupati, Mohenjo-daro*

Tree and Animal Worship

The people of the Indus region also worshipped trees The picture of a god is represented on a seal in the midst of the branches of the *pipal* This tree continues to be worshipped to this day.

Animals were also worshipped in Harappan times, and many of them are represented on seals. The most important of them is the humped bull. Even today, when such a bull passes in the market streets the pious Indians give way to it. Similarly the animals surrounding Pasupati Mahadeva indicate that these were worshipped. Obviously the inhabitants of the Indus region worshipped gods in the form of trees, animals and human beings. But the gods were not placed in temples, a practice which was common in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nor can we say anything about the religious beliefs of the Harappans without being able to read their script. Amulets have been found in large numbers. Probably the Harappans believed that ghosts and evil forces were capable of harming them and therefore used amulets against them. The *Atharva Veda*, which is considered to be a non-Aryan work, contains many charms and spells, and recommends amulets for warding off diseases and evil forces.

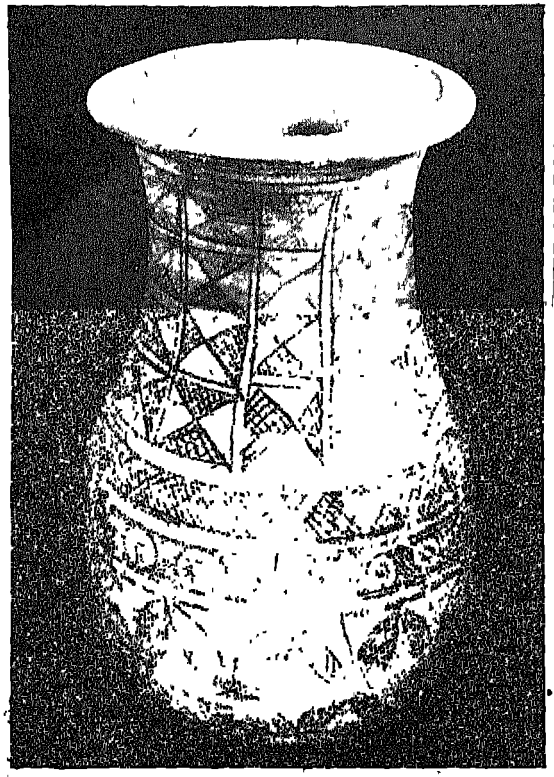
The Harappan Script

The Harappans invented the art of writing like the people of ancient Mesopotamia. Although the earliest specimen of Harappan script was noticed in 1853 and the complete script discovered by 1923, it has not been deciphered so far. Some try to connect it with the Dravidian or the proto-Dravidian language, others with the Sanskrit language, and still others with the Sumerian language, but none of these readings is satisfactory. As the script has not been deciphered, we cannot judge the Harappan contribution to literature, nor can we say anything about their ideas and beliefs.

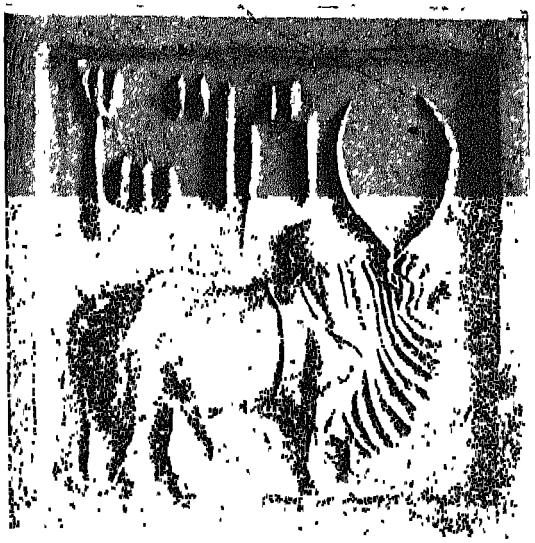
Unlike the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the Harappans did not write long inscriptions. Most inscriptions were recorded on seals, and contain only a few words. These seals may have

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6.8 *Pottery, Lothal*



6.9 *Bull Seal, Monenjo-daro*

been used by propertied people to mark and identify their private property. Altogether we have about 250 to 400 pictographs, and in the form of a picture each letter stands for some sound, idea or object. The Harappan script is not alphabetical but mainly pictographic. Attempts have been made to compare it with the contemporary scripts of Mesopotamia and Egypt. But it is the indigenous product of the Indus region, and does not show any connection with the scripts of Western Asia.

Weights and Measures

The knowledge of script must have helped the recording of private property and the keeping of accounts. The urban people of the Indus region also needed and used weights and measures for trade and other transactions. Numerous articles used for weights have been found. They show that in weighing mostly 16 or its multiples were used; for instance, 16, 64, 160, 320 and 640. Interestingly the tradition of 16 has continued in India till modern times and till recently 16 annas made one rupee. The Harappans also knew the art of measurement. We have come across sticks inscribed with measure marks; one of these is made of bronze.

Harappan Pottery

The Harappans were great experts in the use of the potter's wheel. We come across numerous pots painted in various colours. Harappan pots were generally decorated with the designs of trees and circles. The images of men are also found on some pottery fragments.

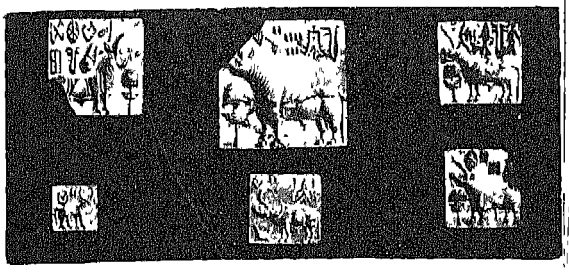
Seals

The greatest artistic creations of the Harappan culture are the seals. About 2000 seals have been found, and of these a great majority carry short inscriptions with pictures of the one-horned bull, the buffalo, the tiger, the rhinoceros, the goat and the elephant.

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6.10 *Seals from Kalibangan*

Images

The Harappan artisans made beautiful images of metal. A woman dancer made of bronze is the best specimen. Except for a necklace she is naked We get a few pieces of Harappan stone sculptures One steatite statue wears an ornamented robe over the left shoulder and under the right arm, and its short locks at the back of the head are kept tidy by a woven fillet.

Terracotta Figurines

We get many figurines made of fire-baked earthen clay, commonly called *terracotta*. These were either used as toys or objects of worship. They represent birds, dogs, sheep, cattle and monkeys. Men and women also find place, and the second outnumber the first. The seals and images were manufactured with great skill, but the terracotta pieces represent unsophisticated artistic works. The contrast between the two sets indicates the gap between the classes which used them. The first were used by members of the upper classes, and the second by the common people. The Harappan culture is poor in artistic works made of stone. We do not come across any massive work of art in stone as we find in the case of sculptures of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Origin, Maturity and End

The Harappan culture existed between 2500 B. C. and 1750 B.C. Its mature phase lay between 2200 B C. and 2000 B C. but throughout the period of its existence it seems to have retained the same kind of tools, weapons and houses. The whole style of life appears to be uniform. We notice the same town-planning, the same seals, the same terracotta works, and the same long chert blades But the view stressing changelessness cannot be pushed too far. We do notice changes in the pottery of Mohenjo-daro over a period of time. Around 1750 B. C. the two important cities of the Harappan culture, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, disappeared, but the Harappan culture at other sites faded out gradually and continued in its degenerate phase in the outlying fringes in Gujarat, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh.

It is as difficult to explain the origin of the Harappan culture as its end. Several pre-Harappan settlements have been found in Baluchistan and in Kalibangan in Rajasthan, but the connection between them and the mature Harappan culture is not clear, though the Harappan culture may have evolved out of these indigenous settlements. Nor do we have clear proof of outside influence on the Harappan cities. Contact with the Mesopotamian cities may have provided some stimulus to the development of the Harappan culture. But there can be no doubt about the Indianness of the Harappan culture. Certain elements distinguish it from the contemporary cultures in Western Asia. It planned its towns with their chess-board system, streets, drainage pipes and cess pits. On the other hand the Mesopotamian cities show a haphazard growth. Rectangular houses with brick-lined bathrooms and wells together with their stairways are found in all Harappan cities. Such town-planning is not to be found in the cities of Western Asia. No other people in antiquity had built such an excellent drainage system except perhaps those of Crete in Knossos, nor did the people of Western Asia show such skill in the use of burnt bricks as the Harappans did. The Harap-

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pans produced their own characteristic pottery and seals, the latter represented the local animal world.. Above all, they invented their own typical script, which bears no resemblance to the Egyptian and Mesopotamian scripts. Although the Harappan culture was a Bronze Age culture, they used bronze on a very limited scale, and largely continued to use stone implements. Finally, no contemporary culture spread over such a wide area as the Harappan culture did. The structures of Harappa cover 5 km in circuit, and in that way are the largest of their type in the Bronze Age No urban complex of the Harappan magnitude has been discovered so far.

While the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia continued to exist even after 1750 B C, the Harappan culture disappeared at about that time. Various causes have been suggested. Some ascribe it to the decreasing fertility on account of the increasing salinity of the soil caused by the expansion of the neighbouring desert Others attribute it to a sudden subsidence or uplift of the land which caused floods. And still others point out that the Harappan culture was destroyed by the Aryans.

In the later phases of the Harappan culture, some exotic tools and pottery indicate the slow percolation of new peoples in the Indus basin. A few signs of insecurity and violence appear in the last phase of Mohenjo-daro. Hoards of jewellery were buried at places, and skulls were huddled together at one place We also notice new types of axes, daggers, knives with midribs and flat tangs appear in the upper levels of Mohenjo-daro Although basically they seem to be Indian, they may betray some foreign influence. Traces of new peoples appear in a cemetery belonging to the late phase of Harappa, where new kinds of pottery occur in the latest levels. New types of pottery also occur in some Harappan sites in Baluchistan At several sites in Panjab and Haryana Painted Grey Ware, generally associated with Vedic people, has been found in conjunction with some late Harappan pottery. All this can be attributed to the barbarian horse-riding people who may have come from Iran through the hills But the new peoples did not come in such numbers as to completely overwhelm the Harappan cities in Panjab and Sindh Although the Rig Vedic Aryans settled down mostly in the land of the Seven Rivers, in which the Harappan culture once flourished, we have no evidence of any mass-scale confrontation between the Harappans and the Aryans.

EXERCISES

1. How were the Harappan cities planned?
2. Describe the sources of the livelihood of the Harappan people.
3. Give an account of the crafts and technology of the Harappans. Why is their culture called the Bronze Age culture?
4. Write a note on the religious practices of the Harappans.
5. Give an account of the Harappan pottery and terracottas.
6. Account for the end of the Harappan civilization.

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CHAPTER 7

Advent of the Aryans and the Age of the *Rig Veda*

Original Home and Identity

The Aryans spoke the Indo-European languages, which are current in changed forms all over Europe, Iran and the greater part of the Indian subcontinent. Originally the Aryans seem to have lived somewhere in the area east of the Alps, in the region known as Eurasia Certain names of animals such as goats, dogs, horses, etc., and names of certain plants such as pine, maple, etc , are similar to one another in all the Indo-European languages These common words indicate the fauna and flora of Eurasia They show that the Aryans were acquainted with rivers and forests Curiously enough, common words for mountains exist only in a few Aryan languages although the Aryans crossed many hills. Their earliest life seems to have been mainly pastoral, agriculture being a secondary occupation. The Aryans did not lead a settled life, with the result that they could not leave behind any solid material remains. Although the Aryans used several animals, the horse played the most significant role in their life. Its swiftness enabled them and some allied peoples to make successful inroads into Western Asia from about 2000 B C. onwards.

On their way to India the Aryans first appeared in Iran, where the Indo-Iranians lived for a long time. We know about the Aryans in India from the *Rig Veda,* which is the earliest specimen of the Indo-European language. The *Rig Veda* is a collection of prayers offered to Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuna and other gods by various families of poets or sages. It consists of ten *mandalas* or books, of which Books II to VII form its earliest portions Books I and X seem to have been the latest additions The *Rig Veda* has many things in common with the *Avesta,* which is the oldest text in the Iranian language The two texts use the same names for several gods and even for social classes Some Aryan names mentioned in the Kassite inscriptions of 1600 B C. and the Mitanni inscriptions of the fourteenth century B.C. found in Iraq suggest that from Iran a branch of the Aryans moved towards the west.

A little earlier than 1500 B.C the Aryans appeared in India We do not find clear and definite archaeological traces of their advent. Possibly they used socketed axes, bronze dirks and swords, which have been discovered in north-western India. The earliest Aryans lived in the geographical area covered by eastern Afghanistan, Panjab and fringes of western Uttar Pradesh. Some rivers of Afghanistan such as the river Kubha, and the river Indus and its five branches, are mentioned in the *Rig Veda.* The Sindhu, identical with the Indus, is the river *par excellence* of the Aryans, and it is repeatedly mentioned. Another river mentioned is the Sarasvati, now lost in the sands of Rajasthan; the area represented by it is covered by the Ghaggar river. Possibly the Aryans obtained

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copper from the Khetri mines of Rajasthan. The whole region in which the Aryans first settled in India is called the Land of the Seven Rivers.

The Aryans came to India in several waves. The earliest wave is represented by the Rig Vedic people, who appeared in the subcontinent in about 1500 B.C. They came into conflict with the indigenous inhabitants called the *dasas*, *dasyus*, etc. Since the *dasas* are also mentioned in the ancient Iranian literature, they seem to have been a branch of the early Aryans. The *Rig Veda* mentions the defeat of Sambara by Divodasa, who belonged to the Bharata clan. In this case the term *dasa* appears in the name Divodasa. Possibly the *dasyus* in the *Rig Veda* represent the original inhabitants of the country, and an Aryan chief who overpowered them was called Trasadasyu. The Aryan chief was soft towards the *dasas*, but strongly hostile to the *dasyus*. The term *dasyu-hatya*, slaughter of the *dasyus*, is repeatedly mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. The *dasyus* possibly worshipped the phallus and did not keep cattle for dairy products.

Tribal Conflicts

We know little about the weapons of the adversaries of the Aryan peoples, although we hear of many defeats inflicted by Indra on the enemies of the Aryans. In the *Rig Veda* Indra is called Purandara, which means that he was the breaker of forts. But we cannot identify the forts held by the pre-Aryans; some of them may have been Harappan settlements. However, there is no doubt about the Aryan successes, and these came because the Aryans possessed chariots driven by horses, and introduced them for the first time into West Asia and India. The Aryan soldiers were probably equipped also with coats of mail (*varman*) and better arms.

The Aryans were engaged in two types of conflicts: first, they fought with the pre-Aryans, and secondly, they fought amongst themselves. Intra-tribal conflicts rocked the Aryan communities for a long time. Divided into five tribes called *panchajana*, the Aryans fought amongst themselves and sometimes enlisted the support of the non-Aryan peoples for the purpose. The Bharatas and the Tritsu were the ruling Aryan clans, and they were supported by priest Vasishtha. The country Bharatavarsha was eventually named after the term Bharata, which appears first in the *Rig Veda*. The Bharata ruling clan was opposed by a host of ten kings, five of whom were heads of Aryan tribes and the remaining five of non-Aryan peoples. The battle that was fought between the Bharatas on the one hand and the host of ten kings on the other is known as the Battle of Ten Kings. This battle was fought on the river Parushni, identical with the river Ravi, and it gave victory to Sudas and established the supremacy of the Bharatas. Of the defeated tribes the most important was that of the Purus. Subsequently the Bharatas joined hands with the Purus and formed a new ruling tribe called the Kurus. The Kurus combined with the Panchalas, and they together established their rule in the upper Gangetic basin where they played an important part in later Vedic times.

Material Life

We can form some idea of the material life of the Rig Vedic Aryans. They owed their success in India to their possession of horses, chariots and also possibly some better arms made of bronze of which we have no archaeological evidence. When they settled in the western part of the subcontinent, they possibly used copper supplied by the Khetri mines in Rajasthan. The Rig Vedic people possessed better knowledge of agriculture. Ploughshare is mentioned in the earliest part of the *Rig Veda* though some consider it an interpolation. Possibly this ploughshare was made of wood. They were acquainted with sowing, harvesting and threshing, and knew about the different seasons.

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In spite of all this, there are so many references to the cow in the *Rig Veda* that the Rig Vedic Aryans seem to have been a pastoral people. Most of their wars were fought for the sake of cows. The term for war in the *Rig Veda* is *gavisthi* or search for cows. The cow seems to have been the most important form of wealth, and whenever we hear of gifts made to priests it is stated in terms of cows and women slaves and never in terms of the measurement of land. The Rig Vedic people may have occasionally occupied pieces of land, but land did not form a well-established type of private property

The *Rig Veda* mentions such artisans as the carpenter, the chariot-maker, the weaver, the leather worker, the potter, etc This indicates that they practised all these crafts. The term *ayas* used for copper or bronze shows that metal-working was known. But we have no clear evidence of the existence of trade. It is doubtful whether the Aryans were acquainted with sea or ocean, because the word *samudra* mentioned in the *Rig Veda* mainly denotes a collection of water At any rate the Aryans did not live in cities, possibly they lived in some kind of fortified mud settlements which still await to be identified satisfactorily by the archaeologists.

Recently a site called Bhagwanpura has been excavated in Haryana and three sites in Panjab, and in all these cases Painted Grey Ware has been found along with 'late Harappan' pottery. The date assigned to the Bhagwanpura finds ranges from 1600 B.C. to 1000 B.C, which is also roughly the period of the *Rig Veda*. The geographical area of these four sites also coincides with that of a good portion of the area represented by the *Rig Veda*. Although Painted Grey Ware has been found at all these sites, neither iron objects nor cereals have been encountered. We may therefore think of a pre-iron phase of the PGW which coincided with the Rig Vedic phase. It is interesting to note that at Bhagwanpura a thirteen-roomed mud house has been discovered. This might indicate either a house for a large extended family or for a tribal chief. Cattle bones have been found in good quantity in all these sites.

Tribal Polity

The administrative machinery of the Aryans in the Rig Vedic period worked with the tribal chief in the centre, because of his successful leadership in war. He was called *rajan*. It seems that in the Rig Vedic period the king's post was hereditary. However, the king did not exercise unlimited power, for he had to reckon with the tribal organizations. Although his post was hereditary, we have also some traces of election by the tribal assembly called the *samiti*. The king was called the protector of his tribe. He protected its cattle, fought its wars and offered prayers to gods on its behalf.

Several tribal assemblies such as the *sabha*, *samiti*, *vidatha*, *gana* are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. These assemblies exercised deliberative, military and religious functions. Even women attended the *sabha* and *vidatha* in Rig Vedic times. But the two most important assemblies from the political point of view seem to have been the *sabha* and the *samiti*. These two were so important that the kings showed eagerness to win their support.

In the day-to-day administration, the king was assisted by a few functionaries. The most important functionary seems to have been the *purohita* The two priests who played a major part in the time of *Rig Veda* are Vasishtha and Visvamitra. They inspired the tribal chiefs to action and lauded their exploits in return for handsome rewards in cows and women slaves. The next important functionary seems to be the *senani*, who used spears, axes, swords, etc. We do not come across any officer concerned with the collection of taxes. Probably the princes received from the people voluntary offerings called *bali*. Presents and spoils of war were perhaps distributed in some Vedic assemblies. The *Rig Veda* does not

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mention any officer for administering justice. But it was not an ideal society There were cases of theft and burglary, and especially we hear of the theft of cows. Spies were employed to keep an eye on such unsocial activities.

The titles of the officials do not indicate their administration of territory. However, some officers seem to have been attached to territories. They enjoyed positions of authority in the pasture grounds and settled villages. The officer who enjoyed authority over the pasture ground is called *vrajapati*. He led the heads of the families called *kulapas*, or the heads of the fighting hordes called *gramanis*, to battle. In the beginning the *gramani* was just the head of a small tribal fighting unit. But when the unit settled the *gramani* became the head of the village, and in course of time he became identical with the *vrajapati*

The king did not maintain any regular or standing army, but in times of war he mustered a militia whose military functions were performed by different tribal groups called *vrata, gana, grama, sardha*. By and large it was a tribal system of government in which the military element was strong. There was no civil system or territorial administration because people were in a stage of perpetual expansion, migrating from one area to another.

Tribe and Family

Kinship was the basis of social structure, and a man was identified by the clan to which he belonged, as can be seen in the names of several Rig Vedic kings. People gave their primary loyalty to the tribe, which was called *jana*. The term *jana* occurs at about 275 places in the *Rig Veda*, and the term *janapada* or territory is not used even once. The people were attached to the tribe, since the territory or the kingdom was not yet established

Another important term which stands for the tribe in the *Rig Veda* is *vis* It is mentioned 170 times in that text. Probably the *vis* was divided into *grama* or smaller tribal units meant for fighting. When the *gramas* clashed with one another it caused *samgrama* or war. The most numerous varna of vaisya arose out of the *vis* or the mass of the tribal people

The term for family (*kula*) is mentioned rarely in the *Rig Veda*. It comprised not only mother, father, sons, slaves, etc., but many more people also It seems that family in early Vedic phase was indicated by the term *griha*, which frequently occurs in this text. In the earliest Indo-European languages the same term is used for nephew, grandson, cousin, etc This would mean that differentiation in family relationships leading to the setting up of separate households had not proceeded far, and the family was a very large joint unit. It was obviously a patriarchal family headed by the father, as was the case in the Roman society It seems that several generations of the family lived under the same roof Because it was a patriarchal society, the birth of a son was desired again and again, and especially people prayed to the gods for brave sons to fight the wars In the *Rig Veda* no desire is expressed for daughters, though the desire for children and cattle is a recurrent theme in the hymns.

Women could attend assemblies. They could offer sacrifices along with their husbands We have an instance of five women who composed hymns although the later texts mention 20 such women. Obviously the hymns were composed orally, and nothing written belongs to that period.

The institution of marriage was established, although symbols of primitive practices survived. We hear of a proposal made by Yami, the twin-sister of Yama, for establishing love relations, but the offer is resisted by Yama. We have some indications of polyandry. For instance, the Maruts are stated to have enjoyed Rodasi, and the two Asvin brothers are represented as living with Surya, the daughter of the

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sun god. But such instances are not too many. Possibly they indicate matrilineal traces, and we have a few instances of sons being named after their mother, as in the case of Mamateya.

We also notice the practice of levirate and widow remarriage in the *Rig Veda* There are no examples of child-marriage, and the marriageable age in the *Rig Veda* seems to have been 16 to 17

Social Divisions

The *Rig Veda* shows some consciousness of the physical appearance of people in north-western India in about 1500-1000 B C. Varna was the term used for colour, and it seems that the Aryans were fair and the indigenous inhabitants dark in complexion The colour distinction may have partially given rise to social orders, but its importance has been exaggerated by those western writers who believe in racial distinctions. The factor which contributed most to the creation of social divisions was the conquest of the indigenous inhabitants by the Aryans. The *dasas* and the *dasyus,* who were conquered by the Aryans, were treated as slaves and sudras. The tribal chiefs and the priests acquired a larger share of the booty, and they naturally grew at the cost of the common people, which created social inequalities in the tribe Gradually the tribal society was divided into three groups—warriors, priests and the people—on the same pattern as in Iran The fourth division called the sudras appeared towards the end of the Rig Vedic period, because it is mentioned for the first time in the tenth Book of the *Rig Veda,* which is the latest addition.

We repeatedly hear of slaves who were given as gifts to the priests They were mainly women slaves employed for domestic purposes It is clear that in Rig Vedic times slaves were not used directly in agriculture or other producing activities.

In the age of the *Rig Veda* divisions based on occupations had started But this division was not very sharp We hear of a family in which a member says "I am a poet, my father is a physician, and my mother is a grinder Earning livelihood through different means we live together . " We hear of gifts of cattle, chariots, horses, slaves, etc Unequal distribution of the spoils of war created social inequalities, and this helped the rise of princes and priests at the cost of the common tribal people. But since economy was mainly pastoral and not food-producing, the scope for collecting regular tributes from the people was very limited. We do not find gifts of land and even those of cereals are rare We find domestic slaves, but not the wage-earners Tribal elements in society were stronger and social divisions based on collection of taxes or accumulation of landed property were absent. The society was still tribal and largely egalitarian

Rig Vedic Gods

Every people discovers its religion in its surroundings. The Aryans found it difficult to explain the advent of rains, the appearance of the sun and the moon, and the existence of the rivers, mountains, etc. So they personified these natural forces and looked upon them as living beings to whom they gave human or animal attributes We have a large number of such divinities in the *Rig Veda,* which is full of hymns composed in their honour by the poets of various families The most important divinity in the *Rig Veda* is Indra, who is called Purandara or breaker of forts. Indra played the role of a warlord, leading the Aryan soldiers to victory against the demons Two hundred and fifty hymns are devoted to him. He is considered to be the rain god and thought to be responsible for causing rainfall. The second position is occupied by Agni (fire god) to whom 200 hymns are devoted. Fire played a significant part in the life of the primitive peoples because of its use in burning forests, cooking, etc. The cult

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of fire commanded an important place not only in India but also in Iran. In Vedic times Agni acted as a kind of intermediary between the gods on the one hand and the people on the other. The oblations offered to Agni were supposed to be carried in the form of smoke to the sky, and thus transmitted to the gods. The third important position is occupied by Varuna who personified water. Varuna was supposed to uphold the natural order, and whatever happened in the world was thought to be the reflection of his desires Soma was considered to be the god of plants, and an intoxicating drink is named after him. The *Rig Veda* has a large number of hymns, which explain the preparation of this drink from plants that have not been satisfactorily identified so far. The Maruts personify the storm Thus we have a large number of gods, who represent the different forces of nature in one form or another, but are also assigned human activities

We also find some female divinities such as Aditi, and Ushas who represented the appearance of the dawn But they were not prominent in the time of the *Rig Veda;* in the patriarchal set-up of the period the male gods were far more important than the female.

The dominant mode of worshipping the gods was through the recitation of prayers and offering of sacrifices. Prayers played an important part in Rig Vedic times Both collective and individual prayers were made Originally every tribe or clan was the votary of a special god. It seems that prayers were offered to gods in chorus by the members of a whole tribe. This also happened in the case of sacrifices Agni and Indra were invited to partake of sacrifices made by the whole tribe (*jana*) Offerings of vegetables, barley, etc , were made to gods But in Rig Vedic times the process was not accompanied by any ritual or sacrificial formulae. At this stage the magical power of the word was not considered so important as it came to be in later Vedic times Why did people worship gods in the time of the *Rig Veda ?* They did not worship gods for their spiritual uplift or for ending the miseries of existence. They asked mainly for *praja* (children), *pasu* (cattle), food, wealth, health, etc.

EXERCISES

1. What is meant by the Aryans? Where did they live originally and how did they come to India?
2. Give an account of the material life of the Rig Vedic people Is it correct to call them an agricultural community?
3. Describe the political organization in the age of the *Rig Veda* To what extent was it tribal in character?
4. Why is the Rig Vedic society called tribal and patriarchal?
5. What gods did the Rig Vedic people worship and why?

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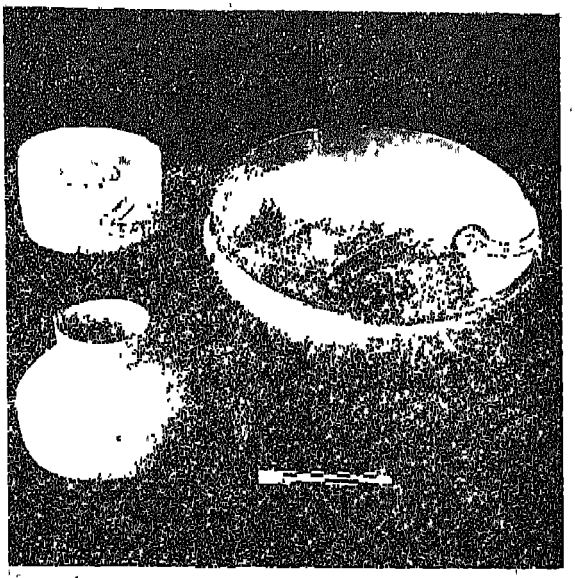
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CHAPTER 8

The Later Vedic Phase : Transition to State and Social Formation

Expansion in the Later Vedic Period (c. 1000-600 B.C.)

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 the Vedic hymns or *mantras* were known as the Samhitas The *Rig Veda Samhita* is the oldest Vedic text, on the basis of which we have described the early Vedic age. For purposes of singing, the prayers of the *Rig Veda* were set to tune, and this modified collection was known as the *Sama Veda Samhita*. In addition to the *Sama Veda*, in post-Rig Vedic times two other collections were composed These were the *Yajur Veda Samhita* and the *Atharva Veda Samhita* The *Yajur Veda* contains not only hymns but also rituals which have to accompany their recitation. The rituals reflect the social and political milieu in which they arose. The *Atharva Veda* contains charms and spells to ward off evils and diseases Its contents throw light on the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans. The Vedic Samhitas were followed by the composition of a series of texts known as the Brahmanas. These are full of ritualistic formulae and explain the social and religious aspects of rituals All these later Vedic texts were compiled in the upper Gangetic basin in *circa* 1000-600 B C In the same period and in the same area, digging and exploration have brought to light nearly 500 sites inhabited for the first time. These are called Painted Grey Ware (PGW) sites because they were inhabited by people who used earthen bowls and dishes made of painted grey pottery They also used iron weapons. With the combined evidence from the later Vedic texts and PGW iron-phase archaeology we can form an idea of the life of the people in the first half of the first millennium B C. in western Uttar Pradesh and adjoining areas of Panjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.



8.1 *Painted Grey Ware*

The texts show that the Aryans expanded from Panjab over the whole of western

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Uttar Pradesh covered by the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* The Bharatas and Purus, the two major tribes, combined and thus formed the Kuru people In the beginning they lived between the Sarasvati and the Drishadvati just on the fringe of the *doab*. Soon the Kurus occupied Delhi and the upper portion of the *doab*, the area called Kurukshetra or the land of the Kurus Gradually they coalesced with a people called the Panchalas, who occupied the middle portion of the *doab* The authority of the Kuru-Panchala people spread over Delhi and the upper and middle parts of the *doab*. They set up their capital at Hastinapur situated in the district of Meerut. The history of the Kuru tribe is important for the battle of the Bharata, which is the main theme of the great epic called the *Mahabharata*. This war is supposed to have been fought around 950 B.C. between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, although both of them belonged to the Kuru clan As a result practically the whole of the Kuru clan was wiped out.

Excavations at Hastinapur, datable to the period 900 B.C. to 500 B.C., have revealed settlements and faint beginnings of town life But they do not at all answer the description of Hastinapur in the *Mahabharata* because the epic was finally compiled much later in about the fourth century A.D. when material life had advanced much. In later Vedic times people hardly knew the use of burnt bricks The mud structures that have been discovered at Hastinapur could not be imposing and lasting. From traditions we learn that Hastinapur was flooded, and the remnants of the Kuru clan moved to Kausambi near Allahabad.

The Panchala kingdom, which covered the modern districts of Bareilley, Badaun and Farukhabad, is famous for its philosopher kings and brahmana theologians.

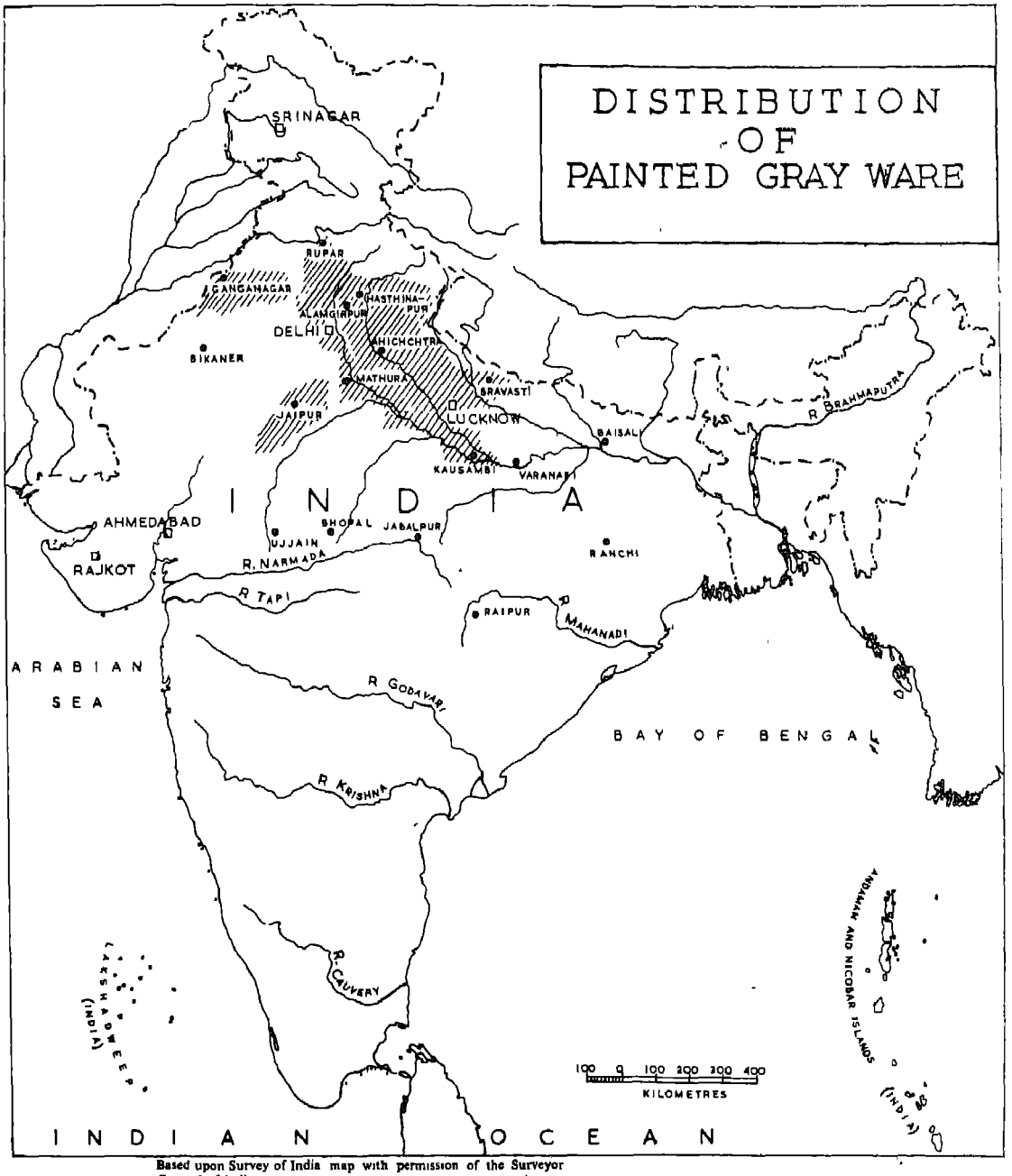
Towards the end of the later Vedic period, around 600 B. C. the Vedic people spread from the *doab* further east to Kosala in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha in north Bihar. Although Kosala is associated with the story of Rama, he is not mentioned in Vedic literature. In eastern Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar the Vedic people had to contend against a people who used copper implements and the black-and-red earthen pots. In western Uttar Pradesh they possibly came up against the people who used pots of ochre or red colour and copper implements; they had been living there from about 1800 B C They possibly also encountered thin habitations of some people using black-and-red ware. It is suggested that at a few places they came against the users of the late Harappan culture, but these people seem to represent a conglomerate culture which cannot be characterised as purely Harappan Whoever be the opponents of the later Vedic peoples evidently they did not occupy any large and compact area and their number in the upper Gangetic basin does not seem to have been large. The Vedic people succeeded in the second phase of their expansion because they used iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots.

The PGW—Iron Phase Culture and Later Vedic Economy

From around 1000 B.C, iron was used in the Gandhara area in Pakistan Iron implements buried with dead bodies have been discovered in good numbers. They have also been found in Baluchistan At about the same time the use of iron appeared in eastern Panjab, western Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Excavations show that iron weapons such as arrow-heads and spear-heads came to be commonly used in western Uttar Pradesh from about 800 B.C. With iron weapons the Vedic people may have defeated the few adversaries that may have faced them in the upper portion of the *doab*. The iron axe may have been used to clear the forests in the upper Gangetic basin, although because of rainfall ranging between 35 cm to 65 cm these forests may not have been so

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line

Figure 7 *PGW Cultures*

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8.2 Iron Objects from PGW Layers at Atranjikhera

thick. Towards the end of the Vedic period knowledge of iron spread in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha. Iron implements have been discovered in this area from the seventh century B.C., and the metal itself is called *syama* or *krishna ayas* in the later Vedic texts.

Although very few agricultural tools made of iron have been found, there is no doubt that agriculture was the chief means of livelihood of the later Vedic people. Late Vedic texts speak of six, eight, twelve and even twenty-four oxen yoked to the plough. This may be an exaggeration. Ploughing was done with the help of the wooden ploughshare, which would possibly work in the light soil of the upper Gangetic basin. Enough bullocks could not be available because of cattle slaughter in sacrifices. Therefore agriculture was primitive, but there is no doubt about its wide prevalence. The *Satapatha Brahmana* speaks at length about the ploughing rituals. According to ancient legends Janaka, the king of Videha and father of Sita, lent his hand to the plough. In those days even kings and princes did not hesitate to take to manual labour. Balarama, the brother of Krishna, is called Haladhara or wielder of the plough. In later times ploughing came to be prohibited for the members of the upper varnas.

The Vedic people continued to produce barley, but during this period rice and wheat became their chief crops. In subsequent times wheat became the staple food of the people in Panjab and western Uttar Pradesh. For the first time the Vedic people came to be acquainted with rice in the *doab*. It is called *vrihi* in the Vedic texts, and its remains recovered from Hastinapur belong to the eighth century B.C. The use of rice is recommended in rituals, but that of wheat only rarely. Various kinds of lentils were also produced by the later Vedic people.

The later Vedic period saw the rise of diverse arts and crafts. We hear of smiths and smelters, who had certainly to do something with iron working from about 1000 B.C. Numerous copper tools of the pre-1000 B.C. period found in western Uttar Pradesh and Bihar might suggest the existence of coppersmiths in both Vedic and non-Vedic societies. The Vedic people may have used the copper mines of Khetri in Rajasthan. In any case copper was one of the first metals to be used by the Vedic people. Copper objects have been found in Painted Grey Ware sites. They were used mainly for war and hunting, and also for ornaments.

Weaving was confined to women but was practised on a wide scale. Leather work, pottery, and carpenter's work made great progress. The later Vedic people were acquainted with four types of pottery: black-and-red ware, black-slipped ware, painted grey ware and red

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ware. The last type of pottery was most popular with them, and has been found almost all over western Uttar Pradesh. However, the most distinctive pottery of the period is known as Painted Grey Ware. It consisted of bowls and dishes, which were used either for rituals or for eating or for both, but by the upper orders Glass hoards and bangles found in the PGW layers may have been used as prestige objects by a few persons On the whole both Vedic texts and excavations indicate the cultivation of specialized crafts. Jewel-workers are also mentioned in later Vedic texts, and they possibly catered to the needs of the richer sections of society

Agriculture and various crafts enabled the later Vedic people to lead a settled life. Excavations and explorations give us some idea about settlements in later Vedic times Widespread Painted Grey Ware sites are found not only in western Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, which was the Kuru-Panchala area, but also in the adjoining parts of Panjab and Haryana, which was the Madra area and in those of Rajasthan, which was the Matsya area Altogether we can count nearly 500 sites, mostly belonging to the upper Gangetic basin Only a few sites such as Hastinapur, Atranjikhera and Noh have been excavated. Since the thickness of the material remains of habitation ranges from one metre to three metres, it seems that these settlements lasted from one to three centuries Mostly these were entirely new settlements without having any immediate predecessors People lived in mudbrick houses or in wattle-and-daub houses erected on wooden poles Although the structures are poor, ovens and cereals (rice) recovered from the sites show that the Painted Grey Ware people, who seem to be the same as the later Vedic people, were agricultural and led a settled life But since they cultivated with the wooden ploughshare, the peasants could not produce enough for feeding those who were engaged in other occupations Hence peasants could not contribute much to the rise of towns.

Although the term *nagara* is used in later Vedic texts we can trace only the faint beginnings of towns towards the end of the later Vedic period. Hastinapur and Kausambi (near Allahabad) can be regarded as primitive towns belonging to the end of the Vedic period. They may be called proto-urban sites. The Vedic texts also refer to the seas and sea voyages This suggests some kind of commerce which may have been stimulated by the rise of new arts and crafts.

On the whole the later Vedic phase registered a great advance in the material life of the people. The pastoral and semi-nomadic forms of living were relegated to the background Agriculture became the primary source of livelihood, and life became settled and sedentary. Supplemented by diverse arts and crafts the Vedic people now settled down permanently in the upper Gangetic plains. The peasants living in the plains produced enough to maintain themselves, and they could also spare a marginal part of their produce for the support of princes and priests.

Political Organization

In later Vedic times popular assemblies lost in importance, and royal power increased at their cost The *vidatha* completely disappeared. The *sabha* and *samiti* continued to hold the ground, but their character changed They came to be dominated by princes and rich nobles Women were no longer permitted to sit on the *sabha*, and it was now dominated by nobles and brahmanas.

The formation of wider kingdoms made the king more powerful. Tribal authority tended to become territorial. Princes ruled over tribes, but their dominant tribes became identical with territories, which might be inhabited by tribes other than their own. In the beginning each area was named after the tribe which settled there first, but eventually the tribal name

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became current as the territorial name. At first Panchala was the name of a people, and then it became the name of a region. The term *rashtra*, which indicates territory, first appears in this period.

The king's influence was strengthened by rituals. He performed the *rajasuya* sacrifice, which was supposed to confer supreme power on him. He performed the *asvamedha*, which meant unquestioned control over an area in which the royal horse ran uninterrupted. He also performed the *vajapeya* or the chariot race, in which the royal chariot was made to win the race against his kinsmen. All these rituals impressed the people with the increasing power and prestige of the king.

During this period collection of taxes and tributes seems to have become common. They were probably deposited with an officer called *sangrihitri* The epics tell us that at the time of big sacrifices large-scale distributions were made by the princes and all sections of people were fed sumptuously. In the discharge of his duties the king was assisted by the priest, the commander, the chief queen and a few other high functionaries. At the lower level the administration was possibly carried on by village assemblies, which may have been controlled by the chiefs of the dominant tribes. These assemblies were also entrusted with the trial of local cases. But even in later Vedic times the king did not possess a standing army. Tribal units were mustered in times of war, and, according to one ritual for success in war, the king had to eat along with his people (*vis*) from the same plate.

Social Organization

The later Vedic society came to be divided into four varnas called the brahmanas, rajanyas or kshatriyas, vaisyas and sudras. The growing cult of sacrifices enormously added to the power of the brahmanas In the beginning the brahmanas were only one of the sixteen classes of priests, but they gradually overshadowed the other priestly groups and emerged as the most important class. They conducted rituals and sacrifices for their clients and for themselves, and also officiated at the festivals associated with agricultural operations. They prayed for the success of their patron in war, and in return the king pledged not to do any harm to them. Sometimes the brahmanas came into conflict with the rajanyas, who represented the order of the warrior-nobles, for positions of supremacy But when the two upper orders had to deal with the lower orders they made up their differences. From the end of the later Vedic period it began to be emphasized that the two should cooperate to rule over the rest of society The vaisyas constituted the common people, and they were assigned the producing functions such as agriculture, cattle-breeding, etc Some of them also worked as artisans Towards the end of the Vedic period they began to engage in trade. The vaisyas appear to be the only tribute-payers in later Vedic times, and the kshatriyas are represented as living on the tributes collected from the vaisyas The process of subjugating the mass of the tribesmen to the position of tribute-payers was long and protracted. We have several rituals prescribed for making the refractory people (*vis* or *vaisya*) submissive to the prince (*rajanya*). All the three higher varnas shared one common feature; they were entitled to *upanayana* or investiture with the sacred thread according to the Vedic *mantras*. The fourth varna was deprived of the sacred thread ceremony, and with this began the imposition of disabilities on the sudras

The prince, who represented the *rajanya* order, tried to assert his power over all the three other varnas. According to the *Aitareya Brahmana*, in relation to the prince the brahmana is described as a seeker of livelihood and an acceptor of gifts but removable at will. A vaisya is called tribute-paying, meant for being beaten, and to be oppressed at will. The worst

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position is reserved for the sudra. He is called the servant of another, to be made to work at will by another, and to be beaten at will.

But generally the later Vedic texts draw a line of demarcation between the three higher orders on the one hand, and the sudras on the other. There were, nevertheless, several public rituals connected with the coronation of the king in which the sudras participated, presumably as members of the original tribe. Certain sections of artisans such as *rathakara* or chariot-maker enjoyed a high status, and were entitled to the sacred thread ceremony Therefore even in later Vedic times varna distinctions had not advanced very far

In the family we notice the increasing power of the father, who could even disinherit his son In princely families the right of primogeniture was getting stronger Male ancestors came to be worshipped. Women were generally given a lower position Although some women theologians took part in philosophic discussions and some queens participated in coronation rituals, ordinarily women were thought to be inferior and subordinate to men

The institution of *gotra* appeared in later Vedic times Literally it means the cow-pen or the place where cattle belonging to the whole clan are kept, but in course of time it signified descent from a common ancestor. People began to practise *gotra* exogamy. No marriage could take place between persons belonging to the same *gotra* or having the same ancestor.

Asramas or four stages of life were not well established in Vedic times. In the post-Vedic texts we hear of four *asramas*: that of *brahmachari* or student, *grihastha* or householder, *vanaprastha* or partial retirement and *samyasa* or complete retirement from the world. But only three are mentioned in the later Vedic texts, the last or the fourth stage had not been well established in later Vedic times.

Gods, Rituals and Philosophy

In the later Vedic period the upper *doab* developed to be the cradle of Aryan culture under brahmanical influence. The whole of the Vedic literature seems to have been compiled in this area in the land of the Kuru-Panchalas. The cult of sacrifice was the corner-stone of this culture and was accompanied by numerous rituals and formulae.

The two outstanding Rig Vedic gods, Indra and Agni, lost their former importance. On the other hand Prajapati, the creator, came to occupy the supreme position in the later Vedic pantheon. Some of the other minor gods of the Rig Vedic period also came to the forefront Rudra, the god of animals, became important in later Vedic times and Vishnu came to be conceived as th preserver and protector of the people who now led a settled life instead of a semi-nomadic life as they did in Rig Vedic times. In addition, some symbolic objects began to be worshipped, and we notice signs of idolatry in later Vedic times As society became divided into social classes such as brahmanas, rajanyas, vaisyas and sudras, some of the social orders came to have their own deities. Pushan, who was supposed to look after cattle, came to be regarded as the god of the sudras, although in the age of the *Rig Veda* cattle-rearing was the primary occupation of the Aryans

People worshipped gods for the same material reasons in this period as they did in earlier times However, the mode of worship changed considerably Prayers continued to be recited, but they ceased to be the dominant mode of placating the gods. Sacrifices became far more important, and they assumed both public and domestic character. Public sacrifices involved the king and the whole of the community, which was still in many cases identical with the tribe. Private sacrifices were performed by individuals in their houses because in this period the Vedic people led a

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settled life and maintained well-established households. Individuals offered oblations to Agni, and each one of these took the form of a ritual or sacrifice.

Sacrifices involved the killing of animals on a large scale and especially the destruction of cattle wealth. The guest was known as *goghna* or one who was fed on cattle

Brahmanas were only one of the sixteen types of priests. The priests who officiated at sacrifices were rewarded generously and given *dakshinas* or gifts.

Sacrifices were accompanied by formulae which had to be carefully pronounced by the sacrificer. The sacrificer was known as the *yajamana*, the performer of *yajna*, and much of his success depended on the magical power of words uttered in the sacrifices. Some rituals performed by the Vedic Aryans are common to the Indo-European peoples, but many rituals seem to have developed on the Indian soil.

These formulae and sacrifices were invented, adopted and elaborated by the priests called the brahmanas The brahmanas claimed a monopoly of priestly knowledge and expertise. They invented a large number of rituals, some of which were adopted from the non-Aryans. The reason for the invention and elaboration of the rituals is not clear, though mercenary motives cannot be ruled out. We hear that as many as 240,000 cows were given as *dakshina* or gift to the officiating priest in the *rajsuya* sacrifice.

In addition to cows, which were usually given as sacrificial gifts, gold, cloth and horses were also given. Sometimes the priests claimed portions of territory as *dakshina*, but the grant of land as sacrificial fee is not well established in the later Vedic period. The *Satapatha Brahmana* states that in the *asvamedha*, north, south, east and west, all should be given to the priest. If this really happened, then what would remain to the king? This therefore merely indicates the desire of the priests to grab as much land as possible But really considerable transfer of land to priests could not have taken place. There is a reference where land, which was being given to the priests, refused to be transferred to them

Towards the end of the Vedic period we notice a strong reaction against priestly domination, against cults and rituals, especially in the land of the Panchalas and Videha where, around 600 B.C., the Upanishads were compiled. These philosophical texts criticized the rituals and laid stress on the value of right belief and knowledge They emphasized that the knowledge of the self or *atma* should be acquired and the relation of *atma* with Brahma should be properly understood. Brahma emerged as the supreme god, comparable to the powerful kings of the period. Some of the kshatriya princes in Panchala and Videha also cultivated this type of thinking and created the atmosphere for the reform of the priest-dominated religion Their teachings also promoted the cause of stability and integration. Emphasis on the changelessness, indestructibility and immortality of *atma* or soul served the cause of stability which was needed for the rising state power. Stress on the relation of *atma* with Brahma served the cause of loyalty to superior authority.

The later Vedic period saw certain important changes. We find the beginnings of territorial kingdoms. Wars were fought not only for the possession of cattle but also for that of territory. The famous Mahabharata battle, fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, is attributed to this period. The predominantly pastoral society of early Vedic times became agricultural. The tribal pastoralists came to be transformed into peasants who could maintain their chief with frequent tributes. Chiefs grew at the expense of the tribal peasantry, and handsomely rewarded the priests who supported their patrons against the common people called the vaisyas The sudras were

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still a small serving order The tribal society broke up into a varna-divided society. But varna distinctions could not be carried too far. In spite of the support of the brahmanas the rajanyas or the kshatriyas could not establish a state system. A state cannot be set up without a regular system of taxes and a professional army, which again depends on taxes. But the existing mode of agriculture did not leave scope for taxes and tributes in sufficient measure.

EXERCISES

1. Trace the expansion of the Aryans in the later Vedic period.
2. Describe the material life of the later Vedic people. How was it different from the Rig Vedic life?
3. What is meant by the Painted Grey Ware culture?
4. Give an account of the political set-up in the later Vedic period
5. How was society organized in later Vedic times?
6. What kind of religion developed in the later Vedic age?

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CHAPTER 9

Jainism and Buddhism

Numerous religious sects arose in the middle Gangetic basin in the sixth century B.C. We hear of as many as 62 religious sects in this period Many of these sects were based on regional customs and rituals practised by different peoples living in north-east India. Of these sects Jainism and Buddhism were the most important, and they emerged as the most potent religious reform movements.

Causes of Origin

In post-Vedic times society was clearly divided into four varnas: brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaisyas and sudras. Each varna was assigned well-defined functions, although it was emphasized that varna was based on birth and the two higher varnas were given some privileges The brahmanas, who were given the functions of priests and teachers, claimed the highest status in society. They demanded several privileges, including those of receiving gifts and exemption from taxation and punishments. In post-Vedic texts we have many instances of such privileges enjoyed by them. The kshatriyas ranked second in the varna hierarchy. They fought and governed and lived on the taxes collected from the peasants. The vaisyas were engaged in agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade. They appear as principal taxpayers. However, along with the two higher varnas they were placed in the category of *dvija* or the twice-born. A *dvija* was entitled to wearing sacred thread and studying the Vedas from which the sudras were kept out The sudras were meant for serving the three higher varnas, and along with women were barred from taking to Vedic studies. They appear as domestic slaves, agricultural slaves, craftsmen and hired labourers in post-Vedic times. They were called cruel, greedy and thieving in habits and some of them were treated as untouchables. The higher the varna the more privileged and purer a person was. The lower the varna of an offender, the more severe was the punishment prescribed for him.

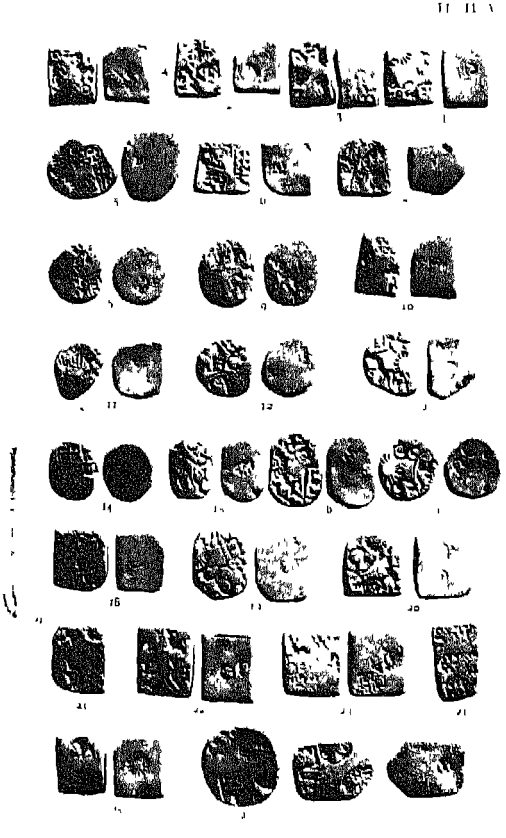
Naturally the varna-divided society seems to have generated tensions We have no means to find out the reactions of the vaisyas and the sudras The kshatriyas, who acted as rulers, however, reacted strongly against the ritualistic domination of the brahmanas, and seem to have led a kind of protest movement against the importance attached to birth in the varna system. The kshatriya reaction against the domination of the priestly class called brahmanas, who claimed various privileges, was one of the causes of the origin of new religions. Vardhamana Mahavira, who founded Jainism, and Gautama Buddha, who founded Buddhism, belonged to the kshatriya clan, and both disputed the authority of the brahmanas.

But the real cause of the rise of these new religions lay in the introduction of a new agricultural economy in north-eastern India. North-

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east India, including the regions of eastern Uttar Pradesh and northern and southern Bihar, has about 100 cm of rainfall. Before these areas came to be colonized on a large scale, they were thickly forested. The thick jungles could not be cleared without the aid of iron axes. Although some people lived in this area before 600 B.C, they used implements of stone and copper, and they led a precarious life on river banks and confluences, where land was opened to settlement through the process of erosion and flooding. In the middle Gangetic basin large-scale habitations began from about 600 B.C, when iron came to be used in this area. On account of the moist nature of the soil in this area too many iron tools of earliest times have not survived, but quite a few axes have been recovered from the layers belonging to *circa* 600-500 B.C. The use of iron tools made possible clearance, agriculture and large settlements. The agricultural economy based on the iron ploughshare required the use of bullocks, and it could not flourish without animal husbandry. But the Vedic practice of killing cattle indiscriminately in sacrifices stood in the way of the progress of new agriculture. The cattle wealth slowly decimated because the cows and bullocks were killed in numerous Vedic sacrifices. The tribal people living on the southern and eastern fringes of Magadha also killed cattle for food. But if the new agrarian economy had to be stable this killing had to be stopped.



PUNCH MARKED SILVER

9.1 ***Punch-marked Coins***

The period saw the rise of a large number of cities in north-eastern India. We may refer, for example, to Kausambi near Allahabad, Kusinagar (in the Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh), Banaras, Vaisali (in the newly created district of the same name in north Bihar), Chirand (in the Chapra district) and Rajgir (situated at a distance of about 100 km from Patna). Besides others these cities had many artisans and traders, who began to use coins for the first time. The earliest coins belonged to the fifth century B.C., and they are called punch-marked coins. They circulated for the first time in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The use of coins naturally facilitated trade and commerce, which added to the importance of the vaisyas. In the brahmanical society the vaisyas ranked third, the first two being brahmanas and kshatriyas. Naturally they looked for some religion which would improve their position. The vaisyas extended generous support to both Mahavira and

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Gautama Buddha. The merchants, called the *setthis*, made handsome gifts to Gautama Buddha and his disciples. There were several reasons for it First, Jainism and Buddhism in the initial stage did not attach any importance to the existing varna system Second, they preached the gospel of non-violence, which would put an end to wars between different kingdoms and consequently promote trade and commerce. Third, the brahmanical law-books, called the Dharmasutras, decried lending money on interest. A person who lived on interest was condemned by them Therefore the vaisyas, who lent money on account of growing trade and commerce, were not held in esteem and were eager to improve their social status.

On the other hand we also notice a strong reaction against various forms of private property Old-fashioned people did not like the use and accumulation of coins made certainly of silver and copper and possibly of gold. They detested new dwellings and dresses, new systems of transport which amounted to luxury, and they hated war and violence The new forms of property created social inequalities, and caused misery and suffering to the masses of the people So the common people yearned to return to primitive life. They wanted to get back to the ascetic ideal which dispensed with the new forms of property and the new style of life. Both Jainism and Buddhism preferred simple, puritan, ascetic living. The Buddhist and Jaina monks were asked to forgo the good things of life. They were not allowed to touch gold and silver. They were to accept only as much from their patrons as was sufficient to keep body and soul together. They therefore rebelled against the material advantages stemming from the new life in the Gangetic basin. In other words we find the same kind of reaction against the changes in material life in north-eastern India in the six'h century B.C. as we notice against the changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution in modern times. Just as the advent of Industrial Revolution made many people think of return to the pre-machine age life, similarly people in the past wanted to return to the pre-iron age life.

Vardhamana Mahavira and Jainism

Vardhamana Mahavira was born in 540 B.C. in a village near Vaisali, which is identical with Basarh in the district of Vaisali in north Bihar. His father was the head of a famous kshatriya clan, and his mother a Lichchhavi princess. They were also connected with the royal family of Magadha. High connections made it easy for Mahavira to approach princes and nobles in the course of his mission.

In the beginning Mahavira led the life of a householder, but in the search for truth he abandoned the world at the age of 30 and became an ascetic He kept on wandering for 12 years from place to place He would not stay for more than a day in a village and for more than five days in a town. During the course of his long journey, it is said, he never changed his clothes for 12 years, and abandoned them altogether when he attained perfect knowledge or *kaivalya* at the age of 42. Through *kaivalya* he conquered misery and happiness Because of this conquest he is known as Mahavira or the great hero or *jina*, i e., the conqueror, and his followers are known as Jainas He propagated his religion for 30 years, and his mission took him to Kosala, Magadha, Mithila, Champa, etc. He passed away at the age of 72 in 468 B C at a place called Pavapuri near modern Rajgir.

Doctrines of Jainism

Jainism taught five doctrines· (1) do not commit violence, (2) do not speak a lie, (3) do not steal, (4) do not acquire property and (5) observe continence (*brahmacharya*). It is said that only the fifth doctrine was added by Mahavira, the other four being taken over by him from previous teachers Although Parsva, the predecessor of Mahavira, had asked his follow-

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ers to cover the upper and lower portions of their body, Mahavira asked them to discard clothes completely. This implies that Mahavira asked his followers to lead a more austere life. On account of this in later times Jainism was divided into two sects : *svetambaras* or those who put on white dress, and *digambaras* or those who keep themselves naked.

Jainism recognized the existence of the gods but placed them lower than the *jina*. It did not condemn the varna system, as Buddhism did. According to Mahavira, a person is born in a high or in a lower varna in consequence of the sins or the virtues acquired by him in the previous birth. Mahavira looks for human values even in a chandala. In his opinion through pure and meritorious life members of the lower castes can attain liberation. Jainism mainly aims at the attainment of freedom from worldly bonds. It is not necessary to use any ritual for acquiring such liberation. It can be obtained through full knowledge and action. Full knowledge, action and liberation are considered to be the three gems or *ratnas* of Jainism.

Spread of Jainism

In order to spread the teachings of Jainism, Mahavira organized an order of his followers which admitted both men and women. It is said that his followers counted 14,000, which is not a large number. Since Jainism did not very clearly mark itself out from the brahmanical religion, it failed to attract the masses. Despite this Jainism gradually spread into south and west India. According to a late tradition, the spread of Jainism in Karnataka is attributed to Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.). The emperor became a Jaina, gave up his throne and spent the last years of his life in Karnataka as a Jaina ascetic. But this tradition is not corroborated by any other source. The second cause of the spread of Jainism in south India is said to be the great famine that took place in Magadha 200 years after the death of Mahavira. The famine lasted for 12 years, and so in order to protect themselves many a Jaina went to the south under the leadership of Bhadrabahu, but the rest of them stayed back in Magadha under the leadership of Sthalabahu. The immigrant Jainas spread Jainism in south India. At the end of the famine they came back to Magadha, where they developed differences with the local Jainas. Those who came back from the south claimed that even during the famine they strictly observed the religious rules, on the other hand, they alleged, the Jaina ascetics living in Magadha had violated those rules and become lax. In order to sort out these differences and to compile the main teachings of Jainism a council was convened in Pataliputra, modern Patna, but the southern Jainas boycotted the council and refused to accept its decisions. From now onwards the southerners began to be called *digambaras*, and the Magadhans *svetambaras*. However, epigraphic evidence for the spread of Jainism in Karnataka is not earlier than the third century A.D. In subsequent centuries, especially from the sixth century, numerous Jaina monastic establishments called *basadis* sprang up in Karnataka and were granted land by the kings for their support.

Jainism spread to Kalinga in Orissa in the fourth century B.C., and in the first century B.C. it enjoyed the patronage of the Kalinga king Kharavela who had defeated the princes of Andhra and Magadha. In the second and first centuries B.C. it also seems to have reached the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. In later centuries Jainism penetrated Malwa, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and even now these areas have a good number of Jainas, mainly engaged in trade and commerce. Although Jainism did not win as much state patronage as Buddhism did and did not spread very fast in early times, it still retains its hold in the areas where it spread. On the other hand Buddhism has practically disappeared from the Indian subcontinent.

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Contribution of Jainism

Jainism made the first serious attempt to mitigate the evils of the varna order and the ritualistic Vedic religion The early Jainas discarded Sanskrit language mainly patronized by the brahmanas. They adopted Prakrit language of the common people to preach their doctrines Their religious literature was written in Ardhamagadhi, and the texts were finally compiled in the sixth century A.D in Gujarat at a place called Valabhi, a great centre of education. The adoption of Prakrit by the Jainas helped the growth of this language and its literature Many regional languages developed out of Prakrit languages, particularly Sauraseni, out of which grew the Marathi language The Jainas composed the earliest important works in Apabhramsa and its first grammar. The Jaina literature contains epics, Puranas, novels and drama. A large portion of the Jaina writing is still in the form of manuscripts, which have not been published and which are found in the Jaina shrines of Gujarat and Rajasthan In early medieval times the Jainas also made good use of Sanskrit and wrote many texts in this language Last but not the least, they contributed to the growth of Kannada, in which they wrote extensively.

Gautama Buddha and Buddhism

Gautama Buddha or Siddhartha was a contemporary of Mahavira. He was born in 563 B.C in a Sakya kshatriya family in Kapilavastu, which is situated in the foothills of Nepal. Gautama's father seems to have been the elected ruler of Kapilavastu, and headed the republican clan of the Sakyas. His mother was a princess from the Kosalan dynasty. Thus, like Mahavira, Gautama also belonged to a noble family. Born in a republic, he also inherited some republican sentiments.

From his early childhood Gautama showed a meditative bent of mind. He was married early, but married life did not interest him. He was moved by the misery which people suffered in the world, and looked for solution. At the age of 29, like Mahavira again, he left home. He kept on wandering for about seven years and then attained knowledge at the age of 35 at Bodh Gaya under a *pipal* tree. From this time onwards he began to be called the Buddha or the enlightened.

Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermons at Sarnath in Banaras. He undertook long journeys and took his message far and wide. He had a very strong physique. which enabled him to walk 20 to 30 km a day He kept on wandering, preaching and meditating continuously for 40 years, resting only in the rainy season every year During this long period he encountered many staunch supporters of rival sects including the brahmanas, but defeated them in debates. His missionary activities did not discriminate between the rich and the poor, the high and the low, and man and woman. Gautama Buddha passed away at the age of 80 in 483 B.C. at a place called Kusinagar, identical with the village called Kasia in the district of Deoria in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Doctrines of Buddhism

The Buddha proved to be a practical reformer who took note of the realities of the day. He did not involve himself in fruitless controversies regarding the soul (*atman*) and the Brahma which raged strongly in his time; he addressed himself to the worldly problems He said that the world is full of sorrows and people suffer on account of desires. If desires are conquered, *nirvana* will be attained, that is, man will be free from the cycle of birth and death.

Gautama Buddha recommended an eightfold path (*astangika marga*) for the elimination of human misery. This path is attributed to him in a text of about the third century B.C. It comprised right observation, right determination, right speech. right action, right livelihood, right exercise, right memory and right medita-

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tion. If a person follows this eightfold path he would not depend on the machinations of the priests, and yet he will be able to reach his destination Gautama taught that a person should avoid the excess of both luxury and austerity. He prescribed the middle path.

The Buddha also laid down a code of conduct for his followers on the same lines as was done by the Jaina teachers. The main items in this social conduct are · (1) do not covet the property of others, (2) do not commit violence, (3) do not use intoxicants, (4) do not speak a lie, and (5) do not indulge in corrupt practices. These teachings are common to the social conduct ordained by almost all religions.

Special Features of Buddhism and the Causes of its Spread

Buddhism does not recognize the existence of god and soul (*atman*). This can be taken as a kind of revolution in the history of Indian religions. Since early Buddhism was not enmeshed in the clap-trap of philosophical discussion, it appealed to the common people. It particularly won the support of the lower orders as it attacked the varna system People were taken into the Buddhist order without any consideration of caste. Women also were admitted to the *sangha* and thus brought on a par with men. In comparison with brahmanism, Buddhism was liberal and democratic

Buddhism made a special appeal to the people of the non-Vedic areas where it found a virgin soil for conversion. The people of Magadha responded readily to Buddhism because they were looked down upon by the orthodox brahmanas. Magadha was placed outside the pale of the holy Aryavarata, the land of the Aryas, covering modern Uttar Pradesh The old tradition persists, and the people of north Bihar would not like to be cremated south of the Ganga in Magadha.

The personality of the Buddha and the method adopted by him to preach his religion helped the spread of Buddhism. He tried to fight evil by goodness and hatred by love He refused to be provoked by slander and abuse. He maintained poise and calm under difficult conditions, and tackled his opponents with wit and presence of mind. It is said that on one occasion an ignorant person abused him The Buddha listened on silently, and when the person had stopped abusing, the Buddha asked: "My son, if a person does not accept a present what will happen to it?" His adversary replied. "It remains with the person who has offered it." The Buddha then said "My son, I do not accept your abuse "

The use of Pali, the language of the people, also contributed to the spread of Buddhism. It facilitated the spread of Buddhist doctrines among the common people. Gautama Buddha also organized the *sangha* or the religious order, whose doors were kept open to everybody, irrespective of caste and sex. The only condition required of the monks was that they would faithfully observe the rules and regulations of the *sangha* Once they were enrolled as members of the Buddhist Church they had to take the vow of continence, poverty and faith. So there are three main elements in Buddhism. Buddha, *sangha* and *dhamma* As a result of organized preaching under the auspices of the *sangha* Buddhism made rapid strides even in the lifetime of the Buddha The monarchies of Magadha, Kosala and Kausambi and several republican states and their people adopted this religion.

Two hundred years after the death of the Buddha the famous Maurya king Asoka embraced Buddhism. This was an epoch-making event. Through his agents Asoka spread Buddhism into Central Asia, West Asia and Sri Lanka, and thus transformed it into a world religion. Even today Sri Lanka, Burma, Tibet and parts of China and Japan profess Buddhism. Although Buddhism disappeared from the land of its birth, it continues to hold ground in the coun-

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tries of South Asia, South-East Asia and East Asia.

Causes of the Decline of Buddhism

By the twelfth century A.D., Buddhism became practically extinct in India. It continued to exist in a changed form in Bengal and Bihar till the twelfth century, but after that this religion almost completely vanished from the country. What were its causes? We find that in the beginning every religion is inspired by the spirit of reform, but eventually it succumbs to rituals and ceremonies it originally denounced. Buddhism underwent a similar metamorphosis. It became a victim to the evils of brahmanism against which it had fought in the beginning. To meet the Buddhist challenge the brahmanas reformed their religion. They stressed the need for preserving the cattle wealth and assured women and sudras of admission to heaven Buddhism, on the other hand, changed for the worse. Gradually the Buddhist monks were cut off from the mainstream of people's life; they gave up Pali, the language of the people, and took to Sanskrit, the language of intellectuals. From the first century A.D. they practised idol worship on a large scale and received numerous offerings from devotees. The rich offerings supplemented by generous royal grants to the Buddhist monasteries made the life of monks easy. Some of the monasteries such as Nalanda collected revenue from as many as 200 villages. By the seventh century A.D. the Buddhist monasteries had come to be dominated by ease-loving p ople and became centres of corrupt practices which Gautama Buddha had strictly prohibited. The new form of Buddhism was known as Vajrayana The enormous wealth of the monasteries with women living in them led to further degeneration. Buddhists came to look upon women as objects of lust. The Buddha is reported to have said to his favourite disciple Ananda "If women were not admitted into the monasteries Buddhism would have continued for thousands of years, but because this admission has been granted it would last only five hundred years."

For their riches the monasteries came to be coveted by the Turkish invaders. They became special targets of the invaders' greed The Turks killed a large number of Buddhist monks in Nalanda, although some of the monks managed to escape to Nepal and Tibet In any case by the twelfth century A.D. Buddhism had practically disappeared from the land of its birth.

Importance and Influence of Buddhism

Despite its ultimate disappearance as an organized religion Buddhism left its abiding mark on the history of India The Buddhists showed a keen awareness of the problems that faced the people of north-east India in the sixth century B C. The new iron ploughshare agriculture, trade, and the use of coins enabled the traders and nobles to accumulate wealth, and we hear of people possessing eighty *kotis* of wealth All this naturally created sharp social and economic inequalities. So Buddhism asked people not to accumulate wealth According to it poverty breeds hatred, cruelty and violence. To eradicate these evils the Buddha advised that farmers should be provided with grain and other facilities, the traders with wealth, and the labourers with wages These measures were recommended to remove poverty in this world. Buddhism further taught that if the poor gave alms to the monks they would be born wealthy in the next world

The code of conduct prescribed for the monks represents a reaction against the material conditions of north-east India in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. It imposes restrictions on the food, dress and sexual behaviour of the monks They cannot accept gold and silver and they cannot take to sale and purchase. These rules were relaxed after the death of the Buddha, but the early rules suggest a return to a kind of primitive communism, a characteristic of the tribal society

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in which people did not practise trade and plough agriculture. The code of conduct prescribed for monks partially reflects a revolt against the use of money, private property and luxurious living, which appeared in the sixth century B C. in north-east India In those days property and money were regarded as luxuries.

Although Buddhism tried to mitigate the evils resulting from the new material life in the sixth century B C , it also tried to consolidate the changes in the social and economic life of the people. The rule that debtors were not permitted to be members of the *sangha* naturally helped the moneylenders and richer sections of society from whose clutches the debtors could not be saved. Similarly the rule that slaves could not join the *sangha* helped the slave-owners Thus the rules and teachings of Gautama Buddha took full account of the new changes in the material life and strengthened them ideologically.

Although the Buddhist monks had renounced the world and repeatedly criticised the greedy brahmanas, in several ways they resembled the brahmanas. Both of them did not participate directly in production, and lived on the alms or gifts given by society. Both of them emphasised the virtues of carrying out family obligations, protecting private property and respecting political authority. Both of them supported the social order based on classes; for the monks however the varna was based on action and attributes but for the brahmanas it was based on birth.

Undoubtedly the objective of the Buddhist teaching was to secure the salvation of the individual or *nirvana*. Those who found it difficult to adjust themselves to the break-up of the old tribal society and the rise of gross social inequalities on account of private property were provided with some way of escape, but it was confined to the monks. No escape was provided for the lay followers, who were taught to come to terms with the existing situation.

Buddhism made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and sudras. Since both women and sudras were placed in the same category by brahmanism, they were neither given sacred thread nor allowed to read the Vedas. Their conversion to Buddhism freed them from such mark of inferiority.

With its emphasis on non-violence and the sanctity of animal life, Buddhism boosted the cattle wealth of the country The earliest Buddhist text *Suttanipata* declares the cattle to be givers of food, beauty and happiness (*annada vannada sukhada*), and thus pleads for their protection. This teaching came significantly at a time when the non-Aryans slaughtered animals for food, and the Aryans in the name of religion. The brahmanical insistence on the sacredness of the cow and non-violence was apparently derived from Buddhist teachings

Buddhism created and developed a new awareness in the field of intellect and culture. It taught the people not to take things for granted but to argue and judge them on merits. To a certain extent the place of superstition was taken by logic. This promoted rationalism among people. In order to preach the doctrines of the new religion the Buddhists compiled a new type of literature. They enormously enriched Pali by their writings. The early Pali literature can be divided into three categories. The first contains the sayings and teachings of the Buddha, the second deals with the rules to be observed by members of the *sangha*, and the third presents the philosophical exposition of the *dhamma*.

The literary activities of the Buddhist monks continued even in the Middle Ages, and some famous Apabhramsa writings in east India were composed by them. The Buddhist monasteries developed as great centres of learning, and can be called residential universities. Mention may be made of Nalanda and Vikramasila in Bihar, and Valabhi in Gujarat.

Buddhism left its mark on the art of ancient India The first human statues worshipped in India were probably those of the Buddha. The

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faithful devotees portrayed the various events in the life of the Buddha in stone. The panels found at Gaya in Bihar and at Sanchi and Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh are illuminating examples of artistic activity. From the first century A D the panel images of Gautama Buddha began to be made. The Greek and the Indian sculptors worked together to create a new kind of art on the north-west frontier of India, which is known as the Gandhara art. The images made in this region betray Indian as well as foreign influence. For the residence of the monks rooms were hewn out of the rocks, and thus began the cave architecture in the Barabar hills in Gaya and in western India around Nasik. Under the impetus of Roman trade Buddhist art flourished in the Krishna delta, and under that of Central Asian contacts it throve in Mathura and Gandhara.

EXERCISES

1. Explain the causes of the origin of the religious sects in north-east India in the sixth century B C.
2. "The sixth century B.C. is remarkable for the origin of numerous religious sects in north-east India." Explain
3. Who was Vardhamana Mahavira and what were his teachings?
4. Trace the origin and development of Jainism in India.
5. Give an account of Jainism. What did it contribute to Indian society?
6. Who was Gautama Buddha? State his teachings
7. Explain the social aspects of Buddhism.
8. Why did Buddhism spread in India and abroad?
9. Account for the decline of Buddhism.
10. Discuss the importance and influence of Buddhism.

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CHAPTER 10

Territorial States and the First Magadhan Empire

From the sixth century B.C. the widespread use of iron in eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar facilitated the formation of large territorial states. Because of iron weapons the warrior class now played an important part. The new agricultural tools and implements enabled the peasants to produce far more foodgrains than they required for consumption The extra product could be collected by the princes to meet their military and administrative needs. The surplus could also be made available to the towns which had sprung up in the sixth century B.C These material advantages naturally enabled the people to stick to their land, and also to expand at the cost of the neighbouring areas. The rise of large states with towns as their base of operations strengthened the territorial idea People owed strong allegiance to the *janapada* or the territory to which they belonged and not to the *jana* or the tribe to which they belonged.

The Mahajanapadas

In the age of the Buddha we find 16 large states called *mahajanapadas*. They were mostly situated north of the Vindhyas and extended from the north-west frontier to Bihar. Of these, Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti seem to have been considerably powerful. Beginning from the east we hear of the kingdom of Anga which covered the modern districts of Monghyr and Bhagalpur. It had its capital at Champa, which shows signs of habitation from the sixth century B C. Eventually the kingdom of Anga was swallowed by its powerful neighbour Magadha.

Magadha embraced the modern districts of Patna, Gaya and parts of Shahabad, and grew to be the leading state of the time. North of the Ganga in the division of Tirhut was the state of the Vajjis which included eight clans. But the most powerful were the Lichchhavis with their capital at Vaisali which is identical with the village of Basarh in the district of Vaisali. The Puranas push the antiquity of Vaisali to a much earlier period, but archaeologically Basarh was not settled earlier than the sixth century B.C.

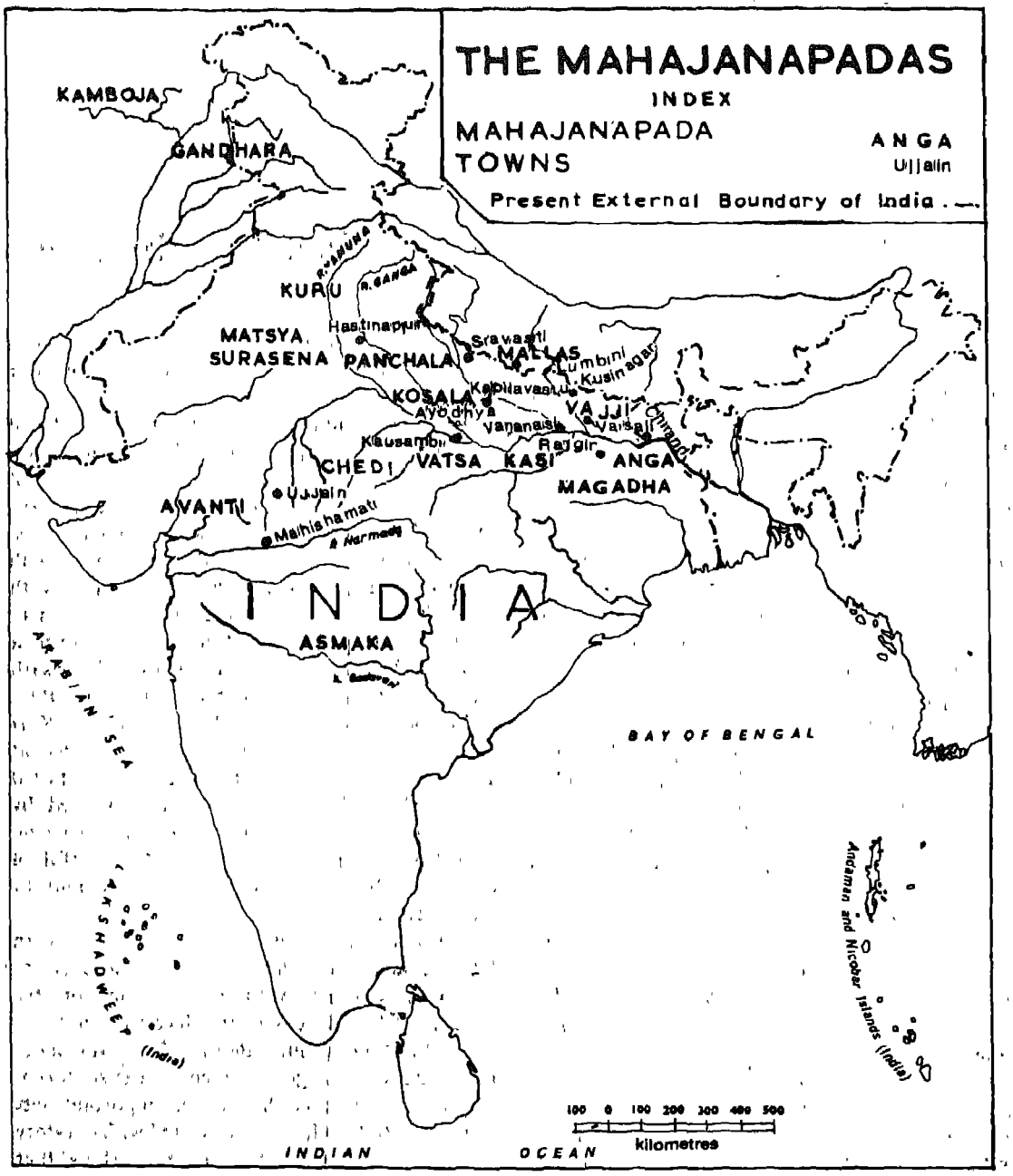
Further west we find the kingdom of Kasi with its capital at Varanasi Excavations at Rajghat show that the earliest habitation started around 700 B C , and the city was enclosed by mud-walls in the sixth century B.C. In the beginning Kasi appears to be the most powerful of the states, but eventually it had to submit to the power of Kosala.

Kosala embraced the area occupied by eastern Uttar Pradesh and had its capital at Sravasti, which is identical with Sahet-Mahet on the borders of Gonda and Bahraich districts in Uttar Pradesh. Diggings indicate that Sahet-Mahet did not possess any large settlement in the sixth century B.C. Kosala contained an important city called Ayodhya, which is associated with the story in the *Ramayana*. But excavations show that it was not settled on any scale before the sixth

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 8 *The Mahajanapadas*

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century B C. Kosala also included the tribal republican territory of Sakyas of Kapilavastu, the birth-place of the Buddha The capital of Kapilavastu has been identified with Piprahwa in Basti district, but Lumbini, which lies at a distance of 15 km from Piprahwa in Nepal, served as another capital of the Sakyas

In the neighbourhood of Kosala lay the republican clan of the Mallas, whose territory touched the northern border of the Vajji state. One of the capitals of the Mallas lay at Kusinara, where Gautama Buddha passed away Kusinara is identical with Kasia in Deoria district.

Further west lay the kindgom of the Vatsas, along the bank of the Yamuna, with its capital at Kausambi The Vatsas were a Kuru clan who had shifted from Hastinapur and settled down at Kausambi near Allahabad. Kausambi was chosen because it was situated near the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna. In the sixth century B C. it had a strong fortified capital, as can be gathered from excavations.

We also hear of the older states of the Kurus and the Panchalas which were situated in western Uttar Pradesh, but they no longer enjoyed the political importance which they had attained in the later Vedic period.

In central Malwa and the adjoining parts of Madhya Pradesh lay the state of the Avantis. It was divided into two parts. The northern part nad its capital at Ujjain, and the southern part at Mahishamati. Excavations show that both these towns became fairly important from the sixth century B.C. onwards, though eventually Ujjain surpassed Mahishamati. It developed large-scale working in iron and erected strong fortification.

The political history of India from the sixth century B.C. onwards is the history of struggles between these states for supremacy. Ultimately the kingdom of Magadha emerged to be the most powerful and succeeded in foundmg an empire.

Rise and Growth of the Magadhan Empire

Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara, who belonged to the Haryanka dynasty. He was a contemporary of the Buddha. He started the policy of conquests and aggrandisement which ended with the Kalinga war of Asoka Bimbisara acquired Anga and placed it under the viceroyalty of Ajatasatru at Champa. He also strengthened his position by marriage alliances. He took three wives. His first wife was the daughter of the king of Kosala and the sister of Prasenajit. The Kosalan bride brought him as dowry a Kasi village, yielding a revenue of 100,000, which suggests that revenues were assessed in terms of coins The marriage bought off the hostility of Kosala and gave him a free hand in dealing with the other states. His second wife Chellana was a Lichchhavi princess from Vaisali, and his third wife was the daughter of the chief of the Madra clan of Panjab. Marriage relations with the different princely families gave enormous diplomatic prestige and paved the way for the expansion of Magadha westward and northward.

Magadha's most serious rival was Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. Its king Chanda Pradyota Mahasena fought Bimbisara, but ultimately the two thought it wise to become friends. Later when Pradyota was attacked by jaundice, at the Avanti king's request Bimbisara sent the royal physician Jivaka to Ujjain. Bimbisara is also said to have received an embassy and a letter from the ruler of Gandhara with which Pradyota had fought unsuccessfully. So through his conquests and diplomacy Bimbisara made Magadha the paramount power in the sixth century B.C. His kingdom is said to have consisted of 80,000 villages, which is a conventional number.

The earliest capital of Magadha was at Rajgir, which was called Girivraja at that time. It was surrounded by five hills, the openings in which were closed by ston -walls on all sides. This made Rajgir impregnable.

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According to the Buddhist chronicles Bimbisara ruled for 52 years, roughly from 544 B.C. to 492 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Ajatasatru (492-460 B C.) Ajatasatru killed his father and seized the throne for himself. His reign saw the high watermark of the Bimbisara dynasty. He fought two wars and made preparations for the third Throughout his reign he pursued an aggressive policy of expansion This provoked against him a combination of Kasi and Kosala. There began a prolonged conflict between Magadha and Kosala. Ultimately Ajatasatru got the best of the war, and the Kosalan king was compelled to purchase peace by giving his daughter in marriage to Ajatasatru and leaving him in sole possession of Kasi.

Ajatasatru was no respector of relations. Although his mother was a Lichchhavi princess, this did not prevent him from making war against Vaisali. The excuse was that the Lichchhavis were the allies of Kosala. He created dissensions in the ranks of the Lichchhavis and finally destroyed their independence by invading their territory and by defeating them in battle. It took him full 16 years to destroy Vaisali. Eventually he succeeded in doing so because of a war engine which was used to throw stones like catapults. He also possessed a chariot to which a mace was attached, and it facilitated mass killings. The Magadhan empire was thus enlarged with the addition of Kasi and Vaisali.

Ajatasatru faced a stronger rival in the ruler of Avanti. Avanti had defeated the Vatsas of Kausambi and now threatened an invasion of Magadha. To meet this danger Ajatasatru began fortification of Rajgir The remains of the walls can be still seen. However, the invasion did not materialize in his lifetime.

Ajatasatru was succeeded by Udayin (460-444 B C). His reign is important because he built the fort upon the confluence of the Ganga and Son at Patna. This was done because Patna lay in the centre of the Magadhan kingdom, which now extended from the Himalayas in the north to the hills of Chotanagpur in the south. Patna's position, as will be seen later, was crucially strategic.

Udayin was succeeded by the dynasty of Sisunagas, who temporarily shifted the capital to Vaisali. Their greatest achievement was the destruction of the power of Avanti with its capital at Ujjain This brought to an end the 100-year old rivalry between Magadha and Avanti. From now onwards Avanti became a part of the Magadhan empire and continued to be so till the end of the Maurya rule.

The Sisunagas were succeeded by the Nandas, who proved to be the most powerful rulers of Magadha. So great was their power that Alexander, who invaded Panjab at that time, did not dare to move towards the east. The Nandas added to the Magadhan power by conquering Kalinga from where they brought an image of the Jina as a victory trophy. All this took place in the reign of Mahapadma Nanda. He claimed to be *ekarat*, the sole sovereign who destroyed all the other ruling princes. It seems that he acquired not only Kalinga but also Kosala which had probably rebelled against him

The Nandas were fabulously rich and enormously powerful It is said that they maintained 200,000 infantry, 60,000 cavalry and 6000 war elephants. Such a huge army could be maintained only through an effective taxation system. It was because of these considerations that Alexander did not advance against them

The later Nandas turned out to be weak and unpopular. Their rule in Magadha was supplanted by that of the Maurya dynasty under which the Magadhan empire reached the apex of glory

Causes of Magadha's Success

The march of the Magadhan empire during the two centuries preceding the rise of the

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Mauryas is like the march of the Iranian empire during the same period. The formation of the largest state in India during this period was the work of several enterprising and ambitious rulers such as Bimbisara, Ajatasatru and Mahapadma Nanda. They employed all means, fair and foul, at their disposal to enlarge their kingdoms and to strengthen their states. But this was not the only reason for the expansion of Magadha.

There were some other important factors. Magadha enjoyed an advantageous geographical position in the age of iron, because the richest iron deposits were situated not far away from Rajgir, the earliest capital of Magadha. The ready availability of the rich iron ores in the neighbourhood enabled the Magadhan princes to equip themselves with effective weapons, which were not easily available to their rivals. Iron mines are also found in eastern Madhya Pradesh, and were not far from the kingdom of the Avantis with their capital at Ujjain. Around 500 B.C. iron was certainly forged and smelted in Ujjain, and probably the smiths manufactured weapons of good quality. On account of this Avanti proved to be the most serious competitor of Magadha for the supremacy of north India, and Magadha took about a hundred years to subjugate Ujjain.

Magadha enjoyed certain other advantages. The two capitals of Magadha, the first at Rajgir and the second at Pataliputra, were situated at very strategic points. Rajgir was surrounded by a group of five hills, and so it was rendered impregnable in those days when there were no easy means of storming citadels, such as cannons which came to be invented much later. In the fifth century the Magadhan princes shifted their capital from Rajgir to Pataliputra, which occupied a pivotal position commanding communications on all sides. Pataliputra was situated at the confluence of the Ganga, the Gandak and the Son, and a fourth river called the Sarayu joined the Ganga not far from Pataliputra. In pre-industrial days, when communications were difficult, the army could move north, west, south and east by following the courses of the rivers. Further, the position of Patna itself was rendered invulnerable because of its being surrounded by rivers on almost all sides. While the Son and the Ganga surrounded it on the north and west, the Poonpun surrounded it on the south and east. Pataliputra therefore was a true water-fort (*jaladurga*), and it was not easy to capture this town in those days.

Magadha lay at the centre of the middle Gangetic plain. The alluvium, once cleared of the jungles, proved immensely fertile. Because of heavy rainfall the area could be made productive even without irrigation. The country produced varieties of paddy, which are mentioned in the early Buddhist texts. This area was far more productive than the areas to the west of Allahabad. This naturally enabled the peasants to produce considerable surplus, which could be mopped up by the rulers in the form of taxes.

The princes of Magadha also benefited from the rise of towns and use of coins. On account of trade and commerce in north-east India, the princes could levy tolls on the sale of commodities and accumulate wealth to pay and maintain their army.

Magadha enjoyed a special advantage in military organization. Although the Indian states were well acquainted with the use of horses and chariots, it was Magadha which first used elephants on a large scale in its wars against its neighbours. The eastern part of the country could supply elephants to the princes of Magadha, and we learn from Greek sources that the Nandas maintained 6000 elephants. Elephants could be used in storming fortresses and in marching over marshy and other areas lacking roads and other means of communication.

Finally, we may refer to the unorthodox character of the Magadhan society. It was inhabited by the Kiratas and Magadhas, who

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were held in low esteem by the orthodox brahmanas. But it underwent a happy racial admixture on account of the advent of the Vedic people. Since it was recently aryanized it showed more enthusiasm for expansion than the kingdoms which had been brought under the Vedic influence earlier. On account of all these reasons Magadha succeeded in defeating the other kingdoms and in founding the first empire in India.

EXERCISES

1. Describe the political condition of India in the sixth century B.C.
2. With the help of a sketch-map trace the expansion of the first Magadhan empire.
3. Account for the success of Magadha in founding an empire.

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CHAPTER 11

Iranian and Macedonian Invasions

Iranian Invasion

In north-east India smaller principalities and republics gradually merged with the Magadhan empire. But the north-west India presented a different picture in the first half of the sixth century B.C. Several small principalities such as those of the Kambojas, Gandharas and Madras fought one another. This area did not have any powerful kingdom like that of Magadha to weld the warring communities into one organized kingdom. The area was also wealthy, and could be easily entered through the passes in the Hindukush.

The Achaemenian rulers of Iran, who expanded their empire at the same time as the Magadhan princes, took advantage of the political disunity on the north-west frontier. The Iranian ruler Darius penetrated into north-west India in 516 B.C. and annexed Panjab, west of the Indus, and Sindh. This area constituted the twentieth province or satrapy of Iran, the total number of satrapies in the Iranian empire being 28. The Indian satrapy included Sindh, the north-west frontier and the part of Panjab that lay to the west of the Indus. It was the most fertile and populous part of the empire. It paid a tribute of 360 talents of gold, which accounted for one-third of the total revenue of Iran from its Asian provinces. The Indian subjects were also enrolled in the Iranian army. Xerxes, the successor of Darius, employed the Indians in the long war against the Greeks. It appears that India continued to be a part of the Iranian empire till Alexander's invasion of India.

Results of the Contact

The Indo-Iranian contact lasted for about 200 years. It gave an impetus to Indo-Iranian trade and commerce. The cultural results were more important. The Iranian scribes brought into India a form of writing which came to be known as the Kharosthi script. It was written from right to left like the Arabic. Some Asokan inscriptions in north-west India were written in the third century B.C. in this script, which continued to be used in the country till the third century A.D. Iranian coins are also found in the north-west frontier region which points to the existence of trade with Iran. But it is wrong to think that the punch-marked coins continued in India as a result of contact with Iran. However, Iranian influence on the Maurya sculpture is clearly perceptible. The monuments of Asoka's time, especially the bellshaped capitals, owed something to the Iranian models. Iranian influence may also be traced in the preamble of Asoka's edicts as well as in certain words used in them. For instance, for the Iranian term *dipi* the Asokan scribe used the term *lipi*. Further, it seems that through the Iranians the Greeks came to know about the great wealth of India, which whetted their greed and eventually led to Alexander's invasion of India.

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Alexander's Invasion

In the fourth century B.C. the Greeks and the Iranians fought for the supremacy of the world. Under the leadership of Alexander of Macedonia the Greeks finally destroyed the Iranian empire. Alexander conquered not only Asia Minor and Iraq but also Iran. From Iran he marched to India, obviously attracted by its great wealth. Herodotus, who is called father of history, and other Greek writers had painted India as a fabulous land, which tempted Alexander to invade this country. Alexander also possessed a strong passion for geographical inquiry and natural history. He had heard that on the eastern side of India was the continuation of the Caspian Sea. He was also inspired by the mythical exploits of past conquerors whom he wanted to emulate and surpass.

The political condition of north-west India suited his plans. The area was parcelled out into many independent monarchies and tribal republics which were strongly wedded to the soil and had a fierce love of the principality over which they ruled. Alexander found it easy to conquer these principalities one by one. Among the rulers of these territories, two were well known—Ambhi, the prince of Taxila, and Porus whose kingdom lay between the Jhelum and the Chenab. Together they might have effectively resisted the advance of Alexander But they could not put up a joint front, the Khyber pass remained unguarded.

After the conquest of Iran Alexander moved on to Kabul, from where he marched to India through the Khyber pass. It took him five months to reach the Indus. Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila, readily submitted to the invader, augmented his army and replenished his treasure. When he reached the Jhelum, Alexander met from Porus the first and the strongest resistance. Although Alexander defeated Porus he was impressed by the bravery and courage of the Indian prince. So he restored his kingdom to him and made him his ally. Then he advanced as far as the Beas river. He wanted to move still further eastward but his army refused to accompany him. The Greek soldiers had grown warweary and disease-stricken. The hot climate of India and ten years of continuous campaigning had made them terribly homesick. They had also experienced a taste of Indian fighting qualities on the banks of the Indus, which made them desist from further progress. As the Greek historian Arrian tells us. "In the art of war the Indians were far superior to the other nations inhabiting the area at that time" Especially the Greek soldiers were told of a formidable power on the Ganga Obviously it was the kingdom of Magadha ruled by the Nandas who maintained an army far outnumbering that of Alexander So, despite the repeated appeals of Alexander to advance, the Greek soldiers did not budge an inch Alexander lamented. "I am trying to rouse the hearts that are disloyal and crushed with craven fears." The king who had never known defeat at the hands of his enemies had to accept defeat from his own men He was forced to retreat, and his dream of an eastern empire remained unfulfilled. On his return march Alexander vanquished many small republics till he reached the end of the Indian frontier. He remained in India for 19 months (326-325 B.C.), which were full of fighting. He had barely any time to organize his conquests Still he made some arrangements. Most conquered states were restored to their rulers who submitted to his authority. But his own territorial possessions were divided into three parts, which were placed under three Greek governors. He also founded a number of cities to maintain his power in this area.

Effects of Alexander's Invasion

Alexander's invasion provided the first occasion when ancient Europe came into close contact with ancient India. It produced certain

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important results. The Indian campaign of Alexander was a triumphant success He added to his empire an Indian province which was much larger than that conquered by Iran, though the Greek possessions in India were soon lost to the then Maurya rulers.

The most important outcome of this invasion was the establishment of direct contact between India and Greece in different fields Alexander's campaign opened up four distinct routes by land and sea. It paved the way for Greek merchants and craftsmen, and increased the existing facilities for trade.

Although we hear of some Greeks living on the north-west even before the invasion of Alexander, the invasion led to the establishment of more Greek settlements in this area. The most important of them were the city of Alexandria in the Kabul region, Boukephala on the Jhelum, and Alexandria in Sindh Although the areas were conquered by the Mauryas the settlements were not wiped out, and some of the Greeks continued to live in this area, under both Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka.

Alexander was deeply interested in the geography of the mysterious ocean which he saw for the first time at the mouth of the Indus. Therefore he despatched his new fleet under his friend Nearchus to explore the coast and search for harbours from the mouth of the Indus to that of the Euphrates. So Alexander's historians have left valuable geographical accounts. They also have left clearly dated records of Alexander's campaign, which enable us to build Indian chronology for subsequent events on a definite basis Alexander's historians also give us important information about social and economic conditions They tell us about the *sati* system, the sale of girls in market places by poor parents, and the fine breed of oxen in north-west India. Alexander sent from there 200,000 oxen to Macedonia for use in Greece The art of carpentry was the most flourishing craft in India, and carpenters built chariots, boats and ships.

By destroying the power of petty states in north-west India Alexander's invasion paved the way for the expansion of the Maurya empire in that area. According to tradition Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the Maurya empire, had seen something of the working of the military machine of Alexander and had acquired some knowledge which helped him in destroying the power of the Nandas

EXERCISES

1. Give an account of the Iranian invasion of India in the sixth century B.C. What were its results?
2. Narrate the history of Alexander's invasion of India, indicating on a sketch-map the route he took.
3. What were the effects of Alexander's invasion of India?

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CHAPTER 12

State and Varna Society in the Age of the Buddha

Material Life

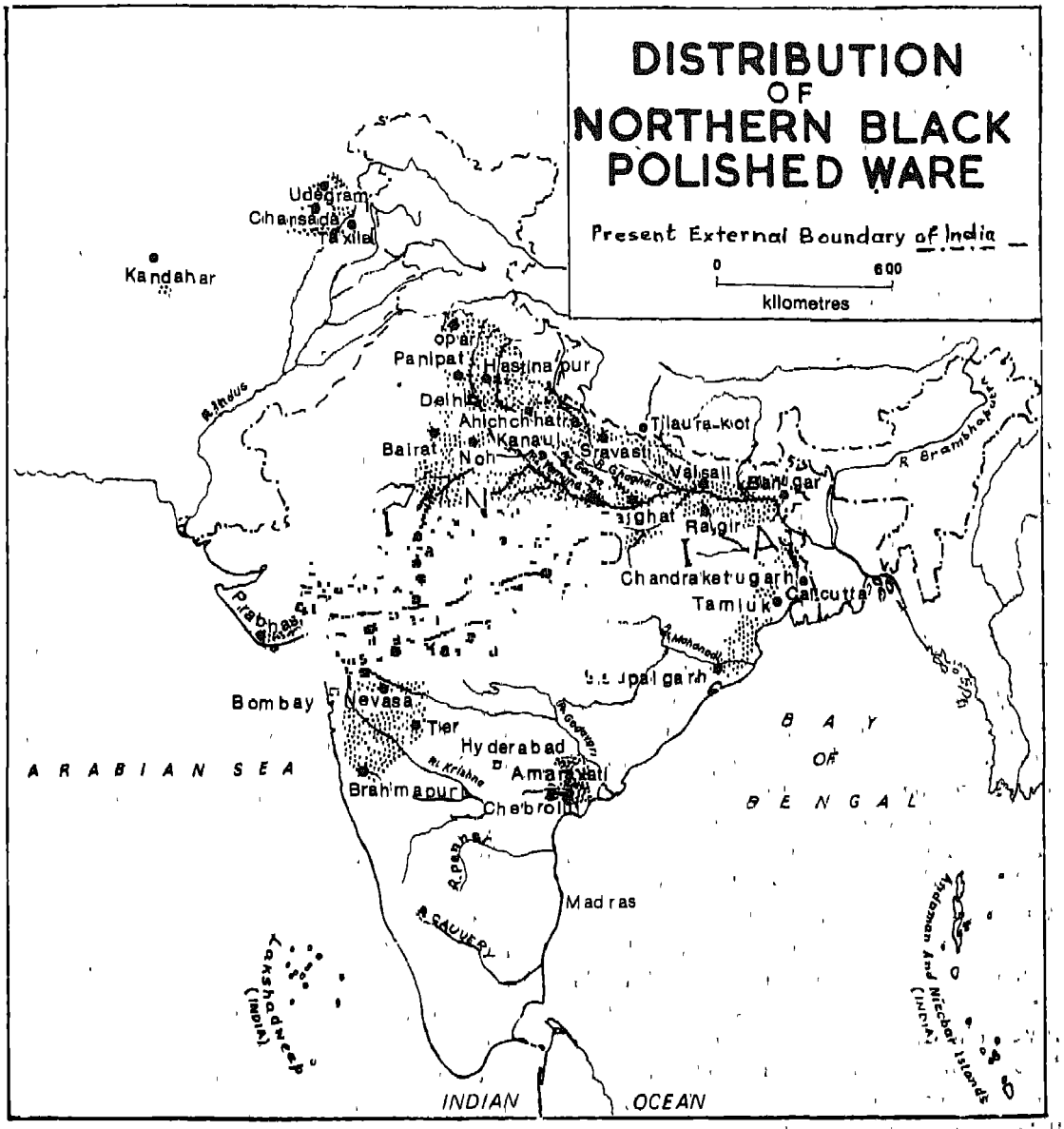
The picture of material life in north India, especially in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, can be drawn on the basis of the Pali texts and the Sanskrit Sutra literature in combination with archaeological evidence. Archaeologically the sixth century B.C. marks the beginning of the NBP phase. The abbreviation NBP stands for the Northern Black Polished Ware, which was a very glossy, shining type of pottery. This pottery was made of very fine fabric and apparently served as the table-ware of richer people. In association with this pottery are found iron implements, especially those meant for crafts and agriculture This phase also saw the beginning of metallic money. The use of burnt bricks and ringwells appeared in the middle of the NBP phase, i.e., in the third century B.C.

The NBP phase marked the beginning of the second urbanization in India. The Harappan towns finally disappeared in about 1500 B.C. After that for about 1,000 years we do not find any towns in India. With the appearance of towns in the middle Gangetic basin in the sixth century B.C., a second urbanization began in India. Many towns mentioned in the Pali and Sanskrit texts such as Kausambi, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Kapilavastu, Varanasi, Vaisali, Rajgir, Pataliputra, Champa have been excavated, and in each case signs of habitation and mud structures belonging to the advent of the NBP phase or its middle have been found. Wooden palisades have been found in Patna, and these possibly belong to Maurya or pre-Maurya times. Some of these towns were also fortified. Houses were mostly made of mud-brick and wood, which naturally have perished in the moist climate of the middle Gangetic basin. Although seven-storied palaces are mentioned in the Pali texts, they have not been discovered anywhere. Structures excavated so far are generally unimpressive, but together with the other material remains they indicate great increase in population when compared with the Painted Grey Ware settlements.

Many towns were seats of government, but whatever be the causes of their origin they eventually turned out to be markets and came to be inhabited by artisans and merchants. At some places there was concentration of artisans, Saddalaputta at Vaisali had 500 potters' shops. Both artisans and merchants were organized into guilds under their respective headmen. We hear of 18 guilds of artisans but only the guilds of smiths, carpenters, leather workers and painters are specified. Both artisans and merchants lived in fixed localities in towns. We hear of *vessa's* or merchants' street in Varanasi. Similarly we hear of the street of ivory-workers. Thus specialization in crafts developed on account of the guild system as well as localization. Generally crafts were hereditary, and the son learned his family trade from the father.

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Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.
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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 9 *India—NBP Sites*

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The products of crafts were carried over long distances by merchants. We repeatedly hear of 500 cartloads of goods. These contained fine textile goods, ivory objects, pots, etc. All the important cities of the period were situated on river banks and trade routes, and connected with one another. Sravasti was linked with both Kausambi and Varanasi. The latter was considered to be a great centre of trade in the age of Buddha The route from Sravasti passed eastward and southward through Kapilavastu and Kusinara and came to Vaisali. Traders crossed the Ganga near Patna and went to Rajgir. They also went by the Ganga river to Champa near modern Bhagalpur. If we believe the Jataka stories the traders of Kosala and Magadha went *via* Mathura as far northward as Taxila. Similarly from Mathura they went to Ujjain and the Gujarat coast.

Trade was facilitated by the use of money. The terms *nishka* and *satamana* in the Vedic texts are taken to be names of coins, but coins actually found are not earlier than the sixth century B.C. It seems that in Vedic times exchange was carried on through means of barter, and sometimes cattle served the purpose of currency. Coins made of metal appear first in the age of Gautama Buddha. The earliest are made largely of silver though a few coppers also appear. They are called punch-marked because pieces of these metals were punched with certain marks such as hill, trees, fish, bull, elephant, crescent, etc. The earliest hoards of these coins have been found in eastern Utrar Pradesh and Magadha, although some early coins are also found in Taxila. The Pali texts indicate plentiful use of money and show that wages and prices were paid in it. The use of money had become so universal that even the price of a dead mouse was estimated in it.

It is likely that writing started a couple of centuries before Asoka and contributed to trade. The earliest records were probably not written on stone and metal and have therefore perished. Writing led to the compilation of not only laws and rituals but also facilitated book-keeping, which was so essential to trade, tax-collection, and the keeping of a large professional army. The period produced texts dealing with sophisticated measurement (Sulvasutras), which presuppose writing and which may have helped the demarcation of fields and houses

Although rural settlements belonging to the NBP phase have not been excavated, we cannot think of the beginning of crafts, commerce and urbanization in the middle Gangetic basin without a strong rural base Princes, priests, artisans, traders, administrators, military personnel and numerous other functionaries could not live in towns unless taxes, tributes and tithes were available in sufficient measure to support them. Non-agriculturists living in towns had to be fed by agriculturists living in villages. In return artisans and traders living in towns made tools, cloth, etc., available to the rural folk. We hear of a village trader depositing 500 ploughs with a town merchant. Obviously these were iron ploughshares. From the NBP phase in Kausambi iron tools consisting of axes, adzes, knives, razors, nails, sickles, etc., have been discovered. A good number of them belong to the earliest layers of the NBP phase, and were probably meant for the use of the peasants who bought them by paying in cash or kind

Numerous villages are mentioned in the Pali texts, and towns seem to have been situated amidst the clusters of villages It seems that the nucleated rural settlement in which all people settled at one place and had their agricultural lands mostly outside the settlement first appeared in the middle Gangetic basin in the age of Gautama Buddha. The Pali texts speak of three types of villages. The first category included the typical village inhabited by various castes and communities. Its number seems to have been the largest, and it was headed

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by a village headman called *bhojaka*. The second included suburban villages which were in the nature of craft villages; for instance a carpenters' village lay in the vicinity of Varanasi Obviously these villages served as markets for the other villages and linked the towns with countryside. The third category consisted of border villages situated on the limits of the countryside which merged into forests. People living in these villages were mainly fowlers and hunters, and led a backward life.

The village lands were divided into cultivable plots and allotted family-wise. Every family cultivated its plots with the help of its members supplemented by that of agricultural labourers. Fields were fenced and irrigation channels dug collectively by the peasant families under the supervision of the village headman.

The peasants had to pay one-sixth of their produce as tax Taxes were collected directly by royal agents, and generally there were no intermediate landlords between the peasants on the one hand and the state on the other. But some villages were granted to brahmanas and big merchants for their enjoyment. We also hear of large plots of land worked with the help of slaves and agricultural labourers Rich peasants were called *grihapatis*, who were almost the same as vaisyas.

Rice was the staple cereal produced in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in this period, Various types of paddy and paddy fields are described in the Pali texts. The use of the term for transplantation is found in the Pali and Sanskrit texts of the period, and it seems that large-scale paddy transplantation began in the age of the Buddha. Paddy transplantation or wet paddy production enormously added to the yield. In addition the peasants also produced barley, pulses, millets, cotton and sugarcane Agriculture made great advance because of the use of the iron ploughshare and immense fertility of the alluvium soil in the area between Allahabad and Rajmahal

The place of technology in promoting rural and urban economy needs to be underlined. Iron played a crucial role in opening the rain-fed forested, hard-soil area of the middle Ganga basin to clearance, cultivation and settlement. The smiths knew how to harden iron tools. Some tools from Rajghat (Varanasi) show that they were made out of the iron ores obtained from Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj. It thus appears that people came to be acquainted with the richest iron mines in the country which was bound to increase the supply of tools for crafts and agriculture.

The picture of economy that emerges from a study of material remains and the Pali texts is much different from the rural economy of later Vedic times in western Uttar Pradesh or the nature of the economy of a few chalcolithic communities found in some parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. We notice for the first time an advanced food-producing economy spread over the alluvium soil of the middle Gangetic basin and the beginning of urban economy in this area It was an economy which provided subsistence not only to direct producers but also to many others who were not farmers or artisans. This made possible collection of taxes and maintenance of armies on a long-term basis, and created conditions in which large territorial states could be formed and sustained.

Administrative System

Although we hear of many states in this period only Kosala and Magadha emerged as powerful Both of them were ruled by the hereditary monarchs belonging to the kshatriya varna. The Jatakas or the stories relating to the previous births of the Buddha tell us that oppressive kings and their chief priests were expelled by the people and new kings were installed. But occasions of expulsion were as rare as those of election. The king enjoyed the highest official status and special protection of his person and

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property. He yielded ground only to great religious leaders of the stature of the Buddha. The king was primarily a warlord who led his kingdom from victory to victory. This is well illustrated by the careers of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru.

The kings ruled with the help of officials, both high and low. Higher officials were called *mahamatras,* and they performed various functions such as those of the minister (*mantrin*), commander (*senanayaka*), judge, chief accountant and head of the royal harem. It is likely that a class of officers called *ayuktas* also performed similar functions in some of the states.

The kings carried on administration with the help of the officers. Varsakara of Magadha and Dirghacharayana of Kosala were effective and influential ministers. The first succeeded in sowing seeds of dissension in the ranks of the Lichchhavis of Vaisali and enabled Ajatasatru to conquer the republic. The second rendered help to the king of Kosala. It seems that high officers and ministers were largely recruited from the priestly class of the brahmanas. Generally they do not seem to have belonged to the clan of the king.

In both Kosala and Magadha, despite the use of the punch-marked coins made of silver, influential brahmanas and *setthis* were paid by the grant of the revenue of villages. In doing so, the king did not have to obtain the consent of the clan, as was the case in later Vedic times, but the beneficiaries were granted only revenue; they were not given any administrative authority.

The rural administration was in the hands of the village headman. In the beginning, the headmen functioned as leaders of the tribal regiments, and so they were called *gramini* which means the leader of the *grama* or a tribal military unit. As life became sedentary and plough cultivation well-established, tribal contingents settled down to agriculture. The *gramini* therefore was transformed into a village headman in pre-Maurya times. The village headmen were known by different titles such as *gramabhojaka, gramini* or *gramika.* Eighty-six thousand *gramikas* are said to have been summoned by Bimbisara The number may be conventional, but it shows that the village headmen enjoyed considerable importance and had direct links with the kings The village headmen assessed and collected the taxes from the villagers, and they also maintained law and order in their locality. Sometimes oppressive headmen were taken to task by the villagers.

Army and Taxation

The real increase in state power is indicated by the formation of a large professional army. At the time of Alexander's invasion, the Nanda ruler of Magadha kept 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2000 horse-chariots and about 4000 elephants. The chariots were losing their importance not only in north-east but also in north-west India, where they had been introduced by the Aryans. Very few elephants were maintained by the rulers of the states in north-west India, though some of them maintained as many horses as the Magadhan king did. The possession of numerous elephants gave an edge to the Magadhan princes.

The large long-service army had to be fed by the state exchequer We are told that the Nandas possessed enormous wealth which must have enabled them to support the army, but we have no clear idea of the measures by which they raised taxes from the people. The fiscal system was established on a firm basis. Warriors and priests, i.e., the kshatriyas and the brahmanas, were exempted from payment of taxes, and the burden fell on the peasants who were mainly vaisyas or *grihapatis. Bali,* a voluntary payment made by the tribesmen to their chiefs in Vedic times, became a compulsory payment to be made by the peasants in the age of the Buddha, and officers called *balisadhakas* were appointed to collect it. It seems that one-sixth of the produce was collected as tax by the king

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from the peasants. Taxes were assessed and collected by royal agents with the help of village headmen. The advent of writing may have helped the assessment and collection of taxes. The discovery of many hoards of punch-marked coins suggests that payment was made in both cash and kind. In north-eastern India payment was made in paddy. In addition to these taxes the peasants were subjected to forced labour for royal work. The birth stories of the Buddha speak of cases in which peasants left the country of the king in order to escape the oppressive burden of taxes.

Artisans and traders also had to pay taxes. Artisans were made to work for a day in a month for the king, and the traders had to pay customs on the sale of their commodities. The tolls were collected by officers known as *saulkika* or *sulkadhyaksha*

The kings of the period no longer summoned the *sabha* and *samiti*. Popular assemblies had practically disappeared in post-Vedic times. Since they were essentially tribal institutions they decayed and disappeared as tribes disintegrated into varnas and lost their identity. Their place was taken by varna and caste groups, and so caste laws and customs were given due weight by the writers of the law-books. However, these regulations were mainly confined to social matters. Popular assemblies could succeed only in small kingdoms where members of the tribe could easily be summoned, as may have been the case in the Vedic period. With the emergence of the large states of Kosala and Magadha it was not possible to hold big assemblies attended by people belonging to different social classes and different parts of the empire. The sheer difficulty of communication made regular meetings impossible. Further, being tribal the old assembly could not find place for many non-Vedic people who lived in the new kingdoms. The changed circumstances therefore were not congenial for the continuance of the old assemblies. Instead, in this period we hear of a small body called *parishad* consisting exclusively of the brahmanas. Even in this period assemblies were there, but not in the monarchies. They flourished in the smaller republican states of the Sakyas, Lichchhavis, etc.

The Republican Experiment

The republican system of government existed either in the Indus basin or in the foothills of the Himalayas in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The republics in the Indus basin may have been the remnants of the Vedic tribes although some monarchies may have been followed by republics. In some cases in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar people were possibly inspired by the old ideals of tribal equality which did not give much prominence to the raja

In the republics real power lay in the hands of tribal oligarchies. In the republics of Sakyas and Lichchhavis the ruling class belonged to the same clan and the same varna. Although in the case of the Lichchhavis of Vaisali 7707 rajas sat on the assembly held in the motehall, the brahmanas were not included in this group. In post-Maurya times, in the republics of the Malavas and the Kshudrakas, the kshatriyas and the brahmanas were given citizenship, but slaves and hired labourers were excluded from it. In a state situated on the Beas river in Panjab, membership was restricted to those who could supply at least one elephant to the state. This was a typical oligarchy in the Indus basin

The administrative machinery of the Sakyas and Lichchhavis was simple. It consisted of raja, *uparaja* (vice-king), *senapati* (commander) and *bhandagarika* (treasurer). We hear of as many as seven courts for trying the same case one after another in the Lichchhavi republic, but this seems to be too good to be true.

In any case certain states in the age of the Buddha were not ruled by hereditary kings but by persons who were responsible to the assemblies. Thus although the people living in ancient republics may not have shared politi-

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cal power equally, the republican tradition in the country is as old as the age of the Buddha

The republics differed from the monarchies in several ways In the monarchies the king claimed to be the sole recipient of revenue from the peasants, but in the republics this claim was advanced by every tribal oligarch who was known as raja Each one of the 7707 Lichchhavi rajas maintained his store-house and apparatus of administration. Again, every monarchy maintained its regular standing army and did not permit any group or groups of people to keep arms within its boundaries But in a tribal oligarchy each raja was free to maintain his own little army under his *senapati,* so that each of them could compete with the other. The brahmanas exercised great influence in monarchy, but they had no place in the early republics, nor did they recognize these states in their law-books Finally, the main difference between a monarchy and a republic lay in the fact that the latter functioned under the leadership of oligarchic assemblies and not of an individual, as was the case with the former.

The republican tradition became feeble from the Maurya period. Even in pre-Maurya times, monarchies were far stronger and common. Naturally ancient thinkers looked upon kingship as the common and most important form of government. To them the state, government and kingship meant the same thing. Since the state was well established in the age of the Buddha, thinkers began to speculate about its possible origins The *Digha Nikaya*, one of the earliest Buddhist Pali texts, points out that in the earliest stage human beings lived happily. Gradually they came to have private property and set up house with their wives So they began to quarrel over property and women. In order to put an end to this quarrel they elected a chief who would maintain law and order and protect people. In return for protection the people promised to give to the chief a part of their paddy. This chief came to be called king, and this is how kingship or the state originated.

Social Orders and Legislation

The Indian legal and judicial system originated in this period. Formerly people were governed by the tribal law, which did not recognize any class distinction But by now the tribal community had been clearly divided into four classes—brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaisyas and sudras. So the Dharmasutras laid down the duties of each of the four varnas, and the civil and criminal law came to be based on the varna division. The higher the varna the purer it was, and the higher was the order of moral conduct expected by civil and criminal law. All kinds of disabilities were imposed on the sudras They were deprived of religious and legal rights and relegated to the lowest position in society. They could not be invested with *upanayana.* Crimes committed by them against the brahmanas and others were punished severely; on the other hand the crimes committed against the sudras were punished lightly. The lawgivers emphasized the fiction that the sudras were born from the feet of the Creator. So members of the higher varnas, especially the brahmanas, shunned the company of the sudra, avoided the food touched by him and refused to enter into marriage relations with him He could not be appointed to high posts, and above all he was specifically asked to serve the twice-born as slave, artisan and agricultural labourer. In this respect even Jainism and Buddhism did not make any substantial change in the position of the sudras Although they could be admitted to the new religious orders their general position continued to be low It is said that Gautama Buddha visited the assemblies of the brahmanas, the kshatriyas and the *grihapatis* or householders, but the assembly of the sudras is not mentioned in this connection.

Civil and criminal law was administered by royal agents, who inflicted rough and ready

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punishments such as scourging, beheading, tearing out of the tongue, etc In many cases punishments for criminal offences were governed by the idea of revenge. It meant tooth for tooth and eye for eye.

Although the brahmanical law-books took into account the social status of the different varnas in framing their laws, they did not ignore the customs of those non-Vedic tribal groups who were gradually absorbed into the brahmanical social order which went on expanding as a result of conquests Some of these indigenous tribals were given fictitious social origins, and, what is further important, they were allowed to be governed by their own customs

The age of the Buddha is important because ancient Indian polity, economy and society really took shape in this period. Agriculture based on the use of iron tools in alluvial areas gave rise to an advanced food-producing economy, particularly in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar It was possible to collect taxes from the peasants, and on the basis of regular taxes and tributes large states could be founded. In order to continue this system the varna order was devised, and the functions of each varna were clearly laid down According to this system, rulers and fighters were called kshatriyas, priests and teachers were called brahmanas, peasants and taxpayers were called vaisyas, and those who served all these three classes as labourers were called sudras.

EXERCISES

1. Point out the important economic developments in the age of the Buddha.
2. What is meant by the NBP phase?
3. How were the varnas organized in post-Vedic times?
4. Describe the system of administration in the monarchical states.
5. Give an account of the republican system of government.

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CHAPTER 13

The Age of the Mauryas

Chandragupta Maurya

The Maurya dynasty was founded by Chandragupta Maurya, who seems to have belonged to some ordinary family. According to the brahmanical tradition he was born of Mura, a sudra woman in the court of the Nandas But an earlier Buddhist tradition speaks of the existence of a kshatriya clan called Mauryas living in the region of Gorakhpur adjoining the Nepalese *terai* In all likelihood Chandragupta was a member of this clan. He took advantage of the growing weakness and unpopularity of the Nandas in the last days of their rule With the help of Chanakya, who is known as Kautilya, he overthrew the Nandas and established the rule of the Maurya dynasty.

Justin, a Greek writer, says that Chandragupta overran the whole of India with an army of 600,000. This may or may not be true But Chandragupta liberated north-western India from the thraldom of Seleucus, who ruled over the area west of the Indus. In the war with the Greek viceroy, Chandragupta seems to have come out victorious. Eventually peace was concluded between the two, and in return for 500 elephants Seleucus gave him eastern Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the area west of the Indus. Chandragupta thus built up a vast empire which included not only Bihar and good portions of Orissa and Bengal, but also western and north-western India, and the Deccan Leaving Kerala, Tamil Nadu and parts of north-eastern India the Mauryas ruled over the whole of the subcontinent In the north-west they held sway over certain areas which were not included even in the British empire.

Imperial Organization

The Mauryas organized a very elaborate system of administration. We know about it from the account of Megasthenes and the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador sent by Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maurya He lived in the Maurya capital of Pataliputra and wrote an account not only of the administration of the city of Pataliputra but also of the Maurya empire as a whole. The account of Megasthenes does not survive in full, but quotations occur in the works of several subsequent Greek writers These fragments have been collected and published in the form of a book, which throws valuable light on the administration, society and economy of Maurya times.

The account of Megasthenes can be supplemented by the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya Although the *Arthasastra* was finally compiled a few centuries after the Maurya rule, some of its books contain material that is genuine and gives authentic information about the Maurya administration and economy. On the basis of these two sources we can draw a picture of the administrative system of Chandragupta Maurya

Chandragupta Maurya was evidently an

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autocrat who concentrated all power in his hands. If we believe in a statement of the *Arthasastra,* the king had set a high ideal He stated that in the happiness of his subjects lay his happiness and in their troubles lay his troubles. But we do not know how far the king acted up to these norms. According to Megasthenes the king was assisted by a council whose members were noted for wisdom. There is nothing to show that their advice was binding on the king, but from the councillors were chosen the high officers

The empire was divided into a number of provinces, and each province was placed under a prince who was a scion of the royal dynasty. The provinces were divided into still smaller units We know from excavations that a large number of towns belonged to Maurya times and special attention had to be paid to their administration Pataliputra, Kausambi, Ujjain and Taxila were the most important cities. The administration of Pataliputra, which was the capital of the Mauryas, was carried on by six committees, each committee consisting of five members. These committees were entrusted with sanitation, care of foreigners, registration of birth and death, regulation of weights and measures and similar other functions. Various types of weights belonging to Maurya times have been found at several places in Bihar.

In addition to these officers the central government maintained about two dozen departments of the state, which controlled social and economic activities at least in the areas which were near the capital The most striking feature of Chandragupta's administration is the maintenance of a huge army. According to the account of a Roman writer, called Pliny, Chandragupta maintained 600,000 foot-soldiers, 30,000 cavalry and 9000 elephants. Another source tells us that the Mauryas maintained 8,000 chariots. In addition to this it seems that the Mauryas also maintained a navy. The administration of the armed forces, according to Megasthenes, was carried on by a board of 30 officers divided into six committees, each committee consisting of five members It seems that the six wings of the armed forces—the army, the cavalry, the elephants, the chariots, the navy and transport—were each assigned to the care of a separate committee The Mauryan military strength was almost three times that of the Nandas. This happened apparently on account of a much larger empire and far more resources.

How did Chandragupta Maurya manage to meet the expenses of such a huge army? If we rely on the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya, it would appear that the state controlled almost all the economic activities in the realm The state brought new land under cultivation with the help of cultivators and sudra labourers The virgin land which was opened to cultivation yielded handsome income to the state in the form of revenue collected from the newly settled peasants It seems that taxes collected from the peasants varied from one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce. Those who were provided with irrigation facilities by the state had to pay for it. In addition to this in times of emergency peasants were compelled to raise more crops. Tolls were also levied on commodities brought to town for sale, and they were collected at the gates. Moreover, the state enjoyed a monopoly in mining, sale of liquor, manufacture of arms, etc This naturally brought money to the royal exchequer.

Chandragupta thus established a well-organized administrative system and gave it a sound financial base.

Asoka (273-232 B.C.)

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by Bindusara, whose reign is important for continued links with the Greek princes His son, Asoka, is the greatest of the Maurya rulers According to Buddhist tradition, he was so cruel in his early life that he killed his 99 brothers to get the throne. But since the statement is

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based on a legend, it may well be wrong. His biography, prepared by Buddhist writers, is so full of fiction that it cannot be taken seriously.

Asokan Edicts

We can reconstruct the history of Asoka on the basis of his inscriptions. He is the first Indian king to speak directly to the people through his inscriptions. They were engraved on rocks, on polished stone pillars mounted by capitals and in the caves. They are found not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in Kandhar in Afghanistan. These inscriptions are in the form of 44 royal orders, and each royal order has several copies. The inscriptions were composed in Prakrit language, and written in the Brahmi script throughout the greater part of the empire. But in the north-western part they appear in Kharosthi script, and in Kandhar in Afghanistan they were written even in Aramaic, in Greek script and Greek language. These inscriptions were generally placed on ancient highways. They throw light on the career of Asoka, his external and domestic policies, and the extent of his empire

Impact of the Kalinga War

The ideology of Buddhism guided Asoka's state policy at home and abroad. After his accession to the throne Asoka fought only one major war called the Kalinga war. According to him 100,000 people were killed in this war, and 150,000 were taken prisoners The war brought to the brahmana priests and the Buddhist monks great suffering, which caused Asoka much grief and remorse. So he abandoned the policy of physical occupation in favour of a policy of cultural conquest. In other words, *bherighosha* was replaced by *dhammaghosha*. We quote below the words of Asoka from his 13th Major Rock Edict .

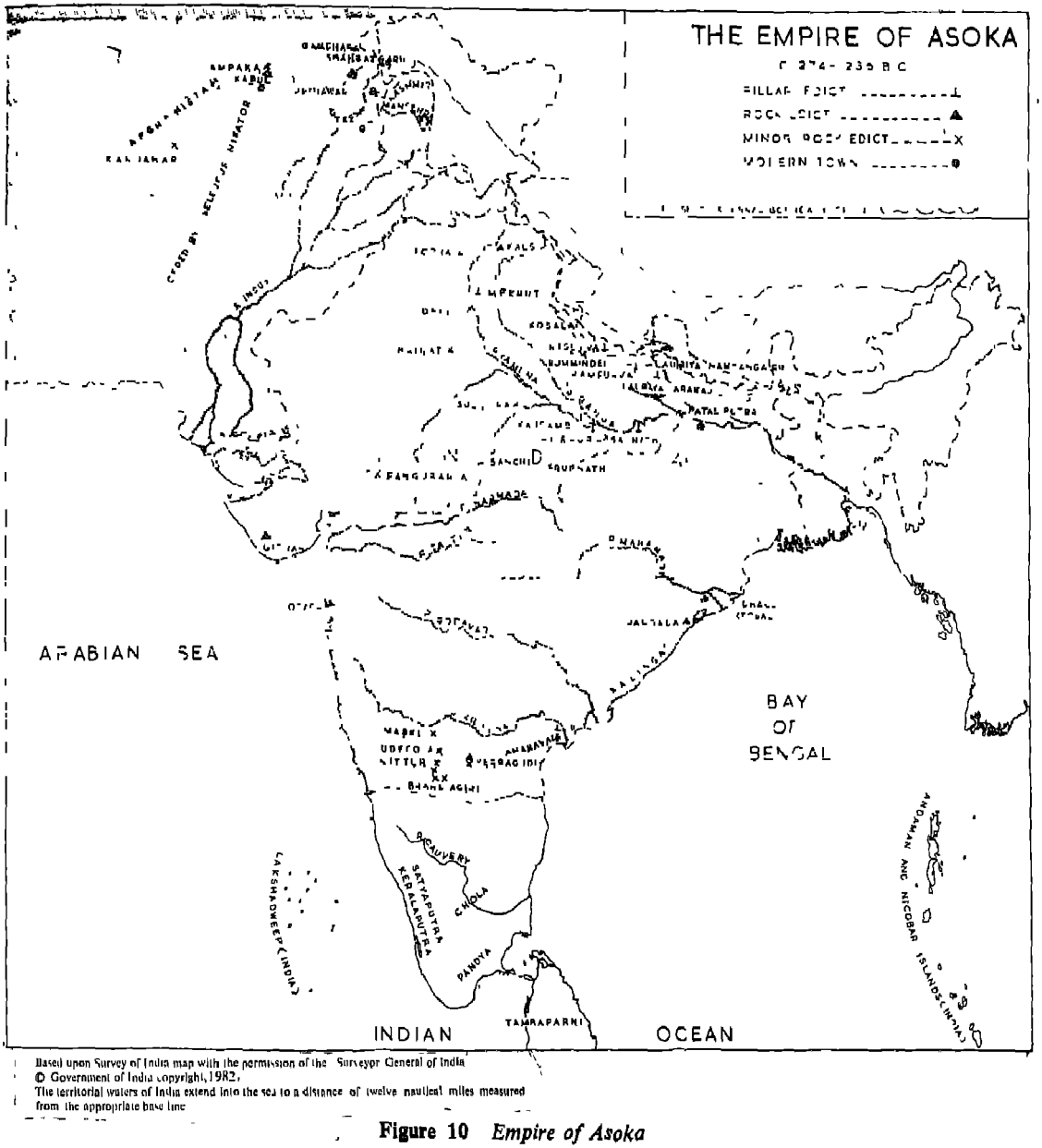
> When he had been consecrated eight years the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, conquered Kalinga. A hundred and fifty thousand people were deported, a hundred thousand were killed and many times that number perished. Afterwards, now that Kalinga was annexed, the Beloved of the Gods very earnestly practised Dhamma, desired Dhamma, and taught Dhamma On conquering Kalinga the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for, when an independent country is conquered the slaughter, death, and deportation of the people is extremely grievous to the Beloved of the Gods, and weighs heavily on his mind What is even more deplorable to the Beloved of the Gods, is that those who dwell there, whether brahmans, *sramanas,* or those of other sects, or householders who show obedience to their teachers and behave well and devotedly towards their friends, acquaintances, colleagues, relatives, slaves, and servants—all suffer violence, murder, and separation from their loved ones. ... Today if a hundredth or a thousandth part of those people who were killed or died or were deported when Kalinga was annexed were to suffer similarly, it would weigh heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods. . . . The Beloved of the Gods considers victory by Dhamma to be the foremost victory. .

Asoka now made an ideological appeal towards the tribal peoples and the frontier kingdoms. The subjects of the independent states in Kalinga were asked to obey the king as their father and to repose confidence in him. The officials appointed by Asoka were instructed to propagate this idea among all sections of his subjects. The tribal peoples were similarly asked to follow the principles of *dhamma.*

Asoka no longer treated foreign dominions as legitimate areas for military conquest. He tried to conquer them ideologically. He took steps for the welfare of men and animals in foreign lands, which was a new thing considering the condition of those days. He sent ambassadors of peace to the Greek kingdoms in Western

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line

Figure 10 *Empire of Asoka*

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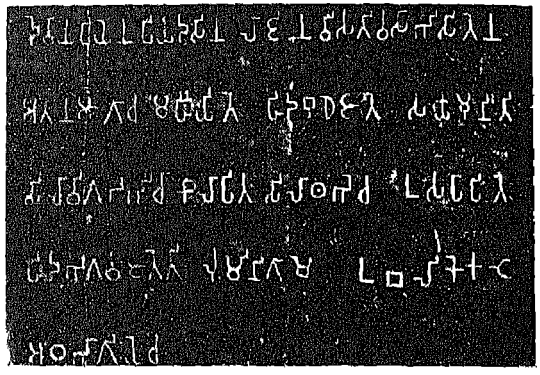
Asia and Greece. All this can be said on the basis of Asoka's inscriptions If we rely on the Buddhist tradition it would appear that he sent missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism to Sri Lanka and Central Asia As an enlightened ruler Asoka tried to enlarge his area of political influence through propaganda.

It would be wrong to think that the Kalinga war made Asoka an extreme pacifist. He did not pursue the policy of peace for the sake of peace under all conditions. On the other hand, he adopted a practical policy of consolidating his empire He retained Kalinga after its conquest and incorporated it into his empire There is also nothing to show that he disbanded the huge army maintained from the time of Chandragupta Maurya Although he repeatedly asked the tribal people to follow the policy of dharma, he threatened them if they violated the established rules of social order and righteousness (dharma). Within the empire he appointed a class of officers known as the *rajukas*, who were vested with the authority of not only rewarding people but also punishing them, wherever necessary. The policy of Asoka to consolidate the empire through dharma bore fruit. The Kandhar inscription speaks of the success of his policy with the hunters and fishermen, who gave up killing animals and possibly took to a settled agricultural life

Internal Policy and Buddhism

Asoka was converted to Buddhism as a result of the Kalinga war. According to tradition he became a monk, made huge gifts to the Buddhists and undertook pilgrimages to the Buddhist shrines. The fact of his visiting the Buddhist shrines is also suggested by the *dharma yatras* mentioned in his inscriptions.

According to tradition the Buddhist council was held under the chairmanship of Asoka's brother, and missionaries were sent not only to south India but also to Sri Lanka, Burma and other countries to convert the people



13.1 *Rummindei Pillar Inscription of Asoka*

The inscription is in Brahmi script. The language of the inscription is Prakrit

The Nagari rendering and English translation of the inscription are given below

1 देवानपियेन पियदसिन लाजिन बीसति — वसाभिसितेन
2 अतन आगाच महीयिते हिद बुधे जाते सक्य—मुनीति
3 सिला—विगड—भीचा कालापित सिला—थभे
च उसपापिते
4 हिद भगवं जाते ति लुंमिनी-गामे उबलिके कटे
5. अठ—भागिये च

[When king Devanampriya Priyadarsin had been anointed twenty years, he came himself and worshipped (this spot), because the Buddha Sākyamuni was born here

(He) both caused to be made a stone bearing wall and caused a stone pillar to be set up (in order to show) that the Blessed one was born here.

The village of Lumbini was exempted from *bali* (tribute) and *bhaga* (the royal share of the produce) was reduced to one-eighth.]

there. Brahmi inscriptions of the second and first centuries B.C. have been found in Sri Lanka.

Asoka set a very high ideal for himself, and this was the ideal of paternal kingship. He repeatedly asked his officials to tell the subjects that the king looked upon them as his children. As agents of the king, the officials were also

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asked to take care of the people Asoka appointed *dharmamahamatras* for propagating dharma among various social groups including women. He also appointed *rajukas* for the administration of justice in his empire

He disapproved of rituals, especially those observed by women He forbade killing of certain birds and animals, and completely prohibited the slaughter of animals in the capital He interdicted gay social functions in which people indulged in revelries.

But Asoka's dharma was not a narrow dharma It cannot be regarded as a sectarian faith. Its broad objective was to preserve the social order. It ordained that people should obey their parents, pay respect to the brahmanas and Buddhist monks, and show mercy to slaves and servants. These instructions can be found in both the Buddhist and brahmanical faiths.

Asoka taught people to live and let live He emphasized compassion towards animals and proper behaviour towards relatives His teachings were meant to strengthen the institution of family and the existing social classes He held that if the people behaved well they would attain heaven. He never said that they would attain *nirvana,* which was the goal of Buddhist teachings Asoka's teachings were thus intended to maintain the existing social order on the basis of tolerance. He does not seem to have preached any sectarian faith.

Asoka's Place in History

It is said that the pacific policy of Asoka ruined the Maurya empire, but this is not true On the contrary Asoka has a number of achievements to his credit. He was certainly the greatest missionary ruler in the history of the ancient world. He worked with great zeal and devotion to his mission, and achieved a lot, both at home and abroad.

Asoka brought about the political unification of the country He bound it further by one dharma, one language and practically one script called Brahmi which was used in most of his inscriptions In unifying the country he respected such scripts as Brahmi, Kharosthi, Aramaic and Greek Evidently he also accommodated such languages as Greek, Prakrit and Sanskrit and various religious sects Asoka followed a tolerant religious policy He did not try to foist his Buddhist faith on his subjects On the other hand he made gifts to non-Buddhist and even anti-Buddhist sects

Asoka was fired with zeal for missionary activities. He deputed officials in the farflung parts of the empire This helped the cause of administration and also promoted cultural contacts between the developed Gangetic basin and the backward distant provinces. The material culture, typical of the heart of the empire, spread to Kalinga and the lower Deccan and northern Bengal

Above all Asoka is important in history for his policy of peace, non-aggression and cultural conquest He had no model in early Indian history for pursuing such a policy, nor did such an example exist in any country except Egypt where Akhnaton had pursued a pacific policy in the fourteenth century B C But it is obvious that Asoka was not aware of his Egyptian predecessor Although Kautilya advised the king to be always intent on physical conquest Asoka followed just the reverse policy. He asked his successors to give up the policy of conquest and aggression, which had been followed by the Magadhan princes till the Kalinga war. He counselled them to adopt a policy of peace, which was badly needed after a period of aggressive wars lasting for two centuries Asoka consistently stuck to his policy. Although he possessed sufficient resources and certainly maintained a huge army, he did not wage any war after the conquest of Kalinga In this sense Asoka was certainly far ahead of his day and generation

However, Asoka's policy did not make any lasting impression on his viceroys and

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vassals, who declared themselves independent in their respective areas after the retirement of the king in 232 B C. Similarly the policy could not convert his neighbours, who swooped on the north-western frontier of his empire within 25 years of Asoka's exit from power in 232 B C.

EXERCISES

1. Who was Chandragupta Maurya? How did he establish the rule of the Maurya dynasty?
2. Describe the imperial organization set up by the Mauryas
3. Write notes on Megasthenes and Kautilya's *Arthasastra*
4. What is meant by the dharma of Asoka?
5. How did Asoka promote Buddhism?
6. Write a biography of Asoka

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CHAPTER 14

Significance of the Maurya Rule

State Control

The brahmanical law-books again and again stressed that the king should be guided by the laws laid down in the Dharmasastras and by the customs prevalent in the country. Kautilya advises the king to promulgate dharma when the social order based on the varnas and asramas (stages in life) perishes. The king is called by him *dharmapravartaka* or promulgator of the social order. That the royal orders were superior to other orders was asserted by Asoka in his inscriptions. Asoka promulgated dharma and appointed officials to inculcate and enforce its essentials throughout the country

Assertion of royal absolutism was a natural culmination of the policy of military conquest adopted by the princes of Magadha. Anga, Vaisali, Kasi, Kosala, Avanti, Kalinga, etc., were annexed to the Magadhan empire one by one. The military control over these areas eventually turned into coercive control of all aspects of life of the people. Magadha possessed the requisite power of sword to enforce its overall control

In order to control all spheres of life the state had to maintain a vast bureaucracy. In no other period of ancient history we hear of so many officers as in Maurya times

The administrative mechanism was backed by an elaborate system of espionage Various types of spies collected intelligence about foreign enemies and kept an eye on numerous officers They also helped the collection of money from credulous people through deliberate resort to superstitious practices.

Important functionaries were called *tirthas*. It seems that most functionaries were paid in cash The highest functionaries were minister (*mantrin*), high priest (*purohita*), commander-in-chief (*senapati*) and crown-prince (*yuvaraja*), who were paid generously as much as 48 thousand *panas* (*pana* being a silver coin equal to three-fourths of a *tola*) In sharp contrast to them the lowest officers were given 60 *panas* in consolidated pay although some employees were given as little as 10 or 20 *panas*. Therefore it would seem that there were enormous gaps between the highest and the lowest category of government servants

Economic Regulations

If we rely on the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya it would appear that the state appointed 27 superintendents (*adhyakshas*) mostly to regulate the economic activities of the state They controlled and regulated agriculture, trade and commerce, weights and measures, crafts such as weaving and spinning, mining, and so on. The state also provided irrigation facilities and regulated water supply for the benefit of agriculturists. Megasthenes informs us that in the Maurya empire the officer measured the land as in Egypt and inspected the channels through which water was distributed into

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smaller channels.

If we believe the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya, a striking social development of the Maurya period was the employment of slaves in agricultural operations. Megasthenes states that he did not notice any slaves in India. But there is no doubt that domestic slaves were found in India from Vedic times onwards. For the first time in the Maurya period slaves were engaged in agricultural work on a large scale The state maintained farms, on which numerous slaves and hired labourers were employed 150,000 war-captives brought by Asoka from Kalinga may have been engaged in agriculture. But ancient Indian society was not a slave society. What the slaves did in Greece and Rome was done by the sudras in India. The sudras were regarded as the collective property of the three higher varnas They were compelled to serve them as slaves, artisans, agricultural labourers, and domestic servants.

Several reasons suggest that royal control worked over a very large area, at least in the core of the empire. This was because of the strategic position of Pataliputra, from where royal agents could sail up and down the four directions. Besides this, the royal road ran from Pataliputra to Nepal through Vaisali and Champaran. We also hear of a road at the foothills of the Himalayas. It passed from Vaisali through Champaran to 'Kapilavastu, Kalsi (in Dehradun district), Hazara, and eventually to Peshawar. Megasthenes speaks of a road connecting north-western India with Patna. Roads also connected Patna with Sasaram and from there they went to Mirzapur and central India. The capital was also connected with Kalinga by a route through eastern Madhya Pradesh, and Kalinga in its turn was connected with Andhra and Karnataka. All this facilitated transport in which horses may have played an important part.

Further, it seems that the Maurya rulers did not have to deal with a large population. All told their army did not exceed 650,000 men. If ten per cent of the population was recruited, the total population would not be more than six and a half million Asokan inscriptions show that royal writ ran all over the country except the extreme east and south but rigid state control may not have proved effective much beyond the middle Gangetic zone.

The Maurya period constitutes a landmark in the system of taxation in ancient India. Kautilya names many taxes to be collected from peasants, artisans and traders. This required a strong and efficient machinery for assessment, collection and storage. The Mauryas attached greater importance to assessment than to storage and depositing. The *samaharta* was the highest officer in charge of assessment, and the *sannidhata* was the chief custodian of the state treasury and store-house. The harm done to the state by the first is thought to be more serious than the harm caused by the second. In fact, an elaborate machinery for assessment first appears in the Maurya period The list of taxes mentioned in the *Arthasastra* is impressive, and if these were really collected very little would be left to the people to live on.

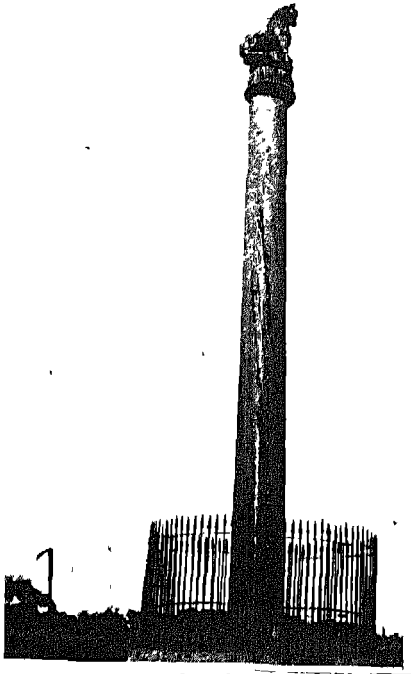
We have epigraphic evidence for the existence of rural store-houses, which show that taxes were also collected in kind and these granaries were meant for helping local people in times of famine, drought, etc.

It seems that the punch-marked silver coins, which carry the symbols of the peacock, and the hill and crescent, formed the imperial currency of the Mauryas. They have been discovered in large numbers. Apparently they contributed to the collection of taxes and payment of officers in cash. Further because of its uniformity the currency must have facilitated market exchange in a wider area.

The Mauryas made a remarkable contribution to art and architecture. They introduced stone masonry on a wide scale Megasthenes states that the Maurya palace at Pataliputra was

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14.1 *Asokan Pillar, Lauriya-Nandangarh*

as splendid as that in the capital of Iran. Fragments of stone pillars and stumps, indicating the existence of a 80-pillared hall, have been discovered at Kumrhar, on the outskirts of modern Patna. Although these remains do not recall the magnificence mentioned by Megasthenes, they certainly attest the high technical skill attained by the Maurya artisans in polishing the stone pillars, which are as shining as Northern Black Polished ware. It must have been a difficult task to carry the huge blocks of stone from the quarries and to polish and embellish them when they were placed erect. All this seems to be a great feat of engineering Each pillar is made of a single piece of sandstone. Only their capitals, which contain beautiful sculptures in the form of lions or bulls, are joined with the pillars on the top. These polished pillars were set up throughout the country, which shows that technical knowledge involved in their polishing and transport had spread far and wide. The Maurya artisans also started the practice of hewing out caves from rocks for monks to live in The earliest examples are the Barabar caves at a distance of 30 km from Gaya. Later this kind of cave architecture spread to western and southern India

Spread of Material Culture

On the one hand the Mauryas created for the first time a well-organized state machinery, which



14.2 *Bull Capital, Rampurva*

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operated in the heart of the empire. On the other hand their conquest opened the doors for trading and missionary activities. It seems that the contacts established by administrators, traders, and Jaina and Buddhist monks led to the spread of the material culture of the Gangetic basin to the areas situated on the periphery of the empire The new material culture in the Gangetic basin was based on an intensive use of iron, plenty of punch-marked coins, abundance of beautiful pottery called Northern Black Polished ware, introduction of burnt bricks and ringwells, and above all on the rise of towns in north-eastern India. A Greek writer called Arrian states that it is not possible to record with accuracy the number of cities on account of their multiplicity Thus the Maurya period witnessed rapid development of material culture in the Gangetic basin. On account of easy access to the rich iron ores of southern Bihar, people used more and more of iron implements To this period belong socketed axes, sickles and possibly ploughshare on a large scale. Although arms and weapons were the monopoly of the Maurya state, the use of the other iron tools was not restricted to any class. Their use and manufacture must have spread from the Gangetic basin to the distant parts of the empire. In the Maurya period burnt bricks were used for the first time in north-eastern India. The Maurya structures made of burnt bricks have been found in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh Houses were made of both bricks and timber which was available in plenty because of thick vegetation in ancient times. Megasthenes speaks of the wooden structures at the Maurya capital Pataliputra Excavations show that logs of wood were also used as an important line of defence against flood and foreign invasion. The use of burnt bricks spread in the outlying provinces of the empire. Because of moist climate and heavy rainfall it was not possible to have lasting and large structures made of mud or mud-bricks, as we find in the dry zones. Therefore the diffusion of the use of burnt bricks proved to be a great boon. Eventually it led to the flowering of towns in the different parts of the empire. Similarly the ringwells which appeared first under the Mauryas in the Gangetic basin spread beyond the heart of the empire. Since ringwells could supply water to people for domestic use it was not imperative now to found settlements on the banks of rivers. They also served as soakage-pits in congested settlements.

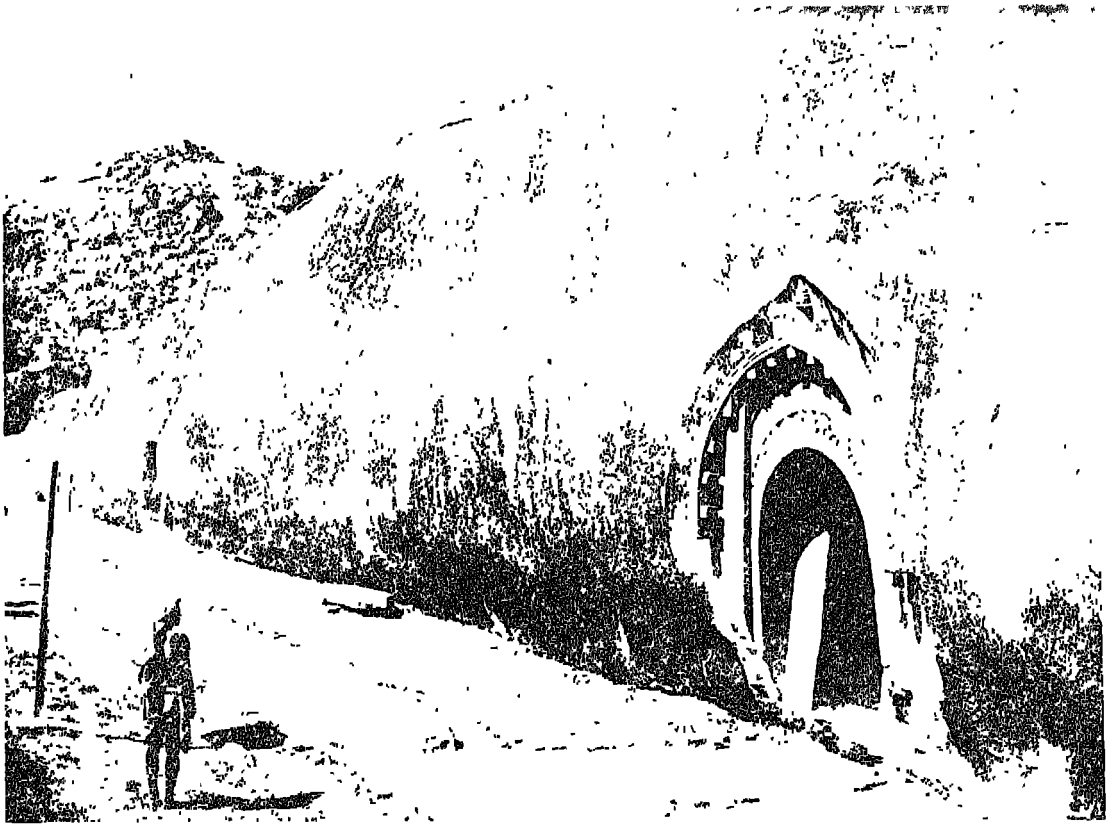


14.3 *Terracotta Figurine of the Maurya Period*

The elements of the middle Gangetic material culture seem to have been transferred with modification to northern Bengal, Kalinga, Andhra and Karnataka. In Bangladesh, where we find the Mahasthana inscription in Bogra

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14.4 *A View of the Lomasrishi Cave, Barabar Hills*

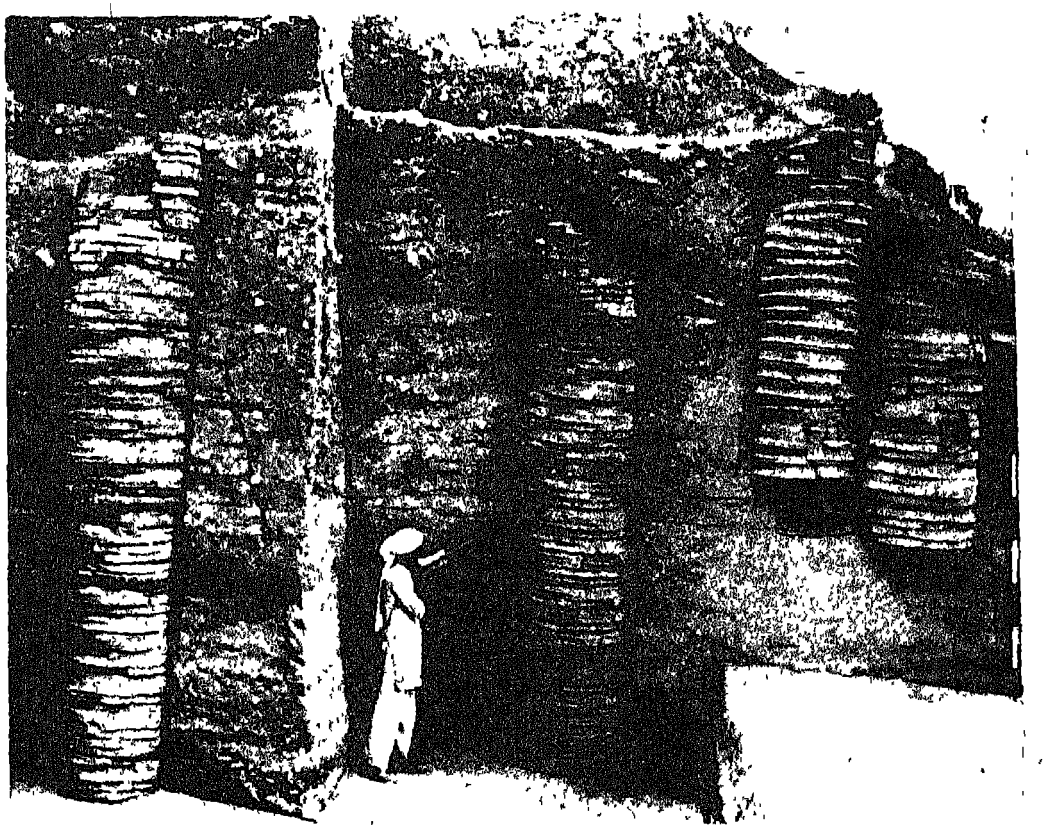
district in Maurya Brahmi, we find NBP at Bangarh in Dinajpur district. NBP sherds have also been found at some places, such as Chandraketugarh in the 24 Parganas, in West Bengal. Gangetic associations can be attributed to settlements at Sisupalgarh in Orissa. These settlements are ascribed to Maurya times in the third century B.C., and they contain NBP and iron implements and punch-marked coins. Since Sisupalgarh is situated near Dhauli and Jaugada, where Asokan inscriptions have been found on the ancient highway passing along the eastern coast of India, material culture may have reached this area as a result of contact with Magadha. This contact may have started in the fourth century B.C, when the Nandas are said to have conquered Kalinga. But it deepened after the conquest of Kalinga in the third century B.C Possibly as a measure of pacification after the Kalinga war, Asoka promoted some settlements in Orissa, which had been incorporated into his empire.

Although we find iron weapons and implements at several places in Andhra and Karnataka in the Maurya period, the advance of iron technology was the contribution of the megalith builders, who are noted for various kinds of large stone burials including those of a round form. But some of these places have Asokan inscriptions as well as NBP etc., belonging to the

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14.5 *Ringed Soak-wells found at Ropar*

third century B.C. For example, a few inscriptions of Maurya times have been found at Amaravati, and Asokan inscriptions have been found at Erragudi in Andhra and at several places in Karnataka. It therefore appears that from the eastern coast ingredients of the material culture percolated through Maurya contacts into the lower Deccan plateau

The art of making steel may have spread through Maurya contacts in some parts of the country. Steel objects belonging to about 200 B.C. or to an earlier date have been found in the middle Gangetic basin. The spread of steel may have led to the use of better methods of cultivation in Kalinga and created conditions for the rise of the Cheti kingdom in that region

In some ways the Satavahana empire was a projection of the Maurya empire in the Deccan. The Satavahana rulers adopted some of the administrative units of the Mauryas, and in their times Buddhism flourished in the same manner as it did in the heart of the empire of Asoka.

The existence of inscriptions, occasional NBP potsherds and punch-marked coins in parts of Bangladesh, Orissa, Andhra and Karnataka from near about 300 B.C. shows that in the Maurya period attempts were made to spread elements of the middle Gangetic basin culture in distant areas. The process seems to be in accord with the instructions of Kautilya. Kautilya advised that new settlements should

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be founded with the help of cultivators, who were apparently vaisyas, and with that of sudra labourers who should be drafted from overpopulated areas In order to bring the virgin soil under cultivation, the new peasants were allowed remission in tax and supplied with cattle, seeds and money The state followed this policy in the hope that it would get back what it had given Such settlements were necessary in those areas where people were not acquainted with the use of the iron ploughshare. This policy led to the opening of large areas to cultivation and settlement

How far the Maurya towns facilitated the diffusion of the material culture of the Gangetic basin into the tribal belt of central India, extending from Chotanagpur in the east to the Vindhyas in the west, cannot be said But it is pretty clear that Asoka maintained intimate contacts with the tribal people, who were exhorted to observe dharma Their contact with the *dharmamahamatras* appointed by Asoka must have enabled them to imbibe elements of higher culture prevalent in the Gangetic basin In this sense Asoka launched a deliberate and systematic policy of acculturation He states that as a result of the diffusion of dharma men would mingle with gods. This implies that tribal and other peoples would take to the habits of a settled, taxpaying, peasant society, and develop respect for paternal power, royal authority and for monks, priests and officers who helped enforce this authority His policy succeeded Asoka claims that hunters and fishermen had given up killing and practised dharma This means that they had taken to a sedentary agricultural life.

Causes of the Fall of the Maurya Empire

The Magadhan empire, which had been reared by successive wars culminating in the conquest of Kalinga, began to disintegrate after the exit of Asoka in 232 B.C Several causes seem to have brought about the decline and fall of the Maurya empire.

Brahmanical Reaction

The brahmanical reaction began as a result of the policy of Asoka There is no doubt that Asoka adopted a tolerant policy and asked the people to respect even the brahmanas But he prohibited killing of animals and birds, and derided superfluous rituals performed by women. This naturally affected the income of the brahmanas. The anti-sacrifice attitude of Buddhism and of Asoka naturally brought much loss to the brahmanas, who lived on the gifts made to them in various kinds of sacrifices. Hence in spite of the tolerant policy of Asoka the brahmanas developed some kind of antipathy to him Obviously they were not satisfied with his tolerant policy They really wanted a policy that should favour them and uphold the existing interests and privileges. Some of the new kingdoms, which arose on the ruins of the Maurya empire, were ruled by the brahmanas. The Sungas and the Kanvas, who ruled in Madhya Pradesh and further east on the remnants of the Maurya empire, were brahmanas. Similarly the Satavahanas, who founded a lasting kingdom in the western Deccan and Andhra, claimed to be brahmanas These brahmana dynasties performed the Vedic sacrifices, which were neglected by Asoka.

Financial Crisis

The enormous expenditure on the army and payment to bureaucracy created a financial crisis for the Maurya empire. As far as we know, in ancient times the Mauryas maintained the largest army and the largest regiment of officers Despite all kinds of taxes imposed on the people, it was difficult to maintain this huge superstructure It seems that Asoka made large grants to the Buddhist monks which left the royal treasury empty In order to meet expenses in the last stage they had to melt the images made of gold.

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Oppressive Rule

Oppressive rule in the provinces was an important cause of the break-up of the empire In the reign of Bindusara the citizens of Taxila bitterly complained against the misrule of wicked bureaucrats (*dushtamatyas*) Their grievance was redressed by the appointment of Asoka. But when Asoka became emperor, a similar complaint was lodged by the same city. The Kalinga edicts show that Asoka felt very much concerned about oppression in the provinces and therefore asked the *mahamatras* not to torture townsmen without due cause For this purpose he introduced rotation of officers in Tosali (in Kalinga), Ujjain and Taxila. He himself spent 256 nights on a pilgrimage tour which may have helped administrative supervision. But all this failed to stop oppression in the outlying provinces, and after his retirement Taxila took the earliest opportunity to throw off the imperial yoke

Spread of the New Material Knowledge in the Outlying Areas

We have seen how Magadha owed its expansion to certain basic material advantages Once the knowledge of the use of these elements of culture spread to central India, the Deccan and Kalinga as a result of the expansion of the Magadhan empire, the Gangetic basin which formed the heart of the empire lost its special advantage The regular use of iron tools and weapons in the peripheral provinces coincided with the decline and fall of the Maurya empire. On the basis of material culture acquired from Magadha new kingdoms could be founded and developed. This explains the rise of the Sungas and Kanvas in central India, of the Chetis in Kalinga and that of the Satavahanas in the Deccan.

Neglect of the North-West Frontier and the Great Wall of China

Since Asoka was mostly preoccupied with missionary activities at home and abroad, he could not pay attention to the safeguarding of the passage on the north-western frontier. This had become necessary in view of the movement of tribes in Central Asia in the third century B.C. The Scythians were in a state of constant flux. A nomadic people mainly relying on the use of horse, they posed serious dangers to the settled empires in China and India. The Chinese ruler Shih Huang Ti (247-210 B.C) constructed the Great Wall of China in about 220 B C. to shield his empire against the attacks of the Scythians. No similar measures were taken by Asoka. Naturally when the Scythians made a push towards India they forced the Parthians, the Sakas and the Greeks to move towards India. The Greeks had set up a kingdom in north Afghanistan which was known as Bactria. They were the first to invade India in 206 B.C This was followed by a series of invasions which continued till the beginning of the Christian era

The Maurya empire was finally destroyed by Pushyamitra Sunga in 185 B.C. Although a brahmana he was a general of the last Maurya king called Brihadratha. He is said to have killed Brihadratha in public and forcibly usurped the throne of Patalipatra. The Sungas ruled in Patalipatra and central India, and they performed several Vedic sacrifices in order to mark the revival of the brahmanical way of life. It is said that they persecuted the Buddhists They were succeeded by the Kanvas who were also brahmanas.

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EXERCISES

1. Why is the Maurya rule important in the history of India?
2. Describe the material culture of India in the age of the Mauryas.
3. How did the Maurya empire spread the culture of the Gangetic basin?
4. Explain the downfall of the Maurya empire.

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CHAPTER 15

Central Asian Contacts and Their Results

The period which began in about 200 B.C did not witness a large empire like that of the Mauryas, but it is notable for intimate and widespread contacts between Central Asia and India In eastern India, central India and the Deccan the Mauryas were succeeded by a number of native rulers such as the Sungas, the Kanvas and the Satavahanas In north-western India they were succeeded by a number of ruling dynasties from Central Asia

The Indo-Greeks

A series of invasions took place from about 200 B.C. The first to cross the Hindukush were the Greeks, who ruled Bactria, lying south of the Oxus river in the area covered by north Afghanistan. The invaders came one after another, but some of them ruled at one and the same time on parallel lines. One important cause of invasions was the weakness of the Selucid empire, which had been established in Bactria and the adjoining areas of Iran called Parthia On account of growing pressure from the Scythian tribes, the later Greek rulers were unable to hold their power in this area. With the construction of the Chinese Wall the Scythians were now not in a position to push forward into China. So they turned their attention towards the neighbouring Greaks and Parthians. Pushed by the Scythian tribes, the Bactrian Greeks were forced to invade India. The successors of Asoka were too weak to stem the tide of foreign invasions which started during the period.

The first to invade India were the Greeks, who are called the Indo-Greeks or Bactrian

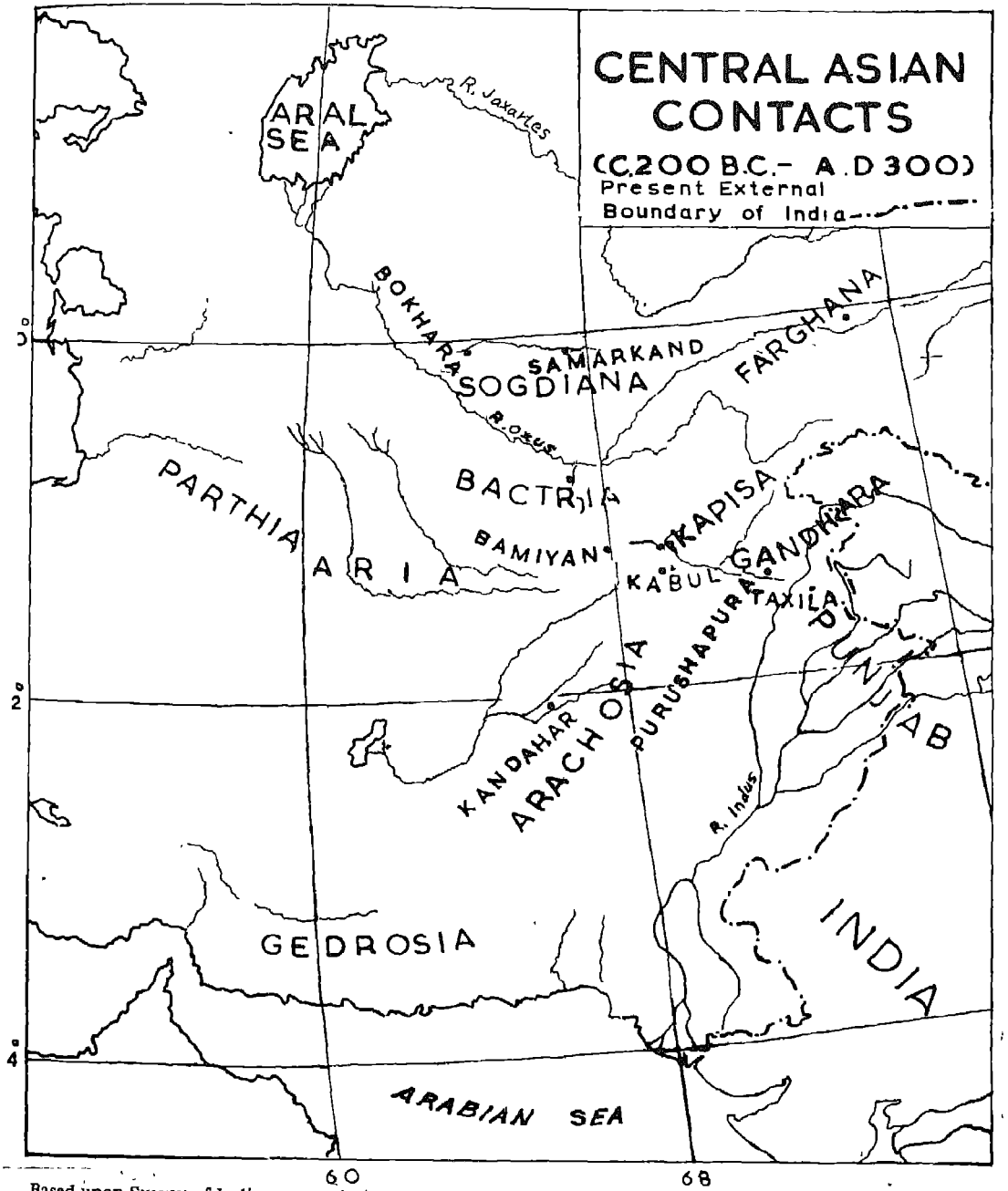


15.1 *Indo-Greek Coins*

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 11 *Central Asian Contacts*

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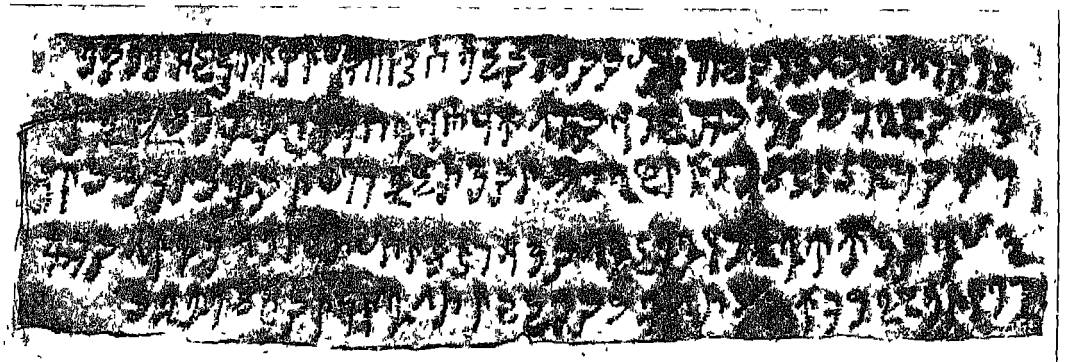
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Greeks. In the beginning of the second century B.C., the Indo-Greeks occupied a large part of north-western India, much larger than that conquered by Alexander. It is said that they pushed forward as far as Ayodhya and Pataliputra But the Greeks failed to establish united rule in India. Two Greek dynasties ruled north-western India on parallel lines at one and the same time. The most famous Indo-Greek ruler was Menander (165-145 B.C.) He is also known by the name Milinda. He had his capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot) in Panjab, and he invaded the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* He was converted to Buddhism by Nagasena, who is also known as Nagarjuna. Menander asked Nagasena many questions relating to Buddhism These questions and Nagasena's answers were recorded in the form of a book known as *Milinda Panho* or *The Questions of Milinda.*

The Indo-Bactrian rule is important in the history of India because of the large number of coins which the Greeks issued The Indo-Greeks were the first rulers in India to issue coins which can be definitely attributed to the kings This is not possible in the case of the early punch-marked coins, which cannot be assigned with certainty to any dynasty The Indo-Greeks were the first to issue gold coins in India, which increased in number under the Kushans The Greek rule is also memorable on account of the introduction of Hellenistic art features in the north-west frontier of India, giving rise to the Gandhara art.

The Sakas

The Greeks were followed by the Sakas, who controlled a much larger part of India than the Greeks did. There were five branches of the Sakas with their seats of power in different parts of India and Afghanistan One branch of the



15.2 *Copper-plate Inscription of about the First Century A D from Kalawan (near Taxila)*

Its script is Kharosthi, which was written from right to left. The language is Prakrit. The Nagari rendering and English translation of the first two lines are given below

सवत्सरये । 100 20 10 4 अजस श्रवणस मसस दिवसे त्रविशे 20 1 1 1 इमेण क्षुणेण चन्द्रभि उम्रसिम्र धमस ग्रहवतिस धित भद्रवलस भय छडशिलए शरिर प्रइस्तवेति गहथू ।

[Twenty-third day of the month of Sravana in the year 134 of Azes (?)—on this day the lay worshipper Chandrabhi, who is the daughter of Grihapati Dharma and wife of Bhadravala, instals the relics of the Buddha at Chhatrasilaka]

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Sakas settled in Afghanistan Another branch of the Sakas settled in Panjab with Taxila as their capital A third branch settled in Mathura, where they ruled for about two centuries. A fourth branch established its hold over western India, where they continued to rule till the fourth century A D A fifth branch of the Sakas established its power in the upper Deccan

The Sakas did not meet much effective resistance from the rulers and peoples of India In about 58 B.C , we hear of a king of Ujjain who effectively fought against the Sakas and succeeded in driving them out in his time. He called himself Vikramaditya, and an era called the Vikrama Samvat is reckoned from the event of his victory over the Sakas in 58 B.C. From this time onwards Vikramaditya became a coveted title Whoever achieved anything great adopted this title just as the Roman emperors adopted the title of Caesar in order to emphasize their great power. As a result of this practice we have as many as 14 Vikramadityas in Indian history, and the title continued to be fashionable with the Indian kings till the twelfth century A.D , and it was especially prevalent in western India and the western Deccan.

Although the Sakas established their rule in different parts of the country, only those who ruled in western India held power for any considerable length of time, for about four centuries or so. The most famous Saka ruler in India was Rudradaman I (A D 130-150) He ruled not only over Sindh, Kutch and Gujarat, but had also recovered from the Satavahanas Konkan, the Narmada valley, Malwa and Kathiawar. He is famous in history because of the repairs he undertook to improve the Sudarsana lake in the semi-arid zone of Kathiawar. This lake had been in use for irrigation for a long time, and was as old as the time of the Mauryas.

Rudradaman was a great lover of Sanskrit. Although a foreigner settled in India, he issued the first-ever long inscription in chaste Sanskrit. All the earlier longer inscriptions that we have in this country were composed in Prakrit.

The Parthians

The Saka domination in north-western India was followed by that of the Parthians, and in many ancient Indian Sanskrit texts the two peoples are together mentioned as Saka-Pahlavas In fact they ruled over this country on parallel lines for some time Originally the Parthians lived in Iran, from where they moved to India. In comparison with the Greeks and the Sakas they occupied only a small portion of north-western India in the first century. The most famous Parthian king was Gondophernes, in whose reign St. Thomas is said to have come to India for the propagation of Christianity In course of time the Parthians, like the Sakas before them, became an integral part of Indian polity and society

The Kushans

The Parthians were followed by the Kushans, who are also called Yuechis or Tocharians. The Kushans were one of the five clans into which the Yuechi tribe was divided. A nomadic people from the steppes of north Central Asia living in the neighbourhood of China, the Kushans first occupied Bactria or north Afghanistan where they displaced the Sakas. Gradually they moved to the Kabul valley and seized Gandhara by crossing the Hindukush, replacing the rule of the Greeks and Parthians in these areas. Finally they set up their authority over the lower Indus basin and the greater part of the Gangetic basin. Their empire extended from the Oxus to the Ganga, from Khorasan in Central Asia to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. A good part of Central Asia now included in the USSR, a portion of Iran, a portion of Afghanistan, almost the whole of Pakistan, and almost the whole of northern India were brought under one rule by the Kushans This created a unique opportunity for the commingling of peoples and cultures,

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and the process gave rise to a new type of culture which embraced five modern countries

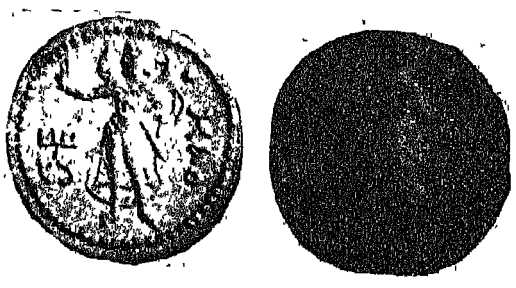
We come across two successive dynasties of the Kushans. The first dynasty was founded by a house of chiefs who were called Kadphises and who ruled for 28 years from about A.D. 50 It had two kings The first was Kadphises I, who issued coins south of the Hindukush. He minted coppers in imitation of Roman coins. The second king was Kadphises II, who issued a large number of gold money and spread his kingdom east of the Indus.

The house of Kadphises was succeeded by that of Kanishka. Its kings extended the Kushan power over upper India and the lower Indus basin. The early Kushan kings issued numerous gold coins with higher gold content than is found in the Gupta coins Although the gold coins of the Kushans are found mainly west of the Indus, their inscriptions are distributed not only in north-western India and Sindh but also in Mathura, Sravasti, Kausambi and Varanasi Hence they had set up their authority in the greater part of the Gangetic basin. Kushan coins, inscriptions, sculptures and structures found in Mathura show that it was their second capital in India, the first being Purushapura or Peshawar, where Kanishka erected a monastery and a huge stupa or relic-tower which excited the wonder of foreign travellers.

The most famous Kushan ruler was Kanishka Although outside the borders of India he seems to have suffered defeat at the hands of the Chinese, he is known to history because of two reasons First, he started an era in A D. 78, which is now known as the Saka era and is used by the Government of India Secondly, Kanishka extended his whole-hearted patronage to Buddhism. He held a Buddhist council in Kashmir, where the doctrines of the Mahayana form of Buddhism were finalized. Kanishka was also a great patron of art and Sanskrit literature

The successors of Kanishka continued to rule in north-western India till about A.D 230, and some of them bore typical Indian names such as Vasudeva.

The Kushan empire in Afghanistan and in the areas west of the Indus was supplanted in the mid-third century A. D. by the Sassanian power, which arose in Iran But Kushan principalities continued to exist in India for about a century. The Kushan authority seems to have lingered in the Kabul valley, Kapisa, Bactria, Khorezm and Sogdiana (identical with Bokhara and Samarkand) in the third-fourth centuries. Many Kushan coins, inscriptions and terracottas have been found in these areas. Especially at a place called Toprak-Kala in Khorezm a huge Kushan palace of the third-fourth centuries has been unearthed It housed an administrative archives containing inscriptions and documents written in Aramaic script and Khorezmian language.



15.3 *Kanishka's Coin*

Impact of Central Asian Contacts

Structures and Pottery

The Saka-Kushan phase registered a distinct advance in building activities. Excavations have revealed several layers of structures, sometimes more than half a dozen at various sites in north India In them we find the use of burnt bricks for flooring and that of tiles for both flooring and roofing. But the use of *surkhi* and tiles may not have been adopted from outside. The period is also

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marked by the construction of brick-wells Its typical pottery is red ware, both plain and polished with medium to fine fabric The distinctive pots are sprinklers and spouted channels. They remind us of red pottery with thin fabric found in the same period in Kushan layers in Soviet Central Asia. Red pottery techniques were widely known in Central Asia, and they are found even in regions like Farghana which were on the peripheries of the Kushan cultural zone.

Trade and Technology

The Sakas and Kushans added new ingredients to Indian culture and enriched it immensely. They settled in India for good and completely identified themselves with its culture. Since they did not have their script, language or religion, they adopted these elements of culture from India. They became an integral part of Indian society to which they contributed considerably. They introduced better cavalry and the use of the riding horse on a large scale. They made common the use of reins and saddles, which appear in the Buddhist sculptures of the second and third centuries A D. The Sakas and the Kushans were excellent horsemen. Their passionate love for horsemanship is attested by numerous equestrian terracotta figures of Kushan times discovered from Begram in Afghanistan Some of these foreign horsemen were heavily armoured, and fought with spears and lances Possibly they also used some kind of a toe stirrup made of rope which facilitated their movements. The Sakas and Kushans introduced turban, tunic, trousers, and heavy long coat Even now the Afghans and Panjabis wear turbans, and the *sherwani* is a successor of the long coat. The Central Asians also brought in cap, helmet and boots which were used by warriors. Because of these advantages they made a clean sweep of their opponents in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Later, when this military technology spread in the country, the dependent princes turned them to good use against their former conquerors.

The coming of the foreigners established intimate contacts between Central Asia and India. As a result India received a good deal of gold from the Altai mountains in Central Asia Gold also may have been received in India through trade with the Roman empire The Kushans controlled the Silk Route, which started from China and passed through their empire in Central Asia and Afghanistan to Iran, and Western Asia which formed part of the Roman empire in the eastern Mediterranean zone. This route was a source of great income to the Kushans, and they built a large prosperous empire because of the tolls levied from the traders. It is significant that the Kushans were the first rulers in India to issue gold coins on a wide scale

Polity

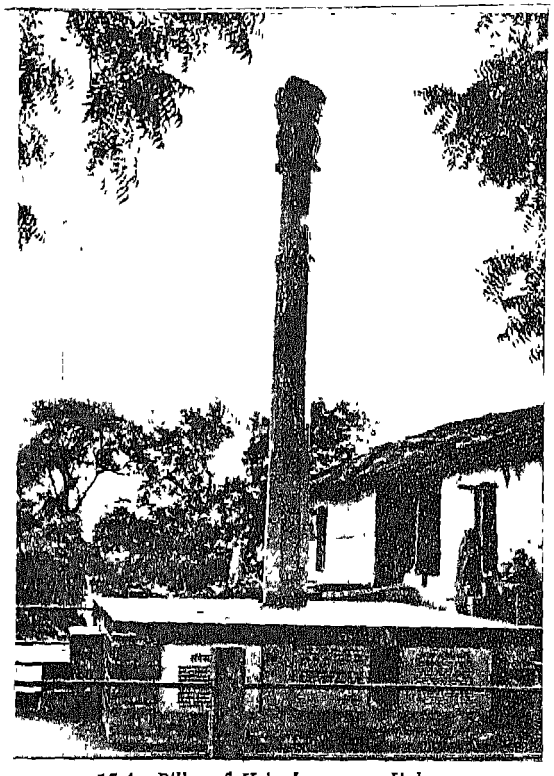
The Central Asian conquerors imposed their rule on numerous petty native princes. This led to the development of a feudatory organization The Kushans adopted the pompous title of king of kings, which indicates their supremacy over numerous small princes.

The Sakas and the Kushans strengthened the idea of the divine origin of kingship. The Kushan kings were called sons of god. This title was adopted by the Kushans from the Chinese, who called their king the son of heaven. It was used in India naturally to stress the royal authority. The Hindu lawgiver Manu asks the people to respect the king even if he is a child, because he is a great god ruling in the form of a human being.

They also introduced the satrap system of government. The empire was divided into numerous satrapies, and each satrapy was placed under the rule of a satrap. Some curious practices such as hereditary dual rule, two kings ruling in the same kingdom at one and the same time, were introduced. We find that father and son

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15.4 *Pillar of Heliodorus near Vidisa*

ruled jointly at one and the same time. Thus it appears that there was less of centralization under these rulers.

The foreigners also introduced the practice of military governorship. This was done by the Greeks, who appointed their governors called *strategos*. Military governors were necessary to maintain the power of foreign rulers over the conquered people.

New Elements in Indian Society

The Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushans ultimately lost their identity in India They became completely Indianized in course of time. Since most of them came as conquerors they were absorbed in Indian society as a warrior class, that is as the kshatriyas. Their placement in the brahmanical society was explained in a curious way. The lawgiver Manu stated that the Sakas and the Parthians were the kshatriyas who had fallen from their duties. In other words, they came to be considered as second-class kshatriyas. In no other period of ancient Indian history were foreigners assimilated into Indian society on such a large scale as they were in post-Maurya times

Religion

Some of the foreign rulers were converted to Vaishnavism, which means the worship of Vishnu, the god of protection and preservation. The Greek ambassador called Heliodorus set up a pillar in honour of Vishnu near Vidisa (headquarters of Vidisa district) in Madhya Pradesh.

A few other rulers adopted Buddhism. The famous Greek ruler Menander was converted to Buddhism. The questions and the answers that he exchanged with the Buddhist teacher Nagasena, also called Nagarjuna, constitute a good source for the cultural history of the post-Maurya period. The Kushan rulers worshipped both Siva and the Buddha, and the images of these two gods appeared on the Kushan coins. Several Kushan rulers were worshippers of Vishnu This was certainly the case with the Kushan ruler Vasudeva, whose very name is a synonym for Krishna, who was worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu.

The Origin of Mahayana Buddhism

The contact with foreigners brought about changes in Indian religions. This especially happened to Buddhism. Buddhism in its original form was too puritanical and too abstract for foreigners, who wanted something concrete and intelligible. They did not appreciate the philosophical doctrines of Buddhism, emphasized by the existing Buddhist schools. They wanted something which they could easily understand and which could satisfy their religious cravings. So there developed a new form of

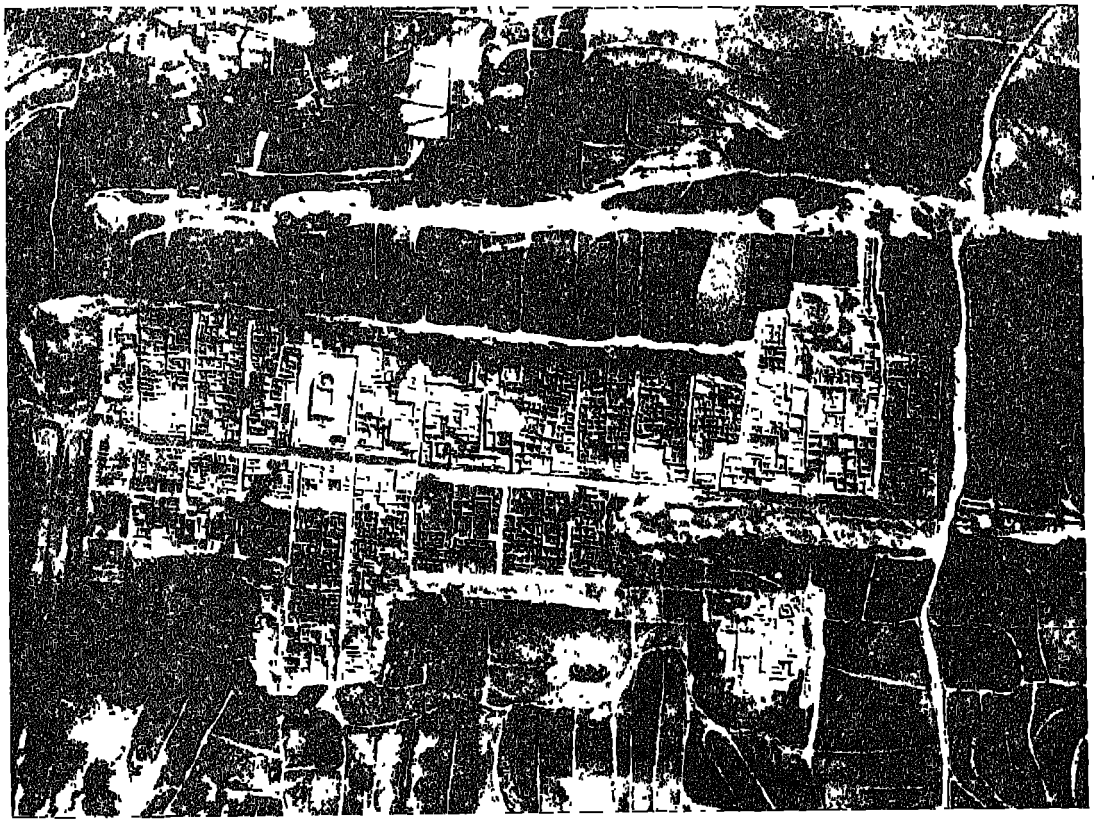
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Buddhism called the *Mahayana* or the Great Wheel, in which the image of the Buddha began to be worshipped. The doors of this sect were opened to all sections of the people. Those who did not subscribe to the newly-founded sect came to be known as the followers of the *Hinayana* or the Small Wheel. Fortunately for *Mahayana*, Kanishka became its great patron He convened a council in Kashmir, where the Buddhist teachings were engraved on sheets of copper and deposited under a stupa. We do not know the contents of these inscriptions because this stupa has not been discovered so far. Kanishka set up many stupas in memory of the Buddha.

Gandhara Art

The foreign princes became enthusiastic patrons of Indian art and literature, and they showed the zeal characteristic of new converts. The Kushan empire brought together masons and other artisans trained in different schools and countries Indian craftsmen came into contact with the Greeks and the Romans, especially in the north-western frontier of India in Gandhara This gave rise to a new kind of art



15.5 *Air View of the Remains of the Ancient City of Taxila (first century A.D)*

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15 6 *Image of the Buddha, Gandhara*

in which images of the Buddha were made in the Graeco-Roman style. The hair of the Buddha was fashioned in the Graeco-Roman style The influence of the Gandhara art also spread to Mathura although it was primarily a centre of indigenous art. Mathura produced beautiful images of the Buddha, but is also famous for the headless erect statue of Kanishka whose name is inscribed on its lower part.

It also produced several stone images of Vardhamana Mahavira. The Mathura school of art flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era, and its products made of red sandstone are found even outside Mathura. At present the Mathura Museum possesses the largest collection of sculptures of Kushan times in India

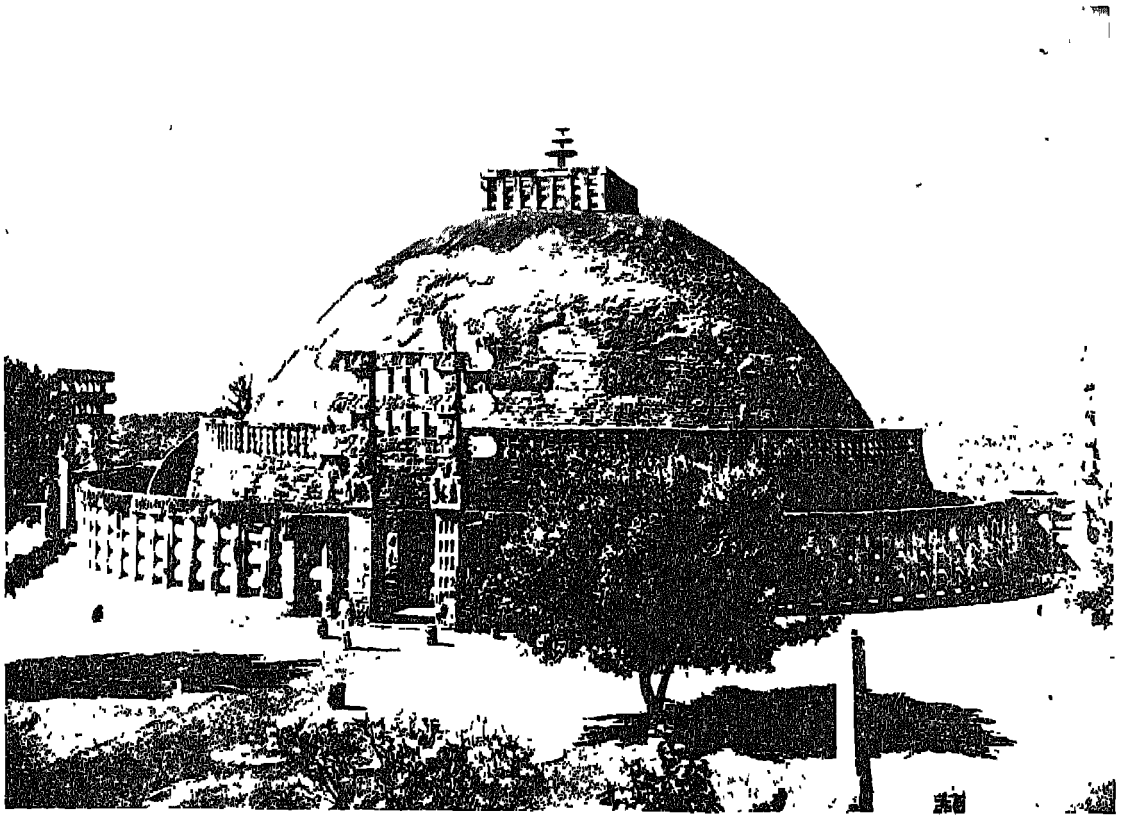
During the same period we notice beautiful works of art at several places south of the Vindhyas. Beautiful Buddhist caves were constructed out of rocks in Maharashtra. In Andhra Pradesh, Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati became great centres of Buddhist art, and the stories connected with the Buddha came to be portrayed in numerous panels The earliest panels dealing with Buddhism are found at Gaya, Sanchi and Bharhut, and belong to the second century B.C. But we notice further development in sculpture in the early centuries of the Christian era.



15.7 *Sculpture from Mathura*

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15.8 *Sanchi Stupa—A View of the Gateway*

Literature and Learning

The foreign princes patronized and cultivated Sanskrit literature The earliest specimen of *kavya* style is found in the inscription of Rudradaman in Kathiawar in about A D. 150. From now onwards inscriptions began to be composed in chaste Sanskrit, although the use of Prakrit in composing inscriptions continued till the fourth century A.D., and even later

It seems that some of the great creative writers such as Asvaghosha enjoyed the patronage of the Kushans. Asvaghosha wrote the *Buddhacharita,* which is a biography of the Buddha. He also composed *Saundarananda,* which is a fine example of Sanskrit *kavya*

The progress of *Mahayana* Buddhism led to the composition of numerous *avadanas*. Most of these texts were composed in what is known as the Buddhist-Hybrid Sanskrit Their one objective was to preach the teachings of *Mahayana* Buddhism to the people. Some of the important books of this genre were the *Mahavastu* and the *Divyavadana*.

The foreigners also contributed to the development of the Indian theatre, by introducing the use of the curtain Since the curtain was borrowed from the Greeks it came to be known as *yavanika* This word was derived from the term *yavana*, which was a sanskritized form of Ionian, a branch of the Greeks known to the ancient Indians. At a later stage the term *yavana* came to be used for all kinds of foreigners

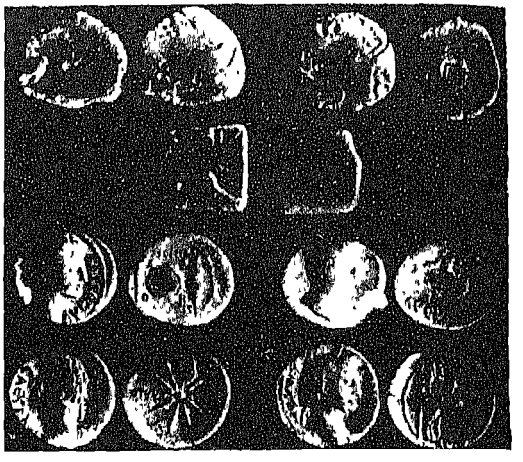
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15.9 *A Panel from Bharhut*



15.10 *Silver Coins*

Science and Technology

Indian astronomy and astrology profited from contact with the Greeks We notice many Greek terms about the movement of planets in Sanskrit texts. Indian astrology came to be influenced by Greek ideas, and from the Greek term *horoscope* was derived the term *horasastra* used for astrology in Sanskrit.

However, the Indians did not owe anything striking to the Greeks in medicine, botany and chemistry. These three subjects were dealt with by Charaka and Susruta. The *Charakasamhita* contains names of numerous plants and herbs from which drugs are to be prepared for the use of patients The processes laid down for the pounding and mixing of the plants give us an idea of the developed knowledge of chemistry in ancient India For the cure of ailments the ancient Indian physician relied chiefly on plants, for which the Sanskrit word is *oshadhi*, and as a result medicine itself came to be known as *aushadhi*.

In the field of technology also the Indians seem to have profited from contact with the Central Asians. Kanishka is represented as wearing trousers and long boots. Possibly the practice of making leather shoes began in India during this period. In any case the Kushan copper coins in India were imitations of the Roman coins. Similarly gold coins in India were struck by the Kushans in imitation of the Roman gold coins. We hear of two embassies being exchanged between the Indian kings and the Roman kings. Embassies were sent from India to the court of the Roman emperor Augustus in A.D. 27-28 and also to

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the Roman emperor Trajan in A.D. 110-20. Thus the contacts of Rome with ancient India may have introduced new practices in technology Working in glass during this period was especially influenced by foreign ideas and practices. In no other period in India did glass-making make such progress as it did during this period.

EXERCISES

1. Who were the Indo-Greeks?
2. Who were the Sakas? Give an account of their activities in India during the first four centuries A.D
3. What part did the Kushan rule play in the life of India?
4. Form an estimate of Kanishka.
5. How did Central Asian contacts affect the polity and society of India?
6. Write short notes on the following:
   Mahayana Buddhism
   Mathura school of art
   Gandhara art.

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CHAPTER 16

The Age of the Satavahanas

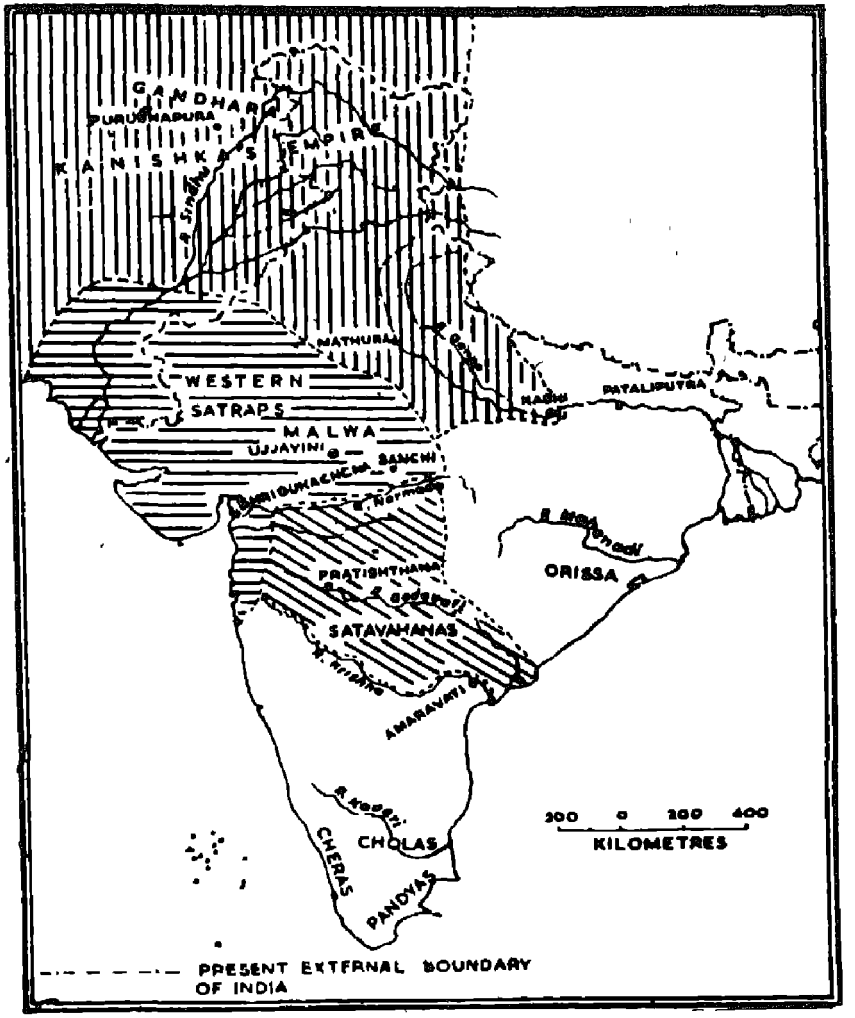
Political History

The most important of the native successors of the Mauryas in the Deccan and in central India were the Satavahanas. The Satavahanas are considered to be identical with the Andhras who are mentioned in the Puranas The Puranas speak only of the Andhra rule and not of the Satavahana rule. On the other hand the name Andhra does not occur in Satavahana inscriptions. According to some Puranas altogether the Andhras ruled for 300 years and this period is assigned to the rule of the Satavahana dynasty. The earliest inscriptions of the Satavahanas belong to the first century B.C., when they defeated the Kanvas and established their power in parts of central India The early Satavahana kings appeared not in Andhra, but in Maharashtra where most of their early inscriptions have been found. They set up their power in the upper Godavari valley, which at present produces rich and diverse crops in Maharashtra. Gradually the Satavahanas extended their power over Karnataka and Andhra. their greatest competitors were the Sakas, who had established their power in the upper Deccan and western India. At one stage the Satavahanas were dispossessed of their dominions by the Sakas in Maharashtra and western India. The fortunes of the family were restored by Gautamiputra Satakarni (A.D. 106-130). He called himself the only brahmana, defeated the Sakas and destroyed many kshatriya rulers. He claims to have destroyed the Kshaharata lineage to which his adversary Nahapana belonged. This claim is true, because more than 8,000 silver coins of Nahapana, found near Nasik, bear marks of being restruck by the Satavahana king He also occupied Malwa and Kathiawar which lay under the control of the Sakas. It seems that the empire of Gautamiputra Satakarni extended from Malwa in the north to Karnataka in the south Possibly he also enjoyed general authority over Andhra.

The successors of Gautamiputra ruled till A.D 220 The coins and inscriptions of his immediate successor Vasisthiputra Pulumayi (A.D 130-154) are found in Andhra, and show that by the middle of the second century this area had become a part of the Satavahana kingdom He set up his capital at Paithan or Pratisthan on the Godavari in Aurangabad district. The Sakas resumed their conflict with the Satavahanas for the possession of the Konkan coast and Malwa. Rudradaman I (A.D. 130-150), the Saka ruler of Saurashtra (Kathiawar), defeated the Satavahanas twice, but did not destroy them on account of matrimonial relations. Yajna Sri Satakarni (A.D. 165-194), one of the later kings, recovered north Konkan and Malwa from the Saka rulers. He was a lover of trade and navigation. His coins have been found not only in Andhra but also in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat.

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 12 *India in about A D 150*

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His love for navigation and overseas trade is shown by the representation of a ship on his coins.

Aspects of Material Culture

The material culture of the Deccan under the Satavahanas was a fusion of local elements and northern ingredients. The megalith builders of the Deccan were fairly acquainted with the use of iron and agriculture. Although before *circa* 200 B.C. we find some hoes made of iron, the number of such tools increased substantially in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era. We do not notice much change in the form of the hoes from megalithic to the Satavahana phase. Only hoes were now fully and properly socketed. Besides socketed hoes, sickles, spades, ploughshares, axes, adzes, razors, etc., belong to the Satavahana layers. Tanged and socketed arrowheads as well as daggers have also been discovered. At a site in Karimnagar district even a blacksmith's shop has been discovered. The Satavahanas may have exploited the iron ores of Karimnagar and Warangal, for in these districts indications of iron workings as early as the megalithic phase have been found. Evidence of ancient gold workings has been found in the Kolar fields in the early Christian centuries. The Satavahanas may have used gold as bullion, for they did not issue gold coins as the Kushans did . They issued mostly coins of lead, which is found in the Deccan. They also issued potin, copper and bronze money. The Ikshvakus also issued their coins. Both the Satavahanas and Ikshvakus seem to have exploited the mineral resources of the Deccan.

The people of the Deccan knew the art of paddy transplantation, and in the first two centuries the area between the Krishna and the Godavari, especially at the mouths of the two rivers, formed a great rice bowl. The people of the Deccan also produced cotton. In the foreign accounts Andhra is considered to be famous for its cotton products. Thus a good portion of the Deccan developed a very advanced rural economy. According to Pliny, the Andhra kingdom maintained an army of 100,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry and 1000 elephants. Apparently the peasants produced enough to support this military strength.

Through contacts with the north the people of the Deccan learnt the use of coins, burnt bricks, ringwells, etc These elements of material life had become quite important in north India by 300 B.C., but they acquired importance in the Deccan a couple of centuries later. In Peddabankur (200 B.C -A D. 200) in Karimnagar district we find regular use of fire-baked bricks, and use of flat, perforated roof tiles. All this must have contributed to lasting structures. What is further remarkable is the fact that as many as 22 brickwells belonging to the second century A.D. have been discovered at that site. Naturally these facilitated thick habitations, and we find there covered drains underground to lead waste water into soakage pits. Towns appeared in Maharashtra by the first century B C., when we find several crafts. They emerged in the eastern Deccan a century later. Pliny informs us that the Andhra country in the eastern Deccan included 30 walled towns, besides numerous villages. Several towns of the second and third centuries in this area are known from inscriptions and excavations. Increasing trade is indicated by numerous Roman and Satavahana coins. They appeared about a century later in the eastern Deccan, in the Godavari-Krishna area.

Social Organization

The Satavahanas originally seem to have been a tribe of the Deccan. But they were brahmanized, and their most famous king Gautamiputra Satakarni claims to have established the fourfold varna system which had fallen into disorder. He boasts that he put an end to the intermixture between the people of different social orders. Such a confusion was obviously caused by the Saka infiltration and by the thin and

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superficial brahmanization of the tribes living in the Deccan. The absorption of the Sakas in Hindu society as kshatriyas was facilitated by intermarriage between the Sakas and the Satavahanas Similarly the indigenous tribal people were more and more acculturated by the Buddhist monks, who were induced by land grants to settle in the western Deccan. It is suggested that traders also supported the Buddhist monks, for the earliest caves seem to have been located on the trade routes. The Satavahanas were also the first rulers to make land grants to the brahmanas, although we have more instances of grants being made to Buddhist monks

According to the Dharmasastras it was the function of the kshatriyas to rule, but the Satavahana rulers called themselves brahmanas Gautamiputra boasts that he was the true brahmana Since the Andhras are identified with the early Satavahanas, probably they were a local tribe who were converted to brahmanism. The orthodox brahmanas of the north looked upon the Andhras as a mixed caste. This shows that the Andhras were a tribal people who were brought within the fold of Hindu society as a mixed caste

Increasing craft and commerce in this period brought many merchants and artisans to the forefront. Merchants took pride in naming themselves after the towns to which they belonged. Both artisans and merchants made generous donations to the Buddhist cause. They set up small memorial tablets Among the artisans the *gandhikas* or the perfumers are repeatedly mentioned as donors At a later stage the term *gandhika* became so general as to denote all kinds of shopkeepers The modern title Gandhi is derived from this ancient term.

The most interesting detail about the Satavahanas relates to their family structure. In Aryan society in north India father enjoyed greater importance than mother, and the princes whom we have considered so far seem to have belonged to a patriarchal society. But the Satavahanas show traces of a matrilineal social structure. It was customary for their king to be named after his mother Such names as Gautamiputra and Vasisthiputra indicate that in their society mother enjoyed a great deal of importance At present in peninsular India the son's name includes a part of the father's name, but in it there is no place for mother. Queens made important religious gifts in their own right, and some of them acted as regents. But basically the Satavahana ruling family was patriarchal because succession to the throne passed to the male member

Pattern of Administration

The Satavahana rulers strove for the royal ideal set forth in the Dharmasastras. The king was represented as the upholder of dharma To him were assigned a few divine attributes. The Satavahana king is represented as possessing the qualities of ancient gods such as Rama, Bhima, Kesava, Arjuna, etc. He is compared in prowess and lustre to these legendary figures and to supernatural forces. This was evidently meant to attribute divinity to the Satavahana king.

The Satavahanas kept some of the administrative units found in Asokan times Their district was called *ahara*, as it was known in the time of Asoka. Their officials were known as *amatyas* and *mahamatras*, as they were known in Maurya times.

But we notice certain military and feudal elements in the administration of Satavahanas. It is significant that the *senapati* was appointed provincial governor. Since the tribal people in the Deccan were not thoroughly hinduized and reconciled to the new rule, it was necessary to keep them under strong military control. The administration in the rural areas was placed in the hands of *gaulmika*, who was the head of a military regiment consisting of nine chariots, nine elephants, 25 horses and 45 foot-soldiers.

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The head of the army platoon was therefore posted in the countryside to maintain peace and order

The military character of the Satavahana rule is also evident from the common use of such terms as *kataka* and *skandhavaras* in their inscriptions. These were military camps and settlements which served as administrative centres so long as the king was there. Thus coercion played an important part in the Satavahana administration.

The Satavahanas started the practice of granting tax-free villages to brahmanas and Buddhist monks. The cultivated fields and villages granted to them were declared free from molestation by royal policemen and soldiers, and all kinds of royal officers. These areas therefore became small independent islands within the Satavahana kingdom. Possibly the Buddhist monks also preached peace and rules of good conduct among the people they lived with, and taught them to respect political authority and social order The brahmanas, of course, helped enforce the rules of the varna system which made society stable

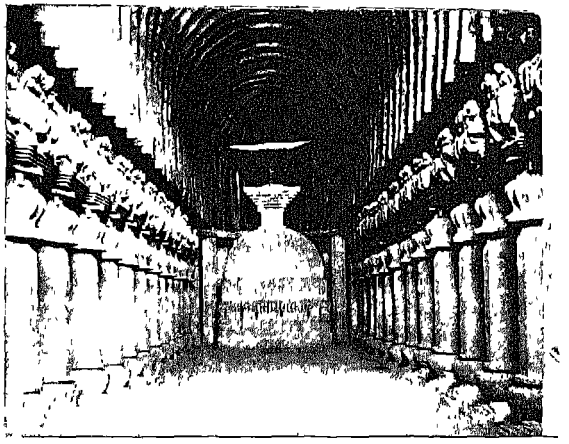
The Satavahana kingdom had three grades of feudatories. The highest grade was formed by the king who was called *raja* and who had the right to strike coins. The second grade was formed by the *mahabhoja*, and the third grade by the *senapati* It seems that these feudatories and landed beneficiaries enjoyed some authority in their respective localities.

Religion

The Satavahana rulers claim to have been brahmanas, and they represented the march of triumphant brahmanism. From the very beginning kings and queens performed the Vedic sacrifices such as the *asvamedha*, *vajapeya*, etc.

They also worshipped a large number of Vaishnava gods such as Krishna, Vasudeva, and others. They paid liberal sacrificial fees to the brahmanas.

However, the Satavahana rulers promoted Buddhism by granting land to the monks In their kingdom the *Mahayana* form of Buddhism commanded considerable following, especially in the artisan class. Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh became important seats of Buddhist culture under the Satavahanas and more so under their successors, the Ikshvakus Similarly, Buddhism flourished in the Nasik and Junar areas in the western Deccan in Maharashtra, where it seems to have been supported by the traders



16 1 *Chaitya at Karle*

Architecture

In the Satavahana phase many temples and monasteries were cut out of the solid rock in the north-western Deccan or Maharashtra with great skill and patience. In fact the process had started about a century earlier from 200 B C. The two common structures were the temple which was called *chaitya* and the monastery which was called *vihara*. The *chaitya* was a large hall with a number of columns, and the *vihara* consisted of a central hall entered by a doorway from a verandah in front. The most famous *chaitya* is that of Karle in the western Deccan It is about 40 metres long, 15 metres wide and 15 metres high It is a most

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16.2 *Sculpture depicting the Worship of Buddha's Footprints—Amaravati*



16 3 *Scene depicting Buddha's Sermon—Nagarjunakonda*

impressive specimen of massive rock architecture

The *viharas* or monasteries were excavated near the *chaityas* for the residence of monks in the rainy season. At Nasik we have three *viharas*. Since they carry the inscriptions of Nahapana and Gautamiputra, it seems that they belong to the first-second centuries A.D.

Rock-cut architecture is also to be found in Andhra in the Krishna-Godavari region, but the region is really famous for independent Buddhist structures. The most important of these monuments are the stupas distributed over an area of 125 km all around Ellora. The most famous of them are Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. The stupa was a large round structure erected over some relic of the Buddha The Amaravati stupa began in about 200 B C but was completely reconstructed in the second half of the second century A D. Its dome measured 53 metres across the base, and it seems to have been 33 metres in height. The Amaravati stupa is full of sculptures which depict the various scenes from the life of the Buddha.

Nagarjunakonda prospered most under the Ikshvakus, the successors of the Satavahanas. It contains not only Buddhist monuments but also the earliest brahmanical brick temples

Language

The official language of the Satavahanas was Prakrit. All inscriptions were composed in this language and written in the Brahmi script, as was the case in Asokan times. Some Satavahana kings may have composed Prakrit books. One Prakrit text called *Gathasaptasati* is attributed to a Satavahana king called Hala. It consisted of 700 verses, all written in Prakrit, but it seems to have been finally re-touched much later, possibly after the sixth century A D

EXERCISES

1. Who were the Satavahanas? How long did they rule?
2. What is meant by matrilineal family?
3. Describe the Satavahana system of administration
4. Give an account of art and religion in the Satavahana dominions.

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CHAPTER 17

The Dawn of History in the Deep South

The Megalithic Background

Several elements mark the beginning of the historical period. These are: settlements of large scale rural communities which carry on plough agriculture with the help of iron implements, formation of the state system, rise of social classes, use of writing, beginnings of written literature. All these phenomena are not found at the tip of the peninsula with the Kaveri delta as the nuclear zone till about the second century B.C. Up to this period the upland portions of the peninsula were inhabited by people who are called megalith builders. They are known not from their actual settlements which are rare, but from their graves. These graves are called megaliths because they were encircled by big pieces of stone. They contain not only skeletons of people who were buried but also pottery and iron objects. The people used various types of pottery, but black-and-red ware seems to have been popular with them. Obviously the practice of burying goods in the graves with the dead bodies was based on the belief that the dead would need all these in the next world. These goods give us an idea of their sources of livelihood. We find arrowheads, spearheads and even hoes and sickles, all made of iron. Tridents, which later came to be associated with Siva, have also been found in the megaliths. However, compared to the number of agricultural tools that were buried, those meant for fighting and hunting are larger in number. This would show that the megalithic people did not practise an advanced type of agriculture.

The megaliths are found in all upland areas of the peninsula, but their concentration seems to be in eastern Andhra and in Tamil Nadu. Their beginnings can be traced to *circa* 1000 B.C., but in many cases the megalithic phase lasted from about the fifth to the first century B.C.; in a few places this phase persisted even up to the early centuries of the Christian era.

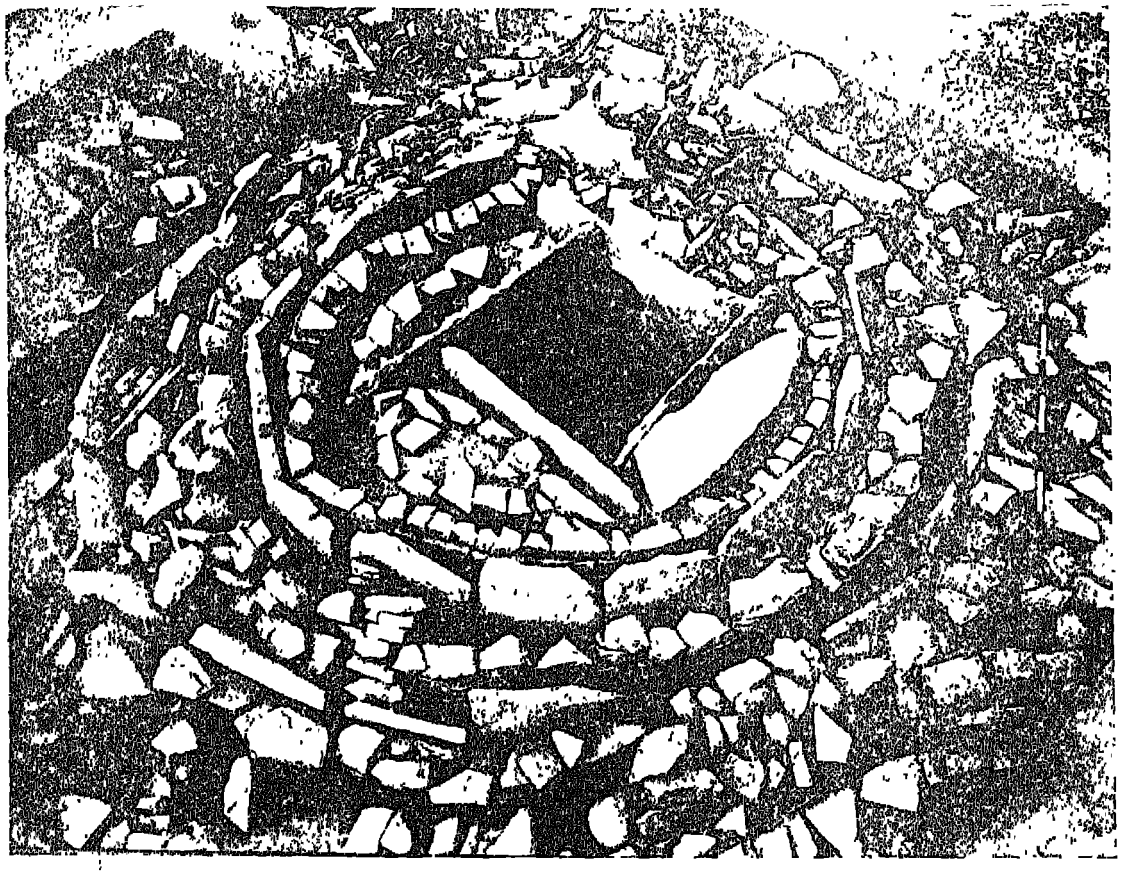
The Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras mentioned in Asokan inscriptions were probably in the megalithic phase of material culture. The megalithic people in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu had certain peculiar characteristics. They buried the skeletons of the dead in urns made of red pottery in pits. In many cases these urns were not surrounded by stone circles, and grave goods were not too many. The practice of urn-burial was different from that of cist-burial or pit-burial surrounded by stone circles, which practice prevailed in the Krishna-Godavari valley. But in any case, in spite of the use of iron, the megalithic people depended partly for settlement and burials on the slopes of the hills. Although the megalithic people produced paddy and *ragi*, apparently the area of cultivable land used by them was very limited, and generally they did not settle on the plains or the low lands.

By the beginning of the Christian era, or probably a little earlier, these people moved from the uplands into fertile river basins and

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17.1 *Megalithic Burial*

reclaimed marshy deltaic areas. Under the stimulus of contact with the elements of material culture brought from the north to the extreme end of the peninsula by traders, conquerors and Jaina and Buddhist missionaries, they came to practise wet paddy cultivation, founded numerous villages and towns, and came to have social classes. All these created conditions for the rise of state systems in the deep south, whose history from the first century A.D. can be constructed on the basis of written records supplemented by Greek and Roman accounts and by archaeology.

Three Early Kingdoms

The southern end of the Indian peninsula situated south of the Krishna river was divided into three kingdoms—Chola, Pandya and Chera or Kerala. The Pandyas are first mentioned by Megasthenes, who says that their kingdom was celebrated for pearls. He also speaks of its being ruled by a woman and states that seven-year old mothers were found in the Pandya country. All this sounds exaggerated but suggests that the Pandya society was matriarchal. The Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras, all the three are mentioned in the inscriptions of Asoka in the

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third centruy B C., but it is clear that their territories lay outside the Maurya empire in modern Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The Pandya territory occupied the southernmost and the south-eastern portion of the Indian peninsula, and it roughly included the modern districts of Tinnevelly, Ramnad and Madurai in Tamil Nadu. It had its capital at Madurai, which was the Tamil word for Mathura. The literature compiled in the Tamil academies in the early centuries of the Christian era and called the Sangam literature refers to the Pandya rulers, but it does not give any connected account One or two Pandya conquerors are mentioned. However, it is evident from this literature that the country was wealthy and prosperous. The Pandya kings profited from trade with the Roman empire and sent embassies to the Roman emperor Augustus. The brahmanas enjoyed considerable influence, and the Pandya kings performed Vedic sacrifices in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Chola kingdom was called Cholamandalam or Coromandal. It was situated to the north-east of the territory of the Pandyas, between the Pennar and the Velur rivers. We have some idea of the political history of the Cholas, whose chief centre of political power lay at Uraiyur, a place famous for cotton trade. It seems that in the middle of the second century B.C. a Chola king named Elara conquered Sri Lanka and ruled over it for nearly 50 years A firmer history of the Cholas begins in the second century A.D. with their famous king Karikala, who flourished around A.D. 100. He founded Puhar and constructed 160 km of embankment along the Kaveri river. This was built with the labour of 12,000 slaves who were brought as captives from Sri Lanka. Puhar is identical with Kaveripattanam, which was the Chola capital. It was a great centre of trade and commerce, and excavations show that it had a large dock. One of the main sources of the wealth of the Cholas was trade in cotton cloth. They maintained an efficient navy which sailed as far as the mouths of the Ganga and the Iravadi, and in later centuries went even to the Malaya archipelago

Under Karikala's successors the Chola power rapidly declined. Their capital, Kaveripattanam, was overwhelmed and destroyed. Their two neighbouring powers, the Cheras and the Pandyas, extended at the cost of the Cholas. What remained of the Chola power was almost wiped out by the attacks of the Pallavas from the north. From the fourth to the ninth century A.D. the Cholas played only a marginal part in south Indian history

The Chera or the Kerala country was situated to the west and north of the land of the Pandyas. It included the narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains and covered a portion of the modern Kerala State. In the early centuries of the Christian era the Chera country was as important as the country of the Cholas and the Pandyas It owed its importance to trade with the Romans. The Romans set up two regiments at Muziris identical with Cranganore in the Chera country to protect their interests. It is said that they also built there a temple of Augustus.

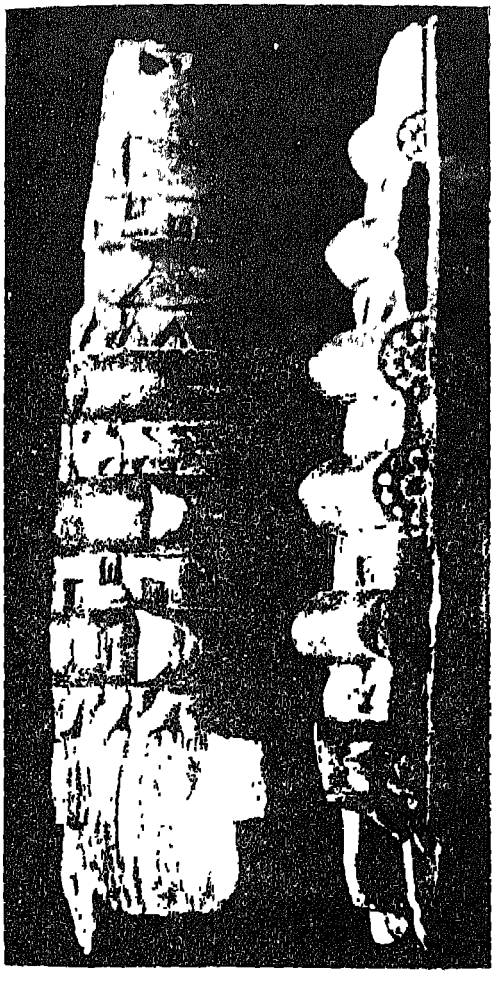
The most important event in the political history of the Cheras was their fight against the Cholas about A.D. 150. Although the Cheras killed the father of the Chola king Karikala, the Chera king also lost his life. Later the two kingdoms temporarily came to terms and concluded a matrimonial alliance. The Chera king next allied himself with the Pandya rulers against the Cholas But the Cholas defeated the allies, and it is said that since the Chera king was wounded in the back he committed suicide out of shame.

According to the Chera poets their greatest king was Senguttuvan, the Red Chera. He routed his rivals and established his cousin securely on the throne. It is said that he invaded

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17.2 *Objects of Carved Ivory belonging to the Early Centuries of the Christian Era*

the north and crossed the Ganga. But all this seems to be exaggerated. After the second century A.D. the Chera power declined, and we have nothing of its history again till the eighth century A.D.

The main interest of the political history of these three kingdoms lies in the continuous wars they fought with one another and also with Sri Lanka.

Although the wars weakened these states, they very much profited from their natural resources and foreign trade. These kingdoms were immensely rich. They grew spices, especially pepper, which was in great demand in the western world. Their elephants supplied ivory, which was highly valued in the West. The sea yielded pearls and their mines produced precious stones, and both these were sent to the West in good quantity. In addition to this they produced muslin and silk. We hear of cotton cloth as thin as the slough of a snake. The early Tamil poems also mention the weaving of complex patterns on silk. Uraiyur was noted for its cotton trade. From very early times the Tamils traded with the Greek or Hellenistic kingdom of Egypt and Arabia on the one side, and with the Malaya archipelago and from there with China on the other. As a result of trade the words for rice, ginger, cinnamon and several other articles in Greek language were derived from Tamil language. When Egypt became a Roman province and when the monsoons were discovered about the beginning of the first century A.D., this trade received great impetus. Thus for the first two and a half centuries A.D. the southern kingdoms carried on lucrative trade with the Romans. With the decline of this trade, these kingdoms also began to decay.

The Purse and the Sword

Trade, foreign and internal, constituted a very important source of royal revenue. We know how the custom officials functioned in Puhar. Transit duties were also collected from merchants who moved with their goods from place to place. For the safety of merchants and prevention of smuggling, soldiers maintained constant vigil on the road.

Spoils of war further added to royal income. But the real foundation of war and polity lay in regular income from agriculture. The share of the agricultural produce, claimed and collected by the king, is not specified. The tip of the peninsula and the adjacent regions were ex-

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tremely fertile. The land produced paddy, *ragi* and sugarcane. It was said of the Kaveri delta that the space in which an elephant could lie down produced enough to feed seven persons. In addition to this the Tamil region produced grains, fruit, pepper and turmeric. It seems that the king had a share in all this produce.

Apparently out of the taxes collected from the peasantry the state maintained a regular army It consisted of chariots drawn by oxen, of elephants, cavalry and infantry. Elephants played an important part in war. Horses were imported by sea into the Pandyan kingdom. The nobles and princes or captains of army rode on elephants, and the commanders drove on chariots. The foot soldiers and horsemen wore leather sandles for the protection of their feet.

Rise of Social Classes

Taxes enabled the king not only to maintain a professional army but also to pay the poets and priests, who were mainly brahmanas. The brahmanas first appear in the Tamil land in the *Sangam* age. An ideal king was one who never hurt the brahmanas. Many brahmanas functioned as poets, and in this role they were generously rewarded by the king. Karikala is said to have given one poet 1,600,000 gold pieces. Besides gold, the poets also received cash, land, chariots, horses and even elephants. The Tamil brahmanas took meat and wine. The kshatriyas and vaisyas do not appear as regular varnas in the *Sangam* texts. But the class of warriors was not absent. Captains of the army were invested with the title of *enadi* at a formal ceremony. Civil and military offices were held under both the Cholas and the Pandyas by *vallalas* or rich peasants. The ruling caste was called the *arasar*, and its members had marriage relations with the *vallalas*, who constituted the fourth caste. They held the bulk of the land and thus constituted the peasantry, divided into the rich and the poor. The rich did not plough the land themselves but employed labourers for this purpose. Agricultural operations were generally carried on by women of the lowest class (*kadaisiyar*), whose status appears to have differed little from that of the slave

Besides agricultural labourers we come across low class artisans To this category belonged the *pulaiyans*, who made rope *charpaiys* and used animal skins as mats. Several outcastes and forest tribes suffered from extreme poverty and lived from hand to mouth. We notice sharp social inequalities in the age of the *Sangam*. The rich lived in houses of brick and mortar, and the poor in huts and humbler structures In the cities the rich merchants lived in the upper storey of their houses. But it is not clear whether rites and religion were used to maintain social inequalities. We notice the dominance of the brahmanas and the ruling caste, but acute caste distinctions which appeared in later times are lacking in the early *Sangam* age.

Beginnings of Brahmanism

The state and society that were formed in the Tamil land in the early centuries of the Christian era developed under the impact of brahmanism. But the brahmanical influence was confined to a small part of the Tamil territory and only to the upper levels of Tamil society in that area. The kings performed the Vedic sacrifices. The brahmanas, who were the followers of the Vedas, carried on disputations, possibly with the Jainas and the Buddhists. But the chief local god worshipped by the people was Murugan, who was also called Subramaniya. The worship of Vishnu is also mentioned, although it may have been a later practice. The megalithic practice of providing for the dead continued. People offered paddy to the dead. Cremation was introduced, but inhumation followed in the megalithic phase was not abandoned.

Tamil Language and Sangam Literature

All that has been stated above about the life

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of the Tamils in the beginning of the historical period is based on the *Sangam* literature. As shown earlier, the *sangam* was a college or assembly of Tamil poets held probably under royal patronage. But we do not know the number of *sangams* or the period for which they were held. It is stated in a Tamil commentary of the middle of the eighth century A.D. that three *sangams* lasted for 9,990 years. They were attended by 8,598 poets, and had 197 Pandya kings as patrons. All this is wild exaggeration. All that can be said is that a *sangam* was held under royal patronage in Madurai.

The available *sangam* literature, which was produced by these assemblies, was compiled in *circa* A.D. 300-600. The early, middle and last strata of the texts are yet to be clearly identified, but they contain descriptions which tally with what we know from the Greek and Roman accounts, and from archaeology. There is no doubt that the art of writing was known to the Tamils before the beginning of the Christian era. More than 75 short inscriptions in the Brahmi script have been found in natural caves, mainly in the Madurai region They provide the specimen of the earliest form of Tamil mixed with Prakrit words. They belong to the second-first centuries B.C when the Jaina and Buddhist missionaries appeared in this area. Inscribed potsherds during recent excavations have been found at several places, and they provide examples of Tamil in the beginning of the Christian era. It is therefore no wonder that considerable *Sangam* literature was produced in the early centuries of the Christian era, although it was finally compiled by A.D. 600.

EXERCISES

1. What is meant by the megaliths? What light do they throw on the material culture of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu?
2. When did the Pandyas first appear in history? Give an account of their activities in the early centuries of the Christian era.
3. Where did the Cholas rule first? Narrate the history of Kaveripattanam.
4. Write a note on the Cheras.
5. Mention the commercial activities of the early Tamil kingdoms.
6. What is meant by the *Sangam* literature? Give an account of life covered by it.

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CHAPTER 18

Crafts, Trade and Towns in the Post-Maurya Age

Crafts

The age of the Sakas, Kushans, Satavahanas (200 B.C.—A D. 200) and the first Tamil states was the most flourishing period in the history of crafts and commerce in ancient India. Arts and crafts witnessed a remarkable growth. We do not come across so many kinds of artisans in the earlier texts as are mentioned in the writings of this period. The *Digha Nikaya*, which belongs to pre-Maurya times, mentions about two dozen occupations, but the *Mahavastu*, which belongs to this period, catalogues 36 kinds of workers living in the town of Rajgir, and the list is not exhaustive. The *Milinda Panho* or the *Questions of Milinda* enumerates as many as 75 occupations, 60 of which are connected with various kinds of crafts. Craftsmen are mostly associated with towns in literary texts, but some excavations show that they also inhabited villages. In a village settlement in Karimnagar in Telangana carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, potters, etc., lived in separate quarters and agricultural and other labourers lived at one end.

Eight crafts were associated with the working of gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, brass, iron and precious stones or jewels Various kinds of brass, zinc, antimony and red arsenic are also mentioned. All this shows great advance and specialization in mining and metallurgy. Technological knowledge about the work of iron had made great progress. Iron artifacts have been discovered in greater numbers in Kushan and Satavahana layers at various excavated sites But the Telangana region of Andhra seems to have made special progress in iron manufacture In addition to weapons, balance rods, socketed axes and hoes, sickles, ploughshares, razors and ladles have been discovered in the Karimnagar and Nalgonda districts of this region. Indian iron and steel including cutlery were exported to the Abyssinian ports, and they enjoyed great prestige in Western Asia.

Cloth-making, silk-weaving and the making of arms and luxury articles also made progress. Mathura was a great centre for the manufacture of a special type of cloth which was called *sataka* Dyeing was a thriving craft in some south Indian towns. A brick-built dyeing vat has been unearthed at Uraiyur, a suburb of Tiruchirapalli town in Tamil Nadu. Similar dyeing vats were excavated at Arikamedu. These structures belong to the 1st-3rd centuries A D. during which handloom textile industry flourished in these towns. The manufacture of oil increased because of the use of the oil wheel. The inscriptions of the period mention weavers, goldsmiths, dyers, workers in metal and ivory, jewellers, sculptors, fishermen, smiths and perfumers as constructors of caves and donors of pillars, tablets, cisterns, etc., to the Buddhist monks. All these suggest that their crafts were in a flourishing condition.

Of the handicrafts meant for manufacturing luxury articles mention may be made of ivory

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Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India
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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve miles measured from the appropriate base line

Figure 13 *India—circa 200 B.C.—A.D. 200*

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work, glass manufacture and bead cutting. Many products of these crafts have been found as a result of digging in the Kushan complexes. Indian ivories have been found in Afghanistan and Rome They are likened to ivory objects found in excavations at Satavahana sites in the Deccan. Roman glass objects appear in Taxila and in Afghanistan, but it was about the beginning of the Christian era that the knowledge of glass-blowing reached India and attained its peak. Similarly large numbers of beads of semi-precious stones appear in post-Maurya layers. Coin-minting was an important craft, and the period is noted for numerous types of coins made of gold, silver, copper, bronze, lead and potin The craftsmen also made fake Roman coins. Various coin-moulds belonging to the period have been found both in north India and in the Deccan. A coin-mould from the Satavahana level shows that through it half a dozen coins could be turned out at a time. These urban handicrafts were supplemented by the manufacture of beautiful pieces of terracotta, which are found in profuse quantities. They have been found in almost all Kushan and Satavahana sites, but special mention may be made of Yelleshwaram in Nalgonda district, where we find the largest number of terracottas and the moulds in which they were manufactured. Terracottas and their moulds have also been found at Kondapur, at a distance of about 65 km from Hyderabad. Terracottas were meant mostly for the use of upper classes in towns. It is significant that with the decline of towns in Gupta, and especially in post-Gupta times, such terracottas almost went out of fashion.

Artisans were organized into guilds, and in the second century A.D. in Maharashtra lay devotees of Buddhism deposited money with the guilds of potters, oil millers and weavers for providing robes and other necessities to the monks. In the same century money was deposited by a chief with the guild of flour makers at Mathura out of the monthly income of which a hundred brahmanas were to be served daily. On the basis of different texts we can say that artisans of this period were organized into at least two dozen guilds. Most artisans known from inscriptions were confined to the Mathura region and to the western Deccan, which lay on the trade routes leading to the ports on the western coast.

The most important economic development of the period was the thriving trade between India and the eastern Roman empire. In the beginning a good deal of this trade was carried on by land, but the movement of the Sakas, Parthians and Kushans from the first century B.C. disrupted trade by land route. Although the Parthians of Iran imported iron and steel from India they presented great obstacles to India's trade with the lands further west of Iran. But from the first century A.D. trade was carried on mainly by sea. It seems that around the beginning of the Christian era the monsoons were discovered. So the sailors now could sail in much less time directly from the eastern coast of the Arabian Sea to its western coast. They could call easily at the various ports such as Broach and Sopara situated on the western coast of India, and Arikamedu and Tamralipti situated on its eastern coast. Of all these ports Broach seems to have been the most important and flourishing. To it were brought not only the commodities produced in the Satavahana kingdom but also the goods produced in the Saka and Kushan kingdoms. The Sakas and the Kushans used two routes from the north-western frontier to the western sea coast. Both these routes converged at Taxila, and were connected with the Silk Road passing through Central Asia. The first route directly ran from the north to the south connecting Taxila with the lower Indus basin from where it passed on to Broach. The second route called the *uttarapatha* was in more frequent use. From Taxila it passed through the modern Panjab up to the western coast of the Yamuna. Following the

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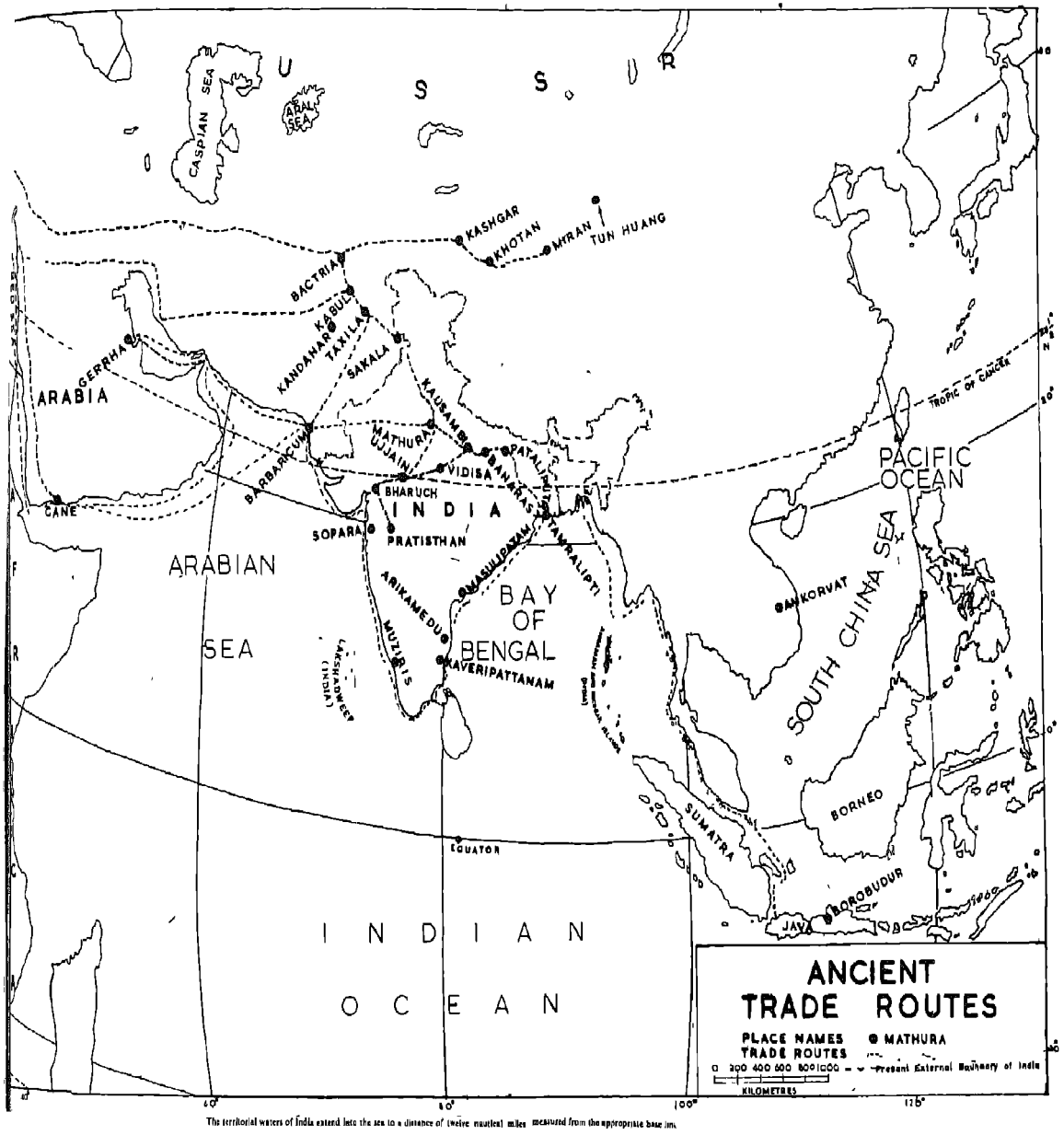


Figure 14 *Ancient Trade Routes*

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course of the Yamuna it went southward to Mathura. From Mathura it passed on to Ujjain in Malwa and again from Ujjain to Broach on the western coast. Ujjain was the meeting-point of another route which started from Kausambi near Allahabad.

Foreign Trade

Although the volume of trade between India and Rome seems to have been large, it was not carried on in articles of daily or common use. There was a brisk commerce in luxury goods, not in the articles of day-to-day use. The Romans first started trade with the southern-most portion of the country, because their earliest coins have been found in the Tamil kingdoms which lay outside the Satavahana dominions. The Romans mainly imported spices for which south India was famous. They also imported muslin, pearls, jewels, and precious stones from central and south India. Iron goods, especially cutlery, formed an important item of export to the Roman empire. In addition to the articles directly supplied by India, certain articles were brought to India from China and Central Asia and then sent to the eastern part of the Roman empire. Silk was directly sent from China to the Roman empire through the Silk Road passing through north Afghanistan and Iran. But the establishment of the Parthian rule in Iran and the neighbouring areas created difficulties. Therefore silk had to be diverted to the western Indian ports through the north-western part of the subcontinent. Sometimes it also found its way from China to India *via* the east coast of India. From there it went to the West. Thus there was considerable transit trade in silk between India and the Roman empire.

In return the Romans exported to India wine-amphorae and various other types of pottery which have been discovered in excavations at Tamluk in West Bengal, Arikamedu near Pondicherry and at several other places in south India. Sometimes they travelled as far as Gauhati. Lead, which was used for making coins by the Satavahanas, seems to have been imported from Rome in the shape of coiled strips. The Roman goods have not been discovered in any good number in north India. But there is no doubt that under the Kushans the north-western part of the subcontinent in the second century A.D carried on trade with the eastern part of the Roman empire This was facilitated by the Roman conquest of Mesopotamia, which was made a Roman province in A.D 115. The Roman emperor Trajan not only conquered Muscat but also explored the Persian Gulf. As a result of trade and conquest the Roman objects reached Afghanistan and north-western India. At Begram, 72 km north of Kabul, large glass jars made in Italy, Egypt and Syria have come to light. We also find there bowls, bronze stands, steel yards, weights of western origin, Graeco-Roman bronze statues of small size, jugs and other vessels made of alabaster Taxila, which is identical with the modern Sirkap in North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, provides fine examples of the Graeco-Roman sculpture in bronze. We also find silver ornaments, some bronze pots, one jar and coins of the Roman emperor Tiberius. But Arretine pottery, which has been found commonly in south India, is not noticed in central or western India or in Afghanistan. Evidently these places did not receive popular western articles, which have been found mostly south of the Vindhyas in the Satavahana kingdom and further south. Thus the kingdoms of both the Satavahanas as well as the Kushans profited from trade with the Roman empire, although the maximum profit seems to have accrued to the Satavahanas.

The most significant Roman export to India was the large number of coins, invariably made of gold and silver. About 85 finds of Roman coins have come to light in the whole of the subcontinent, and most of them come from the south of the Vindhyas,

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This justifies the complaint of the Roman writer Pliny, who wrote his account called *Natural History* in Latin in A.D 77. He bewails that Rome was being drained of gold on account of her trade with India. This may be an exaggeration. But as early as A.D. 22 we hear of complaints against excessive expenditure on the purchase of pepper from the East. Since the westerners were very much fond of Indian pepper, it is called *yavanapriya* in Sanskrit. There also began a strong reaction against the use of India-made steel cutlery for which the Roman nobles paid very high prices The balance of trade was so much in favour of India that eventually steps had to be taken in Rome to ban Rome's trade with India in pepper and steel goods.

How did the Indians use the silver and gold currency which came to India from Rome? The Roman gold coins were naturally valued for their intrinsic worth, but they also may have circulated in big transactions. In the north the Indo-Greek rulers issued a few gold coins. But the Kushans issued gold coins in considerable numbers. It is wrong to think that all Kushan gold coins were minted out of Roman gold. As early as the fifth centruy B.C India had paid a tribute of 320 talents of gold to the Iranian empire. This gold may have been extracted from the gold mines in Sindh. The Kushans probably obtained gold from Central Asia They may also have procured it either from Karnataka or from the gold mines of Dhalbhum in south Bihar which later came under their sway. On account of contact with Rome the Kushans issued the *dinar* type of gold coins which became abundant under the Gupta rule But gold coins may not have been used in day-to-day transactions, which were carried on in coins of lead, potin or copper. Both lead and copper deposits are found in Andhra The Andhras issued a large number of lead or potin coins in the Deccan, and the Kushans issued the largest number of copper coins in northern and northwestern India. Copper and bronze coins were also used in large quantities by the rulers of some indigenous dynasties such as the Nagas who ruled in central India, the Yaudheyas who ruled in eastern Rajasthan together with the adjacent areas of Haryana, Panjab and Uttar Pradesh and the Mitras who ruled in Kausambi, Mathura, Avanti, and Ahichchhatra (Bareilly district in Uttar Pradesh). Perhaps in no other period had money economy penetrated so deeply into the life of the common people of the towns and their suburbs as during this period This development fits well with the growth of arts and crafts and the country's thriving trade with the Roman empire.

Urban Settlements

The growing crafts and commerce and the increasing use of money promoted the prosperity of numerous towns during this period Important towns in north India such as Vaisali, Pataliputra, Varanasi, Kausambi, Sravasti, Hastinapur, Mathura, Indraprastha (Purana Quila in New Delhi) are all mentioned in literary texts, and some of them are also described by the Chinese pilgrims Most towns flourished in the Kushan period in the first and the second centuries A.D. This may be said on the basis of

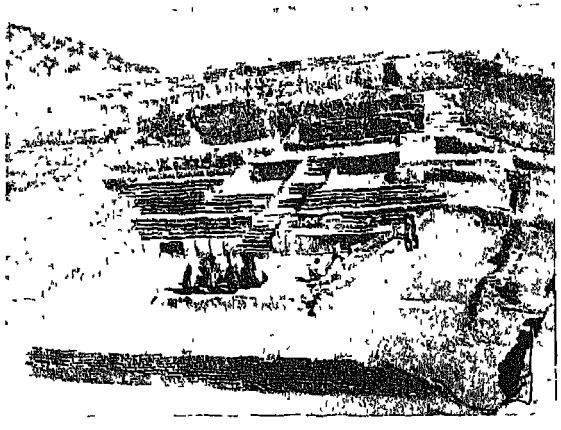


18.1 *Terracotta Figures found in Ter (Distt Osmanabad)*

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18.2 *Remains of the Stadium at Nagarjunakonda*

excavations, which have revealed better structures belonging to the Kushan age. Excavations further show that several sites in Bihar such as Chirand, Sonpur and Buxar, and Mason in Ghazipur in eastern Uttar Pradesh witnessed prosperous Kushan phases. Similarly in Uttar Pradesh, Sohgaura, Bhita, Kausambi and Shringaverapur near Allahabad, Atranjikhera and several sites in the districts of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar were in a thriving state in Kushan times. We notice considerable brick structures of the Kushan period at both Shringaverapur and Chirand. The excavations at Sonkh in Mathura show as many as seven levels of the Kushan phase, and only one of the Gupta phase. Again in Jullundar, Ludhiana and Ropar, all lying in Panjab, several sites show good Kushan structures. The same is true of the sites excavated in Haryana. In many cases the Gupta period had poorly built structures made of used Kushan bricks. On the whole the material remains ascribable to the Kushan phase display urbanization at its peak. This also applies to towns in the Saka kingdom of Malwa and western India. The most important town was Ujjain, because of its being the nodal point of two routes, one from Kausambi and the other from Mathura. But it was also important because of its export of agate and carnelian stones. Excavations show that agate, jasper and carnelian were worked on a large scale for the manufacture of beads after 200 B C. This was possible because the raw material could be obtained in plenty from the trap bedrock in the bed of the Sipra river.

Towns thrived in the Satavahana kingdom during the same period as they did under the Sakas and Kushans. Tagar (Ter), Paithan, Dhanyakataka, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Broach, Sopara, Arikamedu, Kaveripattanam were prosperous towns in the Satavahana period in western and south India. Several Satavahana settlements, some of which may be identical with the thirty walled towns of the Andhras mentioned by Pliny, have been excavated in Telangana. They had originated much earlier than towns in the coastal Andhra although not much later than towns in western Maharashtra. But the decline of towns in Maharashtra, Andhra and Tamil Nadu generally took place from the third century A D. onwards.

Towns prospered in the Kushan and Satavahana empires because they carried on thriving trade with the Roman empire. The country traded with the eastern part of the Roman empire as well as with Central Asia Towns in Panjab and western Uttar Pradesh thrived because the centre of Kushan power lay in north-western India. Most Kushan towns in India lay exactly on the north-western or *uttarapatha* route passing from Mathura to Taxila. The Kushan empire ensured security on the routes. Its end in the third century A.D. dealt a great blow to these towns. The same thing seems to have happened in the Deccan With the ban on trade with India imposed by the Roman empire from the third century A D. towns could not support the artisans and merchants who lived there. Archaeological excavations in the Deccan also suggest decline in the urban settlements after the Satavahana phase.

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EXERCISES

1. "The age of the Sakas, Kushans and Satavahanas was the most flourishing period in the history of crafts and commerce in ancient India." Discuss.
2. Describe the main economic activities in post-Maurya times (*circa* 200 B.C.—A.D 200).
3. Give an account of India's foreign trade between *circa* 200 B.C. and A.D. 200.
4. "The growth of crafts and commerce promoted the prosperity of towns in post-Maurya times (*circa* 200 B C.—A.D 200)," Expand.

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CHAPTER 19

The Rise and Growth of the Gupta Empire

Background

After the break-up of the Maurya empire the Satavahanas and the Kushans emerged as two large political powers. The Satavahanas acted as a stabilizing factor in the Deccan and south, to which they gave political unity and economic prosperity on the strength of their trade with the Roman empire. The Kushans performed the same role in the north. Both these empires came to an end in the middle of the third century A D.

On the ruins of the Kushan empire arose a new empire, which established its sway over a good part of the former dominions of both the Kushans and Satavahanas. This was the power of the Guptas, who may have been of vaisya origin. Although the Gupta empire was not as large as the Maurya empire, it kept north India politically united for more than a century, from 335 to 455. The original kingdom of the Guptas comprised Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the end of the third century A.D. Uttar Pradesh seems to have been a more important province for the Guptas than Bihar, because early Gupta coins and inscriptions have been mainly found in that state. If we leave out some feudatories and private individuals, whose inscriptions have been mostly found in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh will stand out as the most important area in respect of the finds of the Gupta antiquities. Hence Uttar Pradesh seems to have been the place from where the Guptas operated and fanned out in different directions. Probably with their centre of power at Prayag they spread in the neighbouring regions.

The Guptas were possibly the feudatories of the Kushans in Uttar Pradesh, and seem to have succeeded them without any wide timelag. At many places in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the Kushan antiquities are immediately followed by the Gupta antiquities It is likely that the Guptas learnt the use of saddle, reins, buttoned-coats, trousers and boots from the Kushans. All these gave them mobility and made them excellent horsemen. In the Kushan scheme of things chariots and elephants had ceased to be important. Horses played the main part This also seems to have been the case with the Guptas on whose coins horsemen are represented. Although some Gupta kings are described as excellent and unrivalled chariot warriors, their basic strength lay in the use of horses.

The Guptas enjoyed certain material advantages. The centre of their operations lay in the fertile land of Madhyadesa covering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They could exploit the iron ores of central India and south Bihar. Further, they took advantage of their proximity to the areas in north India which carried on silk trade with the Eastern Roman empire, also known as the Byzantine empire. On account of these favourable factors the Guptas set up their rule over Anuganga (the middle Gangetic basin), Prayag (modern Allahabad), Saketa (modern Ayodhya)

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and Magadha. In course of time this kingdom became an all-India empire. The Kushan power in north India came to an end around A.D. 230 and then a good part of central India fell under the rule of the Murundas, who were possibly the kinsmen of the Kushans. The Murundas continued to rule till A.D. 250. Twenty-five years later, in about A.D. 275, the dynasty of the Guptas came to power.

The first important king of the Gupta dynasty was Chandragupta I. He married a Lichchhavi princess from Nepal, which strengthened his position. The Guptas were possibly vaisyas, and hence marriage in a kshatriya family gave them prestige. Chandragupta I seems to have been a ruler of considerable importance because he started the Gupta era in A.D. 319-20, which marked the date of his accession. Later many inscriptions came to be dated in the Gupta era.

Samudragupta (A.D. 335-380)

The Gupta kingdom was enlarged enormously by Chandragupta I's son and successor Samudragupta (A.D. 335-380). He was the opposite of Asoka Asoka believed in a policy of peace and non-aggression, but Samudragupta delighted in violence and conquest. His court poet Harishena wrote a glowing account of the military exploits of his patron In a long inscription the poet enumerates the peoples and countries that were conquered by Samudragupta. The inscription is engraved at Allahabad on the same pillar as carries an inscription of the peace-loving Asoka. The places and the countries conquered by Samudragupta can be divided into five groups. Group one includes princes of the Ganga-Yamunā *doab,* who were defeated and whose kingdoms were incorporated into the Gupta empire. Group two includes the rulers of the eastern Himalayan states and some frontier states such as princes of Nepal, Assam, Bengal, etc., who were made to feel the weight of Samudragupta's arms. It also covers some republics of Panjab. The republics, which flickered on the



19.1 *The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta (lines 30-31 and 33)*

The Nagari rendering of lines 30, 31 and 33 and English translation of lines 30-31 are given below

(l. 30) भवन-गमनावाप्त-ललित-सुखविचरणामाचक्षाण इव भुवो बाहूरयमुच्छ्रित. स्तम्भ यस्य । प्रदान-भुज-विक्रम-प्रशम-शास्त्रवाक्योदयैरुपर्य्युपरि-संचयोच्छ्रितमनेकमार्ग्ग यश ।

(l. 31) पुनाति भुवनत्रयं पशुपतेर्ज्जटान्तर्गु हानिरोध-परिमोक्ष-शीघ्रमिव पाण्डु गाङ्ग पय: ॥ एतच्च काव्य-मेषामेव भट्टारकपादाना दासस्य समीप-परिसर्प्पणानुग्रहोत्मीलित-मते: ।

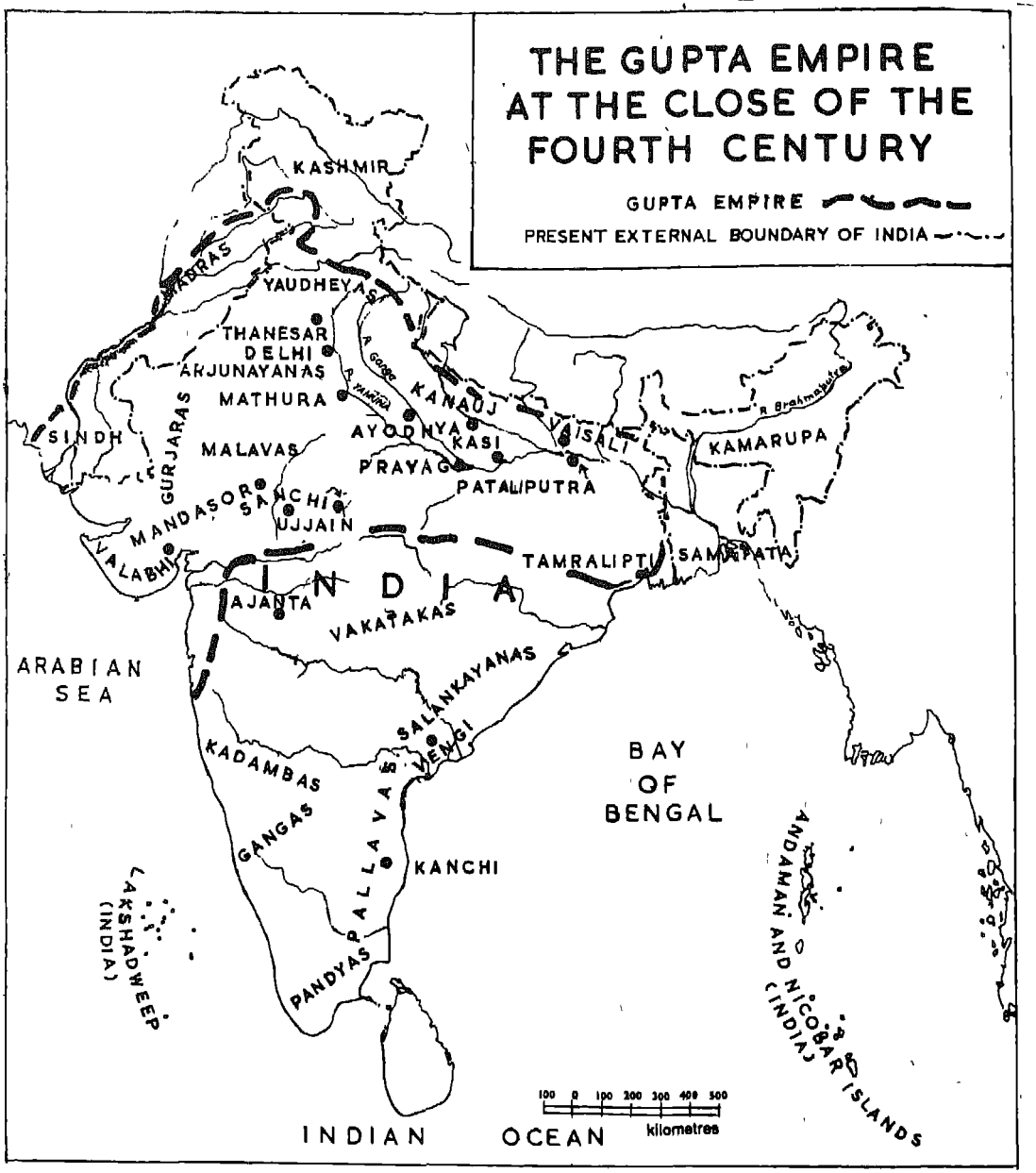
(l. 33) अनुष्ठितं च परमभट्टारक-पादानुध्यातेन महादण्डनायक-तिलभट्टकेन ।

Ll 30-31 [And whose fame,—ever heaped up higher and higher by the development of (his) liberality and prowess of arm and composure and (study of) the precepts of the scriptures,—travelling by many paths, purifies the three worlds, as if it were the pale yellow water of (the river) Gangā, flowing quickly on being liberated from confinement the thickets of the matted hair of (the god) Pasupati.]

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 15 *The Gupta Empire, circa A.D. 400*

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ruins of the Maurya empire, were finally put out by Samudragupta Group three includes the forest kingdoms situated in the Vindhya region and known as *atavika rajyas;* they were brought under the control of Samudragupta. Group four includes 12 rulers of the eastern Deccan and south India, who were conquered and liberated Samudragupta's arms reached as far as Kanchi in Tamil Nadu, where the Pallavas were compelled to recognize his suzerainty. Group five includes the names of the Sakas and Kushans, some of them ruling in Afghanistan. It is said that Samudragupta swept them out of power and received the submission of the rulers of distant lands. The prestige and influence of Samudragupta spread even outside India. According to a Chinese source, Meghavarman, the ruler of Sri Lanka, sent a missionary to Samudragupta for permission to build a Buddhist temple at Gaya. This was granted, and the temple developed into a huge monastic establishment If we believe the eulogistic inscription from Allahabad, it would appear that Samudragupta never knew any defeat, and in this sense he is called the Napoleon of India. There is no doubt that Samudragupta forcibly unified the greater part of India under him, and his power was felt in a much larger area.



19.2 *Coins of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and Chandragupta II*

Chandragupta II (A.D. 380-412)

The reign of Chandragupta II saw the high watermark of the Gupta empire. He extended the limits of the empire by marriage alliance and conquests. Chandragupta married his daughter Prabhavati with a Vakataka prince who belonged to the brahmana caste and ruled in central India. The prince died, and was succeeded by his young son. So Prabhavati became the virtual ruler. As shown by some of her land charters, which betray the influence of the eastern Gupta writing, she managed the affairs of her kingdom with the help of an official sent by her father Chandragupta. Thus Chandragupta exercised indirect control over the Vakataka kingdom in central India This afforded a great advantage to him. Passing through this area Chandragupta II conquered western Malwa and Gujarat, which had been under the rule of the Sakas for about four centuries by that time. The conquest gave Chandragupta the western sea coast, famous for trade and commerce. This contributed to the prosperity of Malwa, and its chief city Ujjain Ujjain seems to have been made the second capital by Chandragupta II.

The exploits of a king called Chandra are glorified in an iron pillar inscription fixed near Qutb Minar in Delhi If Chandra is considered

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to be identica with Chandragupta II, it will appear that he established Gupta authority in north-western India and in a good portion of Bengal.

Chandragupta II adopted the title of Vikramaditya, which had been first used by an Ujjain ruler in 58 B.C. as a mark of victory over the Sakas. The court of Chandragupta II at Ujjain was adorned by numerous scholars including Kalidasa and Amarasimha.

It was in Chandragupta's time that the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien (399-414) visited India and wrote an elaborate account of the life of its people.

Fall of the Empire

The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the Hunas from Central Asia in the second half of the fifth centruy A.D. Although in the beginning the Gupta king Skandagupta tried effectively to stem the march of the Hunas into India, his successors proved to be weak and could not cope with the Huna invaders, who excelled in horsemanship and who possibly used stirrups made of metal. They could move quickly, and being excellent archers they seem to have attained considerable success not only in Iran but also in India.

By 485 the Hunas occupied eastern Malwa and a good portion of central India where their inscriptions have been found. The intermediate regions such as Panjab and Rajasthan also passed under their possession. This must have drastically reduced the extent of the Gupta empire at the beginning of the sixth century. Although the Huna power was soon overthrown by Yasodharman of Malwa, the Malwa prince successfully challenged the authority of the Guptas and set up, in 532, pillars of victory commemorating his conquest of almost the whole of northern India. Although Yasodharman's rule was shortlived, it must have given a severe blow to the Gupta empire.

The Gupta empire was further undermined by the rise of the feudatories. The governors appointed by the Gupta kings in north Bengal and their feudatories in Samatata or south-east Bengal tended to become independent. The later Guptas of Magadha established their power in Bihar. Alongside them the Maukharis rose to power in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and had their capital at Kanauj. It seems that by 550 Bihar and Uttar Pradesh had passed out of Gupta hands. By the beginning of the sixth century we find independent princes issuing land grants in their own rights in northern Madhya Pradesh, although they use the Gupta era in dating their charters. The rulers of Valabhi established their authority in Gujarat and western Malwa. After the reign of Skandagupta i.e., A.D. 467, hardly any Gupta coin or inscription has been found in western Malwa and Saurashtra. The loss of western India, which seems to have been complete by the end of the fifth century, must have deprived the Guptas of the rich revenues from trade and commerce and crippled them economically, and the princes of Thaneswar established their power in Haryana and then gradually moved on to Kanauj.

The Gupta state may have found it difficult to maintain a large professional army on account of the growing practice of land grants for religious and other purposes, which was bound to reduce their revenues. Their income may have further been affected by the decline of foreign trade. The migration of a guild of silk weavers from Gujarat to Malwa in A.D. 473 and their adoption of non-productive professions show that there was not much demand for cloth produced by them. The advantages from Gujarat trade gradually disappeared. After the middle of the fifth century the Gupta kings made desperate attempts to maintain their gold currency by reducing the content of pure gold in it. But this proved of no avail. Although the rule of the Imperial Guptas lingered till the middle of the sixth century A.D., the imperial glory had ended a century earlier.

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EXERCISES

1. Outline the rise and growth of the Gupta empire.
2. Enumerate the conquests of Samudragupta.
3. "The reign of Chandragupta II was the high watermark of the Gupta empire." Expand.

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CHAPTER 20

Life in the Gupta Age

System of Administration

In contrast to the Mauryas the Gupta kings adopted pompous titles such as *paramesvara, maharajadhiraja* and *paramabhattaraka*. This signifies that they ruled over lesser kings in their empire. Kingship was hereditary, but royal power was limited by the absence of a firm practice of primogeniture. The throne did not always go to the eldest son. This created uncertainties, of which the chiefs and high officials could take advantage. The Guptas made munificent gifts to the brahmanas, who expressed their gratitude by comparing the king to different gods. He was looked upon as Vishnu, the protector and preserver. The goddess Lakshmi is represented invariably on the other side of the coins as the wife of Vishnu.

The numerical strength of the Gupta army is not known. Evidently the king maintained a standing army, which was supplemented by the forces occasionally supplied by the feudatories. Chariots receded into the background, and cavalry came to the forefront. Horse archery became prominent in military tactics.

In the Gupta period land taxes increased in number, and those on trade and commerce decreased. Probably the king collected taxes varying from one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce. In addition to this, whenever the royal army passed through the countryside the local people had to feed it. The peasants had to supply animals, foodgrains, furniture, etc., for the maintenance of royal officers on duty in the rural areas. In central and western India the villagers were also subjected to forced labour called *vishti* for serving the royal army and officials.

The judicial system was far more developed under the Guptas than in earlier times. Several law-books were compiled in this period. For the first time civil and criminal law were clearly defined and demarcated. Theft and adultery came under criminal law. Disputes regarding various types of property came under civil law. Elaborate laws were laid down about inheritance. During this period also many laws continued to be based on differences in varnas. It was the duty of the king to uphold the law. The king tried cases with the help of brahmana priests. The guilds of artisans, merchants and others were governed by their own laws. Seals from Vaisali and from Bhita near Allahabad indicate that these guilds flourished exceedingly well in Gupta times.

The Gupta bureaucracy was not as elaborate as that of the Mauryas. The most important officers in the Gupta empire were the *kumaramatyas*. They were appointed by the king in the home provinces and possibly paid in cash. Since the Guptas were possibly vaisyas, recruitment was not confined to the upper varnas only. But several offices came to be combined in the hands of the same person, and posts became hereditary. This naturally weakened the royal control.

The Guptas organized a system of provincial and local administration. The empire was

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divided into divisions (*bhuktis*), and each *bhukti* was placed under the charge of an *uparika*. The *bhuktis* were divided into districts (*vishayas*), which were placed under the charge of *vishaya-pati*. In eastern India the *vishayas* were divided into *vithis*, which again were divided into villages.

The village headman became more important in Gupta times He managed the village affairs with the assistance of elders. With the administration of a village or a small town leading local elements were associated. No land transactions could be effected without their consent.

In the urban administration organized professional bodies were given considerable share The seals from Vaisali show that artisans, merchants and scribes served on the same corporate body, and in this capacity they obviously conducted the affairs of the towns. Besides this common organization, artisans and bankers were organized into their own separate guilds. We hear of numerous guilds of artisans, traders, etc., at Bhita and Vaisali. At Mandasor in Malwa silk weavers maintained their own guilds, and at Indore in the district of Bulandshahar in western Uttar Pradesh oil-pressers had their own guilds. It seems that these guilds, especially those of merchants, enjoyed certain immunities. In any case they could look after the affairs of their own members and punished those who violated the customs and law of the guild

The system of administration described above applied only to north Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and some adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh, which were ruled directly by the officers appointed by the Gupta kings. The major part of the empire was held by feudatory chiefs, many of whom had been subjugated by Samudragupta. The vassals who lived on the fringe of the empire carried out three obligations. They offered homage to the sovereign by personal attendance at his court, paid tribute to him and presented to him daughters in marriage. It seems that in return for these they obtained charters for ruling in the areas. The charters marked with the royal Garuda seal seem to have been issued to the vassals The Guptas thus had several tributary princes in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere. The subordinate position of the princes turned them into feudal vassals

The second important feudal development was the grant of fiscal and administrative concessions to priests and administrators. Started in the Deccan by the Satavahanas, the practice became a regular affair in Gupta times, particularly in Madhya Pradesh Religious functionaries were granted land, free of tax for ever, and they were authorized to collect from the peasants all the taxes which could have otherwise gone to the emperor The villages granted to the beneficiaries could not be entered by royal agents, retainers, etc. The beneficiaries were also empowered to punish the criminals

Whether state officials were paid by grants of land in Gupta times is not clear. Abundance of gold coins would suggest that higher officials were paid in cash. But many officers may have been paid by land grants

Since much of the imperial administration was managed by feudatories and beneficiaries, the Gupta rulers did not require as many officials as the Mauryas did. They did not require too many officers also because the state did not take part in economic activities on any big scale, as it did in Maurya times The participation of leading artisans, merchants, elders, etc , in rural and urban administration also lessened the need for maintaining a large retinue of officers. The Guptas neither needed nor possessed the elaborate administrative machinery of Maurya times, and in several ways their political system appears to be feudal.

Decline of Trade and Rise of Landed Classes

We get some idea of the economic life of the people of Gupta times from Fa-hsien, who visited different parts of the Gupta empire. Among other things, he informs us that Maga-

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dha was full of cities and its rich people supported Buddhism and gave charities But during this period we notice a decline in foreign trade. Till A.D 550 India carried on some trade with the Eastern Roman empire, to which it exported silk. Around A D. 550 the people of the Eastern Roman empire learnt from the Chinese the art of growing silk. This adversely affected the export trade of India. Even before the middle of the sixth century A.D. the demand for Indian silk abroad had slackened. In the middle of the fifth century a guild of silk weavers left their original home in western India in the country of Lata and migrated to Mandasor, where they gave up their original occupation and took to other professions.

The striking development of the Gupta period was the emergence of priestly landlords at the cost of local peasants Land grants made to the priests certainly brought many virgin areas under cultivation. But these beneficiaries were imposed from above on the local tribal peasants, who were reduced to a lower status In central and western India the peasants were also subjected to forced labour.

Social Developments

Land grants to the brahmanas on a large scale suggest that the brahmana supremacy continued in Gupta times. The Guptas who were originally vaisyas came to be looked upon as kshatriyas by the brahmanas. The brahmanas represented the Gupta kings as possessing the attributes of gods, and the Gupta princes became great supporters of the brahmanical order. The brahmanas accumulated wealth on account of numerous land grants. So they claimed many privileges, which are listed in the law-book of Narada.

The castes proliferated into numerous subcastes as a result of two factors. On the one hand a large number of foreigners had been assimilated into the Indian society, and each group of foreigners was considered a kind of Hindu caste. Since the foreigners mainly came as conquerors they were given the status of the kshatriya in society. The Hunas, who appeared in India towards the close of the fifth century, ultimately came to be recognized as one of the thirty-six clans of the Rajputs. Even now some Rajputs bear the title Huna The other reason for the increase in the number of castes was the absorption of many tribal peqples into brahmanical society by way of land grants. To the ruling chiefs of the tribes was ascribed a respectable origin. But most of the rest of the tribal people were given a low origin, and every tribe now became a kind of caste in Hindu society.

In some ways, the position of sudras and women improved in this period. They were now permitted to listen to the epics and the Puranas. They could also worship a new god called Krishna From the seventh century onwards the sudras were mainly represented as agriculturists; in the earlier period they always appeared as servants, slaves and agricultural labourers working for the three higher varnas

But during this period the untouchables increased in number, especially the chandalas. The chandalas appeared in society as early as the fifth century B.C By the fifth century A.D their number had become so enormous and their disabilities so glaring that it attracted the attention of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien. He informs us that the chandalas lived outside the village and dealt in meat and flesh. Whenever they entered the town the upper caste people kept themselves at a distance from them because the road was supposed to have been polluted by them.

Buddhism and Brahmanism

Buddhism no longer received royal patronage in the Gupta period Fa-hsien gives the impression that this religion was in a very flourishing state. But really Buddhism was not so important in the Gupta period as it was in the days of Asoka and Kanishka. Especially it suffered in Magadha.

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Brahmanism had come to the forefront. The two gods who commanded the worship of their followers were Vishnu and Siva. Vishnu emerged as the god of devotion, and he came to be represented as the saviour of the varna system. Numerous legends gathered about him, and a whole Purana called the *Vishnupurana* was compiled in his honour. Similarly a law-book called the *Vishnusmriti* was also named after this god. Above all, by the fourth century A.D. there appeared the famous Vaishnava work *Bhagavadgita,* which taught devotion to Lord Krishna and stressed the performance of the functions assigned to each varna.

A few Gupta kings were worshippers of Siva, the god of destruction. But he came in the front rank at a later stage, and does not seem to have been as important as Vishnu in the early phase of the Gupta rule



20.1 *Image of Nara-Narayana from Deogarh*



20.2 *Temple at Sanchi built during the Gupta Period*

Idol worship in the temples became a common feature of Hinduism from the Gupta period. Many festivals also came to be celebrated. Agricultural festivals observed by different classes of people were given religious garb and colour, and turned into good sources of income for the priests.

The Gupta kings followed a policy of tolerance towards the different religious sects. We find no example of the persecution of the followers of Buddhism and Jainism. This was also on account of the change in the character of Buddhism which had come to acquire many of the features of Hinduism.

Art

The Gupta period is called the Golden Age of ancient India. This may not be true in the

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20.3 *Image of the Buddha from Sarnath*

economic field because several towns in north India declined during this period. But the Guptas possessed a large amount of gold, whatever might be its source, and they issued the largest number of gold coins. Princes and richer people could divert a part of their income for the support of those who were engaged in art and literature. Both Samudragupta and Chandragupta II were patrons of art and literature. Samudragupta is represented on his coins playing the lute (*vina*), and Chandragupta II is credited with maintaining in his court nine luminaries or great scholars.

In ancient India art was mostly inspired by religion. Survivals of non-religious art from ancient India are few. Buddhism gave great impetus to art in Maurya and post-Maurya times. It led to the creation of massive stone pillars, cutting of beautiful caves and raising of high stupas or relic towers. The stupas appeared as dome-like structures on round bases mainly of stone. Numerous images of the Buddha were fashioned.

In the Gupta period we find an over two-metre high bronze image of the Buddha, which was recovered from Sultanganj near Bhagalpur. Fa-hsien saw an over 25 metre high image of the Buddha made of copper, but it is not traceable now. In the Gupta period beautiful images of the Buddha were made at Sarnath and Mathura. But the greatest specimen of Buddhist art in Gupta times is provided by the Ajanta paintings. Although these paintings covered the period from the first to the seventh century A.D.,



20.4 *Image of Yamuna from Ahichhatra (Distt. Bareilly)*

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most of them belong to Gupta times. They depict various events in the life of Gautama Buddha and the previous Buddhas. These paintings are lifelike and natural. They are marked by the brilliance of their colours, which have not faded even after 14 centuries or so.



20.5 *Image of the Buddha from Mathura*



20.6 *Ajanta Painting of an Apsara*

Since the Guptas were supporters of brahmanism, for the first time we get in the Gupta period images of Vishnu, Siva and some other Hindu gods. At many places we get a whole pantheon in which the chief god appears in the middle and his retainers and subordinates appear on the same panel all around him. The leading god is represented large in size, but his retainers and subordinate gods are drawn on a smaller scale. This represents a clear social distinction and hierarchy. The Gupta period was poor in architecture. All we get is a few temples made of brick in Uttar Pradesh and a stone temple. We may mention the brick temples of Bhitargaon in Kanpur, Bhitari in Ghazipur and Deogarh in Jhansi. The Buddhist university at

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Nalanda was set up in the fifth century, and its earliest structure, made of brick, belongs to this period.

Literature

The Gupta period is remarkable for the production of secular literature. To this period belong 13 plays written by Bhasa. But what has made the Gupta period really famous is the work of Kalidasa. Kalidasa wrote *Abhijnanasakuntalam,* which is considered to be one of the best hundred literary works in the world. It was one of the earliest Indian works to be translated into European languages, the other work being the *Bhagavadgita.* Two things can be noted about the plays produced in India in the Gupta period. First, these are all comedies We do not come across any tragedies. Secondly, characters of the higher and lower classes do not speak the same language; women and sudras featuring in these plays use Prakrit

During this period we also notice an increase in the production of religious literature. Most works of the period had a strong religious bias. The two great epics, namely the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* were finally compiled probably in the fourth century A D The *Ramayana* tells us the story of Rama, who was banished by his father Dasaratha from the kingdom of Ayodhya for 14 years on account of the machinations of his stepmother Kaikeyi. He faithfully carried out the orders of his father and went to live in the forest, where his wife Sita was abducted by Ravana, the king of Lanka Eventually Rama with the help of his brother Lakshmana led an expedition to Lanka, defeated Ravana and brought back Sita. The story has two important moral strands. First, it idealizes the institution of family in which a son must obey his father, the younger brother must obey his elder brother and the wife must be faithful to her husband in all circumstances. Second, Ravana symbolizes the force of evil, and Rama symbolizes the force of righteousness. In the end righteousness triumphs over the forces of evil, and good order over bad order.

The *Mahabharata* is essentially the story of a conflict between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It shows that kingship knows no kinship Although the Pandavas were entitled to their share in the kingdom left by Dhritarashtra, the Kauravas refused to give them even a single inch of territory. This led to a prolonged fratricidal war between the Pandavas assisted by Krishna, and the Kauravas. Eventually the Kauravas were worsted in the fight, and the Pandavas came out victorious. This story also represents the victory of righteousness over the forces of evil. The *Bhagavadgita* forms an important part of the *Mahabharata.* It teaches that a person must carry out the duties assigned to him by his caste and rank under all circumstances without any desire for reward.

The Puranas follow the lines of the epics, and the earlier ones were finally compiled in Gupta times. They are full of myths, legends, sermons, etc., which were meant for the education and edification of the common people. The period also saw the compilation of various Smritis or the law-books written in verse. The phase of writing commentaries on the Smritis begins after the Gupta period.

The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on Panini and Patanjali. This period is particularly memorable for the compilation of the *Amarakosa* by Amarasimha, who was a luminary in the court of Chandragupta II. This lexicon is learnt by heart by students taught Sanskrit in the traditional fashion. On the whole the Gupta period was a bright phase in the history of classical literature. It developed an ornate style, which was different from the old simple Sanskrit. From this period onwards we find greater emphasis on verse than on prose. We also come across a few commentaries. There is no doubt that Sanskrit was the court language of the Guptas. Although we get a good deal of brahmanical religious litera-

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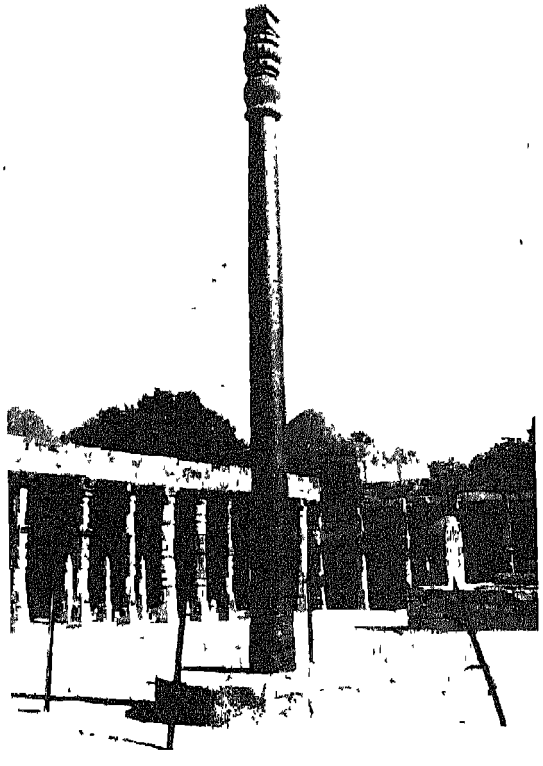
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ture, the period also produced some of the earliest pieces of secular literature.

Science and Technology

In the field of mathematics we come across during this period a work called *Aryabhatiya* written by Aryabhata, who belonged to Pataliputra It seems that this mathematician was well versed in various kinds of calculations. A Gupta inscription of 448 from Allahabad district suggests that the decimal system was known in India at the beginning of the fifth century A D In the fields of astronomy a book called *Romaka Sidhanta* was compiled It was influenced by Greek ideas, as can be inferred from its name.

The Gupta craftsmen distinguished themselves by their work in iron and bronze. We know of several bronze images of the Buddha, which began to be produced on a considerable scale because of the knowledge of advanced iron technology In the case of iron objects the best example is the iron pillar found at Delhi near Mehrauli. Manufactured in the fourth century A.D., the pillar has not gathered any rust in the subsequent 15 centuries, which is a great tribute to the technological skill of the craftsmen It was impossible to produce such a pillar in any iron foundry in the West until about a century ago. It is a pity that the later craftsmen could not develop this knowledge further



20.7 *Iron Pillar at Delhi*

EXERCISES

1. Describe the system of administration under the Imperial Guptas
2. Survey the economic life of the people of India in Gupta times.
3. "The Gupta period is called the Golden Age of ancient India" Discuss.
4. Give an account of the social and religious conditions of India in Gupta times
5. Who was Fa-hsien ? What does he say concerning India ?

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CHAPTER 21

Spread of Civilization in Eastern India

Signs of Civilization

A region is considered to be civilized if its people know the art of writing, have a system for collecting taxes and maintaining order, and possess social classes and specialists for performing priestly, administrative and producing functions. Above all a civilized society should be able to produce enough to support not only the actual producers consisting of artisans and peasants but also consumers who are not engaged in production. All these elements make for civilization. But they appear in a large part of eastern India on a recognizable scale very late. Practically no written records are found in the greater portions of eastern Madhya Pradesh and the adjoining areas of Orissa, of West Bengal, of Bangladesh and of Assam till the middle of the fourth century A.D

The period from the fourth to the seventh century is remarkable for the diffusion of an advanced rural economy, formation of state systems and delineation of social classes in eastern Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, eastern Bengal and south-east Bengal, and Assam. This is indicated by the distribution of a good number of inscriptions in these areas in Gupta times Many inscriptions dated in the Gupta era are found in these areas. They are generally in the form of land grants made by feudatory princes and others for religious purposes to Buddhists and brahmanas and also to Vaishnavite temples and Buddhist monasteries. These beneficiaries played an important role in spreading and strengthening elements of advanced culture The process can be understood by attempting a region-wise survey.

Orissa and Eastern and Southern Madhya Pradesh

Kalinga or the coastal Orissa, south of the Mahanadi, leapt into importance under Asoka, but a strong state was founded in that area only in the first century B. C. Its ruler Kharavela advanced as far as Magadha. In the first and second centuries A D. the ports of Orissa carried on brisk trade in pearls, ivory and muslin. Excavations at Sisupalgarh, the site of Kalinganagari which was the capital of Kharavela at a distance of 60 km from Bhubaneswar, have yielded several Roman objects indicating trade contacts with the Roman empire. But the greater part of Orissa, particularly northern Orissa, neither experienced state formation nor witnessed much commercial activity. In the fourth century Kosala and Mahakantara figure in the list of conquests made by Samudragupta. They covered parts of northern and western Orissa. From the second half of the fourth century to the sixth century several states were formed in Orissa, and at least five of them can be clearly identified. The most important of them is the state of the Matharas, who are also called Pitribhaktas. At the peak of their power they dominated the area between the Mahanadi and the Krishna. Their contem-

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poraries and neighbours were the Vasisthas, the Nalas and the Manas. The Vasisthas ruled on the borders of Andhra in south Kalinga, the Nalas in the forest area of Mahakantara, and the Manas in the coastal area in the north beyond the Mahanadi. Each state developed its system of taxation, administration and military organization. The Nalas, and probably the Manas, also evolved their system of coinage. Each kingdom favoured the brahmanas with land grants and even invited them from outside, and most kings performed Vedic sacrifices not only for spiritual merit but also for power, prestige and legitimacy.

In this period elements of advanced culture were not confined to the coastal belt known as Kalinga, but appeared in the other parts of Orissa. The find of the Nala gold coins in the tribal Bastar area in Madhya Pradesh is significant. It presupposes an economic system in which gold money was used in large transactions and served as medium of payment to high functionaries. Similarly the Manas seemed to have issued copper coins, which implies the use of metallic money even by artisans and peasants. The various states added to their income by forming new fiscal units in rural areas. The Matharas created a district called Mahendrabhoga in the area of the Mahendra mountains. They also ruled over a district called Dantayavagubhoga, which apparently supplied ivory and rice-gruel to its administrators and had thus been created in a backward area. The Matharas made endowments called *agraharas*, which consisted of land and income from villages and were meant for supporting religious and educational activities of the brahmanas. Some *agraharas* had to pay taxes although elsewhere in the country they were tax-free. The induction of the brahmanas through land grants in tribal, forest and red soil areas brought new lands under cultivation and introduced better methods of agriculture, based on improved knowledge of weather conditions. Formerly the year was divided into three units, each consisting of four months, and time was reckoned on the basis of three seasons. Under the Matharas, in the middle of the fifth century began the practice of dividing the year into twelve lunar months. This implied a detailed idea of weather conditions, which was useful for agricultural operations.

In the coastal Orissa writing was certainly known from the third century B C., and inscriptions up to the middle of the fourth century A. D. appeared in Prakrit. But from about A. D. 350 Sanskrit began to be used. What is more significant, charters in this language appear outside the coastal belt beyond the Mahanadi in the north. Thus the art of writing and Sanskrit language spread over a good portion of Orissa, and some of the finest Sanskrit verses are found in the epigraphs of the period. Sanskrit served as the vehicle of not only brahmanical religion and culture but also of property laws and social regulations in new areas. Verses from the Puranas and Dharmasastras are quoted in Sanskrit charters, and kings claim to be the preservers of the varna system. The affiliation of the people to the culture of the Gangetic basin is emphasized. A dip in the Ganga at Prayag at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna is considered holy, and victorious kings visit Prayag

Bengal

As regards Bengal, portions of north Bengal, now in Bogra district, give evidence of the prevalence of writing in the time of Asoka. An inscription indicates several settlements maintaining a storehouse filled with coins and foodgrains for the upkeep of Buddhist monks. Clearly the local peasants were in a position to spare a part of their produce for paying taxes and making gifts. Further, people of this area knew Prakrit and professed Buddhism. Similarly an inscription found in the coastal district of Noakhali in south-east Bengal shows that

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people knew Prakrit and Brahmi script in that area in the second century B.C. But for the greater part of Bengal we do not hear anything till we come to the fourth century A.D In about the middle of the fourth century a king with the title of *maharaja* ruled in Pokharna on the Damodara in Bankura district. He knew Sanskrit and was a devotee of Vishnu, to whom he possibly granted a village.

The area lying between the Ganga and the Brahmaputra now covering Bangladesh emerged as a settled and fairly Sanskrit-educated area in the fifth and sixth centuries The Gupta governors seem to have become independent after about A.D. 550, and occupied north Bengal, a portion may have been seized by the rulers of Kamarupa Local vassal princes called *samanta maharajas* had created their own administrative apparatus and built their military organization consisting of horses, elephants and foot soldiers and boats to fight their rivals and collect taxes from the local peasantry. By A.D. 600 the area came to be known as Gauda with its independent state ruled by Sasanka, the adversary of Harsha

For a century from A D 432-33 we notice a series of land sale documents recorded on copper-plates in Pundravardhanabhukti, which covered almost the whole of north Bengal, now mostly in Bangladesh. Most land grants indicate that land was purchased with gold coins called *dinara*. But once land was given for religious purposes, the donees did not have to pay any tax. The land transactions show the involvement of leading scribes, merchants, artisans, landed classes, etc., in local administration, which was manned by the governors appointed by the Gupta emperors. The land sale documents not only indicate the existence of different social groups and local functionaries but also shed valuable light on the expansion of agriculture Mostly land purchased for religious endowments is described as fallow, uncultivated, and therefore untaxed Without doubt the effect of the grants was to bring plots of land within the purview of cultivation and settlement.

The deltaic portion of Bengal formed by the Brahmaputra and called Samatata was made to acknowledge the authority of Samudragupta It covered south-east Bengal. A portion of this territory may have been populated and important enough to attract the attention of the Gupta conqueror But possibly it was not ruled by brahmanised princes, and consequently it neither used Sanskrit nor adopted the varna system, as was the case in north Bengal. From about A D. 525 the area came to have a fairly organised state covering Samatata and a portion of Vanga which lay on the western boundary of Samatata. It issued a good number of gold coins in the second half of the sixth century. In addition to this state, in the seventh century we come across the state of the Khadgas, literally swordsmen, in the Dacca area. We also notice the kingdom of a brahmana feudatory called Lokanatha and that of the Ratas, both in the Comilla area All these princes of south-east and central Bengal issued land grants in the sixth and seventh centuries. Like the Orissan kings they also created *agraharas*. The land charters show cultivation of Sanskrit, leading to the use of some sophisticated metres in the second half of the seventh century. At the same time they attest the expansion of cultivation and rural settlements. A fiscal and administrative unit called Dandabhukti was formed in the border areas lying between Bengal and Orissa. *Danda* means punishment, and *bhukti* enjoyment. Apparently the unit was created for taming and punishing the tribal inhabitants of that region. It may have promoted Sanskrit and other elements of culture in tribal areas. This was also true of Vardhamanabhukti (Burdwan), of which we hear in the seventh century. In south-east Bengal in the Faridpur area five plots of land granted to a Buddhist monastery were waste and water-logged, paying no tax to the state. Similarly 200 brahmanas were given a

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large area in Comilla district within a forest region full of deer, boars, buffaloes, tigers, serpents, etc All such instances are sufficient proof of the progress of colonization and civilization in new areas.

The two centuries from about the middle of the fifth appear to be very momentous in the history of Bengal. They saw the formation of about half a dozen states, some large and others small, some independent and others feudatory But each had its victory or military camp where it maintained its infantry, cavalry, elephants and boats. Each had its fiscal and administrative districts with its machinery for tax collection and maintenance of order. Each practised expansion through war and land grants to Buddhists and brahmanas The number of endowments had increased so much that ultimately an officer called *agrahai ka* had to be appointed to look after them Land gifts led to rural expansion and created new rights in land. Generally land was under the possession of individual families But its sale and purchase was subject to the overall control of the local communities dominated by leading artisans, merchants, landowners and scribes They helped the local agents of the king But ordinary cultivators were also consulted about the sale of land in the village It seems that originally, only the tribe or the community could grant land because they possessed it. Therefore even when individuals came to possess their own lands and made gifts for religious purposes, the community continued to have a say in the matter. Probably at an earlier stage the community donated land to the priests for religious services and paid taxes to the princes for military and political services. Later the king received from the community a good part of the land and arrogated to himself much more, which enabled him to make land grants The king was entitled to taxes and also possessed rights over waste and fallow land. The administrative functionaries of each state knew Sanskrit, which was the official language. They were also familiar with the teachings of the Puranas and the Dharmasastras. The period therefore is very significant because of the onward march of civilization in this area.

Assam

Kamarupa, identical with the Brahmaputra basin running from east to west, shot into prominence in the seventh century. Excavations however show settlements in Ambari near Gauhati from the fourth century of the Christian era. In the same century Samudragupta received tributes from Davaka and Kamarupa. Davaka possibly accounted for a portion of Nowgong district, and Kamarupa covered the Brahmaputra basin The rulers who submitted to Samudragupta may have been chiefs living on the tributes collected from the tribal peasantry.

The Ambari excavations show that settlements were fairly developed in the sixth and seventh centuries This is supported by inscriptions. By the beginning of the sixth century the use of Sanskrit and the art of writing are clearly in evidence. The Kamarupa kings adopted the title *varman*, which obtained not only in northern, central and western India but also in Bengal, Orissa, Andhra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu They strengthened their position through land grants to the brahmanas. In the seventh century Bhaskaravarman emerged as the head of a state which controlled a good deal of the Brahmaputra basin and some areas beyond it. Buddhism also acquired a foothold, and the Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang (Hieun Tsang) visited this state.

The Formative Phase

Although different parts of eastern India acquired prominence at different times, the formative phase ranged from the fourth to the seventh century. In this period writing, Sanskrit learning, Vedic rituals, brahmanical social classes, and state systems spread and developed in eastern Madhya Pradesh, in north Orissa,

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in West Bengal, in a good part of Bangladesh and in Assam. Cultural contacts with the Gupta empire stimulated the spread of civilization in the eastern zone. North Bengal and north-west Orissa came under the Gupta rule; in other areas of these regions the Gupta association can be inferred from the use of the Gupta era in inscriptions. In Bengal new states were formed by feudatories, who maintained a good number of elephants, horses, boats, etc., in their military camps. Obviously they collected regular taxes from the rural communities to maintain professional armies. For the first time in the fifth and sixth centuries we clearly notice large-scale writing, use of Sanskrit, formation of varna society, and progress of Buddhism and brahmanism in the form of Saivism and Vaishnavism in this area. We find only the remnants of communal authority over land, but we can see the existence of private property in land, and the use of gold coins with which it could be purchased. All this presupposes an advanced food-producing economy. Apparently it was based on iron ploughshare agriculture, wet paddy cultivation, and knowledge of various crafts. Kalidasa refers to the transplantation of paddy seedlings in Vanga, but we do not know whether the practice was indigenous or came from Magadha. North Bengal produced good quality sugarcane. All this made for sufficient agricultural production, which was able to sustain both people and government, and could foster widespread rural settlements in such areas as were either sparsely inhabited or not at all inhabited. A connected narrative of the princes and dynasties and their feudatories, all revolving round a central power, cannot be prepared. But there is no doubt about cultural evolution and conquest of civilization in the outlying provinces in the eastern zone.

The decline and fall of the Gupta empire therefore coincided with considerable progress in the outlying regions. Many obscure areas, which were possibly ruled by tribal chiefs and were thinly settled, came into historical limelight. This applied to the red soil areas of West Bengal, north Orissa and the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh, which formed part of the Chotanagpur plateau and were difficult to cultivate and settle. It applied more to the jungle areas with alluvial soil and heavy rainfall in Bangladesh and to the Brahmaputra basin.

EXERCISES

1. Describe the process of the spread of civilization in eastern India. What factors helped this process?
2. Survey the position of brahmanas in the early kingdoms of Orissa.
3. How were new states formed in Bengal and with what results ?
4. What light do the land grants throw on the social system in the eastern states ?

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CHAPTER 22

Harsha and His Times

Harsha's Kingdom

The Guptas with their seat of power in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar ruled over north and western India for about 160 years, till the middle of the sixth century A D. Then north India again split up into several kingdoms. The white Hunas established their supremacy over Kashmir, Panjab and western India from about A.D. 500 onwards. North and western India passed under the control of about half a dozen feudatories who parcelled out Gupta empire among themselves Gradually one of these dynasties ruling at Thanesar in Haryana extended its authority over all the other feudatories. The ruler who brought it about was Harshavardhana (A.D. 606-647).

Harsha made Kanauj the seat of his power and therefrom extended his authority in all directions. During this period Pataliputra fell on bad days and Kanauj came in the forefront. How did this happen? Pataliputra owed its power and importance to trade and commerce and the widespread use of money. Tolls could be collected from the traders who came to the city from the east, west, north and south by means of four rivers.

But once money became scarce, trade declined, and officers and soldiers began to be paid through land grants, the city lost its importance. Power shifted to military camps (*skandhavaras*), and places of strategic importance, which dominated long stretches of land, acquired prominence. To this class belonged Kanauj. Situated in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, it shot up into political prominence from the second half of the sixth century. Its emergence as a centre of political power from Harsha onwards typifies the advent of the feudal age in north India just as Pataliputra largely represents the pre-feudal order. Fortification of places in the plains was far more difficult, but Kanauj was situated on an elevated area, which was easily fortifiable. Located right in the middle of the *doab*, it was well-fortified in the seventh century. So to exercise control over both the eastern and western wings of the *doab* soldiers could be moved by both land and water routes.

The early history of Harsha's reign is reconstructed from a study of Banabhatta, who was his court poet and who wrote a book called *Harshacharita*. This can be supplemented by the account of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D. and stayed in the country for about 15 years. Harsha's inscriptions speak of various types of taxes and officials.

Harsha is called the last great Hindu emperor of north India, but such a characterization is only partly true. For his authority did not extend to the whole of the country though he established his hold practically over the whole of north India except Kashmir. Rajasthan, Panjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa were

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under his direct control, but his sphere of influence spread over a much wider area It seems that the peripheral states acknowledged his sovereignty His southward march was stopped on the Narmada river by the Chalukyan king Pulakesin, who ruled over a great part of modern Karnataka and Maharashtra with his capital in Badami in the modern Bijapur district of Karnataka Except this Harsha did not face any serious opposition and succeeded in giving a measure of political unity to a large part of the country

Administration

Harsha governed his empire on the same lines as the Guptas did, except that his administration had become more feudal and decentralized. It is stated that Harsha had 100,000 horses, and 60,000 elephants. This seems to be astonishing because the Mauryas, who ruled over practically the whole of the country except the deep south, maintained only 30,000 cavalry and 9000 elephants. Harsha could possess a larger army only if he could mobilize the support of all his feudatories at the time of war Evidently every feudatory contributed his quota of foot soldiers and horses, and thus made the imperial army vast in numbers

Land grants continued to be made to priests for special services rendered to the state. In addition Harsha is credited with the grant of land to the officers by charters. These grants allowed the same concessions to priests as were allowed by the earlier grants The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang informs us that the revenues of Harsha were divided into four parts. One part was earmarked for the expenditure of the king, a second for scholars, a third for the endowment of officials and public servants, and a fourth for religious purposes. He also tells us that ministers and high officers of the state were endowed with land. The feudal practice of rewarding and paying officers with grants of land seems to have begun under Harsha. This is natural because we do not have too many coins issued by Harsha

In the empire of Harsha law and order was not well maintained. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, about whom special care may have been taken by the government, was robbed of his belongings, although he reports that according to the laws of the land severe punishments were inflicted for crime. Robbery was considered to be a second treason for which the right hand of the robber was amputated. But it seems that under the influence of Buddhism the severity of punishment was mitigated, and criminals were imprisoned for life.

Hsuan Tsang's Account

The reign of Harsha is important on account of the visit of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who left China in A.D. 629 and travelled all the way to India. After a long stay in India, he returned to China in A.D. 645. He had come to study in the Buddhist university of Nalanda situated in the district of the same name in Bihar and to collect Buddhist texts from India. The pilgrim spent many years in Harsha's court and widely travelled in India. He vividly describes Harsha's court and life in those days. This account is much richer than that of Fa-hsien It sheds light on the economic and social life as well as the religious sects of the period.

The Chinese account shows that Pataliputra was in a state of decline; so was Vaisali. On the other hand Prayag and Kanauj in the *doab* had become important. The brahmanas and kshatriyas are reported to have led a simple life, but the nobles and priests led a luxurious life. Hsuan Tsang calls the sudras agriculturists, which is significant In the earlier texts they are represented as serving the three higher varnas. The Chinese pilgrim takes notice of untouchables such as scavengers, executioners, etc. They lived outside the villages, and took garlic and onion. The untouchables announced their entry

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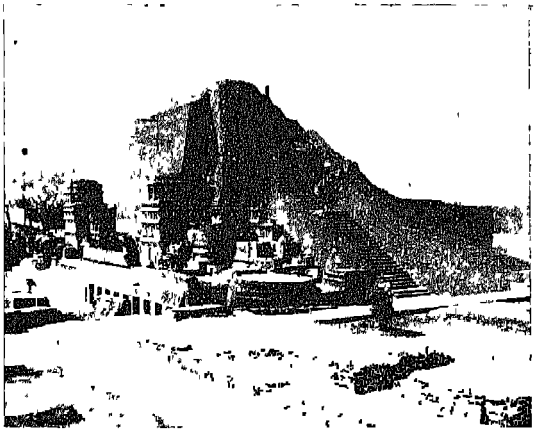
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into the town by shouting loudly so that people might keep away from them

Buddhism and Nalanda

The Buddhists were divided into 18 sects in the time of the Chinese pilgrim. The old centres of Buddhism had fallen on bad days. The most famous centre was Nalanda, which maintained a great Buddhist university meant for Buddhist monks. It is said to have had as many as 10,000 students, all monks They were taught Buddhist philosophy of the *Mahayana* school Although all the mounds of Nalanda have not been dug, excavations have exposed a very impressive complex of buildings These buildings were raised and renovated over a period of 700 years from the fifth century A D. The buildings exposed by excavations do not have the capacity to accommodate 10,000 monks. In 670 another Chinese pilgrim I-tsing visited Nalanda; he mentions only 3000 monks living there. This is reasonable because even if the remaining mounds are excavated the buildings could not be so spacious as to have accommodated 10,000 monks The monastery at Nalanda was supported from the revenues of 200 villages. Nalanda thus had a huge monastic establishment in the time of Harshavardhana.

Harsha followed a tolerant religious policy. A Saiva in his early years, he gradually became a great patron of Buddhism. He held at Prayag a great assembly, which was attended by all the tributary princes, ministers, nobles, etc. On this occasion an image of the Buddha was worshipped, and discourses were given by Hsuan Tsang At the end Harsha made huge



22.1 *Remains of a Stupa at Nalanda*

charities, and he gave away everything except his personal clothing Hsuan Tsang speaks of Harsha in glowing terms. The king was kind, courteous and helpful to him, and the pilgrim could visit the different parts of the empire.

Harsha was a literary figure He wrote three plays, and he rewarded and patronized literary men. Banabhatta gives us a flattering account of the early years of his patron in his book *Harshacharita* in an ornate style which became a model for later writers.

EXERCISES

1. Discuss the achievements of Harsha.
2. How did Harsha administer his kingdom?
3. What light does the account of Hsuan Tsang throw on Indian life?
4. Describe society and religion in the time of Harsha

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CHAPTER 23

Formation of New States and Rural Expansion in the Peninsula

The New Phase

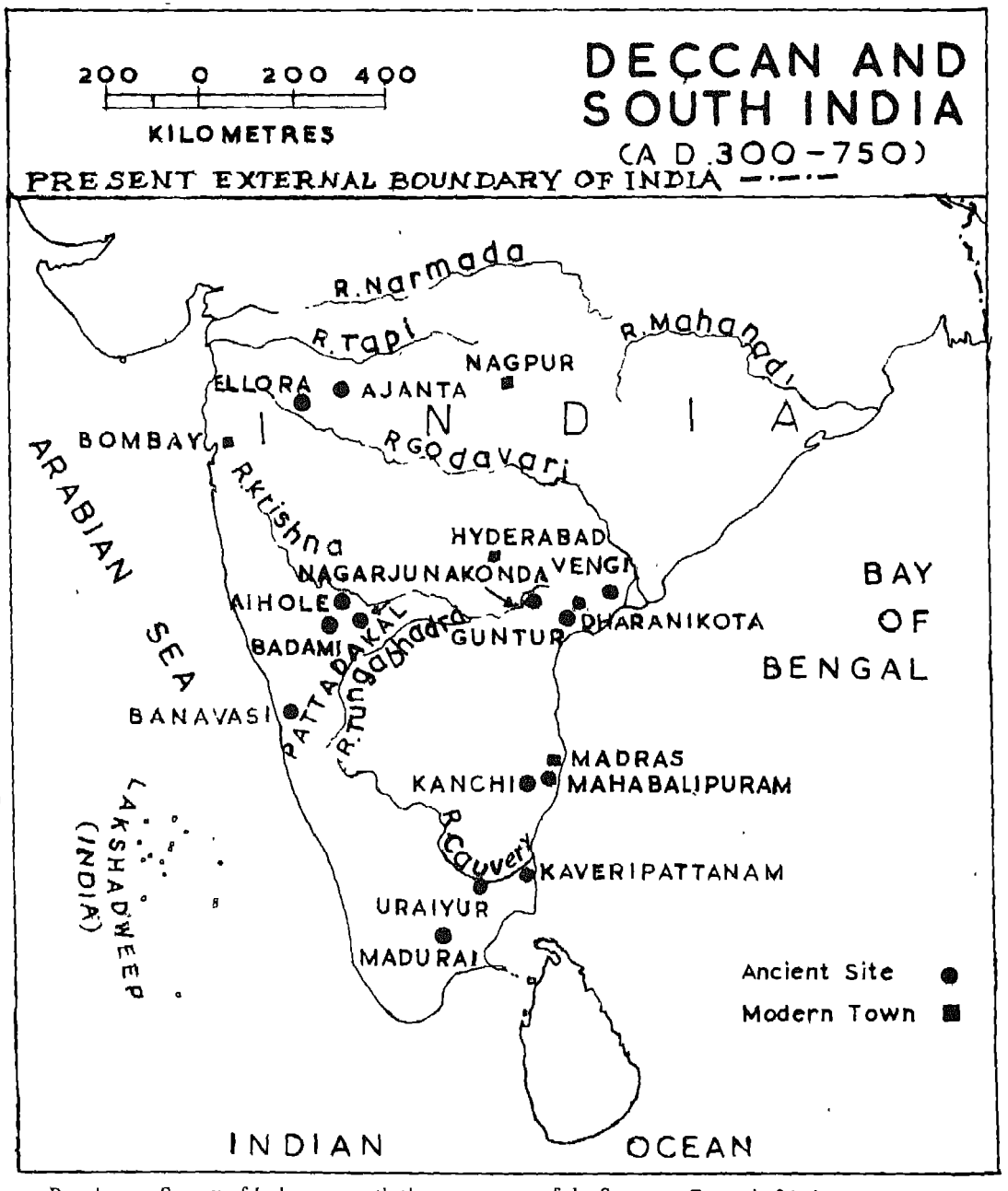
The period *circa* A.D 300-750 marks the second historical phase in the regions south of the Vindhyas. It continued some of the processes which had started in the first historical phase (*circa* 200 B.C—A.D. 300) It also introduced certain new phenomena which are not found on any scale in earlier times. In the first phase we notice the ascendancy of the Satavahanas over the Deccan and that of the Tamil kingdoms in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. In that period the northern portion of Tamil Nadu, southern Karnataka, a portion of southern Maharashtra, and the land between the Godavari and the Mahanadi broadly owed allegiance to seats of political authority established outside their areas. They themselves did not have their own states. Now in these areas and also in Vidarbha between A.D. 300 and A.D. 600 there arose about two dozen states which are known to us from their land charters. Eventually by the beginning of the seventh century the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai emerged to be the three major states. The first historical phase is marked by the appearance of numerous crafts, internal and external trade, widespread use of coins and a good number of towns. Trade, towns and coinage seem to be in a state of decline in the second phase which is distinguished by a large number of land grants made to the brahmanas free of taxes The grants suggest that many new areas were brought under cultivation and settlement. This period therefore saw far more expansion of agrarian economy

We also notice the march of triumphant brahmanism In the first phase we encounter extensive Buddhist monuments in both Andhra and Maharashtra. Cave inscriptions probably indicate the existence of Jainism and also of Buddhism in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. But now Jainism was confined to Karnataka, and in the peninsula as a whole we find numerous instances of the performance of the Vedic sacrifices by kings This phase also marked the beginning of the construction of stone temples for Siva and Vishnu in Tamil Nadu under the Pallavas, and in Karnataka under the Chalukyas of Badami. By the beginning of the second phase south India had ceased to be the land of megaliths, and towards its end we notice the process which eventually made it a land of temples.

The language followed by the rulers and the literate class underwent a change. Even if we leave aside the Asokan inscriptions found in Andhra and Karnataka, epigraphs between the second century B C. and the third century A.D. were mostly written in Prakrit. The Brahmi inscriptions which are found in Tamil Nadu also contain Prakrit words. But from about A.D. 400 Sanskrit became the official language in the peninsula, and most charters were

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

Figure 16 *The Deccan and South India, circa A D. 300—A.D. 750*

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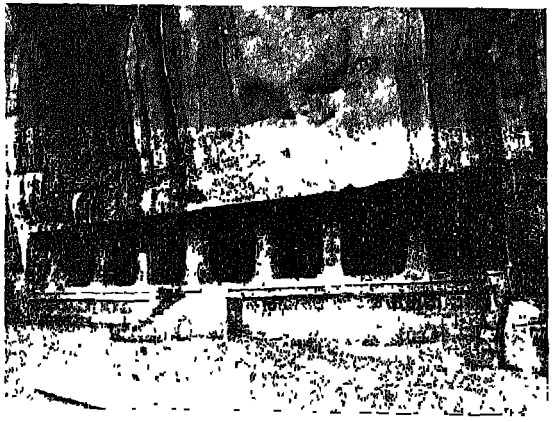
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composed in it.

States of the Deccan and South India

In northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha (Berar) the Satavahanas were succeeded by the Vakatakas, a local power The Vakatakas, who were brahmanas themselves, are known from a large number of copper plate land grants issued to the brahmanas They were great champions of the brahmanical religion and performed numerous Vedic sacrifices. Their political history is of more importance to north India than to south India We have seen how Chandragupta II married his daughter Prabhavati Gupta in the Vakataka royal family and with its support succeeded in conquering Gujarat and the adjoining parts of western India from the Sakas in the last quarter of the fourth century A D. But culturally the Vakataka kingdom became a channel for transmitting brahmanical ideas and social institutions to the south

The Vakataka power was followed by that of the Chalukyas of Badami who played an important role in the history of the Deccan and south India for about two centuries till A.D 757, when they were overthrown by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas. The Chalukyas claimed their descent either from Brahman or Manu or Moon They boast that their ancestors ruled at Ayodhya, but all this was done to claim legitimacy and respectability Really they seem to have been a local Kanarese people, who were improvised into the ruling varna under brahmanical influence.



23 1 *Cave Temple at Badami*

The Chalukyas set up their kingdom towards the beginning of the sixth century A.D. in the western Deccan. They established their capital at Vatapi, modern Badami, in the district of Bijapur which forms a part of Karnataka. Later they branched off into several independent ruling houses, but the main branch continued to rule at Vatapi for two centuries In this period no other power in the Deccan was so important as the Chalukyas of Badami until we come to Vijayanagar in late medieval times.

On the ruins of the Sātavahana power in the eastern part of the peninsula there arose the Ikshvakus in the Krishna-Guntur region. They seem to have been a local tribe who adopted the exalted name of the Ikshvakus in order to demonstrate the antiquity of their lineage. They have left behind many monuments at Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota They started the practice of land grants in the Krishna-Guntur region, where several of their copperplate charters have been discovered

The Ikshvakus were supplanted by the Pallavas. The term *pallava* means creeper, and is a Sanskrit version of the Tamil word *tondai*, which also carries the same meaning. The Pallavas were possibly a local tribe who established their authority in the Tondainadu or the land of creepers. But it took them some time to be completely civilized because in Tamil the word *pallava* is also a synonym of robber. The authority of the Pallavas extended over both southern Andhra and northern Tamil Nadu. They set up their capital at Kanchi, identical with modern Kanchipuram which became a town of temples and Vedic learning under them.

The early Pallavas came into conflict with

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the Kadambas, who had founded their rule in northern Karnataka in the fourth century A D They claim to be brahmanas, and they rewarded their fellow caste men generously.

The Kadamba kingdom was founded by Mayurasarman It is said that he came to receive education at Kanchi, but he was driven out unceremoniously. Smarting under this insult the Kadamba chief set up his camp in a forest, and defeated the Pallavas possibly with the help of th forest tribes. Eventually the Pallavas avenged the defeat but recognized the Kadamba authority by formally investing Mayurasarman with the royal insignia Mayurasarman is said to have performed eighteen *asvamedhas* or horse-sacrifices and granted numerous villages to brahmanas The Kadambas established their capital at Vaijayanti or Banavasi in North Kanara district in Karnataka

The Gangas were another important contemporary of the Pallavas They set up their rule in southern Karnataka around the fourth century. Their kingdom lay between that of the Pallavas in the east and of the Kadambas in the west They are called Western Gangas or Gangas of Mysore in order to demarcate them from the Eastern Gangas who ruled in Kalinga from the fifth century For most of the time the Western Gangas were the feudatories of the Pallavas. Their earliest capital is located at Kolar, which may have helped the rise of this dynasty because of its gold mines.

The Western Gangas made land grants mostly to the Jainas, the Kadambas also made grants to the Jainas, but they favoured the brahmanas more. But the Pallavas granted numerous villages free of taxes largely to the brahmanas. We have as many as 16 land charters of the early Pallavas A few, which seem to be earlier, are written on stone in Prakrit. But most of them were recorded on copper-plates in Sanskrit. The villages granted to the brahmanas were exempted from payment of all taxes and forced labour to the state. This implied that these were collected from the peasantry by the brahmanas for their own enjoyment. As many as 18 kinds of immunities were granted to the brahmanas in a Pallava grant of the fourth century. They were empowered to enjoy the granted land free from payment of land tax, from supply of forced labour, from supply of provisions to royal officers in town, and free from the interference of royal constabulary and agents.

The Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas of Badami and their other contemporaries were great champions of Vedic sacrifices They performed *asvamedha* and *vajapeya* sacrifices, which not only legitimatized their position and enhanced their prestige but also added enormously to the income of the priestly class The brahmanas therefore emerged as an important class at the expense of the peasantry, from whom they collected their dues directly and also received as gifts a good portion of the taxes collected by the king from his subjects.

This situation seems to have proved oppressive, and eventually it caused a revolt led by the Kalabhras in the sixth century The revolt affected the Pallavas as well as their neighbouring contemporaries. The Kalabhras are called evil rulers who overthrew innumerable kings and established their hold on the Tamil land They put an end to the *brahmadeya* rights granted to the brahmanas in numerous villages. It seems that the Kalabhras held Buddhist persuasions, for they patronized Buddhist monasteries It is significant that the Kalabhras revolt could be put down only through the joint efforts of the Pandyas, the Pallavas and the Chalukyas of Badami. There is also a tradition that the Kalabhras had imprisoned the Chola, the Pandya and the Chera kings All this shows that their revolt had assumed wide proportions, and produced repercussions outside the Tamil land The confederacy of the kings against the Kalabhras, who had revoked the land grants made to the brahmanas, shows

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that the revolt was directed against the existing social and political order in south India.

Conflict between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas

The main interest in the political history of peninsular India from the sixth to the eighth centuries centres round the long struggle between the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Chalukyas of Badami for supremacy. The Pandyas, who were in control of Madurai and Tinnevelly districts of Tamil Nadu, joined this conflict as a poor third. Although both the Pallavas and Chalukyas championed brahmanism, performed Vedic sacrifices and made grants to the brahmanas, the two quarrelled with each other for plunder, prestige and territorial resources. Both tried to establish supremacy over the land lying between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra. This *doab* formed the bone of contention in late medieval times between the Vijayanagar and the Bahmani kingdoms. Time and again the Pallava princes tried to cross the Tungabhadra, which formed the natural historic boundary between many a kingdom of the Deccan and the deep south. The struggle continued for long with varying fortunes.

The first important events in this long conflict took place in the reign of Pulakesin II (609-642), the most famous Chalukya king. He is known to us from his eulogy written by the court poet Ravikirti in the Aihole inscription. This inscription is an example of poetic excellence reached in Sanskrit, and in spite of its exaggeration is a valuable source for the biography of Pulakesin. He overthrew the Kadamba capital at Banavasi and compelled the Gangas of Mysore to acknowledge his suzerainty. He also defeated Harsha's army on the Narmada and checked his advance towards the Deccan. In his conflict with the Pallavas he almost reached the Pallava capital, but the Pallavas purchased peace by ceding their northern provinces to Pulakesin II. About A.D. 610 Pulakesin II wrested from the Pallavas the region between the Krishna and the Godavari, which came to be known as the province of Vengi. Here was set up a branch of the main dynasty, and it is known as the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. However, Pulakesin's second invasion of the Pallava territory ended in failure. The Pallava king Narasimhavarman (A.D. 630-668) occupied the Chalukya capital at Vatapi in about A.D. 642, when Pulakesin II was probably killed in fight against the Pallavas. Narasimhavarman assumed the title of Vatapikonda or the conqueror of Vatapi. He is also said to have defeated the Cholas, the Cheras, the Pandyas and the Kalabhras.

Towards the end of the seventh century there was a lull in this conflict, which was again resumed in the first half of the eighth century A.D. The Chalukya king Vikramaditya II (A.D. 733-745) is said to have overrun Kanchi three times. In 740 he completely defeated the Pallavas. His victory ended the Pallava supremacy in the far south although the ruling house continued for more than a century afterwards. However, the Chalukyas could not enjoy the fruits of their victory over the Pallavas for long for their own hegemony was brought to an end in 757 by the Rashtrakutas.

Temples

Besides the performance of Vedic sacrifices, the worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, especially of the last two, was getting popular. From the seventh century the Alvar saints, who were great devotees of Vishnu, popularized the worship of this god. The Nayannars rendered a similar service to the cult of Siva. The Pallava kings constructed a number of stone temples in the seventh and eighth centuries for housing these gods. The most famous of them are the seven *ratha* temples found at Mahabalipuram, at a distance of 65 km from Madras. These were built in the seventh century by Narasimhavarman, who founded the port city

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23.2 *The Ratha Temples at Mahabalipuram*



23.3 *Kailasanath Temple at Kanchi*

of Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram This city is also famous for the Shore Temple, which was a structural construction. In addition to this the Pallavas constructed several structural temples at their capital Kanchi. A very good example was the Kailasanath temple built in the eighth century. The Chalukyas of Badami erected numerous temples at Aihole from about A.D. 610. Aihole contains as many as 70 temples. The work was continued in the adjacent towns of Badami and Pattadakal. Pattadakal has ten temples, built in the seventh and eighth centuries. The most celebrated of these are the Papanatha temple (c. 680), and the Virupaksha temple (c. 740). The first, although 30 metres long, has a low and stunted tower in the northern style The second was constructed purely in southern style It is about 40 metres in length and has a very high square and storied tower (*sikhara*). The temple walls are adorned with beautiful sculptures representing scenes from the *Ramayana*

We have no clear idea how these early temples were maintained. After the eighth century land grants to temples became a common phenomenon in south India, and usually they were recorded on the walls of the temples. But earlier the temples seem to have been constructed and maintained out of the taxes collected by the king from the common people. Some temples in Karnataka under the Chalukyas were erected by the Jaina traders Although the common people worshipped their village gods by offering them paddy and toddy, they may also have made offerings to these temples to acquire status and to satisfy their religious cravings.

Demands on the Peasantry

There is no doubt that for carrying on wars, for cultivating art and literature, for promoting religion, and for maintaining the administrative staff, enormous resources were needed. These were apparently provided by the peasantry The nature of burdens imposed on the agrarian communities is more or less the same in the Vakataka kingdom and the Pallava kingdom although the former belonged to Vidarbha and Maharashtra, and the latter to southern Andhra and northern Tamil Nadu. In addition to land tax, which was a part of the produce, the king could demand benevolence in the form of cereals and gold, and could bore certain trees, such as the palmyra, for obtaining salt and moist substances such as sugar and liquor, all

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derived from plants. Of course all the deposits and hidden treasures in the villages belonged to him Further, he demanded flowers and milk, wood and grass, and could compel the villagers to carry loads free of charge. The king was also entitled to forced labour or *vishti*

In connection with the visit of royal officials, who would appear in the villages either for collecting taxes or for punishing the criminals, and also in course of the march of the army, the rural communities had to perform a number of obligations. They had to supply bullocks for carts and provide cots, charcoal, ovens, cooking pots, and attendants.

This whole list of imposts would show that the state made heavy demands on the labour and produce of the peasantry. Most of these demands are covered by the 18 types of immunities granted to the brahmanas from the fourth century A D. Later more and more demands were made on the peasantry

Rural Expansion

These numerous demands made by the king on the agrarian population presuppose capacity to pay on the part of the peasantry. Collection could not have been possible unless there was increase in agricultural production. In this period we witness formation of new states in the trans-Vindhyan regions. Every state had a number of feudatory chiefdoms, which were small states within a large state. Each of these states, big or small, paramount or feudatory, needed its own army, its own taxation system, its own administrative machinery, and a good number of priestly and similar supporters. Every state therefore needed resources which could be obtained from its rural base. Therefore the state could not multiply without the proliferation of rural communities or increase in agricultural production in the existing villages. It seems that in tribal areas the brahmanas were granted land, and the tribal peasantry learnt the value of preserving cattle and better methods of agriculture from them. In certain areas there was dearth of labour power. In order to keep the economy of such areas going it was also found necessary to make over some sharecroppers and weavers to the brahmanas, as is known from an early Pallava grant. Therefore the large number of grants made to the brahmanas played an important role in spreading new methods of cultivation and increasing the size of the rural communities.

In this period we come across three types of villages in south India, *ur*, *sabha* and *nagaram*. *Ur* was the usual type of village inhabited by peasant castes, who perhaps held their land in common; it was the responsibility of the village headman to collect and pay taxes on their behalf. These villages were mainly found in southern Tamil Nadu The *sabha* type of village consisted of *brahamadeya* villages or those granted to the brahmanas, and of *agrahara* villages. The brahmana owners enjoyed individual rights in the land but carried on their activities collectively The *nagaram* type of village consisted of the villages settled and dominated by combinations of traders and merchants. This happened possibly because trade declined and merchants moved to villages. In the Chalukya areas rural affairs were managed by village elders called *mahajana*. On the whole the period *circa* A.D. 300-A.D. 750 provides good evidence of rural expansion, rural organization and better use of land.

Social Structure

We can present a rough picture of the social structure that developed in this period. Society was dominated by princes and priests. The princes claimed the status of brahmanas or kshatriyas though many of them were local tribal chiefs promoted to the second varna through benefactions made to the priests. The priests invented respectable family trees for these chiefs and traced their descent from age-old solar and lunar dynasties. This process

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enabled the new rulers to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The priests were mainly brahmanas, though the Jaina and Buddhist monks should also be placed in this category In this phase priests gained in influence and authority because of land grants. Below the princes and priests came the peasantry, which was divided into numerous peasant castes. Possibly most of them were called sudras in the brahmanical system. If the peasant and artisan castes failed to produce and render services and payments, it was looked upon as a departure from the established dharma or norm Such a situation was described as the age of Kali. It was the duty of the king to put an end to such a state of affairs and restore peace and order which worked in favour of chiefs and priests. The title *dharma-maharaja* therefore is adopted by the Vakataka, Pallava, Kadamba and Western Ganga kings. The real founder of the Pallava power, Simhavarman, is credited with coming to the rescue of dharma when it was beset with the evil attributes typical of the Kaliyuga. Apparently it refers to his suppression of the Kalabhras who upset the existing social order

EXERCISES

1. Survey the main currents of the history of peninsular India during the period A.D. 300-A.D. 750.
2. Outline the history of the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Chalukyas of Badami
3 Discuss the position of the brahmanas in the Peninsula.
4 Describe the temple architecture of the Pallavas and the Chalukyas
5 What burdens were imposed on the peasantry?
6 Discuss the factors leading to the formation of new states in peninsular India

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CHAPTER 24

India's Cultural Contacts with the Asian Countries

Medieval lawgivers and commentators ordained that a person should not cross the seas. This would imply that India shunned all relations with the outside world. But this is not so, for India maintained contacts with its Asian neighbours since Harappan times. Indian traders went to the cities of Mesopotamia, where their seals belonging to the period between 2400 B.C. and 1700 B.C have been found. From the beginning of the Christian era India maintained commercial contacts with China, South-East Asia, West Asia and the Roman empire. We have seen how the Indian land routes were connected with the Chinese Silk Route. We have also dwelt on India's commercial intercourse with the eastern part of the Roman empire. In addition to this India sent its missionaries, conquerors and traders to the neighbouring countries where they founded settlements.

The propagation of Buddhism promoted India's contacts with Sri Lanka, Burma, China and Central Asia. Most probably the Buddhist missionaries were sent to Sri Lanka in the reign of Asoka in the third century B.C. Short inscriptions in Brahmi script belonging to the second and first centuries B.C. have been found in Sri Lanka. In course of time Buddhism came to acquire a permanent stronghold in Sri Lanka. In the early centuries of the Christian era Buddhism spread from India to Burma. The Burmese developed the Theravada form of Buddhism, and erected many temples and statues in honour of the Buddha What is more significant, the Burmese and Sri Lanka Buddhists produced a rich corpus of Buddhist literature, not to be found in India. All the Pali texts were compiled and commented upon in Sri Lanka. Although Buddhism disappeared from India it continued to command a large following in Burma and Sri Lanka, which is the case even now.

Beginning with the reign of Kanishka a large number of Indian missionaries went to China, Central Asia and Afghanistan for preaching their religion. From China Buddhism spread to Korea and Japan, and it was in search of Buddhist texts and doctrines that several Chinese pilgrims such as Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang came to India. Eventually this contact proved fruitful to both the countries. A Buddhist colony cropped up at Tun Huang, which was the starting point of the companies of merchants going across the desert. The Indians learnt the art of growing silk from China, and the Chinese learnt from India the art of Buddhist painting.

The two other great centres of Buddhism in ancient times were Afghanistan and Central Asia. In Afghanistan many statues of the Buddha and monasteries have been discovered. Begram and Bamiyan situated in the north of this country are famous for such relics. Begram is famous for ivory work, which is similar to

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24.1 *Statue of the Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan*

Indian workmanship in Kushan times. Bamiyan has the distinction of possessing the tallest Buddha statue cut out of rock in the early centuries of the Christian era. It has thousands of natural and artificial caves in which the monks lived Buddhism continued to hold ground in this country till the seventh century A.D. when it was supplanted by Islam.

A similar process took place in the Central Asian republics of the USSR. Excavations have revealed Buddhist monasteries, *stupas* and inscriptions, and manuscripts written in Indian languages at several places in the Central Asian parts of the USSR As a result of the extension of the Kushan rule Prakrit written in Kharosthi script spread to Central Asia, where we find many Prakrit inscriptions and manuscripts belonging to the fourth century A.D. Written language was used for official and day-to-day correspondence as well as for the preservation and propagation of Buddhism In Central Asia Buddhism continued to be a dominant religious force till it was replaced by Islam around the end of seventh century A.D.

Indian culture also spread to South-East Asia, but not through the medium of Buddhism Except in the case of Burma it was mostly diffused through the brahmanical cults. The name Suvarnabhumi was given to Pegu and Moulmein in Burma, and merchants from Broach, Banaras and Bhagalpur traded with Burma. Considerable Buddhist remains of Gupta times have been found in Burma. From the first century A.D. India established close relations with Java in Indonesia, which was called Suvarnadvipa or the island of gold by the ancient Indians. The earliest Indian settlements in Java were established in A D. 56. In the second century of the Christian era several small Indian principalities were set up. When the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien visited Java in the fifth century A.D , he found the brahmanical religion prevalent there. In the early centuries of the Christian era the Pallavas founded their colonies in Sumatra. Eventually these flowered into the kingdom of Sri Vijaya, which continued to be an important power and a centre of Indian culture from the fifth to the tenth century A.D.The Hindu settlements in Java and Sumatra became channels for the radiation of Indian culture The process of founding settlements continued afterwards.

In Indo-China, which is at present divided into Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos, the Indians set up two powerful kingdoms in Kamboja and Champa The powerful kingdom of Kamboja, identical with modern Kampuchea, was founded in the sixth century A D. Its rulers were devotees of Siva They developed Kamboja as a centre of Sanskrit learning, and numerous inscriptions were composed in this language.

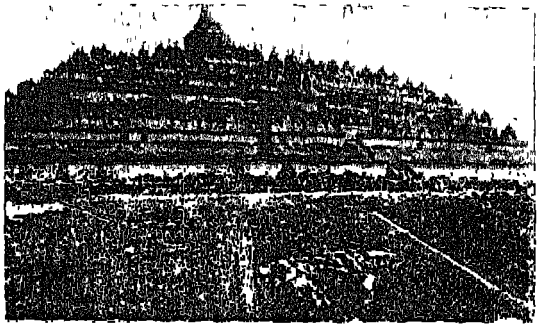
In the neighbourhood of Kamboja at Champa,

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embracing southern Vietnam and the fringes of northern Vietnam, it seems that the traders set up their colonies. The king of Champa was also a Saiva, and the official language of Champa was Sanskrit. This country was considered to be a great centre of education in the Vedas and Dharmasastras.

Indian settlements in the Indian Ocean continued to flourish till the thirteenth century, and during this period intermingled with the local peoples. Continuous commingling gave rise to a new type of art, language and literature. We find in these countries several art objects, which



24.2 *General View of the Temple at Borobudur*

show a happy blending of both Indian and indigenous elements. It is astonishing that the greatest Buddhist temple is found not in India but in Borobudur in Indonesia Considered to be the largest Buddhist temple in the whole world, it was constructed in the eighth century A D., and 436 images of Buddha were engraved on it.

The temple of Ankorvat in Kampuchea is larger than that of Borobudur. Although this temple belongs to medieval times, it can be compared to the best artistic achievements of the Egyptians and Greeks. The stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are written in relief on the walls of the temple. The story of the *Ramayana* is so popular in Indonesia that many folk plays are performed on its basis. The Indonesian language called *Bahasa Indonesia* contains numerous Sanskrit words.

In respect of sculptures the head of the Buddha from Thailand, the head from Kamboja and the magnificent bronze images from Java are regarded as the best examples of the blending of Indian art with the local art traditions of South-East Asia. Similarly beautiful examples of painting comparable to those of Ajanta have been found not only in Sri Lanka but in the Tun Huang caves on the Chinese border.

It would be wrong to think that religion alone contributed to the spread of Indian culture. Missionaries were backed by traders and conquerors. Trade evidently played a vital part in establishing India's relations with Central Asia and South-East Asia. The very names Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa given to territories in South-East Asia suggest Indians' search for gold. Trade led not only to exchange of goods but also of elements of culture. It would be inaccurate to hold that the Indians alone contributed to the culture of their neighbours. It was a two-way traffic The Indians acquired the craft of minting gold coins from the Greeks and Romans. They learnt the art of growing silk from China, that of growing betel leaves from Indonesia, and several other products from the neighbouring countries. Similarly the method of growing cotton spread from India to China and Central Asia. However, Indian contribution seems to be more important in art, religion, script and language. But in no case the culture which developed in the neighbouring countries was a replica of the Indian culture. Just as India retained and developed its own personality in spite of foreign influences, similarly the countries in South-East Asia evolved their own indigenous culture by assimilating the Indian elements.

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EXERCISES

1. Give an account of India's cultural contacts with Central Asia.
2. Describe the spread of Indian culture in South-East Asia.
3. What did the Indians borrow from foreign countries in ancient times?

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CHAPTER 25

Transformation of the Ancient Phase

Social Crisis and the Origin of Land Grants

The central factor that ultimately transformed the ancient Indian society into medieval society was the practice of land grants Why did this practice originate? The charters say that the givers, mainly kings, wanted to acquire religious merit, and the receivers, mainly monks and priests, needed means for performing religious rites. But the practice really came into being because of a serious crisis that affected the ancient social order. The varna society was based on the producing activities of the peasants who were called vaisyas and of the labourers who were called sudras. The taxes collected by the royal officers from the vaisyas enabled the kings to pay salaries to their officials and soldiers, reward their priests, and purchase luxury and other articles from merchants and big artisans But in the third-fourth centuries A.D. a deep social crisis afflicted this system. Contemporary Puranic texts complain of a situation in which varnas or social classes discarded the functions assigned to them The lower orders attempted to arrogate to themselves the status and functions of the higher orders. In other words they refused to pay taxes and render labour services. This led to *varna-samkara* or intermixture of social classes Varna barriers were attacked because the producing masses were oppressed with heavy taxes and impositions, and were denied protection by the kings. This state of affairs is known as Kaliyuga in the Puranic passages of the third-fourth centuries A.D.

Several measures were adopted to overcome the crisis The almost contemporary law-book of Manu advises that the vaisyas and sudras should not be allowed to deviate from their duties This may have led to coercive measures But a more important step to meet the situation was to grant land to priests and officials in lieu of salaries and remuneration. Such a practice had the advantage of throwing the burden of collecting taxes and maintaining law and order in the donated areas on the beneficiaries They could deal with the recalcitrant peasants on the spot. The practice could also bring new lands under cultivation. Moreover by implanting brahmanas in the conquered tribal areas the tribal people could be taught the brahmanical way of life and the need of obeying the king and paying taxes to him

Decline of Central Control

Land grants became frequent from the fifth century A.D According to this the brahmanas were granted villages free from taxes. All the taxes which were collected by the king from the villages were transferred to the brahmanas. In addition to this the beneficiaries were given the right to govern the people living in the donated villages. Government officials and royal retainers were not permitted to enter the gift villages. Up to the fifth century A.D. the ruler

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generally retained the right to punish the thieves, but in later times the beneficiaries were authorised to punish all criminal offenders. So the brahmanas not only collected taxes from the peasants and artisans but also maintained law and order in the villages granted to them. Villages were granted to the brahmanas for ever, so that the power of the king was heavily undermined from the end of the Gupta period. In the Maurya period taxes were assessed and collected by the agents of the king, and law and order were maintained by them. But as a result of land grants there sprang up many pockets which were free from royal control.

Royal control was further eroded through the payment of government officials by land grants. In the Maurya period the officers of the state from the highest to the lowest were generally paid in cash. The practice continued under the Kushans, who issued a large number of copper and gold coins, and it lingered under the Guptas. But from the sixth century A.D. the position seems to have changed. The law-books of that century recommended that services should be rewarded in land. Accordingly from the time of Harshavardhana public officials were paid in land revenues. A fourth of the royal revenue was earmarked for the endowment of great public servants. The governors, ministers, magistrates and officers were given portions of land for their personal upkeep. All this created vested interest at the cost of royal authority.

New Agrarian Economy

We notice an important change in the agrarian economy. Landed beneficiaries could not cultivate lands by themselves, nor could they collect revenues by themselves. The actual cultivation was entrusted to peasants or sharecroppers who were attached to the land but did not legally own it. The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing states that most Indian monasteries got their lands cultivated by servants and others. Hsuan Tsang describes the sudras as agriculturists, which suggests that they no longer cultivated land mainly as slaves and agricultural labourers; they possibly occupied it temporarily. This evidently happened in the old settled areas in north India.

When villages were granted in the tribal areas the agriculturists were placed under the control of religious beneficiaries, especially the brahmanas, because the brahmanas began to be granted land on a large scale from the fifth-sixth centuries. From the sixth century onwards sharecroppers and peasants were particularly asked to stick to the land granted to the beneficiaries in the backward and mountainous areas such as Orissa, Deccan, etc. From there the practice spread to the basin of the Ganga. In north India also artisans and peasants were asked not to leave the villages granted to the beneficiaries. So they could not move from one village to another, on the other hand they had to live in the same village to cater to its all possible needs.

Decline of Trade and Towns

From the sixth century A.D. trade began to decline. Trade with the western part of the Roman empire ended in the third century, and silk trade with Iran and the Byzantium stopped in the middle of the sixth century. India carried on some commerce with China and South-East Asia, but its benefits were reaped by the Arabs who acted as middlemen. In the pre-Muslim period the Arabs practically monopolized the export trade of India. The decline of trade for well over 300 years after the sixth century is strikingly demonstrated by the practical absence of gold coins in the country. The paucity of coins after the sixth century is true not only of north India but also of south India.

The decline of trade led to the decay of towns. Towns flourished in west and north India under the Satavahanas and Kushans. A few cities continued to thrive in Gupta times. But the post-Gupta period witnessed the ruin of many old commercial cities in north India. Excavations show that several towns in Haryana

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and east Panjab, Purana Qila (Delhi), Mathura, Hastinapur (Meerut district), Sravasti (Uttar Pradesh), Kausambi (near Allahabad), Rajghat (Varanasi), Chirand (Saran district), Vaisali and Pataliputra began to decline in the Gupta period, and mostly disappeared in post-Gupta times. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang visited several towns considered sacred on account of their association with the Buddha but found them almost deserted or dilapidated. On account of restricted market for Indian exports, artisans and merchants living in these towns flocked to the countryside and took to cultivation. In the late fifth century a group of silk weavers from the western coast migrated to Mandasor in Malwa, gave up silk weaving and adopted other professions. On account of the decay of trade and towns the villagers had to meet their needs in respect of oil, salt, spices, cloth, etc., all by themselves. So this gave rise to smaller units of production, each unit meeting its own needs.

From the sixth century A.D. onwards some changes occurred in the social organization. In the Gangetic basin in north India the vaisyas were regarded as free peasants, but land grants created landlords between the peasants on the one hand and the king on the other, so that the vaisyas became as good as the sudras. In this way the old brahmanical order was modified. This modified social order spread from north India into Bengal and south India as a result of land grants to the brahmanas, brought from the north, from the fifth-sixth centuries. In the outlying areas we find mainly two orders, the brahmanas and the sudras

Changes in the Varna System

Frequent seizures of power and land grants gave rise to several categories of landed people. When a person acquired land and power he naturally sought a high position in society. He might belong to a lower varna, but he might be favoured with generous land grants by his master. This created difficulties because though economically well off, socially he was low. According to the Dharmasastras social positions hitherto were mainly regulated by the varna system. The people were divided into four varnas, the brahmanas being the highest and the sudras being the lowest. The economic rights of a person were also determined by the varna to which he belonged. So some changes had to be made in the written texts to recognize the position of the new landed classes. An astrologer called Varahamihira, who belonged to the sixth century, prescribed houses in sizes varying according to the varna, as was the old practice. But he also fixes the size according to the grades of various classes of ruling chiefs. Thus formerly all things in society were graded according to the varnas, but now they also came to be determined according to the landed possessions of a person.

From the seventh century onwards numerous castes were created. A Purana of the eighth century states that thousands of mixed castes were produced by the connection of vaisya women with men of lower castes. This implies that the sudras and untouchables were divided into countless sub-castes. So were the brahmanas, and the Rajputs who appeared as an important factor in Indian polity and society around the seventh century. The number of castes increased on account of the nature of the economy in which people could not move from one place to another. Although people living in different areas followed the same occupation, they became divided into sub-castes according to the territory to which they belonged. In addition to this many tribal peoples were admitted into Hindu society because of the land grants given to the brahmanas in the aboriginal tracts Most of these peoples were enrolled as sudras and mixed castes. Every tribe was now given the status of a separate caste in Hindu society.

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Cultural Developments

In about the sixth-seventh centuries started the formation of sub-national units such as Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, etc. The identity of the sub-national groups is recognized by both foreign and Indian sources. The Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang mentions several nationalities Visakhadatta, an author of about the sixth century A.D., speaks of different regions inhabited by peoples different in customs, clothing and language The Jaina books of the late eighth century notice the existence of 18 major peoples or nationalities. It describes the physical features of 16. It produces samples of their language and says something about their character.

The sixth-seventh centuries are equally important in the history of Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit continued to be used by the ruling class from about the second century A.D. As the rulers came to live in pomp and splendour, the style of their language became verbose and ornate The ornate style in Sanskrit prose and poetry became common from the seventh century, and the traditional Sanskrit pandits still love to write in it. The best example of verbiage in prose is found in the writings of Bana Although the prose of Bana was not easy to imitate, it continued to serve as a model for Sanskrit writers in the medieval period.

From the seventh century A.D. we also notice a remarkable development in the linguistic history of India. Buddhist writings from eastern India show the faint beginnings of Bengali, Assamese, Maithili, Oriya, and Hindi. Similarly the Jaina Prakrit works of the same period show the beginning of Gujarati and Rajasthani. It seems that each region came to develop its own language on account of its isolation from the others. On the break-up of the Gupta empire there arose several independent principalities, which naturally hindered countrywide contacts and communications. The decline of trade meant lack of communication between the various regions, and this promoted the growth of regional languages.

Regional scripts became more prominent from the seventh century A.D. From Maurya to Gupta times, although the script underwent changes, more or less the same script continued to obtain throughout the country. Thus a person who has mastered the script of the Gupta age can read inscriptions from different parts of the country in that period But from the seventh century every region came to have its own script, and hence nobody can read post-Gupta inscriptions found in different parts of the country unless he learns several scripts

Bhakti and Tantricism

In sculpture and construction of temples every region came to evolve its own style from the seventh-eighth centuries Particularly south India tended to become the land of stone temples. Stone and bronze were the two main media in which divinities were represented. Bronze statues began to be manufactured on an impressive scale. Although they are also found in good numbers in the Himalayan territories, they predominated in south India because of their use in brahmanical temples and in eastern India because of their use in Buddhist temples and monasteries. Although the same gods and goddesses were worshipped throughout the country, people of every region portrayed them in sculptures in their own way.

We also notice some religious changes in post-Gupta times. Hindu divinities came to be arranged according to their grades in the hierarchy. Just as society was divided into unequal classes based on ritual, landed property, military power, etc., so the divinities were also divided into unequal ranks. Vishnu, Siva and Durga appeared as suprem deities, presiding over many other gods and goddesses, who were placed in lower positions as retainers and attendants. Especially the supreme mother

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goddess was represented in a dominating posture in relation to several minor deities. This was reflected in both art and literature. The monastic organization of the Jainas, Saivites, Vaishnavites, etc., also came to be divided into about five ranks. The highest rank was occupied by the *acharya*, whose coronation took place in the same manner as the coronation of a prince.

From the seventh century A.D. the Bhakti cult spread throughout the country, and especially in the south Bhakti meant that people made all kinds of offerings to the god in return for which they received the *prasada* or the favour of the god. It meant that the devotees completely surrendered to their god. This practice can be compared to the complete dependence of the tenants on the landowners. Just as the tenants offered and rendered various services to the lord and then received land and protection as a kind of favour from him, a similar relation came to be established between the individual and his god.

The most remarkable development in the religious field in India from about the sixth century A.D. was the spread of tantricism. In the fifth-seventh centuries many brahmanas received land in Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central India and the Deccan, and it is about this time that tantric texts, shrines and practices also appeared. Tantricism admitted both women and sudras into its ranks, and laid great stress on the use of magic rituals. Some of the rituals may have been in use in earlier times, but they were systematized and recorded in the tantric texts from about the sixth century A.D. They were intended to satisfy the material desires of the devotees for physical possessions and to cure the day-to-day diseases and injuries. Obviously tantricism arose as a result of the large-scale admission of the aboriginal peoples in brahmanical society. The brahmanas adopted many of the tribal rituals and charms, which were now officially compiled, sponsored and fostered by them. In course of time these were distorted by the brahmanas and priests to serve the interests of their rich clients. Tantricism permeated Jainism, Buddhism, Saivism and Vaishnavism. From the seventh century it continued to hold ground throughout the medieval age. Many medieval manuscripts found in different parts of the country deal with tantricism and astrology, and the two are completely mixed with each other.

Thus in the sixth and seventh centuries we notice certain striking developments in polity, society, economy, language, script and religion. This shows that in this period ancient India was coming to an end and medieval India was taking shape.

EXERCISES

1. What is meant by the end of the ancient period?
2. Point out important changes in Indian polity, economy and society in the fifth-seventh centuries.
3. What developments do you notice in religion and culture in the fifth-seventh centuries?

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CHAPTER 26

Sequence of Social Changes

There are no written texts for the study of society in pre-Vedic times. Archaeology tells us that people lived in small groups in the hilly areas in the Palaeolithic Age The main source of their subsistence was the game they hunted, and wild fruits and vegetation roots they collected. Man learnt to produce food and live in houses towards the end of the stone age and the beginning of the metal age. The neolithic and chalcolithic communities lived on the uplands not far from the hills and rivers. Gradually there arose peasant villages in the Indus basin area, and eventually they blossomed into the urban society of Harappa, with large and small houses. But once the Harappan civilization disappeared, urbanism did not reappear in India for a thousand years or so.

Tribal and Pastoral Phase

For the history of society from the time of the *Rig Veda* we can also use written texts. They tell us that the Rig Vedic society was primarily pastoral. People were semi-nomadic, and their chief possessions consisted of cattle and horses. The term for cow (*gau*) occurs 176 times in the earlier parts of the *Rig Veda*. Cattle were considered to be synonymous with wealth, and a wealthy person was called *gomat*. Wars were fought for the sake of cattle, and therefore the raja whose main duty was to protect the cows was called *gopa* or *gopati*. Cow was so important to the family that the daughter was called *duhitr*, that is one who milks. So intimate was the acquaintance of the Vedic people with kine that when they came across the buffalo in India they called it *govala* or cow-haired. In contrast to references to cows those to agriculture are fewer in the *Rig Veda*. Cattle-rearing therefore was the main source of livelihood.

In such a society people could hardly produce anything over and above what was needed for their subsistence. Tribesmen could afford only occasional presents for their chiefs. The main income of a chief or a prince came from the spoils of war. He captured booty from enemy tribes and exacted tributes from hostile tribes and tribal compatriots. The offering of tribute received by him was called *bali*. It seems that the tribal kinsmen gave trust and voluntary presents to the tribal chief. In return the chief led them from victory to victory and stood by them in difficult times. The respect and occasional gifts received by the prince from his tribesmen may have become customary in Vedic times. But defeated hostile tribes were made to pay tributes. Periodical sacrifices provided an important occasion for the distribution of those gifts and tributes. The lion's share went to the priests in lieu of the prayers they offered to gods on behalf of their patrons. At one place in the *Rig Veda* the invoked god is asked to bestow wealth only on priests, princes and sacrificers. This suggests an attempt at un-

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equal distribution. Princes and priests wanted to grab more at the cost of the common people, although people voluntarily gave a larger share to their chiefs and princes out of deference and because of their military qualities and services. Ordinary members of the tribe received a share which was known as *amsa* or *bhaga* Distribution took place in folk assemblies, which were attended by the rajas and their tribal followers.

Although artisans, peasants, priests and warriors appear even in the earlier portions of the *Rig Veda*, society as a whole was tribal, pastoral, semi-nomadic and egalitarian. Spoils of war and cattle constituted the main forms of property. Cattle and women slaves were generally given as gifts. Gifts of cereals are hardly mentioned because these were not produced on any considerable scale. Therefore apart from the booty captured in wars, there was no other substantial source for the maintenance of princes and priests. It was possible to have high ranks, but not high social classes. Princes and priests employed women slaves for domestic service, but their number may not have been large. The Rig Vedic society did not have a serving order in the form of the sudras.

Agriculture and the Origin of Upper Orders

When the Vedic people moved from Afghanistan and Panjab to western Uttar Pradesh they became full-fledged agriculturists. In later Vedic times we notice continuous settlements for two to three centuries. This gave rise to territorial chiefdoms. Out of the tributes obtained from peasants and others the princes could perform sacrifices and reward their priests. The later Vedic peasant paid to the nobles and warriors who in their turn paid to the priests; in addition, he also paid sacrificial fees to the priests. The peasant supplied food for smiths, chariotmakers and carpenters, who mainly served the emerging class of warriors. But the later Vedic peasant could not contribute to the rise of trade and towns; this feature became prominent in the age of the Buddha. His society did not know the use of metallic money.

The Vedic communities had established neither a taxation system nor a professional army. There did not exist collectors of taxes apart from the kinsmen of the prince. Payment made to the king was not much different from the sacrificial offering made to the gods. The tribal militia of the pastoral society was replaced by the peasant militia of agricultural society. The *vis* or the tribal peasantry formed the *sena* or the armed host The peasantry in later Vedic times was called force (*bala*). The army to protect the *asvamedha* horse comprised both the kshatriyas and the *vis*. Armed with bows, quivers and shields, the former acted as military captains and leaders; armed with sticks, the latter constituted the rank and file. For the sake of victory the chief or noble was asked to eat from the same vessels with the *vis*. The priests stressed through rituals the subjection of the peasantry or vaisyas to the warrior nobles but at this stage the process of turning the tribesmen into taxpaying peasants was very weak. On account of the use of the wooden ploughshare and indiscriminate killing of cattle in sacrifices the peasants did not produce much over and above their needs. Hence they could not pay regular taxes. On the other hand princes were not completely alienated from the peasants. In consonance with tribal practices the rajas were expected to extend agriculture and even to lend their hands to plough, so that the gap between the vaisya and the *rajanya* was not very wide. Although the nobles and warriors ruled over their peasant kinsmen, they had to depend upon peasant militia for fighting against enemies and they could not grant land without the consent of the tribal peasantry. All this placed them in a difficult position and could not sharpen the distinctions between the rulers and the ruled.

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Varna System of Production and Government

The use of iron tools for crafts and cultivation created conditions for the transformation of the comparatively egalitarian Vedic society into a fully agricultural and class-divided social order in the sixth century B.C. Once the forested areas of the middle Gangetic basin were cleared with the help of the iron axe, one of the most fertile parts of the world was opened to settlement. Now we find numerous rural and urban settlements. Large territorial states resulted in the formation of the Magadhan empire. All this was possible because with the help of the iron ploughshare, sickles, and other tools peasants produced a good deal more than what they needed for their subsistence. Peasants needed the support of artisans, who not only provided the peasants with tools, clothing, etc., but also supplied weapons and luxury articles to the princes and priests. The technique of production in post-Vedic times attained a much higher level than that found in the Vedic age.

The new technique and the use of force enabled some people to possess large stretches of land which needed a good number of slaves and hired labourers. In Vedic times people cultivated their fields with the help of their family members, there is no word for wage-earner in Vedic literature. But slaves and wage-earners engaged in cultivation became a regular feature in the age of the Buddha. In the Maurya period they worked on large state farms. Probably 150,000 people captured in Kalinga by Asoka were drafted for work in farms and mines. But, by and large slaves in ancient India were meant for domestic work. Generally the small peasant occasionally aided by slaves and hired labourers played the dominant role in production.

With the new technique peasants, artisans, hired labourers and agricultural slaves produced much more than they needed for their subsistence. A good part of this produce was collected from them by princes and priests For regular collection administrative and religious methods were devised. The king appointed tax-collectors to assess and collect taxes. But it was also important to convince people of the necessity of obeying the raja, paying him taxes and offering gifts to the priests. For this purpose the varna system was devised. According to it members of the three higher varnas or social orders were distinguished ritually from those of the fourth varna. The twice-born were entitled to Vedic studies and investiture with the sacred thread, and the fourth varna or the sudras were excluded from it. They were meant for serving the higher orders, and some law-givers reserved slavery only for the sudras. Thus the twice-born can be called citizens and the sudras non-citizens. But there grew distinctions between citizen and citizen in the ranks of the twice-born. The brahmanas were not allowed to take to the plough and manual work Gradually the contempt of the higher varnas for manual work reached such limits that they developed hatred for the hands that practised crafts and thus came to look upon some manual labourers as untouchables. The more a person withdrew from physical labour, the purer he came to be considered. The vaisyas, although members of the twice-born group, worked as peasants, herdsmen and artisans and later as traders. What is more important, they were the principal taxpayers whose payments maintained the kshatriyas and brahmanas. The varna system authorised the kshatriya to collect taxes from the peasants and tolls from traders and artisans, which enabled him to pay his priests and employees in cash and kind.

The rate of payment and economic privileges differed according to the varna to which a person belonged. Thus a brahmana was required to pay two per cent interest on loans, a kshatriya three per cent, a vaisya four per cent, and a sudra five per cent. Sudra guests could be fed only if they had done some work at the house of the host These rules laid down in the Dharma-

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sastras or law-books may not have been observed strictly, but they indicate the norms which were set by society

Since both priests and warriors lived on the taxes, tributes, tithes and labour supplied by peasants and artisans, their relations were marked by occasional feuds for the sharing of social savings. The kshatriyas were also hurt by the vanity of the brahmanas, who claimed the highest status in society. But both resolved their conflicts and differences in face of the opposition of the vaisyas and sudras. Ancient texts emphasize that the kshatriyas cannot prosper without the support of the brahmanas, and the brahmanas cannot prosper without the support of the kshatriyas. Both can thrive and rule the world only if they cooperate with each other

Social Crisis and Rise of Landed Classes

For several centuries the system worked well in the Gangetic basin, which saw a successive series of large states. In the first and second centuries A.D. it was marked by bumping trade and urbanism. In this phase art flourished as never before. The climax of the old order was reached in about the third century. Then its progressive role seems to have been exhausted. Around the third century A.D. the old social formation was afflicted with a deep crisis. The crisis is clearly reflected in the description of the Kali age in those portions of the Puranas which belong to the third and fourth centuries A.D. The Kali age is characterised by *varna-samkara*, i.e. intermixture of varnas or social orders, which implies that the vaisyas and sudras (peasants, artisans and labourers) either refused to perform producing functions assigned to them or else the vaisya peasants declined to pay taxes and the sudras refused to make their labour available. They did not observe the varna boundaries relating to marriage and other types of social intercourse. On account of this situation the epics emphasize the importance of *danda* or coercive measures, and Manu lays down that the vaisyas and sudras should not be allowed to deviate from their duties. The kings appear as upholders and restorers of the varna system.

But coercive measures alone were not sufficient to make the peasants pay and labourers work. Instead of extracting taxes directly through its own agents and then distributing them among its priestly, military and other employees and supporters, the state found it convenient to assign land revenues directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators, etc., for their support. This development was in sharp contrast to the Vedic practice Formerly only the community had the right to give land to priests and possibly to princes. But now the raja usurped this power and obliged the leading members of the community by granting land to them. These beneficiaries were also empowered to maintain law and order. This is how fiscal and administrative problems were solved. New and expanding kingdoms wanted more and more taxes. These could be obtained from the tribal backward areas provided the tribals adopted new methods of agriculture and were taught to be loyal. The problem was tackled by granting land in the tribal areas to enterprising brahmanas, who could tame the inhabitants of the wild tracts and make them amenable to discipline.

In backward areas land grants to brahmanas and others spread agricultural calendar, diffused the knowledge of *ayurveda* medicine and thus contributed to increase in overall agricultural production. Art of writing and the use of Prakrit and Sanskrit were also disseminated. Through land grants civilization spread in the deep south and far east although some spade work had been done by traders and by Jainas and Buddhists earlier. The grants brought to the Hindu fold a large number of aboriginal peasants who came to be ranked as sudras. The sudras therefore began to be called peasants and agriculturists in early

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medieval texts. On the other hand land grants, especially in developed areas, depreciated the position of independent vaisya peasants. Hence vaisyas and sudras came closer to each other from Gupta times onwards socially and economically. But the most significant consequence of land grants was the emergence of a class of landlords living on the produce of the peasants This prepared the ground in about the 5th-6th centuries A.D. for a new type of social formation which can be called feudal.

Summary

It is therefore not possible to give one label to society in ancient India, but we have to think of several stages in its evolution. The food-gathering society of the Palaeolithic Age was succeeded by the food-producing societies of neolithic and chalcolithic communities. Eventually the peasant communities developed into the Harappan urban societies Then we have a break followed by a society of horse-users and cattle-herders. The *Rig Veda* indicates a social formation which was largely pastoral and tribal The pastoral society became agricultural in later Vedic times, but its primitive agriculture did not yield much, and so the rulers could not get much at the cost of the peasants The class-divided society comes into full view in post-Vedic times. It came to be known as varna system. This social organization rested on the producing activities of the vaisyas supplemented by those of the sudras. By and large, the social system worked well from the age of the Buddha to Gupta times. Then it underwent a change on account of internal upheavals. Priests and officials began to be granted lands for their maintenance, and gradually there emerged a class of landlords between the peasants and the state This undermined the position of the vaisyas and caused modification in the varna system.

EXERCISES

1. Describe the main stages in the evolution of Indian society in ancient times.
2. Why is society in the time of the *Rig Veda* called pastoral?
3. What factors led to the rise of social inequalities in ancient India?
4. In what way did the land grants mark a new stage in the development of Indian society?

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CHAPTER 27

Legacy in Science and Civilization

Religion and Formation of Social Classes

In spite of the existence of towns in Harappan times and again for about 1,000 years from the Maurya to the Gupta period the ancient Indian civilization was not as urban as the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. The greater part of the subcontinent was hundreds of kilometres away from the sea-coast, and it could not develop much trade and commerce. Indian life therefore remained primarily agrarian, and its people comparatively immobile. In comparison with western cultures religion exercised a far stronger influence in India. Every field of ancient Indian life—economy polity, art, literature—was strongly influenced by religion. In addition to Hinduism India gave rise to Jainism and Buddhism. Although Christianity came to this country in about the first century A.D., it did not make much headway in ancient times. Buddhism also disappeared from India in course of time, though it had spread as far as Japan in the east and as far as Central Asia in the north-west. In the process of diffusion Buddhism projected a good deal of Indian art, language and literature in the neighbouring areas.

Religion influenced the formation of social classes in India in a peculiar way. In other ancient societies the duties and functions of social classes were fixed by law which was largely enforced by the state. But in India varna laws enjoyed the sanction of both the state and religion. The functions of priests, warriors, peasants and labourers were defined in law and supposed to have been laid down by divine agencies. Those who departed from their functions and were found guilty of offences were subjected to secular punishments as well as the performance of rituals and penances, all differing according to the varnas. Each varna was given not only a social but also a ritualistic recognition In course of time varnas or social classes and *jatis* or castes came to be regarded hereditary in the eyes of law and religion. All this was done to ensure that vaisyas produce and pay taxes and sudras serve as labourers so that brahmanas act as priests and kshatriyas as rulers. The need of carrying out their respective functions was so strongly ingrained in the minds of the various classes that ordinarily they would never think of deviating from their dharma The *Bhagavadgita* taught that people should lay down their lives in defence of their own dharma rather than adopt the dharma of others, which is dangerous. The lower orders worked hard in the firm belief that they would deserve a better life in the next world or birth This belief lessened the intensity and frequency of tensions and conflicts between those who actually produced and those who lived off these producers as princes, priests, officials, soldiers and big merchants. Hence the necessity for exercising coercion against the lower orders was not so

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strong in ancient India. What was done by slaves and other producing sections in Greece and Rome under the threat of whip was done by the vaisyas and sudras out of conviction formed through brahmanical indoctrination.

Philosophical Systems

The Indian thinkers looked upon the world as illusion and deliberated deeply on the relation between the soul and God. In fact philosophers of no other country delved so deeply into this problem as the Indians did. Ancient India is considered famous for its contribution to philosophy and spiritualism. But the Indians also developed a materialistic view of the world. In the six systems of philosophy which the Indians created we find elements of materialist philosophy in the *sankhya* system of Kapila, who was born around 580 B.C. He believed that the soul can attain liberation only through real knowledge. Real knowledge can be acquired through observation, inference and words The *sankhya* system does not recognize the existence of God. According to it, the world has not been created by God but by nature and the world and human life are regulated by natural forces.

Materialist philosophy received the greatest impetus from Charvaka, who lived in about the sixth century B.C. The philosophy that he propounded is known as *lokayata*. He argued that what is not experienced by man through his sensual organs does not really exist. It implies that gods do not exist. The Indians thus developed both the idealist as well as the materialist systems of philosophy. The idealist system taught that the world is an illusion and ignorance. People were asked by the Upanishads to abandon the world and to strive for real knowledge. Western thinkers have taken to the teachings of the Upanishads because they are unable to solve the human problems created by modern technology. The famous German philosopher Schopenhauer finds in his system a place for the Vedas and the Upanishads. He used to say that the Upanishads consoled him in this life and would also console him after death.

Crafts

It would be wrong to think that the Indians did not make any progress in materialist culture. They attained proficiency in several fields of production. The Indian craftsmen were great experts in dyeing and making various kinds of colours. The basic colours made in India were so shining and lasting that the beautiful paintings of Ajanta and Ellora are still intact.

Similarly the Indians were great experts in the art of making steel. This craft was developed first in India The Indian steel was exported to many countries of the world from very early times and came to be called *wootz* in later times. No other country in the world could manufacture such steel swords as those made by Indian craftsmen. They were in great demand in the entire region from Asia to Europe.

Polity

As regards political organization India was the only other country with Greece to make experiments in some kind of democracy. The country also produced a great ruler in Asoka, who, in spite of his great victory over Kalinga, adopted a policy of peace and non-aggression. Asoka and several other Indian kings practised religious toleration and stressed that the wishes of the followers of the other religions should be respected.

Science and Mathematics

India made an important contribution to science. In ancient times religion and science were inextricably linked together. Astronomy made great progress in the country because the planets came to be regarded as gods, and their movements began to be closely observed. Their study became essential on account of their

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connection with changes in seasons and weather conditions which were important for agricultural activities. The science of grammar and linguistics arose because the ancient brahmanas stressed that every Vedic prayer and every *mantra* should be recited with meticulous correctness. In fact the first result of the scientific outlook of Indians was the production of Sanskrit grammar. In the fourth century B.C. Panini systematized the rules governing Sanskrit and produced a grammar called the *Ashtadhyayi*.

By the third century B.C. mathematics, astronomy and medicine began to develop separately. In the field of mathematics the ancient Indians made three distinct contributions: the notation system, the decimal system and the use of zero. The earliest epigraphic evidence for the use of the decimal system is in the beginning of the fifth century A.D. The Indian notational system was adopted by the Arabs who spread it in the Western world. The Indian numerals are called Arabic in English, but the Arabs themselves called their numerals *hindsa*. Before these numerals appeared in the West they had been used in India for centuries. They are found in the inscriptions of Asoka, which were written in the third century B.C.

The Indians were the first to use the decimal system. The famous mathematician Aryabhata (A.D. 476-500) was acquainted with it. The Chinese learnt this system from the Buddhist missionaries, and the Western world borrowed it from the Arabs when they came in contact with India. Zero was discovered by the Indians in about the second century B.C. From the very beginning the Indian mathematicians considered zero as a separate numeral, and it was used in this sense in sums of arithmetic. In Arabia the earliest use of zero appears in A.D. 873. The Arabs learnt and adopted it from India and spread it in Europe. So far as algebra is concerned both the Indians and the Greeks contributed to it, but in Western Europe its knowledge was borrowed not from Greece but from the Arabs who had acquired it from India.

In the second century B.C. Apastamba produced a practical geometry for the construction of altars at which the kings could offer sacrifices. It describes acute angle, obtuse angle, right angle. Aryabhata formulated the rule for finding the area of a triangle, which led to the origin of trigonometry. The most famous work of this time is the *Suryasiddhanta*, the like of which is not found in contemporary ancient East

The most renowned scholars of astronomy were Aryabhata and Varahamihira Aryabhata belonged to the fifth century, and Varahamihira to the sixth. Aryabhata calculated the position of the planets according to the Babylonian method. He discovered the cause of lunar and solar eclipses The circumference of the earth which he measured on the basis of speculation is considered to be correct even now. He pointed out that the sun is stationary and the earth rotates. The book of Aryabhata is called the *Aryabhatiya*.

Varahamihira's well-known work is called the *Brihatsamhita*, which belongs to the sixth century A.D. Varahamihira stated that the moon rotates round the earth and the earth rotates round the sun. He utilized several Greek works to explain the movement of the planets and some other astronomical problems. Although the Greek knowledge influenced Indian astronomy, there is no doubt that the Indians pursued the subject further and made use of it in their observations of the planets.

In the applied field Indian craftsmen contributed much to the progress of chemistry. The Indian dyers invented lasting colours and they also discovered the blue colour. It has been already stated how the Indian smiths were the first in the world to manufacture steel.

Medicine

The ancient Indian physicians studied ana-

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tomy. They devised methods to diagnose diseases and prescribed medicines for their cure. The earliest mention of medicines is in the *Atharva Veda*. But, as in other ancient societies, the remedies recommended were replete with magical charms and spells, and medicine could not develop along scientific lines.

In post-Maurya times India produced two famous scholars of the *Ayurveda*, Susruta and Charaka. In the *Susrutasamhita* Susruta describes the method of operating cataract, stone disease and several other ailments He mentions as many as 121 implements to be used for operations. In the treatment of disease he lays special emphasis on diet and cleanliness. Charaka wrote the *Charakasamhita* in the second century A.D. It is like an encyclopaedia of Indian medicine. It describes various types of fever, leprosy, hysteria (*mirgi*) and tuberculosis Possibly Charaka did not know that some of these are infectious. His book contains the names of a large number of plants and herbs which were to be used as medicine. The book is thus useful not only for the study of Indian medicine but also for that of ancient Indian flora and chemistry. In subsequent centuries Indian medicine developed on the lines laid down by Charaka

Geography

Ancient Indians also made some contribution to the study of geography They had little knowledge of the geography of the lands outside India, but the rivers, mountain ranges, places of pilgrimage and different regions of the country are described in the epics and Puranas Although the Indians were acquainted with China and Western countries, they neither had any clear idea of where they lay nor of their distances from India

In early times the ancient Indians obtained some knowledge of navigation and they contributed to the craft of shipbuilding. But since important political powers had their seats of power far away from the coast and since there was no danger from the sea side, the ancient Indian princes did not pay any particular attention to navigation.

Art and Literature

The ancient Indian masons and craftsmen produced beautiful works of art. The monolithic pillars erected by Asoka are famous for their shining polish, which matches with the polish on Northern Black Polished ware It is still a mystery how the craftsmen could achieve this kind of polish on pillars and pottery. The Mauryan polished pillars were mounted by statues of animals, especially lions The lion capital has been adopted as the national emblem of the Government of India. We may also refer to the cave temples of Ajanta as well as the famous Ajanta paintings, which go back to the beginning of the Christian era In a way Ajanta is the birth-place of Asian art It contains as many as 30 cave temples, constructed between the second century B.C. and the seventh century A.D. The paintings appeared in the second century A D , and most of them belong to Gupta times Their themes were borrowed from stories about previous incarnations of the Buddha and from ancient literature. The achievement of Indian painters at Ajanta has been lauded by all art connoisseurs. The lines and colours used at Ajanta display a proficiency which is not found in the world before the renaissance in Europe Indian art, moreover, was not limited to India, it spread to Central Asia and China at one end and to South-East Asia on the other The focal point for the spread of Indian art into Afghanistan and the neighbouring part of Central Asia was Gandhara. Elements of Indian art were fused with those of Central Asian and Hellenistic art giving rise to a new art style called the Gandhara style The first statue of the Buddha was fashioned in this style. Although its features are Indian the size and the presentation of the head and the

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drapery show Greek influence. Similarly the temples constructed in south India served in some ways as models for the construction of temples in South-East Asia We have already referred to the temple at Ankorvat in Kampuchea and the temple at Borobudur in Java.

In the field of education we may refer to the huge monastic establishment of Nalanda. It attracted students not only from different parts of India but also from Tibet and China. The standards of examination were stiff, and only those who could pass the test prescribed by the *dvarapandita* or the scholar at the gate could be admitted to this university. Nalanda is one of the earliest examples of a residential-cum-teaching institution which housed thousands of monks devoted to learning, philosophy and meditation.

In the field of literature the Indians produced the *Rig Veda*, which is the earliest specimen of Indo-Aryan literature, and on the basis of which an attempt has been made to determine the nature of the Aryan culture In Gupta times we have the works of Kalidasa, whose play *Abhijnanasakuntalam* has been translated into all the important languages of the world.

EXERCISES

1. State the contribution of ancient India to art, language, literature, religion and philosophy.
2. Describe the main schools of Indian philosophy.
3. Write short notes on ancient Indian medicine, geography, mathematics and astronomy
4. What did India contribute to science and technology?

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