

EARLY INDIA: STATE TO EMPIRE
BA HISTORY

(V SEMESTER)

CORE COURSE
(2011 ADMISSION ONWARDS)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Calicut University, P.O. Malappuram, Kerala, India-673 635

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EARLY INDIA: STATE TO EMPIRE

Prepared & Scrutinized by:

Dr. N.Padmanabhan
*Associate Professor,
PG Department of History,
C.A.S.College, Madayi,
P.O.Payangadi- RS-670358
Kannur-Kerala.*

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UNIT-I**LINEAGE SOCIETY**

Indian history is divided into three different parts- Ancient Indian history, Medieval Indian history and Modern Indian history. The ancient people of India have a continuous civilization since the pre-historic age of 40001 BC, when the first people of the World began to live. Most probably the first people came to India from Africa. They initially gathered in the northern part of India and hunting was their only profession. But after a long time in 4000 BC, they moved to the Indus river valley and took farming as their main profession.

Lineage society

A lineage society is characterised as a formal organized group of people who trace their ancestry from a common ancestor. A lineage society in its early stage of development would mainly be pastoral and along with its growth it may break up itself into several branches, which may either become separate lineage societies or would merge with a neighbouring society. The merger of different lineage societies in due course may lead to the emergence of a land-bonded society. In the course of its growth, lineage society become de-stabilized and marks the transition from the stage of pre-state to the stage of state. Therefore, a lineage society could be considered as a pre-state society, but not a tribal one as common ancestry is not a binding factor in a tribal society. The Rig Vedic pre-state society in ancient India is generally considered as a lineage society, which was mainly pastoral and mobile.

The concept of the lineage society in the ancient Indian sub continent is derived from the historical reading of the Itihasas and puranas and hence it is part of the ancient Indian Itihasa-Purana traditional of historical perspective. Like elsewhere, in ancient India also the myth related to the origin of the world is related with the great flood as depicted in the Itihasa-purana tradition. According to this tradition, Manu the primeval man was the only one to survive the deluge, who returns to Jambu dweep (Indian sub continent), where he laments on his loneliness. Due to his loneliness Manu performs a sacrifice, which resulted in the birth of his eldest son, Ikshaku with whom started the Suryavamsa or Solar Lineage and daughter Ila with whom started the Chandravamsa or the Lunar Lineage. The Itihasa – Purana tradition traces the lineage of all kings and royal families of ancient India either to the Suryavamsa or to the Chandravamsa.

The descent groups of Manu described in the genealogical section of the early Indian historical tradition. The various Puranic texts have this genealogical section or Vamsaucharita. Though the first few generations comprising the descent groups of all the children of Manu are listed in the Puranic texts, soon the genealogy restricts itself to the two main lineages only. Ikshaku had three sons whose lineages are given in the form of listing only the eldest son of the eldest son. The geographical area settled by these lineages was the middle Gangetic valley and these lineages and the geographical area were become the core area of the epic Ramayana the events of which virtually terminated the record of this lineage.

The two main groups tracing their ancestry to Ila are the eldest Yadu and the youngest Puru. Ila given birth to Pururavan, whose great grand son is Yayati who had five sons. The eldest son is Yadu and the youngest, Puru and middle being Anu, Druhyu and Turvasa. Yadu, the rightful successor displeases his father and hence is banished to the South-West and Puru, the youngest inherits the Madhyadesa. The descents of Puru line is geographically concentrated and related to the Indo-Gangetic divide and the Ganga-Yamuna doab and its environs. The descents of Yadu or Yadavas spread out over the Aravalli region, Gujarat, Malwa, Narmada Valley, northern Deccan and eastern Ganga Valley. The descent groups of three middle sons are relatively unimportant.

According to the texts, the line of Turvasa had merged with Purus at an early stage. The line of Druhyu is said to have become Mlechas after few generations. The descendents of Anu survived in Central Punjab and Sind and one branch of it is said to have been migrated to the extreme East. Only the lineages of Puru and Yadu are listed in detail and at great length in the Vamsacharitas. The migration of various segments taken from Ila spread over a large area of northern, western and central India. It is closer in form to a segmentary lineage system. Many of the segments probably did not originally belong to the lineage, but were assimilated in the course of time. The lunar lineage and its distribution was incorporated substantially into the area where the Mahabharata war was fought. It was the major war fought between the two major segments of the lineage on the plains of Kurukshetra and most of the segments were destroyed in the battle.

The event of the Mahabharata focuses on the last part of the Puru lineage. Taken as a whole the Puru lineage seems to have three distinct stages. The first stage is from Puru to Bharata. The second stage marks the segmentation of the main lineage into four groups with a consequent expansion of the territory held by the lineage. The third stage denoted the descent from Kuru to the period of the Mahabharata war. By now relations between Kurus and Panchalas were established through lineage connections. Soon after, one of the Kuru kings, Vasu branched off and occupied Chedi on the southern fringe of Yamuna and Magadha in Bihar, both earlier occupied by Yadavas. Vasu's five sons established new kingdoms- Brihadratha at Maghada, Kusa at Vatsa and the other three in Chedi, Karusa and Matsya.

In fact myth provides a framework with which the lineages could be prepared. The flood and war are both time markers, clearing away the past as it were initiating a new era. It also provides a possible archeological correlation with the decline of the major cities of the Indus civilization. The flood would have to be dated to mid second millennium BC. However, whether or not there was massive deluge, there seems to have been a major disturbance in the river system of the Indo-Gangetic divide.

State in Harappan Cities

A glorious civilization flourished in the valley of the river Indus and its neighbouring regions prior to the rise of the Chalcolithic Age. This civilization known as the Harappan culture was far more developed than the chalcolithic Cultures. During the second decade of the 20th century, archaeological excavations were carried out by Sir John Marshal, Director-General of the Archaeological Department of the Government of India and his colleagues at Mohenjodaro in the Larkana district of Sind (Pakistan) and Harappa in the Montgomery district of the Punjab (Pakistan). In 1922 excavations brought to light the remains of a great civilization which flourished there in the past. As these places were situated in the area covered by the river Indus and its tributaries, the civilization came to be called the Indus Valley Civilization. It arose in the north-western part of India. It is generally called the Harappan Culture because this civilization was discovered first at the modern site of Harappa.

Harappan Cities.

At first it was believed that this splendid civilization flourished in the valley of the Indus only. But recent researches and excavations have brought to light the extensive nature of this civilization. It had spread over various parts of Northern and Central India like Rupar and Bara in the east Punjab, Alamgirpur near Meerut in U.P. and Ragpur and Lothal in Gujarat. The exact period of this civilization is a matter of dispute among scholars. This is due to the failure of deciphering the Indus script. Sir John Marshall has assigned this culture to the period 3150-2750 B.C. But in recent years, archaeologists have made use of scientific tests like carbon test and fixed the period of this civilization from 2300 to 1750 B.C. Probably the civilization must have existed during this period.

Harappa.

Planned cities were the indivisible factors of the Harappan Culture. The first city excavated of this civilization was Harappa. It is considered as the prime city in terms of its size and the variety of objects discovered. The city of Harappa had existed on the banks of the river Ravi in western Punjab. It was excavated by archaeologists like Dayaram Sahni, M.S. Vats and Mortimer Wheeler from the early 1920's onwards. The ruins of the city now cover a circuit of about three miles. It is assumed that a major section of the people of Harappa was engaged in non-food producing activities like administration, craft and trade. Naturally some other might have produced food for the Harappan people. The people of the neighbouring villages were involved in food production. And the food grains produced in the villages were brought to the city with the help of bullock carts and boats. The city of Harappa had existed on a trade route stretching from Jammu to Central Asia through Afghanistan.

Mohenjodaro

Mohenjodaro was the large city of the Harappan civilization. It had a population of nearly 35,000. It is located in the Larkana district of Sind on the banks of the river Indus. The excavations at Mohenjodaro was first started in 1922 by Sir John

Marshall with R.D. Banerji. And later carried on by Mackay and George Dales. Better evidences of town planning and seals are available from this site. It is viewed that the people of Mohenjodaro had been building and rebuilding their houses due to floods. The height of the remains is very high because of the rebuilding process.

Kalibangan

Kalibangan in Rajasthan along the dried up bed of the river Ghagger is another important Harappan city. This site was excavated by B.K. Thapar in the 1960's which have the evidences of pre-Harappan and Harappan habitations.

Lothal

Lothal in Gujarat is another important city excavated. S.R. Rao was in charge of the excavations of the Harappan sites in Gujarat. It is located in the coastal area of the Gulf of Cambay. A dock-yard was also excavated from there. Therefore, it is believed that Lothal was an outpost for sea trade with the West-Asian territories. The remains of a great artificial platform with streets and houses of regular plan have been discovered at Lothal.

Characteristics of Harappan Culture

The Harappan or Indus culture was essentially an urban culture. The city of Mohenjodaro was fairly big, beautiful and well planned. Lamp posts at intervals indicate the existence of street lighting. The streets of the city were wide and straight. They ran from east to west from north to south cutting each other at right angles. The streets that built in such a way as to be cleaned automatically by winds. The elaborate drainage system was a unique feature of the city. There was a pillared hall probably used as a municipal hall at the centre of the city. The city was surrounded by a massive wall built of burnt bricks.

The dwelling houses were many in number. They varied in size from a small building with two rooms to palatial structures with two or more stories. There were many architectural devices to beautify them. They were made of burnt bricks. The houses were generally well ventilated and well furnished. They had paved floors, courtyards and staircases. All houses had wells, bathrooms and drains. The most important structure of the city was the Great Bath with pillared corridors on all sides. It consisted of a large swimming pool at the centre with galleries and rooms on all sides. There were steps leading to the pool. Proper arrangements were made for falling the pool with good water from one way and for discharging the dirty water through another way. The Great Bath was a marvel of their engineering skill.

City life was well developed and well organized in the Indus valley. The citizens were provided with all the civic amenities. The city was divided into several wards. An efficient police force protected the life and property of the citizens. On the whole, the ruins of the city indicates the existence of a well-developed municipal life in the Indus valley civilization.

Agriculture formed the backbone of their *economy*. In addition to food crops, they cultivated corn. Perhaps they were the first people in the ancient world to learn and

practice the art of spinning cotton and dyeing cotton cloth. Vessels of copper, bronze and silver were made by them. Pottery making had reached a high level of perfection and they had coloured and glazed pottery. Among other articles of domestic use were spindles, needles, combs, axes and knives. Their weapons of war included axes, spear, dagger and mace. The absence of sword is significant. The weapons were made of copper or bronze. A few stone implements were also used. The main domestic animals were cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs and dogs. The absence of horses is also significant in the Indus culture.

The people of the Indus valley had a highly developed social organization. The majority of the people belonged to the high or the middle class. They lead a simple life. The society was democratically organised and there was no caste system. The main food crops were wheat and barley. Beef, mutton, fish, milk and vegetables were also used as food. Ornaments of gold, silver and precious stones were used by men and women. Hair styles were common. Men kept short beards and women used cosmetics. The garments were generally made of cotton and occasionally of wool. The Indus people had their own sports past times. Hunting, bull fighting, cock fighting etc were quite common. They were also fond of dance and music.

The Harappans conducted trade both within the northern and western area of the sub continent and with Persian Gulf and Mesopotamian regions. Many Harappan seals have been discovered in Mesopotamia. Trade was necessitated by the absence of raw materials in Harappa. Probably the barter system existed.

The Indus people had a fairly advanced type of religion. The idols as well as the images and pictures on the seals indicated the salient features of their faith. Their chief deity was the Mother Goddess – Sakti. Further there was a male god with three faces in Yogic pose surrounded by four animals depicted on the seals. It is identified as the pre-historic Siva or Pasupati. The worship of stones, trees, animals etc. were popular among them. The most common animals of worship were the bull, the rhinoceros, the goat, the crocodile and the snake. The dove was worshiped as a sacred bird. They adopted different methods for the disposal of the dead. Complete burial and cremation were common among them. In the words of John Marshall the Indus religion was “the lineal progenitor of modern Hinduism”.

The Indus people were highly interested in arts and crafts. The artistic and aesthetic sense of the people found expression in their painted pottery. Utensils and ornaments of various shapes and designs. The Indus seals have been considered as master pieces of the engraver’s art. More than 2000 seals with beautiful engravings have been discovered. The bronze figure of the dancing girl found at Mohenjodaro was an excellent piece of art. There were also numerous figures of animals and birds. They also produced wonderful toys of terracotta for their children. Pots painted with attractive designs were also produced on a large scale.

Indus Script.

The Indus people had developed the art of writing and even developed a script. This script has not been deciphered as yet and is a mystery for the

scholars. But some say that it is pictographic where each letter stands for some object, idea or sound. They have discovered about 250 to 400 pictographs. For instance, Ram Sharan Sharma (in his book *Ancient India*) says, "The Harappan script is not alphabetical but mainly pictographic". On the other hand, some other scholars, like Dr. A.D. Pusalkar (in *The History and Culture of Indian People, Vol. 1*) remarks, "The large number of signs precludes the possibility of the script being alphabetic. It was mainly phonetic, most of signs standing for open or close syllables and the remainder functioning as determinates or ideograms". Dr. S.R. Rao (in his research work *Decipherment of the Indus Script*) supports the second view and says that the Indus people used the phonetic script in the beginning which slowly and slowly in the late Harappan period assumed the alphabetic pattern. Under such circumstances nothing can be said definitely.

There are also controversies as regards the direction – right to left or left to right - of the script. Sir John Marshall is of the view that the Indus script was read from left to right. Dr. Prem Nath, however, believes that the Indus script can be read from right to left. As far as the language of the script is concerned, some scholars take it to be Sanskrit while others as Dravidian, but nothing final can be said until this script is read. In order to decipher this script some writers try to show the resemblance of the Indus script with other scripts in the ancient Civilizations, especially with the Sumerian script.

But nothing final can be said till the Harappan script is deciphered. According to Dr. A.D. Pusalkar, "Perhaps the discovery of some bilingual inscriptions in those areas with which the Indus people had close trade relations might give us the right clue to the decipherment of the Indus script".

There is no idea about the political organization of the Harappans. Perhaps the Harappan rulers were more concerned with commerce than with conquests, and Harappa was possibly ruled by a class of merchants. According to Amour De Riencourt: "All the evidence points to a high degree of standardization and organization, implying strong centralisation with full control over production and distribution and probably a high efficient system of taxation". Evidences, like drainage, town planning, trading items suggests that there was an organisation like a municipal corporation to look after the civil amenities of the people.

Early excavations indicated that the cities were oligarchic commercial republics. But later discoveries suggest a centralised state rather than a number of independent communities. According to some scholars the ruler was most probably a Priest King. It is difficult to say a final word on the subject till the availability of more relevant materials.

Decline.

The decline and fall of the Indus civilization is a tangled problem and no single explanation can claim infallible truth. The decline was progressive and the city was already slowly dying before its ultimate end. Houses mounting on artificial platforms or upon the ruins in their endeavour to check the floods were shoddy in

construction, older buildings were subdivided, even domestic courtyards were partitioned. This was due to intermittent impact of deep and prolonged flooding as the periods of occupation at Mohen-jo-daro were interleaved by three main phases of deep flooding. It is possible there were intermittent spasms of tectonic movements across the Indus Valley responsible for mighty lake formation and silting. Though there is no evidence that the final downfall of the city was the immediate consequence of a cataclysmic deluge, it can nevertheless be stated that the decline of Mohen-jo-daro was the result of a succession of abnormal and prolonged floods.

Many competent scholars, led by Wheeler, postulate that the final blow was delivered by the Aryan invaders. With the narrowing gap between the end of the Indus cities and the invasion of the Aryans, this seems to be plausible. The unburied skeletons lying in the streets of Mohen-jo-daro are very suggestive of the above view. It is widely accepted that somewhere about the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. the Aryan invasion of India took place which assumed the form of an onslaught upon the walled cities of the aborigines. This is the theme of the *Rig Vedic* hymns, the earliest literature of India. The only fortifications of approximate date are those of the citadels of Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro and it is not improbable that the Harappans of the Indus Valley in their decline, fell before the advancing Aryans in or about the 17th century B.C. The scene of a battle, mentioned in the *Rigveda* was Hari-Yupiya, a place which does not seem to be unrelated with the name of Harappa itself. The Aryans had superior weapons as well as swift horses which enabled them to become masters of the Indus cities.

The complete ruin of the Indus cities could also have been due to the wiping out of their system of agriculture. The rivers might have changed their courses which would make irrigation impossible and ruin the city. Pestilence and the erosion of the surrounding landscapes owing to over-exploitation may also be reasons for the end of certain settlements like Kalibangan. Moreover the conquerors might have shattered the dams by which flood irrigation was made to deposit silt on a vast expanse of land. This made cereal production impossible and dealt a great blow to the endurance of the cities which had already begun to decay from long stagnation.

The following table gives the important theories and their founders as regards decline of the Indus culture.

Decline of Indus Valley	
Theorists	Reasons of decline
Gorden Childe, Stuart Piggot	External Aggression
H.T.Lambrick	Unstable river system

K.U.R.Kenedy	Natural calamity
Orell Stein and A.N. Ghosh	Climate change
R. Mprtimer Wheeler	Aryan invasion
Robert Raikes	Earthquake
Sood and Aggarwal	Dryness of river
Walter Fairservis	Ecological imbalance

Rigvedic Culture

The Vedic society developed in the north and northwestern India after a period of two centuries. Since the decline of mature phase of the Indus civilization. In fact, it developed as a continuation of the late Harappan rural culture. This particular phase of the ancient history of India is called the Vedic period as its history is reconstructed mainly on the basis of the information available from the four Vedas namely Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. The information received from the four Vedas is supplemented by the archaeological evidences.

The word Veda is derived from Sanskrit word 'vid' which means 'to know'. The Vedas are essentially a compilation of prayers and hymns, offered by different families of poets and sages to various Gods. The Vedas are also 'samhitas' in the sense that they represent the oral tradition of that period. They were not recorded when they were first composed. The recording took place after a long period of their composition. Hence; these samhitas represent the collections through a period of over a few centuries.

Archaeological Evidences for Vedic Culture

The history of the Indus civilization is reconstructed on the basis of archaeological evidences only. But when we come to the historical period of the Vedic culture more information is derived from the literary sources. Here archaeological sources acts as supplementary to the available literary sources. The archaeological sources mainly throw light upon the material life of the then people and the society. It enable the historian to understand the pattern of settlements, the type of pottery used, the tools and weapons practiced and the houses in which they dwelt. The pottery, tools, weapons and monuments form the important aspects of archaeological excavations.

Excavations conducted in Punjab, Northern Rajasthan, U.P. along the Indus and Ghaggar Rivers over the last forty years have unearthed many settlements which had existed roughly between 1700 B.C. to 600 B.C. The important materials excavated from these sites are pottery called 'ochre coloured pottery', Black and

Red ware and 'Painted Gray ware' cultures. However, the pottery types do not reflect the entire culture of the people. The analysis of pottery remains will help to understand the specific trait of the cultural assemblage of the period. The literary sources often refer to the geographical areas of U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan.

When a particular pottery happens to be a distinct feature of a culture, that particular culture is known by the specifications of the pottery. The Ochre coloured pottery (OCP) culture is associated with a particular type of pottery. More than 100 sites have yielded this characteristic pottery in the Ganga-Yamuna doab. The OCP culture is succeeded by Black and Red Ware (BRW) and painted Gray Ware (PGW) cultures.

The OCP was discovered in the archaeological sites of U.P. in 1950's. It is made of grained clay under fired and has a wash of ochre. The site associated with OCP is called OCP culture. The OCP sites are generally located on riverbanks. These sites are small in size. The material remains of OCP culture are mostly in the form of pottery. These include Jars, bowls etc. Archaeological remains found at Atranjikhhera, an OCP site suggest that the people of this culture had grown rice and barley. The OCP culture has been ascribed to a period between 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C.

Black and Red Ware (BRW) have been found at Atranjikhhera in between OCP and PGW levels during the excavations conducted in the early 1960's. But in Alangirpur and Hasthinapuri, BRW is found associated with PGW, the characteristic feature of Black and Red Ware is the black colour inside and near the rim on the outside and over the rest of the body red colour. Some of the pots are wheel made and some others are hand made. The BRW recovered from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have paintings, while those found in the doab area have no painting at all. Waste flakes, chips, heads of shell and copper, copper ring and fragments of comb made of bone and found in the BRW sites at Atranjikhhera. BRW are recovered from a wider area with some variations from region to regions. It covers a period between 2400 BC and the early centuries of the Christian era.

Literary Sources: Vedic literature.

The most important literary source for the study of the Vedic society is the 'Vedic literature', consisting of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Itihasas and Puranas. Though they were not recorded in any chronological order, they provide useful information about the Vedic society. Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharva Veda are the four Vedas.

The Rigveda was the oldest and the most important book of the Aryans. It consists of 1017 hymns divided into ten mandalas or chapters. The hymns are addressed to various Gods imploring them to send material blessings to the people. They throw light on the early Aryan culture and society. The Yajurveda contains both hymns and commentaries. It describes the performance of sacrifices. The Samaveda is a collection of hymns that were meant to be sung by a special class of priests. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, 'the Samaveda has great

significance in the history of Indian music. It also throws interesting light on the growth of sacrificial ceremonies...". The Atharvaveda is partly prose and partly poetry. It deals with magic and spells to overcome enemies.

The Brahmanas are commentaries useful for the easy comprehension of the Vedas. They also contain instructions to the priests regarding the correct chanting and pronunciation of the 'mantras'. The Aranyakas are part of the Brahmanas. They are also called forest books, which are considered too sacred to be read only in the loneliness of the forest. Aranyakas are the great philosophical thoughts of the great saints of the past. The Upanishads describe the religious and spiritual thoughts of the Aryans. They discuss serious problems like Karma, soul and salvation. Max Muller called the Upanishads as, "the most wonderful composition of human mind". The Vedic literature throws light on the life, culture and civilization of the Aryans. The political, social, economic and religious life of the Aryans also reflects in the Vedic literature.

The Sutras, Smritis, the Puranas, Dharmasastras, the epics etc. are come under the category of the later Vedic literature. The Sutras contain rules relating to Vedic rituals and customary laws. The Smritis deal with laws, customs and practices of the various Aryan groups. The Puranas are legends. They are helpful in bridging the gaps of several royal dynasties in the history of ancient India. The Dharma Sastras deal with ordinary laws and social customs. The duties and responsibilities of the rulers and the ruled are discussed in the Dharma Sastras.

The great epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata deal with the achievement of the great heroes in the early days of the Indo-Aryans. The Ramayana was composed by the great saint Valmiki. It deals with the conflict between the Aryan and non-Aryan civilizations. The Mahabharata describes the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. According to tradition, Vyasa was its compiler. Both the epics are in verse and discuss about life, culture and religion of the people of the later Vedic period.

Origin and Home of the Aryans

There is good archaeological evidence to show that in the centuries following 2000 B.C, north-west India was invaded by some tribes from the west. They were called Aryans who ultimately occupied the greater part of the northern India and forced the vanquished natives, the Dravidians, to migrate to the south.

The most bewildering source of controversy veers round the original home of the Aryans. A number of scholars, attaching great importance to the Puranic evidence, strongly maintain the indigenous origin of the Aryans. Ganganath Jha tried to prove that the original home was the Brahmarshi-desa. Another scholar, D.S. Trivedi, suggests the region of the river Devika in Multan as the original home of the Aryans. Kashmir and the Himalayan regions have been held by L.C. Kalla to be the Aryan homeland.

The Aryans belonged to a very ancient stock of the human race and lived in the great steppeland which stretches from Poland to Central Asia. Owing to pressure of population and desiccation of pasture lands, the Aryans, migrated in bands

westwards, southwards and eastwards. Some invaded Europe to become the forefathers of the Greeks, Latins, Celts and Teutons, while others appeared in Anatolia to become the progenitor of the Hittite empire. Others remained in their old home, the ancestors of the later Baltic and Slavonic peoples, while others moved southwards to the Caucasus and the Iranian tableland. The Kassites, who conquered Babylon, were led by men of this stock. Further to the north in the Hurri region arose the great state of Mittanni, whose Kings had Indo-Iranian names and a few of whose gods – *Indara*, *Uruvna* (Varuna), *Mitira* and *Nasatiya* are familiar to the Vedic religion. The Aryan invasion of India was not a single concerted action, but one covering centuries and involving many tribes. The Aryans who settled in India were racially and culturally akin to the ancient Iranians. The same gods, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, etc. were worshipped by Iranians till Zoroaster taught them to worship Ahura Mazda in the 6th century B.C. Only the Indo-Aryan god of fire (Agni) was worshipped by both. The Sanskrit word *deva* for ‘god’ stood for ‘demon’ in the Iranian language. “Not only single words and phrases but even whole stanzas may be transliterated from the dialect of India into the dialects of Iran without change of vocabulary or construction.” But later on the two peoples developed their distinctive cultures apparently without the mutual influence.

Aryan Settlements in India

The hymns of the *Rigveda* afford an interesting glimpse of the Aryan settlements in India. The centre of their activities was the Punjab. The rivers most often referred to are the Indus itself, the Sarasvati and the Drishadvati and the five streams - the Sutudri (Sutlej), Vipas (Beas), Parushni (Ravi), Asikni (Chenab) and Vitasta (Jhelum). The rivers mentioned outside the Indus basin are the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Sarayu. The Ganga was not an important river in the period of the *Rigveda* while Yamuna has been mentioned only three times. The *Rigveda* also mentions some rivers of Afghanistan namely Kubha (Kabul), Gomati (Gomal) Krumu (Kurram) and Suvastu (Swat).

The *Rigveda* mentions one outstanding historical event, i.e. the victory of King Sudas over the Ten-king confederacy. Sudas was the chief of the Bharatas. At first Visvamitra was the priest of Sudas who, however, dismissed the former and appointed Vasishtha as his priest. Thereupon a long and bitter struggle ensued between the two rival priests. Visvamitra led a tribal confederacy of ten kings against the Bharatas, the federation consisting of the five well-known tribes Puru, Yadu, Turvasa, Adu and Druhya along with five others namely - Alina, Paktha, Bhalanas, Siva and Vishanin. The Bharatas utterly routed the confederacy on the bank of the Parushni, modern Ravi. Soon after this battle Sudas had to fight with three other non-Aryan tribes - Ajas, Sigrus and Yakshus. The Bharatas were settled in the region between the Sarasvati and the Yamuna while the Purus remained in the Harappa region. Though defeated the Purus were a very important tribe and were closely connected with Tritsus and the Bharatas. Out of the amalgamation of these rival tribes in later Vedic period emerged the Kurus.

In their migration to the east and south-east the Aryans came into conflict with the *Dasas* or *Dasyus*. The Kiratas, Kikatas, Chandalas, Parnakas, and Simyus were

Dasa tribes who inhabited the Gangetic valley. The Dasas were dark-complexioned, snub-nosed, worshippers of the phallus, rich in cattle and lived in fortified strongholds; *pura*. It would be too facile to suppose that there was perpetual enmity between the native *dasyus* and the invading Aryans. A gradual fusion took place and the process by which this sense of unity developed was called Aryanization.

Social Institutions

The Rig Vedic Society was a tribal society. The social relations were predominantly based on kinship ties. The Rajas, the purohithas and the people were all part of the clan. The tribe was referred as '**Jana**' and different tribes are seen in the Rig Veda. The inter tribal conflicts were frequent. The 'Battle of Ten Kings' mentioned in the Rig Veda was fought among different tribes like the Bharata, Purus, Yadus etc. Tribal conflict were related to cattle raids, cattle thefts etc. Cattle were the chief measure of wealth. And the term used for cattle during this period was 'gavishti', which means to search for cows. Cattle raids were common in those days. The chief of the tribe was the Raja or the Gopati (one who protect cows). Kinship units are labelled as Gotra. The position of Raja was not hereditary but he was selected from amongst the clansmen. The clan settled in villages. It was a patriarchal society. The birth of a son was desired by every one in the clan.

The women had also a honourable place in the society, even though it was patriarchal. They were educated and had been admitted in the assembly. They enjoyed the privilege of choosing their partners and to marry late. However, they were always considered as the dependents of father, brother or husband. Oral education was existed. The Rig Veda mentions the names of learned women like Apala, Ghoshala, Lopa mutra, Vishwara etc. who had even composed hymns. They generally followed monogamy. Occasional references are seen regarding polygamy. It must have been practiced by king and chief's only. The women had a respectable position in the family also.

The Rig Vedic Aryans distinguished themselves from other groups who they called the 'dasyus'. They had some consciousness about the physical appearance of the people. The dasyus are described as dark, full lipped, and of hostile speech. The term used for colour was 'varna'. The Aryan language speakers were fair in complexion. Colour may have provided the identity mark. The Rig Veda mentions the Aryavarna and the dasa Varna. The dasas were rich in cattle and lived in fortified strong holds. All these groups fought and befriended each other from time to time.

In course of time social divisions took place in the tribal society. Apart from the Raja the society was divided into three social groups. They were the warriors, the priests and the common people. The warriors fought in the wars claimed a senior lineage within the society. The term 'Shudra' is mentioned in the tenth book of Rigveda, which was a later addition. Therefore, it is assumed that the shudras were not present in the Rig Vedic society. In the occupational groups like carpenters, leather workers, weavers etc. are mentioned. But these divisions were not so sharp. Different occupations were taken up by the members of the same family.

Several tribal assemblies like Sabha and Samiti are mentioned in the Rig Veda. The Sabha might have been the council of select clan members and the Samiti, perhaps comprised of the whole clan. These two assemblies performed the functions of the government and the administration. They were also involved in the selection of the Raja.

The term 'Kula' for families is mentioned rarely in Rigveda. Kulapa was the head of the family. It comprised father, mother, sons, slaves and so on. Another word 'griha' is mentioned in Rigveda for family several times and Kula may have been used to indicate a loose knit joint family. Kulapa is often described not only as householder but as fighter.

Political Institutions.

The Vedic polity was tribal. The concept of state had not developed during this period. The chief of the tribe was the Raja. He was the protector of the tribe and he led them into wars. The kingship was not hereditary. He was selected from among the clansmen. The term 'Vis' in the Rigveda refers to the tribal unit or clan. Many such clans formed a tribe. The Raja was assisted by a group of functionaries in the day to day administration. The Purohita was the most important among them. He conducted sacrifices for the tribe as a whole and for the benefit of the Raja. He received gifts for conducting sacrifices. During the earlier period the whole clan participated in the sacrifice. In course of time sacrifices received more importance. Therefore, the position of the Purohita increased. Simultaneously the Raja also became more powerful.

After the priest, the next important functionary was the 'Senani'. He led the tribe in war along with the Raja. No reference is seen in the Rigveda about the functionary who was in charge of tax collection. However, the Raja received offerings from the public known as 'bali'. Though there is no reference to local functionaries, 'vrajapati' is mentioned as the one who was in charge of the pasture grounds. The king never maintained regular army.

Rig Vedic Religion.

In religion, the Aryans of the Rig Vedic age were nature worshippers; Indra occupied the important place among the Vedic gods. Varuna (the sky god), Rudra (storm god), Vayu (god of wind) Ushas (goddess of dawn) Agni (god of fire) etc. were also venerated by them. The Vedic religion was mainly ritualistic. Prayers and sacrifices formed the important part of their worship. Fish, grains and milk were the main offerings. An important feature of the Rig Vedic religion was the predominance of male gods over their female counterparts. They also believed in the existence of a supreme being controlling the whole universe. Life in the next world was regarded as a replica of life in this world.

From Pastoralism to agriculture.

Rig Vedic society was pastoral. The dominant occupational activity of the people was cattle rearing. Pastoral society relies more upon its animal wealth than on agricultural product. People adopted pastoralism in a place where agriculture is not

feasible. In a pastoral society cattle become an important form of wealth. Cattle were the chief measure of wealth. A wealthy man owned many cattle was called 'gomat'. When we have numerous linguistic evidences for cattle rearing in the Rig Veda, we have very few references about agricultural activities. Most of the references to agriculture are of a later date. Barley is the only one grain indicated in the Rigveda. When the Rig Vedic people settled in the western part of the sub continent, they possibly used copper supplied by the Khetri mines in Rajasthan. But copper did not have as much value in agriculture operations as iron implements. They did not use iron technology. They were familiar with the different stages of agricultural activities like sowing, harvesting and threshing. They might have used wooden plough and practices shifting cultivation. The region where the Rig Vedic people settled had received low rainfall in those days. Large scale permanent cultivation was not possible in these areas without irrigation facilities.

The rivers like Indus, Ravi, and Sutlej ran through the areas where the Rig Vedic people had settled, are known to change their course frequently. Hence, the people may have moved out of their villages with their herds for a certain period in order to feed their cattle. Some scholars are of the opinion that they might have practiced agriculture mainly to produce fodder for their cattle. The Vedic people were either nomadic or semi-nomadic.

GANA

The term gana derives from the root 'gan' which means to count. It is a technical word for 'republic'. However, it is used in Vedic literature to refer tribal or clan solidarity. In every case members of the Gana are represented as having the same ancestor. The term Gana is found at forty-six places in the Rigveda, at nine in Atharvaveda and at several places in the Brahmanas. In most cases it has been interpreted in the sense of 'assembly' or 'troops'. K.P. Jayaswal translated it as an assembly or government by assembly, which was later supported by F.W. Thomas. Fleet translated it as a 'tribe'. R.S. Sharma says it was a sort of gentile organization chiefly of Indo-Aryans.

Although literally the term 'gana' does not mean a tribe, but an artificial collection of people not necessarily belonging to the same tribe. In Vedic literature the term is used in the sense of a tribal or clan solidarity. In the Vedic texts Maruts are repeatedly described as Gana, since they were the sons of Rudra, their Gana in this sense was a clan unit. In traditional history also the members of the gana are represented as having the same ancestor.

It is assumed that the tribal Gana acted also as an assembly. Every member of popular assembly such as the 'Sabha', 'Samiti', 'Vidhata' and 'Gana' could take up arms. In that sense the Vedic gana was an armed organization of the whole actually took part in the inter-tribal wars. The leader of the Gana at one place is called 'Ganasyaraja', but generally known as 'Ganapati'. Marut, Brihaspati and Brahmanaspati are repeatedly described as 'Ganapati'. At least in one reference in the Rigveda the leader of the gana is given the title of 'rajan'.

It is stated that the ganas were always anxious to win wealth for themselves. The spoils captured by the members were not directly appropriated by them in their own individual capacity. It was obligatory on them to surrender all such booty to their chief. Ganapati received voluntary gifts for his leadership in war in the early period, which became mandatory payment in the later stage. The economic basis for the Rigvedic gana was the rearing of cattle, not rooted in the soil of any particular territory, but moved from one place to another with the herds of cattle.

The Vedic gana did not possess any other officer, except Ganapati and whether he got anything extra to his share is not clear. It seems that Ganapati distributed equal shares among the people, as is generally found in the tribal societies. There is no mention about any compulsory taxes paid by the members of the gana to its leader. What was offered voluntarily to the gana and its leader in the early period became mandatory payment, when the tribal gana was transformed into a monarchy, in surplus producing agricultural stage. Rigvedic ganas in a nomadic and migratory state engaged in perpetual warfare for the profession of cattle. Ganas practiced agriculture in the later Vedic stage.

It is reported that gana also served as a kind of religious assembly. Vedic ganas had no class distinctions. Maruts are described as people in the Rigveda, while in the 'Satapathabrahmana' of later Vedic period they are repeatedly mentioned as peasants. Vedic gana was probably another primitive tribal democracy combining in itself the military, distributive, religious and social activities of early man. It seems there was no public officials, no taxes, no classes and no army apart from the gana army. In other words, Vedic gana was primarily a tribal republic.

GOTRA

The literary meaning of 'gotra' in the Rigvedic period was cowden or cow shed or stable. In the course of time, significance of gotra changes correspondingly to mean 'household' as well as 'clan'. The term gotra might have been used in the tribal stages to mention a unit of kinship. People of the unit kinship when lived together with their cows came to be known as gotra to the Rigvedic period. However, it is not necessary that the members of a gotra descended. However, it is not necessary that the members of a gotra had its own separate mark for the identification of their cattle. Later the unit of common holding became the joint family. It was the form of property which gave the name to the group holding it in common.

According to Romila Thapar, 'Gotra is a patrilineal, exogamous sibship whose members trace their descent to a common ancestor'. It began with an institution recording kin and social relations only among Brahmins, later extended to other Varnas also. Gotra was crucial to marriage and property since members of the same gotras (sagotra) were not permitted to marry within. Strictly speaking only Brahmin families supposed to particular gotras. Traditionally the gotras of Brahmin families are traceable to seven or eight ancient sages. There are many numbers of gotras in these main divisions of the Brahmins, each of which marry outside its own gotra.

Kosambi writes, 'it is known each particular gotra had its own mark of branding cattle, which were therefore held in common.

The gotras confirmed the status of brahmanas and indicated that the knowledge of ritual was crucial of social status. The maintenance of such a system was necessary for the Brahmins, when new members had to be recruited, who were not from the old kinship groups. The gotra system was useful to incorporate the new Brahmins, who were the tribal priests earlier, into the system.

Mode of re-distribution of wealth.

The process of re-distribution was a form of socio- economic relation existed in the Vedic society. It decisively influenced the social formation of the Vedic society as a part of the power structure. Re-distribution asserted the status of a particular section of the society. It also influenced the relationship between the section of the society. Re-distribution was done at a specific place, after the consolidation of goods from other areas. Dana and Dakshina, Bali and Bhaga were the means of redistribution in the Vedic period.

The two commonly used words for gift giving; in the Vedic texts were 'Dana and Dakshina'. But they were not synonymous. The Dana was the act of giving or granting, irrespective of what and when given. The Dakshina was a specific gift giving to the performer of the sacrifice. The earliest reference of Dana and Dakshina is seen in the 'Dana Stuti' hymns of Rigveda. It states that two distinct groups are involved in the gift giving process- the Brahmins and Rajanyas. Rajanyas or the Kshatriyas bestow wealth on priests. The gift giving act as a means of exchanging and redistributing economic wealth. The wealth for redistribution in the forms of Dana and Dakshina was acquired through the labour of the respective tribe.

The donor and recipient are the two essential elements of gift giving. The other elements include the appropriateness of the gift, place and time of making the gift. In course of time gift giving evolved its own rules. In the Rig Vedic society the most prized gift and object of wealth was cattle. Dana of ten horses is a common figure. Camels, chariots, gold, slave girls etc. were also given as gift during the Vedic period. There is no mention of land and grains given as gift. In those days land was not considered as an object of Wealth.

Bali was a tribute or booty which eventually became a tax on land. It was a method adopted by the ruler to accumulate wealth. Bali included the voluntary offering to the chief and also an obligatory tribute by the defeated one to the victor. It is not sure whether Bali was collected on a regular basis during the Vedic period. During the Rig Vedic period it was given by the people voluntarily to their chief for bringing victory to the entire tribe in the war. And war booty forcibly received by the victorious chief. Bhaga means a share. It was normally applied to the produce of the land. In the early period the king was often called as the 'Bhagadugha' which means those who milks the share.

Later Vedic Phase

The later Vedic age (roughly 1000-600B.C.) witnessed significant changes in the political, social, economic and religious life of the Aryans. The literary sources like the Sama, Yajur and the Atharva Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishads etc. throw light on the Aryan life and culture of the later Vedic period. Eastward Expansion.

The later Vedic period witnessed the widening and shifting of the geographical horizons. The later Vedic works refer to a wider geographical area than is found in the Rig Veda. They mention the two seas, the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean. It would appear that the people of the later Vedic period were familiar with major portions of the north-western and north-eastern India.

During this period the Vedic tribe had moved from the Saptasindhu region to the region of the Ganga-Yamuna and whole of western U.P. The Kurus occupied Delhi and the upper portions of doab, the area called Kurushetra or the land of the Kurus. Gradually they merged with Panchalas, which occupied the middle portions of doab and established their capital at Hastinapura. The history of the Kurus is important for the Kurushetra war which was fought between the Kurus and the Pandavas of the Kuru clan. Towards the end of the later Vedic period, they further moved east to Kosala in eastern U.P. and Videha in north Bihar.

During the course of their eastward expansion, the later Vedic people had to fight against the natives of eastern and western U.P. and north Bihar. In east U.P. and north Bihar they fought against the users of copper implements and the black and red pottery. In western U.P. they fought against the users of ochre or red pottery and copper implements. In some areas they fought against the natives who were considered as the late Harappans. The later Vedic people attained victory over the natives because of the use of horse drawn chariots and iron weapons. It is important that the shift to the east was accompanied by changes in the economy followed by changes in the socio-political organizations as well.

PGW Culture (Painted Gray Ware).

It was first excavated from Ahichatra in 1946. It is wide spread in North India. Thirty sites of PGW culture have been excavated so far including Bhagwanpura in Haryana, Now in Rajasthan, Rupar in Punjab etc, these settlements are located along the river banks and are mostly small villages. The pottery of this culture is wheel made and is gray in colour. Bowls and dishes are the common types of this culture. The people of this period lived in circular or rectangular houses. Certain houses had more than a dozen rooms. Several objects made out of copper, bone, iron and glass and found in the PGW sites. Iron objects are found in all most all sites. Ornaments had been used by the people. Remains of rice, barley and wheat was discovered at the sites of Hasthinapura and Atranjikhhera.

Economic Condition.

Agriculture continued to be the chief occupation of the people. They ploughed the ground and as many as twenty-four oxen were used to drag the large and heavy

plough. The furrow (Sita) was known. The *Satapatha Brahmana* classified agricultural operations as 'ploughing, sowing, reaping and threshing'. The use of manure was well understood for increasing production. A cultivator or ploughman was called *Kinasa*. Many kinds of grains were grown – such as barley, rice wheat, beans, sesamum and *masura* (lentils). There were two harvests in a year.

The expansion of the Aryans coupled with the increase in the material prosperity gave rise to numerous occupations to meet the growing needs of the people. Thus there were fishermen, fire-rangers, ploughers, weavers, dyers, washermen, barbers, butchers, footmen, messengers, makers of jewels, baskets, ropes, chariots, and bows, smiths, potters, professional acrobats, and musicians. The physician healed the sick, but his profession was not considered respectable in society. The development of industries brought in its train numerous new professions like boatmen, helmsmen, oarsmen, money-lender (*Kusidi*), merchants or *Sreshthis* who organized themselves into guilds. The astrologer formed an important part of the life of a village. Women were employed as dyers, embroiderers or basket-makers. A certain amount of sea-borne trade was carried on and the reference to the legend of the flood in the *Sathapatha Brahmana* is taken by some authorities to point to intercourse with Babylon.

There was no regular system of currency of coinage. But some improvised coinage like *Krishnala*, *Satamana* and *nishka* made their appearance. *Krishnala* berry was a unit of weight which usually weighed one *ratti*, that is, 1.8 grains. *Satamana*, a piece of gold equivalent to weight of 100 *Krishnalas*, was used by the merchants as currency. The *nishka* replaced the cow as a unit of value. The advance of civilization was marked by the extended use of metals – gold (*hiranya*), silver (*rajata*), bronze (*ayas*), iron (*krishnayas*), copper (*red ayas*), lead (*sisa*). Gold and silver were used to make ornaments.

The people continued to live in wooden or thatched houses with walls, plastered with clay. The better houses had a store-room, ladie's room, men's general living room and a hall for fire worships. Food and drink remained the same as before. Rice, porridge made of grain, barley, milk, curds, *ghi*, sesame, meat were the common food. Generally meat was taken on festive occasions. Drinking of *Sura* was condemned which goaded men to vicious path. Dress usually consisted of three garments – an undergarment (*nivi*), a garment proper (*vasas*), and an over-garment (*adhi-vasas*). The turban was worn both by men and women. Amulets were generally worn to ward off evils and to ensure happiness and long life. A most powerful amulet was the *trivrita*, made of three strands of gold, three of silver and three of iron. Knowledge of medicine was anything but elementary. The use of medicinal herbs in combination with magical spells betrayed the primitive system of curing diseases. The use of sandbands to stop bleeding is interesting. An accurate observation in the *Samkhayana Brahmana* that sickness was particularly prevalent at the time of change of a season. It showed the unmistakable influence of nature on man's physical constitution.

Sabha and Samiti

Several tribal assemblies are mentioned in the Vedic texts. The most important and frequently mentioned assemblies are the Sabha and Samiti. It is assumed that the Sabha was the council of the select clan members and the Samiti comprised of

the whole clan. These assemblies performed the functions of the governmental administration and also selected the Raja. The Sabha and Samiti might have had some administrative, judicial and legislative powers but how they were exercised can not be determined. It is believed that the power of the Raja were controlled by these two assemblies.

By the later Vedic period these assemblies had lost their prominence. A.L. Basham writes, "the old tribal assemblies are still, from time to time, referred to but their power was waning rapidly, and by the end of this period the king's autocracy was in most cases only limited by the power of the Brahmanas, the weight of tradition and the force of public opinion, which was always of some influence in ancient India". However it did not mean that the king had become authoritarian. The king always attempted to get the co-operation of these assemblies.

Society.

The later Vedic period witnessed a transformation of the pastoral society to a sedentary agrarian society. This transformation was made a reality with the discovery and use of iron implements. The excavated objects of this period include iron tipped arrow-heads, spear heads, sickles and axes. However, iron technology was not developed and not widely used in the agricultural activities. Iron is called 'Shyama' or 'Krishna ayas' in the later Vedic texts. During the later Vedic period iron was used in eastern Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Western U.P. It seems that iron was used mainly for making weapons. Iron did not influence the agricultural technology until the second half of the first millennium B.C.

Ploughing was done with the help of wooden ploughshare. One Iron ploughshare was excavated from Jakhera, which probably belonged to the end of the later Vedic period. Clearing of forest in the upper Gangetic valley was carried on by burning. Iron technology was in the primitive form. And hence, iron implements were not widely used in agricultural activities. However, iron tipped weapon and horse chariots had developed military activity of the people. The later Vedic society was not a well developed agrarian society and the same position was with the iron technology.

Social Divisions-Varna and Jati System.

The most peculiar characteristic of the *Hindu* society is the system called Varna and jati. Varna is caste on the basis of position in the society and jati a sub-caste. (Varna in Sanskrit actually means colour). Varna is the positional label imposed upon different castes as a yardstick for social classification. It was this discrimination, exploitation and human right violations on the basis of the varna-jati classification that the reformist movements opposed the most. The varnas are four in number: brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. This four-fold division was on the basis of profession and the grades of respectability attributed to each of these. And thus the brahmanas who were the custodians of the worship of gods and the performance of the rituals were sanctioned the highest of varnas. The shudras who were allotted the manual labour and related 'clean' jobs the lowest. Below these four layers were the numerous other castes and sub-castes engaged in 'unclean' jobs. These people were below the varnas and therefore were treated as untouchables. The practice, of 'untouchability' is prohibited by law, but

it is continued in certain parts of the country. Mahatma *Gandhi* called the untouchables harijans, the people of Lord Vishnu. They now call themselves dalits. The government coined the term scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

'Varna' did not have any particular use in the operations of the social system, nor had it a built-in power for that. But the most important factor was the caste or jati. Jati denoted a particular community with a definition on customs by and large, having a particular profession hereditarily and, inclusive marriage rights. Each Varna would contain several jatis each of which had its own customs and practices. Historian Romila Thapar writes on the genesis and formulation of the caste system: When the Aryans first came to India they were divided into three social classes, the warriors or aristocracy, the priests, and the common people. There was no consciousness of caste, as is clear from remarks such as "a bard am I, my father is a leech and my mother grinds corn". Professions were not hereditary, nor were there any rules limiting marriages within these classes, or taboos on whom one could eat with. The three divisions merely facilitated social and economic organization. The first step in the direction of caste (as distinct from class) was taken when the Aryans treated the dasas (slaves) as beyond the social pale, probably owing to a fear of the dasa and the even greater fear that assimilation with them would lead to a loss of *Aryan* identity. Ostensibly the distinction was largely that of color, the dasas being darker and of an alien culture.

The later Vedic society was divided into four varnas namely Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vyshyas and Shudras. The hymn in the later portion of the Rig Veda for the first time describes the origin of the four varnas. The doctrine of Varnasrama Dharma and Chaturvarna were introduced during this period. The Brahmins formed the priestly class. The Kshatriyas were trained in war fare, the vyshyas in trade and agriculture. And the shudras took to menial jobs. The caste was elastic at first, but in course of time it became rigid. Change of caste and inter marriages with the shudras were looked upon with growing disfavour.

There was a marked deterioration in the status of women during this period. Daughters were regarded as a source of misery. Women were deprived of their right to attend the Samiti. They had no right to inherit property. Thus they became mere dependents of their fathers, husbands or sons. The Shudras formed the lowest section of the Varna society. The later Vedic text Aitereya Brahmana mentioned the worst position of the shudras. He is called the servant of the other, to be made to work at the will of the other and to be beaten at will.

The varna-Dharma prescribed the Ashramas or the four stages of life, that of the Brahmachari or student, the Grihastha or householder, the vanaprastha or hermit and the Sanyasi or ascetic. The later Vedic texts in general describe only three Ashrams. And the fourth stage has not been well established at that time. But the Upanishads mentioned the fourth stage also.

The literary meaning of Jati is birth or assigned by birth. The Jati occurs in a later Vedic text and is used in the sense of an extended family. The stress on kinship ties was further emphasized by the use of the word Jati. While Varna decided the ritual status of a person. 'Jati' decided the actual status. Jati slowly became the gauge of a more precise assessment of the socio economic status of a group. It was the Buddhist literature that used Jati in the sense of cast, implying

an endogamous kinship group with specialised occupations and service relationship reflecting an increase in social stratification. In course of time each Jati came to have its own religious observances.

Rituals and the Role of Brahmins.

The later Vedic age witnessed the growth of ceremonial religion and priesthood religion became more ritualistic and superstitious. The simple religious worship of the Rig Vedic period gave place to elaborate rituals and complex sacrifices. As a result the power of the priest/Brahmin increased. The worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva became more popular among the people. They were believed as creator, the preserver and the destroyer of mankind respectively. Besides the nature worship, the worship of Krishna and Rama was also known to them. Modern Hinduism which assimilated many non-Aryan practices and beliefs was gradually taking shape during this period. Idol worship, belief in good and evil spirits were absorbed in the religion of the Aryans. The cardinal tenets of Hinduism like the transmigration of soul, moksha, Karma and Maya were enunciated during this period. Thus the organization of Hinduism was the main achievement of the later Vedic age.

From Jana to Janapatha.

The political structure of the Rig Vedic period underwent changes during the later Vedic period. The term 'Jana' used in the Rig Vedic age to denote the tribe or people, paved for the emergence of 'Janapatha' which meant the area where the tribe settled. Though the word 'Rastra' is seen used in the later Vedic texts, it was not used in the sense of a state with well defined territories. Each place earlier known by its tribe now developed as a separate area.

The tribal identity was merging with the territorial identities. The union between the tribes like that of the Bharatras and Purus and then with Kuru denote the integration of the settlements into territorial areas. The union between the tribes brought about a change in the status and function of the earlier tribal chiefs. The chief or the king was no longer a chief involved in cattle raids and cattle thefts. The king now becomes the protector of the territory whose tribes' men had settled. The kshatriyas now had an important position in the society.

The later Vedic texts give details of rituals and ceremonies like Aswamedha, Rajasuya and Vaja Peya conducted by and for the king in order to strengthen his position. All these ceremonies were conducted to regenerate the power and supremacy of the Raja over the people and land, which increased the Prestige of the Raja. The nature of the conflicts and battles also changed. It was not a battle for cattle ownership but for the acquisition of land. The increase in population might have been the reason for it. The king collected army from the tribes at the time of emergency.

UNIT-II**MAHAJANAPADAS**

State formation becomes a reality due to several factors. These factors may vary from region to region. There are many theories which seek to explain the reasons for the emergence of a state. Growth of trade, urbanization, population pressure, territorial expansion etc. lead to state formation. State acts as an efficient instrument to control an expanding population. It exercises control over a more or less well defined territory and maintains an administrative machinery to collect taxes and revenue. It maintains a regular army that enforces law and order in the society.

Along with the state formation the inequality in the society also increases – a well marked distinction between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers controlled the resources of the society for their own use and benefits. The ruled, on the other hand, provide the money and revenue required for the maintenance of the ruling class. The basic nature of a tribal society and a state society is in the nature of the political control. In a tribal system, political power is generally exercised by a clan which has no authority to enforce its decision. In a state system a specialised administrative machinery enforce the decisions of the state. In a tribal society normally the decisions are taken together whereas in a state the decision is taken by the ruling class. And it is enforced upon the ruled ones.

The early stages of state formation took place in different parts of India during the time of the Mahajanapadas. A small section of the society came to have monopoly of power which they exercised over the rest of the society. This power was exercised in various ways and for various purposes. There were monarchies in which the king was the supreme head of the state. By the time of Mauryas the state system had become more complex.

Territorial States and Mahajanapadas.

By the 6th century B.C. the use of iron had become widespread in Eastern U.P. and Western Bihar. It facilitated the formation of the large territorial state. Iron weapons helped the warrior classes to play an important role in the life of the people. The new agricultural tools and implements enabled the peasants to produce more food grains. This surplus in agriculture lead them to trade which changed the ideology of the people. As a result of this various class emerged. These developments lead to the growth of cities and towns. The extra product could be collected by the rulers to meet the military and administrative needs. The surplus could also be used in the towns which had since sprung up. These advantages enabled the people to stick to their land and to expand at the cost of the neighbouring areas. The rise of large stages strengthened the territorial idea. People now began to owe allegiance to the Janapada or to the territory to which they belonged instead of the Jana or the tribe to which they belonged.

In the age of the Buddha, 16 large states called Mahajanapadas were flourishing in North India. They were mostly situated North of the Vindhyas and extended from the North West Frontier of Bihar. Of these Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti were considerably powerful. In the East the kingdom of Anga covered the modern districts of Monghyr and Bhagalpur. It had its capital at Champa. Eventually the kingdom of Anga was swallowed by its powerful neighbour Magadha.

Initially the state of Magadha occupied the modern districts of Patna, Gaya and parts of Shahabad. It grew to be the leading state of the time. North of the Ganga, there was the state of Vajjis, which included 8 clans. But the Lichchavis with their capital at Vaishali, which is identical with the village of Basarh in the district of Vaishali, was the most powerful. To the west of the state of Magadha was the kingdom of Kasi with its capital at Varanasi. In the beginning Kasi was the most powerful of the states but eventually it had to submit to the powerful state of Kosala.

Kosala flourished in the area occupied by Eastern U.P. It had its capital at Shravasti, which is identical with Sahet Mahet on the borders of Gonda and Bahraich districts of U.P. In Kosala there flourished important city of Ayodhya, which is associated with Lord Rama. Kosala also included the tribal republican territory of Sakyas of Kapila Vastu, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. The capital of Kapilavasthu was at Piprahwa in the Basti district. But Lumbini is situated at a distance of 15 K.M. Piprahwa in Nepal, served as another capital of the Sakyas.

In the neighbourhood of Kosala was the republican state of the Mallas, which had also a common border with the Vajji state. One of the capitals of the Mallas was at Kusinagara, where Goutama Buddha passed away. Further west lay the kingdom of the Vatsas. Along the banks of the Yamuna which had its capital at Kausambi. Vatsas were a Kuruclan. They had shifted from Hastinapura and settled down at Kausambi near Allahabad

Another powerful state Avanti was situated in the Central Malwa and the adjoining parts of Madhya Pradesh, which was divided into two parts. The capital of the Northern part was Ujjain while of the southern part was at Mahishamati.

The political history of India from the 6th century onwards is the history of struggle for supremacy among these powerful states of Magadha, Kosala, Kausambi and Avanti. Ultimately the kingdom of Magadha emerged to be the most powerful and it succeeded in founding a powerful empire in the North.

Mahajanapadas

In the later Vedic period, the tribal organisations changed its identity and gradually shifted to the territorial identity, and the area of settlement was now regarded as *janapadas* or states. In transition from tribe to monarchy, they lost the essential democratic pattern of the tribe but retained the idea of government through an assembly representing the tribes. These states consisted of either a single tribe such as Shakyas, Koliyas, and Malas etc. The people in the lower Ganges Valley and Delta, which were outside the Aryan pale, were not incorporated. There was, therefore, a strong consciousness of the pure land of the

Aryans called Aryavarta. Each janapada tried to dominate and *subjugate* other *janapadas* to become *Mahajanapadas*.

The 16 Mahajanapadas		
Mahajanapadas	Capitals	Locations
Gandhara	Taxila	Covering the region between Kabul and Rawalpindi in North Western Province.
Kamboja	Rajpur	Covering the area around the Punch area in Kashmir
Asmaka	Potana	Covering modern Paithan in Maharashtra; on the bank of River Godavari
Vatsa	Kaushambi	Covering modern districts of Allahabad and Mirzapur
Avanti	Ujjain	Covering modern Malwa (Ujjain) region of Madhya Pradesh.
Surasena	Mathura	Located in the Mathura region at the junction of the Uttarapath & Dakshinapath
Chedi	Shuktimati	Covering the modern Budelkhand area
Maila	Kushinara, Pawa	Modern districts of Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Later merged into Maghada Kingdom
Kurus	Hastinapur/Indraprastha	Covering the modern Haryana and Delhi area to the west of River Yamuna
Matsya	Virat Nagari	Covering the area of Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan
Vajjis	Vaishali	Located to the north of the River Ganga in Bihar. It was the seat of united republic of eight smaller

		kingdoms of which Lichhavis, Janatriks and Videhas were also members.
Anga	Champa	Covering the modern districts of Munger and Bhagalpur in Bihar. The Kingdoms were later merged by Bindusara into Magadha.
Kashi	Banaras	Located in and around present day Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
Kosala	Shravasti	Covering the present districts of Faizabad, Gonda, Bahraich, etc.
Magadga	Girivraja/Rajgriha	Covering modern districts of Patna, Gaya and parts of Shahabad.
Panchala	Ahichhatra (W. Panchala), Kampilya (S. Panchala)	Present day Rohilkhand and part of Central Doab in Uttar Pradesh.

Important Republics: The kings in these states had the supreme authority. The Mahajapandas of Vriji, Malla, Kuru, Panchal and Kamboj were republican states and so were other smaller states like Lichhavi, Shakya, Koliya, Bhagga, and Moriya. These republican states had a *Gana-parishad* or an Assembly of senior and responsible citizens. This *Gana-Parishad* had the supreme authority in the state. All the administrative decisions were taken by this Parishad. Again, the republics were basically of two types: (a) the republics comprising a single tribe like those of the Sakyas, the Koliyas and the Mallas, and (b) the republics comprising a number of tribes or the republics of confederacy like the Vrijjis.

Difference between Republics and Monarchies

- In republics, every tribal oligarch claimed share in revenues from peasants. In the monarchies, the king claimed to be the sole recipient of such revenues.
- In the tribal oligarchy or republic, each raja (tribal oligarch) was free to maintain his own little army under his senapati. In a monarchy, the king maintained his regular standing army. He did not permit any other armed forces within his boundaries.
- Republics functioned under the leadership of the oligarchic assemblies, while a monarchy functioned under the individual leadership of the king.
- The Brahmanas had a considerable influence on the monarchical administration, while they were relegated to the background in the republics.

Growth of Urban Centres

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

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

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

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

The Rise of Magadha

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

Bimbisara strengthened his position by marriage alliances. He took three wives. His first wife was the daughter of the king of Kosala. The Kosalan bride brought him as dowry a Kasi village yielding a revenue of 1,00,000. The marriage put an end to the hostility of Kosala and gave him a free hand in dealing with other states. His second wife Chellana was a Lichchavi Princess from Vaisali. And his third wife was the daughter of the chief of the Madra clan of Punjab. These marriage relations gave enormous diplomatic prestige and paved the way for the expansion of Magadha Westward and Northward.

Magadha's most serious rival was Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. Its king, Pradyota Mahasena fought Bimbisara but ultimately the two thought it wise to become friends. Later when Pradyota was attacked by Jaundice, Bimbisara sent the royal physician, Jivaka to Ujjain.

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

According to Buddhist chronicles Bimbisara ruled for 52 years roughly from 544 B.C to 492 B.C under him Magadha became a flourishing kingdom which attracted the most enlightened men of the age. Both Mahavira and Buddha preached their doctrines during the time of Bimbisara. As a patron of Buddhism, Bimbisara made a donation of the park called 'Veluvana' to the Buddha and the Sangha. Bimbisara also showed due reverence to Jainism. He was murdered by his son Ajatasatru, who was impatient to rule Magadha.

Ajatasatru was determined to continue his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. He strengthened Rajagriha and built a small fort, Pataligrama in the vicinity of the Ganges (this was later to become the famous Mauryan metropolis of Pataliputra). His father having conquered the eastern state, Ajatasatru turned his attention to the North and the West. On Bimbisara's tragic death, his wife Kosala Devi died of grief. In consequence the Kosalan king, Prasenajith

revoked the gift of the Kasi village, which was granted to Bimbisara as dowry. The result was the outbreak of hostilities between Magadha and Kosala, which continued with varying fortunes for along time. In the end, peace was concluded between the two, Presenajith restoring the disputed village of Kasi to Ajatasatru and giving his daughter Bajira in marriage to him.

The conflict with the Lichchavis was the next important event of Ajatasatru's reign. Though his mother was a Lichchavi princess, he did not resist from waging war with the Lichchavis. The excuse was that the Lichchavis were the allies of Kosala. He created dissension in the ranks of the Lichchavis and finally destroyed their independence by invading their territory and defeating them in battle. It took him full sixteen years to destroy Vaisali. Finally, Magadha was victorious and was recognized as the most powerful force in eastern India. The victory of Magadha was a victory for the monarchical system, which was now firmly established in the Gangetic plain.

Ajatasatru faced a stronger rival in the ruler of Avanti. Avanti had defeated the Vatsas of Kausambi and now threatened an invasion of Magadha. To meet this danger, Ajatasatru began the fortification of Rajagir. But the invasion did not take place in his life time. Thus the foundations of the Magadhan empire laid by Bimbisara was now firmly established as a result of subtle diplomacy of Ajatasatru

Ajatasatru is represented in the Jain texts as a Jain and in the Buddhist texts as a Buddhist. He paid frequent visits to Mahavira both at Vaisali and Champa and expressed his faith in the teachings of Jainism. In his later days he became a covert to Buddhism and found solace for his tormented soul. Partaking the bulk of the relics of Buddha. Ajatasatru enshrined them in a single sthupa at his capital, Rajagriha. He repaired at Rajagriha 18 Mahavihars which were forsaken after Buddha's death. He promoted the cause of Buddhism by association himself with its first general council, at Rajagriha which was attended by 500 eminent Bikshus.

Ajatasatru was succeeded by his son Udayan (460-444 B.C.). He founded a new town called Kusumapura at Pataliputra. Udayan was succeeded by the dynasty of Shisunagas who temporarily shifted the capital to Vaisali. Their greatest achievement was the destruction of the power of Avanti. This brought to an end the 100 year old rivalry between Magadha and Avanti. From now onwards, Avanti became a part of the Magadhan Empire and continued to be so till the end of the Mauryan rule.

Archaeological Evidences-NBPW Culture (Northern Black Polished ware)

The Northern Black Polished Ware culture (abbreviated NBPW or NBP) of the *Indian Subcontinent (c. 700–200 BC)* is an Iron Age culture, succeeding the Painted Grey Ware culture. It developed beginning around 700 BC, or in the late Vedic period, and peaked from c. 500–300 BC, coinciding with the rise of the Mauryan Empire.

Scholars have noted similarities between NBP and the much earlier *Harappan cultures*, among them the ivory dice and combs and a similar

system of weights. Other similarities include the utilization of mud, baked bricks and stone in architecture, the construction of large units of public architecture, the systematic development of hydraulic features and a similar craft industry. There are also, however, important differences between these two cultures; for example, rice, millet and sorghum became more important in the NBP culture. The NBP culture may reflect the first state-level organization in the Indian Subcontinent.

The NBP Ware culture is identified by its distinctive pottery. The first NBP Ware was discovered from Taxila in 1930 and since then nearly 1500 NBP sites were identified, out of which nearly 75 sites were excavated. The NBP culture extended from Taxila in the north-west to Talmuk in West Bengal and Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh in the south. Rupar in Punjab, Noh in Rajasthan, Vaisali and Pataliputra in Bihar, Hastinapura, Kausambi, and Sravasti etc in U.P. are the important excavated NBP sites.

The archaeologists have identified two phases of NBP culture, the first being the formative one and the second being the mature one. The absence of Punch marked coins and burnt bricks signify the early phase, where as both Punch marked Coins and burnt bricks are seen in the mature phase. The excavations at Hastinapur and Kausambi suggest that buildings were constructed on a large scale in the NBP culture as well as the emergence of cities in the Ganga basin.

Several items are discovered from the NBP sites, the most important being the pottery. They are made on the wheels with glossy surface out of good quality clay. Some of the wares are in golden, silver, pink and brown colours. The wares are orated by simple dots; circles and arches. Most of them are dishes and bowls. On the whole it seems that the NBP wares were luxurious items. Several kinds of tools, weapons, ornaments and other objects made of gold, silver glass, stone and bone have also be found in the NBP sites. Agricultural implements like sickles, axes etc. Weapons like arrowheads, spearheads and several miscellaneous objects all made of iron are found in the sites of Kausambi. These items roughly belong to the second half of the first millennium B.C. It shows an advanced level technology as well as the existence of trade in the society.

Varnasrama Dharma

The principle of Varnasrama Dharma is one of the basic principles of Hinduism. The Varnasrama system is peculiar to Hindus. It is a characteristic feature of Hinduism. It is also prevalent throughout the world according to Guna-Karma (aptitude and conduct), though there is no such distinct denomination of this kind, elsewhere. The duties of the castes are Varna Dharma. The four castes are Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The duties of the stages in life are Asrama Dharma. The four Asramas or orders of life are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

The Principle

Human society is like a huge machine. The individuals and communities are like its parts. If the parts are weak and broken, the machine will not work. A machine is nothing without its parts. The human body also can work efficiently if its parts and organs are in sound and strong condition. If there is pain in any part of the body, if there is disease in any organ or part of the body, this human machine will go out of order. It will not perform its usual function or work.

So is the case with the human society. Every individual should perform his duties efficiently. The Hindu Rishis and sages formed an ideal scheme of society and an ideal way of individual life, which is known by the name Varnasrama Dharma. Hinduism is built on Varnasrama Dharma. The structure of the Hindu society is based on Varnasrama Dharma. Observance of Varnasrama Dharma helps one's growth and self-evolution. It is very indispensable. If the rules are violated, the society will soon perish.

The aim of Varnasrama Dharma is to promote the development of the universal, eternal Dharma. If you defend Dharma, it will defend you. If you destroy it, it will destroy you. Therefore, never destroy your Dharma. This principle holds true of the individual as much as of the nation. It is Dharma alone which keeps a nation alive. Dharma is the very soul of man. Dharma is the very soul of a nation also.

In the West and in the whole world also, there is Varnasrama, though it is not rigidly observed there. Some Western philosophers have made a division of three classes, viz., philosophers, warriors and masses. The philosophers correspond to the Brahmanas, warriors to Kshatriyas and the masses to Vaisyas and Sudras. This system is indispensable to keep the society in a state of perfect harmony and order.

The Four Castes

In Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda, there is reference to the division of Hindu society into four classes. It is described there that the Brahmanas came out of the face of the Lord, the Creator, Kshatriyas from His arms, Vaisyas from His thighs, and the Sudras from His feet. This division is according to the Guna and Karma. Guna (quality) and Karma (kind of work) determine the caste of a man. This is supported by Lord Krishna in the Gita, also. He says in the Gita: "The four castes were emanated by me, by the different distribution of qualities and actions. Know Me to be the author of them, though the actionless and inexhaustible".

There are three qualities or Gunas, viz., *Sattva* (purity), *Rajas* (passion) and *Tamas* (inertia). *Sattva* is white, *Rajas* is red and *Tamas* is black. These three qualities are found in man in varying proportions. *Sattva* preponderates in some persons. They are Brahmanas. They are wise persons or thinkers. They are the priests, ministers or philosophers who guide kings or rulers. In some, *Rajas* is predominant. They are Kshatriyas. They are warriors or men of action. They fight with the enemies or invaders and defend the country. In some, *Tamas* is predominant. They are Vaisyas or traders. They do business and agriculture and

amass wealth. Sudras are the servants. None of these qualities is highly developed in them. They serve the other three castes.

In a broad sense, a Sattvic man, who is pious and virtuous and leads the divine life, is a Brahmana, a Rajasic man with heroic quality is a Kshatriya, a Rajasic man with business tendencies is a Vaisya and a Tamasic man is a Sudra. Hitler and Mussolini were Kshatriyas. Ford was a Vaisya.

Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, and also, uprightness, knowledge, Realisation and belief in God are the duties of the Brahmanas, born of (their own) nature. Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, and also, not flying from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of the Kshatriyas, born of (their own) nature. Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaisyas, born of (their own) nature. And action consisting of service is the duty of the Sudras, born of (their own) nature.

The Law of Spiritual Economics

The underlying principle in caste system or Varna Dharma is division of labour. Rishis studied human nature carefully. They came to the conclusion that all men were not equally fit for all kinds of work. Hence, they found it necessary to allocate different kinds of duties to different classes of people, according to their aptitude, capacity or quality. The Brahmanas were in charge of spiritual and intellectual affairs. The work of political administration and defence was given to the Kshatriyas. The Vaisyas were entrusted with the duty of supplying food for the nation and administering its economic welfare. The Sudras did menial work. The Rishis felt all these needs of the Hindu nation and started the system of Varnas and Asramas.

This division of labour began in Vedic times. The Vedas taught that the Brahmana was the brain of the society, the Kshatriya its arms, the Vaisya its stomach, and the Sudra its feet.

There was a quarrel between the senses, the mind and the Prana as to who was superior. There was a quarrel amongst the different organs and the stomach. If the hands quarrel with the stomach; the entire body will suffer. When Prana departed from the body, all the organs suffered. The head or stomach cannot claim its superiority over the feet and hands. The hands and feet are as much important as the stomach or head. If there is quarrel between the different castes as to which is superior, then the entire social fabric will suffer. There will be disharmony, rupture and discord. A scavenger and a barber are as much important as a minister for the running of the society. The social edifice is built on the law of spiritual economics. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Each class contributes its best to the common weal or world-solidarity. There is no question of higher and lower here.

Character Determines Caste

A Brahmana is no Brahmana if he is not endowed with purity and good character, and if he leads a life of dissipation and immorality. A Sudra is a

Brahmana if he leads a virtuous and pious life. What a great soul was Vidura! What a noble, candid, straightforward student was Satyakama Jabala of Chhandogya Upanishad! Caste is a question of character. Varna is no more the colour of the skin, but the colour of one's character or quality. Conduct and character count and not lineage alone. If one is Brahmana by birth and, at the same time, if he possesses the virtues of a Brahmana, it is extremely good, because certain virtuous qualifications only determine the birth of a Brahmana.

Use and Abuse of the Caste System

The Hindus have survived many a foreign conquest on account of their caste system. But they have developed class jealousies and hatred in the name of the caste system. They have not got the spirit of co-operation. That is the reason why they are weak and disunited today. They have become sectarians in the name of the caste system. Hence there is degradation in India.

The caste system is, indeed, a splendid thing. It is quite flawless. But the defect came in from somewhere else. The classes gradually neglected their duties. The test of ability and character slowly vanished. Birth became the chief consideration in determining castes. All castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties. Brahmanas became selfish and claimed superiority over others by mere birth, without possessing due qualifications. The Kshatriyas lost their chivalry and spirit of sacrifice. The Vaisyas became very greedy. They did not earn wealth by honest means. They did not look after the economic welfare of the people. They did not give charity. They also lost the spirit of sacrifice. Sudras gave up service. They became officers. They wished that others should serve them. The greed and pride of man have created discord and disharmony.

There is nothing wrong in Varnasrama. It is arrogance and haughtiness in men that have brought troubles. Man or the little Jiva is imperfect. He is full of defects. He is simply waiting for claiming superiority over others. The Brahmana thinks that the other three castes are inferior to him. The Kshatriya thinks that the Vaisya and Sudra are inferior to him. A rich Sudra thinks that he is superior to a poor Brahmana or a poor Kshatriya or Vaisya.

At the present moment, the Varnasrama system exists in name only. It has to be rebuilt properly. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, who have fallen from their ideals and who are not doing their respective duties, must do their respective duties properly. They must be educated on right lines. They must raise themselves to their original lofty level. The sectarian spirit must die. They should develop a new understanding heart of love and devotion, with a spirit of co-operation, sacrifice and service.

The Four Asramas

There are four Asramas or stages in life, *viz.*, Brahmacharya or the period of studentship, Grihastha or the stage of the householder, Vanaprastha or the stage of the forest-dweller or hermit, and Sannyasa or the life of renunciation or asceticism. Each stage has its own duties. These stages help the evolution of

man. The four Asramas take man to perfection by successive stages. The practice of the four Asramas regulates the life from the beginning to the end. The first two Asramas pertain to Pravritti Marga or the path of work and the two later stages—the life of Vanaprastha and that of Sannyasa—are the stages of withdrawal from the world. They pertain to Nivritti Marga or the path of renunciation.

Towards Orderly Spiritual Evolution

Life is very systematically and orderly arranged in Sanatana Dharma. There is opportunity for the development of the different sides of human activity. Due occupations and training are assigned to each period of life. Life is a great school in which the powers, capacities and faculties of man are to be evolved gradually.

Every man should pass through the different Asramas regularly. He should not enter any stage of life prematurely. He can enter the next stage, only when each has been completed. In nature, evolution is gradual. It is not revolutionary.

Lord Manu says in his Smriti: “Having studied the Vedas or two Vedas or even one Veda in due order without breaking celibacy, let him dwell in the householder order. When the householder sees wrinkles in his skin and whiteness in his hair and the son of his son, then let him retire to the forest. Having passed the third portion of life in the forests, let him, having abandoned attachments, wander as an ascetic in the fourth portion of life.”

In extraordinary cases, however, some of the stages may be omitted. Suka was a born Sannyasin. Sankara took Sannyasa without entering the stage of a householder. In rare and exceptional cases, a student is allowed to become a Sannyasin, his debts to the world having been fully paid in a previous birth. Nowadays, young Sannyasins without qualifications are found in abundance. This is contrary to the ancient rules and causes much trouble.

The Brahmacharin or the Celibate Student.

The first stage, Brahmacharya, is the period of study and discipline. The student should not indulge in any pleasures. He stays in the house of his preceptor and studies the Vedas and the sciences. This is the period of probation. The teachers in ancient India usually lived in forest hermitages. These hermitages were the Gurukulas or forest universities. The student begged his food. The children of the rich and poor lived together. The student regarded his teacher as his spiritual father and served him with faith, devotion and reverence.

The life of the student begins with the Upanayana ceremony, his second birth. He must be hardy and simple in his habits. He rises early, bathes and does Sandhya and Gayatri Japa. He studies scriptures. He takes simple food in moderation and takes plenty of exercise. He sleeps on a hard mat and does not use soft beds and pillows. He is humble and obedient. He serves and respects elders. He attempts to be chaste in thought, word and deed.

He ever engages himself in doing services to his preceptor. He refrains from wine, meat, perfumes, garlands, tasty and savoury dishes, women, acids, spices and injury to sentient creatures; from lust, anger, greed; dancing, singing and

playing on musical instruments; from dice-playing, gossip, slander and untruth. He sleeps alone.

After the end of his student career, he gives a present to his preceptor according to his ability and returns home to enter the household life. The preceptor gives the final instruction and sends the student home. The teacher delivers a convocation address to the students at the conclusion of their studentship:

“Speak the truth. Do your duty. Never swerve from the study of the Veda. Do not cut off the line of progeny (after giving the preceptor the fee he desires). Never swerve away from truth. Never swerve from duty. Never neglect your welfare. Never neglect your prosperity. Never neglect the study and the teaching of the Vedas.

“Never swerve from the duties to the gods and the forefathers. Regard your mother as a god (*Matridevo Bhava*). Regard your father as a god (*Pitridevo Bhava*). Regard your teacher as a god (*Acharyadevo Bhava*). Regard your guest as god (*Atithidevo Bhava*). Let only those actions that are free from blemishes be done and not others. Only those that are good acts to us should be performed by you and not others.

“You should remove the fatigue of Brahmanas who are superior to you by serving them with seats, etc. Gift should be given with faith, in plenty, with modesty and sympathy. If there be any doubt regarding rites or conduct, then look up to the lives of great men and follow their examples. This is the injunction. This is the teaching. This is the secret of the Vedas. This is God’s word of command. This should be observed. Thus is this to be meditated upon.”

The Grihastha or the Householder

The second stage is that of the Grihastha or householder. The household stage is entered at marriage, when the student has completed his studentship and is ready to take up the duties and responsibilities of householder life. Of all the Asramas, this is the most important, because it supports all the others. As all creatures live supported by the air, so the other Orders exist supported by the householder. As all streams and rivers flow to rest in the ocean, so all the Asramas flow to rest in the householder. The Grihastha is the very heart of Aryan life. Everything depends on him.

Marriage is a sacrament for a Hindu. The wife is his partner in life. She is his Ardhangini. He cannot do any religious ritual without her. She stands by his left side when he performs any religious performance. Husband and wife keep Rama and Sita as their ideal.

A householder should earn money by honest means and distribute it in the proper manner. He should spend one-tenth of his income in charity. He should enjoy sensual pleasures within the limits of the moral law. A householder is permitted to enjoy conjugal happiness on one night in a month.

The householder should perform the Pancha Maha Yajnas. The five Yajnas are: DEVA-YAJNA—offering oblations unto Devas, with recitation of Vedic Mantras.

RISHI-YAJNA—study of Vedas and teaching of Vedas to students, and offering of oblations to Rishis.

PITRI-YAJNA—Tarpana or ablutions to departed souls and Sraaddha or annual religious rites performed for departed souls.

BHUTA-YAJNA—distribution of food to cows, crows and animals in general.

ATITHI-YAJNA—giving food to guests and honouring them.

Hospitality is one of the householder's chief duties. He must ever feed first his guests, Brahmanas and his relatives, and then he and his wife should eat.

When the householder sees that his sons are able to bear the burden of his duties, when his grandsons are around him, he should know that the time has come for him and his wife to retire from the world and spend their time in study and meditation.

The Vanaprastha or the Recluse

The next stage is that of the Varnaprastha. Brahmacharya is a preparation for the life of the householder. Even so, Vanaprastha is a preparation for the final stage of Sannyasa. After discharging all the duties of a householder, he should retire to the forest or a solitary country place and begin to meditate in solitude on higher spiritual things. He is now free from social bonds and the responsibilities of life. He has ample time for study of scriptures. His wife may go with him or remain with her sons.

The Sannyasin or the Renunciate

The next stage is that of a Sannyasin. When a man becomes a Sannyasin, he renounces all possessions, all distinctions of caste, all rites and ceremonies and all attachments to any particular country, nation, or religion. He lives alone and spends his time in meditation. He lives on alms. When he attains the sublime state of deep meditation he rejoices in his own Self. He is quite indifferent to sensual pleasures. He is free from likes and dislikes, desires egoism, lust, anger, greed and pride. He has equal vision and balanced mind. He loves all. He roams about happily and disseminates Brahma Jnana or Knowledge of the Self. He is the same in honour and dishonour, praise and censure, success and failure. He is now *Ativarnasrami*, i.e., above Varna and Asrama. He is quite a free man. He is not bound by any social customs and conventions.

Such a Sannyasin is an ideal man. He has attained perfection and freedom. He is Brahman Himself. He is a Jivanmukta or a liberated sage. Glory to such exalted personages who are living Gods on earth!

Asrama Dharma under Modern Conditions

At the present moment, the Asramas cannot be exactly lived according to the details of the ancient rules, as the conditions have changed very much; but, they may be revived in their spirit, to the great improvement of modern life. In these stages, no one should do the duty of another. The student or Brahmachari should

not do the duties of a householder, a recluse or a Sannyasin. The householder must not perform the duties of a Brahmacharin, Vanaprastha or a Sannyasin. A Sannyasin should not seek again the joys of the householder.

Peace and order will prevail in society, only if and when all people do their respective duties efficiently. The abolition of Varnas and Asramas will cut at the very root of social duties. How can the nation hope to live when Varnasrama Dharma is not rigidly practised?

The students of schools, and colleges should lead a life of purity and simple living. The householder should lead the life of an ideal Grihastha. He should practise self-restraint, mercy, tolerance, non-injury, truthfulness and moderation in everything. Those who find it difficult to lead the life of the third and the fourth Asramas should, remaining in either of the other two Asramas, gradually withdraw themselves from worldly life and practise selfless service, study and meditation.

Varnasrama pertains to body alone, but not to the pure, all-pervading, immortal soul or Atman. Attain Knowledge of the Self and become an Ativarnasrami like Lord Dattatreya.

Jainism and Buddhism

The 6th century B.C. was a period of great spiritual and religious unrest in the world. It was an age of spiritual analysis, synthesis and innovations. The period witnessed the rise of great spiritual leaders like Zoroaster in Persia, Confucius and Leo-Tse in China, Isaiah in Palestine and Heracles in Greece. In India, the period saw the rise of two new religions – Jainism and Buddhism.

Causes/Background for the Rise of Jainism and Buddhism

1. Decay of the Vedic religion.

The most important cause of the rise of new religions in the 6th century B.C. was the decay of the Vedic religion. It lost its original purity and decayed into a lifeless and mechanical system quite insufficient to satisfy the spiritual cravings of the common people. It attached greater importance to sacrifices and ceremonies than to acts real piety. The rites and ceremonies were made so elaborate and expensive that the people groaned under the heavy burden of ceremonial rites.

2. Cruel Sacrifices.

The cruelty in killing and sacrificing animals in the name of religion shocked many people. The bloody sacrifices on certain ceremonial occasions created a feeling of revolt and contempt against the Vedic religion.

3. Supremacy of the Brahmins.

The Brahmins as priests and teachers claimed the highest status in society. They claimed to be the guardians of the Vedic tradition. The rituals and ceremonies were to be performed by them alone. The priestly craft with its magic spells and charms was their monopoly. They virtually dominated every aspect of Aryan life from birth

to death. In short the Brahmins became earthly gods. Hence the people were in need of a new system of faith free from Brahminical domination.

4. Evils of Caste system.

The rigidity of the caste system was another important cause for the rise of new religions. Caste created great social inequalities. Change from one caste to another was practically impossible. The members of the low caste had to face a miserable plight. The Brahmins looked down upon the lower castes of Sudras and Vaisyas with contempt. Naturally, the people desired for a new social order based on the principles of equality and justice. Buddhism and Jainism arose as a revolt of the common people against the oppressive caste system.

5. Difficult Language.

The religious literature and scriptures of the Vedic religion were in Sanskrit which has beyond the comprehension of the common people. They had to depend upon the Brahmins for understanding them properly. Hence there was the need for a new religion which was easy to understand in their own language.

6. Kshatriya Revolt.

The ascendancy of the Brahmins and their arrogant class pride were especially galling to the governing class of Kshatriyas. They found themselves ousted from their position of supremacy and assumed a hostile attitude to the priestly class of Brahmins. The Kshatriya reaction against the Brahmin domination was one of the causes of the origin of new religions. It is significant that the reform movement was led by two Kshatriyas of the royal family – Mahavira and Gautama.

7. Socio – Economic Causes.

Socio-Economic factors also favoured the rise of new religions. The agricultural economy of the period required the use of bullocks and it could not flourish without animal husbandry. But the Vedic Practice of killing cattles for sacrifices stood in the way of the progress of agriculture. The tribal people stood in the way of the progress of agriculture. The tribal people of the period also killed cattle for food. Hence the socio-economic conditions of the period, necessitated the founding of new religions which forbade the slaughter of animals to assist the agrarian economy. More over the use of coins, the growth of trade and commerce, rise of new towns and cities etc. increased the importance of the Vaisyas as a wealthy class. But, the Brahmins looked down upon the Vaisyas as the third caste. Naturally the Vaisyas looked for some new religions which would improve their position. So they extended generous support to Mahavira and Gautama – as founders of new religions.

Vardhamana Mahavira

The origin of Jainism is shrouded in obscurity. The Jain tradition regards Rishaba as the founder to Jainism. He was succeeded by 22 Thirthankaras – all legendary figures. The 23rd Thirthankara, Parswanath was a historical figure. His main teachings were non-violence, non-injury (Ahimsa), non-stealing and non-

possession. Parswanath was the fore-runner of Mahavira, the founder of historical Jainism. As a matter of fact, Mahavira was more a reformer than the founder of a new faith.

Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th Thirthankara of Jainism was a Kshatriya of high position. He was born at Kundala grama at Vaisali in 540 B.C. In course of time he married Yesodha and a daughter was born to him. At the age of 30 he left his home, renounced the world and wandered for twelve years doing severe penance. At the age of 42 he attained the highest spiritual knowledge and thus became a Jaina or the conqueror. For the next 30 years of his life he wandered preaching his gospel in different parts of the country and attained Nirvana at the age of 72 at Pava in south Bihar.

Doctrines and Ideas.

Mahavira taught that the cause of birth, death, sorrow and suffering is Karma and Nirvana is possible if a man's karma becomes pure. Salvation is possible by the observance of the three Jewels (three ratnas) viz, Right knowledge, Right belief and Right conduct. The highest goal of life-salvation or freedom from birth and death can also be obtained by practicing asceticism, celibacy, self torture and death by slow starvation. More over, Ahimsa or non-injury to living beings was also a fundamental doctrine of Jainism. The Jains also discarded property, casteism, Vedic rituals and belief in a God.

However, by the end of the 4th century B.C. there appeared a great division among the followers of Jainism. One section came to be known as 'Digambaras' (those who use no dress at all). The other section known as Swethambaras (the white robed). According to the Jain accounts a terrible famine ravaged North India in the time of Chandra Gupta Maurya and lasted for twelve years. Half of the Jain community led by their saints Badrabahu moved and settled down in a place called Sravana Balgola in Mysore. Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya also accompanied them and attained Nirvana by slow starvation and death, having become a Jain Monk. When the famine ended, the emigrants came back to the North and found that the Jains who remained in North India had given up their original strict Jain way of life. They were condemned by the followers of Badrabhahu as heretics. The differences between the two sections increased gradually and developed into two distinct groups called Digambaras and Swethambaras. This division was one of the major causes for the decline of Jainism. Indifference towards active propaganda work of the spread of the religion, absence of capable religious leaders after the death of Mahavira, hostility of Buddhism, active rivalry and persecution and deliberate destruction of Jains by some of the later Hindu and Muslim rulers were additional factors for the decline of Jainism. Jainism was not so wide spread in India as Buddhism. Yet even to the present time it flourishes in many parts of India like Gujarat, Malwa, Ujjain and Deccan.

Influence of Jainism on Indian culture.

Jainism exercised a profound influence on religious and cultural life of India. It helped to reduce the rigidity of caste system and enriched the cultural heritage of India. The Jains made substantial contributions to the development of language and literature. They wrote on both religious and secular subjects. The early Jain scholars and thinkers spoke and wrote in the regional languages. They contributed much to the languages like Kannada and Tamil. The author of Kural, the master piece of Tamil literature was a Jain. An old Tamil dictionary and a Tamil grammar were also written by Jain scholars. Their contribution to Sanskrit literature was also remarkable. Several works on religion, literature, grammar, biography and mathematics owed their origin to Jain scholars. They also contributed to the development of art and architecture. The sthoopas erected by the Jains in honour of their saints, carved pillars, decorated gates and stone umbrellas are fine specimens of their architectural and sculptural interest. They also built a number of rock cut temples. The Hathigumpha caves in Orissa and the marble temple at Mount Abu in Rajasthan are master pieces of Jain architecture.

Gaudama Buddha

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism was the son of Suddhodana, the chief of the Sakya republican clan of Kapilavasthu. At the age of 16, he was married to his beautiful cousin and lived a life of luxury till he was 29. Then renouncing all worldly pursuits, he left the palace and dear ones and embraced the life of a wandering hermit in search of the supreme truth. Though he learnt philosophy and practices extreme asceticism, he was not satisfied. At last one day as he was sitting under the Bodhi tree at Gaya and meditating, enlightenment dawned upon him and thus he became the Buddha or the enlightened one. The rest of his life he spent in propagating his principles. He converted thousands of people all over the country to his beliefs. He passed away at the age of 80 at Kusi nagara in U.P.

Doctrines and Ideas.

Buddha propagated his doctrines through dialogues and lectures. He preached his followers the four 'Noble Truths' concerning sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the destruction of sorrow and the ways removing of sorrow. According to him (1) all earthly life is misery (2) Desire is the cause of misery (3) the removal of desire alone can end unhappiness (4) the 'Noble Eight fold path' is the means to overcome desire and get liberation from birth and rebirth. It consists of right belief, right thought, right action, right speech, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right remembrance and right meditation. The Eight Fold path is also called the 'Middle path'. Since it was midway between the two extremes of ritualism and asceticism. By following this 'Middle path' one can attain salvation or Nirvana which is the ultimate end of life.

Buddha also laid emphasis on the law of Karma and the transmigration of souls. Another important teaching of Buddha is Ahimsa. He preached against the slaughter of animals for sacrifices. He wanted everyone to observe non-violence in word and deed. To him the spirit of love is more important than good deeds. Buddha

rejected the authority of the Vedas and contempt the caste system. Buddhism ignored god without formally denying its existence. He forbade the followers not to tell lies, not to adopt corrupt means, not to commit violence and not to covet the property of others.

Buddhism spread far and wide under Asoka's patronage. And it was declared the state religion of the Mauryan Empire. The Buddhist doctrines were propagated among the broader states and tribes, the South Indian kingdoms, Ceylon, Syria, Egypt and Macedonia. After the Mauryan period reaction set in against Buddhism and it was divided into Hinayanism and Mahayanism. The Hinayanists followed the original teachings of Buddhism without any fundamental change. They did not worship Buddha as God. But the Mahayanists adopted new doctrines and code of ethics.

Influence of Buddhism on Indian Culture

Buddhism exercised a profound influence on the political, cultural and religious aspects of Indian life. The doctrine of Ahimsa became popular in India due to Buddhist influence. The idea of non-violence influenced the Indian mind so great that it was used as a powerful weapon in India's struggle for freedom. Buddhism also exercised a sobering influence upon Aryan materialism. The growth of vegetarianism and the respect for all forms of life are to a great extent the legacies of Buddhism. Buddhism produced a galaxy of eminent scholars, theologians and philosophers like Aswaghosha, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and Dharmakirti. The Buddhist universities of Nalanda, Vidramasila etc. were well known centres of learning which attracted students and teachers from in and outside of the country. The Buddhist preached their doctrines in the language of common people. This helped the growth and development of regional languages.

The Buddhist broke down the isolation of India and brought her into close contact with the various countries of Asia. The Buddhist monks and scholars carried the gospel of Buddha to foreign countries and the converts to the religion looked upon India as a holy land. Buddhism was the greatest gift of India to the world.

The contribution to Buddhism to Indian art and sculpture was remarkable. Some of the best specimens of Indian art are Buddhist in theme and style. Their sthupas, Viharas, temples and statues of Buddha are beautiful in designs, rich in style and excellent in execution. The stupas of Sanchi, Amaravati and Saranath, the temple at Buddha Gaya and statues in Nagarjuna konda are noted for their artistic and sculptural magnificence.

Upanishad Philosophy

The Upanishads are a collection of philosophical texts which form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion. They are also known as Vedanta, the end of the Veda. The Upanishads are considered by orthodox Hindus to contain revealed truths (Sruti) concerning the nature of ultimate reality (Brahman) and describing the character and form of human salvation (moksha). The Upanishads are found mostly

in the concluding part of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas and have been passed down in oral tradition.

More than 200 Upanishads are known, of which the first dozen or so are the oldest and most important and are referred to as the principal or main (*mukhya*) Upanishads. *With the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahmasutra (known collectively as the Prasthanatrayi), the mukhya Upanishads provide a foundation for several later schools of Indian philosophy (vedanta), among them, two influential monistic schools of Hinduism.*

Historians believe the chief Upanishads were composed over a wide period ranging from the Pre-Buddhist period to the early centuries BCE though minor Upanishads were still being composed in *the medieval and early modern period.* *However, there has been considerable debate among authorities on the exact dating of individual Upanishads. The Upanishads were collectively considered amongst the 100 Most Influential Books ever written by the British poet Martin Seymour-Smith. Their significance has been recognized by writers and scholars such as Schopenhauer, Emerson and Thoreau, among others. Scholars also note similarity between the doctrine of Upanishads and those of Plato and Kant*

The Sanskrit term *Upani ad* derives from *upa-* (nearby), *ni-* (at the proper place, down) and *ad* (to sit) thus: "sitting down near", implying sitting near a teacher to receive instruction or, alternatively, "sitting at the foot of ... (teacher)", or "laying siege" to the teacher. *Monier-Williams' late 19th century dictionary adds that, "according to native authorities Upanishad means 'setting to rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the supreme spirit.'"* *A gloss of the term Upanishad based on Shri Adi Shankara's commentary on the Ka ha and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad equates it with Ātmavidyā, that is, "knowledge of the Self", or Brahmavidyā "knowledge of Brahma".* Other dictionary meanings include "esoteric doctrine" and "secret doctrine".

GAHAPATHI, GRAMANI AND VANIK

The term 'Gahapathi' occurs in the Vedic literature in the sense of the head of a household. In its expanded usage, it is argued that Gahapathi, apart from being the head of a household, was also denoted as a wealthy property owner and producer of wealth associated with land and agriculture. The Buddhist 'Anguttara Nikaya' describes the society consisting of three states; Brahmana, Kshatriya and Gahapathi. According to it, Brahmana is associated with 'mantras and yajnas' and aspiring for 'brahmaloka' as his ideal. The Kshatriya aspires for power and territory and dominion in his ideal, whereas Gahapathi is associated with 'karma' (work) and 'sippa' (craft) and fruits of his work is his ideal.

There are references to several affluent Gahapathis in the early Buddhist texts. During the age of Buddha he is characterized as peasant proprietor and head of a large patriarchal household of any caste, who got respect primarily because of his wealth. Gahapathi, Mendaka is referred as paying wages to the royal army and as donor he is said to have instituted more than one thousand cowherds to serve the Buddha and his Sangha. Another Gahapathi is said to have paid fabulous price for

Jetavana, a plot of land which he donated to the Buddha Jivaka, the famous physician of the Buddhist period is said to have received high remuneration in the form of gold and male and female slaves from wealthy Gahapathis of Saketa and Banaras. Sometimes Gahapathis are also referred as money lenders also, lending money to promising merchants. The emergence of Gahapathi from the position of the Vedic householder to a comparatively wealthy landowner indicates the growing disparity of wealth within the then society.

The political importance of the Gahapathi is suggested in his inclusion among the 'seven treasures' the king or the ideal ruler of the world. The Pali texts use the term Gahapathi constantly along with 'Sethi' (Pali form of Sanskrit word 'Sreshtin'), who is referred as a high level business man. However, Gahapathi and Sethi had specific meanings in the Pali texts and are never used interchangeably. But some of the Jataka stories mention the compound word 'Sethi-Gahapathi' to refer to a person with a rural as well as urban base-one with control over land and business enterprise. D.D. Kosambi notes that Gahapathi becomes village headman also in the later period, being the head of a large patriarchal household of any caste. He commanded respect primarily because of his wealth, whether gained by trade, manufacture or farming and was able to get support by the household members and bound by the inheritance laws of his kinship group, but no longer bound by tribal regulations.

The word 'Gramani' appears in both Vedic and early Pali literature. It literally means the 'one who leads the Grama or Village. The concept of mobility is embedded in the term as a reminiscence of the nomadic life of the early Aryans. In the early Vedic period every such nomadic unit was a Grama. Subsequently, each nomadic unit when settled began to be known as Grama. There is another related term in the Vedic period Samgrama which is used for battle or coming together. The word Samgrama might have been used to denote the collision of two or more units or Gramas. Both in the Vedic and the Buddhist literature, Gramani is also seen associated with the activities of war. So it would be assumed that he was equal to Senani, who led the group in war.

The exact functions of the Brahmani were difficult to determine. He is mentioned as Vaisya Gramani, in Mithrayani Samhitha and Kathaka Samhitha, which indicate that he was the head of the people living in the villages. At times he is referred as the hereditary territorial proprietor living in the capital. It could be assumed that the Gramani must have continue the old practice of leading little groups of people to the battle field, in addition to which he may have acquired functions of general supervisory nature over the villagers.

During the early Vedic period Gramani was not the village headman instead he was the head of the nomadic tribal unit called Grama. The Rigvedic vrajapati who was in charge of the pasture grounds held in common by the tribe. The vrajapati had led family heads to battle for capturing cows became later identical with the Gramani. When the nomadic tribes settled down the Gramani became the head of the grama, now being the settled village. Thus the Gramani has the head of the

mobile tribal unit later became the head of the settled village. In the course of time he became the wealthy proprietor of expensive agricultural land and supervisor of the entire village. Apart from the supervisor of the village, the Gramani had to lead the people into battle but no longer for cattle.

The political importance of the Gramani could be understood from his role in the Ratanavimsi ceremony, which was a part of the Rajasuya coronation sacrifice of the king in the later Vedic period. According to the Ratanavimsi ceremony the sacrificing king went to the house of each Ratnin (jewel holder) and offered obligations to the appropriate deity there. One among the eleven or 12 such Ratnins is referred as the Gramani in the Taittiriya Brahmana and Satapatha Brahmana. It is repeatedly stated that the kings regarded the Ratnins as the sustainers of his realm which shows the significance of the Ratnins including Gramani in the governance of the kingdom.

'Vanik' is the Sanskrit word for the traders in ancient India. The connected words are 'pana' for coin and 'panaya' for trade goods and commodities in general. The Mahajanapatha period witnessed the growth of trading activities in North India and several of its capitals like Kasi, Ayodhya and Rajagriha had become important commercial centres also. The urbanization and growth of trade increased the position of the traders in the society in terms of wealth. The epicentre of trading activities in the 6th century BC was the middle Gangetic valley. Both literary and archaeological evidences support the growth of trade in these areas.

The introduction of coins of copper and silver in the Gangetic basin during the 6th century BC represented the new level of trading activities both in volume and organization. Evidences of both short and long distances of trade have been received from the sites of Chirand in Bihar and Jajman in Kanpur district of U P. The intensification of the trading activities must have taken place during the second half of the first millennium B C. The political stability also helped for the growth of trade.

Vanik was primarily a general trader by this period, while several other terms had been evolved related with traders by this period. The Sethi or Sresthin was the merchant or banker. The Sethi Gahapathi was the wealthy trader and financier, usually living in the urban centres but was involved both in trading and agricultural activities. The Sarthavaha was the leader of a Caravan group which transported goods over long distances. The different types of vaniks amassed much wealth and they emerged as a new social class. The existing Varna ranking had placed the traders or the Vysyas in the third position in the hierarchical social order and this proved to be irksome to those groups of vaniks who own wealth in society.

The heterodox religious sect that had emerged in the Gangetic basin especially Buddhism and Jainism attracted the wealthy social class of traders into their fold. The Brahmana sources restricted the Brahmans fraternizing with those who live off usury. It was in fact treated as the general disapproval of usury in society. Both Jainism and Buddhism did not oppose it. With the emergence and growth of the institutional basis of the traders, the sreni (guild), the vaniks became

more influential. It had a strong urban base and remained as the centre of both professional and Kin cohesion. The strength of the Sreni became clear by the social recognition of the Sreni Dharma (customary law of the guild) as legitimate law.

Social Philosophy of Buddhism

The concept of social justice, which was central to the political thought generating and sustaining the French Revolution of 1789, as conceived by modern theorists, is barely two hundred years old. In the western tradition when we turn to earlier periods, we find that whenever and wherever social institutions like family, clan, occupations etc. arose, justice was sought in thought and beliefs of mankind, and social justice had no role in it. However, the idea of human dignity and the importance of human existence has been the basis of all cultures. Still, almost all of the ancient philosophies and religions paid scant attention to issues of social justice in the modern sense. Walking down the memory lane to Protestantism and the Renaissance, and ultimately back to the Biblical concept of human being, we see that social issues have been addressed from early times. However, it did not concern itself with the basic questions of social justice. It was only from the 18th century that social justice emerged as an important issue in political thought and social philosophy in the West; and the use of the term 'social justice' in official documents started from the latter part of the 19th century.

Normally, social justice means justice sought by the individual in all spheres of social life. It involves certain rights that are held to be exercisable by the individual against those who possess political and economic power and against harmful social customs as well. Nevertheless, society has also some rights vis-à-vis the individuals, who compose it. The rights of the society, however, take the shape of duties and obligations of individuals. Rights of individuals may be designated as freedom and equality, while social rights may be designated as the moral and legal obligations of individuals. As an individual can experience freedom only in a society, which is necessarily moral, the rights and duties of the individual may be held as inter-connected. Hence a healthy society would comprise a couple of essential components — freedom and morality. Moreover, in the development of an individual, i.e. his talents and capabilities, the role of society is crucial. In other words, progress of the individual is impossible in the absence of a progressive society, a society which contributes to the progress of the individual. Thus, the most important issue of social justice is how to save morality without undermining individual freedom and moral sense.

In the backdrop of the above discussion it can be safely held that the concept of social justice is quite close to the concept of humanism. Humanism may be defined as a philosophy and an attitude of mind which gives primacy to human individual and recognizes his/her right to live as a free individual with dignity. Such recognition is the basic principle of social justice. Thus, humanism provides philosophical background to the concept of social justice.

Buddha realized the deeper significance of human existence. He concentrated upon the primacy of human interests and felt that no super human or divine

entity, other than his deeds, would be able to change man's destiny. Hence, the Buddhist philosophy may be characterized as Humanism. Humanism is not merely a theory but it is predominantly practical in outlook. Basically, it is concerned with the ways that would be helpful in the elimination of human suffering. Buddha fully realized the voidness of mere theoretical solution of suffering. It is due to this reason that his doctrine of 'Four Noble Truths' is not only able to explain clearly the human suffering, but also the way to its elimination in the form of 'Eightfold Path.' Through the recognition of theory and practice Buddha discovered the way to the humanization of man and the regeneration of man as a strictly human being. All this projects Buddha as an ardent supporter of social justice and, thereupon, a champion of human rights.

Interestingly, more than two thousand years back Gautam Buddha raised the issue of liberty, equality and fraternity as a revolt against the tyrannical, hierarchical social system in India. Although Buddhist thought seldom addresses the issue of social justice in the modern sense, that is, in terms of such things as human rights, the fair distribution of resources, the impartial rule of law, and political freedom, still it takes up social issues sincerely and upholds that communal good can be realized through the promotion of individual morality. Search for enlightenment holds primacy in Buddhism. Having taught his disciples and helped them become enlightened, he then urged them to preach to others. Buddha asked his disciples to work for others, but asserted that in order to help others one must first become enlightened and, thereupon, be healed. It has been clarified through one of Buddhist dictums: 'One who is sick cannot cure others'. Hence, it would not be proper to claim that Buddhism is oblivious to the interpersonal dimension of human experience. The original belief that one who is sick cannot cure others came to be radically transformed by the *bodhisattva* ideal, which appeared in the later phase of Buddhism known as Mahayana Buddhism.

Although Buddhism is mainly concerned with ethical problem, viz. that of suffering, it presupposed the metaphysical problem that everything is impermanent. Buddha felt that the two problems are correlated. Therefore, in order to discuss social justice in Buddhist perspective it is apparently proper to discuss it in the light of the two basic tendencies in Buddhist thinking — metaphysical and ethical.

Metaphysical point of view.

The crux of metaphysical view-point in Buddhism is that all things are subject to change and decay (*sarvam antiyam*). It is based on the Buddhist cardinal doctrine of 'everything is suffering' (*sarvam dukkham*). Buddha was absolutely convinced through his own observation that the whole world is full of misery. Long and arduous years of penance made him realize that misery is due to the transient character of reality. Explaining this aspect of Buddhism Rhys Davids says: According to Buddhist, there is no being, there is only a becoming, the state of every individual being unstable, temporary and sure to pass away. Everything, be it person, a thing or a God, is, therefore merely a putting together, of component

elements. Further, in each individual without exception, the relation of its component parts is eternally changing and never the same for two consecutive moments. Putting together implies becoming; becoming means becoming different, and becoming different cannot arise without dissolution, a passing away, which must inevitably at some time or other be complete.

Apropos to the thesis of impermanence, it appears that the concept of 'social justice' would be alien in relation to Buddhist philosophy. This is for the simple reason that the basic precept of social justice involves an autonomous and free individual, which appears to be contradictory to the principle of impermanence. Moreover, justice presupposes others as well; and it is the other which makes the concept of justice meaningful.

Undoubtedly, Buddhism is a man centered religion, but the centrality of man does not in any way go against the theory of impermanence. However, Buddhist's concept of man is somewhat different from the common view that there is an abiding substance in man. The general belief is that while body goes through changes, *atma* does not change. However, according to Buddha, there is no such soul, as there is no continuity of an identical substance in man. But he does not deny the continuity of the stream of successive states that compose one's life. In his view, life is an unbroken series of states in which each of the state depends on the condition just preceding and gives rise to one just succeeding it. Thus, Buddha explained continuity of life series on the basis of causal connection running through different series. Hence, in order to focus Buddhist view on social justice, it is seemingly plausible to project it in the light of their concept of man.

Concept of Man in Buddhism

By denying the existence of any super-natural controlling power, Buddhists reject ritualism and emphasize upon human will and action. They posit man as the maker of his destiny. The importance of human action and will be derived from the last sermon of Buddha to his disciples whom he preached to take only themselves as their guide and light. Buddha says,

"You should be carried away in favour of a doctrine... neither by hearsay, nor by tradition, nor by scriptural authority nor by mere logic or argumentation, nor even by teacher's personal charm, and such other things. You should accept a doctrine only after employing your own reason and discretion, after having known it to your utter satisfaction and conviction".

Such views of Buddha led early Buddhists to adopt a consistently dynamic and analytic approach to personal identity. But Buddhists were not interested in understanding man's nature for its own sake. Their highest goal was *Nirvana*, which they characterized as the cessation of all suffering. Being a thorough realist and empiricist, Buddha not only accepted the reality of man, he also did not rest content with the realization of the plight of man.

However, Buddhists view of man is an implication of their doctrine of 'self'. They used the word 'self' to denote two separate entities, one is metaphysical and

another is psychological. The latter sense of self is identified with that of 'man'. Hence, the denial of self, in the former sense, does not mean the denial of man. The denial is restricted to a unitary, homogeneous, non-empirical substance called *atta*, 'self'. Either such a substance itself has been held illusory or the identification of empirical self with it has been questioned. This is signified by the *anatta* (no-self) doctrine. But denial of unitary self is not denial of soul."

Additionally, in the Pali Texts man is viewed as a union of body (form, i.e. *nama*) and consciousness (*rupa*). While consciousness denotes the mental aspect of man, body denotes the physical. Hence, personhood is ascribed as a composition of body, feelings, cognition, activities and consciousness. These five factors are supposed to be the base of the cosmos as well. Hence, man is microcosm of the macrocosm. Birth is explained as the unification of the said factors, and death as their breaking up which leads consciousness to move on to start a new person. The stream flows on a continual flux that still retains a distinct identity. Every link of the series influences the following links and the links that come later. All links belonging to the same chain automatically accept the responsibility for the deeds by the preceding link. The series or link of lives reaches a final end only when one succeeds in overpowering one's ignorance (inability to see the truth) and attachments which requires arduous mental and physical training and a special kind of intellectual ability. Realizing the peculiarity of human existence, Buddhists assert that man recognizes the distinction between what he is and what he is destined to be. Hence, what man is destined to be is not unconcerned with what man is. In other words, the goal is enlightenment which is concerned with the spiritual aspect of life; it cannot be separated from the other aspects of life, such as social, political, psychological, cultural etc. Since all these are concerned with the ethical life of man, it is now appropriate to discuss Buddhist's ethical view-point.

Ethical point of view

Emphasizing on human will and action, Buddhists assert that man is the ultimate architect of his own destiny. Besides, they put equal stress on wisdom and on the development of character towards moral excellence for the benefit of both individual and society. Buddha ascribe man with profound freedom. Buddhists purport that towards the attainment of a higher state of existence this freedom should be exercised by anybody. Buddhism, however, is humanism in the sense that it rejoices in the possibility of a true freedom as something inherent in human nature. For Buddhism, the ultimate freedom is to achieve full release from the root causes of all suffering: greed, hatred and delusion, which clearly are also the root causes of all social evils.

It will not be an exaggeration to state that the Buddhist ethics fully rests on a rational basis rather than on theological basis as is found in early Vedic ethics. Hence, Buddhists enjoined a short list of responsibilities to individuals through the five precepts which were taught in the Buddhist world from the time of Buddha. The precepts are as follows:

I undertake the precept (I) to abstain from the taking of life; (II) not to take that which is not given; (III) to abstain from misconduct in sensual actions; (IV) to abstain from false speech; (V) to abstain from liquor that causes Intoxication and indolence.

These precepts were applicable to each individual and, thereupon, to all sections of society. To weaken, and finally get rid of them in oneself and, in society, are the basis of Buddhist ethics. And here Buddhist social action plays a predominant role.

In Buddhist social philosophy we find that the society was supposed to involve three divisions. These divisions were the *Sangha* i.e. the spiritual community, the society of the common people or householders and the state which was supposed to take care of the former. The three were conceived as interlinked and interdependent, as the well being of one depended upon the well-being of the other two.

As we have discussed elsewhere, society is a world comprising individual persons, each intrinsically valuable. Every rational society tries to foster and encourage the highest possible development of all the capacities of personality in all of its members. The end is justice or right ordering of a society and is called social justice. It is a balance between individual rights and social control. It ensures the fulfillment of the legitimate expectations of the individual under the existing laws. It is also an assurance to provide him benefits and protection in case of any violation or encroachment of one's rights. In other words, social justice is an integrative concept. Therefore, in order to ascertain social justice in Buddhist's perspective, it appears plausible to discuss it with equal stress on all the three aspects of it viz. legal justice, political justice and economic justice, as the *Tripitakas* do contain social, political and economic teachings.

Legal Justice

Legal justice is equality in the eyes of law. Every stratum of people are subject to the same legal system. Although at the time of Buddha there was no full fledged system of law as today, still the spirit of legal justice was, undoubtedly, inherent in the idea of equality, as Buddha was in favour of providing equal platform to each and every individual irrespective of caste, creed and sex.

Buddhists viewed all human beings as equal; therefore Buddhism was committed to the principle of human equality. Buddha attacked the caste system which divided the society in upper and lower castes, thereby depriving the lower castes of certain rights such as the study of *Vedas*. Repudiating the superiority by birth, he declared that:

No Brahman is such by birth
 No outcaste is such by birth
 An outcaste is such by his deeds
 A Brahman is such by his deeds.

Buddha has been considered as a democratic crusader against the inequalities of the caste system and the empty pretensions of the Brahmanical theology. He is regarded as having weakened the foundations of the prevalent religious and social structure by repudiating the revelatory character of the *Vedas* and by challenging the arrogant claims to dignity, importance and merit to Brahmin priests. The following lines clearly depict the rejection of ascriptive superiority based on the physical fact of birth in a particular *gotra* and family:

“Ask not of race, but ask of conduct,
 From the stick is born the sacred fire;
 The wise ascetic though lowly born
 Is noble in his modest self control.”

Again, in the *Brahmanavagga* of the *Dhammapada* we find some of the classic verses eulogizing the moral attributes of a Brahmin:

“I do not call a man a *brahmana* because of his origin or of his mother; he is indeed arrogant, and he is wealthy. But the poor who is free from all attachments, him I call indeed a *brahmana*.”

“Him I call a *brahmana* who does not cling to sensual pleasures, like water on a lotus leaf, like a mustard seed on the point of a needle.”

Another prime feature of social justice at the age of Buddha featured in the treatment of slaves. Buddha condemned slavery in every form. Buddha may be declared as the pioneer of abolition of slavery. He avers five ways in which a master should serve his employees. These are (a) work should be assigned in proportion to the employee's health, (b) due food and wages be given to them, (c) proper care should be taken in his sickness, (d) specially tasty luxuries should be shared with him and (e) holidays should be given to them at due intervals. Buddha was so much compassionate for the working class that he stressed that they be treated with as much consideration as a member of one's own family.

Again, at the time of Buddha the status of women had considerably gone down. Buddha tried to give a place of honour to women. He did not accept the prevailing *Brahmanic* view that a son was indispensable for a man's salvation. Although in the early years Buddha refused to admit women to the *Sangha* or community of celibates but later on he allowed the order of the nuns to be found. Nevertheless, "he enjoined on a young girl of marriageable age the universal virtue of loyalty, respect and obedience to elders, efficiency in house-keeping, love of peace etc. But nowhere in *Pativriyam* (loyalty and devotion to husband) the later Brahmanic ideal of surrender and all absorbing devotion to husband was preached. Buddhism recognized the individuality and independence of women, and their parity with

men. Hence, a girl could remain unmarried by becoming a *Bhikkuni*. Even a widow could find respite in renunciation. Buddhism also checked the spread of *purdah* (veil) system that was prevalent in some royal households.

From the evidence of the Buddha's discourses or *suttas* in the *Digha Nikaya*, it is clear that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of social conditions favorable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist values. An outstanding example of this, in later times, is the remarkable "welfare state" created by the Buddhist emperor, Asoka (B.C. 274-236). Walpola Rahula stated the situation — perhaps at its strongest — when he wrote that "Buddhism arose in India as a spiritual force against social injustices, against degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices; it denounced the tyranny of the caste system and advocated the equality of all men; it emancipated woman and gave her complete spiritual freedom."

It is clear from the facts, stated above, that we cannot characterize Buddha as having begun with the explicit intention of challenging the Brahmin priesthood, and raising the economic and social status of the downtrodden, the slaves and the outcasts. But he stressed the cultivation of those elevated sentiments such as a sense of universal compassion (*metta*) and creative altruism, the fostering of which was bound to reduce social exploitation and social tension.

Through the cultivation of compassion it is possible to rise above the drives of physical nature and also above the socially antipathetic forces of opposition, conflict and antagonistic competition. Social accommodation and adaptation are bound to follow as the consequences of the practice of *metta*. With its notions of *maitri* and *karuna*, Buddhism teaches man to cultivate that softness of feelings which shudders to commit the least injury to the creatures.

In the language of modern social sciences, the message of Buddha conveys that merit has to replace all kinds of subjective considerations like bias, caste preference, prejudice etc. The *Madhuriya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* propounds absolute equality of all the four orders so far as the punishment for evil deeds and reward for meritorious actions, both in this secular world and beyond, are concerned. It ridicules the claims of *Brahmanical* superiority as unfounded and illogical.

In short, Buddhist social action is justified ultimately and, above all, by the existence of social, as well as individual *karma*. It is concerned with relieving suffering immediately, and ultimately believes in creating social conditions which will favour the end of suffering through the individual achievement of transcendent wisdom.

Political Justice

The basis of political justice is that politically or economically stronger people must not be empowered to violate legal system. Verily in Buddhism there is no explicit body of social and political theory comparable to its psychology or metaphysics. Nevertheless, a Buddhist political theory can be deduced primarily

from basic Buddhism i.e. from *Dharma*. Buddhism is of the view that political power is essential to fashion and sustain a society whose citizens are free to live in dignity, harmony and mutual respect, free of the degradation of poverty and war. In such a society of good heart, all men and women find encouragement and support in making the best use of their human condition in the practice of wisdom and compassion.

Political action, thus, involves the Buddhist ideal of approaching each situation without prejudice, but with deserved circumspection in questions of power and conflict, social oppression and justice. These social and political conflicts are the great public *samsaric* driving energies of our life to which an individual responds with both aggression and self-repression. The *Buddha Dharma* offers the possibility of transmuting the energies of the individual into wisdom and compassion.

This may indicate that Buddhist movement was mainly concerned with ethical advancement and psychic illumination and not with political affairs. Nevertheless, political repercussions did ensue from Buddhism. In the *Brahmajala Sutta*, Gautama Buddha emphatically states that he is vitally interested in social cohesion and co-operation and in the act of reconciling those people who are divided. Early Buddhism did have significant political consequences. From the evidence of the Buddha's discourses, or *suttas* in the *Digha Nikaya*, it is clear that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of political conditions favorable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist values. An outstanding example of this, in later times, is the remarkable "welfare state" created by the Buddhist emperor, Asoka (B.C. 274-236).

The Buddhist political justice enjoins special responsibility to the king. As the head of state he must adhere to specific code of conduct, as he is at the helm of affairs of the state. Buddha felt that the personal moral conduct of the king, along with his officials, would be expressed in the political affairs of the state. Thus, the righteous character of the state would help to prevail universal righteousness on earth. Hence, deliverance through peaceful coexistence would become easily attainable for all. In some passages of the Pali Texts a parallel has been drawn between a Buddha and a monarch, as both held the same esteemed place in the eyes of the people. The two have the same objective, i.e. the well-being of people. Both are also an integral part of the ordinary empirical existence, and the political good and well-being is assured through them. The *Kutadana sutta* of the *Digha-Nikaya* explains that the safety of the people and their economic, as well as material prosperity should be of special concern for the state and the government. Political power may manifest and sustain social and economic structures, which breed both material deprivation and spiritual degradation for millions of people.

Buddhists are, thus, concerned with political action, first, in the direct relief of non-volitionally caused suffering now and in the future, and, secondly, with the creation of social *karmic* conditions favourable to the following of the way that leads to the cessation of volitionally-caused suffering, the creation of a society which tends to the ripening of wisdom and compassion rather than the withering of them.

Economic Justice

The basis of economic justice is that although people differ in mental and physical capabilities still everyone must have enough. Buddhist economic justice follows from the precept of non-stealing — 'I will not steal'. Buddha spoke against individual stealing as he felt that it causes suffering. Similarly, stealing (or exploitation), which a powerful group or society practices against less powerful group or society, would cause suffering and, thus, is antithetical to the basic Buddhist principle. Buddha felt that it is not right for some to feast while many starve. Buddhism is the Middle Path between luxury and need; hence all people must have sufficient for health and well being, and in order to support efforts to fulfill higher needs. Inequality fuels resentment, anger and, ultimately, violence. In order to prevent violence there must be rough equity.

As the attitude of Buddhists was inclined towards ethical quests and psychological perfections, its philosophy did not provide any exclusive program for the economic betterment of the mass. If any person was economically thwarted then he could join the *Samgha* and, thus, escape the stigma and privations of the economic world. But there was no relief provided by Buddhism to him if he continued to remain in active social life.

At the time of Buddha economy was not industrial. The trade and commerce was in agricultural products and not in industrial commodities. There was no large scale manufacturing system prevalent at that time in spite of the mention of '*shresthis*.' The prevailing economy of the time was rural.

Nevertheless, Buddhist scripture for economic mores can be classified in two, one for the house-holder and the other for monarch or king. While preaching to the house-holder, need of hard work with righteous duties without any speculations was emphasized. Stressing upon economic order to be cultivated by the monarch, Buddha held that the root of social evil was poverty and employment. This was not to be bribed by charity and donations, which would only further stimulate evil action. The correct way was to supply food and seed to those who lived by agriculture and cattle breeding. Those who lived by trade should be furnished with the necessary capital. Servants of the state should be paid properly and regularly so that they should not find ways to squeeze the *janapadas*. New wealth would, thus, be generated and the *janapadas* liberated from robbers and cheats. A citizen could bring up his children in comfort and happiness, free from want and fear in such a productive and contented environment. The best way of spending surplus accumulation, whether in treasury or voluntary private donations, would be in

public works, such as digging of wells and water-ponds, and planting groves, along the trade routes.

This is a startling modern view of political economy. To have propounded it at a time of Vedic *Yajna* to a society that had just begun to conquer the primeval jungle was an intellectual achievement of the higher order. Schumacher puts the essence of Buddhist economics as follows:

"While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is 'The Middle Way' and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being... The keynote of Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view, the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern — amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfying results"

Buddhists lay emphasis on the purification of human character. Character necessarily is formed by, besides other social influences, the nature of a man's work. And work properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, is beneficial both for the workers and his products. From the Buddhist point-of-view, the function of work is at least three-fold:

- (i) to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties;
- (ii) to enable him to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining with other people in a common task; and
- (iii) to bring forth the goods and services needed for existence.

This attitude has in itself the grains of distinctly far reaching consequences. If one goes by this view of labour, it will imply that any organization or management of work in a manner that becomes "meaningless, boring, stultifying and nerve-racking", for the worker would tantamount to being both asocial for human beings and an inhuman lack of compassion coupled with the basest form of profit motive. At the same time, any comprehension of leisure as an alternative to work would tantamount to a complete misunderstanding of one of the basic truths of human existence, i.e. work and leisure complement each other, and any lopsided emphasis will destroy either the joy of work or the bliss of leisure.

The Buddhist concept of labour, which aims at enabling the individual to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining him with others in a common task, finds fulfillment in a Marxist economic system. In a communist society also the whole community works for the common good and not for the good of any individual. In the process it gives every individual a chance to utilize and develop his faculties. The Marxist motto "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need" underlines the dignity of human labour and common good which is really a momentous fact of any economic system. Once the whole human community accepts this principle of common good the society will restructure itself, address itself to the welfare of the people and pave the way for social justice. Thus, collective co-operative system was for the first time introduced through Buddhist *Samgha*, which can be said to be an ancient socialism.

Conclusion

Lord Buddha opposed the *Brahmanical* social system, their dogmatism and superstition and priesthood. He taught people to exercise reason and not to be led like dumb-cattle. He brought about many-sided advance in the culture and civilization of different countries by his social order and his humanistic movement. Buddha did not limit himself to curing Indian society; his aim was to cure mankind as he sought to deliver man from his bondage. Important Buddhist contribution to Indian and world culture as well, is the idea of social and religious equality.

Buddha carried out a vigorous campaign against social discrimination. Throughout Buddhist literature, we find him leading debates and discussions with the *Brahmanas*, always maintaining equal claims of all classes to purity. He declared that the purity of a man does not depend upon his birth, but upon his actions. He destroyed the fundamental basis of the *Brahmanic* society. Buddha knew that if all men are equal in suffering, they ought also to be equal in deliverance. He endeavours to teach them to free themselves from disease, old age and death; and, as all beings are exposed to these necessary evils, they all have a right to the teaching, which by enlightening them is to free them. In presence of same type of suffering, he perceives no social distinction; the slave is for him as great as a king's son. He is struck, not so much by the abuses and the evils of the society in which he lives, as by those which are inseparable from humanity itself, and it is to the suppression of these that he devotes himself, the others appearing to him very insignificant in comparison.

Although Buddha was a spiritual and moral teacher, and reformer, social, economic political and legal implications do follow from his teachings. He construed every human individual as being divested with certain duties, and the excellence and salvation of individuals depend upon ideal performance of their given duties. In other words, individual rights and dignities are strongly intertwined with corresponding duties. Rather duty is more important than right, and the individual is responsible for the society as well as for himself. Therefore, one has to play one's role well as one's internal change, personal perfection and spiritual excellence are primary. The foundation of Buddhist path is the understanding of one's moral responsibilities towards other. Buddhists never entertained the possibility of limiting man to his physical frame and, thereupon, to one life. Buddha held that each and every man is a potential Buddha; therefore every one must enjoy equal rights and freedom. Only in a free society one can pursue one's goal. As the goal is same for everyone, as far as the quest for the highest goal is concerned, all are equal. Thus, the concept of social justice is quite in tune of Buddhist Philosophy. Apparently taking a cue to it, the principles of equality, fraternity and liberty are the most important ideals and guidelines in the Constitution of most of the countries across the globe and people are striving to attain this ideal.

UNIT-III

THE EMPIRE**Emergence of Monarchy in North India**

The four commanding states of ancient India - Kasi, Kosala, Magadha and Vriji - were all alongside the Ganges River. Among the four states, Magadha had a number of advantages that would help the state to prevail in the struggle for dominance. Magadha has risen to authority during the reigns of Bimbisara (544 to 491 BC) and his son Ajatashatru (491 to 460 BC) of Shishunaga Dynasty. Bimbisara ruled his domain from the city of Rajagriha, now known as Rajgir, near Gaya in the state of Bihar. Bimbisara established family relations by intermarriage with the dignity of neighboring Kosala and Vriji, and simply conquered the territory of Vanga to the southeast. He was murdered by his son Ajatashatru in 493 BC.

Ajatashatru was the last powerful king of Shishunaga Dynasty who established a fort at Pataliputra now known as Patna, by the Ganga and near to her convergence with the Gandaki, Sona, and Ganghara Rivers. Magadha extended to include most of Bihar state and much of West Bengal with the invasion of Anga, and then expanded up the Ganges valley seizing Kosala and Kashi. Ajatashatru was died by 461 BC. Udayan was the last noticeable but not so powerful king of Magadha. He was died in 413 BC. After that the kingdom of Magadh did not proceeding for more than 50 years and the Nanda dynasty took over.

The Nanda Dynasty

The Nandas were the successors of the Sisunagas. According to the puranas there were nine Nandas who ruled for hundred years. The founder of the Nanda dynasty was Mahapadma Nanda. He was described as the son of the last Sisunaga king Mahanandin by a sudra woman. The Jain tradition on the other hand described him as the son of a courtesan by a barbar. The Greek writers also expressed more or less the same view. Thus all accounts agree in describing him as of low caste. Mahapadma Nanda was a great and mighty conqueror and exterminator of all Kshatrias. He defended the Panchalas, Ikshvakus, Aswakas, Kurus etc. In the south, his conquest of Kalinga was proved by the Hathigumpha inscription. Thus Mahapadma Nanda became the first historical emperor of India. The strength and greatness of the Nanda empire was attested by classical writers. It is said that they maintained 200,000 infantry, 60,000 cavalry and 6000 war elephants. It was because of his might that Alexander cleverly evaded its conquest.

Mahapadma Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons who ruled in succession. The last of them was Dhana Nanda, a contemporary of Alexander. Pataliputra became a great centre of commerce and culture during his period. He was a ruthless tyrant. He imposed heavy taxes on the people and that made him unpopular. This coupled with his low birth made him unpopular. The people became discontented and they rallied under Chandragupta Maurya who overthrew the Nanda dynasty with the help of a crafty Brahmin

statesman, Chanakya or Kautilya. It was under the Mauryan dynasty that the Maghadan empire reached the apex of its glory.

The Nandas were a great imperial power. They sprang up into prominence in the dark days that followed the decline of Maghada. The bulk of the country from the Himalayas in the North to the Deccan in the South was under their imperial control. Their enormous wealth, power and prestige are testified by different sources. The puranas, the Jain and Buddhist writers, the Sanskrit drama *Mudrarakshasa* and the accounts of classical writers throw light on the history of the Nandas. But the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga is the important of these sources.

FORMATION OF MAURYAN EMPIRE

The age of the Mauryas is a landmark in the history of Ancient India. The great historian Dr. Vincent Smith has aptly stated that, “the advent of the Mauryan dynasty marks the passage from darkness to light for the historian. Chronology suddenly becomes definite, almost precise; a huge empire springs into existence unifying the innumerable fragments of distracted India”.

The Maurya Empire was physically extensive and most dominant kingdom of Indian ancient history in the reign of 322 BC to 185 BC. Maurya Dynasty was ruled into the state of Magadha (today included with Bihar, eastern UP and WB) from the capital city at Pataliputra (today in Patna). Chandragupta Maurya had established the Kingdom in 322 BC by conquered the Nanda Dynasty. After the ruler Chandragupta Maurya seven more successors rose in power and lined the kingdom with a great Excellency, but the dynasty had disintegrated in 185 BC by Pushyamitra Sunga. There is a list of Maurya Ruler with time in power.

Mauryan Ruler	Reign of Power	
Chandragupta Maurya	322 BC	298 BC
Bindusara	297 BC	272 BC
Asoka the Great	273 BC	232 BC
Dasaratha	232 BC	224 BC
Samprati	224 BC	215 BC
Salisuka	215 BC	202 BC
Devavarman	202 BC	195 BC
Satadhanvan	195 BC	187 BC
Brihadratha	187 BC	185 BC

Sources

The important sources for the study of the Mauryan period are the Arthashastra, Indica, Edicts of Asoka, NBP Wares and coins.

The Arthashastra.

The Arthashastra is an important treatise on the polity and administration of the Mauryan times written by Kautilya who was also known as Chanakya. He was a friend, guide and philosopher to Chandra Gupta Maurya and played a significant role in ousting the Nandas and placing Chandragupta on the throne of Magdha. However, according to scholars like Winternitz and Keith, the work is of a much later period. Probably it was written in the early centuries of Christian era and that the author was a different person and not the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya. The generally accepted opinion amidst the controversies regarding the authorship and its date is that the kernel of the Arthashastra belongs to the Mauryan age and was written by Kautilya but it contains some later day additions and interpolations. The Arthashastra consists of fifteen sections and 180 sub sections. It has 6,000 slokas. The work was discovered by Shama Sastri in 1909. Its contents can be divided into three main parts:

1. The first part deals with the king, his council and the government;
2. The second with civil and criminal law and
3. With inter state law, diplomacy and war.

Thus its range is comprehensive and it contains detailed instructions and guidelines for the governance of a state. It can be called a 'Manual of Administration'. It shows an amazing understanding of the intricacies of administration, foreign policy and diplomacy. Indeed it is an outstanding work showing ancient Indian achievements in the field of political science.

Indica.

'Indica' is the accounts on India prepared by Megasthenese, who was sent to the court of Chandragupta Maurya by his contemporary Greek ruler of the neighbouring area, Seleucus Nikethor. Megasthenese stayed at the Mauryan court and noted down his reflections on the then Indian society. Indica has been preserved in fragments and has been quoted by subsequent writers. The text was later translated into English by M.C Grindle. The passages of the book quoted by the later writers gave us an idea as to what Megasthenese wrote about Mauryan India. Though there are several exaggerations, Indica provides us the valuable information about Mauryan administration and social conditions. Megasthenese has stated that the then Indian society was divided into seven classes namely artisans, farmers, philosophers, soldiers, secret inspectors, traders and councilors.

Edicts of Asoka.

By far the most reliable source of information about the Mauryan history are the large number of Asoka's Inscriptions in the form of Rock Edicts and Pillar Edicts

put up by him in different parts of his vast empire. As observed by Prof. Sathyanatha Iyer, their number and variety coupled with their value as contemporary records composed under the orders of the emperor himself is a valuable source of our knowledge. They help us to know about his noble ideals and outlook, besides throwing light on the religion, society and administration of the Mauryas. The language of the Edicts is Prakrit and the Script used is Brahmi. He used another script called Kharoti in certain parts of North- Western India like Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi. Some inscriptions are Bilingual-in Greek and Arabic like those found near Kandahar. The Brahmi script which was a riddle for a long time was deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837. He was a civil servant of the English East India Company in Bengal and the secretary of the Asiatic society. Prinsep was followed by several scholars in course of time and had successfully deciphered the Edicts.

NBP Wares and coins.

The archaeological phase associated with the NBP wares was the period when towns and cities emerged and during the Mauryan period there were further changes in the material life of the people. The details of NBP wares have been discussed elsewhere. The coins as a source became significant during the Mauryan period. The coins of this period do not bear the names of the kings. They are called Punch-marked coins as different symbols are punched on them separately. The punch marked coins of the Mauryan period were issued probably by a central authority as it indicated by the uniformity of the symbols used.

Political Integration: State as Empire

Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty overthrew the last Nanda king and occupied his capital Pataliputra in 321 B.C. The first attempt of Chandragupta towards political integration was his war with Seleucus Nikator, the ruler of the area, west of the Indus. Chandragupta had won the war and he got Eastern Afghanistan, Baluchistan and area west of the Indus. With this the territorial foundation of the Mauryan Empire had been firmly established. Gradually, Chandragupta got the control of Western India and Deccan. The only parts left out of his empire thus were present day Kerala, Tamil Nadu and parts of North Eastern India. The details of his conquests are not available.

Chandragupta had brought Saurashtra and Malwa region under his control. Some of the later sources state that parts of Karnataka was under the control of Chandragupta. The contact of the Mauryas with South India is referred in the Sangam works. The statement about the abdication of the throne by Chandragupta and his migration to Sravanabelgola in Karnataka as a Jaina Monk, shows the influence of the Mauryas in the South. Bindusara, the son and successor of Chandragupta is said to have subjugated kings and Nobles of about 16 cities and he became the master of the territory which lay between Eastern and Western sea. Since Asoka is credited to have conquered Kalinga only, extension of the Mauryan Empire beyond river Tungabhadra is done by his predecessors. The Mauryan control of Deccan and Mysore Plateau must have been made a reality by

Bindusara. The process of political integration was completed with the conquest of Kalinga by Asoka and thus the Mauryan empire was formed. The notion of 'empire' used to characterize the Mauryan state has to be considered in the context of the ancient period. The Mauryan empire cannot be compared with that of the medieval or modern empires. The term 'empire' is given to designate a political system which was under a central control, a vast territory not all of which are necessarily homogenous. The Mauryan Empire could best be understood as a centralised bureaucratic empire.

STRUCTURE OF MAURYAN POLITY

Chandragupta (322-298 B.C.) was the founder of the Mauryan Empire. He was not only a great warrior, but also an excellent administrator. With the help of his Prime Minister, Kautilya or Chanakya, he reorganized the whole administration. Ashoka (273-232 B.C) inherited from him a well-organized bureaucratic government and utilized its machinery to the fullest extent for maintaining peace and order in his vast empire. The main source of our information about the Mauryan administration are the Arthashastra of Kautilya, the Indica of Megasthenes and inscriptions of Ashoka.

The Central Government.

The King:

In the Mauryan administration, the King was supreme head of administration. He was the pivot and the central figure. He was expected to look after every department. He had judicial, legislative and executive powers. He was the war lord and as such considered plans of military operations with his *Senapati*. He was the fountain-head of justice. As regards the legislative functions, the king has been described by Kautilya as "Dharma Parivartak". He issued what were known as *Seranas* or Ordinances. The edicts of Ashoka are examples of these *Serana* Ordinances. It was also the duty of the king to appoint ministers, priests, superintendents, etc. In spite of so much of power, he was not a despot. About his duties it is written in Arthashastra that "whatever pleases himself the king shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good".

The Council of Ministers:

In order to discharge his duties effectively, the king was assisted by a Council of Ministers known as "Mantri Parishad". Its existence is proved by the descriptions of Ashoka and Kautilya's Arthashastra. The Ministers were appointed by the king after due consideration of their merits, abilities etc. Each minister was in charge of one or more departments and he was assisted by two secretaries and a large number of under-secretaries and clerks. Each minister was personally responsible to the king for his department. At the same time, there was also the joint responsibility. All the important matters were considered and discussed in Cabinet. All the resolutions were framed, passed and sealed here. It was this council, which was to initiate the policies and would recommend the names for provincial governors.

The Secretariat:

In order to conduct the State business efficiently there was present in the state, a highly formed Secretariat. They were to conduct business of the state and its administration. Under each superintendent, there was a department and such departments were various in number. We are told of about 30 such departments in the Arthashastra. They dealt with all the activities of modern state such as education, irrigation, market, famine relief work, medical relief etc.

The provinces:

Mauryan Empire was divided into a number of provinces. Each province was put under the charge of a Governor who generally belonged to royal family or one of the relatives of the king in whom he had complete faith. There were four such provinces, whose capitals were at Taxila, Kalinga, Ujjain and Suvarnagiri. These are mentioned in the edicts of Ashoka. The king would send the detailed instructions about the policy and administration to these governors, who in turn were to execute them. The king had kept a very strict and close supervision over these provinces and their governors.

Village administration:

Village was the unit of administration. Gopa was its head. He kept a record of the land income and property of each householder in his village. He also maintained revenue records, showing the amount of land revenue payable in cash or kind. The Sthanika performed similar duties over one-quarter or Janpada or District.

Military Organization:

The Military organization of Chandragupta was very efficient and well organized. The Mauryan army consisted of cavalry, infantry, chariots and elephants. It was not a military but a standing army liberally paid and equipped by the state. According to Megasthenes, the administration of army was under the direction of a well-organized war office, consisting of a commission of thirty members divided into six boards, each with five members. Board No. I was the board of Admiralty. It controlled the navy. Board No. II. Managed the army transport, commissariat and army services. Board No. III controlled the Infantry, Board No. IV controlled the cavalry, Board No. V the war chariots and Board No. VI. The elephants.

The army was adequately equipped with weapons both offensive and defensive. The horsemen were armed each with two lances and a buckler. The foot soldiers were equipped with broad swords, javeline and bows and arrows. Each elephant carried at least three archers. Defensive armour was supplied to men, elephants and horses. The Arthashastra speaks of an ambulance service consisting of surgeons well-equipped with instruments, medicines and dressing materials, and of female nurses who attended with cooked food and beverages.

Sources of Revenue:

As regards the revenue of the State, taxes were recovered both in cash and kind. These were collected by local officers. They levied these at the rate of one

fourth of the produce of land. Some income was not from taxes but from sales. The taxes on sales were levied according to the price of the goods. There was also the system of excise licenses. The distinction between the taxes levied in rural and fortified areas is indicated in the Arthashastra, which refers to certain high revenue functionaries styled as the Samaharti and Sonnidharti.

Administration of justice:

As regards the administration of justice the king was the head. However, as he could not dispose of all of the cases himself, he appointed a large number of Judicial officers to decide cases in accordance with law laid down by him. According to Megasthenes, the Mauryan Penal Code was very severe and crimes were extremely rare. In the time of Ashoka, justice was tempered with mercy. Ashoka's orders to his Mahamatras was to avoid unjustified imprisonment and harassment of people. Respite of three days was to be given to persons who were condemned to death. Ashoka employed several officials to tour the provinces after three or five years. It was their duty to see that no injustice was done to the people.

Municipal Administration.

The Greek Ambassador Megasthenes had given a very detailed description of the Municipal arrangement, which was very excellent. This type of system was present in the capital, that is Pataliputra. The Administration of the city was entrusted to a commission of thirty members divided into six panchayats or boards of five each. Each board had its own departments allotted to it. Besides this, the whole board met collectively from time to time to discuss common measures of public welfare such as the repair of roads, upkeep of markets, temples and so on and so forth. The departmental functions of the Boards were as follows:

- (i) The first Board was in charge of industrial arts. It supervised industries and handicrafts, regulated work and wages, and enforced use of pure and sound materials.
- (ii) The Second Board took care of the foreigners. It saw to the comforts of foreigners and travelers visiting the city.
- (iii) The third Board was charged with registration of births and deaths, such statistics being necessary to facilitate as well as to obtain information for the Government.
- (v) The fifth Board supervised manufacturers, and prevented the frauds arising from adulteration.
- (vi) The sixth Board collected the tax of one tenth on all goods sold in the city. Evasion of this municipal tax was a capital offence.

Kautilya mentions that there was a Nagarika or the officer of the city. He was just like modern Executive Officer. Thus we can say that there was an elaborate system of Municipal Boards in the 4th Century B.C.

Spy System:

Chandragupta Maurya was fully aware of the importance of spies in the State. Therefore he established a well-organized and high type of espionage which

was in no way inferior to the modern intelligence services. These people reported to the king about the doubtful and subversive activities of the people. At times they reported against the corrupt officials with the result that corruption was totally annihilated. Sometimes women of easy virtue were also employed as spies. "Cipher writing was used and the services of courier pigeons were enlisted". Thus, it is seen that this system was well organized and elaborate in those days in India.

Dharma Mahamatras:

The institution of the Dharma Mahamatras was started by Ashoka. Their duty was to bring about the material and spiritual good of the people. They had to perform many duties with regard to prisoners. Help was to be given to the needy. Dharma Mahamatras did a lot of work in the neighbouring states. It was their duty to render assistance to the helpless and the aged. While distributing charity, they were not to discriminate against any person. According to Dr. Bhandarkar, the Dharma Mahamatras were in charge of justice and they went on tours frequently for that purpose.

Conclusion

Thus we see that Mauryans had introduced a well-organized and autocratic government in India. They had a highly elaborate machinery with many departments managed by carefully graded state officials with well-defined duties. They had also a well equipped and highly trained army to protect the kingdom. Villages enjoyed complete self-government. About the despotic rule of the age, Havel writes "Chandragupta may have been the law unto himself within his empire but he was nonetheless a constitutional monarch bound by the common law of Aryavrata". Moreover, the Mauryans had a paternal form of government. In provincials, Ashoka states, "All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they enjoyed every kind of prosperity and happiness, so also do I desire the same for all men". It is difficult to have a loftier ideal for the administration of the country.

Saptanga and Ashtanga Concepts of state

The 'Arthashastra' of Kautilya and several other ancient Indian texts put forward the 'Saptanga theory of state'. According to this theory there are seven angas (limbs) of a state. These are : king, ministers, ally, taxes, army, fort and land or territory. To these seven elements, the Arthashastra significantly adds an eighth element, the enemy also of the seven limbs of the state, the king is made out to be the most powerful. The Arthashastra gives final authority to the king in all aspects of administration. It gives the king primacy among the seven components of the state because the king appoints or removes the ministers, defends the treasury and the people, works for the progress and welfare of the people and punishes the evil. Not everyone is fit to become a king. He should belong to a high family, should have the ability to control, must be of sharp intellect and above all he should be the upholder of Dharma.

The Saptanga theory suggests that the work of the state cannot be carried out without the assistance of the ministers. The king should listen to their advices, even though they are not binding upon him. But the ministers should see to it that the king's orders are carried out properly. Like the ministers, all the other elements are under the control of the king. The saptanga theory remained as the base for the future Mauryan administration, with necessary practical changes.

Transitions in Varna and Jati

In the Mauryan period the social organisation based on Varna and Ashrama which had began in Vedic age, reached a definite stage. In this period the Brahmanas regained their lost position in the society. Megasthenes divides Mauryan society into seven divisions – philosophers, farmers, herdsman, artisans, soldiers, magistrate and councillors. They have been interpreted as castes because no one was allowed to marry outside his own division or change his profession.

The philosophers consisted of Brahmanas and Shramanas. The Shramanas included ascetics, monks and followers of various sects. The philosophers did not pay tax. The farmers included land owners, the Shudra cultivators and the labourers working on the land. The herdsman were probably the pastoralists who comprised a significant numbers in the Mauryan population. The status of the artisans depended on his particular craft. For instance metal workers were given a higher status than the weavers and potters. The soldiers were the largest class in the society. Besides Kshatriyas, lower castes were also appointed as infantry men, charioteers and attendants. Magistrates and councillors were part of the administrative system and were appointed either from Brahmanas or Kshatriyas.

However the social compositions as suggested by Megasthenes might not be as simple. Because if we consider Brahmanical text and Buddhist text, we find different views regarding caste division.

In Mauryan empire women were employed in various activities. They were appointed as king's body guards, spies and performers. Poor and widowed upper caste women, deserted wives and ageing prostitutes were provided with some work. We also have instances of few female ascetics. Kautilya insisted that tax should be collected from the prostitutes, which suggest that they were large in numbers in the empire. From the textual sources it can be assumed that the majority of women had to follow the wishes of the men in their family in a patriarchal society.

SLAVERY

It is difficult to ascertain whether slavery existed in ancient India or not, in the modern sense of term or as it is understood in the context of the ancient European society. Scholars are of the opinion that a kind of slavery in various forms had existed in ancient India mainly in the form of forced appropriation of labour, skill or gratification. However it was not a legitimate and generally accepted practice. There is no evidence to show that the regular features of slavery as practiced in contemporary Greece and Rome with open slave markets and legal strictures had existed in early India. The Vedic version Dasa as slaves have been

challenged by scholars as the term *Dasa* means servants in a general sense and just from the term it could not be concluded that it was slavery

The primary relevant textual source regarding the slavery is attributed to *Arthashastra* as it provides some clues on the nature and extent of slavery in the section titled, 'Rules regarding slaves and labourers'. The slave appears to have retained control over money, property and right to compensation of wage for labour and at the same time had the right of redemption. It was a punishable offence to deceive or deprive a slave. Generally slavery was of limited duration of temporary status. Slavery for life was very rare and if so severe conditions were put forward.

Employing a slave to carry the dead, to sweep human waste, remains of meal, stripping or keeping in nudity, hurting or abusing, violation of the chastity of female servants etc. were to cause the forfeiture of the value paid, for the slave. Violation of the chastity of female servants led to their immediate liberty. In fact in the Mauryan times and ancient India in general, slavery was mostly domestic under which there subsisted intimate relations with the master and slave and so it was not sharply marked class, but merely the lowest rung of the household ladder.

The character of slavery first appeared in the Vedic period was modified in the post-vedic period in several ways. It is difficult to describe the position of the *Sudras* in the Vedic period in terms of slavery or serfdom. Generally they do not seem to have been slaves or serfs owned by individuals. Since the society has been throughout subject to strictly enforced caste system the difference between lowest caste and the lot of slaves is not that much precise. Slavery in the Vedic period was mostly confined to women, who were employed in domestic work. In the age of *Budhas* slavery embraced men also and they were often employed in production.

By the time of the Mauryan state formation the number of slaves naturally increased. The introduction of the new system of production based on iron technology, spread of agriculture, extension of settlements, growth of crafts and commerce, rise of towns and other urban centres, use of punch marked coins etc, might have paved way for the increase in the number of the forced labourers. The empire of *Magadha* was formed by defeating several enemy rulers and conquering several other kingdoms. Army men and others of the defeated territories and kingdoms may have been made slaves by the *Magadhans*.

The wide spread use of coins created accumulations of money in certain hands which led to money lending. This led to impoverishment and indebtedness of certain sections of society. The *Buddhist* texts show that failure to pay debts led to the enslavement of debtors. Money transactions not only produced debt slaves, but also facilitated sale and purchase of slaves especially in cities developed in north India. In fact slave for production appeared in a period which saw continuous wars, wide spread use of metallic money and to some degree of market economy.

The *Pali* texts of the period speak not of *Sudras* and such but of *Dasas* in the sense of slaves and '*Kammakaras*' or hired labourers as employed in agricultural operations. These *Dasas* had belonged to the *Sudra Varna*. Still slavery was not

exclusively confined to the Sudra Varna only. It is reported that even Khatriyas and other men of high birth also might be reduced to the position of slaves, but the nature of their subjugation may have been different. However, the number of such members was very few. Slavery arising out of debt, purchase and fear was mainly related to the lower orders of the society rather than to the higher varnas. It is reported that the daughter of a cart driver was carried off as a slave by a merchant on account of her father's failure to pay his debts.

Most of the women slaves were employed in domestic services while others were engaged in agricultural activities. Though slaves and hired labourers worked in small land holdings, generally they were engaged in larger agricultural lands. It was not possible to carry out the work in the larger holdings without the labour of the considerable number of dasas and kammakaras. We have no idea about the numerical strength of slaves in the Mauryan period in relation to their employees and employment. According to the Dharmasutras, the Brahmins were allowed to exchange slaves for slaves but could not sell them. The Dharmasutras and other brahmanical law books restricted the selling and purchasing of slaves.

It is assumed that there were mainly five types of slaves (1) born to enslaved mothers (2) captured in raids or prisoners of war (3) voluntarily becoming slaves or bonded labourers to escape from starvation due to famine or flood (4) becoming slaves for indebtedness (5) out of fear being captured in the continuous enemy raids. The wars with Avanti and Anga contributed slaves in the form of prisoners of wars to the slavery of Magadha. R.S. Sharma states 'All this would suggest that slavery prevailed on a considerable scale, but in any case it cannot be compared with the slavery that had existed in contemporary Europe and other parts of the world'.

Surplus and Exchange

The Mauryan economy was mainly depended on agriculture. A large part of the government income came from land revenue. Therefore importance was given on efficient collection of revenue. The farmers or landowners had to pay a variety of taxes to the state. Gradually private ownership of land was conceded. A vast area of wasteland and crownlands were cultivated under the supervision of the state. From the account of Megasthenes we come to know that it was the responsibility of the state to clear new areas or deserted land and to settle the Shudra cultivators. These cultivators were initially exempted from tax, but once they started working on the land, a tax was imposed.

There were two types of land revenue. The first one was rent for the use of land and the second was based on the assessment of the produce. The assessment varied according to local condition or on the productivity of the soil. The sources mention a range from one sixth to a quarter of the produce of the land. We find mention about different types of taxes. One such was 'Pindakara' which was collected jointly from a village. Pastoralists also had to pay tax on the number of animals and on their produce. One unique kind of tax was Visthi which was paid

in the form of free labour to the state. Taxes were also levied for providing irrigation.

Beside agriculture, craft and trade were also two important economic activities of the Mauryan Empire. Some artisans were employed by the state and they were exempted from tax. Armourers and shipbuilders came under this category. Others, who worked in state workshop, had to pay taxes. The rest of the artisans worked either individually or as part of a guild called 'Shreni or Puga'. These associations helped the state in tax collection.

The state controlled trade and industry. The working of mines and forests, the construction and security of trade-routes and the establishment of market towns were all under the state. It also supervised sale of goods and the superintendent of commerce fixed the prices of the goods Merchants had to pay a toll tax which was one-fifth of the value of the good. In addition there was a trade tax of one-fifth of the toll. Merchants were forbidden to make excessive profits. The collection of revenue from commercial sources was varied according to Mauryan control over an area or a route.

We also get mention of organized moneylending. Money could be given as loan from the treasury on interest of 15 percent per annum. However in less secure transactions like long sea voyages the interest rate could be higher.

The remains of urban centres belonged to the Mauryan period suggest that the standard of living was high. Brick, stone and wooden buildings were found during excavation. The discovery of a large number of iron goods suggests extensive use of iron in this period. The distribution of Northern Black Polished Ware as far as South India is an indication of the expansion of trade.

It was possible that the punch-marked silver coins were the imperial currency of the Mauryas. Most of the punch-marked coins discovered have the symbols like crescent-on-arches or hills, the tree-in-railing, the sun symbol and the circle with six arrows like extension. These coins were used for collection of taxes and payment of officers.

Asoka's Concept of Dhamma

Asoka's policy of Dhamma or Dharma had earned him the credit of being considered as one of the greatest kings of the ancient world. The word 'Dhamma' is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word Dharma. This word has been translated as righteousness, piety, and moral life. The Asokan edicts put up at the various parts of the empire explain the principles of Dharma to his people. It should be understood that Asoka's Dharma was not a particular religious faith or practice; instead it was related to norms of social behaviour and activities.

According to some thinkers the concept of Dharma was totally based on Buddhism. On the other hand, a few scholars expressed the view that his Dharma was based on Vedic religion. There are also writers who regarded Asoka's Dharma as a universal religion. In fact, his concept of Dharma was not an extension of any

religious philosophy but a moral law independent of any caste or creed. According to Tripati, the Dharma which he preached to the world is the essence of all religions. It was more or less a moral and ethical code acceptable to all religions. It exhorted the people to show respect to parents, teachers and high officers. Kith and Kin as well as holy men should be given due respect. He also stressed the importance of cultivating noble qualities. Like truthfulness, kindness, charity and generosity. Thus Asoka prescribed a code of conduct, with a view to make life happier and purer in this world. He showed the world that the fruits of moral conquest were sweeter than those of the physical conquests of territories.

Asoka Dharma emphasized on non-violence. The policy of non-violence included giving up of wars and conquests and to restrain from killing of animals. It advocated some welfare measures also like planting of trees and digging of wells etc. It attacked the ceremonies and sacrifices. His personal life was a model for his people. He stopped the practice of royal hunting and imposed strict restrictions upon the slaughtering of animals, fishing etc. He taught the people the basic principle to live and let live.

Asoka had appointed a special group of officers called 'Dharma Mahamatras' to propagate Dharma among the people including women. However, it is assumed that in the long run these Dharma Mahamatras became so powerful and soon began to interfere in politics. Asoka conducted 'Dharma Yathras' in the empire along with his officials in order to propagate Dharma. He was a 'Monk in Kings Garb' as he wanted to spread the ideas of Dharma outside his empire. He sent missionaries to the far away places, like Burma, Greece, and Sri Lanka. Mahendra, the emissary said to have been sent by Asoka to Sri Lanka converted the ruler of that country into Buddhism. Buddhist texts also mentioned about the visit of Sangamitra, the daughter of Asoka to Sri Lanka for the spread of the principle of Dharma. It should be noted that Asoka never tried to propagate a religion; instead he was trying to maintain certain moral principles among the people which was needed by the time.

Decline of the Mauryas

The first great empire of India founded by Chandragupta Maurya and glorified by his grandson. Asoka lost its glamour and glory after the death of the latter in 237 B.C. Asoka was succeeded by a chain of seven weak rulers one after another within a period of about fifty years. Under them, the empire rapidly disintegrated. There were frequent revolts in different parts of the empire. Making use of the opportunities, various provinces declared their independence. Kashmir became independent under Jalauka and Gandhara asserted its freedom under Virasena. The Kalinga threw off the Mauryan Yoke and recovered their freedom. The Andhras raised the banner of revolt and declared the independence of the land south of the Vindhya. The foreign invaders soon fell upon the easy prey and wrested extensive regions in the north west. The Punjab was over run by the Indo-Greeks about 200 B.C. The last Mauryan ruler Brihandratha was murdered by his

Brahmin general Pushyamitra Sunga, who founded the Sunga dynasty in 184 B.C. Thus the Mauryan rule came to an end.

Causes.

1. Brahminical reaction.

According to some scholars like K.P. Jayaswal and V.A. Smith, the decline of the Mauryan Empire was due to a militant Brahminical reaction against the religious policy of Asoka. The Brahmins were annoyed by Asoka's patronage of Buddhism and regulation against sacrifices which formed an essential part of Brahminical religion.

2. Weak Successors of Asoka.

The weakness of the successors of Asoka was an important cause for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. Asoka was succeeded by a progeny of pigmies, whose shoulders were not fit to bear the weight of his mighty monarchy. They were unable to control the government and the people of a vast empire. Naturally the officials became corrupt, oppressive and revolts broke out in different parts of the country. Taking advantage of the weakness of the centre the far off provincial chieftains declared their independence. Ultimately the Mauryan Empire collapsed.

3. Uncentral Position of the capital.

The uncentral position of the Mauryan capital, Pataliputra was a source of weakness to the empire. The empire was vast and Asoka's annexation of Kalinga further enlarged its size. The great distance between the capital and the out lying provinces stood in the way of maintaining law and order.

4. Excessive Centralisation.

Excessive centralization of administrative authority was another cause for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. There was no scientific division of governmental functions between the central and provincial government. The success of the government depended upon the personal ability of the emperor. The weak successors of Asoka were unable to maintain the integrity of the empire which had become an easy prey to disruptive forces.

5. Decline of military power.

Deterioration of the military power of the Mauryan Empire after the death of Asoka was an important cause for the decline of the empire. The army lost its martial spirit and became lethargic due to Asoka's policy of Dharma Vijaya. Therefore, rebellions and foreign invasions made their appearance and the army failed to face these challenges.

6. Problem of succession.

The Mauryans lacked a definite law of succession. As a result after the death of every king, war of succession started which weakened the empire. The bloody wars of succession had a demoralizing effect on the stability of the empire.

7. Foreign Invasion.

Foreign invasion gave a death blow to the empire that was already tottering on account of internal causes. The Indo-Greeks over run the northern part of the Mauryan Empire by about 200 B.C. Taking advantages of the crises; Pushyamitra Sunga murdered the last king Brihadrata which brought about the end of the Mauryan dynasty.

UNIT – IV

STATE AND SOCIETY IN SOUTH INDIA

Evidences from Early Tamil Anthologies and Corroboration with the Megalithic Relics

Early Tamil Anthologies

The sangam age is the first well lighted epoch in the history of South India. During this period Kerala was a part of Tamilakam. The most authentic sources of information for the history of this period is the early Tamil anthologies. According to Tradition there are three Tamil Sangams or Academies which flourished with head quarters at Madurai. The folk songs and oral Tradition of ancient Tamilakam was transmitted from one generation to the other. These Tamil songs or heroic poems had been finally consolidated and compiled at a later stage. These Tamil heroic poem are collectively called as Sangam literature. The sangam songs were created at different periods by different poets. These songs reflect the society of ancient Tamilakam roughly from 3rd century B.C. to 4th century A.D.

The classical Tamil works are divided into three separate sections known as Ettutokai, pathu pattu and patinenkizhkanakku. The earliest among these work is Tolkapium, a work of grammar. The later works are silappathikaram and Mani meghalai. Ettutokai is the name given for the eight literary works called Nattinai, Kurinthokai, Ainkuru nuru, Pattittupathu, paripadal, Kalithukai, Akam Nanuru and puram nanuru. Patittupathu is anthology of 100 poems divided into 10 equal sections each of which was composed by a particular poet in praise of a chera chieftain. Agam Nanuru is a collection of 400 love poems. Puram Nanuru is a collection of 400 poems dealing with external matters like war, government etc. Among the poets who composed poems for sangam works the names of Paranar, Kapilar and Palai Gantamanar deserve special mention.

Megalithic culture.

Megalithic were the huge stone slabs erected over the burials. The culture in which huge stone slabs were used encircle burial places was called the megalithic culture. Several such graves have been found in south India. The megalithics are the most important archeological findings of the ancient period of South Indian history. Menhirs, Rock cut chambers, Dolmens, hat stone, (Topikallu), and umbrella stones (Kudakallu) are the various types of megalithics found in Kerala. The rock cut chambers are of rectangular shape with a small entrance connected with the flight of steps. Rock cut stone benches are seen inside the chamber.

Kerala is noted particularly for its megalithic monuments lying scattered all over the area. The megalithic types found in Kerala form a part of the megalithic complex common to South India and are associated with the cult of the dead. With the beginning of the Iron Age, the burial custom was either to cremate or expose the died bodies to the elements and inform specific bones collected from the

spot. The ashes from the cremated bodies along with their tools, weapons, beads, ornaments, utensils and the like were also similarly interred. The interment was usually done in urns or Jars in pits or cist or rock cut caves. The burial urns of jars have been unearthed from different parts of South India.

Tinai Concepts

In the Sangam age Kerala was a part of Tamilakam. The Sangam literature divided the land into five regions or Tinai on the basis of soil formation and Topography. The Tinais were the physiographic division or ecoregions. There were five such Tinais which are collectively called Ainthinai. These are Kurinchi (Hill and Forest) Mullai (Pastures and Jungles) Palai (Dry land) Marutham (Cultivable land) and Neytal (Sea coast) Each of the Tinais had its Typical geographical features, distinct occupational groups and favourite deities.

The Kurinchi was hilly and forest regions. It was inhabited by Kuravar, Vedar and Kanavar. Their main occupations were hunting and food gathering. They practiced *punam* or shifting cultivation. Their favourite deity was Murugan or Velan. The Mullai was pastoral and jungle areas. This Tinai had the Itayar and Ayar as its inhabitants. Their chief occupation was cattle rearing. Agriculture was their secondary occupation. They worshipped Mayon.

The Palai region was dry and unfertile area. It comprised the middle portion of the land. It was inhabited by war like tribes like Maravar kallar; *vettuvar* etc. They resorted to plunder and warfare. Plunder was their main occupation. It was their job to supply forces of fighting to the chieftains who controlled the hill forts. They worshipped the war goddess Kottavai. The fertile wetland was called Marutham. The *uzhavar* and the *vellalar* lived in this region. Agriculture was their main occupation. They practiced regular cultivation with the help of plough. The term *Uzhavar* denotes the use of the plough and *vellalar* the proprietor of the soil. Paddy was the main product of the region. The cultivators of the Marutham Tinai produced food grains also for the people of the society. Their God was Indra.

The coastal region was called Neythal. The inhabitants of the Neythal territory were the Parathevar, Valayar, Minavar, Nulayar etc. The main occupations of the people were fishing and salt making. Their favourite deity was Kantalon or Varunan.

The Tinai concept had its social and economic implication. It can be called as echo-zones, as the inhabitants of each region depended on the geographical environment to earn their livelihood. They had developed their peculiar life style according to the geographical peculiarities. There was no centralized economy based on organized production or distribution of the necessities of life.

Sangam Society.

The early Tamil literature gives us a clear picture of the South Indian social life in the sangam age. It appears that the chiefly power, constituted the source of authority to command collective labour. Chieftains of bigger levels could command the labour of his mercenaries. There were references in the poems to warriors

(maravari) offering paid service of protection to caravan groups of salt merchants. The basic elements necessary for the flowering of the composite culture existed in Tamilakam in the early sangam age. The tendencies towards social stratification were much more evident. Dignity of labour was recognized everywhere and no person was looked upon as inferior in social status on account of occupation.

The re-distribution system was controlled by Muventer, Kurunila mannar etc. The functionaries like Maravars (warriors) Panas (bard) Parayers (people who play a kind of raid drum called Parai, Tutiyar (people who play a small drum called Tudi), Kuravas, vetar etc. were some of the occupational groups of the period. Such communities like panar, Kuravas, Parayers, vetar and others enjoyed social freedom and respect. They enjoyed the right to education. It is said that the great poets of the sangam period like Kapilar and Paranar originally belonged to the pana community. The panas were welcomed in the residence of rulers and chieftains. Evils of untouchability, unapproachability were unknown. In the early sangam age caste system had not taken clear shape.

The principal social mode of labour realization was familiar or co-operative. There were many skilled labourers like Blacksmith and pottery makers. The practice of burying iron objects along with the dead had pushed a great deal of iron out of circulation and continuous iron working developed as a full time occupation of hereditary specialization. The production of earth pots obviously a continuous full time activity. Another full time function of hereditary nature was that of warriors (Maravar). Every settlement (ur) needed warriors.

In the ports and headquarters of ruling chieftains several hereditary craftsman and specialist functionaries worked and organized into corporate bodies (nikamam). In the ports like Muziris, Tyndis, etc there existed artisans settlements, (cherries). probably both the ruling authority and organized merchant groups must have used labour of a class of servile people.

In the course of plunder and re-distribution some kind of differential allocation of new position, status role and prestige existed. There was a slow emergence of hereditary occupation. Social differentiation was confined to the binary between uyarnor (the high born) and izhipirappalar (the low born) people. Similarly the differentiation in terms of the objective condition of life was also confined to binary between puravalar (re-distributors) and iravalar (dependent)

The Brahmins gave ideological support to the rulers. As a reward they were given high position in the social hierarchy of the rulers. Gradually the Brahmins took control of sacrifice, yaga rituals, teaching and learning. The Brahmins acquired high status with help of king. They received land property in the form of wealth. They alienated completely from the process of production and became a priestly class. The emergence of a new class involved completely from agriculture. A new social atiyar were created and they became adiyala.

Expansion of Agriculture.

During the Sangam period agriculture was done mainly in the Marutham region. Marutham was fertile wet land watered by rivers and streams. The fertility of the soil and the availability of water in the region helped for the spread of agriculture. But the people of Kurinj and Mullai region had practiced small scale cultivation or punam cultivation.

Remains of iron implements have been discovered at the Megalithic sites of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Iron plough was widely used for cultivation. Bullocks and buffaloes were used for pulling the plough. Irrigational facilities in the form of Tanks and dams provided for the spread of agriculture. Menpulam is another term used in the Tamil poems to refer the fertile agricultural area. The surrounding area is called as vanpulam. As advanced agricultured areas, the Marutham Tract attracted people from other Tinais. Being the agriculture area, the Marutham Tinai required the service of artisans like tachar and kollar. Paddy was the main product of the Marutham region. With the growth and the spread of agriculture, production increased. So the attention of the chieftains turned towards the Marutham region. They plundered the surplus product. In course of time a new social groups like Adiyalars were formed. They cultivated food grains for the chieftains and the rulers. The production of surplus paved the way for the social inequalities and struggle for the ownership of the agricultural product.

Emergence of political forms.

The polity of the Sangam period was Tribal in character. Our knowledge about the chieftains of Tamilakam is entirely based on the Tamil heroic poems. There were three levels of chiefly power which gives some clues to the pattern of distribution of power from the simple to the complex. The three levels of chiefly power are the Velir, Kizhar and Ventar.

The velir chieftains held sway over the Kurinji and Mullai areas i.e. in the pastoral forest hills. Ezhimala was the most prominent hill chiefdom of Kerala. Another chiefdom of Southern Kerala was potyilmalai. The structure of the political level of the hill chief was essentially a simple one based on kinship. A chief is referred to as Ko-man or peruman of a given people. Normally a hill comprised several settlements (Ur). There were also kutis of other functionaries. Another category of chiefship is those of unkizar ur- mannan who were generally low land chiefs of small settlements. Like the velir chiefs, the kizar chief were also hunter chief either of vetar or Kuravas. Certain kizar chief also held sway over agrarian areas.

The next category of political power is that of Venter represented by three major chieftains viz. Chera, Chola and Pandya. These three chieftains are referred as Mauventer. They had their core areas in Karur, Madurai and Urair. There was no idea of a fixed or demarcated territory or boundary. They had no fixed army and fixed government machinery, and land revenue system. They made use of local chieftains, War like Tribes for the war plunder, and raids.

Forms of Exchange

Re-distribution.

There are many references in the poems to the practice of accumulating the harvest as heaps at the residence of chieftains. The chieftains re-distributed their stocks of paddy among their kinsmen, scholarly bards (pulavar) common bards (panar), warriors (Maravar) and various groups of magico-religious people who wandered as mendicants (Iravar).

There were three levels of re-distribution corresponding to the three categories of chiefly power namely, venter, velir and kizar. Redistribution asserted the status of a particular section, and followed a determinate pattern of social relationship. The institution of gift (kotai) was an integral part of redistribution. Gift was a type of exchange in the service as product existed in the ancient period between various people as a part of favour and requital gift was an ancient form of exchange. The donar and the recipient of the gift were ritualistically related. The exchange under gift system either paved the way for the emergence of a new type of political relationship or strengthened the political relationship between various levels. Gifts were given to bards, mendicants, warrior etc. The main item of redistribution at the venter and velir level were cattle and grain. Pulavar and panar claim to have received gift of elephants, gems, clothes etc. Gift at the level of kizar were confined to a meal or bowl of millet, maize or rice.

Roman Trade-Early Urban Centres

Different kinds of trade existed in the Sangam period. There were Local trade, Long distance trade and overland and over seas trade. Local Trade was based on Barter system i.e. exchange of goods for goods. The products of each Tinai were in exchange with those of the other regions. Most of the goods from other Tinais flowed to marutham. The people from the respective Tinai reached agricultural area and exchanged their goods for paddy at fixed point of exchange, called Avanam and Angati. There were day markets (nalangati) and evening bazaar (Allangati). People from Kurinji had ivory, honey, animal skin, meat, bamboo, rice for exchange.

The people of Mullai had milk products, millets, maize etc. The coastal people had mainly salt and fish for exchange. The exchange of fish was primarily the duty of the women and they moved about as hawkers and vendors of fishes. There was exchange between fish and paddy. Liquor was exchanged for paddy as well as gold in the marutham. The fixed inter commodity ratio between salt and paddy brought to the context of exchange based on the notion of a medium. It appears that both salt and paddy had functioned as money. Salt has been an indispensable item and its use in olden days ranged from daily consumption to ritual gift.

A new group of traders were involved in the Long distance trade. They conducted journey along the difficult routes passing through palai region and dangerous forest areas. They moved as Caravan troops. The Caravans had to seek their own measure of safety. They employed warriors for protection. During early centuries there existed trade or exchange relation between North and South. Kautilya's Arthashastra and Buddhist literature make references about the North-South trade. Much has been said about the maritime trade of ancient Tamilakam. The

Romans generally known as the Yavanas were the important people to arrive Tamilakam for Trade. Kerala coast is said to have played a major role in the export of pepper and spices to Greco- Roman world in ancient period. Several hoards of punch marked and Roman coins were discovered from various places of Kerala and Tamilnadu.

The classical Greco- Roman accounts refer to the contemporary over seas trade centers and ports in South India. Pliny's 'Natural History' and periplus of the Erethrean Sea give a detailed list of export and import, ports and ports Towns. According to them the major items of export from Tamilakam were pepper, ginger cardamom, clover, spices, animal skin, Ivory, wild woods, cotton fabric, precious stone and gems. Gold and silver coins were the main items that came in return. The classical foreign accounts mention Muziris, Tyndis, Nelkynda and Bakara as the ancient ports of Kerala.

Syllabus

HY5B07 EARLY INDIA: STATE TO EMPIRE

No. of Credits: 4

No. of Contact Hours per week: 5

Aim of the Course: To examine the aspects of the society during the development of a state in ancient India and the aspects of early empires in North India.

UNIT I - Lineage Society

- Historical Antecedents – State in Harappan cities - Archaeological Evidences for Vedic Culture - Political and Social Institutions – Gana – Gotra and Gena
- Mode of re-distribution of wealth – social divisions - *Varna*
- Rituals and the Role of Brahmins
- From Jana to Janapatha

UNIT II - Mahajanapadas

- *Republics and Kingdoms* - archaeological evidences – NBPW 1st phase. Ideology Practice and Conflicts.
- Transition in the Varna System and the emergence of Caste - *Varnasramadharma* - Proliferation of agriculture - Iron Technology in Production - background of the rise of Jainism and Buddhism.
- Conflicts among the Mahajanapadas and the rise of Magadha
- Upanishad Philosophy – Gahapathi - Gamani - Vanik
- Social philosophy of Buddhism.

UNIT III - The Empire

- Emergence of Monarchy in North India.
- Formation of Mauryan Empire - *Sapthanga* and *Ashtanga* concepts of State.
- Transitions in *Varna* and *Jati* - Slavery - Surplus and exchange -

UNIT IV - State and Society in South India

- Evidences from early Tamil Anthologies and corroboration with the Megalithic relics
- *Tinai* Concepts
- *Muvendars* - Intrusion of the Mauryas.
- Roman Trade - Early Urban centres.

Readings:

Basham A.L., *The Wonder that was India.*

Champakalakshmi R., *Trade Ideology and Urbanisation in South India*

Jha D.N., *Economy and Society in Early India*

Kosambi D.D., *Culture and Civilisation in Ancient India*

Majumdar R.C., *Ancient India*

Romila Thapar, *A History of India, Vol. 1*

Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History.*

Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*

Sastri Nilakanta K.A., *A History of South India*

Sharma R.S., *Perspectives in the Social and Economic History of Early India*

Further Readings:

Karashima Naboru, *South India History and Culture*

Kosambi D.D., *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*

Sharma R.S., *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India*

Subrahmanyam N., *Sangam Polity*

