UG HT S3-01
(DSC/DSE)

FOUR YEAR BACHELOR'S DEGREE COURSE
(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)
SEMESTER-III

HISTORY OF INDIA FROM PRE-HISTORY TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE 13TH CENTURY C.E

HISTORY

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences
KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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BACHELOR OF ARTS

HISTORY OF INDIA FROM PRE-HISTORY TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE 13TH CENTURY C.E

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COURSE INTRODUCTION:

This is the first Course of Third Semester, B. A. in History entitled *History of India from Pre-History till the Beginning of the 13th century C.E* under the NEP 2020, B.A. Programme of Krishna kanta Handiqui State Open University. The course aims to enlighten the learners with the ancient Indian history from pre-historic period to the 13th century C.E. The course consists of fifteen units.

The first unit is titled, *Sources of Ancient Indian History.* This unit explains the significance of various sources for the study of ancient Indian history.

The second unit is titled, *Pre-Historic Ecology.* This unit introduces developments in the Paleolithic Age and Mesolithic Age, beginning of food production, Early Village Settlements and Chalcolithic Communities in detail.

The third unit entitled, *The Harappan Civilization.* This unit discusses the origin and early settlement, Urban Patterns, Religious practices, Ruling Elite and Decline of Urban Life of the Harappan Civilization.

The fourth unit entitled, *The Vedic and Post-Vedic Civilization.* The unit discusses the developments Vedic and the Post-Vedic Civilization in detail.

The fifth unit *Cultural and Political Transitions in the 6th Century* explains agricultural expansion, Mode of Production, Rise of Ganas or Sanghas and development of the Mahajanapadas in the 6th century A.D.

The sixth unit is titled, *Alexander's Invasion of India and Its Impact.* This unit discusses the significance of Alexander's invasion of India.

The seventh unit entitled, *The Mauryan Empire.* This unit introduces the rise of Mauryan, Mauryan Administration, the Kalinga War and disintegration of the Mauryan Empire.

The eighth unit entitled, *Society, Economy, Religion and Art in the Mauryan Empire.* This unit discusses the Society, Economy, Religion, Architecture and Sculpture of the Mauryan Empire.

The ninth unit entitled, *Post-Mauryan Developments in India.* The unit discusses the rise of new kingdoms in Northern India-the Sungas, the Kushana, the Satavahanas, Religion-Mahayana Buddhism and Schism in Jainism, Cultural Developments- Art, Architecture and Sculpture in the Post-Mauryan India.

The tenth unit *The Gupta Empire* explains the foundation, expansion, administration and .downfall of the Gupta Empire in detail.

The Eleven unit is titled, *Society, Religion, Culture and Economy under the Gupta Empire.* This unit discusses labour, Slavery, Untouchability, Women, Medicine, Concept of Religion, Sculpture, Architecture, Painting, literature, Scientific developments, Myth of the Golden Age, Agrarian Structure, and trade and Commerce under the Gupta Empire.

The Twelfth unit is, *Emergence of Major Political Dynasties (North India).* This unit introduces emergence of The Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas, the Palas, Origin of the Rajputs, the Chauhans, the

The thirteenth unit entitled, *Rise of Regional Powers in the Post-Gupta Era (South India).* This unit discusses the rise of vrious regional powers in South India like Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cheras, Pandyas and Cholas.

The fourteenth unit entitled, *Developments in the Early Medieval India.* The unit discusses the Deccan Polity, Society, Trade and Commerce, Pushyabhutis, Harshavardhana of Thaneswar and his relation with Kamarupa Kingdom.

The fifteenth unit *Society, Religion and Cultural Developments in the Early Medieval India,* explains Proliferation of Jatis, Rajputanisation, Temple Architecture and its various styles, Buddhism, Jainism: Shankara and Advaita Vedanta, Bhakti Movement in South: Nayannars and Alvars in the early medieval India.

While going through this course, you will notice that some boxes are put in the left hand or right hand side of the text. These boxes are meant to serve the purpose of in-text glossary for you. Again, you may find some boxes marked with: "LET US KNOW". These boxes will provide you with some additional interesting and relevant information. The boxes marked with "ACTIVITY" will help you in making your learning more active and efficient. And, at the end of each section, you will get "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. It will be better if you solve the problems put in these boxes immediately after you go through the sections of the units and then match your answer with "ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" given at the end of each unit.

UNIT 1: SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Sources of Ancient Indian History

1.4 Literary Sources

- 1.4.1 Indigenous Literature
- 1.4.2 Foreign Literature

1.5 Archaeological Sources

- 1.5.1 Inscriptions
- 1.5.2 Numismatics
- 1.5.3 Material Remains

1.6 Let Us Sum Up

1.7 Further Reading

1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.9 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the various source materials for the study of history of ancient India
- discuss different literary sources for the study of ancient Indian history
- discuss the importance of various archaeological sources for the study of ancient Indian history.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this course. In this unit, we are going to discuss the sources available for studying the ancient Indian history. Sources are the very backbone of history. Unfortunately, there was no systematic tradition of history writing in ancient India. But, over the years the long untiring efforts of historians have brought to light numerous sources for the study of the

past. These sources are in the form of indigenous literature, foreign literature, inscriptions, coins and material remains. Broadly the indigenous literature and foreign literature can be termed as ***Literary Sources***, while the inscriptions, coins and material remains are called the ***Archaeological Sources***.

1.3 SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

The history of ancient India can be fairly reconstructed only with the help of the sources. The sources are broadly divided into literary sources and archaeological sources. Literary sources are further divided into indigenous literature and foreign literature. Archaeological sources are divided into inscriptions, coins and material remains. We are now going to discuss all these different forms of sources separately in sub- headings.

1.4 LITERARY SOURCES

Every one of you know the meaning of the term 'literary' that is something in written form. Though there was absence of proper history writing in ancient India, yet there was a huge body of literary materials which speak about our past. However there is no single literary record that can be used as a common source for the whole period of ancient Indian history. The *Vedas*, *Epics*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and other religious scriptures throw much light on the history of ancient India. Besides these the accounts of foreign travellers also help us in reconstructing our past. Let us discuss them in detail in the following sub-sections.

1.4.1 Indigenous Literature

Do you know what indigenous literature is? Indigenous literature means the native or local literature. In the context of our study it means Indian literature. Scholars consider ancient Indian literature as a great help to know the ancient history of India. Ancient literature of India is mostly of religious nature. But there are also host of secular literature which may well be of great help to

reconstruct the history of ancient India.

Old Hindu texts like the ***Vedas***, the ***Upanishadas***, the ***Puranas***, the ***Epics*** and other ***Dharmashastras*** depict a clear picture of India of that period. The Vedic literature proves to be an important source for ancient Indian history. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest Indian literature and it gives us a good deal of information regarding the socio-religious and political condition of the early Indo-Aryans. Equally informative are the other three *Vedas* namely - *Sama*, *Yajur* and *Atharva Veda*. The ***Upanishadas*** tell us about the philosophical thoughts of our ancestors. You surely know that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the two greatest Epics of India. These two Epics describe the social and political life of the later Vedic Aryans. The *Puranas* also serve as important sources. Do you know how many *Puranas* are there? There are altogether eighteen *Puranas*. But only five of them namely, *Matsya*, *Vayu*, *Bhabisya*, *Vishnu* and *Bhagavata* are historically important. These *Puranas* give dynastic lists of different ancient Indian dynasties like Haryanka, Sishunaga, Nanda, Maurya, etc.

Buddhist and Jain literatures are also very important sources. The stories of ***Jataka*** provide numerous information regarding the different aspects of the contemporary society. Famous Buddhist literature like *Dipavamsha* and *Mahavamsha* enlighten us about the history of Buddhism. *Milindapanho* is another important Buddhist text. Among the old Jain literature mention may be made of *Bhagawati Sutra*, *Kalpa Sutra*, *Parishistha Parvana*, etc. In the *Bhagawati Sutra*, we find the names of the sixteen great states (*solasa mahajanapada*) of the 6th century B.C. The *Kalpasutra*, composed by Bhadrabahu, describes the life stories of the Jain religious heads called *Tirthangkaras* including Lord Mahavira. The *Parishistha Parvana* of Hema Chandra gives us different information regarding the Mauryan age.

In addition to these religious texts, a number of ***secular literatures*** had been written in ancient India. In this regard mention

may be made of Panini's *Astadhyayi*, Patanjali's *Mahabhashya*, Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, Bhasa's *Sapnabasavadattam*, Sudraka's *Mricchakatikam*, Kalidas's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, *Raghuvamsam*, *Kumarasamvawam* and *Malabikagnimitram*, Vishakhadatta's *Mudra Rakshasha* and *Devichandraguptam*, etc. All these literary works give us useful data regarding the social, political, economic and religious life style of contemporary India.

We are highly fortunate that we have a few ***scientific literary works*** in ancient India that give us a glimpse into the scientific activities of those days. These sources inform us that India, in olden times, was far advanced in the field of astronomy, mathematics and medical science. The *Pancha Siddhant* of Varahamihir is regarded as the Bible of Indian astronomy. Aryabhatta wrote outstanding astronomical books like *Dasagitika Sutra*, *Aryastasata*, *Aryabhattiya*, etc. *Charak Sanghita* by Charak is an important book on medical science. All these books, though dealing with different branches of science, contribute a lot towards our historical knowledge.



LET US KNOW

Aryabhatta was the most renowned astronomer of ancient India. By linking astronomy with mathematics, Aryabhatta opened up a new era in the study of Indian astronomy. He was the first Indian astronomer to declare that the earth rotates around the sun. He also gave scientific explanations for lunar eclipse. Again, it was Aryabhatta who calculated that the solar year consists of 365 days. For his remarkable contributions to the field of astronomy, Aryabhatta has been regarded as the Indian Newton.

Biographical writings are also an important form of sources. The biographical literatures are mostly about kings written by their court poets. Being written by the court poets these biographies are naturally full of exaggerations. However, we may find immense historical information by thoroughly scrutinizing these works. Some important examples of

biographies are *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta, *Vikramankadevacharita* of Bilhana, *Gaudavaho* of Vakpatiraja, *Ramacharita* of Sandhyakara Nandi, etc.

Equally important are the ***local histories*** written on different regions of our country. Among these local histories the most authentic work is undoubtedly the history of Kashmir known as *Rajtarangini* by Kalhana. It was probably the first historical book of India. While composing this great book, Kalhana followed a scientific approach by examining all available data. The *Rajtarangini* deeply impressed the future historians of Kashmir and a number of chronicles were composed in the model of this work.

Another important source for the history of ancient India is the ***Sangam Literature*** of South India. The *Sangam* Literature is the creation of the Tamil poets. In Tamil language *Sangam* means the confluence of poets. *Sangam* Literature furnishes us with vast information regarding the social, economic, religious and political condition of South India. *Manimekhaloi*, *Kurala*, *Silappadikaram*, etc. are the few important examples of this rich literary period.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the nature of the ancient literature of India?

.....

Q 2: Name the oldest Indian literature?

.....

Q 3: What do you know about Milindapanho?

.....

Q 4: Who wrote *Pancha Siddhant* ?

.....

1.4.2 Foreign Literature

India is fortunate to have a variety of foreign literature. Foreign literature generally includes the writings of the foreigners some of whom came to India with different purposes and left accounts of

their travel of this country. But there were also some other historians like Herodotus and Taranath who never visited India, but gathered information from different sources and mentioned it in their writings. Herodotus is a Greek historian. For being the forerunner in the field of history writing, Herodotus is considered the 'Father of History'. Taranath is a Tibetan historian. His books named *Dulva* and *Tangyur* are important sources for the history of Buddhism.

Among the foreign writers the Greeks were the first to visit India. Alexander's invasion of India inaugurated a new era of Indo-Greek relationship. The mighty Greek conqueror was accompanied by many historians like Nearchus, Onesicritus, etc. These historians recorded remarkable information about North-Western India and of course about Alexander's campaign. However, the most remarkable Greek historian to have visited India was none other than Megasthenes. Megasthenes was the ambassador of the Greek general Seleukos to the court of the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. His book on India called I*ndika* is of immense historical value. Among other important writings the most outstanding are Ptolemy's *Geography*, Pliny's *Natural History*, etc. The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* by some anonymous Greek sailor is another essential book to know about the ports, harbours and commercial life of India in the 1st century A.D.

The Chinese ***pilgrims*** came to India to study Buddhism in the land of its birth. During the reign of the Gupta monarch Chandragupta II, Fa-Hien visited India and stayed here for a period of about fifteen years. He left a very vivid descriptive account of his visit to this country. I-Tsing was another notable Chinese traveller. He composed a number of books on Buddhism in India. However, the most renowned Buddhist scholar to visit India was undoubtedly Hiuen-Tsang. Hiuen-Tsang came to India during the reign of Harshavardhana. He made a wide travel throughout India and his travel diary called *Si-Yu-Ki* forms an important source for the socio-religious history of that period. Although Buddhism was his main

focus, Hiuen-Tsang left some important information regarding the contemporary political situation in India.

The writings of the Mohammedan scholars, who visited India since the 8th century A.D., are also very significant sources. Al-beruni came to India with Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. In his book called *Tahaqiq-i-Hind*, he gives a beautiful account of the Hindu manners, science and literature. Another important work is the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhajuddin Siraj. Among the other Mohammedan writers mention may be made of Al-Masudi, Nizamuddin, Hasan Nizami, etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 5: Who wrote Indika?

.....

Q 6: Name the books written by Taranath.

.....

Q 7: With whom Nearchus and Onesicritus came to India?

.....

Q 8: Who was the author of Gaudavaho?

.....

Q 9: Who was Al-Masudi?

.....

1.5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Archaeology is considered the backbone of the art of historiography. It provides the concrete picture of our past. It has three branches- epigraphy or inscription, coins or numismatic, and material remains or monuments.

1.5.1 Inscriptions

Do you know what the term 'inscription' means? An inscription is writing engraved on stones, pillars or caves by the ruling kings or in some instances by his officers. The kings issued inscriptions for different purposes such as to commemorate victory, to proclaim administrative decrees or to announce grant of land or wealth to some institutions, etc. Sometimes inscriptions were used for religious purposes too. Inscriptions were known as *Sasanavali*.

Figure 1.1: Pillar Inscription



(Source: *Google Images*)

As historical sources, inscriptions are of great value. Inscriptions give us a lot of significant information regarding political, administrative, commercial, and socio-religious condition of that particular period. Sometimes inscriptions contain dates of the rulers which greatly helps the historians of later years to fix the date of a ruler accurately. Inscriptions also give information about the policies and achievement of the concerned rulers and throw light on the prevailing languages. They were written in all languages such as Prakrit, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu, etc.

Now, what we find from the foregoing discussion is that inscriptions play a vital role in supplying a vast range of information. That is why historians consider inscriptions an invaluable source. Even the information supplied by other forms of sources is considered acceptable when they are supported by some ***epigraphic*** evidence.

Among the Indian inscriptions, the inscriptions of Asoka are many in number and of immense historical value. In order to propagate the teachings of Lord Buddha, Asoka issued a good number of edicts (inscriptions). These were engraved on rocks or pillars and cave walls. They inform us about the religious zeal of the great Mauryan monarch. They are still the most important source for the history of the Mauryan age.

The Asokan tradition of issuing inscriptions was keenly followed by the rulers of the post-Mauryan age too. During that period we find hundreds of inscriptions that provide us useful information. In this respect, the most prominent inscription is the ***Allahabad Pillar Inscription*** of Gupta Emperor Samudragupta. This inscription throws a flood of light on the conquests of Samudragupta. The ***Hathi Gumpha*** *Inscription* of king Kharavela informs us about the history of Kalinga. The ***Aihole Pillar*** *Inscription* of Chalukya King Pulakesin II is another important record. Similarly important are the ***Junagarh Rock Inscription*** of Rudradaman, ***Bhitari Pillar*** *Inscription* of Skandagupta, etc.

In addition to these inscriptions, there are some other public records in the form of **land grants**. Now, what is a land grant? The kings of ancient India donated lands to Brahmanas and other religious institutions. As a part of such land grants, the kings issued some inscriptions engraved usually on copper plates. These copper plate inscriptions contain information about the reigning king, the lineage, names of officials, donated land and about the recipient person or institutions. These are really storehouses of relevant information.

1.5.2 Coins

Coins in early India were made of copper, silver, gold and lead. Coin moulds made of burnt clay, dating to the Kushana period (first three centuries of the Common Era), have been found in hundreds. They point to the increased commerce activities during this time. The earliest coins in the sub-continent are punch marked

coins. The coins of the Indo-Bactrians and the Kushanas were artistic though foreign inspired with the use of Kharosthi and Greek script. With the expansion of Magadhan empire, the Magadhan type of punch marked coins replaced those which were issued by other states. Though the earliest coins carried only symbols, the later ones had figures of king, divinities and also mentioned their dates and names. For example, Western Kshatrapa coins give dates in Shaka era.

The area of circulation of coins has enabled us to reconstruct the history of several ruling dynasties. The coins offer valuable information on political organization. For instance, the coins of Yaudheyas and Malavas carry the legend 'gana' which tell us about their non monarchical form of polity. The Satavahana coins had no regular shapes and lacked any artistic merit. Post-Maurya coins were made of lead, potin, copper, bronze, silver and gold. They were issued in large numbers, pointing to increased volume of trade during this period. The Guptas also issued a number of gold coins. Chandragupta I was the earliest Hindu ruler whose inscribed gold coins has been passed down to us. The coin he issues had the king and his queen in the obverse and the name of the Lichchhavis is found mentioned in the reverse. Six different types of gold coins were issued by Samudra Gupta. Silver and copper coins were also issued by the later Guptas. In the post-Gupta period, the gold coins declined in number and purity. This became the basis of the highly contested feudalism theory of R. S. Sharma who believed that debasement of coinage and increased use of cowries point to decline of trade and commerce in this period. This, offcourse, has its critics.

The Coins have proved to be a vital source of authentic information of Indian history. They are significant archaeological sources for the study of contemporary socio-cultural, political and economic condition of ancient India. Thousands of coins belonging to different rulers have been found in various parts of India.

The coins provide us the names, titles, royal portraits, images of the deities worshiped and actual dates of the kings to whom they

belonged. Such information as provided by coins helps us to form a correct idea of the history of these rulers. For example, the images of the deities worshiped found on a coin point to the religious leanings of the ruler concerned. From the coins we may come to know about the economic development of the respective states. The abundance of gold and silver coins of best quality in a particular area easily point to the economic prosperity of that state. Hence historian Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar has rightly remarked: "The importance of ***numismatics*** for the study of the economic condition of a country is too obvious to need a detailed consideration." Similarly, the artistic design, shape, and type of the coins signify the religious and the cultural development of a particular period. Some Roman coins belonging to the 1st century A.D. have been found in various parts of South India. These coins undoubtedly prove India's trade relation with the old Roman Empire.

Figure 1.2: Gupta Coins



(Source: *Google Images***)**

1.5.3 Material Remains

India is rich in archaeological remains which includes monuments and sculptures. Monument means notable sites or structures of historical importance. It includes the remains of old buildings, temples, ***viharas, stupas,*** images of different Gods and Goddesses and so on.

The oldest monumental source for the history of ancient India is undeniably the archaeological remains of the Harappan or Indus

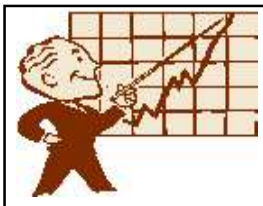
Valley Civilization. The remains of the Indus Valley inform us about the existence of a flourishing civilization prior to that of the Aryans. Thus, the ancient architecture and sculptures help us a lot to understand the evolution of artistic and cultural development of our ancestors. At the same time the study of these monuments may inform us about different schools of art, its development and amount of foreign influence upon it.

Figure 1.3: A Monument



Source: *Google Images*

Potteries are one of the important part of archeological sources. These potteries help us to know about the spread of the culture and civilization. These potteries are available right from prehistoric period to historic period. For example- in Rig Vedic period BRW (Black and Red Ware), OCP (Ochre Coloured Pottery), PGW (Painted Gray Ware) potteries were used. In later Vedic period BW, RW, BRW and PGW potteries were used during the period of Buddhism NBPW culture was formed. Thus, it signifies that potteries play a vital role in reformation of history.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the followings:

Q 10: To whom does the Hathi Gumpha Inscription belong to?

.....

Q 11: To whom does the Junagarh Rock Inscription belongs to?

.....

Q 12: Mention different categories of archaeological sources.

.....

Q 13: Write how inscriptions help us in studying ancient Indian history in about 60 words.

.....



1.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit you have learnt that,

- Sources are very important for studying history.
- Sources are broadly divided into two groups; literary and archaeological.
- Literary sources are further divided into indigenous and foreign literature. The Vedas, Epics, Puranas, Upanishadas and other Dharmasashtras reflect immense light on the history of ancient India. Besides them the, accounts of foreign travellers also help us in reconstructing our past.
- Archaeological sources are sub-divided into inscriptions, coins and material remains. They provide concrete knowledge of our past. These different types of sources help us in reconstructing the early history of our country.



1.7 FURTHER READING

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Religious.

Ans to Q No 2: Rig Veda.

Ans to Q No 3: An important Buddhist text.

Ans to Q No 4: Varahamihir.

Ans to Q No 5: Dulva and Tangyur.

Ans to Q No 6: Megasthenes.

Ans to Q No 7: Alexander

Ans to Q No 8: Vakpatiraja

Ans to Q No 9: Mohammedan

Ans to Q No10: King Kharavella

Ans to Q No11: Rudradaman

Ans to Q No 12: Inscription, coin and monuments

Ans to Q No 13: Inscriptions are writings engraved in different languages on stones, pillars or caves by the ruling kings or sometimes by the officials. They were also called Sasanavalis and were used to commemorate victory, announce land grant, etc. Inscriptions provide us lots of significant informations regarding political, administrative, commercial and socio-religious conditions of the period to which it belonged and thereby helps in the study of the ancient Indian history.



1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q 1: Name the four Vedas.

Q 2: Mention the popular term used for Inscription.

Q 3: Who authored *Indika*?

Q 4: Name the travel diary of Hiuen Tsang.

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Why are the indigenous literary sources important for reconstructing the ancient Indian history?

Q 2: Write a short note on the accounts of Chinese travellers on India.

Q 3: Write a short note on the importance of coins of ancient India.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the importance of literary sources in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

Q 2: How do the archaeological sources help in studying the history of ancient India?

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UNIT 2: PRE-HISTORIC ECOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 What is Ecology?

2.4 The Prehistoric period

2.5 Developments in the Paleolithic Age

2.6 Developments in the Mesolithic Age

2.7 Beginning of food Production

2.8 Early village settlements

2.9 Chalcolithic Communities

2.10 Let Us Sum Up

2.11 Further Reading

2.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.13 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- learn how ecology influenced the pre-historic people in their livelihood and settlements
- discuss the lives, food habits and stone tools of the people of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Periods
- discuss the early village settlements in prehistoric period
- discuss the lives, food habits and different kinds of tools used by the people of different chalcolithic Communities.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to have a discussion on how ecology influenced the prehistoric inhabitants in their livelihood and settlements.

The Prehistoric period precedes written history. The prehistoric period of ancient Indian history has been divided by historians into different phases

.In this unit we will discuss the phases of the prehistoric period. Our discussion in this unit will also focus on the ecology, life, food habits and tools of the people of the Prehistoric period.

2.3 WHAT IS ECOLOGY?

Ecology is the scientific study of the relationship between living organisms and the physical environments. The living organisms include both human being and animals. Ecology is a subject which tries to investigate the connections between living organism like human being, animals and plants with their environment.

In the Prehistoric period human beings were dependent on their environment for their livelihood and settlements and the livelihood and settlements of these times centered round the change of climate in that period.

2.4 THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD

The Prehistoric period started with the beginning of the evolution of human civilization. Historians have agreed that the earth is nearly 4.5 billion years old, while humans appeared on earth nearly 2, 00,000 years ago.



LET US KNOW

Earliest species resembling humans lived in Africa almost 6 million years ago. Homo sapiens, our species of humans or “modern men”, evolved nearly 2, 00,000 years ago.

The time in which humans appeared on earth fell within the “Pleistocene” period or the “Ice” age(25.88, 000 to 11,700). Most of the surface of the earth was covered by ice in that age.

Starting about 2, 00,000 BC, the Prehistoric period ended about 2,000 B.C. As the period was very long, historians have divided the period into three phases on the basis of changes in the environments and tools used by the people of the period. The phases were : the Palaeolithic Age (2,

00,000BC-9,000 BC), the Mesolithic Age (9,000 BC -4,000 BC) and the Neolithic Age (4,000 BC- 2,000 BC).

The Greek “Paleo” or “palaio” means “old” , “mesos” means “middle”, “neo” means “new”, and “lithos” means “stone”. Therefore , the Palaeolithic Age ,the Mesolithic Age and the Neolithic Age are also known as the old (or Early) stone age , the Middle stone age, and the New (or later) stone age.

Thus, the Prehistoric period as a whole may be referred to as the “stone Age” as stone was widely used to make various kinds of tools throughout that period. Since the Prehistoric period was quite long, its phases need to be studied separately. Therefore, we shall now move on to discuss the phases one by one.

2.5 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PALEOLITHIC AGE

The Palaeolithic cultures belong to the Pleistocene geological era. The environment of that period was very different from ours. The environments of the Pleistocene period were cold and dry and the surface of the earth was covered mostly by ice. In India, the Palaeolithic age continued from the appearance of human beings in the region till about 9,000 BC. Though many Palaeolithic sites have been discovered in India yet no such sites have been found in the alluvial plains of the Indus, the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers.

The Palaeolithic people were nomadic. They did not know how to build houses. They lived in their natural habitat, such as in caves. The people of Palaeolithic period had no knowledge of agriculture. They lived on hunted animals and on naturally grown foods such as fruits and roots of plants. The Palaeolithic people wore animal skin, barks or leaves to protect their bodies from difficult weathers. Thus, the Palaeolithic people were mainly dependent on natural resources for their livelihood and settlements.

For the purpose of hunting also the Palaeolithic people depended on their surroundings. They used tools made of crude stones and animals’ bones. Besides hunting these tools also served the purpose of cutting and boring.



LET US KNOW

The crude stones used to make Palaeolithic tools were cut from a hard rock called "Quartzite". Therefore, the people of the Palaeolithic period in India are known as "Quartzite men"

Civilization was not developed in the Palaeolithic period. Interestingly, however, the Palaeolithic people had the knowledge of painting .Hunting scene was most common in Palaeolithic painting. Palaeolithic paintings have been discovered in Bhimbetka.

Palaeolithic tools have been found in the Kurnool district (in Andhra Pradesh) and in the Belan valley (in Uttar Pradesh). In the Belan valley, bone implements and animal remains have also been found along with stone tools. Since the Palaeolithic period in India was very long, historians have divided the period into three parts - **the early or lower Palaeolithic** (2, 00,000 to 1, 00,000 years ago), the **middle Paleolithic** (about 1, 00,000 and 40,000 years ago), and the **late or upper Palaeolithic** (from 40,000 years ago to 9,000 BC). Stone tools are an important key to understand the subsistence pattern of the Paleolithic periods. The style of stone tools varied from each other in these three stages of Palaeolithic periods. The nature of change in the tools was due as to the change of the climate.



The term "Pleistocene" was first coined by the nineteenth century British geologist Sir Charles Lyell. The origin Greek words are "pleistos" and "kainos"."Pleistos" mean "most and "kainos" mean "new" or "recent". Thus, the term mans "the recent period".

Palaeolithic Age: The Early Palaeolithic Age: Sites of the Early Palaeolithic period have been found in the Sohan valley (in West Punjub, which is presently in Pakistan), the Narmada valley (in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat), Didwana (in Rajasthan), Bhimbetka (near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh), Kashmir and Thar Desert. In all these sites tools made of crude stone are found. Early Palaeolithic people used stone tools like hand axes, cleavers and choppers. A hand axe is generally a core tool. It is roughly triangular in shape, broad at one end and pointed at the other. A cleaver is a tool made on a broad rectangular or triangular flake. One end of Cleaver is broad with a straight cutting edge. A Chopper is a large tool and it was used by one side only. The Geological Age of Early Palaeolithic period is the lower Pleistocene Period.

Middle Palaeolithic Age: Middle Palaeolithic sites have been found in the Sohan valley , The Narmada valley , Didwana , Bhimbetka,Begor and the Karmali valley(both in Rajasthan), and nevesa (in Maharashtra).Within the Palaeolithic Periods , there were gradual changes in the types of stone tools. Hand axes, Choppers and Cleavers were still continued but small and light flake tools were mostly used. The Palaeolithic people had crude pebble industry. The most important tools used by these people included were blades, points, borers, scrappers, cores and burins. The Middle Palaeolithic tools have been generally found in many parts in the river gravels. This indicates the condition of the climate of that period. The Geological Age of Middle Palaeolithic period is the middle Pleistocene period. Middle Palaeolithic tools have been found in reddish brown soil in Thar region. This indicates more abundant vegetation, more surface water and less humid climate compared to the lower Palaeolithic contexts.

Late Paleolithic Period: This period coincided with the last phase of the ice age (which ended in about 11,700 BC) and lasted slightly more than the ice age, i.e., till about 9,000 BC. The chief sites of the late Palaeolithic period have been found in the Belan valley, Bhimbetka, Begor, Renugunta(in Andhra Pradesh), and Singhbhum(in Jharkhand), Buddhapuskar (in Rajasthan). The Geological Age of the Late or Upper Palaeolithic period was the Upper Pleistocene Period. The people of the late Palaeolithic period had flint industry and used tools like blades, burins and scrappers. The weather in the late Palaeolithic period was warmer and less humid than that of the early and the middle Palaeolithic periods. As a result, the ice over most parts of the earth used to melt in the late Palaeolithic period.

2.6 DEVELOPMENTS IN MESOLITHIC AGE

The Mesolithic age or the Middle Stone Age was the transitional period between the Palaeolithic age and Neolithic age. The Geological period of the Mesolithic age is Holocene Period. Many environmental changes took place during this transitional age. The climate of the early and middle Holocene was wet and warm. The period experienced with heavy rainfall in summer season and moderate level of rainfall in winter season

.Consequently ,the “Pleistocene” period or the “ice” age ended in about 11,7000 BC. With the end of the late Palaeolithic age in about 9,000 BC, the climate became warmer. The Mesolithic period continued till about 4,000 BC and followed was by the Neolithic period.

The people of Mesolithic Age lived on hunting, food gathering and fishing. At first, they did not know how to tame and rear animals. Towards the later stage of the Mesolithic age, however, people started to tame and rear animals like cow, horse and poultry.

The Mesolithic sites showed some level of sedentariness. Both permanent and non-permanent settlements were continued though they were in small in number. Pottery was absent in most of the Mesolithic sites. But Langhnaj in Gujarat and the Kaimur region of Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh) have some remains of pottery .

One of the most important developments of Mesolithic Age was the spread of settlements. As a result of the increase of population, people started to spread their settlements. The favorable environmental condition and technological improvements helped people to spread their settlements. Towards the later stage of the Mesolithic period, some primitive kinds of cultivation were started. Some discoveries of cultivation of plants in the Salt Lake, Sambhar and Lunkaransar (all in Rajasthan) of the Mesolithic period suggest that cultivation began in India during 7,000-6,000 BC.

Changes also happened in the stone tools. The Mesolithic age is famous for the use of “microliths”, which were blade-like tools made of small, pointed and sharpened flakes of stones.

The important Mesolithic sites in India have been discovered in Western and Central India. A few of the sites are in Bagor, Salt Lake, Sambhar, Lunkaransar , Bhimbetka , Langnaj(in Gujarat), Adamgarh(in Madhya Pradesh), and Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh).

Like the Palaeolithic people, the Mesolithic people also practiced painting. Bhimbetka gives evidence of rock paintings. Adamgarh and Mirzapur also provide proofs of Mesolithic paintings. The Mesolithic paintings depict some major events of the Mesolithic people. Besides hunting, food gathering, fishing, child birth and burial of the dead were depicted by the

Mesolithic people. The use of different colures is one of the striking facts of the Mesolithic paintings. White and light red were used very often. The colures were made from minerals mixed with water, animal fat and egg white. Both monochrome and polychrome paintings were made.



ACTIVITY 2.1

Write a short note on Pre-historic Ecology

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.....

.....



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 1: People of which age did use hand axe, Cleavers, and Choppers?

.....

Q 2: Adamgarh and Mirjapur have some remains of paintings of the ……Age. (Fill in the blank)

Q 3: The geological period of the middle palaeolithic Age belonged to ……Age. (Fill in the blank)

Q 4: Where did we find Palaeolithic tools?

.....

Q 5: To which period the Palaeolithic people belonged?

.....

2.7 BEGINNING OF FOOD PRODUCTION

The third phase of the Prehistoric period is the “food producing age”. It is also known as the Neolithic age or New Stone Age. The Geological era of the Neolithic Age is the Holocene period. In the Indian context, Neolithic age began about 4,000 BC.

Important sites of the Neolithic age are : Mehrgarh(in Baluchistan), Killighul(in Beluchistan province of Pakistan),Chirand (in Bihar),

Chopanimandu (in Uttar Pradesh), Brahmagiri(in Karnataka), and the northern spur of the Vindhya range. The Neolithic sites excavated in South India are Maski, Hallur, Kodekal (in Karnataka), Utnur(in Andhra Pradesh).



LET US KNOW

The Holocene is the geological era that began after the Pleistocene era. It is termed like this from the two Greek words, “holos” and “kainos”. Holos means “whole” or “entire” and Kainos means “new”. Therefore, the term mean as “entirely recent”.

In the Neolithic age, human civilization developed immensely. Several changes occurred in this age. The Neolithic people became less dependent on hunting and food gathering. The beginning of food production was the most important aspect of the Neolithic phase. They practiced agriculture for their food. Barley and wheat were the major crops cultivated by the Neolithic people. Not much is known about the method of the cultivation .Farmers may have used rain water .Stone sickles made by small microliths with a wooden handle must has used for harvesting the crops.

The people of Neolithic age lived sedentary lives. They lived in houses and formed villeges. The people of Mehrgarh lived in houses made of handmade mud-bricks. The people of Neolithic age domesticated animals. The bones of animals like goat, sheep and cattle have been discovered in different sites. Cattle were the most commonly domesticated animal of the Neolithic age. Domestication of animals was a part of in food producing aspect of their livelihood.

Besides these developments, the discovery of fire, use of pottery and use of wheel also transformed the Neolithic age. Wheel-made pottery with painted decorations was an important aspect of pottery making of the Neolithic age.

Stone tools were still used extensively throughout the Neolithic age. The stones used in these tools were no more crude but polished. Stone tools used in this age included arrow heads, blades and sickles. Towards

the end of the Neolithic age, another significant development took place. This was the use of metal. The first metal used by the Neolithic people was copper. Mehrgarh is one of the most important Neolithic sites where evidence of the use of copper has been found. The development of tools, food production, pottery making lead to a more permanent settlement and several small villages grew in the different parts of the Indian subcontinent.

2.8 EARLY VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS

The North-West portion of Indian subcontinent showed a large number of village settlements. The definite time period of village settlement is not possible to identify. But in 7000-3000 BC food producing villages had emerged in Baluchistan and the Vindhyan ranges. The most important among those sites was Mehrgarh, in Bolan valley (in Baluchistan).The Mehrgarh site is considered Neolithic though a small amount of copper has been discovered. The people of Mehrgarh lived permanently in hand-maid mud-brick house. They cultivated crops like wheat and barley. Wheel-made decorative pottery was another important aspect of the Mehrgarh site. Ornaments made from steatite beads indicate that bead and making was an important craft activity of that site.

Kilegulmohammad was another village settlement. The people of this site also lived in mud houses. Wheel-made pottery with geometric designs were used by them .Other village settlements in the North-Western portion of Indian subcontinent were Mundigak(in Afghanistan), Zhob-Loralai(in Baluchistan) and RanaGhundai(in Baluchistan).

The Vindhyan range of southern Uttar Pradesh was also a center of early village settlements. Koldihwa and Mahagara (in Allahabad District) were two important settlements. The people of these sites also practiced agriculture. Some important aspects of permanent village settlement was pottery making, animal domestication and riverside settlement .All these were present in Koldihwa and Mahagara.

Sanganakallu(in Karnataka) was an early village settlement from the Neolithic period. It was one of the biggest and first village settlements in South India. The people of Sanganakallu practiced agriculture. They cultivated small

millets and pulses .They domesticated animals like sheep and cattle.The people of this period also used stone tools like hand axes, blades, sickles. The development in the climate helped people to introduce advance stone tools and helped them in establishing a settled life.

2.9 CHALCOLITHIC COMMUNITIES

The Neolithic Age is followed by Chalcolithic(copper –stone) age. The most striking aspect of this age was the use of metals like Copper and Bronze .But the use of stone tools was not given up. As it is characterized by the use of metals, the Chalcolithic Age is considered a part of the "Bronze Age". However, some microlithic stone tools were still continued. The Chalcolithic communities have been found in many parts of the Indian subcontinent. The Harappan civilization, which used bronze, an alloy of copper, is considered a part of the Chalcolithic civilization The Indus Valley Civilization was basically an urban civilization. It was an advanced civilization compared to other Chalcolithic cultures. The Chalcolithic cultures of central India, eastern India and southern India were different from the Indus valley civilization. These cultures were mainly those of agricultural communities. They existed approximately from 2000-700 B.C.

The Chalcolithic communities have been found in sites like Kayatha (Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh), Ahar or Banas (Rajasthan), Malwa (Nagda, Navdatoli, Maheswar, Eran, Mandsor in Madhya Pradesh, Nevasa, Daimabad, Inamgaon, (all are in Maharashtra), Jorwe (Nasik). Chalcolithic sites have also been found in Chirand, Pandu Rajar Dhibi (in Allahabad) and Mahishadal (in Bengal).Besides copper, the Chalcolithic people used small tools of stone like stone-blades and bladelets. In Ahar and Gilund (in Rajasthan) a good number of copper objects have been found.

The wheel made pottery was the specialty of the Chalcolithic communities. But handmade pottery was also continued. The Chalcolithic people made fine slip of red and orange colour .They also made black and red ware pottery. Potteries were decorated with black colour. Floral, bird and animal motifs were used in the decorations. The Chalcolithic people

domesticated animals and practiced agriculture. They reared cattle, sheep, goat etc. The main crops were barley, wheat and rice. Rice has been found from Inamgaon. Neither plough nor hoe has been found in any sites of Chalcolithic Age. Generally people lived in houses made of mud-brick. But In Ahar people lived in stone houses.

The Chalcolithic people made tools of copper .They also made copper bangles. They also made beads of semi-precious stones such as carnelian, Steatite etc. Spindle whorls have been discovered from Malwa. The discovery of Cotton threads indicate that they knew how to make cloths. The Chalcolithic sites also had some regional variations in case of pottery making and pattern of cultivation. Terracotta female figures have been discovered at sites like Inamgaon and Nevasa. Bull worship was prevalent in Kayatha Culture, this indicates that worship of mother goddess was continued. The practice of burial of the dead body was also continued. The settlement pattern and the burial practices indicate some sort of social stratification in Chalcolithic period.

Some sites of Chalcolithic Period were Pre-Harappan, others are contemporaries of Harappan culture and others are post Harappan. The Pre-Harappan Chalcolithic sites have been discovered in Kalibangan (in Rajasthan), Banawali(in Hariyana),and KotDiji (in Sindh). The Kayatha Culture (in Madhya Pradesh (2000-1800 BC) has some elements of pre-Harappan period. But it also has some Harappan Influences.

The Malwa Culture (1700-1200) BC in Navdatoli, The Jorwe culture (1400-700 BC) in Maharashtra are regarded as non-Harappan Chalcolithic Cultures. At several sites in Southern India Chalcolithic culture was transformed into megalithic culture by using iron.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 6: Mention two Chalcolithic sites.

.....

Q 7: In which period was Pottery made?

.....

Q 8: Write True or False

A. Wheat and barley were the major crops of the food producing stage.

B .Handmaid mud bricks were used by the people of Mehrgarh.

C. The people of Ahar culture lived in mud house.

D. Plough and hoe have been discovered in Chalcolithic communities.

Q 9: Fill in the blanks

A. Neolithic people used ……in harvesting crops.

B. The people of early village settlements used ornaments made of……..

C. The Chalcolithic people made ……pottery.

D. Bull worship was prevalent in ……...culture.



2.10 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit you have learnt that,

- The Prehistoric period (from 2, 00,000 years ago to 2,000 BC) precedes the written history. Its phases were the Paleolithic Age (2, 00,000 BC-9,000BC), the Mesolithic Age (9,000BC-4,000 BC) and the Neolithic Age (4,000 BC-2,000BC).
- The environment of the Paleolithic Age was very cold as it was covered by ice. The people of the Palaeolithic age were nomadic and had no knowledge of agriculture. They used crude stone tools for hunting.

However, they had knowledge of paintings.

- The people of Mesolithic Age were nomadic. But the people of the later part of the Mesolithic age started to domesticate animals. The weather of the Mesolithic Age was warmer than that of the Paleolithic Age. They also had started some kind of primitive cultivation. They used blade-like tools made of small flakes of stone. The Mesolithic people depicted major events of their life in their paintings.
- Food production started with the coming of the Neolithic Age. The people of the Neolithic age lived in houses. They practiced agriculture and domesticated animals. They used wheels, pottery and fire. On the later part of the Neolithic age they used metals. Their stone tools were polished. The changes in the environment helped the people of the Neolithic Age to practice agriculture.
- Food production helped people to settle down. People started to form villages. The decorative pottery making, domestication of animals and cultivation were the important aspect of the early village settlements of Indian subcontinent.
- The Neolithic Age was followed by the Chalcolithic Age. The people of Chalcolithic age used copper tools .Black- and red ware pottery were made by them. The people of Chalcolithic age also used cotton cloth.



2.11 FURTHER READING

1) Kosambi, D.D. (2001): *The cultural and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Vikas Publishing House.

2) Thapar, Romila(2003): *The Penguin History of Early India, from the origins to AD 1300* , Penguin Books India.

3) Singh, Upinder (2009): *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India, from the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Pearson.



2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Palaeolithic Periods

Ans to Q No 2: Mesolithic

Ans to Q No 3: Holocene Period

Ans to Q No 4: Paleolithic

Ans to Q No 5: Kurnool district

Ans to Q No 6: Mesolithic

Ans to Q No 7: Chalcolithic age

Ans to Q No 8: A. True B. True

C. False D. False

Ans to Q No 9: A. Sickle B. Steatite bead

C. Red and orange D. Kayatha



2.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q 1: Give a definition of Ecology.

Q 2: What were the methods of livelihood of the people of the Palaeolithic age?

Q 3: What is Microliths?

Q 4: What types of tools were used by the Chalcolithic people?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in and about 150 words)

Q 1: Briefly discuss the environmental changes in the pre historic periods.

Q 2: Compare and contrast the three phases of the Palaeolithic Age.

Q 3: Write a note on the early village settlement.

Q 4: Briefly describe the agricultural life of the people of the Chalcolithic Age.

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in and about 500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the life and the tools of the Mesolithic people and mention the Mesolithic sites.

Q 2: How the food producing age is different from the earlier phases of the Pre-historic period?

Q 3: Give a brief note on the early village settlement.

Q 4: Differentiate between the Chalcolithic age and the early phases of the prehistoric period?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 3: THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Origin and Early Settlement

- 3.3.1 City and Its People
- 3.3.2 Economic Life

3.4 Religious Practices

3.5 Decline of Urban Life

3.6 Let Us Sum Up

3.7 Further Reading

3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.9 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the origin of the Harappan Civilization
- understand the city life of the people of the Harappan Civilization
- analyse the religious practice of the Harappan people
- discuss the different factors responsible for the decline of this civilization.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In 1922-23, three archaeologists, namely Rakhaldas Banerjee, Daya Ram Sahni and Sir John Marshall, discovered through excavation the ruins of an ancient civilization in the cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Harappa is situated in the Motegomery district of Punjab and Mohenjodaro in the Larkana district of Sindh - both now in Pakistan. This discovery in the above mentioned sites along with many other sites proves it beyond doubt that some thousands of years ago a highly developed civilization grew up here which was surely older than the Vedic Civilization. Most of the excavated

cities are located on the bank of the river Indus. That is why this civilization is also known as the Indus Valley Civilization. Further, as this civilization was first discovered in Harappa, some scholars named it as Harappan Civilization. In this unit we will discuss this civilization in detail.

3.3 ORIGIN AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

Unfortunately, we have no written sources about the Indus Valley Civilization. The scholars have failed to decipher the pictorial language written on the Indus seals found in different sites. As a result, our knowledge on the Harappan people and their lifestyle is largely based on premise. Our knowledge regarding this civilization is primarily based on the careful examination of the different items found during the excavation in Harappa, Mohenjodaro and many other sites. However, these lifeless objects tell us a lot about the people who founded such a highly developed civilization.

It is a difficult task to fix the chronology of this far-flung civilization. Various factors complicated the problem of fixing the Harappan chronology such as the discovery of Harappan seals from various contemporary sites outside India, variations in the C-14 determinations from various sites, time lag between the origin and growth of the civilization in nuclear area and the peripheral areas to the east and south and the conventional data for the Aryan incursion into India, etc. Therefore, various scholars suggested different dates of its origin on the basis of their own findings. According to Sir John Marshall, the date of this civilization fell approximately between 3250 and 2750 B.C. Again, Sir M. Wheeler opines it to be from 2500 to 1500 B.C.

Discovery of Radio-Carbon dating was a gift to archaeological discovery. Many samples from various Harappan sites were dated by this method. After analysing 14 C samples from various sites Dr. D.P. Aggarwal proposed a maximum date bracket of 2300-1750 B.C. for the total growth of Indus civilization. The end of the civilization is even more unclear, but it appears like that the mature Harappan culture came to a close around 1750 B.C., to be succeeded at Harappa, Chandudaro and other sites by late or post-Harappan phases. Thus the mature Harappan civilization had a time

span of not more than five centuries.

Figure 3.1: Indus seals



Source: *Google Images*



LET US KNOW

In addition to Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the traces of the Indus Valley Civilization have also been discovered in a number of other sites in later years. Among these sites mention may be made of Lothal (in Gujarat), Chanhudaro (in Sindh), Kalibangan (in Rajasthan), Rupar (in Haryana), etc. The archaeological remains of these sites greatly help us in the study of the historical character of the Indus Valley Civilization.

3.3.1 The City and Its' People

The interesting remains of the cities of Indus Valley indicate that it was an urban civilization. In other words, this civilization flourished around cities. The ruins show remarkable town planning and excellent drainage system. Let us now explore a few amazing features of these outstanding cities.

The dwelling houses were many in number and varied in size. These were made of well burnt bricks. Almost every house had a well, a kitchen, bathroom and drain. The private drains were connected with the drains of the street. The streets of the cities were straight and the breadth of the streets varied from 9 to 34 feet. These were connected by lanes and by-lanes. Provision for street lights was also an important feature of the Indus city life. All such amenities of the Harappan cities definitely remind us of any present

day town with modern town planning.

The biggest architectural structure found among the ruins was the *Great Bath* of Mohenjodaro. It was actually a public bath with 180 feet length and 108 feet in breadth. The main bathing pool was 39 feet by 23 feet with 8 feet depth. Galleries and rooms surrounded the bathing pool in all sides. You will be amazed to hear that like a modern swimming pool there was provision to fill and empty the water of the bathing pool. Provision for hot water bath was also there.

Figure 3.2 Great Bath



Source: *Google Images*

In addition to the *Great Bath*, a series of long public buildings have also been discovered. These buildings were probably used as public granaries. The biggest among them was the *Great Granary* found at Harappa. It was approximately 169 feet by 135 feet in length and breadth and had small compartments inside.

Figure 3.3 Great Granary



Source: *Google Images*

After the discussion on flourishing Indus cities, let us now have some idea on the people who lived in these remarkably well

planned cities. The excavations of Indus Valley show that there were probably **four classes** of people in the society: *the learned class, the warriors, the traders and artisans, and the working class*. The learned class included the priests, the astrologers, the physicians, etc. The ruins of ancient forts and palaces indicate the existence of a ruling or warrior class whose primary duty was to protect the land and people. The merchants and various artisans such as goldsmith, weaver, carpenter, mason, etc. formed the third section of society. The lowest class was constituted by the manual labourers, daily wage earners, domestic servants, etc.

The people of Indus Valley took both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Their diet list included wheat, barley, rice, milk, mutton, pork, beef, etc. besides a good number of fruits. Cotton as well as woollen clothes were used by the people. The discovery of spindles points out to the existence of weavers. Both men and women wore ornaments. These ornaments were made of different materials like gold, silver, bronze, ivory, etc.

People knew the art of toiletry and cosmetics. Toilet boxes made of ivory, metal, pottery and stone have been found among the ruins of the Indus Valley Civilization. The Harappan Gallery of the National Museum, New Delhi, has a large collection of ornaments and various cosmetic items of the period.

In addition to the clothes and ornaments, a number of other household articles like furniture, utensils, toys, etc. have been found in different sites of the Indus Valley. Most of the kitchen utensils were made of earth and stones. Other domestic items like knife, needle, axe, etc. were made of metals like bronze and copper. All objects were beautifully polished and decorated.

Play and amusement was probably a significant part of the life of the Harappan people. Dicing was a favourite pastime. No less popular was hunting. Children played with clay toys. People were also fond of keeping birds perhaps for enjoying their fights.

Figure 3.4: Indus Toy



Source: *Google Images*



LET US KNOW

The discovery of a large number of toy clay carts from Chanhudaro indicates the existence of a factory in that age.

3.3.2 Economic Life

The marvelous cities and their large population testify to the sound economic condition of the people of the Indus Valley. Various factors such as agriculture, trade and commerce, communication, etc., largely contributed to such economic growth.

Agriculture was one of the most important occupations of the Harappan people. The river Indus and its tributaries made the valley fertile for agriculture and thereby contributed greatly for the large productions. The Great Granary found at Harappa along with many others amply points towards large productivity of this region. The chief agricultural products were wheat, barley, rice, cotton, various kinds of vegetables and fruits.

Another important means of livelihood was the domestication of animals. The Harappan people tamed animals to fulfill two

purposes - for obtaining milk and flesh, and for the purpose of carriage. For the first purpose, they used cows, sheep, pigs, etc. while, for the second one they domesticated camel, bullock, buffalo, ass, elephants, etc. It was doubtful whether horses were tamed or not as no evidence of familiarity with horses has been discovered so far.

The economy of the Harappan Civilization was predominantly based on trade as there was advancements in transport technology. The Harappans probably have pioneered the use of wheeled transport, evidenced by bullock carts that are remarkably similar to those still in use throughout South Asia. Additionally, it appears that they constructed boats and other watercraft, a hypothesis supported by archaeological discoveries of a substantial, dredged canal and a docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Indus River Valley engaged in an extensive maritime trade network. This trade network focused on importing raw materials for use in Harappan city workshops, including minerals from Iran and Afghanistan, lead and copper from other regions of India, jade from China, and cedar wood transported via rivers from the Himalayas and Kashmir. Other commodities of trade included terracotta pots, gold, silver, metals, beads, flints for toolmaking, seashells, pearls and coloured gemstones such as lapis lazuli and turquoise.

A good maritime trade network existed between the Harappan and Mesopotamian civilizations. Harappan seals and jewellery have been discovered at archaeological sites in Mesopotamia encompassing much of present-day Iraq, Kuwait, and parts of Syria. The feasibility of long-distance sea trade over the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf may have been enhanced by the development of plank watercraft equipped with a single central mast supporting a sail made of woven rushes or cloth.

During the Chalcolithic period (4300-3200 BCE) also known as the Copper Age, the Indus Valley Civilization exhibited ceramic affinities with southern Turkmenistan and northern Iran. In the Early Harappan period (circa 3200-2600 BCE), cultural similarities in pottery, seals,

figurines, and ornaments suggest the prevalence of caravan trade with Central Asia and the Iranian plateau.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1: Match the following:

a) Larkana	1. Harappa
b) Great Bath	2. A district of Sindh
c) Great Granary	3. A sea port
d) Lothal	4. Mohenjodaro

Q. 2: Choose the correct alternative:

a) Two / Three / Four archaeologist in 1922-23 at first discovered Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

b) Dicing / Horse Riding / Animal Fighting was a favourite pass time of the people of Harappa Civilization.

c) Agriculture / Sericulture / Horticulture was one of the most important occupations of the Harappan people.

d) Indus people traded with many parts of Eastern / Western Southern Asia.

3.4 RELIGIOUS CONDITION

The archaeological remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro indicate a lot about the religious life of these people. Interestingly, no temples have been discovered in the excavated sites. Still the discovery of a large number of seals and terracotta figurines points to the fact that the Indus people were idol worshippers. People probably believed in a female energy as the source of creation. This female energy was worshipped as Mother Goddess, Nature Goddess or Divine mother.



Animism: The belief that the physical work is permeated by a spirit or vital principle called the ANIMA MUNDA.

Lots of figures of this Goddess found throughout the Indus valley indicate that the worship of the Mother Goddess was a significant part of Indus religion. Besides Mother Goddess, a male God was also worshipped. In a Mohenjodaro seal we find this God sitting in a *yogic* posture with three faces, horned head dress and surrounded by animals. For all these features this God has been identified by the scholars as the prototype of *Siva Pasupati* or lord of the beasts. The identification of this male deity with *Siva* is further strengthened by the discovery of a number of stone objects which exactly look like a *Siva Linga*. Further, the worship of trees, water and fire was also prevalent among the Harappan people. The discovery of a few seals bearing *swastika* symbol indicates the worship of the Sun God. *Swastika* is the symbol of the sun. ***Animism*** probably was a significant aspect of Harappan religious beliefs.

Figure 3.5: Mother Goddess Mohenjodaro



Source: *Google Images*

3.5 DECAY OF THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

It is difficult to fix a proper date for Harappan Civilization. On the basis of the careful examination of available materials scholars are of the opinion that the Indus Valley Civilization ranged between 3200 B.C. and 1700 B.C.

The Harappan Civilization extended over a huge geographical area. It spread from Sutkanjodaro in Baluchistan in the West to Alamgirpur in Uttar Pradesh in the East and from Manda in Jammu in the North to Daimabad in the Godavari Valley in the South. As a whole, it covered an area of 22.50,000 sq. kilometers. It is the largest cultural zone in the contemporary history of world civilization.

Rise and fall of a civilization is a natural phenomenon. The amazing civilization once started by the Harappans was also no exception to it. There are many theories referred to by the scholars regarding the causes of the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization. The most valid and valued theories in this regard are as follows - rapid change of environment, natural calamities like flood and earthquake, conservative mentality and decrease in civic sense of the citizens, foreign attack, etc. However, most of the scholars believe drought and flooding of the river Indus and its tributaries to be the most fatal factor for the destruction of the Harappan Civilization. Earthquake is also supposed to be another potential factor that caused changes in the course of the Indus which led to the inundation of the hinterland of Mohenjodaro.



ACTIVITY- 3.1

Make a list of the Harappan sites mentioned in this unit and then try to locate these places in a map.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Write True / False:

a) People probably believed in a female energy as the source of creation.

b) Swastika is the symbol of the moon.

c) The Harappan Civilization extended over a huge geographical area.

d) Rise and fall of a civilization is not a natural phenomenon.

Q 4: Fill in the blanks:

a) Female energy was worshipped as ..... mother.

b) Sutkanjodaro is in .....

c) Flooding of the river ..... was one of the most fatal factors for the destruction of the Harappan Civilization.

Q 5: What do you know about the religious life of the Harappan people? (Answer in about 50 words)

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that-

- The Harappan Civilization is one of the two earliest civilizations of India. Harappan Civilization also known as the Indus Valley Civilization for being discovered on the bank of the river Indus.
- The Harappan Civilization which extended over a huge geographical area in between 3200 B.C. and 1700 B.C. was an urban civilization with well developed town planning and drainage system.
- The society was divided into four classes. The economic condition of the people of the Indus Valley was good. Along with agriculture, trade and commerce prevailed which was facilitated by developed communication system.
- In the field of religion, the people worshipped idols, both of male and female Gods. Female energy was believed as the source of creation and was worshipped as Mother Goddess, Nature Goddess or Divine Mother. Animism also prevailed as a religious belief. However, in due course of time the Harappan Civilization decayed out.



3.7 FURTHER READING

1) Jha, D.N. (1977), *Ancient India-An Introductory Outline*, Peoples' Publishing House, New Delhi-110055

2) Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C., Datta, K. (1986). *An Advanced History of India*. New Delhi, Macmillan India Ltd.

3) Raychaudhuri, H.C. (1972). *Political History of Ancient India*. Calcutta, University of Calcutta.

4) Tripathi, Ramashankar (1999). *History of Ancient India*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.



3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: (a) 2, (b) 4, (c) 1, (d) 3

Ans to Q No 2: (a) Three, (b) Dicing, (c) Agriculture, (d) Western

Ans to Q No 3: (a) True, (b) False, (c) True, (d) False

Ans to Q No 4: (a) divine, (b) Baluchistan, (c) Indus

Ans to Q No 5: Religious life of the Harappan people can be known from the archaeological remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The people were idol worshippers. They worshipped Lord Siva. Female energy was worshipped as Mother Goddess, Nature Goddess or Divine Mother. It was believed that female energy was the source of creation. Besides, Harappan people also worshipped trees, water and fire.



3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question in and about 50 words)

Q 1: Who discovered the Harappan Civilization?

Q 2: On the bank of which river did the Harappan Civilization develop?

Q 3: Which male God did the Harappan people worship?

Q 4: What was the main occupation of the Harappan people?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in and about 150 words)

Q 1: What do you know about the socio-economic condition of the Harappan Civilization?

Q 2: Write the chief features of the town planning in the Harappan Civilization.

Q 3: Write a short note on the religious life of the Harappan people.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in and about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Why do we call the Harappan Civilization the Indus Valley Civilization? Discuss the features of the Harappa Civilization.

Q 2: Discuss causes of the decline of Harappan Civilization.

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UNIT 4: VEDIC AND POST-VEDIC CIVILIZATIONS

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Vedic Civilization

- 4.3.1 Indo-Aryans and their Origin
- 4.3.2 Political Institutions
- 4.3.3 Society
- 4.3.4 Economy
- 4.3.5 Religion

4.4 Later Vedic Civilization

4.5 Let Us Sum Up

4.6 Further Reading

4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.8 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the origin of the Indo-Aryans
- know the date of the Rig Veda
- understand the political institutions of the Vedic Civilization
- analyse the society and religion of the Vedic Civilization
- discuss the later Vedic Civilization.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit (unit 3) we have discussed the Harappan Civilization, the earliest civilization of India. In the present unit we will deal with another civilization which is completely different from the former in many aspects. This civilization emerged in India after the Indus Valley Civilization. It is the Vedic Civilization. It is followed by the post-Vedic civilization. These two go together to make a sequence and present unit is going to introduce them to the learners.

4.3 VEDIC CIVILIZATION

The Harappan Civilization was followed by Vedic or Rig-Vedic Civilization which was completely opposed to it. The Vedic Civilization was founded by the Aryans. They were immigrants and in the following sections we will discuss the original home of the Aryans. Vedic Civilization is divided into two board divisions- Early Vedic or Rig Vedic Civilization and Later Vedic Civilization.

4.3.1 Indo-Aryans and their origin

The people who evolved this new civilization were known as the Indo-Aryans. They came to India from some parts of Central Asia through the North-West frontier. One should not think that their migration to India was completed in a single batch. Rather, it was a continuous process for hundreds of years. You surely have heard about the Vedas. The Vedas were the main scriptures of the Indo-Aryans. There are four Vedas, namely *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest one. It is also the earliest literature of India. The Indo-Aryans shaped their civilization as guided by the holy Vedas. That is why this civilization of the ***Aryans*** is also known as the Vedic Civilization.



LET US KNOW

The Aryans are a linguistic group spread over not only Northern India and Central India but also over Europe. The group that composed the Vedic literature is known as Indo- Aryans and they used the Sanskrit language.

The whole Vedic age may be studied under two different time zones - the Rig Vedic age and the Later Vedic age. The Rig Vedic age ranged from 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C. and the Later Vedic age ranged from 1000 B.C. to 700 B.C.

4.3.2 Political Institutions

The family was the lowest political unit of the Vedic age. Many families combined together to form a *Grama* or village. The union of several *Gramas* formed the higher unit called *Vis*. The *Vis* was probably a larger administrative unit of the whole tribe. The *Jana* or the state was the highest political and administrative unit. The leader of the *Grama* was called the *Gramani* and that of a *Vis* was called the *Vispati* and the master of the *Jana* was called *Gopa*.



LET US KNOW

The Rig Vedic state was a tribal state. The first Veda informs us about a number of Aryan tribes like Yadu, Anu, Puru, Bharata, etc. These tribes were often at war with one another for the possession of land or cattle.

The nature of pre-state societies in the middle Ganga valley highlights the importance of lineage. The emergence of state marked an important phase of transition in the mid first millennium BCE. Prior to the emergence of political entities in the form of states that coincided with the rise of the *mahajanapadas*, it is important to consider the rise of chiefdoms and the significance of lineage societies. A tribal polity was based on lineage. This development is true of the Early Vedic period where lineage demonstrated the importance of kinship systems. The nature of pre-state societies in the middle Ganga valley thus reflects the significance of the 'clan' and the 'tribe' rather than that of a monarchy. The process of transition from lineage society to state society not only brought about the importance of the 'raja' but also increased the significance of rituals. The search for legitimacy became a marked feature of the political domain that was further followed by the performance of elaborate rites and rituals.

Kingship was the usual form of government of the period. The early Vedic states were generally small in size, sometimes with

only a single tribe. The Vedic king enjoyed special power and dignity. He was denoted the title *Rajan*. Proficiency in warfare was the most essential qualification for the kings to possess the royal throne. He had the responsibility of protecting the life and property of his subjects. In return, he collected tribute called *Bali*, generally in kinds, from his subjects. The king was helped in his administration by the *purohita* (priest), the *senani* (general), the *gramani* (village head man), and the *spasa* (spies). Further, there were two popular bodies called the *sabha* and the *samiti* to help the king. The king had to periodically consult these two bodies in serious political matters. Thus, the *sabha* and the *samiti* restricted the arbitrary power of the king. However, we don't have the exact detail of the composition of the *sabha* and the *samiti*. The *sabha* probably was the selected body of the chiefs of different tribes and the *samiti* was possibly the assembly of the whole people.

4.3.3 Society

The foundation of the Vedic society was the family. At that time families were patriarchal. Do you know what a patriarchal family is? A **patriarchal** family is where the father is considered the head of the family. During the Rig Vedic age such heads of the families were called *grihapati* or *kulapati*.

Women enjoyed a respectable position in early Vedic society. Although the society was patriarchal, the girl child was also not neglected. The door of education was open for the daughters as well as the sons. Thus, we have come to know about some female scholars like Ghosa, Apala, Viswavara, etc who through their wisdom rose to the rank of the *rishis*. Neither the custom of *sati* nor *purdah* was prevalent in the Rig Vedic society. Girls were usually married at a mature age, though child marriage was not unknown altogether. Remarriage of widows was permissible in the society. Thus, we may observe that the Rig Vedic women held a high position in the society as well as in the household.

Cotton, wool and deer skin were used for the purpose of making clothes. Occasionally clothes were embroidered with gold. The Rig Vedic ladies were fond of gold ornaments of different types. Both men and women wore turban.

Barley, rice, wheat and vegetables of different seasons were the chief food of the people. Moreover, milk and its various products were also taken by them. The list of non-vegetarian items includes fish, bird, goat, bull, etc. However, the cow was not killed possibly because of its multiple utility. The Vedic Aryans took two kinds of intoxicating drinks called *soma* and *sura*.

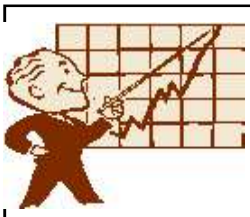
The people of the Vedic age were fond of merrymaking and amusements. Chariot racing, war dancing and hunting were the most fascinating outdoor games. Joyous moments were celebrated with music and dancing. Gambling was probably the most exciting indoor game of the period.

The Vedic society was divided into four classes namely *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudra*. However, in the early Vedic period (i.e. in the Rig Vedic period), there was no watertight divisions of society. Although there was in vogue the existence of four classes, no strict caste system existed at that time. During this period, inter caste marriage and inter caste dinning was a common feature and there was no bar in this respect. The orthodox divisions of society, the conception of untouchability, etc., were the development of later period. However, we do find references to the terms like *Chandala* in the Rig Veda.

A lineage has been generally defined as consisting of a group of unilineal kin that tends to accept genealogical relationships as a binding factor. Unilineal descent groups generally make up a clan which traces its origin to an actual or mythical ancestor. The extended family constitute the basic unit in such a system. The extended family also consists of three or four generations. The constituents of the family along with the relations gives importance to marriage alliances. Claim to power in a lineage society is primarily on the

basis of kin connections. The predominance of the chief is another significant feature of a lineage society. Lineage societies moreover are characterised by lesser forms of social stratification since territorial sovereignty did not constitute an important aspect of lineage societies. The Vedic period saw a change in the form of transition from a lineage system (represented by the *Rig Veda*) to that of state (although not a larger scale in the later Vedic period) followed by a phase of sharper social stratification marked by the rise of chiefdoms in the middle Ganga valley.

The importance of a lineage-based society is clearly indicated in the *Rig Veda*. Since a lineage society has often been correlated with a 'tribal society', the *Rig Veda* highlights the importance of clans. The text mentions about a collection of five tribes known as *pañchajana.* These tribes were the *Yadu, Turvasa, Anu, Druhyu* and *Puru*. The *Rig Veda* also mentions about numerous clans and states the importance of inter-tribal conflicts. For instance, there is mention of Sudas as the chief of the Bharata clan. The frequent occurrences of terms like *jana*, *gana* and *viœ* in the *Rig Veda* further reflects about the division of the society into smaller units or segments that characterised lineage societies. Significance of the family and the household moreover cannot be ignored while analysing the functioning of lineage society. The very foundation of a lineage society rested on family, being the basic unit. The term *kula* denoted the smallest segment of the society. Moreover, a number of families coming together constituted the *grama* or the village. Since the notion of a state or that of monarchy was totally non-existent in a lineage society, hence the *Rig Veda* discusses about the importance of the chief who exercised control over the clans. The necessity to assert territorial sovereignty was largely absent and hence the need to claim legitimacy through the performance of elaborate sacrifices and rituals relegated to the background. Lineage societies thus indicate the absence or the unimportance of kingship as an institution.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who evolved the Vedic Civilization?

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Q 2: Write the name of the four Vedas.

.....

Q 3: Who was the head of the family in the Rig Vedic period?

.....

Q 4: Name two kinds of intoxicating drinks used by the Vedic Aryans.

.....

Q 5: Who was the master of the Jana in the Rig Vedic period?

.....

Q 6: Name two bodies that restricted the arbitrary power of the king in the Rig Vedic period.

.....

Q 7: Fill in the blanks:

a) ..... were the main scriptures of the Indo-Aryans.

b) Women enjoyed a respectable position in early ..... society.

c) ..... was probably the most exciting indoor game of the Vedic period.

d) The ..... was the lowest political unit of the Vedic age.



Barter : Exchange of goods or services for other goods or services.

4.3.4 Economy

In the early Vedic period, the Aryans were dependent mainly on a pastoral economy. They also practiced agriculture, trade and industry to a limited extent. The importance of pastoralism in the early Vedic economy is evident from the direct reference to cattle. The importance of cattle is also evident from references to the chief as *Gopati* or the protector of the cattle. The animals they domesticated were cattle (for meat, dairy products and agricultural purpose), horse (for drawing chariots), sheep and goats (for meat), dog (for hunting, guarding, etc.) etc.

The evidence of agriculture is much more limited in the early Vedic period. Agriculture depended mainly on rainfall rather than on irrigation. The Rig Vedic people introduced the use of ploughshare drawn by oxen. We do find references to various crafts in the Rig Veda. In the Rig Veda terms like *takshan* (carpenters), *hiranyakara* (goldsmith), *kulala* (potters), etc. are mentioned.

The Rig Vedic people perhaps carried on inland trade. Sometimes they traded with the members of the same tribe and at times with the members of different tribes. Merchants used both land and water routes for distant places. The rathas or the chariots and carts drawn by horses and oxen were the chief means of land transportation. Trade was carried by ***barter***. There is controversy regarding whether the Aryans had overseas trade or not. As a whole, we are not in a position to confirm that the Rig Vedic Aryans traded with foreign countries.



Chandala : chandala is a class who looked after the cremation ground of the Hindus. Their social status was at the bottom of the Hindu society.

4.3.5 Religion

The Rig Vedic religion was plain and simple. The early Aryans worshiped every aspects of nature or it may be said that they imposed heavenly qualities on every object under the sun. Thus, there were a number of gods and goddesses in the religion worshipped by the Aryans. The Aryans divided their deities into three classes namely, **Earthly Gods** like *Prithvi*, *Soma*, *Agni*, etc; **Atmospheric Gods** like *Indra*, *Rudra*, *Vayu*, etc. and **Heavenly Gods** like *Dyau*, *Surya*, *Varuna*, etc. Although there were host of deities, interestingly, no temple or image of that period has so far been discovered. This indicates the absence of image worship among the Rig Vedic Aryans. Another striking feature of the Vedic religion was the supremacy of the male Gods in comparison to their female counterparts. Sacrifices or *yajnas* occupied a prominent place in the Vedic rituals. The Aryans believed that the sacrifices and other offerings pleased the Gods and in return, they blessed the performer with the desired object.

Everyone, without the distinction of rich and poor, could perform sacrifices according to his capacity.

4.4 LATER VEDIC CIVILIZATION

There were clear distinctions between the Rig Vedic and Later Vedic Civilization. The Aryans of Later Vedic Age led a more settled life and as a result of such organized lifestyle, there came obvious changes in different aspects of the civilization.

In the Later Vedic age we see the rise of the big states. It was the result of the Aryan expansion from the North-West India towards the East. Small tribal states of Rig Vedic period were gradually replaced by large kingdoms. With the enlargement of kingdoms, the power of the king also increased significantly. The later Vedic kings styled themselves as the *samrat* or *ekarat* meaning sole suzerain. There was also increase in the number of officials for managing the state affairs. The Later Vedic literatures refer to these officials as ratnas (gems). The *Taittiriya Samhita* gives us the list of ten such ratnas such as *purohita* (the priest), *suta* (the charioteer), *mahishi* (queen), *paribrikti* (queen), babata (queen), *sangrahitri* (the treasurer), *akshabapa* (the officer in charge of dice), *senani* (the general), *gramani* (the village head man) and *bhagadugha* (the revenue collector).

Society as a whole witnessed far reaching changes in the Later Vedic period. Probably the caste system started to be rigid probably from this age. There was a significant growth in the power and prestige of the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas in the society. They enjoyed special privileges which were denied to the other castes. Caste became a hereditary right. The concept of untouchability was developing in the society. Striking changes may be seen in the status of women in the later Vedic society. The women lost their respectable social position enjoyed in the Rig Vedic period. Their freedom and equality also gradually vanished. The birth of a girl child was detested. Dowry system became popular. As a whole, women were looked upon as an inferior class.

With the development of civilization, there was an obvious growth in the field of trade and commerce. Both domestic and foreign trades were

carried out by the later Vedic Aryans. By this time they attained the art of navigation. In the absence of a regular coinage, a gold piece called *nishka* was used as the unit of value. Agriculture continued to be an important occupation. Reference to many other occupations like merchants, money lenders, etc. could be found in the later Vedas.

Significant changes took place in the spiritual life of the Aryans of the later Vedic age. The Rig Vedic Gods like *Indra*, *Varuna*, *Surya*, etc now lost their previous glory and were replaced by new Gods like *Rudra*, *Vishnu*, *Prajapati*, etc. In the later Vedic religion, *yajnas* or sacrifices played an important role. The Rig Vedic *yajnas* were simple. But in the later age *yajnas* became more complicated, ceremonial and expensive. Further, the Brahmanas rapidly came forward as the mediator between the heavenly Gods and the earthly mortals. Thus, religion gradually went beyond the reach of the common men and this dissatisfied many in the society.

As a reaction to the elaborate rituals and the highhandedness of the priestly class, there developed a philosophical trend in the later Vedic religion. The inquisitive mind of the philosophers enquired into the various aspects of the creation, life and death. The Upanishads preached the concept of *atma* (the inner soul) and the *Brahma* (the supreme creator). Death only destroys the body of a man not his atma or soul. Therefore, the *atma* or soul is to take birth again and again. An *atma* can avoid rebirth and attain *moksha* (liberation) only when it unites with the *Brahma*. But it solely depends on the *karma* or action of the atma in different births. Thus, there emerged the philosophical doctrines like transmigration of soul, *karma* and *moksha*, etc.



ACTIVITY- 4.1

Try to find out the difference between the Harappan Civilization and the Vedic Civilization.

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CHECK YOUR PROGESS

Q. 8: Write True / False:

a) Gopati means the protector of the cattle.

b) Hiranyakara was the coppersmith.

c) The Aryans divided their deities into two classes.

d) Sacrifices or *yajnas* occupied a prominent place in the Vedic rituals.

e) The samrat or ekarat meant sole suzerain.

f) During the Later Vedic age the birth of a female child was welcomed in the family.

Q 9: Match the following:

a) Takshan	1. Atmospheric God
b) Rudra	2. Queen
c) Babata	3. Carpenters
d) Karma	4. Philosophical Doctrine

Q 10: What do you know about the Rig Vedic economy? (Answer in about 60 words)

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that-

- After the decline of the Harappan Civilization, there emerged the Vedic Civilization which was evolved by the Indo-Aryans. The period of the early Vedic Civilization which ranged from 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C was

known as the Rig Vedic age and hence the civilization also is known as Rig Vedic Civilization.

- The society was based on the patriarchal family system where the women enjoyed a respectable position. It was divided into four classes. But this division was not a rigid one.
- Kingship was the form of government with the king styled as Rajan looking after the prosperity and protection of his subjects.
- The economy was mainly pastoral one. Agriculture, trade and industry were practiced to a limited extent.
- The people worshipped every aspects of nature for which there were number of Gods and Goddess in the religion of the Aryans. The Aryans divided their deities as Earthly Gods, Atmospheric Gods and Heavenly Gods. Male Gods were considered superior to the female Gods.
- There existed a good deal of difference between the Vedic or Rig Vedic Civilization and later Vedic Civilization. The life in the later Vedic period was more settled. There was the emergence of the big states with corresponding increase in the power of the king. In the society the caste system was started to be rigidly imposed.
- In the later vedic period, women lost the social position which they enjoyed in the Rig Vedic period. There was development in the field of trade and commerce.
- In religious matters the Rig Vedic Gods were replaced by new Gods like *Rudra*, Vishnu, etc. in the later vedic period. The philosophical doctrines like transmigration of soul, karma and *moksha*, etc emerged.



4.6 FURTHER READING

1) Jha, D.N. (1977), *Ancient India-An Introductory Outline*, Peoples' Publishing House, New Delhi-110055

2) Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C., Datta, K. (1986). *An Advanced History of India*. New Delhi, Macmillan India Ltd.

3) Raychaudhuri, H.C. (1972). *Political History of Ancient India*. Calcutta, University of Calcutta.

4) Tripathi, Ramashankar (1999). *History of Ancient India*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.



4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Indo-Aryans.

Ans to Q No 2: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda.

Ans to Q No 3: Grihapati or Kulapati.

Ans to Q No 4: Soma and Sura.

Ans to Q No 5: Gopa.

Ans to Q No 6: Sabha and Samiti.

Ans to Q No 7: (a) Vedas, (b) Vedic, (c) Gambling, (d) Family

Ans to Q No 8: (a) True, (b) False, (c) False, (d) True, (e) True, (f) False

Ans to Q No 9: (a) 3, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 4

Ans to Q No 10: The Rig Vedic economy was a pastoral economy. The Aryans of the Rig Vedic period used to domesticate cattle, horse, sheep, goat, etc for different purposes. Agriculture, trade and industry too prevailed in the Rig Vedic period. Agriculture was limited, but use of ploughshare was introduced by the Aryans. Inland trade was carried by barter. Craftsmen like *takshan*, *hiranyakara*, etc were there.



4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)

Q 1: Who was known as Rajana?

Q 2: Name the political institutions of the Vedic civilization.

Q 3: Name two female scholars of the Rig Vedic Period.

Q 4: Who was *samrat* ?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: State the main features of the Rig Vedic society.

Q 2: What was the nature of Rig Vedic Polity?

Q 3: Compare the early Vedic period to that of the later Vedic period.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the political institutions of the Vedic civilization.

Q 2: Give a comprehensive account of the Vedic Civilization.

Q 3: Discuss the socio-economic condition of the later Vedic period.

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Unit 5: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN THE 6TH CENTURY

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Agricultural Expansion

5.4 Mode of production

5.5 Polity-Rise of *Ganas* or *Sanghas*

5.6 The Mahajanapadas

5.7 Economic condition

5.8 Religious condition

5.8.1 Rise of Buddhism

5.8.2 Rise of Jainism

5.9 Social Condition

5.10 Let Us Sum Up

5.11 Further Reading

5.12 Answers to check your Progress

5.13 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- discuss the role of Iron in the growth of agricultural production in the 6th century B.C.
- learn about the mode of production and the surplus economy in the 6th century B.C.
- discuss the rise of *Ganas* and *Sanghas* with their functions in the 6th century B.C.
- discuss the factors for the rise of Mahajanapadas in the 6th century B.C.
- discuss the economic, religious and social condition in the 6th century B.C.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to have a discussion on the political and cultural changes that took place in the 6th century B.C. The 6th century B.C has been regarded as a starting point of a definite political history of ancient India. The idea of territorial emergence was strengthened in the 6th century B.C. The century showed the rise of large states. Before that in the Vedic period we had seen tribal political organization.

Besides the political developments, the 6th century B.C also showed some cultural changes. Our discussion in this unit will also focus on the economic, religious and social condition of the 6th century B.C.

5.3 AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION

The Buddhist and the Jain texts have mentioned agricultural expansion in the Ganga valley in 6th century B.C. Several agricultural similes have been found in the Buddhist text which reflect the importance and expansion of agriculture during that period. Besides agriculture, people also practiced animal rearing though land was considered the most important wealth. Plough and sickle were used in agriculture. Other agricultural implements mentioned in the Buddhist texts were Kudala (spade) and digging tools like Khaniti and Nikkhadana.

Rice cultivation was the most important aspect of the agricultural production of the Ganga valley. Other agricultural crops were cereals, pulses, wheat, barley, beans, and sesame. Sugarcane was also cultivated.

According to the Jaina texts, there were two types of agricultural lands (khetta). One was 'Setu' (meaning dam) and the other was 'Ketu'. The 'Setu' land needed irrigation to cultivate and the 'Ketu' land depended mainly on natural rainfall. The harvested crops were stored in Kotthagaras(granaries) made of bamboo, straw grasses etc.

The Buddhist texts also referred to the sale of land which indicates that the concept of private property was continued at that time.

The discovery of iron has a great role in the agricultural expansion of the Ganga valley. Before the discovery of iron wooden ploughshare was

used in the cultivation. But after the discovery of iron the farmers started to use iron ploughshare. The use of iron ploughshare resulted in deep digging, thereby increasing production. The surplus production helped in the growth of trading activities. The discovery of iron also helped to clear the jungles for using those as cultivable lands by using iron tools. Iron tools were harder in comparison to the copper tools used by the Vedic people. Subsequently the surplus from agriculture led to the establishment of the urban centers.

5.4 MODE OF PRODUCTION

The crucial change brought about in 6th century B.C was due to the diffusion of iron. Iron diffusion and its extensive use in agriculture had a significant impact on labour productivity. Iron technology brought new forms of tools and also multiplied their numbers. It brought progress in agriculture and craft production. The change from copper to iron as the main material for making tools for the agricultural activities took place in the upper Ganga valley around or before 700 B.C. But the iron technology was not the only factor for the change. The important question was not just the introduction of iron technology but the manner in which it was used by those who wanted to establish their authority. Because, the date of the use of iron technology differed from region to region. All these regions did not show equal change in social and economic structure .In South India Iron was used prior to the Northern India.

The mode of production in ancient India was given due attention by Marxist historians like D.D. Kosambi who studied the ancient history from a Marxist perspective. The Asiatic mode of production which Marx had introduced on the base of 19th century European ideas of Oriental Despotism could not directly be applied to Indian history. Because the whole social and economic structure of India was different at that time. The concept of private ownership of land and commercial developments were not established fully. But according to D.D. Koshambi if caste was class at a primitive level of production then there must have been some sort of class conflict or contradictions.

For D.D. Kosambi 'production' was not confined to just the economy and technology of a particular period. It also involved the multiple aspects of society. Who Controls the technology and who works on it were the two important aspects of the mode of production. Kosambi referred that ancient Indian history has a nature of feudal economy. He emphasized on Marx's theory of the feudal mode of production. However, there is a difference between European and Indian concept of feudalism.

5.5 POLITY: RISE OF *GANAS* OR *SANGHAS*

There were two forms of governments in ancient India in the 6th century B.C. One was Ganas or Sanghas and other was Kingdoms. The Ganas or Sanghas were located in the Himalayan foothills, Central and Western India, Punjab and Sindh. The Ganas or Sanghas were older than the Kingdoms of the plains area. The kingdoms were established in the Gangetic plains. But the Ganas or Sanghas emerged in different places. The Buddhist texts mentioned about the Ganas or Sanghas. The political structure and function of the Ganas and Rajyas were different. The politically important Ganas were situated in or near the foothills of the Himalayas in eastern India. Buddhist texts have mentioned the names of some Ganas like- the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Kolias of Devadaha, Moriayas of pipphalivana etc.

The Gana or Sanghas were also called Ganarajyas. The term Gana means people of equal status. They rejected the Vedic philosophy because of its rigid caste system. The new Buddhist and Jain philosophy were popular among the Ganas or Sanghas. In a Gana, the head of the family belonged to a clan .The Gana has some tribal organizations compared to the monarchies .There were two kinds of Ganas- some consisted of the people of one clan, for example the Sakyas and the Koliyas and some consisted of the confederation of several clans, for example, the Vajjis, the Yadavas.

The ancient Ganas were not democratic. Power was in the hands of an aristocracy headed by leading Kshatriya family. The head was known as 'Ganapati', 'Ganajyestha', 'Ganaraja' or 'Sanghamukhya'.

The Ganas were associated with the Kshatriyas. Therefore, the Ganas were

named after the ruling Kshatriya clan. Governance through discussion was an important aspect of the Ganas. These republican states had a Gana-Parishad or an Assembly of people. The administrative advice was given by this Assembly. The Ganas or Sanghas did not observe 'varna' society. The head of the Ganas was called 'Raja' and he enjoyed both political and social powers. In a Gana, land was owned by a clan. The hired labourers and slaves worked on it. Compared to the Kingdoms the Ganas or Saghas ruled over a small geographical area. The transition from a lineage based society to a state implied control over a well demarcated and settled territory. There was now a shift from kinship bonds to that of strong monarchical ties indicating that the power and position of the ruler increased. According to Romila Thapar, a state indicates a sovereign political entity, and its rise is related with a complex network of conditions. These include density of population, concentrated drawing on resources, control over a defined and well recognised territory, rise of urban centres, existence of political authority managing the revenue from taxes collected and redistributing the same through a process of minimal administration.

The emergence of a state system further coincides with unequal power relations and access to resources followed by existence of social disparities. The centrality of the *rajan* and the popularity of the concept of *janapada* from the later Vedic times indicated that the Middle Ganga valley was marked by a different ecological setting. Detailed information about the Middle Ganga valley is primarily found in the Buddhist literature. The rise of later *gana-sanghas* (oligarchies) such as *Vrijjis, Lichchhavis* followed by monarchies like Kosala, Magadha indicates the transition to a state based apparatus. The process of state formation in the Middle Ganga valley has been also associated with iron technology by Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma, D.N. Jha.

The transition from a lineage to that of a state society also signaled a change in the polity of the newly emerging kingdoms from chiefship to that of kingship. The question of power came to be strongly concentrated in the ruling family. In this regard, the importance of the *raja* or king increased tremendously because political power was now concentrated in the king. With the concept of *janapada* becoming popular from the later Vedic times,

the importance of the *raja* and his growing power is noticeable. This was primarily in the form of suggesting elaborate prescriptions for performance of sacrifices or *yajnas*. The performance of different sacrifices such as *rajasuya, asvamedha* and *vajpeya*. The growing power of the *raja* implied a clash with the earlier notions of *gana, jana* and *vice* characteristic of lineage societies marked by the existence of chiefship.

The establishment of states implied that now the *raja* was no longer a tribal chief, but he exercised control over a well settled territory. He was moreover assisted in the exercising of his duties by ministers and advisory councils such as *sabha*, *parishad*. Clan loyalty became weak in the long run paving the way for the emergence of loyalty to the *raja*. The rise of powerful states in the Middle Ganga valley such as Kashi, Kosala, Avanti, Magadha indicated that the establishment of powerful monarchies was an important feature of these states. Without the existence of powerful ruling monarchs,these states would not have achieved considerable success in the domain of territorial expansion. The centrality of the *raja* and the relation of power with it was also linked with emphasis being given to hereditary rulership, paving the way in the long run towards dynastic succession. Not only through the performance of elaborate sacrifices but performing gift giving ceremonies primarily to the Brahmanas or the priestly class enhanced the position of the ruler. Another marked feature associated with the growing power of the *raja* was that of ritual status. Since the Brahmanas claimed the highest position in the ritual domain having knowledge of the Vedas and Sanskrit language, they had the authority to bestow Kshatriya status. The *rajas* therefore depended on the priests for performance of elaborate rituals that legitimized their claim to power and status.

5.6 THE MAHAJANAPADAS

The widespread use of iron in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar created favorable conditions for the formation of territorial states. These states were large geographically. The warrior class used tools made of iron in a large scale. Therefore, they played an important role in the formation of these large states. They also engaged themselves in ruling these states. The new and advanced iron tools helped the peasants to produce more

food grains. The surplus production was sold at some central places which helped in the development of market places and towns. Due to the use of iron technology the material condition of the people developed. Naturally, it enabled the people to settle permanently in a particular area of land .The rise of the large states with towns strengthened the idea of territories .From that time onwards people showed their allegiance to the Janapada or the territory to which they belonged. In the Vedic period people showed their allegiance to the jana or the tribe to which they belonged.



LET US KNOW

Kingdom means a territory ruled by a king or queen. In 6th century B.C., along with the rise of Ganas or Sanghas kingdoms also emerged in the Ganga valley. Three kingdoms of Kasi, Kosala, Magadha and the Vrijjis fought for supremacy. Magadha became successful by defeating all of them. The first definite political history of ancient India started with the rise of the Magadhas.

In the 6th century B.C the entire northern territory situated north of the Vindhyas and extending from the North-West frontier to Bihar was divided into sixteen states or *Mahajanapadas*. These were called Sodas Mahajanapadas.Buddhist literatures like Anguttara, Mahavastu etc. have given the list of the Sixteen Mahajanapadas. The Jain literature like Bhagavati Sutra has also mentioned the sixteen Mahajanapadas. But there are some differences between these two sources about the names of the Mahajanapadas. The great scholar and grammarian Panini has accepted the Buddhist sources. According to Panini, there were two types of Mahajanapadas- some were Monarchy and others were Republic. Among those, Magadha, Koshala, Vatsa and Avanti were powerful. According to the traditional literatures the sixteen Mahajanapadas that existed in Northern India in the 6th century B.C. were-

Kasi (Kashi): One of the first kingdoms to rise to prominence was Kasi, which was located between the Asi River to the south and the Varuna River to the north. Varanasi, the capital, was situated by the Ganga River. The kingdoms of Kasi and Kosala have a long-standing rivalry as per the

Jatakas. Kasi also had sporadic disagreements with Magadha and Anga. One of the strongest states in north India at one point, Kasi eventually became a part of the Kosala Empire.

Kosala (Koshala): Kosala was one of the sixteen *mahajanapadas*. It is currently located in the area in an around Ayodhya and was a sizable neighbour of Kasi. The Sarpika or Syandika (Sai) on the south, the Nepal highlands to the north, and the Sadanira (Gandak) on the east and west bound the kingdom of Kosala. It was split into a northern and a southern region by the Sarayu River. Shravasti, which is now known as the twin settlements of Sahet-Mahet, served as the capital of north Kosala, while Kushavati served as the capital of south Kosala. Saheth has been identified as the location of the old Jetavana monastery, and Maheth was a city. The Kosala Empire was rich in cities and had lush terrain. Kosala was the seat of the rulers of the Ikshaku dynasty. At that time, this dynasty was headed by Mahakoshal. The Ikshaku dynasty is described as a very great dynasty in the *Mahabharata*. After Mahakoshal, King Prosenjit held the throne.

Anga: Anga approximately covers today the eastern Bihar districts of Bhagalpur and Munger. This state is traversed by the Ganges and Champa Rivers. Champa was the capital city of Anga. At one time, Indian traders would come ashore from the port of Champa, which served as the commercial hub of the city. The accounts of travelers frequently mention merchants travelling from Champa to Suvarnabhumi, which might allude to Southeast Asia. Karna ruled over the kingdom of Anga. The people who came from Anga settled in Cochin or the Far East. The kingdom of Anga was in a close struggle with the Magadha and was subjugated by Magadha under its monarch Bimbisara.

Magadha: Magadha was the most powerful kingdom out of the sixteen *mahajanapadas*. The Ganges River passed through Magadha. As a result, this state had extremely fertile soil. By the 4th century BCE, the kingdom of Magadha had established itself as the dominant political power. The kingdom essentially encompassed what are now the districts of Patna and Gaya in Bihar. Its borders were the Vindhyan range to the south and the Ganga, Son, and Champa Rivers to the north, west, and east, respectively. Modern-day Rajgir, once known as Girivraja or Rajagriha, was the capital of Magadha.

This city was deeply connected to both Mahavira and Buddha. Later on, the capital was moved to Pataliputra, which is connected to present-day Patna. According to Buddhist literature, the legendary Haryanka dynasty governed Magadha in the sixth century BCE. This kingdom's first king was Bimbisara. Magadha was an imperialist state that was growing. As a result, Magadha became the centre of an empire that stretched throughout all of India.

Vajji(Vrijji): Vajji was an autonomous republic. The Vrijji *ganasangha* had its capital at Vaishali and was located in eastern India, north of the Ganga. The Vrijji confederacy is regarded as one of the most significant *mahajanapadas* during the Buddha's lifetime. Lord Gautam Buddha was born in the Shakyakula of this kingdom, and Mahavira, the last Tirthankara of the Jaina, was born in the Gyatrikkula of this kingdom. Cunningham and Reese Davids claim that the republic was co-founded by the members of the eight tribes. Among these eight republics was Vajji. Vaishali, the capital city of this state is situated in the district of Muzaffarpur today. One of the greatest cities in modern-day India was Vaishali. Several Buddhist writings have referred to Vaishali's wealth. Marriage ties were also formed between the Vrijji Ganasangha and Magadha under the rule of King Bimbisara. This indicates that the clans in this confederacy were able to retain their position as equals and separate entities, therefore tightly retaining their distinctive identities even inside the confederacy. Even as ganasanghas—particularly the Vrijjis—have frequently been referred to as Kshatriya clans in Buddhist and Jaina writings. But we should not assume that they lived in a varna society. They preserved more of the clan heritage than the kingdoms. Despite its limitations, they exercised clan-wide governance through an assembly.

Malla: The Mallas were a confederacy of nine tribes that lived further to the west than the Vajjis. Out of all the sixteen *mahajanapadas*, Malla was the second republican state. This state's capital was Kushinagar. Within this principality, there were two principal political centres: Kushinara and Pava. Kushinara, located around 77 km east of Gorakhpur on the smaller Gandak, has been identified as Kasia. Historians have identified Pava as either Padaraona village, which is roughly 26 km northeast of Kasia, or as modern-day Pawapuri in Bihar. The Vajjis had strong ties with the Mallas. But there

were sometimes occasional disagreements between them. Lord Gautam Buddha died at Kushinagar.

Chetiya (Chedi): The Chedi kingdom was located in central India's eastern region of Bundelkhand. Experts have linked the Shuktimati or Shuktisahvaya in the *Mahabharata* to the capital city of Sotthivatinagara. The ancient city of Airakina (Eran) next to Sagar and Tripuri in the Narmada Valley near Jabalpur was most likely a component of the Chedi dynasty. In the *Mahabharata* and beyond, Chedi was a well-known kingdom. Chedi was closely associated with the Kashi state. Later, the kingdom of Matsya joined the kingdom of Chedi.

Vamsa (Vatsa): The Vatsa kingdom was located in the Gangetic plains of Uttar Pradesh. Kaushambi I was the capital which is close to the present-day Prayagaraj. Vatsa was a well-developed agricultura

state. Vatsa, often spelt as Vamsa, was a kingdom renowned for its exquisite cotton fabrics. Kaushambi had a significant role in the commercial networks that linked the Ganga Valley, the Deccan, and the Northwest. These formidable defence systems, which date to about 600 BCE, were discovered during excavations. The King Udayana transformed Vatsa as a powerful *mahajanapada*. King Pradyota ruled Avanti at around the same period. There are several legends about their rivalry. According to lore, the kingdom was home to the Kuru and Bharata clans of the Vedic era. King Udayana is also the protagonist of at least three well-known Sanskrit plays.

Kuru: The Kurus settled in the modern-day Ganga-Yamuna Doab area. The Kuru Empire was governed by rulers from the Yuddhishthira *gotra*, or the family of Yuddhishthira, according to the Buddhist legend. Their capital was Indraprastha. The Kuru capital in the *Mahabharata* was in Hastinapura until a flood forced its relocation. One of the references in the Jaina classic *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* is to a Kuru king called Isukara, who governed from there. The Kurus had a monarchy until the Buddha's time. They then transform into a *sangha* as there was no great monarch in the Kuru kingdom in the sixth century BCE and it faded into obscurity. Eventually, Magadha inherited the kingdom.

Panchala: The Panchala *mahajanapada* spanned the current Rohilkhand region and was separated by the Ganga River. Moreover, the kingdom had two capitals: Kampilya, the capital of Dakshina (south) Panchala, was associated with Kampil in the Farukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, while Ahichchhatra, the capital of Uttara (north) Panchala, was identified with current Ramnagar in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. The Panchalas were formerly a monarchical polity before converting to a non-monarchical one, according to the *Arthashastra*. There were significant urban centres in the *mahajanapada*, such as Kanyakubja and Kanauj.

Machachha (Matsya): Matsya was one of the most prominent kingdoms in India around the sixth century BCE. The Matsyas resided close to the eastern regions of what is now Rajasthan, which includes the regions of Jaipur, Alwar, and Bharatpur. This kingdom was founded by the renowned *Virat Raja* of the *Mahabharata* and Viratnagar became the capital of thekingdom after him. The Buddhist scriptures typically relate Surasenas with the Matsyas. Subsequently, the kingdom of Matsyawas added to the Chedi kingdom.

Surasena: The Kingdom Surasena was founded by a king named Shurasena in the Yamuna doab area and had its capital at Mathura.As per the Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya*, Surasena was one of the sixteen *mahajanapadas*. The reference of this *mahajanapada* is also found in the *Ramayana*.As per the Buddhist tradition, King Shurasena was succeeded by his son Avantiputra, the name itself suggesting a marriage between the Surasenas and Avanti. The King Avantiputra of Surasena was a follower of Buddhism. Like other political hubs, Mathura too served as a crucial intersection for commercial routes that linked the north to the Deccan and the western coast.

Assaka (Ashmaka): The kingdom of Assaka is mentioned in a variety of sources, including Panini's *Astadhyayi*, the *Markandeya Purana*, the *Brihatsamhita*, and Greek reports. Buddhist writings place Assaka in Maharashtra beside the Godavari River. Potana, often spelt Podana, was its capital and is comparable to contemporary Bodhan. The *Jatakas* state that Assaka defeated the Kalinga in eastern India militarily and that it had, at some time, fallen under the influence of Kashi.

Avanti:*Mahajanapada* Avanti was situated in the Malwa area of central India. Avanti had two capitals: Mahishmati, which is now Maheshwar in the western region of Madhya Pradesh, and Ujjayini, which is close to modern-day Ujjain in the state. The Deccan and the western coast ports were linked to north India through both cities, making them significant hubs for commerce. Avanti was known for its ruler Pradyota, who was involved in conflicts with Vatsa, Magadha, and Kosala.

Gandhara: The kingdom of Gandhara comprises present-day Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts in Pakistan. Gandhara was situated along the south bank of the River Kubha. The capital city of Gandhara was Takshsila or Taxila. It held a significant importance as a hub for trade and education. Scholars from all over the world gathered at "Taksashila University" to pursue wisdom and knowledge. Excavations at Taxila uncovered three large settlements: the Bhir mound, Sirkap, and Sirsukh. The oldest city is represented by the Bhir mound. Silver punch-marked bar coins and other types of currency have been discovered in the early phases of the Bhir mound. Pushkarasarin, also known as King Pukkusati, ruled Gandhara in the sixth century BCE after defeating Avanti in a battle.

Kamboja: The state of Kamboja was situated in northwest India, close to the Gandhara. The modernday Rajaori region, which is located in Pakistan's Hazara province, was part of Kamboja. The *Mahabharata* also mentions about Kamboja. It is stated that Kamboja is the hub of the Vedic Brahmanical culture. But Kamboja's significance diminished as Aryan settlements grew farther into the Indian Ganges-Jamuna area. Rajpur was the state capital at the time. The Kamboja was a monarchy until the 6th century BCE, although later texts like *Arthashastra* refer to them as a *ganasangha*. The kingdom of Kamboja fell in the fourth century BCE when Alexander entered India.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Write true or false

Q 1: Iron discovery had revolutionized the economic structure of 6th century B.C.

Q 2: The head of the Gana was called 'Raja'.

Q 3: Bhagavati Sutra was a Buddhist text.

Q 4: Bimbisara was the contemporary of Buddha.

5.7 ECONOMIC CONDITION

The economic condition of 6th century B.C. in Northern India was much more developed than in the Vedic Age. The use of iron revolutionized the whole economic structure in the 6th century B.C. The discovery of iron developed the agricultural system. People started to clear jungles for making agricultural land by using iron tools. Moreover, they had also used iron ploughshare instead of wooden ploughshare. It resulted in deep digging which ultimately increased the agricultural production. After using the necessary crops the surplus productions were sold at the centers. This created the market system and ultimately had developed the trading activities.

In the 6th century B.C. urban settlements had emerged in Northern India. The urban settlements had different functions. They were the centers of political control, trading activity and craft production. The emergence of these states had developed the second urbanization in the Gangetic Valley. The Buddhist texts mentioned different kinds of urban centers. The name of a town or a city was 'Pura'. The term 'Nagara' meant a fortress or town. Nigama was a market town. Nigama was associated with trading activities. The capital city was called the 'Rajdhani'. A small town was called 'nagaraka' and a big town was called 'Mahanagara'.

Besides agriculture, the people were also engaged in different craft activities. The early Buddhist texts mentioned several occupations. The Buddhist texts mentioned both rural and urban occupations. Apart from farmers, cattle rearers, traders, they also mentioned washer men, barbers, tailors, painters and cooks. The king also appointed people as soldiers(yodhajivas), ministers (mahamachchas), governors (ratthikas), estate managers(pettanikas), royal chamberlain(thapati), elephant trainers(hattirohas), policemen(raja-bhatas), jailors(bandhanagarikas) ,slaves(dasa and dasis) and wage-workers(kammakaras). Urban occupations included physician (vejja), surgeon (salakatta) , and scribe (lakha). References of accomplished courtesan (ganika) and the ordinary prostitute (vesi) are also there in the Buddhist texts. The Buddhist texts also mentioned about the existence of Guilds. Terms like Shreni, Nigama,

Puga,Vrata and Sangha are used. These terms were used to denote various kinds of corporate organizations including guilds.

The use of coin was an important aspect of urbanization. During that period coins like kahapana, nikkha, kamsa,pada,masaka and kakanika were continued. The punch marked coins were mainly made of mainly silver .The continuation of money economy did not mean the end of the traditional barter system. It meant a change in the economic transactions and also helped in the development of long –term trade and commerce. The continuation of the money economy also helped in the money lending activities. Money lending became a profession for some people.

In the 6th century B.C. trade played an important role in the economic life of the people. The two major trade-routs of that time were known as Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha. The Uttarapatha was the trade-route of Northern India. It continued from the North – west , across the Indo-Gangetic plains, up to the port of Tamralipti on the Bay of Bengal. The item of trade was the precious and semi-precious stones. Lapis Lazuli was collected from Afghanistan and central Asia .Silver was collected from Afghanistan and Central Asia. But Silver was available in Rajasthan too. Shell was imported from the eastern coast to the sites of lower and middle Ganga valley .The Uttarapatha was both a land and river route. The Dakshinapatha was the Southern trade route. Arthashastra has mentioned about this route. It was continued from Pataliputra in Maghadha to Pratishthana on the Godavari river .It was also connected with the ports of the Western coast. The physician Jivaka moved along the Dakshinapatha to Avanti. Overland trade also existed. Taxila was connected with Afghanistan. From Iran silver, gold, jade and lapis lazuli were imported. There was a long distance trade of fine wood between India and Mesopotamia. Thus the growth and expansion of trade and commerce had made the traders an important urban group.



ACTIVITY 5.1

Write a short note on the Punch marked coins.

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5.8 RELIGIOUS CONDITION

Different religious sects emerged in the Gangetic valley in the 6th century B.C. Almost 62 religious sects came into prominence at that time. But among them only Buddhism and Jainism were able to survive and continue as major religions of that time. Both these religions were actually a resistance movement against the ritualistic dominance of Brahmanical religion. There were social and economic factors which led to the development of these heterogeneous sects in the 6th century B.C. These factors are analysed below.

The Varna based social condition was one of the most important factors for the development of these religious sects. In the post-Vedic period, the society was divided into four Varnas; the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. In the early Vedic period, the concept of Varna was on the basis of occupation of the people. But in later Vedic time the concept of Varna was based on the birth of the people. The Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas were considered higher Varna and as such they enjoyed a privileged position in society. The Brahmanas who performed the priestly duties claimed highest status in society and demanded to be given gifts as well as exemption from taxation and punishments. The Kshatriyas were second in the varna hierarchy. They held the position of power and ruled as kings. They collected taxes from the peasants. The Vaishyas were in the third category in the Varna system and were engaged in agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The sudras were considered in the last position of the varna system and their duty was to serve the above three varnas. The varna-divided society created lots of tensions. The Kshatriyas, as they were

the rulers, definitely had more grievances than the Vaishyas. They reacted more strongly against the ritualistic domination of the Brahmanas.The reaction of the Kshatriyas against the domination of the priestly class called Brahmanas was one of the factors which led to the rise of these new religions.

The spread of new agricultural economy in north-eastern India was another factor for the rise of these religions. The north –eastern areas were thickly forested. Before the discovery of iron the people inhabited in these areas had cleared the jungles with the help of bone, stone and copper implements. The use of iron tools made the clearance of the forest easier. Again, the agricultural economy based on iron ploughshare needed the use of bullocks. But the Vedic people used the cattle wealth in their Vedic sacrifices. Therefore the scarcity of animals had threatened the new agricultural economy. Animal husbandry became important for the stability of the new agricultural economy. Therefore, the killing of cows in Vedic sacrifices had to be stopped.

The use of money economy had also contributed to the development of the trade and commercial activities. As a result, the traders became the wealthy people in society. But in spite of their vast resources they did not enjoy equal social status with the two higher varnas (Brahmanas and Kshatriyas). To improve their social status they were in search of a new religion. Let us now discuss the rise of the two religions-Jainism and Buddhism.

5.8.1 Rise of Jainism

Mahavira was the religious teacher of the Jains. The Jainas believed that Mahavira was the last and 24th tirhankara of the Jainas. Before him they had 23 tirthankaras. It is difficult to fix the actual date of the birth and the death of Mahavira. According to one tradition, Mahavira was born in 540 B.C. in a village near vaishali. His father Siddhartha was the head of a Kshatriya clan .The name of Mahavira's mother was Trishala. Mahavira abandoned his family life for the search of truth and attained 'Kaivalya'(omniscience) after 12 years

at the age of 42 . He propagated his religion for 30 years and died at the age of 72 in Pavapuri near Rajgir .Jainism introduced ***five doctrines***. These were, (i) do not commit violence, (ii) do not speak a lie, (iii)do not steal, (iv) do not acquire property and (v)observe continence (Brahmacharya). It is said that the fifth doctrine was the contribution of Mahavira and the other four were originally contributed by his predecessors. Jainism gave emphasis on ahimsa or non-injury to any leaving being. In later period, Jainism was divided into ***two sects***: (a) *Shvetambaras*, those who wore white dress and the (b) *digambaras*, those who did not wore clothes. Jainism believed in the existence of gods but placed them in a lower position than the 'jina' (mahavira or the great hero). Jainism did not condemn the Varna system. The main aim of Jainism is to attain freedom from this mundane world and its bonds. But Jainism did not have any ritual to attain this concept of liberation. The liberation can be achieved by following right knowledge, right faith and right action. These three are considered as the ***jewels or triratna*** of Jainism .Gradually Jainism had spread into South and West India. Jainism spread to Kalinga in the fourth century B.C. Jainism was the first attempt to give a resistance to the ritualistic Vedic religion. The early Jainas discarded the Sanskrit language as it was the language patronized by the Brahmanas .They used the prakrit language to preach their doctrines. They used the Prakrit language because it was the language of the common people. Their religious literature was written in Ardhamagadhi. Initially the Jainas did not worship images. But later on they started to worship Mahavira and the 23 *tirthankaras*.

5.8.2 Rise of Buddhism

Gautama Buddha or Siddhartha, the founder of Buddhism was a contemporary of Mahavira. He was born in 563 B.C. in a Sakya Kshatriya family in Lumbini (Nepal) near Kapilabastu. Suddhodhan was his father and his mother's name was Mayadevi. At the age of 29 Gautama left home in search of truth. He wandered about for

seven years and untimately attained Nirvana (enlightment) at the age of 35 under a "*Pipaltree*" at BodhiGaya. After the attainment of the Nirvana he was called Buddha. Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon (religious teaching) in a deer park at Sarnath(Banaras). He died at the age of 80 in 483 B.C. in Kusinagara (Uttar Pradesh). Buddha said that the world is full of sorrows and it is all due to the people's desires. Desires can be conquered by following ***eight fold paths*** (ashtangikamarg). People can attain Nirvana only after conquerors the desires. The *eight fold path* included- (i) right observation, (ii) right determination, (iii) right speech, (iv) right action, (v) right livelihood, (vi) right exercise, (vii) right memory and (vii) right meditation. Gautama Buddha had laid down a code of conduct for the followers of this new religion. The code consisted of the followings: – do not commit violence, do not covet other's property, do not get intoxicated, do not speak a lie and do not indulge in corrupt practices. Buddhism did not have faith on the existence of God and soul (atman). Gradually Buddhism became popular among the lower section of the society as it attacked the varna division. People from any caste and class could enter in the Buddhist Sangha. Women were also admitted to the Buddhist Sangha. The use of Pali, the language of the common people, helped in the propagation of Buddhism among the common people.There were ***three main elements in Buddhism*** – (a)Buddha, (b) Sangha and (c) Dhamma. The monarchies of Magadha, Kosala and Koshambi adopted Buddhism as state religion. Moreover, several republican states also adopted this religion. Ashoka, the great Mauryan king adopted Buddhism. He introduced several measures like foreign tour (Dhammayatra) for the propagation of Buddhism. Therefore, under the patronization of king Ashoka Buddhism had spread to Cental Asia, West Asia and Sri Lanka and thus became a world religion.

5.9 SOCIAL CONDITION

The society in that time was divided into four classes- Brahmanas, Kshatryas, Vaishyas and Shudras .The Dharmautras laid down the duties of these four Varnas. Therefore the civil and criminal law was based on the Varna division. The Brahmanas and Kshatriyas were the higher varnas. The Vaisyas were the third category in varna system. Shudras were considered as the last in the hierarchy of varna system .The Shudras were deprived of religious and legal rights .The Brahmanas played the role of the priest and teachers. The Kshatriyas were the rulers. The Vaishyas were engaged in agriculture and trade and commerce. The Shudras were regarded as the slaves and they were asked to serve the other three higher varnas.Though the rise of Buddhism and Jainism did not bring any radical change to the social status of the Shudras, yet they could now enter into the new religious system.

Kingship ties were still important and gradually incorporated into the framework of caste. Generally, marriages were held within the same varna. But the Dharmasastra accepted inter-varna marriages. The marriage between a man of higher varna and a woman of lower varna was called **Anuloma marriage**. On the other hand, the marriage between a woman of a higher varna and a man of a lower varna was known as **pratiloma marriage**. The Dharmasastras did not approve the pratiloma form of marriage .There were eight types of marriages.

The concept of untouchebility was prevalent in the 6th century B.C. In the early dharmasastras, the Chandalas were sometimes considered as the Shudras. But gradually distinctions between the two were established .The concept of both male and female slaves prevailed. They did not have the right to join the Buddhist Sanghas until they were freed by their masters.

The concept of private property was started. The son had the right to inherit his father's property .There was, however, a category of property where the women had the right. This category was the '*Stri-dhana'*. It was movable property and given to the women during different occasions in her life.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions

Q 6: Punch marked coins were mainly made of which metal?

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Q 7: Write down the name of the important port of the Bay of Bengal.

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Q 8: Before Mahavira,how many Tirthankars were in Jainism?

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Q 9: Which language was mainly used by Buddha to propagate Buddhism?

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Q 10: What type of tour was adopted by Ashoka to propagate Buddhism in foreign countries?

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5.10 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt—

- The Discovery of iron brought tremendous change in the agricultural technique in the 6th century B.C. The use of iron tools revolutionized the agricultural structure. It further developed trade and commerce.
- The political structure of Northern India in the 6th century B.C was controlled by the Ganas or Sanghas. However the development of the monarchical kingdoms could also be noticed.
- The rise of sixteen Mahajanapadas was an important event of 6th century B.C. We have found both monarchical and republican states among those sixteen Mahajanapadas.
- The economy of 6th century B.C. was mainly dominated by the agricultural activities and trade and commerce. This period also showed the use of money economy.

- Buddhism and Jainism developed in the sixth century B.C.
- The society was based on varna system in that period. Moreover, we also found the prevalence of untouchebility and slavery in the 6th century B.C.



5.11 FURTHER READING

1) Kosambi, D.D. (2001): *The cultural Civilization of Ancient India in Historical outline*, Vikas Publishing House.

2) Thapar Romila (2003): *The Penguin History of Early India, from the origins to AD 1300*, Penguin Books India.

3) Singh Upindar (2009): *A history of Ancient and Early Medieval India, from the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Pearson.



5.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True

Ans to Q No 2: True

Ans to Q No 3: False

Ans to Q No 4: False

Ans to Q No 5: True

Ans to Q No 6: Silver

Ans to Q No 7: Tamralipti

Ans to Q No 8: 23

Ans to Q No 9: Pali

Ans to Q No 10: Dharmayatras



5.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q 1: What types of agricultural lands did exist in 6th century B.C?

Q 2: What was the political structure of the Ganas?

Q 3: Define the term 'surplus production'.

Q 4: What types of coins were used in 6th century B.C.?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in and about 150 words)

Q 1: Discuss the agricultural life of the 6th century B.C.

Q 2: Define 'mode of production'.

Q 3: Discuss the rise and political structure of the Ganas or Sanghas.

Q 4: Give a description of the social condition of the 6th century B.C.

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in and about 500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the role of iron technology in transforming the economic condition of the 6th century B.C.

Q 2: Make a note on the rise of Mahajanapadas.

Q 3: Discuss in detail the economic condition of the 6th century B.C.

Q 4: Discuss in detail the rise and development of Buddhism.

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