

In the previous chapter, we have studied about Maurya Empire. It was a great Empire spread from Afghanistan to many parts of India. This great Empire came to an end around 185 B.C. There after, many important events followed in the history 200 years. During this period, many important cultural and political changes took place. In most parts of India, after the fall of Maurya Empire witnessed evolvement of small and big states. Let us study the impact of this period in various fields.

Literature

In the duration of 500 years between Maurya age and Gupta age, many remarkable changes took place in several dimensions. In the literature of this age, the form of Sanskrit language kept on changing. In Upanisads, Brahman granthas and Mahabharat, Sanskrit acquired literary form. During Patanjali's time, the spoken Sanskrit language was quite polished. However the common people spoke in Prakrit language. In South, Tamil language was spoken, in which many literary works were produced.

The war between Pandavas and Kauravas was narrated in original book, "Jay Samhita". The same was expanded to a great poem called "Bharata" and gradually by the time of Guptas it evolved as 'Mahabharata'. In the beginning of century of A.D., Krishna and Bhagvat Geeta were glorified. Ramayana was written after Mahabharata. Initially the Ramayana was written in pure Sanskrit. From this time the song of divinity of Ramachandra and his glorification began.

During this time Puranas were redefined. During the same time smriti literature on religious, social, political laws, rules and customs were produced. Among the smritigranthas; 'manusmriti' then 'Visnusmriti', 'Naradsmriti', and 'Yagyalkyasmriti' were written in the initial centuries of A.D.

In Sanskrit, in the field of aesthetic literature, important poems were composed. During this time epics and metaphorical poems were created. Ashvagosha contributed a great deal in Sanskrit literature, in which, he wrote an important book called 'Shariputra'. 'Buddhicharitam' and 'Saudarnandan' are also written by him. Bhas is another famous Sanskrit poet. He wrote, 'Swapnavasavadattam', which is quite popular. It must have been written in second or third century A.D. Many other plays based on the content of Mahabharata were written by him. 'Charudatta and pratigna Yaugandharayana' were his special literary creations. 'Jataka mala' was written by Aryasur, which was a sanskritized form of Jataka stories of Tripitak. Patanjali did a great work as mahabhashya on 'Astaddhyayi' of Panini. Bharatamuni constructed 'natya shastra'. 'Charakasamhita' and 'sushrut-samhita' are two great books related to Ayurveda. Attakathas too were constructed during this time, which are the adapted stories of 'tripitak' in pali language. 'Milind Panho' in pali language is quite famous, too.

Society

Indian society was based on Varna and Ashramas. It looked quite orthodox. During the time period, the proportion of mixed tribes increased. The rich believed in polygamy. Gradually the age of a marriageable girl went on decreasing. As the contact with the foreigners increased, the foreigners began adopting Indian culture. Consequently Varna system came under pressure. But gradually they got settled as Kshatriyas. Eight types of marriages are seen. The marriages were arranged according to Varna system. Woman was not allowed to break the marriage and a widow was not allowed to remarry.

Political condition of India

After the fall of Maurya Empire, regional states emerged. At this time, there were attacks from Central Asia and Western China. In North and North-West India, the cultural relation with Central Asia become strong during this time. In North India, the following rulers or dynasties existed.

Shung Dynasty

Pushyamitra Shunga assassinated the last Maurya ruler, Bruhadrath and initiated Shunga dynasty (185 B.C.). He developed his empire around Magadha. At this time, Indo-Greeks that is Indian Greeks who are addressed as Yavanas in Indian literature, they began expanding their empire towards North-West India. Pushyamitra Shunga too had a war with one such Indo-Greek king Demetrius. However, there is no information about its consequences. After Pushyamitra, his son, Agnimitra was enthroned. He was quite powerful. He was a Brahmin and was against Buddha Dharma. He conducted two ashvamegha yajnas. In the second half of the first century B.C., the minister of the last Shunga ruler, Vasudeva Kanva established Kanva dynasty.

Indo-Greek (Unanee or Bactriangreek)

After the death of Sikander, many of the Greek people, who had come with him, either started ruling or residing in Bactria, that is, region on the North-West of Mount Hindu-Kush. Since they stayed there for a long time they were known as Bactriangreeks.

Among these Indo-Greek rulers, Minender was prominent. He had conquered the entire region of Afghanistan and the East of the river Sindhu. He had accepted Buddhist religion and was in touch with the great Buddhist writer, Nagasena. 'Milindpanho' is a well known book that contains the conversations between Milind and Nagasena. 'Milindapanho' means questions of Milind. Thus after Ashoka, a foreigner king gave a great importance to Buddhist religion in his life. His rule lasted from 155 B.C. to 130 B.C.

Shaka Dynasty

The word Shaka is used for the Seethian people. They lived in Central Asia. In the first century B.C. they had come from Seethiya or Shaistan and lived in North-West India around Takshashila. Gradually they spread to Punjab, Malva, Mathura and Gujarat. Among the Shaka rulers Rudradamna was prominent. His kingdom had spread in the entire West India. Beneath the Ashoka edicts at Girnar, his inscriptions were found. It is in Sanskrit language. The Shakas ruled over Gujarat for about 400 years.

Pahlavas

People who had come from Parthiya to India are known as Parthians or Pahlavos. As they lived at the side of Seethiya, their culture is quite close to that of Shaka people. Therefore they were also coupled as Shaka-Pahlava people. They have left some information about themselves in the stone inscription at Takht-e-Bahee near Peshavar. In this dynasty Gondofarnis was an important king, in whose time world famous Christian Saint Thomas arrived in India.

Kanishka and Kushan Dynasty

Kushan was originally a resident of Mongolia. He belonged to Yuhe-chee dynasty. He had created a huge empire by defeating Shakas and Pahlavas. Their first royal person in India was Kizil Khatfis. After that his son Vima Kadafis was enthroned. After that came a ruler Kanishka, who could be in the front row among the rulers of entire India. In 78 A.D. he came to the throne of Kushana dynasty. He had expanded his empire from Central Asia to India's Varanasi and Shravasti of Uttar Pradesh. He had fought wars up to Kashmir and China. He gave birth to composite culture as well as to trade and commerce by joining North India and Central Asia.

The capital of Kaniska was Purushpur (present Peshavar). He, like emperor Ashoka and Minender was a great lover and defender of Buddhist religion. The fourth Buddhist council was organized at Kundalvan (Present Harwan, near Srinagar in Jammu-Kashmir) by him.

It was attended in huge number by the scholars of Buddhist religion. In this gathering Buddhist religion was divided into Mahayana and Heenayana. Kanishka was also a defender of art and architecture. He had patronised the artistic styles of Gandhar and Mathura. In Purushpur he had built a huge Baudha Stupa. After this great king, Kushana dynasty fell, because of the lack of any powerful king.

Political System of Kushanas

The empire of Kushanas was distributed in provinces. The provinces were known as kshatrapee and their head Kshatrapa. The important source of information about kings and their political system are the coins of Kushanas. The Kushana kings used to bear degrees like Devputra and Maharajadhiraja. They believed in the divine power of the kings.

Special Achievements of Kushanas

Kushanas contribution, to Indian society and cultural life in all fields, is incomparable. Because of the vast area from Central Asia to North India, there was a great increase in internal as well as international trade. Those times the North ways of global trade such as silk route (resham marga) and from India's Tamraliptee to Central Asia were under the control of Kushanas. Many new cities emerged in North-West India because of the development in trade and commerce. As the trade was controlled by the Kushana kings, silver and gold were in abundance in their empire.

Kanishka was a patron of literature and Science. During time, the Father of Ayurveda, Charaka, composed to a special book on medical science, Charak Samhita. Famous Bauddha scholar Ashvaghosha wrote 'Buddhcharitam' and brought the life of Buddha in light. Both these scholars were an integral part of the Rajyasabha of Kanishka. Kushanas did a great job to advance the world famous artistic styles of Gandhar art and Mathura. There have been many statues of Buddha and Bauddhistavas in both of these art patterns.

Kushanas and Central Asia

During the rule of Kushanas the political and cultural relationship between India and Central Asia deepened. Many people in Central Asia accepted Bauddha dharma. Because of the contact with Central Aisa, India developed new methods of making currency coins. In place of the former formless coins, new coins of right alloy with pictures of rulers and time-line were made. The Central Asians also contributed to the knowledge of astronomy. In the ancient astronomy books, there are mentions of Greek astronomers. Astrological skills to predict future was also acquired from the Greeks. The contact between India and Greek brought forth a new mixed brand of Gandhar art. It has contributed a great deal in the cultural history of India.

Kalinga

In the history of Maurya Empire it was studied that Ashoka invaded Kalinga. After Ashoka, there was a powerful king Kharavel of Chedi dynasty in Kalinga. His achievements can be read in the inscriptions of elephant caves in Mount Udaygiri near Bhuvaneshvar of Orissa. The writing in the inscription suggests that Kharvel had conquered Magadha. Kharvel ruled in the first century B.C. had won many battles and formed a huge kingdom. He believed in Jain dharma. He had made a huge plan of canals for irrigation.

Satavahana

In the middle of the first century B.C., Satavahana dynasty was prominent in Indian politics. Among its rulers, one was, Gautamipurna Satkarnee. He had defeated Shaka king, Nahapana and expanded Satavahana kingdom up to bank of the river Narmada. His kingdom was mostly located between Godavari and Krishna

rivers. His capital was Pratisthan (Today's Paithan) near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. The history of Satavahana kings is found in Matsyapurana. They were known as sea kings. Their coins have the picture of a ship. The Satavahana ended in the second half of the third century.

The administration of Satavahana was divided into ahar meaning districts. Amatya was the main minister of the king. The land tax was collected in cash and grains. They were the ones to start giving land in donation to Buddhists and Brahmins to develop religions. They were Brahmins and believed strictly in Varna system.

Trade-Commerce

There was a great progress in trade and commerce during the period of Kushanas after the fall of Maurya Empire. There were two main ways known as Uttarapath and Dakshinapatha. In 45 A.D., one Greek navy adventurer, Hippalas discovered the seasons. Due to its discovery the sea travel increased. At this time the important ports of India were Bhruhukachchh (Bharuch), Sopara, Kalyan and Muziris. Hippalas had visited these ports. The trade of these ports was up to Rome. From South-East, sea trade was also carried out with Asia. The main ports of the East were Tamraliptee of Bengal and Aricamedu of Tamil Nadu.

Because of the development of Roman Empire, trade was transacted between India and Rome mostly through land ways and sea ways. An unknown author's book "Perithriyan of the Arithriyan Sea" written in the first century B.C., describes the trade between India and Rome. From India pepper-spices, ivory, gems, malamal and best quality cloth were exported. Pepper was called by them as yavanapriya. The trade of spices of South India with Rome had developed hugely. Heera-manek, nilam, panna, moti and sandal-wood too were exported from India to Rome.

From Rome India imported mainly gold and silver. In south India golden Roman coins are found. Roman authors too had written that the god of Rome was being pulled to India. Best quality liquor came from Rome to India. Roman containers of liquor and Roman script written materials are also found from Aricamedu. Tin, glass and parvala too were imported from Rome to India.

Due to the development in trade and commerce, handicraft too had developed in India. Over 750 handicrafts are mentioned in Milindapanho. Out of these 60 were of sculptor. In Ujjain the chains (malas) were made, in Mathura and Bengal, cotton and silk cloth industry had developed and in South India the cloth-dye industry had developed. These skilled persons were economically wealthy.

The group of traders was known as Shrenee and their president Shreshthi. The trade that took place by caravan was known as sartha. They had international trade. Sarthavahak or sarthak was the head of the organization. The group of Handicraft artisans was called Sangha and their head was called Jayestha. The organizations of weavers, grain merchants, bamboo traders, oil traders and pot-makers had come into existence. They elected their president and were deciding the quality of things. Shrenees functioned like banks as it dealt with interest, discount, credit and debit.

Art and Architecture

In the post-Maurya period, Art and architecture developed remarkably. Architecture is seen in stupas, statues and caves. There was also the amalgamation of the Greek and Indian art styles.

Stupas

Stupa is a room, having hemispherical structure, under which there is a relic of Lord Buddha or a Buddhist monk or a nun. Half of its portion towards its south is covered, and around it initially there is a wooden boundary followed by stone railing. Stupa was first constructed by Emperor Ashoka. Ashoka got them constructed first at Saanichee and Bharhooth in Madhya Pradesh. This tradition of the construction of Stupa was spread up to Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda (Andhra Pradesh).

The stupas of Sanchi and Bharhuta were made in second century A.D. In Post-Maurya period along with the stupa of Ashoka two more stupas were constructed. Over the Stupa, Jataka stories and other Buddhist stories were depicted.

Shaila Architecture

Besides stupas, Shaila architecture got developed at this time. Shaila architecture used to dig out stones and make caves and temples, Bhavans and Viharas were made in them. Prominent Shaila architecture is found in Maharashtra. During the period of Satavahana, such special Shaila architecture was made. For the residence of Buddhist monks, Viharas and for worship, Chaityas were constructed in large numbers.

Art of Statues

During the time of Kanishka, preaching and propagation of Buddha dharma took place in a great deal. In the first century A.D. Buddha dharma was divided in Heenayana and Mahayana. The Mahayana sect considered Buddha as God and started idol worship and rituals. Consequently the production of the statues of Lord Buddha had to be done in big bulk. This gave rise to making of statues of different patterns. Three major Indian statue making school of arts developed: (1) Mathura (2) Gandhar and (3) Amaravati

Mathura

Mathura pattern has contributed a great deal in the art of making statues. The first statue of Gautam Buddha was made in this pattern only. The artisans of this pattern used to make use of the red stones that were found around Mathura. These statues were made by creating black spots on the stones. For worship they used to make special statues. In Mathura pattern, Jain and Brahmin statues too were made. During the period of Kushanas along with the statues of Buddha, statues of Vishnu, Kuber and Kartikey gods too were constructed.

Gandhar

Gandhar, located at North-West of India, was influenced by the administrative systems and cultures of Mauryas, Greeks, Shungas and Kushanas. This area gave birth to a mixed art pattern of Greeks, Romans, Indo-Greek and Greek-Buddhist. However, greater impact was that of Greco-Roman and Indian art pattern. But its content was always the Buddhist religion. Greeks, Shaks and Kushanas were the defenders of Gandhar pattern.

In these art pattern, the statues of Buddha and Bauddhisatvas were constructed. Blue and dark blue colour stones were used. The main feature of Gandhar art is that in the statues of Buddha, in place of emotions the proportion of body was maintained. In it Gautam Buddha is depicted with curly hair having muscular body. It meant Greek art of statue gave more importance to depiction of body-structure than emotions.

Amaravati

Amaravati art pattern was developed in valley region of the rivers Krishna and Godavari. Initially Satavahana and later Ishvaku dynasty kings promoted it. Its construction has taken place from 150 B.C. to 300 B.C. In it, too, the content has been the things that are related to life of Gautam Buddha. In this art, poles and corridors too are prepared in a special way. One more of its specificity is the grooving of ornaments. The statue of Buddha and elephant is an excellent creation of this art pattern. White marbles and beads are also used. More importance is given to man's figure than nature.

History of South India

While discussing the history of North India, the art and architecture of South India too were included. However there is a greater need to study the ancient history of South India in detail as there is a special importance of South India in the history of India.

In South India there is a special type of a culture, which is known as the culture of great stone (mahapashan). The period of this culture is 1200 B.C. to 300 B.C. The great stone culture of South India possesses a great similarity with the great stone culture of Europe. In this culture, the burial of the corpse was done in a specific way. After the death of a person the corpse was buried. At the burial place, a dome like structure was erected and around it huge stones were arranged. Such tombs were kept away from the residential places. On excavation, black and red mud vessels of this culture too have been found. Iron remnants too have been found along with it. The expansion of this culture in South India is from Nagpur of Maharashtra to the ends of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The important locations among these are Brahmgi, Maskee, Aadichallinoor and Nagpur.

From the great stone period tombs, equipments of iron like arrow, bow, sword, trishul, pickaxe, and axe have been found. Along with them, grains of rice and wheat too have been found. It could be inferred that they also knew about agriculture and must have been skillful hunters.

Sangama Era

After the great stone, in the history of South India, the most important period is that of Sangama Era. Sangama means an organization or union of poets. Sangama Era thus is associated with literature. It includes a collection of poems from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. In Sangama literature, many poems were composed in Tamil language. Under the patronage of the Pandya kings of Madurai, three such Sangamas were organized. In that the poets had composed poems on love and war. There after, they were bound in 8 collections, known as 'ittotogai'. Sangama literature reflects the then South Indian society. It also manifests the combination of South Indian and Aryan culture.

Tamil region is spread over from the peaks of Tirupati to Kanyakumari. There seems to be tribal type society. The leadership was hereditary. During the Sangam age the major tribal leaders who had ruled over Tamil region were from Chola, Chera and Pandya. The capitals of Chola, Chera and Pandya were Uraiyur, Banji and Madurai respectively. There used to be frequent wars among the three of them. Consequently, in Sangama literature, there are poems of war and chivalry of the kings and warriors.

Sangama literature divides Tamil region in five Tinai or economic zones: Kurinj (Rocky region), Malai (Dry region), Mulai (Grass and fodder region), Masdam (humid region) and Nital (Seashore region). Here the people's occupations were agriculture and hunting. As per the regions, their currencies were different. The people of Masdam were engaged in agriculture, the people of Nital were engaged in Salt formation and in fishing.

Unlike North India, there was no rigid Varna system. People were known by their professions. However, the wealthy stayed in pukka houses made of bricks and the warriors had high status in the society. To honour the martyrs of the war their busts were installed, which in Tamil were called as nachukal or wishakala. They even worshiped these busts. The women of Sangama period were educated. Many women have written poems in Sangama literature. That means, even in Sangama literature women had important status like that of Vedic literature. They were also engaged in agriculture, animal rearing and other occupations. Sati system in Tamil was known as tipayadal. It meant even in south India custom of sati was practised like in North India. Here, too, the condition of women was pathetic.

Agricultural production was the main source of income. Barter system was followed in trade and commerce. The kings constructed lakes and dams. The weaving of cotton and silk cloth as well as production of salt were their main activities. Very important development of Sangama era is the emergence of trade between South India and Roman Empire. There is a big discussion of many sculptors and architects in Sangama

literature. Vengi, Muzeerees, aricamedu, Urraiyur, Kavereepattanam (Puhar) and Tirucherapalli were some of important trade centres. There are descriptions in the literature about vehicles filled with gold and silver coming from Rome and vehicles filled with pepper and spices going from India. South India was an excellent centre for the trade of elephant tusk (ivory). One very important thing of this period is that the Aryan and the traditions of South India merged well with each other. Even in South India, Indra and Vishnu and later Mahavira and Buddha were worshiped. Shiva and Kartikey were their important gods. In this literature, love, war, social conduct, art and trade-commerce are described in a vivid manner. Political conflict, social inequality and economic prosperity are also described in this literature. In short, Sangama literature efficiently presents the South Indian society from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D., that is 600 years of history.

EXERCISE

1. Answer the following questions in detail :

- (1) Explain your ideas about Sangama literature.
- (2) Discuss about the society that is depicted in Sangama literature.
- (3) Describe the political condition after the fall of Maurya Empire
- (4) Give an idea of the relation of India with other nations of the world.
- (5) Explain Gandhar Art Pattern.

2. Answer the following questions briefly :

- (1) What do you understand by great stone culture?
- (2) Explain trade and commerce between India and Rome.
- (3) Write about Mathura art Pattern.
- (4) Write about the achievements of Kanishka.
- (5) Explain the features of the Post-Mauryan Empire, Indian Society.

3. Choose the correct option from the given alternatives and give answers :

- (1) Which dynasty was established after Maurya Empire?
 (A) Shunga (B) Kanva (C) Gupta (D) Vakatah
- (2) What was the language of Sangama literature?
 (A) Tamil (B) Telugu (C) Malayalam (D) Kanada
- (3) From which location the proof of India's trade with Rome was found?
 (A) Ayodhya (B) Kali (C) Aricamedu (D) Ujjaina
- (4) The book 'Milindpanho' is connected to which king?
 (A) Kanishka (B) Rudradama (C) Samudragupta (D) Minender
- (5) What is the original name of the book 'Mahabharata' which narrates the war of Kauravas-Pandavas?
 (A) Bruhadashamhita (B) Grahshamhita (C) Yuddhasamhita (D) Jayashamhita.