

ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

MA [POLITICAL SCIENCE]

First Semester

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SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Ancient Indian Political Thought

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
Unit-I A brief survey of the geo-political background; Impact of Vedic Values; Salient features of the ancient Indian Political thought.	Unit 1: Ancient Indian Political Thought: An Introduction (Pages: 3-55)
Unit-II Political Philosophy; Ramayan, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Vedanta.	Unit 2: Political Philosophy (Pages: 57-72)
Unit-III Codification of Laws—Manu-Smriti, Narada-Smriti, Vishnu-Smriti, Sukra-niti.	Unit 3: Codification of Laws (Pages: 73-92)
Unit-IV Theories about the origin of the king/kingship; Kautilya—Theory of State, Rajmandala; Manu—Social Laws, Raj dharma, Varnashrama, Statecraft; Benevolent Monarchism—Mauryas and Guptas; Thoughts on Local administration in India.	Unit 4: Theories about the Origin of Kingship (Pages: 93-157)

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INTRODUCTION

Political philosophy refers to the study of topics like liberty, justice, property, rights, law, and the enforcement of a legal code by authority. It discusses what makes a government legitimate, what rights and freedoms it should protect and why, what form it should take and why, what the law is, and what duties citizens owe to a legitimate government, if any, and when it may be legitimately overthrown—if ever.

It is amazing how a nation like India was formed by several small states. It is even more amazing to think that all these small states were governed according to almost similar laws or codes. The rules and laws followed were the ones that were stated in the *Smritis*, ancient texts that offered guidance to rulers on administration as well as the art of managing economic and political affairs. What is most amazing is that the teachings of these ancient texts are still relevant in this age.

Indian political thought has been influenced by many thinkers. For a proper understanding of the Indian political scene in modern times, it is essential to obtain a fair idea of the ideas and philosophies of prominent political thinkers of the past that influence modern political thought.

This book, *Ancient Indian Political Thought*, provides the students an insight into the manner in which political ideas were adopted from time to time; the manner in which these ideas affected the political action of people. It puts forward the views of Kautilya, Manu, Shukracharya and Narada. The book also states the political philosophies as enshrined in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita and the *Vedanta*. Moreover, it also deals with the benevolent monarchism of the Mauryas and the Guptas.

This book, *Ancient Indian Political Thought*, is written in a self-instructional format and is divided into four units. Each unit begins with an *Introduction* to the topic followed by an outline of the *Unit Objectives*. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with *Check Your Progress* questions to test the reader's understanding of the topic. A list of *Questions and Exercises* is also provided at the end of each unit, and includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The *Summary* and *Key Terms* section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

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UNIT 1 ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: AN INTRODUCTION

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Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

The Aryans, who settled down in *janas* or tribes, led a semi-nomadic life and fought among themselves and with other non-Aryan tribes for cows, sheep and

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green pastures. By the later Vedic Age, they had moved further into the Ganga Valley, a process facilitated by use of iron implements, which helped them to clear the thick forests with greater ease. In time, some of these *janas* grew in size and power and came to be known as janapadas (literally meaning foothold of tribe). Gradually, many of these janapadas further evolved into larger political entities by capturing more and more land. These came to be known as mahajanapadas (from Sanskrit *maha* = great). By the 600 BC, there were sixteen mahajanapadas. The kings or groups of Kshatriyas, the chiefs of which called themselves rajas ruled over the janapadas or the mahajanapadas.

The ancient Indian political ideas were much influenced by the general conditions prevailing in the country. Multiplicity of states and existence of despotic monarchy and republican systems in different states, offered a wide and rich field for investigation into different institutions, laws and customs prevalent in various parts of the country. All these factors sowed the seeds of political speculation in the ancient Indian political thoughts and institutions, which had certain distinct features. In this unit, you will be acquainted with the geo-political background of ancient Indian political thought and the salient features of ancient Indian political thought.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the geo-political background of ancient Indian political thought
- Explain the origin, features and settlement patterns of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Describe the origin, political system and political relations of the Aryan Civilization
- Discuss the later vedic polity
- Assess the rise of mahajanapadas and the Magadha state
- Analyze the salient features of ancient Indian political thought

1.2 SURVEY OF THE GEO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Up till 1920, nothing was known about the Indus Valley Civilization. Construction workers at a railway track near Harappa were using bricks from a nearby ruin, when they realized that the bricks probably belonged to a very old civilization. The railway authorities informed the Archaeological Survey of India. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhaldas Banerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the Europeans had flourished in India. This generated great enthusiasm, not only in India but in other countries as well. Further excavations at Lothal, Ropar and Kalibangan revealed that the Indus Valley

Civilization flourished beyond the river Indus. The area that it covered at that time was approximately 1.3 million square kilometres.

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

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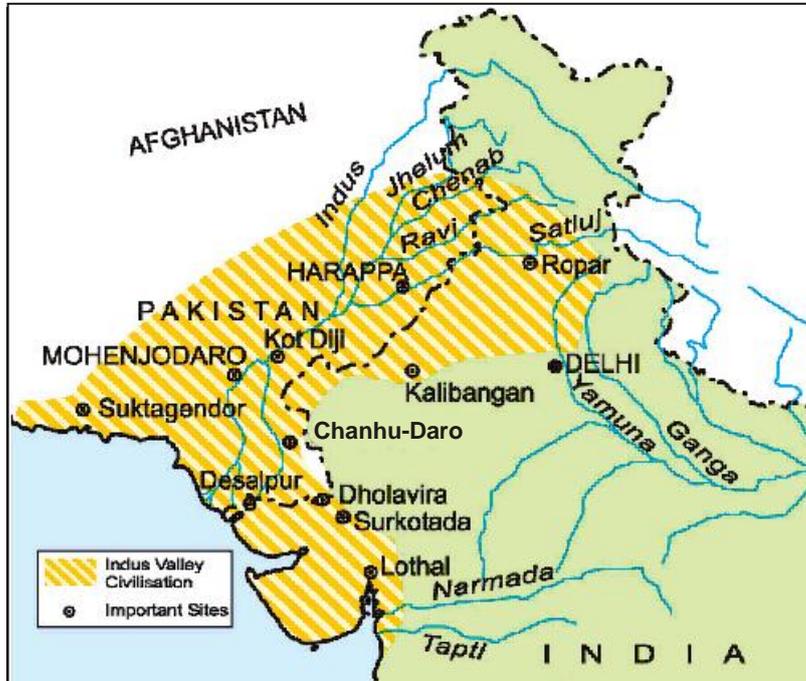


Fig. 1.1 Important Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

The civilization has been credited for excellent town planning, architecture, art and craft. Various idols, seals, pottery, and jewelry pieces found from excavation sites supports this claim. This highly developed civilization, however, collapsed mysteriously.

Following this period emerged the Vedic Aryans. The period of the Aryans have been categorized into two sections—the early Vedic and later Vedic periods. The settlement of the Aryans caused a lot of changes in society and the various castes also came into being. The Aryans brought in immense technological and economic advancement with them which immensely affected life around them and in the ages that were about to come. Following the Vedic age, came the later Vedic Age that lasted between 1000 BC and 600 BC. It was during this age that the Aryans moved eastward from the land of the seven rivers into the Gangetic plain. Some even crossed the Vindhya mountains and moved to south India. During this period, the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were also composed. It is from these literary sources as well as the four Vedas and the archaeological findings at various sites, that historians have been able to tell us about the political, social, economic and religious life of the people. This period marked a transition for the Aryans from being nomadic herds to settlers. Simultaneously, the structure of polity changed, from tribal to state.

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1.2.1 Indus Valley Civilization

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

Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization

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

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

- **Baluchistan:** This region was important from the perspective of trade and commerce. The main places that were extremely important include Sutkagan Dor (at the origin of river Dashak), Sokhta Koh (at the beginning of Shadi Kaur) and Balakot (in the east of Sonmiani at the origin of river Vindar).
- **North-western Border:** Significant artefacts have been discovered from this area in the Gomal valley.
- **Sindhu:** Several remains have been found in the Sindhu region but many sites have been destroyed on the banks of this river. Several remains have been found at the sites of Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, Judeirjo-daro, Amri.
- **Western Punjab:** This area has the most important Harappan site which is located on river Ravi.
- **Eastern Punjab:** An important site of this area is Ropar. In recent excavations remains have been found in Sanghol.
- **Haryana:** In Hisar and Banawali important remains of the Indus Civilization have been found.
- **Doab of Ganga and Yamuna:** The remains of Indus Valley Civilization are spread across from Meerut to Alamgir. Recently remains have also been found at Hulas in Saharanpur.

- **Gujarat:** There are several Indus Valley Civilization sites at the peninsula of Kutch and Kathiawad and the mainlands of Gujarat. Important sites at these peninsula are Surkotada and Lothal, respectively.
- **Other sites:** Important remains have also been found at the sites of Bahawalpur, Jammu and Northern Afghanistan.

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1.2.2 Characteristic Features of Harappan Civilization

The principle characteristic of the Harappan civilization was its urban nature. That urbanization grew on the basis of agricultural surplus which arose out of an extremely favourable weather condition and river irrigation. It enabled the civilizational centres to trade with distant lands up to Egypt and Mesopotamia. The chief towns were Mohenjo-daro (the mound of the dead) and Harappa. But there appears to have been a large number of other towns far and near these cities down to Gujarat and Rajasthan in the south-west and Baluchistan and Afghanistan in the north. Some historians even imagined the existence of a loosely structured Harappan state with a capital, its satellite towns and rural hinterlands.

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

(a) Archeological Evidences

1. Dress and ornaments

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

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

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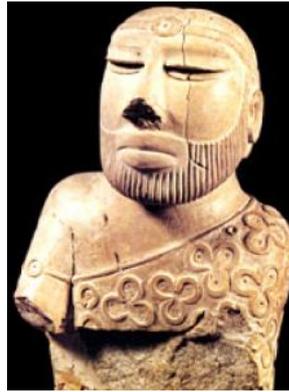


Fig. 1.2 Man Covered with a Shawl

The ornaments of rich people were made of gold, silver and precious stones whereas the ornaments of poor people were made of bones, copper and baked clay. Sir John Hubert Marshall who was the Director General of Archaeology in India in 1902 stated, 'seeing the shine and design of gold ornaments it seems that they are brought from an ornament shop of Bond Street (London) and not from a pre-historical house of five thousand years ago.' Figure 1.3 illustrates a bronze dancing girl.

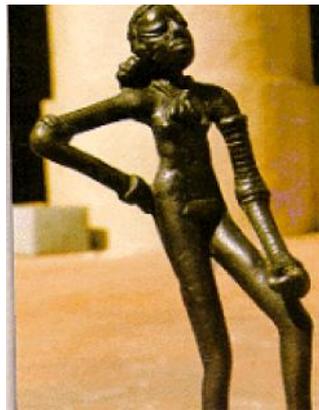


Fig. 1.3 Bronze Idol of Dancing Girl

2. Farming and cattle rearing

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

Animal husbandry was also practised, and oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys and camels were reared. The horse, however, was unknown.

The chief occupation of the Indus people was agriculture. Crops such as wheat, barley, corn and cotton, were cultivated here. According to Dr. Basham, the people did not know how to cultivate rice but the remains of rice at Lothal and

Rangpur have proved this conception wrong. Similarly Dr. Lal has said that the cultivation of cotton was the specialty of Indus people. Grinding machines of wheat, barley and crushing machines and storehouses reflect their proficiency in agriculture. Adequate irrigation facilities were developed for agriculture.

Domestication of animals

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

3. Pottery and trade

Next to agriculture, pottery seems to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel. Reddish-brown clay was baked, glazed and decorated with various designs in black. Some broken bits of pottery found in the excavation sites have geometric designs and animal motifs. They speak of the excellent craftsmanship and artistic skills of the Harappan people.

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

More than 2,000 seals have been found at various sites. The seals were made of terracotta and steatite, a soft stone. Most of the seals are rectangular but some are circular in shape. Some of them have a knob at the back, which contains a hole. It is believed that different guilds or individual merchants and traders used these seals for stamping their consignments. They have a carved picture with some inscription on the other side. These seals throw light on the religion, customs and economic activities of the society. The animal shown in the seal may be a sacred bull. Small-scale industries were also chief sources of living.



Fig. 1.4 Indus Ornaments, Pottery and Seal

Carpenters, potters, weavers, goldsmiths, connoisseurs, and sculptors, constitute the different professions of the time. Potters made a good living by making earthen toys. The Indus Valley Civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport by bullock-driven carts as well as boats. Most of these boats were probably small and had flat-

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bottoms, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today. Archaeologists have discovered a big canal and docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal. The artefacts of this civilization found at the sites of other ancient civilizations suggest trade links with portions of Afghanistan, the coastal regions of Persia, Northern and Central India, and Mesopotamia.

4. Social life in Indus Civilization

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

- **Social organization:** The social organization of the people was divided chiefly into four sections. The first section consisted of the intellectuals, brahmins, astrologers and doctors. The second section included warriors or soldiers. Industrialists, traders, sculptors and artists belonged to the third section. The fourth section comprised labourers, farmers, and servants. The society was matriarchal, and the people of this civilization led a comfortable and prosperous life.
- **Food:** Chief food items included wheat, barley, meat, rice, peas, milk, vegetables and fruits. People were vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian.
- **Cosmetics:** Both men and women had great interest in cosmetics. Women used to apply lipstick, perfumes, soot, powder, and made different kinds of buns and plaits. Men preferred to keep their hair long and were clean shaven. Combs and dressing boxes were made of elephant's tusk and brass. The amount of goods and services common man used here seem to be better than the other places of the contemporary civilized world.
- **Sources of entertainment:** This civilization had developed several sources of entertainment. Chess was the favourite game of its citizens. Discovery of rattles, whistles, sound-creating elephant and clay toys points towards the presence of several varieties of toys. Hunting, cock fighting and music were the chief sources of entertainment. The citizens took special care in the physical development and entertainment of their children.
- **Scientific knowledge:** The citizens used a script, which was primarily pictorial. Unfortunately, it could not be deciphered. Stone weights were usually of hexagonal shape but the heavier ones were spherical and sharp. After examining the authenticity of weights and measures, it can be concluded that the citizens were familiar with algebra, the decimal system and geometry.
- **Medicine:** Indus people had a knowledge of medicinal plants and they used natural medicinal plants for treating human diseases. The evidences of surgery have also been found.
- **Tools of household:** Several earthen pots, knives, chisels, axes, pitchers, plates and glasses have been found from the excavation sites. Pots were beautified by ornamentation.

- **Last rites:** Evidences show that three techniques were used to perform the last rites for the dead. These are as follows:
 - **Absolute meditation:** As per this technique, the dead were buried in the earth.
 - **Partial meditation:** As per this technique, the dead bodies were left in open so that they became food for birds and animals. The leftovers were then buried.
 - **Cremation:** In this technique, the dead bodies were burnt and the ashes were collected in pots and buried.

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(b) Religious Beliefs and Practices

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

Like their contemporaries—the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people—the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea. Examples of this script are found on the seals, most of which bear an inscription. Figure 1.5 shows the idol of the Mother Goddess.



Fig. 1.5 Mother Goddess

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

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

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

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

this civilization were happier than those of other civilizations. The tradition of Indian culture which was started by the Indus Valley civilization is till today constantly flowing. Indian culture is indebted to the Indus Civilization especially in the field of religion and art.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name the two archaeologists who carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh and at Harappa.
2. What helped Harappa to attain its urban character?
3. Name the crops the Harappans cultivated.
4. How can you confirm that trade thrived in the Harappan society?
5. What were the sources of entertainment for the Harappans?
6. How do you know that the Harappans worshipped nature?

1.2.3 Settlement Patterns and Town Planning

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

(i) Architecture in the Indus Valley Civilization

Evidence of town management of this time is found from the remains of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Kalibanga, and Lothal. Towns were so well managed and organized that it is still a matter of wonder. The roads were very broad. The drainage system was very fine. Figure 1.6 illustrates the citadel, the Great Bath and the city of Mohenjo-daro. The remains of Mohenjo-daro are proof of the unparalleled art of the ancient cities, their cleanliness and construction. It is quite clear from studies that cleanliness was given a lot of importance.

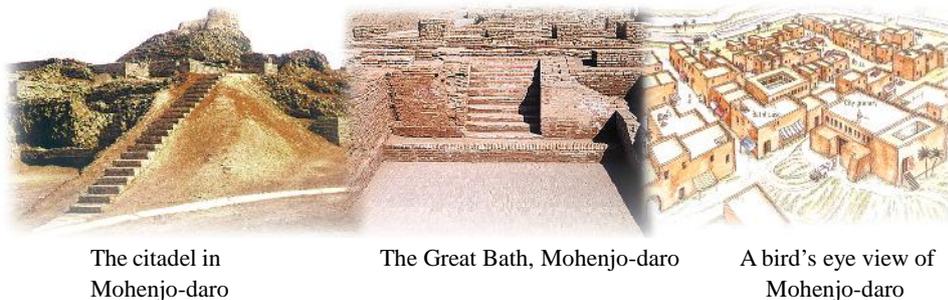


Fig. 1.6 Mohenjo-daro

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

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(ii) Art of Making Buildings

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

(iii) Town Planning

Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro reveal that all these cities were similarly planned. They were divided into two parts—a raised area with large buildings called the citadel at the western end and a lower town. The roads ran at right angles, bringing out the grid pattern of the township. The citadel was built on a raised platform, constructed with bricks and stones, about 12 metre high and rectangular in shape, and surrounded by a huge brick wall with watchtowers. This protected the buildings and the people from the recurrent flooding of the river Indus. The citadel was probably the seat of the government and overlooked the lower town. The ruler or the administrator lived here along with the nobles. It also had public buildings such as the granaries, the assembly or town hall and important workshops. The Great Bath was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres. A flight of steps led down to the pool at two ends. Broad corridors on four sides with a number of rooms surrounded the pool. It is the finest specimen of the engineering skill of the Harappan people.

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

Town hall

A huge structure, almost 70 metres long and over 23 metres wide, with walls about 1.5 metres thick has been excavated in Mohenjo-daro. It has twenty pillars made of burnt bricks, arranged in four rows of five each. Archaeologists believe that this

great hall may have been used as an assembly hall, a prayer hall or as a hall for cultural shows.

Residential area and houses

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

Streets

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

Drainage system

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

(iv) Art

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and capable of making beautiful and attractive idols. Certain aspects of the art forms during the Indus Valley Civilization are as follows:

- **Proficiency in constructing buildings:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were proficient in constructing buildings. Big buildings and good bathrooms prove their mastery in this art.
- **Proficiency in idol making:** The idols of this time are of very good quality. These idols are very imaginative and artistic. The artists paid great attention to detailing to achieve the right facial expressions on their idols. The idol of the *Tribhangi* dancer is an excellent example. The metal idols were made by melting and moulding metals.
- **Proficiency in seal making:** Seals were prepared from different kinds of stones, metals, clay and ivory. The seals were mainly square, rectangular or

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circular in shape. To increase the beauty of the coins, shapes of animals were made on them. People had acquired great proficiency in this field.

- **Art of writing:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were familiar with the art of writing. Their script was symbolic in character. They wrote from right to left. Though the language is not decipherable, the seals tell us that the text used was brief and short.



Fig. 1.7 An Indus Valley Pictograph Appears on this Seal

- **Dance and music:** It is known from seals and other things that the Indus Valley people were familiar with dance and music. A copper idol has been found in which a lady in a dancing pose is standing on her right leg.
- **Other art forms:** The Indus Valley people were familiar with the art of metallurgy, drawing, pot making and manufacturing statues.

Textile workers were also considered as craftsmen. The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the first in the world to cultivate cotton and weave it into cloth. The textile workers of Harappa were believed to have woven cloth by hand interlacing two or more sets of strands. They did not use looms. Instead spindles made of terracotta were used. Remnants of dye vats have been found at some Indus sites, and it is believed that these were used to dye cotton cloth. Cotton cloth was also an important trade item.

Not only metallurgists but even stone workers made sharp-edged tools. A parallel-sided chert flake was supposed to have been used as a blade. Stone was used to make statues. The sculpture of a bearded man that was found at one of the sites is proof of the existence of skilled sculptors.

1.2.4 Urban Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

Like other unanswered questions about the Indus Valley Civilization, the question of its devastation, of how, when, and why it disappeared, is unanswered. Many historians have given their own opinion. Seven layers have been found during excavations at

different sites, which inform us that the Indus Valley Civilization would have been established and devastated a number of times. The chief reason being the floods in the Indus river. The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.

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

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

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

Post-Harappan Traditions

It is believed that the decline of the urban society happened in many stages, more than a century ago, or even earlier. The urban system may have broken down between 2000 and 1750 BC but this does not imply that the lifestyle of the urban population all over the Indus region broke down completely. However, the system of control, both social and political, that may have existed did end. Urban traits such as usage of seals, writing and other specialized crafts seem to have vanished from the urban areas. This era was referred to as the post-urban era. The period that followed and lasted till about 750 BC was known as the post-Harappan era.

In the Saraswati valley, the representative of the post-Harappan era is the pottery from the Cemetery H at Harappa. At the same time, there is proof of a marked reduction in the number and size of settlements. This suggested that there was definitely some environmental deterioration. In the eastern Punjab region also, while disappearance of bigger urban sites was noticed, there was not a complete decrease in the number of smaller settlements. These same points were suggested in the settlements in the Ganga-Yamuna valleys more towards the east. Therefore, it was concluded that in the post-urban period, regional variations developed in material culture. Some of the traits characteristic of pre-urban and urban phases continued in some parts.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Why is Mohenjo-daro called the planned ancient city?
8. What is referred to as the town hall?
9. What reasons have been cited by historians for the disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization?

1.3 ARYAN CIVILIZATION

Scholars have different views with regard to the original homeland of the Aryans. The most accepted theory is that they came from Central Asia, the region around the Caspian Sea. According to historians, one group broke away from the main stock of Indo-Europeans in Central Asia and moved eastward. They are called the Indo-Aryans. The Indo-Aryans first settled in present day Iran and then migrated to India. Agriculture and cattle rearing were the main occupations of the early Aryans. They brought horses to India from Central Asia, gave up their nomadic life and settled here forming tribal settlements known as janas. In the Aryan society, there were four varnas—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.

The Aryans initially settled in the Sapta-Sindhu region that covered Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh, Kabul and Gandhara (Kandhar). A study of the Vedas and the Epics (Mahabharata and Ramayana) can tell you a lot about how tall and good looking they were with long limbs and fair skin. They took approx 1,000 years to establish control over all of north India. It was only after this long period that they approached the south. The Ramayana tells the stories of how the Aryans expanded to the south. Lord Rama, God-like and extremely good looking, was the Aryan king who killed Ravana. While the Aryans were all 'aryaputras' or the sons of Aryans, the natives of the south were referred to as Dasyus.

People who spoke old Indo-Aryan dialects of the Indo-Iran branch of the Indo-European language family, arrived during the late third and second millennia BC. These people probably came from the steppes to the north and east of the Caspian Sea. They first moved to the southern areas of Central Asia before spreading out across the Iranian plateau. This movement may have begun during the Indus Valley Civilization itself. Some historians believe that, between 2000 and 1500 BC, Indo-Aryan speakers continued to spread. As a result they also entered India. They interacted culturally with the active population. This led to the synthesis of a new culture which found mention in the later hymns of the Rig Veda, which express Aryan ethnicity. Figure 1.8 illustrates the route of Aryan advent.

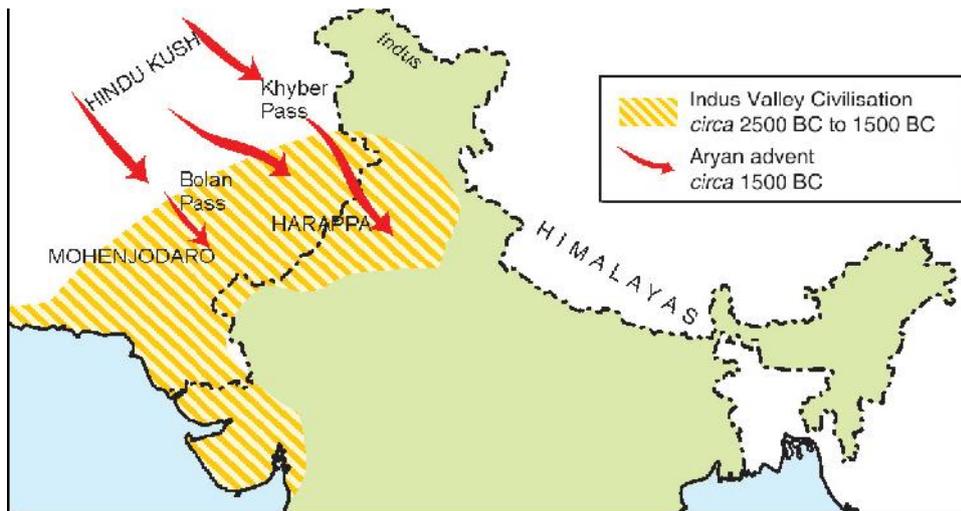


Fig. 1.8 The Route of Aryan Advent

The settlement of the Aryans caused a lot of changes in society and the various castes also came into being. The Aryans brought in immense technological and economic advancement with them which immensely affected life around them and in the ages that were about to come.

Political system

Initially, the Aryans stayed together in small village settlements. Their political and social structure was based on the clan or '*kula*' system. These settlements later grew to become kingdoms. Their society followed the patriarchal pattern, which was not surprising considering their militant nature. A village or '*gram*' was formed by grouping together a few '*kulas*'.

The head of the *kula* was the '*gramina*'. In some places, instead of '*kulas*' there were similar political units called '*visyas*' headed by '*visyatis*'. A few '*visyas*' together formed a '*jana*' which was ruled by a *Rajana* or king. The exact relationship between the '*grama*', the '*visya*' and the *jana* is still not very clearly understood.

The King

Although the King was considered the head and was treated and respected as any monarch should be, he could not rule according to his whims and fancies. He had to work as a team with his people. His court had several officials. His chief queen or *Mahishi* was also a part of the process of decision making. The king was further assisted by the '*sabha*' and the '*samiti*'. The *Samiti* was much like the lower house of our Lok Sabha with members who were representatives of the people while the *Sabha* was a permanent body of chosen men.

The pattern of rule was democratic and quite proper. However, this did not last. *Janas* were overpowered by one another, and there were mergers. With time, they formed kingdoms ruled by the King who soon became all powerful and despotic. Women continued to enjoy respect and were given the freedom to voice their opinion

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and exert their influence. However, by the time of the Mahabharata, they had lost most of this power and came to be considered as property owned by men. What better proof than the gambling away of his wife, Draupadi, by King Yudhishtira in the epic Mahabharata!

1.3.1 Early Vedic Polity: Transition from Tribal Polity to State

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

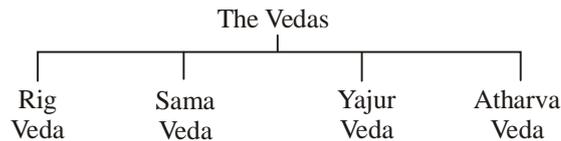


Fig. 1.9 The Four Vedas

They named this place as Brahmavarta or 'Land of the Vedic Period Gods'. As their number increased, they began to move eastward and settled in the Ganga-Yamuna plains which now came to be called Aryavarta or 'Land of the Aryans'. Gradually, they occupied the whole of northern and western India up to the Vindhya mountains. Our information about the early Aryans is based on the excavations at Bhagwanpura in Haryana and three other sites in Punjab, which have revealed many pottery pieces dating from 1500 BC to 1000 BC. However, our chief source of information is the Rig Veda, which was composed in 1500 BC. The Vedas are the earliest literary records of the Aryans. Since our main source of information about the Aryans is the Vedic literature, this period is also called the Vedic Age. The early vedic period extends from 1500BC to 1000 BC. There are four Vedas—Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda (see Figure 1.10). The word 'veda' means knowledge. Rig Veda is the oldest of the Vedic literature. It was composed in about 1500 BC. It consists of 1,028 slokas, which are divided into ten books. At first it was transferred orally from one generation to the other along with the other Vedas and is, therefore, called sruti or 'that which is heard'. Many centuries later, it was written down. The Rig Veda gives us an insight into the political, social, economic and religious life of the early vedic period. The early vedic polity was structured as follows:

- **The king:** The highest officer of the nation was the king. The morality of the king was very high. Kingship was hereditary. The chief work of the king was to safeguard his nation and citizens. He had to be proficient in the management of soldiers and very just. There were many officers for assisting the king in his administrative work. He had many functionaries, including the purohita and senani. The main job of purohita was to give advice to the king and practice spells and charms for success in war whereas senanis fought for him in the war.
- **The ministers of the king:** The king appointed various ministers for running the administration efficiently. The foremost among them was the senani, the supreme commander of the armed forces.

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- **Warriors:** The chief warrior in the army was the second highest officer. He was appointed by the king himself. His work was to take care of the warriors' organization and to lead the army in the absence of the king. Apart from the warriors, the *Gramani* was also an important officer. He used to be the chief of villages. Apart from these office bearers, the diplomats and secret agents also played very important roles in the Early Vedic polity.
- **Organizations and committees:** Organizations and committees were very important in that age. They were created to check the despotism of the king and to discuss the problems of the nation. There were two bodies the 'sabha' and the 'samiti'. The Atharva Veda refers to them as the two daughters of *Prajapati* or Brahma. Earlier the *sabha* was responsible for performing only judicial functions. However, historians came to believe that it served as a centre for social gathering. Some considered it to be the village assembly while some considered this as a committee of selected seniors or elders. The *samiti* on the other hand was probably the bigger or central assembly.
- **Judiciary:** Only assumptions can be made regarding the judicial system due to non-availability of proof. The chief justice was the king himself.

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

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

Technological and Economic Development

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

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

The Aryans introduced the horse in India from Central Asia. They were used to draw chariots and to ride during battles as well as during peacetime by the *rajan* and the nobles and therefore, greatly valued. Hunting, pottery, spinning, weaving,

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carpentry, metallurgy (copper and bronze) and leatherwork were other important occupations. Shipping was limited to the navigation of rivers for the inland trade. Gold and oxen were used as money during trading. Figure 1.10 illustrates various artifacts of the Early Vedic period.

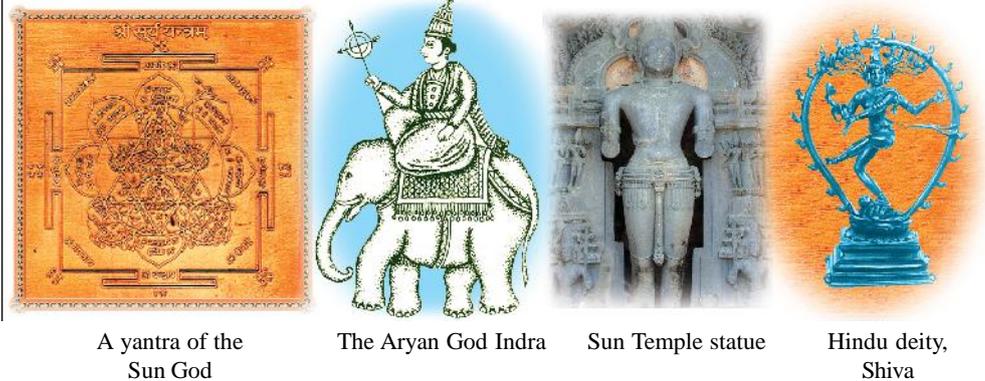


Fig. 1.10 Artifacts of the Early Vedic Period

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

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

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

Political Relations

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

A *raj purohit* or high priest performed religious ceremonies and also acted as an adviser. The *gramani* or the village headman looked after the village. Figure 1.11 illustrates the political structure of the Early Vedic period.

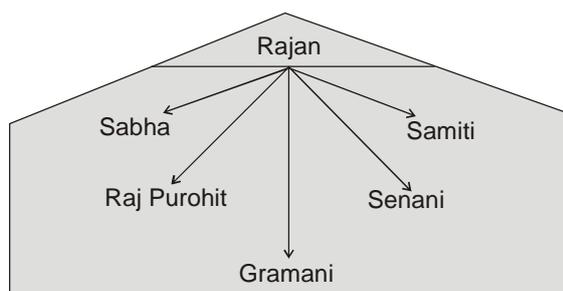


Fig. 1.11 Political Structure of the Early Vedic Period

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

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

Table 1.1 Political Life of the Vedic Age

Unit	Head
Rashtra	Rajan/Gopa/Samarat
Janas/janapada	Jyeshtha
Vish	Vishpati
Gram	Gramani

Social Stratification and Emergence of the Caste System

The early Vedic society consisted of four *varnas*—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. There was no complication in the *varna* system. The basis of *varna* was perhaps work rather than birth. It is mentioned in the Rig Veda that, 'I am a sculptor, my father is a doctor and my mother grinds cereals in the house.' The early Aryans differentiated between themselves according to the occupations each followed. The word 'varna' was later used to refer to the social division, dividing society into the following four occupational groups:

- The brahmins or the priests performed religious ceremonies and prayers and imparted education.

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

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

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

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

1.3.2 Later Vedic Polity

The later Vedic age lasted between 1000 BC and 600 BC. It was during this age that the Aryans moved eastward from the land of the seven rivers into the Gangetic plain. Some even crossed the Vindhya mountains and moved to south India. During this period, the *Puranas*, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were also composed. It is from these literary sources as well as the four Vedas and the archaeological findings at various sites, that historians have been able to tell us about the political, social, economic and religious life of the people.

The history of the later Vedic period is based mainly on the Vedic texts, which were compiled after the age of the Rig Veda. The collections of Vedic hymns or mantras are known as the Samhitas. The Rig Veda were set to tune, and this modified collection was known as the Samaveda. In the post Rig Vedic times, two other collections, the Yajur Veda Samhita and the Atharva Veda Samhita were composed. We have to depend upon the Samhitas of the Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads, all religious works for the later Vedic period which, roughly speaking, comes down to about 600 BC. Figure 1.12 illustrates the Later Vedic Civilization.

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Fig. 1.12 Later Vedic Civilizations

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

1.3.3 Settlement Patterns

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

Technological and Economic Development

The Vedic Aryans were well known for their technology related to the tanning of leather, fermentation of grains and fruits, and dyed scale production of copper, iron

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and steel, brass, silver and gold and their alloys. Indian steel was believed to be of very high quality in the ancient world and it was exported in large quantities. Tin and mercury were imported from the 7th century. Alchemy was also referred to in literature. They made a special kind of polished grey pottery (known as P.G. ware). Radio-carbon dating dates it back to 1000–800 BC. Other varieties of pottery, for example, red or *black-polished* pottery were also made by them.

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

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

Social Stratification

During the Later Vedic period, the earlier distinctions in society based on varna or occupation became rigid and hereditary. A person's birth became more important than his skill or merit. Each caste had its own code of laws and marriage outside the caste was forbidden. Brahmins occupied a very high position in society as they were learned. They alone could perform the rituals and sacrifices. Only the select few amongst them could advise the king. The common people held them in high esteem.

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

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

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

Political Relations

The most important change in the Post-Vedic times was that the king had become the absolute ruler. All power was concentrated in his hands. He was the supreme commander of the army and the chief justice of his kingdom. The king called himself *maharajadhiraj* and *samrat*. Kings often performed the *rajasuya* sacrifice and the *ashvamedha* (horse sacrifice) to make a show of their powers. The *rajasuya* sacrifice was performed in order to bestow supreme power on the king. In the *ashvamedha yajna*, a special horse, accompanied by soldiers, was let loose for a year by a ruler to wander at will. The king staked his claim over all those territories over which the horse wandered. Later the horse was sacrificed. If the horse was captured, war followed.

As kingdoms expanded, the work of the administration also multiplied. The king was now assisted by a large number of officials. The *rajapurohita* performed elaborate rituals and gave advice. The *senani* came to occupy a prestigious place in the court. He had the responsibility of expanding the kingdoms and helping the king during the war. Another official of importance was the tax collector known as the *sangrihitri*. There was a change in the composition of the *sabha* and *samiti*. It was not possible for common man to attend these assemblies. Therefore, the nature of the two assemblies became aristocratic, dominated only by the upper class, the brahmins and the princes. Women no longer participated in the meetings.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of the political divisions and events of the Brahminic period is very little. We can glean only a few facts from incidental anecdotes in sacerdotal literature and from other references in the epic and the Puranas. In later Vedic times, the Rig Vedic tribal assemblies lost importance and the royal power increased at their cost.

Traces of the election of the king appear in the later Vedic texts. The king whose position was commonly hereditary still led in terms of power and authority, although minor operations were entrusted to the *senani*. The king punished the wicked and upheld the law, *dharma*. He controlled the land and could even deprive an individual of it.

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Popular assemblies like the *sabha* and the *samiti* (though not quite defunct yet) were rarely heard of during this period. The growth in the size of the kingdom must have made their frequent meetings difficult and in consequence their control or check over the ruler must have progressively decreased. The ongoing assemblies came to be controlled by chiefs and rich nobles and women were no longer permitted to sit in the *sabha* which was now dominated by warriors and brahmins. The formation of the larger kingdom increased the power of the chief king. Tribal authority tended to become territorial. The dominant tribes gave their names to territories which might be inhabited by tribes other than their own. Initially, each area was named after the tribe that first settled there.

The term *rashtra*, indicating territory, arose during this period. The concept of controlling people also appeared. It was indicated by the use of the term *rajya* which meant sovereign power. With the emergence of larger realms, the importance attached to the *purohita*, the *rajanya* (noble), the *mahisi* (chief queen), the *suta* (Charioteers) and the *senani* (Army commander) also increased. Other important functions that arose during this period include the *gramani* (village headman), the *bhagadugha* (collector of taxes), *ksattri* (chamberlain), *samgrahitri* (treasurer) and the *aksavapa* (superintendent of dicing who supervised the gambling halls and collected revenue from there).

Development of the Caste System

Society did not remain unaffected by the changes that were taking place during this period. Aryanization promoted social differentiation. In the later Vedic texts the term 'arya' encapsulates Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Thus, it was the Vedic Aryans who introduced the *varna* system.

The early Vedic society came to be divided into four *varnas* called the brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra *varnas*. No doubt the division into four classes was already referred to in a late hymn of the Rig Veda but whether it bore any other traces of familiarity with the institution of caste, apart from the clear distinction between the Arya and the Dasyu is not clear. The divisions became more pronounced and the caste system was well on its way towards crystallization. The starting point of these distinctions was, of course, the colour bar, between the fair Arya and the dark Dasyu. However, the constant wars of the Aryans, the growing complexities of life and political conditions, and the tending towards specialization in labour, gradually resulted in the formation of hereditary occupational groups. Thus, those who possessed a knowledge of the sacred scriptures, officiated in religious ceremonies and received gifts were called Brahmins, those who fought, owned land and wielded political power were called Kshatriyas; the general mass of people, the traders, the agriculturists, and the craftsmen, were grouped under the class Vaishya and the Sudras reserved for the menial services were generally recruited from the conquered Dasyus. There was, however, still no unnatural rigidity of caste as in the succeeding age.

Also, the growing importance of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins in the society made it imperative to maintain their exclusive superior status, as compared

to the rest. During the later Vedic period however, the concept of varna was simple in nature. The notion of untouchability was absent.

Gotra

The institution of *gotra* (literally meaning cow pen) came to be known during this period. Gotra signified descent from a common ancestor and marriages could not take place between couples belonging to the same geneology.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. What do the terms Brahmavarta and Aryavarta mean?
11. What is Vish and who is a Vishapati?
12. What was the role of the guilds?
13. What was the mode of trade transaction in the later Vedic age?
14. What was the position of the women in the society?
15. What does the term gotra refer to?

1.4 RISE OF MAHAJANAPADAS

Ancient Buddhist texts make frequent reference to the sixteen great kingdoms and republics which had evolved and flourished in the northern/north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent before the rise of Buddhism in India.

Look at Figure 1.13 to know the location of the mahajanapadas. Of the sixteen mahajanapadas, four were prominent monarchies—Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha. They were constantly fighting with each other. Ultimately, Magadha emerged as the supreme power.

Republics and monarchies

The mahajanapadas had two kinds of political systems. They were either republics or monarchies. A republican mahajanapada was ruled by a group of people elected by the people of that tribe. There was no hereditary ruler. Decisions were taken on the basis of majority consent. So, it was a kind of democratic system where the people of the tribe had a say in their political affairs. The Sakya mahajanapada, for example, was an important republic.

Most of the mahajanapadas had a monarchical system. The king ruled according to his own wish. After his death, his son succeeded him to the throne. Magadha, for example, was a monarchical mahajanapada.

The Aryans slowly and steadily expanded their civilization and culture. They expanded rapidly in northern India. Many strong Aryan centres were established till the 6th century BC and the states were being called on the basis of caste. None had full control over whole India, which was divided into so many smaller states. In

order to expand the states, the janapadas were extended and changed into mahajanapadas later.

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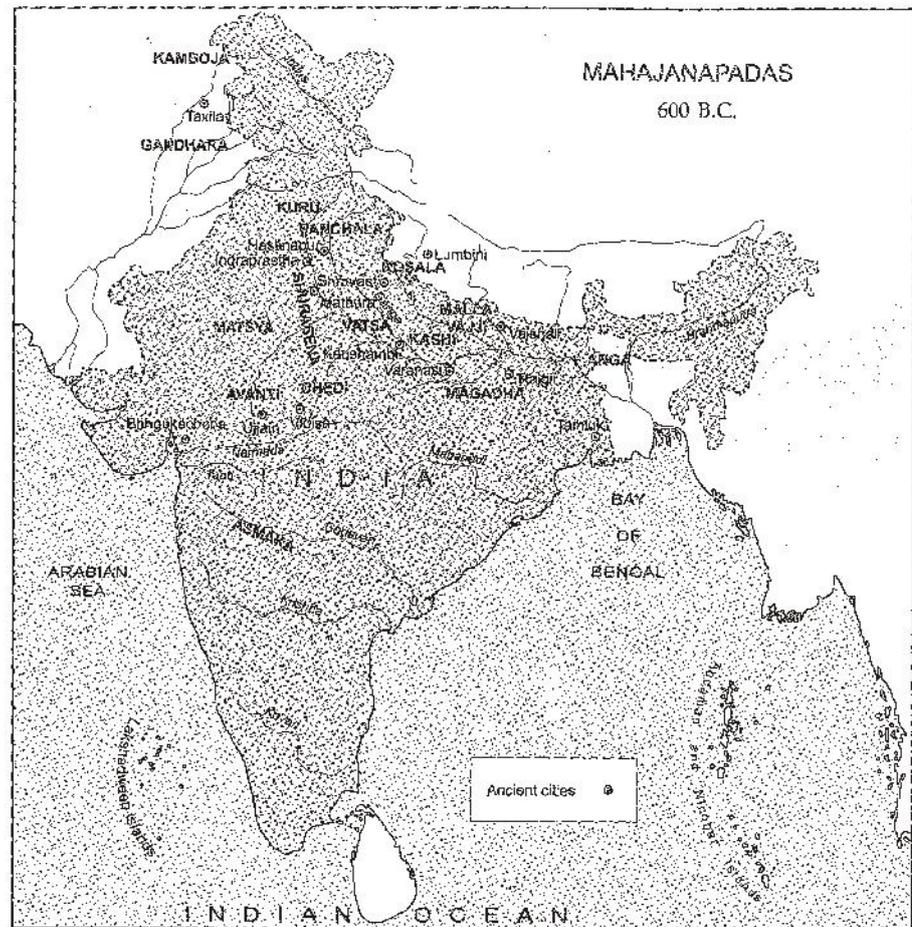


Fig. 1.13 Locations of the Mahajanapadas

1.4.1 Emergence of Cities and Territorial States

Although there has not been enough evidence concerning mahajanapadas, important Buddhist and Jain books provide some information according to Buddhist text *Anguthara Nikaya*, name of the sixteen major mahajanapadas were:

- **Anga:** This was situated near modern Bhagalpur (located on the borders of modern Bihar and Bengal). Champa was its capital. Champa has been considered one of the six great cities in the sixth century BC. It was famous for its trade and commerce. Anga was an enemy of Magadh. It was defeated by Magadh by mid-sixth century BC.
- **Magadh:** It was situated where modern Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar are located. Its capital was at Rajagriha. Rajagriha was an impenetrable place surrounded by five hills. The remains of the walls of Rajagriha provide the earliest evidence of fortification in the history of India. In the fifth century BC, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, which was the seat of the early

Magadha kings. Magadh rose to prominence because its fertile agricultural tracts were best suited for the cultivation of wet rice. Further, the iron ore deposits of south Bihar (modern Jharkhand) were under its control. Last but not the least, the open social system of the Magadhan empire made it the most important monarchy in the years to come.

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- **Kashi:** Of the sixteen mahajanapadas, Kashi was the most powerful in the beginning. It was located in and around modern Varanasi. Its capital Varanasi was the foremost city of India situated on the confluence of the Ganges and the Gomati river and in the middle of the most fertile agricultural areas. It emerged as a leading centre of textile manufacture and horse trade in the time of the Buddha. However, by the time of the Buddha, the Kashi mahajanapada had been taken over by Kosala and was a cause of war between Magadha and Kosala kingdoms.
- **Kosala:** Kosala was bound on the west by the river Gomati, on the south by the Sarpika, on the east by the river Sadanira (Gandak) and on the north by the Nepal hills. Kosala mahajanapada emerged out of an assimilation of many smaller principalities and lineages. Hiranyanabha, Mahakosala Prasenjita and Suddhodhana have been named as rulers of Kosala in the sixth century BC. Saketa, Shravasti (modern Sahet-Mahet) and Bahravich districts of Uttar Pradesh were three important Kosala cities. The capital of Kosala was Shravasti. King Prasenjita was a contemporary and friend of the Buddha. Later, Kosala emerged as one of the most powerful rivals to the emergent Magadha Empire.
- **Vrijji or Vajji:** This was located in contemporary Bihar. This mahajanpada came into existence by the coming together of several castes. Its capital was Vaishali.
- **Malla:** There were two branches of the Mallas, namely Kushinagar and Pava. This was a federal democracy.
- **Vatsa:** Vatsa was one of the most powerful mahajanapadas with its capital at Kaushambi (near modern Allahabad) on the bank of the Yamuna. This means that the Vatsas were settled around modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. Bhasa, one of the greatest Sanskrit dramatists in ancient India, has immortalized Udayan, a Vatsa king, in his plays. These plays are based on the story of the love affair between Udayana and Vasavadatta, the Princess of Avanti. These plays also point to the conflict among the powerful kingdoms of Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti. Vatsa lost its significance in the ensuing struggle because the later texts do not refer to them with great importance.
- **Chedi:** Contemporary Bundelkhand and its nearby landmass came under Chedi. Its capital was Shaktimati or Sotthivati.
- **Kuru:** This mahajanpadas covered the regions of Thaneshwar, Delhi and Meerut. Its capital was Indraprastha.
- **Surasena:** This was located to the south of Matsya state. Its capital was Mathura.

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- **Panchal:** This was located in the territory between river Ganga and Yamuna. It also had two branches. The capital of northern Panchal was Ahichatrapur, while that of southern Panchal was Kampilya.
- **Matsya (Maccha):** This was located in modern Jaipur, Alwar and Bharatpur regions of Rajasthan. Its capital was Viratnagara.
- **Avanti:** Avanti was one of the most powerful mahajanapadas in the sixth century BC. The central area of this mahajanapad or kingdom roughly corresponds to Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh. The kingdom was divided into two parts. Its southern capital was Mahasmati, while its northern capital was Ujjain. The latter was more important. The kingdom controlled the trade with the south. According to a legend, from an enemy he became father-in-law of Udayen who ruled over Vatsa kingdom.
- **Ashmak:** This region was located in south India. Its capital was Paudanya (Potan).
- **Gandhara:** The states of contemporary Taxila and Kashmir came under this region. It had two capitals, namely Pushkalavati and Taxila. Taxila was a famous centre of learning.
- **Kambhoj:** This janapad was located to the north of Gandhar at Pamir and Badakshan. Its capital was Rajpur.

A slightly different list of the 16 mahajanapadas is given in Jain book named *Bhagwati Sutra*. These names were Anga, Banga (Vanga), Magadha, Malaya, Malavaka, Accha, Vaccha (Vatsa), Kochcha, Padha, Ladha (lata), Bajji (Vajji), Moli, Kasi, Kosala, Avaha and Sambhuttara.

Republics

We get the knowledge of the republics of the 6th century BC from Buddhist books. These republics were as follows:

- **Shakyas of Kapilavastu:** It was located on the border of Nepal on the foothills of the Himalayas. This republic was located in the western part of contemporary Gorakhpur. Gautam Buddha was born in this state. Its capital was Kapilavastu. The people of this area considered themselves to be the descendants of Eshvak. This was a major site of learning.
- **Bulis of Allakappa:** This area was located between the contemporary districts of Shahabad and Muzaffarpur. According to *Dhammapada*, this area was situated near the Veth Island.
- **Kalamas of Kesputta:** The spiritual guru of Buddha, Aalar Kalam, belonged to this dynasty. This dynasty is related to the Panchal Keshis as described in *Shatpath Brahman*.
- **Bhaggas of Susamagiri:** According to *Sanyutta Nikaya*, this area was situated in Bhargadisa. Contemporary Mirzapur was located near this area.
- **Kolis of Ramgram:** This republic was situated in the east of Shakyas of Kapilavastu.

- **Mallas of Pava:** This dynasty was ruled by the kshatriyas of the Vashistha gotra. The Mallas were settled in contemporary Padrauna in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Mallas of Kushinagar:** They were the second branch of Mallas. Buddha attained *Parinirvana* here.
- **Moris of Pippalivan:** According to *Mahavansa*, the Moris were earlier known as the Shakyas. However, later they shifted to a hilly region of the Himalayas due to the brutality of Vidudabh where they established the Pippalivan city. This city has always been famous for the sound of peacocks and as a result is referred to as 'Moris'.
- **Videhas of Mithila:** Mithila was a renowned learning centre.
- **Licchavis of Vaishali:** The Licchavis belonged to the Kshatriya clan.
- **Naga of Vaishali:** The combination of the Videhas and the Licchavis led to the establishment of the federation of Vajji. There was also a federation of Licchavis and Nagas which was called Asthakul in which Videhas, Yangyik, Licchavi and Vajji were included.

Thus, the powerful republics of this period included the Shakya, Licchavi, Videha, Vajji and Malla. According to D. R. Bhandarkar, an authority on the ancient history of India from 650 – 325 BC, 'The meaning of republic and federation was a group of well decided and well organized men.' However, it seems that a unit of a federation was usually called a republic. Several republics made a federation. Thus, many *grihas* made a *kul* and a group of *kulas* formed a republic.

Administrative System of the Republics

The administration of the states at that time differed from each other. *Atreya Brahman* has described five types of administrative polities, viz. *Samarajya*, *Bhojya*, *Swarajya*, *Vairajya* and *Rajya*. In *Samarajya* polity, the head of the state was called *Samrat*, his coronation was a necessity and his position was hereditary. In *Bhojya* polity, the head of the state was called *Bhoja*, and his status was not hereditary, rather he was assigned administrative authority for a fixed period. The Satvava Yadavas too, had this sort of polity. In *Swarajya* polity, the head of the state was called *Samrat* and its administration was carried on by some respected *Kulas*, which were regarded as equal to each other. In *Vairajya* polity, the head of the state was called the king. The representatives of the people chose different administrative officers as well. In *Rajya* polity, tribal administration continued as before. The janpadas of Kuru and Panchal in *Madhyadesh* pursued this system. Most of the contemporary texts have referred to the *Samarajya* polity where the head of the state was called the *Samrat* and whose office was hereditary. Such states got better opportunities for their territorial expansion. The use of iron increased the area under cultivation and agricultural production. The monarch drew maximum advantage from it as his share from the produce was fixed and he alone had the right to permit the clearance of forests. Increased agricultural production led to an increased trade and commerce, which again benefitted the monarch. It all resulted in the material prosperity of the emperor, which helped him in increasing his military strength, which he could fruitfully utilize for the expansion of the territories of his empire.

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However, some of the general features of a republic are as follows:

- **King:** The king was the head of executive of the entire state. He was an elected member. He had no absolute powers.
- **Council of ministers:** There were nine members in the council of ministers, which constituted only the best people taken from the noble. However, we find mention of four members in the Malla republic, nine in the Licchavi republic and eighteen in the Videha republic.
- **Organization of executive:** The executive was also known as the *sanstha*. The Licchavis considered themselves to be the king. If there were conflicts in matters of war, peace, religious and social issues, voting was done. If due to any reason consensus was not achieved, a committee was appointed which was called *udayvahika*.
- **Process of voting:** Four techniques were in use for the purpose of voting. These are as follows:
 - **Secret system:** According to this technique, voting was done secretly.
 - **Open system:** According to this technique, voting was done openly.
 - **Mouth-to-ear system:** In this technique, the voters cast their votes by revealing their preferences by whispering in the ears.
 - **Evident system:** In this system, the names of voters were declared evidently.
- **The working procedure of the organization:** The working procedure was as follows:
 - Fixed rules were made for the proposal of the organization. Usually the proposal was repeated thrice and if not resisted the proposal was accepted. But if resisted the proposal was set for vote by special rules. This voting was done secretly.
 - Committees were made to resolve conflicting issues and questions.
 - Complementary rules were made.
- **Group system:** Groups existed based on division of votes, debates and important concerns.
- **Judiciary:** There were seven types of courts in existence. The king was the chief justice of the judiciary.

The hierarchy of the officials in the republics was as shown in Figure 1.14.

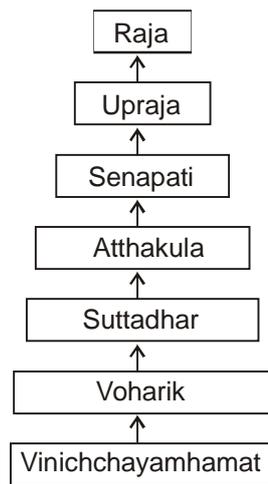


Fig. 1.14 Hierarchy of Officials

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Advantages of the Republican System

The chief benefits of the republics were as follows:

- The king had no absolute powers.
- All citizens took equal part in the administrative work of the republics.
- The social rules were kept safe by voting.
- There was no influence of the hereditary. Honesty, sense of responsibility, and experience were the chief qualities sought in a leader, even if he had a low social status.
- During war the entire state struggled collectively in defence of the idols of its republic.
- There was financial affluence. The contemporary states were the main centres of culture, art and civilization.

Defects of the Republican System

The defects of the republican system were as follows:

- Important issues could not be kept confidential due to debates and consequently security was hampered.
- The decision-making procedure was slow and led to delays.
- Personal interests entered the political domain.
- Due to the theory of equality, defects of administrative skill and tactfulness were neglected.
- This system curtailed huge expenses.
- There was interference by political parties in the everyday administration of the state affairs.
- There was lack of economical and regional leadership.

Reasons for Devastation of the Republics

The following were the chief reasons for the devastation of republics:

- Lack of equality
- Birth of landlordism during the period of Buddha
- Defects in the judicial system
- Landlordism, which led to the decline of the system of self administration
- Popularity of monarchy

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

16. What kind of political system prevailed under the mahajanapadas?
17. Name the mahajanapadas as mentioned in the Buddhist and Jain texts.
18. Name the most powerful republics of the 6th century BC.
19. Who was the chief justice during this period?

1.4.2 Magadha: The First Territorial State

Magadha had many geographical advantages, which helped to make it strong and powerful in comparison to other kingdoms. The Gangetic plain had a very fertile soil. The dense forests yielded timber and were rich in iron ore deposits. The river and its ports helped inland trade with other cities. Thus, both agriculture and trade flourished which provided the king with high revenues. This, in turn, allowed the king to maintain a large army and protect his territories.

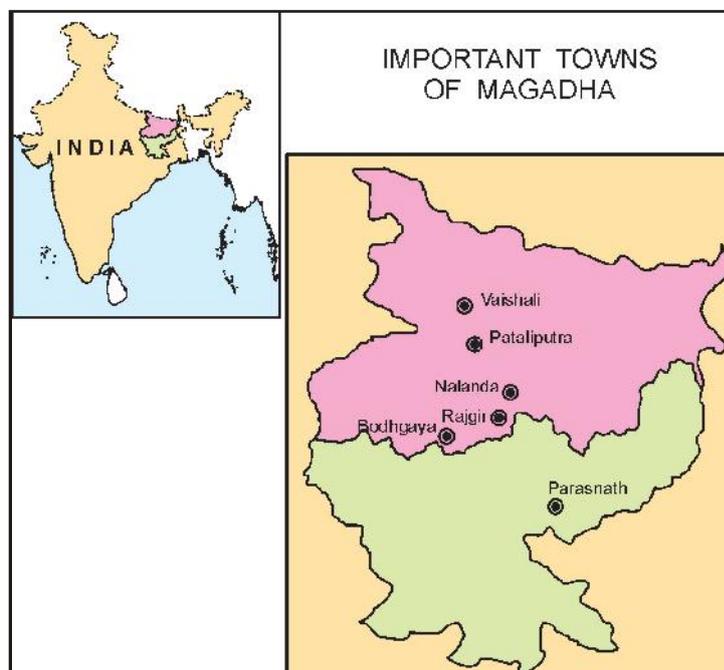


Fig. 1.15 Important Towns of Magadha

The first important ruler of Magadha was Bimbisara. During his reign Magadha rose to power. He ruled in the middle of the sixth century from his capital at Rajagriha. He expanded his empire and strengthened his position by marriage alliances and military conquests. Ajatashatru succeeded his father Bimbisara. He ruled over Magadha from 493 BC to 461 BC and waged wars with smaller states. He controlled the Gangetic plain by fortifying the city of Pataliputra (modern day Patna), which was his capital. After Ajatashatru, the Nandas emerged as the last powerful dynasty before Chandragupta Maurya captured the throne of Magadha. Figure 1.15 shows the locations of important towns of Magadha.

Magadha expansion

Magadha embraced the districts of Patna and Gaya in Bihar. It was bound on the north and the west by the rivers Ganges and Son, on the south by the spurs of the Vindhya and on the east by the river Champa. Its earliest capital was Griivraja or Rajagriha near Rajgir. The other names for the city were Magadhapura, Brihadrathapura Vasumati, Kusagrapura and Bimbisarpuri.

The location of Magadha helped in making it an economically prosperous state and strengthen the defence system. A favourable network of rivers, which connected the capital Pataliputra with all the major trading centres, gave a good boost to the trading and mercantile activities. Huge resources of iron helped in the production of relatively better quality implements as well as weapons and resulted in a profitable trade. Thick forests surrounding the territory provided people with good quality wood for building activities. Elephants were a major force in the army and hence, helped, though indirectly, in the emergence of cities and urban culture.

Another very important factor was the fertility of the soil. The plains of Ganga and the fertile nature of the soil created ideal conditions for a vibrant agrarian economy. Production increased and so did the surpluses. Hence, the state could impose higher taxes, and the revenue so gathered helped the king to maintain a large and extensive army, which was so very important for a state to aspire to become an empire.

Culturally Magadha, being situated in the eastern part of India, had a more proper assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements rather than the usual coercion of the latter by the former. The reason for this assimilation was that by the time Brahmanism reached the eastern fringe, it had lost the impact making strength and so liberal traditions could be accommodated to a great extent in Magadha. These traditions were further strengthened by the heterodox sects like Jainism and Buddhism.

Dr R. K. Mookerjee writes, 'The laxity of social restrictions imposed by the orthodox brahmanical culture and the universal aspect of Buddhism and Jainism, which found a congenial home in Magadha, must have considerably widened the political outlook of this region and contributed to make the nucleus of it a mighty empire.' Last but not the least, besides this conditionality, it was the personal capacities of the rulers who ruled Magadha from the accession of Bimbisara to the invasion of Alexander.

Both Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were great warriors, strategists and shrewd diplomats. These two laid the foundation of Magadha as a mahajanapada, which

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ultimately became an empire under the Nandas. Thus, ambitious rulers, the geographical location of Magadha, fertile land, natural resources, liberal cultural tradition, and trading activities had some important role in the emergence of Magadha as an empire.

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H. C. Raychaudhuri, an Indian historian known for his studies on ancient India, states, 'The early dynastic history of Magadha is shrouded in darkness. We have occasional glimpses of war-lords and statesmen, some probably entirely mythical, other having more appearance of leader. The history commences with the famous Bimbisara of the Haryanka Kula.'

There is a reference in the Rig Veda to a territory called Kikata, which was ruled by a chief named Pramaganda. Kikata is described as a synonym of Magadha. The Yajur Veda refers to the bards of Magadha. Figure 1.16 illustrates ancient coins from Magadha.



Fig. 1.16 Coins from Magadha

Life in Magadha

(i) Position of the King

The king had absolute powers, as sanctioned by the brahmins. The king, in turn, held the brahmins in great respect. He performed sacrifices such as the *Ashwamedha yajna* to establish his supremacy. He ruled with the help of other officials, such as the *senani* (commander-in-chief) and *amatyas* (officers in charge of revenue collection).

The king had the right to collect taxes. This money was spent on maintaining the army; paying salaries to the officers; building roads, wells and canals; and supporting the Brahmins. The king had to maintain a huge army as the *mahajanapadas* were always fighting with each other. He also had his capital fortified.

(ii) The society

The society remained divided into the four main *varnas*—brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and sudras. The first three classes enjoyed all the privileges. The brahmins framed laws, which the rest of the society had to follow. The position of the sudras remained inferior to others. Inter-caste marriages were not permitted. Child marriage

and polygamy were common and women continued to have a lower status in the society. They were expected to serve the menfolk. The system of *varnashrama* were more rigidly established. Man's life continued to be divided into four main ashramas.

(iii) Religion

Brahmanism was the dominant religion. The Brahmins conducted all the rituals and ceremonies in Sanskrit, a language not understood by the common people. The *yajna* or sacrifices were very expensive. The common people, especially the poor, felt sidelined and resented this. This paved the way for the rise of Buddhism and Jainism.

(iv) Education

The *gurukul* system of education continued. Important centres of learning were Kashi, Ujjain and Taxila.

(v) Agriculture, Taxation and Trade

- Wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, vegetables and oilseeds were the main crops grown. Rice was the staple food. Agriculture was the main source of revenue for the state.
- The peasant had to pay one-sixth of his produce to the king. This was called *bhaga* or share. In the beginning, taxes were collected in kind, in the form of products or services (barter system). For example, hunters would pay taxes in the form of animal or animal produce. Artisans and craftsmen also had to pay taxes. A weaver or blacksmith would work for the king one day every month.
- Later, this barter system changed and coins of silver, copper and gold were issued by the state.
- Taxes were levied on traders.
- Hunters also had to pay taxes in kind, i.e. some part of his hunt. When coins were introduced, taxes were collected in cash. Special officers were appointed as tax collectors.
- Artisans and craftsmen organized themselves into guilds. These professions were hereditary.
- The introduction of coinage provided a boost to trade. People settled near market centres to trade. These trade centres developed into cities. Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Mathura and Vaishali were important cities. Rivers were used as trade routes.
- Champa was an important river port. Sopara was an important seaport. The chief articles of trade were silk, muslin, ivory, jewellery and perfumes.

Thus, the political and economic developments of the sixth century BC paved the way for establishment of empires later in history.

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The Brihadrathas

According to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, the earliest dynasty of Magadha was founded by Brihadratha, the father of Jarasandha and the son of Vasu. According to the Ramayana, Vasu was the founder of Griveraja or Vasumati. In the Puranas, we come across a list of the kings of this dynasty. The chronology of the kings as given in the Puranas and the order of their succession may not be true.

The Jain writers refer to two early kings of Rajagriha named Samudra Vijaya and Gaya. The latter is stated to have been taught by the Jains and reached perfection. However, there is no corroboration of the facts stated by the Jain writers.

1.4.3 Republics in the Age of Bimbisara

Emergence of republics was one of the most startling features of the post-Vedic age. The concept of a republic state evolved from the Vedic concept of 'gana'—an assembly which was certainly a feature of a nomadic and migratory state engaged in a perpetual warfare for the possession of more and more cattle. Second important aspect associated with the Vedic 'ganas' was the absence of class distinctions. The members of a 'gana' were generally cattle-rearers who, at the time of war, took up the job of a soldier. The concept of 'gana' gave way to a more organized territorial and socially stratified 'gana' or 'sangha' of the post-Vedic period. The reason for the evolution of these republics was perhaps the retaliation and reaction against the way of life practiced during the later Vedic period. This evolution of the post-Vedic republics was a part of the larger movement, which emerged to eradicate the social menace of the later Vedic period. In terms of social regeneration, these republics did away with the class and sex distinctions and also with the expensive and superstitious religious ritual, which included *inter alia* a large scale destruction of the cattle.

As regarding politics, these republics wrote off the hereditary kingship, which bestowed virtually all the political rights to a small section of the rich and the king or the ruler, thus, keeping the masses out of the whole process. Under the brahmanical concept of kingship, a few classes ruled over the others. The leaders of these new republican movements based their ideologies on the nature of 'Vedic ganas' where there were no class or Varna distinctions, no dominance of a few classes over the others and, finally, no coercive authority of the king to extract more and more from the tribal peasants.

It is generally considered that Videha and Vaishali were the two oldest republics, which emerged as a result of the conversion of the monarchical form of government. But this explanation does not seem to be plausible. As opined by Romila Thapar, these republics seem to have been breakaway sections of their respective parent states. Hence, it may be surmised that the post-Vedic republics of Licchavis and Shakyas, were nothing but new distorted editions of the early Vedic tribal 'gana'. Rhys Davids mentions that a number of smaller republics flourished alongside these monarchies in the age of Bimbisara and Buddha. These were as follows:

- Vriji (Vajji) (Vaishali)
- Malla (Kushinagara)
- Shakya (Kapilavastu)

- Koliya (Devadaha and Ramagrama)
- Bhagga (Sumsumara hills)
- Buli (Allakappa)
- Kalama (Kesaputta)
- Moriyas (Pipphalivana)

The words in the parentheses are the names of the capital cities of the respective republics. Of these eight republics, Vrijiis and Mallas have already been discussed in the foregoing pages. A brief discussion of Shakyas, Koliya, Bhaggas and Moriyas is as follows:

- **Shakyas:** The capital of Shakyas was Kapilavastu, identified with Piprahwa, a small village situated in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh. Kapilavastu was the native place of Buddha. The rulers of Shakyas acknowledged the suzerainty of the king of Kosala and, like him, claimed to belong to the solar (Aditya) race and the Ikshvaku line.
- **Koliya:** Their capital was Ramagrama and Devadaha and their territories were separated from those of Shakyas by the river Rohini. It is mentioned in the Buddhist texts that once there was a scramble between the two sides over the water of Rohini and a bloody conflict was averted by the intervention of Buddha.
- **Bhaggas:** Bhagga state was dependent on the Vatsa kingdom. Its capital was situated in the Sumsumara hill along with Bulis and Kalamas. Though not much is known about these two republics, in all probability, Kalama was the native clan of philosopher Allara who taught the art of meditation to Buddha.
- **Moriyas:** Their capital was Pipphalivana and it was this tribe to which belonged the Mauryan rulers.

The four great kingdoms

The four major kingdoms, which emerged as the most powerful ones after the degeneration of the *Mahajanapadas* were as follows:

- Kosala
- Vatsa
- Avanti
- Magadha

1. Kosala

Kosala king Mahakosala was succeeded by his son Prasenjit or Prasenadi who was the contemporary of the Magadha king Bimbisara. By now, Kosala had grown huge in size making Kashi, Shakyas and Kalama its vassal states. Prasenjit was generally on friendly terms with Bimbisara and there were matrimonial alliances between the two families.

The other prominent events during the later years of Prasenjit included:

- Prasenjit's war with the Magadhan king Ajatashatru in which he was defeated badly.

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- While he was away, his throne was lost forever because of the revolt of his son Vidudhabha.
- After usurping the throne, Vidudhabha carried out a terrible vengeance on the Shakyas for sending the daughter of the son of a slave-woman to the harem of king Prasenjit. Vidudhabha himself was the progeny of this marriage.
- Prasenjit, after being defeated by Magadha, married Mallika who was the daughter of the chief of a tribe of garland makers.

2. Vatsa

Vatsa was extended on the southern boundary of Kosala. Its capital was Kasam (Kausambi). Here, king Satanika Parantapa was succeeded by his son Udayana (the legendary hero of *Svapnavasavadatta*). The commentary on *Dhammapada* says that Vasavadatta (princess of Avanti and daughter of Pradyota) became his queen. According to *Svapnavasavadatta*, Udayana had a wife named Padmavati who was the sister of Darsaka of Magadha. *Priyadarsika* says that he was married to Aranyaka (the daughter of Dridhivarma, the king of Anga). Ratnavali tells us the story of his love with Sagarika, the attendant of his chief queen Vasavadatta. He was a great king but did not have any successor who was worthy of royalty. After him the kingdom was annexed by the Avanti king.

3. Avanti

Chanda Pradyota was the Avanti king who flourished at the same time when Bimbisara ruled Magadha. Puranas called him 'Nyaya Varjita' i.e. destitute of good policy. He waged wars against Udayana, (the king of Vatsa) and also against King Pushkarashirin of Taxila.

4. Magadha

The *Mahajanapada* Magadha has been identified with the present day Patna and Gaya districts. It was generally considered to be out of the place of the Aryan culture in the Vedic, the Brahmana and the Sutra periods. It came into prominence mainly under the rule of Haryankas. It was perhaps because of a more systematically organized monarchy under the Haryankas that they were able to build a formidable empire after liquidating some other powerful states. Before discussing the political history of Magadha in detail, let us first study the Achaemenid attacks in the north western fringe of the Indian subcontinent.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

20. Identify the factors that helped Magadha emerge as a powerful state in the Gangetic plains.
21. What were the cultural conditions that aided the Magadh kingdom?
22. What was the root to evolution of republics?
23. Name the tribe that gave birth to the Mauryans.

1.4.4 Dynasties of Magadha

Haryanka-Kula—Bimbisara

The first politically significant family that ruled Magadha was the family of Brihadratha, which came to an end in the 6th century BC and was succeeded by the Haryanka-Kula of the Haryanka family. Bimbisara was the king who brought Magadha on the path of conquests and aggrandizement, which stopped only after the renunciation of violence by Ashoka after the Kalinga episode. Though he was not the founder of the dynasty, he certainly was the first prominent ruler of Magadha. Also known as 'Seniya' (or Srenika), he was anointed by his father Bhattiya to the royal throne of Magadha when he was fifteen years old. Through his ability to successfully make matrimonial alliances, his military capability and shrewd diplomacy, he ruled successfully for around five decades. But at the far end of his life, he was betrayed by his own son who brought about his downfall.

One prominent example of his shrewd diplomacy was the turning down, though politely, of the request of help by Pushkarashirin of Taxila against Pradyota of Avanti. When Pradyota was suffering from jaundice, he sent his personal physician Jivaka to treat him. His military might was exemplified by his conquest and occupation of Anga. He defeated the ruler of Anga (Brahmadatta) and annexed the state. He appointed Kunika (Ajatashatru) as the governor of the newly conquered state. He is said to have established his authority over some republics also.

Bimbisara went in for a number of matrimonial alliances with other ruling houses. These matrimonial alliances not only strengthened his political position, but also made the most powerful contemporaries like Prasenadi and Chetaka his friendly acquaintances. Though, according to *Mahavagga*, he had 500 wives, but that seems a little conjectural to approve of it. The important matrimonial relations of Bimbisara were as follows.

- **Khema:** She was the chief consort of Bimbisara and was the daughter of the king of Madra in central Punjab.
- **Kosaladevi:** She was the sister of Prasenjit, the Kosala king. This marriage took place as a result of the arrangement under which both Prasenjit and Bimbisara married each other's sisters.
- **Chellana:** Chellana was the daughter of the Licchavi chief Chetaka. She was the mother of Ajatashatru. Chellana is sometimes also identified with Vaidehi Vasavi who used to carry food for Bimbisara when he was imprisoned by his son.

The Kosalan wife of Bimbisara brought a Kosi village, which became the bone of contention in the next generation. Both the Buddhist and Jain scriptures mention Bimbisara as a follower of their respective sects. According to Jain canons, he frequently visited Mahavira with utmost devotion. His wife Chellana, who hailed from Vaishali, influenced him to a great extent to follow Mahavira and accept his doctrines. As far as Buddhism is concerned, the relevant pieces of literature suggest that Bimbisara had a very friendly and intimate relationship with Buddha. The king is said to have met Gautama before he attained Buddhahood and was so impressed

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by the latter that he invited Gautama to become a chief. After attaining *buddhabhāva* (state of perfect enlightenment) when Gautama came to Girivraja, Bimbisara came out for his reception and welcomed him. He is also said to have understood his doctrines. Bimbisara made arrangements for the entertainment of Buddha and his disciples in his palace and served them food with his own hands. Soon after, he donated a 'bamboo grove' to the sangha. He also appointed his physician Jivaka to attend to Buddha's order. He is said to have made a proclamation that Buddha and the members of his order, when carried across the Ganga, should not be asked to pay the ferry charges.

Though not much is known about the administrative hierarchy of Bimbisara, the *Vinaya Pitaka* says that he had a firm control over his ministers. The high officers called 'Rajabhata' were divided into several classes, including the following:

- **Sabatthaka:** He was the officer in-charge of the general affairs.
- **Senanayaka Mahamatthas:** They were the army generals.
- **Voharika Mahamatthas:** They were the judges. The general punishments in vogue against offences included imprisonment, branding, beheading, tearing out the tongue, and breaking ribs.
- **Gramabhojaka or Gramakuta:** It was an important class of officials under Bimbisara who were responsible for collecting the tax levied on the produce.

The provincial administration was in its rudimentary stage. Only the 'gramikas', the village headmen on whom the king relied heavily, are mentioned. They are said to have assembled in the capital from 80,000 villages of the realm.

Bimbisara was murdered by his son Ajatashatru, and the latter ascended the throne under a volatile condition. Ajatashatru soon got engaged in wars with the Kosala and the Licchavis and defeated them. But, still, Avanti was in contention for supremacy.

Udayin

Though the Puranas and the *Svapnavasavadatta* generally mentions Darsaka as the successor of Ajatashatru, the Pali and Jain texts refer to Udayin or Udayabhadra, born of Padmavati, as the successor who served as the viceroy of Champa during his father's lifetime. He converted the fortress of Pataliputra, which was built by his father during the war against Vaishali, into a large city and made it his capital (according to *Parishishthaparvan*) in the fourth year of his reign. He was an enemy of Avanti. Palaka, the contemporary ruler of Avanti, had already annexed Vatsa and so the two kingdoms reached a state of being face to face with each other.

The history of the successors of Udayin is quite nebulous. According to *Puranas*, Nandivardhana and Mahanandi were the successors while the *Ceylonese* chronicles refer to Anuradha, Manda and Nagadasaka. *Anguttara Nikaya* mentions only Munda among the successors of Udayin. All these kings had committed parricide and, so people threw the dynasty out and placed Sisunaga, the Magadhan viceroy, on the throne. Thus was laid the foundation of the line of Sisunaga.

Sisunagas

The Sisunagas were the kings of the line of Sisunaga and ruled between 413 and 345 BC. Sisunaga made Vaishali the second seat, which ultimately became his capital. The most important event of the reign of Sisunaga was the destruction of the glory of Avanti. He defeated the last Avanti king Avantivardhana. After this, Aryaka was placed on the throne of Ujjain.

Sisunaga was succeeded by his son Kalashoka (Ceylonese chronicles) or Kakavarna (Puranas). He summoned the second Buddhist council of Vaishali in 386 BC. He also transferred his capital to Pataliputra from Vaishali. He, according to the Ceylonese chronicles, ruled for 28 years. Bana in his *Harshacharita* mentions that he was murdered by the first of the Nandas whose name was Ugrasena (according to *Mahabodhi Vamsa*).

The Nandas

Ugrasena has been identified as Mahapadma. The ancestry of Mahapadma is not known, though the Puranas describe him as the son of a Sudra woman. The Jain canons call him the son of a courtesan by a barber. Curtius, the Greek writer, describes Mahapadma as the son of a barber. He impressed the queen of Magadha through his looks and charms and in collusion with the queen, he killed the king and assumed the guardianship of his children only to liquidate them later. He then took up the royal authority.

Mahapadma has been called as an 'ekarat' by the Puranas who overthrew all the dynasties of northern India. These included Ikshvaku, Panchalas, Kasis, Haihays, Kalinga Asmaka, Kurus, Maithilas, and Surasen. In the south, his control extended beyond Kalinga, to a city on the banks of Godavari, known as Naunanda Dhera. It was, perhaps, the southernmost limit of the Nanda dominions. The Puranas also compare him with Parashurama, the destroyer of the Kshatriyas because of his war-like activities.

According to the Puranas, Mahapadma was succeeded by his eight sons. The last of the Nanda kings was Dhanananda. Dhanananda was the contemporary of Alexander and was known to the Greek writers as 'Agrammes' or 'Xandrames', the mightiest king beyond the Beas. The Nandas were finally overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya with the help of Kautilya.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

24. What was the major policy of Bimbisara for expansion?
25. Under which king did Vaishali become the capital?

1.5 SALIENT FEATURES OF ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

The ancient Indian political ideas were much influenced by the general conditions prevailing in the country. Multiplicity of states and existence of despotic monarchy

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and republican systems in different states, offered a wide and rich field for investigation into different institutions, laws and customs prevalent in various parts of the country. All these factors sowed the seeds of political speculation in the ancient Indian political thoughts and institutions, which had certain distinct features. Some of the prominent features are as follows:

(i) Continuity

An important feature of Indian political thought is its continuity. Some scholars have contended that the later political thinkers merely reproduced the treatises of the earlier thinkers. This is not acceptable, as B. A. Saletore states it would be 'incorrect to maintain that the ancient theorists merely echoed one another; on the other hand they carefully maintained what their predecessors had said in regard to political thought, recorded wherever necessary divergent opinions and thereby added to the totality and continuity of the subject. Their conservatism was by itself one of the factors which enable our subject to possess a continuity of its own.'

(ii) Religion and ethics

The ancient thought was intimately linked with religion and ethics as well as the development of the moral standard of the people. Though the offices of the king and priest were kept separate, yet religion occupied a position of prominence. The king and the priests never worked at cross purposes and their relations were based on mutual help and co-operation. As Beni Prasad said, 'The conflict between the secular and religious powers which raged in medieval Europe and gave rise to a good deal of political theory, had no counterpart in ancient India.' He asserted that the relations between the king and the priest were generally very smooth and cordial.

(iii) Realistic and practical character

Despite the religious and moral undertone, the political thought of ancient India was intensely realistic and practical in character. The political ideas of the Hindus were simple and laid down rules of policy, which were founded upon the accumulated wisdom of past masters that the rulers were expected to follow.

(iv) Monarchical states

The political ideas were to a large extent influenced by the monarchical states that were predominant, mostly in northern India.

(v) Conservative attitude

The Hindu political thought was often conservative. It justified caste system and inferior rank of *Sudras*. The ancient political thinkers were unprogressive and not prepared to accept any dynamic change.

(vi) Hindu habit of synthesis

In ancient India, politics was intimately linked with other subjects and was not treated as an isolated subject of study. It was intimately linked with other branches of human activities. This was in keeping with the Hindu habit of synthesis and all embracing idea of the state.

(vii) Dominant position in the society

A notably feature of ancient political thought is that the priestly and ruling classes occupied a dominant position in the society. However, later on the priestly class was not given this status and in *Arthashastra*, Kautilya excluded them from the list of component factors (*angas*) of government (*rajayam*).

(viii) Didactic and destructive

Ancient thought is largely didactic or instructive, ideological and practical. The writings of the ancient thinkers were mostly treaties on ethics and state administration.

Thus, one finds that ancient Indian political thought had some distinct features of its own and it would be wrong to say that political thought did not make any significant progress during the ancient times.

One can trace the development of ancient Indian political ideas in *Rigveda Samhita*, the earliest literary works of Indo-Aryans and the famous epic Mahabharata. In the Mahabharata, Sri Krishna and Bhishma are described as great political philosophers and sages of all time to come. In fact, Sri Krishna is considered to be an Avatar (an incarnate God) and his message is well described in the famous Bhagavad Gita. Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa is the author of the Mahabharata and hence it is pertinent to study his writings in order to know ancient Hindu political philosophy. The Mahabharata is a legend, but it vividly described the nature of ancient Indian polity.

1.5.1 Political Philosophy as Enshrined in Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Vedanta

The tradition of political thinking starts with the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Different theories of the nature of the state were formed and different forms of states have been experimented with over time. The historical development of political ideas find that the concept of *Swaraj*, self government, constantly inspired the mind. From the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, through the writings of Jnaneshwara and Shivaji, to the political ideas of Tilak, Aurobindo, and Gandhi, *Swaraj* has been constantly discussed.

Ancient Indian political thought has been significantly represented by the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The political thought found in the great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana is more complex and comprehensive. The *Manusmriti*, along with other *smritis*, dealt with every political institutions and the entire panorama of human life vertically and horizontally. The vertical perspective led to the concept of the state. The horizontal perspective led to the concept of *Dharma*. Both these concepts were supported equally by philosophy and science. Therefore; it is no wonder that the contemporary Indian political thinkers have unanimously appreciated Raj Dharma as the sound basis of polity.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

26. What influenced the ancient Indian political ideas?
27. Where can one trace the development of ancient Indian political ideas?

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1.6 SUMMARY

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- The Indus Valley Civilization also called Harappan Civilization, flourished from about 3,000 BC to 1,500 BC.
- Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Lothal and Ropar were some of the important sites of the Indus Valley Civilization.
- In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhaldas Bannerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the European had flourished in India.
- Maximum remains of the Indus Valley Civilization have been found in the valley of the river Indus, from where the civilization derives its name.
- The Harappan Civilization was spread across Punjab and Sindh, in the valleys of North-western frontiers mainly Kathiawad, Rajasthan and Doab.
- The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton. They wore cotton and woollen clothes.
- Agriculture being the chief occupation, the Indus people used to domesticate buffaloes, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, oxen, etc. The people also earned their living by domestication of animals, which were also helpful in agriculture.
- Next to agriculture, pottery seems to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel.
- The shape of the city was rectangular. The roads crossed each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block, there was a network of narrow lanes.
- At Mohenjo-daro, which means 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi, the most remarkable feature was the Great Bath. It was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres.
- Like their contemporaries, the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people, the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea.
- Although the Indus Valley Civilization declined and disappeared, its influence on the Indian culture remains.
- The worship of the mother goddess in image form as the symbol of female power or shakti was introduced in the Later Vedic Age.
- The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and were capable of making beautiful and attractive idols. The artists worked on great detailing to achieve the right facial expressions of the idols. The idol of the Tribhangi dancer is an excellent example.
- Seals were prepared from different kinds of stones, metals, clay and ivory.

- The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were familiar with the art of writing. Their script was symbolic in character.
- The Indus Valley people were familiar with the art of metallurgy, drawing, pot making and manufacturing statues.
- In the Saraswati valley, the representative of the post-Harappan era is the pottery from the Cemetery H at Harappa.
- The Aryans initially settled in the Sapta-Sindhu region that covered Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh, Kabul and Gandhara (Kandhar). The Aryans probably came from the steppes to the North and East of the Caspian Sea.
- The information about the early Aryans is based on the excavations at Bhagwanpura in Haryana and three other sites in Punjab, which have revealed many pottery pieces dating from 1,500 BC to 1,000 BC.
- Since the main source of information about the Aryans is the Vedic literature, this period is also called the Vedic Age.
- The Early Vedic period extends from 1,500 BC to 1,000 BC.
- The Aryans first settled in the region of Punjab. This is proved by the fact that the rivers Kuruman, Kabul and the other western tributaries of the Indus are mentioned in the Rig Veda.
- The Indo-Aryans settled in the region of the waning Indus Valley Civilization, i.e., across the river Indus.
- The agriculture was the chief occupation of the Aryans. They also reared animals. Oxen, horses, dogs, goats and sheep were mainly domesticated. by them and they considered cow to be pious and important.
- The early Vedic society consisted of four varnas—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. There was no complication in the varna system. The basis of varna was occupation rather than birth in the beginning.
- By the later Vedic Age, the Aryan tribes or janas, had moved further into the Ganga Valley. As these janas grew in size and power, they came to be known as janapadas (literally meaning the foothold of tribe).
- Ancient Buddhist texts make frequent reference to the sixteen great kingdoms and republics which had evolved and flourished in the northern/north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent before the rise of Buddhism in India.
- Some republican or oligarchic states mentioned were the Shakyas of Kapilavastu, the Bhaggas of Surhsumara Hill, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Mallas of Pava and the Mallas of Kusinara to name a few. Emergence of republics was one of the most startling features of the Post-Vedic age.
- The concept of republican state evolved from the Vedic 'gana'—an assembly which was certainly a feature of a nomadic and migratory state engaged in a perpetual warfare for the possession of more and more cattle. Second important aspect associated with the Vedic 'ganas' was the absence of class distinctions.

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- Most of the principalities in the trans-Beas region were small monarchies and republics, and Madra, Kamboja and Gandhara were the most important among them. None of them, though, had the power to weld the various warring states like Mahapadma Nanda, who successfully did so in the east. Hence, these north western frontier states proved to be the natural prey to the mighty Achaemenids who, by then, had become quite powerful in Persia.
- Both Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were great warriors, strategists and shrewd diplomats. These two laid the foundation of Magadha as a Mahajanapada, which ultimately became an empire under the Nandas.
- Thus, the various factors which contributed towards the strong foothold of the empire were—ambitious rulers, geographical location, land fertility, natural resources, liberal cultural tradition and trading activities.
- The ancient Indian political ideas were much influenced by the general conditions prevailing in the country. Multiplicity of states and existence of despotic monarchy and republican systems in different states, offered a wide and rich field for investigation into different institutions, laws and customs prevalent in various parts of the country.
- A notably feature of ancient political thought is that the priestly and ruling classes occupied a dominant position in the society.
- The tradition of political thinking starts with the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Different theories of the nature of the state were formed and different forms of states have been experimented with over time.

1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Post-Harappan era:** The period that followed after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization and lasted till 75 BC is called the post-Harappan era.
- **Cemetery H culture:** The culture named after the discovery of a large cemetery filled with painted burial urns of the late Harappan period is called the cemetery H culture.
- **Dasyus:** Dasyus is the title given to the natives of the south after the Aryan invasion.
- **Sabha:** A sabha is a small committee of selected elders.
- **Samiti:** A samiti is a general assembly of the whole tribe.
- **Guilds:** A guild is a society of people with similar jobs, interests or aims.
- **Rajasuya:** A sacrifice performed in order to bestow supreme power on the king is called rajasuya.
- **Rapurohita:** A person who performed elaborate rituals and gave advice to the king is a rapurohita.
- **Senani:** An official who was responsible for the expansion of the kingdom and conceptualizing war strategies is called a senani.

- **Devadasi system:** Devadasi system is a religious practice in parts of southern India, including Andhra Pradesh, whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple.
- **Mahajanapadas:** Mahajanapadas are the sixteen monarchies and ‘republics’ that stretched across the Indo-Gangetic plains from modern-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh in the sixth century BC, prior to and during the rise of Buddhism in India. They represent a transition from a semi-nomadic tribal society to an agrarian-based society with a vast network of trade and a highly-organized political structure.
- **Vedic ganas:** A social structure where there is no class or Varna distinctions and no dominance of a few classes over the others is a vedic gana.
- **Atreya brahman:** The Atreya brahman is the brahman of the Shakala shakha of the Rig Veda, an ancient Indian collection of sacred hymns. This work, according to the tradition is ascribed to Mahidasa Atreya.
- **Republic:** A form of government where an elected group of people were the rulers is a republic.
- **Puranas:** Puranas are sacred texts of Hinduism that describe the history of the universe and Hindu philosophy.

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1.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhaldas Bannerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the European had flourished in India.
2. The principle characteristic of the Harappan civilization was its urban nature. That urbanization grew on the basis of agricultural surplus which arose out of an extremely favourable weather condition and river irrigation. It enabled the civilizational centres to trade with distant lands up to Egypt and Mesopotamia.
3. The chief crops the Harappans cultivated were wheat, barley, cotton, maize and millet. They also grew fruits and vegetables.
4. That trade, both by land and sea, thrived in the Harappan society, can be confirmed from the fact that a number of seals of Indus origin have been found at various sites in Mesopotamia (Sumer). Most of the seals are rectangular but some are circular in shape. Some of them have a knob at the back, which contains a hole. It is believed that different guilds or individual merchants and traders used these seals for stamping their consignments.
5. The Harappans had several sources of entertainment. Chess was the favourite game of its citizens. Discovery of rattles, whistles, sound-creating elephant and clay toys points towards the presence of several varieties of toys. Hunting, cock fighting and music were the chief sources of entertainment.

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6. The strongest evidence to prove that Harappans worshiped nature are the coins which bore inscriptions of tree and mother goddess. There are also evidences to prove that sun and rivers were worshiped.
7. Evidences from Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Kalibanga, and Lothal prove that towns had broad roads which cut each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. The cities had a good drainage system and there were lights on roads. Hence, it is called the planned ancient city.
8. A huge structure, almost 70 metres long and over 23 metres wide with walls about 1.5 metres thick has been excavated in Mohenjo-daro. It has twenty pillars made of burnt bricks, arranged in four rows of five each. Archaeologists believe that this great hall may have been used as an assembly hall, a prayer hall or as a hall for cultural shows.
9. The most commonly accepted theory is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or change in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration. Some historians are of the opinion that epidemics or fire destroyed the cities. Others believe that foreign invasions (probably of the Aryans) led to its decline. Yet another theory is that ecological changes due to deforestation led to the land becoming dry and uninhabitable.
10. The Aryans first settled in the area around the Indus and its tributaries, between 1500 BC and 1000 BC. They named this place 'Brahmavarta' or 'Land of the Vedic Period Gods'. As their number increased, and they moved eastward and settled in the Ganga-Yamuna plains. They named the region 'Aryavarta' or 'Land of the Aryans'.
11. Several villages made a Vish. The highest officer of the Vish was called Vishpati.
12. Guilds are organizations of artisans and craftsmen producing goods of fine quality. The guilds regulated prices of goods.
13. Archaeological sources suggest barter system was discontinued and coins were used for trade transactions.
14. The position of women also began to deteriorate and they were thought to be inferior to men. They were not allowed to read Vedic literature. Their main duty was to look after the house.
15. Gotra signified descent from a common ancestor and marriages could not take place between couples belonging to the same genealogy.
16. The mahajanapadas had two kinds of political systems. They were either republics or monarchies. A republican mahajanapada was ruled by a group of people elected by the people of that tribe. There was no hereditary ruler. The Sakya mahajanapada, for example, was an important republic. The other was a monarchical system. The king ruled according to his own wish. After his death, his son succeeded him to the throne. Magadha, for example, was a monarchical mahajanapada.

17. Although there has not been enough evidence concerning the mahajanpadas, according to important Buddhist and Jain texts there were sixteen mahajanapadas namely Anga, Magadh, Kashi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Vatsa, Chedi, Kuru, Surasena, Panchal, Matsya (Maccha), Avanti, Ashmak, Gandhara, and Kambhoj.
18. The powerful republics of this period included the Shakya, Lichchavi, Videha, Vajji and Malla.
19. Though there were seven types of courts, the king was the chief justice of the judiciary.
20. Magadha had many geographical advantages, which helped to make it strong and powerful in comparison to other kingdoms. The Gangetic plain had a very fertile soil. The dense forests yielded timber and were rich in iron ore deposits. The river and its ports helped inland trade with other cities. Thus, both agriculture and trade flourished which provided the king with high revenues. This, in turn, allowed the king to maintain a large army and protect his territories.
21. Culturally Magadha, being situated in the eastern part of India, had a more proper assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements rather than the usual coercion of the latter by the former. The reason for this assimilation was that by the time Brahmanism reached the eastern fringe, it had lost the impact making strength and so liberal traditions could be accommodated to a great extent in Magadha. These traditions were further strengthened by the heterodox sects like Jainism and Buddhism.
22. The concept of a republic state evolved from the Vedic concept of 'gana'—an assembly which was certainly a feature of a nomadic and migratory state engaged in a perpetual warfare for the possession of more and more cattle. The gana system during the Vedic period had no class or varna distinctions, no dominance of a few classes over the others and, finally, no coercive authority of the king to extract more and more from the tribal peasants.
23. Mauryan rulers originated from the Moriya tribe. Their capital was Pippalivana.
24. To expand his territory, Bimbisara went in for several matrimonial alliances. According to sources and historians, Bimbisara had three wives.
25. Vaishali became the capital under Sisunaga who ruled between 413 and 345 BC.
26. The ancient Indian political ideas were much influenced by the general conditions prevailing in the country. Multiplicity of states and existence of despotic monarchy and republican systems in different states, offered a wide and rich field for investigation into different institutions, laws and customs prevalent in various parts of the country.
27. One can trace the development of ancient Indian political ideas in *Rigveda Samhita*, the earliest literary works of Indo-Aryans and the famous epic Mahabharata.

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1.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the trade practices that were prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization?
2. What were the chief sources of entertainment of the Indus Valley people?
3. Write a note on the settlement patterns and town planning of the Indus Valley people.
4. What were the causes for the decline of the Indus Valley civilization?
5. Write a note on post-Harappan traditions.
6. What is the earliest source of information about the Aryans?
7. State the technological and economic development during the post-Vedic period
8. How was the early Vedic social structure?
9. What were the major occupations of Aryans in the early Vedic period?
10. What are the varnas? How are they classified?
11. How did the caste system become so rigid in the later Vedic period?
12. List the important republics of the sixth century BC.
13. State the main feature of the administrative system of the republics.
14. Trace the rise of Magadha under the leadership of Bimbisara.
15. Write a note on Ajatashatru's rise to power.
16. What are the political philosophies enshrined in Bhagvad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Vedanta.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the extent of the Indus Valley Civilization.
2. Explain the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley people.
3. Describe the political and social structure of the Aryans.
4. Describe the period that followed the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization.
5. Discuss the transition from tribal polity to state structure in India.
6. Compare the polity during the early Vedic and later Vedic periods.
7. Explain the settlement patterns of the early Vedic times.
8. Describe the technological and economic development prevalent during the early Vedic times.
9. Discuss the social stratification and political relations during the Early Vedic times.
10. Explain the emergence of the caste system.
11. Discuss the settlement patterns in the Post-Vedic period.

12. What were the political conditions at the beginning of Sixth century BC in India?
13. Discuss the emergence and rise of mahajanapadas.
14. How did the Harayana Kula manage to create a unified kingdom? Elaborate.
15. Give a detailed list of all the reasons responsible for the expansion of the Magadh kingdom.
16. Discuss the salient features of the ancient Indian political thought.

NOTES

1.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Political Philosophies: The Mahabharata and The Ramayana
 - 2.2.1 Importance of the State and the Science of Politics: *Dandniti*
 - 2.2.2 Origin of the State
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 - 2.2.4 The Morals in Politics: *Dharma*
 - 2.2.5 The Concept of an Ideal State
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- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will give you a comprehensive and clear understanding of the great Indian classics, such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedas. It will provide a detailed insight into the political ideas in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Both these epics have a marvellous combination of myths and facts and Gods and humans. These books act as the foundation of ancient Indian political thought that has influenced the polity of India in different times across different ages.

The Mahabharata states how a king should behave as his subjects consider him an embodiment of virtue. The Ramayana discusses the concept of an ideal state. Both these epics are full of stories and legends of Gods, demons and mortals.

In the Mahabharata, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are described. According to the *Gita*, a person should do his share of work and not have any expectations as each person gets what he deserves and not what he desires. Bhagavad Gita is an assimilation of the lessons that were given by Shri Krishna to Arjuna during the war of Mahabharata when the latter got anxious on seeing his family on the enemy side.

Indian political thought that originated in Hindu polity gradually developed in contemporary times and now its continuance is based upon neo-Vedanta, a modern version of the ancient Vedanta philosophy.

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2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the political philosophies of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana
- Describe the functions of the king and his government as presented in the epics
- Outline the concept of an ideal state in ancient India
- Analyse the political philosophies of the Bhagavad Gita and *Vedanta*
- Assess the role of the *varna* system in social stratification in India

2.2 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES: THE MAHABHARATA AND THE RAMAYANA

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two epics comprising a combination of myths and mysticism. They present the world of the intra-cosmic Gods and human beings. Both these two ancient Sanskrit texts refer to wars and the period of relative uncertainty in which power in all its forms had come to plague mankind. They are regarded as the cornerstones of Hindu religion and culture and influence the world view since they affect all aspects of the political and social norms that exist in India. The political ideas that are enshrined in both the epics stress on certain political principles that man needs to conform to in order to transcend beyond the sordid condition of mankind. Both these epics do not only affect all aspects of the political and social norms that exist in India but also form the foundation of the ancient Indian political thought, which has influenced the polity in India across different ages and time.

In the Ramayana, Rama is the first king around whom a whole new concept of life, society and politics emerges. It was composed by Valmiki in twenty-four thousand verses, divided into seven books around 550 BC. The central theme was religious mores influencing and shaping all aspects of the Indian society. Vyasa's Mahabharata, on the other hand, is an account of Bhishma, the great Kuru sage and warrior's, discourse to Yudhisthira which is contained in the first two sections of *Shanti Parva*. The discourse dwells on the duties of the king and the obligations of his subjects. It provides a theory of the state, which is remarkable for that age as it deals with many fundamental questions. Some of them are as follows:

- The importance and science of politics
- Origin of state
- Functions of the government
- Ideal state
- Obligations of the subjects towards the state

It is not surprising that the most profound body of political ideas which has influenced the Indian society and politics is from this ancient literature.

2.2.1 Importance of the State and the Science of Politics: *Dandniti*

The ancient literature of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata asserts the importance of politics as a tool for righteousness to exist in the public life. That is why, politics is important. Without it, righteousness is not possible. In fact, the absence of politics in the society would result in a conflict of wills and anarchy, a situation that all political writers of the period dread.

The importance of politics in a state is to assert and practise righteousness and not to trespass the differences beyond their limits. It is through this righteousness that people would get the chance to experience divinity. Therefore, the main purpose of power which is to be exercised by the king is to protect the good and punish the wicked. The highest duty of the king is to protect his subjects and save them from injury with compassion.

For the good to live a life of calm without the fear of the wicked, the policy of chastisements has to be adopted. That is *dandniti*—the policy of punishment, which prevents any kind of mischief in the society. It is in this sense that the science of punishment acts as a means to achieve the higher ends, that of individual security and social order.

The main concern of Vyasa in Mahabharata was not only what men ought to do but also the best way to create order that would facilitate pursuit of happiness for the individual and finally lead to supreme bliss.

2.2.2 Origin of the State

The ancient literature of Mahabharata talks about the state of nature prior to the origin of the state. In the state of nature there was no sovereignty, no king, no rules or law to chastise. The state of nature was anarchical as there was lawlessness, with men becoming lustful and greedy and the mighty ruling over the weak. The destiny for many was destruction.

The state originated from the state of nature, so that the king could establish *dharma*, i.e., righteousness. In other words, the state emerges to protect the weak but comes with the authority of divine grace. This concept has a parallel with the divine origin of the state but differs in the sense that only good kings are the representatives of God and they remain good by discharging their obligation towards the people according to the concept of Indian political thought.

However, in Mahabharata the concept of sovereign power is missing since the state is the outcome of human effort and divine intervention. Also, it can regulate but not dominate others who owe their origin to different sources while in Hobbes the protection of the weak is missing and state becomes Leviathan.

Since the state came into existence to protect the weak, the state is good as long as it does that. The state can only do that when the king performs his duties according to *dharma*, otherwise he would invite entry into hell and this notion supposedly served as a great deterrent. Sin needs to be restrained so that

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righteousness can be maintained. The origin of the state in a way depicts the existence of the king to maintain peace and *dharma* on the earth.

2.2.3 Kingship: Functions of the Government

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The king represents the state and therefore the functions of the government should be carried out by him. The two texts have given a treatise on the role of the king as the main functionary of the government and is the most elaborate political concept, which has been discussed in both the epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The code of conduct for the king with regard to punishment during the times of distress has been given in the *Rajadharma*. It goes beyond the science of administering the kingdom as he denotes the security in the kingdom. The need for a true king who follows the *rajadharma* has been given more importance than that of having a personal family.

Kingship in ancient India may be termed as benevolent, paternalistic autocracy bound down by many instructions of service to the people. The king was considered to be a servant of the people, seeking to promote the welfare of his subjects. He was supposed to concentrate on the welfare of all sections of people in the society with compassion. He, in fact, represented the state, its security, administration as well as the welfare policies and decision-making.

The main functions of the government are defined in the form of six-fold requirements, which the king needs to carry out and are mentioned as follows:

- Peace with a stronger enemy
- War with the one having matching strength
- Invading the dominions of weaker rulers
- Halting and asking for protection if one is weak
- Creating dissensions and differences among the chief officers of the enemy
- Defense of the kingdom by seeking alliances and building forts

Vyasa mentions that an intelligent king should avoid war for the acquisition of territory. Instead, he should do it through conciliation, gifts and disunion. He further illustrates that the king represents the security of all when he performs his duties well. He has to ensure that there is no fear of any kind of loot or robbery of property, sons, daughters, women, vehicle, jewellery, clothing, houses and wealth.

By maintaining righteousness, the king is respecting the divinity and paying off his debt. The king should treat his subjects like a mother treats her child. He should forsake what is dear to him for the benefit of his people. He should always try to ascertain the weakness of his foes, conceal his own weakness, and keep his own counsels and administer justice. He should try to keep a balance between mildness and strictness.

Since the king represents the institutions of kingship and the state, therefore, he needs to embody the best of qualities, such as intellect, renunciation, awareness of the weaknesses of the enemies, good looks, capacity to be fair and just to all the sub-sections, swiftness of decision making, gentle in behaviour, industrious, farsightedness, indifference to self-pride and control over anger.

The Mahabharata preaches the paternalism of the king because he is expected to deploy secret and trusted agents to ascertain the views of his subjects about his conduct, actions and reputation. It essentially maintains that the tyrannical tendencies of the king can best be curbed by moral, spiritual and religious sanctions.

The main function of a king is to protect, help in the prosperity and maintain righteousness (*dharma*) through impartial justice. He should not act according to his personal likes or dislikes but only according to the wishes of the people. Like Rama in the Ramayana who laid the foundations for social morality, the king was expected to devote his life to the service and welfare of the subjects of his state.

The Mahabharata further states how a king is supposed to behave as he should not indulge in grief and devote himself to the truth. He should have the following qualities:

- Humility
- Self-restrain
- Righteousness
- Handsome
- Ability to control passion
- Modesty
- Ability to ascertain the weakness of his foes
- Ability to conceal his own weakness
- Ability to keep his own counsels
- Ability to administer justice

He should try to keep a balance between mildness and strictness so that he is regarded with respect and not taken as a tyrannical ruler.

The king should levy taxes according to the scriptures or else he will prove himself wrong. He should not try to fill the treasury through any acts of unrighteousness. He should exterminate robbers from his kingdom and never pardon any culprit with the rod of chastisement. He should try to re-compensate any losses born of the acts of robbery from his own treasury or wealth that is obtained from his dependents.

The king should take note of the sales and purchases, state of the roads, food and clothing, artisans and traders in accordance with the laws. He should levy taxes on them after ascertaining the labour required to produce these things and services. The taxes should not be so high as to burden the people but levied in such a way that both the labourers as well as the person who produces the article can share the profits.

One becomes a king for acting righteously and, thus, is entitled to be called 'the protector of the world'. If he engages in righteous actions, he deserves to occupy the position of God. However, if his acts are unrighteous, he will sink to hell. Therefore, he should be careful not to employ people who are covetous or foolish. All subjects survive upon righteousness; while the righteousness, in turn, rests upon the king.

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The king should be an embodiment of virtue whose acts are driven by a righteous and gracious soul. It is his duty to chastise the unrighteousness and if he fails to do so, the Gods may abandon his mansion and that in turn brings ignominy and bad luck. As the sage embodies righteousness on earth, he should be the personification of *dharma*; while the king who is unrighteous is called *vrishala*.

Therefore, it has been observed that the king decides the course of life of his subjects while the course of the life of the king is in turn decided by the priests. This depicts the control of the forces of knowledge and reason over the forces of physical power. Any dereliction of duty would invite so many punishments for the king during and after his life that following the path of *dharma* was the only course left for him. *Dharma*, it was said, would uphold all the creatures.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Why is politics an important area of study?
2. What is *dandniti*?
3. Who represents the state?

2.2.4 The Morals in Politics: *Dharma*

The concept of *dharma* is a fundamental principle, which almost totally defined the polity in ancient India. The Sanskrit word '*dharma*' has several connotations, which are mostly of ethical nature. It is derived from the root word, *dhr*, which literally means to uphold, sustain and maintain a thing in its pure being. *Dharma* can be translated as right action, right conduct, virtue and moral law. The people believed in the concept of *dharma* as the eternal truth which represents both the moral law and righteous order. It was believed that *dharma* existed on the earth due to the king and had the presence of morality that prevented immoral acts such as murder.

The most enduring theme in Ramayana was that of *dharma*, which has been reinforced in the two pivotal events: the obedience of Rama to go for an exile and banishing his wife Sita when the citizens of Ayodha question her chastity. Both these steps were meant to maintain the moral order. Mahabharata focusses on the loss and re-establishment of *dharma* on earth. The Kurukshetra war symbolized a fight between the forces of *dharma* as represented by the Pandavas and *adharma*, the opposite, as represented by the Kauravas.

According to the Mahabharata, there are stages of *dharma* which an individual has to perform in accordance with the social class that he is born in and various stages of social life and other duties and responsibilities to be fulfilled. Such stages are *asramadharma* (duties of a person in different stages of social life); *rajadharma* (duties of a king to his kingdom); *kuladharma* (duties for the family) and *stridharma* (the duties of women).

After analysing the greatest epics, the concept of *dharma* can be described as the foundation of everything from the universal to the individual. It can be considered as the very foundation to maintain and nurture life. It is through the

observance of *dharma* that an individual not only fulfills his duties to the universe at large and the society but also to himself and divinity throughout his lifetime.

2.2.5 The Concept of an Ideal State

The notion of an ideal state has been given its clearest expression by Valmiki in the epic Ramayana, which has become the reference point for all subsequent Indian political thought. Vyasa in Mahabharata talks about a welfare state as it defines a proactive role for the state so that social harmony can be maintained. In other words, the two epics have dwelt on the concept of an Ideal state as one of the political ideas to define ancient Indian political thought.

In the kingdom of Ramayana, there is *Dharmarajya*, which stands for the righteous kingdom of Ayodhya. It gives a majestic description of an ideal state which is called *Ram Rajya*, where peace, prosperity and tranquillity reigned since there was no one to challenge the seat of Ayodhya. In fact, the literal meaning of Ayodhya means the land without wars.

The ideal state is also reflected in the attitude of the ruler, where king Dashrath's lineage treated even the poorest of the poor as 'equal'. In other words, all the citizens were treated equally and not in accordance with their possessions. Besides, the rulers were educated in such a manner that they experienced the pain and sufferings of the poorest of the poor as well as the weakest citizen in the kingdom. This has been well illustrated in the education imparted by the sage Vishwamitra to Rama and Lakshmana. He advised them to walk instead of covering a distance on chariot. It is very important for the rulers or the administrators to experience the life of the common man so that they can be good at their jobs. That is why '*Ram Rajya*' has not only been described as an ideal society but even fuelled the imagination of our freedom fighters for independence.

Moreover, Rama as an ideal king has laid the foundation of social morality for eternity. He was an upright ruler, true to his vows and a preserver of law. He upheld the supremacy of public opinion even for the ruler to dictate his private life. He also elevated the concept of public welfare above personal welfare. The main attempt of Valmiki was to establish *dharma* as the main objective for a state to exist. The origin of a state is to create an ideal state so that natural anarchy could be prevented where 'might' replaces 'justice' and 'fair play'.

In order to maintain the social order, the division of labour has been codified through the *varna* system and the state exists to reconcile the different interests without creating anarchy within the state.

The political ideas of the Ramayana have found their reference point in Indian political thought. The concept of social order to be maintained by the different sections of society has found its resurgence in the writings of Swami Vivekananda and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

The concept of *Ram Rajya* gained its political currency when Mahatma Gandhi first projected an ideal state for India after Independence. The ideal state that *Ram Rajya* seeks to establish is a state where the values of justice, equality, idealism, renunciation and sacrifice are practised without any communal affiliation.

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Vyasa's Mahabharata talks about a welfare state where the state is made to be the custodian of property that the state possesses as it has been described to be the fundamental duty of the state. The concept of property is neutral as it depends on who uses it and for what purposes. The property founded on virtue forms the necessary element of life and not based on sin while pride and unrighteousness go against the concept of prosperity.

The king should not extract taxes from the property and goods of such people who study the Vedas. However, from the property of the wicked, he should not only extract tax but seize them. This would strengthen the king's treasury and by distributing the property he will prevent misfortune from falling on the people to whom it has been distributed.

Besides, in his teachings, Bhishma—the central character of Mahabharata who was endowed with spiritual insight and experience—advises Yudhishthira, the eldest brother among the Pandav brothers, and gives a broad outline of a welfare state. His advice had the following points:

- The king should always maintain and protect the helpless, the masterless, the old and widows.
- The king should give gifts of vessels and food out of compassion at proper time and seasons so that no beggars exist.
- In case there are poor people in the kingdom, the king should try to show compassion on the capacity of his power.
- It is the duty of the king to wipe the tears of the distressed, the helpless and the old.

2.2.6 Obligations of the Subjects

Valmiki in the Ramayana as well as Vyasa in the Mahabharata had made it clear that the king represents the state and he should run the administration of the state in accordance with *dharma* so that righteousness can be maintained in the kingdom. The people in turn have political obligations as subjects of the divinity, which can be summed up as follows:

- The person who shares what is agreeable and beneficial to the king and who bears (a share of) the burdens of kingly duties, conquers both this and the other world.
- The men who even think of injuring the king without doubt meet with grief here and go to hell hereafter.
- Anyone who is clever and has the ability to work should not spread any evil reports about the king.
- No man who acts against the king can ever be happy even if he happens to be the king's son or brother.
- No one should covet what belongs to the king or else he is meeting destruction. An intelligent man should protect what belongs to the king.

The people have the right to resist the illegitimate authority of the king. The efforts and acts of men who are careful of their own duties are always crowned with success. So, all men seek to obey the dictates of righteousness and be productive to meet peace and prosperity.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.
 - (a) Ramayana was composed by _____ in twenty-four thousand verses.
 - (b) The importance of politics in a state is to assert and practise _____.
5. State whether the following are true or false.
 - (a) In the Mahabharata, the king represents the state.
 - (b) An intelligent king should avoid war for the acquisition of territory.

2.3 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND VEDANTA

The Bhagavad Gita is referred to as the essence of the *Upanishads* because the fundamental thought of the latter has been presented in practical and easily communicable form in the *Gita*. In the Mahabharata, the teachings of the *Gita* occur at a significantly and humanistic occasion because Arjuna was puzzled by a conflict of loyalties. In the eighteen chapters of the *Gita*, Sri Krishna advanced various kinds of arguments to convince Arjuna of his duties in accordance with the status in society and to urge him to fulfill them through detachment towards the result.

In order to give forceful justification to his humanistic advice, Sri Krishna indulged in a detailed analysis of man, nature and God. This analysis is in essence, rooted in the spiritualism of the *Upanishads*. Thus, in the *Gita* also, as in the *Upanishads*, the relationship in the unitarity existing between man, nature and God has been pronounced. According to the *Gita*, man's highest objective is realization of God, or consolidation of society. This is a humanistic ideal, and by placing it along with the realization of God in the *Gita*, the highest significance has been attached to it. This ideal is attainable through devotion, knowledge or action. The *Gita* provides a detailed consideration of each of these paths, as a result of which further commentators concentrated on one or the other and thereby produced independent analyses or critiques of the *Gita*. But Sri Krishna himself believed that these three paths were identical because they related to the three aspects of human personality—cognitive, conative and affective. All the three occupy an equally significant place in human life.

In the *Gita*, an ideal individual is called *sthitapragya*. His thoughts and actions are described in detail in *Gita*. This makes it clear that the *Gita* supports the integral

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personality and that it provides a harmonious blend of hedonism and stoicism, external action and internal peace, activism and renunciation, involvement and detachment, knowledge and devotion, individual freedom and social solidarity. The concept of social solidarity in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* has a metaphysical, sociological and psychological aspect. While the metaphysical aspect believes in the unity of man, nature and God, the sociological aspect believes in the *Varna system*, the psychological aspect in the *Ashram system*, and the ideal of *Purusharathas*. These three aspects are, in fact, identical and cannot be separated from one another. Indian philosophy does not differentiate between the metaphysical, the sociological and the psychological aspects of reality. Its approach is total and integral. The aspects have been distinguished to help the understanding of them. The theory of *Karma* and rebirth is an elaboration of the *Varna* system; since duties are not confined to human world but form a part of total cosmic fabric and divine purpose.

2.3.1 Metaphysical Aspects of Society

Like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* maintain identity between man, nature and God. This identity in the form of *Brahmana* is the basis of harmony, integrity, and justice in the individual, society and humanity. *Jiva* is an internal part of God. Therefore, God realization is self-realization. The *Prakriti* of God has two aspects—*Para* and *Apara*. *Apara* or lower *prakriti* includes life, water, air, mind and intellect. These are the material, the physical, the vital and the psychological worlds. The *Para Prakriti* or higher nature sustains the limited and embodied soul. The *Apara prakriti* is the unconscious, while the *Para Prakriti* is the conscious. Both are God's powers. Ultimately, God is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. Both man and nature aim at realization of divine values. God himself helps man in the realization of the ideal of harmony. Harmony must win in the end. Social harmony is bound to achieve its aim. The destiny of the individual, however, lies in becoming a successful instrument of this divine purpose.

2.3.2 Varna System as a Social Stratification

The *Gita* has preached the *varnashram dharma* but the fulfillment of this *dharma* becomes a duty only because it has been obtained by God. Krishna, the author of *Gita* himself asserts 'The four strata of society (the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaishya*, and the *Sudra*) were created by me classifying them according to their pre natal qualities and apportioning corresponding duties to them.' Every man has some native determined duties. He may achieve his personal and social ultimate end by performing these determined actions. The distinctions of traits and actions have been utilized for the stratification of the society into four *varnas*, viz, *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishyas*, *Sudras*.

Clarifying the duties of different *Varnas*, the author of the *Gita* says 'Arjuna, the duties of *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, as well as of *Sudras*, are classified according to the qualities born of their respective natures. Control of mind, control of senses, undergoing hardship for the sake of duty, purity (both internal and external), forgiveness, straightness of mind and body, belief in God, the scriptures and the

other world, knowledge of the sacred lore and knowledge of God based on direct experience—these are the *Brahmana's* duties, born of his own nature. Prowess, majesty, firmness, bravery, ingenuity, not running away from battle generosity, rulership, these are the *Kshatriya's* duties born of his own nature. Cultivation, protection of cows and trade are the *Vaishya's* duties born of his own nature. Service of all three varnas is the *Sudra's* duty, born of his own nature. Accordingly, the *Gita's* ethics resembles that of *F. H. Bradley* in the idea of every person having a particular station to fulfill in society. The only point where they differ is that while *Bradley* treats self-realization to be the motivating cause, the *Gita* considers the aim to be the attainment of God or consolidation of society.

2.3.3 Ashram System and Purushartha

The *Gita* believes in *Varnashtram Dharma*, which originated in the Vedas. *Purushartha* has been referred as 'the firmness by which the man, who seeks, the fruit of actions, clutches with extreme fondness the first three objects of life, viz: *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (prosperity) and *Kama* (pleasure), that firmness, son of *Kunti*, is *Rajasic*.' Thus, the *Gita* recommends not only the first three *Purusharthas* but also the fourth. In fact, the fourth is the aim of the first three. However, the first three are not neglected. What has to be renounced is not action but the attachment to their fruits. In the words of the *Gita*, 'He who either hates action, which did not lead to happiness, nor is attached to action, which is conducive to good, that person imbued with the quality of goodness, has attained freedom from doubts: he is wise and a man of true renunciation.' According to the *Gita*, the divine order itself fixes the process of time, destiny, social duties, duties of different varnas, and duties of the individual, in day and night and at different occasions. All these duties have been elaborately described by the scriptures. The *Gita* lays emphasis upon following the scriptures, not because they embody the divine injunctions to men having faith that whatever the cause of morality suffers, the divine power itself helps the man to maintain balance. Thus, ultimately, social harmony is a must. Man has only to follow it without attachment.

2.3.4 Political Philosophy of Vedanta

National polity of a country is rooted in its philosophy and culture. Indian political thought started from Hindu polity gradually developed in the contemporary times by the influence of western political thought. However, continuing the ancient tradition, contemporary Indian political thought is based upon neo-Vedanta, a modern version of ancient Vedanta philosophy. This is not to say that no Indian political thinker developed ideas based on western political thought. Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, M. N. Roy, to mention only a few, presented political thought based upon a critical analysis of modern Western polity. However, as has already been said that from Manu to Kautilya and M. K. Gandhi the main current of Indian political thought has been based on neo-Vedanta, characterized by monism, spiritualism, decentralization, welfare of all, spiritual democracy, and world brotherhood. The concept political Vedantism is highly significant and it symbolizes one of the most profound transformations of ancient Hindu thought in modern India. *Aurobindo* has

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tried to interpret some of the spiritual concepts of Vedantic philosophy in a political context. *Vivekananda* and *Ramatirtha* formulated the concept of practical Vedanta as the way to success in individual and national life. *Aurobindo* expounds the philosophy of political Vedantism. *Tilak* supported political violence on the basis of metaphysics of the *Gita*. Gandhi considered the service to humanity as a *yajna* leading to emancipation and God realization.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.
 - (a) The Bhagavad Gita is referred to as the essence of _____.
 - (b) In the Bhagavad Gita, an ideal individual is called _____.
7. State whether the following are true or false.
 - (a) Service to all three *varnas* is the *Brahmana*'s duty.
 - (b) National polity of a country is rooted in its philosophy and culture.

2.4 SUMMARY

- The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two epics comprising a combination of myths and mysticism. They present the world of the intra-cosmic Gods and human beings.
- Both these epics do not only affect all aspects of the political and social norms that exist in India but also form the foundation of the ancient Indian political thought, which has influenced the polity in India across different ages and time.
- The ancient literature of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata asserts the importance of politics as a tool for righteousness to exist in the public life. That is why, politics is important. Without it, righteousness is not possible.
- The main concern of Vyasa in Mahabharata was not only what men ought to do but also the best way to create order that would facilitate pursuit of happiness for the individual and finally lead to supreme bliss.
- In the state of nature there was no sovereignty, no king, no rules or law to chastise. The state of nature was anarchical as there was lawlessness, with men becoming lustful and greedy and the mighty ruling over the weak. The destiny for many was destruction.
- The state originated from the state of nature, so that the king could establish *dharma*, i.e., righteousness. In other words, the state emerges to protect the weak but comes with the authority of divine grace.
- The origin of the state in a way depicts the existence of the king to maintain peace and *dharma* on the earth.

- The king represents the state and therefore the functions of the government should be carried out by him.
- Vyasa mentions that an intelligent king should avoid war for the acquisition of territory. Instead, he should do it through conciliation, gifts and disunion.
- The main function of a king is to protect, help in the prosperity and maintain righteousness (*dharma*) through impartial justice.
- The king should levy taxes according to the scriptures or else he will prove himself wrong. He should not try to fill the treasury through any acts of unrighteousness.
- The people believed in the concept of *dharma* as the eternal truth which represents both the moral law and righteous order. It was believed that *dharma* existed on the earth due to the king and had the presence of morality that prevented immoral acts such as murder.
- The notion of an ideal state has been given its clearest expression by Valmiki in the epic Ramayana, which has become the reference point for all subsequent Indian political thought.
- In order to maintain the social order, the division of labour has been codified through the *varna* system and the state exists to reconcile the different interests without creating anarchy within the state.
- Vyasa's Mahabharata talks about a welfare state where the state is made to be the custodian of property that the state possesses as it has been described to be the fundamental duty of the state. The concept of property is neutral as it depends on who uses it and for what purposes.
- Valmiki in the Ramayana as well as Vyasa in the Mahabharata had made it clear that the king represents the state and he should run the administration of the state in accordance with *dharma* so that righteousness can be maintained in the kingdom.
- The people have the right to resist the illegitimate authority of the king. The efforts and acts of men who are careful of their own duties are always crowned with success. So, all men seek to obey the dictates of righteousness and be productive to meet peace and prosperity.
- The Bhagavad Gita is referred to as the essence of the *Upanishads* because the fundamental thought of the latter has been presented in practical and easily communicable form in the *Gita*.
- According to the *Gita*, man's highest objective is realization of God, or consolidation of society. This is a humanistic ideal, and by placing it along with the realization of God in the *Gita*, the highest significance has been attached to it.
- Indian philosophy does not differentiate between the metaphysical, the sociological and the psychological aspects of reality. Its approach is total and integral. The aspects have been distinguished to help the understanding of them.

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- Like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* maintain identity between man, nature and God. This identity in the form of Brahamana is the basis of harmony, integrity, and justice in the individual, society and humanity.
- Both man and nature aim at realization of divine values. God himself helps man in the realization of the ideal of harmony. Harmony must win in the end. Social harmony is bound to achieve its aim. The destiny of the individual, however, lies in becoming a successful instrument of this divine purpose.
- The *Gita* believes in *Varnashtram Dharma*, which originated in the *Vedas*. *Purushartha* has been referred as ‘the firmness by which the man, who seeks, the fruit of actions, clutches with extreme fondness the first three objects of life, viz: *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (prosperity) and *Kama* (pleasure), that firmness, son of Kunti, is *Rajasic*.’
- According to the *Gita*, the divine order itself fixes the process of time, destiny, social duties, duties of different *varnas*, and duties of the individual, in day and night and at different occasions.
- National polity of a country is rooted in its philosophy and culture. Indian political thought started from Hindu polity gradually developed in the contemporary times by the influence of western political thought.
- The concept political Vedantism is highly significant and it symbolizes one of the most profound transformations of ancient Hindu thought in modern India.

2.5 KEY TERMS

- **Mysticism:** Mysticism is a religion based on mystical communion with an ultimate reality.
- **Dandniti:** *Dandniti* is the policy of punishment that prevents any kind of mischief in the society.
- **Paternalism:** Paternalism is the attitude that subordinates should be controlled in a fatherly way for their own good.
- **Lineage:** Lineage is a social group tracing its descent from a single ancestor.
- **Varna:** Varna is the name for the original social division of Vedic people into four groups.
- **Stoicism:** Stoicism is the endurance of pain or hardship without a display of feelings and without complaint.

2.6 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The ancient literature of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata asserts the importance of politics as a tool for righteousness to exist in the public life. That is why, politics is important. Without it, righteousness is not possible. In fact, the absence of politics in the society would result in a conflict of wills and anarchy, a situation that all political writers of the period dread.

2. Dandniti is the policy of punishment, which prevents any kind of mischief in the society. It is in this sense that the science of punishment acts as a means to achieve the higher ends, that of individual security and social order.
3. The king represents the state and therefore the functions of the government should be carried out by him.
4. (a) Valmiki; (b) Righteousness
5. (a) True; (b) True
6. (a) Upanishads; (b) Sthitapragya
7. (a) False; (b) True

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2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the central theme of the Ramayana?
2. List the fundamental questions that the Mahabharata deals with.
3. Why do the Ramayana and the Mahabharata assert the importance of politics?
4. What is the importance of politics in a state?
5. What does the ancient literature of the Mahabharata say about the nature of a state and its origin?
6. Enumerate the functions of the government.
7. Describe the main functions and duties of the king in ancient India.
8. What are the qualities that a king should possess according to the Mahabharata?
9. 'The concept of dharma is a fundamental principle.' Explain.
10. 'There are stages of dharma which an individual has to perform in accordance with the social class that he is born in.' What are these stages?
11. What advice did Bhishma give to Yudhishthira with regard to a welfare state?
12. What is the concept of an ideal state as provided by Valmiki?
13. Write a short note on the political philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the political philosophies of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.
2. Describe the functions of the king and his government as presented in the epics.
3. Outline the concept of an ideal state in ancient India.
4. Critically analyse the political philosophies of the Bhagavad Gita and *Vedanta*.
5. Assess the role of the *varna* system in social stratification in India.

2.8 FURTHER READING

NOTES

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UNIT 3 CODIFICATION OF LAWS

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Manu
 - 3.2.1 The *Manusmriti* and The *Manusamhita*
 - 3.2.2 Status of Women
 - 3.2.3 Criticism
 - 3.2.4 Manu's Importance and Contributions as the Father of the Indian Polity
- 3.3 *Narada Smriti* and *Vishnu Smriti*
 - 3.3.1 *Vishnu Smriti*
- 3.4 Sukraniti
 - 3.4.1 Consumption, Production and Exchange
 - 3.4.2 Contributions of Shukracharya
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Key Terms
- 3.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.8 Questions and Exercises
- 3.9 Further Reading

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous unit described the political philosophies as enshrined in the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita and the *Vedanta*. This unit will discuss the viewpoint of Manu, Narada, *Vishnu Smriti* and Shukracharya. Manu was the first person of this universe according to Hindu mythology. He was the first law-giver of antiquity and he wrote *Manusmriti*; an ancient legal classic. It is a comprehensive treatise, which tells us about the Hindu way of life in ancient times and discusses social structure.

The *Narada Smriti* forms a part of the *Dharmasastra* and is a piece of work credited to the divine sage Narada. The *Narada Smriti* majorly deals with the utilitarian and practical law that deals with dharma. The *Vishnu Smriti*, also referred to as *Vaishnava Dharmasastra* and *Vishnu-sutra* is an assemblage of ancient aphorisms based on the sacred laws of India.

Shukracharya was a Bhargava rishi and son of Brighu *muni*. He was the guru of the demons and had been bestowed with extraordinary powers as a reward for the hard penance that he had done to impress Lord Shiva. Shukracharya became the guru of the demons instead of the Gods due to the hatred that he bore towards Lord Vishnu. This hatred stemmed from what he perceived as the murder of his mother for sheltering some demon being hunted by Lord Vishnu. Shukracharya is highly respected for his treatise, *Sukraniti*. In this work, he advises a person to use every second of his life in the pursuit of wealth and knowledge. *Sukraniti* says that work is not just a tool for production but it is also needed for the welfare of the society and the health of the individual. It describes an excellent worker as one who

does not desert the master in times of difficulty. Shukracharya is said to be very merciful towards the suffering and misdirected souls and helps them relieve their sorrows.

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3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the philosophies of Manu
- Summarize the important features of the *Manusmriti* and the *Manusamhita*
- Discuss the ideas and views behind works such as *Narada Smriti* and *Vishnu Smriti*
- Outline the contributions of Shukracharya to Indian society
- Explain the main ideas of *Sukraniti*

3.2 MANU

According to the Hindu mythology, Manu was the first person on the earth. He was imbued with great wisdom and was devoted to virtue. He divided the society according to *varnas*.

Varna refers to the categorization of the Hindu society into four castes, as stated by the *Brahmanas* and their sacred texts. This quadruple division is not to be confused with *Jâti* or even the much finer division of the contemporary caste system in India. The four *varnas*, or *chatur varna*, are mentioned in the ancient texts in the following (stratified) order, from top to bottom:

- ***Brahmanas***: Scholars, teachers and fire priests
- ***Kshatriya/chattari***: Kings, warriors, administrators
- ***Vaishyas***: Agriculturists and merchants
- ***Sudras***: Service providers and artisans

They are also divided into two groups, the ***Arya*** (comprising the first three classes) and the ***Sudra*** (comprising those who were excluded from Vedic rituals).

Separated from and shunned by the society were the ‘untouchables’ like the *Chandaal*, who had to deal with the disposal of dead bodies and are described as dirty and polluted. There was a belief that one’s *karma* in the past, resulted in one’s condition in this birth. The *varna* system of Hindu society is described in the various *Puranas* and *Smritis*, among others. *Manusmriti* is one of the many *Dharmasastra* texts reflecting the laws and society of the Mauryan period in India. It was a reference work for the *Brahmanas* of Bengal and was relied upon by the British colonial administrators and scholars based in Calcutta, the capital city. However, it was almost unknown in South India.

The *Manusmriti* is often quoted in reference to the Varna system as an inherited social class system. However, the Hindu rightists usually point out that the *Manusmriti* is a later work that does not form a part of Hindu scriptures, so it is of

questionable relevance. The rightists content that the *Manusmriti* has been used by British colonists, politicians and sociologists to denigrate those of the Hindu faith.

The *Manusmriti* claims that by the time it was written in the ancient times, Hindu society included another class (untouchables) of people without a position in any of the four *Varnas* and therefore associated with the lowest of jobs. The upper classes, who were supposed to maintain ritual and corporal purity, came to regard them as untouchables. The people of this 'fifth *varna*' are now called Dalits (*the oppressed*) or Harijans; they were formerly known as 'untouchables' or 'pariahs'. However, this last addition to the social strata is not a part of the religion of Hinduism. Hinduism only categorizes occupations into four categories.

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3.2.1 The *Manusmriti* and The *Manusamhita*

Of all the *smritis*, that of Manu is admittedly the best and authoritative. According to U. N. Ghosal, Manu's *smriti* occupies an exceptional place in our ancient literature and is considered as first rank among all the *smriti* texts of ancient Hindu literature. The *Manusmriti* enjoys a predominant position in our ancient literature after the *Vedas*. It is a comprehensive treatise, which tells about the Hindu way of life in ancient times.

Manu's greatness lies in the fact that he has embodied the essence of the *Veda* in his treatise. The political ideas of Manu are expressed in his work. His importance in Indian political thought lies in the fact that it was he who gave the stamp of sanctity and permanence to the socio-political institutions of the land, and left to the Indian world the first code of civil and criminal law. His greatness in the history of the world can be gauged by the analogy and contrast which he offers to the other law-givers of antiquity.

The *Manusamhita*

The *Manusamhita* is more than a law book. 'It is unquestionably rather to be compared with the great poem of *Lucretius*, beside which it ranks as the expression of a philosophy of life.' The breadth of subject matter indicates how all-embracing the *Manusamhita* was in laying the foundations for the functioning of the ancient Hindu Society. Most of the basic political concepts are discussed in this work.

The *Manusamhita* or the code of Manu contains twelve chapters in which Manu has beautifully depicted the creation of mankind, religion and polity. These chapters are as follows:

- **CHAPTER I:** It deals with the origin of the world, creation of supreme soul, four classes of men and the differences in their respective *dharma*, origin of *Yugas* (ages).
- **CHAPTER II:** It describes the householders' life, eight kinds of marriages, conjugal life, role of house-holders in society, happiness in married life, qualities of teachers and disciples.
- **CHAPTER III:** It deals with the sources and the grounds of *dharma*, persons for whom *dharma* holds good and *Dharmasastras*, will and intention, way of attaining *moksha*, heaven, way of becoming a twice-born, removal of demerits

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by proper study of *Vedas* and recitation of vedic hymns, various *samskaras* and celibacy.

- **CHAPTER IV:** It contains the descriptions of the householder's life relating to Dharma, ways of earning a livelihood, rules of four *Vedas* and *Grahashta Ashram*.
- **CHAPTER V:** It discusses the duties of husband and wife, causes of death, prohibition of flesh-eating and edible and non-edible foods.
- **CHAPTER VI:** It analyses the time and rules of *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa Ashrams*, charity, dress and residence.
- **CHAPTER VII:** It deals with the king, his duties and qualities; procedure of appointment of ministers; payment of taxes; and punishment to corrupt officials.
- **CHAPTER VIII:** It deals with law, its administration, justice witnesses, different types and degrees of punishment, loans and interests, trade and business, and duties of the state towards fallen women.
- **CHAPTER IX:** It deals with women, and their dharma, duties expected of them and their importance in family and society, six kinds of wife's property (*Stridhan*), evils of unlawful sex.
- **CHAPTER X:** It elaborates on the relations, rules and patterns of behaviour among the *varnas*, importance of *Brahmanas* and the difference between the high and low classes.
- **CHAPTER XI:** It deals with the rules of giving alms to students; rules of performing sacrifices; various vices and penitence; penitence for animal slaughter; debauchery; destruction of vegetation and various *prayaschita* (atonement).

The last chapter is Chapter XII, which has two sections, one dealing with the theory of *karma*, (action and its consequence) including re-birth of the soul. The other section deals with those dharmas which help to seek the spiritual perfection through self-knowledge, attainment of the ever-lasting good and five elements of human body.

3.2.2 Status of Women

Manu views the family as the most significant of all social groups. The family consists of husband, wife and children. Manu says a lot about marriages. Marriage, according to him, is a sacred thing. A man receives his wife from God and is linked with her from the past and he should protect her. Manu does not allow any kind of divorce or separation between the husband and the wife and views a marriage as indissoluble during one's lifetime. A husband can remarry under some exceptional situations. Manu is against leading an independent and unprotected life by women. According to him, a woman should always be taken care of by someone—by her father in childhood, by her husband in youth and by her son in her old age. It implies that a woman is not fit for freedom. But elsewhere Manu admired women and praised their role in family or in the household. He entrusted the wife with the responsibility of managing financial and material resources of the house. He equates the housewife

with the Goddess of fortune because both 'bestow illumination'. Manu advises that all members in the house shall honour women and keep them happy. He writes, 'where women are respected, there the Gods delight; and where they are not, there all works and efforts are reduced to nil.' Procreation takes place with the proper consummation of marriage and adultery has been strongly condemned by him. All religious rites could be performed only with the help of the wife. According to Manu, a girl may better remain a spinster than be given in marriage to a worthless man and in case her father fails to give her in marriage to a suitable man within three years of attaining the age of marriage, she herself shall choose her husband, which shall not be treated as illegal. These ideas of Manu show that Manu did not fail to give proper place to women in society.

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3.2.3 Criticism

Manu was a political philosopher but even his ideas have been subjected to criticism on the following grounds:

- Manu was a supporter of the divinity of the king and the superiority of the priestly class. It is not consistent with democratic principles.
- Manu's concept of a kingdom was nothing more than the emergence of a tribal organization into some faint beginning of a territorial state. In other words, an imperial power had not yet emerged and Manu did not think of a well-developed and multi-purpose political structure of the modern times.
- Another objection leveled against Manu is that he has laid undue emphasis of the scheme of four-fold *Varnas*, which subsequently led to many other social complications and conflicts.
- Some of the ideas of Manu, especially his views on authority, administration and local government are indistinct, irrelevant and one-sided. In spite of these criticisms, Manu is considered as the father of Indian polity for his immense contributions to the Indian society, polity and religion.

3.2.4 Manu's Importance and Contributions as the Father of the Indian Polity

Manu was a great law-giver and was also the first great thinker on socio-political ideas and institutions of the ancient age. The code of Manu not only deals with the culture and civilization of the ancient period, it is the richest heritage of an urban civilization. Manu's greatest contribution lies in his theory of law and punishment. The code of Manu has utility for all sections of the people and for all ages to come. Hence, it has continued to maintain its high position in the socio-political life of the people. Manu is a guiding star and his writings give light and guidance to the human race.

Manu was called the father of Indian polity for his outstanding contributions as follows:

- Manu was the author of the *Manusmriti*, which is admittedly one of the most important and authoritative works constituting the foundation of the social

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order of the Vedic times. He was the father of mankind. The code of Manu touches all aspects of social and political life in ancient India.

- According to Manu, kingship was divinely created in order to save mankind from anarchy and give protection to the people.
- The king was bound by moral and divine limitations while exercising his supreme authority and was wise, honest, knowledgeable, dutiful and responsible.
- The king had to take the advice and assistance of scriptures, ministers, learned *Brahmanas* and officials in carrying out his administrative duties and could not rule arbitrarily.
- The theory of *danda* is the real driving force in his entire political philosophy and it brings stability in social order and justice in policy. The theory of *danda* is dealt with in the next unit.
- Manu's system of local government is highly praiseworthy and his idea of foreign policy or inter-state relations is quite pragmatic.
- Manu can be compared with Hammurabi, the famous law-giver of Babylonia. Manu represented the height of the Indo-Aryan culture and Hammurabi stood for the Babylonian civilization. Yet, judicial procedure for Manu has many things in common with Hammurabi. Both the codes of Manu and Hammurabi mirrored a developed socio-economic and political thought.

Every political philosopher is a product of his own time. Manu is not an exception to it. His philosophy reflected both localism and universalism. Manu represented the Indo-Aryan Vedic culture, where religion played a vital role. Hence, his philosophy revolves round *Dharma* or religion. His ideas like that of the benevolent king, rule of law, limited government and theory of punishment, have universal appeal. He was one of the greatest minds and most respected figures in the history of law-givers of antiquity. It was he who gave the stamp of sanctity and permanence to the socio-political institutions of ancient India.

The code of Manu or *Manusmriti* is a monumental work with universal appeal. It is a treatise on statecraft, which will serve as a handbook for rulers and statesmen in times to come. According to D. Machenize Brown, a philosopher, 'To the Western world, the code of Manu is the best known work of its kind.' To conclude, Manu's contribution to Political Science is outstanding and remarkable. He is a great thinker and philosopher of all times.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the order in which the four *varnas* are stratified?
2. Who were the *Chandaals*?
3. How many chapters does the *Manusamhita* or the code of Manu contain?
4. Give one reason as to why Manu's ideas were subjected to criticism.

3.3 NARADA SMRITI AND VISHNU SMRITI

The Upanishads teach us the highest product of the human mind—truth. Besides truth they also preach wisdom. Annie Besant, the Indian thinker, is of the view that, ‘the Upanishads are the highest product of the human mind, the crystallized wisdom of divinely illumined men.’ Truth according to the *Narada Smriti* is:

Truth is said to be the one unequalled means of purification of the soul. Truth is the ladder by which man ascends to heaven, as a ferry plies from one bank of a river to the other.... The gods are truth simply, the human race is falsehood. He whose mind is persistent in truth, obtains a divine state in this world even. Speak truth and discard falsehood. It is through truth that thou shalt attain heaven. By uttering a falsehood thou wilt precipitate thyself into a most dreadful hellish abode. And in the hells the merciless attendants of Yama [the god of death], endowed with great strength, will cut off thy tongue and strike thee with swords, constantly.

The *Narada Smriti* forms a part of the *Dharmasastra* and is a piece of work credited to the divine sage Narada. The *Narada Smriti* majorly deals with the utilitarian and practical law that deals with dharma. This piece of work has become a hallmark of the Hindu and Indian administrators. This was also used by the British Raj, as a path to bargain the intricate and complicated dissimilarities of dharma which is essential for unbiased and effective political administration. Moreover, many British legal scholars perceive the *Narada Smriti* forestalling the ideologies of distinct pleading, i.e. exclusions allowed by justifying certain situations, which have been cited in the present British law.

The *Narada Smriti* is also referred to as the *Naradiya Dharmasastra*. This piece of work gained much importance when Sir W. Jones quoted it in the Preface of his translation of the Code of Manu. It was brought to the notice of the learned man due to its bearing on the foundation and antiquity of the imposing law-book of India of the ancient times. Narada in his *Narada Smriti* refers to four, and not three, forms of the Code of Manu, in 1,00,000 slokas or 1,080 chapters in 12,000; 8,000 and 4,000 slokas. The authors of these four forms are allocated to Manu, Narada, Markandeya and Sumati, the son of Bhrigu. The *Narada Smriti* is labelled as a condensed form of the ninth or *Vyavahara* (legal) chapter of the original Code that exists in 1,00,000 slokas. Medhâtithi, one of the oldest commentators of *Manusmriti*, quotes in his Commentary on the Code of Manu that ‘this work, consisting of one hundred thousand (slokas), was composed by Pragâpati and abridged successively by Manu and the rest’. The former part of the *Narada Smriti* is designed as a *mâtrikâ* or *vyavahâra-mâtrikâ*, ‘summary of proceedings-at-law’ or ‘general rules of procedure.’

Narada Smriti is the only *Dharmasatra* that does not deal with areas such as moral demeanour and atonement. Its focused nature has been valued by the Hindu rulers and also in Southeast Asia as a means of carrying out their duty (dharma)

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of impartially ruling the country. Wealth, according to Narada, is something that is related to the caste. He writes in his *Narada Smriti*:

Wealth is again declared to be of twelve sorts, according to the caste of the acquirer. Those modes of acquisition, which are common to all castes, are threefold. The others are said to be nine fold. Property obtained by inheritance, gifts made from love, and what has been obtained with a wife (as her dowry), these are the three sorts of pure wealth, for all (castes) without distinction.

A Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, according to Narada, is credited to three kinds of wealth:

The pure wealth peculiar to a Brahmin is declared to be threefold: What has been obtained as alms, by sacrificing, and through (instructing) a pupil. The pure wealth peculiar to a Kshatriya is of three sorts likewise: What has been obtained in the shape of taxes, by fighting, and by means of the fines declared in lawsuits. The pure wealth peculiar to a Vaishya is also declared to be threefold: (what has been acquired) by tillage, by tending cows, and by commerce. For a Sudra, it consists of what is given to him by the members of the three higher castes.

For Narada, the duty of the Brahmin is that of a very important stature and he puts emphasis on the right path of duty for the Brahmin. If a Brahmin forgets his path of righteousness and leads his life as a Kshatriya or Vaishya, he is supposed to be 'expelled from society, because he has swerved from the path of duty.' Apart from the duties of the Brahmin, the *Narada Smriti* deals with twenty-one modes of acquiring property, three kinds of women twice married, twenty women that a man must not approach, five or seven ordeals, two kinds of proof and two kinds of documents, four kinds of wanton women, one hundred and thirty-two divisions of the eighteen principal titles of law. According to Narada, a woman or a child should not and is not capable of being a proof in any lawsuit since they can be false evidence. He writes:

Whenever a heinous crime, or a robbery, or adultery, or one of the two kinds of insult has been committed, he must not inquire (too strictly) into the (character of the) witnesses. A child also cannot be (made a witness), nor a woman, nor one man alone, nor a cheat, nor a relative, nor an enemy. These persons might give false evidence. A child would speak falsely from ignorance, a woman from want of veracity, an imposer from habitual depravity, a relative from affection, an enemy from desire of revenge.

3.3.1 *Vishnu Smriti*

The *Vishnu Smriti*, also referred to as *Vaishnava Dharmasastra* and *Vishnu-sutra* is an assemblage of ancient aphorisms based on the sacred laws of India and also acquires a place in the history of ancient times as a commendable work on the

lines of similar other ancient works that have come down to us. This piece of work can be styled as a Dharma-sutra and the volume of the *Vishnu Smriti* and the variety of areas dealt in it, makes it capable enough to give it a place among the five or existing Dharma-sutras. The *Vishnu Smriti* is interestingly an association of the *Kathas*—the oldest Vedic schools—and the legendary Code of Manu and also some other ancient law-codes.

The *Vishnu Smriti*, in Hinduism, is considered to be one of the modern versions of the *Dharmasatra* tradition. This piece of work is the only version of the *Dharmasatra* that does not directly deal with working of the dharma or the means of knowing dharma. The *Vishnu Smriti* has a robust bhakti alignment where daily worship of Lord Vishnu is essential. Lord Vishnu was all powerful, the text begins with the greatness of the Lord:

The night of Brahman being over, and the God sprung from the lotus (Brahman) having woke from his slumber, Vishnu purposing to create living beings, and perceiving the earth covered with water, assumed the shape of a boar, delighting to sport in water, as at the beginning of each former Kalpa, and raised up the earth (from the water). His feet were the Vedas; his tusks the sacrificial stakes; in his teeth were the offerings; his mouth was the pyre; his tongue was the fire; his hair was the sacrificial grass; the sacred texts were his head; and he was (endowed with the miraculous power of) a great ascetic.’

The *Vishnu Smriti* opens with the situation where the Earth is immersed underwater and he helps her by diving into the water and bringing her out of the water into the surface. The Earth is obliged to be saved but she is worried about her safety in the future. Vishnu then comforts her that she should not worry because, ‘Good people who take delight in the conduct of the social classes and the orders of life who are totally devoted to the śāstras, O Earth, will support you. The task of caring for you is entrusted to them’ (1.47). On being consoled, the Earth continues, asking, ‘Tell me, O Eternal One, the Laws of the social classes and orders of life.’ (1.48-1.49). Thus, from this question, Vishnu then unveils into his lessons of dharma.

The sources of the *Vishnu Smriti* are difficult to trace but it is considered that the text heavily drew from its various *Dharmasastras* such as the *Manusmriti* and the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*. Some of the scholars also view the text as an altered Vaishnava form of the *Kathaka Dharma-sutra*. It is believed that the metrical verses and the Kathakagrhya were added later. The exact date of this text cannot be traced accurately but it is believed to be anywhere between 300 BC and 1000 BC.

The text consists of hundred chapters, mainly written in prose and having few verses at the end of each chapter. The text is written in a dialogic form between Lord Vishnu and Prithvi—the goddess Earth. The difference between this form of *Dharmasatra* and other forms is this very form—dialogic—where all the other forms only expound laws and are not dialogic.

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The *Vishnu Smriti* postulates the duties of the four castes—Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras as:

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Brâhmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sûdras are the four castes. The first three of these are (called) twice-born. For them the whole number of ceremonies, which begin with the impregnation and end with the ceremony of burning the dead body, have to be performed with (the recitation of) Mantras. Their duties are: For a Brâhmana, to teach (the Veda); For a Kshatriya, constant practice in arms; For a Vaishya, the tending of cattle; For a Sûdra, to serve the twice-born. For all the twice-born, to sacrifice and to study (the Veda). Again, their modes of livelihood are: For a Brâhmana, to sacrifice for others and to receive alms; For a Kshatriya, to protect the world (and receive due reward, in form of taxes); For a Vaishya, tillage, keeping cows (and other cattle), traffic, lending money upon interest, and growing seeds; For a Sûdra, all branches of art (such as painting and the other fine arts).

The duty of the king, according to the *Vishnu Smriti* is to protect his subjects and maintain the four castes and their duties in the practice of their duties. He has the responsibility of appointing all the chiefs and lords. Moreover, he is to collect taxes from his subjects except from the Brahmins. The *Vishnu Smriti* states, 'Let him (king) show honour to the righteous; and let him punish the unrighteous'. In this way, there are several other duties assigned to the king of the state. The text postulates—in a dialogic form—many other laws that look into various matters like the duties of the king, criminal and civil law, law of debt, the four castes, areas related to witnesses and ordeals, inheritance, funeral ceremonies, women, sacraments, crimes, penance, duties of a householder, meditation on Vishnu and so on.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. To whom is the *Narada Smriti* credited?
6. What are the sources of the *Vishnu Smriti*?

3.4 SUKRANITI

Shukracharya was born as the son of Brighu *muni*. With his curly black hair, he was described as beautiful to behold. He had a slender physique and rode a camel, horse and chariot. In his hands he held beads, a stick and a lotus. He used to dress in a neat white *dhoti*.

Shukracharya, deity of the planet Venus, was a great devotee of the supreme personality of Godhead. He was a great soul although he was often disregarded simply because he was the guru of the *asuras*. Shukracharya was not a simple character; his exalted qualities were hidden. Often he acted in a twisted manner because it was not easy to direct his demonic disciples towards the path of devotion.

Still, on so many occasions—as verified by the *shastras*—Shukracharya was very successful with his tactics.

He was accepted as the deity of the feminine planet Venus. Natural law gave credit to the male and not to the subtle female energy. According to the flawless and perfect order of the universe as ordained by the supreme person, the female is considered a part of the male foundation. Nonetheless Shukracharya is very much a male and is not a female as wrongly portrayed by western astrology. Venus, like all other planets in Vedic astrology, was a demi god and not a demi-goddess. Some of the characteristics of Shukracharya were well known and others were more obscure. He was a sage of the *Bhargava atharvan* branch and descendent of sage Kavi.

Shukracharya married Priyavratha's daughter Urjaswathi who gave birth to four sons—Chanda, Amarka, Twaashtra, Dharaatra and a daughter named Devyani.

Devyani is famous for being cursed by Kacha, the son of Brihaspati. Kacha became a student of Shukracharya to learn the art of *mrityu-sanjivani* or reviving the dead, a science well known to the guru of the demons. Devyani fell in love with the handsome Kacha and desired to marry him, but Kacha refused because she was the daughter of his teacher. She retaliated by cursing him that when he needed to employ the art of *mrityu-sanjivani*, it would be ineffective. Kacha retaliated by cursing the beautiful lady that she would never marry a brahmana. As a result of Kacha's curse, the daughter of Shukracharya eventually married the great King Yayati.

Shukra means white liquid. Another tinge of meaning assigned to the name of Shukracharya is 'bright' or 'shiny'. By connotation, *shukra* is equated with semen, the most refined substance in one's body. Shukra is identified as well with *soma rasa*, or the drink of immortality and he had the ability to revive those among the dead if their bodies were intact.

Shukracharya is highly respected for his treatise *Sukraniti*. In *Sukraniti*, *Brihaspati's* principles are accepted that happiness can come from dharma and dharma comes from wealth. However, he is explicit that without wealth life has no meaning, and hence advises to use every second of life in pursuit of knowledge and wealth, and then use it to get a good wife, child and friends as well as for charity.

He has laid extensive rules for keeping employees happy by paying well, providing pension for old age and bonus for good work, but he is equally demanding for faithful work and provides for deterrent punishment for wrong work, corruption, procrastination and delays.

3.4.1 Consumption, Production and Exchange

According to both Manu and Shukracharya, economy or *arth* is part of the four principal activities of human life—dharma (duty), *arth* (economy), *kama* (fulfilment of desires) and moksha (spiritual activities). It thus has an integrated approach for the whole life and duly regards ethics, morality and system of consumption also as part of overall consideration. Finally, prosperity in this world and preparation for happiness in next world as well as next birth are also part of the overall activity.

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Manusmriti divides all economic (monetary) transactions in the following three categories according to descending order of merit:

- *Bhiksha*: For professionals
- Barter or monetary business
- Stealing or ineligible gain

The first and foremost transaction is *bhiksha*. In today's parlance, *bhiksha* is translated as begging but this is not the meaning stated in the *Manusmriti*. There, it means *dakshina* where payment is made for service rendered according to the ability and wish of the party receiving the service. Thus, the *Shishya* or student pays the Guru *dakshina* according to his wish without any demand from the Guru. A sanyasi's *bhiksha* (asking for alms) is also a 'dakshina' as he has completely abandoned all his selfish attachments and completely devoted his to the upliftment of society.

The second transaction is the normal business transaction that involves exchange of goods and services. This exchange in modern times takes place using currency.

The third and the most inferior transaction is 'stealing'. Stealing does not merely imply lifting of a stranger's possession without permission. It includes all transactions where payment is received without commensurate service being provided. Thus, if a worker in a factory or any workplace receives full wages but has not really worked fully for it, his wages may be considered partly as theft.

Accumulation of wealth beyond justification is also considered stealing. According to Manu, a person should accumulate just enough wealth to fulfil his needs. If he accumulates more, he is a thief deserving punishment. The surplus should be distributed to society.

According to *Sukraniti*, work is not merely a tool of production but is required for the welfare of society as well as the health of individual. Human beings are not merely economic tools but have all-round ability with maximum stress on spirituality. This can be achieved by treating work as a duty and as worship of God. Also, use of large implements (machines) should be discouraged as it leads to monopoly conditions and wealth gets concentrated in only a few hands. It also reduces the importance of human effort as endeavour.

There should be a limit to competition so that an authority or corporation with greater resources is not able to destroy smaller ones, and thereby concentrate wealth in a single monopoly. 'Survival of the fittest' is an uncivilized state of society, which says that the strong have the right to kill and eat away the weak.

Manusmriti propagates that the disparity in not just income but also wealth and expenditure should be limited. It is of the belief that a skilled person should receive six times the remuneration that is due to an unskilled person. Also, in the matter of wealth, a *Vaishya* is permitted to accumulate wealth up to ten years of his expenditure whereas the *Brahmana* is permitted only up to three years.

According to Shukracharya, a spendthrift must not be tolerated. According to him, the king should take away the wealth of a miser who only hoards wealth without spending or only spends on himself.

The ancient *smritis* are full of laws relating to the employer and the employee. For example, *Vetana-dana* (payment of wages), *Svamipala Vivada* (employer–employee disputes), *Abhyupetyaasurusa* (breach of contract of service) and *Vetanasya anapakarma* are explained in detail in *Manusmriti*, *Yajnavalkyasmriti* and *Naradasmriti*. *Sukraniti* presents provisions for employer–employee relations; these are codes relevant even today. In fact, modern management experts use these as part of their strategies.

Among the oldest of law codes, especially regarding governance and administration is *Sukraniti* or the laws as laid by Shukracharya. He prescribes a holistic approach towards the issue of labour, which includes both the employer and the employee. He prescribes the qualities that a master should possess. According to him, low wages, harsh treatment, insult, abuse and imposition of heavy fines or severe punishment are the causes of unrest among the employees. ‘Satisfied by payment of adequate wages and in time, promoted honourably, cheered by gentle words and consoled in grief, the employees would never let down or desert their master’.

According to the *Sukraniti*, every worker needs economic, social and personal security. When these needs are not fulfilled, conflicts arise between the workers and the employer, which lead to industrial disputes. This is supported by the modern day studies on industrial unrest. Some of the common causes of industrial disputes are psychological, institutional, economic and denial of legal and other rights of workers. Shukracharya highlights the psychological aspect of disputes by pointing out that a servant should desert such a king (master) who does not remember the good done for him, is not satisfied with good service and is suspicious.

Similarly, a servant should follow certain codes in his behaviour towards his employer. Shukracharya considered that truth and philanthropy are the two most sacred of all virtues. The employer should always select persons with such qualities. Envy and untruthfulness are the greatest of all sins; untruthfulness is considered as a greater sin than envy. Ultimately, a good servant is one who knows when and what is to be said, and what is to be done, and does it at the proper time.

Sukraniti places immense importance on communication. It gives several examples to prove that an organization will go astray in the absence of proper communication. Those officers who do not explain what is good and what is harmful to the employer are really his secret enemies in the form of workers. Shukracharya has pointed out that a master who does not have faith in his counsellors is like a thief in the form of a ruler, an exploiter of the people’s wealth. He should not form his judgment based on hearsay. He says that the officers should not envy one another, nor should they ever get into conflict. In a place where the officers and the king are working in harmony, *lakshmi* (wealth) is present in full strength and lasts long.

Appointment, promotion and transfer are to be based on merit. *Theniti* suggests that the king should appoint ten chief advisers. Their posts should be held by rotation. As the officers become qualified for greater responsibilities, they should be readily promoted as stagnation takes away satisfaction and kills the incentive to work and the administration suffers on account of absence of motivation.

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Shukracharya also cautions about the natural infirmity of man, whereby he gets intoxicated by power. So no officer should be allowed to wield power in the same office for a long time and recommends periodical transfers. He also gives tips on sickness benefits, leave rules, bonus as deferred, wage, payment of pension, and family pension, to the workers. Besides these, three types of wages, classification of workers, compensation to son and wife have been mentioned by Shukracharya. In fact the bonus is considered as the claim of the employee on the profit made by industry. The noteworthy point is that in *Sukraniti*, the payable bonus is 1/8th of annual salary, irrespective of the profit made or even in the absence of profit. According to *Sukraniti*, bonus means deferred wages.

In times of crisis, the employer should call on the wise men, preceptors, brother, friends, workers, relatives and counsellors and humbly consult their wishes in the proper manner. He should inform them about his problems and request them to give their counsel as friends and not as workers. He should say that he has no other source of help besides them. Shukracharya says that an excellent worker is he who does not desert the master in difficulty and the ideal master is one who sacrifices his life for the sake of his servant.

The employer–employee, king–servant relations are based on dharma. It is the guiding principle. Dharma is a principle based on mutuality. In this context, any deviation from fair conduct is construed as deviating from the path of dharma. What one does to ensure one’s own welfare should always contribute to the welfare of all. When one makes profit out of labour exerted by others, that person is duty-bound to ensure their welfare. The right of employees thus can be seen as the duty of the employer. The Indian way of life, therefore, gave emphasis to everybody’s duty, which, if discharged, also ensures the fulfilment of everyone’s rights. If duty is violated, rights remain unfulfilled.

3.4.2 Contributions of Shukracharya

In Vedic astrology, the malefic seven years (*mahadasha*) of Ketu are followed by the benefic twenty years of Shukra. The intensity of the Ketu *mahadasha* can be damaging enough to leave a person fighting for life. At such times, the reviving touch of Venus is sought. Sometimes, the only individuals to whom those suffering the Ketu *dasha* can relate to are those who are living through the Venus planetary period. This is because Venus—the *brahmana* Shukracharya—is generous and full of mercy towards the suffering.

Shukracharya was born on Friday in the year *Paarthiva* on *Sraavana Suddha Ashtami* when *Swathi Nakshatra* was on the ascent. Friday is, therefore, known as *Shukravaar* in Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Assamese and Kannada. Shukracharya studied the Vedas under rishi Angirasa but could not stand Angirasa’s favouritism to his son Brihaspati. He then went to study under rishi Gautama and went on to perform penance to appease Lord Shiva. As a reward, he received the *Sanjivani mantra* (a hymn that can revive the dead).

During this period Brihaspati became the guru (Preceptor) of the divine people or the ‘devas’. Shukracharya held Vishnu responsible for the murder of his mother for sheltering a demon being chased by Vishnu. Therefore, in vengeance,

Shukracharya decided to become the guru of the asuras. He helped them triumph over *devas* and used his magical powers to revive the dead and wounded asuras.

The *Devasur* war was fought between two factions of Aryan kings and sages (Rishis). One worshipped divinity under the name of *deva* and the other worshipped divinity under the name of *asur*. Ushanas *shukra* along with the petty king Vrushparvan, was the preceptor of the faction that worshipped divinity under the name of *asur*. These differences aggravated to such an extent that at a later period his descendants and followers left Saptasindhu to settle elsewhere, towards Iran. The Iranian priests belonging to the sect worshipping *Ahur* of *Ahur Mazda* are referred to as *Atharvan*.

In one story, Lord Vishnu was born as the Brahmana sage Vamana, who came with the mission of taking the three worlds as alms from the *asura* king Bali. Lord Vishnu wanted to deceive the king Bali who was the grandson of the great king Prahlad, in order to help the *devas*. The sage Shukracharya identified him immediately and warned the king. The king was however a man of his word and offered the gift to Vamana. Shukracharya, annoyed with the pride of the king, shrank himself with his powers and sat in the spout of the vase, from which water had to be poured to seal the promise to the deity in disguise. Lord Vishnu, in disguise of the dwarf, understood immediately, and picked a straw from the ground and directed it up the spout, poking out the left eye of Shukracharya rendering the guru of the asuras half blind.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna described Shri Shukracharya as one of his representatives. In fact, he is honoured in the same verse as the great sage Vyasadeva where Krishna confirmed, 'Among great thinkers I am Ushana (*Shukra*)'. Ushana was the intelligent and farsighted spiritual master of the demons.

Often in astrology, Jupiter or Brihaspati is called the 'greater benefic' because his power influences religion, philosophy, banking, progeny and education. Shukracharya is referred to as the 'lesser benefic' because his powers rule over luxuries, dining, the arts and various pleasures of sense gratification. However, as per the *Gita*, Shri Krishna feels that both the *deva* guru (Jupiter) and *asura* guru (Venus) represent him.

Soma, the demi-god of the Moon, is another feminine planet. Soma is equated with the left eye of the universal form of Shri Krishna. Like Venus, the Moon also rules liquids since water is the most fertile of all elements. The Moon also does not get credit from gross materialists for infusing all living entities with their individual characteristics. The movements of the Moon are likewise mysterious as are the movements of the bright Venus. In *Shrimad Bhagavadam*, Venus is described as always moving in proximity to the sun. Shukracharya is never seen in opposition to the sun—despite the fact that he is considered as one of the Sun's enemies for technical reasons in astrology. Shukra, with his captivating brightness, is the first celestial body to appear upon the horizon while setting in the evening.

Brihaspati stands in staunch opposition to the policies of Shukracharya. But it was his challenge to the guru of the *asuras* to fight or debate over the rights of the universe that made Shukracharya stand out in his true light. The Venus, being imbued with feminine passivity, has that sort of character that has to be provoked from

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outside forces in order to display his real spirit. Shukracharya's only true equal is Brihaspati. On the battlefield, he is often seen fighting with Brihaspati. In order to help the asuras convert to the right path of dharma, Shukracharya hides his true nature and secretly enjoys the rebukes of Brihaspati. In his heart the guru of the asuras holds a conviction that equals the guru of the demi-gods: They both worship the supreme personality of Godhead.

Shukracharya once used his powers to revive the slain army of the demon Andhaka. For this act he was swallowed by Lord Shiva. Shukracharya was not able to free himself for one hundred celestial years. During this time he meditated upon Lord Vishnu's universal form in the belly of the angry Lord Shiva. But when Shukra managed to emerge, even Shiva was amazed. The greatest of the demi-gods blessed Shukracharya with powers that no other *jiva* in this universe can equal. He can revitalize the universe or an individual because of these splendid blessings. But his position as the asura guru is always tricky and difficult to understand.

Many great devotees have debilitated him in their charts pointing to their renounced spirit. This is so in the case of Shrila Prabhupada whose debilitated Venus, though powerfully *neecha-bhang* in the tenth house, indicates a temperament far above any attraction to sense gratification. Still other worshipers of Lord Shri Krishna have Venus exalted in their horoscopes, pointing to their desire to employ all beautiful things in life in the service of the Supreme Lord. You can find Venus in all different positions in the charts of devotees. It is Jupiter whose position in the horoscope of a devotee describes the extent of devotional influence (by emphasizing the houses of dharma), while the position of Venus further refines the chart.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.
 - (a) Shukracharya was the deity of the planet _____.
 - (b) Shukracharya is highly respected for his treatise _____.
8. State whether the following are true or false.
 - (a) Shukracharya had three sons and a daughter.
 - (b) In the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna describes Shukracharya as one of his representatives.

3.5 SUMMARY

- According to the Hindu mythology, Manu was the first person on the earth. He was imbued with great wisdom and was devoted to virtue. He divided the society according to *Varnas*.
- *Varna* refers to the categorization of the Hindu society into four castes, as stated by the *Brahmanas* and their sacred texts. This quadruple division is not to be confused with *Jâti* or even the much finer division of the contemporary caste system in India.

- The *varna* system of Hindu society is described in the various *Puranas* and *Smritis*, among others. *Manusmriti* is one of the many *Dharmasastra* texts reflecting the laws and society of the Mauryan period in India. It was a reference work for the *Brahmanas* of Bengal and was relied upon by the British colonial administrators and scholars based in Calcutta, the capital city.
- Of all the *smritis*, that of Manu is admittedly the best and authoritative. According to U. N. Ghosal, Manu's *smriti* occupies an exceptional place in our ancient literature and is considered as first rank among all the *smriti* texts of ancient Hindu literature.
- The *Manusamhita* or the code of Manu contains twelve chapters in which Manu has beautifully depicted the creation of mankind, religion and polity.
- Manu views the family as the most significant of all social groups. The family consists of husband, wife and children. Manu says a lot about marriages. Marriage, according to him, is a sacred thing.
- The code of Manu or *Manusmriti* is a monumental work with universal appeal. It is a treatise on statecraft, which will serve as a handbook for rulers and statesmen in times to come.
- The Upanishads teach us the highest product of the human mind—truth. Besides truth they also preach wisdom. Annie Besant, the Indian thinker, is of the view that, 'the Upanishads are the highest product of the human mind, the crystallized wisdom of divinely illumined men.'
- The *Narada Smriti* forms a part of the *Dharmasastra* and is a piece of work credited to the divine sage Narada. The *Narada Smriti* majorly deals with the utilitarian and practical law that deals with dharma.
- *Narada Smriti* is the only *Dharmasatra* that does not deal with areas such as moral demeanour and atonement.
- For Narada, the duty of the Brahmin is that of a very important stature and he puts emphasis on the right path of duty for the Brahman.
- The *Vishnu Smriti*, also referred to as *Vaishnava Dharmasastra* and *Vishnu-sutra* is an assemblage of ancient aphorisms based on the sacred laws of India and also acquires a place in the history of ancient times as a commendable work on the lines of similar other ancient works that have come down to us.
- The sources of the *Vishnu Smriti* are difficult to trace but it is considered that the text heavily drew from its various *Dharmasastras* such as the *Manusmriti* and the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*.
- The duty of the king, according to the *Vishnu Smriti* is to protect his subjects and maintain the four castes and their duties in the practice of their duties. He has the responsibility of appointing all the chiefs and lords.
- Shukracharya was born as the son of Brighu *muni*. He is accepted as the deity of the feminine planet Venus.
- Shukracharya is highly respected for his treatise *Sukraniti*. In the *Sukraniti*, Shukracharya says that without wealth life has no meaning, and hence advises

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to use every second of life in pursuit of knowledge and wealth. He also recommends using this wealth to obtain a good wife, a child, good friends and also spend on charity.

- According to the *Sukraniti*, work is not merely a tool of production but is needed for the welfare of the society as well as the health of the individual. Human beings are not merely economic tools but have all-round ability with maximum stress on spirituality. This can be achieved by treating work as a duty and as worship of God.
- According to Shukracharya, an extravagant spender must be driven out of state. He advises the king that if a miser only hoards wealth, spends only on himself or does not spend at all, his wealth should be taken away.
- Shukracharya prescribes a holistic approach towards the issue of labour, which includes both the employer and the employee.
- According to the *Sukraniti*, every worker needs economic, social and personal security. When these needs are not fulfilled, conflicts arise between the workers and the employers leading to industrial disputes.
- *Sukraniti* places immense importance on communication. It gives many examples to prove that an organization will go astray in the absence of proper communication.
- Shukracharya was a sage of the Bhargava *atharvan* branch and a descendant of sage Kavi. He studied the Vedas under rishi Angirasa and rishi Gautama.

3.6 KEY TERMS

- **Varna:** *Varna* refers to the categorization of the Hindu society into four castes, as stated by the *Brahmanas* and their sacred texts.
- **Denigrate:** Denigrate is an abusive attack on a person's character or good name.
- **Pariah:** Pariah is a term used in southern India to refer to a member of a low caste.
- **Antiquity:** Antiquity is a specified historical period during the ancient past.
- **Procrastination:** The action of delaying or postponing something is called procrastination.
- **Parlance:** A particular way of speaking or using words is referred to as parlance.
- **Philanthropy:** Philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed by the generous donation of money to good causes.
- **Dasha:** The patterns that show which planets will be ruling at particular times in *Jyotisha* is termed as *dasha*.
- **Jiva:** *Jiva* is a living being, or more specifically, the immortal essence of a living organism that survives physical death.

- **Malefic:** Anything that has a destructive, evil or harmful effect is termed as malefic. The term is used mainly in astrology while describing the bad effects of certain planets.
- **Benefic:** Benefic is a term used to describe anything that is favourable or beneficial. Usually used while referring to planets and stars in astrology. It is the opposite of malefic.

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3.7 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The four *varnas*, or *chatur varna*, are mentioned in the ancient texts in the following (stratified) order, from top to bottom:
 - *Brahmanas*: Scholars, teachers and fire priests
 - *Kshatriya/chattari*: Kings, warriors, administrators
 - *Vaishyas*: Agriculturists and merchants
 - *Sudras*: Service providers and artisans
2. Separated from and shunned by the society were the ‘untouchables’ like the *Chandaal*, who had to deal with the disposal of dead bodies and are described as dirty and polluted.
3. The *Manusamhita* or the code of Manu contains twelve chapters in which Manu has beautifully depicted the creation of mankind, religion and polity.
4. Manu was a supporter of the divinity of the king and the superiority of the priestly class. It is not consistent with democratic principles.
5. The *Narada Smriti* forms a part of the *Dharmasastra* and is a piece of work credited to the divine sage Narada.
6. The sources of the *Vishnu Smriti* are difficult to trace but it is considered that the text heavily drew from its various *Dharmasastras* such as the *Manusmriti* and the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*.
7. (a) Venus; (b) *Sukraniti*
8. (a) False; (b) True

3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the *Manusmriti*?
2. Who were the Dalits or Harijans?
3. State the reason why the *Manusmriti* enjoys a predominant position in our ancient literature after the *Vedas*.
4. State the constituents of the various chapters of the *Manusamhita*.
5. What are Manu’s views on marriage?
6. Explain briefly why Manu was called the father of Indian polity.

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7. Write short notes on:
 - (i) *Narada Smriti*
 - (ii) *Vishnu Smriti*
8. Explain briefly why Shukracharya became the guru of the demons and not the Gods.
9. Who was Kacha and what was his relation with Shukracharya's daughter Devayani?
10. Describe the similarities and dissimilarities between the *Manusmriti* and the *Sukraniti*.
11. Write a short note on *Sukraniti*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Who was Manu? Discuss in detail the *Manusmriti* and the *Manusamhita*.
2. 'Manu views the family as the most significant of all social groups.' Discuss. Also, discuss the criticism and importance of Manu's ideas as the father of the Indian polity.
3. 'The Upanishads teach us the highest product of the human mind—truth.' Elucidate on this statement with regard to *Narada Smriti* and *Vishnu Smriti*.
4. Assess the views of Shukracharya.
5. Discuss what *Sukraniti* has to say on the employer–employee relationship.
6. How did Shukracharya help the demons? Explain.

3.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF KINGSHIP

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- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
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 - 4.3.5 Varnadharmā
- 4.4 Benevolent Monarchism
 - 4.4.1 Mauryas
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- 4.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.9 Questions and Exercises
- 4.10 Further Reading

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The importance of politics in a state is to assert and practice righteousness and not to trespass the differences beyond their limits. It is through this righteousness that people would get the chance to experience divinity. Therefore, the main purpose of power which is to be exercised by the king is to protect the good and punish the wicked. The highest duty of the king is to protect his subjects and save them from injury with compassion.

According to Manu and Shukra, economy or *arth* is a part of the four principal activities of human life—*dharma* (duty), *arth* (economy), *kama* (fulfilment of desires) and *moksha* (spiritual activities). It, thus, has an integrated approach for the whole life and duly regards ethics, morality and system of consumption also as part of overall consideration. The economy described, and commended, by the *Arthashastra* was completely dominated by the state. The government was not merely tax gatherer but also agriculturist, cowherd, road-builder, cattle breeder, miner, forester, manufacturer and merchant.

Shukracharya says that an excellent worker is he who does not desert the master in difficulty and the ideal master is one who sacrifices his life for the sake of his servant. The employer-employee, king-servant relations are based on *dharma*.

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What one does to ensure one's own welfare should always contribute to the welfare of all. The Indian way of life, therefore, gave emphasis to everybody's duty, which, if discharged, ensures the fulfilment of everyone's rights also. Where duty is violated, rights find no means of fulfilment.

In this unit, you will learn about the theories of Kautilya and Manu about the origin of kingship and the reign of benevolent monarchs like the Mauryas and the Guptas.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the theory of kingship and statecraft as postulated by Kautilya
- Assess the economic functions of the state and the rajmandala theory
- Understand the social organization, raj dharma and the idea of statecraft of Manu
- Analyse the Mauryas as benevolent monarchs
- Explain the conquests of the Gupta dynasty
- Discuss the working of the local administration prevalent in ancient India

4.2 KAUTILYA

Kautilya is considered as the pioneer of economics and political science. In the Western world, he has been referred to as the Indian Machiavelli, although his works predate Machiavelli's by about 1800 years. Kautilya was a teacher in Takshila, an ancient centre of learning, and was responsible for the creation of the Mauryan Empire, the first of its kind on the Indian subcontinent. His works were lost near the end of the Gupta dynasty and not rediscovered until the early twentieth century. Two classics that are said to be Kautilya's creations are the *Arthashastra* and the *Neetishastra*. The *Arthashastra* is also known as *Chanakya Niti*. It discusses monetary and fiscal policies, welfare, international relations and war strategies in detail. *Neetishastra* is a treatise on the ideal way of life, and shows Kautilya's in-depth study of the Indian way of life. In the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya specifically described the duties of the council of state and of the council of ministers. According to him, a state should completely dominate its economy and taxation and pricing policies. Kautilya developed a labour theory of value for determining 'just' wage for workers as he understood the concepts of demand and supply and their combined influence on price. He even wrote explicitly on foreign trade, interest and money.

4.2.1 Theory of Kingship and Moral Statecraft

A revolution dawned on the Indian political thought with the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1904. A manuscript of the text along with a commentary on a small part of it by a writer named Bhattasvamin, was handed over by a Pandit of Tanjore District to R. Shamasastri, Librarian, Mysore Government Oriental Library.

Mr Shamasastri first published a report of his finding in the Indian Antiquary (Bombay) of January 1905. Indian and Occidental experts closely scrutinized the original documents over the years, and Shamasastri's English translation was successively revised until it met the most rigorous criticisms of qualified experts. Subsequently, the authenticity of the *Arthashastra* as the work of primary significance in Hindu politics was completely established.

However, the issue of the exact authorship of *Arthashastra* is still in doubt even after continuing examination, analysis and debate. Several questions remain open: (i) Was the Kautilya who wrote the *Arthashastra* the same Kautilya who ruled the Mauryan Empire with Chandragupta? ; (ii) Or was the *Arthashastra* produced by aides and disciples to the minister-statesman Kautilya?; (iii) Or is Kautilya only a name given, as the name Manu is given to the *Manusamhita*, to represent a mythical author when actually the *Arthashastra* was the work of numerous scholars?; (iv) Finally, was the *Arthashastra* written in the 4th century BC or was it written sometime between the 4th century BC and the 3rd century AD? These questions have never been precisely resolved and renowned authorities who have investigated the above questions in detail, have differed in their opinions and results.

The fact is that only little reliable knowledge has been acquired about the author of *Arthashastra*. The author subscribes himself as Kautilya at the end of each of the 150 chapters of the work, and re-asserts his vow to destroy the Nanda dynasty. The two other names used by the author are Vishnugupta and Chanakya. Dr. Ganapati Sastri holds the view that the venerable *acharya* had been born in the *Kutala gotra* and hence his name was Kautalya, not Kautilya; he was born at Chanaka and was therefore called Chanakya; and his parents baptized him as Vishnugupta and he came to be known by this name also.

However, despite varied views as regards the authorship, the *Arthashastra* is, all agree, the most important work in Hindu politics. Its air of intense political realism and concern for practical problems of administration, adjudication and governmental control distinguish it from the more theoretical works of earlier *Brahmana* schools. Moreover, acute insights are given to an analysis of the politics of the Mauryan Empire. So the *Brahmana* statesman is credited as being, if not the author of the entire *Arthashastra*, at least the guiding spirit behind its compilation and thesis.

For the purpose of this study, the most important element to be considered is that the Indian tradition credits Chanakya as the author of *Arthashastra*. Modern Indian scholars, almost without exception, hold that this tradition is correct; and the leaders of Indian nationalism so far as they have recorded their position, maintain that Kautilya was the minister and *Shashtra* writer, and that the *Arthashastra* is a true product of the political thought and practical politics of Chandragupta's Empire. The Indian tradition thus considers that Chanakya the statesman was Kautilya, the author and/or the guiding spirit of the 'art of politics'.

The Kautilya *Arthashastra*, as the name indicates is a treatise on *Arthashastra*. '*Artha* is the sustenance or livelihood (*vrttih*) of men; in other words it means 'the earth inhabited by men'. *Arthashastra* is the science which is the means of the acquisition and protection of the earth. Since very early times *artha* has stood for material well-being, and as such *Arthashastra* is primarily concerned with the general

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well being on earth, which can be made possible by the state activity alone. *Arthashastra* is thus a science dealing with state affairs. It is the science of statecraft or of politics and administration.

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The *Arthashastra* literature, divorcing itself from moral philosophy order, devoted itself to practical, political and administrative matters within the greater moral order. Since the Hindu tradition makes no distinction between economics and politics both are somewhat merged in *Arthashastra*.

Kautilya and Machiavelli

The customary comparison between Kautilya and Machiavelli has resulted in the portrayal of Kautilya as the Machiavelli of India by thinkers like G. B. Bottazi and Hillebrant. The portrayal, however, seems to be misplaced as Kautilya preceded Machiavelli, and thus he ought to be treated as the pioneer in the science of statecraft. Not only this, a closer look at the two political thinkers impartially projects the difference in their philosophical and conceptual frameworks. However, notwithstanding the differences in the historical and cultural background of ancient India and 15th century Italy, the common points of focus for both the thinkers are preservation, acquisition and expansion of the state.

The differences in the political outlook of Kautilya and Machiavelli are essentially rooted in the long Indian tradition of culture and politics on which Kautilya drew and which, while conceding autonomy to different branches of knowledge, recommends an integrated view of life. Because of this tradition, Kautilya does not divorce political issues from the ethical ones. As such, this prevents Kautilya's political philosophy from degenerating into a ruthless device for acquiring power for its own sake. In spite of its emphasis on the need to consolidate political power, it does not treat this power as an end but as a means. On the other hand, Machiavelli views politics as a moral activity in pursuit of political power that is not aware of its social responsibility. In this sense, the differences between the two thinkers become fundamental.

The suggestions of Machiavelli depict shrewd insight. He believed that it was not necessary for the government to be human or ethical. What was necessary was that the government must maintain itself in power and provide the security of life and property to its citizens, thus confirming the government to play a particular role that of a police state, and thus reducing the origin or the base of the executive only to a limited purpose of proving its usefulness by remaining in power.

Machiavelli viewed an identity between the interest of the Prince and the subjects and he vested full authority in the prince to act as he likes in the best interest of the state. He failed to understand that the prince as a human being may try to promote selfish interests at the cost of public interest and may use all types of autocratic methods for this purpose.

Contrarily, the distinctiveness of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* lies in its primary concern for practical utility in administration. Kautilya hardly speculated on the origin of the state. All the same, the high-handedness of the religious institutions in public life hardly made any provision for the interest of the state.

The *Arthashastra* refers to numerous previous teachers and claims to be a systematic compendium of the ancient teachings. Kautilya makes no pretence for the construction of any original system of political philosophy. He is not interested in presenting the architectonic of the rationally perfect and ideal polity. He only claims to have made an attempt to eliminate the discrepancies existing in the various schools. As a result, the *Arthashastra* appears to be a tremendously comprehensive work. It succinctly deals with the major problems of political theory, law and administration as well as the conduct of foreign policy and warfare and, on occasions, becomes so specific as to advise the exact fines to be levied on various kinds of criminal acts. The work is characterized by its absolutely realistic philosophy and practical approach to the science of politics. Like Machiavelli, Kautilya has produced a theory of government in which the end justifies the means.

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Kautilya: A Traditionalist

Kautilya remains a traditionalist when he conceives of the state as a political organism. He also discussed the state in the traditional terms of *pratyangabhuta*, or the seven limbs of the state. 'The king, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army and the friend and the enemy are the elements of sovereignty.' He goes on to explain that 'accepting the enemy, these seven elements, possessed of their excellent characteristics are said to be the limb-like elements of sovereignty.' As such from this initial premise, Kautilya proceeds to analyze the interworkings of the seven elements and the function of the state.

Kautilya has an obvious preference for the monarchical state. However, there is one passage in which he parenthetically deals with the conditions of clan-republics or *Kulas*, and admits that some of them possess the two-fold merit of invincibility and permanence.

The king being the first element of the organic state is dealt with, in general, along the lines of the earlier *Dharmasutras*. The canonical writers mentioned only the rudiments of public administration, and *Arthashastra* being secular, dealt with both the state and the king and is more concerned with the ethical and moral aspects of sovereignty; and Kautilya must have assumed that the *dharma* of the king was fully understood from the sacred literature. Therefore, it was not necessary for him to deal overlong on this subject.

Since Kautilya's state could not rely upon any popular feeling of nationalism, it had to rely on the absolute personal loyalty of subjects for the king. He urges that the Prince receive rigorous intellectual and moral discipline, the former involving the study of the four traditional sciences under the tutelage of specially qualified *Brahmanas* and the latter centering on the control of the senses so as to develop royal character. The prince should enjoy pleasures within the limits of his *svadharma* and must never disregard virtue and wealth. He makes clear that the king's education and self-control is the first requisite of successful government. Elsewhere, Kautilya addresses the prince:

The observance of one's own duty leads one to *Svarga* and infinite bliss (*Anantya*). When it is violated, the world will come to an end owing to confusion of castes and duties. Hence the King shall never allow people to

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swerve from their duties; for whoever upholds his own duty, ever adhering to the customs of the *aryas* and the following rules of caste and divisions of religious life, will surely be happy both here and thereafter. For the world, when maintained in accordance with injunction of the triple Vedas, will surely progress but never perish.

Kautilya accepts the theory of *Matsya-nayaya*, the logic of the fish, for his is a science of politics for the *Kali Yuga*. He impresses on the monarch the fact that the king exists solely for the sake of righteousness and never for self-gratification.

Since Kautilya accepts the organic social order which is based on *dharma*, *varna* and *asrama*, he teaches that it is the primary duty of the king to see that each caste and each *asrama* scrupulously observe their proper *dharmas* and that the King allow no *samkara* or confusion to creep in as happens when people fail to perform their *dharmas*. The king must, according to Kautilya, avoid those causes that produce evils among the people. If the king follows these injunctions, the state will be strong, prosperous and victorious. Moreover, the king must act vigorously, the conscientious discharge of royal duties being his performance of sacrifice and his consecration of Brahma. His happiness must lie in the happiness of his subjects and their well-being must be his well being. Kautilya obviously places greatest emphasis on the king's education, discipline and duties. The king in the Kautilyan state is by far the most important element of the seven limbs of the state.

Dandaniti, the science of punishment is the most important tool of the king in the *Kali Yuga*. It is his *dharma* to enforce the just ordering of society through royal punishment and to bring to bear the power of the state against those who would disrupt the ordered life. Degenerated making must be elevated to *dharma* through the all-powerful monarch.

Kautilya also teaches the king the great lesson of the use of his royal power in saying:

Whoever imposes severe punishment becomes repulsive to the people; while he who awards mild punishment becomes contemptible. But whoever imposes punishment as deserved becomes respectable. For punishment (*danda*), when awarded with due consideration, makes the people devoted to righteousness and to world productive of wealth and enjoyment; while punishment, when ill awarded under the influence of greed and anger owing to ignorance, excites fury even among hermits and ascetics dwelling in forests, not to speak of householders.

Though Kautilya places primary emphasis on the king and his functions, he does not omit a detailed analysis of the proper functions of the other six elements of the state. The king, as befits traditional Hindu theory, was an absolute king, and yet his powers were to be guided and checked by the *Brahmanas* through *rajadharmas*. Unlimited power was, no doubt, centred in one single individual but its arbitrary use could never have been contemplated, or even tolerated. Kautilya advised the king that 'sovereignty is possible only with assistance. A single wheel can never move'. The *Brahmana* minister-adviser is the most important check upon the king's authority. Specifically, Kautilya insists that the king must rule with the help of ministers (*mantris*) and the state officials (*amatyas*). However, he provides the king with a series of

tests by which each minister and official is tested by fear, virtue, wealth and love to see that he is fit for his high position.

It is a widely held view that the doctrine of the necessity for constant espionage in every branch of administration pervades the whole of *Arthashastra*. The vast civil service envisaged by Kautilya is continually under the scrutiny of overt and covert agents of the king whose duty is to prevent dishonesty, disloyalty and maladministration. None escapes the scrutiny of the spies, and it must be assumed that the king himself was tested. It is probable, though Kautilya does not give explicit evidence, that the vast spy system was controlled by the *Brahmana* prime minister. Since Kautilya was interested in checking the arbitrary power of the sovereign, it seems natural that this device of espionage on the royal household would be an extremely effective checking system.

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Arthashastra on the Council of State: Duties and Functions

Kautilya specifically defines the duties of the Council of State and of the Council of Ministers. He insists that these bodies (each having been cleared on security grounds) actively participated in the management of state affairs. He further states that these Councils deal with practical matters of administration and that their duty is to provide the best possible system of government and to strengthen the state in fulfilling its *dharma*.

It should be noted that while Kautilya teaches the divinity of the king, he seems to place greatest emphasis on the divinity of the king's office. This relates to the Kautilya's embryonic theory of contract which is conjoined with the doctrine of the king's quasi-divinity. Here Kautilya's object is evidently not to lay down a philosophical theory of kingship but to justify on, as broad a basis as possible, the king's authority in the eyes of his subjects. The Kautilyan contract theory is identical with that of the *Santiparvan* in which Manu accepts the position of the wealth of the people. Manu accepts the position of king and, in turn, receives a portion of the wealth of the people. Manu is divinely appointed and, therefore, the King's office is of divine origin.

The army and the conduct of war are fully described in the *Arthashastra*. The army, according to Kautilya, is to be recruited from five classes, namely, *Choras* or *Pratirodhakas* (robbers and bandits); *Mlechchhas* (foreigners); *Choraganas* (organized gangs of brigands); *Atavi-kas* (foresters); and *Sasiro-pajivi Srenis* (warrior clans). They were to be led into battle by the King and officered by trusted *Kshatriyas*. The Kautilyan emphasis on recourse to wars necessitated that he included rather detailed descriptions of the art of war, the problems of armament and logistics, the strategy of campaigns, and other subjects which must have comprised part of the education of the monarch and which show the extensive knowledge of the *Brahmana* minister in such military matters.

Kautilya urged recourse to war only as a last resort. Diplomacy is guided by expediency. Expediency becomes the golden rule of all international relations. Kautilya advises the king, who is restrained in the circle of states (*prakritimandala*), to utilize the six-fold policy in order for his state to pass from deterioration to stagnation and from stagnation to prosperity. Depending upon the strength and condition of the state, Kautilya holds that the forms of policy are six. Of these, 'agreement with

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pledges is peace; offensive operation is war; indifference is neutrality; making preparations is marching; seeking the protection of another is alliance; and making peace with one and waging war with another, is termed a double policy (*dvaidhibhava*). These are the six forms.'

The techniques of statecraft Kautilya offers in his *Arthashastra* are guidelines to a king for the administration of internal and external affairs. The author's treatment of the problems of internal governance—political, economic, social administration—and of external affairs, is, indeed comprehensive and deep. In this respect, as in several others, lies the uniqueness of the *Arthashastra* which is a storehouse of political wisdom and a text book of the principles and techniques of statecraft.

It would not be wrong to say that Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was the last important original work in the literature of traditional Hindu political thought. Whether or not its author was the *Brahmana* prime minister of Chandragupta and the leader of the first great Brahmanical political reaction is not that relevant. The work represents the apex of the practical science of politics, government and administration. To some extent, it should be admitted that the policies of *Arthashastra* was not applied in the Mauryan empire, and that it was revered and probably followed in the Sunga and the Gupta Empires, and that it has continued to play an important part in the Indian tradition of politics and statecraft. The intensity and realistic approach of *Arthashastra* argues for the contention that its author was widely familiar with the practical problems of government. Realism may be said to be the keynote of the volume and it provided a major contribution to the Hindu political tradition.

Kautilya's practical statesmanship leads him to discuss the basic problems of social control, local administration, military affairs, taxation and revenue collection, and foreign affairs as well as the major problems of political theory. His contributions, which he calls only a revival and reinterpretation of an older tradition, have preserved a heritage of Machiavellian policies alongside the more moralistic and idealized theories of the *Sutras*. The *Arthashastra* is not only a compendium of *dharma* principles, it is a manual of practical politics as well.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is different from the rest of the ancient works both in its plan and purpose. Whenever Kautilya refers to the views of his predecessors, his scrutiny and analysis are based on a sound judgement and give an evidence of his superior intellectual might and practical wisdom. He is not merely a preserver of the old political ideas but a creator of new ones as well. He is impatient with the existing unsystematic and chaotic theories of polity and removes the cobwebs in political thinking through his incisive logic and firm grasp of the realities of statecraft.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name the two creations of Kautilya that are said to be classics.
2. What are the common points of focus for Kautilya and Machiavelli?
3. Who is the most important element of the seven limbs of the state in the Kautilyan state?

4.2.2 Economic Functions of the State

Conventionally, the *Arthashastra* has been credited to the well-known minister of ruler Chandragupta Maurya—Kautilya. Kautilya who is also known as Vishnugupta and Chanakya, is regarded by historians as the one responsible for making Chandragupta the ruler of Magadha after having overthrown the Nandas from the throne in 321 BC. *Arthashastra* is considered to be dated around the end of the 4th century BC. It is yet uncertain to be sure that the text was written by Kautilya himself or by someone else on his behalf as it now exists and the time is uncertain too. Studying the evidence, Kangley (1986 part III: 106) concludes that ‘there is no convincing reason why this work should not be regarded as the work of Kautilya who helped Chandragupta to come to power in Magadha.’ However, Kangley himself confesses elsewhere (ibid: 108): ‘Despite the legends about Kautilya or Chanakya preserved in many works, information about him that can be regarded as reliable is meagre.’ Historian A. L. Basham is of the view that the text that exists today is a piece of work that was written post Maurya period but pre-Gupta age, work demonstrating an explanation of A Mauryan original by Kautilya himself is a reasonable one. Irrespective of these controversies surrounding the issue, we will still assume Kautilya to be the author of the text and we shall use Kangley’s texts, unless otherwise indicated.

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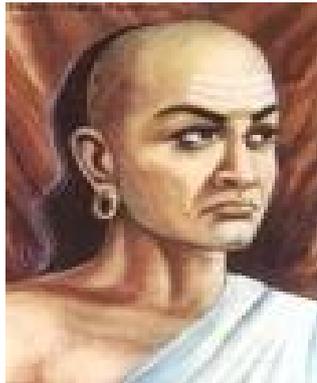


Fig. 4.1 Kautilya

The turning point from the Buddhist scriptures to that of *Arthashastra* is quite a different one. There are many reasons for this and this cannot be assured by the fact that the *Arthashastra* reiterates the sacredness of the Varna hierarchy which in turn was being doubted by the Buddhist teachings. The difference between the two thoughts are neither simply on ethical or economic grounds. *Arthashastra*, as the name suggests, and also the literal meaning of the term that means the science of wealth, was not exactly an inquiry into the sources of the prosperity of nations. Instead, it was a piece of work dealing with politics that advised the rulers on how to preserve their wealth and also increase their power. This particular approach of the text is similar to that of the ‘Cameralist’ school of the 17th century Germany. The Cameralist school too were concerned with ‘administration and policy studies’ (*Kameralwissenschaft*) and not only the economic policy as such.

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The economic conditions as enshrined in the *Arthashastra* totally belonged to the state. The responsibility of the government was not only to collect tax but it also acted as the agronomist, road-builder, livestock breeder, collier, forester, builder and wholesaler. Anything that was private economy except the production of food crops, was strictly regulated by the government activities. The king was the supreme power of the state and was the one who represented the state, but the actual governance and administration of the state was carried out by a complex order of government representatives who worked in the respective economic divisions, each with an *adhyaksha* (manager or controller who was proficient in his particular field as the head of the department). The executives working under the *adhyaksha* were both responsible for the governance of the state as well as managing its economy. The administration of the state and the management of the economy in this particular manner required a lot of thorough facts. This was to be obtained by collection of regular data and statistics, by recruiting cautious officials and mainly by employing a good network of spies who could help in the governance of the state.

The arena of state activity where the *Arthashastra* seemed to concentrate most was that of settlement of land. The king is responsible for the settlement of the country by importing people from the foreign lands or by exporting his own people to other countries. The text also discusses the comparative fiscal virtues of different types of land that could be settled, which meant that there was a lot of barren land to be cultivated. A land that could yield more even in scanty rainfall was preferred for the cultivation of crops. Also, land that had large amount of water was preferred to a dry land because there was a surety of regular production.

The state was the independent owner of the forests and it was solely responsible for the proper development of the forests. There was a difference between the elephant forests that were solely responsible for the military purposes of the country since they were built on the borders of the country and the product forests that had fiscal value. It is the responsibility of the king, according to the *Arthashastra*, to develop and launch product forests, one corresponding to each essential product. He is also responsible for establishing factories and industries for the manufacture of goods made from these forest products. The grass land was also under the state and the official in charge was responsible for measuring grass lands, digging wells and tanks, developing gardens and orchards in these areas and pastures. Similarly, the official was also in charge of the cattle being fed in the pastures and the caravans passing through. Besides, these grassland could also be rented to the herdsmen.

Additional responsibilities of the state besides the above mentioned ones was the management of mineral resources. The state had the full authority over the mines, hence the establishment of new mines and the restitution of the old and rejected ones was thus an important activity to be performed by the state. The director of mining was the one who headed these activities. This director had to be a professional in *sulbashastra* (geology) and *dhatushastra* (metallurgy); he also should carry out surveys in all the regions where mineral resources are to be found and then establish new ones and also restore the old ones. The digging up of mines are quite expensive and hence sometimes the code of choice should be used. Kautilya

is of the opinion that those mines are the best ones that are rich in ores and resources and are easily manageable and adept at being managed at a small cost. Earlier, it was seen that a mine that yielded valuable products such as diamonds were considered to be the best ones and were preferred than the rest. Contrary to this view, Kautilya was in favour of larger mines even if it did not yield much valuable products like diamonds, since the larger mines have articles that can be sold continuously, contrary to diamonds who have a restricted market.

It is true that all mines were under the supervision of the state, but it was necessary that all of them had to directly work under the state or the state directly supervised them. Herein, Kautilya is of the opinion that a mine that has high managing costs should be rented out to people with a fixed amount of share in its name and only those mines should be directed by the state that have low managing costs. As far as salt mines are concerned, they are to be rented out for a fixed amount of share. Those working in the mines directed by the state should be from the same classes as labourers working on crown lands. Those workers who seem to be dissatisfied by the governance of the king are to be posted to the mines and their spouses and children are kept as captives so as to prevent the workers from going over to the enemy.

Kautilya, as always, was very much anxious about the revenue generated by the state and its activities. According to Kautilya, there are twelve types of income that the state can generate from the mines, they are:

- *Mulya* (price)
- *Bhaga* (share)
- *Vyaji* (a sort of sale tax)
- *Parigha* (the exact nature of which is not clear, but which appears to be a kind of protective duty)
- *Atyaya* (penalty for violation of state monopoly)
- *Sulka* (custom duty in the case, for example, of imported salt, or excise duty)
- *Vaidharana* (compensation for transfer of state right of sale to private individuals)
- *Danda* (fine)
- *Rupa*, which seems to refer to the inspection fee of one-eighth per cent
- *Rupika*, which appears to be a charge for manufacture at 8 per cent of the price
- *Dhatu* (metals)
- *Panya* (commodities manufactured from them)

No doubt that the activity of mining was an important source of economy for the state, yet another field of governance directly under the state was trade. The *Arthashastra* provides that a large amount of income was received by the state in kind and the state had the monopoly of the production of a large variety of products and goods. Trading was a natural phenomenon by the state and the *Arthashastra* also proclaimed that the state engaged in large-scale trade.

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According to the *Arthashastra*, state goods (*rajapanya*) can be categorized into two groups—*svabhumija*, indigenously produced, and *parabhumija*, those that were created in foreign lands. *Parabhumija* was concerned with trade that could be imported by the state. Those goods that were indigenous in nature owned by the state were to be sold apparently in one particular place, i.e. the capital city. The capital was the place where all the state stores were situated. On the other hand, the goods that were imported were to be sold in various centres and stores. Dealing either with the imported goods or the indigenous goods, while fixing the selling price of the goods, the interest of the clients were to be taken into account. Profit should not be the ultimate motive when it is harming the customers or the client, especially in the case of those goods that are in constant demand.

The state goods were to be vended by the state owned servants, but in some cases the traders could also help the state servants. In such cases, the traders were to pay a fee to cope up with the losses that were made, which in case the servants would have helped, would have sought profit.

It was the duty of the director of trade to make preparations and provisions for the export of goods belonging to the state to the foreign lands. Before venturing on such a task, the director should make a thorough investigation of the cost involved, the duties that is to be undertaken by him in order to make the project a profitable one. He could also make arrangements for bartering state goods with that of the foreign lands. This business of export and import is to ensure the profit being sought by the state. If there are no profits being sought by the state, then the director should ensure either the import of goods from foreign lands or the export of goods to other lands across the river routes. Hence, in this way, the director should move towards those paths where he can sought profit and avoid those that bring in no profit to the state.

The director of trade was known as the *panyadhyaksa* and the all the trade was under the control of the state. The director was responsible for many things like severe control over pricing, ensuring the safety of the traders who are travelling from one place to another, distribution of goods in all parts of the country, ensuring proper transport facilities of goods, construction of well-built roads. Kautilya emphasized on the security of the traders en route their destination. There were risks of robbers and forest tribes, due to which these traders usually moved in groups and travelled in caravans (*sartha*). The *Arthashastra* also proclaims some rules for those who were responsible for shielding the caravans and also to reimburse their losses in case of any. While working within a state, the state was by default responsible for the protection of the caravans. A road cess called *vartani* was usually charged by the officer of state which was charged at the frontier post, for any loss suffered by the caravans on its way to the capital. In other cases, there are a lot of other officers involved in the responsibility for the loss suffered by a caravan. Besides *vartani*, the *Arthashastra* also refers to another tax named *dtivahika*, which was charged on escort charges. Here we may presume that the state might have provided for an armed guard who was to accompany the caravan for its security from the frontier post to the capital.

Adding on to the duties performed by the state, there were other areas too where the state had its dominion—textiles. The *Arthashastra* does not define this as the state control, which means that these industries could also be owned privately. However, the state could also engage itself in the manufacturing of textiles on a huge scale and could also supervise those industries that were privately owned. The officer who was in charge of this system was known as the *sutradhyaksa*. This officer was responsible for ensuring the spinning of yarn from wool, bark fibre, cotton, hemp and flax by women, especially for those who were without the support of anyone. Those women who were not allowed to go out of their homes and belonged to respectable families, were given the liberty to spin yarn in their homes. Different factories were to be set up for different kinds of cotton, linen, silk and cloth. The *sutradhyaksa* was also responsible for the production of ropes, thongs and straps which were used in the making of carts and chariots used in the army.

Storage of goods of all varieties was also one of the responsibilities of the state. The *Arthashastra* also describes the construction of the stores in great detail. There were certain parts of the stores which were made of the state products only, but there were others too that were purchased by the state in kind. These stores could be used for part-time payments for the state servants. These stores were also helpful in producing buffer products and also avoiding a wide variation in price and the official in charge was supposed to buy things when there was an excess and similarly sell those products when there was scarcity.

The question that arises here is the scope that the private enterprises had in the state. There was hardly any except the creation produced by artisans and skilled-craftsmen. In any private organization, there were the master artisans who headed many other artisans who were responsible for the actual work done. There were some cases where there were independent craftsmen and artisans who worked on their own and in their private work-shops. In this case, the *sreni* (guild), to which the craftsman belonged gave the assurance to the clients against any such loss caused by the artisan. It is usually assumed that every craft had its own union, even when the duties and functions of these associations are not very well defined in the *Arthashastra*. The artisans were also covered under the state control where delay in providing services to the customers or ensuring dissatisfied customers was considered to be an offence punishable by the state. The *Arthashastra* also postulates the percentage of increase and decrease in raw material during the process of production, to which the craftsperson must obey.

The state mechanism over agriculture based on private lands was less than that of the industries. When the crops were in good conditions, the farmer was given the liberty to choose the crops and the allotment of land too. The state also had to make sure that the farmers do not cheat on them in the form of land revenue. To ensure this, the state had to have information of the lands and types of soil and crops used in the fields by the farmers. It also had to make sure that the harvest and sowing of seeds were done in a proper manner. Only when there was financial problems in the state or for the king, that the state could take control over the land.

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In such cases, the state could provide the seeds to the farmers and could also ensure the direct sowing of seeds by the state itself.

Taxation and the pricing policy

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One of the main consideration for Kautilya while determining the responsibilities of the state was the long-term probability of the state to increase the state revenue. The very same belief underlines his method of taxation.

The main source of tax revenue was agriculture which was also the main source of economy for the state. One-sixth of the share produced was usually prescribed as tax but in case of emergency or when the king is going through financial misbalances, the state could also levy taxes up to one-fourth of the share or even one-third of the total produce. There were other taxes that were levied on the villagers like taxes levied for the maintenance of the army, or buying gifts for festive occasions and so on. Tax levied on water rate was also an important source of tax, much more important than the land tax. These were levied when the farmers used the water belonging to the state for irrigation purposes, even when the agricultural land belonged to the farmer himself.

A fixed percentage was levied as taxes subject to the nature of the irrigation used by the farmer. If the irrigation was such that the water was set in motion by hand, the rate payable was one-fifth of the produce; if set in motion by shoulders, the rate rose to one-fourth; the latter rate also applied to lift-irrigation, water being lifted from tanks, wells, rivers, lakes. The rate of tax levied on the farmers by the state increased to one-third when a mechanical device was used to set the water flowing in different directions. This tax was an additional source of tax besides the land tax which was levied at one-sixth of the rate. This meant that a farmer who used a mechanical device for the irrigation of his fields, paid tax that was almost half of the revenue produced by the farmer on his land. Not only was this a large amount to be paid as taxes, but the motivation to take up a task of this kind was also low.

The tax policy as in the other spheres, here too was concerned with long-run tax-rate and not just the levying of taxes. The treasury of the state could be increased by various activities—control of workers and employees, control and suppression over thieves, treasuring of customs and values, presence of crops in huge numbers, huge quantities of products produced, avoidance of trouble, reduction of indemnities and presents in cash. As Spengler notes, one of Kautilya's main concerns 'seems to have been the collection and expenditure of revenue in such ways as to build up the permanent revenue yielding capacity of the economy.'

Kautilyanism, remarks Karwal, 'was concerned with the regulation of economic transactions as much as it was with the control of economic operation—transactions between retailers and consumers, merchants (whole sellers) and retailers, employers and labourers, and lenders and borrowers'. The policy of pricing was an essential component of such a parameter. It was the state who fixed the rate of goods, interests and also wages and the working conditions of the workers. There were rules that were laid in the *Arthashastra*, and the desecration of which would involve major forfeits. It was the duty of the director of trade, i.e. *panyadhyaksa*, to regulate the prices of various commodities who were required to be 'conversant

with differences in prices' between several possessions and the request for them (the popularity and unpopularity of goods of various kinds). He was to fix the prices of goods, raising or lowering them according to their 'availability and popularity'.

The director of trade had to be a professional in the trade of determining the worth of the products. While determining the value of the commodities, the director should keep in mind the comforts and benefits of the customers preventing 'even a big profit that would be injurious to the subjects'. Costs that would be covered by the commodities should be kept in mind, also the interest is to be kept in mind. When the products are to be delivered to some far off places, then the officer in charge should calculate the expenses, rent, duty, the distance and the interest to be procured by the project. Moreover, he should first ensure that the project is a profitable one. Special attention was given to the prices of imported goods. While delivering commodities to a foreign land—the road cess, the expenses involved in the production of the commodity, interest after having paid the taxes and ferry-dues—are to be considered by the official in charge.

If there is a tight competition in the market, due to which there is a hike in the prices of the commodity, at such times, the extra money would go into the state treasury. The *Arthashastra* does not lay much rules about the distribution of wages to the workers working for the state, even then there are few of them scattered in Book 3 (Concerning Judges), which mainly exists in the legal form. For example, it differentiates between two cases where on the one hand the wages of the employee has been decided before the initiation of the work and on the other where the wages have not been decided by the employer before the commencement of the job. The text proclaims that in the first case, the worker should receive the amount of wages that have been agreed upon by the employer and in the second instance, wages should be 'in conformity with the work and time'.

There are a few cases where the *Arthashastra* has been more specific, where wages are not a part of them. Even then the text does lay down that 'a cultivator, a cowherd and a trader should receive one-tenth part of the crops, of butter and of the goods dealt in by them'. The wages of the several kinds of craftsmen has been prescribed by the text. Where a group activity is concerned, such as people working in a union, or partners working together at an enterprise, earnings are to be divided among the members of the association or distributed as agreed upon among themselves. The same norm applies to priests who work together in an association except that 'objects received for each one's special duties' would be engaged by the priest concerned.

In the fixation of salaries of those workers who work in state owned industries, a lot more supervision is given, though this seems to differ in the different sectors. Hence, the superintendent of yarns and textiles 'should fix the wage after ascertaining the fineness, coarseness or medium quality of the yarn, and the largeness or smallness of quantity, i.e., paying attention to productivity'. The official in charge of agriculture, while providing for wages to the workers in the fields and cowherds, beside the fixed monthly wages fixed for them should 'supply food in accordance with person's dependent on them'. For fixing salaries of officials that are in the higher level of the power dynamics, the salary should be high enough to make the officers 'insusceptible

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to investigations and disinclined to revolt'. 'Those moving about for spying' should be paid wages according to the work done or performed. The laws regarding the interest on loans is postulated in the *Arthashastra* but in a very superficial manner which is contained mainly in the legal form. Possibly the only area of concern from the economic point of view is the treatment of different maxima on different types of loans. The maximum permitted rate is higher for dealings involving a higher degree of risk. It is, for example, twice as high for debtors embarking on a journey by sea as for those going on a journey through forests and the latter again is double of the interest on routine commercial loans.

The land system

Let us study now the economic viewpoint regarding land system seen in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. One of the first questions that Indians have been pondering since long is whether all land belongs to the State. Traditionally, and mostly even now, private ownership of land was uncommon, as per many historians. While as per some other historians, there has been both a tradition of state-owned as well as privately-owned land in India. However, this dichotomy in opinion could also mean that the definition of ownership is not clear to most people, or that the definition changed over the years.

When civilization was at the tribal stage in India, land was considered to be collectively owned by the tribe and the king of the tribe was considered the owner. However, when generations of families continued to work on and take care of separate pieces of land, they slowly started to be regarded as owners of their particular pieces of land and staked claim over those pieces. This kind of claim was very similar to the present-day idea of private ownership of land. And this is the idea that seems to be included in Kautilya's text regarding private ownership of land.

If a piece of land was unoccupied by a family, it was considered state-owned. As per Kautilya, the state could grant this piece of land to those families or individuals who were ready to pay some set amount of taxes for it. Such tax would be important for the funds of the State which needed the money to keep the infrastructure running. However, the farmer of lands would only stake claim to the land for their lifetime and could not qualify as owners of the land. Also, if the original farmer to whom the land had been granted by the State could not use the land fruitfully, the land rights could be taken away from them and granted to someone else, which could be State servants or traders. The final tiller of this land would not become the owner but would just be a tenant using the land to earn a living. The State would provide financial assistance to them for buying seeds, cattle and other agricultural requirements, and in this way, the State would maintain its claim over the land. However, this financial assistance was only a loan and the farmer had to repay it at their convenience. Farmers or settlers were also provided other privileges like tax subsidy and concessions.

Kautilya has also specified legal provisions regarding privately-owned land in the Book 3 of *Arthashastra*. Book 3 was named 'Concerning Judges'. As per this book, the owner of the land was different from the tenant of the land. In case the owner asked the tenant to leave or the tenant chose to leave at the time of sowing,

except in case of 'defect, calamity or unbearable conditions', the person deciding to termination of rights had to pay a fine. If two landowners of adjacent properties found themselves involved in a dispute over boundaries, and neither could successfully plead their case, the disputed part would automatically become the State's property. If a land's owner could not be traced, that land would also go to the State and be qualified as 'Paranastasvamikam'. Land could be bought and sold, as per the *Arthashastra* which has a section devoted to 'The Sale of Immovable Property'. This section also specifies rules and theories regarding how the sales procedure was to be completed. The priority of purchase rights was in the order: kinsmen, neighbour and creditors. If none of these were interested, then outsiders could come forward to buy the land under certain terms and conditions.

The *Arthashastra* specifies that the sale of a house could only be carried out in the present of 40 neighbouring families in front of the house. If a field, park, embankment, tank or reservoir was being sold, village elders had to be present and the owner had to declare the terms of the sale in front of them. The number of village elders who had to be present varied with the extent of the boundary. The seller would ask 'At this price, who is willing to purchase?'. After asking this three times, if no one raised an objection, the land could be sold to the interested buyer.

So, when a house or reservoir was sold, the land on which it was located was also considered sold. However, this sale was bound by certain regulations—the winning bidder had to pay set taxes to the State. Also, if the land was sold at a higher price than the one decided by the seller, as a result of a competition among bidders, the extra money would go to the State.

One more evidence of the fact that the concept of private ownership existed is that there was no rule for taking away the land from the farmer if he could not pay land revenue. There is only mention of an officer who enforced payment.

Conversely, if there was to be a new settlement and the State decided to distribute lands, a person who had failed to fruitfully utilize the land could be deprived of the land and the land re-granted to another farmer.

While there are descriptions and provisions for both State-owned and privately-owned land in the *Arthashastra*, there is no information regarding use of these lands or the tenurial arrangement for these lands. If a state-owned land was not being cultivated by a state agency, it could be leased to sharecroppers. There were two possible categories of sharecroppers defined in the text: one, where the sharecropper keeps half of the produce and another category who would keep only one-fourth or one-fifth of the produce. The first category of sharecroppers had to bring in their own agricultural resources and equipment along with cattle and so on, and the second category of sharecroppers depended on the State for all such assistance. While Kautilya has described these rules in relation to state-owned lands, it seems understood that the same rules applied to privately-owned land as well.

Certain Indian Marxist scholars believe that *Arthashastra* was very radical in its agrarian policy. Such a policy can raise the status of poor Sudras to the level of a peasant proprietor. On the whole, Kautilya's policies seem to be in favour of cultivation by owner farmers, rather than landlordism. This interpretation, however, seems to

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be unsound. The following is Kautilya's opinion about elements of excellence in a janapada (country or region):

Charming, endowed with agricultural land, mines, material forests and elephant forest, beneficial to cattle, beneficial to men, with protected pastures, rich in animals, not depending on rain for water, provided with water routes and land routes, with valuable, manifold and plenty of commodities, capable of bearing fines and taxes, with farmers devoted to work, with a wise master, inhabited mostly by the lower varnas, with men loyal and honest – these are the excellences of a country.

This list seems entirely to agree with Kautilya's priorities. Through these elements, he seems to keep focus on 'factors of production', or the material bases of power and wealth. For Kautilya, a team of hardworking and loyal peasants is an important element of excellence. Diligence and loyalty, however, are qualities that the poor are expected to have anyway, especially in keeping with the age-old varna system of caste. However, the significant point here is that farming and agriculture were supposed to be the tasks of the Vaishyas, but with economic growth, most of them moved into industry and trade and sudras had to take the places they had vacated. Kautilya seems to recognize this shift and in fact, encourages the rise in status of the sudras as the logical way to upliftment of society in general.

Scholars have encountered many issues in interpreting the *Arthashastra*. Some of them are described briefly here. First, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is not the only *Arthashastra* text available. There are many more similar texts. However, it is, unique in that it is the only complete work that has survived the times. References to other works are found in many places, even in fact in Kautilya's work. The *Arthashastra* texts came up, observes Ghoshal (1966: 41), as 'an independent branch of learning avowedly concerned with the acquisition and preservation of dominion'.

They attempted to stand apart, especially from the *Dharamshastras*, which were representations of the Brahmanical portion of the holy law. *Dharamshastra* was mainly focused on the duties of the king, or rajdharma and not the concept of dharma in general. Kautilya has openly maintained allegiance to this school in his own *Arthashastra*, and especially in the last part (Book 15, The Method of the Science). Men cannot conduct their lives without wealth and *Arthashastra* defines ways to attain and protect this wealth. So, once he identifies the three primary factors—spiritual goods, material well-being and sensual pleasure—Kautilya claims that material well-being is the most important of all three and cannot be attained without wealth. Unless a person is materially satisfied, they cannot pursue sensual goods or limit themselves to spiritual well-being.

Scholars have been interested in the issue as to how far the Kautilyan text, the *Arthashastra*, can be considered to mirror the prevalent activities of his time. Basham (1954: 80) notes, 'Probably no kingdom of ancient India, not even the Mauryas, was the influence of the state quite so all pervading as in the system envisaged in the *Arthashastra*'. In Basham's view, Kautilya and other scholars who write either on statecraft or sacred law, describe 'things not as they were in fact but as they ought to be'. It can be said that as against the preaching's of the Buddhist scholars, the *Arthashastra* and Kautilya, both were not much concerned with the

ethical issues of a state. His text and the preaching's sought in it are rather more of the instrumental kind than the normative one.

*Theories about the
Origin of Kingship*

It is difficult to evaluate the long term effect of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* on the Indian mind-set. There are many writers who praised him extensively and there are others who criticized him to the core. One among those who praised him was *Kamandakiya Nitisara* which was a work modelled on Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which is considered to be written around the 5th century AD. This text describes Kautilya as, 'that learned man who had reached the limits of knowledgeuseful in the acquisition and maintenance of the earth', and again as one 'who churned the nectar of the science of policy from the ocean of political sciences' (quoted in Karwal 1966: 392-3). More typical perhaps is the verdict of Vana, the author of *Kadambari*, one of the best known plays in Sanskrit literature:

Is there anything that is righteous for those, for the science of Kautilya, merciless in its precepts, rich in cruelty, is an authority; ...whose desire is always for the goddess of wealth that has been cast away by thousands of king...? (quoted in Karwal op. cit.: 393).

On the whole, despite the approval it got and the effect it implemented, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* did not succeed in leaving any enduring impression in the authority of the *Dharmashastras*.

Kautilya's labour theory of value

Two millennia before Adam Smith enunciated the labour theory of value, Kautilya in the *Arthashastra* held that a 'just' wage to be paid to workers should be based on the amount of time spent on the job, the amount of output created, and the skills necessary to perform the required tasks. Kautilya explicitly recognizes three distinct components for determining the market value of labour: the level of skill required (the human capital element), labour hours worked and units of output produced (the labour productivity element). As stated by Benoy Chandra Sen in his treatise, *Economics in Kautilya* (p. 51):

The wages of a labourer cannot but be dependent on the market-value of the article produced. The latter again depends on the cost of its production, including the cost of material used. Thus, the settlement of just wages is a complicated matter depending not only on the skill of the worker employed but also on the total out-turns of his work; i.e., both the quality and quantity of the job completed by him.

R. Shamasastri in his translation, *Kautilya's Arthashastra* cites that among the duties of the superintendent of weaving shall be the setting of wages paid to weavers (pp. 125-126):

Wages shall be fixed according as the threads spun are fine, coarse or of middle quality, and in proportion to a greater or less quantity manufactured, and in consideration of the quantity of thread spun ... Wages shall be cut short, if, making allowance of the quality of raw material, the quantity of the thread spun out is found to fall short.

In determining wages for labour in general, Shamasastri quotes Kautilya in establishing the following procedure (p. 208):

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As to wages not previously settled, the amount shall be fixed in proportion to the work done and the time spent in doing it. Wages being previously unsettled, a cultivator shall obtain 1/10th of the crops grown, a herdsman 1/10th of the butter clarified, a trader 1/10th of the sale proceeds. Wages previously settled shall be paid and received as agreed upon.

V. Nagarajan, in his book on *Evolution of Social Polity of Ancient India* observes that (p. 114):

To prevent deception by employers, Kautilya lays down that cultivators or merchants shall either at the end or in the middle of their cultivation or manufacture pay the labourers proportionate wages. Payment to labour is not contingent on marketing of goods. Production should not be hampered by the irresponsible conduct of the workers.

Guilds of Artisans ('Sanghabhrta') often functioned as contractors and employed semi-skilled and unskilled labourers. To protect these labourers, Kautilya, as cited by Narayan Chandra Bandyopadhyaya in his Book, *Kautilya*, (p. 203) recommends that a board of overseers review the guild contracts concerning wage rates and working conditions.

Kautilya, the great Indian philosopher and statesman, in writing his epic treatise on the art of good government, the *Arthashastra*, enunciated classified views on international trade, principles of taxation and a labour theory of value.

Writing more than two thousand years before Hume, Smith, Ricardo and J. S. Mill, Kautilya anticipated their thoughts on the importance of conducting trade in accordance with the principle of comparative advantage, that imports are as important as exports in promoting a nation's economic development and growth, and that reciprocal demand will determine the value of commodities in bilateral and multilateral trade.

He also clearly anticipated Smith and Ricardo on the principles of effective taxation that will result in an ideal system of taxation: One which will promote economic growth and development, ensure that resources are used efficiently, whose burden is borne fairly, and which distorts economic decision-making as little as possible.

Kautilya was also far ahead of his time in developing a labour theory of value in trying to determine what was a 'just' wage for workers. Anticipating the thoughts of Smith and Ricardo, he explicitly recognized that the value of labour depends on the level of skills employed, time spent on the job and the amount of output produced. He also was cognizant that the market value of labour also reflects the market value of the product created.

One can only conjecture that trade theory, principles of taxation and the labour theory of value associated with classical economic thought might have evolved much earlier (perhaps in the 14th or 15th century) if Kautilya's views had been known to scholars such as St. Thomas Aquinas in the late middle ages or early Mercantilists in the Renaissance. This is another example of occidental philosophical thought suffering from not having access to oriental philosophical thought.

Kautilyan economics: An analysis and interpretation

The work of Kautilya is known to a very few economists in the western world. Hence, an introduction of Kautilya, the time of his work and the circumstances that prevailed at the time might be helpful in appreciating his economic ideas. Kautilya was a Brahmin from India and a contemporary of Aristotle. While there is some controversy about the exact date of his work, most scholars place him in the 4th century BC, during the time of Chandragupta Maurya, the great Indian emperor who ruled India for a long time. In fact, it is said that Kautilya established Chandragupta as the king of India and liberated India from the misrule of King Nanda. A review of relevant literature further indicates that Kautilya may have actually served as the minister in the kingdom of Chandragupta and exercised a dominant role in the governance of the state.

Kautilya's book *Arthashastra* is essentially a book on statecraft and is a guide to the means of acquisition and preservation of the *artha* or wealth. His ideas were primarily designed to maintain and increase the strength and control of a monarchy. Kautilya was a realist. His ideas about governing a state were quite practical. In his time, he would be considered a radical, because he rejected many of the established values and ideas of the Hindus, and many of the teachings of *Dharmashastra*. For example, he did not consider religion to be above the interest of the state. In fact, he would not hesitate to exploit religious sentiments of people to accomplish his goal of strengthening the state. Although he was a Brahmin, he did not think that Brahmins should be immune from paying taxes and from other responsibilities to the state. On the other hand, he increased the role and recognition of the low cast people and was generally opposed to slavery.

The word *Arthashastra*, literally translated, means principles of money or wealth. Kautilya, however, used the word in much broader context to include many of the activities of a state—economic, political, social, military and others that may affect its wealth. His ultimate objective, however, was not to benefit the king but to benefit the people. He thought a strong and wealthy monarchy would be in a position to protect the interest of the people against the invasion of other kings. He has repeatedly mentioned that the king must keep his subjects happy and should not impose any oppressive rule except during emergency.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a masterpiece work, particularly in the context of the time when the book was written. He seems to have encyclopaedic knowledge about different aspects of governing a monarchy such as administration, revenue, taxation, law, diplomacy, business and trade, coinage, agriculture and land tenure, labour, people and the society. The economic ideas presented here are only a very small proportion of Kautilya's total work. Often his economic theories are implicit rather than explicit, which is understandable because he did not write a book on economics as we know it today.

(i) Demand and supply

Kautilya knew the concepts of demand and supply and their combined influence on price. He even writes about the estimation of demand and control of supply.

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According to him, a king should not arbitrarily fix the price of a product without regard to its supply and demand situations. He advocated the concept of a just price. The just price was designed to maintain the incentive on the part of the business people by allowing them 5 to 10 per cent profit in their operations. As the state owned businesses competed with the private businesses, the conflict of interest was clear. Kautilya suggested that some parity in price should be maintained such that the private sector is not choked off. He indicated that an arbitrary price cannot be dictated from above without regard to the cost of production, the ratio of supply to demand and a reasonable level of profit. When there was a glut of any commodity, the state (designated state official *panyadhyaksha*) was expected to intervene and centralize the sale of that commodity so that the price did not slump. Apparently, the entire supply was purchased and its sale was carried out through the agency of the state at a fixed price. All in all, the text reveals a definite attempt to strike a reasonable balance between the interests of the state, the traders and the consumers. Often, however, the interests of the consumers are regarded as supreme. The state business was assigned to a designated state official (*panyadhyaksha*) who was expected to be an expert in determining the values of various commodities and must always be thoroughly posted with the demand and supply situations of the commodities involved. Any kind of price collusion by the groups and associations of merchants were discouraged by heavy fines on the offenders.

(ii) Foreign trade

Kautilya clearly understood the advantages of foreign trade. Foreign trade was strongly encouraged. In fact, he recommended that experts be sent to study foreign markets and determine which commodities could be imported and exported profitably. He encouraged imports but understood that it could not be a one-way trade; hence, for the long-term, he suggested that a balance between import and export should be maintained. He does not display any of the fears of foreign trade that the mercantilists after him had displayed. He stated that before a successful trade contract can be established, it must be beneficial to all countries involved. There must be a price advantage and profit to be made. Hence, greater consumption possibility and profit motives seem to be dominant factors in encouraging foreign trade. Foreign trade, however, was regulated and not everything could be imported or exported. Kautilya laid down general and specific policies regarding all aspects of trade, which seems all too complex and strangely modern. However, the policies are primarily administrative in nature.

(iii) Risk and uncertainty

Kautilya related the levels of risk and uncertainty to levels of profits and interests. He had indicated that the higher levels of risk and uncertainty must be compensated by the probability of receiving higher profits and interests. For example, he recommends the allowable profit on imports to be twice as high as on domestic goods. The associated risk was considered to be an important reason for allowing 10 per cent of profits on imports and only 5 per cent on domestic products. In those days, the importer of foreign goods faced great danger of being robbed and looted while transporting their products. Further, a large amount of capital investment was

needed for foreign trade. The potential risk and the expected high profits were the reasons why the overseas traders were paid an extremely high interest of 20 per cent per month on borrowed money.

(iv) Interest

Unlike Aristotle, who considered charging interest on loans as unjust, Kautilya outlined a structure based upon the type of loans, factors affecting interest rate, methods of calculating interest and the circumstances when interest may not be collected by the lenders. Interest rate in his time varied from 1.25 to 2 per cent per month, primarily, depending upon two factors; the risk involved and the potential productivity of the money borrowed. The interest rate on secured loan for personal need, such as to meet marriage expense, was only 1.25 per cent per month. The rate was higher for trade purposes. In the case of ordinary local trade, the rate was 5 per cent per month, but the rate doubled for those trading in forest products. The traders who travelled to forest areas were subjected to greater risk from animals and robbers; further, the business in forest products was more profitable. The highest rate of 20 per cent per month was charged to those who engaged in overseas trade considered to be the most risky but also the most profitable business. Further, the rate of interest was also high on loans taken by a group of people rather than by an individual. It was felt, as the group would share the burden of interest, it would not fall heavy on any one individual.

Moreover, the group was generally in the better position to pay high interest because it was involved in large projects with greater profit potential, such as foreign trade. The creditors could not charge an interest not approved by the state. Further, certain groups of people, due to their inability to pay (sick, bankrupt) or due to the nature of their work (student), may be exempt from paying interest; the privilege, however, had to be earned by the process of law. The different kinds of interests were distinguished by Kautilya are compound interest, periodical interest, stipulated interest, daily interest, and the use of a pledged article. Indeed the idea of expressing interest as a percent or many units per hundred originated in India. The overall Kautilyan system of interest seems quite elaborate, complex and even modern.

(v) Law of diminishing returns

Kautilya neither set forth a systematic population policy nor provided an explicit statement on the law of diminishing returns, but his planning and recommendations on settlement of people on land, land classification and utilization, and other comments on social aspects indicate that he was concerned about excessive population growth and the law of diminishing return. He encouraged the state to build new villages either on new sites or on old reins—a measure he recommended to avoid congestion in existing villages by transferring the excess population to the new settlements. Each newly created village was designed to have between 100 to 500 families (500-2500 people). The distance between neighbouring villages was to be between 2 to 4 miles. It seems that the policy was to create a uniform pattern of comparatively small interdependent villages. The congestion was to be avoided by limiting the number of people living in it. He did not think that large congested but self-sufficient

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villages were as efficient as small villages, which depended on each other to fulfil their wants. Kautilya differentiated land according to its productivity. The share of the crop that the state may receive from land depended upon the expected return from such land. He also outlined the conditions of remarriage and its effects on population, diseases and famine.

(vi) Wages

Kautilya used three criteria in prescribing wages for the state employees. He indicated that the wage should be high enough to maintain loyalty of high echelon officials, to evoke the needed efficiency and effort, and to reflect the relative standing of an occupation. He recommended that the aggregate wage bill of the state should not exceed one-fourth of its revenue.

In determining wage in the private industries, Kautilya uses a variety of factors: The quality and quantity of work, market value of the final product and the market value of the inputs. The wage differed between the industries based upon the skill and technology required, and within the industry based upon the quality and quantity of work done. Higher wages were paid for overtime work done during holidays. The labour market was quite competitive. Those who could not compete joined the ranks of the unemployed and the unskilled labours with their wages appreciably reduced. The concept of contractual wages also existed. The quality and the quantity of work to be performed were specified for a certain sum of wages. A general review of the industries, described by Kautilya, indicates a trend toward specialization and use of mechanical devices to improve the quality and quantity of output.

In *Arthashastra*, there is a definite effort to formulate a wage policy based on the realistic understanding of the economics, social and political factors. The emerging policy must be just and must be consistent with the interest of the state as a capitalist. According to Kautilya, the state is a party to any labour or wage legislation together with farmers, merchants and industrialists.

The policy suggested in *Arthashastra* attempts to strike a balance between the delicate interests of the parties involved. Kautilya indicates that although the state is in a privileged position of a monopolist, it should co-operate with the private sector for proper utilization of resources. Further, a strong private sector is a source of strength to the state.

(vii) Money

In Kautilya's economy, there is no restriction on the supply of money. The supply and demand for money seem to take care of themselves without any interference from the state. It seems the restriction on the supply of money comes from the availability of gold and silver, the two important metals used in the manufacture of coins. In manufacturing coins, both gold (for gold coins) and silver (for silver coins) had to be mixed with definite proportions of other alloys. Any individual could have his gold or silver converted into coins at the state mint for a fee. Different denominations of coins were used for transaction purposes. It seems the supply of money was not used for controlling economic activities.

(viii) The tax system

Kautilya's discussion of taxation has several underlying principles: The taxing power of the state should be limited; tax should not be felt to be heavy or excessive; tax increases should be graduated; tax should be levied in proper place, time and form; and tax level should be equitable and reasonable.

Kautilya noted that a ruler should not levy tax at his pleasure. He took extreme care in avoiding fiscal tyranny and consequent public discontent. He thought that disloyal and indifferent subjects will endeavour to destroy even strong kings. He stressed that subjects should be taxed in such a way that it maintains their ability to bear future burden, and, if necessary, a heavier one. If the tax is raised, it should be raised little by little during the time of prosperity.

He did advocate proportionately higher income tax on the rich and higher sales tax on the luxury goods. However, to Kautilya, it was essential that a ruler supply sufficient overhead capital and developmental assistance, or encourage it through tax exemptions. Further, a king should direct expenditure to profitable projects and have in hand sufficient reserve of money, food, clothing and ammunition to meet the need imposed by calamities, war or other emergencies. Many groups were exempt from tax either due to their inability to pay (handicapped conditions) or the service they were engaged in (priest).

The land tax was collected only if there was a profit above the normal level. The schedule of taxes on production and sales was prepared after carefully calculating the cost of production and the normal profits, the length of time needed to sell the product, the level of unsold inventory and the fluctuations of the market. The taxation by the state took into consideration the conditions necessary for ensuring the stability and welfare of the tax payer. Different kinds of taxes existed such as direct and indirect taxes, sales and excise taxes, income and value added taxes. It seems Kautilya's scheme of taxation involved the elements of sacrifice on the part of the tax payer, direct benefit to the taxpayers, redistribution of income (the state took care of its poor) and tax incentive for desired investments. One of the unique features of his tax policy was to allow for a normal amount of profit for businesses before the tax was collected. Kautilya's tax system seems quite comprehensive, particularly, in light of the antiquity of his writing.

(ix) Economic planning

The most important underlying goal in Kautilya's economic planning is the creation of wealth to strengthen the state; hence, to protect and benefit the people. In his scheme of economic planning, the following seem to be the most important aspects of his statecraft:

- Conservation of resources for sustenance of rural and urban areas
- Allocation and utilization of resources for economic growth
- Defence of the state
- Consolidation of its potential for emergencies and against invasion

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Kautilya outlined in meticulous detail the techniques of controlling practically every aspect of economic activity. However, his prescription for control was to discipline and streamline the various economic activities for the greatest economic welfare of the state, which was viewed to be consistent with the prosperity of its subjects. Kautilya outlined the techniques for regulating agriculture, domestic non-agricultural businesses, as well as foreign trade. Definite wage structure and policies were instituted in accordance with the product produced. The employee and employer relationship was monitored to prevent exploitation of labour or disruption of production by the workers. The state ensured that all the contractual arrangements between them were fulfilled. It was in the interest of the state to see that the production did not cease. The output was not allowed to be sold at the point of origin; it was to be sold only in designated market places to that price regulation on which products could be systematically applied. The state determined the prices of products based upon its estimate of demand and supply.

The price was so regulated that it allowed a profit of 5 per cent for local business and about 10 per cent for foreign trade. The state often controlled the supply if the predetermined price could not be maintained. It also provided social overhead capital and often tax incentive for businesses to operate profitably. Further, the state did not believe in self-sufficient village specialization and foreign trade was emphasized.

In theory, the state had the absolute control over all aspects of economic activities; in practice, it allowed and even encouraged the growth of private businesses. It was recognized that the wealth of a state depended upon the wealth of the people; hence, it could not stifle individual initiatives in production and profit.

While the economic welfare of subject and private businesses were not in conflict with the welfare of a state, Kautilya streamlined all economic, administrative, political, legal and social activities to strengthen the state.

One must marvel at the depth of Kautilya's pragmatic philosophy underlying his work in *Arthashastra*. Although, he did not write a book on economics per se, he has expressed and used many economic ideas in managing the affairs of the state as early as 4th century BC. Since then, many of his economic thoughts have been rediscovered and restated by many prominent economists and philosophers that we know so well. Kautilya should earn his rightful place among the stalwarts of the history of economic ideas.

4.2.3 Rajmandala

The most notable contribution of Chanakya to political thought is his mandala theory. Briefly, the mandala, or a Circle, of Chanakya's concept consists of an aggregate of kings, friendly, hostile, and neutral, group around the figure of a central king very significantly called vijigishu. The dictionary meaning of the Sanskrit term is 'desirous of victory or conquest', 'wishing to overcome or surpass'. Indologists like Shamasastri and Ghoshal have translated it 'the Aggressor', but, perhaps, 'hegemonist' will be the more appropriate rendering keeping in view the dictionary meaning and the general context of the *Arthashastra*. Professor Ghoshal further elaborates the idea

of mandala and its vijishu and states, 'It contemplates a system of States bound by hostile, friendly or neutral relations with an ambitious potentate—an Indian Louis XIV or Napoleon—as its central figure.'

Kautilya included the enemy as the eighth element of the state. He was acutely aware of the relation of other states to his state and the *Mandala*, or political circle of neighbours, brought him to devise a dynamic system of balance of power unequalled in ancient literature. Politics, thus treated, rises almost to the level of a fine art. Kautilya provides the first and only original discussion of what may be termed international power politics in the Hindu political tradition.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. State one important area of state activity.
5. Which sector formed the most important source of tax revenue?
6. What is Kautilya's concept of just price?
7. What are the three criteria used by Kautilya in prescribing wages for the state employees?

4.3 MANU

Manu is regarded as the father of ancient Indian political thought. He is regarded as the first law-giver of mankind. It seems wrong to regard this name as a historical persona. The word 'Manu' is derived from the root of man (mankind). Its literal meaning signifies a mental being, a demi-God. Mythologically, Manu was considered to be the father of the human race and the first lawgiver. He was thereafter the reviver, and promulgator of the laws. He is also described as the first and greatest of ancient Indian kings, the offspring of the sun. Finally, Manu is said to be not a person at all, but a title given to great lawgivers. The actual author or authors of the *Manusamhita* used the name of Manu to give authority to its rules. The 'Vedas' and ancient 'Puranas' mentioned about more than one Manu. To Sri Aurobindo, it is more a symbol than anything else. It is probable that the person who propounded *Dharmasastra* ascribed it to Manu to give it authority, sanctity, and validity. Manu is also regarded as the divine law-giver. It is more a symbol for an office than a person. In *Rigveda*, he is described as the father of human race and in the *Puranas* as the teacher of mankind. To the whole world, the code of *Manu* or *Manusamhita* is the best-known work of its own kind.

Date of Manu

The date of Manu is a matter of great controversy. Traditions and beliefs place the work at the dawn of civilization. On the other hand, some historians have attempted to ascribe it to a Brahman pundit in the *Sunga* dynasty of the second century BC, designed to support Brahman rule after the collapse of the Kshatriya authority of the Maurya dynasty. The estimates of date vary all the way from the sixth century

BC to the early Christian era. Sir William Jones refers Manu to 1200 BC and R. G Bhanarkar referred him to sometimes during 2nd and 5th century AD. According to B. A. Saletore the probable date of Manu is 1900 to 1800 BC.

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Whatever be the controversy about the life and time of Manu, the fact remains that he was one of the most fascinating law-givers of antiquity. He was the foremost lawgiver and the first political thinker who laid the foundations of social, economic, legal and political institutions in India. No other ancient Indian thinker covered so thoroughly the entire arena of social, legal and political life with great comprehension and insight as Manu did. Scholars like Nietzsche, Swami Vivekanand, Swami Dayananda and Sri Aurobindo have recognized him as the greatest law-giver of the ancient world. Even Nietzsche went to the extent of advising the Christians to close the Bible and open the codes of Manu for reference.

4.3.1 Social Organization or Social Order

In the *Manusmriti* there is reference to social structure. Here, Manu states that in the beginning, God fashioned a social structure for the smooth functioning of his creation and created four classes of people—the ‘*Brahmins*’ from his mouth, the ‘*Kshatriyas*’ from his arms, the ‘*Vaishyas*’, from his thighs and the ‘*Sudras*’ from his foot. Manu calls it *Varnashrama Dharma* or laws of different professions.

The social structure, according to Manu, is based on the principle of *Varnashrama Dharma* or division of the society into four varnas with their respective duties (dharma) for smooth running of the society. The four varnas include the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Sudras* were created by Lord Brahma from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet respectively, representing the dominance of one of the three elements (*gunas*), i.e., *Sattava* (knowledge), *Rajas* (Power and action) and *Tamas* (desire for material pleasure). The Brahmins representing *sattava* are devoted to study and gathering knowledge. The Kshatriya representing *Rajas* are endowed with power and strength and are in charge of defending the king, the state and the people. The Vaishyas and Sudras representing *Tamas* are devoted to material gains and hard work.

According to Manu, there are four ends of life, they are: *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire or pleasure) and *Moksha* (salvation). A lifespan of one hundred years has been carved out for every individual, which has been divided into four stages or Ashramas each having twenty-five years. The respective stages are *Brahmacharya*, *Grahastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. In the first stage of life, that is, during the early period of Brahmacharya, a man maintains complete celibacy and learns education. After Brahmacharyas, he gets married and enters into worldly life as a Grahastha. In the Vanaprastha stage he gives up worldly life, leaves home for the forest to meditate and in the final stage of life, he leads a life of an ascetic, conquering his desires of worldly gains and attaining purity of body and mind. Manu mentioned about the four ages (*yugas*) and their respective characteristics, *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwapaa* and *Kaliyugas*, which move in cyclical order. Thus, austerities, knowledge and sacrifices move in a cyclical order. Austerities, knowledge, sacrifices, and gifts respectively are the dominant traits of these four ages.

Manu forbids a man of low caste from accepting the occupation of a higher one in order to earn his livelihood. According to him, it is better to perform one's duty imperfectly than to try to perform the duty of another caste. Many not only acknowledged the *Vedic* doctrine of divine creation of the social classes in graded sequence as well as that of performance of their distinctive functions by the divine will, but in the process also admitted the supremacy of the *Brahmins* over the persons of other castes in the society. He prescribes works for the people of all castes and asks them to attend to their respective occupations. Manu gave superior status to Brahmins in society. The Brahmin is known as *dvija* (twice-born) on account of a second birth (*upanayana*) by undergoing a spiritual transformation and the purification of the body. According to Manu, a *Brahmin* has to play 'a multi-dimensional role of a spiritual guide, a teacher, a judge, a sacrificer, all rolled into one.'

Contrary to this, Manu gave a very low position to the *Sudras*. A *Sudra* has no personality and status. He cannot realize the goal of his life and is always swayed by the impulse of the moment. He can develop his human virtues and his personality by coming in contact with the other three classes. The purpose of the *Sudra*, the lowest class in the social strata, is to serve the superior three classes in society.

U. N. Ghosal observes that Manu adds an important principle, namely, that of integration of the social units towards the divine purpose of universal welfare, which probably marks a closer approach to the idea of organic unity of society that was thought of by the ancient political philosophers.

Later on in the fifth century BC, Plato, the Greek political philosopher, while explaining the nature of justice, divided the society into three classes representing three elements in the human soul, i.e., class of philosopher-rulers or guardians representing spirit and the producing class or mass representing appetite. Aristotle, the famous Greek political philosopher and disciple of Plato, justified slavery as a natural institution. Aristotle's theory of slavery is the manifestation of the general rule of nature of the subordination of the inferior to the superior or of the body to the soul or of appetite to reason. Considering from this angle, Manu's division of society into four classes is not irrelevant or unjustified. No doubt, Manu's *Varnashrama Dharma* creates a class system in society. However, according to Manu this system may not be strictly on hereditary line. To him *Varna* depends upon quality and character and not on birth.

4.3.2 Divine Origin Theory and Raj Dharma

Manu says that God created the institution of kingship. Its creation was necessitated because the people disappointed by the prevailing disharmony, mutual differences, conflicts and distrust approached Lord Brahma, the Creator, to help and protect them. Brahma, thereupon, decided to give them a king with the duty to maintain law and order and punish the law-breakers. Manu writes, 'For when these creatures being without a king dispersed in all directions, the Lord created a king for the protection of this whole (creation), taking (for that purpose) eternal particles of Indra, of the wind, of Yama, of the Sun, of Fire, of Varuna, of the Moon and of the Lord of wealth (Kubera).' Thus, Manu thought that the king was created out of the

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particles of eight Gods of the world and possessed super-human virtues. Manu said, 'Because a king has been founded by particles of those parts of the Gods, he therefore surpasses all created being in luster, and like the Sun he burns eyes and hearts; nor can anybody on earth even gaze on him. Through his (super-natural) power, he is Fire and Wind, the Sun and Moon, the Lord of Justice (Yama), the Kubera, the Varuna, the great Indra.' Thus, Manu held that the king was ordained by God to rule over his subjects. In other words, he regarded the king as a divine creation. According to D. R. Bhandarkar, 'For the first time, therefore, we find a trace of the real divine origin of the kingship similar to that propounded by the western thinkers afterwards. Thus the divine theory of the Origin of the State and the king first originated in the East and not in the West.'

Position of the King

A logical corollary of the divine theory of the king was complete submission and obedience of subjects to his authority. Manu says, 'Even an infant king must not be despised that he is a (mere) mortal; for he is a great deity in human form. Fire burns man, if he carelessly approaches it; the fire of the king's (anger) consumes the (whole) family, together with its culture and its board of property.' He again writes, 'The man who in his exceeding folly hates him, will doubtlessly perish; for the king quickly makes up his mind to destroy him. Let no man therefore, transgress that law which the king decrees with respect to his favourites, nor which inflict pain on those in disfavour.' Manu claims that people have no right to hate or disobey the authority of the king because the latter acts on the instructions of God. It is held by modern writers that Manu puts emphasis on the divine qualities of an ideal ruler, and not on divine origin. It is nothing more than an emphasis on the noble qualities a king should possess, which are not usually found in ordinary human beings. Manu's theory of divine origin, in the strict sense of the term, is not consistent with the fact that Manu with his fundamental faith believes that the king is subject to *Dharma* (law), has made the king liable to be fined. Manu wrote, 'where the common man is fined one *karshapana* (paisa), the king shall be fined one thousand that is the settled law.'

Qualities of the King

Manu's emphasis was more on the qualities of the king than the divinity of the king. If a king is not righteous, learned and just, and if he does not observe the *dharma*, the king would not be regarded as divine. Manu, therefore, advised the kings to acquire the knowledge of the *Vedas* and possess all noble qualities.

On his part the king is also expected to possess certain noble qualities. He should be able to satisfy his people by his actions so that they may feel that they are being ruled with their consent. He should command respect from people through pleasing manners. Manu also emphasized the importance of training, self-discipline and self-control of the king and highlighted their importance of the success of the government. Manu said that the king and the royal officers should worship and respect the learned Brahmins, should cultivate modesty, and should conquer the senses. He put special emphasis on the conquest of senses by the king and declared that a person who has conquered his own sense is alone able to keep his subjects under control.

Qualifications of the Head of the State

Manu states that the head of the state,

He should be as powerful as electricity: as dear to his people's hearts as their very breath, able to read the inmost thoughts of others, and just in his dealings as a judge. He should enlighten people's minds by the spread of knowledge, justice, and righteousness, and dispel ignorance and injustice as the sun illuminates the world. He should be like one who consumes wickedness like fire, keeps the wicked and the criminal under control like a jailer, gladdens the hearts of the good like the moon; makes the country rich and prosperous, as a treasurer keeps his treasury full; it powerful and majestic like the sun, keeps the people in fear and awe; and on whom no one in the whole world dares to look with a stern eye. He alone is then fit to be the Head of the State who is like fire, air the sun, the moon, a judge, a treasurer, a gaoler in keeping the wicked under control, and like electricity in power.

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Theory of Danda or Punishment (Dandaniti)

The theory of *Danda* or punishment as propounded by Manu is an important idea around which his whole political philosophy revolves. Manu's idea of the supreme authority of the king is justified by the sanction of *danda* in ensuring individual security in respect of person and property as well as stability of the social order. Manu justifies his view of *danda* with a reference to an old principle of human psychology that the theory of *danda* is the only ground for the fulfillment of individual obligations. The king's mode of application of *danda* is the key to the weal and woe of the individual and the community. Manu enumerates the good qualities qualifying the ruler for the exercise of *danda* as well as the bad qualities disqualifying him for the same. Finally, it lays down the principle of king's unlimited jurisdiction over offenders.

Putting emphasis on coercive power (Danda), Manu said that, *danda* is the king, *danda* rules all peoples; *danda* alone protects them. *Danda* is awake when others are asleep and the wise declare *danda* to be identical with law (dharma). It is through the fear of *danda*, that all creatures, movable and immovable, are made conscious of their duties and responsibilities. The whole world is kept in order by *danda*. As good men are rare, it is through the fear of *danda*, that bad men are controlled.

The king, is a just inflictor of *danda*, and he acts after due consideration as he is wise and conversant with virtue. The king who is vulnerable, bad and deceitful, on the other hand, is destroyed by *the same danda, which he inflicts; when the king sways from his duty (dharma), danda strikes him down*. Manu made the king responsible to the people. The king derives his authority from the people. Hence the king, who oppresses the people, forfeits his kingdom and even his life. Thus, Manu's king was always a benevolent king, who lives for his subjects. This idea of Manu gives indirect support to a certain extent the theory of political sovereignty of the people.

Duties of King

Manu does not merely emphasize the duties of the subjects towards the king but also emphasizes on the duties of the king. One of the major duty of the king is to

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protect the country and his subjects. Manu said, 'A king who protects his subjects receives from each and all praise and the right to collect taxes. A king who does not afford protection will soon sink into hell.' As regards the actual duties of the king, Manu insisted that the king should regulate both the political and social life of the subjects, protect them from all possible aggressions and keep them fully safe; maintain law and order in the state by keeping the state free from thieves and robbers; protection of private property; protection of class system because its violation is bound to lead to social disharmony; bestow favours on deserving persons; control the price of commodities; provide security to the traders coming into the country; and encourage trade and agriculture of the country. On duties and position of the king in the *Manusmriti*, a scholar says that 'it will be seen that the promotion of public welfare and happiness is possible when the ruler is a philosopher, considers himself subject to higher law, applies himself diligently to his duties, acknowledges the sovereignty of the people, bows to their wishes and guards the welfare. He is not above law, and the relations between him and his subjects have to be reciprocal. He holds his high office so that he may protect the people; help everyone in his own self-knowledge and in the discharge of his own duties.'

What is essential for the proper and efficient discharge of the royal duties, the king must combine in himself the qualities of a *Kshatriya* and a *Brahmin*. It is the duty of the *Kshatriya* to punish the wicked and the evil-doer and the *Brahmin* to be religious and pious. Besides the above mentioned duties of the king in respect of social, economic and political spheres, Manu has mentioned a long list of duties as enumerated in the *Manusmriti* under the following eight heads—Executive, Judicial, Legislative, Administrative, Ecclesiastical, Revenue, Military and Enlightened. The king has to perform his duties in these eight fields.

Manu, thus, ascribed to the king all the high qualities for which the king is worshipped as God by the people. The king is worshipped not simply because he is the king but because he is learned, righteous, modest and free from vices springing from pleasure and wealth. Manu, therefore, puts emphasis on the presence of the qualities in the king, which make him fit for the difficult and responsible functions of exercising power and authority over the people in almost all spheres of life.

4.3.3 The State and Government of State Structure

Manu's state had a divine origin. Manu gave the '*Saptanga theory*' regarding the element of the state. He believed that the state or the political organization known as *Rajya* has seven prakrtis or parts or elements. They are:

- Swamin (the sovereign ruler)
- Amatya (the officials)
- Pura (the capital)
- Rashtra (the kingdom)
- Kosha (revenue),
- Bala (the standing army)
- Mitra (the foreign ally)

Manu discusses the seven parts and calls them the seven limbs of the state, no particular one can be said to excel the others since each of them has a particular function to perform. This involves the essential parity of the factors of the state structure in spite of there being inequality in some respects. It also substantiates the organic theory of the state of Manu, which was afterwards developed by the Western thinkers. Manu admits the impossibility of one man's rule in view of the difficulty and complexity of governmental functions. Regarding the king's officials, Manu discussed the part played by the king's ministers and other officers in the administration of the state. It is very difficult to govern a kingdom yielding much revenue, especially if one has no assistants. Here, Manu discusses the qualifications of different classes of the king's officials, such as his minister and other officers, his ambassador, his domestic servants, superintendents of the administrative departments, tax collectors, and local officers. The ministers should come from royal families and they should be intelligent, loyal, hardworking and free from temptations. The king should also appoint ambassadors and diplomats for conduct of foreign relations. They must be good orators, intelligent, fearless, learned and skilful. The king should heavily punish the defaulter officials or those who indulge in corruption. The king should even go to the extent of confiscating their property and driving them out of his kingdom. Important departments like the revenue and the army should be kept under the direct control and supervision of the king and the king should keep a constant watch on them.

Manu has given an elaborate scheme of local government. In his scheme, the ultimate unit is the village. Every village must have a headman. The local government may be formed by groups of ten, twenty, a hundred and a thousand villages. Every town should have 'a superintendent of all affairs' with an army of spies to help him in 'exploring' the behaviour of the people. Local government, as a whole, should remain in charge of a minister at the headquarters. A company of soldiers should be stationed 'in the midst of two, three, five, or hundreds of villages for the protection of the kingdom.'

Lastly, we come to Manu's policies of government, which may be conveniently considered under two heads, namely, those relating to public security and to matters relating to foreign policy. With regard to the policy of public security, the king, according to Manu, will detect with the help of spies two classes of thieves who are otherwise called the 'the open thieves'—and 'the secret thieves', consisting of those who took bribes and other types of cheats, rogue, gamblers, fortune tellers, high officers and physicians guilty of improper conduct, burglars, and so forth. Manu mentions punishment for both these classes of culprits. Punishments are prescribed by Manu for various acts of injury to the public, such as breaking down dams, tanks, cutting of the water-supply, breaking public property, destroying bridges, adulterating commodities, dishonest dealing with customers, dishonest behaviour as well as theft. Punishment is also prescribed for royal officers who remain inactive during attacks by robbers and for failing to give help according to their capacity, when a village is being plundered or a highway robbery is being committed.

4.3.4 Inter-State Relations or Foreign Policy

Regarding the policy of inter-state relations, Manu suggested the principle of application of the six types of foreign policy. First, the king makes peace when he is sure of his

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own gain and superiority in future and of his inferiority at present; second, he should wage war when he thinks that he is strong enough to defeat the enemy; third, he should march against the enemy when his army is well-disposed towards him and is comparatively superior; fourth, he should be neutral, if he is weak in troops; fifth he should built his forces, if he finds that his enemy is stronger in every respect; and last, he would take refuge with a rich and powerful king, when he is very easily assailable by the enemy's forces. The king, while determining his war policy, should consider the future and the immediate present as well as the good and bad aspects of all past events.

Manu gave emphasis on the full security of the state, which should be the goal of foreign policy. He was not in favour of territorial annexation. The king should use force as the last alternative. Manu recommended four political expedients of conciliation, bribery, dissension and force as the policy of inter-state relations. He thinks that while all the four expedients may be directed towards achieving success, force should be used as the last resort. However, he suggests the application of conciliation and force in a wise manner in the interest of the prosperity of the state.

4.3.5 Varnadharmā

Varna refers to the categorization of the Hindu society by four castes, hypothesized by the Brahmins and their sacred texts. This quadruple division is not to be confused with *Jāti* or even the much finer division of the contemporary caste system in India. The four varnas, or *chatur varna*, are mentioned in ancient texts in the following (stratified) order, from top to bottom,

- **Brahmins:** Scholars, teachers and fire priests
- **Kshatriya/chattari:** Kings, warriors, administrators
- **Vaishyas:** Agriculturists and merchants
- **Sudras:** Service providers and artisans

They are also divided into two groups, the Arya (comprising the first three classes) and the Sudra, the Sudra generally being excluded from Vedic rituals.

Separate and shunned by the society were the 'untouchables' like the *Chandaal*, who had to deal with the disposal of dead bodies and are described as dirty and polluted. There was a belief that one's Karma in the past, resulted in one's condition in this birth. The varna system of Hindu society is described in the various Puranas and Smritis, among others. *Manusmriti* is one of many Dharmashastra texts reflecting the laws and society of Maurya period India and being a reference work for the Brahmins of Bengal especially, was relied upon by the British colonial administrators and scholars based in Calcutta, the capital city. *Manusmriti* was almost unknown south of the Vindhya.

Manusmriti is often quoted in reference to the Varna system as an inherited social class system. However, the Hindu rightists usually point out that the *Manusmriti* is a later work that does not form a part of Hindu Scriptures, so it is of questionable relevance. The rightists content that the *Manusmriti* has been used by British colonialists, politicians and sociologists to denigrate those of the Hindu faith.

The *Manusmriti* claims that by the time it was written in ancient times, Hindu society included another class (untouchables) of people without a position in any of the four Varnas and therefore associated with the lowest of the jobs. The upper classes, who were supposed to maintain ritual and corporal purity, came to regard them as untouchables. The people of this 'fifth varna' are now called Dalits (*the oppressed*) or Harijans; they were formerly known as 'untouchables' or 'pariahs'. However, this last addition social strata is not a part of the religion of Hinduism. Hinduism only categorizes occupations into four categories.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. Who is Manu?
9. Name the four ends of life as propounded by Manu.
10. Why did Manu advise the kings to acquire knowledge of the Vedas?

4.4 BENEVOLENT MONARCHISM

Benevolent monarchism is a form of political governance where a monarch or leader of a state exercises outright political control over the people of his state but this control is seen to be exercised for the maximum benefit of the entire population. A benevolent monarch may permit for some independent administrative decisions to exist, such as through communal votes or elected legislative body with restricted power.

4.4.1 Mauryas

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

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

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Economy under Chandragupta Maurya

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

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

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

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

Occupations

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

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

Metallurgy

According to Megasthenes, during the Mauryan age, there was an enormous quantity of gold and silver in India. Iron, copper and brass was also available in large quantities. Iron was used for manufacture of arms. Ordinarily, the work of mining was done by

the state officials. The state representative who was in-charge of the mines was known as Akradhayaksha. During the Mauryan times, ornaments were worn by members of both the sexes. The wealthy section of the society wore ornaments made of ivory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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India. The existence of a special assembly for receiving the foreign ambassadors in the royal court of Mauryas indicates that there existed close relations between India and countries abroad. Thus, during the Mauryan times, kings had to maintain foreign relations and formulate the appropriate external policies.

Coinage

The following were the Mauryan coins:

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

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

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

Asoka (269–232 BC)

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

Early Life

Though Asoka is known as the greatest king of India, historians learned about him only in the 19th century. In 1837, a British scholar named James Prinsep deciphered the inscriptions on the pillars and rocks that are found in many parts of India. The script was in Brahmi script. From these inscriptions, it was concluded that Asoka and the ruler named Devanampriya Priyadarsi were one and the same person. An inscription discovered by Prinsep in 1915 used the name Asoka along with the other name. These inscriptions gave historians valuable information about Asoka's rule and the extent and condition of his empire. The land he ruled stretched from the Himalayas in Nepal and Kashmir to Mysore in the south, from Afghanistan in the northwest to the banks of the River Brahmaputra in the east. In the west, his territory covered Saurashtra and Junagarh. Kalinga was one of the kingdoms, which remained unconquered and hostile when Asoka succeeded to the throne. It was important to Asoka from a geographical point of view, since the route to south India both by land and by sea passed through it. It would also bring added prosperity to the Mauryan Empire. It was for these reasons that Asoka attacked Kalinga.

Asoka's Dhamma

The word 'dhamma' was derived from the Sanskrit word 'dharma'. Asoka followed the principles of Buddhism—that of truth, charity, kindness, purity and goodness. He wanted his people to lead pure and virtuous lives, irrespective of their religion or culture. He considered all subjects his children. He explained his ideas in his edicts by engraving his principles on pillars throughout his kingdom. The edicts were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common people, so that they could understand and follow them. Some of the edicts such as those in the Afghanistan were composed in Greek for the same reason. The purpose of the edicts was to inform the people of Asoka's reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral. He strictly prohibited animal slaughtering in the kingdom and asked people to be respectful of each other. People should respect nature, their parents, everything living as well as non-living. Brahmins should be treated with respect and servants should be treated as equals. Donating alms to the poor and the needy was practiced and advised by the state. He preached harmony and peace and advised people to get rid of anger, jealousy, cruelty and arrogance. According to Romila Thapar, an Indian historian whose principal area of study is ancient India, 'Dhamma was a way of life which was based on the social and moral responsibilities.'

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

Features of Mauryan Administration

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

Central administration

The central administration had the following parts:

¶ **King:** The form of Mauryan kingdom was monarchical. Kautilya maintains in the *Arthashastra*: 'The king should behave like a father.' The king was expected to be an efficient warrior, descendant of a high family, an able provider of justice and a wise administrator. Megasthenes opined that the king had to be just during his leisure. The king was the commander of the army and chief justice but his powers were not absolute. According to Kautilya, 'The king is not one who only enjoys the kingship but the king is one who does welfare of his subjects.'

¶ **Council of ministers:** There used to be a council of ministers to provide assistance to the administrative work of the huge Mauryan Empire. The king selected only efficient people in his council. Kautilya believed that the vehicle of administration could not function on one wheel. In order to function

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effectively, the king had to have the council of ministers to help him administer the vast kingdom. Therefore, the king should appoint and take advice from his ministers. These ministers used to be honest, faithful and clever. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes about eighteen ministers with specific portfolios. Every minister used to head his department. The eighteen ministers were: 1. Prince, 2. Chief Minister, 3. Commander, 4. *Dauvarik*, 5. *Purohit*, 6. *Antarveshik*, 7. Jailer, 8. *Samaharta*, 9. *Sannidhata*, 10. *Pradestha*, 11. *Nayak*, 12. *Paur*, 13. Chief Justice, 14. *Karmantik*, 15. Head of Council, 16. *Dandpal*, 17. *Durgpal*, and 18. *Antapal*. There used to be small committee of ministers to advise the king. Each committee consisted of 3–4 ministers called *Mantrids*. According to Smith, 'The Mauryan kingdom was clearly divided into departments and minutely into category of workers whose works were defined in absolute terms.'

Administration of provinces

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

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

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

Town administration

The town administration of the Mauryan empire had a very special place in ancient Indian history. Each town was under a chief called *Nagarak*. *Gop* and *Sthanik* were the officials to assist the *Nagarak*. Megasthenes' description of Pataliputra may be cited in this regard. 'This was a very big town of India. This was established on the banks of Ganga and Son rivers. Its length was 9 ½ miles and breadth 3 or 4 miles.' For the administration of town, there were six committees of five people each. Each committee had its work schedule. These committees were artisan committee, foreign committee, population committee, commerce committee, trade committee and tax committee.

Village administration

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

Penal and judicial system

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

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

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

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

Police and espionage systems

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

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

Socio-economic Changes under the Mauryan Empire

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

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Welfare measures

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

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

Mauryan society

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

- **Social condition:** People were happy and affluent during this period. Not only the necessities of personal life but the pleasure of social life was also available to these people.
- **Varnashram system:** The society was divided into various *varnas*. According to *Arthashastra*, the society was divided into four *varnas*: Brahmanas, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, but Megasthenes has written that the society was divided into seven castes. These castes were farmer, philosopher, *gop shikari*, labourer, kshatriya, president and minister or *sabhasad*. Once someone relinquished his profession, he was not allowed to practise the profession again. The description of seven castes by Megasthenes does not seem proper, but it was definite that the caste system had become complex. Life was divided into four *Ashramas*: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihasthashram*, *Vanprasthashram* and *Sanyas*. According to Kautilya, truth, *suchita*, non-violence, compassion, and forgiveness, were necessary for all the *varnas*. Slavery was also in vogue.
- **Marriage:** The basis of family life was marriage. The main reason for marriage was the production of children. Usually marriages took place within the same castes. It was considered to be a main ritual. Marriage was of eight types: *Brahma*, *Dev*, *Arya*, *Prajapatya*, *Aasur*, *Gandharv*, *Rakshas* and *Paisach*.
- **Condition of women:** The condition of women in the Mauryan age was worse as compared to the Vedic period. Sati and widow remarriage were practised. After the death of husbands, the wives happily burnt themselves on the pyre of their husbands and those who restrained from doing so were not considered respectful. Women had no individual civil or political rights. There are also evidences of prostitution. Kautilya maintained that a prostitute gave a part of her income as tax. Women had right to basic education.

- **Sources of entertainment:** The abundance and variety of sources of entertainment reflect the affluence of the materialistic life of the common people during the Mauryan period. The chief sources of entertainment were hunting, wrestling, chariot racing, horse racing, animal fights, dance, *chaupad* and music. People celebrated many festivals.

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Economic condition

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

Religious life

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

Trade and Commerce in Mauryan Period

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

Commerce

Imports as well as exports were in vogue during this period. Clothes, jewellery, artifacts, scent, horses, etc. were exported. According to Greek writers, trade was carried out on land as well as sea routes. Mention of weaver and blacksmith organizations, which had political and economic powers, is also available in contemporary accounts. The foreign and inland trades got promotion from affluent industries.

Trade

The growth of agriculture and different professions gave a great fillip to trade. There was a brisk internal trade. Fa-Hein's description reveals that the traders were given full freedom. They could easily move from one place to the other. During

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this period, a good trade relation existed with foreign countries also. For internal trade, there were good means of transportation. The people carried their goods from place to place through seas and land routes. In those days, Ujjain, Banaras, Vaisali, Gaya, Prayaga, Pataliputra and Mathura were the important centres of trade. These towns were linked through a network of roads. The roads were safe and Fa-Hien did not come across any road accident. The merchants carried their goods on bullock carts. Rivers Ganges, Krishna, Godavari and Brahmaputra were utilized for trade. Trade commodities are not known definitely but it can at least be said that it must have been carried on in cloth, wheat, spices, salt, diamonds and precious stones.

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

Decline of the Mauryan Empire

The decline of the Mauryan Empire was a setback to the political unity of India. As the vast empire began to disintegrate, many small kingdoms emerged throughout the country. Taking advantage of this weakness, many tribes and powerful rulers from Central Asia extended their kingdoms and began to make inroads into the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent. In the course of time, they adopted Indian culture and became a part of the Indian population. In 185 BC, Pushyamitra Sunga of the Sunga Dynasty overthrew the last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha. The Sungas ruled over India for the next 112 years. Towards the end of their rule, the Sungas and the Kanvas had only the region around Magadha under their control, as most of the regions including Kalinga and the Deccan had revolted and broken away from the empire. The Satavahanas emerged in the first century BC in northern Deccan from Nasik. Most probably, they held administrative positions under the Mauryans but became powerful after the decline of their master.

However, for a short time, they were overcome by the Sakas and lost large portions of their territory to them. In South India, in the last century BC, the Cholas and the Pandyas dominated the eastern coast of India. Cheras were in the region where Kerala is today. These three kingdoms were constantly at war with each other. All these kingdoms built fleets of ships and encouraged the growth of international trade between India, South-East Asia, Central Asia and Europe. These kingdoms are mentioned in the Mahabharata, the *Jataka* stories, as well as in the accounts of Megasthenes and the Roman historian, Pliny, as well as in Asoka's inscriptions. Our main source of information about them is the Sangam literature.

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

The mighty Kushana Empire reached its zenith during the time of Kanishka I. Under him, the Kushanas were feared not only in India, but also in Central Asia. However, his successors failed to maintain his feat. Vasishka, the successor of Kanishka I, is stated to have ruled only over Mathura and its surrounding regions. Probably, he had the Sanchi region also under his control. As no inscription of Vasishka has been discovered in any other part of India, it is concluded that he lost control over the distant parts of the Kushana Empire. No cause is given for the collapse of the Kushana power during his reign, but it is contended that the collapse was merely a temporary one.

4.4.2 Guptas

Political Conditions after the Kushanas

The weakening of the Kushanas was followed by political disarray in the country. Numerous republican principalities and monarchical states surfaced. Among these, some played significant role in overthrowing the Kushanas. None among them, however, was strong enough to integrate the country into a political unity. That high task fell to the share of the Guptas. Samudragupta and his successors eliminated the regional kingdoms, local chiefs, the republican communities and brought a large part of the country under a strong central authority. Political will, once again, was at work. The Guptas performed this task successfully and well. They restored to the country, once again, unity and solidarity. They set before the people a new horizon. A bird's eye-view of the political state on the eve of the emergence of the Guptas to political prominence and the role they played on the contemporary political stage is obviously expedient to follow the course of events.

Republican states

Several republican states rose to prominence in the North-West and the Punjab, the region which had felt, the impact of the rise and fall of the Yavanas, the Pallavas, Sakas and of the Kushanas the most. Among them, some republics of the ancient origin, though small in size and resource, with resolution and determination, exerted on their own or in cooperation with the like-minded, threw away the Kushana hegemony. The Yaudheyas were the strongest among them and also probably the first to strike effectively. They had probably the cooperation of the Kunindas and of the Arjunyanas in this task. Their success made the Malavas assume independence.

- **Yaudheyas:** The Yaudheyas were the republican people. In the Mahabharata, Yaudheya appears as the name of the son of Yudhishtira, and it is not improbable that the Yaudheya people claimed descent from the Pandava king.

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They were known as the 'Kshatriyas par excellence'. They held sway over Rajasthan and south-eastern Punjab. By the end of the 2nd century AD, they were one of the first to have liberated themselves from the yoke of the Kushanas. In the present state of knowledge, there is nothing to single out the Yaudheyas or any of their neighbours in Punjab, UP, and Rajputana as having been solely responsible for the collapse of the Kushana rule in India.

- **Kunindas:** The Kunindas were republicans of the ancient origin. They had good neighbourly relations with the Yaudheyas. They cooperated with the Yaudheyas in overthrowing the Kushanas. They held the territory between the Sutlej and the Beas.
- **Arjunayanas:** The Arjunayanas were republicans of the Mahabharata origin. They probably claimed descent from the Pandava prince Arjuna or from the Haihaya king of the same name. They held the territory around Agra–Jaipur. They continued to hold their own down to the middle of the 4th century AD.
- **Malavas:** The Malavas were of the ancient origin. They held the Ravi–Sutlej territories. On the eve of Alexander's invasion, probably under political pressure, they moved southwards and established themselves in Ajmer–Tonk–Mewar region with Malavanagar, near Jaipur, being their capital. They are said to have given their name to Malwa (Malava).
- **Madras:** The Madras made themselves independent of the Kushanas and established their authority over the Ravi–Chenab doab. They made Sialkot their capital.
- **Audumbaras:** The Audumbara republic held sway over Kangra, Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur region. They are said to have merged with the Malavas.

Later, these republics, according to the Allahabad pillar inscriptions, accepted the supremacy of Samudragupta. He recognized and respected their autonomy.

Monarchical states

- **Nagas:** The Nagas were serpent-worshipping, non-Aryan tribes of ancient India. Their great power, culture and political prestige are hinted at in such epic legends as those relating to Vasuki and Takshaka, the death of Parikshit, and the serpent sacrifice of Janamejaya as well as in literary traditions like that of Nilanaga, the pre-historic protector of Kashmir. According to some scholars, one of the earliest historical Naga royal lines was the dynasty (or dynasties) represented by Sisunaga and Naga-Darsaka, king of Magadha. Serpent-worshipping was a popular cult in all parts of ancient India. The existence of the Nagas in different parts of India in early and medieval periods and of their descendants in the present times is evidenced not only by epigraphic, numismatic and literary records, but also by numerous localities named after the Nagas (e.g., Nagapura, Uracapura, Nagarakhanda) and a large number of families (including many royal houses) with the cognomen Naga.

The Nagas were an important power. They are said to have played a significant role in terminating the Kushana authority in the Gangetic valley. But the manner

in which it was done is not clear. The success of the Yaudheyas, the Kunindas and the Arjunayanas emboldened the Nagas of Padmavati to reassert their independence.

The Padmavati Nagas were known as the Bharasiva 'whose royal line owed its origin to the great satisfaction of Shiva that was caused by their carrying a Shivalinga placed as a load upon their shoulders' and 'who were besprinkled on the forehead with the pure water of the Bhagirathi that had been obtained by their valour.' Thus, the name of the Bharasivas, a family of Nagas who were usually Shaivas, has been explained by their carrying a *linga*. It is also suggested that their home was away from the Bhagirathi (Ganga) but that they extended their power as far as the valley of the river.'

They held their authority over Gwalior and the neighbouring region. Padmavati was their capital. It was situated near the confluence of the Sindhu and the Para and thus had the natural protection from three sides. It was a famous centre for education and culture. Its fame did not diminish even after the fall of the Nagas. The Puranas refer to the rule of nine Naga kings at Padmavati. Bharasiva Naga dynasty was one of the most important that flourished on the ruins of the Kushana Empire. They are credited to have thrown away the Kushanas and performed ten *Asvamedhas*. The Dasavamedhaghat at Benaras, commemorates these sacrifices. But according to a historian, this large number of horse-sacrifices need not, however, be taken as proof that they were the leading power to oust the Kushanas; for horse-sacrifices were often performed by petty rulers in that period.' They had extended their authority over Punjab.

Of this line, Bhavanaga (AD 305–340) reigned over the kingdom bordering the Bhagirathi. He gave his daughter in marriage to the Vakataka crown prince Gautamiputra in AD 300. The Vakataka records mention that Bhavanaga was the maternal grandfather of Rudrasena I.

Another Naga family ruled over western UP with their capital at Mathura. According to a Puranic statement, seven Naga kings ruled over Mathura.

By the middle of the 4th century AD, Nagasena and Ganapati were reigning at Padmavati and Mathura respectively. Both of them were defeated by Samudragupta and their territories were annexed. A Naga line, however, continued as the feudatories or as officers of the Guptas.

¶ **Maukharis:** The Maukharis ruled Badva in Kota, Rajasthan. They were enthusiastic about the cause of Vedic religion. Sacrificial pillars have been discovered commemorating the *Triratna* sacrifices performed by four of them. Their relation with the later Maukharis of Bihar and Kanauj is not clear.

¶ **Maghas:** Magha is the name given to the dynasty by the Puranas as four of their known kings have names ending in Magha. The family, according to the Puranas, had nine kings but the details of all of them are not available. Their principality was in the south-east of Padmavati. In the beginning, it was confined to Baghelkhand alone. Earliest of their kings was Vasishthiputra Bhimsena. His son and successor Kautriputra Pothasiri was an able ruler. His capital

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was Bandhogarh. It flourished under his fostering care. Merchants from distant places came to visit the place and made religious endowments. Later, the crown prince Bhadra-magha snatched Kausambi from the Kushans. He started the 'Magha' series of coins. The dynasty ceased to exist after 300 AD.

¶ **Western Kshatrapas:** The western Kshatrapas, touched the zenith of power and glory under Rudradaman I. His successor put up with the fluctuations of their fortune. Finally, in 304 AD, an upstart, Rudra Simha II brought the house of the Chashtana to an end. The last of the line of the upstart was Rudra Simha III. He was defeated by Chandragupta and his territory was annexed to the Gupta dominion.

¶ **Ikshvakus:** The Satavahana line was brought to an end by Ikshvakus, one of their feudatories. The earliest of this line was Vasishtiputra Santhmula, who reigned over Dhanyakalaka and the neighbouring territory in the second quarter of the third century AD. Nothing much is known about the predecessors of Santhmula. The Ikshvaku of the far south appear to have had their capital at Vijayapuri situated in the valley of the Nagarjunikonda hills. The Ikshvakus continued for long as a local power.

Among the other minor dynasties that reigned in the region were the Brihatphalayanans in the Kistana district, with their capital at Pithunda; the Anandas at Guntur and the Salankayanas at Vengapura.

¶ **Vakatakas (AD 225–510):** The Vakatakas were the most important power that arose on the wreck of the Satavahana Empire. Vendhyasakti was the founder of the house. Their original principality was Berar. They established matrimonial relations first with the Nagas and later with the Guptas in the north. They continued to hold their domination down to AD 540. Their weak and incompetent successors failed to hold their own against the challenge from the Kadambas of Karnataka, the Kalachuris of Northern Maharashtra and the Nalas of Bastar, who steadily absorbed most of their territory. Later, the Chalukyas of Karnataka rose to be mighty and swept them out of the existence.

¶ **Dakshina Kosala:** The kingdom consisted of Raipur, Bilaspur, Sambalpur and Orissa. The region Dakshina Kosala, in contrast to the Uttara-Kosala, which roughly corresponded to modern Oudh, may have been originally colonized as suggested by Altakar, by the princes of the Ikshvakus dynasty of Ayodhya in the middle of the 4th century AD. It was headed by Mahendra Samudragupta.

¶ **Kalinga:** Soon after the fall of the Chedi dynasty, Kalinga broke into small principalities and each was headed by a minor reigning house. Significant among them were the Pitribhaktas of Simhapura and the Matharas of Pishtapura.

Thus, the country had been divided into a number of republican and monarchical states. But, still the Kushanas had not been completely uprooted. They continued to

rule over the north western parts. The Sakas, though in a state of decline, held authority over Gujarat and Malwa. There was a political void. The Guptas met the consequent challenge and moved to the centre of the political stage.

Chandragupta I

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

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

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

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

Samudragupta

After Chandragupta, his son Samudragupta (AD 325–375) became king of the Gupta dynasty. He established a vast kingdom by conquering different battles and strengthened the Gupta dynasty for centuries. On account of his immense talent, Chandragupta chose his successor in his own life. Samudragupta was an able emperor, skilled commander and a man of great personality. He was a great conqueror; hence, he is compared with Napoleon. It is popularly said that Asoka is famous for his peace and non-violence while Samudragupta is famous because of his victories.

Conquests of Samudragupta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

South expedition

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

- **Mahendra of Kaushal:** Mahendra was the king of Kaushal. Modern districts of Raipur, Sambhalpur and Vilaspur were included in it.
- **Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara:** Vyaghraraja was the king of Mahakantara, which was the forest area of Orissa.

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

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

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

Policy towards the frontier states: Samudragupta adopted three kinds of policy against these states, such as *Sarvakara*, i.e., these states accepted to pay all types of tributes, *Ajnakarana*, i.e., these states carried out the order of Samudragupta, and *Pranamakarana*, i.e., they appeared individually and greeted the king.

Conquest of foreign states

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

Extent of Samudragupta's kingdom

Samudragupta's empire extended from the Himalayas in the north to Vindhya in the south and from Bay of Bengal in the east to Eastern Malwa in the west. He had indirect influence over Gujarat, Sindh, Western Rajaputana, West Punjab and the frontier states of Kashmir, and he had friendly relations with Saimhala and the

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other islands. Samudragupta adopted the policy of expansion of his empire. The main aim of his conquest was to hoist his flag of victory.

Horse-sacrifice

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

Estimate of Samudragupta's reign

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



Fig. 4.2 Samudragupta's Gold Coins

Chandragupta II Vikramaditya

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

Matrimonial alliances

Chandragupta II adopted both the policies of matrimonial relationship as well as war for strengthening his empire. His contemporary Naga dynasty was very strong and had influence over several regions of North India. Establishment of matrimonial relationship with the Nagas helped him much in strengthening his sovereignty over the newly established empire. Matrimonial alliances with Vakatakas helped him a

lot. Therefore, Chandragupta II gave his daughter Prabhavatigupta in marriage to Vakataka king Rudrasen II. Vakataka king had control over such geographical region wherefrom he could have assisted or opposed the Northern aggressor against the Shaka vassals of Saurashtra. This matrimonial alliance proved much important for him. It is evident from the Talgund inscription that the princess of Kuntal, King Kakustha Verma was married in the Gupta dynasty.

Conquests of Chandragupta II

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

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

Horse-sacrifice

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



Fig. 4.3 Chandragupta II on Horseback as Depicted on a Coin

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Extent of Chandragupta II's empire

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

Estimate of Chandragupta II

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

Skandagupta

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

Victory over Hunas

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

The Junagarh inscription referred to defeat of the serpent kings by Skandagupta. Vakatakas had captured Malwa during Skandagupta's reign by taking advantage of the numerous wars that Skandagupta was fighting simultaneously. Therefore, Skandagupta had to remain satisfied by appointing Pranadatta in the

region. Govindgupta was a son of Chandragupta II and he was the governor of Vaishali. Historians believe that he revolted after the death of Kumaragupta in western Malwa, but Skandhagupta crushed his rebellion successfully.

Extent of Skandagupta's empire

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

Estimate of Skandagupta's reign

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

11. Define benevolent monarchism.
12. What was the purpose of the Asokan edicts?
13. Who were the Kunindas?
14. Who were the Hunas and which Gupta ruler defeated them?

4.5 THOUGHTS ON LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

Local self-government, to borrow a phrase from Sydney Webb, is 'as old as the hills'. This can be more true of India than any other country of the world. There is sufficient evidence to establish the fact that the institution of local self-government is almost pre-historic, and the conception of local self-government is indigenous to the Indian soil. Municipal governments have flourished in India since times immemorial. While empires rose and fell, village panchayats which formed an integral part of the national life, helped to preserve democratic traditions in social, cultural, economic and political life, survived the onslaughts of centuries of political upheavals and saved Indian society from disintegration. The existence of local bodies in ancient India is a positive proof of the inherent genius of our people to manage local affairs efficiently and on a decentralized basis. The decentralization of power in the kingdoms of the Maurya and the Gupta period was unique and this has already been discussed in the above section. Such a devolution of power was unknown to the western world until modern times. The local governments at different levels, performing many functions, though not very democratic, were sufficiently autonomous.

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The village was the preliminary source of administration in ancient India. The various forms of knowledge in ancient India can be categorized under four heads—the Vedas, Economics, Politics and Philosophy. Out of these four categories, politics and administration was regarded one of the most important aspect of study. The Mahabharata says, 'When the Science of Politics is neglected, the three Vedas as well as all virtues decline.' Hence, a state could thrive only when its subjects were happy and prosperous. Politics, in ancient India, was not as much seen as a science as much as it was treated as an art. In other words, it was rather concerned with providing guidance in the exercising of authentic administration, rather than the creation of a complete and dependable system of political theories. Chanakya, for instance, defines Politics as 'the science which treats of what is right in public policy and what is not, and of power and weakness.' According to the *Sukraniti*, a knowledge of the science 'enables rulers to gain victories over their foes, to please their subjects, and to be proficient in statecraft.' Our sources of information about the local administration of ancient India are numerous—the Puranas, Vedas, the Hindu epics, the Smritis, religious books of the Buddhists and Jains, account of foreign philosophers, literature and so on.

It is seen that a village is a very important body in ancient India. Moreover, this body represented the economic, social, cultural and administrative unit of the people. These villages practiced various activities such as holding of meetings and committees. These meetings and committees were headed by the elders of the village and they dealt with the problems faced by the villagers. Hence, in this way the task done by the modern government today, was being done by these gram panchayats in ancient India.

In the Vedic period, the head of the village was named as the 'Gramin'. Villages in the ancient times had their own committees or meeting where the majority of the votes was considered to be the means of providing justice to the people or to solve their problems. Therefore, it can be said that these committees and meetings played a very important role in the Vedic times where each village was a democracy on its own. It was the Panchayat that dealt with the administration of these villages. The word 'Panchayat' can be said to be an association of five people since the term 'panch' means five. There were certain rules and regulations that were carried out during the election of these Panchayat members and certain qualifications were required of a person to be eligible for becoming a member of the Panchayat. Hence, local administration was achieved this way in ancient India.

'Mukhiya' was the village headman and the governance of the village was supervised under his guidance. The 'gramin' is called the 'Grambhojak' in the Jatakkathas. There are various sources like inscriptions, copper-plates and literature that inform us that the term 'gramin' was used in different parts of the world. Similarly, the 'gramin' was named differently in various parts of India. In north India, it is referred to as 'Gramin', whereas in Telangana it is named 'Munund'. Similarly, it is called 'Mahattak' in Uttar Pradesh and 'Gramukut' and 'Gavunda' in South India. The names may be different in different parts of the world, but the 'Mukhiya' was the head of the village. He played an important role in the local administration. In the Vedic age, the states were small in size and hence the Central government took care of the administration but with time, states started to enlarge

and hence the village became the unit of administration. Generally, the rank of a 'Gramin' was inherited through hereditary but in case of non-worthy members, the 'Gramin' could be elected by the people.

The village headman, i.e. the 'Gramin' was the one who headed the administrative and military unit of the village. The main obligation of the 'Gramin' was to maintain peace and unity in the village and also maintain the security of the village against any external force. The threat of thieves, dacoits and bankruptcy was prevalent in those times and hence the village had to be always ready for self-defence. According to the *Arthashastra*, self-reliance of a village was very important. Collection of taxes was also one of the responsibilities of the 'Gramin'. Moreover, he also needed to take heed of the land under his custody by measuring the same and segregating the different kinds of land under his control.

The 'Gram Sabha' were the assemblies in the villages. They were considered to be an important part of the administration. This term has been in vogue since the Vedic times. The relationship between these assemblies and the centre started to degrade after the increase in the size or area of the state. Hence, its status and importance as the main body of governance increased. Any worthy villager was capable of becoming a member of the 'Gram Sabha'. According to the different caste and occupations carried out by the people of ancient India, they were classified as 'gan' or 'sanghs'. The 'Gram Sabha' can be said to be an assimilation of these 'sanghs'. The villagers had various occupations comprising farmers, artisans, washer men, pot-makers, weavers, carpenters, blacksmith, goldsmith, oil extractors and so on as pointed out by the Chola kings. These assemblies were known as 'Mahajans', 'Mahattar' and 'Perumakkal' in South India. Later on, they were referred to as 'Gram Panchayat'.

Committees of 'Gram Sabha' were formed to help the village administration. These committees looked after the welfare of the villagers. They were represented by all castes and hence the number of the members of this committee might be more compared to the other committees. There are copper inscriptions belonging to the kings excavated in South India that suggest that the number of members were 100 to 1000. Hence, each head of family was a member of the 'Gram Sabha'. The various problems of village administration were dealt by these sabhas and they also performed organized tasks as carried out by the central government. The Mauryan age consisted of 'Panchayats' and 'Gram Sabhas' and this has been continually in process since this period. Various stone carvings suggest that there were many committees in ancient India and all of them were given different responsibilities like maintaining reservoirs, maintaining unity among the people, drinking water facilities, sanitation, collecting of taxes and so on. In this way, there were bodies like the 'Gram Panchayats' for local administration, and other public works were carried out by committees and the members of these 'Gram Panchayats'. In this way, the Panchayat was the root of ancient local administration.

Cholas

The arrangement of local self-government has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas. Probably, no other ruling dynasty of either the

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north or the south had such an extensive arrangement of local self-government at different units of the administration as the Cholas. The *Mahasabha* of the village played an important role in the administration of the village. Besides, there was a provision of representative bodies at the level of *Kurram*, *Nadu* and *Mandal* as well, which helped in the administration. An assessment can be made of the nature of the local self-government by the rights and duties of the *Mahasabha* of the village.

For the formation of *Mahasabha*, first a village was divided into thirty wards. The people of each ward used to nominate a few people possessing the ownership of about an acre and a half of land, residence in a house built at one's own site, aged between thirty-five and seventy, possessing knowledge of one Veda and a *Bhahsya*. Moreover, he or any of his relations must not have committed any wrong or received punishment. Besides those who had been on any of the committees for the past three years and those who had been on the committee but had failed to submit the accounts, were excluded from being the nominees. From among the persons duly nominated, one was chosen from every ward to be the member of the *Mahasabha*. At this stage the members were not chosen by election but by the lot-system. Names of persons were written on palm-leaf tickets which were put into a pot and shuffled and a young boy was directed to pick out the ticket. The same procedure was followed for the formation of the different committees of the *Mahasaha*. Thus, the *Mahasabha* of a village was constituted of educated and economically independent persons of the village and in all, had thirty members. There were also different committees of the *Mahasabha* to look after different things concerning the village like the judicial committee, the garden committee, the committee to look after tanks and irrigation.

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

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

Muslim rule in India

With the coming of the Muslim rule in India, local institutions received a set-back, as they did not enjoy the same autonomy and prestige, as under the Hindu kings. Sir Jadunath Sirkar in his book *Mughal Administration* writes, 'Mughal government was highly centralized autocracy. The crown was the motive power of the entire administrative machinery. Where the government is absolute, the supreme authority concentrated in one man's hand, the territory larger, the means of communications between the districts slow and difficult, the transfer of local officers frequent, no political life or local initiative is left to the people.'

The Muslim rulers recognized local chiefs and zamindars as the repositories of local authority, to the exclusion of the people. 'The villages and towns of the Mughal Empire enjoyed parochial self-government rather than local autonomy. People who do not possess political freedom and powers of self-taxation for national purposes, cannot be said to enjoy local autonomy' (Ibid. 13). The office of Kotwal was developed as the keystone of the municipal administration and 'his functions in connection with the town in his charge were, at least in theory, the most comprehensive conceivable being in certain respects even wider than those of the municipal bodies of the present day' (Dr P. Sharma, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals*).

While the Mughals did not initiate any positive measures of encouragement to local institutions, wherever such institutions existed, they worked in co-operation with the official machinery of the rulers and in certain respects became a part of it.

Between the breakdown of the Mughal Empire and the coming of the British, there was complete anarchy and military despotism in most parts of the country. During this period "the ties of social framework were loosened, and in many places, local institutions had been perverted or sapped, before the British officials had an opportunity to assess their value' (H. Tinker, *The Foundation of local self-government in India, Pakistan and Burma*).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

15. Name the various forms of knowledge prevalent in ancient India.
16. How does Chanakya define politics?
17. Who is a 'Gramin'?
18. What happened to local institutions with the coming of the Muslim rule in India?

4.6 SUMMARY

- Kautilya is considered as the pioneer of economics and political science. In the Western world, he has been referred to as the Indian Machiavelli, although his works predate Machiavelli's by about 1800 years.

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- Kautilya was a teacher in Takshila, an ancient centre of learning, and was responsible for the creation of the Mauryan Empire, the first of its kind on the Indian subcontinent.
- Two classics that are said to be Kautilya's creations are the *Arthashastra* and the *Neetishastra*.
- Kautilya developed a labour theory of value for determining 'just' wage for workers as he understood the concepts of demand and supply and their combined influence on price. He even wrote explicitly on foreign trade, interest and money.
- A revolution dawned on the Indian political thought with the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1904.
- However, despite varied views as regards the authorship, the *Arthashastra* is, all agree, the most important work in Hindu politics. Its air of intense political realism and concern for practical problems of administration, adjudication and governmental control distinguish it from the more theoretical works of earlier *Brahmana* schools.
- The *Arthashastra* refers to numerous previous teachers and claims to be a systematic compendium of the ancient teachings. Kautilya makes no pretence for the construction of any original system of political philosophy.
- Kautilya accepts the theory of *Matsya-nayaya*, the logic of the fish, for his is a science of politics for the *Kali Yuga*. He impresses on the monarch the fact that the King exists solely for the sake of righteousness and never for self-gratification.
- The techniques of statecraft Kautilya offers in his *Arthashastra* are guidelines to a King for the administration of internal and external affairs.
- Kautilya specifically defines the duties of the Council of State and of the Council of Ministers. He insists that these bodies (each having been cleared on security grounds) actively participated in the management of state affairs.
- Yet another important area of economic activity by the state is trade. According to the *Arthashastra*, the state received a large part of its income in kind. The state also had a monopoly of the manufacturer of a large variety of goods.
- A basic question about the land system which has been debated in India since antiquity is whether all land belonged to the state. Some writers, including some modern ones, have maintained that in India, private ownership of land was unknown.
- An issue which has attracted some attention from scholars is how far Kautilya's *Arthashastra* can be taken to reflect the prevailing practice in India of his time.
- Kautilya related the levels of risk and uncertainty to levels of profits and interests. He had indicated that the higher levels of risk and uncertainty must be compensated by the probability of receiving higher profits and interests.

- Kautilya used three criteria in prescribing wages for the state employees. He indicated that the wage should be high enough to maintain loyalty of high echelon officials, to evoke the needed efficiency and effort, and to reflect the relative standing of an occupation.
- The most notable contribution of Chanakya to political thought is his mandala theory. Briefly, the mandala, or a Circle, of Chanakya's concept consists of an aggregate of kings, friendly, hostile, and neutral, group around the figure of a central king very significantly called vijigishu.
- Manu is regarded as the father of ancient Indian political thought. He is regarded as the first law-giver of mankind. It seems wrong to regard this name as a historical persona. The word 'Manu' is derived from the root of man (mankind).
- Many not only acknowledged the *Vedic* doctrine of divine creation of the social classes in graded sequence as well as that of performance of their distinctive functions by the divine will, but in the process also admitted the supremacy of the *Brahmins* over the persons of other castes in the society.
- Manu says that God created the institution of kingship. Its creation was necessitated because the people disappointed by the prevailing disharmony, mutual differences, conflicts and distrust approached Lord Brahman, the Creator, to help and protect them.
- Manu's emphasis was more on the qualities of the king than the divinity of the king. If a king is not righteous, learned and just, and if he does not observe the *dharma*, the king would not be regarded as divine. Manu, therefore, advised the kings to acquire the knowledge of the *Vedas* and possess all noble qualities.
- Manu's state had a divine origin. Manu gave the '*Saptanga theory*' regarding the element of the state. He believed that the state or the political organization known as Rajya has seven prakrtis or parts or elements.
- Regarding the policy of inter-state relations, Manu suggested the principle of application of the six types of foreign policy.
- Benevolent monarchism is a form of political governance where a monarch or leader of a state exercises outright political control over the people of his state but this control is seen to be exercised for the maximum benefit of the entire population.
- Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire. After establishing himself firmly on the throne of Magadha, Chandragupta set out to expand his empire.
- The town administration of the Mauryan Empire had a very special place in ancient Indian history. Each town was under a chief called *Nagarak*.
- The economic life during the Mauryan period had prospered abundantly. Agriculture, trade and industry developed and strengthened the economic conditions of people.

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- The weakening of the Kushanas was followed by political disarray in the country. Numerous republican principalities and monarchical states surfaced.
- After Ghatotkach, his son Chandragupta I (AD 319–324) became king of this dynasty. He was the first independent ruler of this dynasty as the previous Gupta rulers were feudatories/vassals. He adopted the title of ‘Maharajadhiraja’.
- Samudragupta was an able emperor, skilled commander and a man of great personality. He was a great conqueror; hence, he is compared with Napoleon. It is popularly said that Asoka is famous for his peace and non-violence while Samudragupta is famous because of his victories.
- Skandagupta was the last powerful and effective emperor. He always worked for the integrity of his empire. He was a brilliant example of his braveness.
- Local self-government, to borrow a phrase from Sydney Webb, is ‘as old as the hills’. This can be more true of India than any other country of the world. There is sufficient evidence to establish the fact that the institution of local self-government is almost pre-historic, and the conception of local self-government is indigenous to the Indian soil.
- The village was the preliminary source of administration in ancient India. The various forms of knowledge in ancient India can be categorized under four heads—the Vedas, Economics, Politics and Philosophy.
- ‘Mukhiya’ was the village headman and the governance of the village was supervised under his guidance.
- The village headman, i.e. the ‘Gramin’ was the one who headed the administrative and military unit of the village.
- The arrangement of local self-government has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas.
- With the coming of the Muslim rule in India, local institutions received a setback, as they did not enjoy the same autonomy and prestige, as under the Hindu kings.

4.7 KEY TERMS

- **Artha:** *Artha* is the sustenance or livelihood (*vrttih*) of men; in other words it means ‘the earth inhabited by men’.
- **Arthashastra:** *Arthashastra* is the science which is the means of the acquisition and protection of the earth.
- **Pratyangabhuta:** *Pratyangabhuta* are also referred to the seven limbs of the state.
- **Benevolent monarchism:** Benevolent monarchism is a form of political governance where a monarch or leader of a state exercises outright political control over the people of his state but this control is seen to be exercised for the maximum benefit of the entire population.
- **Gramin:** The village headman was called as the ‘Gramin’.

4.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. Two classics that are said to be Kautilya's creations are the *Arthashastra* and the *Neetishastra*.
2. The common points of focus for both the thinkers are preservation, acquisition and expansion of the state.
3. The king in the Kautilyan state is by far the most important element of the seven limbs of the state.
4. An important area of state activity was the development of mineral resources. All mines were owned by the state. The staving of new mines and the renewal of old discarded ones was thus an important state activity, in the charge of the director of mining.
5. Agriculture, by far the most important sector of the economy, was also the principle source of tax revenue. Normally a one-sixth share of produce was prescribed as tax but in times of emergency, when the king faced difficulties concerning money, the share could go up to one fourth or even one third.
6. According to Kautilya, a king should not arbitrarily fix the price of a product without regard to its supply and demand situations. He advocated the concept of a just price. The just price was designed to maintain the incentive on the part of the business people by allowing them 5 to 10 per cent profit in their operations.
7. Kautilya used three criteria in prescribing wages for the state employees. He indicated that the wage should be high enough to maintain loyalty of high echelon officials, to evoke the needed efficiency and effort, and to reflect the relative standing of an occupation.
8. Manu is regarded as the father of ancient Indian political thought. He is regarded as the first law-giver of mankind. It seems wrong to regard this name as a historical persona. The word 'Manu' is derived from the root of man (mankind).
9. According to Manu, there are four ends of life, they are: *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire or pleasure) and *Moksha* (salvation).
10. Manu's emphasis was more on the qualities of the king than the divinity of the king. If a king is not righteous, learned and just, and if he does not observe the *dharma*, the king would not be regarded as divine. Manu, therefore, advised the kings to acquire the knowledge of the *Vedas* and possess all noble qualities.
11. Benevolent monarchism is a form of political governance where a monarch or leader of a state exercises outright political control over the people of his state but this control is seen to be exercised for the maximum benefit of the entire population.
12. The purpose of the edicts was to inform the people of Asoka's reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral.
13. The Kunindas were republicans of the ancient origin. They had good neighbourly relations with the Yaudheyas. They cooperated with the Yaudheyas in overthrowing the Kushanas.

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14. The Hunas were the barbarians. After Skandagupta's victory over Pushyamitras, he fought a fierce battle against the Hunas. They had, over the years, become terrors for kingdoms in Asia and Europe.
15. The various forms of knowledge in ancient India can be categorized under four heads—the Vedas, Economics, Politics and Philosophy.
16. Chanakya, for instance, defines Politics as 'the science which treats of what is right in public policy and what is not, and of power and weakness.'
17. In the Vedic period, the head of the village was named as the 'Gramin'.
18. With the coming of the Muslim rule in India, local institutions received a setback, as they did not enjoy the same autonomy and prestige, as under the Hindu kings.

4.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What does the term *Arthashastra* mean?
2. Kautilya is considered to be the Machiavelli of India. Is this statement justified?
3. Describe Kautilya as a traditionalist.
4. '*Arthashastra* is a storehouse of political wisdom and a text book of the principles and techniques of statecraft.' Discuss.
5. Describe the economic functions of the state as prescribed in the *Arthashastra*.
6. What responsibility did the state have regarding the arrangement for storage of goods?
7. Write a note on the taxation and pricing policy undertaken by the Kautilyan state.
8. Differentiate between the two types of share cropping arrangement—*ardhasitikas* and *svaviryopajivins*.
9. What are the problems faced in interpreting the *Arthashastra*?
10. What does Kautilya's labour theory of value provide?
11. Discuss the rajmandala theory of Kautilya.
12. On what principle is the social structure according to Manu based?
13. Discuss the duties of the king as postulated by Manu.
14. Write a note of Asoka's Dhamma.
15. List the conquests of Samudragupta.
16. State the importance of village in ancient India.
17. List the duties of the 'Gramin Sabha'.

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'A revolution dawned on the Indian political thought with the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1904.' With regard to this statement, discuss the theory of kingship and statecraft as postulated by Kautilya.
2. Assess the economic functions of the state and the rajmandala theory as described by Kautilya in *Arthashastra*.
3. Elucidate on the social organization, raj dharma and the idea of statecraft as put forward by Manu.
4. Analyse the Mauryas as benevolent monarchs.
5. Explain the conquests of the Gupta dynasty.
6. Discuss the local administration that was prevalent in ancient India.

NOTES

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