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ANCIENT HISTORY



942-574-4877

www.vidyaics.com

icsvidya@gmail.com

BASICS OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

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1. What, Where, How and When

The past was different for different groups of people. For example, the lives of herders or farmers were different from those of kings and Queen, the lives of merchants were different from those of crafts persons, and so on.

❖ Sources of information from Past

- **Manuscripts:** Manuscripts were written by hand (this comes from the Latin word 'manu' meaning hand.) These were **usually written on palm leaf**, or on the specially prepared bark of a tree known as the birch, which grows in the Himalayas.
- Over the years, many manuscripts were eaten away by insects, some were destroyed, but many have survived, often preserved in temples and monasteries.
- These books dealt with all kinds of subjects such as **religious beliefs and practices, the lives of kings, medicine and science**. Besides, there were **epics, poems, plays**.
- Many of these were written in Sanskrit, others were in Prakrit (languages used by ordinary people) and Tamil.
- **Inscriptions:** These are writings on relatively hard surfaces such as stone or metal. Sometimes, **kings got their orders** inscribed so that people could see, read and obey them.
- There are other kinds of inscriptions as well, where men and women (including kings and queens) recorded what they did. For Exa. **Kings often kept records of victories in battle.**

❖ Additional Information:

- **Kandahar Inscription:** Inscription dates to about 2250 years ago, and was found in **Kandahar, present-day Afghanistan**.
 - It was inscribed on the orders of a ruler named **Ashoka**.
 - This inscription was inscribed in two different scripts and languages, **Greek (top) and Aramaic (below)**, which were used in this area.
 - **Rosetta Inscription:** **Rosetta** is a town on the north coast of **Egypt**, and here an inscribed stone was found, which contained inscriptions in **three different languages** and scripts (**Greek, and two forms of Egyptian**).
 - Scholars who could read Greek, figured out that the names of kings and queens were enclosed in a little frame, called a **cartouche**.
- **Archaeological Findings:** Archaeologists study the remains of buildings made of stone and brick, paintings, and sculpture.
 - They also explore and **excavate** (dig under the surface of the earth) to find tools, weapons, pots, pans, ornaments and coins.
 - **Some of these objects may be made of stone, others of bone, baked clay or metal.** Archaeologists also look for bones of animals, birds, and fish to find out what people ate in the past.

Early Settlements of human in Indian Subcontinent

- People have lived along the **banks of river Narmada** for several hundred thousand years.
- Some of the earliest people who lived here were **skilled gatherers**, (i.e., people who gathered their food).

- They knew about the vast wealth of plants in the surrounding forests, and collected roots, fruits and other forest produce for their food. They also **hunted animals**.
- Some of the areas where women and men **first began to grow crops** such as wheat and barley about 8000 years ago and are located near the **Sulaiman and Kirthar hills**.
- People also **began rearing animals like sheep, goat, and cattle, and lived in villages**. **Early agriculture was also developed in Garo hills to the north-east**. The places where rice was first grown are to the north of the Vindhyas.
- About 4700 years ago, **some of the earliest cities flourished on the banks of river Indus and its tributaries** (tributaries are smaller rivers that flow into a larger river).
- Later, about 2500 years ago, **cities were developed on the banks of the Ganga and its tributaries, and along the seacoasts**.

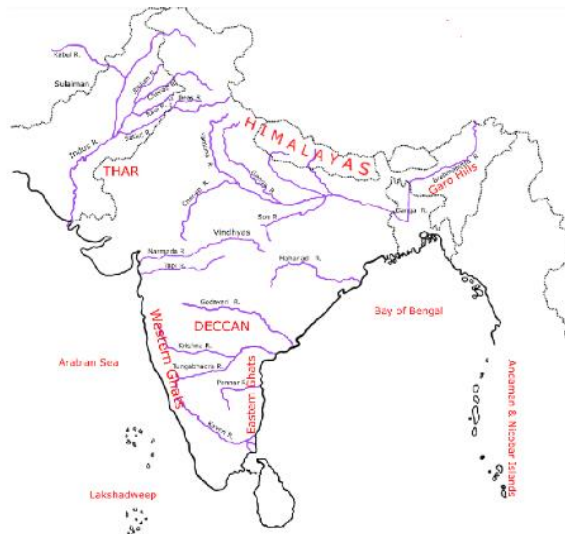


Fig 1.1: Physical Map of the Subcontinent

- In ancient times, **the area along Ganga and its tributary called the Son, to the south of the Ganga was known as Magadha** now lying in the state of Bihar.
- Its rulers were very powerful and **set up a large kingdom**. Kingdoms were set up in other parts of the country as well.

❖ Reasons for people travelling from one part of the subcontinent to another

- Throughout the ancient period, people travelled from one part of the subcontinent to another. The hills and high mountains including the Himalayas, deserts, rivers and seas made journeys dangerous at times, but never impossible.
- Men and women moved in **search of livelihood**, as also to escape from natural disasters like floods or droughts. Sometimes men marched in armies, **conquering others' lands**.
- Besides, **merchants** travelled with caravans or ships, carrying **valuable goods** from place to place.
- **Religious teachers** walked from village to village, town to town, to **offer religious instruction and advice**.
- Finally, some people perhaps travelled driven by a **spirit of adventure**, wanting to **discover new and exciting places**.
- All these led to the sharing of ideas between people. These movements of people **enriched our cultural traditions**. People have shared **new ways of carving stone, composing music, and even cooking food over several hundreds of years**.

❖ Names of the land

- Two of the words we often use for our country are India and Bharat. **The word India comes from the Indus, called Sindhu in Sanskrit.**
- The Iranians and the Greeks who came through the northwest about 2500 years ago and were familiar with the Indus, called it the **Hindos or the Indos**, and the land to the east of the river was called India.
- The name **Bharata was used for a group of people who lived in the northwest**, and who are mentioned in the Rigveda, the earliest composition in Sanskrit (dated to about 3500 years ago). **Later it was used for the country.**

❖ Interesting Points

- All dates before the **birth of Christ** are counted backwards and usually have the letters BC (Before Christ) added on.
- **AD** stands for two Latin words, '**ANNODOMINI**' meaning 'in the year of the Lord' (i.e. Christ). So, 2012 can also be written as AD 2012.
- The letters **CE** stand for '**Common Era**', **BCE** for '**Before Common Era**' and **BP** meaning '**Before Present**' are used.
- When we write anything, we use a **script**, consist of letters or signs. When we read what is written, or speak, we use a language. **Languages** which were used, as well as scripts, have changed over time.
- All inscriptions contain **both scripts and languages**. Scholars understand what was inscribed through a process known as **decipherment**.
- **South Asia** includes the present countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka and the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, Iran, China and Myanmar. **South Asia** is often **called a subcontinent** because although is smaller than a continent, it is very large, and is separated from the rest of Asia by Seas, hills and Mountains.

2.From Hunting-Gathering to Growing Food

- People who lived in the subcontinent as early as two million years ago, known as hunter-gathers. It was a broad prehistoric period during which **stone was widely used to make tools** with an edge, a point or a percussion surface.
- **Paleolithic Period**: This comes from two Greek words, 'Paleo', meaning old, and 'Lithos' meaning Stone. The name points to the importance of finds of stone tools.
 - The Paleolithic period extends **from 2 million years ago to about 12000 years ago**. This long stretch of time is divided into the **lower, middle and upper Paleolithic**.
 - **This long span of time covers 99% of human history**.
- Stone tools found during this period are generally tinny, and are called **microliths**.
- **Microliths were probably stuck on the handles of bone or wood** to make tools such as saws and sickles. At the same time, older varieties of tools continued to be in use.
- **Neolithic Period**: The next stage, **from about 10000 years ago**, is known as the Neolithic. Neolithic stone tools include tools that were polished to give a **fine cutting edge, and mortars and pestles used for grinding grain** and other plant.
- At the same time, tools of the Paleolithic types continued to be made and used, and remember, some tools were also made of bone.

❖ **Hunter-Gatherers:**

- Hunter-gatherers **lived in the subcontinent as early as two million years ago**. Generally, they hunted wild animals, caught fish and birds, gathered fruits, roots, nuts seeds, leaves, stalk and eggs.
- Hunter-gatherers moved from place to place. **There are many reasons for this:**
 - **In search of food** : If they had stayed at one place for a long time, they would have eaten up all the available plant and animal resources. Therefore, they would have had to go elsewhere in search of food.
 - **To follow prey movements**: Animals move from place to place - either in search of smaller prey or in the case of deer and wild cattle, in search of grass and leaves. That is why those hunted them had to follow their movements.
 - **In search of different kinds of plants**: Plants and trees bear fruit in different, So, people may have moved from season in search different kinds of plants.
 - **In search of Water**: People, plants and animals need water to survive. Water is found in lakes, streams and rivers. While many rivers and lakes are perennial (With water throughout the year) others are seasonal. People living on their banks would have had to go in search of water during the dry seasons (winter and summer).

❖ **Tools used by Hunter - Gatherers:**

- Hunter - Gatherers used tools of **stone, wood and bone**, of which stone tools have survived best.
- Some of these stone tools were used to **cut meat and bone, scrape bark (from trees) and hides (animals' skins), chop fruits and roots**.
- Some may have been attached to handles of bone or wood, **to make spears and arrows for hunting**. Other tools were used to chop wood, which was used as firewood. Wood was also used to make huts and tools.

- Stone tools may also have used for; **Digging the ground to collect edible roots and stitching clothes made out of animal skin.**

❖ **Places from where the evidences of hunter-gatherers are found**

- Many sites were **located near sources of water, such as rivers lakes.**
- As Stone tools were important, people tried to find places where good quality stone was easily available.
- Near the camps where they lived. These animals such as sheep, goat, cattle and also the pig lived in herds, and most of them ate grass.



Fig 2.1: Some Important Archaeological Sites

❖ **Factors that led to Hunting-Gathering to Growing Food**

- *Factors that led to Hunting-Gathering to Growing Food;*
- **Changes in the climate:** Around 12,000 years ago, there were major changes in the climate of the world, with a **shift to relatively warm conditions.**
- **Development of grasslands:** In many areas, **Changes in the climate** led to the development of grasslands. This in turn **led to an increase in the number of deer, antelope, goat, sheep and cattle,** i.e. animals that survived on grass.
- **Herding and rearing of animals:** Those who hunted these animals now followed them, learning about their food habits and their breeding seasons. It is likely that this helped people to start thinking about herding and rearing these animals themselves. Fishing also became important.
- **Domestication of plants:** This was also a time when several grains bearing grasses, including wheat, barley and rice grew naturally in different parts of the subcontinent. Men, women and children probably collected these grains as food, and learnt where they grew, and when they ripened.

This may have **led them to think about growing plants** on their own. In this way people became farmers.

- **Domestication of animals:** People could also attract and then tame animals by leaving food for them near their shelters. **The first animal to be tamed was the wild ancestor of the dog.** Later, people encouraged animals that were **relatively gentle** to come.
- Often, people protected these animals from attacks by other wild animals. **This is how they became herders.**

❖ **Process of Domestication**

- Domestication is the name given to the **process in which people grow plants and look after animals.** Very often, plants and animals that are tended by people become different from wild plants and animals. This is because people select **plants and animals** for domestication.
- For example, they select those plants and animals that are **not prone to disease. They also select plants that yield large-size grain, and have strong stalks, capable of bearing the weight of the ripe grain.**
- Seeds from selected plants are **preserved and sown** to ensure that new plants (and seeds) will have the same qualities.
- Amongst animals, those that are **relatively gentle are selected for breeding.**
- As a result, gradually, domesticated animals and plants become different from wild animals and plants. For example, **the teeth and horns of wild animals are usually much larger than those of domesticated animals.**
- Domestication was a gradual process that took place in many parts of the world. **It began about 12,000 years ago.** Virtually all the plant and animal produce that we use as food today is a result of domestication.
- Some of the earliest plants to be domesticated were **wheat and barley.** The earliest domesticated animals include sheep and goat.

❖ **Story of Burzahom**

- In **Burzahom (in present-day Kashmir)**, people-built **pit-houses**, which were dug into the ground, with steps leading into them. These may have provided shelter in cold weather.
- Archaeologists have also found **cooking hearths both inside and outside the huts**, which suggests that, depending on the weather; people could cook food either indoors or outdoors.
- Many kinds of **earthen pots** have also been found. These were **sometimes decorated** and were used for storing things. People began using pots for cooking food, especially grains like rice, wheat and lentils that now became an important part of the diet.
- Besides, they began **weaving cloth**, using different kinds of materials, for example cotton, that could now be grown.

❖ **Story of Mehrgarh**

- Mehrgarh site is located in a fertile plain, near the **Bolan Pass**, which is one of the most important routes into Iran.
- Mehrgarh was probably one of the places where **people learnt to grow barley and wheat, and rear sheep and goats for the first time** in this area.

- It is **one of the earliest villages** that we know about.
- At this site many **animal bones** were found. Bones of wild animals such as the deer and pig, and also bones of sheep and goat were found.
- Other finds at **Mehrgarh include remains of square or rectangular houses**. Each house had four or more compartments, some of which may have been used for storage.
- When people die, their relatives and friends generally pay respect to them. People look after them, perhaps in the **belief that there is some form of life after death**. Burial is one such arrangement.
- **Several burial sites** have been found at Mehrgarh. In one instance, the dead person was buried with goats, which were probably meant to serve as food in the next world.

❖ Interesting Points

- **Grain** was used as **seed, as food, as gifts and stored for food**.
- As grain had to be stored for both food and seed, people had to think of ways of storing it. In many areas, they began making **large clay pots, or wove baskets, or dug pits** into the ground.
- Animals multiply naturally. Besides, if they are looked after carefully, they provide milk, which is an important source of food, and meat, whenever required. In other words, **animals that are reared can be used as a 'store' of food**.
- **Sites are places where the remains of things (tools, pots, buildings etc.) were found**. These were made, used and left behind by people. These may be found on the surface of the earth, buried under the earth, or sometimes even under water.
- Many of the caves in which these early people lived have **paintings on the walls**. Some of the best examples are from **Madhya Pradesh and southern Uttar Pradesh**. These paintings show wild animals, drawn with great accuracy and skill.
- **Bhimbetka** (in present day Madhya Pradesh) is an old site with **caves and rock shelters**. People chose these natural caves because they provided shelter from the rain, heat and wind. **These rock shelters are close to the Narmada valley**.
- **Traces of ash have been found in Kurnool caves**.
- This suggests that people were familiar with the **use of fire**. Fire could have been used for many things: as a source of light, to roast meat, and to scare away animals.
- **One of the most famous Neolithic sites, Catal Huyuk, was found in Turkey**. Several things were brought from great distances - **flint from Syria, cowries from the Red Sea, shells from the Mediterranean Sea** - and used in the settlement. Remember, there were no carts - most things would have been carried on the backs of pack animals such as cattle or by people.

3. In the Earliest Cities

About eighty years ago (1920AD), archaeologists found the **Harappa**, and realized that this was **one of the oldest in the subcontinent**.

❖ Harappan Civilization

- **Harappa** was the **first city to be discovered**, all other sites from where similar buildings (and other things) were found were described as Harappan.
- These cities developed about 4700 years ago. These cities were found in the **Punjab, and Sind in Pakistan, and Gujrat, Rajasthan, Haryana & Punjab in India**.



Fig 3.1: The Earliest Cities in the Subcontinent

- Archaeologists have found a set of unique objects in almost all these cities: **red pottery painted with designs in black, stone weights, seals, special beads, copper tools, and paralleled sided long stone blades**.

❖ Special Characteristics of the Earliest Cities

- **Divided into two or more parts:** Many of these cities were divided into two or more parts. Usually, **the part to the West was smaller but higher**. Archaeologists describe this as the **Citadel**. Generally, **the part to the East was larger but lower**. This is called the lower town. Very often walls of baked brick were built around each part.
- **Baked bricks used:** The bricks were so well baked that they have lasted for thousands of years. The bricks were laid in an **interlocking pattern** and that made the walls strong. In some cities, **special buildings were constructed on the citadel**.
- **Houses:** Generally, houses were **either one or two storey high**, with rooms built around a courtyard. Most houses had a **separate bathing area**, and some had **wells to supply water**.
- **Drainage system and streets:** Many of these cities had **covered drains**. These were laid out, in **straight lines**.
- Each drain had a **gentle slope** so that water could flow through it. Very often, drains in houses were connected to those on the streets and smaller drains led into bigger ones.
- As the drains were converted **inspection holes were provided** at intervals to clean them.

❖ Great Bath

- In **Mohenjodaro**, a very special tank, which archaeologists call the **Great Bath**, was built in this area.

- This was lined with bricks, coated with plaster, and made water-tight with a layer of natural tar. There were steps leading down to it from two sides, while there were rooms on all sides.
- Water was probably brought in from a well and drained out after use. **Perhaps important took a dip in this tank on special occasions.**



Fig 3.2: Great Bath

❖ Harappan Crafts

- Most of the things that have been found by archaeologists are made of **stone, shell and metal, including copper, bronze, gold and silver**. Copper and bronze were used to make tools, weapons, ornaments and vessels. **Gold and silver** were used to make ornaments and vessels. Perhaps the most striking finds are those of **beads, weights, and blades**.
- **Harappan Seals:** The Harappans **made seals out of stone**. These are generally **rectangular** and **usually have an animal**.

1) In which one of the following regions was Dhanyakataka, which flourished as a prominent Buddhist centre under the Mahasanghikas, located?

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| (a) Andhra | (b) Gandhara |
| (c) Kalinga | (d) Magadha |

Answer: (a)

2) With reference to ancient South India, Korkai, Poompuhar, and Muchiri were well known as

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) capital cities | (b) ports |
| (c) centres of iron-and-steel making | (d) shrines of Jain Tirthankaras |

Answer: (b)

3) With reference to ancient India, consider the following statements:

1. The concept of Stupa is Buddhist in origin.
2. Stupa was generally a repository of relics.
3. Stupa was a votive and commemorative structure in Buddhist tradition.
- 4) How many of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None |

Answer: (b)

4) Consider the following dynasties:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| a) Hoysala | b) Gahadavala |
| c) Kakatiya | d) Yadava |

How many of the above dynasties established their kingdoms in the early eighth century AD?

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) Only three | (d) None |

Answer: (d)

5) Which one of the following explains the practice of Vattakirutal' as mentioned in Sangam poems?

- (a) Kings employing women bodyguards.

- (b) Learned persons assembling in royal courts to discuss religious and philosophical matters
- (c) Young girls keeping watch over agricultural fields and driving away birds and animals
- (d) A king defeated in a battle committing ritual suicide by starving himself to death

Answer: (d)

6) **“Souls are not only the property of animal and plant life, but also of rocks, running water, and many other natural objects not looked on as living by other religious sects.”**

The above statement reflects one of the core beliefs of which one of the following religious sects of ancient India?

- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Shaivism
- (d) Vaishnavism

Answer: (b)

7) With reference to ancient Indian History, consider the following pairs:

Literary Work	
Devichandraguptam	
Hammira-Mahakavya	Nayachandra Suri
Milinda-panha	Nagarjuna
Nitivakymrita	Somadeva Suri

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: (c)

8) Consider the following pairs:

Site	Well known for
Besnagar	Shaivite cave shrine
Bhaja	Buddhist cave shrine
Sittanavasal	Jain cave shrine

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

4. Bricks, Beads and Bones

The Harappan Civilisation

The Indus valley civilisation is also called the **Harappan culture**. Archaeologists use the term "culture" for a group of objects, distinctive in style, that are usually found within a specific area and period of time. These distinctive objects include seals, beads, weights, stone blades and even baked bricks.

Beginning

- There were **several archaeological cultures** in the region prior to the Mature Harappan.
- These cultures were associated with distinctive pottery, evidence of agriculture and pastoralism, and crafts.
- Settlements were **generally small**, and there were virtually **no large buildings**.
- It appears that there was a break between the Early Harappan and the Harappan civilisation, evident from large-scale burning at some sites, as well as the abandonment of certain settlements.

Subsistence Strategies

- Mature Harappan culture developed in some of the areas occupied by the Early Harappan cultures and shared common subsistence strategies.
- They ate a wide range of plant and animal products, including fish.
- Their dietary practices have been reconstructed from finds of charred grains and seeds.
 - Grains found at Harappan sites include **wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea and sesame**.
 - **Millets** are found from sites in **Gujarat**.
 - Finds of rice are relatively rare.
- Animal bones found at Harappan sites include those of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo, pig and of wild species such as boar, deer, gharial, fish and fowl.

Agricultural Technologies

- Seals and terracotta sculpture indicate that the **bull was known** and that oxen were used for ploughing.
- **Terracotta models of the plough** have been found at Cholistan (the desert area of Pakistan bordering the Thar Desert) and at Banawali (Haryana).



Fig. 1.1: A Terracotta Bull

- **Evidence of ploughed field at Kalibangan** (Rajasthan) associated with early Harappan levels. They had two sets of furrows at right angle, suggesting two different crops grown at same time.

- Most Harappan sites are **located in semi- arid lands**, where irrigation was probably required for agriculture.
- **Traces of canals** have been found at the Harappan site of **Shortughai in Afghanistan**, but not in Punjab or Sind.
- It is also likely that water drawn from wells was used for irrigation.
- **Water reservoirs found in Dholavira (Gujarat)** may have been used to store water for agriculture.

Mohenjodaro: A Planned Urban Centre

- The settlement is divided into two sections, one **smaller but higher** and the other much larger but lower, designated as the **Citadel and the Lower Town respectively**.
- Buildings of the citadel were constructed on mud brick platforms and it was walled.
- The Lower Town was also walled. Several buildings were built on platforms, which served as foundations.
- The settlement was **first planned and then implemented**.
- **Bricks were of a standardised ratio**, where the length and breadth were four times and twice the height respectively.
- Such bricks were used at all Harappan settlements.

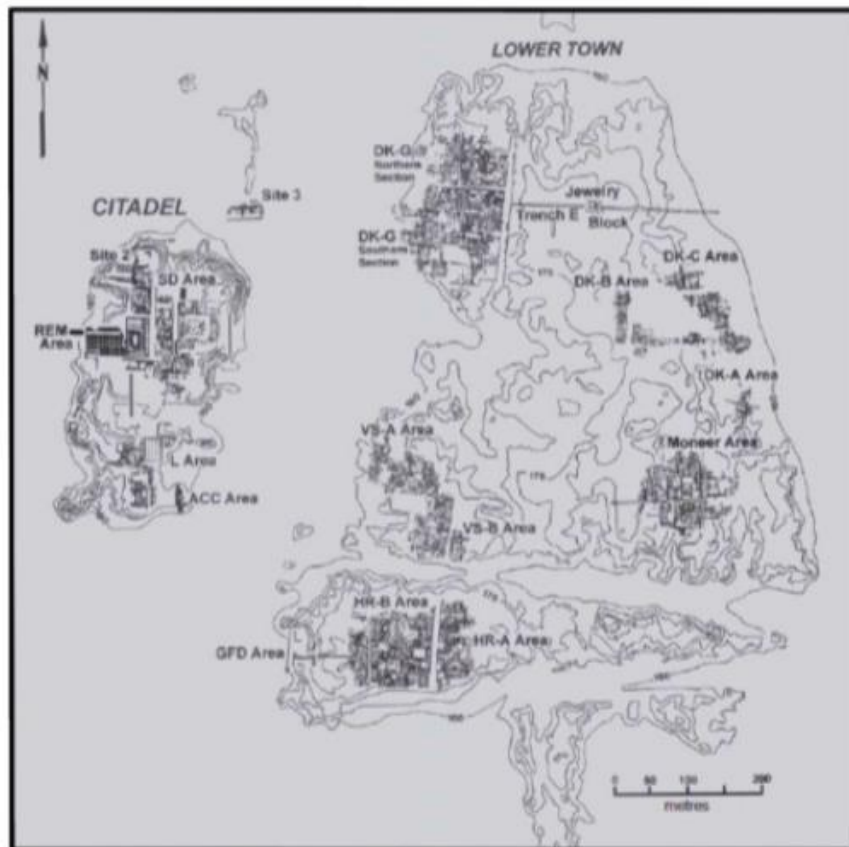


Fig. 1.2: Layout of Mohenjo-daro

Laying out drains

- **Planned drainage system** was one the main features of Harappan cities.
- **Roads and streets** were laid out along an approximate "**grid**" **pattern**, intersecting at right angles, streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them.
- Drainage systems were not unique to the larger cities, but were found in smaller settlements as well. At Lothal, for example, while houses were built of mud bricks, drains were made of burnt bricks.

Domestic Architecture

- The **Lower Town at Mohenjodaro** provides examples buildings. of residential
 - Many were **centred on a courtyard**, with rooms on all sides.
 - The courtyard was probably the centre of activities.
 - There are **no windows in the walls** along the ground level.
 - The main entrance does not give a direct view of the interior or the courtyard.
- Every house had its **own bathroom** paved with bricks, with drains connected through the wall to the street drains.
- Some houses have **remains of staircases** to reach a second storey or the roof.
- Many houses **had wells**, often in a room that could be reached from the outside and perhaps used by passers-by.
- Total number of wells in Mohenjodaro is estimated to be about 700.

The Citadel

- Some structures of Citadel were probably used for special public purposes which includes the warehouse, a massive structure of which the lower brick portions remain, while the upper portions, probably of wood, decayed long ago and the **Great Bath**.
- The Great Bath was a large rectangular tank in a courtyard surrounded by a corridor on all four sides.
 - There were **two steps on the north and south leading into the tank, which was made watertight by setting bricks on edge and using a mortar of gypsum**.
 - There were rooms on three sides, in one of which was a large well.
 - Water from the tank flowed into a huge drain.
- Across a lane to the north lay a smaller building with eight bathrooms, four on each side of a corridor, with drains from each bathroom connecting to a drain that ran along the corridor.
- The uniqueness of the Citadel suggests that it was used for special public purpose.

Tracking Social Differences Burials

- The dead were generally laid in pits. Sometimes, there were differences. in the way the burial pit was made, in some instances, the hollowed-out spaces were lined with bricks.
- Some graves contain **pottery and ornaments**, indicating a belief that these could be used in the afterlife. **Jewellery** has been found in burials of both men and women.
- In the mid-1980s, an ornament consisting of three shell rings, **a Jasper (a kind of semi-precious stone) bead and hundreds of micro beads was found near the skull of a male**.
- In some instances, the dead were buried with copper mirrors.
- On the whole, it appears that the Harappans did not believe in burying precious things with the dead.

Looking for "luxuries"

- Objects were luxuries if they are rare or made from costly, non-local materials or with complicated technologies.
- Little **pots of faience** (made of ground sand or silica mixed with colour and a gum and then fired) were probably considered precious because they were difficult to make.



Fig. 1.3: A Faience Pot

- Rare objects made of valuable materials are generally concentrated in large settlements like Mohenjodaro and Harappa and are rarely found in the smaller settlements.
- Gold too was rare and precious, all the gold jewellery found at Harappan sites was recovered from hoards.

Finding Out About Craft Production

- **Chanhudaro** was exclusively devoted to craft production, including **bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making.**
- The variety of materials used to make beads:
 - Stones like **carnelian** (of red colour), jasper, crystal, quartz and steatite.
 - Metals like **copper, bronze and gold.**
 - **Shell, faience** and terracotta or burnt clay.
- Some beads were made of two or more stones, cemented together, some of stone with gold caps.
- The shapes were numerous - **disc shaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, segmented.**
- Techniques for making beads differed according to the material.
 - **Steatite**, a soft stone, was easily worked.
 - Some beads were moulded out of a paste made with steatite powder, which permitted making a variety of shapes.
- **Red colour of carnelian** was obtained by firing the yellowish raw material and beads at various stages of production.
 - **Nodules** were chipped into rough shapes, and then finely flaked into the final form.
 - Grinding, polishing and drilling completed the process.
- Specialised drills have been found at Chanhudaro, Lothal and recently at Dholavira.
- **Nageshwar and Balakot** were specialised centers for making shell objects. including bangles, ladles and inlay, which were taken to other settlements.

Identifying centres of production

- Raw materials such as stone nodules, whole shells, copper ore; tools; unfinished objects; rejects and waste material, are some of the best indicators of Craft work.
- For instance, if shell or stone is cut to make objects, then pieces of these materials will be discarded as waste at the place of production.

- Larger waste pieces were used up to make smaller objects, but minuscule bits were usually left in the work area.
- **Apart from specialised works, craft production was also undertaken in large cities like Mohenjodaro and Harappa.**

Strategies for Procuring Materials

- A variety of materials was used for craft production. While some such as clay were locally available, many such as stone, timber and metal had to be procured from outside.
- **Terracotta toy models of bullock carts** suggest that this was one important means of transporting goods and people across land routes.
- Riverine routes along the Indus and its tributaries, as well as coastal routes were also probably used.

Materials from the subcontinent and beyond

- The Harappans procured materials for craft production in various ways.
 - They **established settlements such as Nageshwar and Balakot in areas where shell was available.**
 - **Shortughai**, in far-off Afghanistan, near the **best source of lapis lazuli**, a blue stone that was apparently very highly valued.
 - **Lothal was near sources of carnelian** (from Bharuch in Gujarat), steatite (from south Rajasthan and north Gujarat) and **metal** (from Rajasthan).
- Another strategy was to send expeditions to areas such as the **Khetri region of Rajasthan (for copper)** and South India (for gold).
 - These expeditions communication with local communities.
 - Finds of Harappan artefacts such as steatite micro beads in these areas are indications of such contact.
 - **There is evidence in the Khetri area for the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture, with its distinctive non-Harappan pottery and an unusual wealth of copper objects.**
 - It is possible that the inhabitants of this region supplied copper to the Harappans.

Contact with distant lands

- **Copper** was probably brought from **Oman**. Chemical analyses have shown that both the Omani copper and Harappan artefacts have traces of nickel, suggesting a origin. common
- A large **Harappan Jar** coated with a thick layer of black clay has been found at Omani sites.
- **Mesopotamian texts datable to the third millennium BCE** refer to copper coming from a region called Magan, perhaps a name for Oman.

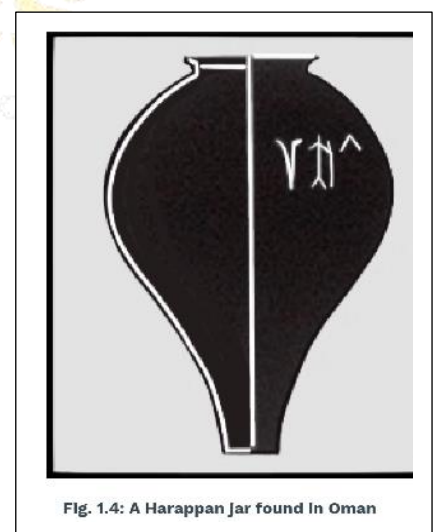


Fig. 1.4: A Harappan Jar found in Oman

- Mesopotamian texts mention contacts with regions named **Dilmun** (probably the island of Bahrain), **Magan and Meluhha**, possibly the Harappan region.
 - They mention the **products from Meluhha**: carnelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold, and varieties of wood.
- It is likely that communication with Oman, Bahrain or Mesopotamia was by sea.

- **Mesopotamian texts refer to Meluhha as a land of seafarers, ships and boats are depicted on seals.**



Fig. 1.5: Seal depicting a boat

Seals, Script, Weights Seals and Sealing

- Used to **facilitate long distance communication.**
- Each bag of goods was affixed with some wet clay on which seal was pressed.
- If the bag reached with seal intact, that meant it wasn't tampered.
- **Sealing also conveyed the identity of the sender.**

An Enigmatic Script

- Harappan seals **usually have a line of writing, probably containing the name and title of the owner.**
- The motif (generally an animal) conveyed a meaning to those who could not read.
- Most inscriptions are short, the longest containing about 26 signs. Although the script remains undeciphered to date, it was evidently not alphabetical (where each sign stands for a vowel or a consonant)
- It has many signs - somewhere between 375 and 400.
- The script was written **from right to left.**

Weights

- **Exchanges were regulated** by a precise system of weights, usually made of a stone called Chert and generally cubical, with no markings.
- The lower denominations of weights were binary (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc. up to 12,800), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system.
- Smaller weights were probably used for weighing jewellery and beads.
- Metal scale-pans have also been found.

Ancient Authority

There are indications of complex decisions being taken and implemented in Harappan society. For example, the extraordinary uniformity of Harappan artefacts as evident in pottery seals, weights and bricks, which were of uniform ratio throughout the region.

Palaces and kings

- **Large building found at Mohenjodaro was labelled as a palace** by archaeologists, but no spectacular finds were associated with it.
- A **stone statue** was labelled the "**priest-king**". This is because archaeologists were familiar with Mesopotamian history and its "priest-kings" and have found parallels in the Indus region.
- Some archaeologists believe that **Harappan society had no rulers**, and that everybody enjoyed equal status.

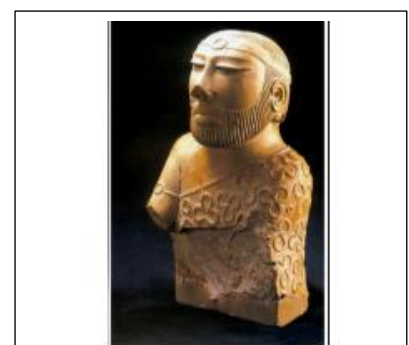


Fig. 1.6: A "Priest-King"

- Others feel there was no single ruler but several, that Mohenjodaro, Harappa and others had separate rulers.
- However, similarity in artefacts, the evidence for planned settlements, the standardised ratio of brick size hint towards a single state.

The End of the Civilisation

- By 1800 BCE most of the Mature Harappan sites in regions such as **Cholistan** had been abandoned.
- Simultaneously, there was an expansion of population into new settlements in Gujarat, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.
- In the few sites that continued to be occupied after 1900 BCE there was a transformation of material culture, marked by the disappearance of the distinctive artefacts of the civilisation - weights, seals, special beads. Writing, long-distance trade, and craft specialisation also disappeared.
- House construction techniques deteriorated, and large public structures were no longer produced.
- Artefacts and settlements indicate a rural way of life in what are called "**Late Harappan**" or "**successor cultures**".
- These changes may have been due to climatic change, deforestation, excessive floods, shifting and/or drying up of rivers, to overuse of the landscape.

Discovering the Harappan Civilisation Cunningham's Confusion

- **Cunningham, the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), began** archaeological excavations in the mid nineteenth century, his main interest was in the study of the Early Historic and later periods.
- He used the accounts left by **Chinese Buddhist** pilgrims who had visited the
- Buddhist pilgrims who had visited the subcontinent between the fourth and seventh centuries CE to locate early settlements.
- A site like Harappa, which was not part of the itinerary of the Chinese pilgrims and was not known as an Early Historic city, did not fit very neatly within his framework of investigation.
- Harappan artefacts were found fairly often during the nineteenth century but Cunningham did not realise how old these were.
- Cunningham was given a Harappa seal, but he tried to place it within the time-frame with which he was familiar because he thought that Indian history began with the first cities in the Ganga valley.

A New Old Civilization

- Importance of the findings was realized when seals were discovered by **Daya Ram Sahni** in layers that were definitely much older than Early Historic levels.
- **Rakhal Das Banerji** found similar seals at **Mohenjodaro**, hinting that these sites were part of a single archaeological culture.
- In **1924, John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI**, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley.

New Techniques and Questions

- An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have added to the list of Harappan sites.
- Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhigarhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated.

Problems of Piecing Together the Past

It is not the Harappan script that helps in understanding the ancient civilization, but the material evidence like pottery, tools, ornaments, household objects etc.

Classifying Finds

- Recovering artefacts is just the beginning of the archaeological enterprise.
 - Archaeologists then classify their finds in terms of material, such as stone, clay, metal, bone, ivory, etc.
 - The second, and more complicated, is in terms of function, for instance, whether an artefact is a tool or an ornament, or both, or something meant for ritual use.
 - Archaeologists also try to identify the function of an artefact by investigating the context in which it was found was it found in a house, drain, grave or in a kiln
 - Sometimes, archaeologists take recourse to indirect evidence. For example, there are traces of cotton at some Harappan sites, to find out about clothing we have to depend on indirect evidence including depictions in sculpture.

Problems of Interpretation:

- Early archaeologists thought that certain objects which seemed unusual or unfamiliar may have had a religious significance.
 - These included terracotta figurines of women, heavily jewelled, some with elaborate head-dresses, regarded as mother goddesses.
 - Rare stone statuary of men in an almost standardised posture, seated with one hand on the knee - such as the "priest-king" was also similarly classified.
 - In other instances, structures have been assigned ritual significance. These include the Great Bath and fire altars found at Kalibangan and Lothal.
- Attempts have also been made to reconstruct religious beliefs and practices by examining seals, some of which seem to depict ritual scenes.
- Others, with plant motifs, are thought to indicate nature worship.
- Some animals- such as the one-horned animal, often called the "Unicorn". depicted on seals seem to be mythical, composite creatures.
- In some seals, a figure shown seated cross-legged in a "yogic" posture, sometimes surrounded by animals, has been regarded as a depiction of "proto- Shiva", an early form of one of the major deities of Hinduism.
- Conical stone objects have been classified as lingas.



Fig. 1.7: A "Proto-Shiva" seat

Timeline: 1: Major Periods in Earty Indian Archaeology:

- **2 million BP (before present):** Lower Palaeolithic

- **80,000:** Middle Palaeolithic
- **35,000:** Upper Palaeolithic
- **12,000:** Mesolithic
- **10,000:** Neolithic (early agriculturists and pastoralists)
- **6,000:** Chalcolithic (first use of copper)
- **2600 BCE:** Harappan civilisation
- **1000 BCE:** Early iron, megalithic burials
- **600 BCE-400 CE:** Early Historic

Timeline 2: Major Developments in Harappan Archaeology Nineteenth Century:

1875: Report of Alexander Cunningham on Harappan seal.

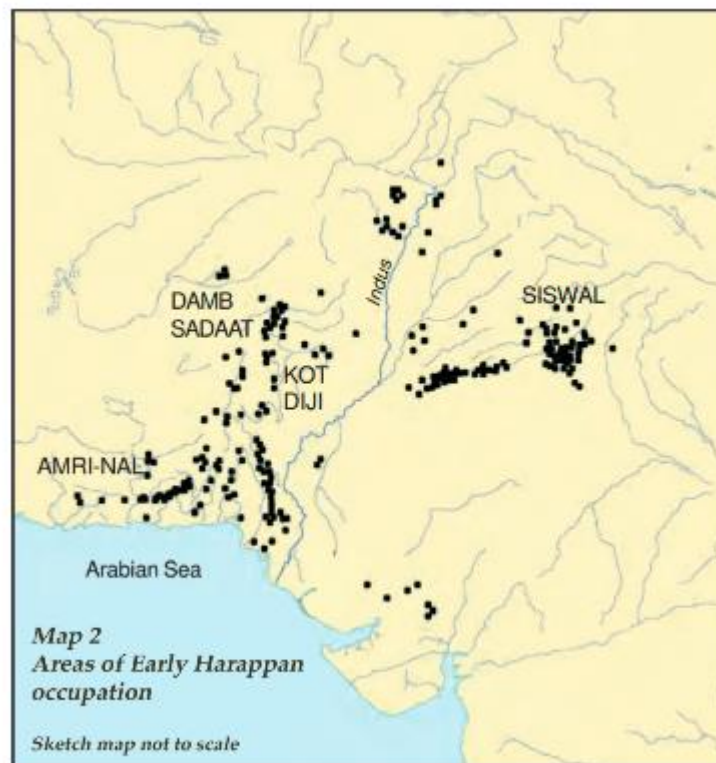
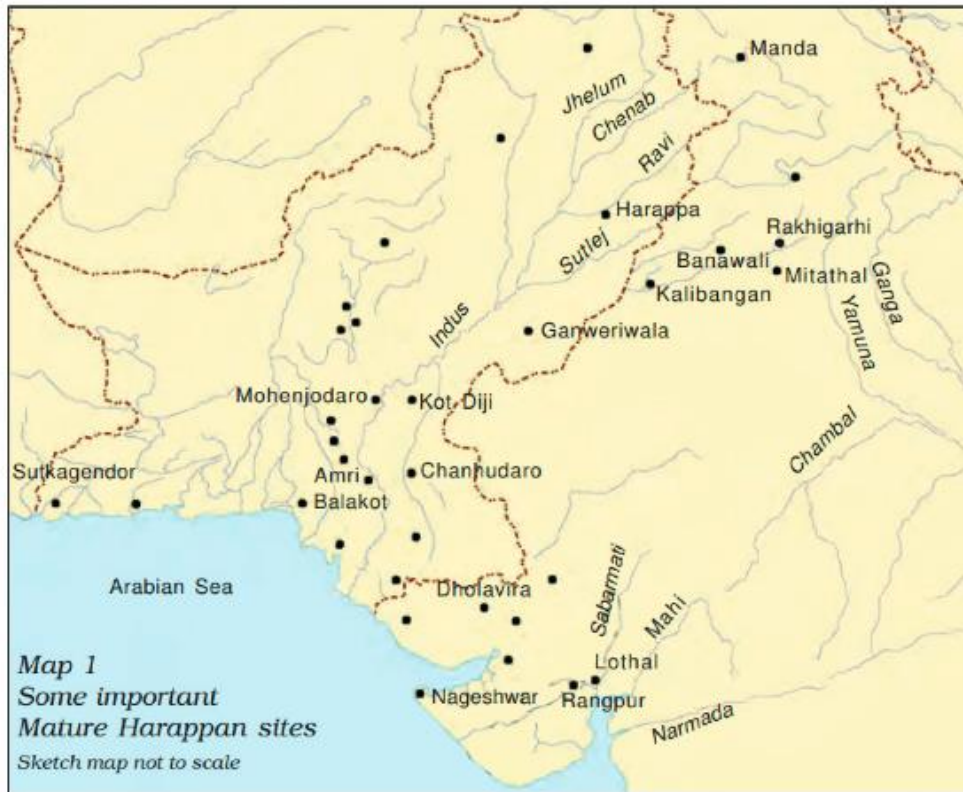
Twentieth Century

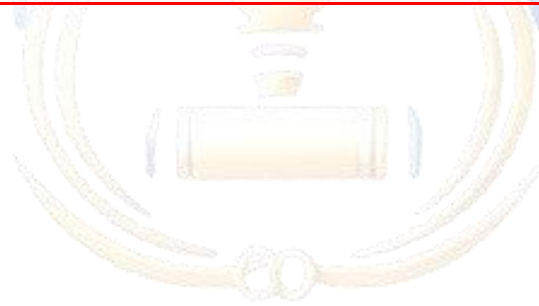
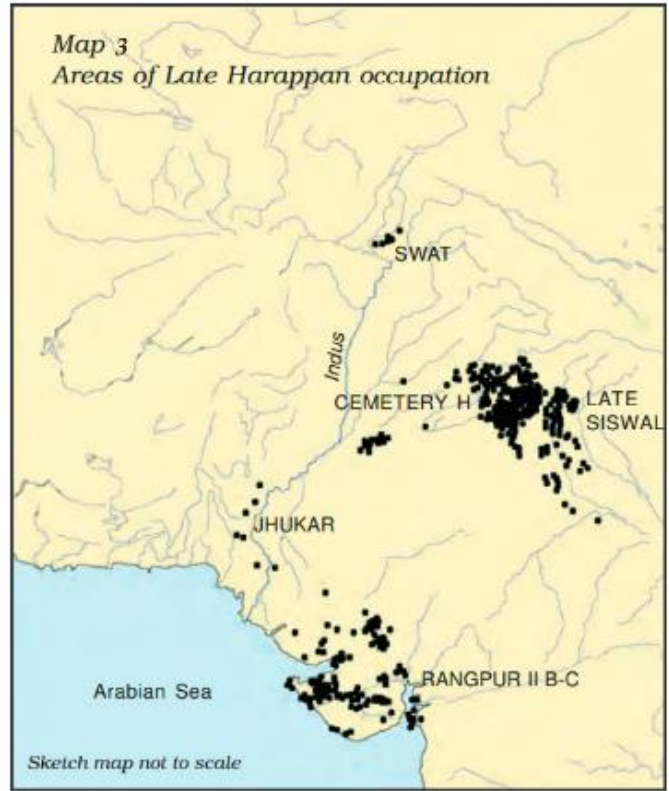
- **1921:** M.S. Vats begins excavations at Harappa.
- **1925:** Excavations begin at Mohenjodaro.
- **1946:** R.E.M. Wheeler excavates at Harappa.
- **1955:** S.R. Rao begins excavations at Lothal.
- **1960:** B.B. Lal and B.K. Thapar begin excavations at Kalibangan.
- **1974:** M.R. Mughal begins explorations in Bahawalpur.
- **1980:** A team of German and Italian archaeologists begins surface explorations at Mohenjodaro.
- **1986:** American team begins excavations at Harappa.
- **1990:** R.S. Bisht begins excavations at Dholavira.

Interesting Points:

Shamans are men and women who claim magical and healing powers, as well as an ability to communicate with the other world.

Important Maps:





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5. What Books and Burials Tell Us

- There are four of them the **Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda**. The **oldest Veda** is the **Rigveda**, composed about 3500 years ago.

Rigveda

- The Rigveda includes **more than a thousand hymns**, called **Sukta** or "**well- said**". These hymns are in **praise of various gods and goddesses**.
- Three gods are especially important: **Agni, the god of fire; Indra, a warrior god; and Soma, a plant from which a special drink was prepared**.
- These hymns were **composed by sages (rishis)**. Priests taught students to recite and memorise each syllable, word, and sentence, bit by bit, with great care.
- A few were **composed by women**. The **Rigveda is in old or Vedic Sanskrit**.
- The Rigveda was **recited and heard** rather than read. It was written down several centuries after it was first composed, and printed less than 200 years ago.
- Some of the hymns in the Rigveda are in the form of dialogues. One such hymn is a dialogue between a sage named **Vishvamitra, and two rivers, (Beas and Sutlej)** that were worshipped as goddesses.
- Historians point out that this hymn was composed in the area where these rivers flow. They also suggest that the **sage lived in a society where horses and cows were valued animals**. That is why the rivers are compared to horses and cows.
- Other rivers, especially the **Indus and its other tributaries**, and the **Sarasvati**, are also named in the hymns. The **Ganga and Yamuna are named only once**.
- There are many prayers in the Rigveda **for cattle, children (especially sons), and horses**. Horses were yoked to **chariots** that were used in battles, which were fought to capture cattle.
- Battles were also **fought for land**, which was important for pasture, and for growing hardy crops that ripened quickly, such as barley. **Some battles were fought for water**, and to capture people
- Some wealth was used for the **performance of yajnas or sacrifices** in which offerings were made into the fire. These were meant for gods and goddesses. **Offerings could include ghee, grain, and in some cases, animals**.
- There was **no regular army, but there were assemblies** where people met and discussed **matters of war and peace**. They also **chose leaders**, who were often brave and skillful warriors.
- The priests, sometimes called Brahmins, performed various rituals.
- **Rajas in Rigveda** where the rulers were chosen by the Jana i.e., the people. Rajas did not have **capital cities, palaces or armies, nor did they collect taxes**. Generally, **sons did not automatically succeed fathers as rajas**.
- Two words were used to describe the **people or the community** as a whole. One was the word, **Jana**. The other was **vish**.
- The family was part of a larger grouping called **vis or clan**. One or more than one clans made **Jana or tribe**. **The Jana was the largest social unit**.
- The word vaishya comes from **vish**. Examples- **Puru Jana or vish, the Bharata jana or vish, the Yadu jana or vish**.
- **Aryans in India**: from the various Vedic texts, especially the Rig Veda, which is the earliest specimen of the Indo- European language and the chief source of information on the history of this period.
- **Dasas or Dasyus**: Dasyu were the people who **did not have the same religious beliefs as the Aryan**. **These were people who did not perform sacrifices, and probably spoke different languages**.

Later, the term dasa (and the feminine dasi) came to mean slave. **Slaves were women and men who were often captured in war.** They were treated as the **property of their owners**, who could make them do whatever work they wanted.

Megaliths

- **Megaliths (literally big stones)** were carefully arranged by people, and **were used to mark burial sites.** The practice of erecting megaliths began about 3000 years ago, and was **prevalent throughout the Deccan, south India, in the north- east and Kashmir.**
- While some **megaliths can be seen on the surface**, other **megalithic burials are often underground.**
- All these burials have some common features. Generally, **the dead were buried with distinctive pots, which are called Black and Red Ware. Also found are tools and weapons of iron and sometimes, skeletons of horses, horse equipment and ornaments of stone and gold.**
- Sometimes, more objects are found in one grave than in another. In **Brahmagiri**, one skeleton was buried **with 33 gold beads, 2 stone beads, 4 copper bangles**, and one conch shell. Other skeletons have only a few pots.
- These finds suggest that there was some **difference in status amongst the people who were buried.** Some were rich, others poor, some chiefs, others followers.
- Sometimes, **megaliths contain more than one skeleton.** These indicate that people, perhaps belonging to the **same family**, were buried in the same place though not at the same time. The bodies of those who died later were brought into the **grave through the portholes.**
- **Cist is one type of megalith.** Some cists have port-holes which could be used as an entrance.

Burial Practices at Inamgaon:

- It is a site on the **river Ghod**, a tributary of the **Bhima.** It was occupied between 3600 and 2700 years ago.
- Here, adults were generally buried in the ground, **laid out straight, with the head towards the north.** Sometimes burials **were within the houses.**
- Vessels that probably contained **food and water** were placed with the dead.
- One man was **found buried in a large, four-legged clay jar in the courtyard of a five-roomed house (one of the largest houses at the site)**, in the Centre of the settlement. This house also had a **granary.** **The body was placed in a cross-egged position.**

Occupations at Inamgaon:

- Archaeologists have found **seeds of wheat, barley, rice, pulses, millets, peas and sesame.**
- Bones of a number of animals, many bearing cut marks that show they may have been used as food, have also been found. These include **cattle, buffalo, goat, sheep, dog, horse, ass, pig, sambhar, spotted deer, blackbuck, antelope, hare, and mongoose, besides birds, crocodile, turtle, crab and fish.**
- There is evidence that fruits such as **ber, amla, jamun, dates and a variety of berries** were collected.

Interesting Points:

- **First evidence of writing:** Around 3500 years ago, we find some of the first evidence of writing in China. These writings were on animal bones. These are called **oracle bones**, because they were used to **predict the future.**

- The bones were then put into the fire, and they cracked because of the heat. Then fortune tellers studied these cracks, and tried to predict the future. **In China, Kings did not know the use of iron.**
- **Birch bark Manuscript of the Rigveda**: A Manuscript of the Rigveda, on birch bark, was found in **Kashmir**. About 150 years ago, **it was used to prepare one of the earliest printed texts of the Rigveda**, as well as an English translation. It is now preserved in a library in Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Charaka Samhita**: About 2000 years ago, there was a **famous physician named Charaka** who wrote a **book on medicine known as the Charaka Samhita**.
 - There he states that the human body has **360 bones**. This is a much larger number than the 200 bones that are recognized in modern anatomy.
 - **Charaka arrived at this figure by counting the teeth, joints and cartilage.**
- **Sanskrit is part of a family of languages known as Indo-European**.
 - Some Indian languages such as Assamese, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri and Sindhi; Asian languages such as Persian and many European languages such as English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish belong to this family. They are called a family because they originally had words in common.
- Other languages used in the subcontinent belong to different families. For instance, those used in the **north-east belong to the Tibeto- Burman family; Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam belong to the Dravidian family; and the languages spoken in Jharkhand and parts of central India belong to the Austro-Asiatic family.**

6. Kingdom, Kings and An Early Republic

- The period that followed Rig Vedic Age is known as **Later Vedic Age**. These include **the Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda**, as well as other books. These were composed by priests, and described how rituals were to be performed. **They also contained rules about society.**
- **Samveda:** For purposes of singing, the prayers of the Rigveda were set to tune and this modified collection was known as the **Samveda Samhita**.
- **Yajurveda:** Yajurveda contains not only the hymns but also the rituals which have to accompany their recitation. The Yajurveda is found in two recensions, **Black and White**, and are full of rituals to be performed publicly or individually.
- **Atharvaveda:** Atharvaveda is completely different from the other three Vedas. It contains **charms and spells** to ward off evils and diseases. These are replete with ritualistic formulae and explain the social and religious meaning of rituals. **Its contents throw light on the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans.** Atharvaveda is the most valuable of the Vedas after the Rig Veda for the history and sociology.

Varna System:

- The most important change was the **rise and growth of social differentiation in the form of varna system**. The four varnas in which society came to be divided were the **Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras**.
- **These groups were decided on the basis of birth**. For example, if one's father and mother were brahmins one would automatically become a brahmin, and so on.
- The first varna was that of the brahmin. **Brahmins were expected to study (and teach) the Vedas, perform sacrifices and receive gifts.**
- In the second place were the rulers, also known as **kshatriyas**. They were expected to **fight battles and protect people**.
- Third were the **Vish or the Vaishyas**. They were expected to be **farmers, herders, and traders**. **Both the kshatriyas and the Vaishyas could perform sacrifices.**
- Last were the **Shudras**, who had to **serve the other three groups and could not perform any rituals**. **Often, women were also grouped with the Shudras. Both women and Shudras were not allowed to study the Vedas.**
- Later, they classified some people as **untouchable**. These included some **crafts persons, hunters and gatherers**, as well as people who helped **perform burials and cremations**. The priests said that **contact with these groups was polluting**.

Janapadas:

- The word Janapadas literally means the **land where the Jana set its foot and settled down**.

Mahajanapadas:

- About 2500 years ago, some Janapadas became more important than others, and were known as Mahajanapadas. **Most Mahajanapadas had a capital city**, many of these were **fortified**. This means that huge walls of wood, brick or stone were built around them.
- The new rajas now began **maintaining armies**. **Soldiers were paid regular salaries** and maintained by the king throughout the year. **Some payments were probably made using punch marked coins**

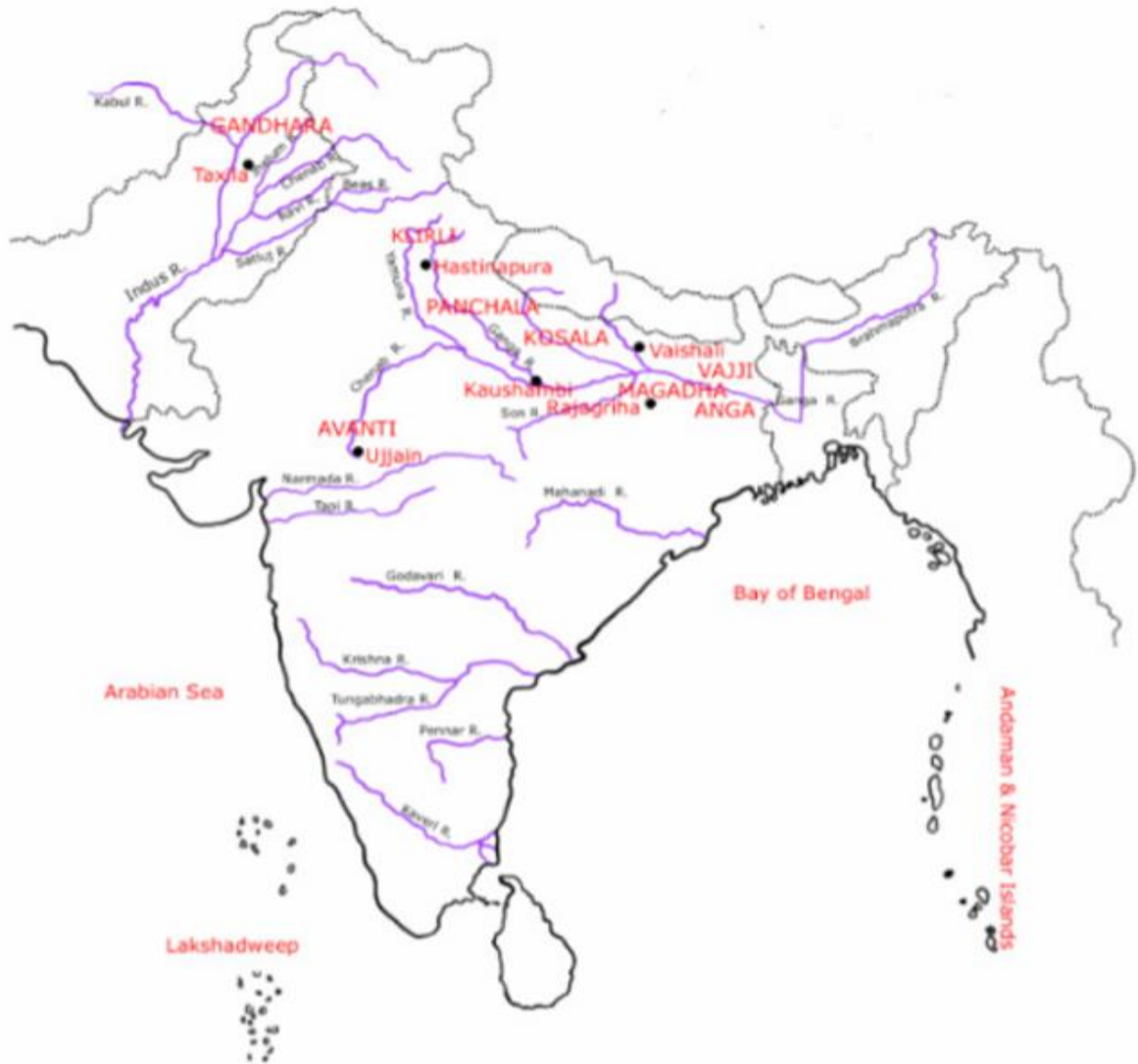


Fig 5.1: Important Janapadas, Mahajanapadas and Cities

Taxes:

- As the rulers of the Mahajanapadas were **(a) building huge forts (b) maintaining big armies, they needed more resources**. And they needed officials to collect these. So, instead of depending on occasional gifts brought by people, as in the case of the raja of the Janapadas, they **started collecting regular taxes**.
- Taxes on crops were the most important. This was because most people were farmers. Usually, the tax was fixed **at 1/6th of what was produced**. This was known **as bhaga or a share**.
- There **were taxes on crafts** persons as well. These could have been in the **form of labour**. For example, a weaver or a smith may have had to work for a day every month for the king.
- Herders were also expected to pay taxes in the **form of animals and animal produce**.
- There were also **taxes on goods** that were bought and sold, through trade.
- And hunters and gatherers also had to **provide forest produce to the raja**.

Changes in agriculture

- There were two major changes in agriculture around this time. One was the **growing use of iron ploughshares**. This meant that heavy, clayey soil could be turned over better than with a wooden ploughshare, so that more grain could be produced.
- Second, people began **transplanting paddy**. This meant that instead of scattering seed on the ground, from which plants would sprout, saplings were grown and then planted in the fields. This led to increased production, as many more plants survived.
- However, it was back breaking work. Generally, slave men and women, (dasas and dasis) and **landless agricultural labourers (Kammakaras) had to do this work**.

Story of the Magadha:

- Magadha became the most important Mahajanapada in about two hundred years.

Causes of Magadha's Success:

- **Ambitious rulers:** Magadha had two very powerful rulers, **Bimbisara and Ajatashatru**, who used all possible means to conquer other Janapadas. Mahapadma Nanda was another important ruler. He extended his control up to the north-west part of the subcontinent.
- **Two capitals:** **Rajagriha (present- day Rajgir)** in Bihar was the capital of Magadha for several years. Later the **capital was shifted to Pataliputra (present-day Patna)**. Both were situated at very strategic points.
- **Resources:** Many rivers such as the Ganga and Son flowed through Magadha. **This was important for (a) transport, (b) water supplies (c) making the land fertile. Parts of Magadha were forested.**
Forests also provided wood for building houses, carts and chariots. Besides, there were **iron ore mines** in the region that could be tapped to make strong tools and weapons.
- **Special advantage in military organization:** Elephants, which lived in the forest, could be captured and trained for the army.

Story of the Vajji:

- While Magadha became a powerful kingdom, Vajji, with its **capital at Vaishali (Bihar)**, was under a different form of government, known as gana or sangha.
- **Gana is used for a group that has many members. Sangha means organization or association.**

- In a gana or a sangha there were **not one, but many rulers**. Sometimes, even when thousands of men ruled together, each one was known as a raja.
- **These rajas performed rituals together**. They also met in assemblies, and decided what had to be done and how, through discussion and debate.
- For example, if they were attacked by an enemy, they met to discuss what should be done to meet the threat. **However, women, dasas and kammakaras could not participate in these assemblies.**
- **Both the Buddha and Mahavira belonged to ganas or sanghas**. Some of the most vivid descriptions of life in the sanghas can be found in Buddhist books.
- Rajas of powerful kingdoms tried to conquer the sanghas. Nevertheless, these lasted for a very long time, till about 1500 years ago, **when the last of the ganas or sanghas were conquered by the Gupta rulers.**

Interesting Points:

- **Account of the Vajjis from the Digha Nikaya:** This is an account of the Vajjis from the **Digha Nikaya**, a famous Buddhist book, which contains some of the speeches of the Buddha. These were written down about 2300 years ago.
 - Ajatashatru wanted to attack the Vajjis. He sent his minister named **Vassakara to the Buddha** to get his advice on the matter. The Buddha asked whether the Vajjis met frequently, in full assemblies. When he heard that they did, he replied that the Vajjis would continue to prosper as long as:
 - They held full and frequent public assemblies.
 - They met and acted together.
 - They followed established rules.
 - They respected, supported and listened to elders.
 - **Vajji women were not held by force or captured.**
 - **Chaityas (local shrines) were maintained in both towns and villages**
- **Alexander's Invasion:** More than 2300 years ago, a ruler named Alexander, who lived in Macedonia in Europe, wanted to become a world conqueror.
- Of course, he didn't conquer the world, but did conquer parts of Egypt and West Asia, and came to the Indian subcontinent, reaching up to the banks of the Beas.
- **When he wanted to march further eastwards, his soldiers refused. They were scared, as they had heard that the rulers of India had vast armies of foot soldiers, chariots and elephants.**
- **Ashvamedha Ritual:** The Ashvamedha or horse sacrifice was one such ritual. **A horse was let loose to wander freely and it was guarded by the raja's men.**
- If the horse wandered into the kingdoms of other rajas and they stopped it, they had to fight. If they allowed the horse to pass, it meant that they accepted that the raja who wanted to perform the sacrifice was stronger than them.
- These rajas were then invited to the sacrifice, which was performed by specially trained priests, who were **rewarded with gifts**.
- The raja who organized the sacrifice was recognized as being very powerful, and all those who came brought gifts for him. **The raja was a central figure in these rituals.**
- **Earthen pots:** Some of these were grey in colour, others were red. One special type of pottery found at these sites is known as **Painted Grey Ware**. **Around 2500 years ago**, people of Athens set up a form of government, which was called **Democracy, which lasted for about 200 years.**

7. New Questions and Ideas

Some kings in the Mahajanapadas were growing more powerful. **New cities were developing, and life was changing in the villages** as well. Many thinkers were trying to understand these **changes in society**. They also wanted to try and find out the **true meaning of life**. Buddha and Mahavira were the prominent ones.

❖ **Buddha:**

- **Siddhartha, also known as Gautama, the founder of Buddhism**, was born about 2500 years ago.
- The Buddha belonged to a small gana known as the **Sakya gana** and was a **kshatriya**. When he was a young man, he left the comforts of his home in search of knowledge.
- He wandered for several years, meeting and holding discussions with other thinkers. He finally decided to find his own path to realisation, and **meditated for days on end under a peepal tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar**, where he attained enlightenment.
- After that, he was known as the **Buddha or the Wise One**. He then went to **Sarnath, near Varanasi, where he taught for the first time**.
- He spent the rest of his life travelling on foot, going from place to place, teaching people, till he **passed away at Kusinara**.

❖ **Doctrines of Buddhism:**

- The Buddha taught that **life is full of suffering and unhappiness**. This is caused because we have **cravings and desires** (which often cannot be fulfilled).
- Sometimes, even if we get what we want, we are not satisfied, and want even more (or want other things). The Buddha described this as **thirst or tanha**. He taught that this constant craving could be removed by following moderation in everything.
- He also **taught people to be kind, and to respect the lives of others**, including animals. He believed that the results of our actions (called karma), whether good or bad, affect us both in this life and the next.
- The Buddha taught in the language of the ordinary people, **Prakrit**, so that everybody could understand his message.

❖ **Mahavira:**

- The last and **24th tirthankara of the Jainas, Vardhamana Mahavira**, also spread his message around this time, i.e. 2500 years ago. He was a **kshatriya prince of the Lichchhavis**, a group that was part of the **Vajji sangha**.
- At the age of thirty, he left home and went to live in a forest. For twelve years he led a hard and lonely life, at the end of which he attained enlightenment.

❖ **Doctrines of Jainism:**

- He taught a simple doctrine: men and women who wished to know the truth must leave their homes. They must follow **very strictly the rules of ahimsa**, which **means not hurting or killing living beings**. "All beings," said Mahavira "long to live. To all things life is dear."
- In Jainism, **three Ratnas (Triratnas)** are given and they are called the way to Nirvana. They are **Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct**. Right conduct means observance of **five great vows**:
 - **Ahimsa** (do not commit violence).
 - **Satya vachana** (do not speak a lie)
 - **Asteya** (do not steal)
 - **Brahmacharya** (do not indulge in sexual act)

➤ **Aprigraha** (do not acquire property).

- Ordinary people could understand the teachings of Mahavira and his followers, because they used **Prakrit**.
- Followers of Mahavira, who were known as Jainas (**The word Jaina comes from the term Jina, meaning conqueror**), had to lead very simple lives, begging for food.
- It was **very difficult** for most men and women to follow these **strict rules**. Nevertheless, thousands left their homes to learn and teach this new way of life. Many more remained behind and supported those who became monks and nuns, providing them with food.
- **Jainism was supported mainly by traders**. Farmers, who had to kill insects to protect their crops, found it more difficult to follow the rules. **Over hundreds of years, Jainism spread to different parts of north India, and to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.**
- The teachings of Mahavira and his followers were transmitted orally for several centuries. **They were written down in the form in which they are presently available at a place called Valabhi**, in Gujarat, about 1500 years ago.

❖ **The Sangha**

- Both the Mahavira and the Buddha felt that only those **who left their homes could gain true knowledge**. They arranged for them to stay together in the **sangha, an association of those who left their homes**.
- **The rules made for the Buddhist sangha were written down in a book called the Vinaya Pitaka**. From this we know that there were separate branches for men and women.
- **All men could join the sangha. However, children had to take the permission of their parents and slaves that of their masters**. Those who worked for the king had to take his **permission and debtors that of creditors. Women had to take their husbands' permission**.
- Men and women who joined the sangha led simple lives. They meditated for most of the time, and went to cities and villages to beg for food during fixed hours. That is why they were known as **bhikkhus (the Prakrit word for renouncer bhikkunis - beggar) and Bhikkunis**.
- They taught others, and helped one another. **They also held meetings to settle any quarrels that took place within the sangha**.
- Those who joined the sangha included brahmins, kshatriyas, merchants, labourers, barbers, courtesans and slaves. Many of them wrote down the teachings of the Buddha. Some of them also composed beautiful poems, describing their life in the sangha.

❖ **Monasteries**

- To begin with, both Jaina and Buddhist monks went from place to place throughout the year, teaching people. **The only time they stayed in one place was during the rainy season, when it was very difficult to travel**. Then, their supporters built temporary shelters for them in gardens, or they lived in natural caves in hilly areas.
- As time went on, many supporters of the monks and nuns, and they themselves, felt the need for **more permanent shelters and so monasteries were built**. These were known as **viharas**. The earliest viharas were made of wood, and then of brick. Some were even in caves that were dug out in hills, especially in western India.
- Very often, the land on which the vihara was built was **donated by a rich merchant or a landowner, or the king**.

- The local people came with gifts of food, clothing and medicines for the monks and nuns. In return, they taught the people. Over the centuries, Buddhism spread to many parts of the subcontinent and beyond.

❖ Upanishads:

- **Upanishad literally means 'approaching and sitting near'** and the texts contain conversations between teachers and students. Often, ideas were presented through simple dialogues.
- The Upanishads **contain philosophical speculations. They are generally called Vedanta which means the end of the Vedas.**
- One reason is that they came at the end of the Vedic period or that they were taught at the end of the Vedic instruction. These texts were compiled around 600 B.C. and criticized the **rituals and laid stress on the values of right belief and knowledge.**
- Many of thinkers felt that there was something permanent in the universe that would last even after death. They described this as **the atman or the Individual soul and the brahman or the universal soul.** They believed that ultimately, **both the atman and the brahman were one.**
- Many of their ideas were recorded in the Upanishads. These were part of the **later Vedic texts.**
- Most Upanishadic thinkers were men, especially brahmins and rajas. Occasionally, there is mention of **women thinkers, such as Gargi, who was famous for her learning,** and participated in debates held in royal courts. **Poor people rarely took part in these discussions.**
- One famous exception was **Satyakama Jabala,** who was named after his mother, the slave woman Jabali. He had a deep desire to learn about reality, was accepted as a student by a brahmin teacher named **Gautama** and became one of the best-known thinkers of the time.
- Many of the ideas of the Upanishads were later developed by the famous thinker **Shankaracharya.**

❖ Six Schools of Indian Philosophy:

German-born British Indologist, **Friedrich Max Muller,** has observed that the six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers.

Darshans	Author	Theme
Nyaya	Gautama	It is logical quest for God. It tells that the material power Maya, With the help of God, becomes he universe.
Vaisheshika	Kanada	It aims is to receive happiness in this life and finally ultimate liberation through the attachment of true Knowledge of Divine.
Sankhya	Kapila	It explains that the aim of Sankhya to eliminate all kinds of physical and mental pains and to receive liberation.
Yoga	Maharishi Patanjali	It has 4 chapter and accepts three kinds of evidences for determining the aim of life.
Purva Mimansa	Jaimini	It is condensed explanation of Vedic theme and at the same time, the classification of its issues.
Vedanta (Uttara Mimansa)	Maharishi Vyasa	It explains that Bramha Sutra is for that person who has a real deep desire to know God. True liberation could only be attained by lovingly surrendering to him.

❖ The system of ashramas:

- Around the time when Jainism and Buddhism were becoming popular, brahmins developed the system of ashramas.
- Here, the word ashrama does not mean a place where people live and meditate. **It is used instead for a stage of life.**
- **Four ashramas were recognised: brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha and samnyasa.**
 - Brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya men were expected to **lead simple lives and study the Vedas during the early years of their life (brahmacharya).**
 - Then they had to **marry and live as householders (grihastha).**
 - Then they had to **live in the forest and meditate (vanaprastha).**
 - Finally, they had to **give up everything** and become samnyasins.
- The system of ashramas allowed men to spend some part of their lives in meditation. Generally, **women were not allowed to study the Vedas**, and they had to follow the ashramas chosen by their husbands.

Interesting Points:

- The story of two sages **Shaunaka and Abhipratarin** who worshipped the universal soul is contained in the **Chhandogya Upanishad**.
- **Zoroastrianism: Zoroaster was an Iranian prophet.** His teachings are contained in a book called the **Avesta**.
 - The language of the Avesta, and the practices described in it are very similar to those of the Vedas.
 - The basic teachings of Zoroaster are contained in the maxim "**Good thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.**"
 - For more than a thousand years, Zoroastrianism was a major religion in Iran. Later, some Zoroastrians migrated from Iran and settled down in the coastal towns of Gujarat and Maharashtra. **They were the ancestors of today's Parsis.**
- **Sarnath stupa** was built to mark the place where the **Buddha first taught his message.**
- **Panini**: One of the most famous was Panini, who prepared a **grammar for Sanskrit**.
 - He arranged the vowels and the consonants in a special order, and then used these to create formulae like those found in Algebra.
 - He used these to write down the rules of the language in short formulae.
- **Karle Chaitya** is located in present-day Maharashtra. Monks and nuns lived and meditated in these shelters.

8. Kinship, Castle and Class Early Societies (600BCE-600CE)

The Critical Edition of the Mahabharata

- Mahabharata is One of the most ambitious projects of scholarship began in 1919, under the leadership of a noted **Indian Sanskritist, V.S. Sukthankar**. A team comprising dozens of scholars initiated the task of preparing a critical edition of the Mahabharata. Two things became apparent after the project:
 - There were **several common elements in the Sanskrit versions of the story, evident in manuscripts found all over the subcontinent.**
 - **There were enormous regional variations in the ways in which the text had been transmitted over the centuries.**
- These variations are reflective of the complex processes that shaped early (and later) social histories through dialogues between dominant traditions and resilient local ideas and practices.

Kinship and Marriage: Many Rules and Varied Practices

Finding out about families

- Families are parts of larger networks of people defined as relatives, or to use a more technical term, kinfolk.
- For early societies, historians can retrieve information about elite families fairly easily, however it is difficult to reconstruct the familial relationships of ordinary people.

The ideal of Patriliney

- Patriliney means tracing descent from father to son, grandson and so on while Matriliney is the term used when descent is traced through the mother.
- Mahabharata is a story about Patriliney. It describes a feud over land and power between two groups of cousins, who belonged to a single ruling family, a lineage dominating one of the janapada, ultimately leading to a battle.
- Patriliney had existed prior to the Mahabharata, but its central story reinforced the idea that it was valuable.
- Most ruling dynasties claimed to follow this system, although there were variations in practice: sometimes there were no sons, sometimes brother succeeded, sometimes claimed the throne. other kins
- In exceptional circumstances, women exercised power, like Prabhavati Gupta.

Rules of marriage

- Marrying daughters into families outside the kin was considered desirable.
- This system, called Exogamy, meant that the lives of young girls and women belonging to families that claimed high status were often carefully regulated to ensure that they were married at the "right" time and to the "right" person.
- This gave rise to the belief that kanyadana was an important duty of the father.
- Due to emergence of new and complex social life, Brahmanas laid down new codes of social behaviour known as the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras, In Sanskrit. The most important of such works, the Manusmriti, was compiled between c. 200 BCE and 200 CE.
- These texts recognized 8 types of marriages. Of these, the first four were considered as "good" while the remaining were condemned. It is possible that these were practised by those who did not accept Brahmanical norms.

The Gotra of Women

- One Brahmanical practice, evident from c. 1000 BCE onwards, was to classify people (especially Brahmanas) In terms of gotras. Each gotra was named after a Vedic seer, and all those who belonged to the same gotra were regarded as his descendants.
- Two rules about gotra were important:
 - Women were expected to give up their father's gotra and adopt that of their husband.
 - Members of the same gotra could not marry.
- Some of the Satavahana rulers were polygynous.
 - Names of women who married Satavahana rulers indicates that many of them had names derived from gotras such as Gotama and Vasistha, their father's gotras.
 - They didn't adopt names derived from their husband's gotra name as they were required to do according to the Brahmanical rules.
 - Some of these women belonged to the same gotra, this ran counter to the ideal of exogamy recommended in the Brahmanical texts. In fact, it exemplified an alternative practice, that of endogamy or marriage. within the kin group, which was (and is) prevalent amongst several communities in south India. Such marriages amongst kinfolk (such as cousins) ensured a close-knit community.

Importance of Mothers'

- Satavahana rulers were identified through Metronymics (names derived from that of the mother).
- Although mothers were important, but succession to the throne was generally patrilineal in Satvahanas.

Social Differences: Within and Beyond the Framework of Caste

The "Right" Occupation

- The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras also contained rules about the ideal "occupations" of the four categories or varnas.
 - Brahmanas were supposed to study and teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices and get sacrifices performed, and give and receive gifts.
 - Kshatriyas were to engage in warfare, protect people and administer justice, study the Vedas, get sacrifices performed, and make gifts.
 - The last three "occupations" were also assigned to the Valshyas, who were in addition expected to engage in agriculture, pastoralism and trade.
 - Shudras were assigned only one occupation, that of serving the three "higher" varnas.
- The Brahmanas evolved strategies to enforce these norms. One, as we have just seen, was
 - To assert that the varna order was of divine origin.
 - Second, they advised kings to ensure that these norms were followed within their kingdoms.
 - Third, they attempted to persuade people that their status determined by birth. was
 - Prescriptions were often reinforced by stories told in the Mahabharata and other texts.

Non-Kshatriya Kings

- According to the Shastras, only Kshatriyas could be kings. However, several important ruling lineages had different origins.
- Social background of the Mauryas, has been hotly debated. While later Buddhist texts suggested they were Kshatriyas, Brahmanical texts described them as being of "low" origin.

- The Shungas and Kanvas, successors of the Mauryas, were Brahmanas.
- Shakas who came from Central Asia, were regarded as mlechchhas, barbarians or outsiders by the Brahmanas.
 - However, rebuilt of Sudarshana lake by Rudradaman, the best-known Shaka ruler, suggested that mlechchhas were familiar with Sanskrit traditions.
- Ruler of the Satavahana dynasty. Gotami-puta Siri-Satakarni, claimed to be both a unique Brahmana (eka bamhana) and a destroyer of the pride of Kshatriyas.
 - He also ensured that there was no Intermarriage amongst members of the four varnas.
 - At the same time, he entered into a marriage alliance with the kin of Rudradaman.

Jatis and Social Mobility

- In Brahmanical theory, Jati, like varna, was based on birth.
- While the number of varnas was fixed at four, there was no restriction on the number of Jatis.
- In fact, whenever Brahmanical authorities encountered new groups, for instance, people living in forests such as the nishadas or which did not fit into the fourfold varna system, they classified them as a Jati.
- Jatis which shared a common occupation or profession were sometimes organised into shrenis or guilds. For example; an interesting stone inscription (c. fifth century CE), found in Mandasor (MP), records the history of a guild of silk weavers who originally lived in Lata (Gujarat), from where they migrated to Mandasor, then known as Dashapura.

Beyond the four Varnas: Integration

- People who were not influenced by the Brahmanical ideas were often described as odd, uncivilised, or even animal-like.
- These included forest-dwellers for whom hunting and gathering remained an important means of subsistence. Categories such as the nishada, to which Ekalavya is supposed to have belonged, are examples of this.
- People who spoke non-sanskritic languages were labelled as mlechchhas and looked down upon.

Beyond the four Varnas: Subordination and Conflict

- Brahmanas classified certain social categories as "untouchable".
- Some activities were considered as "polluting", these included handling corpses and dead animals.
- Those who performed such tasks, designated as chandalas, were placed at the very bottom of the hierarchy. Their touch and, in some cases, even seeing them was regarded as "polluting".
- Chandalas had to live outside the village, use discarded utensils, and wear clothes of the dead and ornaments of iron.
 - They could not walk about in villages and cities at night.
 - They had to dispose of the bodies of those who had no relatives and serve as executioners.
- Chinese Buddhist monk Fa Xian wrote that "untouchables" had to sound a clapper in the streets so that people could avoid seeing them.
- Another Chinese pilgrim, Xuan Zang, observed that executioners and scavengers were forced to live outside the city.

Beyond Birth: Resources and Status Gendered access to property

- Issues of ownership, foregrounded in stories such as the Mahabharata, also figure in the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras.
- According to the Manusmriti, the paternal estate was to be divided equally amongst sons, with a special share for the eldest but women could not claim a share of these resources.
- Women were allowed to retain the gifts they received in their marriage as stridhana.
 - This could be inherited by their children.
 - The Manusmriti warned women against hoarding family property, or even their own valuables, without the husband's permission. In other words, social differences between men and women were sharpened because of the differences in access to resources.

Varna and Access to Property

- Apart from gender, other criteria for having access to wealth was Varna.
- The only "occupation" prescribed for Shudras was servitude, while a variety of occupations were listed for men of the first three varnas, according to which the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas would be the wealthiest.
- Kings were depicted as wealthy, priests are also generally shown to be rich, though there are occasional depictions of the poor Brahmana.
- However, the Buddhists recognized the differences in society, but did not regard these as natural or inflexible. They also rejected the idea of claims to status on the basis of birth.

An alternative social scenario: Sharing wealth

- There were situations where men who were generous were respected and those who simply accumulated wealth for themselves were despised.
- There were several kingdoms in ancient South India where chiefs were patrons of bards and poets who sang their praise.
- Poems in the Tamil Sangam anthologies illuminate social and economic relationships, suggesting that there were differences but those who controlled resources were expected to share them.

Explaining Social Differences: A Social Contract

- Buddhists, in a myth found in a text known as the Sutta Pitaka suggested that originally human beings did not have fully evolved bodily forms, nor was the world of plants fully developed.
- All beings lived in an idyllic state of peace, taking from nature only what they needed for each meal.
- There was a gradual deterioration of this state as human beings became increasingly greedy, vindictive and deceitful.
- This led them to think of someone who would lead and guide them and would be known as Mahasammata, the great elect.
- This suggests that the institution of kingship was based on human choice, with taxes as a form of payment for services rendered by the king. At the same time, it reveals recognition of human agency in creating and institutionalising economic and social relations.

Handling Texts: Historians and the Mahabharata**Language and content**

- The Sanskrit used in the Mahabharata is far simpler than that of the Vedas or Prashastis.
- Contents of the present text are classified under two broad heads:

- Sections that contain stories, designated as the narrative, and o Sections that contain prescriptions about social norms, designated as didactic.
- This division is not watertight, the didactic sections include stories, and the narrative often contains a social message.
- Historians believed the Mahabharata was meant to be a dramatic, moving story, and that the didactic portions were probably added later.
- The text is described as an itihasa within early Sanskrit tradition.

Author(s) and Dates

- The original story was probably composed by charioteer-bards known as sutas who generally accompanied Kshatriya warriors to the battlefield and composed poems celebrating their victories.
- Then, from the fifth century BCE, Brahmanas took over the story and began writing it.
- 200 BCE and 200 CE was the period when the worship of Vishnu was growing in importance, and Krishna was coming to be identified with Vishnu. Subsequently, between c. 200 and 400 CE, large didactic sections



9. Ashoka, The Emperor Who Gave up War

Ashoka was one of the greatest rulers known to history and on his **instructions, inscriptions** were inscribed on **pillars, as well as on rock surfaces**.

❖ **Mauryan Empire:**

- **Chandragupta Maurya:** He was the **founder of the Mauryan Empire**.
 - Chandragupta was supported by a wise man named **Chanakya or Kautilya**. Many of Chanakya's ideas were written down in a book called the **Arthashastra**.
 - **Megasthenes** was an ambassador who was sent to the court of Chandragupta by the Greek ruler of West Asia named Seleucus Nicator.
- **Bindusara:** He was **son of Chandragupta**, was the second to sit on the throne of the Great Mauryan Dynasty.
- **Ashoka:** The most famous Mauryan ruler was Ashoka. Ashoka was one of the greatest rulers known to history and on his instructions, inscriptions were inscribed on pillars, as well as on rock surfaces.

Inscriptions of Ashoka:

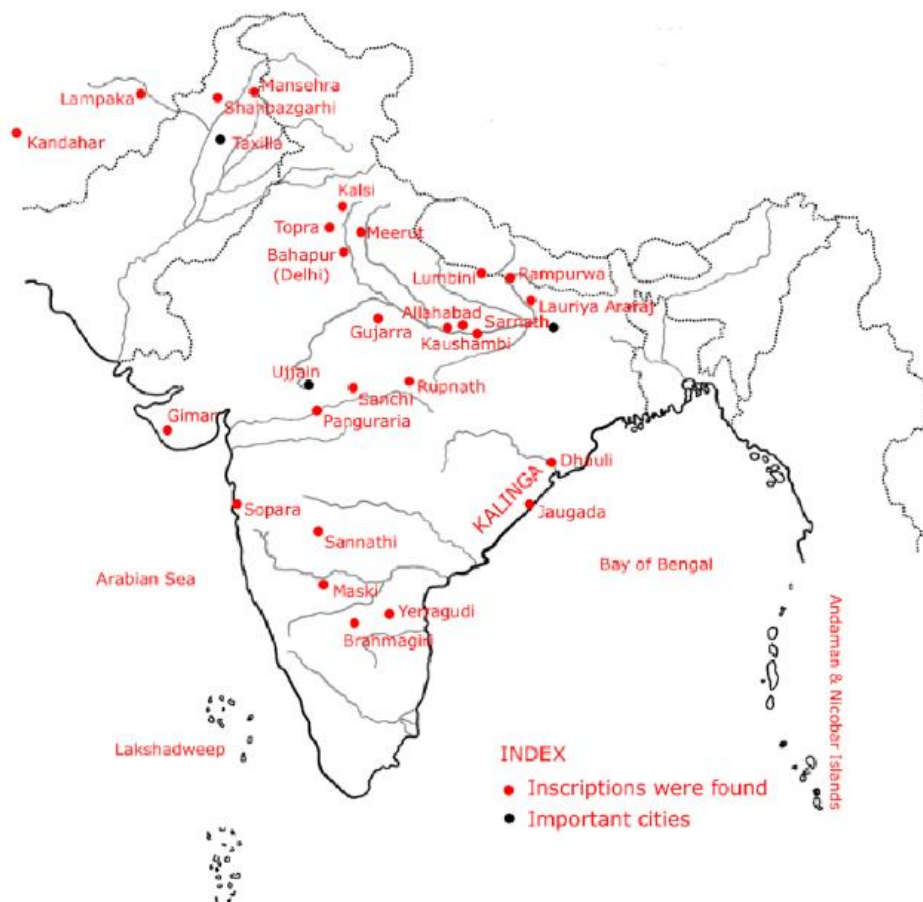


Fig. 7.1: Principal cities and some of the places where inscriptions were found

- **He was the first ruler** who tried to take his message to the people through inscriptions. Most of Ashoka's inscriptions were in **Prakrit and were written in the Brahmi script**.
- **Kalinga war:** Kalinga is the ancient name of coastal Orissa. Ashoka fought a war to conquer Kalinga. However, he was so horrified when he saw the violence and bloodshed and later on, he decided not to fight any more wars.

➤ **He is the only king in the history of the world who gave up conquest after winning a war. Eight years after becoming king, Ashoka conquered Kalinga.**

❖ **Ashoka's Dhamma:**

- Ashoka's dhamma **did not involve worship of a god, or performance of a sacrifice**. He felt that just as a father tries to teach his children, he had a duty to instruct his subjects. He was also **inspired by the teachings of the Buddha**.
- So, he appointed officials, known as the dhamma mahamatta who went from place to place teaching people about dhamma. Besides, Ashoka got his messages inscribed on rocks and pillars, instructing his officials to read his message to those who could not read it themselves.
- Ashoka also sent messengers to spread ideas about **dhamma to other lands, such as Syria, Egypt, Greece and Sri Lanka**.
- He built roads, dug wells, and built rest houses. Besides, he arranged for medical treatment for **both human beings and animals**.

❖ **Governance of Mauryan Empire:**

- **Taxila was a gateway to the northwest**, including Central Asia, while Ujjain lay on the route from north to south India. Merchants, officials and crafts persons probably lived in these cities.
- Emperors need more resources than kings because empires are larger than kingdoms, and need to be protected by big armies. So also, they need a **larger number of officials who collect taxes**.
- As the empire was so large, different parts were ruled differently. The area around Pataliputra was under the **direct control of the emperor**.
- This meant that **officials were appointed to collect taxes** from farmers, herders, crafts persons and traders, who lived in villages and towns in the area.
- Officials also **punished** those who disobeyed the ruler's orders. Many of these officials were given salaries.
- Messengers went to and fro, and **spies kept a watch on the officials**. And of course, the emperor supervised them all, with the help of members of the royal family, and senior ministers.
- There were other areas or provinces. Each of these was ruled from a provincial capital such as Taxila or Ujjain. Although there was some amount of control from **Pataliputra, and royal princes were often sent as governors, local customs and rules were probably followed**.
- Besides, there were vast areas between these centres. Here the Mauryas tried to control **roads and rivers**, which were important for transport, and to collect whatever resources were available as tax and tribute.
- For example, the Arthashastra tells us that the **north-west was important for blankets, and south India for its gold and precious stones**. It is possible that these resources were collected as tribute.
- Unlike taxes, which were collected on a regular basis, **tribute was collected as and when it was possible from people who gave a variety of things, more or less willingly**.

❖ **Post Mauryan Age:**

- The Mauryan empire collapsed about 2200 years ago. In its place (and elsewhere) rose several new kingdoms. In the north-west, and in parts of north India, kings known as the **Indo-Greeks ruled for about one hundred years**.
- They were **followed by a Central Asian people known as the Shakas**, who set up kingdoms in the north-west, north and western India. Some of these kingdoms lasted for about 500 years. **till the**

Shakas were defeated by the Gupta kings. The Shakas in turn were followed by the Kushanas (about 2000 years ago).

- In the north, and in parts of central India, a general of the Mauryas, named **Pushyamitra Shunga, set up a kingdom.**
- The Shungas were followed by another dynasty, known as the **Kanvas**, and by rulers from other families till the establishment of the Gupta empire about 1700 years ago.
- The Shakas who ruled over parts of western India fought several battles with the **Satavahanas**, who ruled over western and parts of central India.
- The Satavahana kingdom, which was established about 2100 years ago, lasted for about 400 years. Around 1700 years ago, a new ruling family, **known as the Vakatakas**, became powerful in central and western India.
- In South India, the **Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas ruled between 2200 and 1800 years ago.** And, about 1500 years ago, there were two large kingdoms, those of the **Pallavas and the Chalukyas.**

Interesting Points:

- **The Rampurwa bull** is a finely polished stone sculpture. This was part of a Mauryan pillar found in Rampurwa, Bihar, and has now been **placed in Rashtrapati Bhavan.** It is an example of the skill of the sculptors of the time.
- Most modern Indian scripts have developed from the Brahmi script over hundreds of years.
- **Great Wall of China:** Somewhat before the time of the Mauryan empire, about 2400 years ago, emperors in China began building the Great Wall.
 - It was meant **to protect the northern frontier of the empire from pastoral people.** Additions to the wall were made over a period of 2000 years because the frontiers of the empire kept shifting.
 - **The wall is about 6400 km long,** and is made of stone and brick, with a road along the top. Several thousand people worked to build the wall.
There are watch towers all along. at distances of about 100-200 m.
- **Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath: National emblem of India is an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath, a statue from 250 BCE. The statue depicted four Asiatic lions back-to-back, with the two-dimensional emblem showing three lions.**
 - The actual Sarnath capital features four Asiatic lions standing back-to-back, symbolising power, courage, confidence, and pride, mounted on a circular base.
 - At the bottom **is a horse and a bull,** and at its centre is a wheel (**Dharma chakra**). The abacus is girded with a frieze of sculptures in high relief of The Lion of the North, **The Horse of the West, The Bull of the South and The Elephant of the East, separated by intervening wheels, over a lotus in full bloom, exemplifying the fountainhead of life and creative inspiration.**
 - Forming an integral part of the emblem is the motto inscribed below the abacus in Devanagari script: **Satyameva Jayate** ("Truth alone triumphs"). **This is a quote from Mundaka Upanishad, the concluding part of the sacred Hindu Vedas.**



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10. Kings, Farmers & Towns Early States and Economies (600BCE-600CE)

There were several developments in different parts of the subcontinent during the long span of 1,500 years following the end of the Harappan civilisation. This was also the period during which the Rigveda was composed by people living along the Indus and its tributaries.

Princep and Piyadassi

- James Prinsep, deciphered Brahmi and Kharosthi, two scripts used in the earliest inscriptions.
- He found that most of these mentioned a king referred to as Piyadassi meaning "pleasant to behold"; referring to Asoka.

The Earliest States

The Sixteen Mahajanapadas

- Early Buddhist and Jaina texts mention, sixteen states known as mahajanapadas.
- Although the lists vary, some names such as Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti occur frequently. Clearly, these were amongst the most important mahajanapadas.
- Most mahajanapadas were ruled by kings, some, known as ganas or sanghas, were oligarchies, where power was shared by a number of men, often collectively called rajas.
- Both Mahavira and the Buddha belonged to such ganas.
- In some cases, like the Vajji sangha, the rajas probably controlled resources such as land collectively.
- Each mahajanapada had a capital city. often fortified.
- Sixth century BCE onwards, Brahmanas began composing Sanskrit texts known as the Dharmasutras, which laid down norms for rulers.

First amongst the sixteen: Magadha

- Between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE, Magadha (In Bihar) became the most powerful mahajanapada because of the following reasons:
 - Magadha was agriculture productive. a was region where especially
 - Iron mines (in Jharkhand) were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons.
 - Elephants, an important component of the army. were found in forests.
 - Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap and convenient communication.
 - Early Buddhist and Jaina writers attributed its power to the policies of individuals: ruthlessly ambitious kings like Bimbisara, Ajatasattu and Mahapadma Nanda.
- Initially, Rajagaha (present day Rajgir In Bihar) was the capital of Magadha, meaning "house of the king".
- Rajagaha was a fortified settlement, located amongst hills. In the fourth century BCE, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, present-day Patna, commanding routes of communication along the Ganga.

An Early Empire

The growth of Magadha culminated in the Mauryan Empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya.

Findings about the Mauryas

- History of reconstructed sources: Mauryan Empire is through various.
 - Archaeological finds, especially sculpture.
 - Contemporary works, such as the account of Megasthenes (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya).

- The Arthashastra, parts of which were probably composed by Kautilya or Chanakya,
- Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist, Jaina, Puranic Sanskrit literary works. and
- Inscriptions of Asoka (272/268-231 BCE) on rocks and pillars.
- Asoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages on stone surfaces natural rocks and polished pillars.
- He used the inscriptions to proclaim what he understood to be dhamma.
- This included respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas and those who renounced worldly life, treating slaves and servants kindly, and respect for religions and traditions other than one's own.

Administering the empire

- There were five major political centers in the empire, the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centers of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri, all mentioned in the Asokan Inscription.
- It is likely that administrative control was strongest in areas around the capital and the provincial centers.
 - These centers were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes.
 - Suvarnagiri was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.
- Megasthenes mentions a committee. with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity.
 - One looked after the navy,
 - Second managed transport and provisions,
 - Third was responsible for foot- soldiers,
 - Fourth for horses,
 - Fifth for chariots,
 - Sixth for elephants.
- Asoka also tried to hold his empire. together by propagating dhamma, to ensure the well-being of people. Special officers, known as the dhamma mahamatta, were appointed to spread the message of dhamma.

Importance of the Empire:

- Emergence of the Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major landmark.
- Archaeological finds associated with the Mauryas, including stone sculpture, were considered to be examples of the spectacular art typical of empires.
- The message on Asokan inscriptions was very different from that of other rulers, suggesting that Asoka was more powerful and industrious.

New Notions of Kingship Chiefs and Kings in The South

- The new kingdoms that emerged in the Deccan and further south, including the chiefdoms of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas proved to be stable and prosperous.
- The early Tamil Sangam texts contain poems describing chiefs and the ways in which they acquired and distributed resources.
- Many chiefs and kings, including the Satavahanas, who ruled over parts of western and central India (c. second century BCE-second century CE) and the Shakas, a people of Central Asian origin who

established kingdoms in the north-western and western parts of the subcontinent, derived revenues from long-distance trade.

Divine kings

- One means of claiming high status was to identify with a variety of deities. This strategy was best exemplified by the Kushanas who ruled over a vast kingdom extending from Central Asia to north-west India. Their history has been reconstructed from inscriptions and textual traditions. The notions of kingship they wished to project are perhaps best evidenced in their coins and sculpture.
- Colossal statues of Kushana rulers have been found installed in a shrine at Mat near Mathura and in a shrine in Afghanistan as well.
- This indicates that the Kushanas considered themselves godlike.
 - Many Kushana rulers also adopted the title devaputra, possibly inspired by Chinese rulers who called themselves "sons of heaven".
- Larger states, including the Gupta Empire was dependent on Samantas, men who maintained themselves through local resources including control over land.
 - They offered homage and provided military support to rulers.
 - Powerful Samantas could become kings.
- Histories of the Gupta rulers have been reconstructed from literature, coins and Inscriptions, including Prashastis, composed in praise of kings.
- Prayaga Prashasti (also known as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription) composed in Sanskrit by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta.

A Changing Countryside Popular Perceptions of Kings

- Perception of king in the minds of subjects was known through anthologies such as the Jatakas and the Panchatantra.
- Many of these stories originated as popular oral tales that were later committed to writing.
- Gandatindu Jataka describes the plight of the subjects of a wicked king.
 - When the king went in disguise to find out what his subjects thought about him, each one of them cursed him for their miseries, complaining that they were attacked by robbers at night and by tax collectors during the day.
 - To escape from this situation, people abandoned their village and went to live in the forest.

Strategies for Increasing Production

- One such strategy was the shift to plough agriculture, which spread in fertile alluvial river valleys such as those of the Ganga and the Kaveri.
- The iron-tipped ploughshare was used to turn the alluvial soil in areas which had high rainfall.
- In some parts of the Ganga valley, production of paddy was increased by the introduction of transplantation.
- Use of irrigation, through wells and tanks, and less commonly, canals were introduced.

Differences in rural society

There was a growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture stories, especially within the Buddhist tradition, refer to landless agricultural labourers, small peasants and large landholders.

- The term "Gahapati" was the owner, master or head of a household, who exercised control over the women, children, slaves and workers who shared a common residence. He was also the owner of the resources land, animals and other things that belonged to the household. Sometimes the term was used as a marker of status for men belonging to the urban elite, including wealthy merchants. It was often used in Pali texts to designate the small peasants and large landholders.
- Large landholders and village headman emerged as powerful figures, and often exercised control over other cultivators.
- Sangam texts mention different categories of people living in the villages:
 - Large landowners or Vellalar.
 - Ploughmen or uzhar.
 - Slaves or adimai.

Land Grants and New Rural Elites

- Grant of land was a common feature, and these were recorded in inscriptions, which either on stone or copper plates.
- Records which survive are generally about grants to religious Institutions or to Brahmanas.
- Most of the inscriptions were in Sanskrit and from seventh century local languages such as Tamil and Telugu were also used.
- According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land.
 - However, Prabhavati, daughter of Chandragupta II, had access to land, which she then granted.
 - This may have been because she was a queen, and her situation was exceptional.
- One inscription explains that the rural population, the Brahmanas, peasants and others were expected to provide a part of produce to the king.
- There were regional variations in the sizes of land donated, ranging from small plots to vast stretches of uncultivated land.
- Reasons for land grants vary- to extend agriculture to new areas, to win allies and bring samantas under control through land grants. Land grants also provide some insight into the relationship between cultivators and the state.

Towns and Trade New Cities

- All major towns were located along routes of communication.
 - Pataliputra was on riverine routes.
 - Ujjayini, was along land routes.
 - Puhar was near the coast, from where sea routes began.
 - Mathura was a bustling centre of commercial, cultural and political activity.

Urban populations: Elites and Craftsperson

- Excavation at places where the kings and elites lived led to recovery of fine pottery bowls and dishes, with a glossy finish, known as Northern Black Polished Ware, used by rich people, and ornaments, tools, weapons, vessels, figurines, made of a wide range of materials gold, silver, copper, bronze, ivory, glass, shell and terracotta.
- Votive inscriptions which record gifts made to religious institutions, mention the name of the donor and specify his/ her occupation as well.

- They mention the town populace: washing folk, weavers, scribes, carpenters, potters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, officials, religious teachers, merchants and kings.
- Guilds or shrenis, organisations of craft producers and merchants, are mentioned, as they were required to meet the growing demands of urban elites.

Trade in the Subcontinent and Beyond

- From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions;
 - Overland into Central Asia.
 - Overseas from ports into the Arabian Sea to East and North Africa and West Asia, and through the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia and China.
 - Rulers often attempted to control these routes by offering protection for a price.
- Peddlers travelled on foot and merchants travelled with caravans of bullock carts and pack-animals.
- There were seafarers, whose ventures were risky but highly profitable. Successful merchants, designated as masattuvan in Tamil and setthis and sathavahas in Prakrit, were enormously rich.
- A wide range of goods were transported like salt, grain, cloth, metal ores and finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, etc.
- Spices such as pepper, were in high demand in the Roman Empire, as were textiles and medicinal plants.

Coins and kings

- Punch-marked coins made of silver and copper (sixth century BCE onwards) were amongst the earliest to be minted and used.
- Usually, kings issued coins, but it is likely that merchants, bankers and townspeople also issued some of these coins.
- The first coins to bear the names and Images of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greeks, who established control over the north-western part of the subcontinent
- The Kushanas, Issued the largest hordes of gold coins (first gold coins), which were identical in weight with those issued by contemporary Roman Emperors and the Parthians of Iran.
- Roman coins found In South India Indicates wide network of trade in Southern India.
- Coins were also issued by tribal republics such as the Yaudheyas of Punjab and Haryana.
- Spectacular gold coins were Issued by the Gupta rulers, known for their purity. These coins facilitated long-distance transactions from which kings also benefited.

Back to Basics : Deciphering Inscriptions Deciphering Brahmi

- Most scripts used to write modern Indian Languages are derived from Brahmi, the script used in Asokan inscriptions.
- European scholars aided by Indian pandits compared contemporary Bengali and Devanagari manuscripts, with the letters of older specimens.
- James Prinsep was able to decipher Asokan Brahmi in 1838.

How Kharosthi was read

- Indo-Greek coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi scripts.
- European scholars who could read the former compared the letters.

- For example, symbol for "a" could be found in both scripts for writing names such as Apollodotus.
- When Prinsep identified the language of the Kharosthi inscriptions as Prakrit, it became possible to read longer inscriptions.

Historical evidence from inscriptions

- Name of Asoka is not mentioned in the inscription (Source 10), titles adopted by the ruler, Devanampiya, and Piyadassi are used instead.
- The name of Asoka was mentioned in other inscriptions along with these titles.
- Asokan inscription (Source 11), has been interpreted as reflecting the anguish of the ruler, as well as marking a change in his attitude towards warfare.
- Asokan inscriptions have been found in present-day Orissa, however, the one depicting his anguish is missing.

The Limitations Evidence: of Inscriptional

- There are technical limitations:
 - Letters are very faintly engraved; thus reconstructions are uncertain.
 - Inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing.
 - It is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions, some of which may be specific to a particular place or time.
- Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered but not all have been deciphered, published and translated.
- Many more inscriptions must have existed but didn't survive the ravages of time, only a fraction remains of what was inscribed.
- Not everything that we consider politically or economically significant was necessarily recorded in inscriptions. for example, joys and sorrows of daily existence doesn't find mention.

Timeline 1: Major Political and Economic Developments

- **600-500 BCE:** Paddy transplantation; urbanisation in the Ganga valley; mahajanapadas; punch-marked coins.
- **500-400 BCE:** Rulers of Magadha consolidate power.
- **327-325 BCE:** Invasion of Alexander of Macedon.
- **321 BCE:** Accession of Chandragupta Maurya.
- **272/268-231:** BCE Reign of Asoka.
- **185 BCE:** End of the Mauryan empire.
- **200-100 BCE:** Indo-Greek rule in the northwest; Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas In South India; Satavahanas in the Deccan.
- **100 BCE-200 CE:** Shaka (peoples from Central Asia) rulers in the northwest; Roman trade; gold coinage.
- **78 CE:** Accession of Kanishka.
- **100-200 CE:** Earliest inscriptional evidence of land grants by Satavahana and Shaka rulers.
- **320 CE:** Beginning of Gupta rule.
- **335-375 CE:** Samudragupta
- **375-415 CE:** Chandragupta II; Vakatakas in the Deccan.
- **500-600 CE:** Rise of the Chalukyas in Karnataka and of the Pallavas in Tamil Nadu.

- **606-647 CE:** Harshavardhana king of Kanauj: Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang comes in search of Buddhist texts.
- **712:** Arabs conquer Sind.

Timeline 2: Major Advances in Epigraphy

Eighteenth century

- 1784: Founding of the Asiatic Society (Bengal).

Nineteenth century

- **1810s:** Colin Mackenzie collects over 8,000 Inscriptions in Sanskrit and Dravidian languages.
- **1838:** Decipherment of Asokan Brahmi by James Prinsep.
- **1877:** Alexander Cunningham publishes a set of Asokan Inscriptions.
- **1886:** First issue of Epigraphia Carnatica, a journal of South Indian inscriptions.
- **1888:** First issue of Epigraphia Indica.

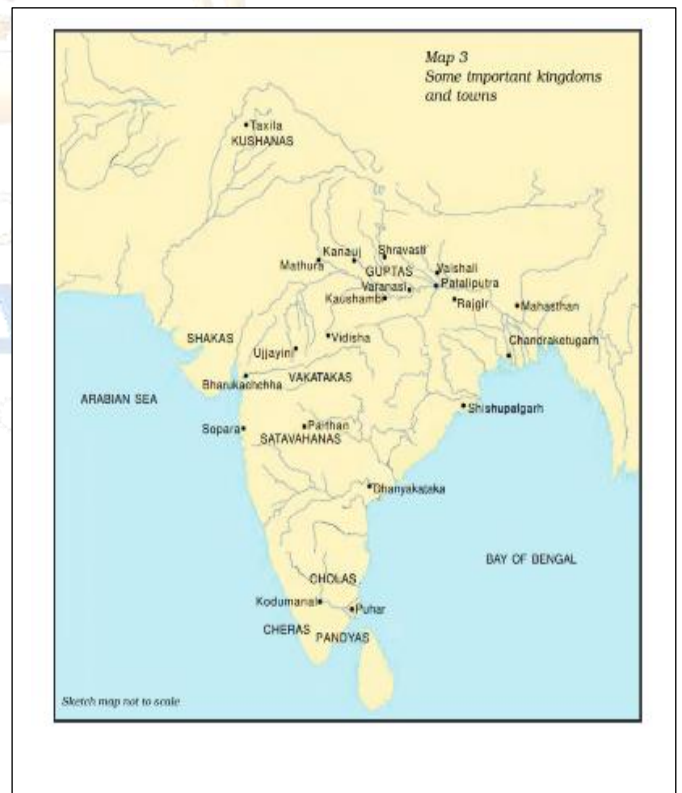
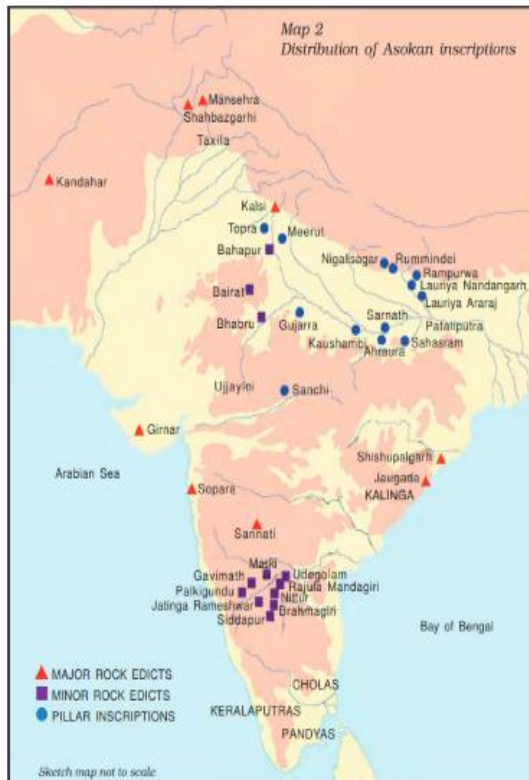
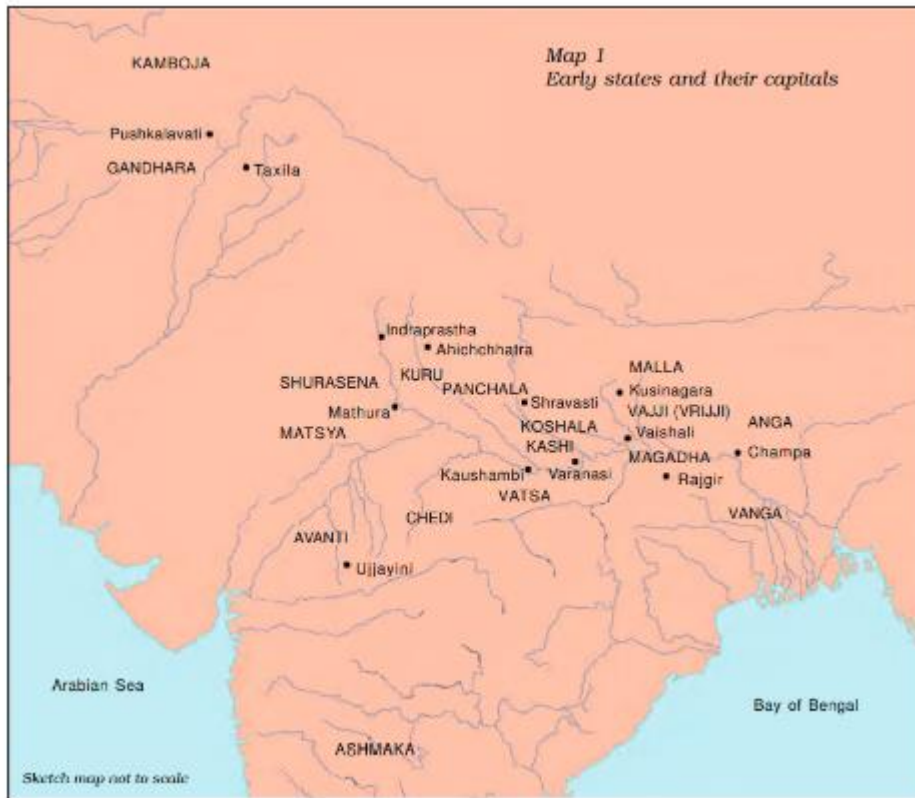
Twentieth century

- 1965-66: D.C. Sircar publishes Indian Epigraphy and Indian Epigraphical Glossary.

Interesting Points

- Janapada means the land where a jana (a people, clan or tribe) sets its foot or settles. It is a word used in both Prakrit and Sanskrit.
- **Chiefs and chiefdoms:** A chief is a powerful man whose position may or may not be hereditary. He derives support from his kinfolk. His functions may include performing special rituals, leadership in warfare, and arbitrating disputes. He receives gifts from his subordinates (unlike kings who usually collect taxes) and often distributes these amongst his supporters. Generally, there are no regular armies and officials in chiefdoms.
- Votive inscriptions record gifts made to religious institutions.
- **Numismatics** is the study of coins, including visual elements such as scripts and images, metallurgical analysis and the contexts in which they have been found.
- **Pativedaka:** A term used for reporter during Ashoka rule.
- An Agrahara was land granted to a Brahmana, exempted from paying land revenue and other dues and was often given the right to collect these dues from the local people.
- Most Asokan inscriptions were in the Prakrit language while those in the northwest of the subcontinent were in Aramaic and Greek.
- The Manusmṛti is one of the best-known legal texts of early India, written in Sanskrit and compiled between c. second century BCE and c. second century CE.
- **The Harshacharita** is a biography of Harshavardhana, the ruler of Kanauj, composed in Sanskrit by his court poet, Banabhatta (c. seventh century CE).
- **Sovanika:** A term used for goldsmith.
- Archaeological evidence of a bead-making industry, using precious and semi-precious stones, has been found in Kodumanal (Tamil Nadu). It is likely that local traders brought the stones mentioned in the Periplus from sites such as these to the coastal ports.
- **"Periplus"** is a Greek word meaning sailing around and "Erythraean" was the Greek name for the Red Sea.

Important Maps :



11. Vital Villages, Thriving Towns

The kings and kingdoms could not have existed without the support of flourishing villages. While **new tools and the system of transplantation** increased production, irrigation was also used. Irrigation works that were built during this time included canals, wells, tanks, and artificial lakes.

Social life in Southern Villages:

- There were **at least three different kinds of people** living in most villages in the southern and northern parts of the subcontinent.
- In the Tamil region, **large landowners were known as vellalar, ordinary ploughmen were known as uzhavar, and landless labourers, including slaves, were known as kadaiyyar and adimai.**

Social life in Northern Villages:

- In the northern part of the country, the **village headman was known as the grama bhojaka**. Usually, men from the same family held the position for generations. In other words, **the post was hereditary**.
- The grama bhojaka was often the **largest landowner**. Generally, he had slaves and hired workers to cultivate the land. Besides, as he was powerful, the king often used him to **collect taxes from the village**. He also functioned as a judge, and sometimes as a policeman. Apart from the gramabhojaka, there were other independent farmers, known as **grihapatis**, most of whom were smaller landowners.
- And then there were men and women such as **the dasa karmakara**, who did not own land, and had to earn a living working on the fields owned by others.

Art and Craft in Towns:

- **Sculptors** carved scenes depicting peoples' lives in towns and villages, as well as in the forest. Many of these sculptures were used to **decorate railings, pillars and gateways of buildings** that were visited by people.
- **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW):** NBPW is a hard, **wheel made**, metallic looking ware with a shiny black surface.
 - ↳ The potter used to expose the earthenware to very high temperature in his kiln which resulted in the blackening of its outer surface. A fine black slip was also applied on this, which gave the pottery a **mirror-like shine**.
- **Manufacture of cloth:** There were famous centres such as **Varanasi in the north, and Madurai in the south**. Both men and women worked in these centres.
- **Punch-marked Coins:** Punch-marked coins were **generally rectangular or sometimes square or round in shape**, either cut out of metal sheets or made out of flattened metal globules (a small spherical body).
 - ↳ The coins were not inscribed, but **were stamped** with symbols using dies or punches. Hence, they are called punch-marked coins.
 - ↳ These coins are **found over most parts of the subcontinent** and remained in circulation till the early centuries CE.

Role of Shrenis:

- Many **crafts persons and merchants now formed associations known as shrenis**. These shrenis of crafts persons **provided training, procured raw material, and distributed the finished product**. Then shrenis of merchants organised the trade.
- Shrenis also **served as banks**, where rich men and women deposited money. This was invested, and part of the interest was returned or used to **support religious institutions such as monasteries**.

Story of Mathura:

- Mathura has been an important settlement for more than 2500 years. It was important because it **was located at the cross roads of two major routes of travel and trade from the northwest to the east and from north to south.**
- There were fortifications around the city, and several shrines. Farmers and herders from adjoining areas provided food for people in the city.
- Mathura was also a centre where some **extremely fine sculpture** was produced. Around 2000 years ago **Mathura became the second capital of the Kushanas.**
- Mathura was also a religious centre there were **Buddhist monasteries, Jaina shrines**, and it was an important centre for the **worship of Krishna**. Several inscriptions on surfaces such as stone slabs and statues have been found in Mathura.

Story of Arikamedu:

- Between 2200 and 1900 years ago, **Arikamedu was a coastal settlement where ships unloaded goods from distant lands.** A massive brick structure, which may have been a warehouse, was found at the site.
- Other finds include pottery from the Mediterranean region, such as amphorae (tall double-handled jars that contained liquids such as wine or oil) and stamped red-glazed pottery, known as **Arretine Ware**, which was named after a city in Italy. This was made by pressing wet clay into a stamped mould.
- There was yet another kind of pottery which was made locally, though Roman designs were used. **Roman lamps, glassware and gems have also been found at the site.**
- Small tanks have been found that were probably dyeing vats, used to **dye cloth**. There is plenty of evidence for the **making of beads from semi-precious stones and glass.**

Interesting Points:

- **Ring wells:** In many cities, archaeologists have found rows of pots, or ceramic rings arranged one on top of the other. These are known as ring wells.
↳ These seem to have been **used as toilets in some cases**, and as **drains and garbage dumps**. These ring wells are usually found in individual houses.
- **Arthashastra, mentioned Rules for spinning and weaving.** They describe how spinning and weaving could be done in workshops under the supervision of a special official. If a woman does not complete her work, she will have to **pay a fine, and her thumbs can be cut off."**
- **Sangam literature:** Some of the earliest **works in Tamil, known as Sangam literature**, were composed around 2300 years ago.
↳ These texts were called Sangam because they were supposed to have been composed and compiled in **assemblies (known as sangams) of poets that were held in the city of Madurai.**
- **Jatakas:** These were stories that were probably composed by ordinary people, and then written down and preserved by **Buddhist monks.**
- The **use of iron** began in the subcontinent around 3000 years ago.
- Some of the largest collections of iron tools and weapons were found in the megalithic burials.
- Around 2500 years ago, there is evidence for the **growing use of iron tools**. These included axes for clearing forests, and the iron ploughshare.

12. Traders, Kings and Pilgrims

Northern Black Polished Ware fine pottery, especially bowls and plates, were found from several archaeological sites throughout the subcontinent. **Traders may have carried** them from the places where they were made, to sell them at other places.

Trade from South India:

- South India was **famous for gold, spices, especially pepper, and precious stones. Pepper was particularly valued in the Roman Empire, so much so that it was known as black gold.**
- So, traders carried many of these goods to Rome in ships, across the sea, and by land in caravans. There must have been quite a lot of trade as many **Roman gold coins have been found in south India.**
- Traders explored several sea routes. Some of these followed the coasts. There were others across the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, where sailors took advantage of the monsoon winds to cross the seas more quickly.
- So, if they wanted to reach the western coast of the subcontinent from East Africa or Arabia, they chose to sail with the south-west monsoon. **And sturdy ships had to be built for these long journeys.**

New kingdoms along the coasts:

The southern half of the subcontinent is marked by a long coastline, and with hills, plateaus, and river valleys. Amongst the river valleys, that of the Kaveri is the most fertile.

- **Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas:**
 - ↳ Chiefs and kings who controlled the river valleys and the coasts became rich and powerful. Sangam poems mention the **muverndar. This is a Tamil word meaning three chiefs, used for the heads of three ruling families, the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas.**
 - ↳ Each of the three chiefs had two centres of power: one inland, and one on the coast. Of these six cities, two were very important: **Puhar or Kaveripattinam, the port of the Cholas, and Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas.**
 - ☑ **The chiefs did not collect regular taxes.** Instead, they **demand and received gifts** from the people. They also went on **military expeditions**, and collected tribute neighbouring areas.

Satavahanas:

- ↳ Around 200 years later a dynasty known as the Satavahanas became powerful in western India. The most important ruler of the Satavahanas was **Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni.**
- ↳ We know about him from an **Inscription composed on behalf of his mother, Gautami Balashri.**
- ↳ He and other Satavahana rulers were known as **lords of the Dakshina Patha, literally the route leading to the south, which was also used as a name for the entire southern region.**
- ↳ He sent his army to the eastern, western and southern coasts.

The story of the Silk Route:

- The rich, glossy colours of silk, as well as its smooth texture, make it a highly valued fabric in most societies. Making silk is a complicated process.
 - Raw silk has to be **extracted from the cocoons of silk worms**, spun into thread and then woven into cloth. **Techniques of making silk were first invented in China around 7000 years ago.**

- While the methods remained a closely guarded secret for thousands of years, some people from China who went to distant lands on foot, horseback, and on camels, carried silk with them. **The paths they followed came to be known as the Silk Route.**
- Sometimes, Chinese rulers sent gifts of silk to rulers in Iran and west Asia, and from there, the knowledge of silk spread further west. About 2000 years ago, wearing silk became the fashion amongst rulers and rich people in Rome.
- It was **very expensive**, as it had to be brought all the way from China, along dangerous roads, through mountains and deserts.
- People living along the route often demanded payments for allowing traders to pass through. Some kings tried to control large portions of the route. **This was because they could benefit from taxes, tributes and gifts that were brought by traders travelling along the route.**
- In return, **they often protected the traders who passed through their kingdoms from attacks by robbers.**
- The best-known of the rulers who **controlled the Silk Route were the Kushanas**, who ruled over central Asia and north-west India around 2000 years ago.
- **Their two major centres of power were Peshawar and Mathura. Taxila was also included in their kingdom.** During their rule, a branch of the Silk Route extended from Central Asia down to the seaports at the mouth of the river Indus, from where silk was shipped westwards to the Roman Empire.
- **The Kushanas were amongst the earliest rulers of the subcontinent to issue gold coins.** These were used by traders along the Silk Route.

Kanishka:

- The most famous Kushana ruler was Kanishka, who ruled around 1900 years ago. He organised a Buddhist council, where scholars met and discussed Important matters.
- **He started an era in A D. 78**, which is now known as the Saka era and is used by the Government of India.
- **Ashvaghosha**, a poet who composed a biography of the Buddha, the Buddhacharita, lived in his court. Ashvaghosha and other Buddhist scholars now began writing in Sanskrit.

The spread of Buddhism:

A new form of Buddhism, known as Mahayana Buddhism, now developed. **This had two distinct features.**

↳ Earlier, the Buddha's presence was shown in sculpture by using certain signs. For instance, his attainment of enlightenment was shown by sculptures of the peepal tree. Now, **statues of the Buddha were made.** Many of these were made in **Mathura, while others were made in Taxila.**

↳ **Bodhisattvas:** The second change was a belief in Bodhisattvas. These were supposed to be persons who had attained enlightenment.

- Once they attained enlightenment, they could live in **complete isolation and meditate in peace.** However, instead of doing that, they remained in the world to teach and help other people.
 - The worship of Bodhisattvas became very popular, and spread throughout Central Asia, China, and later to Korea and Japan.
- Buddhism also spread to western and southern India, where dozens of caves were hollowed out of hills for monks to live in. Some of the caves were made on the orders of kings, queens and merchants.

- These were often located near passes through the **Western Ghats**. Roads connecting prosperous ports on the coast with cities in the Deccan ran through these passes. Traders probably halted in these cave monasteries during their travels.
- Buddhism also spread south eastwards, to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and other parts of Southeast Asia including Indonesia. **The older form of Buddhism, known as Theravada Buddhism was more popular in these areas.**

Chinese Buddhist pilgrims:

- As traders journeyed to distant lands in caravans and ships, pilgrims often travelled with them.
 - The best-known of these are the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, **Fa Xian**, who came to the subcontinent about 1600 years ago, **Xuan Zang** (who came around 1400 years ago) and **I-Qing**, who came about 50 years after Xuan Zang.
 - **They came to visit places associated with the life of the Buddha as well as famous monasteries.**
 - Each of these pilgrims left an account of his journey. They wrote of the dangers they encountered on their travels, which often took years, of the countries and the monasteries that they visited, and the books they carried back with them.
 - Xuan Zang, and other pilgrims spent time **studying in Nalanda, (Bihar)** the most famous Buddhist monastery of the period.
- live in. Some of these caves were made on the orders of kings and queens, others by merchants and farmers.

The beginning of Bhakti:

- This was also the time when the worship of certain deities, which became a central feature of later Hinduism, gained in importance. These deities **included Shiva, Vishnu, and goddesses such as Durga**. These deities were worshipped through Bhakti, an idea that became very popular at this time.
- Bhakti comes from the Sanskrit term **bhaj** meaning '**to divide or share**.' This suggests an intimate, two-way relationship between the deity and the devotee.
- **Bhakti is directed towards Bhagavat**, which is often translated as god, but also means one who possesses and shares bhaga, literally good fortune or bliss. **The devotee, known as the bhakta or the bhagavata**, shares his or her chosen deity's bhaga.
- Bhakti is generally understood as a **person's devotion to his or her chosen deity**. Anybody, whether rich or poor, belonging to the so-called 'high' or 'low' castes, man or woman, could follow the path of Bhakti.
- The idea of Bhakti is **present in the Bhagavad Gita**, a sacred book of the Hindus, which is included in the Mahabharata. In this Krishna the God, asks Arjuna, his devotee and friend, to abandon all dharmas and take refuge in him, as only he can set Arjuna free from every evil.
- This form of worship gradually spread to different parts of the country. Those who followed the **system of Bhakti emphasised devotion and individual worship of a god or goddess, rather than the performance of elaborate sacrifices.**
 - ↳ According to this system of belief, if a devotee worships the chosen deity with a pure heart, the deity will appear in the form in which he or she may desire. So, the deity could be thought of as a **human being, lion, tree or any other form.**
- Once this idea gained acceptance, artists made beautiful images of these deities.
- Most Bhakti literature tells us that **riches, learning and high status do not automatically ensure a close relationship with the deity.**

- Because the deities were special, these images of the deity were often placed within special homes, places that we describe as **temples**.
- Bhakti inspired some of the best expressions in art such as **sculpture, poetry and architecture**.

Interesting Points:

- **Christianity:** About 2000 years ago, Christianity emerged in West Asia. **Jesus Christ** was born in **Bethlehem**, which was then part of the Roman empire.
 - Christ's teachings were that he was the Saviour of the world. He also taught people to treat others with **love and trust others**, just as they themselves wanted to be treated.
 - ↳ Christ's teachings appealed to ordinary people, and spread through West Asia, Africa and Europe. The first Christian preachers came from West Asia to the west coast of the subcontinent within a hundred years of Christ's death. than the performance of elaborate sacrifices.
 - The Christians of Kerala, known as **Syrian Christians** because they probably came from West Asia, are amongst the oldest Christian communities in the world.
- ↳ **Appar, was a devotee of Shiva** who lived about 1400 years ago.
- ↳ The word 'Hindu' like the term 'India' is derived from the river Indus. It was **used by Arabs and Iranians to refer to people** who lived to the east of the river, and to their cultural practices, including **religious beliefs**.

Additional Information:

Fa Xian began his journey back home from Bengal. He boarded a ship belonging to some merchants. They had barely travelled for two days when they were caught in a storm.

↳ The merchants began throwing their merchandise overboard so as to lighten the load and save the ship from sinking.

↳ Fa Xian threw away his meagre personal belongings, but clung to his books and the statues of the Buddha that he had collected. Finally, the storm subsided after 13 days.

☑ **It took him more than 90 days** to reach Java, where he halted for five months, before boarding another merchant ship that took him to China.

- **Xuan Zang**, who took the land route back to China (through the north-west, and Central Asia) carried back with him statues of the Buddha made of gold, silver and sandalwood, and over 600 manuscripts loaded on the backs of 20 horses.

☑ **Over 50 manuscripts were lost when the boat on which he was crossing the Indus capsized.** He spent the rest of his life translating the remaining manuscripts from Sanskrit into Chinese.

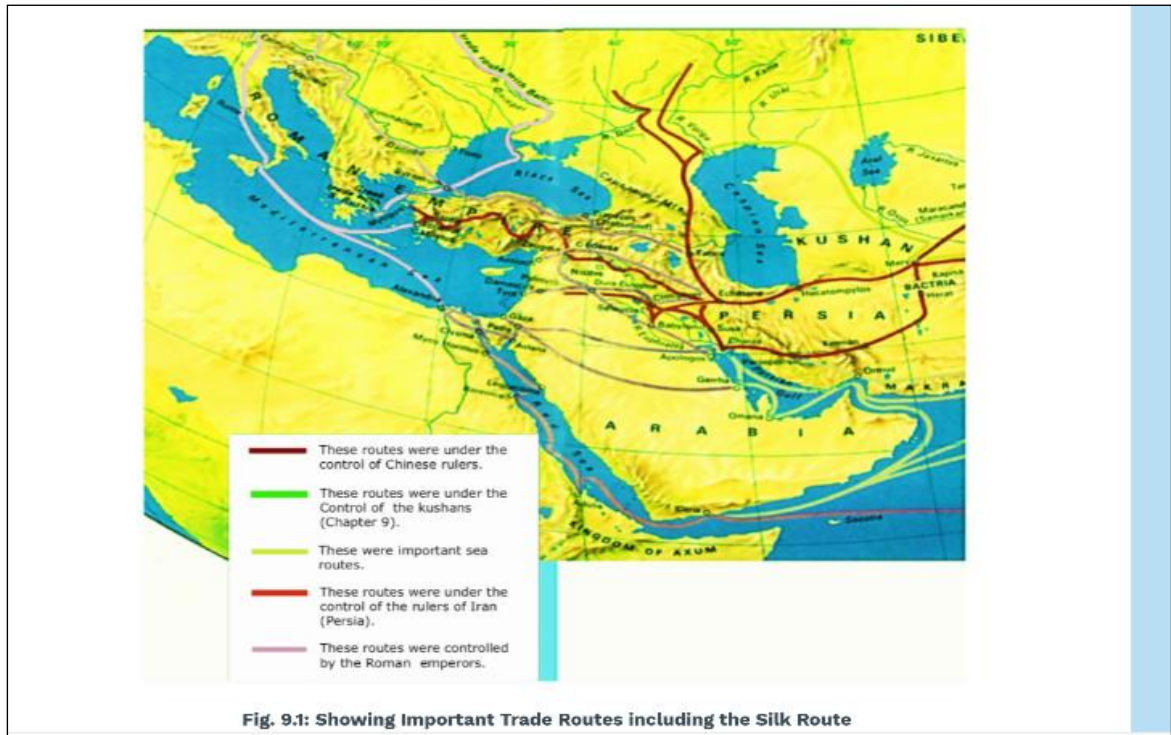


Fig. 9.1: Showing Important Trade Routes including the Silk Route

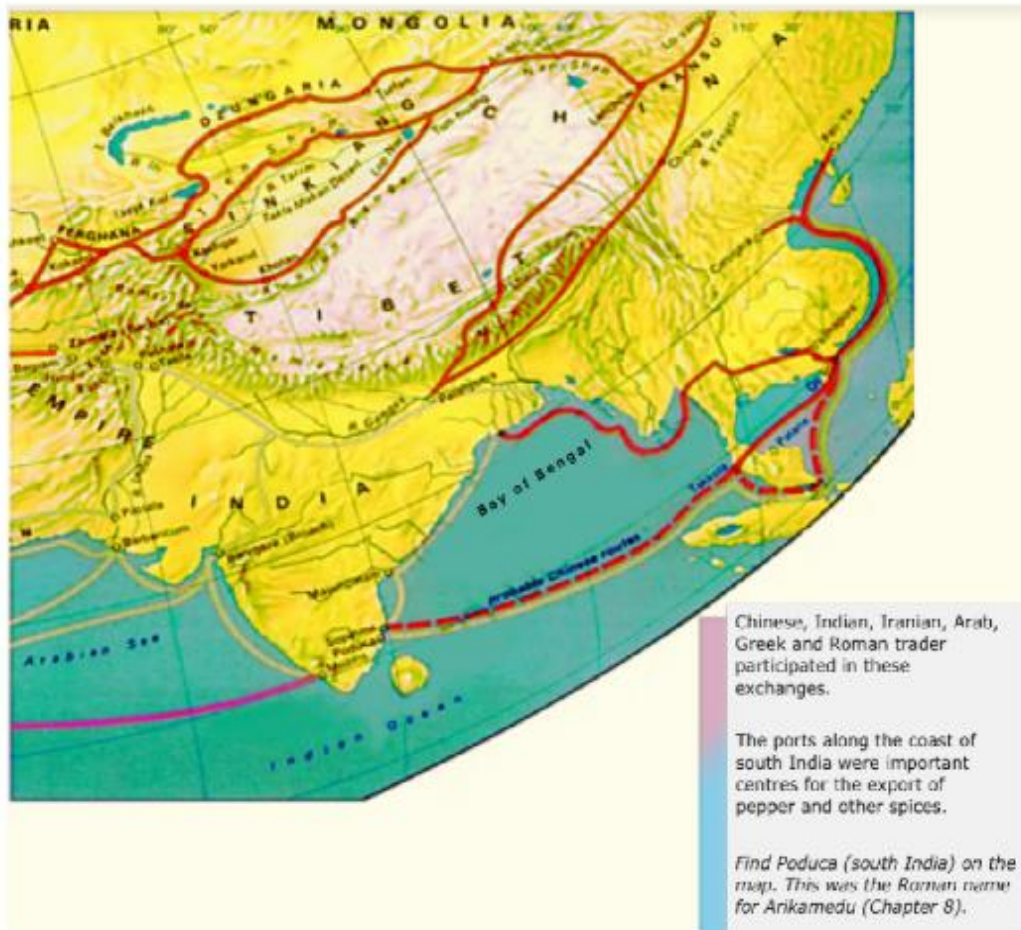


Fig. 9.2: Showing Important Trade Routes including the Silk Route

13. Traders, Kings and Pilgrims

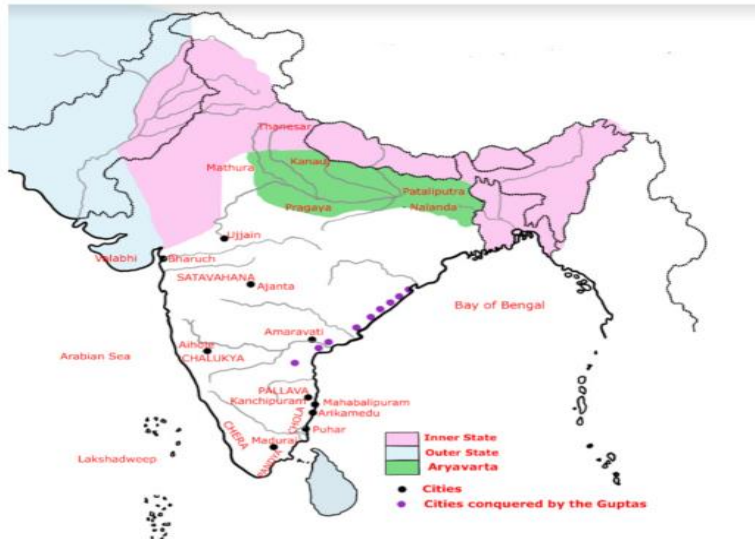
Samudragupta, was a famous ruler of a dynasty known as **the Guptas**. We know about Samudragupta from a long inscription, inscribed on the Ashokan pillar at Allahabad. It was composed as a Kavya by **Harishena**, who was a **poet and a minister at the court of Samudragupta**.

Samudragupta and Prayag Prashasti:

- **Prayag Prashasti** is a mirror of Samudragupta's era. Prayag Prashasti was composed by Harishena, the Darbari poet of Samudragupta. He was the "**Kumaramatyā**" and "**sandhivigrihik**" during **Samudra Gupta's period**.
- The poet praised the king in glowing terms as a warrior, as a king who won victories in battle, who was learned and the best of the poets. He is also described as equal to the gods. The prashasti was composed in very long sentences.
- Harishena describes four different kind of rulers and tells us about Samudragupta's policies towards them.
 - **The rulers of Aryavarta**, the area shaded in the green on the map. Here there were nine rulers who were uprooted, and their kingdoms were made part of Samudragupta's empire.
 - **The rulers of Dakshinpatha**. Here there were twelve rulers. Some of whose capitals are marked with red dots on the map. They surrendered to Samudragupta after being defeated and he then allowed them to rule again,
 - **The inner circle of neighbouring states**, including Assam, coastal Bengal, Nepal, and a number of gana Sanghas in the northwest, marked in purple on the map. They brought tribute, followed his orders, and attended his court.
 - **The rulers of the outlying areas**. marked in blue on the map, perhaps the descendants of the Kushanas and Shakas, and the ruler of Sri Lanka, who submitted to him and offered daughters in marriage.
- This one mention Samudragupta's great grandfather, grandfather, father and mother. His mother, Kumara devi, belonged to the Lichchhavi gana, while his father, Chandragupta, was the first ruler of the Gupta dynasty to adopt the grand title of Maharaj-Adhiraja, a title that Samudragupta also used. His great grandfather and grandfather are mentioned simply as maha-rajās.
- His love for music is attested by his coins that represent him as playing on a vina.

Chandragupta II:

- **Chandragupta II is remembered for his patronage of art and literature**. He is credited with maintaining nine luminaries (navaratna) in his court. The great Sanskrit poet and playwright Kalidasa was the most notable of them all. It was in Chandragupta's time that the Chinese pilgrim **Fahien** (399-414) visited India and wrote an elaborate account of the life of its people.
- He led an expedition to western India, where he overcame the last of the Shakas. Vikram Samvat era beginning in the 58 BCE is traditionally associated with Gupta king, Chandragupta II, who had founded it as a mark of victory over the Shakas and assumed the title of Vikramaditya.



Harshavardhana and the Harshacharita:

- Harshavardhana, who ruled nearly 1400 years ago, was one such ruler. His court poet, Banabhatta, wrote his biography, the Harshacharita, in Sanskrit. This gives us the genealogy of Harsha, and ends with his becoming king.
- Xuan Zang also spent a lot of time at Harsha's court and left a detailed account of what he saw.
- Harsha was not the eldest son of his father, but became king of Thanesar after both his father and elder brother died.
- His brother-in-law was the ruler of Kanauj and he was killed by the ruler of Bengal. Harsha took over the kingdom of Kanauj, and then led an army against the ruler of Bengal.
- Although he was successful in the east, and conquered Magadha and probably Bengal also, he was not as successful elsewhere. He tried to cross the Narmada to march into the Deccan, but was stopped by a ruler belonging to the Chalukya dynasty, Pulakeshin II.
- Banabhatta, who adored his court wrote Harshacharita, Parvatiparinay and Kadambari. Harsha himself wrote 3 plays: Priyadarshika, Ratnavali and Nagananda.

The Pallavas, Chalukyas and Pulakeshin's prashasti:

- The Pallavas and Chalukyas were the most important ruling dynasties in south India during this period.
- The kingdom of the Pallavas spread from the region around their capital, Kanchipuram, to the Kaveri delta, while that of the Chalukyas was centred around the Raichur Doab, between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra.
- Aihole, the capital of the Chalukyas. was an important trading centre. It developed as a religious centre, with a number of temples.
- The Pallavas and Chalukyas frequently raided one another's lands, especially attacking the capital cities, which were prosperous towns.
- The best-known Chalukya ruler was Pulakeshin II. We know about him from a prashasti, composed by his court poet Ravikirti. This tells us about his ancestors, who are traced back through four generations from father to son. Pulakeshin evidently got the kingdom from his uncle.
- According to Ravikirti, he led expeditions along both the west and the east coasts. Besides, he checked the advance of Harsha.
- Pulakeshin also attacked the Pallava king, who took shelter behind the walls of Kanchipuram. But the Chalukya victory was short-lived. Ultimately, both the Pallavas and the Chalukyas gave way to new rulers belonging to the Rashtrakuta and Chola dynasties.

Administration under these kingdoms:

- As in the case of earlier kings, land revenue remained important for these rulers, and the village remained the basic unit of administration.
- There were some new developments as well. Kings adopted a number of steps to win the support of men who were powerful, either economically, or socially, or because of their political and military strength. For instance:
- Some important administrative posts were now hereditary. This means that sons succeeded fathers to these posts. For example, the poet Harishena was a maha-danda-nayaka, or chief judicial officer, like his father.
 - ↳ Sometimes, one person held many offices. For instance, besides being a maha-danda-nayaka, Harishena was a kumar-amatya, meaning an important minister, and a sandhi- vighraha, meaning a minister of war and peace.
 - ↳ Besides, important men probably had a say in local administration. These included the nagarashreshthi or chief banker or merchant of the city, the sarthavaha or leader of the merchant caravans, the prathama- kulika or the chief craftsman, and the head of the kayasthas or scribes.

Army:

- Like earlier rulers, some of these kings maintained a well-organised army, with elephants, chariots, cavalry and foot soldiers. Besides, there were military leaders who provided the king with troops whenever he needed them.
- They were not paid regular salaries. Instead, some of them received grants of land. They collected revenue from the land and used this to maintain soldiers and horses, and provide equipment for warfare. These men were known as samantas. Whenever the ruler was weak, samantas tried to become independent.

Assemblies in the southern kingdoms:

- The inscriptions of the Pallavas mention a number of local assemblies. These included the sabha, which was an assembly of brahmin land owners. This assembly functioned through subcommittees, which looked after irrigation, agricultural operations, making roads, local temples, etc.
- The ur was a village assembly found in areas where the land owners were not brahmins.
- And the nagaram was an organisation of merchants. It is likely that these assemblies were controlled by rich and powerful landowners and merchants. Many of these local assemblies continued to function for centuries.

Ordinary people in the kingdoms:

- Kalidasa is known for his plays depicting life in the king's court. An interesting feature about these plays is that the king and most brahmins are shown as speaking Sanskrit, while women and men other than the king and brahmins use Prakrit.
- His most famous play, Abhijnana Shakuntalam, is the story of the love between a king named Dushyanta and a young woman named Shakuntala.
- The Chinese pilgrim Fa Xian noticed the plight of those who were treated as untouchables by the high and mighty. They were expected to live on the outskirts of the city.
 - ↳ He writes: "If such a man enters a town or a market place, he strikes a piece of wood, in order to keep himself separate; people, hearing this sound, know what it means and avoid touching him or brushing against him."
- Banabhatta provides us with a vivid picture of the king's army on the move.

Interesting Points:

- Arab merchants and sailors played an important role in the sea trade between India and Europe. Others who lived in Arabia were the Bedouins, pastoral tribes depending mainly on camels, hardy animals that could survive in the desert.
- Islam: Around 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad introduced a new religion, Islam, in Arabia. Like Christianity, Islam was a religion that laid stress on the equality and unity of all before Allah, the one supreme god.
↳ Within a hundred years, Islam spread to north Africa, Spain, Iran and India. Arab sailors, who were already familiar with the coastal settlements of the subcontinent, now brought the new religion with them. Arab soldiers conquered Sind (in present-day Pakistan) about 1300 years ago.

14. Buildings, Paintings and Books

Iron pillar at Mehrauli, Delhi is a remarkable example of the skill of Indian crafts persons. It is made of iron, 7.2. m high and weighs over 3 tonnes. It was made about 1500 years ago by Chandragupta-II, belonged from Gupta dynasty.

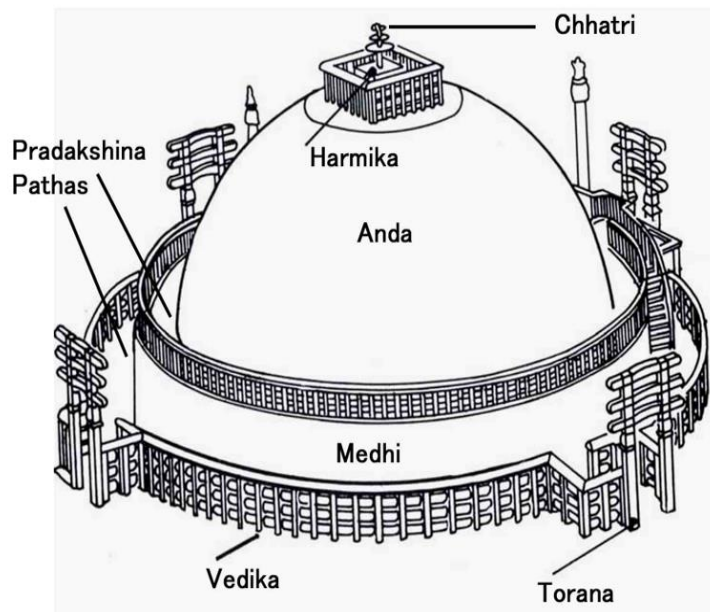
Metallurgy:

- Ancient Indian metallurgists made major contributions to the metallurgical history of the world. Archaeological excavations have shown that the Harappans were master craftsmen and had knowledge of copper metallurgy.
- They even manufactured bronze by mixing copper and tin. While the Harappans belonged to the Bronze Age. their successors belonged to the Iron Age.
- India produced highly advanced types of iron-forged iron, wrought iron and cast iron.

Stupas:

- The word stupa means a mound. There are several kinds of stupas, round and tall, big and small, which have certain common features. Generally, there is a small box placed at the centre or heart of the stupa.
- This may contain bodily remains such as teeth, bone or ashes of the Buddha or his followers, or things they used, as well as precious stones, and coins.
- This box, known as a relic casket, covered with earth. Later, a layer of mud brick or baked brick was added on top. And then, the dome like structure was sometimes covered with carved stone slabs.
- Often, a path, known as the pradakshina patha, was laid around the stupa. This was surrounded with railings. Entrance to the path was through gateways.
- Devotees walked around the stupa, In a clockwise direction, as a mark of devotion. Both railings and gateways were often decorated with sculpture.
- Example-Amaravati and Sanchi.

- Figure of stupa given below:



Hindu temples

- Some of the earliest Hindu temples were also built at this time. Deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, and Durga were worshipped in these shrines.
- The most important part of the temple was the room known as the garbhagriha, where the image of the chief deity was placed. It was here that priests performed religious rituals, and devotees offered worship to the deity.
- Often, as at Bhitargaon, a tower, known as the shikhara, was built on top of the garbhagriha, to mark this out as a sacred place. Building shikharas required careful planning. Most temples also had a space known as the mandapa. It was a hall where people could assemble.
- An early temple at Bhitargaon, Uttar Pradesh was built about 1500 years ago, and was made of baked brick and stone
- Monolithic temples at Mahabalipuram- Each of these was carved out of a huge, single piece of stone (that is why they are known as monoliths). While brick structures are built up by adding layers of bricks from the bottom upwards, in this case the stone cutters had to work from top downwards.
- The Durga temple at Aihole, was built about 1400 years ago.

Ajanta caves:

- The finest examples of Buddhist art during Gupta period are the paintings of Ajanta caves. Depicting the life of Buddha and the Jataka stories, these paintings with lustrous colors have not faded even after fourteen centuries.
- The Ajanta Caves are approximately 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments which date from the 2nd century BCE to about 480 CE in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra state of India.

Silappadikaram:

- A famous Tamil epic, the Silappadikaram, was composed by a poet named Ilango, around 1800 years ago. It is the story of a merchant named Kovalan, who lived in Puhar and fell in love with a courtesan named Madhavi, neglecting his wife Kannagi.

- Later, he and Kannagi left Puhar and went to Madurai, where he was wrongly accused of theft by the court jeweller of the Pandya king.
- The king sentenced Kovalan to death.
- Kannagi, who still loved him, was full of grief and anger at this injustice, and destroyed the entire city of Madurai.

Manimekalai:

- Another Tamil epic, the Manimekalai was composed by Sattanar around 1400 years ago. This describes the story of the daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi.

Meghaduta:

- The Meghaduta is the Kalidasa's best-known poem, in which a monsoon cloud is imagined to be a messenger between lovers who are separated from one another.

Purana:

- Purana literally mean old. The Puranas contain stories about gods and goddesses, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Durga or Parvati. They also contain details on how they were to be worshipped. Besides, there are accounts about the creation of the world, and about kings.
- The Puranas were written in simple Sanskrit verse, and were meant to be heard by everybody, including women and shudras, who were not allowed to study the Vedas. They were probably recited in temples by priests, and people came to listen to them.

Mahabharata:

- The Mahabharata is about a war fought between the Kauravas and Pandavas, who were cousins. This was a war to gain control of the throne of the Kurus, and their capital, Hastinapura. The story itself was an old one, but was written down in the form in which we know it today, about 1500 years ago.
- Both the Puranas and the Mahabharata are supposed to have been compiled by Vyasa. The Bhagavad Gita, was also included in the Mahabharata.

Ramayana:

- The Ramayana is about Rama, a prince of Kosala, who was sent into exile. His wife Sita was abducted by the king of Lanka, named Ravana, and Rama had to fight a battle to get her back.
- He won and returned to Ayodhya, the capital of Kosala, after his victory. Like the Mahabharata, this was an old story that was now written down. Valmiki is recognised as the author of the Sanskrit Ramayana.

Writing books on Science:

- This was also the time when Aryabhata, a mathematician and astronomer, wrote a book in Sanskrit known as the Aryabhatiyam.
- He stated that day and night were caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis, even though it seems as if the sun is rising and setting everyday. He developed a scientific explanation for eclipses as well. He also found a way of calculating the circumference of a circle, which is nearly as accurate as the formula we use today.
- Varahamihira, Brahmagupta Bhaskaracharya were and some other mathematicians and astronomers who made several discoveries.

Ayurveda:

- Ayurveda is a well-known system of health science that was developed in ancient India.
- The two famous practitioners of Ayurveda in ancient India were Charaka (1st-2nd centuries C.E.) and Sushruta (c. 4th century C.E.) Charak Samhita, written by Charak is a remarkable book on medicine.
- In his treatise, Susruta Samhita, Sushruta speaks about elaborate surgical procedures.

Interesting Points:

- Ordinary people also told stories, composed poems and songs, sang, danced, and performed plays. Some of these are preserved in collections of stories such as the Jatakas and the Panchatantra, which were written down around this time.
 - ↳ Stories from the Jatakas were often shown on the railings of stupas and in paintings in places such as Ajanta.
 - ↳ The story of the monkey king is shown on a piece of sculpture found from a stupa at Bharhut in central India.
- **Symbol for zero:** While numerals had been used earlier, mathematicians in India now invented a special symbol for zero.
 - ↳ This system of counting was adapted by the Arabs and then spread to Europe. It continues to be in use throughout the world.
 - ↳ The Romans used a system of counting without using zero.
- Paper was invented in China about 1900 years ago, by a man named Cai Lun. He beat plant fibres, cloth, rope and the bark of trees, soaked these in water, and then pressed, drained and dried the pulp to create paper. Even today, hand-made paper is made through a similar process. The technique of making paper was a closely guarded secret for centuries. It reached Korea about 1400 years ago, and spread to Japan soon after. It was known in Baghdad about 1800 years ago. From Baghdad it spread to Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia including the subcontinent.

Important Dates from Ancient History:

- The beginning of farming and herding at Mehrgarh dates to c. 6000 BC/ BCE
- The Harappan cities flourished between c. 2700 and 1900 BCE
- The Rigveda was composed between c. 1500 and 1000 BCE
- Mahajanapadas and cities developed in the Ganga valley and new ideas associated with the Upanishads, Jainism and Buddhism emerged c. 500 BCE
- Alexander invaded the northwest c. 327-325 BCE
- Chandragupta Maurya became king c. 321 BCE
- Ashoka ruled between c. 272/268 to 231 BCE
- The composition of the Sangam texts, c. 300 BCE-300 CE
- The reign of Kanishka, c. 78-100 CE
- The establishment of the Gupta empire, c. 320 CE
- The compilation of the Jaina texts at the council at Valabhi, c. 512/521 CE
- The rule of Harshavardhana, 606-647 CE
- Xuan Zang comes to India, 630-643 CE.
- The rule of Pulakeshin II, 609-642 CE

15. Thinkers, Beliefs and Buildings Cultural Developments (600BCE – 600CE)

A Glimpse of Sanchi

- Nineteenth-century Europeans were very interested in the stupa at Sanchi. Both French and the Englishmen wanted to take away the eastern gateway of Sanchi stupa.
- The rulers of Bhopal, ShahJehan Begum and her successor Sultan Jehan Begum, provided money for the preservation of the ancient site.
- Shahjehan Begum funded a guesthouse for John Williams and also the publication of the volumes written by him.
- One of the most important Buddhist centres, the discovery of Sanchi has vastly transformed the understanding of early Buddhism.

The Background: Sacrifices and Debates

The Sacrificial Tradition

- The Rigveda consists of hymns in praise of a variety of deities, especially Agni, Indra and Soma.
- Many of these hymns were chanted when sacrifices were performed, where people prayed for cattle, sons, good health, long life, etc.
- At first, sacrifices were performed collectively. Later (1000 BCE-500 BCE onwards) some were performed by the heads of households for the wellbeing of the domestic unit.
- More elaborate sacrifices, such as the Rajasuya and Ashvamedha, were performed by chiefs and kings who depended on Brahmana priests to conduct the ritual.

New Questions

- Many ideas found in the Upanishads show that people were curious about the meaning of life, the possibility of life after death and rebirth.
- People also began speculating on the significance of the sacrificial tradition.

Debates and discussions

- Buddhist teachers travelled from place to place, trying to convince one another as well as laypersons, about the validity of their philosophy.
- Debates took place in the kutagarashala (a hut with a pointed roof-or in groves where travelling mendicants halted) if a philosopher succeeded in convincing one of his rivals, the followers of the latter also became his disciples.
- Many teachers, including Mahavira and the Buddha, questioned the authority of the Vedas.
- They also emphasized on individual agency, where an individual could strive to attain liberation from tribulations of worldly existence.

Beyond Worldly Pleasures: The Message of Mahavira

- The basic philosophy of the Jainas was already in existence in north India before the birth of Vardhamana (Mahavira), in the sixth century BCE.
- According to Jaina tradition, Mahavira was preceded by 23 other teachers or tirthankaras (those who guide men and women across the river of existence).
- The most important idea in Jainism is that the entire world is animated: even stones, rocks and water have life.
 - Non-injury to living beings, especially to humans, animals, plants and Insects, is central to Jaina philosophy.

- Principle of ahimsa emphasised within Jainism is an important theme.
 - The cycle of birth and rebirth is shaped through karma.
 - Asceticism and penance are required to free oneself from the cycle of karma.
 - Monastic existence is a necessary condition of salvation.
- **Jaina monks and nuns took five vows:** To abstain from killing. Stealing. Lying. to observe celibacy, and to abstain from possessing property.

The Spread of Jainism

- Like the Buddhists, Jaina scholars produced a wealth of literature in a variety of languages like Prakrit, Sanskrit and Tamil.
- For centuries, manuscripts of these texts were carefully preserved in libraries attached to temples.
- Some of the earliest stone sculptures associated with religious traditions were produced by devotees of the Jaina tirthankaras.

The Buddha and the Quest for Enlightenment

- According to traditions, Siddhartha, as the Buddha was named at birth, was the son of a chief of the Sakya clan.
- He was deeply anguished after seeing the miseries in the world.
- Siddhartha explored several paths including bodily mortification which led him to a situation of near death.
- Then he meditated for several days and finally attained enlightenment.
- After this he came to be known as the Buddha or the Enlightened One.
- For the rest of his life, he taught dhamma or the path of righteous living.

The Teachings of The Buddha

- The Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from stories, found in the Sutta Pitaka.
- Some stories describe his miraculous powers, others suggest that the Buddha tried to convince people through reason and persuasion.
- According to Buddhist philosophy.
 - World is transient (anicca) and constantly changing.
 - It is also soul less (anatta) as there is nothing permanent or eternal in it.
 - Sorrow (dukkha) is intrinsic to human existence.
- It is by following the path of moderation between severe penance and self-indulgence that human beings can rise above worldly troubles.
- Buddha regarded the social world as the creation of humans rather than of divine origin.
- He advised kings and gahapatis to be humane and ethical.
- The Buddha emphasised Individual agency as the means to escape from the cycle of rebirth and attain self-realisation and nibbana (the extinguishing of the ego and desire) and thus end the cycle of suffering for those who renounced the world.
- According to Buddhist tradition, his last words to his followers were: "**Be lamps unto yourselves as all of you must work out your own liberation.**"

Followers of the Buddha:

- Buddha founded a sangha, an organization of monks who became teachers of dhamma.
- These monks lived simply, possessing only the essential requisites for survival, they lived on alms, they were known as bhikkhus.
- Initially, only men were allowed into the sangha, but later women also came to be admitted.
 - Ananda, one of the Buddha's dearest disciples, persuaded him to allow women into the sangha. foster mother.
 - Buddha's Mahapajapati Gotami was the first woman to be ordained as a bhikkhuni.
 - Many women became teachers of dhamma and went on to become theris (respected women who had attained liberation).
- Buddha's followers came from many social groups.
 - They included kings, wealthy men and gahapatis.
 - **Humbler folk:** workers, slaves and craftspeople.
 - Within the sangha, all were equal, having shed their earlier social identities on becoming bhikkhus and bhikkhunis.
- The Internal functioning of the sangha was through consensus, if that failed. decisions were taken by a vote on the subject.
- The emphasis placed on metta (fellow feeling) and karuna (compassion), drew men and women to Buddhist teachings.

About Tipitakas:

- The Buddha (and other teachers) taught orally through discussion and debate. Men and women (perhaps children as well) attended these discourses and discussed what they heard. None of the Buddha's speeches were written down during his lifetime.
- After his death (c. fifth-fourth century BCE), his teachings were compiled by his disciples at a council of "elders" or senior monks at Vesall (Pali for Vaishali in present-day Bihar).
- These compilations were known as Tipitaka-literally, three baskets to hold different types of texts. They were first transmitted orally and then written and classified according to wall length as well as subject matter.
- The Vinaya Pitaka included rules and regulations for those who joined the sangha or monastic order; the Buddha's teachings were included in the Sutta Pitaka; and the Abhidhamma Pitaka dealt with philosophical matters.
- Each pitaka comprised a number of individual texts. Later, commentaries were written on Buddhist scholars. these texts by
- As Buddhism travelled to new regions such as Sri Lanka, other texts such as the Dipavamsa (literally, the chronicle of the Island) and Mahavamsa (the great chronicle) were written, containing regional histories of Buddhism. Many of these works contained biographies of the Buddha.

Stupas

- Buddhist literature mentions several chaityas (place of worship). It also describes places associated with the Buddha's life:
 - where he was born (Lumbini),
 - where he attained enlightenment (Bodh Gaya),
 - where he gave his first sermon (Sarnath) and

- where he attained nibbana (Kusinagara).

Why were stupas built

- There were some places that were regarded as sacred. This was because relics of the Buddha such as his bodily remains or objects used by him were buried there. These were mounds known as stupas.
- The tradition of erecting stupas may have been pre-Buddhist, but they came to be associated with Buddhism.
- Since they contained relics regarded as sacred, the entire stupa came to be venerated as an emblem of both the Buddha and Buddhism.
- According to Buddhist text known as the Ashokavadana, Asoka distributed portions of the Buddha's relics to every important town and ordered the construction of stupas over them.

How were stupas built

- **Inscriptions** found on the railings and pillars of stupas record donations made for building and decorating them.
- Donations were made by kings such as the Satavahanas, guilds, such as that of the ivory workers who financed part of one of the gateways at Sanchi.
- Donations were made by women and men who mention their names and occupation.
- Bhikkhus and bhikkhunis also contributed towards building these monuments.

The Structure of the Stupa

- The stupa originated as a simple semi-circular mound of Earth, later called anda.
- It evolved into a more complex structure, balancing round and square shapes. Above the anda was the harmika, a balcony like structure that represented the abode of the gods.
- Arising from the harmika was a mast called the yashti, often surmounted by a chhatra or umbrella. Around the mound was a railing, separating the sacred space from the secular world.
- The early stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut were plain except for the stone railings, which resembled a wooden fence.
- Later, the mound of the stupas came to be elaborately carved with niches and sculptures as at Amaravati, and Shahji-ki-Dheri in Peshawar (Pakistan).



Fig. 4.1: Elevation of The Great Stupa at Sanchi

"Discovering" Stupas: The Fate of Amaravati and Sanchi

- In 1854, Walter Elliot, the commissioner of Guntur, visited Amaravati and collected several sculpture panels and took them away to Madras (called the Elliot marbles).
- He came to the conclusion that the structure at Amaravati was one of the largest and most magnificent Buddhist stupas ever built.

- However, slabs of the structure were either taken to different areas for research or found in the gardens of British administrators.
- Sanchi stupa survived as scholars understood its importance and value, which was not the case with Amravati stupa, as it was discovered prior to this knowledge.

Sculpture

Stories in Stone

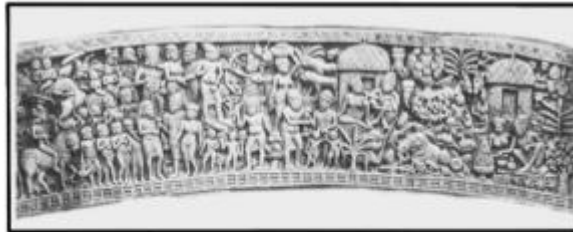


Fig. 4.2: A part of the Northern Gateway of Sanchi Stupa

- The sculpture in the Figure ↑ depicts a rural scene with huts and trees.
- This is a scene from the Vessantara Jataka.
- It is a story about a generous prince who gave away everything to a Brahmana and went to live in the forest with his wife and children.
- Historians often try to understand the meaning of sculpture by comparing it with textual evidence.

Symbols of Worship

- Buddha attained enlightenment while meditating under a tree. Early sculptors did not show the Buddha in human form, instead, they showed his presence through symbols.
 - The empty seat was meant to indicate the meditation of the Buddha.
 - The stupa was meant to represent the 'Mahaparinibbana'.
 - Symbol of the wheel was used frequently. This stood for the first sermon of the Buddha, delivered at Sarnath.
- The tree does not stand simply for a tree but symbolises an event in the life of the Buddha.

Popular Traditions:

- Sculpture of "**Women at the Gate**"
 - It is a sculpture of a beautiful woman swinging from the edge of the gateway, holding onto a tree.
 - Scholars believe it could be a representation of a shalabhanjika.
 - This was a woman whose touch caused trees to flower and bear fruit, regarded as an auspicious symbol.
 - It suggests that people who turned to Buddhism enriched it with their own pre-Buddhist and even non-Buddhist beliefs and practices.



Fig. 4.3: The Woman at the gate

- Some of the finest depictions of animals are found. These animals include elephants, horses, monkeys and cattle.
 - Animals were often used as symbols of human attributes, for example, Elephants were depicted to signify strength and wisdom.
- Another motif is of a woman surrounded by lotuses and elephants, which seem to be sprinkling water on her as if performing an abhisheka or consecration.
 - Some historians identify the figure as Maya, the mother of the Buddha, others identify her with a popular goddess, Gajalakshmi (the goddess of good fortune-who is associated with elephants).



Fig. 4.4: Gajalakshmi

- The serpent, motif is found on several pillars. This motif seems to be derived from popular traditions, which were not always recorded in texts.
- Interestingly, one of the earliest modern art historians, James Fergusson, considered Sanchi to be a centre of tree and serpent worship. He was not familiar with Buddhist literature - most of which had not yet been translated and arrived at this conclusion by studying only the images on their own.

New Religious Traditions

The Development Buddhism: of Mahayana

- By the first century CE, there is evidence of changes in Buddhist ideas and practices.
- Early Buddhist teachings had given great importance to self-effort in achieving nibbana. Besides, the Buddha was regarded as a human being who attained enlightenment and nibbana through his own efforts. However, gradually the idea of a saviour emerged. It was believed that he was the one who could ensure salvation.
- Simultaneously, the concept of the Bodhisatta also developed.
- They were perceived as deeply compassionate beings who accumulated merit through their efforts but used this not to attain nibbana, but to help others.
- The worship of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattas became an important part of this tradition.

- This new way of thinking was called Mahayana, Great Vehicle and the older tradition as Hinayana or the lesser vehicle.
- Supporters of Mahayana regarded other Buddhists as followers of Hinayana. However, followers of the older tradition described themselves as theravadins, that is, those who followed the path of old, respected teachers, the there as.

The Growth of Puranic Hinduism

- The rise of Valshnavism and Shalvism is noticed in this period.
- In Vaishnavism (Vishnu was worshipped as the principal deity) and Shaivism (Shiva was regarded as the chief god), there was growing emphasis on the worship of a chosen deity. In such worship, the bond between the devotee and the god was visualised as one of love and devotion, or bhakti.
- In Vaishnavism, cults developed around the various avatars or incarnations of the deity. Ten avatars were recognised within the tradition. These were forms that the deity was believed to have assumed in order to save the world whenever it was threatened by disorder and destruction because of the dominance of evil forces.
- Shiva was symbolised by the linga, although he was occasionally represented in human form too.

Building Temples

- The early temple was a small square room, called the garbhagriha, with a single doorway for the worshipper to enter and offer worship to the image.
- Gradually, a tall structure, known as the shikhara, was built over the central shrine. Temple walls were often decorated with sculpture.
- One of the unique features of early temples was that some temples were hollowed out of huge rocks, as artificial caves, for example, the Kailashnath Temple.

Timeline 1: Major Religious Developments

- **1500-1000 BCE:** Early Vedic traditions
- **1000-500 BCE:** Later Vedic traditions
- **Sixth century:** BCE Early Upanishads; Jainism, Buddhism
- **Third century BCE:** First stupas.
- **Second century BCE onwards:** Development of Mahayana Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism and goddess cults.

Third century CE: Earliest temples

Timeline 2: Discovery and Preservation of Early Monuments and Sculpture

Nineteenth century

- **1814:** Founding of the Indian Museum, Calcutta.
- **1834:** Publication of Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus, by Ram Raja; Cunningham explores the stupa at Sarnath.
- **1835-1842:** James Fergusson surveys major archaeological sites.
- **1851:** Establishment of the Government Museum, Madras.
- **1854:** Alexander Cunningham publishes Bhilsa Topes, one of the earliest works on Sanchi.
- **1878:** Rajendra Lala Mitra publishes Buddha Gaya: The Heritage of Sakya Muni.

- **1880:** H.H. Cole appointed Curator of Ancient Monuments.
- **1888:** Passing of the Treasure Trove Act, giving the government the right to acquire all objects of archaeological interest.

Twentieth century

1914: John Marshall and Alfred Foucher publish The Monuments of Sanchi.

1923: John Marshall publishes the Conservation Manual.

1955: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru lays the foundation stone of the National Museum, New Delhi.

1989: Sanchi declared a World Heritage Site.

Interesting Points

- **The Therigatha**, Buddhist text, part of the Sutta Pitaka, is a collection of verses composed by bhikkhunis. It provides an insight into women's social and spiritual experiences.
- **Makkhali Gosala:** Belonged to the tradition of the Ajivikas. They have often been described as fatalists: those who believe that everything is predetermined.
- **Ajita Kesakambalin:** Belonged to the tradition of the Lokayatas, usually described as materialists.
- **Uttaradhyayana Sutta:** A Prakrit Jain text in which the story of queen named Kamalavati tried to persuade her husband to renounce the world was discussed.
- Hagiography is a biography of a saint or religious leader. Hagiographies often praise the saint's achievements, and may not always be literally accurate. They are important because they tell us about the beliefs of the followers of that particular tradition.
- **Samanas:** Those who have renounced the world.
- Mahaparinibbana Sutta, is the part of the Sutta Pitaka.
- About 200 years after the time of the Buddha, Asoka erected a pillar at Lumbini to mark the fact that he had visited the place.
- A British official named Colin Mackenzie visited the Amravati stupa site. Although he found several pieces of sculpture and made detailed drawings of them, these reports were never published.
- The **paintings at Ajanta** depict stories from the Jatakas. These include depictions of courtly life, processions, men and women at work, and festivals. The artists used the technique of shading to give a three-dimensional quality. Some of the paintings are extremely naturalistic.
- Generally, **Puranas were written in simple Sanskrit verse**, and were meant to be read aloud to everybody, including women and Shudras, who did not have access to Vedic learning.
- **Vasudeva-Krishna** was an important deity in the Mathura region. Over centuries, his worship spread to other parts of the country as well.
- **Barabar (Bihar) Caves:** These were constructed in the third century BCE on the orders of Asoka for renouncers who belonged to the Ajivika sect.
- **Gandhara Art:** In Taxila and Peshawar, Indo-Greek rulers had established kingdoms in the second century BCE. As these images were closest to the Greek statues these scholars were familiar with, they were considered to be the best examples of early Indian art.
- Depicts of descent of the river Ganga from heaven or Arjuna doing penance are found at Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu). Resembling the Manusmriti were added. With these additions, a text which initially perhaps had less than 10,000 verses grew to comprise about 100,000 verses. This enormous composition is traditionally attributed to a sage named Vyasa.

The Search for Convergence

- In 1951-52, the archaeologist B.B. Lal excavated at a village named Hastinapura in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh).
- Lal observed that walls of mud and mud- bricks were duly encountered, discovery of mud-plaster with prominent reed- marks suggested that some of the houses had reed walls plastered over with mud.
- Another instance in the Mahabharata is Draupadi's marriage with the Pandavas, an instance of polyandry that is central to the narrative.
- Historians suggest that the fact that the author(s) describe a polyandrous union indicates that polyandry may have been prevalent amongst ruling elites.

A Dynamic Text

- Over the centuries, versions of the epic were written in a variety of languages through an ongoing process of dialogue between peoples, communities, and those who wrote the texts.
- Several regional stories that circulated amongst certain people found their way into the epic.
- It also provided themes for a wide range of performing arts plays, dance and other kinds of narrations.

Timeline 1: Major Textual Traditions:

- **500 BCE:** Ashtadhyayi of Panini, a work on Sanskrit grammar.
- **500-200 BCE:** Major Dharmasutras (in Sanskrit).
- **500-100 BCE:** Early Buddhist texts including the Tripitaka (in Pali).
- **500 BCE-400 CE:** Ramayana and Mahabharata (in Sanskrit).
- **200 BCE-200 CE:** Manusmriti (in Sanskrit); composition Tamil Sangam literature.
- **100 CE:** Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas. works on medicine (in Sanskrit).
- **200 CE onwards:** Compilation of the Puranas (In Sanskrit).
- **300 CE:** Natyashastra of Bharata, a work on dramaturgy (in Sanskrit).
- **300-600 CE:** Other Dharmashastras (in Sanskrit).
- **400-500 CE:** Sanskrit plays including the works of Kalidasa; works on astronomy and mathematics by Aryabhata and Varahamihira (in Sanskrit); compilation of Jaina works (in Prakrit).

Timeline 2: Major Landmarks in the Study of the Mahabharata:

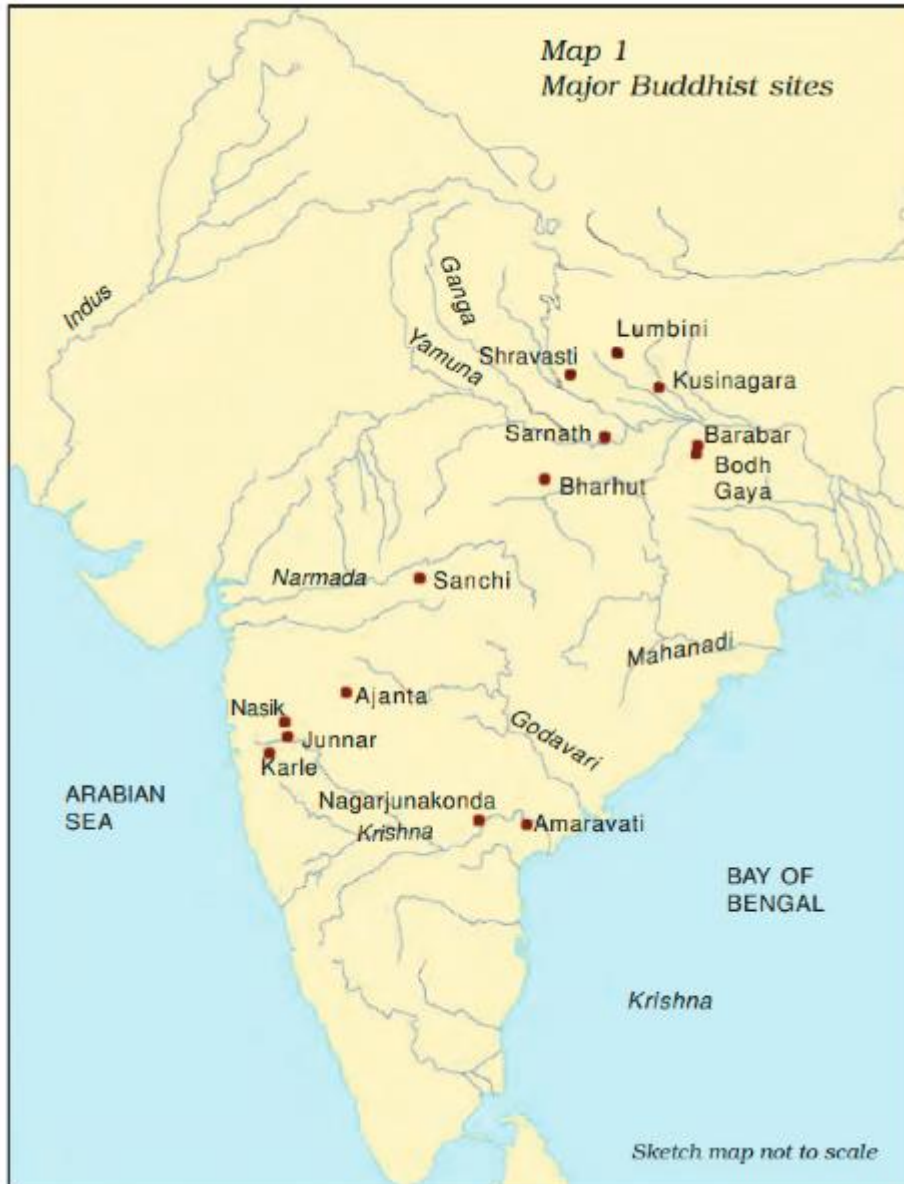
Twentieth century

- 1919-66: Preparation and publication of the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata.
- 1973: J.A.B. van Buitenen begins English translation of the Critical Edition; remains incomplete after his death in 1978.

Interesting Points:

- **Puranaruru:** One of the anthologies of poems of the Tamil Sangam literature (c. first century CE).
- **Majjhima Nikaya:** A Buddhist text in Pali deals with a dialogue between a king named Avantiputta and a disciple of the Buddha named Kachchana. It reveals Buddhist attitudes towards varna.
- For men, the Manusmriti declares, there are seven means of acquiring wealth: inheritance, finding, purchase, conquest, investment, work, and acceptance of gifts from good people. For women, there are six means of acquiring wealth: what was given in front of the fire (marriage) or the bridal procession, or as a token of affection, and what she got from her brother, mother or father. She could also acquire wealth through any subsequent gift and whatever her "affectionate" husband might give her.
- **Matanga Jataka:** A Pali text, where the Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a previous birth) is identified as a chandala.
- **Vanik:** The term used for merchants in Sanskrit texts and inscriptions.

- **Mrichchhakatika:** Written by Shudraka (c. fourth century CE) deals with the story of Charudatta.
- **Purusha sukta:** A verse from a hymn in the Rigveda describes the sacrifice of Purusha, the primeval man. All the elements of the universe, including the four social categories, were supposed to have emanated from his body: The Brahmana was his mouth, of his arms was made the Kshatriya. His thighs became the Vaishya, of his feet the Shudra was born.
- Sanskrit texts use the term kula to designate families and jnati for the larger network of kinfolk. The term vamsha is used for lineage.
- The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, contains a list of successive generations of teachers and students, many of whom were designated by metronymics.

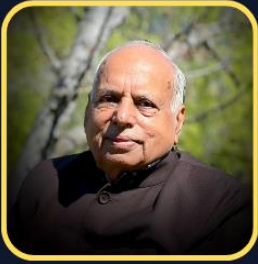




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