STUDY GUIDE

HISTORY OF INDIA UP TO-712 AD

PREPARED BY

Dr. C. AMOSE

Associate Professor of History

Head, Department of Public Administration,

Muslim Arts College

Thiruvithancode – 629174

Kanyakumari District.

HISTORY OF INDIA UPTO 712 A.D

Objective: To create awareness and understanding of the rich Indian culture and heritage.

Unit: 1

Pre-Historic Period:

Physical features of India - Sources of Ancient Indian History - Literary Sources-Indigenous and Foreign Accounts Archaeological sources, Life of people in the Pre-historic Times: Paleolithic Age - Neolithic Age- The Age of Metals.

Unit: II

From Harappan Culture to Aryanisation:

Harappan culture: Indus Valley Civilization Centers of Civilization - Date - Town planning - Art and Architecture - Indus script - Social and Economic Life of the people - Religion. Fall of the Harappan culture. Vedic culture: Origin of Aryans - Early settlements and expansion - Rig Vedic society, polity and religion, Vedic literature. Later Vedic Age: Social, Economic and Religious life.

Unit: III

North India from 600-325 BC:

Mahajanapadas - Rise of kingdoms and Republics- Rise of Magatha and Nandas. Life of the people - Four Ashrams - Factors for the rise of new religions - Buddhism - Buddha's Teachings The four Buddhist Councils Schism in Buddhism: Mahayanism and Hinayanism Spread of Buddhism - Legacy of Buddhism. Jainism: Life of Mahavira - Teachings of Jainism-24 Jaina Thirthankaras - Jain Councils - Spread of Jainism - Schism in Jainism - Legacy of Jainism. Persian and Greek Invasions.

Unit: IV

Rise of Empires- I Phase:

Rise of Mauryan Empire: Sources - Chandragupta Maurya- Megasthenes - Ashoka - Kalinga war Asoka's Dharma - Ashokaand Buddhism - Ashoka's Edicts Fine Arts, Education, Literature under the Mauryas - Mauryan Administration. The Kushan Empire: Kanishka, His conquests and religion - Contact with outside world - Coinage - Architecture - The Gandhara School of Art, and Mathura School of Art.

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Unit: V

Rise of Empires- II Phase:

The Guptas: Sources - Chandra Gupta 1 - Samudra Gupta - Fa-hien and his Account of India - Chandra Gupta II - conquests - Gupta administration - Economic condition - Coinage of Guptas - Golden Age of the Guptas - Guptas in the field of Literature, Art and Architecture - Science Ajanta Paintings - Education and Educational Institutions HarshaVardhana: Hiuen Tsang's account of India. India on the eve of Muslim invasion - Arab conquest of Sindh and its effects.

Text Books:

1. Hans Raj :"History of Ancient India", Surjeet Publications, the Kholapur road, Kamla Nagar, Delhi -7.
2. Kundra D.N-History of India- Navdeep Publications.-3623,Chauri Bazaar,Delhi
3. Khurana History of India from the Earlies Times to 1206 A.D

Books for reference:

1. Agraval. D.P. and ChakrabartsD.K -Essays in Indian Proto History
2. Atlekar A.S - State and Government in Ancient India.
3. Basham A.L - The Wonder that was India.
4. Beni Prasad - Theory of Government in Ancient India.

HISTORY OF INDIA UP TO-712 AD

UNIT-I

PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

Physical features of India

The land of India displays great physical variation. Geologically, the Peninsular Plateau constitutes one of the ancient landmasses on the earth's surface. It was supposed to be one of the most stable land blocks. The Himalayas and the Northern Plains are the most recent landforms. From the view point of geology, Himalayan mountains form an unstable zone. The whole mountain system of Himalaya represents a very youthful topography with high peaks, deep valleys and fast flowing rivers. The northern plains are formed of alluvial deposits. The peninsular plateau is composed of igneous and metamorphic rocks with gently rising hills and wide valleys.

Major physiographic divisions

The physical features of India can be grouped under the following physiographic divisions .

(1) The Himalayan Mountains
(2) The Northern Plains
(3) The Peninsular Plateau
(4) The Indian Desert
(5) The Coastal Plains
(6) The Islands

The Himalayan Mountains:

The Himalayas, geologically young and structurally fold mountains stretch over the northern borders of India. These mountain ranges run in a west-east direction from the Indus to the Brahmaputra. The Himalayas represent the loftiest and one of the most rugged mountain barriers of the world. They form an arc, which covers a distance of

about 2,400 Km. Their width varies from 400 Km in Kashmir to 150 Km in Arunachal Pradesh. The altitudinal variations are greater in the eastern half than those in the western half. The Himalaya consists of three parallel ranges in its longitudinal extent. A number of valleys lie between these ranges. The northern-most range is known as the Great or Inner Himalayas or the Himadri. It is the most continuous range consisting of the loftiest peaks with an average height of 6,000 metres. It contains all prominent Himalayan peaks.

The range lying to the south of the Himadri forms the most rugged mountain system and is known as Himachal or lesser Himalaya. The ranges are mainly composed of highly compressed and altered rocks. The altitude varies between 3,700 and 4,500 metres and the average width is of 50 Km. While the Pir Panjal range forms the longest and the most important range, the Dhaula Dhar and the Mahabharat ranges are also prominent ones. This range consists of the famous valley of Kashmir, the Kangra and Kullu Valley in Himachal Pradesh. This region is well-known for its hill stations.

The outer-most range of the Himalayas is called the Shiwaliks. They extend over a width of 10-50 Km and have an altitude varying between 900 and 1100 metres. These ranges are composed of unconsolidated sediments brought down by rivers from the main Himalayan ranges located farther north. These valleys are covered with thick gravel and alluvium. The longitudinal valley lying between lesser Himalaya and the Shiwaliks are known as Duns. Dehra Dun, Kotli Dun and Patli Dun are some of the well-known Duns.

Besides the longitudinsal divisions ,the Himalayas have been divided on the basis of regions from west to east. These divisions have been demarcated by river valleys. For example, the part of Himalayas lying between Indus and Satluj has been traditionally known as Punjab Himalaya but it is also known regionally as Kashmir and Himachal Himalaya from west to east respectively. The part of the Himalayas lying between Satluj and Kali rivers is known as Kumaon Himalayas. The Kali and Teesta rivers demarcate the Nepal Himalayas and the part lying between Teesta and Dihang rivers is known as Assam Himalayas. There are regional names also in these broad categories. Find out some regional names of the Himalayas

The Brahmaputra marks the eastern-most boundary of the Himalayas. Beyond the Dihang gorge, the Himalayas bend sharply to the south and spread along the eastern

boundary of India. They are known as the Purvachal or the Eastern hills and mountains. These hills running through the north-eastern states are mostly composed of strong sandstones, which are sedimentary rocks. Covered with dense forests, they mostly run as parallel ranges and valleys. The Purvachal comprises the Patkai hills, the Naga hills, the Manipur hills and the Mizo hills.

The Northern Plain

The northern plain has been formed by the interplay of the three major river systems, namely — the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra along with their tributaries. This plain is formed of alluvial soil. The deposition of alluvium in a vast basin lying at the foothills of the Himalaya over millions of years, formed this fertile plain. It spreads over an area of 7 lakh sq. km. The plain being about 2400 km long and 240 to 320 km broad, is a densely populated physiographic division. With a rich soil cover combined with adequate water supply and favourable climate it is agriculturally a productive part of India.

The rivers coming from northern mountains are involved in depositional work. In the lower course, due to gentle slope, the velocity of the river decreases, which results in the formation of riverine islands.

The rivers in their lower course split into numerous channels due to the deposition of silt. These channels are known as distributaries

The Northern Plain is broadly divided into three sections. The Western part of the Northern Plain is referred to as the Punjab Plains. Formed by the Indus and its tributaries, the larger part of this plain lies in Pakistan. The Indus and its tributaries — the Jhelum, the Chenab, the Ravi, the Beas and the Satluj originate in the Himalaya. This section of the plain is dominated by the doabs.

The Ganga plain extends between Ghaggar and Teesta rivers. It is spread over North India in Haryana, Delhi, U.P., Bihar, partly Jharkhand and West Bengal. In the East, particularly in Assam lies the Brahmaputra plain.

The northern plains are generally described as flat land with no variations in its relief. It is not true. These vast plains also have diverse relief features. According to the variations in relief features, the Northern plains can be divided into four regions. The

rivers, after descending from the mountains deposit pebbles in a narrow belt of about 8 to 16 km in width lying parallel to the slopes of the Shiwaliks. It is known as bhabar. All the streams disappear in this bhabar belt. South of this belt, the streams and rivers re-emerge and create a wet, swampy and marshy region known as terai. This was a thickly forested region full of wildlife. The forests have been cleared to create agricultural land and to settle migrants from Pakistan after partition. Locate Dudhwa National Park in this region

The largest part of the northern plain is formed of older alluvium. It lies above the floodplains of the rivers and presents a terracelike feature. This part is known as bhangar. The soil in this region contains calcareous deposits, locally known as kankar. The newer, younger deposits of the floodplains are called khadar. They are renewed almost every year and so are fertile, thus, ideal for intensive agriculture.

The Peninsular Plateau The Peninsular plateau is a tableland composed of the old crystalline, igneous and metamorphic rocks. It was formed due to the breaking and drifting of the Gondwana land and thus, making it a part of the oldest landmass. The plateau has broad and shallow valleys and rounded hills. This plateau consists of two broad divisions, namely, the Central Highlands and the Deccan Plateau. The part of the Peninsular plateau lying to the north of the Narmada river, covering a major area of the Malwa plateau, is known as the Central Highlands. The Vindhyan range is bounded by the Satpura range on the south and the Aravalis on the northwest. The further westward extension gradually merges with the sandy and rocky desert of Rajasthan. The flow of the rivers draining this region, namely the Chambal, the Sind, the Betwa and the Ken is from southwest to northeast, thus indicating the slope. The Central Highlands are wider in the west but narrower in the east. The eastward extensions of this plateau are locally known as the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. The Chotanagpur plateau marks the further eastward extension, drained by the Damodar river.

The Deccan Plateau is a triangular landmass that lies to the south of the river Narmada. The Satpura range flanks its broad base in the north, while the Mahadev, the Kaimur hills and the Maikal range form its eastern extensions. Locate these hills and ranges in the Physical map of India. The Deccan Plateau is higher in the west and slopes gently eastwards. An extension of the Plateau is also visible in the northeast, locally

known as the Meghalaya, Karbi-Anglong Plateau and North Cachar Hills. It is separated by a fault from the Chotanagpur Plateau. Three prominent hill ranges from the west to the east are the Garo, the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills.

The Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats mark the western and the eastern edges of the Deccan Plateau respectively. Western Ghats lie parallel to the western coast. They are continuous and can be crossed through passes only. Locate the Thal, Bhor and Pal Ghats in the Physical map of India.

The Western Ghats are higher than the Eastern Ghats. Their average elevation is 900– 1600 metres as against 600 metres of the Eastern Ghats. The Eastern Ghats stretch from the Mahanadi Valley to the Nigiris in the south. The Eastern Ghats are discontinuous and irregular and dissected by rivers draining into the Bay of Bengal. The Western Ghats cause orographic rain by facing the rain bearing moist winds to rise along the western slopes of the Ghats. The Western Ghats are known by different local names. The height of the Western Ghats progressively increases from north to south. The highest peaks include the Anai Mudi (2,695 metres) and the Doda Betta (2,637 metres). Mahendragiri (1,501 metres) is the highest peak in the Eastern Ghats. Shevroy Hills and the Javadi Hills are located to the southeast of the Eastern Ghats. Locate the famous hill stations of Udagamandalam, popularly known as Ooty and the Kodaikanal.

One of the distinct features of the Peninsular plateau is the black soil area known as Decean Trap. This is of volcanic origin, hence, the rocks are igneous. Actually, these rocks have denuded over time and are responsible for the formation of black soil. The Aravali Hills lie on the western and northwestern margins of the Peninsular plateau. These are highly eroded hills and are found as broken hills. They extend from Gujarat to Delhi in a southwest-northeast direction.

The Indian Desert The Indian desert lies towards the western margins of the Aravali Hills. It is an undulating sandy plain covered with sand dunes. This region receives very low rainfall below 150 mm per year. It has arid climate with low vegetation cover. Streams appear during the rainy season. Soon after they disappear into the sand as they do not have enough water to reach the sea. Luni is the only large river in this region.

Barchans (crescent-shaped dunes) cover larger areas but longitudinal dunes become more prominent near the Indo-Pakistan boundary. If you visit Jaisalmer, you may go to see a group of barchans.

The Coastal Plains

The Peninsular plateau is flanked by stretch of narrow coastal strips, running along the Arabian Sea on the west and the Bay of Bengal on the east. The western coast, sandwiched between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, is a narrow plain. It consists of three sections. The northern part of the coast is called the Konkan (Mumbai – Goa), the central stretch is called the Kannad Plain, while the southern stretch is referred to as the Malabar coast.

The plains along the Bay of Bengal are wide and level. In the northern part, it is referred to as the Northern Circar, while the southern part is known as the Coromandel Coast. Large rivers, such as the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri have formed extensive delta on this coast. Lake Chilika is an important feature along the eastern coast.

The Islands You have already seen that India has a vast mainland. Besides this, the country has two groups of islands. Can you identify these island groups.

Locate the Lakshadweep Islands group lying close to the Malabar coast of Kerala. This group of islands is composed of small coral isalnds. Earlier they were known as Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindive. In 1973, these were named as Lakshadweep. It covers small area of 32 sq km. Kavaratti island is the administrative headquarters of Lakshadweep. This island group has great diversity of flora and fauna. The Pitti island, which is uninhabited, has a bird sanctuary.

Now you see the elongated chain of islands located in the Bay of Bengal extending from north to south. These are Andaman and Nicobar islands. They are bigger in size and are more numerous and scattered. The entire group of islands is divided into two broad categories – The Andaman in the north and the Nicobar in the south. It is believed that these islands are an elevated portion of submarine mountains. These island groups are of great strategic importance for the country. There is great diversity of flora

and fauna in this group of islands too. These islands lie close to equator and experience equatorial climate and has thick forest cover.

A detailed account of the different physiographic units highlights the unique features of each region. It would, however, be clear that each region complements the other and makes the country richer in its natural resources. The mountains are the major sources of water and forest wealth. The northern plains are the granaries of the country. They provide the base for early civilisations. The plateau is a storehouse of minerals, which has played a crucial role in the industrialisation of the country. The coastal region and island groups provide sites for fishing and port activities. Thus, the diverse physical features of the land have immense future possibilities of development.

Literary sources of ancient history:

Ancient history takes us deep into a country's beginning. It tells us what it was like at that age. The literary sources help to gather this knowledge and understand better. The ancient history of India helps us to acknowledge how our country was and how it started. Ancient history gives us a picture of India, which is not known by us. The knowledge of ancient history helps us know the country's initial economic, cultural, regional, and religious aspects. It tells us which king ruled for how many years, which monument was built and why, what was the economic condition in a particular era, how people lived, and what they did for the occupations. Ancient literature like Puranas holds the most important content based on ancient history.

Sources of ancient history

The only way to know about ancient history is to dig up its various sources. The sources can be various and so many. From folklore, myths to photographs and literature. These help to study and have deeper knowledge in the doings of history.

The two most reliable and authentic sources for ancient history are

- Literary sources
- Archaeological sources

By literary source, it means the kinds of literature based on the subject matter of ancient history. The literary sources of ancient history mainly comprise the traditional literature, which has the most genuine and explained content. There are types of these traditional kinds of literature that we will discuss.

Vedas

The Vedas are the most anticipated and oldest of religious texts. The Vedas were composed and written in Vedic Sanskrit. The text is the oldest literature that tells us about the scriptures of Hinduism. The Vedas have four types – Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda. These Vedas are further divided into four parts – Samhitas, Aranyakas, Brahmanas, and the Upanishads. All these texts are a part of traditional literature and give us an insight into the religious philosophies of ancient Indian people. The text also comprises day-to-day lives, households, and other social working norms present in society.

Puranas

The word Purana itself means old. This text is a very crucial and huge part of Indian literature. These texts usually deal with and talk about legends, myths, and lores which have been popular since the ancient period. Puranas are deeply studied because of their uniqueness in symbolism and layers of literary contexts. Puranas were originally written in Sanskrit but later translated into different Indian languages. Puranas are often called encyclopedias because of their vast content in cosmology and cosmogony. The Puranas texts also know gods and goddesses, heroes, demigods, horror, humour, religion, astronomy, theology as well as philosophy.

Pali and Prakrit

The Pali and Prakrit are the main languages used in Buddhist texts. The first-ever written work on Buddhism was in Pali. The text deals with 549 Jatakas. Pali and Prakrit also talk about the politics, economics, and religious aspects of Buddhists in India. These jatakas also talks about the future Buddha. Every story on Buddhist realms is related to these tales of Jatakas. The

Pali and Prakrithas have a huge range of socio-economic, political, mythology and folklore stories too.

Dramas

Puranas are not the only ancient literature. There are three substantially important Dramas written by Kalidasa. These dramas are popularly known as Malavikagnimitram, Vikramorvashiyam, and Abhigyan Shakuntalam. These three texts were written in Sanskrit and are also very informative and threw light on ancient India's socio-political and other social aspects.

Epics

Speaking of ancient history and literature, no one can ever miss out on one of the two most popular epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata. Both Ramayana and Mahabharata are two epic tales of heroism, philosophies, relations, battles, politics and betrayal. Though they are depicted as fictional, still these two kinds of literature have a major hold on people's lives and teach us about the art of war, family relations and political complexities.

Ancient history is an important part of all aspects of life. It helps us to have an idea about our land. The ancient details give us an idea of how the place used to be thousands and thousands of years ago. The only and most valuable way to gain knowledge in ancient history is by gathering and reading up all the traditional literature written on the topic. These literary sources help to picture the ancient economic, religious, ruling, culture and norms of primitive and old India.

The Prehistoric Ages:

Earth's beginnings can be traced back 4.5 billion years, but human evolution only counts for a tiny speck of its history. The Prehistoric Period or when there was human life before records documented human activity roughly dates from 2.5 million years ago to 1,200 B.C. It is generally categorized in three archaeological periods: the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age.

From the invention of tools made for hunting to advances in food production and agriculture to early examples of art and religion, this enormous time span ending roughly 3,200 years ago (dates vary upon region) was a period of great transformation.

The Stone Age

The Stone age **is** divided into three periods: Paleolithic (or Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (or Middle Stone Age), and Neolithic (or New Stone Age), this era is marked by the use of tools by our early human ancestors (who evolved around 300,000 B.C.) and the eventual transformation from a culture of hunting and gathering to farming and food production. During this era, early humans shared the planet with a number of now-extinct hominin relatives, including Neanderthals and Denisovans.

In the Paleolithic period (roughly 2.5 million years ago to 10,000 B.C.), early humans lived in caves or simple huts or tepees and were hunters and gatherers. They used basic stone and bone tools, as well as crude stone axes, for hunting birds and wild animals. They cooked their prey, including woolly mammoths, deer and bison, using controlled fire. They also fished and collected berries, fruit and nuts. Ancient humans in the Paleolithic period were also the first to leave behind art. They used combinations of minerals, ochres, burnt bone meal and charcoal mixed into water, blood, animal fats and tree saps to etch humans, animals and signs. They also carved small figurines from stones, clay, bones and antlers.The end of this period marked the end of the last Ice Age, which resulted in the extinction of many large mammals and rising sea levels and climate change that eventually caused man to migrate.

During the Mesolithic period (about 10,000 B.C. to 8,000 B.C.), humans used small stone tools, now also polished and sometimes crafted with points and attached to antlers, bone or wood to serve as spears and arrows. They often lived nomadically in camps near rivers and other bodies of water. Agriculture was introduced during this time, which led to more permanent settlements in villages.Finally, during the Neolithic period (roughly 8,000 B.C. to 3,000 B.C.), ancient humans switched from hunter/gatherer mode to agriculture and food production. They domesticated animals and cultivated cereal grains. They used polished hand axes, adzes for

plowing and tilling the land and started to settle in the plains. Advancements were made not only in tools but also in farming, home construction and art, including pottery, sewing and weaving.

The Bronze Age

During the Bronze Age (about 3,000 B.C. to 1,300 B.C.), metalworking advances were made, as bronze, a copper and tin alloy, was discovered. Now used for weapons and tools, the harder metal replaced its stone predecessors, and helped spark innovations including the ox-drawn plow and the wheel.This time period also brought advances in architecture and art, including the invention of the potter's wheel, and textiles—clothing consisted of mostly wool items such as skirts, kilts, tunics and cloaks. Home dwellings morphed to so-called roundhouses, consisting of a circular stone wall with a thatched or turf roof, complete with a fireplace or hearth, and more villages and cities began to form.Organized government, law and warfare, as well as the beginnings of religion, also came into play during the Bronze Age, perhaps most notably relating to the ancient Egyptians who built the pyramids during this time. The earliest written accounts, including Egyptian hieroglyphs and petroglyphs (rock engravings), are also dated to this era.

The Iron Age:

The discovery of ways to heat and forge iron kicked off the Iron Age (roughly 1,300 B.C. to 900 B.C.). At the time, metal was seen as more precious than gold, and wrought iron (which would be replaced by steel with the advent of smelting iron) was easier to manufacture than bronze.Along with mass production of iron tools and weapons, the age saw even further advances in architecture, with four-room homes, some complete with stables for animals, joining more rudimentary hill forts, as well as royal palaces, temples and other religious structures. Early city planning also took place, with blocks of homes being erected along paved or cobblestone streets and water systems put into place.Agriculture, art and religion all became more sophisticated, and writing systems and written documentation, including alphabets, began to emerge, ushering in the Early Historical Period.

UNIT – II

FROM HARAPPAN CULTURE TO ARYANISATION

Indian velley civilization

The Indus Valley Civilisation, also known as the Indus Civilisation, was a Bronze Age civilisation in the northwestern regions of South Asia, lasting from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE, and in its mature form 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE. Together with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, it was one of three early civilisations of the Near East and South Asia, and of the three, the most widespread, its sites spanning an area from much of Pakistan, to northeast Afghanistan, and northwestern India. The civilisation flourished both in the alluvial plain of the Indus River, which flows through the length of Pakistan, and along a system of perennial monsoon-fed rivers that once coursed in the vicinity of the Ghaggar-Hakra, a seasonal river in northwest India and eastern Pakistan.

The term Harappan is sometimes applied to the Indus civilisation after its type site Harappa, the first to be excavated early in the 20th century in what was then the Punjab province of British India and is now Punjab, Pakistan. The discovery of Harappa and soon afterwards Mohenjo-daro was the culmination of work that had begun after the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India in the British Raj in 1861. There were earlier and later cultures called Early Harappan and Late Harappan in the same area. The early Harappan cultures were populated from Neolithic cultures, the earliest and best-known of which is Mehrgarh, in Balochistan, Pakistan. Harappan civilisation is sometimes called Mature Harappan to distinguish it from the earlier cultures.

The cities of the ancient Indus were noted for their urban planning, baked brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, clusters of large non-residential buildings, and techniques of handicraft and metallurgy. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa very likely grew to contain between 30,000 and 60,000 individuals, and the civilisation may have contained between one and five million individuals during its florescence. A gradual drying of the region during the 3rd millennium BCE may have been the initial stimulus for its urbanisation. Eventually it also

reduced the water supply enough to cause the civilisation's demise and to disperse its population to the east.

Although over a thousand Mature Harappan sites have been reported and nearly a hundred excavated, there are five major urban centres: Mohenjo-daro in the lower Indus Valley (declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980 as "Archaeological Ruins at Moenjodaro"), Harappa in the western Punjab region, Ganeriwala in the Cholistan Desert, Dholavira in western Gujarat (declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021 as "Dholavira: A Harappan City"), and Rakhigarhi in Haryana. The Harappan language is not directly attested, and its affiliations are uncertain, as the Indus script has remained undeciphered. A relationship with the Dravidian or Elamo-Dravidian language family is favoured by a section of scholars.

Etymology

The Indus civilisation is named after the Indus river system in whose alluvial plains the early sites of the civilisation were identified and excavated. Following a tradition in archaeology, the civilisation is sometimes referred to as the Harappan, after its type site, Harappa, the first site to be excavated in the 1920s; this is notably true of usage employed by the Archaeological Survey of India after India's independence in 1947.

The term "Ghaggar-Hakra" figures prominently in modern labels applied to the Indus civilisation on account of a good number of sites having been found along the Ghaggar-Hakra River in northwest India and eastern Pakistan. The terms "Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation" and "Sindhu-Saraswati Civilisation" have also been employed in the literature after a posited identification of the Ghaggar-Hakra with the river Saraswati described in the early chapters of Rigveda, a collection of hymns in archaic Sanskrit composed in the second-millennium BCE.

Recent geophysical research suggests that unlike the Sarasvati, whose descriptions in the Rig Veda are those of a snow-fed river, the Ghaggar-Hakra was a system of perennial monsoon-fed rivers, which became seasonal around the time that the civilisation diminished, approximately 4,000 years ago.

Extention

The Indus Valley Civilisation was roughly contemporary with the other riverine civilisations of the ancient world: Ancient Egypt along the Nile, Mesopotamia in the lands watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris, and China in the drainage basin of the Yellow River and the Yangtze. By the time of its mature phase, the civilisation had spread over an area larger than the others, which included a core of 1,500 kilometres (900 mi) up the alluvial plain of the Indus and its tributaries. In addition, there was a region with disparate flora, fauna, and habitats, up to ten times as large, which had been shaped culturally and economically by the Indus.

Around 6500 BCE, agriculture emerged in Balochistan, on the margins of the Indus alluvium. In the following millennia, settled life made inroads into the Indus plains, setting the stage for the growth of rural and urban settlements. The more organized sedentary life, in turn, led to a net increase in the birth rate. The large urban centres of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa very likely grew to containing between 30,000 and 60,000 individuals, and during the civilisation's florescence, the population of the subcontinent grew to between 4–6 million people. During this period the death rate increased, as the close living conditions of humans and domesticated animals led to an increase in contagious diseases. According to one estimate, the population of the Indus civilisation at its peak may have been between one and five million.

The civilisation extended from Balochistan in the west to western Uttar Pradesh in the east, from northeastern Afghanistan in the north to Gujarat state in the south. The largest number of sites are in the Punjab region, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir states, Sindh, and Balochistan. Coastal settlements extended from Sutkagan Dor in Western Baluchistan to Lothal in Gujarat. An Indus Valley site has been found on the Oxus River at Shortugai, in the Gomal River valley in northwestern Pakistan, at Manda, Jammu on the Beas River near Jammu, and at Alamgirpur on the Hindon River, only 28 km (17 mi) from Delhi. The southernmost site of the Indus Valley Civilisation is Daimabad in Maharashtra. Indus Valley sites have been found most often on rivers, but also on the ancient seacoast, for example, Balakot (Kot Bala), and on islands, for example, Dholavira.

Discovery and history of excavation

The first modern accounts of the ruins of the Indus civilisation are those of Charles Masson, a deserter from the East India Company's army. In 1829, Masson traveled through the princely state of Punjab, gathering useful intelligence for the Company in return for a promise of clemency. An aspect of this arrangement was the additional requirement to hand over to the Company any historical artifacts acquired during his travels. Masson, who had versed himself in the classics, especially in the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, chose for his wanderings some of the same towns that had featured in Alexander's campaigns, and whose archaeological sites had been noted by the campaign's chroniclers. Masson's major archaeological discovery in the Punjab was Harappa, a metropolis of the Indus civilisation in the valley of Indus's tributary, the Ravi river. Masson made copious notes and illustrations of Harappa's rich historical artifacts, many lying half-buried. In 1842, Masson included his observations of Harappa in the book Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab. He dated the Harappa ruins to a period of recorded history, erroneously mistaking it to have been described earlier during Alexander's campaign. Masson was impressed by the site's extraordinary size and by several large mounds formed from long-existing erosion.

Two years later, the Company contracted Alexander Burnes to sail up the Indus to assess the feasibility of water travel for its army. Burnes, who also stopped in Harappa, noted the baked bricks employed in the site's ancient masonry, but noted also the haphazard plundering of these bricks by the local population.

Despite these reports, Harappa was raided even more perilously for its bricks after the British annexation of the Punjab in 1848–49. A considerable number were carted away as track ballast for the railway lines being laid in the Punjab. Nearly 160 km (100 mi) of railway track between Multan and Lahore, laid in the mid-1850s, was supported by Harappan bricks.

In 1861, three years after the dissolution of the East India Company and the establishment of Crown rule in India, archaeology on the subcontinent became more formally organised with the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Alexander Cunningham, the Survey's first director-general, who had visited Harappa in 1853 and had noted

the imposing brick walls, visited again to carry out a survey, but this time of a site whose entire upper layer had been stripped in the interim. Although his original goal of demonstrating Harappa to be a lost Buddhist city mentioned in the seventh century CE travels of the Chinese visitor, Xuanzang, proved elusive, Cunningham did publish his findings in 1875. For the first time, he interpreted a Harappan stamp seal, with its unknown script, which he concluded to be of an origin foreign to India.

Archaeological work in Harappa thereafter lagged until a new viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, pushed through the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act 1904, and appointed John Marshall to lead the ASI. Several years later, Hiranand Sastri, who had been assigned by Marshall to survey Harappa, reported it to be of non-Buddhist origin, and by implication more ancient. Expropriating Harappa for the ASI under the Act, Marshall directed ASI archaeologist Daya Ram Sahni to excavate the site's two mounds.

Farther south, along the main stem of the Indus in Sind province, the largely undisturbed site of Mohenjo-daro had attracted notice. Marshall deputed a succession of ASI officers to survey the site. These included D. R. Bhandarkar (1911), R. D. Banerji (1919, 1922–1923), and M. S. Vats (1924). In 1923, on his second visit to Mohenjo-daro, Baneriji wrote to Marshall about the site, postulating an origin in "remote antiquity", and noting a congruence of some of its artifacts with those of Harappa. Later in 1923, Vats, also in correspondence with Marshall, noted the same more specifically about the seals and the script found at both sites. On the weight of these opinions, Marshall ordered crucial data from the two sites to be brought to one location and invited Banerji and Sahni to a joint discussion. By 1924, Marshall had become convinced of the significance of the finds, and on 24 September 1924, made a tentative but conspicuous public intimation in the Illustrated London News.

In the next issue, a week later, the British Assyriologist Archibald Sayce was able to point to very similar seals found in Bronze Age levels in Mesopotamia and Iran, giving the first strong indication of their date; confirmations from other archaeologists followed. Systematic excavations began in Mohenjo-daro in 1924–25 with that of K. N. Dikshit, continuing with those of H. Hargreaves (1925–1926), and Ernest J. H. Mackay (1927–1931). By 1931, much of

Mohenjo-daro had been excavated, but occasional excavations continued, such as the one led by Mortimer Wheeler, a new director-general of the ASI appointed in 1944, and including Ahmad Hasan Dani.

After the partition of India in 1947, when most excavated sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation lay in territory awarded to Pakistan, the Archaeological Survey of India, its area of authority reduced, carried out large numbers of surveys and excavations along the Ghaggar-Hakra system in India. Some speculated that the Ghaggar-Hakra system might yield more sites than the Indus river basin. According to archaeologist Ratnagar, many Ghaggar-Hakra sites in India and Indus Valley sites in Pakistan are actually those of local cultures; some sites display contact with Harappan civilisation, but only a few are fully developed Harappan ones. As of 1977, about 90% of the Indus script seals and inscribed objects discovered were found at sites in Pakistan along the Indus river, while other sites accounts only for the remaining 10%. By 2002, over 1,000 Mature Harappan cities and settlements had been reported, of which just under a hundred had been excavated, mainly in the general region of the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra rivers and their tributaries; however, there are only five major urban sites: Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira, Ganeriwala and Rakhigarhi. As of 2008, about 616 sites have been reported in India, whereas 406 sites have been reported in Pakistan.

Chronology

The cities of the ancient Indus had "social hierarchies, their writing system, their large planned cities and their long-distance trade mark them to archaeologists as a full-fledged 'civilisation.'" The mature phase of the Harappan civilisation lasted from c. 2600–1900 BCE. With the inclusion of the predecessor and successor cultures – Early Harappan and Late Harappan, respectively – the entire Indus Valley Civilisation may be taken to have lasted from the 33rd to the 14th centuries BCE. It is part of the Indus Valley Tradition, which also includes the pre-Harappan occupation of Mehrgarh, the earliest farming site of the Indus Valley. Several periodisations are employed for the IVC. The most commonly used classifies the Indus Valley Civilisation into Early, Mature and Late Harappan Phase. An alternative approach by Shaffer divides the broader Indus Valley Tradition into four eras, the pre-Harappan "Early Food

Producing Era", and the Regionalisation, Integration, and Localisation eras, which correspond roughly with the Early Harappan, Mature Harappan, and Late Harappan phases.

Pre-Harappan era

Mehrgarh is a Neolithic (7000 BCE to c. 2500 BCE) mountain site in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, which gave new insights on the emergence of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Mehrgarh is one of the earliest sites with evidence of farming and herding in South Asia. Mehrgarh was influenced by the Near Eastern Neolithic with similarities between "domesticated wheat varieties, early phases of farming, pottery, other archaeological artefacts, some domesticated plants and herd animals."

Jean-Francois Jarrige argues for an independent origin of Mehrgarh. Jarrige notes "the assumption that farming economy was introduced full-fledged from Near-East to South Asia," and the similarities between Neolithic sites from eastern Mesopotamia and the western Indus valley, which are evidence of a "cultural continuum" between those sites. But given the originality of Mehrgarh, Jarrige concludes that Mehrgarh has an earlier local background, and is not a '"backwater' of the Neolithic culture of the Near East".

Lukacs and Hemphill suggest an initial local development of Mehrgarh, with a continuity in cultural development but a change in population. According to Lukacs and Hemphill, while there is a strong continuity between the neolithic and chalcolithic (Copper Age) cultures of Mehrgarh, dental evidence shows that the chalcolithic population did not descend from the neolithic population of Mehrgarh, which "suggests moderate levels of gene flow." Mascarenhas et al. (2015) note that "new, possibly West Asian, body types are reported from the graves of Mehrgarh beginning in the Togau phase (3800 BCE)."

Gallego Romero et al. (2011) state that their research on lactose tolerance in India suggests that "the west Eurasian genetic contribution identified by Reich et al. (2009) principally reflects gene flow from Iran and the Middle East." They further note that "The earliest evidence of cattle herding in south Asia comes from the Indus River Valley site of Mehrgarh and is dated to 7,000 YBP."

Early Harappan

The Early Harappan Ravi Phase, named after the nearby Ravi River, lasted from c. 3300 BCE until 2800 BCE. It started when farmers from the mountains gradually moved between their mountain homes and the lowland river valleys, and is related to the Hakra Phase, identified in the Ghaggar-Hakra River Valley to the west, and predates the Kot Diji Phase (2800–2600 BCE, Harappan 2), named after a site in northern Sindh, Pakistan, near Mohenjo-daro. The earliest examples of the Indus script date to the 3rd millennium BCE.

The mature phase of earlier village cultures is represented by Rehman Dheri and Amri in Pakistan. Kot Diji represents the phase leading up to Mature Harappan, with the citadel representing centralised authority and an increasingly urban quality of life. Another town of this stage was found at Kalibangan in India on the Hakra River.

Trade networks linked this culture with related regional cultures and distant sources of raw materials, including lapis lazuli and other materials for bead-making. By this time, villagers had domesticated numerous crops, including peas, sesame seeds, dates, and cotton, as well as animals, including the water buffalo. Early Harappan communities turned to large urban centres by 2600 BCE, from where the mature Harappan phase started. The latest research shows that Indus Valley people migrated from villages to cities.

The final stages of the Early Harappan period are characterised by the building of large walled settlements, the expansion of trade networks, and the increasing integration of regional communities into a "relatively uniform" material culture in terms of pottery styles, ornaments, and stamp seals with Indus script, leading into the transition to the Mature Harappan phase.

Mature Harappan

According to Giosan et al. (2012), the slow southward migration of the monsoons across Asia initially allowed the Indus Valley villages to develop by taming the floods of the Indus and its tributaries. Flood-supported farming led to large agricultural surpluses, which in turn supported the development of cities. The IVC residents did not develop irrigation capabilities, relying mainly on the seasonal monsoons leading to summer floods. Brooke further notes that the

development of advanced cities coincides with a reduction in rainfall, which may have triggered a reorganisation into larger urban centres.

According to J.G. Shaffer and D.A. Lichtenstein, the Mature Harappan civilisation was "a fusion of the Bagor, Hakra, and Kot Diji traditions or 'ethnic groups' in the Ghaggar-Hakra valley on the borders of India and Pakistan".

Also, according to a more recent summary by Maisels (2003), "The Harappan oecumene formed from a Kot Dijian/Amri-Nal synthesis". He also says that, in the development of complexity, the site of Mohenjo-daro has priority, along with the Hakra-Ghaggar cluster of sites, "where Hakra wares actually precede the Kot Diji related material". He sees these areas as "catalytic in producing the fusion from Hakra, Kot Dijian and Amri-Nal cultural elements that resulted in the gestalt we recognize as Early Harappan (Early Indus)."

By 2600 BCE, the Early Harappan communities turned into large urban centres. Such urban centres include Harappa, Ganeriwala, Mohenjo-daro in modern-day Pakistan, and Dholavira, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi, Rupar, and Lothal in modern-day India. In total, more than 1,000 settlements have been found, mainly in the general region of the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra Rivers and their tributaries.

Cities

A sophisticated and technologically advanced urban culture is evident in the Indus Valley Civilisation, making them the first urban centre in the region. The quality of municipal town planning suggests the knowledge of urban planning and efficient municipal governments which placed a high priority on hygiene, or, alternatively, accessibility to the means of religious ritual.

As seen in Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and the recently partially excavated Rakhigarhi, this urban plan included the world's first known urban sanitation systems. Within the city, individual homes or groups of homes obtained water from wells. From a room that appears to have been set aside for bathing, waste water was directed to covered drains, which lined the major streets. Houses opened only to inner courtyards and smaller lanes. The housebuilding in some villages in the region still resembles in some respects the housebuilding of the Harappans.

The ancient Indus systems of sewerage and drainage that were developed and used in cities throughout the Indus region were far more advanced than any found in contemporary urban sites in the Middle East and even more efficient than those in many areas of Pakistan and India today. The advanced architecture of the Harappans is shown by their dockyards, granaries, warehouses, brick platforms, and protective walls. The massive walls of Indus cities most likely protected the Harappans from floods and may have dissuaded military conflicts.

The purpose of the citadel remains debated. In sharp contrast to this civilisation's contemporaries, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, no large monumental structures were built. There is no conclusive evidence of palaces or temples. Some structures are thought to have been granaries. Found at one city is an enormous well-built bath (the "Great Bath"), which may have been a public bath. Although the citadels were walled, it is far from clear that these structures were defensive.

Most city dwellers appear to have been traders or artisans, who lived with others pursuing the same occupation in well-defined neighbourhoods. Materials from distant regions were used in the cities for constructing seals, beads and other objects. Among the artefacts discovered were beautiful glazed faïence beads. Steatite seals have images of animals, people (perhaps gods), and other types of inscriptions, including the yet un-deciphered writing system of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Some of the seals were used to stamp clay on trade goods.

Although some houses were larger than others, Indus civilisation cities were remarkable for their apparent, if relative, egalitarianism. All the houses had access to water and drainage facilities. This gives the impression of a society with relatively low wealth concentration.

Authority and governance

Archaeological records provide no immediate answers for a centre of power or for depictions of people in power in Harappan society. But, there are indications of complex decisions being taken and implemented. For instance, the majority of the cities were constructed in a highly uniform and well-planned grid pattern, suggesting they were planned by a central authority; extraordinary uniformity of Harappan artefacts as evident in pottery, seals, weights

and bricks; presence of public facilities and monumental architecture; heterogeneity in the mortuary symbolism and in grave goods (items included in burials).

These are some major theories:

- There was a single state, given the similarity in artefacts, the evidence for planned settlements, the standardised ratio of brick size, and the establishment of settlements near sources of raw material.
- There was no single ruler but several cities like Mohenjo-daro had a separate ruler, Harappa another, and so forth.

Metallurgy

The people of the Indus civilisation achieved great accuracy in measuring length, mass, and time. They were among the first to develop a system of uniform weights and measures. A comparison of available objects indicates large scale variation across the Indus territories. Their smallest division, which is marked on an ivory scale found in Lothal in Gujarat, was approximately 1.704 mm, the smallest division ever recorded on a scale of the Bronze Age. Harappan engineers followed the decimal division of measurement for all practical purposes, including the measurement of mass as revealed by their hexahedron weights.

Arts and crafts

Many Indus Valley seals and items in pottery and terracotta have been found, along with a very few stone sculptures and some gold jewellery and bronze vessels. Some anatomically detailed figurines in terracotta, bronze, and steatite have been found at excavation sites, the former probably mostly toys. The Harappans also made various toys and games, among them cubical dice (with one to six holes on the faces), which were found in sites like Mohenjo-daro.

The terracotta figurines included cows, bears, monkeys, and dogs. The animal depicted on a majority of seals at sites of the mature period has not been clearly identified. Part bull, part zebra, with a majestic horn, it has been a source of speculation. As yet, there is insufficient evidence to substantiate claims that the image had religious or cultic significance, but the

prevalence of the image raises the question of whether or not the animals in images of the IVC are religious symbols.

Many crafts including, "shell working, ceramics, and agate and glazed steatite bead making" were practised and the pieces were used in the making of necklaces, bangles, and other ornaments from all phases of Harappan culture. Some of these crafts are still practised in the subcontinent today. Some make-up and toiletry items (a special kind of combs (kakai), the use of collyrium and a special three-in-one toiletry gadget) that were found in Harappan contexts still have similar counterparts in modern India. Terracotta female figurines were found (c. 2800–2600 BCE) which had red colour applied to the "manga" (line of partition of the hair).

The finds from Mohenjo-daro were initially deposited in the Lahore Museum, but later moved to the ASI headquarters at New Delhi, where a new "Central Imperial Museum" was being planned for the new capital of the British Raj, in which at least a selection would be displayed. It became apparent that Indian independence was approaching, but the Partition of India was not anticipated until late in the process. The new Pakistani authorities requested the return of the Mohenjo-daro pieces excavated on their territory, but the Indian authorities refused. Eventually an agreement was reached, whereby the finds, totalling some 12,000 objects (most sherds of pottery), were split equally between the countries; in some cases this was taken very literally, with some necklaces and girdles having their beads separated into two piles. In the case of the "two most celebrated sculpted figures", Pakistan asked for and received the so-called Priest-King figure, while India retained the much smaller Dancing Girl.

Though written considerably later, the arts treatise Natya Shastra (c. 200 BCE – 200 CE) classifies musical instruments into four groups based on their means of acoustical production—strings, membranes, solid materials and air—and it is probable that such instruments had existed since the IVC. Archeological evidence indicates the use of simple rattles and vessel flutes, while iconographical evidence suggests early harps and drums were also used. An ideogram in the IVC contains the earliest known depiction of an arched harp, dated sometime before 1800 BCE.

Human statuettes

A handful of realistic statuettes have been found at IVC sites, of which much the most famous is the lost-wax casting bronze statuette of a slender-limbed Dancing Girl adorned with bangles, found in Mohenjo-daro. Two other realistic incomplete statuettes have been found in Harappa in proper stratified excavations, which display near-Classical treatment of the human shape: the statuette of a dancer who seems to be male, and the Hapappa Torso, a red jasper male torso, both now in the Delhi National Museum. Sir John Marshall reacted with surprise when he saw these two statuettes from Harappa:

When I first saw them I found it difficult to believe that they were prehistoric; they seemed to completely upset all established ideas about early art, and culture. Modelling such as this was unknown in the ancient world up to the Hellenistic age of Greece, and I thought, therefore, that some mistake must surely have been made; that these figures had found their way into levels some 3000 years older than those to which they properly belonged ... Now, in these statuettes, it is just this anatomical truth which is so startling; that makes us wonder whether, in this all-important matter, Greek artistry could possibly have been anticipated by the sculptors of a far-off age on the banks of the Indus.

These statuettes remain controversial, due to their advanced style in representing the human body. Regarding the red jasper torso, the discoverer, Vats, claims a Harappan date, but Marshall considered this statuette is probably historical, dating to the Gupta period, comparing it to the much later Lohanipur torso. A second rather similar grey stone torso of a dancing male was also found about 150 meters away in a secure Mature Harappan stratum. Overall, anthropologist Gregory Possehl tends to consider that these statuettes probably form the pinnacle of Indus art during the Mature Harappan period.

Thousands of steatite seals have been recovered, and their physical character is fairly consistent. In size they range from squares of side 2 to 4 cm (3⁄4 to 1+1⁄2 in). In most cases they have a pierced boss at the back to accommodate a cord for handling or for use as personal adornment. In addition a large number of sealings have survived, of which only a few can be

matched to the seals. The great majority of examples of the Indus script are short groups of signs on seals.

Seals have been found at Mohenjo-daro depicting a figure standing on its head, and another, on the Pashupati seal, sitting cross-legged in what some[who?] call a yoga-like pose (see image, the so-called Pashupati, below). This figure has been variously identified. Sir John Marshall identified a resemblance to the Hindu god, Shiva.

A human deity with the horns, hooves and tail of a bull also appears in the seals, in particular in a fighting scene with a horned tiger-like beast. This deity has been compared to the Mesopotamian bull-man Enkidu. Several seals also show a man fighting two lions or tigers, a "Master of Animals" motif common to civilisations in Western and South Asia.

Trade and transportation

The Indus Valley civilisation may have had bullock carts identical to those seen throughout South Asia today, as well as boats. Most of these boats were probably small, flat-bottomed craft, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today;. An extensive canal network, used for irrigation, has however also been discovered by H.-P. Francfort.

During 4300–3200 BCE of the chalcolithic period (copper age), the Indus Valley Civilisation area shows ceramic similarities with southern Turkmenistan and northern Iran which suggest considerable mobility and trade. During the Early Harappan period (about 3200–2600 BCE), similarities in pottery, seals, figurines, ornaments, etc. document intensive caravan trade with Central Asia and the Iranian plateau.

Judging from the dispersal of Indus civilisation artefacts, the trade networks economically integrated a huge area, including portions of Afghanistan, the coastal regions of Persia, northern and western India, and Mesopotamia, leading to the development of Indus-Mesopotamia relations. Studies of tooth enamel from individuals buried at Harappa suggest that some residents had migrated to the city from beyond the Indus Valley. Ancient DNA studies of graves at Bronze Age sites at Gonur Depe, Turkmenistan, and Shahr-e Sukhteh, Iran, have

identified 11 individuals of South Asian descent, who are presumed to be of mature Indus Valley origin.

There was an extensive maritime trade network operating between the Harappan and Mesopotamian civilisations as early as the middle Harappan Phase, with much commerce being handled by "middlemen merchants from Dilmun" (modern Bahrain, Eastern Arabia and Failaka located in the Persian Gulf). Such long-distance sea trade became feasible with the development of plank-built watercraft, equipped with a single central mast supporting a sail of woven rushes or cloth.

Agriculture

According to Gangal et al. (2014), there is strong archeological and geographical evidence that neolithic farming spread from the Near East into north-west India, but there is also "good evidence for the local domestication of barley and the zebu cattle at Mehrgarh." According to Jean-Francois Jarrige, farming had an independent local origin at Mehrgarh, which he argues is not merely a "'backwater' of the Neolithic culture of the Near East", despite similarities between Neolithic sites from eastern Mesopotamia and the western Indus valley which are evidence of a "cultural continuum" between those sites. Archaeologist Jim G. Shaffer writes that the Mehrgarh site "demonstrates that food production was an indigenous South Asian phenomenon" and that the data support interpretation of "the prehistoric urbanisation and complex social organisation in South Asia as based on indigenous, but not isolated, cultural developments".

Jarrige notes that the people of Mehrgarh used domesticated wheats and barley, while Shaffer and Liechtenstein note that the major cultivated cereal crop was naked six-row barley, a crop derived from two-row barley. Gangal agrees that "Neolithic domesticated crops in Mehrgarh include more than 90% barley," noting that "there is good evidence for the local domestication of barley." Yet, Gangal also notes that the crop also included "a small amount of wheat," which "are suggested to be of Near-Eastern origin, as the modern distribution of wild varieties of wheat is limited to Northern Levant and Southern Turkey."

The cattle that are often portrayed on Indus seals are humped Indian aurochs (Bos primigenius namadicus), which are similar to Zebu cattle. Zebu cattle is still common in India, and in Africa. It is different from the European cattle (Bos primigenius taurus), and are believed to have been independently domesticated on the Indian subcontinent, probably in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan.

Research by J. Bates et al. (2016) confirms that Indus populations were the earliest people to use complex multi-cropping strategies across both seasons, growing foods during summer (rice, millets and beans) and winter (wheat, barley and pulses), which required different watering regimes. Bates et al. (2016) also found evidence for an entirely separate domestication process of rice in ancient South Asia, based around the wild species Oryza nivara. This led to the local development of a mix of "wetland" and "dryland" agriculture of local Oryza sativa indica rice agriculture, before the truly "wetland" rice Oryza sativa japonica arrived around 2000 BCE.

Food

According to archeological finds, Indus valley civilization had dominance of meat diet of animals such as cattle, buffalo, goat, pig and chicken. Remnants of dairy products were also discovered. According to Akshyeta Suryanarayan et al., available evidence indicates culinary practices to be common over the region; food-constituents were dairy products (in low proportion), ruminant carcass meat, and either non-ruminant adipose fats, plants, or mixtures of these products. The dietary pattern remained same throughout the decline.

Seven food-balls ("laddus") were found in intact form, along with two figurines of bulls and a hand-held copper adze, during excavations in 2017 from western Rajasthan. Dated to about 2600 BCE, they were likely composed of legumes, primarily mung, and cereals. The authors speculated the food-balls to be of a ritualistic significance, given the founds of bull figurines, adze and a seal in immediate vicinity.

Language

It has often been suggested that the bearers of the IVC corresponded to proto-Dravidians linguistically, the break-up of proto-Dravidian corresponding to the break-up of the Late Harappan culture. Finnish Indologist Asko Parpola concludes that the uniformity of the Indus inscriptions precludes any possibility of widely different languages being used, and that an early form of Dravidian language must have been the language of the Indus people. Today, the Dravidian language family is concentrated mostly in southern India and northern and eastern Sri Lanka, but pockets of it still remain throughout the rest of India and Pakistan (the Brahui language), which lends credence to the theory.

According to Heggarty and Renfrew, Dravidian languages may have spread into the Indian subcontinent with the spread of farming. According to David McAlpin, the Dravidian languages were brought to India by immigration into India from Elam. In earlier publications, Renfrew also stated that proto-Dravidian was brought to India by farmers from the Iranian part of the Fertile Crescent, but more recently Heggarty and Renfrew note that "a great deal remains to be done in elucidating the prehistory of Dravidian." They also note that "McAlpin's analysis of the language data, and thus his claims, remain far from orthodoxy." Heggarty and Renfrew conclude that several scenarios are compatible with the data, and that "the linguistic jury is still very much out." In a 2021 study, Bahata Ansumali Mukhopadhyay presented a linguistic analysis to posit a Proto-Dravidian presence in the ancient Indus area, using Dravidian root words for tooth, toothbrush and elephant in various contemporary ancient civilisations.

Possible writing system

Between 400 and as many as 600 distinct Indus symbols have been found on stamp seals, small tablets, ceramic pots and more than a dozen other materials, including a "signboard" that apparently once hung over the gate of the inner citadel of the Indus city of Dholavira. Typical Indus inscriptions are around five characters in length, most of which (aside from the Dholavira "signboard") are tiny; the longest on any single object (inscribed on a copper plate) has a length of 34 symbols.

While the Indus Valley Civilisation is generally characterised as a literate society on the evidence of these inscriptions, this description has been challenged by Farmer, Sproat, and Witzel (2004) who argue that the Indus system did not encode language, but was instead similar to a variety of non-linguistic sign systems used extensively in the Near East and other societies, to symbolise families, clans, gods, and religious concepts. Others have claimed on occasion that the symbols were exclusively used for economic transactions, but this claim leaves unexplained the appearance of Indus symbols on many ritual objects, many of which were mass-produced in moulds. No parallels to these mass-produced inscriptions are known in any other early ancient civilisations.

Religion

The religion and belief system of the Indus Valley people has received considerable attention, especially from the view of identifying precursors to deities and religious practices of Indian religions that later developed in the area. However, due to the sparsity of evidence, which is open to varying interpretations, and the fact that the Indus script remains undeciphered, the conclusions are partly speculative and largely based on a retrospective view from a much later Hindu perspective.

Early and influential work in the area that set the trend for Hindu interpretations of archaeological evidence from the Harappan sites[186] was that of John Marshall, who in 1931 identified the following as prominent features of the Indus religion: a Great Male God and a Mother Goddess; deification or veneration of animals and plants; a symbolic representation of the phallus (linga) and vulva (yoni); and, use of baths and water in religious practice. Marshall's interpretations have been much debated, and sometimes disputed over the following decades.

One Indus Valley seal shows a seated figure with a horned headdress, possibly tricephalic and possibly ithyphallic, surrounded by animals. Marshall identified the figure as an early form of the Hindu god Shiva (or Rudra), who is associated with asceticism, yoga, and linga; regarded as a lord of animals, and often depicted as having three eyes. The seal has hence come to be known as the Pashupati Seal, after Pashupati (lord of all animals), an epithet of Shiva. While Marshall's work has earned some support, many critics

and even supporters have raised several objections. Doris Srinivasan has argued that the figure does not have three faces or yogic posture and that in Vedic literature Rudra was not a protector of wild animals. Herbert Sullivan and Alf Hiltebeitel also rejected Marshall's conclusions, with the former claiming that the figure was female, while the latter associated the figure with Mahisha, the Buffalo God and the surrounding animals with vahanas (vehicles) of deities for the four cardinal directions.

Marshall hypothesised the existence of a cult of Mother Goddess worship based upon excavation of several female figurines and thought that this was a precursor of the Hindu sect of Shaktism. However the function of the female figurines in the life of Indus Valley people remains unclear, and Possehl does not regard the evidence for Marshall's hypothesis to be "terribly robust". Some of the baetyls interpreted by Marshall to be sacred phallic representations are now thought to have been used as pestles or game counters instead, while the ring stones that were thought to symbolise yoni were determined to be architectural features used to stand pillars, although the possibility of their religious symbolism cannot be eliminated. Many Indus Valley seals show animals, with some depicting them being carried in processions, while others show chimeric creations. One seal from Mohenjo-daro shows a half-human, a half-buffalo monster attacking a tiger, which may be a reference to the Sumerian myth of such a monster created by goddess Aruru to fight Gilgamesh.

In contrast to contemporary Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations, Indus Valley lacks any monumental palaces, even though excavated cities indicate that the society possessed the requisite engineering knowledge. This may suggest that religious ceremonies if any, may have been largely confined to individual homes, small temples, or the open air. Several sites have been proposed by Marshall and later scholars as possibly devoted to religious purposes, but at present only the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro is widely thought to have been so used, as a place for ritual purification. The funerary practices of the Harappan civilisation are marked by fractional burial (in which the body is reduced to skeletal remains by exposure to the elements before final interment), and even cremation.

Late Harappan

Around 1900 BCE signs of a gradual decline began to emerge, and by around 1700 BCE most of the cities had been abandoned. Recent examination of human skeletons from the site of Harappa has demonstrated that the end of the Indus civilisation saw an increase in inter-personal violence and in infectious diseases like leprosy and tuberculosis. According to historian Upinder Singh, "the general picture presented by the late Harappan phase is one of a breakdown of urban networks and an expansion of rural ones."

During the period of approximately 1900 to 1700 BCE, multiple regional cultures emerged within the area of the Indus civilisation. The Cemetery H culture was in Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh, the Jhukar culture was in Sindh, and the Rangpur culture (characterised by Lustrous Red Ware pottery) was in Gujarat. Other sites associated with the Late phase of the Harappan culture are Pirak in Balochistan, Pakistan, and Daimabad in Maharashtra, India.

The largest Late Harappan sites are Kudwala in Cholistan, Bet Dwarka in Gujarat, and Daimabad in Maharashtra, which can be considered as urban, but they are smaller and few in number compared with the Mature Harappan cities. Bet Dwarka was fortified and continued to have contacts with the Persian Gulf region, but there was a general decrease of long-distance trade. On the other hand, the period also saw a diversification of the agricultural base, with a diversity of crops and the advent of double-cropping, as well as a shift of rural settlement towards the east and the south.

The pottery of the Late Harappan period is described as "showing some continuity with mature Harappan pottery traditions," but also distinctive differences. Many sites continued to be occupied for some centuries, although their urban features declined and disappeared. Formerly typical artifacts such as stone weights and female figurines became rare. There are some circular stamp seals with geometric designs, but lacking the Indus script which characterised the mature phase of the civilisation. Script is rare and confined to potsherd inscriptions. There was also a decline in long-distance trade, although the local cultures show new innovations in faience and glass making, and carving of stone beads. Urban amenities such as drains and the

public bath were no longer maintained, and newer buildings were "poorly constructed". Stone sculptures were deliberately vandalised, valuables were sometimes concealed in hoards, suggesting unrest, and the corpses of animals and even humans were left unburied in the streets and in abandoned buildings.

During the later half of the 2nd millennium BCE, most of the post-urban Late Harappan settlements were abandoned altogether. Subsequent material culture was typically characterised by temporary occupation, "the campsites of a population which was nomadic and mainly pastoralist" and which used "crude handmade pottery". However, there is greater continuity and overlap between Late Harappan and subsequent cultural phases at sites in Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh, primarily small rural settlements.

Aryan migration

In 1953 Sir Mortimer Wheeler proposed that the invasion of an Indo-European tribe from Central Asia, the "Aryans", caused the decline of the Indus civilisation. As evidence, he cited a group of 37 skeletons found in various parts of Mohenjo-daro, and passages in the Vedas referring to battles and forts. However, scholars soon started to reject Wheeler's theory, since the skeletons belonged to a period after the city's abandonment and none were found near the citadel. Subsequent examinations of the skeletons by Kenneth Kennedy in 1994 showed that the marks on the skulls were caused by erosion, and not by violence.

In the Cemetery H culture (the late Harappan phase in the Punjab region), some of the designs painted on the funerary urns have been interpreted through the lens of Vedic literature: for instance, peacocks with hollow bodies and a small human form inside, which has been interpreted as the souls of the dead, and a hound that can be seen as the hound of Yama, the god of death. This may indicate the introduction of new religious beliefs during this period, but the archaeological evidence does not support the hypothesis that the Cemetery H people were the destroyers of the Harappan cities.

Continuity and coexistence

Archaeological excavations indicate that the decline of Harappa drove people eastward. According to Possehl, after 1900 BCE the number of sites in today's India increased from 218 to 853. According to Andrew Lawler, "excavations along the Gangetic plain show that cities began to arise there starting about 1200 BCE, just a few centuries after Harappa was deserted and much earlier than once suspected." According to Jim Shaffer there was a continuous series of cultural developments, just as in most areas of the world. These link "the so-called two major phases of urbanisation in South Asia".

At sites such as Bhagwanpura (in Haryana), archaeological excavations have discovered an overlap between the final phase of Late Harappan pottery and the earliest phase of Painted Grey Ware pottery, the latter being associated with the Vedic culture and dating from around 1200 BCE. This site provides evidence of multiple social groups occupying the same village but using different pottery and living in different types of houses: "over time the Late Harappan pottery was gradually replaced by Painted Grey ware pottery," and other cultural changes indicated by archaeology include the introduction of the horse, iron tools, and new religious practices.

There is also a Harappan site called Rojdi in Rajkot district of Saurashtra. Its excavation started under an archaeological team from Gujarat State Department of Archaeology and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in 1982–83. In their report on archaeological excavations at Rojdi, Gregory Possehl and M.H. Raval write that although there are "obvious signs of cultural continuity" between the Harappan civilisation and later South Asian cultures, many aspects of the Harappan "sociocultural system" and "integrated civilization" were "lost forever," while the Second Urbanisation of India (beginning with the Northern Black Polished Ware culture, c. 600 BCE) "lies well outside this sociocultural environment".

Post-Harappan

Previously, scholars believed that the decline of the Harappan civilisation led to an interruption of urban life in the Indian subcontinent. However, the Indus Valley Civilisation did

not disappear suddenly, and many elements of the Indus civilisation appear in later cultures. The Cemetery H culture may be the manifestation of the Late Harappan over a large area in the region of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, and the Ochre Coloured Pottery culture its successor. David Gordon White cites three other mainstream scholars who "have emphatically demonstrated" that Vedic religion derives partially from the Indus Valley Civilisations.

As of 2016, archaeological data suggests that the material culture classified as Late Harappan may have persisted until at least c. 1000–900 BCE and was partially contemporaneous with the Painted Grey Ware culture. Harvard archaeologist Richard Meadow points to the late Harappan settlement of Pirak, which thrived continuously from 1800 BCE to the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great in 325 BCE.

In the aftermath of the Indus civilisation's localisation, regional cultures emerged, to varying degrees showing the influence of the Indus civilisation. In the formerly great city of Harappa, burials have been found that correspond to a regional culture called the Cemetery H culture. At the same time, the Ochre Coloured Pottery culture expanded from Rajasthan into the Gangetic Plain. The Cemetery H culture has the earliest evidence for cremation; a practice dominant in Hinduism today.

The inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilisation migrated from the river valleys of Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra, towards the Himalayan foothills of the Ganga-Yamuna basin.

The origin and History of the Aryans

There is a consensus opinion among many historians that the Aryans were a heterogeneous group of people who lived in different parts of the ancient world in the area comprising Mediterranean, parts of Europe, central Asia and north western India. There is also an established opinion in the academic circles that the ancestors of "some" Indians, Persians, Germans, Greeks, Romans, and the Celts were Aryans, who worshipped different gods and goddesses, used fire in their rituals and spoke many languages, which have evolved into the present day Indo European languages. The Indo Iranian group of Aryans settled in Iran and parts

of north western India. Although they seemed to have shared a common ancestry, they parted their ways in matters of language and religion.

However, there is a divergence of opinion among various scholars as to the original homeland of Aryans, which is summarized below. Indian historians who deal with the subject fall broadly into two categories: those who suggest that the Indian origin of the Aryans and those who support the non-Indian origin of Aryans. Neither side has come up with convincing evidence or argument so far.

There is also a divergence of opinion among those who support the Aryan invasion theory with regard to their subsequent expansion in the Indian subcontinent. According to one school of thought the Aryans came in hordes and first settled in northwestern India, from where they migrated gradually towards the Gangetic valley, north eastern India and southern India.

According to some, they probably came in two or more waves and colonized the land. There is no evidence to suggest that they occupied the land forcibly and even if they did it must have been on a limited scale. As they migrated towards the east, they had to deal with more powerful and organized native communities and established political powers, whom they could not conquer politically. So their expansion into the subcontinent beyond the Sapta Sindhu region must have happened peacefully through the migration of families of wandering priests and sages rather than through political conquest.

The ruling classes in these regions were drawn to Vedic religion but not completely. So some compromise on the part of both sides and some integration of religious practices took place. This is evident from the fact that regions comprising of present day UP, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, parts of MP, all of southern India and western India were not thoroughly Aryanized and that the basic character of Vedic religion underwent dramatic changes during the post Rigvedic period. Historically these areas also witnessed the predominance of non-Vedic faiths and sectarian movements like Saivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism.

The last view that India itself might be the original land of the Aryans has been gaining ground as circumstantial evidence and genetic studies do not confirm the Aryan invasion theory

as proposed by the British and other European scholars. Historically, India was known as Aryavarta, meaning the land of the Aryans. This was not a mere coincidence. No other country, land, or region was historically known by that name. The ancestors of Aryans might have come from Africa or Central Asia, but the Aryan culture was distinctly indigenous and derived from the Kshatriya clans of the Vedic civilization. The Buddha was a Kshatriya, a person of noble birth. His followers often addressed him as Aryaputra, meaning the son of an Arya. So was Mahavira. They were remnants of the ancient wisdom which the Kshatriyas preached through the Upanishads, and which was at times in variance with the ritual knowledge of the Vedas (karmakanda) practiced by the Brahmanas.

The Aryans were men of the original Indian nobility. The Rajputs of today and other warrior groups, are their descendants. They originally worshipped Brahma, Indra, Varuna, Soma, Mitra, etc., who were Kshatriya gods (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad), who were subsequently relegated to a secondary position in the Hindu pantheon as rulers of directions (dikpalas). It is not a coincidence that the only major temple of Brahma is found in Rajaputana and he lost his popular appeal. By the time of the Nandas and Mauryas (who came from lower castes), the Vedic Kshatriyas lost their power and disappeared, but left their mark as symbols of authority and nobility. In India, until recent times, men of higher castes, landlords and those who occupied positions of authority were customarily addressed as Arya. In native literature, speeches, correspondence and letter writing it was used as the equivalent of "respected Sir." Its corrupt form in Telugu, the second largest native language after Hindi, is "ayya," which is used even today as a mark of respect to address elderly people, fatherly figures and men of authority.

Thus, by usage and by custom we have clear evidence that India had a very deep and historic connection with the concept of Arya, a tradition which most likely originated in memory of an ancient group of people who inhabited the region and wielded considerable influence, power and authority before they were superseded by other political and feudal groups.

It has to be remembered that India has always been, as it is now, a heterogeneous society where people belonging to difference races, religions, languages and backgrounds coexisted. They came to India in the remote past from different parts of the world, from Africa,

Mediterranean, Europe, central Asia, Russia, China and probably Arctic region by land and by sea. While there was an inward migration into the subcontinent, there was also probably some outward migration towards the east, north and west and even to some islands in the Pacific and Australia.

For example, contrary to the popular opinion, the people of Andhra Pradesh were immigrants from different regions within the subcontinent as well from regions outside India. The invading armies of Sakas, Pahlavas, Persians and Kushanas settled in various parts of the country and became an integral part of native communities. So it is incorrect to divide the Indian population merely into two or three groups. It is also incorrect to classify Telugu as a purely Dravidian language. In fact, it has elements of both Indo-European and Dravidian languages. Its most literary form, which, Sri Krishna Devaraya, the king of Vijayanagara, famously considered the best of the native tongues, is very close to Sanskrit both grammatically and syntactically.

The Indus people knew how to build ports or trade merchandise by rivers and sea, using boats. They knew how to chart their course through dangerous seas using the position of the stars and the movements of the sun and the moon. It is wrong to assume that the Aryans introduced an organized religion or an advanced civilization in the Indian subcontinent in the backdrop of an inferior civilization.

Later Vedic Age (1000-600 B.C.)

During the Later Vedic Age the Aryans thoroughly subdued the fertile plains watered by Yamuna, Ganges and Sadanira. They crossed the Vindhyas and settled in the Deccan, to the north of Godavari. During the Later Vedic Age popular assemblies lost much of their importance and royal power increased at their cost. In other words, chiefdom gave way to kingdom. Formation of large kingdoms made the king more powerful. During the Later Vedic Age (1000-600 B.C.) the Aryans thoroughly subdued the fertile plains watered by Rivers like: Yamuna, Ganges and Sadanira.

Chronology

The period of 1500 B.C and 600 B.C was divided into Early Vedic Age (Vedic Period) and Later Vedic Age. Vedic Period: 1500 B.C- 1000 B.C; It was in this period, Aryans were supposed to have invaded India. Later Vedic Period: 1000 B.C- 600 B.C

Characteristics

Later Vedic Compositions

This period is based on the Vedic texts compiled after the Veda. The collection of Vedic hymns or mantras is called the Samhita. Since the hymns were sung, the Veda was set to tune and was then named the Sama Veda Samhita. Two more collections were composed during this period: the Yajur Veda Samhita and the Atharva Veda Samhita. The hymns in the Yajur Veda are accompanied by rituals that reflect the socio-political structure of the society. The Atharva Veda contains charms and spells that were supposed to ward off evil. They reflected the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans. The Samhitas were followed by a series of texts called Brahmanas which explained the social and religious aspects of rituals.

The Painted Grey Ware

Excavation in the upper Gangetic basin has led to the discovery of earthen bowls and dishes made of painted grey pottery. These wares are part of the same area and the same period (circa 1000-600 BC) as the post-Vedic compilations. Thus, these sites are called Painted Grey Ware (PGW) sites. These sites can be found in western Uttar Pradesh and adjoining areas of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Iron Phase Culture

Iron gained prominence from around 1000 BC and was also found inside burials in Pakistan and Baluchistan. Iron was used to make weapons such as arrow-heads and spear- heads in Uttar Pradesh from around 800 BC. The terms 'Syama' or 'Krishna ayas' are used to refer to iron in the later Vedic texts. Although agriculture was primitive, it was widespread and the prevalence of rice and wheat grew in the later Vedic age. Introduction of metals led to the rise of diverse arts and crafts. Occupations like those of smelters, iron and copper smiths and carpenters came into existence. There were four types of pottery in the later Vedic age: black-and-red ware, black-slipped ware, painted grey ware, and red ware.

From Harappan Culture to Arganisation

The Indus Valley Civilization is the earliest known culture of the Indian subcontinent of the kind now called "urban" (or centered on large municipalities), and the largest of the four ancient civilizations, which also included Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. The society of the Indus River Valley has been dated from the Bronze Age, the time period from approximately 3300-1300 BCE. It was located in modern-day India and Pakistan, and covered an area as large

as Western Europe. Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were the two great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, emerging around 2600 BCE along the Indus River Valley in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. Their discovery and excavation in the 19th and 20th centuries provided important archaeological data regarding the civilization's technology, art, trade, transportation, writing, and religion.

Harappan people

The people of the Indus Valley, also known as Harappan (Harappa was the first city in the region found by archaeologists), achieved many notable advances in technology, including great accuracy in their systems and tools for measuring length and mass.

Harappans were among the first to develop a system of uniform weights and measures that conformed to a successive scale. The smallest division, approximately 1.6 mm, was marked on an ivory scale found in Lothal, a prominent Indus Valley city in the modern Indian state of Gujarat. It stands as the smallest division ever recorded on a Bronze Age scale. Another indication of an advanced measurement system is the fact that the bricks used to build Indus cities were uniform in size.

Harappans demonstrated advanced architecture with dockyards, granaries, warehouses, brick platforms, and protective walls. The ancient Indus systems of sewerage and drainage developed and used in cities throughout the region were far more advanced than any found in contemporary urban sites in the Middle East, and even more efficient than those in many areas of Pakistan and India today.

Harappans were thought to have been proficient in seal carving, the cutting of patterns into the bottom face of a seal, and used distinctive seals for the identification of property and to stamp clay on trade goods. Seals have been one of the most commonly discovered artifacts in Indus Valley cities, decorated with animal figures, such as elephants, tigers, and water buffalos.

Harappans also developed new techniques in metallurgy—the science of working with copper, bronze, lead, and tin—and performed intricate handicraft using products made of the semi-precious gemstone, Carnelian.

Art

Indus Valley excavation sites have revealed a number of distinct examples of the culture's art, including sculptures, seals, pottery, gold jewelry, and anatomically detailed figurines in terracotta, bronze, and steatite—more commonly known as Soapstone.

Among the various gold, terracotta, and stone figurines found, a figure of a "Priest-King" displayed a beard and patterned robe. Another figurine in bronze, known as the "Dancing Girl," is only 11 cm. high and shows a female figure in a pose that suggests the presence of some choreographed dance form enjoyed by members of the civilization. Terracotta works also included cows, bears, monkeys, and dogs. In addition to figurines, the Indus River Valley people are believed to have created necklaces, bangles, and other ornaments.

Miniature Votive Images or Toy Models from Harappa, c. 2500 BCE. The Indus River Valley Civilization created figurines from terracotta, as well as bronze and steatite. It is still unknown whether these figurines have religious significance.

Trade And Transportation

The civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport technology. The Harappan Civilization may have been the first to use wheeled transport, in the form of bullock carts that are identical to those seen throughout South Asia today. It also appears they built boats and watercraft—a claim supported by archaeological discoveries of a massive, dredged canal, and what is regarded as a docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal.

Trade focused on importing raw materials to be used in Harappan city workshops, including minerals from Iran and Afghanistan, lead and copper from other parts of India, jade from China, and cedar wood floated down rivers from the Himalayas and Kashmir. Other trade goods included terracotta pots, gold, silver, metals, beads, flints for making tools, seashells, pearls, and colored gem stones, such as lapis lazuli and turquoise.

Maritime trade

There was an extensive maritime trade network operating between the Harappan and Mesopotamian civilizations. Harappan seals and jewelry have been found at archaeological sites in regions of Mesopotamia, which includes most of modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, and parts of Syria. Long-distance sea trade over bodies of water, such as the Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, may have become feasible with the development of plank watercraft that was equipped with a single central mast supporting a sail of woven rushes or cloth.

During 4300-3200 BCE of the Chalcolithic period, also known as the Copper Age, the Indus Valley Civilization area shows ceramic similarities with southern Turkmenistan and northern Iran. During the Early Harappan period (about 3200-2600 BCE), cultural similarities in pottery, seals, figurines, and ornaments document caravan trade with Central Asia and the Iranian plateau.

Writing

Harappans are believed to have used Indus Script, a language consisting of symbols. A collection of written texts on clay and stone tablets unearthed at Harappa, which have been carbon dated 3300-3200 BCE, contain trident-shaped, plant-like markings. This Indus Script suggests that writing developed independently in the Indus River Valley Civilization from the script employed in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt.

As many as 600 distinct Indus symbols have been found on seals, small tablets, ceramic pots, and more than a dozen other materials. Typical Indus inscriptions are no more than four or five characters in length, most of which are very small. The longest on a single surface, which is less than 1 inch (or 2.54 cm.) square, is 17 signs long. The characters are largely pictorial, but include many abstract signs that do not appear to have changed over time.

The inscriptions are thought to have been primarily written from right to left, but it is unclear whether this script constitutes a complete language. Without a “Rosetta Stone” to use as a comparison with other writing systems, the symbols have remained indecipherable to linguists and archaeologists.

A Rosetta Stone for the Indus script, lecture by Rajesh Rao. Rajesh Rao is fascinated by "the mother of all crossword puzzles," how to decipher the 4,000-year-old Indus script. At TED 2011, he explained how he was enlisting modern computational techniques to read the Indus language. View full lesson: http://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-rosetta-stone-for-the-indus-script-rajesh-rao

Religion

The Harappan religion remains a topic of speculation. It has been widely suggested that the Harappans worshipped a mother goddess who symbolized fertility. In contrast to Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, the Indus Valley Civilization seems to have lacked any temples or palaces that would give clear evidence of religious rites or specific deities. Some Indus Valley seals show a swastika symbol, which was included in later Indian religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Many Indus Valley seals also include the forms of animals, with some depicting them being carried in processions, while others showing chimeric creations, leading scholars to speculate about the role of animals in Indus Valley religions. One seal from Mohenjo-daro shows a half-human, half-buffalo monster attacking a tiger. This may be a reference to the Sumerian myth of a monster created by Aruru, the Sumerian earth and fertility goddess, to fight Gilgamesh, the hero of an ancient Mesopotamian epic poem. This is a further suggestion of international trade in Harappan culture.

Decline of Harappan Culture

We cannot state the exact reason for the decline of the Harappan civilization and its culture, since there is no record of that period available at the present time. But from archaeological remains, there is no doubt that such a developed civilization neither declined suddenly nor was the result of a single cause. From the remains of the Harappan civilization, we can determine that it took almost 600 years (1900 to 1300 BC) for its decline to happen.

Many historians arrive at different conclusions about the decline of the Harappan culture. Some suggest it was environmental factors that triggered its decline, while others propose that it was a foreign invasion.

Cause of the Decline of the Harappan Culture

Floods

M.R. Sahni is a palaeontologist who suggested a hypothesis regarding the decline of the Harappan culture. In this hypothesis, he presented evidence of the presence of alluvium (a deposit of clay and sand left by flowing water in a river valley) containing freshwater shells at a height far above the present flood level. There was no clear explanation of what created the flood. After his hypothesis, many other palaeontologists made different assumptions, such as the possibility of a tectonic plate which produced an earthquake. But there was no evidence to support this theory, or other theories of different researchers.

The floods in the Indus river might be one of the main causes for the extinction of Harappan culture. These repeated floods may have caused a mass migration of the people of the Harappan civilization to other regions.

Change of Course of the Indus River

Palaeontologists have found a lot of evidence that the Indus river changed its course many times throughout history. In Mohenjo-Daro (the capital of the Harappan civilization), water was the main source of income. When the Indus river changed its course from Mohenjo-Daro, water became scarce, to the point that people of the city needed to migrate from their capital to different places to survive. Water is essential for agriculture, which was also a reason for people of the Harappan civilization to migrate to places suitable for agriculture.

This change caused a drought in the region. However, a change in the course of the Indus river could not have been the cause of the decline of the Harappan culture, since other major cities were not affected by these changes.

Plague

Research by Dr. Gwen Robbins Schug, an anthropologist, shows that leprosy emerged during the developmental period of the Harappan civilization, and its impact increased over time. Palaeontologists have found skeletal remains of many people on the main road in Mohenjo-Daro with evidence of leprosy on the bones. Through this, we can state that there was evidence of an outbreak of plague in the region.

Research also shows the emergence of infectious diseases in the late Harappan civilization which, many researchers believe, led to the mass migration of people from densely populated areas to rural areas.

Foreign Invasion

Sir Mortimer Wheeler, a researcher, has put forward a theory that the Aryan invasion was the reason for the decline of the Harappan culture, since there is archaeological evidence of genocide and unburied skeletons scattered throughout Mohenjo-Daro. After autopsies were conducted on these skeletons, it revealed that their death was caused by sharp objects or perhaps weapons. During that time, the use of weapons was known to Aryans but there was no evidence of the Harappan people's knowledge of weapons. During the invasion, it might have been a one-sided genocide of the Harappan people, caused by the Aryans when they arrived at a rich and fertile piece of land. The Harappan civilization was the gateway to the Indian peninsula, but its people may have migrated from the area out of fear of the Aryans. The Harappan culture gradually fell into oblivion as the Aryans replaced the Harappan civilization with a new culture brought by them. Areas of Harappan culture that were invaded by Aryans might have occurred due to conflicts between rural and forest-dwelling people.

Natural Catastrophes

Researcher Jim G. Shaffer presented a list of natural catastrophes that could have occurred during the Harappan civilization to cause its destruction. One of the biggest natural catastrophes that could have occurred was an earthquake, since the Harappan civilization was situated in an area that is prone to earthquakes. Other researchers have speculated that the

movement of tectonic plates near the area caused potentially damaging earthquakes that could have led to major flooding in the area. As a result, many people in the region migrated from one region to another to avoid these natural disasters. Earthquakes became known as one of the main reasons for the decline of the Harappan culture.

Status of women:

Women were respected by the society, enjoyed freedom, had access to education and were often free to choose their partners through swayamvara. Purdah and sati were not prevalent.

Spirituality:

The ultimate aim of life was to attain moksha or salvation through the pursuit of dharma, artha and kama. Karma or performance of duty without any expectation or return was preached in the Bhagavad Gita.

Worship:

The early Vedic people worshipped forces of nature and personified them as gods and goddesses. Indra, Agni, Varuna, Marut were some of their gods while Usha: Aditi, Prithvi were some of their goddesses. Some of the solar Gods and goddesses referred to in the Rig Veda are Surya, Savitri and Pushau. Yajna (sacrifice) was performed along with chanting of Vedic hymns. People poured ghee (clarified butter) and other ingredients into the fire to invoke the blessings of gods. Agni or fire was looked upon ass an intermediary between gods and humans. The vedic people prayed individually as well as collectively for the welfare of the jana.

Change in religious practices:

There was a change in religious practices during the later Vedic period.

The prominent Gods of the early Vedic period like Indra, Agni and Varuna the preserver and Shiva completed the trinity. The religion became extremely ritualistic. Sanskrit mantras, which were the monopoly of Brahmins, became an essential part of all religious functions. This made the Brahmins very powerful and the Yajnas expensive. Participation in them was restricted

to the upper three classes. The kings performed Ashvamedha, Rajasuya and Vajapeya sacrifies to establish their position.

Survival of Vedic Culture

It is very interesting to know that some elements of the culture of the Vedic Age have survived over a period 3,000 years and continues to be a part of Indian culture even today. By the end of the latter Vedic age, changes started occuring in the society. For the first time, people started discussing certain beliefs such as creation of the universe, life after death and essence of life. These were questions which were dealt with in great detail in the Upanishads.

Material life and economy

The Aryans were primarily pastoral and agricultural people. They domesticated animals like cows, horses, sheeps, goats and dogs. They ate simple food consisting of cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, milk and various milk products. They drank a beverage called Soma. Games of chess, chariot racing etc. were their modes of entertainment. In the early period there was no money transaction or taxes. Bali or voluntary donation was prevalent. Cows were the measure of wealth. As the time nacead avtancive use of iran brought great channas in their Iron tools resulted in varied crafts and technology. Use of iron weapons and horses enabled them to fight wars and defend themselves better against enemies. . Increasing number of crafts, availability of surplus food and growth of population led to specialisation of skills and urbanisation.

UNIT – III

NORTH INDIA FROM 600-325 BC

Mahajanapads

The Mahājanapadas were sixteen kingdoms or oligarchic republics that existed in ancient India from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE during the second urbanisation period.

The 6th–5th centuries BCE is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history; during this period India's first large cities arose after the demise of the Indus Valley civilization. It was also the time of the rise of sramana movements (including Buddhism and Jainism), which challenged the religious orthodoxy of the Vedic period. Two of the Mahājanapadas were most probably gaṇasaṅghas (oligarchic republics) and others had forms of monarchy. Ancient Buddhist texts like the Anguttara Nikaya make frequent reference to sixteen great kingdoms and republics which had developed and flourished in a belt stretching from Gandhara in the northwest to Anga in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. They included parts of the trans-Vindhyan region, and all had developed prior to the rise of Buddhism in India. Archaeologically, this period has been identified as corresponding in part to the Northern Black Polished Ware culture.

The term "Janapada" literally means the foothold of a people. The fact that Janapada is derived from Jana points to an early stage of land-taking by the Jana people for a settled way of life. This process of settlement on land had completed its final stage prior to the times of the Buddha and Pāṇini. The Pre-Buddhist northern Indian sub-continent was divided into several Janapadas, demarcated from each other by boundaries. In Pāṇini's "Ashtadhyayi", Janapada stands for country and Janapadin for its citizenry. Each of these Janapadas was named after the Kshatriya people (or the Kshatriya Jana) who had settled therein. Buddhist and other texts only incidentally refer to sixteen great nations (Solasa Mahajanapadas) that existed prior to the time of the Buddha. They do not give any connected history except in the case of Magadha. The Buddhist Anguttara Nikaya, at several places, gives a list of sixteen great nations:

1. Anga
2. Assaka (or Asmaka)

3. Avanti
4. Chedi
5. Gandhara
6. Kashi
7. Kamboja
8. Kosala
9. Kuru
10. Magadha
11. Malla
12. Matsya (or Maccha)
13. Panchala
14. Surasena
15. Vajji
16. Vatsa (or Vamsa)

Another Buddhist text, the Digha Nikaya, mentions twelve Mahajanapadas from the above list and omits four of them (Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara, and Kamboja). Chulla-Niddesa, another ancient text of the Buddhist canon, adds Kalinga to the list and substitutes Yona for Gandhara, thus listing the Kamboja and the Yona as the only Mahajanapadas from Uttarapatha. The Vyākhyāprajñapti (or the Bhagavati Sutra), a sutra of Jainism, gives a different list of sixteen Mahajanapadas:

1. Anga
2. Banga (Vanga)
3. Magadha
4. Malaya
5. Malavaka
6. Accha
7. Vaccha
8. Kochcha
9. Padha
10. Ladha (Radh or Lata)
11. Bajji (Vajji)
12. Moli (Malla)
13. Kasi
14. Kosala
15. Avaha
16. Sambhuttara
17. Ruhma

The author of the Bhagavati Sutra (or the Vyākhyāprajñapti) has a focus on the countries of Madhydesa and of the far east and south only. He omits the nations from Uttarapatha like the Kamboja and Gandhara. The more extended horizon of the Bhagvati and the omission of all countries from Uttarapatha "clearly shows that the Bhagvati list is of later origin and therefore less reliable."

List of Mahajanapadas

Anga

The first reference to the Angas is found in the Atharvaveda where they find mention along with the Magadhas, Gandharis and the Mujavats, apparently as a despised people. The Jaina Prajnapana ranks Angas and Vangas in the first group of Aryan people. It mentions the principal cities of ancient India. It was also a great center of trade and commerce and its merchants regularly sailed to distant Suvarnabhumi. Anga was annexed by Magadha in the time of Bimbisara. This was the one and only conquest of Bimbisara.

Aśmaka

The country of Assaka or the Ashmaka tribe was located in Dakshinapatha or southern India. It included areas in present-day Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra. In Gautama Buddha's time, many of the Assakas were located on the banks of the Godavari River (south of the Vindhya mountains). The capital of the Assakas was Potana or Potali, which corresponds present-day Bodhan in Telangana and Paudanya of Mahabharata. In Maharashtra its capital is located in Potali which corresponds to present day Nandura, Buldhana district. The Ashmakas are also mentioned by Pāṇini. They are placed in the north-west in the Markendeya Purana and the Brhat Samhita. The river Godavari separated the country of the Assakas from that of the Mulakas (or Alakas). The country of Assaka lay outside the pale of Madhyadesa. It was located on a southern high road, the Dakshinapatha. At one time, Assaka included Mulaka and abutted Avanti.

Avanti

The country of the Avantis was an important kingdom of western India and was one of the four great monarchies in India in the post era of Mahavira and Buddha, the other three being Kosala, Vatsa and Magadha. Avanti was divided into north and south by the river Narmada. Initially, Mahishamati (Mahissati) was the capital of Southern Avanti, and Ujjaini (Sanskrit: Ujjayini) was of northern Avanti, but at the times of Mahavira and Buddha, Ujjaini was the capital of integrated Avanti. The country of Avanti roughly

corresponded to modern Malwa, Nimar and adjoining parts of today's Madhya Pradesh. Both Mahishmati and Ujjaini stood on the southern high road called Dakshinapatha which extended from Rajagriha to Pratishthana (modern Paithan). Avanti was an important centre of Buddhism and some of the leading theras and theris were born and resided there. King Nandivardhana of Avanti was defeated by king Shishunaga of Magadha. Avanti later became part of the Magadhan empire.

Chedi

The Chedis, Chetis or Chetyas had two distinct settlements of which one was in the mountains of Nepal and the other in Bundelkhand near Kausambi. According to old authorities, Chedis lay near Yamuna midway between the kingdom of Kurus and Vatsas. In the mediaeval period, the southern frontiers of Chedi extended to the banks of the river Narmada. Sotthivatnagara, the Sukti or Suktimati of Mahabharata, was the capital of Chedi. The Chedis were an ancient people of India and are mentioned in the Rigveda, with their king Kashu Chaidya. The location of the capital city, Suktimati, has not been established with certainty. Historian Hem Chandra Raychaudhuri and F. E. Pargiter believed that it was in the vicinity of Banda, Uttar Pradesh. Archaeologist Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti has proposed that Suktimati can be identified as the ruins of a large early historical city, at a place with the modern-day name Itaha, on the outskirts of Rewa, Madhya Pradesh.

Gandhāra

The wool of the Gandharis is referred to in the Rigveda. The Gandharas and their king figure prominently as strong allies of the Kurus against the Pandavas in the Mahabharata war. The Gandharas were furious people, well-trained in the art of war. According to Puranic traditions, this Janapada was founded by Gandhara, son of Aruddha, a descendant of Yayati. The princes of this country are said to have come from the line of Druhyu who was a famous king of the Rigvedic period and one of the five sons of king Yayati of lunar dynasty. The river Indus watered the lands of Gandhara. Taksashila and Pushkalavati, the two cities of this Mahajanapada, are said to have been named after Taksa and Pushkara, the two sons of Bharata, a prince of Ayodhya and younger brother of Lord Rama. According to Vayu Purana (II.36.107),

the Gandharas were destroyed by Pramiti (a.k.a. Kalika) at the end of Kali Yuga. Pāṇini mentioned both the Vedic form Gandhari as well as the later form Gandhara in his Ashtadhyayi. The Gandhara kingdom sometimes also included Kashmira. Hecataeus of Miletus (549-468) refers to Kaspapyros (Kasyapura or Purushapura, i.e., modern day Peshawar) as a Gandharic city. According to Gandhara Jataka, at one time, Gandhara formed a part of the kingdom of Kashmir. The Jataka also gives another name Chandahara for Gandhara.

Gandhara Mahajanapada of Buddhist traditions included territories of east Afghanistan, and north-west of the Panjab (modern districts of Peshawar (Purushapura) and Rawalpindi). Its later capital was Taksashila (Prakrit for Taxila). The Taksashila University was a renowned centre of learning in ancient times, where scholars from all over the world came to seek higher education. Pāṇini, the Indian genius of grammar and Kautiliya are the world-renowned products of Taxila University. King Pukkusati or Pushkarasarin of Gandhara in the middle of the 6th century BCE was the contemporary of king Bimbisara of Magadha. Gandhara was located on the grand northern high road (Uttarapatha) and was a centre of international commercial activities. According to one group of scholars, the Gandharas and Kambojas were cognate people. It is also contended that the Kurus, Kambojas, Gandharas and Bahlikas were cognate people. According to Dr T. L. Shah, the Gandhara and Kamboja were nothing but two provinces of one empire and were located coterminously, hence influencing each other's language. Naturally, they may have once been a cognate people. Gandhara was often linked politically with the neighboring regions of Kashmir and Kamboja.

Kamboja

Kambojas are also included in the Uttarapatha. In ancient literature, the Kamboja is variously associated with the Gandhara, Darada and the Bahlika (Bactria). Ancient Kamboja is known to have comprised regions on either side of the Hindukush. The original Kamboja was located in eastern Oxus country as neighbor to Bahlika, but with time, some clans of the Kambojas appear to have crossed the Hindukush and planted colonies on its southern side also. These latter Kambojas are associated with the Daradas and Gandharas in Indian literature and also find mention in the Edicts of Ashoka. The evidence in the Mahabharata and in Ptolemy's

Geography distinctly supports two Kamboja settlements. The cis-Hindukush region from Nurestan up to Rajauri in southwest of Kashmir sharing borders with the Daradas and the Gandharas constituted the Kamboja country. The capital of Kamboja was probably Rajapura (modern Rajori) in the south-west of Kashmir. The Kamboja Mahajanapada of the Buddhist traditions refers to this cis-Hindukush branch of ancient Kambojas.

The trans-Hindukush region including the Pamirs and Badakhshan which shared borders with the Bahlikas (Bactria) in the west and the Lohas and Rishikas of Sogdiana/Fergana in the north, constituted the Parama-Kamboja country. The trans-Hindukush branch of the Kambojas remained pure Iranian but a large section of the Kambojas of cis-Hindukush appears to have come under Indian cultural influence. The Kambojas are known to have had both Iranian as well as Indian affinities.

The Kambojas were also a well known republican people since Epic times. The Mahabharata refers to several gaṇaḥ (or Republics) of the Kambojas. Kautiliya's Arthashastra attestes the Kambojas republican character and Ashoka's Edict No. XIII also testifies the presence of the Kambojas along with the Yavanas. Pāṇini's Sutras, though tend to convey that the Kamboja of Pāṇini was a Kshatriya monarchy, but "the special rule and the exceptional form of derivative" he gives to denote the ruler of the Kambojas implies that the king of Kamboja was a titular head (king consul) only According to Buddhist texts, the first fourteen of the above Mahajanapadas belong to Majjhimadesa (Mid India) while the last two belong to Uttarapatha or the north-west division of Jambudvipa.

In a struggle for supremacy that followed in the 6th/5th century BCE, the growing state of the Magadhas emerged as the predominant power in ancient India, annexing several of the Janapadas of the Majjhimadesa. A bitter line in the Puranas laments that Magadhan emperor Mahapadma Nanda exterminated all Kshatriyas, none worthy of the name Kshatriya being left thereafter. This refers to the Kasis, Kosalas, Kurus, Panchalas, Vatsyas and other neo-Vedic tribes of the east Panjab of whom nothing was ever heard except in the legend and poetry. (The Nandas usurped the throne of Shishunaga dynasty c. 345 BCE, thus founding the Nanda Empire.)

The Kambojans and Gandharans, however, never came into direct contact with the Magadhan state until Chandragupta and Kautiliya arose on the scene. But these nations also fell prey to the Achaemenids of Persia during the reign of Cyrus (558–530 BCE) or in the first year of Darius. Kamboja and Gandhara formed the twentieth and richest satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus I is said to have destroyed the famous Kamboja city called Kapisi (modern Begram) in Paropamisade.

Kasi

The kingdom was located in the region around its capital Varanasi, bounded by the Varuna and Asi rivers in the north and south which gave Varanasi its name. Before Buddha, Kasi was the most powerful of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Several jataka tales bear witness to the superiority of its capital over other cities in India and speak highly of its prosperity and opulence. These stories tell of the long struggle for supremacy between Kashi and the three kingdoms of Kosala, Anga and Magadha. Although King Brihadratha of Kashi conquered Kosala, Kashi was later incorporated into Kosala by King Kansa during Buddha's time. The Kashis along with the Kosalas and Videhans find mention in Vedic texts and appear to have been a closely allied people. The Matsya Purana and Alberuni spell Kashi as Kausika and Kaushaka respectively. All other ancient texts read Kashi.

Kosala

The country of Kosala was located to the north-west of Magadha, with its capital at Ayodhya. Its territory corresponded to the modern Awadh (or Oudh) in Central and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It had the river Ganges for its southern, the river Gandak (Narayani) for its eastern, and the Himalaya mountains for its northern boundary.

Later, the kingdom was ruled by the famous king Prasenajit during the era of Mahavira and Buddha, followed by his son Vidudabha (Virudhaka). King Prasenajit was highly educated. His position was further improved by a matrimonial alliance with Magadha: his sister was married to Bimbisara and part of Kasi was given as dowry. There was, however, a struggle for supremacy between king Pasenadi (Prasenajit) and king Ajatashatru of Magadha which was

finally settled once the confederation of Liccavis became conquered by Magadha. Kosala was ultimately merged into Magadha when Vidudabha was Kosala's ruler. Ayodhya, Saketa, Banaras, and Sravasti were the chief cities of Kosala.

Kuru

The Puranas trace the origin of Kurus from the Puru-Bharata family. Kuru was born after 25 generations of Puru's dynasty, and after 15 generations of Kuru, Kauravas and Pandavas were born. Aitareya Brahmana locates the Kurus in Madhyadesha and also refers to the Uttarakurus as living beyond the Himalayas. According to the Buddhist text Sumangavilasini, the people of Kururashtra (the Kurus) came from the Uttarakuru. Vayu Purana attests that Kuru, son of Samvarsana of the Puru lineage, was the eponymous ancestor of the Kurus and the founder of Kururashtra (Kuru Janapada) in Kurukshetra. The country of the Kurus roughly corresponded to the modern Thanesar, state of Delhi, and Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. According to the Jatakas, the capital of the Kurus was Indraprastha (Indapatta) near modern Delhi which extended seven leagues. At Buddha's time, the Kuru country was ruled by a titular chieftain (king consul) named Korayvya. The Kurus of the Buddhist period did not occupy the same position as they did in the Vedic period but they continued to enjoy their ancient reputation for deep wisdom and sound health. The Kurus had matrimonial relations with the Yadavas, the Bhojas, Trigratas, and the Panchalas. There is a Jataka reference to king Dhananjaya, introduced as a prince from the race of Yudhishtra. Though a well known monarchical people in the earlier period, the Kurus are known to have switched to a republican form of government during the 6th to 5th centuries BCE. In the 4th century BCE, Kautiliya's Arthashastra also attests the Kurus following the Rajashabdopajivin (king consul) constitution.

Magadha

The Magadha was one of the most prominent and prosperous of mahajanapadas. The capital city Pataliputra (near present day Patna, Bihar) was situated on the confluence of major rivers like the Ganga, Son, Punpun and Gandak. The alluvial plains of this region and its proximity to the copper and iron rich areas of Bihar and Jharkhand helped the kingdom to develop good quality weapons and support the agrarian economy. Its location at the centre of the

highways of trade of those days contributed to its wealth. All these factors helped Magadha to emerge as the most prosperous state of that period.

The kingdom of the Magadhas roughly corresponded to the modern districts of Patna and Gaya in southern Bihar and parts of Bengal in the east. The capital city of Pataliputra was bound in the north by the river Ganges, in the east by the river Champa, in the south by the Vindhya mountains and in the west by the river Sona. During Buddha's time its boundaries included Anga. Its earliest capital was Girivraja or Rajagaha (modern Rajgir in the Nalanda district of Bihar). The other names for the city were Magadhapura, Brihadrathapura, Vasumati, Kushagrapura and Bimbisarapuri. It was an active center of Jainism in ancient times. The first Buddhist Council was held in Rajagaha in the Vaibhara Hills. Later on, Pataliputra became the capital of Magadha.

Malla

The Mallakas are frequently mentioned in Buddhist and Jain works. They were a powerful people dwelling in Northern India. According to Mahabharata, Panduputra Bhimasena is said to have conquered the chief of the Mallakas in the course of his expedition in Eastern India. During the Buddhist period, the Mallakas Kshatriya were a republican people with their dominion consisting of nine territories corresponding to the nine confederated clans. These republican states were known as gaṇasaṅghas. Two of these confederations – one with Kushinagar (modern Kasia near Gorakhpur) as its capital and the second with Pava (modern Fazilnagar, 20 kilometres (12 mi) southeast of Kushinagar) as the capital – had become very important at the time of Buddha. Kuśināra is very important in the history of Buddhism since Lord Buddha took last meal at Pava. Buddha was taken ill at Pava and died at Kusinara. It is widely believed that Lord Gautam died at the courtyard of King Sastipal Mall of Kushinagar. Kushinagar is now the centre of the Buddhist pilgrimage circle which is being developed by the tourism development corporation of Uttar Pradesh.

The Mallakas, like the Licchavis, are mentioned by Manusmriti as Vratya Kshatriyas. They are called Vasishthas (Vasetthas) in the Mahapparnibbana Suttanta. The Mallakas originally had a monarchical form of government but later they switched to one

of Samgha (republic), the members of which called themselves rajas. The Mallakas appeared to have formed an alliance with the Licchhavis for self-defense but lost their independence not long after Buddha's death and their dominions were annexed to the Magadhan empire.

Matsya

The country of the Matsya or Macchā tribe lay to the south of the Kurus and west of the Yamuna, which separated them from the Panchalas. It roughly corresponded to the former state of Jaipur in Rajasthan, and included the whole of Alwar with portions of Bharatpur. The capital of Matsya was at Viratanagara (modern Bairat) which is said to have been named after its founder king Virata. In Pali literature, the Matsyas are usually associated with the Surasenas. The western Matsya was the hill tract on the north bank of the Chambal. A branch of Matsya is also found in later days in the Vizagapatam region. The Matsyas had not much political importance of their own during the time of Buddha.

Pancala

The Panchalas occupied the country to the east of the Kurus between the mountains and river Ganges. It roughly corresponded to modern Budaun, Farrukhabad and the adjoining districts of Uttar Pradesh. The country was divided into Uttara-Panchala and Dakshina-Panchala. The northern Panchala had its capital at Adhichhatra or Chhatravati (modern Ramnagar in the Bareilly District), while southern Panchala had its capital at Kampilya or Kampil in the Farrukhabad District. The famous city of Kanyakubja or Kanauj was situated in the kingdom of Panchala. Originally a monarchical clan, the Panchals appear to have switched to republican corporation in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. In the 4th century BCE, Kautiliya's Arthashastra also attests the Panchalas as following the Rajashabdopajivin (king consul) constitution.

Surasena

The country of the Surasenas lay to the east of Matsya and west of Yamuna. This corresponds roughly to the Brij region of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. and Gwalior region of Madhya Pradesh. It had its capital at Madhura or Mathura. Avantiputra, the king of Surasena, was the first among the chief disciples of Buddha, through whose

help Buddhism gained ground in Mathura country. The Andhakas and Vrishnis of Mathura/Surasena are referred to in the Ashtadhyayi of Paṇini. In Kautiliya's Arthashastra, the Vrishnis are described as sangha or republic. The Vrishnis, Andhakas and other allied tribes of the Yadavas formed a sangha and Vasudeva (Krishna) is described as the sangha-mukhya. Mathura, the capital of Surasena, was also known at the time of Megasthenes as the centre of Krishna worship. The Surasena kingdom had lost its independence on annexation by the Magadhan empire.

Vṛji

Vajji or Vṛji was a confederacy of neighbouring clans including the Licchavis and one of the principal mahājanapadas of Ancient India. The area they ruled constitutes the region of Mithila in Nepal and northern Bihar and their capital was the city of Vaishali.

Both the Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya and the Jaina text Bhagavati Sutra (Saya xv Uddesa I) included Vajji in their lists of solasa (sixteen) mahājanapadas. The name of this mahājanapada was derived from one of its ruling clans, the Vṛjis. The Vajji state is indicated to have been a republic. This clan is mentioned by Pāṇini, Chanakya and Xuanzang.

Vatsa (or Vaṃsa)

The Vatsas or Vamsas are called to be a branch of the Kurus. The Vatsa or Vamsa country corresponded with the territory of modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. It had a monarchical form of government with its capital at Kausambi (identified with the village Kosam, 38 miles from Allahabad). Kausambi was a very prosperous city where a large number of wealthy merchants resided. It was the most important entrepôt of goods and passengers from the north-west and south. Udayana was the ruler of Vatsa in the 6th-5th century BCE. He was very powerful, warlike and fond of hunting. Initially king Udayana was opposed to Buddhism, but later became a follower of Buddha and made Buddhism the state religion. Udayana's mother, Queen Mrigavati, is notable for being one of the earliest known female rulers in Indian history.

Rise of Magadha

Among the 16 Mahajanapadas, Kasi was initially powerful. However, Kosala became dominant later. A power struggle broke out between Magadha, Kosala, Vrijji and Avanti. Eventually Magadha emerged as the dominant Mahajanapada and established the first Indian empire.

Rise of Magadha under the Haryanka Dynasty

1 . Bimbisara

Bimbisara is the first known ruler of Magadha . He was the first ruler to introduce matrimonial alliances for strategic purposes . He married following

He had great army (according to Jain texts). Bimbisara was contemporary of both Mahavira & Buddha and met Buddha 7 years before enlightenment . Buddha visited his capital after enlightenment as he promised earlier. His capital was Girivraja (identified as Rajgriha). He was killed by his son Ajatshatru.

2 . Ajatshatru

He killed Bimbisara & Mahakosala died in shock . Her brother, King Prasenjit took back Kashi which was earlier given in dowry . This led to a military confrontation between Magadha and Kosala. The struggle lasted until Prasenjit was overthrown. Ajatashatru also fought and won the battle against the Lichchhavis. During this war, he sent his minister Vassakara to create dissension . He also used new weapons named (1) Mahshilakantaka i.e. catapult to throw large stones and (2) Rathamusala (chariot with blades attached on wheels). On Buddha's demise, Ajatshatru is said to have gone to Kusinagara to claim portion of his relics . He built many stupas around Rajgriha and organised first buddhist council. He was also killed by his own son Udayen.

3. Udayen

Udayen developed Pataliputra as city. He was killed by his own son . Later kings like Anurudha and Nagadaska also suffered PATRICIDE .

Hence, revolt broke and Haryanka dynasty was thrown away by Shishunaga Dynasty

Shishunaga Dynasty

1 . Shishunaga

Shishunaga was the Governor of Haryanka & did coup d'état. He ruled from Girivraja & seemed to have second capital at Vaishali .

2. Kalashoka

During his reign Pataliputra became capital of Magadha. He organised & sponsored 2nd Buddhist Council at Vaishali in 383 BC. It was presided by Sabakami. Last king of this dynasty was Nandivardhana . Shaishunaga dynasty came to bitter end. King and his sons were killed, making way for Nanda dynasty

Nanda Dynasty (345-321 AD)

Puranic , Buddhist & Jaina tradition agree that there were 9 Nanda kings . Mahapadma Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons, and they were together known as the navanandas or the nine Nandas. Nandas build on the foundations of Haryanka & Shishunaga dynasty & emerged as the first great empire in North India. Nandas were thought of low origin with some sources stating that dynasty's founder, Mahapadma Nanda, was the son of a Shudra mother.

Mahapadma Nanda = Empire Builder

Mahapadma Nanda usurped the throne by murdering the last of the Shishunaga kings. Mahapadma Nanda has been described in Puranas as "the destroyer of all the Kshatriyas". He defeated many other kingdoms, including Panchalas, Haihayas, Kalingas, Asmakas, Kurus , Surasenas etc.

He is known as Ekrat (Sole king). He conquered Kalinga . Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela (of Kalinga) also mentions the conquest of Kalinga by Nanda. He also expanded his territory south of the Vindhya range, into the Deccan plateau . Mahapadma Nanda is described as the first empire builder in the recorded history of India.

He inherited the large kingdom of Magadha built by Haryanka & Shishunaga dynasty . But he wanted to extend it to yet more distant frontiers. For this he built up a vast army. According to Diodorus and Rufus (Roman historian) , his army consisted of 2 lakh infantry, 20 thousand cavalry, 2 thousand war chariots and 3,000 war elephants. Such was the fear of Nanda army that when Alexander invaded India (Dhana Nanda was the ruler at that time), he confined his campaign to the plains of Punjab as his forces were frightened by the prospect of facing Nanda army & mutinied at Hyphasis River (the modern Beas River) .

Magadha emerged as strongest Mahajanapadas

In Republics of North-eastern India (Malla, Vajji), there was no centralisation due to common ownership of land by the kshatriyas. On the other hand, in the Monarchies of upper Ganga , Vedic sacrifices led to wasteful consumption. Magadha located in the mid Ganga plains had no such limitations. Magadha had the advantage of Rich soil & history of rice cultivation . Good rainfall, irrigated land and bandhs used as water reserves. It was close to the mines and minerals of Singhbhum. Forest of Rajmahal hills for procuring timber and elephants. Geographical Position Old capital Rajgriha was surrounded by perimeter of 5 easily defendable hills9. New capital Pataliputra was protected due to location at Ganga & Son. Both Uttarapatha & Dakshinapatha passed through Magadha leading to high volumes of trade. River Ganges which flowed through the heart of Magadha was the high route of trade. Due to foreign invasions like Achaemenians in 6th century B.C Macedonians in 4th Century B.C. infiltration of foreign races. Demands started to raise that there was need of central paramount power on the subcontinent to defend it from foreign invasions. It prepared the country to submit to Magadhan hegemony.

An unbroken chain of very able and extraordinary monarchs ascended the Magadhan throne like Shishunaga, Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, Mahapadma and Chandragupta . They were fortunate in having great ministers and diplomats like Vassakara, Kautilya and Radha Gupta .

Buddhism

Buddhism also known as Buddha Dharma, and Dharmavinaya (transl. "doctrines and disciplines"), is an Indian religion or philosophical tradition based on teachings attributed to the Buddha. It originated in present-day North India as a śramaṇa–movement in the 5th century BCE, and gradually spread throughout much of Asia via the Silk Road. It is the world's fifth-largest religion, with over 520 million followers (Buddhists) who comprise seven percent of the global population.

The Buddha's central teachings emphasize the aim of attaining liberation from attachment or clinging to existence, which is said to be marked by impermanence (anitya), dissatisfaction/suffering (duḥkha), and the absence of lasting essence (anatman). He endorsed the Middle Way, a path of spiritual development that avoids both extreme asceticism and hedonism. A summary of this path is expressed in the Noble Eightfold Path, a cultivation of the mind through observance of meditation and Buddhist ethics. Other widely observed practices include: monasticism; "taking refuge" in the Buddha, the dharma, and the saṅgha; and the cultivation of perfections (paramita).

Buddhist schools vary in their interpretation of the paths to liberation (mārga) as well as the relative importance and 'canonicity' assigned to various Buddhist texts, and their specific teachings and practices. Two major extant branches of Buddhism are generally recognized by scholars: Theravāda (lit. 'School of the Elders') and Mahāyāna (lit. 'Great Vehicle'). The Theravada tradition emphasizes the attainment of nirvāṇa (lit. 'extinguishing') as a means of transcending the individual self and ending the cycle of death and rebirth (saṃsāra), while the Mahayana tradition emphasizes the Bodhisattva-ideal, in which one works for the liberation of all beings. The Buddhist canon is vast, with many different textual collections in different languages (such as Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, and Chinese).

The Theravāda branch has a widespread following in Sri Lanka as well as in Southeast Asia, namely Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. The Mahāyāna branch—which includes the traditions of Zen, Pure Land, Nichiren, Tiantai, Tendai, and Shingon—is predominantly practiced in Nepal, Bhutan, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. Additionally,

Vajrayana (lit. 'Indestructible Vehicle'), a body of teachings attributed to Indian adepts, may be viewed as a separate branch or tradition within Mahayana. Tibetan Buddhism, which preserves the Vajrayāna teachings of eighth-century India, is practised in the Himalayan states as well as in Mongolia and Russian Kalmykia. Historically, until the early 2nd millennium, Buddhism was widely practised in the Indian subcontinent; it also had a foothold to some extent elsewhere in Asia, namely Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines.

Etymology

Buddhism is an Indian religion or philosophy. The Buddha ("the Awakened One"), a Śramaṇa; who lived in South Asia c. 6th or 5th century BCE. Followers of Buddhism, called Buddhists in English, referred to themselves as Sakyan-s or Sakyabhiksu in ancient India. Buddhist scholar Donald S. Lopez asserts they also used the term Bauddha, although scholar Richard Cohen asserts that that term was used only by outsiders to describe Buddhists.

The Buddha

Details of the Buddha's life are mentioned in many Early Buddhist Texts but are inconsistent. His social background and life details are difficult to prove, and the precise dates are uncertain, although the 5th century BCE seems to be the best estimate.

Early texts have the Buddha's family name as "Gautama" (Pali: Gotama), while some texts give Siddhartha as his surname. He was born in Lumbini, present-day Nepal and grew up in Kapilavastu, a town in the Ganges Plain, near the modern Nepal–India border, and he spent his life in what is now modern Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Some hagiographic legends state that his father was a king named Suddhodana, his mother was Queen Maya. Scholars such as Richard Gombrich consider this a dubious claim because a combination of evidence suggests he was born in the Shakya community, which was governed by a small oligarchy or republic-like council where there were no ranks but where seniority mattered instead. Some of the stories about the Buddha, his life, his teachings, and claims about the society he grew up in may have been invented and interpolated at a later time into the Buddhist texts.

According to early texts such as the Pali Ariyapariyesanā-sutta ("The discourse on the noble quest", MN 26) and its Chinese parallel at MĀ 204, Gautama was moved by the suffering (dukkha) of life and death, and its endless repetition due to rebirth. He thus set out on a quest to find liberation from suffering (also known as "nirvana"). Early texts and biographies state that Gautama first studied under two teachers of meditation, namely Āḷāra Kālāma (Sanskrit: Arada Kalama) and Uddaka Ramaputta (Sanskrit: Udraka Ramaputra), learning meditation and philosophy, particularly the meditative attainment of "the sphere of nothingness" from the former, and "the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception" from the latter.

Finding these teachings to be insufficient to attain his goal, he turned to the practice of severe asceticism, which included a strict fasting regime and various forms of breath control. This too fell short of attaining his goal, and then he turned to the meditative practice of dhyana. He famously sat in meditation under a Ficus religiosa tree — now called the Bodhi Tree — in the town of Bodh Gaya and attained "Awakening" (Bodhi).

According to various early texts like the Mahāsaccaka-sutta, and the Samaññaphala Sutta, on awakening, the Buddha gained insight into the workings of karma and his former lives, as well as achieving the ending of the mental defilements (asavas), the ending of suffering, and the end of rebirth in saṃsara. This event also brought certainty about the Middle Way as the right path of spiritual practice to end suffering. As a fully enlightened Buddha, he attracted followers and founded a Sangha (monastic order). He spent the rest of his life teaching the Dharma he had discovered, and then died, achieving "final nirvana", at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, India.

The Buddha's teachings were propagated by his followers, which in the last centuries of the 1st millennium BCE became various Buddhist schools of thought, each with its own basket of texts containing different interpretations and authentic teachings of the Buddha; these over time evolved into many traditions of which the more well known and widespread in the modern era are Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

The term "Buddhism" is an occidental neologism, commonly (and "rather roughly" according to Donald S. Lopez Jr.) used as a translation for the Dharma of the Buddha, fójiào in

Chinese, bukkyō in Japanese, nang pa sangs rgyas pa'i chos in Tibetan, buddhadharma in Sanskrit, buddhaśāsana in Pali.

Four Noble Truths – dukkha and its ending

The Four Truths express the basic orientation of Buddhism: we crave and cling to impermanent states and things, which is dukkha, "incapable of satisfying" and painful. This keeps us caught in saṃsāra, the endless cycle of repeated rebirth, dukkha and dying again. But there is a way to liberation from this endless cycle to the state of nirvana, namely following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The truth of dukkha is the basic insight that life in this mundane world, with its clinging and craving to impermanent states and things is dukkha, and unsatisfactory. Dukkha can be translated as "incapable of satisfying", "the unsatisfactory nature and the general insecurity of all conditioned phenomena"; or "painful". Dukkha is most commonly translated as "suffering", but this is inaccurate, since it refers not to episodic suffering, but to the intrinsically unsatisfactory nature of temporary states and things, including pleasant but temporary experiences. We expect happiness from states and things which are impermanent, and therefore cannot attain real happiness.

In Buddhism, dukkha is one of the three marks of existence, along with impermanence and anattā (non-self). Buddhism, like other major Indian religions, asserts that everything is impermanent (anicca), but, unlike them, also asserts that there is no permanent self or soul in living beings (anattā). The ignorance or misperception (avijjā) that anything is permanent or that there is self in any being is considered a wrong understanding, and the primary source of clinging and dukkha.

The cycle of rebirth

Saṃsāra

Saṃsāra means "wandering" or "world", with the connotation of cyclic, circuitous change. It refers to the theory of rebirth and "cyclicality of all life, matter, existence", a fundamental assumption of Buddhism, as with all major Indian religions. Samsara in Buddhism

is considered to be dukkha, unsatisfactory and painful, perpetuated by desire and avidya (ignorance), and the resulting karma. Liberation from this cycle of existence, nirvana, has been the foundation and the most important historical justification of Buddhism.

Buddhist texts assert that rebirth can occur in six realms of existence, namely three good realms (heavenly, demi-god, human) and three evil realms (animal, hungry ghosts, hellish).[note 10] Samsara ends if a person attains nirvana, the "blowing out" of the afflictions through insight into impermanence and "non-self".

Rebirth

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception to death. In Buddhist thought, this rebirth does not involve a soul or any fixed substance. This is because the Buddhist doctrine of anattā (Sanskrit: anātman, no-self doctrine) rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul found in other religions.

The Buddhist traditions have traditionally disagreed on what it is in a person that is reborn, as well as how quickly the rebirth occurs after death. Some Buddhist traditions assert that "no self" doctrine means that there is no enduring self, but there is avacya (inexpressible) personality (pudgala) which migrates from one life to another. The majority of Buddhist traditions, in contrast, assert that vijñāna (a person's consciousness) though evolving, exists as a continuum and is the mechanistic basis of what undergoes the rebirth process. The quality of one's rebirth depends on the merit or demerit gained by one's karma (i.e. actions), as well as that accrued on one's behalf by a family member. Buddhism also developed a complex cosmology to explain the various realms or planes of rebirth.

Karma

In Buddhism, karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") drives saṃsāra – the endless cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skilful deeds (Pāli: kusala) and bad, unskilful deeds (Pāli: akusala) produce "seeds" in the unconscious receptacle (ālaya) that mature later either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. The existence of karma is a core belief in Buddhism, as with

all major Indian religions, and it implies neither fatalism nor that everything that happens to a person is caused by karma.

A central aspect of Buddhist theory of karma is that intent (cetanā) matters and is essential to bring about a consequence or phala "fruit" or vipāka "result". However, good or bad karma accumulates even if there is no physical action, and just having ill or good thoughts creates karmic seeds; thus, actions of body, speech or mind all lead to karmic seeds. In the Buddhist traditions, life aspects affected by the law of karma in past and current births of a being include the form of rebirth, realm of rebirth, social class, character and major circumstances of a lifetime. It operates like the laws of physics, without external intervention, on every being in all six realms of existence including human beings and gods.

A notable aspect of the karma theory in Buddhism is merit transfer. A person accumulates merit not only through intentions and ethical living, but also is able to gain merit from others by exchanging goods and services, such as through dāna (charity to monks or nuns). Further, a person can transfer one's own good karma to living family members and ancestors.

Liberation

The cessation of the kleshas and the attainment of nirvana (nibbāna), with which the cycle of rebirth ends, has been the primary and the soteriological goal of the Buddhist path for monastic life since the time of the Buddha. The term "path" is usually taken to mean the Noble Eightfold Path, but other versions of "the path" can also be found in the Nikayas. In some passages in the Pali Canon, a distinction is being made between right knowledge or insight (sammā-ñāṇa), and right liberation or release (sammā-vimutti), as the means to attain cessation and liberation.

Nirvana literally means "blowing out, quenching, becoming extinguished". In early Buddhist texts, it is the state of restraint and self-control that leads to the "blowing out" and the ending of the cycles of sufferings associated with rebirths and redeaths. Many later Buddhist texts describe nirvana as identical with anatta with complete "emptiness, nothingness". In some

texts, the state is described with greater detail, such as passing through the gate of emptiness (sunyata) – realising that there is no soul or self in any living being, then passing through the gate of signlessness (animitta) – realising that nirvana cannot be perceived, and finally passing through the gate of wishlessness (apranihita) – realising that nirvana is the state of not even wishing for nirvana.

The nirvana state has been described in Buddhist texts partly in a manner similar to other Indian religions, as the state of complete liberation, enlightenment, highest happiness, bliss, fearlessness, freedom, permanence, non-dependent origination, unfathomable, and indescribable. It has also been described in part differently, as a state of spiritual release marked by "emptiness" and realisation of non-self.

While Buddhism considers the liberation from saṃsāra as the ultimate spiritual goal, in traditional practice, the primary focus of a vast majority of lay Buddhists has been to seek and accumulate merit through good deeds, donations to monks and various Buddhist rituals in order to gain better rebirths rather than nirvana.

Dependent arising

Pratityasamutpada, also called "dependent arising, or dependent origination", is the Buddhist theory to explain the nature and relations of being, becoming, existence and ultimate reality. Buddhism asserts that there is nothing independent, except the state of nirvana. All physical and mental states depend on and arise from other pre-existing states, and in turn from them arise other dependent states while they cease.

The 'dependent arisings' have a causal conditioning, and thus Pratityasamutpada is the Buddhist belief that causality is the basis of ontology, not a creator God nor the ontological Vedic concept called universal Self (Brahman) nor any other 'transcendent creative principle'. However, Buddhist thought does not understand causality in terms of Newtonian mechanics; rather it understands it as conditioned arising. In Buddhism, dependent arising refers to conditions created by a plurality of causes that necessarily co-originate a phenomenon within

and across lifetimes, such as karma in one life creating conditions that lead to rebirth in one of the realms of existence for another lifetime.

Buddhism applies the theory of dependent arising to explain origination of endless cycles of dukkha and rebirth, through Twelve Nidānas or "twelve links". It states that because Avidyā (ignorance) exists, Saṃskāras (karmic formations) exist; because Saṃskāras exist therefore Vijñāna (consciousness) exists; and in a similar manner it links Nāmarūpa (the sentient body), Ṣaḍāyatana (our six senses), Sparśa (sensory stimulation), Vedanā (feeling), Taṇhā (craving), Upādāna (grasping), Bhava (becoming), Jāti (birth), and Jarāmaraṇa (old age, death, sorrow, and pain). By breaking the circuitous links of the Twelve Nidanas, Buddhism asserts that liberation from these endless cycles of rebirth and dukkha can be attained.

Not-Self and Emptiness

A related doctrine in Buddhism is that of anattā (Pali) or anātman (Sanskrit). It is the view that there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in phenomena. The Buddha and Buddhist philosophers who follow him such as Vasubandhu and Buddhaghosa, generally argue for this view by analyzing the person through the schema of the five aggregates, and then attempting to show that none of these five components of personality can be permanent or absolute. This can be seen in Buddhist discourses such as the Anattalakkhana Sutta.

"Emptiness" or "voidness" (Skt: Śūnyatā, Pali: Suññatā), is a related concept with many different interpretations throughout the various Buddhisms. In early Buddhism, it was commonly stated that all five aggregates are void (rittaka), hollow (tucchaka), coreless (asāraka), for example as in the Pheṇapiṇḍūpama Sutta (SN 22:95). Similarly, in Theravada Buddhism, it often means that the five aggregates are empty of a Self.

Emptiness is a central concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka school, and in the Prajñāpāramitā sutras. In Madhyamaka philosophy, emptiness is the view which holds that all phenomena (dharmas) are without any svabhava (literally "own-nature" or "self-nature"), and are thus without any underlying essence, and so are "empty" of

being independent. This doctrine sought to refute the heterodox theories of svabhava circulating at the time.

The Three Jewels

All forms of Buddhism revere and take spiritual refuge in the "three jewels" (triratna): Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Buddha

While all varieties of Buddhism revere "Buddha" and "buddhahood", they have different views on what these are. Regardless of their interpretation, the concept of Buddha is central to all forms of Buddhism.

In Theravada Buddhism, a Buddha is someone who has become awake through their own efforts and insight. They have put an end to their cycle of rebirths and have ended all unwholesome mental states which lead to bad action and thus are morally perfected. While subject to the limitations of the human body in certain ways (for example, in the early texts, the Buddha suffers from backaches), a Buddha is said to be "deep, immeasurable, hard-to-fathom as is the great ocean," and also has immense psychic powers (abhijñā). Theravada generally sees Gautama Buddha (the historical Buddha Sakyamuni) as the only Buddha of the current era.

Mahāyāna Buddhism meanwhile, has a vastly expanded cosmology, with various Buddhas and other holy beings (aryas) residing in different realms. Mahāyāna texts not only revere numerous Buddhas besides Shakyamuni, such as Amitabha and Vairocana, but also see them as transcendental or supramundane (lokuttara) beings. Mahāyāna Buddhism holds that these other Buddhas in other realms can be contacted and are able to benefit beings in this world. In Mahāyāna, a Buddha is a kind of "spiritual king", a "protector of all creatures" with a lifetime that is countless of eons long, rather than just a human teacher who has transcended the world after death. Shakyamuni's life and death on earth is then usually understood as a "mere appearance" or "a manifestation skilfully projected into earthly life by a long-enlightened transcendent being, who is still available to teach the faithful through visionary experiences."

Dharma

The second of the three jewels is "Dharma" (Pali: Dhamma), which in Buddhism refers to the Buddha's teaching, which includes all of the main ideas outlined above. While this teaching reflects the true nature of reality, it is not a belief to be clung to, but a pragmatic teaching to be put into practice. It is likened to a raft which is "for crossing over" (to nirvana) not for holding on to. It also refers to the universal law and cosmic order which that teaching both reveals and relies upon. It is an everlasting principle which applies to all beings and worlds. In that sense it is also the ultimate truth and reality about the universe, it is thus "the way that things really are."

Sangha

The third "jewel" which Buddhists take refuge in is the "Sangha", which refers to the monastic community of monks and nuns who follow Gautama Buddha's monastic discipline which was "designed to shape the Sangha as an ideal community, with the optimum conditions for spiritual growth." The Sangha consists of those who have chosen to follow the Buddha's ideal way of life, which is one of celibate monastic renunciation with minimal material possessions (such as an alms bowl and robes).

The Sangha is seen as important because they preserve and pass down Buddha Dharma. As Gethin states "the Sangha lives the teaching, preserves the teaching as Scriptures and teaches the wider community. Without the Sangha there is no Buddhism." The Sangha also acts as a "field of merit" for laypersons, allowing them to make spiritual merit or goodness by donating to the Sangha and supporting them. In return, they keep their duty to preserve and spread the Dharma everywhere for the good of the world.

There is also a separate definition of Sangha, referring to those who have attained any stage of awakening, whether or not they are monastics. This sangha is called the āryasaṅgha "noble Sangha". All forms of Buddhism generally reveres these āryas (Pali: ariya, "noble ones" or "holy ones") who are spiritually attained beings. Aryas have attained the fruits of the Buddhist path. Becoming an arya is a goal in most forms of Buddhism. The āryasaṅgha includes holy beings such as bodhisattvas, arhats and stream-enterers.

Other key Mahayana views

Mahāyāna Buddhism also differs from Theravada and the other schools of early Buddhism in promoting several unique doctrines which are contained in Mahāyāna sutras and philosophical treatises.

One of these is the unique interpretation of emptiness and dependent origination found in the Madhyamaka school. Another very influential doctrine for Mahāyāna is the main philosophical view of the Yogācāra school variously, termed Vijñaptimātratā-vāda ("the doctrine that there are only ideas" or "mental impressions") or Vijñānavāda ("the doctrine of consciousness"). According to Mark Siderits, what classical Yogācāra thinkers like Vasubandhu had in mind is that we are only ever aware of mental images or impressions, which may appear as external objects, but "there is actually no such thing outside the mind." There are several interpretations of this main theory, many scholars see it as a type of Idealism, others as a kind of phenomenology.

Another very influential concept unique to Mahāyāna is that of "Buddha-nature" (buddhadhātu) or "Tathagata-womb" (tathāgatagarbha). Buddha-nature is a concept found in some 1st-millennium CE Buddhist texts, such as the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras. According to Paul Williams these Sutras suggest that 'all sentient beings contain a Tathagata' as their 'essence, core inner nature, Self'. According to Karl Brunnholzl "the earliest mahayana sutras that are based on and discuss the notion of tathāgatagarbha as the buddha potential that is innate in all sentient beings began to appear in written form in the late second and early third century." For some, the doctrine seems to conflict with the Buddhist anatta doctrine (non-Self), leading scholars to posit that the Tathāgatagarbha Sutras were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists. This can be seen in texts like the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, which state that Buddha-nature is taught to help those who have fear when they listen to the teaching of anatta. Buddhist texts like the Ratnagotravibhāga clarify that the "Self" implied in Tathagatagarbha doctrine is actually "not-self". Various interpretations of the concept have been advanced by Buddhist thinkers throughout the history of Buddhist thought and most attempt to avoid anything like the Hindu

Atman doctrine. These Indian Buddhist ideas, in various synthetic ways, form the basis of subsequent Mahāyāna philosophy in Tibetan Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism.

Paths to liberation

The Bodhipakkhiyādhammā are seven lists of qualities or factors that contribute to awakening (bodhi). Each list is a short summary of the Buddhist path, and the seven lists substantially overlap. The best-known list in the West is the Noble Eightfold Path, but a wide variety of paths and models of progress have been used and described in the different Buddhist traditions. However, they generally share basic practices such as sila (ethics), samadhi (meditation, dhyana) and prajña (wisdom), which are known as the three trainings. An important additional practice is a kind and compassionate attitude toward every living being and the world. Devotion is also important in some Buddhist traditions, and in the Tibetan traditions visualisations of deities and mandalas are important. The value of textual study is regarded differently in the various Buddhist traditions. It is central to Theravada and highly important to Tibetan Buddhism, while the Zen tradition takes an ambiguous stance.

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the Middle Way (madhyamapratipad). It was a part of Buddha's first sermon, where he presented the Noble Eightfold Path that was a 'middle way' between the extremes of asceticism and hedonistic sense pleasures. In Buddhism, states Harvey, the doctrine of "dependent arising" (conditioned arising, pratītyasamutpāda) to explain rebirth is viewed as the 'middle way' between the doctrines that a being has a "permanent soul" involved in rebirth (eternalism) and "death is final and there is no rebirth" (annihilationism).

Paths to liberation in the early texts

A common presentation style of the path (marga) to liberation in the Early Buddhist Texts is the "graduated talk", in which the Buddha lays out a step by step training. In the early texts, numerous different sequences of the gradual path can be found. One of the most important and widely used presentations among the various Buddhist schools is The Noble Eightfold Path, or "Eightfold Path of the Noble Ones" (Skt. 'āryāṣṭāṅgamārga'). This can be found in various

discourses, most famously in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (The discourse on the turning of the Dharma wheel).

Other suttas such as the Tevijja Sutta, and the Cula-Hatthipadopama-sutta give a different outline of the path, though with many similar elements such as ethics and meditation. According to Rupert Gethin, the path to awakening is also frequently summarized by another a short formula: "abandoning the hindrances, practice of the four establishings of mindfulness, and development of the awakening factors."

Noble Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path consists of a set of eight interconnected factors or conditions, that when developed together, lead to the cessation of dukkha. These eight factors are: Right View (or Right Understanding), Right Intention (or Right Thought), Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. This Eightfold Path is the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, and asserts the path to the cessation of dukkha (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness). The path teaches that the way of the enlightened ones stopped their craving, clinging and karmic accumulations, and thus ended their endless cycles of rebirth and suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path is grouped into three basic divisions, as follows:

Right view

The belief that there is an afterlife and not everything ends with death, that Buddha taught and followed a successful path to nirvana; according to Peter Harvey, the right view is held in Buddhism as a belief in the Buddhist principles of karma and rebirth, and the importance of the Four Noble Truths and the True Realities.

Right intention

Giving up home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant in order to follow the path; this concept, states Harvey, aims at peaceful renunciation, into an environment of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to lovingkindness), away from cruelty (to compassion).

Right speech

No lying, no rude speech, no telling one person what another says about him, speaking that which leads to salvation.

Right action

No killing or injuring, no taking what is not given; no sexual acts in monastic pursuit, for lay Buddhists no sensual misconduct such as sexual involvement with someone married, or with an unmarried woman protected by her parents or relatives.

Right livelihood

For monks, beg to feed, only possessing what is essential to sustain life. For lay Buddhists, the canonical texts state right livelihood as abstaining from wrong livelihood, explained as not becoming a source or means of suffering to sentient beings by cheating them, or harming or killing them in any way.

Right effort

Guard against sensual thoughts; this concept, states Harvey, aims at preventing unwholesome states that disrupt meditation.

Right mindfulness

Never be absent-minded, conscious of what one is doing; this, states Harvey, encourages mindfulness about impermanence of the body, feelings and mind, as well as to experience the five skandhas, the five hindrances, the four True Realities and seven factors of awakening.

Right concentration

Correct meditation or concentration (dhyana), explained as the four jhānas.

Common Buddhist practices

Hearing and learning the Dharma

In various suttas which present the graduated path taught by the Buddha, such as the Samañ̃aphala Sutta and the Cula-Hatthipadopama Sutta, the first step on the path is hearing the Buddha teach the Dharma. This then said to lead to the acquiring of confidence or faith in the Buddha's teachings. Mahayana Buddhist teachers such as Yin Shun also state that hearing the Dharma and study of the Buddhist discourses is necessary "if one wants to learn and practice the Buddha Dharma." Likewise, in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, the "Stages of the Path" (Lamrim) texts generally place the activity of listening to the Buddhist teachings as an important early practice.

Refuge

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking of the "Three Refuges", also called the Three Jewels (Sanskrit: triratna, Pali: tiratana) as the foundation of one's religious practice. This practice may have been influenced by the Brahmanical motif of the triple refuge, found in the Rigveda 9.97.47, Rigveda 6.46.9 and Chandogya Upanishad 2.22.3–4. Tibetan Buddhism sometimes adds a fourth refuge, in the lama. The three refuges are believed by Buddhists to be protective and a form of reverence. The ancient formula which is repeated for taking refuge affirms that "I go to the Buddha as refuge, I go to the Dhamma as refuge, I go to the Sangha as refuge." Reciting the three refuges, according to Harvey, is considered not as a place to hide, rather a thought that "purifies, uplifts and strengthens the heart".

Śīla – Buddhist ethics

Śīla (Sanskrit) or sīla (Pāli) is the concept of "moral virtues", that is the second group and an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path. It generally consists of right speech, right action and right livelihood. One of the most basic forms of ethics in Buddhism is the taking of "precepts". This includes the Five Precepts for laypeople, Eight or Ten Precepts for monastic life, as well as rules of Dhamma (Vinaya or Patimokkha) adopted by a monastery. Other important elements of Buddhist ethics include giving or charity (dāna), Mettā (Good-Will), Heedfulness (Appamada), 'self-respect' (Hri) and 'regard for consequences' (Apatrapya).

Precepts

Buddhist scriptures explain the five precepts (Pali: pañcasīla; Sanskrit: pañcaśīla) as the minimal standard of Buddhist morality. It is the most important system of morality in Buddhism, together with the monastic rules. The five precepts are seen as a basic training applicable to all Buddhists. They are:

1. "I undertake the training-precept (sikkha-padam) to abstain from onslaught on breathing beings." This includes ordering or causing someone else to kill. The Pali suttas also say one should not "approve of others killing" and that one should be "scrupulous, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings."
2. "I undertake the training-precept to abstain from taking what is not given." According to Harvey, this also covers fraud, cheating, forgery as well as "falsely denying that one is in debt to someone."
3. "I undertake the training-precept to abstain from misconduct concerning sense-pleasures." This generally refers to adultery, as well as rape and incest. It also applies to sex with those who are legally under the protection of a guardian. It is also interpreted in different ways in the varying Buddhist cultures.
4. "I undertake the training-precept to abstain from false speech." According to Harvey this includes "any form of lying, deception or exaggeration...even non-verbal deception by gesture or other indication...or misleading statements." The precept is often also seen as including other forms of wrong speech such as "divisive speech, harsh, abusive, angry words, and even idle chatter."
5. "I undertake the training-precept to abstain from alcoholic drink or drugs that are an opportunity for heedlessness." According to Harvey, intoxication is seen as a way to mask rather than face the sufferings of life. It is seen as damaging to one's mental clarity, mindfulness and ability to keep the other four precepts.

Undertaking and upholding the five precepts is based on the principle of non-harming (Pāli and Sanskrit: ahiṃsa). The Pali Canon recommends one to compare oneself with others, and on the basis of that, not to hurt others. Compassion and a belief in karmic

retribution form the foundation of the precepts. Undertaking the five precepts is part of regular lay devotional practice, both at home and at the local temple. However, the extent to which people keep them differs per region and time. They are sometimes referred to as the śrāvakayāna precepts in the Mahāyāna tradition, contrasting them with the bodhisattva precepts.

Vinaya

Vinaya is the specific code of conduct for a sangha of monks or nuns. It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 offences including 75 rules of decorum for monks, along with penalties for transgression, in the Theravadin tradition. The precise content of the Vinaya Pitaka (scriptures on the Vinaya) differs in different schools and tradition, and different monasteries set their own standards on its implementation. The list of pattimokkha is recited every fortnight in a ritual gathering of all monks. Buddhist text with vinaya rules for monasteries have been traced in all Buddhist traditions, with the oldest surviving being the ancient Chinese translations.

Monastic communities in the Buddhist tradition cut normal social ties to family and community, and live as "islands unto themselves". Within a monastic fraternity, a sangha has its own rules. A monk abides by these institutionalised rules, and living life as the vinaya prescribes it is not merely a means, but very nearly the end in itself. Transgressions by a monk on Sangha vinaya rules invites enforcement, which can include temporary or permanent expulsion.

Restraint and renunciation

Another important practice taught by the Buddha is the restraint of the senses (indriyasamvara). In the various graduated paths, this is usually presented as a practice which is taught prior to formal sitting meditation, and which supports meditation by weakening sense desires that are a hindrance to meditation. According to Anālayo, sense restraint is when one "guards the sense doors in order to prevent sense impressions from leading to desires and discontent." This is not an avoidance of sense impression, but a kind of mindful attention

towards the sense impressions which does not dwell on their main features or signs (nimitta). This is said to prevent harmful influences from entering the mind. This practice is said to give rise to an inner peace and happiness which forms a basis for concentration and insight.

A related Buddhist virtue and practice is renunciation, or the intent for desirelessness (nekkhamma). Generally, renunciation is the giving up of actions and desires that are seen as unwholesome on the path, such as lust for sensuality and worldly things. Renunciation can be cultivated in different ways. The practice of giving for example, is one form of cultivating renunciation. Another one is the giving up of lay life and becoming a monastic (bhiksu o bhiksuni). Practicing celibacy (whether for life as a monk, or temporarily) is also a form of renunciation. Many Jataka stories such as the focus on how the Buddha practiced renunciation in past lives.

One way of cultivating renunciation taught by the Buddha is the contemplation (anupassana) of the "dangers" (or "negative consequences") of sensual pleasure (kāmānaṃ ādīnava). As part of the graduated discourse, this contemplation is taught after the practice of giving and morality. Another related practice to renunciation and sense restraint taught by the Buddha is "restraint in eating" or moderation with food, which for monks generally means not eating after noon. Devout laypersons also follow this rule during special days of religious observance (uposatha). Observing the Uposatha also includes other practices dealing with renunciation, mainly the eight precepts. For Buddhist monastics, renunciation can also be trained through several optional ascetic practices called dhutaṅga. In different Buddhist traditions, other related practices which focus on fasting are followed.

Mindfulness and clear comprehension

The training of the faculty called "mindfulness" is central in Buddhism. According to Analayo, mindfulness is a full awareness of the present moment which enhances and strengthens memory. The Indian Buddhist philosopher Asanga defined mindfulness thus: "It is non-forgetting by the mind with regard to the object experienced. Its function is non-distraction." According to Rupert Gethin, sati is also "an awareness of things in relation to things, and hence an awareness of their relative value." There are different practices and

exercises for training mindfulness in the early discourses, such as the four Satipaṭṭhānas (Sanskrit: smṛtyupasthāna, "establishments of mindfulness") and Ānāpānasati (Sanskrit: ānāpānasmṛti, "mindfulness of breathing"). A closely related mental faculty, which is often mentioned side by side with mindfulness, is sampajañña ("clear comprehension"). This faculty is the ability to comprehend what one is doing and is happening in the mind, and whether it is being influenced by unwholesome states or wholesome ones.

Meditation – Sama-amādhi and dhyāna

A wide range of meditation practices has developed in the Buddhist traditions, but "meditation" primarily refers to the attainment of samādhi and the practice of dhyāna (Pali: jhāna). Samādhi is a calm, undistracted, unified and concentrated state of awareness. It is defined by Asanga as "one-pointedness of mind on the object to be investigated. Its function consists of giving a basis to knowledge (jñāna)." Dhyāna is "state of perfect equanimity and awareness (upekkhā-sati-parisuddhi)," reached through focused mental training. The practice of dhyāna aids in maintaining a calm mind, and avoiding disturbance of this calm mind by mindfulness of disturbing thoughts and feelings.

Origins

The earliest evidence of yogis and their meditative tradition, states Karel Werner, is found in the Keśin hymn 10.136 of the Rigveda. While evidence suggests meditation was practised in the centuries preceding the Buddha, the meditative methodologies described in the Buddhist texts are some of the earliest among texts that have survived into the modern era. These methodologies likely incorporate what existed before the Buddha as well as those first developed within Buddhism. There is no scholarly agreement on the origin and source of the practice of dhyāna. Some scholars, like Bronkhorst, see the four dhyānas as a Buddhist invention. Alexander Wynne argues that the Buddha learned dhyāna from Brahmanical teachers.

Whatever the case, the Buddha taught meditation with a new focus and interpretation, particularly through the four dhyānas methodology, in which mindfulness is maintained. Further, the focus of meditation and the underlying theory of liberation guiding the meditation has been

different in Buddhism. For example, states Bronkhorst, the verse 4.4.23 of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with its "become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring, concentrated, one sees soul in oneslf" is most probably a meditative state. The Buddhist discussion of meditation is without the concept of soul and the discussion criticises both the ascetic meditation of Jainism and the "real self, soul" meditation of Hinduism.

The formless attainments

Often grouped into the jhāna-scheme are four other meditative states, referred to in the early texts as arupa samāpattis (formless attainments). These are also referred to in commentarial literature as immaterial/formless jhānas (arūpajhānas). The first formless attainment is a place or realm of infinite space (ākāsānañcāyatana) without form or colour or shape. The second is termed the realm of infinite consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana); the third is the realm of nothingness (ākiñcaññāyatana), while the fourth is the realm of "neither perception nor non-perception". The four rupa-jhānas in Buddhist practice lead to rebirth in successfully better rupa Brahma heavenly realms, while arupa-jhānas lead into arupa heavens.

Meditation and insight

In the Pali canon, the Buddha outlines two meditative qualities which are mutually supportive: samatha (Pāli; Sanskrit: śamatha; "calm") and vipassanā (Sanskrit: vipaśyanā, insight). The Buddha compares these mental qualities to a "swift pair of messengers" who together help deliver the message of nibbana (SN 35.245). The various Buddhist traditions generally see Buddhist meditation as being divided into those two main types. Samatha is also called "calming meditation", and focuses on stilling and concentrating the mind i.e. developing samadhi and the four dhyānas. According to Damien Keown, vipassanā meanwhile, focuses on "the generation of penetrating and critical insight (pann)".

There are numerous doctrinal positions and disagreements within the different Buddhist traditions regarding these qualities or forms of meditation. For example, in the Pali Four Ways to Arahantship Sutta (AN 4.170), it is said that one can develop calm and then insight, or insight and then calm, or both at the same time. Meanwhile, in Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośakārikā,

vipaśyanā is said to be practiced once one has reached samadhi by cultivating the four foundations of mindfulness (smṛtyupasthānas).

Beginning with comments by La Vallee Poussin, a series of scholars have argued that these two meditation types reflect a tension between two different ancient Buddhist traditions regarding the use of dhyāna, one which focused on insight based practice and the other which focused purely on dhyāna. However, other scholars such as Analayo and Rupert Gethin have disagreed with this "two paths" thesis, instead seeing both of these practices as complementary.

The Brahma-vihara

The four immeasurables or four abodes, also called Brahma-viharas, are virtues or directions for meditation in Buddhist traditions, which helps a person be reborn in the heavenly (Brahma) realm. These are traditionally believed to be a characteristic of the deity Brahma and the heavenly abode he resides in.

The four Brahma-vihara are:

1. Loving-kindness (Pāli: mettā, Sanskrit: maitrī) is active good will towards all;[293][296]
2. Compassion (Pāli and Sanskrit: karuṇā) results from metta; it is identifying the suffering of others as one's own;
3. Empathetic joy (Pāli and Sanskrit: muditā): is the feeling of joy because others are happy, even if one did not contribute to it; it is a form of sympathetic joy;
4. Equanimity (Pāli: upekkhā, Sanskrit: upekṣā): is even-mindedness and serenity, treating everyone impartially.

Tantra, visualization and the subtle body

Some Buddhist traditions, especially those associated with Tantric Buddhism (also known as Vajrayana and Secret Mantra) use images and symbols of deities and Buddhas in meditation. This is generally done by mentally visualizing a Buddha image (or some other mental image, like a symbol, a mandala, a syllable, etc.), and using that image to cultivate calm and insight. One may also visualize and identify oneself with the imagined deity. While

visualization practices have been particularly popular in Vajrayana, they may also found in Mahayana and Theravada traditions.

In Tibetan Buddhism, unique tantric techniques which include visualization (but also mantra recitation, mandalas, and other elements) are considered to be much more effective than non-tantric meditations and they are one of the most popular meditation methods. The methods of Unsurpassable Yoga Tantra, (anuttarayogatantra) are in turn seen as the highest and most advanced. Anuttarayoga practice is divided into two stages, the Generation Stage and the Completion Stage. In the Generation Stage, one meditates on emptiness and visualizes oneself as a deity as well as visualizing its mandala. The focus is on developing clear appearance and divine pride (the understanding that oneself and the deity are one). This method is also known as deity yoga (devata yoga). There are numerous meditation deities (yidam) used, each with a mandala, a circular symbolic map used in meditation.

Insight and knowledge

Prajñā (Sanskrit) or paññā (Pāli) is wisdom, or knowledge of the true nature of existence. Another term which is associated with prajñā and sometimes is equivalent to it is vipassanā (Pāli) or vipaśyanā (Sanskrit), which is often translated as "insight". In Buddhist texts, the faculty of insight is often said to be cultivated through the four establishments of mindfulness. In the early texts, Paññā is included as one of the "five faculties" (indriya) which are commonly listed as important spiritual elements to be cultivated (see for example: AN I 16). Paññā along with samadhi, is also listed as one of the "trainings in the higher states of mind" (adhicittasikkha). The Buddhist tradition regards ignorance (avidyā), a fundamental ignorance, misunderstanding or mis-perception of the nature of reality, as one of the basic causes of dukkha and samsara. Overcoming this ignorance is part of the path to awakening. This overcoming includes the contemplation of impermanence and the non-self nature of reality, and this develops dispassion for the objects of clinging, and liberates a being from dukkha and saṃsāra.

Prajñā is important in all Buddhist traditions. It is variously described as wisdom regarding the impermanent and not-self nature of dharmas (phenomena), the functioning of

karma and rebirth, and knowledge of dependent origination. Likewise, vipaśyanā is described in a similar way, such as in the Paṭisambhidāmagga, where it is said to be the contemplation of things as impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self.

Devotion

Most forms of Buddhism "consider saddhā (Skt śraddhā), 'trustful confidence' or 'faith', as a quality which must be balanced by wisdom, and as a preparation for, or accompaniment of, meditation." Because of this devotion (Skt. bhakti; Pali: bhatti) is an important part of the practice of most Buddhists. Devotional practices include ritual prayer, prostration, offerings, pilgrimage, and chanting. Buddhist devotion is usually focused on some object, image or location that is seen as holy or spiritually influential. Examples of objects of devotion include paintings or statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, stupas, and bodhi trees. Public group chanting for devotional and ceremonial is common to all Buddhist traditions and goes back to ancient India where chanting aided in the memorization of the orally transmitted teachings. Rosaries called malas are used in all Buddhist traditions to count repeated chanting of common formulas or mantras. Chanting is thus a type of devotional group meditation which leads to tranquility and communicates the Buddhist teachings.

Vegetarianism and animal ethics

Based on the Indian principle of ahimsa (non-harming), the Buddha's ethics strongly condemn the harming of all sentient beings, including all animals. He thus condemned the animal sacrifice of the Brahmins as well hunting, and killing animals for food. However, early Buddhist texts depict the Buddha as allowing monastics to eat meat. This seems to be because monastics begged for their food and thus were supposed to accept whatever food was offered to them. This was tempered by the rule that meat had to be "three times clean": "they had not seen, had not heard, and had no reason to suspect that the animal had been killed so that the meat could be given to them". Also, while the Buddha did not explicitly promote vegetarianism in his discourses, he did state that gaining one's livelihood from the meat trade was unethical. In contrast to this, various Mahayana sutras and texts like the Mahaparinirvana sutra, Surangama sutra and the Lankavatara sutra state that the Buddha promoted vegetarianism out of

compassion. Indian Mahayana thinkers like Shantideva promoted the avoidance of meat. Throughout history, the issue of whether Buddhists should be vegetarian has remained a much debated topic and there is a variety of opinions on this issue among modern Buddhists.

Buddhist texts

Buddhism, like all Indian religions, was initially an oral tradition in ancient times. The Buddha's words, the early doctrines, concepts, and their traditional interpretations were orally transmitted from one generation to the next. The earliest oral texts were transmitted in Middle Indo-Aryan languages called Prakrits, such as Pali, through the use of communal recitation and other mnemonic techniques. The first Buddhist canonical texts were likely written down in Sri Lanka, about 400 years after the Buddha died. The texts were part of the Tripitakas, and many versions appeared thereafter claiming to be the words of the Buddha. Scholarly Buddhist commentary texts, with named authors, appeared in India, around the 2nd century CE. These texts were written in Pali or Sanskrit, sometimes regional languages, as palm-leaf manuscripts, birch bark, painted scrolls, carved into temple walls, and later on paper.

Unlike what the Bible is to Christianity and the Quran is to Islam, but like all major ancient Indian religions, there is no consensus among the different Buddhist traditions as to what constitutes the scriptures or a common canon in Buddhism. The general belief among Buddhists is that the canonical corpus is vast. This corpus includes the ancient Sutras organised into Nikayas or Agamas, itself the part of three basket of texts called the Tripitakas. Each Buddhist tradition has its own collection of texts, much of which is translation of ancient Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts of India. The Chinese Buddhist canon, for example, includes 2184 texts in 55 volumes, while the Tibetan canon comprises 1108 texts – all claimed to have been spoken by the Buddha – and another 3461 texts composed by Indian scholars revered in the Tibetan tradition. The Buddhist textual history is vast; over 40,000 manuscripts – mostly Buddhist, some non-Buddhist – were discovered in 1900 in the Dunhuang Chinese cave alone.

Early Buddhist texts

The Early Buddhist Texts refers to the literature which is considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist material. The first four Pali Nikayas, and the corresponding Chinese Āgamas are generally considered to be among the earliest material. Apart from these, there are also fragmentary collections of EBT materials in other languages such as Sanskrit, Khotanese, Tibetan and Gāndhārī. The modern study of early Buddhism often relies on comparative scholarship using these various early Buddhist sources to identify parallel texts and common doctrinal content. One feature of these early texts are literary structures which reflect oral transmission, such as widespread repetition.

The Tripitakas

Many early Tripiṭakas, like the Pāli Tipitaka, were divided into three sections: Vinaya Pitaka (focuses on monastic rule), Sutta Pitaka (Buddhist discourses) and Abhidhamma Pitaka, which contain expositions and commentaries on the doctrine. The Pāli Tipitaka (also known as the Pali Canon) of the Theravada School constitutes the only complete collection of Buddhist texts in an Indic language which has survived until today. However, many Sutras, Vinayas and Abhidharma works from other schools survive in Chinese translation, as part of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. According to some sources, some early schools of Buddhism had five or seven pitakas.

Mahāyāna texts

The Mahāyāna sūtras are a very broad genre of Buddhist scriptures that the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition holds are original teachings of the Buddha. Modern historians generally hold that the first of these texts were composed probably around the 1st century BCE or 1st century CE. In Mahāyāna, these texts are generally given greater authority than the early Āgamas and Abhidharma literature, which are called "Śrāvakayāna" or "Hinayana" to distinguish them from Mahāyāna sūtras. Mahāyāna traditions mainly see these different classes of texts as being designed for different types of persons, with different levels of spiritual understanding. The Mahāyāna sūtras are mainly seen as being for those of "greater" capacity. Mahāyāna also

has a very large literature of philosophical and exegetical texts. These are often called śāstra (treatises) or vrittis (commentaries). Some of this literature was also written in verse form (karikās), the most famous of which is the Mūlamadhyamika-karikā (Root Verses on the Middle Way) by Nagarjuna, the foundational text of the Madhyamika school.

Tantric texts

During the Gupta Empire, a new class of Buddhist sacred literature began to develop, which are called the Tantras. By the 8th century, the tantric tradition was very influential in India and beyond. Besides drawing on a Mahāyāna Buddhist framework, these texts also borrowed deities and material from other Indian religious traditions, such as the Śaiva and Pancharatra traditions, local god/goddess cults, and local spirit worship (such as yaksha or nāga spirits).

Some features of these texts include the widespread use of mantras, meditation on the subtle body, worship of fierce deities, and antinomian and transgressive practices such as ingesting alcohol and performing sexual rituals.

Historical roots

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of Iron Age India around the middle of the first millennium BCE. This was a period of great intellectual ferment and socio-cultural change known as the "Second urbanisation", marked by the growth of towns and trade, the composition of the Upanishads and the historical emergence of the Śramaṇa traditions. New ideas developed both in the Vedic tradition in the form of the Upanishads, and outside of the Vedic tradition through the Śramaṇa movements. The term Śramaṇa refers to several Indian religious movements parallel to but separate from the historical Vedic religion, including Buddhism, Jainism and others such as Ājīvika.

Several Śramaṇa movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE (pre-Buddha, pre-Mahavira), and these influenced both the āstika and nāstika traditions of Indian philosophy. According to Martin Wilshire, the Śramaṇa tradition evolved in India over two phases, namely Paccekabuddha and Savaka phases, the former being the tradition of

individual ascetic and the latter of disciples, and that Buddhism and Jainism ultimately emerged from these. Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical ascetic groups shared and used several similar ideas, but the Śramaṇa traditions also drew upon already established Brahmanical concepts and philosophical roots, states Wiltshire, to formulate their own doctrines. Brahmanical motifs can be found in the oldest Buddhist texts, using them to introduce and explain Buddhist ideas. For example, prior to Buddhist developments, the Brahmanical tradition internalised and variously reinterpreted the three Vedic sacrificial fires as concepts such as Truth, Rite, Tranquility or Restraint. Buddhist texts also refer to the three Vedic sacrificial fires, reinterpreting and explaining them as ethical conduct.

The Śramaṇa religions challenged and broke with the Brahmanic tradition on core assumptions such as Atman (soul, self), Brahman, the nature of afterlife, and they rejected the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads. Buddhism was one among several Indian religions that did so. Early buddhist positions in the Theravada tradition had not established any deities, but were epistemologically cautious rather than directly atheist. Later buddhist traditions were more influenced by the critique of deities within Hinduism and therefore more committed to a strongly atheist stance. These developments were historic and epistemological as documented in verses from Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra, and supplemented by reference to suttas and jātakas from the Pali canon.

Indian Buddhism

The history of Indian Buddhism may be divided into five periods: Early Buddhism (occasionally called pre-sectarian Buddhism), Nikaya Buddhism or Sectarian Buddhism: The period of the early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, Late Mahayana, and the era of Vajrayana or the "Tantric Age".

Pre-sectarian Buddhism

According to Lambert Schmithausen Pre-sectarian Buddhism is "the canonical period prior to the development of different schools with their different positions." The early Buddhist Texts include the four principal Pali Nikāyas (and their parallel Agamas found in the Chinese

canon) together with the main body of monastic rules, which survive in the various versions of the patimokkha. However, these texts were revised over time, and it is unclear what constitutes the earliest layer of Buddhist teachings. One method to obtain information on the oldest core of Buddhism is to compare the oldest extant versions of the Theravadin Pāli Canon and other texts. The reliability of the early sources, and the possibility to draw out a core of oldest teachings, is a matter of dispute. According to Vetter, inconsistencies remain, and other methods must be applied to resolve those inconsistencies. According to Schmithausen, three positions held by scholars of Buddhism can be distinguished:

1. "Stress on the fundamental homogeneity and substantial authenticity of at least a considerable part of the Nikayic materials;"
2. "Scepticism with regard to the possibility of retrieving the doctrine of earliest Buddhism;"
3. "Cautious optimism in this respect."

The Core teachings

According to Mitchell, certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout the early texts, which has led most scholars to conclude that Gautama Buddha must have taught something similar to the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, Nirvana, the three marks of existence, the five aggregates, dependent origination, karma and rebirth. According to N. Ross Reat, all of these doctrines are shared by the Theravada Pali texts and the Mahasamghika school's Śālistamba Sūtra. A recent study by Bhikkhu Analayo concludes that the Theravada Majjhima Nikaya and Sarvastivada Madhyama Agama contain mostly the same major doctrines. Richard Salomon, in his study of the Gandharan texts (which are the earliest manuscripts containing early discourses), has confirmed that their teachings are "consistent with non-Mahayana Buddhism, which survives today in the Theravada school of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, but which in ancient times was represented by eighteen separate schools."

However, some scholars argue that critical analysis reveals discrepancies among the various doctrines found in these early texts, which point to alternative possibilities for early Buddhism. The authenticity of certain teachings and doctrines have been questioned. For

example, some scholars think that karma was not central to the teaching of the historical Buddha, while other disagree with this position. Likewise, there is scholarly disagreement on whether insight was seen as liberating in early Buddhism or whether it was a later addition to the practice of the four jhānas. Scholars such as Bronkhorst also think that the four noble truths may not have been formulated in earliest Buddhism, and did not serve in earliest Buddhism as a description of "liberating insight". According to Vetter, the description of the Buddhist path may initially have been as simple as the term "the middle way". In time, this short description was elaborated, resulting in the description of the eightfold path.

Ashokan Era and the early schools

According to numerous Buddhist scriptures, soon after the parinirvāṇa (from Sanskrit: "highest extinguishment") of Gautama Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission. Many modern scholars question the historicity of this event. However, Richard Gombrich states that the monastic assembly recitations of the Buddha's teaching likely began during Buddha's lifetime, and they served a similar role of codifying the teachings. The so called Second Buddhist council resulted in the first schism in the Sangha. Modern scholars believe that this was probably caused when a group of reformists called Sthaviras ("elders") sought to modify the Vinaya (monastic rule), and this caused a split with the conservatives who rejected this change, they were called Mahāsāṃghikas. While most scholars accept that this happened at some point, there is no agreement on the dating, especially if it dates to before or after the reign of Ashoka.

Buddhism may have spread only slowly throughout India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (304–232 BCE), who was a public supporter of the religion. The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (such as at Sanchi and Bharhut), temples (such as the Mahabodhi Temple) and to its spread throughout the Maurya Empire and into neighbouring lands such as Central Asia and to the island of Sri Lanka.

During and after the Mauryan period (322–180 BCE), the Sthavira community gave rise to several schools, one of which was the Theravada school which tended to congregate in the

south and another which was the Sarvāstivāda school, which was mainly in north India. Likewise, the Mahāsāṃghika groups also eventually split into different Sanghas. Originally, these schisms were caused by disputes over monastic disciplinary codes of various fraternities, but eventually, by about 100 CE if not earlier, schisms were being caused by doctrinal disagreements too.

Following (or leading up to) the schisms, each Saṅgha started to accumulate their own version of Tripiṭaka (triple basket of texts). In their Tripiṭaka, each school included the Suttas of the Buddha, a Vinaya basket (disciplinary code) and some schools also added an Abhidharma basket which were texts on detailed scholastic classification, summary and interpretation of the Suttas. The doctrine details in the Abhidharmas of various Buddhist schools differ significantly, and these were composed starting about the third century BCE and through the 1st millennium CE.

Post-Ashokan expansion

According to the edicts of Aśoka, the Mauryan emperor sent emissaries to various countries west of India to spread "Dharma", particularly in eastern provinces of the neighbouring Seleucid Empire, and even farther to Hellenistic kingdoms of the Mediterranean. It is a matter of disagreement among scholars whether or not these emissaries were accompanied by Buddhist missionaries.

Buddhist expansion throughout Asia

In central and west Asia, Buddhist influence grew, through Greek-speaking Buddhist monarchs and ancient Asian trade routes, a phenomenon known as Greco-Buddhism. An example of this is evidenced in Chinese and Pali Buddhist records, such as Milindapanha and the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. The Milindapanha describes a conversation between a Buddhist monk and the 2nd-century BCE Greek king Menander, after which Menander abdicates and himself goes into monastic life in the pursuit of nirvana. Some scholars have questioned the Milindapanha version, expressing doubts whether Menander was Buddhist or just favourably disposed to Buddhist monks.

The Kushan empire (30–375 CE) came to control the Silk Road trade through Central and South Asia, which brought them to interact with Gandharan Buddhism and the Buddhist institutions of these regions. The Kushans patronised Buddhism throughout their lands, and many Buddhist centers were built or renovated (the Sarvastivada school was particularly favored), especially by Emperor Kanishka (128–151 CE). Kushan support helped Buddhism to expand into a world religion through their trade routes. Buddhism spread to Khotan, the Tarim Basin, and China, eventually to other parts of the far east. Some of the earliest written documents of the Buddhist faith are the Gandharan Buddhist texts, dating from about the 1st century CE, and connected to the Dharmaguptaka school. The Islamic conquest of the Iranian Plateau in the 7th-century, followed by the Muslim conquests of Afghanistan and the later establishment of the Ghaznavid kingdom with Islam as the state religion in Central Asia between the 10th- and 12th-century led to the decline and disappearance of Buddhism from most of these regions.

Mahāyāna Buddhism

The origins of Mahāyāna ("Great Vehicle") Buddhism are not well understood and there are various competing theories about how and where this movement arose. Theories include the idea that it began as various groups venerating certain texts or that it arose as a strict forest ascetic movement. The first Mahāyāna works were written sometime between the 1st century BCE and the 2nd century CE. Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts, mainly those of Lokakṣema. (2nd century CE).[note 30] Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the first versions of the Prajnaparamita series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.

There is no evidence that Mahāyāna ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, with a separate monastic code (Vinaya), but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas. Records written by Chinese monks visiting India indicate that both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks could be found in the same monasteries,

with the difference that Mahāyāna monks worshipped figures of Bodhisattvas, while non-Mahayana monks did not.

Mahāyāna initially seems to have remained a small minority movement that was in tension with other Buddhist groups, struggling for wider acceptance. However, during the fifth and sixth centuries CE, there seems to have been a rapid growth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is shown by a large increase in epigraphic and manuscript evidence in this period. However, it still remained a minority in comparison to other Buddhist schools.

Mahāyāna Buddhist institutions continued to grow in influence during the following centuries, with large monastic university complexes such as Nalanda (established by the 5th-century CE Gupta emperor, Kumaragupta I) and Vikramashila (established under Dharmapala c. 783 to 820) becoming quite powerful and influential. During this period of Late Mahāyāna, four major types of thought developed: Mādhyamaka, Yogācāra, Buddha-nature (Tathāgatagarbha), and the epistemological tradition of Dignaga and Dharmakirti. According to Dan Lusthaus, Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra have a great deal in common, and the commonality stems from early Buddhism.

Late Indian Buddhism and Tantra

During the Gupta period (4th–6th centuries) and the empire of Harṣavardana (c. 590–647 CE), Buddhism continued to be influential in India, and large Buddhist learning institutions such as Nalanda and Valabahi Universities were at their peak. Buddhism also flourished under the support of the Pāla Empire (8th–12th centuries). Under the Guptas and Palas, Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayana developed and rose to prominence. It promoted new practices such as the use of mantras, dharanis, mudras, mandalas and the visualization of deities and Buddhas and developed a new class of literature, the Buddhist Tantras. This new esoteric form of Buddhism can be traced back to groups of wandering yogi magicians called mahasiddhas. The question of the origins of early Vajrayana has been taken up by various scholars. David Seyfort Ruegg has suggested that Buddhist tantra employed various elements of a "pan-Indian religious substrate" which is not specifically Buddhist, Shaiva or Vaishnava.

According to Indologist Alexis Sanderson, various classes of Vajrayana literature developed as a result of royal courts sponsoring both Buddhism and Saivism. Sanderson has argued that Buddhist tantras can be shown to have borrowed practices, terms, rituals and more form Shaiva tantras. He argues that Buddhist texts even directly copied various Shaiva tantras, especially the Bhairava Vidyapitha tantras. Ronald M. Davidson meanwhile, argues that Sanderson's claims for direct influence from Shaiva Vidyapitha texts are problematic because "the chronology of the Vidyapitha tantras is by no means so well established" and that the Shaiva tradition also appropriated non-Hindu deities, texts and traditions. Thus while "there can be no question that the Buddhist tantras were heavily influenced by Kapalika and other Saiva movements" argues Davidson, "the influence was apparently mutual."

Already during this later era, Buddhism was losing state support in other regions of India, including the lands of the Karkotas, the Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas, the Pandyas and the Pallavas. This loss of support in favor of Hindu faiths like Vaishnavism and Shaivism, is the beginning of the long and complex period of the Decline of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent. The Islamic invasions and conquest of India (10th to 12th century), further damaged and destroyed many Buddhist institutions, leading to its eventual near disappearance from India by the 1200s.

Spread to East and Southeast Asia

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to China is most commonly thought to have started in the late 2nd or the 1st century CE, though the literary sources are all open to question. The first documented translation efforts by foreign Buddhist monks in China were in the 2nd century CE, probably as a consequence of the expansion of the Kushan Empire into the Chinese territory of the Tarim Basin.

The first documented Buddhist texts translated into Chinese are those of the Parthian An Shigao (148–180 CE). The first known Mahāyāna scriptural texts are translations into Chinese by the Kushan monk Lokakṣema in Luoyang, between 178 and 189 CE. From China, Buddhism was introduced into its neighbours Korea (4th century), Japan (6th–7th centuries), and Vietnam (c. 1st–2nd centuries).

During the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907), Chinese Esoteric Buddhism was introduced from India and Chan Buddhism (Zen) became a major religion. Chan continued to grow in the Song dynasty (960–1279) and it was during this era that it strongly influenced Korean Buddhism and Japanese Buddhism. Pure Land Buddhism also became popular during this period and was often practised together with Chan. It was also during the Song that the entire Chinese canon was printed using over 130,000 wooden printing blocks.

During the Indian period of Esoteric Buddhism (from the 8th century onwards), Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and Mongolia. Johannes Bronkhorst states that the esoteric form was attractive because it allowed both a secluded monastic community as well as the social rites and rituals important to laypersons and to kings for the maintenance of a political state during succession and wars to resist invasion. During the Middle Ages, Buddhism slowly declined in India, while it vanished from Persia and Central Asia as Islam became the state religion.

The Theravada school arrived in Sri Lanka sometime in the 3rd century BCE. Sri Lanka became a base for its later spread to Southeast Asia after the 5th century CE (Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and coastal Vietnam). Theravada Buddhism was the dominant religion in Burma during the Mon Hanthawaddy Kingdom (1287–1552). It also became dominant in the Khmer Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries and in the Thai Sukhothai Kingdom during the reign of Ram Khamhaeng (1237/1247–1298).

Schools and traditions

Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravāda or Mahāyāna. This classification is also used by some scholars and is the one ordinarily used in the English language. An alternative scheme used by some scholars divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas: Theravāda (or "Southern Buddhism", "South Asian Buddhism"), East Asian Buddhism (or just "Eastern Buddhism") and Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (or "Northern Buddhism").

Some scholars use other schemes. Buddhists themselves have a variety of other schemes. Hinayana (literally "lesser or inferior vehicle") is sometimes used by Mahāyāna followers to name the family of early philosophical schools and traditions from which contemporary Theravāda emerged, but as the Hinayana term is considered derogatory, a variety of other terms are used instead, including: Śrāvakayāna, Nikaya Buddhism, early Buddhist schools, sectarian Buddhism and conservative Buddhism.

Not all traditions of Buddhism share the same philosophical outlook, or treat the same concepts as central. Each tradition, however, does have its own core concepts, and some comparisons can be drawn between them:

Monasteries and temples

Buddhist institutions are often housed and centered around monasteries (Sanskrit:viharas) and temples. Buddhist monastics originally followed a life of wandering, never staying in one place for long. During the three month rainy season (vassa) they would gather together in one place for a period of intense practice and then depart again. Some of the earliest Buddhist monasteries were at groves (vanas) or woods (arañña̱s), such as Jetavana and Sarnath's Deer Park. There originally seems to have been two main types of monasteries, monastic settlements (sangharamas) were built and supported by donors, and woodland camps (avasas) were set up by monks. Whatever structures were built in these locales were made out of wood and were sometimes temporary structures built for the rainy season. Over time, the wandering community slowly adopted more settled cenobitic forms of monasticism.

There are many different forms of Buddhist structures. Classic Indian Buddhist institutions mainly made use of the following structures: monasteries, rock-hewn cave complexes (such as the Ajanta Caves), stupas (funerary mounds which contained relics), and temples such as the Mahabodhi Temple. In Southeast Asia, the most widespread institutions are centered on wats. East Asian Buddhist institutions also use various structures including monastic halls, temples, lecture halls, bell towers and pagodas. In Japanese Buddhist temples, these different structures are usually grouped together in an area termed the garan. In Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhist institutions are generally housed in gompas. They include monastic quarters, stupas and

prayer halls with Buddha images. In the modern era, the Buddhist "meditation centre", which is mostly used by laypersons and often also staffed by them, has also become widespread.

Jainism

Jainism, also known as Jain Dharma, is an Indian religion. Jainism traces its spiritual ideas and history through the succession of twenty-four tirthankaras (supreme preachers of Dharma), with the first in the current time cycle being Rishabhadeva, whom the tradition holds to have lived millions of years ago, the twenty-third tirthankara Parshvanatha, whom historians date to the 9th century BCE, and the twenty-fourth tirthankara Mahavira, around 600 BCE. Jainism is considered to be an eternal dharma with the tirthankaras guiding every time cycle of the cosmology. The three main pillars of Jainism are ahiṃsā (non-violence), anekāntavāda (non-absolutism), and aparigraha (asceticism).

Jain monks, after positioning themselves in the sublime state of soul consciousness, take five main vows: ahiṃsā (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (not stealing), brahmacharya (chastity), and aparigraha (non-possessiveness). These principles have affected Jain culture in many ways, such as leading to a predominantly lacto-vegetarian lifestyle. Parasparopagraho jīvānām (the function of souls is to help one another) is the faith's motto, and the Ṇamōkāra mantra is its most common and basic prayer.

Jainism is one of the oldest religions still practiced today. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, Digambaras and Śvētāmbaras, which hold different views on ascetic practices, gender, and the texts considered canonical. Both sub-traditions have mendicants supported by laypersons (śrāvakas and śrāvikas). The Śvētāmbara tradition in turn has three sub-traditions: Mandirvāsī, Deravasi, and Sthānakavasī. The religion has between four and five million followers, known as Jains, who reside mostly in India, where they number around 4.5 million as per the 2011 census. Outside India, some of the largest Jain communities can be found in Canada, Europe, and the United States. Japan is also home to a fast-growing community of converts. Major festivals include Paryushana and Das Lakshana, Ashtanika, Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, Akshaya Tritiya, and Dipawali.

Beliefs and philosophy

Jainism is transtheistic and forecasts that the universe evolves without violating the law of substance dualism, and the actual realization of this principle plays out through the phenomena of both parallelism and interactionism.

Dravya

Dravya means substances or entity in Sanskrit. Jains believe the universe is made up of six eternal substances: sentient beings or souls (jīva), non-sentient substance or matter (pudgala), the principle of motion (dharma), the principle of rest (adharma), space (ākāśa), and time (kāla). The last five are united as the ajiva (non-living). Jains distinguish a substance from a complex body, or thing, by declaring the former a simple indestructible element, while the latter is a compound made of one or more substances that can be destroyed.

Tattva

Tattva connotes reality or truth in Jain philosophy and is the framework for salvation. According to Digambara Jains, there are seven tattvas: the sentient (jiva or living), the insentient (ajiva or non-living), the karmic influx to the soul (Āsrava, which is a mix of living and non-living), the bondage of karmic particles to the soul (Bandha), the stoppage of karmic particles (Saṃvara), the wiping away of past karmic particles (Nirjarā), and the liberation (Moksha). Śvētāmbaras add two further tattvas, namely good karma (Punya) and bad karma (Paapa). The true insight in Jain philosophy is considered as "faith in the tattvas". The spiritual goal in Jainism is to reach moksha for ascetics, but for most Jain laypersons, it is to accumulate good karma that leads to better rebirth and a step closer to liberation.

Pramana

Jain philosophy accepts three reliable means of knowledge (pramana). It holds that correct knowledge is based on perception (pratyaksa), inference (anumana) and testimony (sabda or the word of scriptures). These ideas are elaborated in Jain texts such as Tattvarthasūtra, Parvacanasara, Nandi and Anuyogadvarini. Some Jain texts add analogy (upamana) as the fourth reliable means, in a manner similar to epistemological theories found in other Indian religions. In Jainism, jnāna (knowledge) is said to be of five kinds – mati jñāna (sensory knowledge), śrutu jñāna (scriptural knowledge), avadhi jñāna (clairvoyance), manah prayāya Jñāna (telepathy) and kevala jnana (omniscience). According to the Jain text Tattvartha sūtra, the first two are indirect knowledge and the remaining three are direct knowledge.

Soul and karma

According to Jainism, the existence of "a bound and ever changing soul" is a self-evident truth, an axiom which does not need to be proven. It maintains that there are numerous souls, but every one of them has three qualities (Guṇa): consciousness (chaitanya, the most important), bliss (sukha) and

vibrational energy (virya). It further claims the vibration draws karmic particles to the soul and creates bondages, but is also what adds merit or demerit to the soul. Jain texts state that souls exist as "clothed with material bodies", where it entirely fills up the body. Karma, as in other Indian religions, connotes in Jainism the universal cause and effect law. However, it is envisioned as a material substance (subtle matter) that can bind to the soul, travel with the soul in bound form between rebirths, and affect the suffering and happiness experienced by the jiva in the lokas. Karma is believed to obscure and obstruct the innate nature and striving of the soul, as well as its spiritual potential in the next rebirth.

Saṃsāra

The conceptual framework of the Saṃsāra doctrine differs between Jainism and other Indian religions. Soul (jiva) is accepted as a truth, as in Hinduism but not Buddhism. The cycle of rebirths has a definite beginning and end in Jainism. Jain theosophy asserts that each soul passes through 8,400,000 birth-situations as they circle through Saṃsāra, going through five types of bodies: earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, air bodies and vegetable lives, constantly changing with all human and non-human activities from rainfall to breathing. Harming any life form is a sin in Jainism, with negative karmic effects. Jainism states that souls begin in a primordial state, and either evolve to a higher state or regress if driven by their karma. It further clarifies that abhavya (incapable) souls can never attain moksha (liberation). It explains that the abhavya state is entered after an intentional and shockingly evil act. Souls can be good or evil in Jainism, unlike the nondualism of some forms of Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Jainism, a Siddha (liberated soul) has gone beyond Saṃsāra, is at the apex, is omniscient, and remains there eternally.

Cosmology

Jain texts propound that the universe consists of many eternal lokas (realms of existence). As in Buddhism and Hinduism, both time and the universe are eternal, but the universe is transient. The universe, body, matter and time are considered separate from the soul (jiva). Their interaction explains life, living, death and rebirth in Jain philosophy.8 The Jain cosmic universe has three parts, the upper, middle, and lower worlds (urdhva loka, madhya loka, and adho loka). Jainism states that Kāla (time) is without beginning and eternal; the cosmic wheel of time, kālachakra, rotates ceaselessly. In this part of the universe, it explains, there are six periods of time within two eons (ara), and in the first eon the universe generates, and in the next it degenerates. Thus, it divides the worldly cycle of time into two half-cycles, utsarpiṇī (ascending, progressive prosperity and happiness) and avasarpiṇī (descending, increasing sorrow and immorality). It states that the world is currently in the fifth ara of avasarpiṇī, full of sorrow

and religious decline, where the height of living beings shrinks. According to Jainism, after the sixth ara, the universe will be reawakened in a new cycle.

God

Jainism is a transtheistic religion, holding that the universe was not created, and will exist forever. It is independent, having no creator, governor, judge, or destroyer. In this, it is unlike the Abrahamic religions and the theistic strands of Hinduism, but similar to Buddhism. However, Jainism believes in the world of heavenly and hellish beings who are born, die and are reborn like earthly beings. The souls who live happily in the body of a heavenly celestial do so because of their positive karma. It is further stated that they possess a more transcendent knowledge about material things and can anticipate events in the human realms. However, once their past karmic merit is exhausted, it is explained that their souls are reborn again as humans, animals or other beings. The perfect enlightened souls with a body are called Arihants (victors) and perfect souls without a body are called Siddhas (liberated souls). Only a soul with human body can attain enlightenment and liberation. The liberated beings are the supreme beings and are worshipped by all heavenly, earthly and hellish beings who aspire to attain liberation themselves.

Salvation, liberation

Purification of soul and liberation can be achieved through the path of three jewels: Samyak Darśana (Correct View), meaning faith, acceptance of the truth of soul (jīva); Samyak Gyana (Correct Knowledge), meaning undoubting knowledge of the tattvas; and Samyak Charitra (Correct Conduct), meaning behavior consistent with the Five vows. Jain texts often add samyak tapas (Correct Asceticism) as a fourth jewel, emphasizing belief in ascetic practices as the means to liberation (moksha). The four jewels are called Moksha Marg (the path of liberation).

Main principles

Non-violence (ahimsa)

The principle of ahimsa (non-violence or non-injury) is a fundamental tenet of Jainism. It holds that one must abandon all violent activity and that without such a commitment to non-violence all religious behavior is worthless. In Jain theology, it does not matter how correct or defensible the violence may be, one must not kill or harm any being, and non-violence is the highest religious duty. Jain texts such as Acaranga Sūtra and Tattvarthasūtra state that one must renounce all killing of living beings,

whether tiny or large, movable or immovable. Its theology teaches that one must neither kill another living being, nor cause another to kill, nor consent to any killing directly or indirec

Furthermore, Jainism emphasizes non-violence against all beings not only in action but also in speech and in thought. It states that instead of hate or violence against anyone, "all living creatures must help each other". Jains believe that violence negatively affects and destroys one's soul, particularly when the violence is done with intent, hate or carelessness, or when one indirectly causes or consents to the killing of a human or non-human living being.

The doctrine exists in Hinduism and Buddhism, but is most highly developed in Jainism. The theological basis of non-violence as the highest religious duty has been interpreted by some Jain scholars not to "be driven by merit from giving or compassion to other creatures, nor a duty to rescue all creatures", but resulting from "continual self-discipline", a cleansing of the soul that leads to one's own spiritual development which ultimately affects one's salvation and release from rebirths.9 Jains believe that causing injury to any being in any form creates bad karma which affects one's rebirth, future well-being and causes suffering.p

Late medieval Jain scholars re-examined the Ahiṃsā doctrine when faced with external threat or violence. For example, they justified violence by monks to protect nuns.p According to Dundas, the Jain scholar Jinadattasuri wrote during a time of destruction of temples and persecution that "anybody engaged in a religious activity who was forced to fight and kill somebody would not lose any spiritual merit but instead attain deliverance". However, examples in Jain texts that condone fighting and killing under certain circumstances are relatively rare.

Many-sided reality (anekāntavāda)

The second main principle of Jainism is anekāntavāda, from anekānta ("many-sidedness") and vada ("doctrine"). The doctrine states that truth and reality are complex and always have multiple aspects. It further states that reality can be experienced, but cannot be fully expressed with language. It suggests that human attempts to communicate are Naya, "partial expression of the truth". According to it, one can experience the taste of truth, but cannot fully express that taste through language. It holds that attempts to express experience are syāt, or valid "in some respect", but remain "perhaps, just one perspective, incomplete". It concludes that in the same way, spiritual truths can be experienced but not fully expressed. It suggests that the great error is belief in ekānta (one-sidedness), where some relative truth is treated as absolute. The doctrine is ancient, found in Buddhist texts such as the Samañña phala

Sutta. The Jain Agamas suggest that Mahāvīra's approach to answering all metaphysical philosophical questions was a "qualified yes" (syāt). These texts identify anekāntavāda as a key difference from the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha taught the Middle Way, rejecting extremes of the answer "it is" or "it is not" to metaphysical questions. The Mahāvīra, in contrast, taught his followers to accept both "it is", and "it is not", qualified with "perhaps", to understand Absolute Reality. The permanent being is conceptualized as jiva (soul) and ajiva (matter) within a dualistic anekāntavāda framework.

According to Paul Dundas, in contemporary times the anekāntavāda doctrine has been interpreted by some Jains as intending to "promote a universal religious tolerance", and a teaching of "plurality" and "benign attitude to other [ethical, religious] positions". Dundas states this is a misreading of historical texts and Mahāvīra's teachings. According to him, the "many pointedness, multiple perspective" teachings of the Mahāvīra is about the nature of absolute reality and human existence. He claims that it is not about condoning activities such as killing animals for food, nor violence against disbelievers or any other living being as "perhaps right". The five vows for Jain monks and nuns, for example, are strict requirements and there is no "perhaps" about them. Similarly, since ancient times, Jainism co-existed with Buddhism and Hinduism according to Dundas, but Jainism disagreed, in specific areas, with the knowledge systems and beliefs of these traditions, and vice versa.

Non-attachment (aparigraha)

The third main principle in Jainism is aparigraha which means non-attachment to worldly possessions. For monks and nuns, Jainism requires a vow of complete non-possession of any property, relations and emotions. The ascetic is a wandering mendicant in the Digambara tradition, or a resident mendicant in the Śvētāmbara tradition. For Jain laypersons, it recommends limited possession of property that has been honestly earned, and giving excess property to charity. According to Natubhai Shah, aparigraha applies to both the material and the psychic. Material possessions refer to various forms of property. Psychic possessions refer to emotions, likes and dislikes, and attachments of any form. Unchecked attachment to possessions is said to result in direct harm to one's personality.

Jain ethics and five vows

Jainism teaches five ethical duties, which it calls five vows. These are called anuvratas (small vows) for Jain laypersons, and mahavratas (great vows) for Jain mendicants. For both, its moral precepts preface that the Jain has access to a guru (teacher, counsellor), deva (Jina, god), doctrine, and that the individual is free from five offences: doubts about the faith, indecisiveness about the truths of Jainism,

sincere desire for Jain teachings, recognition of fellow Jains, and admiration for their spiritual pursuits. Such a person undertakes the following Five vows of Jainism:

1. Ahiṃsā, "intentional non-violence" or "noninjury": The first major vow taken by Jains is to cause no harm to other human beings, as well as all living beings (particularly animals). This is the highest ethical duty in Jainism, and it applies not only to one's actions, but demands that one be non-violent in one's speech and thoughts.
2. Satya, "truth": This vow is to always speak the truth. Neither lie, nor speak what is not true, and do not encourage others or approve anyone who speaks an untruth.
3. Asteya, "not stealing": A Jain layperson should not take anything that is not willingly given. Additionally, a Jain mendicant should ask for permission to take it if something is being given.
4. Brahmacharya, "celibacy": Abstinence from sex and sensual pleasures is prescribed for Jain monks and nuns. For laypersons, the vow means chastity, faithfulness to one's partner.
5. Aparigraha, "non-possessiveness": This includes non-attachment to material and psychological possessions, avoiding craving and greed. Jain monks and nuns completely renounce property and social relations, own nothing and are attached to no one.

Jainism prescribes seven supplementary vows, including three guṇa vratas (merit vows) and four śikṣā vratas. The Sallekhana (or Santhara) vow is a "religious death" ritual observed at the end of life, historically by Jain monks and nuns, but rare in the modern age. In this vow, there is voluntary and gradual reduction of food and liquid intake to end one's life by choice and with dispassion, This is believed to reduce negative karma that affects a soul's future rebirths.

Practices

Asceticism and monasticism

Of the major Indian religions, Jainism has had the strongest ascetic tradition. Ascetic life may include nakedness, symbolizing non-possession even of clothes, fasting, body mortification, and penance, to burn away past karma and stop producing new karma, both of which are believed essential for reaching siddha and moksha ("liberation from rebirths" and "salvation").

Jain texts like Tattvartha Sūtra and Uttaradhyayana Sūtra discuss austerities in detail. Six outer and six inner practices are oft-repeated in later Jain texts. Outer austerities include complete fasting,

eating limited amounts, eating restricted items, abstaining from tasty foods, mortifying the flesh, and guarding the flesh (avoiding anything that is a source of temptation). Inner austerities include expiation, confession, respecting and assisting mendicants, studying, meditation, and ignoring bodily wants in order to abandon the body. Lists of internal and external austerities vary with the text and tradition.9 Asceticism is viewed as a means to control desires, and to purify the jiva (soul).i The tirthankaras such as the Mahāvīra (Vardhamana) set an example by performing severe austerities for twelve

Monastic organization, sangh, has a four-fold order consisting of sadhu (male ascetics, muni), sadhvi (female ascetics, aryika), śrāvaka (laymen), and śrāvikā (laywomen). The latter two support the ascetics and their monastic organizations called gacch or samuday, in autonomous regional Jain congregations. Jain monastic rules have encouraged the use of mouth cover, as well as the Dandasan – a long stick with woolen threads – to gently remove ants and insects that may come in their path.

Food and fasting

The practice of non-violence towards all living beings has led to Jain culture being vegetarian. Devout Jains practice lacto-vegetarianism, meaning that they eat no eggs, but accept dairy products if there is no violence against animals during their production. Veganism is encouraged if there are concerns about animal welfare. Jain monks, nuns and some followers avoid root vegetables such a9s potatoes, onions, and garlic because tiny organisms are injured when the plant is pulled up, and because a bulb or tuber's ability to sprout is seen as characteristic of a higher living being. Jain monks and advanced laypeople avoid eating after sunset, observing a vow of ratri-bhojana-tyaga-vrata. Monks observe a stricter vow by eating only once a day.

Jains fast particularly during festivals. This practice is called upavasa, tapasya or vrata, and may be practiced according to one's ability. Digambaras fast for Dasa-laksana-parvan, eating only one or two meals per day, drinking only boiled water for ten days, or fasting completely on the first and last days of the festival, mimicking the practices of a Jain mendicant for the period. Śvētāmbara Jains do similarly in the eight day paryusana with samvatsari-pratikramana. The practice is believed to remove karma from one's soul and provides merit (punya). A "one day" fast lasts about 36 hours, starting at sunset before the day of the fast and ending 48 minutes after sunrise the day after. Among laypeople, fasting is more commonly observed by women, as it shows her piety and religious purity, gains merit earning and helps ensure future well-being for her family. Some religious fasts are observed in a social and supportive female group. Long fasts are celebrated by friends and families with special ceremonies.

Meditation

Jainism considers meditation (dhyana) a necessary practice, but its goals are very different from those in Buddhism and Hinduism. In Jainism, meditation is concerned more with stopping karmic attachments and activity, not as a means to transformational insights or self-realization in other Indian religions. According to Padmanabh Jaini, Sāmāyika is a practice of "brief periods in meditation" in Jainism that is a part of siksavrata (ritual restraint). The goal of Sāmāyika is to achieve equanimity, and it is the second siksavrata. The samayika ritual is practiced at least three times a day by mendicants, while a layperson includes it with other ritual practices such as Puja in a Jain temple and doing charity work. According to Johnson, as well as Jaini, samayika connotes more than meditation, and for a Jain householder is the voluntary ritual practice of "assuming temporary ascetic status".

Rituals and worship

There are many rituals in Jainism's various sects. According to Dundas, the ritualistic lay path among Śvētāmbara Jains is "heavily imbued with ascetic values", where the rituals either revere or celebrate the ascetic life of tirthankaras, or progressively approach the psychological and physical life of an ascetic. The ultimate ritual is sallekhana, a religious death through ascetic abandonment of food and drinks. The Digambara Jains follow the same theme, but the life cycle and religious rituals are closer to a Hindu liturgy. The overlap is mainly in the life cycle (rites-of-passage) rituals, and likely developed because Jain and Hindu societies overlapped, and rituals were viewed as necessary and secular.

Jains ritually worship numerous deities, especially the Jinas. In Jainism a Jina as deva is not an avatar (incarnation), but the highest state of omniscience that an ascetic tirthankara achieved. Out of the 24 tirthankaras, Jains predominantly worship four: Mahāvīra, Parshvanatha, Neminatha and Rishabhanatha. Among the non-tirthankara saints, devotional worship is common for Bahubali among the Digambaras. The Panch Kalyanaka rituals remember the five life events of the tirthankaras, including the Panch Kalyanaka Pratishtha Mahotsava, Panch Kalyanaka Puja and Snatrapuja.

The basic ritual is darsana (seeing) of deva, which includes Jina, or other yaksas, gods and goddesses such as Brahmadeva, 52 Viras, Padmavati, Ambika and 16 Vidyadevis (including Sarasvati and Lakshmi). Terapanthi Digambaras limit their ritual worship to tirthankaras. The worship ritual is called devapuja, and is found in all Jain sub-traditions. Typically, the Jain layperson enters the Derasar (Jain temple) inner sanctum in simple clothing and bare feet with a plate filled with

offerings, bows down, says the namaskar, completes his or her litany and prayers, sometimes is assisted by the temple priest, leaves the offerings and then departs.

Jain practices include performing abhisheka (ceremonial bath) of the images. Some Jain sects employ a pujari (also called upadhye), who may be a Hindu, to perform priestly duties at the temple. More elaborate worship includes offerings such as rice, fresh and dry fruits, flowers, coconut, sweets, and money. Some may light up a lamp with camphor and make auspicious marks with sandalwood paste. Devotees also recite Jain texts, particularly the life stories of the tirthankaras.

Traditional Jains, like Buddhists and Hindus, believe in the efficacy of mantras and that certain sounds and words are inherently auspicious, powerful and spiritual. The most famous of the mantras, broadly accepted in various sects of Jainism, is the "five homage" (panca namaskara) mantra which is believed to be eternal and existent since the first tirthankara's time. Medieval worship practices included making tantric diagrams of the Rishi-mandala including the tirthankaras. The Jain tantric traditions use mantra and rituals that are believed to accrue merit for rebirth realms.

Festivals

The most important annual Jain festival is called the Paryushana by Svetambaras and Dasa lakshana parva by the Digambaras. It is celebrated from the 12th day of the waning moon in the traditional lunisolar month of Bhadrapada in the Indian calendar. This typically falls in August or September of the Gregorian calendar. It lasts eight days for Svetambaras, and ten days among the Digambaras. It is a time when lay people fast and pray. The five vows are emphasized during this time. Svetambaras recite the Kalpasūtras, while Digambaras read their own texts. The festival is an occasion where Jains make active effort to stop cruelty towards other life forms, freeing animals in captivity and preventing the slaughter of animals.

The last day involves a focused prayer and meditation session known as Samvatsari. Jains consider this a day of atonement, granting forgiveness to others, seeking forgiveness from all living beings, physically or mentally asking for forgiveness and resolving to treat everyone in the world as friends. Forgiveness is asked by saying "Micchami Dukkadam" or "Khamat khamna" to others. This means, "If I have offended you in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or action, then I seek your forgiveness." The literal meaning of Paryushana is "abiding" or "coming together".

Mahavir Janma Kalyanak celebrates the birth of Mahāvīra. It is celebrated on the 13th day of the lunisolar month of Chaitra in the traditional Indian calendar. This typically falls in March or April of the Gregorian calendar. The festivities include visiting Jain temples, pilgrimages to shrines, reading Jain texts and processions of Mahāvīra by the community. At his legendary birthplace of Kundagrama in Bihar, north of Patna, special events are held by Jains. The next day of Dipawali is observed by Jains as the anniversary of Mahāvīra's attainment of moksha. The Hindu festival of Diwali is also celebrated on the same date (Kartika Amavasya). Jain temples, homes, offices, and shops are decorated with lights and diyas (small oil lamps). The lights are symbolic of knowledge or removal of ignorance. Sweets are often distributed. On Diwali morning, Nirvan Ladoo is offered after praying to Mahāvīra in all Jain temples across the world. The Jain new year starts right after Diwali. Some other festivals celebrated by Jains are Akshaya Tritiya and Raksha Bandhan, similar to those in the Hindu communities.

Traditions and sects

The Jain community is divided into two major denominations, Digambara and Śvētāmbara. Monks of the Digambara (sky-clad) tradition do not wear clothes. Female monastics of the Digambara sect wear unstitched plain white sarees and are referred to as Aryikas. Śvētāmbara (white-clad) monastics, on the other hand, wear seamless white clothes.

During Chandragupta Maurya's reign, Jain tradition states that Acharya Bhadrabahu predicted a twelve-year-long famine and moved to Karnataka with his disciples. Sthulabhadra, a pupil of Acharya Bhadrabahu, is believed to have stayed in Magadha. Later, as stated in tradition, when followers of Acharya Bhadrabahu returned, they found those who had remained at Magadha had started wearing white clothes, which was unacceptable to the others who remained naked. This is how Jains believe the Digambara and Śvētāmbara schism began, with the former being naked while the latter wore white clothes. Digambara saw this as being opposed to the Jain tenet of aparigraha which, according to them, required not even possession of clothes, i.e. complete nudity. In the fifth-century CE, the Council of Valabhi was organized by Śvētāmbara, which Digambara did not attend. At the council, the Śvētāmbara adopted the texts they had preserved as canonical scriptures, which Digambara has ever since rejected. This council is believed to have solidified the historic schism between these two major traditions of Jainism. The earliest record of Digambara beliefs is contained in the Prakrit Suttapahuda of Kundakunda.

Digambaras and Śvētāmbara differ in their practices and dress code, interpretations of teachings, and on Jain history especially concerning the tirthankaras. Their monasticism rules differ, as does their iconography. Śvētāmbara has had more female than male mendicants, where Digambara has

mostly had male monks and considers males closest to the soul's liberation. The Śvētāmbaras believe that women can also achieve liberation through asceticism and state that the 19th Tirthankara Māllīnātha was female, which Digambara rejects. Early Jain images from Mathura depict Digambara iconography until late fifth century A.D. where Svetambara iconography starts appearing.

Excavations at Mathura revealed Jain statues from the time of the Kushan Empire (c. 1st century CE). Tirthankara represented without clothes, and monks with cloth wrapped around the left arm, are identified as the Ardhaphalaka (half-clothed) mentioned in texts. The Yapaniyas, believed to have originated from the Ardhaphalaka, followed Digambara nudity along with several Śvētāmbara beliefs. In the modern era, according to Flügel, new Jain religious movements that are a "primarily devotional form of Jainism" have developed which resemble "Jain Mahayana" style devotionalism.

Scriptures and texts

Jain canonical scriptures are called Agamas. They are believed to have been verbally transmitted, much like the ancient Buddhist and Hindu texts, and to have originated from the sermons of the tirthankaras, whereupon the Ganadharas (chief disciples) transmitted them as Śhrut Jnāna (heard knowledge). The spoken scriptural language is believed to be Ardhamagadhi by the Śvētāmbara Jains, and a form of sonic resonance by the Digambara Jains.

The Śvētāmbaras believe that they have preserved 45 of the 50 original Jain scriptures (having lost an Anga text and four Purva texts), while the Digambaras believe that all were lost, and that Āchārya Bhutabali was the last ascetic who had partial knowledge of the original canon. According to them, Digambara Āchāryas recreated the oldest-known Digambara Jain texts, including the four anuyoga. The Digambara texts partially agree with older Śvētāmbara texts, but there are also gross differences between the texts of the two major Jain traditions. The Digambaras created a secondary canon between 600 and 900 CE, compiling it into four groups or Vedas: history, cosmography, philosophy and ethics.

The most popular and influential texts of Jainism have been its non-canonical literature. Of these, the Kalpa Sūtras are particularly popular among Śvētāmbaras, which they attribute to Bhadrabahu (c. 300 BCE.). This ancient scholar is revered in the Digambara tradition, and they believe he led their migration into the ancient south Karnataka region and created their tradition. Śvētāmbaras believe instead that Bhadrabahu moved to Nepal. Both traditions consider his Niryuktis and Samhitas important. The earliest surviving Sanskrit text by Umaswati, the Tattvarthasūtra is considered authoritative by all traditions of

Jainism. In the Digambara tradition, the texts written by Kundakunda are highly revered and have been historically influential, while the oldest being Kasayapahuda and Shatkhandagama attributed to Acharya pushpdanta and Bhutbali. Other important Digambara Jain texts include: Samayasara, Ratnakaranda śrāvakācāra, and Niyamasara.

Comparison with Buddhism and Hinduism

Jain votive plaque with Jain stupa, the "Vasu Śilāpaṭa" ayagapata, 1st century CE, excavated from Kankali Tila, Mathura. The inscription reads: "Adoration to the Arhat Vardhamana. The daughter of the matron courtesan Lonasobhika (Lavanasobhika), the disciple of the ascetics, the junior courtesan Vasu has erected a shrine of the Arhat, a hall of homage (ayagasabha), cistern and a stone slab at the sanctuary of the Nirgrantha Arhats, together with her mother, her daughter, her son and her whole household in honour of the Arhats."

All four Dharmic religions, viz., Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, have some similarities in concepts and doctrines such as karma and rebirth. They do not believe in eternal heaven or hell or judgment day, and leave it up to individual discretion to choose whether or not to believe in gods, to disagree with core teachings, and to choose whether to participate in prayers, rituals and festivals. They all consider values such as non-violence to be important, link suffering to craving, individual's actions, intents, and karma, and believe spirituality is a means to enlightened peace, bliss and eternal liberation (moksha).

Jainism differs from both Buddhism and Hinduism in its ontological premises. All believe in impermanence, but Buddhism incorporates the premise of anatta ("no eternal self or soul"). Hinduism incorporates an eternal unchanging atman ("soul"), while Jainism incorporates an eternal but changing jiva ("soul"). In Jain thought, there are infinite eternal jivas, predominantly in cycles of rebirth, and a few siddhas (perfected ones). Unlike Jainism, Hindu philosophies encompass nondualism where all souls are identical as Brahman and posited as interconnected one.

While both Hinduism and Jainism believe "soul exists" to be a self-evident truth, most Hindu systems consider it to be eternally present, infinite and constant (vibhu), but some Hindu scholars propose soul to be atomic. Hindu thought generally discusses Atman and Brahman through a monistic or dualistic framework. In contrast, Jain thought denies the Hindu metaphysical concept of Brahman, and Jain philosophy considers the soul to be ever changing and bound to the body or matter for each lifetime, thereby having a finite size that infuses the entire body of a living being.

Jainism is similar to Buddhism in not recognizing the primacy of the Vedas and the Hindu Brahman. Jainism and Hinduism, however, both believe "soul exists" as a self-evident truth. Jains and Hindus have frequently intermarried, particularly in northern, central and western regions of India. Some early colonial scholars stated that Jainism like Buddhism was, in part, a rejection of the Hindu caste system, but later scholars consider this a Western error. A caste system not based on birth has been a historic part of Jain society, and Jainism focused on transforming the individual, not society.

Monasticism is similar in all three traditions, with similar rules, hierarchical structure, not traveling during the four-month monsoon season, and celibacy, originating before the Buddha or the Mahāvīra. Jain and Hindu monastic communities have traditionally been more mobile and had an itinerant lifestyle, while Buddhist monks have favored belonging to a sangha (monastery) and staying in its premises. Buddhist monastic rules forbid a monk to go outside without wearing the sangha's distinctive ruddy robe, or to use wooden bowls. In contrast, Jain monastic rules have either required nakedness (Digambara) or white clothes (Śvētāmbara), and they have disagreed on the legitimacy of the wooden or empty gourd as the begging bowl by Jain monks.

Jains have similar views with Hindus that violence in self-defence can be justified, and that a soldier who kills enemies in combat is performing a legitimate duty. Jain communities accepted the use of military power for their defence; there were Jain monarchs, military commanders, and soldiers. The Jain and Hindu communities have often been very close and mutually accepting. Some Hindu temples have included a Jain Tirthankara within its premises in a place of honour, while temple complexes such as the Badami cave temples and Khajuraho feature both Hindu and Jain monuments.

Art and architecture

Jainism has contributed significantly to Indian art and architecture. Jain arts depict life legends of tirthankara or other important people, particularly with them in a seated or standing meditative posture. Yakshas and yakshinis, attendant spirits who guard the tirthankara, are usually shown with them. The earliest known Jain image is in the Patna museum. It is dated approximately to the third century BCE. Bronze images of Pārśva can be seen in the Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai, and in the Patna museum; these are dated to the second century BCE.

Ayagapata is a type of votive tablet used in Jainism for donation and worship in the early centuries. These tablets are decorated with objects and designs central to Jain worship such as the stupa, dharmacakra and triratna. They present simultaneous trends or image and symbol worship.

Numerous such stone tablets were discovered during excavations at ancient Jain sites like Kankali Tila near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, India. The practice of donating these tablets is documented from first century BCE. to third century CE. Samavasarana, a preaching hall of tirthankaras with various beings concentrically placed, is an important theme of Jain art.

The Jain tower in Chittor, Rajasthan, is a good example of Jain architecture. Decorated manuscripts are preserved in Jain libraries, containing diagrams from Jain cosmology. Most of the paintings and illustrations depict historical events, known as Panch Kalyanaka, from the life of the tirthankara. Rishabha, the first tirthankara, is usually depicted in either the lotus position or kayotsarga, the standing position. He is distinguished from other tirthankara by the long locks of hair falling to his shoulders. Bull images also appear in his sculptures. In paintings, incidents from his life, like his marriage and Indra marking his forehead, are depicted. Other paintings show him presenting a pottery bowl to his followers; he is also seen painting a house, weaving, and being visited by his mother Marudevi.[266] Each of the twenty-four tirthankara is associated with distinctive emblems, which are listed in such texts as Tiloyapannati, Kahavaali and Pravacanasaarodhara.

Temples

A Jain temple, a Derasar or Basadi, is a place of worship. Temples contain tirthankara images, some fixed, others moveable. These are stationed in the inner sanctum, one of the two sacred zones, the other being the main hall. One of the images is marked as the moolnayak (primary deity). A manastambha (column of honor) is a pillar that is often constructed in front of Jain temples. Temple construction is considered a meritorious act.

Ancient Jain monuments include the Udaigiri Hills near Bhelsa (Vidisha) and Pataini temple in Madhya Pradesh, the Ellora in Maharashtra, the Palitana temples in Gujarat, and the Jain temples at Dilwara Temples near Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Chaumukha temple in Ranakpur is considered one of the most beautiful Jain temples and is famous for its detailed carvings. According to Jain texts, Shikharji is the place where twenty of the twenty-four Jain Tīrthaṅkaras along with many other monks attained moksha (died without being reborn, with their soul in Siddhashila). The Shikharji site in northeastern Jharkhand is therefore a revered pilgrimage site. The Palitana temples are the holiest shrine for the Śvētāmbara Murtipujaka sect. Along with Shikharji the two sites are considered the holiest of all pilgrimage sites by the Jain community. The Jain complex, Khajuraho and Jain Narayana temple are part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Shravanabelagola, Saavira Kambada Basadi or 1000

pillars and Brahma Jinalaya are important Jain centers in Karnataka. In and around Madurai, there are 26 caves, 200 stone beds, 60 inscriptions, and over 100 sculptures.

The second–first century BCE. Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves are rich with carvings of tirthanakars and deities with inscriptions including the Elephant Cave inscription. Jain cave temples at Badami, Mangi-Tungi and the Ellora Caves are considered important. The Sittanavasal Cave temple is a fine example of Jain art with an early cave shelter, and a medieval rock-cut temple with excellent fresco paintings comparable to Ajantha. Inside are seventeen stone beds with second century BCE. Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. The eighth century Kazhugumalai temple marks the revival of Jainism in South India.

Outside contemporary India, Jain communities built temples in locations such as Nagarparkar, Sindh (Pakistan). However, according to a UNESCO tentative world heritage site application, Nagarparkar was not a "major religious centre or a place of pilgrimage" for Jainism, but it was once an important cultural landscape before "the last remaining Jain community left the area in 1947 at Partition".

Statues and sculptures

Jain sculptures usually depict one of the twenty-four tīrthaṅkaras; Parshvanatha, Rishabhanatha and Mahāvīra are among the more popular, often seated in lotus position or kayotsarga, along with Arihant, Bahubali, and protector deities like Ambika. Quadruple images are also popular. Tirthankar idols look similar, differentiated by their individual symbol, except for Parshvanatha whose head is crowned by a snake. Digambara images are naked without any beautification, whereas Śvētāmbara depictions are clothed and ornamented.

A monolithic, 18-metre (59-foot) statue of Bahubali, Gommateshvara, built in 981 CE by the Ganga minister and commander Chavundaraya, is situated on a hilltop in Shravanabelagola in Karnataka. This statue was voted first in the SMS poll Seven Wonders of India conducted by The Times of India. The 33-metre (108-foot) tall Statue of Ahiṃsā (depicting Rishabhanatha) was erected in the Nashik district in 2015. Idols are often made in Ashtadhatu (literally "eight metals"), namely Akota Bronze, brass, gold, silver, stone monoliths, rock cut, and precious stones.

Symbols

Jain icons and arts incorporate symbols such as the swastika, Om, and the Ashtamangala. In Jainism, Om is a condensed reference to the initials "A-A-A-U-M" of the five parameshthis: "Arihant, Ashiri, Acharya, Upajjhaya, Muni", or the five lines of the Ṇamōkāra Mantra.[citation needed] The Ashtamangala is a set of eight auspicious symbols: in the Digambara tradition, these are chatra, dhvaja, kalasha, fly-whisk, mirror, chair, hand fan and vessel. In the Śvētāmbar tradition, they are Swastika, Srivatsa, Nandavarta, Vardhmanaka (food vessel), Bhadrasana (seat), Kalasha (pot), Darpan (mirror) and pair of fish.

The hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes ahimsā. The wheel represents the dharmachakra, which stands for the resolve to halt the saṃsāra (wandering) through the relentless pursuit of ahimsā. The five colours of the Jain flag represent the Pañca-Parameṣṭhi and the five vows. The swastika's four arms symbolise the four realms in which rebirth occurs according to Jainism: humans, heavenly beings, hellish beings and non-humans. The three dots on the top represent the three jewels mentioned in ancient texts: correct faith, correct understanding and correct conduct, believed to lead to spiritual perfection.

Jainism is a religion founded in ancient India. Jains trace their history through twenty-four tirthankaras and revere Rishabhanatha as the first tirthankara (in the present time-cycle). Some artifacts found in the Indus River Valley civilization have been suggested as a link to ancient Jain culture, but very little is known about the Indus Valley iconography and script. The last two tirthankaras, the 23rd tirthankara Parshvanatha (c. 9th–8th century BCE) and the 24th tirthankara Mahavira (c. 599 – c. 527 BCE) are historical figures. Mahavira was a contemporary of the Buddha. According to Jain texts, the 22nd Tirthankara Neminatha lived about 85,000 years ago and was the cousin of Krishna.[308]

Ancient

Jainism is an ancient Indian religion of obscure origins. Jains claim it to be eternal, and consider the first tirthankara Rishabhanatha as the reinforcer of Jain Dharma in the current time cycle. It is one of the Śramaṇa traditions of ancient India, those that rejected the Vedas, and according to the twentieth-century scholar of comparative religion Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Jainism was in existence before the Vedas were composed.

The historicity of first twenty two tirthankaras is not determined yet. The 23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha, was a historical being, dated by the Jain tradition to the ninth century

BCE; historians date him to the eighth or seventh century BC. Mahāvīra is considered a contemporary of the Buddha, in around the sixth century BCE. The interaction between the two religions began with the Buddha; later, they competed for followers and the merchant trade networks that sustained them. Buddhist and Jain texts sometimes have the same or similar titles but present different doctrines.

Kings Bimbisara (c. 558–491 BCE), Ajatashatru (c. 492–460 BCE), and Udayin (c. 460–440 BCE) of the Haryanka dynasty were patrons of Jainism. Jain tradition states that Chandragupta Maurya (322–298 BCE), the founder of the Mauryan Empire and grandfather of Ashoka, became a monk and disciple of Jain ascetic Bhadrabahu in the later part of his life. Jain texts state that he died intentionally at Shravanabelagola by fasting.

The third century BC emperor Ashoka, in his pillar edicts, mentions the Niganthas (Jains). Tirthankara statues date back to the second century BC. Archeological evidence suggests that Mathura was an important Jain center from the second century BC. onwards. Inscriptions from as early as the first century CE already show the schism between Digambara and Śvētāmbara. There is inscriptional evidence for the presence of Jain monks in south India by the second or first centuries BCE, and archaeological evidence of Jain monks in Saurashtra in Gujarat by the second century CE.

Royal patronage has been a key factor in the growth and decline of Jainism. In the second half of the first century CE, Hindu kings of the Rashtrakuta dynasty sponsored major Jain cave temples. King Harshavardhana of the seventh century championed Jainism, Buddhism and all traditions of Hinduism The Pallava King Mahendravarman I (600–630 CE) converted from Jainism to Shaivism. His work Mattavilasa Prahasana ridicules certain Shaiva sects and the Buddhists and expresses contempt for Jain ascetics. The Yadava dynasty built many temples at the Ellora Caves between 700 and 1000 CE. King Āma of the eighth century converted to Jainism, and the Jain pilgrimage tradition was well established in his era.i Mularaja (10th century CE), the founder of the Chalukya dynasty, constructed a Jain temple, even though he was not a Jain. During the 11th century, Basava, a minister to the Jain Kalachuri king Bijjala, converted many Jains to the Lingayat Shaivite sect. The Lingayats destroyed Jain temples and adapted them to their use. The Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana (c. 1108–1152 CE) became a Vaishnavite under the influence of Ramanuja, and Vaishnavism then grew rapidly in what is now Karnataka.

Persian and Greek Invasions of India

The Persian and Greek invasion of India was an important event in Indian history which had far reaching consequences. The Persian and Greek invasion of India began in the Sixth Century B.C. when the North-west region of India was fragmented and small principalities such as Gandhara, Kamboja were fighting over each other. Since it was easy to enter India via the passes in Hindukush, many foreign invasions began to happen in the Northwest Frontier of India.

The Persians were the first to invade India and were followed by the Greeks. The Persian invasion of India took place in two phases. The first phase was carried out by Cyrus around 535 BCE and the second phase by Darius in 518 BCE. The Greek invasion of India was carried out by a famous ruler, Alexander.

Cyrus

Cyrus was the founder of the Achaemenid empire in Iran. The Persian invasion of India was first led by him. He invaded the Indian borderland and captured the Gandhara region. Cyrus invaded as far as the river Indus and the Indian tribes living to the west of the river submitted to him. Behistun Inscription mentions that all the region conquered by Cyrus in India was brought under the satrapy of Gandhara. (Satrapy means province and Satrap was the provincial governor in ancient Persian empire) Check the NCERT Notes Cripps Mission here.

Darius

Cyrus' son Cambyses paid no attention towards India. Thus the grandson of Cyrus, Darius I conquered the Indus valley in 516 B.C. Punjab, West of Indus and Sindh were annexed by Darius and these areas constituted the 20th satrap of Iran.This area became the most fertile area of the Persian empire. 360 talents of gold was paid as a tribute to the Persian empire which constituted one third of their revenue from Asian provinces. The Indians were employed in the Persian army Darius explored the Indus by sending a naval expedition under Skylax.

Xerxes

Indian Provinces were used by him to strengthen his positions Indian Cavalry and Infantry who were sent to Greece to fight his opponents retreated after the defeat of Xerxes. With this failure, the forward policy of Persians was hampered in India.

Effects of the Persian Invasion

This contact lasted for about 200 years and thus resulted in the Indo – Iranian trade and commerce. It is evident from the Iranian coins found in the northwest Frontier of India. The Kharoshthi script which was written from right to left was an Iranian form of writing and was introduced in India by the Iranian scribes. Mauryan sculptures and monuments, particularly those of Ashoka's time were heavily influenced by the Iranian models. The idea of issuing edicts and the terms used on them traced to have the Persian influence. The Greeks came to know about India and its wealth from the Persians which paved the way for the Greek invasion of India.

The greek invasion

The Greeks under the leadership of Alexander of Macedonia defeated the Persian empire and conquered Asia, Iran and Iraq. In the Battle of Arbela, he defeated Darius III and conquered the entire Persia. He was attracted by the wealth of India. It was also believed that there was a continuation of sea to the East of India which made him believe that by conquering India, the Eastern boundary of the world would be Conquered. Thus from Iran he moved towards Kabul and from there via Khyber pass he marched into India. The entire North India was divided into so many independent monarchies and tribal republics which favoured the intentions of Alexander.

Battle of Hydaspes:

Porus refused to submit his kingdom to Alexander and this led to a battle between them. The Battle of Hydaspes was fought on the plains of Karri and Porus lost the battle. Alexander was impressed by the courage of Porus and restored him back to his throne. He marched and conquered the areas as far as the river Beas. The soldiers grew tired of war and refused to fight. Thus Alexander was forced to retreat and he decided to return home with his soldiers. Most of the states were restored back to the rulers who accepted his sovereignty. The remaining areas of his possessions were divided into three and were placed under three Greek governors. On his way back, he fell ill and died at Babylon in 323 B.C.

Effects of Greek Invasion

In several fields Direct contact was established between India and Greece. Four distinct routes by land and sea were opened up as a result of Alexander's expedition. Greek invasion resulted in establishment of Greek settlement in the North western region who continued to live under Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka. Valuable account was left by the historians of Alexander which gives important

information regarding the social and economic conditions of India back then. The influence of Greek art and architecture in India can be seen in Gandhara school of art which is associated with the Greco – Roman style of art. The Greek invasion resulted in political unification of North India under the Mauryas.

The Persian and Greek invasions of India had a huge impact particularly in terms of culture and politics. According to the traditions Chandragupta Maurya is said to have acquired some knowledge from the working of the military machine of Alexander which helped him to destroy the Nanda empire.

Unit-IV

Rise of Mauryam Empries I Phase

Mauryam Emprie:

The Maurya Empire, or the Mauryan Empire, was a geographically extensive Iron Age historical power on the Indian subcontinent based in Magadha. Founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 322 BCE, and existing in loose-knit fashion until 185 BCE The Maurya Empire was centralized by the conquest of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, and its capital city was located at Pataliputra, modern Patna. Outside this imperial center, the empire's geographical extent depended on the loyalty of military commanders who controlled the armed cities that sprinkled it. During Ashoka's rule (c. 268 – c. 232 BCE) the empire briefly controlled the major urban hubs and arteries of the Indian subcontinent except those in the deep south. It declined for about 50 years after Ashoka's rule, and dissolved in 185 BCE with the assassination of Brihadratha by Pushyamitra Shunga and the foundation of the Shunga Empire in Magadh.

Chandragupta Maurya raised an army, with the assistance of Chanakya, his teacher and the author of Arthashastra, and overthrew the Nanda Empire in c. 322 BCE, laying the foundation for the Maurya Empire. Chandragupta rapidly expanded his power west across central and western India by defeating the satraps left by Alexander the Great, and by 317 BCE the empire had fully occupied northwestern India. The Mauryan Empire then defeated Seleucus I Nicator, a diadochus and founder of the Seleucid Empire, during the Seleucid–Mauryan war, thus acquiring territory west of the Indus River, Afghanistan and Balochistan.

Under the Mauryas, internal and external trade, agriculture, and economic activities thrived and expanded across India due to the creation of a single and efficient system of finance, administration, and security. The Maurya dynasty built a precursor of the Grand Trunk Road from Pataliputra to Taxila. After the Kalinga War, the Empire experienced nearly half a century of centralized rule under Ashoka the Great. Ashoka's embrace of Buddhism and sponsorship of Buddhist missionaries allowed for the expansion of that faith into Sri Lanka, northwest India, and Central Asia.

The population of South Asia during the Mauryan period has been estimated to be between 15 and 30 million. The Maurya period was marked by exceptional creativity in art, architecture, inscriptions and texts, but also by the consolidation of caste in the Gangetic plain, and the declining rights of women in mainstream Indo-Aryan speaking regions of India. Archaeologically, the period of Mauryan rule in South Asia falls into the era of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The Arthashastra and the Edicts of Ashoka are the primary sources of written records of Mauryan times. The Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath is the national emblem of the Republic of India.

Etymology:

The name "Maurya" does not occur in Ashoka's inscriptions, or the contemporary Greek accounts such as Megasthenes's Indica, but it is attested by the following sources: T

- The Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradaman (c. 150 CE) prefixes "Maurya" to the names Chandragupta and Ashoka.
- The Puranas (c. 4th century CE or earlier) use Maurya as a dynastic appellation.
- The Buddhist texts state that Chandragupta belonged to the "Moriya" clan of the Shakyas, the tribe to which Gautama Buddha belonged.
- The Jain texts state that Chandragupta was the son of a royal superintendent of peacocks (mayura-poshaka).
- Tamil Sangam literature also designate them as 'moriyar' and mention them after the Nandas.
- Kuntala inscription (from the town of Bandanikke, North Mysore) of 12th century AD chronologically mention Mauryya as one of the dynasties which ruled the region.

According to some scholars, Kharavela' Hathigumpha inscription (2nd-1st century BC) mentions era of Maurya Empire as Muriya Kala (Mauryan era), but this reading is disputed: other scholars—such as epigraphist D. C. Sircar read the phrase as mukhiya-kala ("the principal art").

According to the Buddhist tradition, the ancestors of the Maurya kings had settled in a region where peacocks (mora in Pali) were abundant. Therefore, they came to be

known as "Moriyas", literally meaning, "belonging to the place of peacocks". According to another Buddhist account, these ancestors built a city called Moriya-nagara ("Moriya-city"), which was so called, because it was built with the "bricks coloured like peacocks' necks".

The dynasty's connection to the peacocks, as mentioned in the Buddhist and Jain traditions, seems to be corroborated by archaeological evidence. For example, peacock figures are found on the Ashoka pillar at Nandangarh and several sculptures on the Great Stupa of Sanchi. Based on this evidence, modern scholars theorize that the peacock may have been the dynasty's emblem.

Some later authors, such as Dhundhi-raja (an 18th-century commentator on the Mudrarakshasa and an annotator of the Vishnu Purana), state that the word "Maurya" is derived from Mura and the mother of the first Maurya king. However, the Puranas themselves make no mention of Mura and do not talk of any relation between the Nanda and the Maurya dynasties. Dhundiraja's derivation of the word seems to be his own invention: according to the Sanskrit rules, the derivative of the feminine name Mura (IAST: Mura) would be "Maureya"; the term "Maurya" can only be derived from the masculine "Mura".

Founding:

Prior to the Maurya Empire, the Nanda Empire ruled over a broad swathe of the Indian subcontinent. The Nanda Empire was a large, militaristic, and economically powerful empire due to conquering the Mahajanapadas. According to several legends, Chanakya travelled to Pataliputra, Magadha, the capital of the Nanda Empire where Chanakya worked for the Nandas as a minister. However, Chanakya was insulted by the Emperor Dhana Nanda when he informed them of Alexander's invasion. Chanakya swore revenge and vowed to destroy the Nanda Empire. He had to flee in order to save his life and went to Taxila, a notable center of learning, to work as a teacher. On one of his travels, Chanakya witnessed some young men playing a rural game practicing a pitched battle. One of the boys was none other than Chandragupta. Chanakya was impressed by the young Chandragupta and saw royal qualities in him as someone fit to rule.

Meanwhile, Alexander the Great was leading his Indian campaigns and ventured into Punjab. His army mutinied at the Beas River and refused to advance farther eastward when confronted by another army. Alexander returned to Babylon and re-deployed most of his troops west of the Indus River. Soon after Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BCE, his empire fragmented into independent kingdoms led by his generals.

The Maurya Empire was established in the Magadha region under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya and his mentor Chanakya. Chandragupta was taken to Taxila by Chanakya and was tutored about statecraft and governing. Requiring an army Chandragupta recruited and annexed local military republics such as the Yaudheyas that had resisted Alexander's Empire. The Mauryan army quickly rose to become the prominent regional power in the North West of the Indian subcontinent. The Mauryan army then conquered the satraps established by the Macedonia ns. Ancient Greek historians Nearchus, Onesictrius, and Aristobolus have provided lot of information about the Mauryan empire. The Greek generals Eudemus and Peithon ruled in the Indus Valley until around 317 BCE, when Chandragupta Maurya (with the help of Chanakya, who was now his advisor) fought and drove out the Greek governors, and subsequently brought the Indus Valley under the control of his new seat of power in Magadha.

Chandragupta Maurya's ancestry is shrouded in mystery and controversy. On one hand, a number of ancient Indian accounts, such as the drama Mudrarakshasa (Signet ring of Rakshasa – Rakshasa was the prime minister of Magadha) by Vishakhadatta, describe his royal ancestry and even link him with the Nanda family. A kshatriya clan known as the Mauryas are referred to in the earliest Buddhist texts, Mahaparinibbana Sutta. However, any conclusions are hard to make without further historical evidence. Chandragupta first emerges in Greek accounts as "Sandrokottos". As a young man he is said to have met Alexander. Chanakya is said to have met the Nanda king, angered him, and made a narrow escape.

Conquest of the Nanda Empire

Historically reliable details of Chandragupta's campaign against Nanda Empire are unavailable and legends written centuries later are inconsistent. Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu texts claim Magadha was ruled by the Nanda dynasty, which, with Chanakya's counsel,

Chandragupta conquered Nanda Empire The army of Chandragupta and Chanakya first conquered the Nanda outer territories, and finally besieged the Nanda capital Pataliputra. In contrast to the easy victory in Buddhist sources, the Hindu and Jain texts state that the campaign was bitterly fought because the Nanda dynasty had a powerful and well-trained army.

The Buddhist Mahavamsa Tika and Jain Parishishtaparvan records Chandragupta's army unsuccessfully attacking the Nanda capital. Chandragupta and Chanakya then began a campaign at the frontier of the Nanda empire, gradually conquering various territories on their way to the Nanda capital. He then refined his strategy by establishing garrisons in the conquered territories, and finally besieged the Nanda capital Pataliputra. There Dhana Nanda accepted defeat The conquest was fictionalised in Mudrarakshasa play, it contains narratives not found in other versions of the Chanakya-Chandragupta legend. Because of this difference, Thomas Trautmann suggests that most of it is fictional or legendary, without any historical basis. Radha Kumud Mukherjee similarly considers Mudrakshasa play without historical basis.

These legends state that the Nanda king was defeated, deposed and exiled by some accounts, while Buddhist accounts claim he was killed. With the defeat of Dhana Nanda, Chandragupta Maurya founded the Maurya Empire.

Chandragupta Maurya:

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, Chandragupta led a series of campaigns in 305 BCE to take satrapies in the Indus Valley and northwest India. When Alexander's remaining forces were routed, returning westwards, Seleucus I Nicator fought to defend these territories. Not many details of the campaigns are known from ancient sources. Seleucus was defeated and retreated into the mountainous region of Afghanistan.

The two rulers concluded a peace treaty in 303 BCE, including a marital alliance. Under its terms, Chandragupta received the satrapies of Paropamisadae (Kamboja and Gandhara) and Arachosia (Kandhahar) and Gedrosia (Balochistan). Seleucus I received the 500 war elephants that were to have a decisive role in his victory against western Hellenistic kings at the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE. Diplomatic relations were established and several Greeks, such as the historian Megasthenes, Deimakos and Dionysius resided at the Mauryan court.

Megasthenes in particular was a notable Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. His book Indika is a major literary source for information about the Mauryan Empire. According to Arrian, ambassador Megasthenes (c. 350 – c. 290 BCE) lived in Arachosia and travelled to Pataliputra. Megasthenes' description of Mauryan society as freedom-loving gave Seleucus a means to avoid invasion, however, underlying Seleucus' decision was the improbability of success. In later years, Seleucus' successors maintained diplomatic relations with the Empire based on similar accounts from returning travellers.

Chandragupta established a strong centralised state with an administration at Pataliputra, which, according to Megasthenes, was "surrounded by a wooden wall pierced by 64 gates and 570 towers". Aelian, although not expressly quoting Megasthenes nor mentioning Pataliputra, described Indian palaces as superior in splendor to Persia's Susa or Ecbatana. The architecture of the city seems to have had many similarities with Persian cities of the period.

Chandragupta's son Bindusara extended the rule of the Mauryan empire towards southern India. The famous Tamil poet Mamulanar of the Sangam literature described how areas south of the Deccan Plateau which comprised Tamil country was invaded by the Maurya army using troops from Karnataka. Mamulanar states that Vadugar (people who resided in Andhra-Karnataka regions immediately to the north of Tamil Nadu) formed the vanguard of the Mauryan army. He also had a Greek ambassador at his court, named Deimachus.[69] According to Plutarch, Chandragupta Maurya subdued all of India, and Justin also observed that Chandragupta Maurya was "in possession of India". These accounts are corroborated by Tamil sangam literature which mentions about Mauryan invasion with their south Indian allies and defeat of their rivals at Podiyil hill in Tirunelveli district in present-day Tamil Nadu.

Chandragupta renounced his throne and followed Jain teacher Bhadrabahu. He is said to have lived as an ascetic at Shravanabelagola for several years before fasting to death, as per the Jain practice of sallekhana.

Bindusara:

Bindusara was born to Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan Empire. This is attested by several sources, including the various Puranas and the Mahavamsa. He is attested by

the Buddhist texts such as Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa ("Bindusaro"); the Jain texts such as Parishishta-Parvan; as well as the Hindu texts such as Vishnu Purana ("Vindusara"). According to the 12th century Jain writer Hemachandra's Parishishta-Parvan, the name of Bindusara's mother was Durdhara. Some Greek sources also mention him by the name "Amitrochates" or its variations.

Historian Upinder Singh estimates that Bindusara ascended the throne around 297 BCE. Bindusara, just 22 years old, inherited a large empire that consisted of what is now, Northern, Central and Eastern parts of India along with parts of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Bindusara extended this empire to the southern part of India, as far as what is now known as Karnataka. He brought sixteen states under the Mauryan Empire and thus conquered almost all of the Indian peninsula (he is said to have conquered the 'land between the two seas' – the peninsular region between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea). Bindusara did not conquer the friendly Tamil kingdoms of the Cholas, ruled by King Ilamcetcenni, the Pandyas, and Cheras. Apart from these southern states, Kalinga (modern Odisha) was the only kingdom in India that did not form part of Bindusara's empire. It was later conquered by his son Ashoka, who served as the viceroy of Ujjaini during his father's reign, which highlights the importance of the town.

Bindusara's life has not been documented as well as that of his father Chandragupta or of his son Ashoka. Chanakya continued to serve as prime minister during his reign. According to the medieval Tibetan scholar Taranatha who visited India, Chanakya helped Bindusara "to destroy the nobles and kings of the sixteen kingdoms and thus to become absolute master of the territory between the eastern and western oceans". During his rule, the citizens of Taxila revolted twice. The reason for the first revolt was the maladministration of Susima, his eldest son. The reason for the second revolt is unknown, but Bindusara could not suppress it in his lifetime. It was crushed by Ashoka after Bindusara's death.

Bindusara maintained friendly diplomatic relations with the Hellenic world. Deimachus was the ambassador of Seleucid emperor Antiochus I at Bindusara's court.[87] Diodorus states that the king of Palibothra (Pataliputra, the Mauryan capital) welcomed a Greek author, Iambulus. This king is usually identified as Bindusara. Pliny states that the

Egyptian king Philadelphus sent an envoy named Dionysius to India. According to Sailendra Nath Sen, this appears to have happened during Bindusara's reign.

Unlike his father Chandragupta (who at a later stage converted to Jainism), Bindusara believed in the Ajivika sect. Bindusara's guru Pingalavatsa (Janasana) was a Brahmin of the Ajivika sect. Bindusara's wife, Queen Subhadrangi (Queen Dharma Aggamahesi) was a Brahminalso of the Ajivika sect from Champa (present Bhagalpur district). Bindusara is credited with giving several grants to Brahmin monasteries (Brahmana-bhatto).

Historical evidence suggests that Bindusara died in the 270s BCE. According to Upinder Singh, Bindusara died around 273 BCE. Alain Daniélou believes that he died around 274 BCE.[85] Sailendra Nath Sen believes that he died around 273–272 BCE, and that his death was followed by a four-year struggle of succession, after which his son Ashoka became the emperor in 269–268 BCE. According to the Mahavamsa, Bindusara reigned for 28 years. The Vayu Purana, which names Chandragupta's successor as "Bhadrasara", states that he ruled for 25 years.

Ashoka abrilliant commander

As a young prince, Ashoka (272–232) was a brilliant commander who crushed revolts in Ujjain and Taxila. As monarch he was ambitious and aggressive, re-asserting the superiority in southern and western India. But it was his conquest of Kalinga (262–261 BCE) which proved to be the pivotal event of his life. Ashoka used Kalinga to project power over a large region by building a fortification there and securing it as a possession. Although Ashoka's army succeeded in overwhelming Kalinga forces of royal soldiers and civilian units, an estimated 100,000 soldiers and civilians were killed in the furious warfare, including over 10,000 of Ashoka's own men. Hundreds of thousands of people were adversely affected by the destruction and fallout of war. When he personally witnessed the devastation, Ashoka began feeling remorse. Although the annexation of Kalinga was completed, Ashoka embraced the teachings of Buddhism, and renounced war and violence. He sent out missionaries to travel around Asia and spread Buddhism to other countries. He also propagated his own dhamma.

Ashoka implemented principles of ahimsa by banning hunting and violent sports activity and ending indentured and forced labor (many thousands of people in war-ravaged Kalinga had

been forced into hard labour and servitude). While he maintained a large and powerful army, to keep the peace and maintain authority, Ashoka expanded friendly relations with states across Asia and Europe, and he sponsored Buddhist missions. He undertook a massive public works building campaign across the country. Over 40 years of peace, harmony and prosperity made Ashoka one of the most successful and famous monarchs in Indian history. He remains an idealized figure of inspiration in modern India.

The Edicts of Ashoka, set in stone, are found throughout the Subcontinent. Ranging from as far west as Afghanistan and as far south as Andhra (Nellore District), Ashoka's edicts state his policies and accomplishments. Although predominantly written in Prakrit, two of them were written in Greek, and one in both Greek and Aramaic. Ashoka's edicts refer to the Greeks, Kambojas, and Gandharas as peoples forming a frontier region of his empire. They also attest to Ashoka's having sent envoys to the Greek rulers in the West as far as the Mediterranean. The edicts precisely name each of the rulers of the Hellenic world at the time such as Amtiyoko (Antiochus), Tulamaya (Ptolemy), Amtikini (Antigonos), Maka (Magas) and Alikasudaro (Alexander) as recipients of Ashoka's proselytismThe Edicts also accurately locate their territory "600 yojanas away" (a yojanas being about 7 miles), corresponding to the distance between the center of India and Greece (roughly 4,000 miles).

Decline of Mauryas:

Ashoka was followed for 50 years by a succession of weaker kings. He was succeeded by Dasharatha Maurya, who was Ashoka's grandson. None of Ashoka's sons could ascend to the throne after him. Mahinda, his firstborn, became a Buddhist monk. Kunala Maurya was blind and hence couldn't ascend to the throne; and Tivala, son of Kaurwaki, died even earlier than Ashoka. Little is known about another son, Jalauka.

The empire lost many territories under Dasharatha, which were later reconquered by Samprati, Kunala's son. Post Samprati, the Mauryas slowly lost many territories. In 180 BCE, Brihadratha Maurya, was killed by his general Pushyamitra Shunga in a military parade without any heir. Hence, the great Maurya empire finally ended, giving rise to the Shunga Empire.

Reasons advanced for the decline include the succession of weak kings after Aśoka Maurya, the partition of the empire into two, the growing independence of some areas within the empire, such as that ruled by Sophagasenus, a top-heavy administration where authority was entirely in the hands of a few persons, an absence of any national consciousness, the pure scale of the empire making it unwieldy, and invasion by the Greco-Bactrian Empire.

Some historians, such as H. C. Raychaudhuri, have argued that Ashoka's pacifism undermined the "military backbone" of the Maurya empire. Others, such as Romila Thapar, have suggested that the extent and impact of his pacifism have been "grossly exaggerated".

Shunga coup (185 BCE):

Buddhist records such as the Ashokavadana write that the assassination of Brihadratha and the rise of the Shunga empire led to a wave of religious persecution for Buddhists, and a resurgence of Hinduism. According to Sir John Marshall, Pushyamitra may have been the main author of the persecutions, although later Shunga kings seem to have been more supportive of Buddhism. Other historians, such as Etienne Lamotte[101] and Romila Thapar, among others, have argued that archaeological evidence in favour of the allegations of persecution of Buddhists are lacking, and that the extent and magnitude of the atrocities have been exaggerated.

Establishment of the Indo-Greek Kingdom (180 BCE)

The fall of the Mauryas left the Khyber Pass unguarded, and a wave of foreign invasion followed. The Greco-Bactrian king, Demetrius, capitalized on the break-up, and he conquered southern Afghanistan and parts of northwestern India around 180 BCE, forming the Indo-Greek Kingdom. The Indo-Greeks would maintain holdings on the trans-Indus region, and make forays into central India, for about a century. Under them, Buddhism flourished, and one of their kings, Menander, became a famous figure of Buddhism; he was to establish a new capital of Sagala, the modern city of Sialkot. However, the extent of their domains and the lengths of their rule are subject to much debate. Numismatic evidence indicates that they retained holdings in the subcontinent right up to the birth of Christ. Although the extent of their successes against indigenous powers such as the Shungas, Satavahanas, and Kalingas are unclear, what is clear is

that Scythian tribes, renamed Indo-Scythians, brought about the demise of the Indo-Greeks from around 70 BCE and retained lands in the trans-Indus, the region of Mathura, and Gujarat.

Military:

Megasthenes mentions military command consisting of six boards of five members each, (i) Navy (ii) military transport (iii) Infantry (iv) Cavalry with Catapults (v) Chariot divisions and (vi) Elephants.

Administration of Mauryas:

The Empire was divided into four provinces, with the imperial capital at Pataliputra. From Ashokan edicts, the names of the four provincial capitals are Tosali (in the east), Ujjain (in the west), Suvarnagiri (in the south), and Taxila (in the north). The head of the provincial administration was the Kumara (royal prince), who governed the provinces as king's representative. The kumara was assisted by Mahamatyas and council of ministers. This organizational structure was reflected at the imperial level with the Emperor and his Mantriparishad (Council of Ministers). The mauryans established a well developed coin minting system. Coins were mostly made of silver and copper. Certain gold coins were in circulation as well. The coins were widely used for trade and commerce

Historians theorise that the organisation of the Empire was in line with the extensive bureaucracy described by Chanakya in the Arthashastra: a sophisticated civil service governed everything from municipal hygiene to international trade. The expansion and defense of the empire was made possible by what appears to have been one of the largest armies in the world during the Iron Age. According to Megasthenes, the empire wielded a military of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 8,000 chariots and 9,000 war elephants besides followers and attendants. A vast espionage system collected intelligence for both internal and external security purposes. Having renounced offensive warfare and expansionism, Ashoka nevertheless continued to maintain this large army, to protect the Empire and instil stability and peace across West and South Asia].Even though large parts were under the control of Mauryan empire the spread of information and imperial message was limited since many parts were inaccessible and were situated far away from capital of empire.

The economy of the empire has been described as, "a socialized monarchy", "a sort of state socialism", and the world's first welfare state. Under the Mauryan system there was no private ownership of land as all land was owned by the king to whom tribute was paid by the by the laboring class. In return the emperor supplied the laborers with agricultural products, animals, seeds, tools, public infrastructure, and stored food in reserve for times of crisis.

Local government:

Arthashastra and Megasthenes accounts of Pataliputra describe the intricate municipal system formed by Maurya empire to govern its cities. A city counsel made up of thirty commissioners was divided into six committees or boards which governed the city. The first board fixed wages and looked after provided goods, second board made arrangement for foreign dignitaries, tourists and businessmen, third board made records and registrations, fourth looked after manufactured goods and sale of commodities, fifth board regulated trade, issued licenses and checked weights and measurements, sixth board collected sales taxes. Some cities such as Taxila had autonomy to issue their own coins. The city counsel had officers who looked after public welfare such as maintenance of roads, public buildings, markets, hospitals, educational institutions etc. The official head of the village was Gramika (in towns Nagarika. The city counsel also had some magisterial powers. The taking of Census was regular process in the Mauryan administration. The village officials (Gramika) and municipal officials (Nagarika) were responsible enumerating different classes of people in the Mauryan empire such as traders, agriculturists, smiths, potters, carpenters etc. and also cattle, mostly for taxation purposes.These vocations consolidated as castes, a feature of Indian society that continues to influence the Indian politics till today.

Economy:

For the first time in South Asia, political unity and military security allowed for a common economic system and enhanced trade and commerce, with increased agricultural productivity. The previous situation involving hundreds of kingdoms, many small armies, powerful regional chieftains, and internecine warfare, gave way to a disciplined central authority. Farmers were freed of tax and crop collection burdens from regional kings, paying instead to a nationally administered and strict-but-fair system of taxation as advised by the principles in

the Arthashastra. Chandragupta Maurya established a single currency across India, and a network of regional governors and administrators and a civil service provided justice and security for merchants, farmers and traders. The Mauryan army wiped out many gangs of bandits, regional private armies, and powerful chieftains who sought to impose their own supremacy in small areas. Although regimental in revenue collection, Maurya also sponsored many public works and waterways to enhance productivity, while internal trade in India expanded greatly due to new-found political unity and internal peace

Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty, and during Ashoka's reign, an international network of trade expanded. The Khyber Pass, on the modern boundary of Pakistan and Afghanistan, became a strategically important port of trade and intercourse with the outside world. Greek states and Hellenic kingdoms in West Asia became important trade partners of India. Trade also extended through the Malay peninsula into Southeast Asia. India's exports included silk goods and textiles, spices and exotic foods. The external world came across new scientific knowledge and technology with expanding trade with the Mauryan Empire. Ashoka also sponsored the construction of thousands of roads, waterways, canals, hospitals, rest-houses and other public works. The easing of many over-rigorous administrative practices, including those regarding taxation and crop collection, helped increase productivity and economic activity across the Empire.

In many ways, the economic situation in the Mauryan Empire is analogous to the Roman Empire of several centuries later. Both had extensive trade connections and both had organizations similar to corporations. While Rome had organizational entities which were largely used for public state-driven projects, Mauryan India had numerous private commercial entities. These existed purely for private commerce and developed before the Mauryan Empire itself.

Religion:

Throughout the period of empire, Brahmanism was an important religion. The Mauryans favored Brahmanism as well as Jainism and Buddhism. Minor religious sects such as Ajivikas also received patronage. A number of Hindu texts were written during the Mauryan period.

According to a Jain text from 12th century, Chandragupta Maurya followed Jainism after retiring, when he renounced his throne and material possessions to join a wandering group of Jain monks and in his last days, he observed the rigorous but self-purifying Jain ritual of santhara (fast unto death), at Shravana Belgola in Karnataka. Nevertheless, it is possible that Chandragupta Maurya "did not give up the performance of sacrificial rites and was far from following the Jaina creed of Ahimsa or non-injury to animals." Samprati, the grandson of Ashoka, also patronized Jainism. Samprati was influenced by the teachings of Jain monks like Suhastin and he is said to have built 125,000 derasars across India. Some of them are still found in the towns of Ahmedabad, Viramgam, Ujjain, and PalitanaIt is also said that just like Ashoka, Samprati sent messengers and preachers to Greece, Persia and the Middle East for the spread of Jainism, but, to date, no evidence has been found to support this claim. The Buddhist texts Samantapasadika and Mahavamsa suggest that Bindusara followed Hindu Brahmanism, calling him a "Brahmana bhatto" ("monk of the Brahmanas").

Magadha, the centre of the empire, was also the birthplace of Buddhism. Ashoka initially practised Brahmanism] but later followed Buddhism; following the Kalinga War, he renounced expansionism and aggression, and the harsher injunctions of the Arthashastra on the use of force, intensive policing, and ruthless measures for tax collection and against rebels. Ashoka sent a mission led by his son Mahinda and daughter Sanghamitta to Sri Lanka, whose king Tissa was so charmed with Buddhist ideals that he adopted them himself and made Buddhism the state religion. Ashoka sent many Buddhist missions to West Asia, Greece and South East Asia, and commissioned the construction of monasteries and schools, as well as the publication of Buddhist literature across the empire. He is believed to have built as many as 84,000 stupas across India, such as Sanchi and Mahabodhi Temple, and he increased the popularity of Buddhism in Afghanistan and Thailand. Ashoka helped convene the Third Buddhist Council of India's and South Asia's Buddhist orders near his capital, a council that undertook much work of reform and expansion of the Buddhist religion. Indian merchants embraced Buddhism and played a large role in spreading the religion across the Mauryan Empire.

Society:

The population of South Asia during the Mauryan period has been estimated to be between 15 and 30 million. According to Tim Dyson, the period of the Mauryan Empire saw the consolidation of caste among the Indo-Aryan people who had settled in the Gangetic plain, increasingly meeting tribal people who were incorporated into their evolving caste-system, and the declining rights of women in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions of India, though "these developments did not affect people living in large parts of the subcontinent."

Architectural remains:

The greatest monument of this period, executed in the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, was the old palace at Paliputra, modern Kumhrar in Patna. Excavations have unearthed the remains of the palace, which is thought to have been a group of several buildings, the most important of which was an immense pillared hall supported on a high substratum of timbers. The pillars were set in regular rows, thus dividing the hall into a number of smaller square bays. The number of columns is 80, each about 7 meters high. According to the eyewitness account of Megasthenes, the palace was chiefly constructed of timber, and was considered to exceed in splendour and magnificence the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana, its gilded pillars being adorned with golden vines and silver birds. The buildings stood in an extensive park studded with fish ponds and furnished with a great variety of ornamental trees and shrubsKauṭilya's Arthashastra also gives the method of palace construction from this period. Later fragments of stone pillars, including one nearly complete, with their round tapering shafts and smooth polish, indicate that Ashoka was responsible for the construction of the stone columns which replaced the earlier wooden ones.

During the Ashokan period, stonework was of a highly diversified order and comprised lofty free-standing pillars, railings of stupas, lion thrones and other colossal figures. The use of stone had reached such great perfection during this time that even small fragments of stone art were given a high lustrous polish resembling fine enamel. This period marked the beginning of Buddhist architecture. Ashoka was responsible for the construction of several stupas, which were large domes and bearing symbols of Buddha. The most important ones are located at Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Bharhut, and possibly Amaravati Stupa. The most widespread examples of

Mauryan architecture are the Ashoka pillars and carved edicts of Ashoka, often exquisitely decorated, with more than 40 spread throughout the Indian subcontinent. The peacock was a dynastic symbol of Mauryans, as depicted by Ashoka's pillars at Nandangarh and Sanchi Stupa. The two Yakshas, possibly 3rd century BCE, found in Pataliputra. The two Brahmi inscriptions starting with ... (Yakhe... for "Yaksha...") are paleographically of a later date, circa 2nd century CE Kushan.

Natural history:

The protection of animals in India was advocated by the time of the Maurya dynasty; being the first empire to provide a unified political entity in India, the attitude of the Mauryas towards forests, their denizens, and fauna in general is of interest.

The Mauryas firstly looked at forests as resources. For them, the most important forest product was the elephant. Military might in those times depended not only upon horses and men but also battle-elephants; these played a role in the defeat of Seleucus, one of Alexander's former generals. The Mauryas sought to preserve supplies of elephants since it was cheaper and took less time to catch, tame and train wild elephants than to raise them. Kautilya's Arthashastra contains not only maxims on ancient statecraft, but also unambiguously specifies the responsibilities of officials such as the Protector of the Elephant Forests.

The Mauryas also designated separate forests to protect supplies of timber, as well as lions and tigers for skins. Elsewhere the Protector of Animals also worked to eliminate thieves, tigers and other predators to render the woods safe for grazing cattle

The Mauryas valued certain forest tracts in strategic or economic terms and instituted curbs and control measures over them. They regarded all forest tribes with distrust and controlled them with bribery and political subjugation. They employed some of them, the food-gatherers or aranyaca to guard borders and trap animals. The sometimes tense and conflict-ridden relationship nevertheless enabled the Mauryas to guard their vast empire

When Ashoka embraced Buddhism in the latter part of his reign, he brought about significant changes in his style of governance, which included providing protection to fauna, and

even relinquished the royal hunt. He was the first ruler in historyto advocate conservation measures for wildlife and even had rules inscribed in stone edicts. The edicts proclaim that many followed the king's example in giving up the slaughter of animals; one of them proudly states:

However, the edicts of Ashoka reflect more the desire of rulers than actual events; the mention of a 100 'panas' (coins) fine for poaching deer in royal hunting preserves shows that rule-breakers did exist. The legal restrictions conflicted with the practices freely exercised by the common people in hunting, felling, fishing and setting fires in forests.

Contactas with the Hellenistic world:

Foundation of the Empire:

Relations with the Hellenistic world may have started from the very beginning of the Maurya Empire. Plutarch reports that Chandragupta Maurya met with Alexander the Great, probably around Taxila in the northwest. Sandrocottus, when he was a stripling, saw Alexander himself, and we are told that he often said in later times that Alexander narrowly missed making himself master of the country, since its king was hated and despised on account of his baseness and low birth.

Reconquest of the Northwest (c. 317–316 BCE)

Chandragupta ultimately occupied Northwestern India, in the territories formerly ruled by the Greeks, where he fought the satraps (described as "Prefects" in Western sources) left in place after Alexander (Justin), among whom may have been Eudemus, ruler in the western Punjab until his departure in 317 BCE or Peithon, son of Agenor, ruler of the Greek colonies along the Indus until his departure for Babylon in 316 BCE. India, after the death of Alexander, had assassinated his prefects, as if shaking the burden of servitude. The author of this liberation was Sandracottos, but he had transformed liberation in servitude after victory, since, after taking the throne, he himself oppressed the very people he has liberated from foreign domination. Later, as he was preparing war against the prefects of Alexander, a huge wild elephant went to him and took him on his back as if tame, and he became a remarkable fighter and war leader. Having thus

acquired royal power, Sandracottos possessed India at the time Seleucos was preparing future glory.

Conflict and alliance with Seleucus (305 BCE)

. Seleucus I Nicator, the Macedonian satrap of the Asian portion of Alexander's former empire, conquered and put under his own authority eastern territories as far as Bactria and the Indus (Appian, History of Rome, The Syrian Wars 55), until in 305 BCE he entered into a confrontation with Emperor Chandragupta:

Always lying in wait for the neighbouring nations, strong in arms and persuasive in council, he [Seleucus] acquired Mesopotamia, Armenia, 'Seleucid' Cappadocia, Persis, Parthia, Bactria, Arabia, Tapouria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Hyrcania, and other adjacent peoples that had been subdued by Alexander, as far as the river Indus, so that the boundaries of his empire were the most extensive in Asia after that of Alexander. The whole region from Phrygia to the Indus was subject to Seleucus.

Though no accounts of the conflict remain, it is clear that Seleucus fared poorly against the Indian Emperor as he failed to conquer any territory, and in fact was forced to surrender much that was already his. Regardless, Seleucus and Chandragupta ultimately reached a settlement and through a treaty sealed in 305 BCE, Seleucus, according to Strabo, ceded a number of territories to Chandragupta, including eastern Afghanistan and Balochistan.

Marriage alliance

Chandragupta and Seleucus concluded a peace treaty and a marriage alliance in 303 BCE. Chandragupta received vast territories and in a return gave Seleucus 500 war elephants, a military asset which would play a decisive role at the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE. In addition to this treaty, Seleucus dispatched an ambassador, Megasthenes, to Chandragupta, and later Deimakos to his son Bindusara, at the Mauryan court at Pataliputra (modern Patna in Bihar). Later, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt and contemporary of Ashoka, is also recorded by Pliny the Elder as having sent an ambassador named Dionysius to the Mauryan court.

Mainstream scholarship asserts that Chandragupta received vast territory west of the Indus, including the Hindu Kush, modern-day Afghanistan, and the Balochistan province of Pakistan Archaeologically, concrete indications of Mauryan rule, such as the inscriptions of the Edicts of Ashoka, are known as far as Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. He (Seleucus) crossed the Indus and waged war with Sandrocottus [Maurya], king of the Indians, who dwelt on the banks of that stream, until they came to an understanding with each other and contracted a marriage relationship. After having made a treaty with him (Sandrakotos) and put in order the Orient situation, Seleucos went to war against Antigonus. The treaty on "Epigamia" implies lawful marriage between Greeks and Indians was recognized at the State level, although it is unclear whether it occurred among dynastic rulers or common people, or both.

Exchange of presents

Classical sources have also recorded that following their treaty, Chandragupta and Seleucus exchanged presents, such as when Chandragupta sent various aphrodisiacs to Seleucus. And Theophrastus says that some contrivances are of wondrous efficacy in such matters [as to make people more amorous]. And Phylarchus confirms him, by reference to some of the presents which Sandrakottus, the king of the Indians, sent to Seleucus; which were to act like charms in producing a wonderful degree of affection, while some, on the contrary, were to banish love.

His son Bindusara 'Amitraghata' (Slayer of Enemies) also is recorded in Classical sources as having exchanged presents with Antiochus I: But dried figs were so very much sought after by all men (for really, as Aristophanes says, "There's really nothing nicer than dried figs"), that even Amitrochates, the king of the Indians, wrote to Antiochus, entreating him (it is Hegesander who tells this story) to buy and send him some sweet wine, and some dried figs, and a sophist; and that Antiochus wrote to him in answer, "The dry figs and the sweet wine we will send you; but it is not lawful for a sophist to be sold in Greece.

Greek population in India

An influential and large Greek population was present in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent under Ashoka's rule, possibly remnants of Alexander's conquests in the Indus

Valley region. In the Rock Edicts of Ashoka, some of them inscribed in Greek, Ashoka states that the Greeks within his dominion were converted to Buddhism.

Here in the king's dominion among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the Nabhakas, the Nabhapamkits, the Bhojas, the Pitinikas, the Andhras and the Palidas, everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions in Dharma.

Now, in times past (officers) called Mahamatras of morality did not exist before. Mahdmatras of morality were appointed by me (when I had been) anointed thirteen years. These are occupied with all sects in establishing morality, in promoting morality, and for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to morality (even) among the Greeks, Kambojas and Gandharas, and whatever other western borderers (of mine there are).

Fragments of Edict 13 have been found in Greek, and a full Edict, written in both Greek and Aramaic, has been discovered in Kandahar. It is said to be written in excellent Classical Greek, using sophisticated philosophical terms. In this Edict, Ashoka uses the word Eusebeia ("Piety") as the Greek translation for the ubiquitous "Dharma" of his other Edicts written in Prakrit.

Ten years (of reign) having been completed, King Piodasses (Ashoka) made known (the doctrine of) Piety (εὐσέβεια, Eusebeia) to men; and from this moment he has made men more pious, and everything thrives throughout the whole world. And the king abstains from (killing) living beings, and other men and those who (are) huntsmen and fishermen of the king have desisted from hunting. And if some (were) intemperate, they have ceased from their intemperance as was in their power; and obedient to their father and mother and to the elders, in opposition to the past also in the future, by so acting on every occasion, they will live better and more happily.

Also, in the Edicts of Ashoka, Ashoka mentions the Hellenistic kings of the period as recipients of his Buddhist proselytism, although no Western historical record of this event remains: The conquest by Dharma has been won here, on the borders, and even six hundred yojanas (5,400–9,600 km) away, where the Greek king Antiochos rules, beyond there

where the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander rule, likewise in the south among the Cholas, the Pandyas, and as far as Tamraparni (Sri Lanka).

Ashoka also encouraged the development of herbal medicine, for men and animals, in their Everywhere within Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi's [Ashoka's] domain, and among the people beyond the borders, the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputras, the Keralaputras, as far as Tamraparni and where the Greek king Antiochos rules, and among the kings who are neighbors of Antiochos, everywhere has Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, made provision for two types of medical treatment: medical treatment for humans and medical treatment for animals. Wherever medical herbs suitable for humans or animals are not available, I have had them imported and grown. Wherever medical roots or fruits are not available I have had them imported and grown. Along roads I have had wells dug and trees planted for the benefit of humans and animals.

The Greeks in India even seem to have played an active role in the spread of Buddhism, as some of the emissaries of Ashoka, such as Dharmaraksita, are described in Pali sources as leading Greek ("Yona") Buddhist monks, active in Buddhist proselytism (the Mahavamsa, XII

Subhagasena and Antiochos III (206 BCE)

Sophagasenus was an Indian Mauryan ruler of the 3rd century BCE, described in ancient Greek sources, and named Subhagasena or Subhashasena in Prakrit. His name is mentioned in the list of Mauryan princes[] and also in the list of the Yadava dynasty, as a descendant of Pradyumna. He may have been a grandson of Ashoka, or Kunala, the son of Ashoka. He ruled an area south of the Hindu Kush, possibly in Gandhara. Antiochos III, the Seleucid king, after having made peace with Euthydemus in Bactria, went to India in 206 BCE and is said to have renewed his friendship with the Indian king there:

He (Antiochus) crossed the Caucasus and descended into India; renewed his friendship with Sophagasenus the king of the Indians; received more elephants, until he had a hundred and fifty altogether; and having once more provisioned his troops, set out again personally with his army: leaving Androsthenes of Cyzicus the duty of taking home the treasure which this king had agreed to hand over to him.

Ashoka(304-232 BCE)

Asoka (304 – 232 BCE), popularly known as Ashoka the Great, and also referred to as Chakraravartin Samrat Ashoka, was the third Mauryan Emperor of Magadha in the Indian subcontinent during c. 268 to 232 BCE. His empire covered a large part of the Indian subcontinent, stretching from present-day Afghanistan in the west to present-day Bangladesh in the east, with its capital at Pataliputra. A patron of Buddhism, he is credited with playing an important role in the spread of Buddhism across ancient Asia.

Ashoka's edicts state that during his eighth regnal year (c. 260 BCE), he conquered Kalinga after a brutal war. Ashoka subsequently devoted himself to the propagation of "dhamma" or righteous conduct, the major theme of the edicts. Ashoka's edicts suggest that a few years after the Kalinga War, he was gradually drawn towards Buddhism. The Buddhist legends credit Ashoka with establishing a large number of stupas, patronising the Third Buddhist council, supporting Buddhist missionaries, making generous donations to the sangha, and even persecuting non-Buddhists.

Ashoka's existence as a historical emperor had almost been forgotten, but since the decipherment of sources written in Brahmi script in the 19th century, Ashoka holds a reputation as one of the greatest Indian emperors. The emblem of the modern Republic of India is an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Ashoka. Ashoka's wheel, the Ashoka Chakra is adopted at the centre of the National Flag of India.

Sources of Information:

Information about Ashoka comes from his inscriptions; other inscriptions that mention him or are possibly from his reign; and ancient literature, especially Buddhist texts. These sources often contradict each other, although various historians have attempted to correlate their testimony. So, for example, while Ashoka is often attributed with building many hospitals during his time, there is no clear evidence that any hospitals existed in ancient India during the 3rd century BC or that Ashoka was responsible for commissioning the construction of any.

Inscriptions:

Ashoka's inscriptions are the earliest self-representations of imperial power in the Indian subcontinent. However, these inscriptions are focused mainly on the topic of dhamma, and provide little information regarding other aspects of the Maurya state or society Even on the topic of dhamma, the content of these inscriptions cannot be taken at face value. In the words of American academic John S. Strong, it is sometimes helpful to think of Ashoka's messages as propaganda by a politician whose aim is to present a favourable image of himself and his administration, rather than record historical facts.

A small number of other inscriptions also provide some information about Ashoka. For example, he finds a mention in the 2nd century Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradaman. An inscription discovered at Sirkap mentions a lost word beginning with "Priy", which is theorised to be Ashoka's title "Priyadarshi", although this is not certain. Some other inscriptions, such as the Sohgaura copper plate inscription, have been tentatively dated to Ashoka's period by some scholars, although others contest this.

Buddhist legends

Much of the information about Ashoka comes from Buddhist legends, which present him as a great, ideal king. These legends appear in texts that are not contemporary to Ashoka and were composed by Buddhist authors, who used various stories to illustrate the impact of their faith on Ashoka. This makes it necessary to exercise caution while relying on them for historical information. Among modern scholars, opinions range from downright dismissal of these legends as mythological to acceptance of all historical portions that seem plausible.

The Buddhist legends about Ashoka exist in several languages, including Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, Burmese, Sinhala, Thai, Lao, and Khotanese. All these legends can be traced to two primary traditions. The North Indian tradition preserved in the Sanskrit-language texts such as Divyavadana (including its constituent Ashokavadana); and Chinese sources such as A-yü wang chuan and A-yü wang ching. The Sri Lankan tradition preserved in Pali-lanuage texts, such as Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa, Vamsatthapakasini (a commentary on Mahavamsa), Buddhaghosha's commentary on the Vinaya, and Samanta-pasadika.

There are several significant differences between the two traditions. For example, the Sri Lankan tradition emphasizes Ashoka's role in convening the Third Buddhist council, and his dispatch of several missionaries to distant regions, including his son Mahinda to Sri Lanka. However, the North Indian tradition makes no mention of these events. It describes other events not found in the Sri Lankan tradition, such as a story about another son named KunalaEven while narrating the common stories, the two traditions diverge in several ways. For example, both Ashokavadana and Mahavamsa mention that Ashoka's queen Tishyarakshita had the Bodhi Tree destroyed. In Ashokavadana, the queen manages to have the tree healed after she realises her mistake. In the Mahavamsa, she permanently destroys the tree, but only after a branch of the tree has been transplanted in Sri Lanka. In another story, both the texts describe Ashoka's unsuccessful attempts to collect a relic of Gautama Buddha from Ramagrama. In Ashokavadana, he fails to do so because he cannot match the devotion of the Nagas who hold the relic; however, in the Mahavamsa, he fails to do so because the Buddha had destined the relic to be enshrined by King Dutthagamani of Sri Lanka. Using such stories, the Mahavamsa glorifies Sri Lanka as the new preserve of Buddhism King Ashoka visits Ramagrama, to take relics of the Buddha from the Nagas, but in vain. Southern gateway, Stupa 1, Sanchi.

Other sources

Numismatic, sculptural, and archaeological evidence supplements research on Ashoka Ashoka's name appears in the lists of Mauryan kings in the various Puranas. However, these texts do not provide further details about him, as their Brahmanical authors were not patronised by the Mauryans Other texts, such as the Arthashastra and Indica of Megasthenes, which provide general information about the Maurya period, can also be used to make inferences about Ashoka's reign. However, the Arthashastra is a normative text that focuses on an ideal rather than a historical state, and its dating to the Mauryan period is a subject of debate. The Indica is a lost work, and only parts of it survive in the form of paraphrases in later writings

The 12th-century text Rajatarangini mentions a Kashmiri king Ashoka of Gonandiya dynasty who built several stupas: some scholars, such as Aurel Stein, have identified this king

with the Maurya king Ashoka; others, such as Ananda W. P. Guruge dismiss this identification as inaccurate.

Alternative interpretation of the epigraphic evidence:

For some scholars, such as Christopher I. Beckwith, Ashoka, whose name only appears in the Minor Rock Edicts, is not the same as king Piyadasi, or Devanampiya Piyadasi (i.e. "Beloved of the Gods Piyadasi", "Beloved of the Gods" being a fairly widespread title for "King"), who is named as the author of the Major Pillar Edicts and the Major Rock Edicts

Beckwith suggests that Piyadasi was living in the 3rd century BCE, was probably the son of Chandragupta Maurya known to the Greeks as Amitrochates, and only advocated for piety ("Dharma") in his Major Pillar Edicts and Major Rock Edicts, without ever mentioning Buddhism, the Buddha, or the Samgha (the single notable exception is the 7th Edict of the Major Pillar Edicts which does mention the Samgha, but is a considered a later fake by Beckwith). Also, the geographical spread of his inscription shows that Piyadasi ruled a vast Empire, contiguous with the Seleucid Empire in the West.

On the contrary, for Beckwith, Ashoka was a later king of the 1st–2nd century CE, whose name only appears explicitly in the Minor Rock Edicts and allusively in the Minor Pillar Edicts, and who does mention the Buddha and the Samgha, explicitly promoting Buddhism. The name "Priyadarsi" does occur in two of the minor edicts (Gujarra and Bairat), but Beckwith again considers them as later fabrications. The minor inscriptions cover a very different and much smaller geographical area, clustering in Central India. According to Beckwith, the inscriptions of this later Ashoka were typical of the later forms of "normative Buddhism", which are well attested from inscriptions and Gandhari manuscripts dated to the turn of the millennium, and around the time of the Kushan Empire. The quality of the inscriptions of this Ashoka is significantly lower than the quality of the inscriptions of the earlier Piyadasi.

Name and titles:

The name "A-shoka" literally means "without sorrow". According to an Ashokavadana legend, his mother gave him this name because his birth removed her sorrows. The name Priyadasi is associated with Ashoka in the 3rd–4th century CE Dipavamsa The term

literally means "he who regards amiably", or "of gracious mien" (Sanskrit: Priya-darshi). It may have been a regnal name adopted by Ashoka. A version of this name is used for Ashoka in Greek-language inscriptions: ("Basileus Piodasses"). Ashoka's inscriptions mention his title Devanampiya (Sanskrit: Devanampriya, "Beloved of the Gods"). The identification of Devanampiya and Ashoka as the same person is established by the Maski and Gujarra inscriptions, which use both these terms for the king. The title was adopted by other kings, including the contemporary king Devanampiya Tissa of Anuradhapura and Ashoka's descendant Dasharatha Maurya.

The title 'Mahasammat' is received in the context of directing the Mahamatras in the Buddhist text Nikaya. Also the other two other titles are 'Murdhabhishikta' and 'Janapadasthamaviryaprapt' which are often

The exact date of Ashoka's birth is not certain, as the extant contemporary Indian texts did not record such details. It is known that he lived in the 3rd century BCE, as his inscriptions mention several contemporary rulers whose dates are known with more certainty, such as Antiochus II Theos, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Antigonus II Gonatas, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander (of Epirus or Corinth). Thus, Ashoka must have been born sometime in the late 4th century BCE or early 3rd century BCE (c. 304 BCE),

Ancestry:

Ashoka's own inscriptions are fairly detailed but make no mention of his ancestors Other sources, such as the Puranas and the Mahavamsa state that his father was the Mauryan emperor Bindusara, and his grandfather was Chandragupta – the founder of the Empire. The Ashokavadana also names his father as Bindusara, but traces his ancestry to Buddha's contemporary king Bimbisara, through Ajatashatru, Udayin, Munda, Kakavarnin, Sahalin, Tulakuchi, Mahamandala, Prasenajit, and Nanda. The 16th century Tibetan monk Taranatha, whose account is a distorted version of the earlier traditions, describes Ashoka as the illegitimate son of king Nemita of Champarana from the daughter of a merchant.

Ashokavadana states that Ashoka's mother was the daughter of a Brahmin from Champa, and was prophesied to marry a king. Accordingly, her father took her to Pataliputra, where she

was inducted into Bindusara's harem, and ultimately, became his chief queen. The Ashokavadana does not mention her by name, although other legends provide different names for her. For example, the Asokavadanamala callsherSubhadrangi The Vamsatthapakasini or Mahavamsa-tika, a commentary on Mahavamsa, calls her "Dharma" ("Dhamma" in Pali), and states that she belonged to the Moriya Kshatriya clan. A Divyavadana legend calls her Janapada-kalyani; according to scholar Ananda W. P. Guruge, this is not a name, but an epithet.

According to the 2nd-century historian Appian, Chandragupta entered into a marital alliance with the Greek ruler Seleucus I Nicator, which has led to speculation that either Chandragupta or his son Bindusara married a Greek princess. However, there is no evidence that Ashoka's mother or grandmother was Greek, and most historians have dismissed the idea.

As a Prince:

Ashoka's own inscriptions do not describe his early life, and much of the information on this topic comes from apocryphal legends written hundreds of years after him. While these legends include obviously fictitious details such as narratives of Ashoka's past lives, they have some plausible historical information about Ashoka's period..

According to the Ashokavadana, Bindusara disliked Ashoka because of his rough skin. One day, Bindusara asked the ascetic Pingala-vatsajiva to determine which of his sons was worthy of being his successor. He asked all the princes to assemble at the Garden of the Golden Pavilion on the ascetic's advice. Ashoka was reluctant to go because his father disliked him, but his mother convinced him to do so. When minister Radhagupta saw Ashoka leaving the capital for the Garden, he offered to provide the prince with a royal elephant for the travel. At the Garden, Pingala-vatsajiva examined the princes and realised that Ashoka would be the next king. To avoid annoying Bindusara, the ascetic refused to name the successor. Instead, he said that one who had the best mount, seat, drink, vessel and food would be the next king; each time, Ashoka declared that he met the criterion. Later, he told Ashoka's mother that her son would be the next king, and on her advice, left the kingdom to avoid Bindusara's wrath.

While legends suggest that Bindusara disliked Ashoka's ugly appearance, they also state that Bindusara gave him important responsibilities, such as suppressing a revolt in Takshashila (according to north Indian tradition) and governing Ujjain (according to Sri Lankan tradition). This suggests that Bindusara was impressed by the other qualities of the prince. Another possibility is that he sent Ashoka to distant regions to keep him away from the imperial capital.

Rebellion at Taxila:

According to the Ashokavadana, Bindusara dispatched prince Ashoka to suppress a rebellion in the city of Takshashila (present-day Bhir Mound in Pakistan). This episode is not mentioned in the Sri Lankan tradition, which instead states that Bindusara sent Ashoka to govern Ujjain. Two other Buddhist texts – Ashoka-sutra and Kunala-sutra – state that Bindusara appointed Ashoka as a viceroy in Gandhara (where Takshashila was located), not Ujjain.

The Ashokavadana states that Bindusara provided Ashoka with a fourfold-army (comprising cavalry, elephants, chariots and infantry) but refused to provide any weapons for this army. Ashoka declared that weapons would appear before him if he was worthy of being a king, and then, the deities emerged from the earth and provided weapons to the army. When Ashoka reached Takshashila, the citizens welcomed him and told him that their rebellion was only against the evil ministers, not the king. Sometime later, Ashoka was similarly welcomed in the Khasa territory and the gods declared that he would go on to conquer the whole earth.

Takshashila was a prosperous and geopolitically influential city, and historical evidence proves that by Ashoka's time, it was well-connected to the Mauryan capital Pataliputra by the Uttarapatha trade route. However, no extant contemporary source mentions the Takshashila rebellion, and none of Ashoka's records states that he ever visited the city. That said, the historicity of the legend about Ashoka's involvement in the Takshashila rebellion may be corroborated by an Aramaic-language inscription discovered at Sirkap near Taxila. The inscription includes a name that begins with the letters "prydr", and most scholars restore it as "Priyadarshi", which was the title of Ashoka. Another evidence of Ashoka's connection to the city may be the name of the Dharmarajika Stupa near Taxila; the name suggests that it was built by Ashoka ("Dharma-raja").

The story about the deities miraculously bringing weapons to Ashoka may be the text's way of deifying Ashoka; or indicating that Bindusara – who disliked Ashoka – wanted him to fail in Takshashila.

Governor of Ujjain:

According to the Mahavamsa, Bindusara appointed Ashoka as the viceroy of present-day Ujjain (Ujjeni), which was an important administrative and commercial centre in the Avanti province of central India. This tradition is corroborated by the Saru Maru inscription discovered in central India; this inscription states that he visited the place as a prince. Ashoka's own rock edict mentions the presence of a prince viceroy at Ujjain during his reign, which further supports the tradition that he himself served as a viceroy at Ujjain.

The Saru Maru commemorative inscription seems to mention the presence of Ashoka in the area of Ujjain as he was still a Prince.

Pataliputra was connected to Ujjain by multiple routes in Ashoka's time, and on the way, Ashoka entourage may have encamped at Rupnath, where his inscription has been found.

According to the Sri Lankan tradition, Ashoka visited Vidisha, where he fell in love with a beautiful woman on his way to Ujjain. According to the Dipamvamsa and Mahamvamsa, the woman was Devi – the daughter of a merchant. According to the Mahabodhi-vamsa, she was Vidisha-Mahadevi and belonged to the Shakya clan of Gautama Buddha. The Buddhist chroniclers may have fabricated the Shakya connection to connect Ashoka's family to Buddha. The Buddhist texts allude to her being a Buddhist in her later years but do not describe her conversion to Buddhism. Therefore, it is likely that she was already a Buddhist when she met Ashoka.

The Mahavamsa states that Devi gave birth to Ashoka's son Mahinda in Ujjain, and two years later, to a daughter named Sanghamitta. According to the Mahavamsa, Ashoka's son Mahinda was ordained at the age of 20 years, during the sixth year of Ashoka's reign. That means Mahinda must have been 14 years old when Ashoka ascended the throne. Even if Mahinda was born when Ashoka was as young as 20 years old, Ashoka must have ascended the throne at 34 years, which means he must have served as a viceroy for several years.

Ascension to the throne:

Legends suggest that Ashoka was not the crown prince, and his ascension on the throne was disputed. Ashokavadana states that Bindusara's eldest son Susima once slapped a bald minister on his head in jest. The minister worried that after ascending the throne, Susima may jokingly hurt him with a sword. Therefore, he instigated five hundred ministers to support Ashoka's claim to the throne when the time came, noting that Ashoka was predicted to become a chakravartin (universal ruler). Sometime later, Takshashila rebelled again, and Bindusara dispatched Susima to curb the rebellion. Shortly after, Bindusara fell ill and was expected to die soon. Susima was still in Takshashila, having been unsuccessful in suppressing the rebellion. Bindusara recalled him to the capital and asked Ashoka to march to Takshashila. However, the ministers told him that Ashoka was ill and suggested that he temporarily install Ashoka on the throne until Susmia's return from Takshashila. When Bindusara refused to do so, Ashoka declared that if the throne were rightfully his, the gods would crown him as the next king. At that instance, the gods did so, Bindusara died, and Ashoka's authority extended to the entire world, including the Yaksha territory located above the earth and the Naga territory located below the earth. When Susima returned to the capital, Ashoka's newly appointed prime minister Radhagupta tricked him into a pit of charcoal. Susima died a painful death, and his general Bhadrayudha became a Buddhist monk.

The Lion Capital of Ashoka in Sarnath, showing its four Asiatic lions standing back to back, and symbolizing the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, supporting the Wheel of Moral law (Dharmachakra, reconstitution per Sarnath Museum notice). The lions stand on a circular abacus, decorated with dharmachakras alternating with four animals in profile: horse, bull, elephant, and lion. The architectural bell below the abacus, is a stylized upside down lotus. Sarnath Museum,

The Mahavamsa states that when Bindusara fell sick, Ashoka returned to Pataliputra from Ujjain and gained control of the capital. After his father's death, Ashoka had his eldest brother killed and ascended the throne The text also states that Ashoka killed ninety-nine of his half-brothers, including Sumana.[61] The Dipavamsa states that he killed a hundred of his brothers and was crowned four years later. The Vamsatthapakasini adds that an Ajivika ascetic had predicted

this massacre based on the interpretation of a dream of Ashoka's mother. According to these accounts, only Ashoka's uterine brother Tissa was spared. Other sources name the surviving brother Vitashoka, Vigatashoka, Sudatta (So-ta-to in A-yi-uang-chuan), or Sugatra (Siu-ka-tu-lu in Fen-pie-kung-te-hun).

The figures such as 99 and 100 are exaggerated and seem to be a way of stating that Ashoka killed several of his brothers. Taranatha states that Ashoka, who was an illegitimate son of his predecessor, killed six legitimate princes to ascend the throne. It is possible that Ashoka was not the rightful heir to the throne and killed a brother (or brothers) to acquire the throne. However, the Buddhist sources have exaggerated the story, which attempts to portray him as evil before his conversion to Buddhism. Ashoka's Rock Edict No. 5 mentions officers whose duties include supervising the welfare of "the families of his brothers, sisters, and other relatives". This suggests that more than one of his brothers survived his ascension. However, some scholars oppose this suggestion, arguing that the inscription talks only about the families of his brothers, not the brothers themselves.

Reign before Buddhist influence:

Both Sri Lankan and North Indian traditions assert that Ashoka was a violent person before Buddhism. Taranatha also states that Ashoka was initially called "Kamashoka" because he spent many years in pleasurable pursuits (kama); he was then called "Chandashoka" ("Ashoka the fierce") because he spent some years performing evil deeds; and finally, he came to be known as Dhammashoka ("Ashoka the righteous") after his conversion to Buddhism.

The Ashokavadana also calls him "Chandashoka", and describes several of his cruel acts:

The ministers who had helped him ascend the throne started treating him with contempt after his ascension. To test their loyalty, Ashoka gave them the absurd order of cutting down every flower-and fruit-bearing tree. When they failed to carry out this order, Ashoka personally cut off the heads of 500 ministers. One day, during a stroll at a park, Ashoka and his concubines came across a beautiful Ashoka tree. The sight put him in an amorous mood, but the women did not enjoy caressing his rough skin. Sometime later, when Ashoka fell asleep, the resentful women chopped the flowers and the branches of his namesake tree. After Ashoka woke up, he

burnt 500 of his concubines to death as punishment. Alarmed by the king's involvement in such massacres, prime minister Radha-Gupta proposed hiring an executioner to carry out future mass killings to leave the king unsullied. Girika, a Magadha village boy who boasted that he could execute the whole of Jambudvipa, was hired for the purpose. He came to be known as Chandagirika ("Girika the fierce"), and on his request, Ashoka built a jail in Pataliputra. Called Ashoka's Hell, the jail looked pleasant from the outside, but inside it, Girika brutally tortured the prisoners.

The 5th-century Chinese traveller Faxian states that Ashoka personally visited the underworld to study torture methods there and then invented his methods. The 7th-century traveller Xuanzang claims to have seen a pillar marking the site of Ashoka's "Hell".The Mahavamsa also briefly alludes to Ashoka's cruelty, stating that Ashoka was earlier called Chandashoka because of his evil deeds but came to be called Dharmashoka because of his pious acts after his conversion to Buddhism.[86] However, unlike the north Indian tradition, the Sri Lankan texts do not mention any specific evil deeds performed by Ashoka, except his killing of 99 of his brothers. Such descriptions of Ashoka as an evil person before his conversion to Buddhism appear to be a fabrication of the Buddhist authors, who attempted to present the change that Buddhism brought to him as a miracle. In an attempt to dramatise this change, such legends exaggerate Ashoka's past wickedness and his piousness after the conversion.

Kalinga war and conversion to Buddhism:

Ashoka's inscriptions mention that he conquered the Kalinga region during his 8th regnal year: the destruction caused during the war made him repent violence, and in the subsequent years, he was drawn towards Buddhism. Edict 13 of the Edicts of Ashoka Rock Inscriptions expresses the great remorse the king felt after observing the destruction of Kalinga.

Directly, after the Kalingas had been annexed, began His Sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the Law of Piety, his love of that Law, and his inculcation of that Law. Thence arises the remorse of His Sacred Majesty for having conquered the Kalingas because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death, and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty.

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan tradition suggests that Ashoka was already a devoted Buddhist by his 8th regnal year, converted to Buddhism during his 4th regnal year, and constructed 84,000 viharas during his 5th–7th regnal years. The Buddhist legends make no mention of the Kalinga campaign.

Based on Sri Lankan tradition, some scholars, such as Eggermont, believe Ashoka converted to Buddhism before the Kalinga war. Critics of this theory argue that if Ashoka were already a Buddhist, he would not have waged the violent Kalinga War. Eggermont explains this anomaly by theorising that Ashoka had his own interpretation of the "Middle Way". Some earlier writers believed that Ashoka dramatically converted to Buddhism after seeing the suffering caused by the war since his Major Rock Edict 13 states that he became closer to the dhamma after the annexation of Kalinga. However, even if Ashoka converted to Buddhism after the war, epigraphic evidence suggests that his conversion was a gradual process rather than a dramatic event. For example, in a Minor Rock Edict issued during his 13th regnal year (five years after the Kalinga campaign), he states that he had been an upasaka (lay Buddhist) for more than two and a half years, but did not make much progress; in the past year, he was drawn closer to the sangha and became a more ardent follower.

The Kalinga War:

According to Ashoka's Major Rock Edict 13, he conquered Kalinga 8 years after ascending to the throne. The edict states that during his conquest of Kalinga, 100,000 men and animals were killed in action; many times that number "perished"; and 150,000 men and animals were carried away from Kalinga as captives. Ashoka states that the repentance of these sufferings caused him to devote himself to the practice and propagation of dharma. He proclaims that he now considered the slaughter, death and deportation caused during the conquest of a country painful and deplorable; and that he considered the suffering caused to the religious people and householders even more deplorable.

This edict has been inscribed at several places, including Erragudi, Girnar, Kalsi, Maneshra, Shahbazgarhi and Kandahar. However, it is omitted in Ashoka's inscriptions found in the Kalinga region, where the Rock Edicts 13 and 14 have been replaced by two separate edicts that make no mention of Ashoka's remorse. It is possible that Ashoka did not consider it

politically appropriate to make such a confession to the people of Kalinga. Another possibility is the Kalinga war and its consequences, as described in Ashoka's rock edicts, are "more imaginary than real". This description is meant to impress those far removed from the scene, thus unable to verify its accuracy. Ancient sources do not mention any other military activity of Ashoka, although the 16th-century writer Taranatha claims that Ashoka conquered the entire Jambudvipa.

First contact with Buddhism:

Different sources give different accounts of Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. According to Sri Lankan tradition, Ashoka's father, Bindusara, was a devotee of Brahmanism, and his mother Dharma was a devotee of Ajivikas. The Samantapasadika states that Ashoka followed non-Buddhist sects during the first three years of his reign. The Sri Lankan texts add that Ashoka was not happy with the behaviour of the Brahmins who received his alms daily. His courtiers produced some Ajivika and Nigantha teachers before him, but these also failed to impress him.

The Dipavamsa states that Ashoka invited several non-Buddhist religious leaders to his palace and bestowed great gifts upon them in the hope that they would answer a question posed by the king. The text does not state what the question was but mentions that none of the invitees were able to answer it. One day, Ashoka saw a young Buddhist monk called Nigrodha (or Nyagrodha), who was looking for alms on a road in Pataliputra. He was the king's nephew, although the king was not aware of this. he was a posthumous son of Ashoka's eldest brother Sumana, whom Ashoka had killed during the conflict for the throne. Ashoka was impressed by Nigrodha's tranquil and fearless appearance, and asked him to teach him his faith. In response, Nigrodha offered him a sermon on appamada (earnestness). Impressed by the sermon, Ashoka offered Nigrodha 400,000 silver coins and 8 daily portions of rice. The king became a Buddhist upasaka, and started visiting the Kukkutarama shrine at Pataliputra. At the temple, he met the Buddhist monk Moggaliputta Tissa, and became more devoted to the Buddhist faith. The veracity of this story is not certain. This legend about Ashoka's search for a worthy teacher may be aimed at explaining why Ashoka did not adopt Jainism, another major contemporary faith that advocates non-violence and compassion. The legend suggests that Ashoka was not attracted to Buddhism because he was looking for such a faith, rather, for a competent spiritual teacher. The

Sri Lankan tradition adds that during his sixth regnal year, Ashoka's son Mahinda became a Buddhist monk, and his daughter became a Buddhist nun.

A story in Divyavadana attributes Ashoka's conversion to the Buddhist monk Samudra, who was an ex-merchant from Shravasti. According to this account, Samudra was imprisoned in Ashoka's "Hell", but saved himself using his miraculous powers. When Ashoka heard about this, he visited the monk, and was further impressed by a series of miracles performed by the monk. He then became a Buddhist. A story in the Ashokavadana states that Samudra was a merchant's son, and was a 12-year-old boy when he met Ashoka; this account seems to be influenced by the Nigrodha story.

The A-yu-wang-chuan states that a 7-year-old Buddhist converted Ashoka. Another story claims that the young boy ate 500 Brahmanas who were harassing Ashoka for being interested in Buddhism; these Brahmanas later miraculously turned into Buddhist bhikkus at the Kukkutarama monastery, which Ashoka visited. Several Buddhist establishments existed in various parts of India by the time of Ashoka's ascension. It is not clear which branch of the Buddhist sangha influenced him, but the one at his capital Pataliputra is a good candidate. Another good candidate is the one at Mahabodhi: the Major Rock Edict 8 records his visit to the Bodhi Tree – the place of Buddha's enlightenment at Mahabodhi – after his tenth regnal year, and the minor rock edict issued during his 13th regnal year suggests that he had become a Buddhist around the same time.

Reign after Buddhist influence:

Both Mahavamsa and Ashokavadana state that Ashoka constructed 84,000 stupas or viharas. According to the Mahavamsa, this activity took place during his fifth–seventh regnal years. The Ashokavadana states that Ashoka collected seven out of the eight relics of Gautama Buddha, and had their portions kept in 84,000 boxes made of gold, silver, cat's eye, and crystal. He ordered the construction of 84,000 stupas throughout the earth, in towns that had a population of 100,000 or more. He told Elder Yashas, a monk at the Kukkutarama monastery, that he wanted these stupas to be completed on the same day. Yashas stated that he would signal the completion time by eclipsing the sun with his hand. When he did so, the 84,000 stupas were completed at once.

The Mahavamsa states that Ashoka ordered construction of 84,000 viharas (monasteries) rather than the stupas to house the relics. Like Ashokavadana, the Mahavamsa describes Ashoka's collection of the relics, but does not mention this episode in the context of the construction activities. It states that Ashoka decided to construct the 84,000 viharas when Moggaliputta Tissa told him that there were 84,000 sections of the Buddha's Dhamma. Ashoka himself began the construction of the Ashokarama vihara, and ordered subordinate kings to build the other viharas. Ashokarama was completed by the miraculous power of Thera Indagutta, and the news about the completion of the 84,000 viharas arrived from various cities on the same day.

The construction of following stupas and viharas is credited to Ashoka:

- Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, India
- Dhamek Stupa, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India
- Mahabodhi Temple, Bihar, India
- Barabar Caves, Bihar, India
- Nalanda Mahavihara (some portions like Sariputta Stupa), Bihar, India
- Taxila University (some portions like Dharmarajika Stupa and Kunala Stupa), Taxila, Pakistan
- Bhir Mound (reconstructed), Taxila, Pakistan
- Bharhut stupa, Madhya Pradesh, India
- Deorkothar Stupa, Madhya Pradesh, India
- Butkara Stupa, Swat, Pakistan
- Sannati Stupa, Karnataka, India
- Mir Rukun Stupa, Nawabshah, Pakistan

Propagation of Dhamma:

Ashoka's rock edicts suggest that during his eighth–ninth regnal years, he made a pilgrimage to the Bodhi Tree, started propagating dhamma, and performed social welfare activities. The welfare activities included establishment of medical treatment facilities for humans and animals; plantation of medicinal herbs; and digging of wells and plantation of trees

along the roads. These activities were conducted in the neighbouring kingdoms, including those of the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputras, Tamraparni, the Greek kingdom of Antiyoka.

The edicts also state that during his tenth–eleventh regnal years, Ashoka became closer to the Buddhist sangha, and went on a tour of the empire that lasted for at least 256 days.

By his 12th regnal year, Ashoka had started inscribing edicts to propagate dhamma, having ordered his officers (rajjukas and pradesikas) to tour their jurisdictions every five years for inspection and for preaching dhamma. By the next year, he had set up the post of the dharma-mahamatra. During his 14th regnal year, he commissioned the enlargement of the stupa of Buddha Kanakamuni.

Third Buddhist Council:

The Sri Lankan tradition presents a greater role for Ashoka in the Buddhist community. In this tradition, Ashoka starts feeding monks on a large scale. His lavish patronage to the state patronage leads to many fake monks joining the sangha. The true Buddhist monks refuse to co-operate with these fake monks, and therefore, no uposatha ceremony is held for seven years. The king attempts to eradicate the fake monks, but during this attempt, an over-zealous minister ends up killing some real monks. The king then invites the elder monk Moggaliputta-Tissa, to help him expel non-Buddhists from the monastery founded by him at Pataliputra. 60,000 monks (bhikkhus) convicted of being heretical are de-frocked in the ensuing process. The uposatha ceremony is then held, and Tissa subsequently organises the Third Buddhist council, during the 17th regnal year of Ashoka. Tissa compiles Kathavatthu, a text that reaffirms Theravadin orthodoxy on several points. The North Indian tradition makes no mention of these events, which has led to doubts about the historicity of the Third Buddhist council.

Richard Gombrich argues that the non-corroboration of this story by inscriptional evidence cannot be used to dismiss it as completely unhistorical, as several of Ashoka's inscriptions may have been lost. Gombrich also argues that Asohka's inscriptions prove that he was interested in maintaining the "unanimity and purity" of the Sangha. For example, in his Minor Rock Edict 3, Ashoka recommends the members of the Sangha to study certain texts (most of which remain unidentified). Similarly, in an inscription found at Sanchi, Sarnath, and

Kosam, Ashoka mandates that the dissident members of the sangha should be expelled, and expresses his desire to the Sangha remain united and flourish.

The 8th century Buddhist pilgrim Yijing records another story about Ashoka's involvement in the Buddhist sangha. According to this story, the earlier king Bimbisara, who was a contemporary of the Gautama Buddha, once saw 18 fragments of a cloth and a stick in a dream. The Buddha interpreted the dream to mean that his philosophy would be divided into 18 schools after his death, and predicted that a king called Ashoka would unite these schools over a hundred years later.

Buddhist missions:

In the Sri Lankan tradition, Moggaliputta-Tissa – who is patronised by Ashoka – sends out nine Buddhist missions to spread Buddhism in the "border areas" in c. 250 BCE. This tradition does not credit Ashoka directly with sending these missions. Each mission comprises five monks, and is headed by an elder. To Sri Lanka, he sent his own son Mahinda, accompanied by four other Theras Itthiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasala. Next, with Moggaliputta-Tissa's help, Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to distant regions such as Kashmir, Gandhara, Himalayas, the land of the Yonas (Greeks), Maharashtra, Suvannabhumi, and Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan tradition dates these missions to Ashoka's 18th regnal year, naming the following missionaries:

- Mahinda to Sri Lanka
- Majjhantika to Kashmir and Gandhara
- Mahadeva to Mahisa-mandala (possibly modern Mysore region)
- Rakkhita to Vanavasa
- Dhammarakkhita the Greek to Aparantaka (western India)
- Maha-dhamma-rakkhita to Maharashtra
- Maharakkhita to the Greek country
- Majjhima to the Himalayas
- Soṇa and Uttara to Suvaṇṇabhūmi (possibly Lower Burma and Thailand)

The tradition adds that during his 19th regnal year, Ashoka's daughter Sanghamitta went to Sri Lanka to establish an order of nuns, taking a sapling of the sacred Bodhi Tree with her. The North Indian tradition makes no mention of these events. Ashoka's own inscriptions also appear to omit any mention of these events, recording only one of his activities during this period: in his 19th regnal year, he donated the Khalatika Cave to ascetics to provide them a shelter during the rainy season. Ashoka's Pillar Edicts suggest that during the next year, he made pilgrimage to Lumbini – the place of Buddha's birth, and to the stupa of the Buddha Kanakamuni.

The Rock Edict XIII states that Ashoka's won a "dhamma victory" by sending messengers to five kings and several other kingdoms. Whether these missions correspond to the Buddhist missions recorded in the Buddhist chronicles is debated. Indologist Etienne Lamotte argues that the "dhamma" missionaries mentioned in Ashoka's inscriptions were probably not Buddhist monks, as this "dhamma" was not same as "Buddhism". Moreover, the lists of destinations of the missions and the dates of the missions mentioned in the inscriptions do not tally the ones mentioned in the Buddhist legends.

Other scholars, such as Erich Frauwallner and Richard Gombrich, believe that the missions mentioned in the Sri Lankan tradition are historical.[124] According to these scholars, a part of this story is corroborated by archaeological evidence: the Vinaya Nidana mentions names of five monks, who are said to have gone to the Himalayan region; three of these names have been found inscribed on relic caskets found at Bhilsa (near Vidisha). These caskets have been dated to the early 2nd century BCE, and the inscription states that the monks are of the Himalayan school. The missions may have set out from Vidisha in central India, as the caskets were discovered there, and as Mahinda is said to have stayed there for a month before setting out for Sri Lanka.

According to Gombrich, the mission may have included representatives of other religions, and thus, Lamotte's objection about "dhamma" is not valid. The Buddhist chroniclers may have decided not to mention these non-Buddhists, so as not to sideline Buddhism. Frauwallner and Gombrich also believe that Ashoka was directly responsible for the missions, since only a resourceful ruler could have sponsored such activities. The Sri Lankan chronicles, which belong

to the Theravada school, exaggerate the role of the Theravadin monk Moggaliputta-Tissa in order to glorify their sect. Some historians argue that Buddhism became a major religion because of Ashoka's royal patronage. However, epigraphic evidence suggests that the spread of Buddhism in north-western India and Deccan region was less because of Ashoka's missions, and more because of merchants, traders, landowners and the artisan guilds who supported Buddhist establishments.

Violence after conversion:

According to the Ashokavadana, Ashoka resorted to violence even after converting to Buddhism. For example:

- He slowly tortured Chandagirika to death in the "hell" prison.
- He ordered a massacre of 18,000 heretics for a misdeed of one.
- He launched a pogrom against the Jains, announcing a bounty on the head of any heretic; this resulted in the beheading of his own brother – Vitashoka.

According to the Ashokavadana, a non-Buddhist in Pundravardhana drew a picture showing the Buddha bowing at the feet of the Nirgrantha leader Jnatiputra. The term nirgrantha ("free from bonds") was originally used for a pre-Jaina ascetic order, but later came to be used for Jaina monks. "Jnatiputra" is identified with Mahavira, 24th Tirthankara of Jainism. The legend states that on complaint from a Buddhist devotee, Ashoka issued an order to arrest the non-Buddhist artist, and subsequently, another order to kill all the Ajivikas in Pundravardhana. Around 18,000 followers of the Ajivika sect were executed as a result of this order. Sometime later, another Nirgrantha follower in Pataliputra drew a similar picture. Ashoka burnt him and his entire family alive in their house. He also announced an award of one dinara (gold coin) to anyone who brought him the head of a Nirgrantha heretic. According to Ashokavadana, as a result of this order, his own brother was mistaken for a heretic and killed by a cowherd. Ashoka realised his mistake, and withdrew the order.

For several reasons, scholars say, these stories of persecutions of rival sects by Ashoka appear to be clear fabrications arising out of sectarian propaganda.

Imperial extent:

The extent of the territory controlled by Ashoka's predecessors is not certain, but it is possible that the empire of his grandfather Chandragupta extended across northern India from the western coast (Arabian Sea) to the eastern coast (Bay of Bengal), covering nearly two-thirds of the Indian subcontinent. Bindusara and Ashoka seem to have extended the empire southwards. The distribution of Ashoka's inscriptions suggests that his empire included almost the entire Indian subcontinent, except its southernmost parts. The Rock Edicts 2 and 13 suggest that these southernmost parts were controlled by the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Keralaputras, and the Satiyaputras. In the north-west, Ashoka's kingdom extended up to Kandahar, to the east of the Seleucid Empire ruled by Antiochus II. The capital of Ashoka's empire was Pataliputra in the Magadha region.

Relationship with Buddhism:

The Buddhist legends state that Ashoka converted to Buddhism, although this has been debated by a section of scholars. The Minor Rock Edict 1 leaves no doubt that Ashoka was a follower of Buddhism. In this edict, he calls himself an upasaka (a lay follower of Buddhism) and a sakya (i.e. Buddhist, after Gautama Buddha's title Shakya-Muni). This and several other edicts are evidence of his Buddhist affiliation:

In his Minor Rock Edict 1, Ashoka adds that he did not make much progress for a year after becoming an upasaka, but then, he "went to" the Sangha, and made more progress. It is not certain what "going to" the Sangha means – the Buddhist tradition that he lived with monks may be an exaggeration, but it clearly means that Ashoka was drawn closer to Buddhism. In his Minor Rock Edict 3, he calls himself an upasaka, and records his faith in the Buddha and the Sangha.In the Major Rock Edict 8, he records his visit to Sambodhi (the sacred Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya), ten years after his coronation. In the Lumbini (Rumminidei) inscription, he records his visit to the Buddha's birthplace, and declares his reverence for the Buddha and the sangha.In the Nigalisagar inscription, he records his doubling in size of a stupa dedicated to a former Buddha, and his visit to the site for worship.Some of his inscriptions reflect his interest in maintaining the Buddhist sangha (see #Purification of sangha below). The Saru Maru inscription

states that Ashoka dispatched the message while travelling to Upunita-vihara in Manema-desha. Although the identity of the destination is not certain, it was obviously a Buddhist monastery (vihara).

Other religions

A legend in the Buddhist text Vamsatthapakasini states that an Ajivika ascetic invited to interpret a dream of Ashoka's mother had predicted that he would patronise Buddhism and destroy 96 heretical sects. However, such assertions are directly contradicted by Ashoka's own inscriptions. Ashoka's edicts, such as the Rock Edicts 6, 7, and 12, emphasise tolerance of all sects. Similarly, in his Rock Edict 12, Ashoka honours people of all faiths. In his inscriptions, Ashoka dedicates caves to non-Buddhist ascetics, and repeatedly states that both Brahmins and shramanas deserved respect. He also tells people "not to denigrate other sects, but to inform themselves about them".

In fact, there is no evidence that Buddhism was a state religion under Ashoka. None of Ashoka's extant edicts record his direct donations to the Buddhists. One inscription records donations by his queen Karuvaki, while the emperor is known to have donated the Barabar Caves to the Ajivikas.[160] There are some indirect references to his donations to Buddhists. For example, the Nigalisagar Pillar inscription records his enlargement of the Konakamana stupa. Similarly, the Lumbini (Rumminidei) inscription states that he exempted the village of Buddha's birth from the land tax, and reduced the revenue tax to one-eighth.

Ashoka appointed the dhamma-mahamatta officers, whose duties included the welfare of various religious sects, including the Buddhist sangha, Brahmins, Ajivikas, and Nirgranthas. The Rock Edicts 8 and 12, and the Pillar Edict 7, mandate donations to all religious sects.

Ashoka's Minor Rock Edict 1 contains the phrase "amissā devā". According to one interpretation, the term "amissā" derives from the word "amṛṣa" ("false"), and thus, the phrase is a reference to Ashoka's belief in "true" and "false" gods. However, it is more likely that the term derives from the word "amiśra" ("not mingled"), and the phrase refers to celestial beings who did not mingle with humans. The inscription claims that the righteousness generated by adoption of dhamma by the humans attracted even the celestial gods who did not mingle with humans.

Dharma:

Ashoka's various inscriptions suggest that he devoted himself to the propagation of "Dharma" (Pali: Dhamma), a term that refers to the teachings of Gautama Buddha in the Buddhist circles. However, Ashoka's own inscriptions do not mention Buddhist doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths or Nirvana. The word "Dharma" has various connotations in the Indian religions, and can be generally translated as "law, duty, or righteousness". In the Kandahar inscriptions of Ashoka, the word "Dharma" has been translated as eusebeia (Greek) and qsyt (Aramaic), which further suggests that his "Dharma" meant something more generic than Buddhism.

The inscriptions suggest that for Ashoka, Dharma meant "a moral polity of active social concern, religious tolerance, ecological awareness, the observance of common ethical precepts, and the renunciation of war."

Foreign realtions:

It is well known that Ashoka sent dütas or emissaries to convey messages or letters, written or oral (rather both), to various people. The VIth Rock Edict about "oral orders" reveals this. It was later confirmed that it was not unusual to add oral messages to written ones, and the content of Ashoka's messages can be inferred likewise from the XIIIth Rock Edict: They were meant to spread his dhammavijaya, which he considered the highest victory and which he wished to propagate everywhere (including far beyond India). There is obvious and undeniable trace of cultural contact through the adoption of the Kharosthi script, and the idea of installing inscriptions might have travelled with this script, as Achaemenid influence is seen in some of the formulations used by Ashoka in his inscriptions. This indicates to us that Ashoka was indeed in contact with other cultures, and was an active part in mingling and spreading new cultural ideas beyond his own immediate walls.

Hellenistic world:

In his rock edicts, Ashoka states that he had encouraged the transmission of Buddhism to the Hellenistic kingdoms to the west and that the Greeks in his dominion were converts to Buddhism and recipients of his envoys:

Now it is conquest by Dhamma that Beloved-of-the-Gods considers to be the best conquest. And it (conquest by Dhamma) has been won here, on the borders, even six hundred yojanas away, where the Greek king Antiochos rules, beyond there where the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander rule, likewise in the south among the Cholas, the Pandyas, and as far as Tamraparni. Here in the king's domain among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the Nabhakas, the Nabhapamktis, the Bhojas, the Pitinikas, the Andhras and the Palidas, everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions in Dhamma. Even where Beloved-of-the-Gods' envoys have not been, these people too, having heard of the practice of Dhamma and the ordinances and instructions in Dhamma given by Beloved-of-the-Gods, are following it and will continue to do so.

It is possible, but not certain, that Ashoka received letters from Greek rulers and was acquainted with the Hellenistic royal orders in the same way as he perhaps knew of the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, given the presence of ambassadors of Hellenistic kings in India (as well as the dütas sent by Ashoka himself). Dionysius is reported to have been such a Greek ambassador at the court of Ashoka, sent by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who himself is mentioned in the Edicts of Ashoka as a recipient of the Buddhist proselytism of Ashoka. Some Hellenistic philosophers, such as Hegesias of Cyrene, who probably lived under the rule of King Magas, one of the supposed recipients of Buddhist emissaries from Asoka, are sometimes thought to have been influenced by Buddhist teachings.

The Greeks in India even seem to have played an active role in the propagation of Buddhism, as some of the emissaries of Ashoka, such as Dharmaraksita, are described in Pali sources as leading Greek (Yona) Buddhist monks, active in spreading Buddhism (the Mahavamsa, XII).

Some Greeks (Yavana) may have played an administrative role in the territories ruled by Ashoka. The Girnar inscription of Rudradaman records that during the rule of Ashoka, a Yavana Governor was in charge in the area of Girnar, Gujarat, mentioning his role in the construction of a water reservoir.

It is thought that Ashoka's palace at Patna was modelled after the Achaemenid palace of Persepolis.

Legends about past lives:

Buddhist legends mention stories about Ashoka's past lives. According to a Mahavamsa story, Ashoka, Nigrodha and Devnampiya Tissa were brothers in a previous life. In that life, a pratyekabuddha was looking for honey to cure another, sick pratyekabuddha. A woman directed him to a honey shop owned by the three brothers. Ashoka generously donated honey to the pratyekabuddha, and wished to become the sovereign ruler of Jambudvipa for this act of merit.[184] The woman wished to become his queen, and was reborn as Ashoka's wife Asandhamitta. Later Pali texts credit her with an additional act of merit: she gifted the pratyekabuddha a piece of cloth made by her. These texts include the Dasavatthuppakarana, the so-called Cambodian or Extended Mahavamsa (possibly from 9th–10th centuries), and the Trai Bhumi Katha (15th century).

According to an Ashokavadana story, Ashoka was born as Jaya in a prominent family of Rajagriha. When he was a little boy, he gave the Gautama Buddha dirt imagining it to be food. The Buddha approved of the donation, and Jaya declared that he would become a king by this act of merit. The text also state that Jaya's companion Vijaya was reborn as Ashoka's prime-minister Radhagupta. In the later life, the Buddhist monk Upagupta tells Ashoka that his rough skin was caused by the impure gift of dirt in the previous life. Some later texts repeat this story, without mentioning the negative implications of gifting dirt; these texts include Kumaralata's Kalpana-manditika, Aryashura's Jataka-mala, and the Maha-karma-vibhaga. The Chinese writer Pao Ch'eng's Shih chia ju lai ying hua lu asserts that an insignificant act like gifting dirt could not have been meritorious enough to cause Ashoka's future greatness. Instead, the text claims that in another past life, Ashoka commissioned a large number of Buddha statues as a king, and this act of merit caused him to become a great emperor in the next life.

The 14th century Pali-language fairy tale Dasavatthuppakarana (possibly from c. 14th century) combines the stories about the merchant's gift of honey, and the boy's gift of dirt. It narrates a slightly different version of the Mahavamsa story, stating that it took place before the birth of the Gautama Buddha. It then states that the merchant was reborn as the boy who gifted dirt to the Buddha; however, in this case, the Buddha his attendant to Ānanda to create plaster from the dirt, which is used repair cracks in the monastery walls.

Last Years:

Tissarakkha as the queen:

Ashoka's last dated inscription - the Pillar Edict 4 is from his 26th regnal year. The only source of information about Ashoka's later years are the Buddhist legends. The Sri Lankan tradition states that Ashoka's queen Asandhamitta died during his 29th regnal year, and in his 32nd regnal year, his wife Tissarakkha was given the title of queen.

Both Mahavamsa and Ashokavadana state that Ashoka extended favours and attention to the Bodhi Tree, and a jealous Tissarakkha mistook "Bodhi" to be a mistress of Ashoka. She then used black magic to make the tree wither. According to the Ashokavadana, she hired a sorceress to do the job, and when Ashoka explained that "Bodhi" was the name of a tree, she had the sorceress heal the tree. According to the Mahavamsa, she completely destroyed the tree, during Ashoka's 34th regnal year.

The Ashokavadana states that Tissarakkha (called "Tishyarakshita" here) made sexual advances towards Ashoka's son Kunala, but Kunala rejected her. Subsequently, Ashoka granted Tissarakkha kingship for seven days, and during this period, she tortured and blinded Kunala.[141] Ashoka then threatened to "tear out her eyes, rip open her body with sharp rakes, impale her alive on a spit, cut off her nose with a saw, cut out her tongue with a razor." Kunala regained his eyesight miraculously, and pleaded for mercy for the queen, but Ashoka had her executed anyway. Kshemendra's Avadana-kalpa-lata also narrates this legend, but seeks to improve Ashoka's image by stating that he forgave the queen after Kunala regained his eyesight.

Death

According to the Sri Lankan tradition, Ashoka died during his 37th regnal year, which suggests that he died around 232 BCE. According to the Ashokavadana, the emperor fell severely ill during his last days. He started using state funds to make donations to the Buddhist sangha, prompting his ministers to deny him access to the state treasury. Ashoka then started donating his personal possessions, but was similarly restricted from doing so. On his deathbed, his only possession was the half of a myrobalan fruit, which he offered to the sangha as his final donation. Such legends encourage generous donations to the sangha and highlight the role of the

kingship in supporting the Buddhist faith. Legend states that during his cremation, his body burned for seven days and nights.

Legacy:

In The Outline of History (1920), H. G. Wells wrote, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines, almost alone, a star."

Architecture:

Besides the various stupas attributed to Ashoka, the pillars erected by him survive at various places in the Indian subcontinent. Ashoka is often credited with the beginning of stone architecture in India, possibly following the introduction of stone-building techniques by the Greeks after Alexander the Great. Before Ashoka's time, buildings were probably built in non-permanent material, such as wood, bamboo or thatch. Ashoka may have rebuilt his palace in Pataliputra by replacing wooden material by stone, and may also have used the help of foreign craftmen. Ashoka also innovated by using the permanent qualities of stone for his written edicts, as well as his pillars with Buddhist symbolism.

Symbols:

Ashokan capitals were highly realistic and used a characteristic polished finish, Mauryan polish, giving a shiny appearance to the stone surface. Lion Capital of Ashoka, the capital of one of the pillars erected by Ashoka features a carving of a spoked wheel, known as the Ashoka Chakra. This wheel represents the wheel of Dhamma set in motion by the Gautama Buddha, and appears on the flag of modern India. This capital also features sculptures of lions, which appear on the seal of India.

Inscriptions:

The edicts of Ashoka are a collection of 33 inscriptions on the Pillars of Ashoka, as well as boulders and cave walls, issued during his reign. These inscriptions are dispersed throughout modern-day Pakistan and India, and represent the first tangible evidence of Buddhism. The

edicts describe in detail the first wide expansion of Buddhism through the sponsorship of one of the most powerful kings of Indian history, offering more information about Ashoka's proselytism, moral precepts, religious precepts, and his notions of social and animal welfare.

Before Ashoka, the royal communications appear to have been written on perishable materials such as palm leaves, birch barks, cotton cloth, and possibly wooden boards. While Ashoka's administration would have continued to use these materials, Ashoka also had his messages inscribed on rock edicts. Ashoka probably got the idea of putting up these inscriptions from the neighbouring Achaemenid empire. It is likely that Ashoka's messages were also inscribed on more perishable materials, such as wood, and sent to various parts of the empire. None of these records survive now.

Scholars are still attempting to analyse both the expressed and implied political ideas of the Edicts (particularly in regard to imperial vision), and make inferences pertaining to how that vision was grappling with problems and political realities of a "virtually subcontinental, and culturally and economically highly variegated, 3rd century BCE Indian empire. Nonetheless, it remains clear that Ashoka's Inscriptions represent the earliest corpus of royal inscriptions in the Indian subcontinent, and therefore prove to be a very important innovation in royal practices."

Most of Ashoka's inscriptions are written in a mixture of various Prakrit dialects, in the Brahmi script.

Several of Ashoka's inscriptions appear to have been set up near towns, on important routes, and at places of religious significance. Many of the inscriptions have been discovered in hills, rock shelters, and places of local significance. Various theories have been put forward about why Ashoka or his officials chose such places, including that they were centres of megalithic cultures, were regarded as sacred spots in Ashoka's time, or that their physical grandeur may be symbolic of spiritual dominance. Ashoka's inscriptions have not been found at major cities of the Maurya empire, such as Pataliputra, Vidisha, Ujjayini, and Taxila. It is possible that many of these inscriptions are lost; the 7th century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang refers to some of Ashoka's pillar edicts, which have not been discovered by modern researchers.

It appears that Ashoka dispatched every message to his provincial governors, who in turn, relayed it to various officials in their territory. For example, the Minor Rock Edict 1 appears in several versions at multiple places: all the versions state that Ashoka issued the proclamation while on a tour, having spent 256 days on tour. The number 256 indicates that the message was dispatched simultaneously to various places. Three versions of a message, found at edicts in the neighbouring places in Karnataka (Brahmagiri, Siddapura, and Jatinga-Rameshwara), were sent from the southern province's capital Suvarnagiri to various places. All three versions contain the same message, preceded by an initial greeting from the arya-putra (presumably Ashoka's son and the provincial governor) and the mahamatras (officials) in Suvarnagiri.

Coinage:

The caduceus appears as a symbol of the punch-marked coins of the Maurya Empire in India, in the 3rd–2nd century BCE. Numismatic research suggests that this symbol was the symbol of king Ashoka, his personal "Mudra". This symbol was not used on the pre-Mauryan punch-marked coins, but only on coins of the Maurya period, together with the three arched-hill symbol, the "peacock on the hill", the triskelis and the Taxila mark.

Kushan Empire:

The Kushans were most probably one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation, an Indo-European nomadic people of possible Tocharian origin, who migrated from northwestern China (Xinjiang and Gansu) and settled in ancient Bactria. The founder of the dynasty, Kujula Kadphises, followed Greek religious ideas and iconography after the Greco-Bactrian tradition, and was also a follower of the Shaivite sect of Hinduism. The Kushans in general were also great patrons of Buddhism, and, starting with Emperor Kanishka, they also employed elements of Zoroastrianism in their pantheon. They played an important role in the spread of Buddhism to Central Asia and China, ushering in a period of relative peace for 200 years, sometimes described as "Pax Kushana".

The Kushans possibly used the Greek language initially for administrative purposes but soon began to use the Bactrian language. Kanishka sent his armies north of the Karakoram mountains. A direct road from Gandhara to China remained under Kushan control for more than

a century, encouraged travel across the Karakoram and facilitated the spread of Mahayana Buddhism to China. The Kushan dynasty had diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire, Sasanian Persia, the Aksumite Empire and the Han dynasty of China. The Kushan Empire was at the center of trade relations between the Roman Empire and China: according to Alain Daniélou, "for a time, the Kushana Empire was the centerpoint of the major civilizations". While much philosophy, art, and science was created within its borders, the only textual record of the empire's history today comes from inscriptions and accounts in other languages, particularly Chinese.

The Kushan Empire fragmented into semi-independent kingdoms in the 3rd century AD, which fell to the Sasanians invading from the west and establishing the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom in the areas of Sogdiana, Bactria and Gandhara. In the 4th century, the Guptas, an Indian dynasty, also pressed from the east. The last of the Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian kingdoms were eventually overwhelmed by invaders from the north, known as the Kidarites, and later the Hephthalites.

Origins:

Chinese sources describe the Guìshuang (the Kushans, as one of the five aristocratic tribes of the Yuezhi. Many scholars believe that the Yuezhi were a people of Indo-European origin. A specifically Tocharian origin of the Yuezhi is often suggested. An Iranian, specifically Saka, origin, also has some support among scholars. Others suggest that the Yuezhi might have originally been a nomadic Iranian people, who were then partially assimilated by settled Tocharians, thus containing both Iranian and Tocharian elements.

The Yuezhi were described in the Records of the Great Historian and the Book of Han as living in the grasslands of eastern Xinjiang and northwestern part of Gansu, in the northwest of modern-day China, until their King was beheaded by the Xiongnu who were also at war with China, which eventually forced them to migrate west in 176–160 BC. The five tribes constituting the Yuezhi are known in Chinese history as Xiumì , Guishuang , Shuāngmǐ , Xìdùn and Dumì.

The ethnonym "KOPPANO" (Koshshano, "Kushan") in Greek alphabet (with the addition of the letter , "Sh") on a coin of the first known Kushan ruler Heraios (1st century AD).

The Yuezhi reached the Hellenic kingdom of Greco-Bactria (in northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan) around 135 BC. The displaced Greek dynasties resettled to the southeast in areas of the Hindu Kush (in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) and the Indus basin (in present-day Pakistan and India), occupying the western part of the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

In South Asia , Kushan emperors regularly used the dynastic name KOÞANO ("Koshano") on their coinage. Several inscriptions in Sanskrit in the Brahmi script, such as the Mathura inscription of the statue of Vima Kadphises, refer to the Kushan Emperor as , Ku-ṣā-ṇa ("Kushana"). Some later Indian literary sources referred to the Kushans as Turushka, a name which in later Sanskrit sources was confused with Turk, "probably due to the fact that Tukharistan passed into the hands of the western Turks in the seventh century". According to John M. Rosenfield, Turushka, Tukhāra or Tukhāra are variations of the word Tokhari in Indian writings. Yet, according to Wink, "nowadays no historian considers them to be Turkish-Mongoloid or "Hun", although there is no doubt about their Central-Asian origin."

Early Kushans:

Some traces remain of the presence of the Kushans in the area of Bactria and Sogdiana in the 2nd-1st century BC, where they had displaced the Sakas, who moved further south. Archaeological structures are known in Takht-i Sangin, Surkh Kotal (a monumental temple), and in the palace of Khalchayan. On the ruins of ancient Hellenistic cities such as Ai-Khanoum, the Kushans are known to have built fortresses. Various sculptures and friezes from this period are known, representing horse-riding archers, and, significantly, men such as the Kushan prince of Khalchayan with artificially deformed skulls, a practice well attested in nomadic Central Asia. Some of the Khalchayan sculptural scenes are also thought to depict the Kushans fighting against the Sakas. In these portrayals, the Yuezhis are shown with a majestic demeanour, whereas the Sakas are typically represented with side-whiskers, and more or less grotesque facial expressions.

The Chinese first referred to these people as the Yuezhi and said they established the Kushan Empire, although the relationship between the Yuezhi and the Kushans is still unclear. Ban Gu's Book of Han tells us the Kushans (Kuei-shuang) divided up Bactria in 128 BC. Fan Ye's Book of Later Han "relates how the chief of the Kushans, Ch'iu-shiu-ch'ueh

(the Kujula Kadphises of coins), founded by means of the submission of the other Yueh-chih clans the Kushan Empire."

The earliest documented ruler, and the first one to proclaim himself as a Kushan ruler, was Heraios. He calls himself a "tyrant" in Greek on his coins, and also exhibits skull deformation. He may have been an ally of the Greeks, and he shared the same style of coinage. Heraios may have been the father of the first Kushan emperor Kujula Kadphises.

Diverse Cultural influences:

In the 1st century BC, the Guishuang gained prominence over the other Yuezhi tribes, and welded them into a tight confederation under commander Kujula Kadphises. The name Guishuang was adopted in the West and modified into Kushan to designate the confederation, although the Chinese continued to call them Yuezhi.

Gradually wresting control of the area from the Scythian tribes, the Kushans expanded south into the region traditionally known as Gandhara (an area primarily in Pakistan's Pothowar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region) and established twin capitals in Begram. and Charsadda, then known as Kapisa and Pushklavati respectively.

The Kushans adopted elements of the Hellenistic culture of Bactria. They adopted the Greek alphabet to suit their own language (with the additional development of the letter Þ "sh", as in "Kushan") and soon began minting coinage on the Greek model. On their coins they used Greek language legends combined with Pali legends (in the Kharoshthi script), until the first few years of the reign of Kanishka. After the middle of Kanishka's reign, they used Kushan language legends (in an adapted Greek script), combined with legends in Greek (Greek script) and legends in Prakrit (Kharoshthi script).

The Kushans "adopted many local beliefs and customs, including Zoroastrianism and the two rising religions in the region, the Greek cults and Buddhism".From the time of Vima Takto, many Kushans started adopting aspects of Buddhist culture, and like the Egyptians, they absorbed the strong remnants of the Greek culture of the Hellenistic Kingdoms, becoming at least partly Hellenised. The great Kushan emperor Vima Kadphises may have embraced Shaivism (a sect of Hinduism), as surmised by coins minted during the period. The

following Kushan emperors represented a wide variety of faiths including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Shaivism.

The rule of the Kushans linked the seagoing trade of the Indian Ocean with the commerce of the Silk Road through the long-civilized Indus Valley. At the height of the dynasty, the Kushans loosely ruled a territory that extended to the Aral Sea through present-day Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan into northern India.

The loose unity and comparative peace of such a vast expanse encouraged long-distance trade, brought Chinese silks to Rome, and created strings of flourishing urban centers.

Territorial expansion:

Rosenfield notes that archaeological evidence of a Kushan rule of long duration is present in an area stretching from Surkh Kotal, Begram, the summer capital of the Kushans, Peshawar, the capital under Kanishka I, Taxila, and Mathura, the winter capital of the Kushans. The Kushans introduced for the first time a form of governance which consisted of Kshatrapas.

Other areas of probable rule include Khwarezm and its capital city of Toprak-Kala, Kausambi (excavations of Allahabad University), Sanchi and Sarnath (inscriptions with names and dates of Kushan kings), Malwa and Maharashtra, and Odisha (imitation of Kushan coins, and large Kushan hoards).

Kushan invasions in the 1st century AD had been given as an explanation for the migration of Indians from the Indian Subcontinent toward Southeast Asia according to proponents of a Greater India theory by 20th-century Indian nationalists. However, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis.

The Rabatak inscription, discovered in 1993, confirms the account of the Hou Hanshu, Weilüe, and inscriptions dated early in the Kanishka era (incept probably AD 127), that large Kushan dominions expanded into the heartland of northern India in the early 2nd century AD.[clarify] Lines 4 to 7 of the inscription describe the cities which were under the rule of Kanishka, Ujjain, Kundina, Saketa, Kausambi, Pataliputra,and Champa (although the text is not clear whether Champa was a possession of Kanishka or just beyond it). The Buddhist text Sridharmapiṭakanidanasutra known via a Chinese translation made in AD 472—refers to the

conquest of Pataliputra by Kanishka. A 2nd century stone inscription by a Great Satrap named Rupiamma was discovered in Pauni, south of the Narmada river, suggesting that Kushan control extended this far south, although this could alternatively have been controlled by the Western Satraps. Eastern reach as far as Bengal: Samatata coinage of king Vira Jadamarah, in imitation of the Kushan coinage of Kanishka I. The text of the legend is a meaningless imitation. Bengal, circa 2nd-3rd century AD.

In the East, as late as the 3rd century AD, decorated coins of Huvishka were dedicated at Bodh Gaya together with other gold offerings under the "Enlightenment Throne" of the Buddha, suggesting direct Kushan influence in the area during that period. Coins of the Kushans are found in abundance as far as Bengal, and the ancient Bengali state of Samatata issued coins copied from the coinage of Kanishka I, although probably only as a result of commercial influence. Coins in imitation of Kushan coinage have also been found abundantly in the eastern state of Orissa. In the West, the Kushan state covered the Pārata state of Balochistan,western Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan was known for the Kushan Buddhist city of Merv.

Northward, in the 1st century AD, the Kujula Kadphises sent an army to the Tarim Basin to support the city-state of Kucha, which had been resisting the Chinese invasion of the region, but they retreated after minor encounters. In the 2nd century AD, the Kushans under Kanishka made various forays into the Tarim Basin, where they had various contacts with the Chinese. Kanishka held areas of the Tarim Basin apparently corresponding to the ancient regions held by the Yüeh-zhi, the possible ancestors of the Kushan. There was Kushan influence on coinage in Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan. According to Chinese chronicles, the Kushans (referred to as Da Yuezhi in Chinese sources) requested, but were denied, a Han princess, even though they had sent presents to the Chinese court. In retaliation, they marched on Ban Chao in AD 90 with a force of 70,000 but were defeated by the smaller Chinese force. Chinese chronicles relate battles between the Kushans and the Chinese general Ban Chao. The Yuezhi retreated and paid tribute to the Chinese Empire. The regions of the Tarim Basin were all ultimately conquered by Ban Chao. Later, during the Yuánchū period (AD 114–120), the Kushans sent a military force to install Chenpan, who had been a hostage among them, as king of Kashgar.

Kushan fortresses:

Several Kushan fortresses are known, particularly in Bactria, which were often rebuilt on top of Hellenistic fortifications, as in Kampir Tepe. They are often characterized by arrow-shaped loopholes for archers.

Main Kushan rules:

Kushan rulers are recorded for a period of about three centuries, from circa AD 30 to circa 375, until the invasions of the Kidarites. They ruled around the same time as the Western Satraps, the Satavahanas, and the first Gupta Empire rulers. These conquests by Kujula Kadphises probably took place sometime between AD 45 and 60 and laid the basis for the Kushan Empire which was rapidly expanded by his descendants. Kujula issued an extensive series of coins and fathered at least two sons, Sadaṣkaṇa (who is known from only two inscriptions, especially the Rabatak inscription, and apparently never ruled), and seemingly Vima Takto.

Vima Taktu or Sadashkana (c. 80 – c. 95)

Vima Takto (Ancient Chinese: Yangaozhen) is mentioned in the Rabatak inscription (another son, Sadashkana, is mentioned in an inscription of Senavarman, the King of Odi). He was the predecessor of Vima Kadphises, and Kanishka I. He expanded the Kushan Empire into the northwest of South Asia. The Hou Hanshu says: "His son, Yangaozhen [probably Vema Tahk (tu) or, possibly, his brother Sadaṣkaṇa], became king in his place. He defeated Tianzhu [North-western India] and installed Generals to supervise and lead it. The Yuezhi then became extremely rich. All the kingdoms call [their king] the Guishuang [Kushan] king, but the Han call them by their original name, Da Yuezhi."

Vima Kadphises (c. 95 – c. 127)

Vima Kadphises (Kushan language: Οοημο Καδφισης) was a Kushan emperor from around AD 95–127, the son of Sadashkana and the grandson of Kujula Kadphises, and the father of Kanishka I, as detailed by the Rabatak inscription. Vima Kadphises added to the Kushan territory by his conquests in Bactria. He issued an extensive series of coins and inscriptions. He issued gold coins in addition to the existing copper and silver coinage.

Kanishka I (c. 127 – c. 150):

The rule of Kanishka the Great, fourth Kushan king, lasted for about 23 years from c. AD 127. Upon his accession, Kanishka ruled a huge territory (virtually all of northern India), south to Ujjain and Kundina and east beyond Pataliputra, according to the Rabatak inscription: In the year one, it has been proclaimed unto India, unto the whole realm of the governing class, including Koonadeano (Kaundiny, Kundina) and the city of Ozeno (Ozene, Ujjain) and the city of Zageda (Saketa) and the city of Kozambo (Kausambi) and the city of Palabotro (Pataliputra) and as far as the city of Ziri-tambo (Sri-Champa), whatever rulers and other important persons (they might have) he had submitted to (his) will, and he had submitted all India to (his) will. His territory was administered from two capitals: Purushapura (now Peshawar in northwestern Pakistan) and Mathura, in northern India. He is also credited (along with Raja Dab) for building the massive, ancient Fort at Bathinda (Qila Mubarak), in the modern city of Bathinda, Indian Punjab.

The Kushans also had a summer capital in Bagram (then known as Kapisa), where the "Begram Treasure", comprising works of art from Greece to China, has been found. According to the Rabatak inscription, Kanishka was the son of Vima Kadphises, the grandson of Sadashkana, and the great-grandson of Kujula Kadphises. Kanishka's era is now generally accepted to have begun in 127 on the basis of Harry Falk's ground-breaking research. Kanishka's era was used as a calendar reference by the Kushans for about a century, until the decline of the Kushan realm.

Huvishka (c. 150 – c. 180

Huvishka (Kushan: Οοηþκι, "Ooishki") was a Kushan emperor from the death of Kanishka (assumed on the best evidence available to be in 150) until the succession of Vasudeva I about thirty years later. His rule was a period of retrenchment and consolidation for the Empire. In particular he devoted time and effort early in his reign to the exertion of greater control over the city of Mathura.

Vasudeva I (c. 190 – c. 230)

Vasudeva I was the last of the "Great Kushans". Named inscriptions dating from year 64 to 98 of Kanishka's era suggest his reign extended from at least AD 191 to 225. He was the last

great Kushan emperor, and the end of his rule coincides with the invasion of the Sasanians as far as northwestern India, and the establishment of the Indo-Sasanians or Kushanshahs in what is nowadays Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwestern India from around AD 240.

Vasishka (c. 247 – c. 267)

Vasishka was a Kushan emperor who seems to have had a 20-year reign following Kanishka II. His rule is recorded at Mathura, in Gandhara and as far south as Sanchi (near Vidisa), where several inscriptions in his name have been found, dated to the year 22 (the Sanchi inscription of "Vaksushana" – i.e., Vasishka Kushana) and year 28 (the Sanchi inscription of Vasaska – i.e., Vasishka) of a possible second Kanishka era.

Little Kushans (AD 270 – 350)

Following territory losses in the west (Bactria lost to the Kushano-Sasanians), and in the east (loss of Mathura to the Gupta Empire), several "Little Kushans" are known, who ruled locally in the area of Punjab with their capital at Taxila: Vasudeva II (270 – 300), Mahi (300 – 305), Shaka (305 – 335) and Kipunada (335 – 350). They probably were vassals of the Gupta Empire, until the invasion of the Kidarites destroyed the last remains of Kushan rule.

Kushan deities:

The Kushan religious pantheon is extremely varied, as revealed by their coins that were made in gold, silver, and copper. These coins contained more than thirty different gods, belonging mainly to their own Iranian, as well as Greek and Indian worlds as well. Kushan coins had images of Kushan Kings, Buddha, and figures from the Indo-Aryan and Iranian pantheons. Greek deities, with Greek names are represented on early coins. During Kanishka's reign, the language of the coinage changes to Bactrian (though it remained in Greek script for all kings). After Huvishka, only two divinities appear on the coins: Ardoxsho and Oesho (see details below).

Kushans and Buddhism:

The Kushans inherited the Greco-Buddhist traditions of the Indo-Greek Kingdom they replaced, and their patronage of Buddhist institutions allowed them to grow as a commercial power. Between the mid-1st century and the mid-3rd century, Buddhism, patronized by the

Kushans, extended to China and other Asian countries through the Silk Road. Kanishka is renowned in Buddhist tradition for having convened a great Buddhist council in Kashmir. Along with his predecessors in the region, the Indo-Greek king Menander I (Milinda) and the Indian emperors Ashoka and Harsha Vardhana, Kanishka is considered by Buddhism as one of its greatest benefactors.

During the 1st century AD, Buddhist books were being produced and carried by monks, and their trader patrons. Also, monasteries were being established along these land routes that went from China and other parts of Asia. With the development of Buddhist books, it caused a new written language called Gandhara. Gandhara consists of eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Scholars are said to have found many Buddhist scrolls that contained the Gandhari language. The reign of Huvishka corresponds to the first known epigraphic evidence of the Buddha Amitabha, on the bottom part of a 2nd-century statue which has been found in Govindo-Nagar, and now at the Mathura Museum. The statue is dated to "the 28th year of the reign of Huvishka", and dedicated to "Amitabha Buddha" by a family of merchants. There is also some evidence that Huvishka himself was a follower of Mahayana Buddhism. A Sanskrit manuscript fragment in the Schøyen Collection describes Huvishka as one who has "set forth in the Mahāyāna."

The 12th century historical chronicle Rajatarangini mentions in detail the rule of the Kushan kings and their benevolence towards Buddhism. Then there ruled in this very land the founders of cities called after their own appellations the three kings named Huska, Juska and Kaniska These kings albeit belonging to the Turkish race found refuge in acts of piety; they constructed in Suskaletra and other places monasteries, Caityas and similar edificies. During the glorious period of their regime the kingdom of Kashmir was for the most part an appanage of the Buddhists who had acquired lustre by renunciation. At this time since the Nirvana of the blessed Sakya Simha in this terrestrial world one hundred fifty years, it is said, had elapsed. And a Bodhisattva was in this country the sole supreme ruler of the land; he was the illustrious Nagarjuna who dwelt in Sadarhadvana.

Kushan art:

The art and culture of Gandhara, at the crossroads of the Kushan hegemony, developed the traditions of Greco-Buddhist art and are the best known expressions of Kushan influences to Westerners. Several direct depictions of Kushans are known from Gandhara, where they are represented with a tunic, belt and trousers and play the role of devotees to the Buddha, as well as the Bodhisattva and future Buddha Maitreya

According to Benjamin Rowland, the first expression of Kushan art appears at Khalchayan at the end of the 2nd century BC.[117] It is derived from Hellenistic art, and possibly from the art of the cities of Ai-Khanoum and Nysa, and clearly has similarities with the later Art of Gandhara, and may even have been at the origin of its development. Rowland particularly draws attention to the similarity of the ethnic types represented at Khalchayan and in the art of Gandhara, and also in the style of portraiture itself. For example, Rowland find a great proximity between the famous head of a Yuezhi prince from Khalchayan, and the head of Gandharan Bodhisattvas, giving the example of the Gandharan head of a Bodhisattva in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The similarity of the Gandhara Bodhisattva with the portrait of the Kushan ruler Heraios is also striking. According to Rowland the Bactrian art of Khalchayan thus survived for several centuries through its influence in the art of Gandhara, thanks to the patronage of the Kushans.

During the Kushan Empire, many images of Gandhara share a strong resemblance to the features of Greek, Syrian, Persian and Indian figures. These Western-looking stylistic signatures often include heavy drapery and curly hair, representing a composite (the Greeks, for example, often possessed curly hair).

As the Kushans took control of the area of Mathura as well, the Art of Mathura developed considerably, and free-standing statues of the Buddha came to be mass-produced around this time, possibly encouraged by doctrinal changes in Buddhism allowing to depart from the aniconism that had prevailed in the Buddhist sculptures at Mathura, Bharhut or Sanchi from the end of the 2nd century BC. The artistic cultural influence of kushans declined slowly due to Hellenistic Greek and Indian influences.

Kushan monetary system:

Kushan gold ingots, from the Dalverzin Tepe treasure, 1st century CE The Kushans used gold ingots as part of their monetary system, as shown by the gold treasure discovered in 1972 in Dalverzin Tepe. The main objects from the treasure were circular and parallelepipedic ingots, followed by various decorative objects and jewelry items. The circular ingots used to be progressively cut up as needed, depending on the amount required for a transaction. On the contrary, the parallelepipedic ingots were used to stock wealth in a not-divisible form; these ingots bear inscriptions in Kharoshthi mentioning their weight and the god Mitra (protector of contractual relations) These ingots are all ttributed to the monetary system of the Kushan Empire.

The coinage of the Kushans was abundant and an important tool of propaganda in promoting each Kushan ruler. One of the names for Kushan coins was Dinara, which ultimately came from the Roman name Denarius aureus. The coinage of the Kushans was copied as far as the Kushano-Sasanians in the west, and the kingdom of Samatata in Bengal to the east. The coinage of the Gupta Empire was also initially derived from the coinage of the Kushan Empire, adopting its weight standard, techniques and designs, following the conquests of Samudragupta in the northwest. The imagery on Gupta coins then became more Indian in both style and subject matter compared to earlier dynasties, where Greco-Roman and Persian styles were mostly followed.

It has long been suggested that the gold contained in Kushan coins was ultimately of Roman origin, and that Roman coins were imported as a consequence of trade and melted in India to mint Kushan coins. However, a recent archaeometallurgical study of trace elements through proton activation analysis has shown that Kushan gold contains high concentrations of platinum and palladium, which rules out the hypothesis of a Roman provenance. To this day, the origin of Kushan gold remains unknown.

Contancts with Rone:

Several Roman sources describe the visit of ambassadors from the Kings of Bactria and India during the 2nd century, probably referring to the Kushans. Historia Augusta, speaking

of Emperor Hadrian Reges Bactrianorum legatos ad eum, amicitiae petendae causa, supplices miserunt "The kings of the Bactrians sent supplicant ambassadors to him, to seek his friendship Also in 138, according to Aurelius Victor (Epitome, XV, 4), and Appian (Praef., 7), Antoninus Pius, successor to Hadrian, received some Indian, Bactrian, and Hyrcanian ambassadors.[Some Kushan coins have an effigy of "Roma", suggesting a strong level of awareness and some level of diplomatic relations The summer capital of the Kushan Empire in Begram has yielded a considerable amount of goods imported from the Roman Empire in particular, various types of glassware. The Chinese described the presence of Roman goods in the Kushan realm. Parthamaspates of Parthia, a client of Rome and ruler of the kingdom of Osroene, is known to have traded with the Kushan Empire, goods being sent by sea and through the Indus River.

Contancts with China:

During the 1st and 2nd century AD, the Kushan Empire expanded militarily to the north, putting them at the center of the profitable Central Asian commerce. They are related to have collaborated militarily with the Chinese against nomadic incursion, particularly when they allied with the Han dynasty general Ban Chao against the Sogdians in 84, when the latter were trying to support a revolt by the king of Kashgar. Around 85, they also assisted the Chinese general in an attack on Turpan, east of the Tarim Basin.

In recognition for their support to the Chinese, the Kushans requested a Han princess, but were denied even after they had sent presents to the Chinese court. In retaliation, they marched on Ban Chao in 86 with a force of 70,000, but were defeated by a smaller Chinese force. The Yuezhi retreated and paid tribute to the Chinese Empire during the reign of emperor He of Han (89–106). The Kushans are again recorded to have sent presents to the Chinese court in 158–159 during the reign of Emperor Huan of Han.

Following these interactions, cultural exchanges further increased, and Kushan Buddhist missionaries, such as Lokaksema, became active in the Chinese capital cities of Luoyang and sometimes Nanjing, where they particularly distinguished themselves by their translation work. They were the first recorded promoters of Hinayana and Mahayana scriptures in China, greatly contributing to the Silk Road transmission of Buddhism.

Decline:

After the death of Vasudeva I in 225, the Kushan empire split into western and eastern halves. The Western Kushans (in Afghanistan) were soon subjugated by the Persian Sasanian Empire and lost Sogdiana, Bactria, and Gandhara to them. The Sassanian king Shapur I (240–270) claims in his Naqsh-e Rostam inscription possession of the territory of the Kushans (Kūšān šahr) as far as "Purushapura" (Peshawar), suggesting he controlled Bactria and areas as far as the Hindu-Kush or even south of it:

The Sasanians deposed the Western dynasty and replaced them with Persian vassals known as the Kushanshas (in Bactrian on their coinage: KOÞANO ÞAO Koshano Shao) also called Indo-Sasanians or Kushano-Sasanians. The Kushano-Sasanians ultimately became very powerful under Hormizd I Kushanshah (277–286) and rebelled against the Sasanian Empire, while continuing many aspects of the Kushan culture, visible in particular in their titulature and their coinage.

The Eastern Kushan kingdom, also known as the "Little Kushans", was based in the Punjab. Around 270 their territories on the Gangetic plain became independent under local dynasties such as the Yaudheyas. Then in the mid-4th century they were subjugated by the Gupta Empire under Samudragupta. In his inscription on the Allahabad pillar Samudragupta proclaims that the Devaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi (referring to the last Kushan rulers, being a deformation of the Kushan regnal titles Devaputra, Shao and Shaonanoshao: "Son of God, King, King of Kings") are now under his dominion, and that they were forced to "self-surrender, offering (their own) daughters in marriage and a request for the administration of their own districts and provinces". This suggests that by the time of the Allahabad inscription the Kushans still ruled in Punjab, but under the suzerainty of the Gupta Emperor.

Numimastics indicate that the coinage of the Eastern Kushans was much weakened: silver coinage was abandoned altogether, and gold coinage was debased. This suggests that the Eastern Kushans had lost their central trading role on the trade routes that supplied luxury goods and gold. Still, the Buddhist art of Gandhara continued to flourish, and cities such as Sirsukh near Taxila were established.

Sasanian, Kidarite and Alchon invasions:

In the east around 350, Shapur II regained the upper hand against the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom and took control of large territories in areas now known as Afghanistan and Pakistan, possibly as a consequence of the destruction of the Kushano-Sasanians by the Chionites. The Kushano-Sasanian still ruled in the north. Important finds of Sasanian coinage beyond the Indus river in the city of Taxila only start with the reigns of Shapur II (r.309-379) and Shapur III (r.383-388), suggesting that the expansion of Sasanian control beyond the Indus was the result of the wars of Shapur II "with the Chionites and Kushans" in 350-358 as described by Ammianus Marcellinus. They probably maintained control until the rise of the Kidarites under their ruler Kidara.

In 360 a Kidarite Hun named Kidara overthrew the Kushano-Sasanians and remnants of the old Kushan dynasty, and established the Kidarite Kingdom. The Kushan style of Kidarite coins indicates they claimed Kushan heritage. The Kidarite seem to have been rather prosperous, although on a smaller scale than their Kushan predecessors. East of the Punjab, the former eastern territories of the Kushans were controlled by the mighty Gupta Empire.The remnants of Kushan culture under the Kidarites in the northwest were ultimately wiped out in the end of the 5th century by the invasions of the Alchon Huns (sometimes considered as a branch of the Hephthalites), and later the Nezak Huns.

UNIT – V

GUPTA EMPIRE

The Gupta Empire was an ancient Indian empire which existed from the early 4th century CE to early 6th century CE. At its zenith, from approximately 319 to 467 CE, it covered much of the Indian subcontinent. This period is considered as the Golden Age of India by historians. The ruling dynasty of the empire was founded by Gupta, and the most notable rulers of the dynasty were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta. The 5th-century CE Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits the Guptas with having conquered about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India, including the kingdoms of Parasikas, the Hunas, the Kambojas, tribes located in the west and east Oxus valleys, the Kinnaras, Kiratas, and others.

The high points of this period are the great cultural developments which took place primarily during the reigns of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I. Many Hindu epics and literary sources, such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, were canonised during this period. The Gupta period produced scholars such as Kalidasa, Aryabhata, Varahamihira and Vatsyayana, who made great advancements in many academic fields. Science and political administration reached new heights during the Gupta era. The period, sometimes described as Pax Gupta, gave rise to achievements in architecture, sculpture, and painting that "set standards of form and taste [that] determined the whole subsequent course of art, not only in India but far beyond her borders". Strong trade ties also made the region an important cultural centre and established the region as a base that would influence nearby kingdoms and regions in India and Southeast Asia. The Puranas, earlier long poems on a variety of subjects, are also thought to have been committed to written texts around this period. Hinduism was followed by the rulers and the Brahmins flourished in the Gupta empire but the Guptas tolerated people of other faiths as well.

The empire eventually died out because of factors such as substantial loss of territory and imperial authority caused by their own erstwhile feudatories, as well as the invasion by the Huna peoples (Kidarites and Alchon Huns) from Central Asia. After the collapse of the Gupta Empire in the 6th century, India was again ruled by numerous regional kingdoms.

Origin

The homeland of the Guptas is uncertain. According to one theory, they originated in the present-day lower-Doab region of Uttar Pradesh, where most of the inscriptions and coin hoards of the early

Gupta kings have been discovered. This theory is also supported by the Purana, as argued by the proponents, that mention the territory of the early Gupta kings as Prayaga, Saketa, and Magadha areas in the Ganges basin.

Another prominent theory locates the Gupta homeland in the present-day Bengal region in Ganges basin, based on the account of the 7th-century Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing. According to Yijing, king Che-li-ki-to (identified with the dynasty's founder Shri Gupta) built a temple for Chinese pilgrims near Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no (apparently a transcription of Mriga-shikha-vana). Yijing states that this temple was located more than 40 yojanas east of Nalanda, which would mean it was situated somewhere in the modern Bengal region. Another proposal is that the early Gupta kingdom extended from Prayaga in the west to northern Bengal in the east.

The Gupta records do not mention the dynasty's varna (social class).[30] Some historians, such as A.S. Altekar, have theorised that they were of Vaishya origin, as certain ancient Indian texts prescribe the name "Gupta" for the members of the Vaishya varna. According to historian R. S. Sharma, the Vaishyas – who were traditionally associated with trade – may have become rulers after resisting oppressive taxation by the previous rulers. Critics of the Vaishya-origin theory point out that the suffix Gupta features in the names of several non-Vaishyas before as well as during the Gupta period, and the dynastic name "Gupta" may have simply derived from the name of the family's first king Gupta. Some scholars, such as S. R. Goyal, theorise that the Guptas were Brahmanas, because they had matrimonial relations with Brahmans, but others reject this evidence as inconclusive. Based on the Pune and Riddhapur inscriptions of the Gupta princess Prabhavati-gupta, some scholars believe that the name of her paternal gotra (clan) was "Dharana", but an alternative reading of these inscriptions suggests that Dharana was the gotra of her mother Kuberanaga.

Nepali scholar D. R. Regmi links the imperial Guptas with the Abhira Guptas of Nepal, noting that excavations in Nepal and Deccan have revealed that the Gupta suffix was common among Abhira kings.

Early rulers

Gupta (Gupta script: gu-pta, fl. late 3rd century CE) is the earliest known king of the dynasty: different historians variously date the beginning of his reign from mid-to-late 3rd century CE. Gupta founded the Gupta Empire c. 240-280 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha, c. 280-319 CE, followed by Ghatotkacha's son, Chandragupta I, c. 319-335 CE. "Che-li-ki-to", the name of a king

mentioned by the 7th century Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing, is believed to be a transcription of "Shri-Gupta" (IAST: Śrigupta), "Shri" being an honorific prefix. According to Yijing, this king built a temple for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims near "Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no" (believed to be a transcription of Mṛgaśikhāvana).

In the Allahabad Pillar inscription, Gupta and his successor Ghatotkacha are described as Maharaja ("great king"), while the next king Chandragupta I is called a Maharajadhiraja ("king of great kings"). In the later period, the title Maharaja was used by feudatory rulers, which has led to suggestions that Gupta and Ghatotkacha were vassals (possibly of Kushan Empire). However, there are several instances of paramount sovereigns using the title Maharaja, in both pre-Gupta and post-Gupta periods, so this cannot be said with certainty. That said, there is no doubt that Gupta and Ghatotkacha held a lower status and were less powerful than Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta I married the Licchavi princess Kumaradevi, which may have helped him extend his political power and dominions, enabling him to adopt the imperial title Maharajadhiraja. According to the dynasty's official records, he was succeeded by his son Samudragupta. However, the discovery of the coins issued by a Gupta ruler named Kacha have led to some debate on this topic: according to one theory, Kacha was another name for Samudragupta; another possibility is that Kacha was a rival claimant to the throne.

Samudragupta

Samudragupta succeeded his father around 335 or 350 CE, and ruled until c. 375 CE. The Allahabad Pillar inscription, composed by his courtier Harishena, credits him with extensive conquests. The inscription asserts that Samudragupta uprooted 8 kings of Āryāvarta, the northern region, including the Nagas. It further claims that he subjugated all the kings of the forest region, which was most probably located in central India. It also credits him with defeating 12 rulers of Dakshinapatha, the southern region: the exact identification of several of these kings is debated among modern scholars, but it is clear that these kings ruled areas located on the eastern coast of India. The inscription suggests that Samudragupta advanced as far as the Pallava kingdom in the south, and defeated Vishnugopa, the Pallava regent of Kanchi. During this southern campaign, Samudragupta most probably passed through the forest tract of central India, reached the eastern coast in present-day Odisha, and then marched south along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions that rulers of several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies paid Samudragupta tributes, obeyed his orders, and performed obeisance before him. The frontier kingdoms included Samatata, Davaka, Kamarupa, Nepala and Karttripura. The tribal oligarchies included Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, and Abhiras, among others.

Finally, the inscription mentions that several foreign kings tried to please Samudragupta by personal attendance; offered him their daughters in marriage (or according to another interpretation, gifted him maidens); and sought the use of the Garuda-depicting Gupta seal for administering their own territories. This is an exaggeration: for example, the inscription lists the king of Simhala among these kings. It is known that from Chinese sources that the Simhala king Meghavarna sent rich presents to the Gupta king requesting his permission to build a Buddhist monastery at Bodh Gaya: Samudragupta's panegyrist appears to have described this act of diplomacy as an act of subservience.

Samudragupta appears to have been Vaishnavite, as attested by his Eran inscription, and performed several Brahmanical ceremonies. The Gupta records credit him with making generous donations of cows and gold. He performed the Ashvamedha ritual (horse sacrifice), which was used by the ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty, and issued gold coins (see Coinage below) to mark this performance.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription presents Samudragupta as a wise king and strict administrator, who was also compassionate enough to help the poor and the helpless. It also alludes to the king's talents as a musician and a poet, and calls him the "king of poets". Such claims are corroborated by Samudragupta's gold coins, which depict him playing a veena.

Samudragupta appears to have directly controlled a large part of the Indo-Gangetic Plain in present-day India, as well as a substantial part of central India. Besides, his empire comprised a number of monarchical and tribal tributary states of northern India, and of the south-eastern coastal region of India.

Ramagupta

Ramagupta is known from a sixth-century play, the Devichandragupta, in which he surrenders his wife to the enemy Sakas and his brother Chandragupta has to sneak into the enemy camp to rescue her and kill the Saka king. The historicity of these events is unclear, but Ramagupta's existence is confirmed by three Jain statues found at Durjanpur, with inscriptions referring to him as the Maharajadhiraja. A large number of his copper coins also have been found from the Eran-Vidisha region and classified in five

distinct types, which include the Garuda, Garudadhvaja, lion and border legend types. The Brahmi legends on these coins are written in the early Gupta style.

Chandragupta II "Vikramaditya"

According to the Gupta records, amongst his sons, Samudragupta nominated prince Chandragupta II, born of queen Dattadevi, as his successor. Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya (Victory of the Sun), ruled from 375 until 415. He married a Kadamba princess of Kuntala and of Naga lineage (Nāgakulotpannnā), Kuberanaga. His daughter Prabhavatigupta from this Naga queen was married to Rudrasena II, the Vakataka ruler of Deccan. His son Kumaragupta I was married to a Kadamba princess of the Karnataka region. Chandragupta II expanded his realm westwards, defeating the Saka Western Kshatrapas of Malwa, Gujarat and Saurashtra in a campaign lasting until 409. His main opponent Rudrasimha III was defeated by 395, and he crushed the Bengal chiefdoms. This extended his control from coast to coast, established a second capital at Ujjain and was the high point of the empire. Kuntala inscriptions indicate rule of Chandragupta in Kuntala region of Indian state of Karnataka. Hunza inscription also indicate that Chandragupta was able to rule north western Indian subcontinent and proceeded to conquer Balkh, although some scholars have also disputed the identity of gupta king. Chalukyan ruler Vikramditya VI (r. 1076 – 1126 CE) mentions Chandragupta with his title and states"why should the glory of the Kings Vikramaditya and Nanda be a hindrance any longer ? he with a loud command abolished that (era), which has the name of Saka, and made that (era) which has the Chalukya counting".

Despite the creation of the empire through war, the reign is remembered for its very influential style of Hindu art, literature, culture and science, especially during the reign of Chandragupta II. Some excellent works of Hindu art such as the panels at the Dashavatara Temple in Deogarh serve to illustrate the magnificence of Gupta art. Above all, it was the synthesis of elements that gave Gupta art its distinctive flavour. During this period, the Guptas were supportive of thriving Buddhist and Jain cultures as well, and for this reason, there is also a long history of non-Hindu Gupta period art. In particular, Gupta period Buddhist art was to be influential in most of East and Southeast Asia. Many advances were recorded by the Chinese scholar and traveller Faxian in his diary and published afterwards.

The court of Chandragupta was made even more illustrious by the fact that it was graced by the Navaratna (Nine Jewels), a group of nine who excelled in the literary arts. Amongst these men was Kālidāsa, whose works dwarfed the works of many other literary geniuses, not only in his own age

but in the years to come. Kalidasa was mainly known for his subtle exploitation of the shringara (romantic) element in his verse.

Chandragupta II's campaigns against foreign tribes

The 4th century Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits Chandragupta Vikramaditya with conquering about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India. After finishing his campaign in East and West India, Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) proceeded northwards, subjugated the Parasikas, then the Hunas and the Kambojas tribes located in the west and east Oxus valleys respectively. Thereafter, the king proceeded into the Himalaya mountains to reduce the mountain tribes of the Kinnaras, Kiratas, as well as India proper. In one of his works Kalidasa also credits him with the removal of the Sakas from the country. He wrote 'Wasn't it Vikramaditya who drove the Sakas out from the lovely city of Ujjain?'.

The Brihatkathamanjari of the Kashmiri writer Kshemendra states, King Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) had "unburdened the sacred earth of the Barbarians like the Sakas, Mlecchas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Tusharas, Parasikas, Hunas, and others, by annihilating these sinful Mlecchas completely".

Faxian

Faxian, a Chinese Buddhist, was one of the pilgrims who visited India during the reign of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II. He started his journey from China in 399 and reached India in 405. During his stay in India up to 411, he went on a pilgrimage to Mathura,Kannauj, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Kashi, and Rajagriha, and made careful observations about the empire's conditions. Faxian was pleased with the mildness of administration. The Penal Code was mild and offences were punished by fines only. From his accounts, the Gupta Empire was a prosperous period. His writings form one of the most important sources for the history of this period.

Faxian on reaching Mathura comments—

"The snow and heat are finely tempered, and there is neither hoarfrost nor snow. The people are numerous and happy. They have not to register their households. Only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the gain from it. If they want to go, they go. If they want to stay on, they stay on. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined

according to circumstances. Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right-hand cut off. The king's bodyguards & attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country, the people do not kill any living creature, not drink any intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic."

Kumaragupta I

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his second son Kumaragupta I, born of Mahadevi Dhruvasvamini. Kumaragupta I assumed the title, Mahendraditya.[86] He ruled until 455. Towards the end of his reign a tribe in the Narmada valley, the Pushyamitras, rose in power to threaten the empire. The Kidarites as well probably confronted the Gupta Empire towards the end of the rule of Kumaragupta I, as his son Skandagupta mentions in the Bhitari pillar inscription his efforts at reshaping a country in disarray, through reorganisation and military victories over the Pushyamitras and the Hunas. He was the founder of Nalanda University which on 15 July 2016 was declared as a UNESCO world heritage site. Kumaragupta I was also a worshipper of Kartikeya

Skandagupta

Skandagupta, son and successor of Kumaragupta I is generally considered to be the last of the great Gupta rulers. He assumed the titles of Vikramaditya and Kramaditya. He defeated the Pushyamitra threat, but then was faced with invading Kidarites (sometimes described as the Hephthalites or "White Huns", known in India as the Sweta Huna), from the northwest. He repelled a Huna attack around 455 CE, but the expense of the wars drained the empire's resources and contributed to its decline. The Bhitari Pillar inscription of Skandagupta, the successor of Chandragupta, recalls the near-annihilation of the Gupta Empire following the attacks of the Kidarites. The Kidarites seem to have retained the western part of the Gupta Empire. Skandagupta died in 467 and was succeeded by his agnate brother Purugupta.

Decline of the empire

Following Skandagupta's death, the empire was clearly in decline, and the later Gupta coinage indicates their loss of control over much of western India after 467–469. Skandagupta was followed by Purugupta (467–473), Kumaragupta II (473–476), Budhagupta (476–495), Narasimhagupta (495–530), Kumaragupta III (530–540), Vishnugupta (540–550), two lesser known kings namely, Vainyagupta and Bhanugupta.

In the 480's the Alchon Huns under Toramana and Mihirakula broke through the Gupta defences in the northwest, and much of the empire in the northwest was overrun by the Huns by 500. According to some scholars the empire disintegrated under the attacks of Toramana and his successor Mihirakula. It appears from inscriptions that the Guptas, although their power was much diminished, continued to resist the Huns. The Hun invader Toramana was defeated by Bhanugupta in 510. The Huns were defeated and driven out of India in 528 by King Yashodharman from Malwa, and possibly Gupta emperor Narasimhagupta.

These invasions, although only spanning a few decades, had long term effects on India, and in a sense brought an end to Classical Indian civilisation. Soon after the invasions, the Gupta Empire, already weakened by these invasions and the rise of local rulers such as Yashodharman, ended as well. Following the invasions, northern India was left in disarray, with numerous smaller Indian powers emerging after the crumbling of the Guptas. The Huna invasions are said to have seriously damaged India's trade with Europe and Central Asia. In particular, Indo-Roman trade relations, which the Gupta Empire had greatly benefited from. The Guptas had been exporting numerous luxury products such as silk, leather goods, fur, iron products, ivory, pearl, and pepper from centres such as Nasik, Paithan, Pataliputra, and Benares. The Huna invasion probably disrupted these trade relations and the tax revenues that came with them.

Furthermore, Indian urban culture was left in decline, and Buddhism, gravely weakened by the destruction of monasteries and the killing of monks by the hand of the vehemently anti-Buddhist Shaivist Mihirakula, started to collapse. Great centres of learning were destroyed, such as the city of Taxila, bringing cultural regression. During their rule of 60 years, the Alchons are said to have altered the hierarchy of ruling families and the Indian caste system. For example, the Hunas are often said to have become the precursors of the Rajputs.

The succession of the 6th-century Guptas is not entirely clear, but the tail end recognised ruler of the dynasty's main line was king Vishnugupta, reigning from 540 to 550. In addition to the Hun invasion, the factors, which contribute to the decline of the empire include competition from the Vakatakas and the rise of Yashodharman in Malwa.

The last known inscription by a Gupta emperor is from the reign of Vishnugupta (the Damodarpur copper-plate inscription), in which he makes a land grant in the area of Kotivarsha (Bangarh in West Bengal) in 542/543 CE. This follows the occupation of most of northern and central India by the Aulikara ruler Yashodharman c. 532 CE. A 2019 study by archaeologist Shanker

Sharma has concluded that the cause of the Gupta empire's downfall was a devastating flood which happened around the middle of the 6th century in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Post-Gupta successor dynasties

In the heart of the former Gupta Empire, in the Gangetic region, the Guptas were succeeded by the Maukhari dynasty and the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The coinage of the Maukharis and Pushyabhutis followed the silver coin type of the Guptas, with portrait of the ruler in profile (although facing in the reverse direction compared to the Guptas, a possible symbol of antagonism) and the peacock on the reverse, the Brahmi legend being kept except for the name of the ruler.

In the western regions, they were succeeded by the Gurjaras, the Pratiharas, and later the Chaulukya-Paramara dynasties, who issued so-called Indo-Sasanian coinage, on the model of the coinage of the Sasanian Empire, which had been introduced in India by the Alchon Huns.

Military organisation

In contrast to the Mauryan Empire, the Guptas introduced several military innovations to Indian warfare. Chief amongst these was the use of siege engines, heavy cavalry archers and heavy sword cavalry. The heavy cavalry formed the core of the Gupta army and were supported by the traditional Indian army elements of elephants and light infantry. The utilisation of horse archers in the Gupta period is evidenced on the coinage of Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and Prakasaditya (postulated to be Purugupta) that depicts the emperors as horse-archers.

Unfortunately there is a paucity of contemporary sources detailing the tactical operations of the Imperial Gupta Army. The best extant information comes from the Sanskrit mahakavya (epic poem) Raghuvaṃśa written by the Classical Sanskrit writer and dramatist Kalidasa. Many modern scholars put forward the view that Kalidasa lived from the reign of Chandragupta II to the reign of Skandagupta and that the campaigns of Raghu – his protagonist in the Raghuvaṃśa – reflect those of Chandragupta II. In Canto IV of the Raghuvamsa, Kalidasa relates how the king's forces clash against the powerful, cavalry-centric, forces of the Persians and later the Yavanas (probably Huns) in the North-West. Here he makes special mention of the use horse-archers in the kings army and that the horses needed much rest after the hotly contested battles. The five arms of the Gupta military included infantry, cavalry, chariot, elephants and ships. Gunaighar copper plate inscription of Vainya Gupta mentions ships but not chariots. Ships had become integral part of Indian military in the 6th century AD.

Religion

The Guptas were traditionally a Hindu dynasty. They were orthodox Hindus, and allowed followers of Buddhism and Jainism to practice their religions. Sanchi remained an important centre of Buddhism. Kumaragupta I (455 CE) is said to have founded Nalanda. Modern genetic studies indicate that it was during the Gupta period that Indian caste groups ceased to intermarry (started practicing/enforcing endogamy).

Some later rulers however seem to have especially promoted Buddhism. Narasimhagupta Baladitya (c. 495–?), according to contemporary writer Paramartha, was brought up under the influence of the Mahayanist philosopher, Vasubandhu. He built a sangharama at Nalanda and also a 300 ft (91 m) high vihara with a Buddha statue within which, according to Xuanzang, resembled the "great Vihara built under the Bodhi tree". According to the Manjushrimulakalpa (c. 800 CE), king Narasimhsagupta became a Buddhist monk, and left the world through meditation (Dhyana). The Chinese monk Xuanzang also noted that Narasimhagupta Baladitya's son, Vajra, who commissioned a sangharama as well, "possessed a heart firm in faith".

Gupta administration

A study of the epigraphical records of the Gupta empire shows that there was a hierarchy of administrative divisions from top to bottom. The empire was called by various names such as Rajya, Rashtra, Desha, Mandala, Prithvi and Avani. It was divided into 26 provinces, which were styled as Bhukti, Pradesha and Bhoga. Provinces were also divided into Vishayas and put under the control of the Vishayapatis. A Vishayapati administered the Vishaya with the help of the Adhikarana (council of representatives), which comprised four representatives: Nagarasreshesthi, Sarthavaha, Prathamakulika and Prathama Kayastha. A part of the Vishaya was called Vithi. The Gupta also had trading links with the Sassanid and Byzantine Empire. The four-fold varna system was observed under the Gupta period but caste system was fluid. Brahmins followed non-Brahmanical profession as well. Khastriyas were involved in trade and commerce. The society largely coexisted among themselves.

Legacy

Scholars of this period include Varāhamihira and Aryabhata, who is believed to be the first to consider zero as a separate number, postulated the theory that the Earth rotates about its own axis, and studied solar and lunar eclipses. Kalidasa, who was a great playwright, who wrote plays such

as Shakuntala, and marked the highest point of Sanskrit literature is also said to have belonged to this period. The Sushruta Samhita, which is a Sanskrit redaction text on all of the major concepts of ayurvedic medicine with innovative chapters on surgery, dates to the Gupta period.

Chess is said to have developed in this period, where its early form in the 6th century was known as caturaṅga, which translates as "four divisions" – infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and chariotry – represented by the pieces that would evolve into the modern pawn, knight, bishop, and rook, respectively. Doctors also invented several medical instruments, and even performed operations. The Indian numerals which were the first positional base 10 numeral systems in the world originated from Gupta India. The names of the seven days in a week appeared at the start of the Gupta period based on Hindu deities and planets corresponding to the Roman names. The ancient Gupta text Kama Sutra by the Indian scholar Vatsyayana is widely considered to be the standard work on human sexual behaviour in Sanskrit literature. Aryabhata, a noted mathematician-astronomer of the Gupta period proposed that the earth is round and rotates about its own axis. He also discovered that the Moon and planets shine by reflected sunlight. Instead of the prevailing cosmogony in which eclipses were caused by pseudo-planetary nodes Rahu and Ketu, he explained eclipses in terms of shadows cast by and falling on Earth.

Art and architecture

The Gupta period is generally regarded as a classic peak of North Indian art for all the major religious groups. Although painting was evidently widespread, the surviving works are almost all religious sculpture. The period saw the emergence of the iconic carved stone deity in Hindu art, as well as the Buddha-figure and Jain tirthankara figures, the latter often on a very large scale. The two great centres of sculpture were Mathura and Gandhara, the latter the centre of Greco-Buddhist art. Both exported sculpture to other parts of northern India.

The most famous remaining monuments in a broadly Gupta style, the caves at Ajanta, Elephanta, and Ellora (respectively Buddhist, Hindu, and mixed including Jain) were in fact produced under later dynasties, but primarily reflect the monumentality and balance of Guptan style. Ajanta contains by far the most significant survivals of painting from this and the surrounding periods, showing a mature form which had probably had a long development, mainly in painting palaces. The Hindu Udayagiri Caves actually record connections with the dynasty and its ministers, and the Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh is a major temple, one of the earliest to survive, with important sculpture.

Gupta Art and Architecture –Golden Age

From the beginning of the fourth century CE to the end of the sixth century CE, the Gupta Empire ruled over ancient India. From roughly 319 to 467 CE, when it was at its height, it dominated a large portion of the Indian subcontinent. Historians refer to this time as India's "Golden Era."

King Sri Gupta established the empire's reigning dynasty, whose most important members were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, and Skandagupta. The Guptas are credited with having conquered about twenty-one kingdoms, both inside and outside of India, according to the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa who lived in the fifth century CE. These kingdoms include those of the Parasikas, Hunas, Kambojas, tribes living in the west and east Oxus valleys, the Kinnaras, the Kiratas, and others.

Gupta Art

The Gupta Empire, which governed the majority of northern India from from 300 to 480 CE, is known for its art, which persisted in somewhat diminished form until around 550. For all the major religious groups in North India, the Gupta era is typically recognised as the classic zenith and golden age of North Indian art. The "Classical decorum" of Gupta painting stands out in contrast to later Indian mediaeval art, which prioritised the person over the overall religious goal. Even though there are many surviving paintings, they are almost exclusively religious sculptures. Hindu art during this time period witnessed the creation of the famous carved stone deities, while the production of Buddha statues and Jain tirthankara statues, often on a very massive scale, continued to rise.

Gupta Art

Mathura, the traditional epicentre of sculpture, continued to thrive, while Gandhara, the epicentre of Greco-Buddhist art just outside the northern boundary of Gupta dominion, continued to have an impact. During that time, new centres, particularly at Sarnath, arose. Sculpture was exported from Sarnath and Mathura to other northern Indian regions.

Kushan art, which flourished in northern India from the first and the fourth centuries CE and combined the legacy of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, influenced by Hellenistic artistic canons, and the more Indian art of Mathura, came before Gupta art. The Western Satraps created an advanced form of art in Western India, which is shown in Devnimori. This art predates the development of Gupta art and may have impacted it as well as the artwork found in the Ajanta Caves, Sarnath, and other locations from the fifth century onward. The Satavahanas' art in central India had already developed a sophisticated Indian creative idiom. With Samudragupta and Chandragupta II's conquests, the Gupta Empire expanded to encompass vast areas of central, northern, and northwestern India, as well as the Punjab and the Arabian Sea. They carried on and expanded these earlier artistic traditions and created a distinctive Gupta style, rising "to heights of sophistication, elegance, and glory." The Gupta imperial family did not use inscriptions, much alone portraits that have survived, to declare their connection to the art created under them, in contrast to certain other Indian dynasties before and after them.

Delhi Sultanate Art & Architecture

Gupta Architecture

The first purpose-constructed Hindu (and Buddhist) temples, which sprang from the ancient tradition of rock-cut shrines, were created during the Gupta Dynasty in North Central India. These temples were frequently devoted to all of the Hindu gods and were decorated with towers and intricate decorations. The styles, designs, and elements of Gupta architecture are incredibly varied.

Gupta Architecture

The variety of Gupta structures shows that Hindu temple architecture was still developing and hadn't yet reached the standardised state of subsequent centuries. Nonetheless, there is no denying that Gupta-era structures had an impact on later Indian temple design, which persisted all the way up to the Middle Ages. Regrettably, only a small portion of the numerous Gupta temples that were built have remained.

Gupta Architecture: Gupta Cave Shrines

The oldest instances of religious architecture were cave-temples, which typically had a single carved doorway and an exterior adorned with relief sculpture. A Shiva linga (phallus) and other ritual sculptures were erected inside the shrine, and the walls were lavishly embellished with further carvings depicting mythological scenes. One cave near Udayagiri in Madhya Pradesh has a date stamp that reads 401 CE, which is a notable example. One of the best pieces of Gupta art may be seen in this shrine, a famous relief depicting Vishnu as the boar-headed Varaha. The panel is 7 by 4 metres in size, and the main figure is almost completely circular and emerges from the cosmic waters after slaying a snake-like monster and saving the goddess Bhudevi (Earth). The picture, which is based on a well-known Hindu story, may also be an allegory for the security and tranquilly provided by the Gupta monarchs.

Gupta Architecture:

The Guptas, who were dissatisfied with caves, were the first dynasty to erect Hindu temples that stood by themselves permanently, starting a long legacy of Indian temple architecture. Here, it's likely crucial to remember that Hindu temples were created as the dwelling place (devalaya) of a god rather than gathering places. Priests could make gifts to the gods in this elaborate palace (prasada), and worshippers could also make offerings of prayers, flowers, and food (puja), usually to a sacred artefact or statue that represented a particular deity and was kept inside a compact, windowless building (the garbhagriha). Also, believers would go around the temple as part of a sacred ritual.

Hiuen Tsang's Views on India

The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited India during the period of emperor Harsha. When he went back to China, he wrote a detailed description of India during the reign of Harsha in his book 'Si-yu-ki' or 'Record of the Western Countries'. His description has been accepted as the best available source of knowing the administrative, social and cultural condition of India at that time. However, his account of India is not entirely dependable. At several places it is confused, while mostly it is biased because Hiuen Tsang used his description as a means to

glorify Buddhism and Harsha as its follower. The primary aim of the visit of Hiuen Tsang to India was to gain knowledge of Buddhism and collect its religious texts. As he did not get the permission of the Chinese emperor to visit India, he slipped away from there in 629 A.D. He crossed the desert of Gobi, visited several places in Central Asia like Kashagar, Samarkand and Balkha and reached Afghanistan. He met and found worshippers of the Sun, a large number of Buddhist monks and followers, Stupas and monasteries at different places. From Afghanistan he reached Taxila via Peshawar. The journey from China to India was covered by him in about a year. Then he stayed in India for nearly fourteen years. From Taxila, he went to Kashmir and then visited several places in India like Mathura, Kannauj, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Kapilvastu, Kusinagara, Sarnath, Vaisali, Pataliputra, Rajagraha, Bodha-Gaya and Nalanda.

He remained at the University of Nalanda for about five years. He, then, proceeded to Bengal and visited South India as well, as far as Kanchi. He had been a guest to Bhaskara Varman, ruler of Kamarupa. From there he was called to the court of Harsha. Harsha called a religious assembly at Kannauj to honour him. Hiuen Tsang presided over that assembly.He also participated in one of the religious assemblies called by Harsha at Prayag after that. He left India in 644 A.D. through the same route by which he had entered. He took back many images of Buddha and copies of different Buddhist religious texts. When he reached back China he was received with honour by the Chinese emperor. Then he wrote the description of India at the instance of the Emperor.

Hiuen Tsang Accounts

Hiuen Tsang described the city-life of India. The information we gather from his account is that the houses were of varied types and were constructed with wood, bricks and dung. The city-streets were circular and dirty. Many old cities were in ruins while new cities had grown up. Prayag was an important city while the importance of Pataliputra was replaced by Kannauj. Sravasti and Kapilvastu had lost their religious importance. Instead, Nalanda and Valabhi were the centres of Buddhist learning. Hiuen Tsang described Kannauj as a beautiful city. He described that Indians used cotton, silk and wool for their garments and these were of varied types. He described Indians as lovers of education, literature and fine arts. According to him,

Indians received education between nine and thirty years of age and, in certain cases, all their lives. Mostly the education was religious and was provided orally. Many texts were put in writing and their script was Sanskrit. Debates and discussions were the most important means of providing education and also that of establishing superiority over rivals in knowledge.

Hiuen Tsang praised emperor Harsha and his administration very much. He described him as a laborious king who travelled far and wide and contacted his subjects personally to look after their welfare and supervise his administration. According to him, Harsha used to spend 3/4th of the state-income for religious purposes.

He described that the kingdom was well-governed; it was- free from revolts; there were a few cases of law-breaking; offenders were given physical punishments and tortured as well to extract the truth from them while the traitors were given death sentence or turned out of the kingdom. The burden of taxation was not heavy on the subjects; they were free from the oppression of the government servants and were, thus, happy. The state used to record its every activity. He, however, described that travelling was not very much safe at that time. The main source of income of the state was land-revenue which formed 1/6th of the produce. Hiuen Tsang described that Harsha divided his income into four parts. One part of it was spent on administrative routine of the state; the second part of it was distributed among government employees; the third of it was given to scholars; and the fourth part of it was given in charity to Brahamanas and the Buddhist monks.

Hiuen Tsang wrote that the army of Harsha consisted of 60,000 war-elephants, 50,000 strong cavalry chariots and a 1,00,000 strong infantry. He described Harsha as a perfect devotee of Buddha. He agreed that Hinduism was more widely popular in India at that time as compared to Buddhism. Hiuen Tsang described the social condition of India in detail. He wrote that caste-system was rigid. There was no purdah-system and women were provided education. However, the practice of sati prevailed. In general, the common people were simple and honest. They used simple garments and avoided meat, onions and liquor in their food and drinks. They observed high morality in their social and personal lives. The rich people dressed well, lived in comfortable houses and enjoyed all comforts and amenities of life. Hiuen Tsang also wrote about

the economic condition of India at that time. He gave a long list of Indian fruits and agricultural products. India produced the best cotton, silk and woolen cloth at that time and prepared all sorts of garments from them. He praised very much the quality of Indian pearls and ivory.

The Indians prepared and used all types of jewellery and ornaments. He wrote that India had a brisk trade with foreign countries and there were prosperous city- ports on its sea-coast both in the East and the West. India exported cloth, sandalwood, medicinal herbs, ivory, pearls, spices etc. to foreign countries and imported gold, silver and horses. Hiuen Tsang described India as a rich and prosperous country. Hiuen Tsang wrote about the religious condition of India as well. He described that Brahamanism, Buddhism and Jainism were all popular religions in India. There was complete tolerance among people of all religious faiths and people changed their religions voluntarily. Though he did not write that Buddhism was on decline, yet, his description of cities indicates that Buddhism was, certainly, on decline and Brahamanism was progressing. Hiuen Tsang gave description of religious assemblies also which were organised by Emperor Harsha at Prayag (Allahabad) and Kannauj.

Thus, Hiuen Tsang has given such a detailed description of political, social, religious and economic life of India as has not been given by any other Chinese traveller. The description, certainly, helps us in making an assessment of the conditions of India during the reign of emperor Harsha. However, historians do not accept his description as entirely dependable because he wrote with a positive favour for Buddhism. Therefore, it needs to be corroborated and checked with the help of other contemporary sources.

Political Condition of India at the eve of Muslim Conquest in 11th Century

One the eve of the Muslim invasions of India in the beginning of the 11th century, India was divided into a large number of states. There was going on a struggle for supremacy among the heads of those states. They were so jealous of one another that they could not put a united front against the foreign invaders. The lack of a sense of unity among them was responsible for their defeat.

Multan and Sindh:

The Arabs had conquered Sindh in 712 A.D. and had also established their control over Multan. These Muslim States were able to maintain their existence in spite of the fact the Hindu States in their neighbourhood were certainly very strong and could have finished them only in they could join hands. Their mutual jealousies helped these states to continue. These states threw off the Yoke of the Caliph in 871 A.D. and had enjoyed complete independence since then. On account of their peculiar position in the country, they continued to profess nominal allegiance to the Caliph. There were many dynastic changes from time to time. However, at the beginning of the 11th century Multan was being ruled by Fateh Daud of Karmathians Dynasty. He was a capable ruler. Sindh proper was being ruled by the Arabs and was practically are independent State. In both these states there were a sizeable number of converts to Islam. The condition of the people in these kingdoms was quite bad because the rulers could not provide proper administration.

The Hindustani Kingdom:

The Kingdom of Hindustani located in North-West India extended over territories from Sirhind to Lamgham and Kashmir to Multan. Once even Kabul formed a part of this empire, but by the 11th century its territory had been greatly reduced. This Hindu Kingdom was able to resist the pressure of the Arabs: for 200 years. Ultimately, it was forced to give up a part of Afghanistan including Kabul and shift its capital to Udbhandapur of Waihand. Jaipala was the name of the Hindu ruler of this kingdom towards the end of the 10th century. He was a brave soldier and a capable ruler. However, he did not prove himself to be a match for the foreign invaders, but he was the first Indian rule to fall Victim to foreign's invasion.

Kashmir:

Another important kingdom at that time was Kashmir. Its ruler came into conflict with the Hindustani Kingdom and Kanauj. Shankar Varman was a very famous king of Kashmir of Utpal Dynasty. He was responsible for the extension of the boundaries of Kashmir in many directions. It is said that he died while fighting with the people of Urasa, modern Hazara District.

After the death of Shankar Varman the Utpal Dynasty began to decline. There was a lot of confusion after his death. The Brahmans of the valley putup Yasaskara on the throne in 939, but the dynasty founded by him did not last long. The next important ruler was Parvagupta who himself was succeeded by Kshemagupta. Kshemagupta was a wet ruler. Dida, his queen, was actually the ruler of the country during the reign of her husband. Ultimately, she managed to oust her husband and place the crown over her own head. She ruled up to 1003 A.D. During her reign the condition of the state was far from satisfactory. After that Sangrama Raja founded a new dynasty known as the Lohara Dynasty. When the Punjab was being attacked by the Muslims, Kashmir was being ruled by a woman.

Kanauj:

The Pratiharas ruled over Kanauj from about the middle of the 9th century A.D. They traced their descent from Lakshman, the brother of Ram Chandra. There are scholars who believe that they descended from the Gurjara race Vats a Raja won the title of Samrat of Emperor. He was succeeded by Nagabhatta II. The latter defeated Dharampala, the king of Bengal but suffered defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakutas. The Pratiharas had to continue the fight against their neighbours. Mahipala, the Pratihara king, was defeated by Indra III, the Rashtrakuta King and lost his capital, Kanauj.

The Pratihara power was considerably weakened and its rulers continued to rule over the Upper Gangetic Valley and parts of Rajasthan and Malwa. Their former feudatories, the Chandelas of Bundhelkhand, the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Paramaras of Malwa became independent. The last Pratihara ruler was Rajyapala. His capital, Kanauj, was invaded by Mahmud Ghazni in 1018 A.D. The Pratiharas were succeeded by Gahadawalas of Kanauj. The founder of their dynasty was Chandra Deva. He protected the sacred cities of Kashi, Kanauj, Ayodhya and Indrasthana. Probably, he also created a standing army to guard the frontier by levying a tax known as the Urushadanda. Govinda Chandra, his grandson, continued fighting against his neighbours and was successful in extending his Eastern Frontier upto Monghyer. Probably, he did not succeed much against the Muslims.

Govind Chandra was succeeded by Vijaya Chandra. Hostilities started again with the Muslims during his reign. He was succeeded by his son, Jaya Chandra. The latter had to fight against the Senas in the East and the Chauhans of Ajmer and Sambhar in the West. He abolished the tax called Urushadanda. There was bitter hostility between Jai Chandra and Prithvi Raj Chauhan and that was partly responsible for the destruction of both.

The Chandelas:

To the South of Kanauj lay the kingodm of the Chandelas of Khajuraho. Vidyadhara, its ruler, fought against Mahmud of Ghazni. After his death, the kingdom passed through many ups and downs. Madanavarman (1129-1163 A.D.) not only defended his kingdom against the foreign invaders but also extended its boundaries. Paramardin, his grandson, ruled from 1165 to 1201 A.D. He suffered defeat at the hands of Prithvi Raj Chauhan in about 1182 A.D. Paramardin lacked valour. He was hostile to the Chauhans and might have been on friendly terms with the Gahadawalas.

The Tomars of Delhi:

The Tomars of Delhi had proved more than once their right to be the defenders of the gateway to the Gangetic plains. In 1043 A.D., Mahipala Tomer captured Hansi, Thanesar, Nagarkot and many other forts. Although he advanced as far as Lahore, he failed to capture the same. In spite of this, the Tomars were attacked by their Rajput neighbours. Under these circumstances, the Tomars changed their policy and entered into some sort of an alliance with the Muslims against their Rajput enemies.

The Chauhans:

The Chauhans were the rivals of the Tomars for a long time. They were able to increase their power during the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. In 1079 A.D., Durlabharaja III lost his life while fighting against the Muslims. The struggle against the Muslims was continued by his nephew, Prithvi Raj I. Ajayaraja, the next ruler, claimed to have defeated his Muslim enemies from Ghazna. Actually he appears to have suffered defeat at their hands. Amoraja, the son of Ajayaraja, was able to defeat the Muslims raiders in the battle near Ajmer. Not contented with

this, he carried his raids into the territories of his enemies. During the reign of his son, Bisal or Vigraharaja IV, a Muslim attack was beaten off and the Chauhans were able to capture the forts of Hansi and Delhi. The Tomars of Delhi continued to rule after that as feudatories of the Chauhans.

Vigraharaja can certainly claim credit for having realised the danger from the Muslims and his duty to fight against them. A study of the Siwalik Pillar Prasasti and the play Lalitavigharaja of which he is the hero shows Vigraharaja had decided to make the country called Aryavarta the abode of the Aryas by the extermination of the invaders from the Indian soil and the protection of the temples of the Hindus from destruction at the hands of the Muslims. A reference may be made to the rivalry between the Chauhans and the Chaulukyas. Mulraja I, the Chaulukya, ruler, was defeated by Vigraharaja II, the Chauhan ruler. Jayasimha Siddharaja of Gujarat tried to end the hostilities by giving his daughter in marriage to Arnoraja. However, hostilities once again flared up in the reign of Kumarapala Chaulukya who defeated Arnoraja near Ajmer and forced him to conclude peace on very humiliating terms. Vigraharaja IV, the Chauhan ruler, avenged the insult by revaging the Chaulukya territories and capturing Chittor. Hostilities continued even during the succeeding reigns. When both sides got tired, a treaty of peace was concluded in about 1187 A.D. In spite of this, there was no chance of the two powers joining hands to fight against the Muslims.

The desire to be the supreme political powers in Northern India made the Chauhans attack the Chandellas of Mahoba-Khajuraho, the Bhadanakas of Sripatha or Bayana, the Parmaras of Malwa and Abu and Gahadavalas of Kanauj and Banaras. Prithvi Raj III not only attacked Paramadin Chandela but also attacked and defeated the Bhadanakas and perhaps also annexed some of their territory to his own dominions. The Chauhans were often on hostile terms with the Parmaras of Malwa. As the Parmaras of Abu regarded the Chaulukyas their over-lords, an attack on then formed a part of the Chauhan-Chaulukya struggle for supermacy. As regards the Gahadavalas, tradition is unanimous in regarding Jai Chandra Gahadavala and Prithvi Raj III as bitter enemies. This hostility was increased on account of the abduction of Jai Chandra's daughter, Samyogta, by Prithivi Raj III.

The Chaulukyas of Gujarat:

The Kingdom of the Chaulukyas of Gujarat was founded by Mulraja in the middle of the I Oth century. It continued to {ncrease in power and in the reigns of Jayasimha Siddharaja and Kumarapala, it became the strongest state of Western India comprising Gujarat, Saurashtra, Malwa, Abu, Nadol and Konkana. Kumarpala was succeeded by Ajayaraja who himself was succeeded by Mulraja II and Bhima II. The invasion of Muhammad Ghori in the reign of Mulraja II was repelled by his mother with the help of the feudatories. Mulraja II ruled only for 12 months and during the reign of his successor Bhima II, his feudatories declared them independent and probably deprived him of his throne. Lavanaprasada and Viradhavala of Dholkala helped him to recover some of his lost power. It is true that Bhima II was a powerful ruler, but he did not realise the danger which he was facing, along with others from Muhammad Ghori. So long his own territory was not attacked, he was not prepared to join hands witlv others to fight against the Muslims. The result was that a very valuable opportunity was lost forever.

The Parmaras of Malwa:

The position of the Parmaras of Malwa was such that they had to fight against most of the Northern as well as Southern powers. Bhoja, the Great, appears to have tried to regenerate Hindu society. He also fought against the Muslims. It was probably his power which prevented Mahmi'd of Ghazni to return by the route he had taken to reach Somnath in 1024 A.D. There is no evidence to show that the successors of Bhoja continued to follow an anti-Muslim policy. In the last quarter of the 12th century, Malwa was not of much political consequence.

The Kalachuris:

Two of the branches of the Kalachuris ruled at Gorakhpur. Another branch ruled at Tripuri. Kokalla, its ruler, is said to have plundered the treasury of Turushkas. Another early ruler of Dahala who fought against the Muslims, was Gangeyadeva Vikramaditya who was in possession of Banaras in 1034 A.D., when Niyaltgin plundered it. Later on, the Kalachuris were engaged in a struggle for supremacy with the Chandellas on the one hand and the Parmaras on the other. Jayasimha Kalachuri came to the throne in about 1139 A.D. He is said to have repulsed

an attack by Khusrau Malik, the Ghaznavide ruler. Between 1177 and 1180 A.D., Jayasimha was succeeded by Vijayasimha and the latter ruler at least up to 1195. Like his redecessors, he seems to have continued fighting against his neighbours.

Palas of Bengal:

Devapala of the Pala Dynasty ruled for a long period but as his successors were weak, his kingdom declined. The degenerate Palas had to fight against the Pratiharas of Kanauj and thereby brought sufferings for their people. Mahipala I ruled over Bengal in the first quarter of the 11th century and he was a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni. He was able to restore, at least partially, the fortunes of his family. However, a part of Bengal had already fallen into the hands of his vassals who nominally recognised him as their overlord. While Mahmud of Ghazni was attacking India, Bengal was threatened by Rajendra Chola and thus she suffered a lot.

The Deccan Kingdoms:

As in the North, a struggle for supremacy was being carried on in Southern India by the Chaulukyas of Kalyani, the Cholas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madura. The early Chaulukyas in the Deccan had fallen in the struggle for supremacy in 753 A.D. at the hands of the Rashtrakutas and the latter had given place to the later Chaulukyas in 973 A.D. Likewise, the Great Pallava Dynasty had fallen towards the end of the 9th century. The founder of the later Chaulukya Dynasty was Tailla II who claimed descent from the early Chaulukyas of Vatapi. He made Kalyani his Capital. His successors had to fight constantly against the Cholas who rose to prominence under Rajaraja, the Great, who ruled from 985 to 1014 A.D. He was succeeded by Rajendra Chola who ruled up to 1044. Rajendra Chola was a great warrior and conqueror. He made extensive conquests in Southern and Northern India and was considered to be one of the greatest rulers of the country. While the Cholas and the Chaulukyas were involved in a bitter struggle in the South, India was attacked by the Muslims.

It is not correct to say that there was the lack of a patriotic sentiment among the people of India. It is well-known that women sold their ornaments to finance the war against the Muslims and the poor people worked harder to help the fight against the foreign invaders. There was no

lack of chivalrous spirit among the Hindus. Women took pride in the fact that their husbands died in the battle field rather than came back defeated. Mothers were ashamed of their children who could not defend the motherland. However, this patriotic spirit was of no avail on account of mutual rivalries and animosity. The Pratiharas were the enemies of the Muslims, but the Rashtrakutas were their friends. The Pratiharas were the bulwark against the Muslim invaders, but the tripartite struggle among the Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and Palas resulted in the liquidation of the Kingdom of the Pratiharas and that made the task of the Muslim invaders easy.

Jayapala was a great patriot, but Anangapala was selfish and no wonder there was no effective resistance against the foreigners. It is stated that when Prithvi Raj Chauhan was defeated in the battle of Tarain, Jayachandra of Kanauj "started ceremonies and rejoicing; in every house thresholds were washed with butter and trumpets were blown." Such an atmosphere was most congenial to the foreign invaders. It is thus evident that India, on the eve of Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion was split up into a number of small states involved in mutual warfare. What is still worse that these states were not willing to cooperate with each other in meeting common danger. This disunity amongst the states made the task of conquest by the Muslim invaders easy.

Arab Conquest of Sindh

The most effective and last emperor of the Hindu kingdom was Harshavardan. After his death, political instability in India has been started. After getting this opportunity, Arabs set easily their foot in this country. At this time, Sindh was India's prosperous state, so, they decided to capture this state. Then, in this state, an Islamic region has been established and became one of the most effective Islamic centres. An ambitious, courageous and great warrior was a boy aged about 17 years. This boy was Muhammad-bin-Qasim. He has been born at Taif in Saudi Arabia. This ambitious warrior invaded the Multan area and Sindh consequently. His ultimate aim was to establish a rich civilization and culture base territory as he was a kind king. Through his activities and working techniques, it has been proved that he was a good and kind administrator. He had an interest in the poetry world and it led him to write great poetry that is known to us as the Sindh Heritage. When he got a good position in the heart of people by his works, the Khalifas

could not tolerate this and arrested him by false charging. After capturing him, they took him to Arab and killed him.

Reason for Sindh Invasion by Arab

There were a lot of reasons behind the Sindh invasion v by the Arabs. One of the most effective reasons is that the Hindu rulers of Sindh had very weak strength of armies and possessed poor management in every field. This issue made people interested to allow the Arabs to capture their region for improvement in the economy and culture. After entering this area, Arabs started to open their income source by making a good relationship with other countries. This helps them a lot to expand their business using camels and horses as carriers of goods. Another most important reason is that the Sindh region was recognized as a tribal area, so, to move from this situation, the Arabs easily captured this region.

Effects of Sindh Conquest

Sindh conquest provided a memorable impact in every section such as religions, social and political factors, cultural and economical development, and the Arab settlement. These effects are described particularly. Changes in religions: Islam was established and published in Multan and Sindh. Their attempt to capture the northern area was failed as Rajput possessed a strong power in this area. The propagation of Islam was declined and the khalifas got shaken after Mohammed Qasim's death. In Islam strategies, all rules and processes of this warrior have proven as the most effective and fruitful. Keeping a belief in Hinduism, Arabs did not add any extra taxes or charges as they were very kind. This concept impressed Hindus and welcomed them with their open arms.

Social and political impact:

To capture India by Arabs, the Hindu ruler's weak strength of army and poor management helps people to make their interest and capture the whole country. They rely on Arabs that they will make their country more strong than prior. Arabs started to communicate with outer Islamic countries for business and trade opened a door to improve fast. Before capturing the Sindh area by Arabs, it was considered as a poor and tribal territory of the country.

Sindh became economically and politically strong. The Arabs believe that success will be easy by winning people's minds rather than their land as they were effective politicians. Cultural and economical development: After adopting the tolerance policy, the Arabs allowed Hindus to understand the Islamic religion and to follow it with love. They gained Brahmion's knowledge and adopted their rituals in various fields such as Arthashastra, Medicine AndAstrology. In their Arabian dictionary, they added a lot of Sanskrit words to make them easy to understand. According to the particular area of crops, they planned businesses and trades in this area to improve the economical and cultural conditions of this region. They brought camels and horses for their business purpose to carry all goods from this region to other states.

This invasion is a memorable moment in history as this is the Sindh tribal region's economic and social development. After getting invaded by the Arabs, this region started to grow faster in every field such as religion, social, political, and economic status. Different orders and laws were established after their invasion of this region. They set a trading list with different Arab countries which help them to improve as per situations. According to their strong belief in Islam, this religion was spread fast. In this era, Brahmins were free to follow their religion.

Harsha

Harshavardhana was a Pushyabhuti emperor who ruled northern India from 606 to 647 CE. He was the son of Prabhakaravardhana who had defeated the Alchon Hun invaders, and the younger brother of Rajyavardhana, a king of Thanesar, present-day Haryana. At the height of Harsha's power, his territory covered much of north and northwestern India, with the Narmada River as its southern boundary. He eventually made Kanauj (in present Uttar Pradesh state) his capital, and ruled till 647 CE. Harsha was defeated by the Emperor Pulakeshin II of the Chalukya dynasty in the Battle of Narmada, when he tried to expand his empire into the southern peninsula of India.

The peace and prosperity that prevailed made his court a centre of cosmopolitanism, attracting scholars, artists and religious visitors from far and wide. The Chinese traveller Xuanzang visited the court of Harsha and wrote a very favourable account of him (as Shiladitya), praising his justice and generosity. His biography Harshacharita ("Deeds of

Harsha") written by Sanskrit poet Banabhatta, describes his association with Thanesar, besides mentioning the defence wall, a moat and the palace with a two-storied Dhavalagriha (white mansion).

Early life

Much of the information about Harsha's youth comes from the account of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Harsha was the second son of Prabhakarvardhana, king of Thanesar. After the downfall of the Gupta Empire in the middle of the 6th century, North India was split into several independent kingdoms. The northern and western regions of India passed into the hands of a dozen or more feudatory states. Prabhakara Vardhana, the ruler of Sthanvisvara, who belonged to the Vardhana family, extended his control over neighbouring states. Prabhakar Vardhana was the first king of the Vardhana dynasty with his capital at Thaneswar. After Prabhakar Vardhana's death in 605, his eldest son, Rajya Vardhana, ascended the throne. Harsha Vardhana was Rajya Vardhana's younger brother. This period of kings from the same line has been referred to as the Vardhana dynasty in many publications. At the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit, Kanauj was the capital of Raja Harshvardhan, the most powerful sovereign in Northern India. K.P. Jaiswal in Imperial History of India, says that according to a 7-8th century Buddhist text, Mañjuśrī-mūla-Kalpa, Harsha was born of King Vishnu (Vardhana) and his family was of Vaishya caste. This is supported by some more writers.

Ascension

Harsha's sister Rajyashri had been married to the Maukhari king, Grahavarman. This king, some years later, had been defeated and killed by king Devagupta of Malwa and after his death Rajyashri had been cast into prison by the victor. Harsha's brother, Rajya Vardhana, then the king at Thanesar, could not accept this affront on his family. So he marched against Devagupta and defeated him. However, Shashanka, king of Gauda in Eastern Bengal, then entered Magadha as a friend of Rajyavardhana, but in secret alliance with the Malwa king. Accordingly, Shashanka treacherously murdered Rajyavardhana. In the meantime, Rajyasri escaped into forests. On hearing about the murder of his brother, Harsha resolved at once to march against the treacherous king of Gauda, but this campaign remained

inconclusive and beyond a point he turned back. Harsha ascended the throne at the age of 16. His first responsibility was to rescue his sister and to avenge the killings of his brother and brother-in-law. He rescued his sister when she was about to immolate herself.

Reign of Harsha

As North India reverted to small republics and small monarchical states ruled by Gupta rulers after the fall of the prior Gupta Empire, Harsha united the small republics from Punjab to central India, and their representatives crowned him king at an assembly in April 606 giving him the title of Maharaja. Harsha established an empire that brought all of northern India under his control. The peace and prosperity that prevailed made his court a centre of cosmopolitanism, attracting scholars, artists and religious visitors from far and wide. The Chinese traveller Xuanzang visited the court of Harsha, and wrote a very favourable account of him, praising his justice and generosity. Pulakeshin II repelled an invasion led by Harsha on the banks of Narmada in the winter of 618–619. Pulakeshin then entered into a treaty with Harsha, with the Narmada River designated as the border between the Chalukya Empire and that of Harshavardhana.

Xuanzang describes the event thus:

"Shiladityaraja (i.e., Harsha), filled with confidence, marched at the head of his troops to contend with this prince (i.e., Pulakeshin); but he was unable to prevail upon or subjugate him". In 648, Tang dynasty emperor Tang Taizong sent Wang Xuance to India in response to emperor Harsha having sent an ambassador to China. However once in India he discovered Harsha had died and the new king Aluonashun (supposedly Arunāsva) attacked Wang and his 30 mounted subordinates. This led to Wang Xuance escaping to Tibet and then mounting a joint expendition of over 7,000 Nepalese mounted infantry and 1,200 Tibetan infantry and attack on the Indian state on June 16. The success of this attack won Xuance the prestigious title of the "Grand Master for the Closing Court." He also secured a reported Buddhist relic for China. 2,000 prisoners were taken from Magadha by the Nepali and Tibetan forces under Wang. Tibetan and Chinese writings document describe Wang Xuance's raid on India with Tibetan soldiers. Nepal had been subdued by the Tibetan King Songtsen. The Indian pretender was among the

captives. The war happened in 649.[Taizong's grave had a statue of the Indian pretender. The pretender's name was recorded in Chinese records as "Na-fu-ti O-lo-na-shuen" (Dinafudi is probably a reference to Tirabhukti).

During Harshvardhan's rule Vardhan dynasty's geographical boundaries was spread from North to South, Nepal to Narmada river and East to West from Assam to Gujarat. He had a friendly relations with King of Kamrup, Bhaskarvarman and sent his envoy in the court of Chinese King, formed friendly relations. Harshvardhan established state's capital at Kannauj. He use to spend major part of state's income to welfare of his subjects. He use to donate his wealth after every 5 years.

Religion

Like many other ancient Indian rulers, Harsha was eclectic in his religious views and practices. His seals describe his ancestors as sun-worshippers, his elder brother as a Buddhist, and himself as a Shaivite. His land grant inscriptions describe him as Parama-maheshvara (supreme devotee of Shiva). His court poet Bana also describes him as a Shaivite. Harsha's play Nāgānanda tells the story of the Bodhisattva Jīmūtavāhavana, and the invocatory verse at the beginning is dedicated to the Buddha, described in the act of vanquishing Māra (so much so that the two verses, together with a third, are also preserved separately in Tibetan translation as the Mārajit-stotra. Shiva's consort Gauri plays an important role in the play, and raises the hero to life using her divine power.

According to the Chinese Buddhist traveler Xuanzang, Harsha was a devout Buddhist. Xuanzang states that Harsha banned animal slaughter for food, and built monasteries at the places visited by Gautama Buddha. He erected several thousand 100-feet high stupas on the banks of the Ganges river, and built well-maintained hospices for travellers and poor people on highways across India. He organized an annual assembly of global scholars, and bestowed charitable alms on them. Every five years, he held a great assembly called Moksha. Xuanzang also describes a 21-day religious festival organized by Harsha in Kannauj; during this festival, Harsha and his subordinate kings performed daily rituals before a life-sized golden statue of the Buddha. Since Harsha's own records describe him as Shaivite, his conversion to Buddhism

would have happened, if at all, in the later part of his life. Even Xuanzang states that Harsha patronised scholars of all religions, not just Buddhist monks. According to historians such as S. R. Goyal and S. V. Sohoni, Harsha was personally a Shaivite and his patronage to Buddhists misled Xuanzang to portray him as a Buddhist.

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