

General Knowledge Today



suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

Prelims Indian History-1: Prehistory and Indus Valley

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Model Questions

Prelims MCQ Topics

Classification of Prehistoric Period, Palaeolithic Age, Narmada Man, Lower Palaeolithic Period, Various cultures in Lower Palaeolithic era, Middle Palaeolithic Period, Upper Palaeolithic Culture, Important Palaeolithic sites in India, Mesolithic Era, Tools of Mesolithic Era, Changes in Life in Mesolithic Era, Important Mesolithic Sites, Neolithic Revolution, Mehrgarh Culture and Chalcolithic Era. Indus Valley Civilization: Extent, Origin, Sites, Life, Decline. Prelims Model Questions.

Note: Kindly check the Prelims Model Questions in the end of this module.

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Pre-History

Prehistoric period belongs to the time before the emergence of writing. It is believed that man learnt writing only about 5000-8000 years ago during the Neolithic period. The earliest known Neolithic writings are *Dispilio Tablet* (found in Greece) and *Tărtăria tablets* (found in Romania). Both of these belong to 6th millennium BC. Thus, Prehistory began with appearance of the human beings about five lakh years ago, and finished with the invention of writing about 6-8 thousand years ago.

Classification of Prehistoric Period

Three classes of prehistoric period are stone, bronze and iron ages, with the later two overlapping with historic age.

Stone Age is divided into three periods viz. Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic. Out of them, Palaeolithic (longest) and Mesolithic represent hunting-gathering stage while the Neolithic represents the stage of food production, i.e. plant cultivation and animal husbandry.

Palaeolithic Age

The term Palaeolithic was coined by archaeologist John Lubbock in 1865. Palaeolithic Age spanned from 500,000 years ago {when tool making members of *Homo erectus* had arrived} till 10,000 BC. It is divided into three periods viz. *lower Palaeolithic*, *middle Palaeolithic* and *upper Palaeolithic* ages. The transition from each of these phases to successive phases was slow and marked by increased fineness in the stone tools and technology of the time as follows:

- Lower Palaeolithic age tools – Handaxe and cleaver
- Middle Palaeolithic age tools – Flakes
- Upper Palaeolithic tools – Flakes and blades

Further, this division is not uniform around the world because of several factors such as time lag, climatic vagaries, great distances, numerous geographical and physical barriers etc. Palaeolithic age finally ended with the end of Ice Age in about 10,000 BC.

Narmada Man – the only stone age fossil from India

Narmada Man or *Narmada Human* is the earliest *Homo* species of Indian sub-continent. This fossil was found on banks of Narmada River in Hathnora Village of Madhya Pradesh in 1982. Narmada Man used to live 2.5 Lakh years ago and belonged to *Homo erectus* species, which was first among the three *Homo* species (*Homo habilis*, *Homo ergaster* and *Homo erectus*) to acquire tool making skills. These three species predate *Homo sapience sapience*, to which we belong. The importance of Narmada man is that it is only authentic record of a *Homo* species fossil from *Stone Age in India*.

Lower Palaeolithic Period

In lower Palaeolithic phase, the tools were mainly hand axes and cleavers with some flakes also. These tools were relatively blunt and have been found all over India except plains of Indus, Ganga

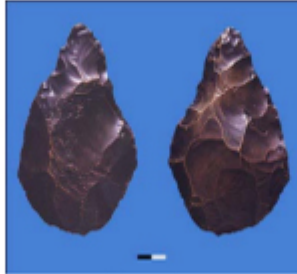


and Brahmaputra {because raw material may not be available in these plains to make tools}. Many Palaeolithic tool assemblages were found around Tapti, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna rivers. The raw material used for making tools was mainly quartzite and chert but quartz and basalt was also used.

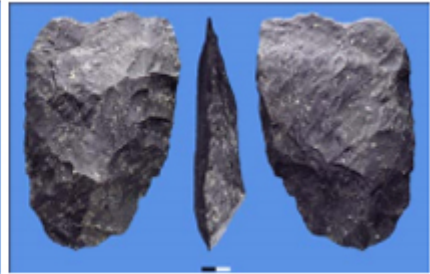
Tools of Paleolithic Era



Chopper



Handaxe



Cleaver

Various cultures in Lower Palaeolithic era

The Palaeolithic period in India shows several distinct cultural and technological traditions.

Soan Culture

Extensive deposits of pebble tools and choppers found in the Soan river (a tributary of Indus) valley in Pakistan along with some other similar sites in nearby area are collectively called Soan culture or Sohan culture.

MadrAsian Culture

Father of Indian Pre-history Robert Bruce Foote had discovered hand axes near Chennai and called it Madrasian culture. Foote was a geologist of the Geological Survey of India.

Nevasan Culture

Some Middle Palaeolithic era flake tools, scrappers, borers etc. were found at Nevasa site (Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra) in the valley of river Godavari and are called Nevasan culture.

Acheulian culture

Acheulian culture was named after the French site of St. Acheul, which was *first effective colonization of the Indian subcontinent* and is almost synonymous with the lower Palaeolithic settlements in India. Most of the sites in India including those in peninsular India, Deccan, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, East and North East have been categorized in Acheulian culture.

Middle Palaeolithic Period

The lower Paleolithic cultures slowly transformed into the middle Palaeolithic by shedding some of the tool types; and by incorporating new forms and new techniques of making them. In comparison to the lower Palaeolithic era, the tools in middle Palaeolithic became *smaller, thinner and lighter*. Due to this, middle Palaeolithic period is also known as Flake tool industry.

Further, there was also a significant change in the choice of raw material for making tools. While



quartzite, quartz and basalt continued to be used, in many areas they were replaced or supplemented by fine-grained siliceous rocks like chert and jasper.

Important Middle Palaeolithic Sites in India included Luni valley, around Didwana, Budha Pushkar in Rajasthan; Valleys of the Belan, Son river, Narmada river and their tributaries in central India {including Bhimbetka} and some sparse sites in Chota Nagpur plateau, Deccan plateau and Eastern Ghats.

Upper Palaeolithic Culture

Upper Palaeolithic culture developed during the later part of the upper Pleistocene. The Upper Palaeolithic period has recorded a rich panorama of fossils in the peninsular rivers of India. One important discovery is of the ostrich egg shells at over 40 sites in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, which shows that ostrich, a bird adapted to arid climate, was widely distributed in western India during the later part of the upper Pleistocene. There were very important changes in the Palaeolithic-environment which had its own impact on the distribution and living ways of the humans. Some of them were as follows:

- There was extremely cold and arid climate in the high altitude and northern latitudes.
- There was extensive formation of deserts in North west India
- The drainage pattern of western India became almost defunct and river courses shifted “westwards”.
- Vegetation cover over most of the country thinned out during this period.
- Coastal areas of south-eastern Tamil Nadu, Saurashtra and Kutch developed quartz and carbonate dunes as a result of the lowering of the sea level.
- During terminal Pleistocene south-westerly monsoons became weak and the sea level decreased by scores of metres.

Due to the harsh and arid climate, the vegetation was sparse though the faunal fossils show presence of grasslands. The human population faced rusticated food resources and that is the reason that the number of Upper Palaeolithic sites is very limited in the arid and semi-arid regions. The most opulent archaeological evidence of this period comes from the Belan and Son valleys in the northern Vindhyas , Chota Nagpur plateau in Bihar , upland Maharashtra, Orissa and from the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh.

Tools of Upper Palaeolithic Era

The tools of Upper Palaeolithic Era are further refined upon the lower and middle periods and *show a marked regional diversity with respect to the refinement of techniques and standardization of finished tool forms*. Man also used prototypes of traps, snares and nets during the upper Palaeolithic times. The advancement in tools is evident from bores in stones, grinding slabs etc. The bored stones are still used by fishermen as net sinkers in riverine fishing and marine fishing. The use of grinding stones



might have been for processing plant foods such as wild rice.

Another important discovery of upper Palaeolithic period was of rubble built in circular form. Further, the upper Palaeolithic settlements also show a distinct trend of being associated with permanent sources of waters.

The earliest form of art by humans also belongs to upper Palaeolithic period in the form of rock paintings.

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Important Palaeolithic sites in India

Lingsugur in Raichur district, Karnataka was the first site to be discovered from India. Apart from this, some of the important Palaeolithic sites in India are as follows:

- Lidder river Pahalgam , Kashmir
- Sohan valley Punjab,
- Banks of River Beas, Banganga, Sirsa Haryana,
- Chittorgarh and Kota, Rajasthan,
- River Wagoon, Kadamali basins Rajasthan.
- River Sabaramati and Mahi basins (Rajasthan & Gujarat),
- Basins of river tapti, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna
- Koregaon, Chandoli and shikarpur (Maharashtra),
- River Raro (Jharkhand),
- River Suvarnrekha (Orissa),
- Ghatprabha River Basin (Karnataka).
- Belan Valley, Allahabad
- Singi Talav, Didwana , Nagaur Rajasthan
- Hunsgi, Gulbarga in Karnataka.
- Attirampakkam in Tamilnadu

Mesolithic Era

The transition from the Palaeolithic period to Mesolithic period is marked by transition from *Pleistocene period to Holocene* and favourable changes in the climate. The climate became warmer and humid and there was expansion of flora and fauna contributed by increased rainfall. This led to availability of new resources to humans.



Tools of Mesolithic Era

The Mesolithic tools smaller in size and better in finishing (more geometric) than the Palaeolithic age and are called Microliths. These microliths are tiny tools of one to five centimetres length, made by blunting one or more sides with steep retouch.



The main tool types are backed blades, obliquely truncated blades, points, crescents, triangles and trapezes. Some of the microliths were used as components of spearheads, arrowheads, knives, sickles, harpoons and daggers. They were fitted into grooves in bone, wood and reed shafts and joined together by natural adhesives like gum and resin. Use of bow and arrows for hunting has been documented by Mesolithic man in rock art of that period. The Bored stones, which had already appeared during the upper Palaeolithic, became common during this, and the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. These are believed to have been used as weights in digging sticks and as net sinkers. Similarly, shallow querns and grinding stones also occur at several sites. These new technological elements led to enhanced efficiency in hunting, collection and processing of wild plant foods.

Changes in Life in Mesolithic Era

Domestication of Plants and Animals

The economy of early period of Mesolithic age was based on hunting, fishing and food gathering. Slowly domesticating crops and animals made their way into human life. By 6000 BC, food production became prominent part of Mesolithic life. Agriculture had not fully developed by was only a prototype of domestication of crops and animals. The earliest evidence of domestication of animals has been provided by Adamgarh in Madhya Pradesh and Bagor in Rajasthan. Some examples of earliest cultivation of plants around 7000-6000 years back have been found near Sambhar lake in Ajmer Rajasthan, Mehrgarh in Pakistan etc.

The first animals to be domesticated were dog, cattle, sheep and goat and the first plants to be cultivated were wheat and barley. *This new subsistence economy based on food production had a lasting impact on the evolution of human society and the environment.* In the humid lands, extending from the



middle Ganga valley to China and Southeast Asia, rice cultivation and domestication of pig was accomplished probably around the same time because rice and pig existed in wild form in this region. The cultivation of yams and taro also took place in this region. Domesticated animals proved to be useful not only for meat but also for milk, hide, agricultural operations, and transport.

Nomadism to Sedentary settlements

The favourable climate, better rainfalls, warm atmosphere and increased food security led to reduction in nomadism to seasonally sedentary settlement and increased population. They moved to new areas such as nearby rivers which provided water. First human colonization of the Ganga plains took place during this period.

Disposal of dead and making of Graves

The sedentary settlements lead to beginning of the tradition of various ways of intentional disposal of the dead. *The first evidence of intentional disposal of the dead comes from Mesolithic Era.* Mesolithic human burials have been found at Bagor in Rajasthan, Langhnaj in Gujarat, Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh etc. The dead were buried in graves both in extended and crouched position {in crouched position knees are bent and the upper body is brought forward and down}. In some cases two individuals were buried in a single grave. The dead were occasionally provided with grave offerings which include chunks of meat, grinding stones, stone, bone and antler ornaments, and pieces of haematite.

Mesolithic Art

The Mesolithic man was a lover of art, evident from the paintings in several thousand rock shelters in the Vindhyan sandstone hills in central India. The paintings have been found in both inhabited and uninhabited shelters. The paintings are made mostly in red and white pigments, made from the nodules found in rocks and earth. The subject matter of the paintings are mostly wild animals and hunting scenes, though there are some related to human social and religious life such as sex and child birth. These Rock arts are paintings {petrographs} and engravings {petroglyphs} done in rock shelters or natural caves. In India also, most of the rock art, especially paintings and carvings, have been known to exist from the Mesolithic Age, which continued to Neolithic Age, Iron Age and early historic period. This art not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern paintings.

Important Mesolithic Sites

- In Rajasthan, Bagor is almost largest Mesolithic site in India. Other major Mesolithic sites in Rajasthan are Tilwara, Pachpadra basin and Sojat Area etc.
- In Gujarat, mesolithic sites include those on banks of river Sabarmati as such as Akhaj, Valsana, Hirpur, Langhanj etc.
- In Uttar Pradesh, Sarai Nahar Rai, Morhana Pahar and Lekkahia are important Mesolithic



sites.

- In Madhya Pradesh, Bhimbetka along with Adamgarh, Chaturbhujnath Nala are major Mesolithic sites.
- In Jharkhand Chhota nagpur plateau is a major Mesolithic site in India.
- In Odisha, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundergarh are major mesolithic sites.
- In South India, Mesolithic sites are abundant in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Neolithic Revolution, Mehrgarh Culture and Chalcolithic Era

The Neolithic period began around 10700 to 9400 BC in Tell Qaramel in Northern Syria. In South Asia the date assigned to Neolithic period is 7000 BC and the earliest example is Mehrgarh Culture.

The Neolithic Revolution

The human settlements in the Mesolithic era got more sedentary and this was the beginning of establishment of villages. Man now could keep cattle, sheep and goats and protect crops from pests. In due course, as the efficiency of agricultural production improved, some farmers were able to generate surplus food. As a consequence, a section of the population were freed from the task of food production and their talents and energies were diverted to tasks such as the production of pots, baskets, quarrying of stone, making of bricks, masonry and carpentry.

This was the beginning of the new occupations such as the oil presser, washerman, barber, musician, dancers etc. This transition from hunting-gathering to food production is called the **Neolithic revolution**. Around 6000BC, the smelting of metals such as Copper began which was used for raw material to be used in tool production. Later, Tin was mixed with copper and bronze appeared which stronger metal than both tin and copper was. *Use of bronze for tools led to the invention of wheel which revolutionized transport and pottery production.*

Mehrgarh Culture

Mehrgarh is located on the Bolan River, a tributary of the Indus, at the eastern edge of the Baluchistan plateau overlooking the Indus plain. It is supposed to be the oldest agricultural settlement in the Indian subcontinent. Despite being an agriculture settlement, the Mehrgarh people used only stone tools so considered a part of Stone Age. This culture flourished from 7000BC to 2600 BC and showed improvisation in almost every area of life until it was abandoned.

Important Facts about Mehrgarh

- The main domesticated animals in Mehrgarh were cattle, sheep, goat and water buffalo while the main cultivated plants were wheat and barley.
- Houses made in mud and mud-bricks, created rooms to store grains, buried dead under floors of houses where they lived, used ornaments of steatite, turquoise, sea shells etc.
- Domesticated cotton for the first time. Used pottery decorated with images of birds, animals.
- Learnt use of making stone beads, copper smelting, timber, terracotta, commercial

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transactions.

- The first evidence in human history for the drilling of teeth in a living person was found in Mehrgarh.

Mehrgarh was discovered after discovery of Indus Valley Civilization and it is now seen as a precursor to the Indus Valley Civilization. The above features of Mehrgarh have changed the entire concept of the Indus civilization.

Other Important Neolithic Sites

- In Kashmir valley, Burzahom (meaning place of birth) and Gufkral (meaning cave of the potter) are important Neolithic / Chalcolithic sites.
- In Uttar Pradesh, Belan valley is a Neolithic site known as earliest rice-farming community in India.

Chalcolithic Period

Use of metals along with stones began with the Chalcolithic or Eneolithic period with abundant use of Copper. The economy of this period was based upon agriculture, stock raising, hunting and fishing. The earliest settlements of the Chalcolithic period in India range from the Gangetic basin to Chhotanagpur Plateau.

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Salient Features

- The use of painted pottery is a hall mark of the Chalcolithic period. Chalcolithic pottery ranges from red ware, deep red ware to deep brown and black, pictographic red and black and polished red.
- The burial practice was another striking feature and the dead were buried in a particular direction all over a particular area. In Kashmir, the people of Neolithic settlements used to bury dogs with their masters.
- The largest site of the Chalcolithic period is Diamabad situated on the left bank of the Pravara River.

Some Chalcolithic Cultures

- Ahara Culture: The sites of Ahar Culture were Aahar (Rajasthan), Balathal, Gilund etc. The distinctive feature is black and red ware.
- Kayatha Culture: Located in Chambal and its tributaries, the sturdy red slipped ware with chocolate designs is main feature
- Malwa Culture: Narmada & its tributaries in Gujarat. One of the largest Chalcolithic settlements.
- Svalda Culture: The well-known sites are in Dhulia district of Maharashtra.
- Prabhas & Rangpur Culture: Both of them are derived from the Harappa culture. The polished red ware is the hall mark of this culture.

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Indus Valley Civilization

The Bronze Age Indus Valley Civilization or Harappan Civilization was the culmination of a long and sustained cultural evolution in the Indus Valley and surrounding areas. The term “Indus Valley Civilization” was used by John Marshall for the first time. The people of this civilization were definitely in touch with the other civilizations especially with Mesopotamian civilization.

Extent

As the three of the world’s civilizations developed along the river banks {Egyptian on Nile, Mesopotamian on Tigris–Euphrates, Chinese on the Yangtse}, the Indus valley civilization developed on bank of Indus and several other nearby rivers such as *Ghaggar–Hakra*, the now dried up *Saraswati* and the *Drasadvati*. Centre of the civilization was in Sind and Punjab and from there, it spread in all directions.

Its westernmost point was Suktagendor in South Baluchistan while easternmost point was Alamgirpur in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. In North, it extended Afghanistan while in South, its extent was up at least Maharashtra state. So far, around 1400 settlements have been discovered, most of which are located on river banks. This civilization was largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia and China and covered an area of around 1.3 million square kilometers. This area is triangular in shape and no other ancient civilization was extended to such a large area.

Origin and Period

Indus Valley civilization is now considered as a continuation of the neolithic Mehrgarh culture which flourished between 7000BC to 5000BC. The overall period assigned to Indus Valley Civilization is 3300–1300 BC, with its mature period between 2600 to 1900 BC.

Some people call Indus Valley people as Proto-Dravidians, who might have been pushed to south in mature Harappan phase when Aryans, with their advanced military skills commenced their migration around 2000BC.

Indus Valley Sites

Harappa

Harappa is the first discovered site of this civilization excavated in 1921 by a team led by Daya Ram Sahni. It was a major urban centre during its mature phase surrounded by extensive walls. It is located in Punjab Province, Pakistan, on an old bank / bed of the River Ravi. Its location along old course of Ravi provided access to trade networks, aquatic food and water for drinking and cultivation. Due to this, Harappa remained occupied for a long time. Further, Harappa was also a meeting point of trade routes coming from east.

Archaeologists have divided Harappa in five different phases of which oldest is Ravi aspect / Hakra (3300–2800BC), followed by Kot Dijian or Early Harappa (2800–2600BC) followed by Mature



(2600-1900BC), Transitional (1900-1800BC) and Late Harappa (1800-1300BC) phases.

Important Findings of Harappa

The important material findings at Harappa include pottery, chert blades, copper or bronze implements, terracotta figurines, seals and sealing, weights, etc. This apart, the two rows of granaries with brick platforms, a citadel on elevated platform, a supposed workmen's quarter, vanity case, furnaces, crucibles for bronze smelting etc. have also been found. Harappa also is the only site which yields the evidence of coffin burial. A copper bullock cart is another notable finding.

Mohen-jo Daro

Mohenjo-Daro (mound of dead) was excavated by a team led by R.D. Banerjee in 1922. It is located in the Larkana District of Sindh Pakistan on bank of Indus River.

Important Findings of Mohenjo Daro

Notable findings at Mohenjo-Daro are the magnum opus **Great Bath**, uniform buildings and weights, hidden drains and other hallmarks of the civilization. This is the site where most unicorn seals have been found. Mohenjo-Daro is also sometimes known as largest urban centre of the civilization. The famous bronze dancing girl, seal of supposed Pashupati, steatite statue of bearded priest, numerous terracotta figurines are another notable findings of Mohenjo-Daro.

Great Bath

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The most famous building found at Mohenjo-Daro is a great bath. It is a 6×12 meter specimen of beautiful brick work. The water for the bath was provided from a well in an adjacent room. The floor was made up of bricks. Floor and outer walls were bituminized so that there is no leakage of water. There are open porch's on four sides of the bath. There is use of Burnt bricks, Mortar and Gypsum in the Great bath but NO use of stone is there.

Kalibangan

Kalibangan (black bangles) is in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan. It was located on the banks of now dried up Sarwaswati River; and flourished for at least 5 centuries. The site was first discovered by Italian Luigi Pio Tessitori and was later excavated extensively by A Ghosh.

Important Findings at Kalibangan

The oldest ploughed field, evidence of earliest recorded Earthquake (which might have ended this city itself), Fire-Altars, Charging bull, tiled floor, two kinds of burials (circular and rectangular graves), bones of camels etc. are important findings of Kalibangan. Further, this site was different from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the following respects:

- The bricks in other sites were baked ones, while Kalibangan bricks are earthen ones.
- There was no drainage system in Kalibangan.

Due to these, Kalibangan is not considered a well planned city as comparable to other important sites of Indus Valley.



Dholavira

Dholavira is located in Rann of Kutch of Gujarat. It is relatively a new discovery, excavated in 1990s by a team led by R S Bisht. It had several large reservoirs, an elaborate system of drains to collect water from the city walls and house tops to fill these water tanks.

Dholavira versus Harappa & Mohenjo Daro

Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Dholavira are called the nucleus cities of the civilization. Unlike the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro where there are two settlements, in Dholavira 3 citadels or principal divisions have been found which have been duly protected by fortifications. There is an open ground out of the fortifications. In Dholavira there has been found the inner enclosure of the citadel too which has not been found in any other cities of the Harappan culture.

Important Findings of Dholavira

One of the most important findings of Dholavira has been a signboard with Indus Script.

Lothal

Lothal is located in Ahmadabad, Gujarat. It was a coastal town {three important coastal towns of IVC are Lothal, Suktagendor and Balakot} and had different type of town planning. The city was divided into six sections and each section was built on a wide platform of unripe bricks. *Entry to the houses were on Main Street while other sites of IVC have lateral entry.*

Important Findings of Lothal

Important findings of Lothal include an artificial dockyard {which makes it an important sea link}, rice husk {rice husk has been found only at Lothal and Rangpur}, bead making factory etc. Lothal is thought to have direct sea trade links with Mesopotamia because of finding of an Iranian seal from there.

Suktagendor

Suktagendor was located around 55 kms from the shore of Arabian Sea on the Bank of Dasht River near the Iran Border. It was an important coastal town along with Lothal and Balakot (in Pakistan) and is considered to be the western border of Indus Valley Civilization. It was originally a port and later cut off from the sea due to coastal upliftment. The conclusion has been drawn up that Suktagendor had trade relationships with Babylon.

Other

Kot Diji

Kot Diji was a pre-harappan site and located on the left bank of River Sindh. This city was destructed by Force or some fire. A tar is the major object found here. Statues of bull and mother goddess are other things found in Kot diji.

Ropar

Ropar in Punjab was excavated under Y D Sharma. There is another site Bara near Ropar, which shows an evidence of the decaying culture of pre harappan era.



Mittathal

Mittathal is located in the Bhiwani district of Haryana. A terracotta cartwheel has been found. Weights of stones have also been found. The evidence of residence outside a Citadel have been found in Mittathal. The site gives evidences of rise, flourishing and fall of Harappa civilization.

Chanhu-Daro

Chanhu Daro is situated 130 kms south of Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh and is the only harappan city which does not have a fortified citadel. The Chanhu Daro has given evidence of factories of various figurines, seals, toys, bone implements so it has been interpreted that it was a settlement with lots of artisans and was an industrial town.

Banawali

Banawali is located in Hissar district of Haryana. High quality barley has been found at Banawali.

Alamgirpur

Alamgirpur is located in Meerut in Uttar Pradesh and is considered to be easternmost boundary of Indus Valley. Important findings of Alamgirpur include pottery, plant fossils, animal bones and copper tools.

Surkotda

Surkotda is located in the Bhuj area of Gujarat and has provided evidence of the first actual remains of the horse bones.

Rangpur

Rangpur is located 50 kms from Ahmadabad in Gujarat. This along with Lothal are two sites where rice husk has been found by archaeologists.

Rakhigarhi

Rakhigarhi in Hissar, Haryana is one of the largest sites of Indus Valley.

Bhagatrav

Bhagatrav is located in Bharuch district of Gujarat along the Arabian Sea coast and seems to have remained an important port of the Indus valley.

Salient Common Features of Entire Civilization

The common features of all the Indus valley civilizations are as follows:

- A common script which remains undeciphered so far.
- Proper Town planning in all Indus valley cites except few such as Kalibangan. Presence of cooking area, water reservoir in houses.
- Presence of a fortified citadel in almost all urban centres.
- Presence of residential and non-residential buildings. Absence of temples of special places of worship except few altars at some sites.
- Use of standard weights and measurements
- Pottery of wheels and bead making industries



- Practice of burying the dead.

Life at Indus Valley Civilization

Most knowledge about the life at Indus Valley comes from the remains of the cities of Harappa and Mohen-Jo Daro. Important aspects of social, economic and religious life are discussed below:

Administration: Was there any central authority in Indus Valley?

Cities are the symbols of the Indus Valley civilization characterized by the density of population, close integration between economic and social processes, tech-economic developments, careful planning for expansion and promotion of trade and commerce, providing opportunities and scope of work to artisans and craftsmen etc. This was a sort of urban revolution, which could not have been possible without the strong central authority, specialized economic organization and socio-cultural unity.

The size and architectural complexity of all large Harappa cities mean something in terms of a socio-cultural development. The lay-out of the streets, the presence of a large-scale drainage system with its requirement for constant tending, the monumental citadels, all can be taken as an indication of tendencies toward a strong central government.

Another feature of Harappan urbanization was the elaborate craft specialization and the contacts with other reasonably distant parts of Asia. But the greatest challenge to the archaeologists is their failure to get any idea of the Harappan urban institutions. For example, we almost know nothing about the form of the state and the economic institutions.

Maritime commerce with Mesopotamia was a part to their life, but the knowledge of inner working of these complex Harappan urban economic institutions completely eludes us.

Language

Not a great deal of knowledge we have because the Harappa script has not been deciphered. In the Indus Valley Civilization, the style of script seems to be Boustrophedon i.e. written from right to left in first line and from left to right in second line. This language was pictographic and was engraved on seals, copper tablets, bone, ivory etc. However, such scripts is not seen on bricks.

Religion

Most prominent religious figures are Unicorn, so called Pashupati / Proto-shiva,, seven mothers (*sapta matrika*) and compound creatures. The later three are now inculcated in Hindu religion. The mother goddess was dominant shows that the **society was predominantly matriarchal**. There was a division of labour and society was diversified and stratified. The people were scholars, artisans, traders, warriors and businessmen. The protoshiva or pashupati seems to be the only one male deity as depicted on seals. He is surrounded by four wild animals viz. an elephant, a tiger, a buffalo and a rhinoceros. Apart from this there 2 deer's beneath the seat of the deity. The headdress of the deity



has two horns. It wears a number of bangles. There is an inscription of seven letters on top.

This representation has at least three concepts which are usually associated with Shiva viz., that he is (i) Trimukha (three-faced), (ii) Pashupati (Lord of animals), and (iii) Yogisvara or Mahayogi. The first two aspects are apparent from the seal itself. The deity is sitting cross-legged in a Padmasana posture with eyes turned towards the tip of the nose which evidence the Yogisvara aspect of the deity. The deity is always nude save for a cincture round the waist.

Linga Worship

Stone symbols of both male and female sex organs have been found which gives in indication that Phallus or Linga worship was in practice.

Tree Worship and other rituals

The peepal tree has been depicted on many seals which gives a sense that it might be a sacred tree. Humped bull seems to be a venerated animal and there are **evidences of snake worship** and **snake charmers**. No temples, No special places of worship, no castes. The people had a sense of arts and crafts and it is proved by the toys, figurines, bangles, stone statues, metal statues, etc. The people were expert in making seals.

Talisman

On a seal is depicted a six-rayed motif which may signify the sun. Swastiks and cross signs were harbingers of good luck. A shell inlay, shaped like a heart, was probably used as a Talisman.

Food

Both veg and nonveg life. There are evidences of cultivation of Wheat, Barley, Rice, Date, melon, lemon etc. people were cattle herders and used milk and milk products. There are evidences that people made sweets. Half burnt bones give evidence of nonveg life.

Dress

A figure of a bearded man has been found in Mohenjo-Daro which indicated that they used sewn clothing's. The cloth used to cover the torso in the upper part of the body in such a way that it kept right hand Free. There are evidences that they people took interest in cosmetics and had great aesthetic sense. Men kept long hair and kept beard or also shaven beard.

The people of Indus valley civilization were aware of Bronze mirrors, Ivory Combs, antimony rods but **NOT hair dyes**.

Sports and Entertainments:

The large number of terracotta figurines and toys such as cart, bull, elephant, monkeys, chariots; whistles etc. indicate that the children entertained themselves. There are no clear evidences of Music in the civilization; however, the finding of a dance girl bronze figurine gives some insight about the social entertainment.

Science & Technology

The Harappan civilization was the womb of mathematics from where both the concept of numbers and



the numerical system originated. The numerical system developed by the Harappan included symbols for most numbers and several innovations for mathematical manipulations such as addition and multiplication.

The Harappan numerical system is decimal and additive multiplicative in usage. There are symbols for numerical for 4 to 100, 1000 and their derivatives. The numerical system which was first used by the Harappan later found its way into other ancient civilization.

These people are known to have constructed the world's first tidal port at Lothal at the head of the gulf company. They possessed a **high degree of knowledge relating to the ebb and flow of tides** and carried on brisk overseas trade with other civilizations.

They were also conversant with the medical sciences and used various herbs and drugs to treat diseases. The people of Indus valley Civilization practiced **Trephination** which is kind of medical intervention making a burr hole in the skull to treat migraines and mental disorders. The evidences of Trephination have been found at Lothal, Kalibangan and Burzahom but not at Harappa or most other sites.

Tools, arms and weapons

They are made up of Copper and Bronze. They were unaware of the use of Iron. The Harappan people were generally peace loving and had not much arms and weapons in their kitty.

Burial Practice

All Indus valley sites have distinct burial of the dead practice. Surkotda and Dholavira are two sites where the burial practice resembled the megalithic practice.

Economy

The economy was based upon agriculture as well as trade. Commerce was important and there were links from overseas places.

Agriculture

The agriculture was in flourishing condition which was due to timely and good rains. They sowed many crops including the rice, wheat, cotton, barley etc. Other crops were dates, melon, pea etc.

Predominantly Rainfed Crops as Irrigation was based upon the rainwater but also the sources of irrigations were available. Wheat and barley were the most important Harappan Crops.

In Harappa, 3 principle varieties of Wheat were sown; three varieties of barleys were also sown. The cultivation of lentils, mustard, linseed, Sesamum has been found. The Finger millet, Ragi, Bajra, Jawar were cultivated and it seems that they diffused from Africa.

Animal Husbandry

The humped bull was domesticated animal, other were buffalo, pigs, elephants, donkeys, goats and sheep's. Only Surkotada has given an evidence of domestication of Horse. Generally Horse is absent in the civilization.



The goats, cows and Sheep were commonly domesticated in the mature harappan phase but the evidences of Buffalo have not been found in that much quantity.

Transportation

The carts and chariots were means of transport. For sea trade big boats were there to serve the purpose.

Relations with Other civilizations

Indus Valley people had established trade relations other contemporary civilizations by 2000BC. They conducted trade with other civilizations including Mesopotamia, Babylon by land as well as sea route. The historical records of Mesopotamia mention a place **Meluha** which seems to be either name of Indus River region or India itself. These records describe wood, copper, gold, ivory, and exotic birds (like peacocks) being exported from Meluha. The Harappans traded grain, copper utensils, mirrors, elephant ivory, cotton cloth, lapis lazuli (a semi-precious gemstone), and ceramic jewellery for gold, silver, marine shell, copper, tin, lead, jade, and amethyst. Some of these were crafted into ornaments and exported.

In various cities of Mesopotamia, the Harappan seals have been found which prove these relationships.

Weights and Measurements

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The weights and measurements were calibrated to a considerable extent. The measures were standardized and perhaps there is binary system in use. A scale made up of Elephant tusk has been found at Mohenjo-Daro and Lothal.

Finance, Business and Industry

There was use of many kinds of metals including Gold, Silver, Copper, Lapis Lazuli, Turquoise, Amethyst, Alabaster, jade etc. It is thought that Jade came from Central Asia, Turquoise came from Iran, Amethyst came from current Maharashtra and Lapis lazuli came from Afghanistan.

A Jewellery hoard has been found at Allahdino, an Indus valley Site near congregation of Indus River and Arabian sea. It has a necklace of 36 carnelian beads, Bronze spacer beads and a copper bead covered with Gold foil and 20 Gold lumps.

The trade was multifaceted. It was operated on intraregional as well as interregional basis and had a guild system coupled with nomadic trade. There are no evidences of monetary exchange.

Well developed stoneware industry. The manufacturing of the stone bangles was most prevalent in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Harappan civilization had an Economic Zone. This economic zone was along the bank of the Sirhind river.

Metallurgy

These people were aware of Gold, Silver, Copper, Brass, Bronze and Tin but did not know much about Iron. Copper was the most widely used metal. Ganeshwar in Sikar District of Rajasthan is



supposed to be the supplier of Copper to the cities of Indus Valley; however, the largest hoard of Copper came from Gungeria.

Pottery

A large variety of pottery, both plain and decorated, has been found. Harappanwares were shaped on a potter's wheel. The potters wheels, being made of wood, have not survived. The kilns in which the pots were baked have been unearthed. The heating was skilfully controlled as most of the pottery was carefully fired. Once the vessel was shaped on the wheels, the ochre was painted over it. Then the designs were painted on this red surface with a brush in black.

Bowls and other utensils were made with soft stones like alabaster. Such utensils have been discovered in Baluchistan and in the valley of the Indus.

Seals

The seals were used throughout the length and breadth of this civilization. Made of steatite, these seals range in size from 1cm to 5cm. Seals are either square or rectangular in shape. Square seals have carvings and inscription while rectangular have only inscription. Most frequently engraved animals on Indus Valley Seals are the humpless bull and unicorns.

Arts and Architecture

The Harappans were not artistic people. Their architecture was completely utilitarian. There is no trace of ornamentation in houses and public buildings nor there are traces of paintings or monumental sculpture anywhere in the remains.

At the same time, the Harappans seem to have excelled themselves in producing works of art of small compass. Their notable artistic achievement was in their seal engravings, especially those of animals. The best are those of the humped bull, buffalo, rhinoceros and the tiger. These figures exhibit powerful naturalism and appear to be the work of craftsmen whose arts are to be seen also in amulets and other objects.

Indus Valley: Critical Analyses

Comparison of Indus Valley and Mesopotamian Civilization

Both Indus Valley and Mesopotamia are oldest civilizations of the world. Both traded with each other. The key comparisons of Indus Valley and Mesopotamian civilization are as follows:

- While theory of Kingship or a ruler class has not been proved for Indus Valley, the Mesopotamians were ruled by a priest King, who was considered to be divine. That King solved disputes, led administration and had an army too.
- While no special places of worship have been found in Indus Valley, it is assumed that these people worshipped nature. However, presence of different religious objects such as seals, statues etc. indicate that Indus Valley might be having a polytheistic religion. In Mesopotamia also, polytheism was present but the Mesopotamians also built temple for worship.



- The *Harappan society seems to be a matriarchal society*, evident from so many statues of female deities. On the other hand, *Mesopotamia across its history became more and more a patriarchal society*, one in which the men were far more powerful than the women.

Question of Decline of Indus Valley Civilization

Decline set in around 1900 BC and after 1700 BC, little remained in Harappan civilization. However, it did not come to an abrupt end within particular decade or century. Until recently, it was believed that Indus Cities were destroyed by the Aryans who entered India from Iran and Afghanistan through northwestern passes such as the Bolan and the Khyber. The evidences of this theory were two pronged. *Firstly*, there is a reference in the *Rig-Veda*, that Indra destroyed hostile people of Hariyuppa (Harappa) called Dasyus who lived in forts called *Pur* (Thus, one name of Indra is Purandhar, destroyer of *Pur*). *Secondly*, there was a discovery of some skeletons of men, women and children from the lower city of Mohenjo Daro, killed during the so-called last massacre. Most ardent propounder of this theory was Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

However, most scholars and archaeologists dismiss the Wheeler's theory to be too simplistic. The argument against this is that a *Pur* of Rigveda was not a fort of Indus Valley but *just a structure of filmy ramparts and stockades etc.* Further, *Rig-Veda* never mentions anything about some of the recognizable features of the sites such as streets, houses, wells, drains, granaries etc.

Another theory considers a combination of natural and socio-economic factors behind decline of the Indus cities. The natural factors could be geological and climatic. It is believed that the Indus Valley region experienced several tectonic disturbances which caused earthquakes. These upheavals not only disturbed their life but also changed courses of rivers or dried them up. The modern satellite imagery confirms dramatic shifts in the river courses, which might have caused great flood cutting the food producing areas from urban centres. This is evident from the quantities of silt layers in the upper levels of Mohenjo Daro indicating heavy floods.

Another natural reason might be changes in patterns of rainfall. During the mature Harappan age in 2500 BC, there was a great rise in the amount of rainfall, but by the beginning of the second millennium BC it had dropped dramatically thus affecting food production adversely. With the rivers shifting their courses, the rainfall declining and sufficient food failing to arrive from the countryside, there was a slow but inevitable collapse of the Indus system. Its final outcome was catastrophic for the Mature Harappan phase.

This decline theory of environment degradation was given by John Marshall. The dogma says that cutting of forests for agriculture and timber for fuel may have resulted in the barren land and silting of rivers. It has been postulated that in Saraswati region, the civilization declined mainly because of the shifting of the river channels.



Claim of the Indus Civilisation being a Vedic Civilisation

What is the rationale for describing the Harappan Civilisation as the Saraswati Civilisation? To what extent is it a credible rationale?

Some Indian historians make a claim essentially on the basis of the *Puranas* that *Indus valley Civilization* was one of the tribes / Janas of the Vedic civilization. *Puranas* provide long lists of ancient dynasties, and the so-called *Uttanapada Dynasty* of Manu Swayambhuba of the tenth millennium BC is considered as the first of the dynasties that continue for thousands of years.

This claim is also made to describe Harappan civilization as Saraswati Civilization. Many Indus Valley sites like Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi, Banawali, Dholavira, Lothal are believed to be located along the Saraswati River.

However, this cannot be a credible rationale unless there are archaeological or any other types of evidence for claiming a continuity of Indian kingship from such an early period. The claim is thus treated with scepticism and the belief that no waves of migrants entered India after the tenth millennium BC is considered false. However, the claim finds resonance among Hindu religious nationalists imbued with the idea of *Hindutva*.

Prelims Model Questions

1. Which among the following is / are the features of the Neolithic Era in India?
1. Earliest cultivation of crops
 2. Earliest domestication of the animals
 3. First human colonization of the Ganges plains in India
- Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1 & 2

[B] Only 2

[C] Only 3

[D] None of them

Answer: [D] None of them

All the above happened in Mesolithic era.

2. Which among the following is / are the hallmark features of Neolithic revolution?
1. A transition from hunting-gathering to food production
 2. A transition from plenty of use of copper to Iron
 3. Rise of domestication of various types of plants and animals

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 2 & 3



[C] 1, 2 & 3

[D] Only 1 & 3

Answer: [D] Only 1 & 3

3. The Mesolithic era is known for many activities which were done by humans for the first time. Which among the following started during Mesolithic era?

1. Domestication of Plants and Animals
2. Intentional disposal of the dead
3. Painting and arts on rocks

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 1 & 2

[C] Only 2 & 3

[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [B] Only 1 & 2

4. With reference to the Early Mesolithic era, consider the following statements:

1. This period is known for substantial increase in human population
2. The climate in this period became warm, marked with increased rainfall
3. The core economy of this period was agriculture

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1 is correct

[B] Only 1 & 2 are correct

[C] Only 2 & 3 are correct

[D] 1, 2 & 3 are correct

Answer: [B] Only 1 & 2 are correct

5. With reference to the subject matter of Prehistoric paintings at Bhimbaitaka, consider the following statements:

1. The most painted animals were deer and stag
2. There is a little depiction of birds
3. Human forms have been depicted generally with bows and arrows

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

[A] Only 1 is correct

[B] Only 1 & 2 are correct

[C] Only 2 & 3 are correct

[D] 1, 2 & 3 are correct



Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3 are correct

At Bhimbaitaka, most painted caves are of Mesolithic age. The importance of these caves is that here lived the men collectively and the tools and weapons made by them for use are still intact. Mostly the paintings are of red and white colour while some were green and yellow colour also. These colours were prepared by the local pigments found in earth. These colours were mixed with water or some other liquid. Most of the paintings have been destroyed by forces of nature. But even then lot of good paintings are still there in good condition which are painted on the roof and walls these caves.

These paintings can be divided into four ages.

1. Mesolithic age
2. Copper stone age
3. Early Historic age
4. Later Historic age

The paintings are mostly of Mesolithic age, in which deer and stag are most painted. The elephant, rhinoceros, bear, wild bear, cow bullock, buck, deer, and monkeys etc. have also been painted. Also there is Fish, tortoise and crabs. There are some social themes, also, in which dance dresses; ornaments, mother and child, drinking party, hunting scene and folk dance etc. are painted. Later paintings are of processions on horses.

In these paintings, the primitive hunter man depicted with bow and arrow, has not only successfully expressed his emotions but also the mysterious nature and his struggle for existence against the ferocious animals of the jungle

6. The Indus Valley People commonly used the following metals / alloys?

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Copper
4. Brass
5. Bronze
6. Iron

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
[B] 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6
[C] 1, 2, 3 & 5
[D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

Answer: [A] 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5



These people were aware of Gold, Silver, Copper, Brass, Bronze and Tin but did not know much about Iron. Copper was the most widely used metal.

7. The evidences related to farming tools/ equipments used by the Indus Valley Civilization people show that they were aware of using__:

1. Plough
2. Rehat
3. Sickles

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
[B] Only 2 & 3
[C] Only 1 & 3
[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [C] Only 1 & 3

Kindly note that Rehat is Persian wheel. Its not very ancient in comparison to plough and sickles. The only direct evidence farming tools comes in the form of ploughed fields at Kalibangan, belonging to the Early Harappan period, and at the Indus outpost of Shortugai. Apart from the plough, very little is known about the agricultural tools or cultivation techniques used by the Harappans. Gypsum crystals found on a sherd at Kalibangan may have been used as a fertilizer. Harvesting was undertaken with a flint blade or flint-edged sickle. (Weber 2001)

8. With reference to the Indus Valley Civilization, consider the following statements:

1. Sutkagendor was the westernmost Harappan settlement
2. Lothal was a major center of trade and industry
3. Both Sutkagendor and Lothal were coastal / port towns

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

- [A] Only 1 & 2
[B] Only 2 & 3
[C] Only 1
[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

The westernmost site Sukttagendor is located near present borders of Iran and it was an important coastal / port town. Another important port town was Lothal. One more coastal city was Balakot, which is located near Karachi in Pakistan

9. Which among the following features are generally present in Indus Valley Civilization?



1. Large-scale state owned storage facilities
2. Military force
3. Palaces and special burials for rich
4. Well-attested overseas trade Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1 & 2
[B] Only 1, 2 & 3
[C] Only 2 & 3
[D] Only 4

Answer: [D] Only 4

This question pertains to the doubtful knowledge about the Harappan political organization. Harappan political organization has been endlessly debated. Evidence is extremely limited and open to many different interpretations. The highly organized system of craft production, the uniformity in artifacts, the planned layout of urban settlements, the well-attested overseas trade, and other distinctive aspects of Indus culture indicate the existence of occupational specialization and an overarching system of organization and control. However, many of the characteristic features of hierarchical states, such as palaces, rich burials, large-scale state storage facilities, and a military force for internal policing and external aggression, so visible in other civilizations, are apparently absent. What makes the situation even more puzzling is the sheer size of the Indus polity. In the face of this mystery, some scholars argue that the Indus civilization was not a state at all and seek other explanations for its striking uniformities.

10. Consider the following archaeological sites of Indus valley civilization:
1. Chanhudaro
 2. Rakhigarhi
 3. Sutkagan Dor

Which of the above is/are located at present in India?

- [A] 2 Only
[B] 1 and 2 Only
[C] 1,2 and 3
[D] None

Answer: [A] 2 Only

Rakhigarhi is a village in Hisar District in the state of Haryana in India, situated in the north-west about 150 kilometers from Delhi. Sutkagan Dor is the westernmost known



archaeological site of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is located about 480 km west of Karachi on the Makran coast, near the Iranian border, in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province. Chanhudaro is located 130 kilometers south of Mohenjodaro, in Sindh, Pakistan.

11. The Indus Valley Civilization has not been deciphered yet. Consider the following reasons:

1. No knowledge about their language
2. Small length of inscriptions
3. Absence of bilingual texts

Which among the above is/ are correct reasons?

[A] Only 1

[B] 1 & 2

[C] 1, 2 & 3

[D] 1 & 3

Answer: [C] 1, 2 & 3

All of them are the correct reasons. The first reason is that we don't know what language they used. Then the inscriptions are so small that average inscription has only 4.6 signs. Longest single inscription at Indus Valley is 17 signs long. Then there are no bilingual texts available.

12. Which among the following special features of Indus Valley Civilization are also found in the contemporary Civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia?

1. Use of Cotton
2. Well Built Houses of the Citizens

Choose the correct option:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 2

[C] Both 1 & 2

[D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [D] Neither 1 nor 2

Marshall compares and contrasts the Indus Valley civilization with those of contemporary Egypt and Mesopotamia: 'Thus, to mention only a few salient points, the use of cotton for textiles was exclusively restricted at this period to India and was not extended to the western world until 2,000 or 3,000 years later. Again, there is nothing that we know of in prehistoric Egypt or Mesopotamia or anywhere else in western Asia to compare with the well-built baths and commodious houses of the citizens of Mohenjodaro. In these countries much money and



thought were lavished on the building of magnificent temples for the gods and on the palaces and tombs of kings, but the rest of the people seemingly had to content themselves with insignificant dwellings of mud. In the Indus Valley the picture is reversed and the finest structures are those erected for the convenience of the citizens.' These public and private baths, as well as the excellent drainage system we find at Mohenjo-daro, are the first of their kind yet discovered anywhere.

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Prelims Indian History -2: Vedic Civilization

Target 2016: Integrated IAS General Studies

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Model Questions

Please check Prelims MCQs at the end of this module.

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Origin of Vedic Culture

Aryans as a Race versus Linguistic Group

The term Aryan *denotes a linguistic group and not a race*. Their language Vedic Sanskrit has definite relationship with major languages of Europe and Asia. Scholars call this group of languages as Indo-European and the people speaking these languages as Indo-Europeans or Indo-Aryans. On this basis, it is postulated that Aryans *spoke common language, shared a common home and dispersed in all directions including India*. However, there are no written / archaeological evidences on Aryan migration and this historical fact has been established *on the basis of comparative philology* only.

Vedic Sanskrit is thus one of the oldest languages, originated outside India and gradually became the primary literary language of the Hinduism. The oldest Sanskrit literature dates back to 1500 BC, while classical Sanskrit language dates back to 4th century BC (Panini's Grammar).

We note here that there are 6000 languages in the world spoken today. They have been classified into various language family groups. The dominant language family of northern part of Indian sub-continent is Indo-Aryan which is a sister branch of the Iranian family. Both these branches are considered to belong to the larger family of families called Indo-European. Sanskrit is the longest established language of this entire family.

The above discussion makes it clear that Aryans were not some sort of people belonging to a superior race. The Nazis grossly misappropriated the term "Aryan" for a race for a sinister objective. Hitler segregated the population of Germany on the basis of whether they were superior Aryans or inferior Jews or Gypsies. His pseudo-scientific belief that the Aryan race of Germanic stock had been endowed with extraordinary mind and beauty led to holocaust finally.

The question is- What was the basis of such belief?

The key reason of this historic distortion was the writings of the European scholars of 19th century who were too much fascinated with the term "Aryan". They lived at a time when European imperialism dominated the world. They were obsessed with the desire to explain to the world that the Europeans were superior people, and this superiority of mind, body and their scientific prowess owed to their Aryan origin. This coupled with some important linguistic research in India during late 18th century gave rise to a misconception about the racial superiority of the Aryans and the intellectuals of both India and Europe were preoccupied with the glory of Aryans. In this way, the holocaust by Hitler is nothing *but a manifestation of the power of poisonous intellectualism of a misguided generation*.

Aryans: Original Home Controversy

The question of origin of Aryans has been not only a fascinating story but also a matter of controversy. The Aryan migration theory says that the groups of nomadic tribal people from regions

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outside Indian sub-continent started migrating towards India around 1700 BC. These people are called Rig-Vedic Aryans because they brought with them the earliest portion of collection of hymns as Rig-Veda. These people mixed with the non-Aryans and a new society was born with mix Aryan and Non-Aryan cultural elements; and eventually Aryan elements increasing occupying a central place. Because of absence of written / archaeological evidences on Aryan migration the scholars have depended on comparative philology mainly to make these postulations.

However, there are three particular questions with this. First – *What was the original home of Aryans?* Second – *If Aryans were outsiders, then who were original inhabitants of India, and what happened to them when Aryans came?* Third – *Is there any conspiracy behind foreign origin of Aryans to divide the Indian society?* The second and third questions have been particularly raised by the revisionists who deny the very non-Indian origin of Aryans.

Original home of Aryans

The various scholars and their suggested original homes are as follows:

- Max Muller – Central Asia
- Swami Dayanand Saraswati – Tibet
- Mayor – Pamir Plateau
- Hurz Feld – Turkistan
- J C Rod – Bactria
- Lokmanya Tilak – Arctic region

Central Asia as Aryan Home

As per this, the original home of the Aryans was in the Eurasian steppes lands north and east of Black Sea and extending towards Caspian Sea. Sometime during the third millennium BC, due to climatic and environmental changes, the groups of people from these areas migrated to variety of zones outside their original homeland. *Max Muller*, a German scholar of comparative philology propounded the Central Asian home theory of Aryans. Apart from philology, scant resources of archaeology and examination of oral traditions also support this theory. These people domesticated horse and had developed wheeled vehicles so make the migration easier. However, these people did not come in a mighty torrent to spread with force of arms. The migration was slow, gradual and mostly peaceful. They spoke a variety of languages and dialects. When they settled into different areas, their language and culture mixed and original vocabulary was augmented and modified. This theory also tried to explain the further expansion of Aryans in India. In around 2000BC, there were two areas in which Aryans settled. First was in Afghanistan from modern Kabul to Peshawar while second was Kandahar. The Rig- Vedic Aryans moved from there about 1400 BC, crossing the various rivers and proceeding towards either the Swat valley or Punjab. This entire region including



Afghanistan, Swat valley, Punjab and Indo- Gangetic watershed is collectively referred once as *Sapta Sindhava*, the land of the seven rivers.

The Rig-Veda – Avesta Link

It has been established that the between 1700 BC and 1400 BC, two peoples Avestan and Rigvedic co-existed in same area. They represent the two most important arms of the Indo-Iranian tradition as a whole. They had common culture, mythology and rituals before they separated. They worshipped a number of Gods together. Both shared the tradition of composing hymns in praise of their gods. Both have revered the nature gods such as wind, sun, sky etc. Some of the earliest prayers of both of them are similar. Sanskrit is close to the language of *Yashts*, the earliest hymns of *Avesta* {sacred text of Zorastrians}. Both groups shared a common habit of drinking juice of fertility plant {probably *Ephedra spp*} called *Soma* in Rig-Veda and *Haoma* in Avesta. Similarly, the symbolic importance of fire in the rituals of both groups is also notable. Thus, taking into account the similarities in mythology, language, religious practice, beliefs etc. it can be safely concluded that the traditions of Avesta and Rig-Veda emerged from a single common source.

Tibet Home Theory

In *Satyarth Prakash*, Swami Dayanand Saraswati propounded that the original home of the Aryans was Tibet. Logic given was that sun and fire was worshipped in Tibet due to extreme cold; and the flora and fauna mentioned in Rig-Veda were found in Tibet. This theory was bought by only a few, however, Nazis took it seriously and sent an expedition to Tibet to get some clues.

Arctic Home Theory

Lokmanya Tilak in his book “The Arctic Home in the Vedas” propounded that North Pole was the original home of Aryans during pre-glacial period. He used Vedic hymns, Avestic passages, Vedic chronology and Vedic calendars and compared them with the geological, astronomical, and archaeological evidences to conclude that the primordial cradle of the Aryan race was North Pole, before the changed climatic conditions forced them to move southward into present-day Europe, Iran, and India.

Analyzing the Revisionist Arguments

Though there have been considerable evidences that Aryans were migrants, yet an aggressive campaign of revisionism launched by some writers that Indian Civilization is purely Indian. First argument towards this is that Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic Aryan Culture are one and same; and it was in fact the *Saraswati Culture* as evident from settlements discovered along or in the direction of now dried up Saraswati River. However, this argument countered on the basis that nowhere in the Rig-Vedic texts there is a mention of cities of Indus or Saraswati. In fact, the Indus Valley Culture came into light only in 19th century and it was not even recognized in India until then.



Second argument is that the Vedic books don't discuss any of the foreign lands of west, neither Iran nor Central Asia nor Afghanistan from where the Aryans are supposed to come. However, this argument is countered that the texts have obliquely given reference to the places, rivers, animals, etc. of that land.

Archaeological Evidences

As mentioned above, there are not many archaeological evidences to clearly prove the migration of Aryans. However, there are three documents which contain references to Aryan names. Interestingly, none of these comes from Iran or Afghanistan or Central Asia but from Mesopotamia.

Firstly, in the documents of the Kassite rulers of Babylon (c. 1750 BC–1170 BC) there is reference of two gods' viz. Suriya (sun god) and Marutta (god of war) and a King called Abiratta (Abhiratha).

Secondly, there was a Mittani Kingdom in the North-West of Babylon in 1500 to 1300BC in which some documents list the names of princes and noblemen. Some of them are Indrota (Indra), Sauksatra, Purusa etc.

Thirdly, the most important evidence comes from the Boghazkoi tablet inscription found in eastern Turkey. These inscriptions record the details of a treaty signed in around 1350BC between the losers Mittani and victors Hittites. Both the sides have listed their Gods. The Gods of Mittani are Indra, Varuna, Nasatya etc. which are clearly Rig-Vedic. In Rig-Veda, these Gods have been assigned the task of overseeing the treaties.

The Extent of Vedic Civilization: Sapta Sindhu, Brahnavarta and Aryavarta

From their original home in Central Asia, the Aryans moved towards South-west in around 2000 BC and settled mainly in two areas in modern Afghanistan. First was the region between modern Kabul and Peshawar while another was Kandahar which was linked Quetta via the Bolan Pass. In around 1400 BC, they further crossed various rivers and proceeded either towards Swat Valley or towards Punjab and Indo-Gangetic plains. This entire region including Afghanistan, Swat Valley, Punjab and Indo-Gangetic watershed has been referred in Rig-Veda once as the Sapta Sindhava or Sapta Sindhu (the land of seven rivers).

The seven rivers of Sapta Sindhu

The scholars have puzzled themselves in defining the seven rivers of Sapta Sindhu. The *Nadistuti sukta* of Rig-Veda mentioned ten rivers viz. Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sutudri, Parusni, Asikni, Marudvrdha, Vitasta, Arjikiya and Susoma. The Sutudri is old name of Sutlej, Parushni of Ravi, Asikni of Chenab and Vitasta of Jhelum. Apart from these 10 rivers, the Kubha River (Kabul), Suwastu (Swat) Kramu (Kurram) & Gomati (Gomal) Rivers have also got place in Rig-Vedic texts. Thus, any of these might be the seven rivers of Sapta Sindhava region.

Another set of scholars believes that Sindhu and Saraswati were most sacred rivers of that era. They



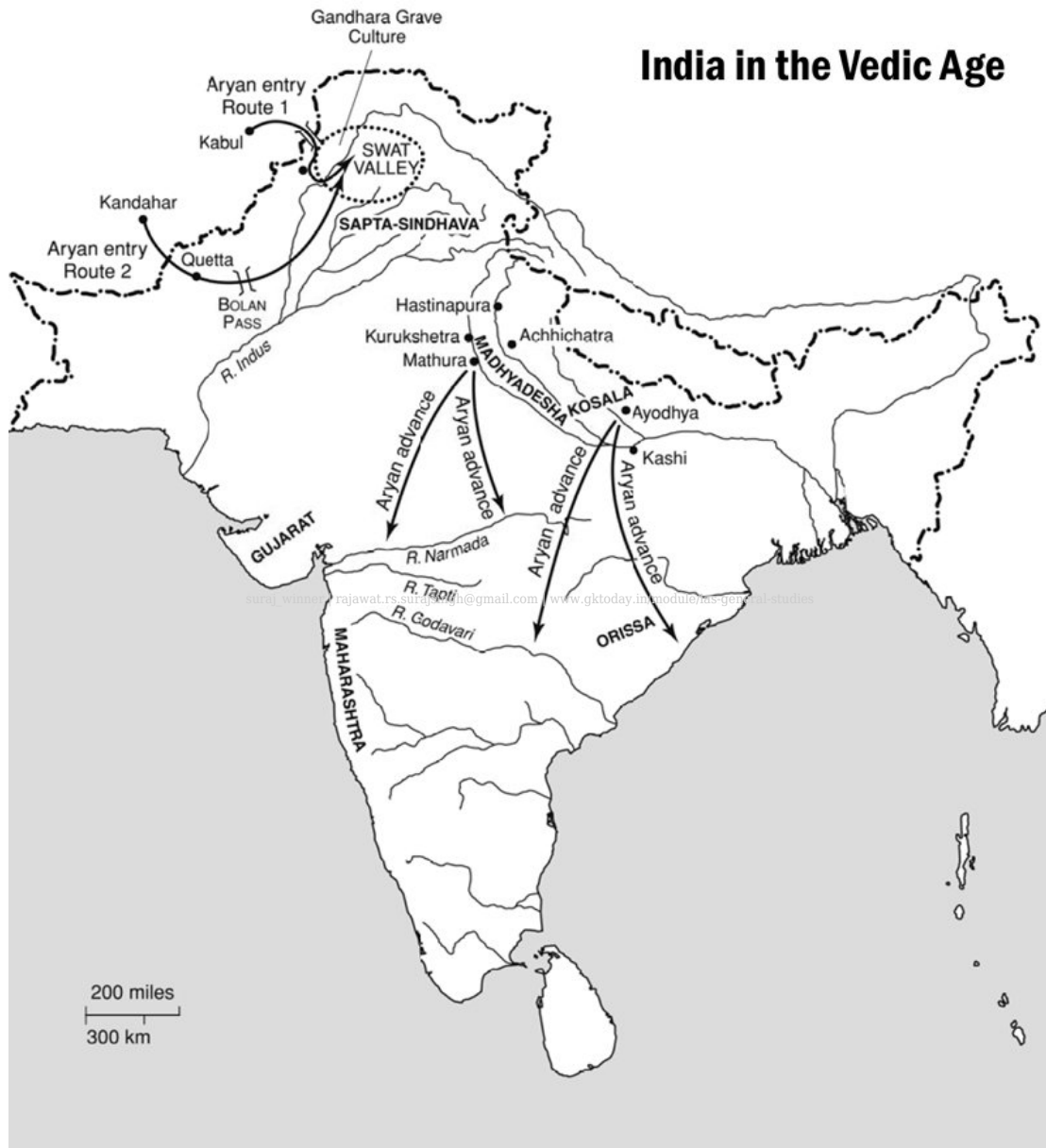
argue that the hymns in praise of Saraswati are some of the oldest composed 8000 years ago. As per this argument, Sapta Sindhu region comprised of river Saraswati, Indus and five tributaries of Indus viz. Sutudri (Sutlej), Parusni (Ravi), Asikni (Chenab), Vitasta (Jhelum) and Vipas (Beas) river. This term is also found in Avesta.

The Sapta Saindhavas country of the Rig Vedic period was bounded by the Himalayas and modern Tibet in the east, Turkistan in the north, Afghanistan, in the west and the Aravallis in the south.

Brahmavarta

The geographical regions mentioned in Rig-veda include *Sapta Sindhuva*, *Panchanada*, *Madhyadesa* and *Praki*. These were perhaps the first references to the emergence of regions. The geographical location of these regions suggests that the Indo- Aryans preferred to settle down along the banks of Indus and its tributaries (Panchanada). Further south-east, the land between Saraswati and Drishadvati (Ghagghar) was called Brahmavarta. On the periphery of these plains lie the alluvial basins of the Gomti (Gomal), Krumu (Kurru) and Kubha (Kabul) in Afghanistan. This was the geographical extent of the Vedic Aryan settlements. The further southward migration led them to Madhyadesa region.

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For your examinations, you may note the names of modern rivers and their old names:

Rig-Vedic Name	Modern Name
Sindhu	Indus



Rig-Vedic Name	Modern Name
Vitase	Jhelum
Askini	Chenab
Purushni	Ravi
Vipas	Beas
Sutudri	Satluj
Gumal / Gomai	Gomati
Krumu	Kurram
Drishdvati	Ghagghar
Suwastu	Swat

Aryavarta

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In the later scriptures, the country of Aryans is also designated as Aryavarta. The boundaries of Aryavarta included parts of Modern Afghanistan, Punjab and Sindh of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and northern India up to Vindhyan mountains. Rig-Vedic Aryans had not established settlements in the southern India. The Ganga and the mountains of the Vindhya were the barriers not easy to cross in those days.

Geographical entities in Rig-Vedic Texts

A total of 31 rivers have been mentioned in Rig-Vedic hymns, most of which belong to Indus, Ganga and lost Saraswati system. The rivers south to Vindhya have not been mentioned. Among mountains, they have mentioned Himalayas, Arjika, Mujuvant, Silamant (Suleman range) etc. They have not mentioned the land south of Yamuna, not even Vindhya or Satpura ranges. The Shatapatha brahmana mentioned eastern and western oceans.

Further, Vedic Aryans were rural and nomadic, so no important cities have been mentioned. The places were known only by name of the tribes which controlled them.

Literature

Outline of Vedic Literature

The glory of Aryans is in their literature. The Vedic texts were composed in Sanskrit and orally transmitted for many centuries before they were finally written down. During this transition from oral to written versions, the language also evolved from what was known as Vedic Sanskrit to



Classical Sanskrit.

Shruti and Smriti

The Vedic literature is broadly divided into two categories viz. Shruti and Smriti. Shruti (that was heard) literature was initially transmitted orally before it was finally written down. It is considered authoritative, canonical, eternal / divine and unquestionable truth. *Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads* together form the Shruti literature and make the central canon of Hinduism. These also make the four components of Vedic literature.

Smriti is what is remembered, *supplementary and may change over time*. The entire body of Classical Sanskrit literature is Smriti including Vedangas, Shatdarshana, Puranas, Itihasas (epics), Upavedas, Trantras, Agamas and Upangas. They are authoritative to the extent that they conform to the bedrock of Shruti.

However, there is not a distinct divide between Shruti and Smriti. Both can be represented as a continuum.

Shruti Literature

Vedas

The four Vedas viz. Rig-Veda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda come under the Shruti literature and are bedrocks of entire Vedic literature. The *basic material or mantra text of each of the Vedas* is called Samhita.

Samhita is literally a compilation. Some post Vedic texts are also known as Samhitas such as Ashtavakra Gita, Bhrigu Samhita, Brahma Samhita, Deva Samhita, Garga Samhita, Kashyap Samhita, Shiva Samhita and Yogayajnavalkya Samhita.

Brahmanas

Brahmanas are prose texts explaining the meaning of hymns of Vedas, giving their applications and stories of their origin and composers.

Aranyakas

Aranya means forest. Aranyakas were written in forests for the hermits and students of the Vedas. They are actually the concluding parts of Brahmanas and their content focuses on philosophy and mysticism rather than *rites, ritual and sacrifices*. *Their stress is on moral values. They form a bridge between Karma of Brahmanas and Gyana of Upanishads.*

Upanishads

Upanishad means to sit down near someone. They denote students sitting near their Guru to learn. Thus, Upanishads are treatises of teachings of Gurus to their pupils. They specify philosophical knowledge and spiritual learning. The main motto of the Upanishads is "Knowledge Awards Salvation". Upanishadas are called the end of Vedas (Vedanta) because they denote the last phase of



Vedic period and also reveal the final aim of Veda.

Smriti Literature

Vedangas

Vedangas are six auxiliary disciplines associated with the study and understanding of the Vedas. They include Shiksha (Phonetics), Kalpa (Ritual Canon), Vyakaran (Grammar), Nirukta (explanation), Chhanda (Vedic meter) and Jyotisha (Astrology)

Shatdarshana

The six āstika (orthodox) schools of thought of Hinduism are called Shatdarshana or six philosophies. These include Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimansa and Vedanta. Currently, only Vedanta and Yoga are in tradition.

Puranas

Puranas are compilations of ancient legends and consist of history of the universe from creation to destruction, genealogies of kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, and descriptions of Hindu cosmology, philosophy, and geography. They have served as sources of historical facts of early period but are coloured with exaggerations, and also represent a corrupt form of Hindu Philosophy. Due to this, for historians, they are neither trustworthy proofs for reconstruction of Ancient Indian History nor helpful in fixing the boundaries of the empires. They also don't provide authentic information about the administration of ancient dynasties.

Itihasas (epics)

The Four Itihasas or Epics are Valmiki-Ramayana, Yogavasishtha, Mahabharata and Harivamsa. These embody all that is in the Vedas, but only in a simpler manner. Due to their simplicity like a novel, they are called the *Suhrit-Samhitas* or the *Friendly Treatises*. {Conversely, Vedas are called the Prabhu-Samhitas or the Commanding Treatises with great authority}. Itihasas explain the great universal truths in the form of historical narratives, stories and dialogues. These are very interesting volumes and are liked by all, from the inquisitive child to the intellectual scholar.

Upavedas

Upaveda is literally “applied knowledge”. These are supplementary Vedas on technical subjects. These include:

- Āyurveda: Deals in Medicine and associated with the Rigveda
- Dhanurveda: Deals in Archery and associated with the Yajurveda
- Gāndharvaveda: Deals with Music and Dance and associated with the Samaveda.
- Shastrashastra: Deals with military technology and associated with the Atharvaveda

Trantras Agamas

Tantra literature is considered to be first spoken by Lord Shiva to his consort Parvati. The Tantra has three divisions viz. Agama, Yamala and Tantra. Tantra is also a function of diety worshipped and has three parts viz. saiva, vaishnava and shakta. The ancient texts list total 64 Tantras.



Agamas

Agamas are part of all the main religions of India viz. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Folk religions. In context with Hinduism, Agama refers to a collection of ideas pertaining to matters like construction of temples, idol creation and conduct of worship of the Deity.

Dharma Sastras

The four dharma sutra collectively make the Dharamashashtras of Smriti Literature. These include Dharma sutras {guidelines to live a Dharmic life}, Grhya sutras {guidelines for family life}, Sruta sutras {guidelines for performing rituals} and Sulba sutras {mathematical principles for construction of various altars}.

Important Trivia about Vedic Shruti Literature for UPSC Examinations

Rather than dealing the topics in details, here are some of the notable facts and observations which you must note for your examinations:

On Rig-Veda

- Rig-Veda is oldest literature of the world and is known as “First testament” of mankind.
- The famous *Gayatri Mantra* comes from *third Mandala of Rig-Veda*.
- The first hymn (1.1) of Rig-Veda is dedicated to Vedic God *Agni*.
- One entire Mandala (ninth) is dedicated to the Vedic beverage *Soma*.
- The *Nadistuti sukta* is hymn dedicated to 10 rivers of contemporary India.
- The *Nasadiya Sukta* talks about the origin of the Universe and is part of 10th Mandala. This Sukta states a paradox “*not the non-existent existed, nor did the existent exist then*”. This particular statement has attracted a lots of commentaries in both Indian and western theology.
- There are two branches of Rig-Veda viz. *Shakala Shakha* and *Vatkal or Bhashkala Shakha*.
- Two Brahmins of Rig-Veda are *Aitreya* and *Kaushitaki*.

On Yajurveda

- *It contains rituals for yajnas and is ascribed to Advaryus who prepared ground for Yajnas*.
- It is *world’s oldest prose literature*.
- Two branches *Shukla* and *Shyama*. *Shyama* is older than *Shukla* and has no separate Brahman. *Shukla* is newer and has three Brahmanas attached to it viz. *Kathaka*, *Taittiriya* and *Shatapatha Brahmana*
- *Dhanurveda* is Upaveda of *Yajurveda*.

On Sam Veda

- *Samaveda* contains the rhythmic compilation of Hymns for *Rig-Veda*. The 1549 hymns are there to be sung at the *Soma Sacrifice* by a special class of Brahmins called *Udgatris*.
- *Gandharveda* is Upaveda of *Samveda*.
- *Panchavisha*, *Shadvisha* and *Jaiminiya Brahmanas* are attached to *Samaveda*.

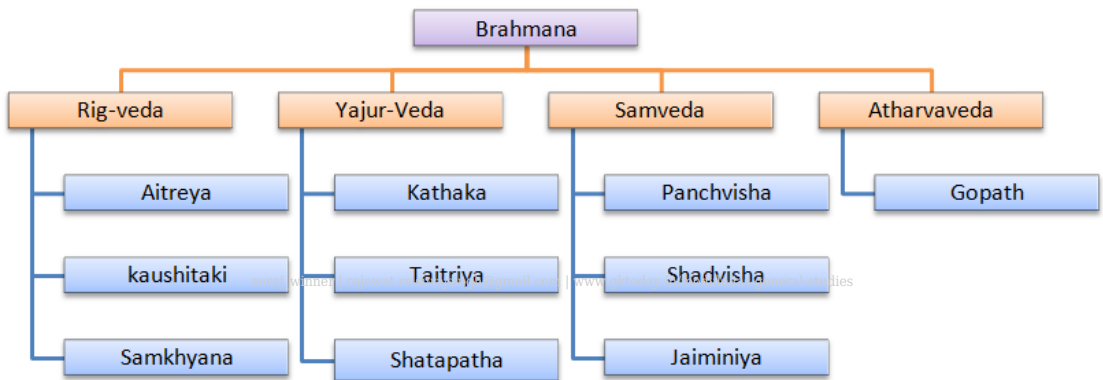
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On Atharvaveda

- Atharvaveda is chronologically the latest Veda. It describes the popular beliefs and superstitions of the humble folk.
- It contains the magic spells, incorporates much of early traditions of healing and magic that are paralleled in other Indo-European literatures.
- It is ascribed to Atharvans and Angiras.
- Gopatha Brahman is linked to Atharvaveda.
- Atharvaveda has no Aranyakas appended to it.

The following graphics shows list of Brahmanas of four Vedas for quick reference.



On Aranyakas

- As we discussed earlier, they were created in forests and are for students and hermits. They make a bridge between the Karma of Brahmana and Gyana of Upanishads.
- There are no Aranyaka appended to Atharvaveda.

On Upanishads

- Upanishad means to sit down near someone and denotes a student sitting near his guru to learn. They specify philosophical knowledge and spiritual learning and their main motto is "Knowledge Awards Salvation".
- Upanishads are also called Vedanta, because they reveal the final aim of Vedas.
- Oldest Upanishads are *Brhadaranyaka* and *Chandogya*. Latest Upanishad is *Muktikā Upanishad* recorded by Dara Shikoh in 1656.
- Dara Shikoh, the unlucky son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan is known to have translated fifty Upanishads into Persian.
- There are 108 Upanishads, of which 11 are predominant and called Mukhya Upanishads.

Important Trivia on Upanishads

Four Mahavakyas

The four Mahavakyas or great statements are from Upanishads. They are as follows:

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Prajnanam Brahma

This means consciousness is Brahman. It comes from Aitareya Upanishad of Rig-Veda. This Mahavakya implies that the consciousness is subtlest texture of the cosmos and is present and active everywhere.

Ayam Atma Brahma

This means self or Atman is Brahman. It comes from the Mandukya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.

Tat Tvam Asi

This means “Thou art That”. It comes from the Chandogya Upanishad of the Samveda. It’s too much mystical statement and has been interpreted by different schools differently. In its simplest meaning, it says that self in its pure form is identical with the original reality.

Aham Brahmasmi

This means “I am Brahman”. This statement comes from the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajurveda.

Asato Ma Sadgamaya

This Upanishada belongs to the Shatpath Brahman and contains the famous shloka “*asato ma sadgamaya tamaso ma jyotirgamaya mrtiyorma amrtam gamaya*” This shloka means “*lead us from the unreal to the real, lead us from darkness to light, lead us from death to immortality*”.

Kathopnishad

It was translated by Max Müller in 1879. It was rendered in verse by Edwin Arnold as “The Secret of Death”. The central story is immortality and covers the story of encounter of Nachiketa, son of sage Vajasravasa, with Yama, God of death.

Muktika

This Upanishad deals with the Para Vidya and Apari Vidya. The Para Vidya is knowledge that leads to Self Realization, Apari Vidya deals with everything else or the material knowledge.

Mundaka Upanishad

Mundaka Upanishad is notable as the source of the phrase Satyameva jayate (3.1.6)

Māandūkya

Mandukya is the Shortest Upanishad. It contains twelve verses expounding the mystic syllable Aum, the three psychological states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, and the transcendent fourth state of illumination.

Praśna

Six pupils interested in knowing divinity or Brahman come to sage **Pippalada** and requests him to clarify their spiritual doubts. Therefore, this Upnishad is in Question Answer format.

Important Notes on Smriti Literature

Vedanga

Vedangas are six auxiliary disciplines associated with the study and understanding of the Vedas. They



are as follows:

Shiksha (Phonetics)

Its aim is the teaching of the correct pronunciation of the Vedic hymns and mantras. The oldest phonetic textbooks are the Pratishakyas (prātiśākhya), describing pronunciation, intonation of Sanskrit, as well as the Sanskrit rules of sandhi (word combination), specific to individual schools or Shakhas of the Vedas.

Kalpa (Ritual Canon)

It contains the sacrificial practice and systematic sutras. There are three kinds of Sutras part of Kalpa:

- **Śrautasūtras**, which are based on the Shruti, and teach the performance of the great sacrifices, requiring three or five sacrificial fires
- **Smartasūtras**, or rules based on the Smriti or tradition. The Smartasūtras have two classes viz.
 - **Grhyasutras, or domestic rules**: They are basically treating the rites of passage, such as marriage, birth, namegiving, etc., connected with simple offerings into the domestic fire.
 - **Dharmasutras or customs and social duties**: The Dharmasūtras are the first four texts of the Dharmaśāstra tradition and they focus on the idea of dharma, the principal guide by which Hindus strive to live their lives. The Dharmasūtras are written in concise prose, leaving much up to the educated reader to interpret. The most important of these texts are the sutras of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasīṣṭha.
 - The Dharmasūtras can be called the guidebooks of **dharma** as they contain the rules of conduct and rites as practiced in the Vedic schools. They discuss about the duties of people at different stages of life like studenthood, householdership, retirement and renunciation. These stages are also called āśramas. They also discuss about the rites and duties of kings, judicial matters, and even personal practices like the regulations in diet, offenses and expiations, daily oblations, and funerary practice.

Vyakaran (Grammar)

Vyakaran includes the Aṣṭādhyāyī, of Panini. Most of the work of very early Indian grammarians ranging to 8th century BC is lost. There are 4 parts of Panini's Grammar:

- Śivasūtra: Contains phonology (notations for phonemes specified in 14 lines)
- Aṣṭādhyāyī: Contains morphology (construction rules for complexes)
- Dhātupāṭha: Contains list of roots (classes of verbal roots)
- Gaṇapāṭha: Contains list of classes of primitive nominal stems



Nirukta (explanation)

It is traditionally attributed to Yāska, an ancient Sanskrit grammarian. It deals with etymology, particularly of obscure words, especially those occurring in the Veda

Chhanda (Vedic meter)

It measures and divides Vedic Mantras by number of padas in a verse, which is called Padas. Number of padas divides each verse, hymn, or mantra and number of syllables divides each pada. There is a distinct taxonomy on this basis. For example a Gayatri Chhanda has 3 padas of 8 syllables containing 24 syllables in each stanza. Similarly, Anuṣṭup has 4 padas of 8 syllables containing 32 syllables in each stanza. Anuṣṭup is the typical shloka of classical Sanskrit poetry

Jyotisha (Astrology)

It describes rules for tracking the motions of the sun and the moon and the foundation of Vedic Jyotish.

Shatdarshana

Hindu philosophy is traditionally divided into six āstika (orthodox) schools of thought, or *darśanam*, which accept the Vedas as supreme revealed scriptures. The āstika schools are:

1. **Samkhya**, an atheistic and strongly dualist theoretical exposition of consciousness and matter.
2. **Yoga**, a school emphasizing meditation, contemplation and liberation.
3. **Nyaya** or logic, explores sources of knowledge (Nyāya Sūtras).
4. **Vaisheshika**, an empiricist school of atomism.
5. **Mīmāṃsā**, an anti-ascetic and anti-mysticist school of orthopraxy.
6. **Vedānta**, the last segment of knowledge in the Vedas, or the 'Jñan' (knowledge) 'Kanda' (section). Vedānta came to be the dominant current of Hinduism in the post-medieval period.

Of the historical division into six darsanas, only two schools, Vedānta and Yoga, survive.

The basic information about them is as follows:

School	Author	Beginning	Main Book
Nyaya	Gautama	6th Century BC	Nyayasutra
Vaisheshika	Kanaad	6th century BC	Vaisheshik Sutra
Sankya	Kapil	6th century BC	Sankya Sutra
Yoga	Maharishi Patanjali	2nd century BC	Yog Sutra
Poorva Mimansa	Jaimini	4th Century BC	Poorva Mimansa Sutra
Uttar Mimansa or Vedanta	Badrayan or Maharishi Vyas	4th century BC	Uttar Mimansa Sutra



Nyaya:

Literally means recursion. It is based on texts known as the Nyaya Sutras, which were written by **Aksapada Gautama** from around the 2nd century AD. Nyaya Sutras say that there are four means of attaining valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony.

Vaisheshika

It was proposed by **Maharishi Kanaad**. It postulates that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms. The school deals in detail with “Padarth” or Matter.

Samkya

Samkya or Samkhya means Enumeration. The founder of the Sankhya school of Philosophy was **Maharishi Kapil**. The school denies the “existence of God” and postulated that there are two realities Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is the consciousness and Prakriti is the phenomenal realm of matter.

Yoga

Founder of this school of Philosophy was Patanjali. Yuj means “control” and Yoga also mean to “add”. Rāja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Hatha Yoga are its main branches. The Yogasutras of Patanjali which mainly postulate the Raj Yoga, date back to Mauryan Period while Hathayoga was introduced by Yogi Swatmarama. The major difference between Raj Yoga and Hathayoga is that Raja Yoga aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications, while a Hatha Yogi starts his Sadhana, or spiritual practice, with Asanas (postures) and Pranayama. So Raj Yoga starts from Mind and Hathyoga starts from Body.

Mimansa

Mimansa means investigation or enquiry. The primary enquiry is into the nature of dharma based on close theology of the Vedas. It has two divisions, Poorva Mimansa and Uttar Mimansa. Uttar Mimansa is treated as Vedanta. The poorva Mimansa was postulated by Jamini. The ideology of Poorva Mimansa was to counteract the challenge by Buddhism and vedanta which marginalized the Vedic sacrifices. This school got momentum in Gupta period and reached its climax in 7-8th century. Sabara and Kumaril Bhatta were two main interpretators. It was one of the major forces to decline Buddhism in India, but later itself was eclipsed by Vedanta.

Vedanta:

Vedanta means Veda end or the purpose or goal of the Vedas. It was given by Badrayana or maharishi Vyasa who is one of the 7 chiranjivis and wrote “Mahabhartā”.

Difference between Nyaya and Vaisheshika

Vaisesika is allied to the nyaya system of philosophy. Both systems accept the liberation of the individual self as the end goal; both view ignorance as the root cause of all pain and misery; and both believe that liberation is attained only through right knowledge of reality. There are, however, two



major differences between Nyaya and Vaisesika.

- **First**, nyaya philosophy accepts four independent sources of knowledge — perception, inference, comparison, and testimony — but vaisesika accepts only two — perception and inference.
- **Second**, nyaya maintains that all of reality is comprehended by sixteen categories (padarthas), whereas vaisesika recognizes only seven categories of reality. These are: dravya (substance), guna (quality), karma (action), samanya (generality), visesa (uniqueness), samavaya (inherence), and abhava (nonexistence). The term padartha means “the object denoted by a word,” and according to vaisesika philosophy all objects denoted by words can be broadly divided into two main classes

— that which exists, and that which does not exist. Six of the seven padarthas are in the first class, that which exists. In the second class, that which does not exist, there is only one padartha, abhava, which stands for all negative facts such as the nonexistence of things.

Vedanta

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Advaita

Its proponent was Adi Sahnakara and his Guru Gaudapada. The essence of this Vedanta is that “*Brahman is the only reality, and the world, as it appears, is illusory.*”

Vishishtadvaita

Its proponent was Rāmānuja. The basic theory is that “jīvātman is a part of Brahman, and hence is similar, but not identical. Brahman, matter and the individual souls are distinct but mutually inseparable entities”. Vishishtadvaita advocates Bhakti to attain God.

Dvaita

The proponent of the Dvaita was Madhwāchārya. This theory is also known as Tatvavādā – The Philosophy of Reality. It identifies God in the Brahman (Universe) and its incarnations such as Vishnu and Krishna. It says that all individual souls (jīvātman) and matter as eternal are mutually separate entities.

Dvaitādvaita

The theory of Dvaitādvaita was given by Nimbarka. It is based upon the early school of Bhedābheda of Bhaskara. It says that jīvātman is at once the same as yet different from Brahman. The jiva relation may be regarded as dvaita from one point of view and advaita from another. This school identifies God in Krishna.

Shuddhādvaita

The proponent of Shuddhādvaita was Vallabha. It says that World is Leela of God that is Krishna



and he is **Sat-Chid-Aananda**. It identifies Bhakti as the only means of liberation. Vallabha was also a famous saint of Pushti Marg. He won the famous debate of Brahmavad over Shankars.

Achintya Bhedābheda

The proponent of Achintya Bhedābheda was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was a follower of the Dvaita vedanta of Sri Madhwacharya. The doctrine of Achintya Bhedābheda or inconceivable and simultaneous one-ness and difference states that the soul or energy of God is both distinct and non-distinct from God and he can be experienced through a process of long devotion. It identified God in Krishna. This Philosophy is followed by ISKCON.

Purnādvaita or Integral Advaita

The proponent of Purnādvaita was Shri Arubindo. He propounded this doctrine in his “The Life Divine”. synthesized all the exant schools of Vedanta and gave a comprehensive resolution integrating cues from the Western metaphysics and modern science. Sri Arubindo is known to be one, who restored the umbilical cord of the Vedantic exegesis with the Vedas.

Modern Vedānta

The proponent of Modern Vedānta was Swami Vivekananda. His phislosophy says that the conditions of abject poverty should be removed; only then will people be able to turn their minds toward God.

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

School Name	Propounders
Advaita	Adi Sahnakar and his Guru Gaudapada
Vishishtadvaita	Rāmānuja
Dvaita	Madhwāchārya
Dvaitādvaita	Nimbarka
Shuddhādvaita	Vallabha
Achintya Bhedābheda	Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
Purnādvaita or Integral Advaita	Shri Arubindo
Modern Vedānta	Swami Vivekananda

Vedic Religion, Polity and Society

Rig Vedic Gods

Before we discuss the important deities of the Vedic people, it is important to understand that



Aryans were solely theists and their contemplation about life and the world was from the spiritual standpoint. The Vedic Aryans believed in the *concept of one in many evident from the quote “Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti”*, which means that which exists is ONE sages call it by various names.

Worship of Nature

Rig-Vedic Aryans worshipped the forces of nature, but at the same time believed in the basic unity of nature. They worshipped many gods not in fear of nature but to gain nature's favour. All the natural phenomena such as the sky, thunder, rain, air were believed to be guided by their presiding deities, while natural devastations were taken to be an expression of their wrath. The hymns of the Rig-Veda were mainly sung for the glorification of the gods in order to appease them. God was regarded as the ruler, ordainer of the period of life, protector of men and giver of happiness.

There were *no places of worship like temples* or objects of worship like Idols. Natural phenomena were conceived as the expression of some spiritual different appearances of various gods. For the different appearances of the sky different deities were imagined, such as Varuna, Indra, Mitra, Dyus. Most of these natural events were personified and it was the birth of first mythology in the world.

Dyus-Pitr, Mithra, Varuna

The Aryans looked up to the bright sky and worshipped it under the name of *Dyu* or *Dyaus*. *This term is equivalent to the Greek Zeus and the first syllable of the Jupiter*. It is also similar to *Tiu* of the Saxons and the *Zio* of the Germans.

These common names under which the sky-god was worshipped by the different cultures of ancient times prove that the sky was worshipped under these names by the primitive Aryans in their original home.

So, earliest divine power in Vedic literature is Dyaus. Dyaus was referred as Dyaus Pitr, which later became Ju-piter. Pitr means Prithvi and Dyaus was coupled with prithivi and the two Dyaus-Prithivi are the universal parents.

Rig-Vedic Aryans called the sky of day as *Mithra* corresponding to the Zend *Mithra*; and they called the sky of night Varuna, corresponding to the Greek *Ouranos*.

Varuna, apart from being the god of the sky, is also the god of law of nature *Rta*. Varuna is also lord of the Patal Loka (nether world). He is one of the most prominent gods in the Rig-Veda, and lord of the heavens and the earth.

Indra and Marut

While the Hindu Aryans of the Punjab continued to worship the ancient sky-god under the ancient names of Dyus, Mitra, and Varuna, they paid special homage to the sky that rains, which they called Indra. Rise of rivers and the luxuriance of crops depend on the rain-giving sky; and in course of time, Indra became the most prominent deity in the Vedic society.



Indra was conceived as a warlike deity, battling with the clouds, called **Vritra**, to obtain copious torrents of rain for man, and fighting with the demons of darkness, called **Panis**, to restore to the world the light of the morning. The Maruts or storm-gods were supposed to help Indra in his contest with the reluctant clouds, for in India the first showers of the rainy season are often attended with storms and thunder.

Thus, Indra was the most important divinity and was lord of war. 250 hymns have been devoted to only Indra in Rig Veda, which is highest for any of the Gods. His other names are:

- Car-warrior (Rathestha)
- A winner (Jitendra)
- Soma Drinker (Somapa).

Indra is mentioned as son of Dyaus. He killed a demon Vritra, so he is known as Vritrahan. He destroyed the forts of Dasyus, so also known as Purandhar. He held the thunderbolt (Vajra) with which he destroyed the enemies. His wife is Indrani or Sachi (energy).

Aditi, Sun, Savithri

Next to the sky, the sun was the most prominent object of the worship of the ancient Hindus. Aditi was the limitless light of sky, and her sons, the Adityas were the suns of the different months of the year. Surya was coterminous with Greek **Helios**, the Latin **Sol**, and the **Teuton Tyr**.

Savitri is another name of the same deity Sun, and the sacred hymn, the Gayathri Mantra, which is still repeated every morning by pious Hindus all over world; is a verse dedicated to Savithri. Please note that Vishnu, which in later Hindu mythology has become a name of the Supreme Preserver of all beings, was a name of the sun in the Vedic age. The rising sun, the sun at Zenith, and the setting sun were considered the three steps of Vishnu striding across limitless space.

Agni

Fire or Agni was an object of worship. No sacrifice to the gods could be performed without libations or offerings to the fire, and Agni **was therefore considered to be the priest among the gods**. But Agni is not only the terrestrial fire in the Rig Veda; he is also the fire of the lightning and the sun, and his abode was in heaven. The early sage Bhrigus discovered him there, and Atharvavan and Angiras, the first sacrificers, installed him in this world, as the protector of men.

Thus, Agni is the God of fire and acceptor of sacrifices. He was considered an intermediary between Gods and men. 200 hymns have been devoted to only Agni in Rig Veda while Agni is mentioned in 218 hymns.

Vayu and Rudra

Vayu or the wind is sometimes invoked in the Rig Veda. The Maruts or storm-gods are oftene invoked, as we have seen before, and are considered the helpers of Indra in obtaining rain for the



benefit of man. Rudra, the loud-sounding father of the Maruts, is the Thunder, and in later Hindu mythology, this name has been appropriately chosen for the Supreme Destroyer of all living beings.

Soma & Brihaspati

Agni, or fire, received special homage because he was necessary for all sacrifice. The libation of soma juice was similarly regarded sacred, and Soma was worshipped as a deity. Similarly, the prayer, which accompanied the libations or offerings, was also regarded as a deity, and was called Brahmanaspati. In later Hindu mythology, Brahman is selected as the name of the Supreme Creator of all living beings.

Soma was prepared by extracting juice from the stalks of a certain plant, and the Soma God was god of the plants. 123 hymns are dedicated to Soma and most of them are from Soma Mandala.

Agni Soma Cult

Apart from lightning the Holy Fire, the Soma-drinking was another mark of the Arya cult, which may therefore be called 'the Agni-Soma cult.' Soma is a product of the Himalayan regions, so that when the cult moved down to the plains, Kirata (huntress) girls from the Himalayan hills supplied it to Brahmanas. The use of Soma, like the worship of Agni indicates the Himalayan region as the place where the Agni-Soma cult first originated.

Soma & Haoma

The fermented juice of the plant called Soma appears to have been the only intoxicating drink used in Vedic times. So much were the ancient Aryans addicted to this drink, that Soma was soon worshipped as a deity both in India and in Iran (under the name Haoma in the latter country), and we find one entire Mandala, or Book, of the Rig-Veda, dedicated to this deity.

Visvedevas

They are various Vedic gods taken together as a whole headed by Indra. 70 hymns are dedicated to Visvedevas in Rig-Veda.

Ashwins or Ashwinikumars

Light and Darkness naturally suggested to the early Aryans the idea of twin gods. The sky (Vivasvat) is the father, and the Dawn (Saranyu) is the mother of the twin Ashwins and the legend goes on to say that Saranyu ran away from Vivasvat before she gave birth to the twins. *There is a similar legend in Greek mythology, where and Erinnys (corresponding to Saranyu) ran away from her lover, and gave birth to Areion and Despoina. The original idea is that the Dawn and Gloaming disappears, and gives birth to Light and to Darkness.*

Please note that later, Aswins lost their original character and simply became the physician gods, responsible for healing of the sick and the wounded, tending mortals with kindness. There are other twins Yama and Yami, who are kids of same parents – the Dawn and Sky. They also acquired

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different characters in Rig Veda.

Yama & Yami

Yama is considered to have been the first mortal who died and espied the way to the celestial abodes, and in virtue of precedence, he became the ruler of the departed. He is the guardian of the world of Dead. His twin sister is Yami and both Yama and Yami are Children of Surya. Yamini means Night and Yami is also known as Yamuna.

Usha

Usha has been described as far – extending, many – tinted, brilliant **Dawn**, whose abode is unknown. She harnesses her chariots from afar and comes in radiance and glory. She is the young, the white-robed daughter of the sky, and the queen of all earthly treasures. She is like the careful mistress of the house who rouses everyone from his slumbers and sends him to his work. Yet she is radiant as a bride decorated by her mother for the auspicious ceremony, and displaying her charms to the view.

Such are the fond epithets and beautiful similes with which the Hindu Aryans greeted the fresh and lovely mornings of a tropical sky.

Other Rig Vedic Gods

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- Pusan: The guardian of the Jungle Paths and Roads.
- Aditi – Goddess of Eternity
- Gandhrava – Divine Musicians
- Rbhus – three semi divine deities of Rig-Veda.
- Rudra – Archer of Gods
- Aranyanai – Goddess of Forests
- Usha – Goddess of Dawn
- Prithvi – Goddess Earth

Apsaras

Apsaras are dancers of the celestial courts, however, Rig Veda mentions Apsara as the wife of Gandharva. Rig Veda allows for the existence of more than one Apsara. The maiden Apsara is Urvashi who became the wife of king Pururavas, first king of the Somavamsha. Narrative of Urvashi and Pururavas is found in the Rigveda (X.95.1-18) and the Shatapatha Brahmana (XI.5.1)

Comparison of the Greek Deities and Ancient Hindu Deities

There was an essential difference between the Hindu gods of the Vedic age and the Greek gods of the Homeric age. The first thing we should note that the Sanskrit language is nearer and closer than the Greek to the original Aryan tongue, yet Hindu conceptions go nearer to the original Nature-worship of the primitive Aryans. The Gods of Homeric Greeks have attained a marked individuality and the characters are so individualistic that “nature” almost escapes. But the Hindu Gods are still the powers



of Nature and show manifestations of Nature. For example, we can identify Indra with Rains easily but can not identify Zeus with Sky. *Therefore, we can say that Hindu conceptions are more true to their original sources.*

Rig-Vedic Polity

During Rig-Vedic era, the basic unit of power lied within a patriarchal family (*Kula*). The head of the family was a *Kulapa*. A group of such families called *grama*, which was controlled by a village headman *Gramini*. The groups of the villages belonged to a clan (*Vis*) and many clans made a community called *Jana*.

Concept of King

The Chief of this tribe *Jana* was *Rajana*. *Rajana* was not a king in real sense, but a *protector of the tribe and the cattle wealth*. In fact there was no real state territory or structure or even a real King.

Since *Rajan* was the leader of the people and not ruler of any territory, he is called *Janasya gopa* or *Gopati Janasya* also. A *Rajana* fought wars on behalf of his *Jana*. These wars were for control of cattle wealth and **not** possession of territory. Thus, the *concept of land territory was absent in early Rig-Vedic period*. This is the reason that while term *Jana* appears many times in Rig-Veda, *Janapada* does not appear even for once. The territorial aspect of the state is thought to have appeared in later Vedic age only. Initially, the various regions were known after the names of the tribes which controlled them and later they developed into various *Janapadas*.

Grama and Sangrama

The *Grama* was not essentially a village but a group of families who kept on migrating. So, again, the concept of a settled village was absent in early Vedic era. A *grama* can also be called a militaristic tribal unit. A war or battle between *Gramas* was called *Sangrama*. In a *grama*, the duty to manage pastoral land was of a *Vrajapati*, who also led the battles. Thus, both *Gramini* and *Vrajapati* were either same person or equivalent *grama* level heads.

The Rig-Vedic Tribes

We know about at least 33 tribes belonging to Early and later Vedic era from Rig-Veda. The most important source of these tribes is the *Dasrajana* or the battle of ten Kings. According to Rigveda, this battle happened between *Sudas* of *Bharata* tribe and the confederacy of ten well-known tribes viz. *Puru*, *Yadu*, *Turvasa*, *Anu*, *Druhyu*, *Alina*, *Paktha*, *Bhalanas*, *Shiva* and *Vishanin*. This bloody battle was fought on the banks of *Purushni* (*Ravi*) and *Bharata* emerged victorious in it.

Taxation

The *Rajan* could not have an elaborate administrative machinery because the nature of the Rig-Vedic



economy. An economy in which the surplus was very small, the Rajan received only **Bali**, i.e., offering to a prince or to a god from the conquered people. However these tributes were neither regular and nor stipulated and hence cannot be called a tax.

Military & Spy functionalities

There was no regular standing army. The military functions were invested in the Vedic assemblies. All the three persons viz. the Vrajapati, Kulapa (head of the family) and the Gramani functioned as military leaders. The Rajan held the Spies called *Spasa* to keep an eye on the conduct of the people.

Ugra and Jivagribha were two officials probably meant for dealing with the criminals. The Madhyamasi seems to have acted as a mediator in disputes. There was no code of law in the early Vedic era.

The Earliest Tribal Assembly – Vidhata

Vidatha appears for 122 times in the Rig-Veda and seems to be the most important assembly in the Rig Vedic period. Vidatha was an assembly meant for secular, religious and military purpose. The Rig-Veda only once indicated the connection of woman with the Sabha whereas Vidatha is frequently associated with woman women actively participated in the deliberations with men. Vidatha was the earliest folk assembly of the Aryans, performing all kinds of functions- economic, military religious and social. The Vidatha also provided common ground to clans and tribes for the worship of their gods.

Sabha & its Sabhavati

The term Sabha denotes both the assembly (in early Rig-Vedic) and the assembly hall (later Rig-Vedic). Women called **Sabhavati** also attended this assembly. It was basically a kin-based assembly and the practice of women attending it was stopped in later-Vedic times. Rig-Veda speaks of the Sabha also as a dicing and gambling assembly, along with a place for dancing, music, witchcraft, and magic. It discussed pastoral affairs and performed judicial and administrative functions and exercised judicial authority.

Samiti

The references to samiti come from the latest books of the Rig-Veda showing that it assumed importance only towards the end of the Rig-Vedic period. Samiti was a folk assembly in which people of the tribe gathered for transacting tribal business. It discussed philosophical issues and was concerned with religious ceremonies and prayers. References suggest that the Rajan was elected and re-elected by the Samiti.

The differentiations between Sabha and Samiti

In the beginning, there was no difference between the Sabha and the Samiti. Both were called daughters of Prajapati. Both were mobile units led by chiefs who kept moving along with the forces. The only difference between Sabha and Samiti seems to be the fact that *Sabha performed judicial*



functions, which the Samiti did not. Later, the sabha became a small aristocratic body and samiti ceased to exist.

The Gana or the Republic

A Gana was an assembly or troop. The leader of the gana is generally called Ganapati.

The Parisad

The early parisad seems to be a tribal military assembly, partly, matriarchal and partly patriarchal. However, the variety of the references lead to the non-Vedic character of the parisad. In later-Vedic period, it tended to become partly an academy and partly a royal council dominated by the priests, who functioned as teachers and advisers.

Changes in Polity in later Vedic Era

In the later Vedic period, groups of communities became part of a region or a state (*janapada*). The idea of kingship evolved gradually from clan chieftainship. By the end of the Vedic period, king's authority was beginning to derive less from the support of such assemblies than from his own success in the struggle for power. Gradually, the hereditary element crept in with the further consolidation of power by the *rajas*. From this point, the role of courtiers became important. In the later Vedic era, the main office holders included chief priest (*purohit*), commander-in-chief (*senani*), treasurer (*samagrahitri*), collector of taxes (*bhagadugha*) and keeper of the king's household (*kshata*).

Slowly, the legitimisation of the king's power started getting confirmed by a lengthy and elaborate rituals of sacrifice (*yajna*) conducted by the priests. This way, the alliance between priest and King became the fundamental feature of the Indian polity. It also later led to social stratification.

Important Officials

For your examinations, you may also note down the important office holders in the Vedic era.

Official	Rig Vedic Title
King	Rajan
Priest	Purohita
Commander	Senani
Officer in Charge of Pastoral Lands	Vrajapati
Police Officers	Jivagribha
Spy	Spasa
Head of the Village	Gramini
Head of the family	Kulapa also called Dampati



Official	Rig Vedic Title
Mediator in Disputes	Madhyamasi
Tax Collector	Bhagadugha
Treasurer	Sangrahitri
Chief Queen	Mahishi
Charioteer	Suta
Messenger	Palagala
Accountant	Akshvapa

Rig-Vedic Society

The Kula or family was the basic unit of Rig-Vedic society. The Kula was headed by a Kulapa, who was usually the eldest member. Society was essentially patriarchal and birth of son was desired repeatedly. Status of women was equal to men in the early Rig-Vedic society. Both polygamy and polyandry were in vogue.

The Evolution of Varna System

Social strata used to exist in the Harappan civilization also. Similarly, there was a threefold division of society {priests, rulers and producers} in the Iranian society also. However, what happened in Indian sub-continent was unique and extraordinary. In the evolution of Kingship in the later Vedic era, the priests (Brahmans) and rulers (Kshatriyas) consolidated their respective position in the society. The producers split into two groups. The free peasants and traders formed the group Vaishya while the slaves, laborers, artisans degraded to fourth group Shudra. This was based on occupation initially but later got rigid on the basis of birth. Despite of a small population, the people got compartmentalized into these four groups as per *Varnashrama Dharma*.

Marriage and women

Despite of the patriarchal character of the family, the position of women was much better in the Rig Vedic period than in later times. They could attend assemblies and offer sacrifices along with their husbands. Five women have been mentioned as composers of hymns out of which Ghosha, Lopamudra and Apala are famous. Girls were normally married off after puberty (between the age of 16 and 17). Unmarried girls grew up in the home of their parents. Some unmarried woman like Visvavara and Apala offered sacrifices on their own. There are also evidences of widow remarriage in the Rig-Veda.



Education

In the early Rig-Vedic era, entire instruction was given orally. Art of writing does not seem to have developed yet. In the well-known Gayatri mantra there is a prayer to Savitri for the stimulation of the intellect. There were women teachers. Many of them possessed the highest spiritual knowledge. Maitreyi and Gargi were gifted scholars. Rishis who composed hymns founded their own schools separately to teach their pupils and every person among the vis was entitled to learn Vedic mantras. In the later-Vedic phase, with the development of *Varnashrama*, education began with an investiture ceremony (upanayan). Since Upanayan was confined to three upper Varnas, the sudras were not entitled to education. Sometimes girls were also encouraged. When teacher was satisfied with the student, last sermon called snatakopadesa (kind of convocation) was delivered.

Institution of Gotra

Gotra or cowpen was a mechanism for widening social ties a new relationship was established between hitherto unrelated people. It is possible that animals were herded in common and such a place was known as gotra and from this it acquired the character of an exogamous institution.

Amusements and entertainments

Music, both vocal and instrumental, was well known. Vedic Aryans played on the Vina and flute suraj winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies Vana to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. Few claim that **Dhrupad** of Indian classical music originated in Vedic Era.

Dancing was common. The chariot race was a favourite sport and source of entertainment. Chariot race was a symbolic source of political authority of the king. The fascination of gambling and the ruin caused by its addiction find mention in the Rig-Veda.

House holding

The Griha sutra prescribes a code of conduct, which gives a fairly good idea of the manners and etiquette of the later-Vedic age. A guest (atithi) was welcomed at all times and special guests, like the guru, the king, and the father-in-law, etc. were given special treatment. Respect for the elders self-restraint, moral purity, abstinence of all kinds and faithfulness were some of the virtues. Cleanliness was a passion. Daily bath, washing of the feet and hands every now and then, and purifying the atmosphere with Vedic mantras were a part of ritual when ritualism acquired special significance in the later-Vedic age. It became one of the many sources of the development of hierarchy and the supremacy for the Brahmanas.

Eating Habits

The main cereal produced by the early Rig-Vedic people was Yava or barley. Wheat (Godhuma) appears in later Vedic texts only. Yava was also a generic term for various kinds of cereals. ilk, Milk products and cattle meat belonged to their food habits. Alcoholic / Non-alcoholic drinks were known and common. Soma and Sura are two popular liquors. Sura may be a kind of beer or wine.



Dress code

Two pieces of cloth were normally worn- the upper garment was called **uttariya** and the lower one was known as **antariya**. The dress for the male and the female did not differ much.

Health and hygiene

Everyone aspired for and everyone was blessed to live for a hundred years. **Epilepsy was common** and it affected the children as well. Superstitions and magical charms were employed to cure the diseases. Miraculous cures are ascribed to the twin-gods, the Ashvins, who are the great healers of diseases and experts in the surgical art. They were divine physicians who restored eyesight and cured the blind, sick and maimed.

Rig Vedic Economy

Rig Vedic economy was primarily pastoral. They domesticated Pashu (which included cattle, horse and even human beings), as opposed to Mriga, i.e. wild animals. Cattle was synonymous with wealth and a wealthy person was called **Gomat**.

Cattle was so important that the terms of battle were derived from Gau itself, such as *Gavisti*, *Gosu*, *Gavyat*, *Gavyu*. *Godhuli* was a measure of time. Gopa and Gopati were epithets given to the king. Duhitri was the term used for daughter because she used to milk the cow. One of the four categories of gods was known as Gojata, i.e. cowborn.

When the Vedic people encountered buffalo, they called it *Gauri and Gavala* or cow-haired.

The cattle obtained in raids were divided among the families. Cattle formed an important item of donation and it may also have formed a part of bali, the tribute given to the raja by the clan or Vis members. The cattle in general and cow in particular was the **main medium of exchange during the Rig Vedic period**.

The economy was based upon agriculture. The people were well acquainted with the sowing, harvesting, threshing and various agro seasons. The people were pastoral, Cow was revered but the cows, and bulls were sacrificed too. The gifts to the priests were in terms of number of **Cows and women slaves** but **NOT in measurements of lands**.

Crafts and Metallurgy

All kinds of crafts were practiced. There were potters, Chariot makers, carpenters, and weaver and leather workers. The metal work was known as follows:

- Copper was known as “Ayas”
- Gold was known as Hiranya
- Iron was also known as was known as Shyama or Krishna Ayas.

Religion

There were no places of worship like temples. There are no indications in the Rig-Veda of any



“temples reared by mortal hands” and consecrated as places of worship. On the contrary, every householder, every patriarch of his family, lighted the sacrificial fire in his own home and poured libations of the Soma juice and prayed to the gods for happiness to his family, for abundant crops and wealth and cattle, for immunity from sickness, and for victory over the black aborigines. Natural phenomena were conceived as the expression of some spiritual different appearances of various gods.

Changes in life in Later Vedic Age

The key changes in later Vedic era included evolution of territorial sovereignty; development of Varnashrama dharma, degradation of Sabha and Samitis, degradation of women, sedentary life, private possession of land, rigidity of the society etc.

General Changes

The Sabhas and Samitis continued to hold the ground; however the women were not allowed to sit in Sabha. Brahmins and Nobles took the place.

The King became important and territorial authority became important. The term Rastra which indicated a territorial country got prominent in the later Vedic Age.

Ashvamedha Yagya was considered to authorize the unquestioned authority over an area where the Royal Horse could run. The levy of taxes started and became prominent and the officer responsible for this function was *sangrihitri*. The standing army was not possessed by the king even in Later Vedic period and *gramas* mustered in times of war.

Changes in Economy

The life became sedentary and the domestication of animals and cultivation increased. Cattle were still the currency and principle movable property. The idea of private possession of lands started taking shape. Ironsmiths, weavers, jewelers, dyers, potters, are the new classes of artisans. Trade was also boosted.

The Gold piece of specific weight Satamana was used as a currency rate. Use of Gold as currency is mentioned in Satapatha Brahman. Nishka was another popular currency. The other matellic coins were Suvarna and Krishnala. Barter system still existed. Money lending as a trade was prevalent. Money lenders were called Kusidin.

The Four Varnas

The society was now divided into 4 varnas viz. Brahmans, Kahstriyas, Vaish and Shudras. Each of them was assigned its duty. The vaishyas were common people who were responsible for producing the agricultural commodities and rearing of the cattle. The engaged in trade and were called *vaniks*. Nagara was used for the first time, which meant a city and beginning of town life.

Types of Marriages in later Vedic Ages

There were several kinds of marriages in later Vedic era listed in below table:



Marriage Type	Description
Brahma Vivah	Marriage of a girl with the boy of same Varna with Vedic rites and rituals
Daiva Vivah	When father donated his daughter to a priest as a part of Dakshina.
Arsa Vivah	A token bride-price of a Cow and a Bull was given
Prajapati Vivah	Marriage without dowry
Gandharva Vivah	It was a kind of love marriage or swyamavara type
Asura Vivah	Marriage by Purchase
Paisach Vivah	Seduction of a girl while sleeping or mentally unstable due to a drink.
Rakshasha Vivah	Marriage by abduction

Anuloma and Pratiloma Vivah

The marriage of a man of higher Varna with a girl from lower Varna was called “Anuloma Vivah”. It was allowed by the sacred texts. The marriage of a girl of higher Varna with a man of a lower Varna was called “Pratiloma Vivah” and it was NOT allowed in the texts. However, as it goes, the intermarriage between Varnas led to new castes. Vashishtha mentions below examples:

- The offspring of a Sudra and a Brahman woman becomes a Chandala.
- That of a Sudra and Kshatriya woman, a Vaina.
- That of a Sudra and Vaisya woman, an Antyavasayi.
- The son begotten by a Vaisya on a Brahman woman becomes a Ramaka.
- The son begotten by a Vaisya on a Kshatriya woman, a Paulkasa.
- The son begotten by a Kshatriya on a Brahman woman becomes a Suta.
- Children begotten by Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas on women of the next lower, second lower, and third lower castes become respectively Ambashthas, Ugras, and Nishadas.
- The son of a Brahman and a Sudra woman is a Parasava.

Four Purushartha

Purushartha refers to a goal, end or aim of human existence. The Four Purushartha of Hinduism are as follows:

- **Dharma:** Dharma is given the foremost rank in the scriptures. Today, it corresponds to religious, social and/or moral righteousness
- **Artha:** material and/or financial means of living
- **Kama :** pleasure including sensual pleasures



- **Moksha:** Liberation; or renunciation as well as detachment

The Hindu Philosophy says that Dharma is the gateway to Moksha.

Ashrama System

Four stages of the lifespan of 100 years were not established in the early Vedic era. They were well established in the later Vedic era and 4 Ashrams were:

- **Brahmacharya Ashram:** The first 25 years were set for student life
- **Grihastha Ashram:** The age from 25 to 50 years was kept for having a family and discharging the worldly duties such as giving birth to children and raising them
- **Vanaprastha Ashram:** Age from 50-75 years was fixed for partial retirement and living life in forests.
- **Sanyas Ashram:** The last age of 75-100 years was fixed for complete retirement from the world.

The fourth ashram has not been mentioned in early Vedic texts. The Sanyas ashram is mentioned in Jabala Upanishad.

Sacrifices & Rituals

- **Rajsuya:** This sacrifice conferred supreme power to King.
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- **Asvamedha:** Authorized the King an unquestioned control over an area.
- **Vajapeya:** It was a chariot race in which the Royal Chariot was to win race against the kinsmen. This elevated the Raja to a Samrat.
- **Garbhdharana:** The conception ceremony.
- **Pumsayam:** Ritual to procure a male child.
- **Sementonayam:** Ritual to ensure safety of the child in womb.
- **Jatakarma:** Birth ceremony performed prior to cutting the umbilical chord of the newborn infant
- **Culakarma:** performed in 3rd year of the baby's life
- **Upnayana:** performed in the eighth year to confer dvija status.

Important Terms in Vedic Era

Vedic Term	Meaning
Aghanya	Not to be killed
Agnadheya	ceremony which preceded the public rituals in Vedic Era.
Akshavapa	accounts officer
Amaju	Lifelong unmarried girl



Vedic Term	Meaning
Bhagadugh	carpenter
Bhishaka	Doctor or Vaidya
Charmana	Blacksmith
Datra	Sickle
Duhitri	Milker of cow and also a daughter
Gaura	Buffalo
Gavishti	a fight for cows.
Gocarman	a measure of distance
Gotra	A kinship unit
Hiranyakara	Goldsmith
Jansaya Gopa	Tribal Chief
Kinsmen of the King	Sajata
Kulala	Potter
Purapati	responsible for defense.
Rathakara	Chariot maker
Samgavan	A measure of time
Sarabha	Elephant
Satdaya	Compensation for manslaughter
Sira	Plough
Sita	Furrows
Spas	Spies
Takshan / Teshtri	carpenter



Vedic Term	Meaning
Varatra	leather strap of the Plough
Vrihi	Rice

Other Important Notes

Comparison of the Harappa and Vedic Civilizations

The key differences between Harappa and Vedic Civilization are enumerated as follows:

1. The sources of information of the Harappan civilization are mainly archaeological, while the Vedic culture is mostly known from the literary sources.
2. Harappans are said to have been the original inhabitants of India while the Aryans are believed to have come to India from central Asia.
3. The Harappan civilization was urban in nature, Vedic culture was rural and pastoral. At best the Rig Vedic Aryans lived in fortified places protected by mud walls; and these cannot be regarded as towns in the Harappan sense.
4. In the Indus civilization trade, internal and external, crafts as well as industries were the main sources of economy, Vedic Economy was initially postoral and later became based upon agriculture and cattle rearing.
5. The agricultural operations, including the ploughing of fields, were better known to the later-Vedic people.
6. Indus people did not know the use of iron. It was purely a copper-bronze culture, while the Vedic culture in its later phase is replete with references to iron.
7. The horse, which played a decisive role in the Aryan system of warfare, was not known to the Indus people. A few bones of horse and terracotta figure of a horse-like animal have been unearthed from surkotada.
8. Indus people were basically peace loving. Their arms (swords, daggers, arrow-heads, spears) were primitive in nature. Aryans were warlike people and were conversant with all kinds of traditional arms and armour and had devised a full-fledged science of war.
9. Aryans worshiped Varuna, Indra, aditi and a large number of other deities which stood for the principal phenomena of nature. They performed sacrifices and offered milk, ghee, etc. to their The Harappans worshipped Pashupati, mother goddess, animals, snake and nature. The fire-altars were discovered from only one Harappan site at Kalibangan.
10. The Harappans practiced earth burials whereas the Aryans practiced cremation.
11. Harappan pottery called black or red pottery was wheel made and very distinctive in nature. The distinctive Aryan pottery is known as PGW (painted grey ware).

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12. The Harappans were short statured, black in complexion, Aryans were tall, well-built and handsome.
13. The Harappans ate all birds and animals including cow and calf. They ate wheat, barley and bread. The Aryans preferred Barley, milk and its products, specially ghee or butter and enjoyed Soma drink.
14. Cotton was the basic fabric of the Harappans while the Aryans put on woollen garments
15. Vedic Sanskrit is the mother of all non-Dravidian languages, Indus script still remains undeciphered.
16. It was quite clear that Indus people were literate whereas the Vedic people were illiterate (In terms of writing) because there is not a single word for writing in any of the Vedic texts.

Concept of Rita and Dharma

Dharma is so called, because it holds; Dharma holds the people. Etymologically, Dharma is derived from the root Dhr—to hold—and its meaning is ‘that which holds’ this world. Rita is predecessor to Dharma and is the Original Rig Vedic concept which refers to the principle of natural order which regulates and coordinates the operation of the universe and everything within it. Rita is described as that which is ultimately responsible for the proper functioning of the natural, moral and sacrificial orders. In Rig Veda, Rita appears as many as 390 times. Rita has been characterized as “the one concept which pervades the whole of Rig-Vedic thought.

In the early Rig Vedic era, Rita was abstract; slowly the universal principle started mingling with the anthropomorphic tendencies of the Vedic period. In due course of time, it became associated with the actions of individual deities. The Rita became associated with Varuna, the omniscient, all pervading sky God. Adityas became the Chariotters of Rita. Varuna became the friend & keeper of Rita. Varuna became the universal Power, which maintained Rita and was celebrated as having “separated and established heaven and earth, spreading them out as the upper and lower firmaments, himself enthroned above them as the universal king, ordering the immutable moral law, exercising his rule by the sovereignty of Rita”. (James 1969)

Eventually Dharma overshadowed Rita in the later Vedic Era. While Rita encompassed the ethical principles with a notion of cosmic retribution, Dharma was said to be a path to be followed as per the ordinances of Rita. Failing to follow this path meant appearance of various forms of calamity and suffering. Committing to the path of Rita was “Dharma” so we can say that Dharma was originally conceptualized as a subordinate component Rita Dharma became a very useful instrument in framing religious, moral and social regulations, that interest in it and discussion of its applications to social and moral order eclipsed all discussions of metaphysical and theological ideas.

There was also an important change in later Vedic and Epic Era. The notion of Dharma shifted



emphasis away from nature as executor of Rita and now it became more or less an individual duty to uphold the Dharma through one's actions. This was called Karma. Karma is what one does to uphold the Dharma and thus, the emphasis from the natural order vanished and it became essentially related to the pains and pleasures one experiences in life, and this tried to explain the gross inequality and injustice in the world. So, Karma was somewhat opposite to Rita as well as Dharma. Karma became the central piece of Hindu philosophy in later Vedic era.

The Concept of Sapta Rishi

Saptarshi or the seven sages are mentioned at many places in Vedic Literature. The term "Saptarishis" is NOT mentioned in Vedic Richas but they are enumerated in different **later Vedic texts**, Upnishads and Brahmanas, They are considered to be the **patriarchs of Vedic Religion**.

Ursa Major constellation is coterminous with Sapta Rishi. Ursa Minor is coterminous with Laghu Sapta Rishi. There is one more star slightly visible within the Saptarishi and it is called Arundhati.

- The first list of the seven sages was given by Jaiminiya Brahman. The rishis are Vasistha, Bharadvaja, Jamadagni, Gautama, Atri, Visvamitra, and Agastya
- The second list is given in Brihadaranyaka Upnishad which mentions the names as Gautama and Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni, Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa, and Atri.
- Gopath Brahmana enlists the 7 sages as follows: Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Gungu, Agastya, and Kaśyapa.

The role played by the Saptarishis in the birth of Kartikeya, has been vividly described in Kumarsambhava of Kalidasa. Rishi Agastya was one of the legendary sage, about whom a lot of traditions prevalent. His greatest feat was the reconciliation of Indra and the Maruts after Indra had been annoyed at his proposing to give the Maruts an offering to the exclusion of Indra. This feat is the subject of three hymns of the Rigveda. Agastya married Lopamudra, and appears in a strange dialogue with Lopamudra in Rigveda. In the Rigveda, this appears to show him as an ascetic who finally yields to temptation.

The story of Agastya and Lopamudra

Lopamudra is also known as Kaushitaki and Varaprada, there is one hymn in the Rigveda is attributed to her. Lopamudra was created by sage Agastya with the most graceful parts of animals such as eyes of the deer etc. She spread the fame of the **Lalita sahasranama** (the thousand names of the Divine Mother). *The meaning of word Lopamudra is "loss of beauty" which refers to the loss caused to the animals in her creation. Agastya created her, secretly introduced her to the palace of Vidarbha King, and later when she grew up asked the king to return her as his wife.*

Metals known to Aryans

The exact metal denoted by this word when used by itself, as always in the Rigveda, is uncertain. The most probable accepted candidate for the use of word Ayas were either Copper or Bronze. In



Rigveda, Agni has been referred to as Ayodamstra which means “one that with teeth of Ayas”, the teeth refer to flames of Agni. The Vajansheyi samhita notes that *Gold was Hiranya, Iron was Syama (also Syama Ayas), Lead was sisa, Tin was Trapu, Lohita Ayas was Copper, because of its red color.*

Some Notable Trivia

- Kathopnishad deals with the dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama
- “Satyamev Jayate” India’s motto comes from “Mundaka Upanishad”
- Aitareya Brahman establishes Superiority of Brahmins.
- Shudra word comes in 10th Mandala of Rig-Veda, so this term also belongs to later vedic age.
- In the later Vedic period, divine royal theory started. The king in the center was called Raja, Samrat in East, Swarat in West, Virat in North and Bhoj in South.
- Coins were used in Later Vedic Age
- Most mentioned River is Indus, Most revered river is Saraswati.
- The marriage of a widow to brother or relative of the deceased was known as “Niyoga”.
- *Rishi Agastya* is known for Aryanization of South India.
- Jabala Upanishad mentions the 4 Ashrams for the first time.
- Swastika is said to be not only pre-Vedic but also Pre-Harappan and it existed from Baluchistan, Indus Valley and even Turkmenistan. It is NOT an exclusive Aryan Symbol.
- *Vaishya* as a Varna has NO mention in Rig-Veda
- *Yavyavati* is another name for Ravi in Rig-Veda.
- Agni was a God which was worshipped by Aryans as well as Ancient Iranians.
- A hymn in Rig Veda is devoted to Lopamudra. She was wife of Rishi Agastya and credited with spreading the fame of the *Lalita sahastranama*. Her other names are Kaushitaki and Varaprada.
- Gargi was daughter of Rishi Vachaknu and is mentioned in the Sixth and the Eighth Brahmana of *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*
- Atranjikheda is the place where largest deposits of the Iron weapons have been found.
- The literal meaning of Aryamnah Pantha word is “Aryaman’s Way” and is an expression which occurs in the Brahmanas and denotes the “Milky way”
- In early Vedic era, there was no distinct theory of Kingship and King (Rajan) was generally a tribal chieftain. This chieftain was the holder of the established order and moral rule which was called *Dhratavatra*.

Prelims Model Questions

1. According to ancient Indian tradition, a Veda can be divided into two parts viz. Mantra Samhita and Brahmanas. What is / are difference(s) between the two?

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1. While Mantras are mostly in verse, Brahmanas are mostly in prose
2. Brahmanas contain formulas for rituals, rules and regulations for rites and sacrifices

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
- [B] Only 2
- [C] Both 1 & 2
- [D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [C] Both 1 & 2

Many scholars, modern and ancient, have tried to define the Brahmanas by stating their characteristics. The reality however is that there is no sharp difference in the characteristics of the Mantra and the Brahmana portions of the Vedas. The only thing that we may state safely is this – Mantras are those portions of the Vedas that are designated as such traditionally. And the rest is Brahmana.

Unlike the mantras, which are mostly in verse, the Brahmanas are predominantly prose. The Brahmanas contain formulas for rituals, rules and regulations for rites and sacrifices and also outline other religious duties. The formulas and rules for conducting extremely complex rituals are explained to the minutest detail. And every ritual is performed for a specific purpose for which a specific effect/benefit is expected. It was felt that there was nothing that could not be achieved by sacrifices – the sun could be stopped from rising and Indra, the chief of gods, could be deposed from his throne. The duties of men professing different occupations, the eternity of the Veda, popular customs, cosmogony, historical details, praise of ancient heroes are some other subjects dealt with in the Brahmanas.

2. With reference to the Rig-Vedic, which among the following statements is / are correct?
 1. Burial as a form of funeral ceremony is more ancient than cremation among ancient Hindus
 2. The concept of Hell and its tortures are mentioned in some verses of Rig Veda

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1 is correct
- [B] Only 2 is correct
- [C] Both 1 & 2 are correct
- [D] Neither 1 nor 2 is correct

Answer: [A] Only 1 is correct

Burial was probably the first form of funeral ceremony among ancient Hindus ; but this was soon followed by cremation, and the ashes were then buried in the earth. It is remarkable that there is no mention of a hell and its



tortures in the Rig Veda.

3. With reference to the position of women in Rig-Vedic India, which among the following observations is / are correct?

1. A girl generally selected her own husband
2. Unmarried girls obtained a share in paternal property
3. Widows could remarry after death of their husbands

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
[B] Only 1 & 2
[C] Only 2 & 3
[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

There were no unhealthy restrictions upon Hindu women in those days, no rules to keep them secluded or debarred from their legitimate place in society. A girl generally selected her own husband, but her parents' wishes were for the most part respected. We have frequent allusions to careful and industrious wives who superintended the arrangements of the house, and, like the dawn, roused everyone in the morning and sent him to his work. Girls who remained unmarried obtained a share in the paternal property. Widows could re-marry after the death of their husbands. (RC Datt)

4. Consider the following statements about Rig Vedic period:
1. The societies were patriarchal in nature during the period
 2. Agriculture was the dominant occupation of people during the period
 3. Gold and copper were the widely used metals during the period

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- [A] 2 Only
[B] 1 and 3 Only
[C] 2 and 3 Only
[D] 1, 2 and 3

Answer: [B] 1 and 3 Only

Second statement is wrong because pastoralism was the dominant occupation of people during the period. Agriculture was negligible and was mainly developed towards the end of this period.

5. With reference to vedic literature, "Tat Tvam Asi" is one of the most interpreted mahavakya



(great saying). Which among the following is source of this mahavakya?

- [A] Aitareya Brahman
- [B] Kalpasutra
- [C] Brahadaranyaka
- [D] Chandogya Upanishad

Answer: [D] Chandogya Upanishad

Tat Tvam Asi comes from Chandogya Upanishad.

6. During the early Vedic period, which of the following priests served as presiding priest during ritual sacrifices?

- [A] Hotr
- [B] adhvaryu
- [C] Udgatr
- [D] Brahmin

Answer: [A] Hotr

hotr was the presiding priest, with perhaps only the adhvaryu as his assistant in the earliest time.

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7. The Rig-Veda is a source of ____:

- 1. Gayatri Mantra
- 2. Nadistuti sukta
- 3. Purusha sukta

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
- [B] Only 1 & 2
- [C] Only 2
- [D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

The Famous Gayatri mantra is in Rig Veda Mandala 3. Purusha sukta (पुरुष सूक्त) is hymn 10.90 of the Rigveda, dedicated to the Purusha, the “Cosmic Being”. The seer of this verse is Rishi Narayana and this sukta can evoke God-experience in the seeker. Nadistuti sukta (नादिस्तुति सूक्त) is hymn 10.75 of the Rigveda.

8. What is / are the differences between the White Yajurveda and the Black Yajurveda?
- 1. While the White yajurveda comprises has a clear distinction between Samhita and Brahmana, the Black Yajurveda comprises both mixed up
 - 2. While the White Yajurveda is more prevalent in northern India, Black Yajurveda is more



prevalent in South India

3. While the White Yajurveda is otherwise called Vajasaneyi Samhita, Black Yajurveda is otherwise called Taittiriya Samhita

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 1 & 2

[C] Only 2 & 3

[D] Only 1 & 3

Answer: [B] Only 1 & 2

Each Veda can be divided into two parts – Mantras and Brahmanas. A collection of Mantras is typically called a Samhita. Currently, and often in ancient Hindu tradition as well, it is often the Samhita portion alone which is referred to as the Veda. For instance, the word ‘Rigveda’ would typically mean the Rigveda Samhita.

The Brahmanas have their own names and are more like theological treatises of the Vedas. The end portions of many Brahmanas have an esoteric content, called the ‘Aranyakas’. Embedded in these Aranyakas, or at their very end, are deeply spiritual treatises called the ‘Upanishads’. For several centuries now, Upanishads are the mainstay of Hindu spiritual traditions, and are held in the highest esteem.

In the case of the Rigveda, Samaveda and the Atharvaveda, there is a clear-cut separation of the Mantra collection from the Brahmana portions. In contrast, the Yajurveda is of two types: Shukla (or white) Yajurveda and Krishna (or black) Yajurveda. In the former, the Mantra and Brahmana collections occur separate from each other. In the latter, the Mantra and the Brahmana portions are intermixed. Thus, the Taittiriya ‘Samhita’ belonging to the Krishna Yajurveda has Mantras interspersed with Brahmana portions. Even the Taittiriya ‘Brahmana’ has both Mantras and Brahmana passages mixed with each other.

Shukla yajur veda (more prevalent amongst Brahmanas in the North parts of India) and Krishna yajur veda (more prevalent amongst Brahmanas of the South.) Krishna Yajur Veda the Samhita and Brahmana are not separate entities.

9. Which one of the following statements is correct about Sabha and Samiti in Rigvedic times ?
1. While Sabha was a selected body, Samiti was assembly of larger group of people
 2. While Sabha performed most judicial as well as political functions, Samiti did not do these



functions

Select the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 2

[C] Both 1 & 2

[D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [A] Only 1

Two assemblies called 'sabha' and 'samiti' formed an essential feature of the government. The term 'sabha' is often mentioned in the Rigveda, and denotes both "the people in conclave" and the "hall" which was the venue of their meeting. Since, however, the 'sabha' was used for the game of dice, it is clear that even nonpolitical business could be transacted at the hall or by the people who constituted the 'sabha'. That it was a gathering of the elect i.e., of Brahmanas and the rich patrons, when it was concerned for administrative purposes, is clear from the term 'Sabheya', "worthy of the assembly", as applied to a Brahmana.

The 'samiti' in the sense of an "Assembly" of the Vedic tribe is mentioned in the Rigveda. According to Ludwig, the 'samiti' was a more comprehensive conference including not only all the common people (visah) but also Brahmanas and rich patrons (maghavan).

Although it is difficult to distinguish between a 'sabha' and a 'samiti', it appears that the 'samiti' was an august assembly of a larger group of the people for the discharge of tribal (i.e. political) business and was presided over by the king, while the 'sabha', a more select body, was less popular and political in character than the 'samiti'.

Although the functions and powers of 'sabha' and 'samiti' cannot be exactly defined, numerous passages referring to them clearly indicate that both these Assemblies exercised considerable authority and must have acted as healthy checks on the power of the king.

Source: Administrative System in India: Vedic Age to 1947 By U. B. Singh

10. Which among the following Upanishads has been called the "Secret of Death"?

[A] Kathopnishad

[B] Mundakopnishad

[C] Mandukya

[D] Mundaka

Answer: [A] Kathopnishad

Kathopnishad was translated by Max Müller in 1879. It was rendered in verse by Edwin Arnold as "The Secret of Death". The central story is immortality and covers the story of encounter of Nachiketa, son of sage



Vajasravasa, with Yama, God of death.

11. Which among the following is / are considered to be Shruti Literature?

1. Vedas
2. Brahmanas
3. Aranyakas
4. Upanishads

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1 & 2
[B] Only 1, 3 & 4
[C] Only 1, 2 & 3
[D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

Answer: [D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

The Vedic literature is broadly divided into two categories viz. Shruti and Smriti. Shruti is “that which has been heard” and is canonical, consisting of revelation and unquestionable truth, and is considered eternal. Shruti describes the sacred texts comprising the central canon of Hinduism viz. Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, & Upanishads. Smriti literally means “that which is remembered, supplementary and may change over time”. It is authoritative only to the extent that it conforms to the bedrock of Shruti and it is entire body of the post Vedic Classical Sanskrit literature. It comprises Vedanga, Shad darsana, Puranas, Itihasa, Upveda, Tantras, Agamas, Upangas.

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Prelims MCQ Topics

Kindly refers to related previous years questions asked by UPSC in Prelims and our own Model Questions at the end of this module.

Buddhism

The reasons for development of new religions were as follows:

- The economy increasingly changed from pastoral to agro-based and importance of trade increased. Vaishyas which had third position in the Varna system provided support to both the new faiths viz. Jainism and Buddhism.
- The degraded position of shudras and women; rigidity in caste and varna system etc. irked the people.
- The ritual killing of animals for sacrifices was not favoured in new agro based economy.
- Vedic religion was overloaded by complex rituals, exaggeration, Brahmanic supremacy, superstitions etc. Both the new religions challenged the authority of Brahmins.
- Sanskrit was the language of Vedic religion but it started losing charm. Most people spoke Prakrit.

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Gautam Buddha

- The Buddhavamsa mentioned total 29 Buddhas of which 27 preceded Gautam Buddha and Maitreya is future Buddha to come. The current Kalpa has five Buddhas viz. Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, Kassapa, Gautama and Maitreya.

Buddha's Life

- Gautam Buddha was born as Siddhartha. His father Shuddhodhana was a leader of Shakya clan which was a republic with capital at Kapilvastu. His mother Mahamaya was princess of another such principality called Devadaha. His mother died soon after his birth and he was *raised by Prajapati Gautami*.
- He was born in Lumbini in modern-day Nepal, around the year 563 BC and raised in Kapilavastu. The main evidence that Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal is the Ashoka Pillar which is still at Lumbini.
- Buddha's Birth is celebrated as **Vesaka** in some countries while in India, it is celebrated as Buddha Purnima, which falls in month of Vaishaka / April or May.
- He was married to Yashodhara at the age of 16 who gave birth to his son Rahula. He left house at age of 29 years after encountering with human sufferings and due to the truth that human life is momentary and one has to suffer a lot. The objective of leaving home was to overcome the sufferings due to old age, illness and death. This leaving home is called the



Great Departure or Mahaabhinashkramana.

- While wandering as ascetic he subjected himself to austerity. But austerity did not bring him desired results. He studied under two hermits *Allara* and *Udaka* to achieve knowledge, but that knowledge also did not satisfy him. He did several experiments for five years. Meanwhile, he concluded that neither the path of austerity nor the extreme luxury is correct way. Finally, he started moving away from ascetics and imbibed himself into meditation.
- At the age of 35 years, while meditating under a Pipal tree on the bank of river Niranjana at Gaya, he came across the desired truth. He now became Shakyamuni Buddha or the Buddha of Shakyas Clan.
- His first followers were two merchants Tapussa and Bhallika. With other followers he gave his first sermon dealing with *Four Noble Truths* and the *Noble Eightfold Path* at *Deer Park in Sarnath near Varanasi*. This first sermon was called Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. The four noble truths and Noble Eightfold Path became the core pillars of Buddhist teaching.
- Buddha and his teaching (Dhamma) along with the first union of his five disciples (Sanhga) formed the three gems (Triratna) of Buddhism.
- For rest of his life, Buddha travelled to many places and spread the Dhamma. *He spent most of his monastic life in Sravasti*. His parinirvana happened at Kusinagara at the age of 80 years.

Symbols associated with Buddha's Life

- Buddha's birth : Lotus and Bull
- The Great Departure (Mahabhinishkramana) : Horse
- Enlightenment : Bodhee tree {Peepal}
- First sermon (Dhammachakraparivartana) : Wheel
- Death (Parinirvana) : Stupa

Buddha's Teachings

Four Noble Truths

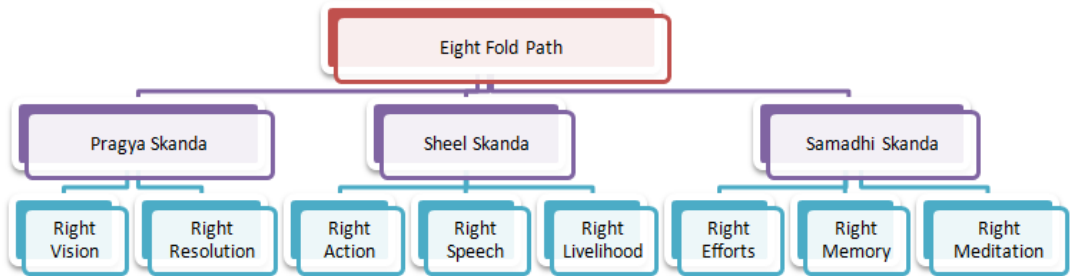
1. *Dukkha* : World is full of sorrow and everything from birth to death brings sorrows
2. *Dukkha Samudaya* (Cause of sorrow): Desire is the cause of sorrow
3. *Dukkha Nirodha* (Prevention of sorrow): Triumph over desires leads to prevention of sorrow.
4. *Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada Magga* or The path of Prevention of Sorrow: Man can avoid Dukkha by avoiding extremes of life and following middle path or *Madhyam Patipada*. The life of moderation and self control along with pursuance of 8 fold path is essential to prevent the Dukkha.

Eight Fold Path or Astangika marg

- The eight fold path was recommended to eliminate the human misery. It comprises of three



basic divisions of wisdom (*Pragya Skanda*), ethical conduct (*Sheel Skanda*) and meditation (*Samadhi Skanda*).



Two Most Important Questions focused by Buddha

- Gautama Buddha is known to have concentrated on two most important questions about existence. These were (1) How can we minimize suffering-both our own and that of others? and (2) How can we attain inner peace?

Buddha's analogy to a Great Physician

In the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha is often compared to a great physician, and his teachings are compared to medicine. The teachings on the four noble truths in particular are related to a medical diagnosis, as follows:

- Dukkha: identifying the illness and the nature of the illness (the diagnosis)
- Dukkha Samudaya: identifying the causes of the illness (the etiology)
- Dukkha Nirodha: identifying a cure for the illness (the prognosis)
- Magga: recommending a treatment for the illness that can bring about a cure (the prescription)

Buddhist Literature

Tripitaka

- Tripitaka is traditional term used for various Buddhist scriptures. It is known as Pali Canon in English. The three pitakas are ***Sutta Pitaka***, ***Vinaya Pitaka*** and ***Abhidhamma Pitaka***.
- **Sutta Pitaka** has over 10 thousand Suttas {Sutras or teachings} related to Buddha and his close companions. It has five sections viz. *Digha Nikaya* (long discourses), *Majjhima Nikaya* (medium discourses), *Samyutta Nikaya* (connected discourses), *Anguttara Nikaya* (numerical discourses), *Khuddaka Nikaya* (minor collection).
- **Vinay Pitaka** deals with monastic rules and regulations. This has three books viz. *Suttavibhanga*, *Khandhaka* and *Parivara*. *Suttavibhanga* is a commentary on monastic discipline called *Patimokkha*. The rules are divided into two parts viz. *Mahavibhanga* (for fully ordained monks) and *Bikkhuni Vibanga* (for female monks). *Khandhaka* has two books which



deal with Buddha, his disciples and the first and second Buddhist Councils. *Parivara* covers the summary and analysis of the first two books.

- **Abhidhamma Pitaka** deals with philosophy and doctrine of Buddhism.

Jatakas

- Jatakas are very much close to folklore literature and they contain the tales of previous births of Buddha in poetry form. There are 547 such tales called Jatakamala in Sanskrit, *cietak* in Khmer and *Sadok* in Chinese.

Milinda Panha

- *Milinda Panha* or Questions of Milinda contains the dialogue of Indo-Greek king Meander and Buddhist monk Nagasena. It has been written in second to first century BC and initially written in Sanskrit. There is only one copy in Sri Lankan Pali of this work.

Dipavamsa

- Dipavamsa (Chronicle of Island) is the *oldest historical record of Sri Lanka*. It is believed to have been compiled around 3rd or 4th century BC somewhere in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka during the reign of King Dhatusena of Sri Lanka, the first Mauryan King of Sri Lanka.
- Dipavamsa is one of the most important works in Pali Literature. It details the tooth relic and Bodhi Tree's arrival in Sri Lanka. It also deals with the arrival of Buddha's teaching and preachers in Sri Lanka. It mentions that Buddha visited Kelaniya and Dighavapi in Sri Lanka.

Mahavamsa

- **Mahavamsa** {Great Chronicle} is a Pali epic poem and deals with royal dynasties of not only Sri Lanka but the whole Indian subcontinent and is known as world's longest unbroken historical accounts. The consecration of Asoka and details of Selucus and Alexander have been detailed in it.

Mahavastu

- Mahavastu {Great Event} is a work in prose and verse and is written in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit. It details the miracles & earlier lives of Buddha.

Buddha Charita

- *Buddha Charita* is an epic style Sanskrit work by **Ashvaghosa** and was compiled in second century BC.

Mahāvibhāsa Śāstra

- It's a Sanskrit compendium by Vasumitra, dealing with Buddhism, Vaisheshika and Samkya philosophies.

Lalitavistara

- Lalitavistara is a Sanskrit text that deals with the biography of Buddha.

Divyavadana



- Divyavadana {divine tales} has anthology in the form of Sanskrit Stories dealing with Maurya and Sunga history. One story in it titled *Asokavadana* deals with the legends of Asoka.

Udanavarga

- Udanavarga is an early Buddhist Sanskrit text. It has verses attributed to Buddha and his disciples.

Udana

- Udana is a Pali text with the Sutta Pitaka. It also contains the story of “Blind men and Elephant”.

Bodhi Vamsa

- Bodhi Vamsa is a mix Sanskrit Pali text which describes the arrival of branch of Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka and many other things which mentioned in Mahavamsa.

Buddhist Scholars

The most important turning point in the expansion of Buddhism in India was the emergence and conversion of Asoka the Great (304–232 BC). He embraced Buddhism after 8 years of his coronation, he became a Buddhist and made it his state religion in 260 BC. He convened the third Buddhist council, which was held in Pataliputra in the presidency of *Moggaliputta Tissa*. He launched a vigorous campaign to propagate Buddhism which could be called Asoka's Dhamma.

Salient Notes on Some Buddhist Scholars are as follows:

Aśvaghoṣa

- Aśvaghoṣa is the Greatest Indian Poet Prior to Kalidasa. He is known as first Sanskrit Dramatist of the World. His epics rivalled the contemporary Ramayana. He wrote Buddhist texts in Classical Sanskrit.
- He was the court writer and religious advisor of Kushana king Kanishka. His main works are *Buddhacharita*, *Mahalakara* (Book of Glory) and *Saundaranandakavya* (details the life of Nanda).

Nagarjuna

- Nagarjuna founded the Madhyamika school of Mahayan Buddhism. He was contemporary of Satavahana King Gautamiputra. He was born in a Brahmin family in Nagarjunaconda in modern Andhra Pradesh.
- Due to his birth in Brahmin family and later conversion in Buddhism, it can be justified that his early work was in Sanskrit and not in Pali or Hybrid Sanskrit.
- Most important work is *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which means *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*. His theory is also known as Shunyavada “emptiness”.

Asanga & Vasubandhu

- Both were half brothers and proponents of *Yogachara* and *Abhidhamma*. They were from



modern Peshawar area in Pakistan. Most important work of Vasubandhu was *Abhidharmamoksha*.

Buddhaghosa

- *Buddhaghosa* lived the 5th century AD and is known to be one of the greatest Pali scholar. His name means “Voice of Buddha”. Considered to be most important commentator of the Theravada.
- He is said to have gone to Sri Lanka from India’s Magadha and settled in Anuradhapura. The most important work is *Visuddhimagga*

Dignāga or Dinnaga

- He is considered to be the founder of Buddhist logic.

Candrakīrti or Chandrakirti

- He was a disciple of Nagarjuna and a scholar at the Nalanda University. *Prasannapadā* is his main work which means happy words or clear words

Dharmakirti

- Dharmakirti lived in 7th century AD and was primary theorist of Buddhist Sankya. He was a teacher at the Nalanda University and a poet. He has written *Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition*. He has been called “Kant of India”.

Buddhist Councils

Six Buddhist councils have been convened. Here is a short description:

First Buddhist Council: 400 BC

- Held soon after the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, around 400 BC under the patronage of king Ajatshatru with the monk Mahakasyapa presiding, at Rajgriha, **in the Sattapani Cave**.
- The idea was to preserve Buddha’s teachings (Sutta) and rules for disciples (Vinaya). Ananda, one of the great disciples of Buddha recited Suttas and Upali, another disciple recited Vinaya. *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was also included.

Second Buddhist Council : 383 BC

- It was held in 383 BC. This idea of this council was to settle a dispute on Vinaya Pitaka, the code of discipline. The dispute was on 10 Points such as storing salt in horn, eating after midday, eating once and going to villages for alms, eating sour milk after one’s meal etc. It was not settled and Buddhism sects appeared for the first time. The subgroups were *Sthaviravada*, *Mahasanghika* and *Sarvastivada*. It was held at Vaishali under the patronage of King Kalasoka and the presidency of Sabakami.
- Sthaviravada followed the teachings of the elders and Mahasanghika became extinct later. Sthaviravada later continued till 3rd Buddhist council.



Third Buddhist Council: 250 BC

- Third Buddhist council was held in 250 BC at Pataliputra under the patronage of King Asoka and under the presidency of Moggaliputta Tissa.
- The teachings of Buddha which were under two baskets were now classified in 3 baskets as Abhidhamma Pitaka was established in this council, and they were known as “Tripitaka”. It also tried to settle all the disputes of Vinaya Pitaka.

Fourth Buddhist Council: 72AD

- The Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Kundalvana, Kashmir in 72 AD under the patronage of Kushan king Kanishka and the president of this council was Vasumitra, with Aśvaghosa as his deputy. This council distinctly divided the Buddhism into 2 sects Mahayan & Hinayan.
- Another Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Tambapanni (one name of Sri Lanka) at Aloka Lena under the patronage of **Vattagamani-Abaya**. However, most scholars agree that this was not eligible to be called a Council as it was not under a king but a local chieftain. This council is also related to the cruel policy of Vattagamani-Abaya towards Jains, as it is said that a Jain premises was destroyed and a Mahayan temple was built.

Fifth Buddhist Council: 1871

- Fifth Buddhist Council took place in 1871 under the patronage of **King Mindon** in Mandalay, Burma. It was presided by Jagarabhivamsa, Narindabhidhaja, and Sumangalasami. The idea was to recite all the teachings of the Buddha and examine them systematically if any of them was dropped or altered.

Sixth Buddhist Council : 1954

- The Sixth Buddhist Council was held in 1954 in Burma at **Kaba Aye**, in Yangon under the patronage of Burmese Government led by Prime Minister U Nu. Construction of Maha Passana Guha, which is very much similar to India's Sattapanni Cave where the first Buddhist Council had been held, was authorized by the government.
- It was aimed to preserve the genuine Dhamma and Vinaya Pitaka. It held under the presidency of Mahasi Sayadaw and Bhadanta Vicittasrabhivamsa. 500 Buddhist scholars from 8 countries participated in this council.

Mahayana and Hinayana

A Yana is a vehicle. A Hinayana is a lesser vehicle while a Mahayana is a Great vehicle.

Hinayana

- The other names of Hinayana are: *Deficient Vehicle*, *Abandoned Vehicle* or *Defective Vehicle*.
- It believes in the original teaching of Buddha or Doctrine of Elders.
- Does not believe in Idol worship and tries to attain *individual salvation* through self discipline

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and meditation. Ultimate aim of Hinayana is thus nirvana.

- Stharvivada or Thervada is a Hinayana sect.
- Asoka Patronized Hinayana.
- Pali, the language of masses was used by the Hinayana scholars.

Mahayana

- Mahayana or “great vehicle” believes in the heavenliness of Buddha and Idol worship of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas embodying Buddha Nature.
- It spread from India to various countries including China and South East Asian nations.
- Zen, Pure Land, Tiantai, and Nichiren, Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism are traditions of Mahayana.
- Mahayana believed in universal liberation from suffering for all beings (hence the “Great Vehicle”). Ultimate aim of Mahayana is “spiritual upliftment”.
- It allows salvation to be alternatively obtained through the grace of the Amitābha Buddha by having faith and devoting oneself to mindfulness of the Buddha.
- It believes in Mantras. Language of Mahayana was predominantly Sanskrit.

Similarity between Hinayana versus Mahayana

Both adopt one and the same Vinaya, and they have in common the prohibitions of the five offenses, and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths.

Bodhisattva

A Bodhisattva means one who has essence of enlightenment. Anyone who has a spontaneous wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all is a Bodhisattva. It's a very popular subject in Buddhist art. A bodhisattva is bound to enlightenment and refers to all who are destined to become Buddhas in this life or another life. There are celestial bodhisattvas which are manifestations of Gautam Buddha. Important 8 Bodhisattvas are as follows:

Avalokiteśvara

Avalokiteśvara encompasses all Buddhas. In China he is known as Guānshìyīn Púsà, in Tibetan as Chenrezig, in Thai as Avalokitesuarn. He is said to incarnate in Dalai Lama. He is depicted as holding a lotus flower. He is depicted as female also. A cave wall painting of Avalokiteśvara is devoted in Ajanta Caves as Padmapani.

Manjusri

He is known as Wénshū in Chinese, Jampelyang in Tibetan and is a manifestation of great wisdom and meditation. Mañjuśrī is depicted as a male bodhisattva wielding a flaming sword in his right hand.

Samantabhadra

Samantabhadra means Universal Worthy and he is associated with meditation. Known as Fugen



Bosatsu in Japanese and very popular in Japan among the Tendai and Shingon sects. His manifestation is Action and he is key figure in Flower Garland Sutra.

Ksitigarbha

Ksitigarbha is usually depicted as a Buddhist monk in the Orient / East Asia. Ksitigarbha means Earth Womb. he is regarded as Bodhisattva of Earth or Hell beings or Mortals. He is regarded as guardian of children and patron deity of deceased children and aborted fetuses in Japanese culture. he carries a staff.

Ksitigarbha, Samantabhadra, Manjusri, and Avalokitesvara are the principal Bodhisattvas of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism.

Maitreya

Maitreya will be successor of Gautama Buddha. He is also known as *Ajita Bodhisattva*. He holds a “water phial” in his left hand. Earliest mention of Metteyya is in the Digha Nikaya 26 of the Pali Canon. It is said that he will arrive when oceans will decrease in size (that is why keeps a Kumbha or phial in his hand) and will rule the Ketumati Pure Land (Varanasi).

We note here that popular **Budai or laughing Buddha** is claimed to be an incarnation of Maitreya.

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Budai was a Chinese Zen monk who lived during the Later Liang Dynasty (907–923 CE) in China. In Japanese, he is called Hotei and is one of the 7 Lucky Gods of Japan.

Vajrapani

Vajrapani is depicted as one of the 3 protective deities around Buddha, other are Manjusri and Avlokiteshwara. Vajrapani manifests Buddha's power, Manjusri manifests Buddha's wisdom and Avlokiteshwara manifests Buddha's compassion. In Japan a dharma protector called Nio is also Vajrapani.

Sadāparibhūta

Sadāparibhūta is a Bodhisattva which manifests “never disparaging” spirit.

Akasagarbha

Akasagarbha is boundless as space. He is known as twin brother of Ksitigarbha. He is manifestation of wisdom.

Places Associated with Life of Buddha

Astamahasthanas

Astamahasthanas are eight great holy ***places associated with the life of Buddha***. These include four pilgrimage sites related to the life of Gautama Buddha viz. Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagara and four other sites viz. Sravasti, Sankasya, Rajgir and Vaishali.

Lumbini

Lumbini is currently located in Kapilavastu district of Nepal. It is birth place of Buddha. At the time



of birth of Buddha, Lumbini was a part of *Shakya Janapada*, which was a republic.

Bodhgaya

It is located in Bihar on the bank of river Neranjana {this river was known as Uruwela at that time}. It is known for place of enlightenment of Buddha.

Sarnath

Sarnath {also known as Mrigadava, Migadaya, Rishipattana, Isipatana} is the deer park where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon or *Dhammachakraparivartan Sutra*. At the time of Buddha, it was a part of Kashi Janapada.

Kushinagar

Kushinara or Kushinagara is located in Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh. It is the site of Buddha's death and mahaparinirvana. At the time of Buddha's death, it was a capital of Malla janapada.

Sravasti

Sravasti was located in Uttar Pradesh around area of Balrampur in modern Uttar Pradesh. It is closely associated with the life of Buddha because Buddha had spent 24 Chaturmasas {implies 24 years because one year as only one Chaturmasa between Ashadha to Kartika}. Thus, we can say that most of monastic life of Buddha was spent in Shravasti. In Buddha's times, Shravasti was capital of Kosala Kingdom. Shravasti is also birthplace of Jain Tirthankar Sambhavanath, and thus is important for Jains also.

Sankasya

It's current location is Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh. It has some faiths of Buddhism that Buddha after his death descended from heaven here.

Rajgir

Rajgir was the early capital of Magadh Janapada, which was ruled by Bimbisara during Buddha's time. After the great departure (Mahabhinishkramana), Buddha had first gone to Rajgir. He started begging alms over there and living life of an ascetic. King Bimbisara had offered Buddha his throne which he turned down.

Vaishali

At the time of Buddha, Vaishali was in Vajji Janapada. After leaving Kapilavastu for renunciation, he came to Vaishali first and had his spiritual training from Allara and Udaka.

Other places of importance in Buddhism

Amaravati

Amaravati in Andhrapradesh's Guntur district is also known as Dhanyakataka or Dharanikota and was the site of a great Buddhist Stupa built in pre-Mauryan times, ruled by Satavahana kings.

Nagarjungkonda

Nagarjungkonda is near Nagarjun Sagar in Andhra Pradesh. Once, it was home to more than 30 Buddhist Viharas (Buddhist universities and monasteries), attracting students from as far as China,



Gandhara, Bengal and Sri Lanka. Nagarjuna was one of the largest and most important Buddhist centers in South India from the second century BC until the third century AD. It was named after Nagarjuna, a renowned Buddhist scholar and philosopher, who had migrated here from Amaravati to propagate and spread the Buddha's message of universal peace and brotherhood. Remains were discovered in 1926 by archaeologist AR Saraswati in 1926.

Ajanta Caves

Ajanta Caves are 31 rock cut caves from 2nd to 8th century AD, located in Aurangabad. The first caves called Chaityas were created during Satavahana Dynasty. Cave No. 1 has the painting of Padmapani and Vajrapani. Painted narratives of the Jataka tales are depicted on the walls.

Angkor Wat

Angkor Wat is located in Cambodia. The temple complex was built by Suryavarman II and it was first devoted to Vishnu and later to Buddhist.

Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya was known as Bodhimanda, Uruvela, Sambodhi, Vajrasana and Mahabodhi till 18th century when Bodh Gaya name became popular. It has the Mahabodhi temple and Bodhi tree. It became Unesco world heritage site in 2002.

Bodhi Tree

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It's a Pipal Tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) and known as Bo in Sri Lanka. Located in Bodh Gaya. Under this tree Gautama attained enlightenment. The current tree is a descendent of the original tree. There are other Bodhi trees as well viz. *Anandabodhi* tree in Sravasti and the **Bodhi tree (Bo)** or also known as Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi planted in 288 BC in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka and both of them have been propagated from the original tree. It is also known as oldest living Human Planted tree in the world with a known planting date.

Borobudur

Borobudur is located in Indonesia and comprises six square platforms topped by three circular platforms, and is decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 Buddha statues. It's a world Heritage site. There are 3 Buddhist temples which are known as Borobudur Temple Compounds.

Bamyan Caves

They are located in Afghanistan and have statues represented the classic blended style of Gandhara art of 6th century, They were the largest examples of standing Buddha carvings in the world, before they were blown by dynamite by Taliban in 2001.

Ellora Caves

Ellora Caves represent Buddhist, Jain and Hindu Rock cut temples built by Rastrakuta Kings. Earliest Buddhist cave is Cave 6; most caves of Buddhism are Viharas. Cave number 10 is a Chaitya hall also known as Chandrashala or Vishwakarma Cave and also known as carpenter's cave. At heart of this



cave is a 15 ft statue of Buddha seated in a preaching pose.

Pushpagiri University

Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri are the part of the Puspagiri University which flourished till 11th century in Odisha. They lie atop the Langudi hills in Jajpur and Cuttak of Orissa.

Vikramshila, Odantapuri and Somapapuri

Vikramshila. Odantapuri & Somapapuri were the Buddhist Viharas founded by Palas.

Other Concepts Related to Buddhism

Trikaya Doctrine

Trikaya Doctrine in Buddhism was developed by Yogkarins. It says that Buddha has three kāyas or bodies, the *nirmānakāya* or created body which manifests in time and space; the *sambhogakāya* or body of mutual enjoyment which is a body of bliss or clear light manifestation; and the *Dharmakāya* or Truth body which embodies the very principle of enlightenment and knows no limits or boundaries. The later development of Mahayan Buddhism adopted this theory.

The theory was formulated in answer to a paradox which confronted Mahayana Buddhism. Whereas the true ideal of early Buddhism was the arahant, this was replaced in the Mahayana by the bodhisattva. Yet if this was the true ideal, why did Siddhartha Gautama not become a bodhisattva, rather than a Buddha who selfishly passed away at parinirvana? This objection was addressed in the Yogacarins' concept of the Trikaaya. They said that Gautama was not in fact an ordinary man, but the manifestation of a great spiritual being having three bodies.

Comparison of Buddhist Philosophy and Samkhya Philosophy

There are some basic points of agreement towards which both Samkhya-Yoga and Buddhism were drawn. Their approach is positive and pragmatic. This positivistic attitude is reflected in their rejection of sacrificial ritualism, priests, God, etc. Buddha's antipathy towards sacrifice and violence is well known. But Samkhya being in the fold of orthodox systems also renounces the ritualistic way unable to solve the problem of suffering. Samkhya Philosophy says that sacrificial rituals are like the ordinary perceptible means; hence ultimately ineffective in bringing that abiding and final release from suffering. Samkhya goes to the extent describing one form of bondage, "Bondage by sacrificial gifts."

Both are Humanistic and reject any divine grace for attaining moksa or enlightenment

Both Samkhya and Buddhism are humanistic. The goal is achievable by everyone by his own effort; one need not look for any divine grace for attaining moksa. Every liberated man attains to the self-effulgent nature of the isolated Purusa (Kevalin) or Buddhahood by following the prescribed method. A man must depend entirely on himself, as the canonical text says: '**you yourselves must make the effort**'; the Buddhas do but point the way'.



Idea of spirit / soul

Both Samkhya and the early Buddhism rejected the concept of soul. They emphasis on individual rather on cosmic; similarity in the theories of evolution; similarity in the view of the world as a constantly becoming and changing phenomena; acceptance of the concept of Gunas; acceptance of the Satkarya vada that the effect resides in its cause; similarity in enumeration of the basic elements or components of nature; similarity in the notions of liberation kaivalya or nirvana; rejection of both the Vedic authority and the validity of rituals; rejection of extreme practices and self torture etc. Though Samkhya abandons the idea of the existence of the absolute, but it retains the idea of spirit (Purusha) and of material world (Prakrti); the Buddhism, on the other hand abandoned both these two conceptions, and retained only the fleeting series of mental states (stream of consciousness) as a quasi reality, In either case there is effort to disown the human psycho-physical apparatus and its functioning.

Chaityas and Viharas

Viharas were for the purpose of living, Chaityas were assemblies for the purpose of discussions. Further, Chaityas were with Stupas, Viharas did not have stupas.

Both early Chaityas and Viharas were made by woods and later stone-cut Chaityas and Viharas were made. Chaitya was a rectangular prayer hall with a stupa placed in the centre, the purpose was prayer. The Chaitya was divided into three parts, and had an apsidal ending, that is, a semicircular rear end, The central part of the hall (also called the nave) was separated from the two aisles by two rows of pillars, The chaityas also had polished interior walls, semicircular roofs and horse-shoe shaped windows called the Chaitya windows. Viharas were the residences of the monks.

Jainism

Jainism originated centuries before Buddhism but was revived only by Mahavira. This religion is one of the oldest and there are no evidences of its origin.

About Mahavira

Mahavira, also known as Vardhamana, Vira, Viraprabhu, Sanmati, Ativira, Gnatputra (in Tamil Texts) and Nigantha Nātaputta (in Pali canon), was 24th Tirthankar of Jainism. He was born in 599 BC as son of King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala. His birth day falls in month of Chaitra (March or April).

His birthplace Kundagrama is located in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. His father King Siddarth was head of Gyatrika Kshtriyas and his mother mother Trishla was a Licchavi princess and sister of ruler Chetak. Chetaka's daughter later married powerful King of Magadha, Bimbisara. Mahavira's Gotra was Kashyapa. Family of Mahavira was called in Sanskrit Jnatri and in Prakrit Naata. The male members of the family were called Jnatriputras or Naataputtas.

At the age of 30, Mahavira renounced the royal life, gave up worldly possessions and spent 12 years



as ascetic, mostly in meditation. Once he attained Kevalya Gyana (supreme knowledge), he devoted rest of his life preaching the eternal truth and spiritual freedom to people across India. He attained Nirvana at Pavapuri (current Nalanda district) at the age of 72 years.

As per Shwetambara traditions, he was married to Yasoda, who had given birth to his daughter Anojja or Priyadarsana. Priyadarsana later married to Jamali, who was also a disciple of Mahavira. As per Digambara tradition, *Mahavira was never married.*

Jain Philosophy

Jainism, like Buddhism is non-theistic. *It does not acknowledge existence of a supreme divine creator.* This is different from Vedic religion which is monotheistic and believes in existence of a divine creator of this universe.

Nine Tattvas (Nine truths)

According to Jainism, there are nine truths or realities (Nav-tattva) viz. Soul (*Jiva*), matter (*Ajiva*), merit (*Punya*), demerit or sin (*Papa*), influx of karma (*Asrava*), Stoppage of Karmic matter (*Samvara*), Bondage (*Bandha*), shredding of karmic matter (*nirjara*) and Liberation (*Moksha*).

Soul (Jiva)

Apart from non-belief in a supreme divine creator, another remarkable feature of Jain philosophy is that it believes in *independent existence of soul and matter*. The soul or Jiva is the conscious substance which is different in different humans and animals. The number of Jivas is infinite. Soul is engaged in worldly affairs good or bad karma and takes successive births as per the stock of its karma. Thus, it is the Jiva which enjoys the fruits of karma and thus Jiva is also called *Bhokta*.

Non-soul (Ajiva)

Ajiva is the opposite of jiva comprising of dharma, adharma, akash, pudgala and kala substances, of these, the first three (medium of motion, medium of rest, space or medium of accommodation are formless (amurta) and indivisible wholes. The forth substance matter is defined as what is possessed of the qualities of touch, taste, colour and smell. Time is atomic in dimension and the kala atoms pervade the whole cosmic space.

Punya and Papa

Punya is the consequence of good deeds. There are nine ways to it. Papa is consequence of bad deeds. Papa is major factor that results in bondage of Jiva. Injury or harm to other living beings is one of the most heinous papa in Jainism.

Asrava {Influx of Karma}

Asrava denotes the inflow of karmic matter by the soul. Just as water flows into a boat through a hole, so the karmic matter flows through asrava into the soul. The nature of activity is shubha (meritorious) or ashubha (demeritorious). The principle “*like causes produce like results*” is accepted as a determining feature of the Jain doctrine of karma.



Samvara (stoppage of karmic matter)

Samvara means stopping, controlling or ceasing of inflow of karmic matter into the soul. Smavara is achieved through self control, restrained movement, virtues, contemplation and monastic conduct.

Bandha (bondage)

Bandha is the union of jiva with pudgala (matter) or soul with non-soul particles. The matter is determined by five causes, namely wrong belief, attachment, carelessness, passions and activity.

Nirjara (shedding the karmic matter)

Nirjara means shedding off, drying up or destruction. Nirjara is to destroy and burn up accumulated karma.

Moksha (liberation)

Moksha is the supreme stage of spiritual attainment when all causes of bondage having been uprooted, the soul is freed from karmic matter. It is a stage of peace, perfect faith, perfect knowledge, and a stage of having achieved siddhi. Moksha is attained through *right faith, right knowledge and right conduct (Tri-ratna)*.

For the perfection of right conduct, five kind of vows (Mahavratas) recommended viz. Non-violence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacharya*) and no greed (*aparigraha*).

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Summary

Every living being has a soul. Every soul is potentially divine, with innate qualities of infinite knowledge, perception, power, and bliss. However, these qualities are masked by its karmas. Therefore, Jains think of every living being as themselves, harming no one and be kind to all living beings. This is the basis of non-violence in Jainism. Every soul is born as a celestial, human, sub-human or hellish being according to its own karmas. Every soul is the architect of its own life, here or hereafter. When a soul is freed from karmas, it becomes free and attains divine consciousness, experiencing infinite knowledge, perception, power, and bliss.

Non-violence in Jainism

Ahimsa is such a cardinal principle of Jainism that it is called beginning and the end of Jain Religion. Ahimsa means not to kill or hurt any living being *by body, mind or speech*. This vrata or vow is possible for only those who dedicate their whole life on the basis of Mahavratas and who have renounced their household life.

Non-possession

Possession of worldly things perpetrates in violence. Desire to get more is the root cause of violence and bondage of soul with karma. Thus, non-possession is the second cardinal principle of Jainism.

Anekantavad

Philosophically an important contribution of Jainism is the doctrine of Anekantavad (non-absolutism). As per this, reality can be examined from many standpoints. The same thing can be

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describe from at least seven standpoints and all can be equally true. This particular school promotes tolerance of contrary opinions among the theologists and philosophers.

Six Dravyas of Jain Cosmology

As per Jain theory, the world is not created, maintained, or destroyed by a supreme, divine deity but functions according to the **universal law** of cyclic existence. It is made of six dravyas as follows:

- *Jiva and Ajiva*: All living and Non-living substances.
- *Pudagala*: This means matter
- *Dharma-Tattva*: This means Principle of Motion
- *Adharma tattva*: This means principle of Rest
- *Akasa*: This means space
- *Kala*: This means time.

Samsāra, as per Jain faith is worldly life characterized by continuous rebirths and reincarnations in various realms of existence. The mundane existence is full of suffering and misery and hence is worth renunciation. *Moksa* is the only liberation from *Samsāra*.

Universal Truth or Kevalya Gyana

Jain doctrine is established upon undying, universal truths. Kevalya Gyana is absolute knowledge and is the highest form of knowledge that a soul can attain. A person who has attained Kevala Gyana is called a *Kevalin*. To get a status of a Jina, attaining Kevalagyana is required first.

Jain Sects

Jain Samgha could not maintain its unity after 200 years of Mahavira's Parinirvana. It split in Digambara sect and Shwetambara Sect during the Mauryan Era. The Digambara sect observed the tenets of religion strictly and the monks remained naked. Shwetambara sect were liberal and they wore white clothes.

Besides monastic nudity, the other beliefs of the Digambaras that are different from the Shvetambaras are as follows:

- The perfect saint (kevalin) does not need food to stay alive
- Mahavira never married;
- No woman can reach moksha without being reborn as a man
- All tirthankaras, when rendered as images, must be portrayed as naked, without ornaments, and with downcast eyes

Moreover, the Digambara do not recognize the Shwetambara canon of religious texts but maintain that the early literature was gradually forgotten and lost completely by the second century ad.

Jain Sangeeti

The conferences of Jainism are called Jain Sangeeti. The first Jain Sangeeti was convened in 300 BC



and this conference was headed by Sthoolbhadra. The second Jain Sangeeti was called in 512 AD and was held in Vallabhi Gujarat. The chairman was Devardhi Kshammaramana.

Jain Symbol

Jain Emblem or Jain Symbol was adopted in 1975, at the auspicious occasion of 2500th Nirvana anniversary of Lord Mahavira. This emblem is used in almost all of the Jain magazines, wedding invitation cards, Jain festival cards, and every magazine with links to events related to Jain society. Use of this emblem helps to create a culture showing dedication and trust for the religion and the values that are represented by the emblem. The pic shows the features of the Jain emblem.

Navakar Mantra

Navakar Mantra is the fundamental prayer in Jainism and can be recited at any time of the day. Praying by reciting this mantra, the devotee bows with respect to liberated souls still in human form (Arihantas), fully liberated souls (Siddhas), spiritual leaders (Acharyas), teachers (Upadyayas) and all the monks. By saluting them, Jains receive inspiration from them to follow their path to achieve true bliss and total freedom from the karmas binding their souls. In this main prayer, Jains do not ask for any favours or material benefits. This mantra serves as a simple gesture of deep respect towards beings who are more **spiritually advanced**. The mantra also reminds followers of the ultimate goal, nirvana or moksha

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Jain Literature

Jain Literature is called Jain Agamas. They are canonical texts of Jainism based on Mahavira's teachings. There are in all 45 texts.

Royal Patrons of Jainism

- Asoka's Grandson Samprati
- King Kharvela of Orissa: set up Jain rock cut cave.
- Gangs, Kadambas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas had patronized Jainism.
- King Amoghavarsha of Rastrakuta dynasty became a Jain Monk.
- The Chalukyan period rock cut caves at Badami and Aihole have the figures of Jain Tirthankaras.
- Samatabhadra in Kanchi preached this religion.
- The Dilwara Jain temples at Mount Abu were built by Chalukya Dynasty kings between 11 to 13th

Other Notable Trivias

- The Jain religion professes peace and non-violence and this was the major reason that mercantile community was attracted towards this religion.
- Chandragupta Maurya had abdicated his throne towards the end of his life and became an ascetic under the Jain saint Bhadrabahu. He migrated to Karnataka and spent his ending days



at sallekhana at Shravanabelagola. Bhadrabahu Cave is the place where he is said to have died by fasting. Bhadrabahu had propagated Jainism in South India.

- The metaphysical thoughts of Jainism are linked to Samkhya Philosophy.
- There are five Jain caves at Ellora, which belong to the ninth and tenth centuries and they all belong to the Digambara sect. Cave 32 at Ellora is called Indra Sabha and it is a Jain Cave. Tiger cave at Udayagiri, and Sittannavasala Cave at Padukottai are Jain caves only.
- Death through gradual starvation at the end of one's natural life is called 'Santhara'. Among Jains it is a means to attain salvation and not suicide. The Jains profess a vast difference between suicide and Santhara. Suicide is committed in a fit of anger or depression while the decision to observe Santhara is taken with a calm mind.
- Neminath or Arishtnemi was a Jain Tirthankar who was considered to be a kinsman of Lord Krishna.
- 11 close disciples of Mahavira are called *Ganadhara*. The Jain Samgha was made up of 11 Ganadharas.
- Virasena, Mahaviracharya, Hemachandra and Mahendra Suri were well known Jain Mathematicians. [uraj_winner](#) | [rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com](#) | [www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies](#)
- 4 Sankalpas viz. Satya, Ahimsa, Asteya and Aparigraha were adopted and preached by Parshvanth.

Maurya Empire

Sixteen Mahajanapadas

In the 8th century BC, India could be broadly understood in terms of five large regions viz. Madhyadesa (the middle country), Pratichya (western lands), Prachya (Eastern region), Uttarpatha (the land in the north of Vindhya and Dakshinpatha (the land south of Vindhya).

Around sixth century BC, the territories of sixteen Mahajanapadas got clearly marked. These included Kasi, Kosala, Anga, Magadha, Vajji or Vriji, Malla, Chedi or Cheti, Vamsa or Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Machcha or Matsya, Surasena, Assaka or Ashmaka, Avanti, Gandhara & Kamboja. The names of at least 9 among them are given in the Vedic Literature. Panini in the 4th century BC mentions as many as 22 different Janpadas, but also mentions 3 most important viz. Magadha, Kosala and Vatsa.



Evolution of Mahajanapadas

The society in Vedic period was rural, where smallest political unit was a **Vis**. However, some later Vedic texts detail about the Janpadas such as *Kuru, Panchala, Matysa, Kunti, Kikata, Jayminia, Kashi, Magadha, Anga, Kamboja* etc. The rise of Janpadas is mainly attributed to the establishment of settled agriculture communities. The development of an agriculture based economy led to increase in crops and cattle wealth coupled with use of iron in technology. The society was now totally divided into 4 Varna. Based upon occupation, new labour class and landed classes emerged. The landed class was

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known as *Gahapatis*. The trade flourished and the towns, which were either located on trade routes such as Mathura or located, near the banks of rivers such as Magadha developed. This transition also saw an emergence of taxing, standing army, territorial powers etc.

The sixteen Mahajanapadas are as follows:

Kasi

Its Capital was Banaras. Kasi was located on the confluence of Ganga and Gomti rivers and somewhere around today's Varanasi.

Kosala

Its capital was Shravasti. It was located in the Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It covers today's districts Faizabad, Gonda, Bahraich etc. and was bordered by River Gomti on the west, River Sadaniva in the east, Nepal hills in the north and River Syandika in the South.

Anga

Its capital was Champa. It covered the modern districts of Munger and Bhagalpur in Bihar. It was later annexed to Magadha by Bimbisara. Magadha was on its west and Rajmahal hills on the west.

Magadha

The initial capital of Magadha was Girivraja or Rajgriha. It covered the modern districts of Patna, Gaya, Shahabad of Bihar. It was bordered by River Son on North and Ganga on South.

Vajji or Vriji

Its capital was Vaishali. It was located on the north of River Ganga in Bihar. The seat of 8 smaller clans / kingdoms called "*Athakula*" out of which Lichhavis, Janatriks, Videhas were very important. It was separated from Kosala from river Gandak.

Malla

Its capital was Kushinagar, Pawa. It covered the modern districts of Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Chedi or Cheti

It was located in the Bundelkhand division of Madhya Pradesh regions to the south of river Yamuna and along river Betwa or Vetravati. Its capital was Suktimati or Sotthivati located somewhere near Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

Vatsa

Its capital was Kausambi. It covered the modern districts of Allahabad and Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

Kuru

Its capital was Indraprastha / Hastinapur / Isukara. It covered the modern Haryana & Delhi-Meerut-Ghaziabad region. Its eastern border was River Yamuna.

Panchala

Its capitals were Ahichhtra (Western Panchal) and Kampilya (eastern Panchala). It covered modern day Rohilkhand division & Upper Gangetic Plains of today's Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand.



Matsya

Its capital was Viratnagar. It was located in the Alwar, Bharatpur, Jaipur districts of Rajasthan.

Surasena

Its capital was Mathura. It was located on the junction of Uttarpatha and Dakshinpatha around Mathura of Today.

Assaka

Its capital was Potali, Potana or Podana. Located on the banks of the Godavari River. Its capital was Potali, Potana or Podana, which now lies in the Nandura Tehsil, Buldana district in the Indian state of Maharashtra and it was the only Mahajanapada situated to the south of the Vindhya Range, and was in Dakshinapatha

Avanti

Its capital was Ujjain & Mahismati. Located on present day Malwa region. It was divided into two parts by the Vindhyas, the northern part had its capital at Ujjayini and the southern part had its centre at Mahishmati.

Gandhara

Its capital was Taxila. Covered the regions between Kabul and Rawalpindi in North Western Provinces, Peshawar, the Potohar plateau and on the Kabul River.

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Kamboja

Its capital Rajpur. It was located around Hindukush mountains of Kashmir.

Brief Political History of Magadha

Of all the Mahajanapadas, Magadha eventually emerged as most powerful mainly because of its peculiar geographical location. It was bordered by Ganga River in North, Son River in West, Vindhya ranges in south and Champa in East. The natural barriers protected Magadha from three sides and it was not easy to invade such a territory. Here is a brief account of the political history of Magadha since Rig-Vedic period accounts.

Earliest known king of Magadha was Brihadrath whose name appears in Rig-Veda as well as Puranas. His son Jarasandha was killed by Bhima in Mahabharata war.

The Brihadrath dynasty was followed by Pradyotas. By that time, the practice of killing one's father to usurp the throne had crept in. The Pradyotas were notorious for patricide and irked people overthrew them in a civil revolt. Next in the line was Haranyaka dynasty, whose great King Bimbisara is remembered as most powerful King of Magadha before Mauryas. Bimbisara was a contemporary of Buddha as well as Mahavira.

Bimbisara used matrimonial alliances and sending envoys to expand his power. Since patricide was in vogue those days, Bimbisara also became a victim of it. His son Ajatshatru starved him to death.

Ajatshatru was also a valorous king who expanded his empire by fighting war with Kashi, Licchhavis and others. During his reign, Mahavira, Buddha and also Makkhali Gosala or Gosala Maskariputta, the



founder of Ajivikas path attained Nirvana.

Ajatshatru was a devout Buddhist as well as Jain. He enshrined the relics of Buddha in a stupa and also renovated many monasteries. Under his sponsorship, the first Buddhist Council was organized at Sattapani caves in Rajgir. By that time, Rajgir served as capital of Magadha. Ajatshatru built a fort at Pataliputra and his son Udayin developed Pataliputra as a city.

Ajatshatru was also a victim of patricide by his son Udayin. Same fate was shared by almost all kings of Haranyaka dynasty. Again there was a civil revolt and public placed Shishunaga on throne of Magadha. Shishunaga was amatya (minister) of last Haranyaka king Nagadasaka.

Kalasoka, the son of Shishunaga made Pataliputra as new capital of Magadha. He may be of dark complexion as the contemporary Sri Lankan texts mention his name as *Kakavarna* (of color like a crow). Kalsoka sponsored second Buddhist council in 383 BC under monk Sabakami. His ten sons ruled simultaneously before Magadha slipped into hands of Nandas.

The founder of Nanda dynasty was Mahapadmananda. Since he had one of the largest standing armies in the history of world {2 Lakh infantry, 8000 war chariots, 6000 elephants!}, he is also called Ugrasena. His army was so large that he could arrange it in a lotus shape {Padmavyuh} and he was so wealthy that his wealth could be counted in Padma (One quadrillion). He subdued all the contemporary powers and consolidated power of Magadha.

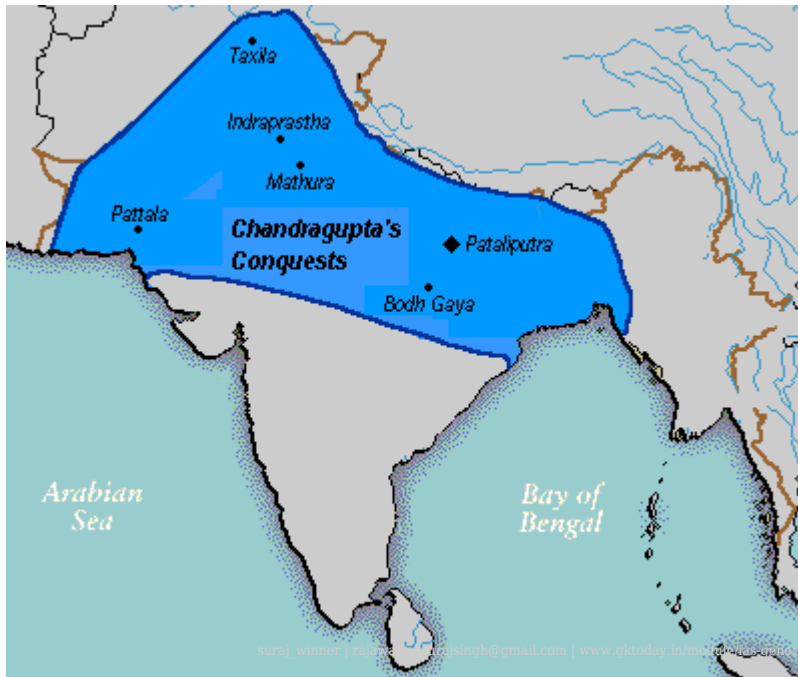
Mahapadmananda, who is thought to be from humble origin {son of a barber} was the first non-kshatriya ruler in the history of India. Nandas were also the first empire builders of India.

The Nandas ruled for around 100 years. During the reign of last Nanda ruler Dhananada, Alexander invaded from west. Alexander was able to cross Beas but before he could cross Ganga, he heard that Dhananda's 2 Lakh strong army is waiting for his men for a bloody massacre. He lost the confidence and moved back. While moving back, he died on the way probably due to Malaria.

However, this invasion along with several other such invasions from west had put the North-West on boil. In Magadha, the popularity of Dhananda had went down because of his lavishness and greed that led to extortion and corruption. The situation was such that any brave heart could seize the opportunity to topple the Nandas. This opportunity was cashed by Kautilya, who was once thrown out of Nanda's court. To seek revenge, he groomed Chandragupta Maurya, the brave young man, who is thought to be the son of Dhananda's shudra concubine Mura.

Chandragupta first gave a death blow to Greeks in north-west and then attacked and dethroned the Nandas. Nandas life was spared and they were asked to run with as much treasure as much their chariot could carry.

The most important implication of rise of Chandragupta Maurya was that India was, for the first time perhaps, united politically. The below map shows the extent of Maurya empire at that time.



Meanwhile, Alexander was succeeded by his one of his generals Seleucus, who launched a campaign to get back the Greek territories lost to Mauryas. He was able to cross Indus, but could not succeed to defeat Chandragupta. An alliance was made in which Seleucus returned some of the won areas to Chandragupta. Chandragupta gifted some 500 war elephants to Seleucus and also some kind of matrimonial alliance was made in which son / daughter of one was married to the daughter / son of other. Seleucus also sent Megasthenes to court of Chandragupta.

In the old age, Chandragupta abdicated the throne in favour of his son Bindusara and became a disciple of Jain Monk Bhadrabahu. He spent his last days at Sharavanbelgola and supposed to have died practicing *Santhara* there.

Chandragupta's successor Bindusara (also known as Amitraghata- destroyer of enemies) carried on the legacy of Mauryas and cemented good alliances with Greek King Antiochus-I. He ruled for some 25 years and was succeeded by Ashoka after a bloody battle of succession among his sons.

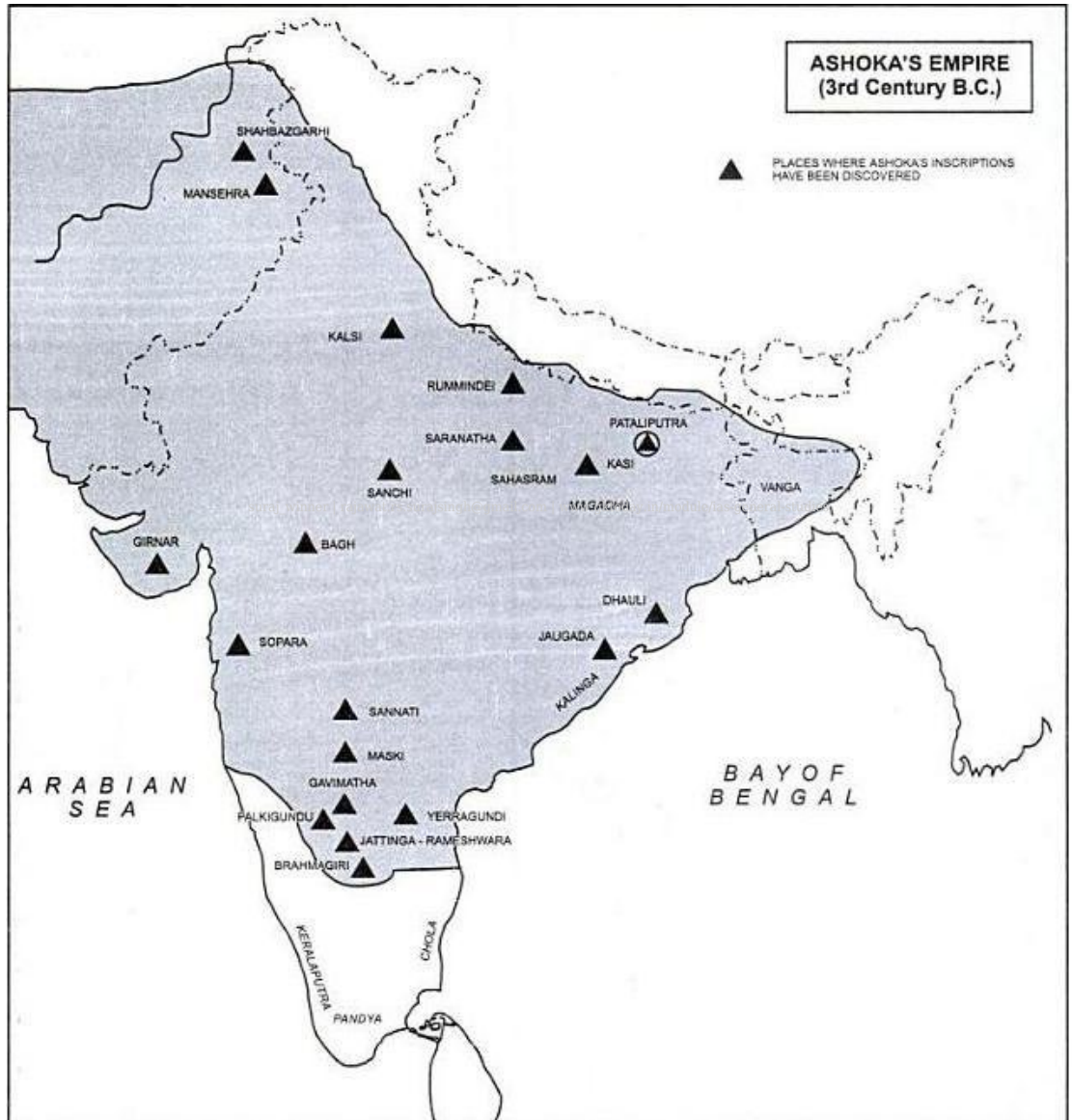
Before becoming ruler of Magadha, Asoka had shown his valour in Taxila and Avanti where he was sent by his father mainly to subdue the revolts. He served as Governor of Taxila and Ujjain before terminating as many as 99 other contenders to the throne of his father. He was such a cruel person that some texts call him Chandashoka.

During the time of Ashoka, the boundaries of Maurya empire extended to maximum by that time. He invaded and annexed Kalinga mainly because *Kalinga controlled land and sea routes to South India.*



Prelims Indian History -3: From Mauryas to Guptas

However, this battle changed his mind and introduced a new element in the politics of India in the form of cultural coherence based on the moral values of Buddhism and a norm of benignity, civility and humanity in matters of governance.



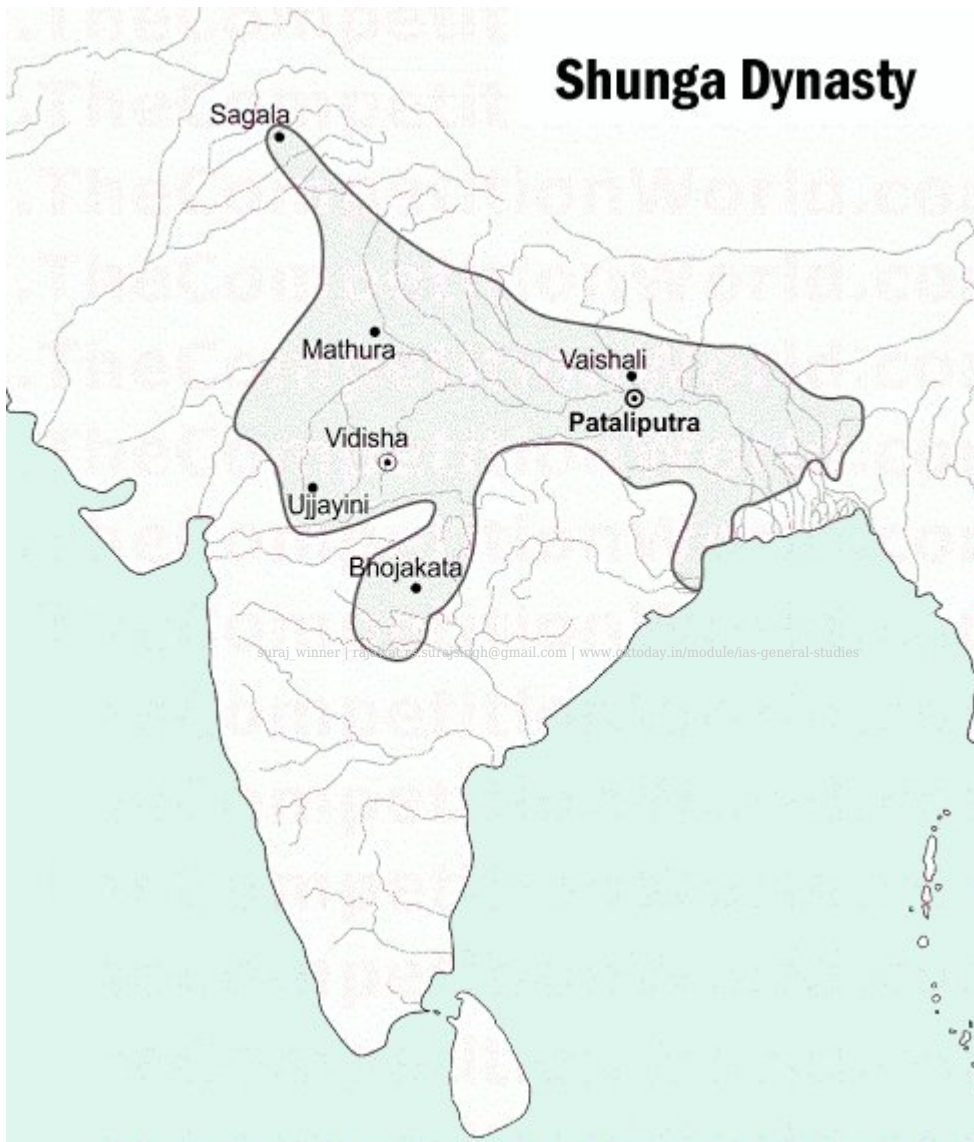
However, such a policy was bound to have its side effects on polity after Ashoka's death. Asoka died in 232 BC after ruling for four decades. His sons could not survive the waves of changes. His six successors including Jaluka, Samprati and Dasaratha could rule for only 52 years.



The life of last Maurya ruler Brihadrath was troubled. By this time, there were repeated attacks of Yavanas / Greeks from western side. His brave commander Pushyamitra Shunga was able to repel two attacks of Greeks but was not happy with the attitude of his master. He killed Brihadrath in 185-184 BC and thus closed the chapter of Mauryas from Indian history, thus founding Sunga dynasty.

Pushyamitra and his son Agnimitra ruled from Pataliputra. *The later Shungas made Vidisha as their capital.* However, by the time of Shungas, many independent rulers had appeared in west as well as south. The most remarkable was rise of Satavahanas in south and Indo-Greeks, Kushanas, and many others in west and Kharvela in Kalinga (east). Thus, the boundaries of Magadh by the time of Shunga had narrowed down to some parts of Central India only as shown in below graphics:

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The last Shunga ruler Devabhuti was killed by his own amatya (minister) Vasudeva Kanva around 73BC. Thus, Magadha slipped into hands of Kanvas, who were Brahmins by caste. Only few rulers of this Kanva dynasty are known on the basis of numismatics. This dynasty was finally overthrown by Satavahanas in 30BC and thus once mighty Magadha was broken into many small parts ruled by different dynasties at different periods.



Important Observations / Facts on Maurya and Shunga Rule

Here are some of the important observations summarized for your examinations.

Tisya

Tisya was the name of one of the brothers of Ashoka. The Sri Lankan texts portray Ashoka as a cruel prince, who terminated all of his 99 brothers except his uterine brother Tisya for throne.

Ashoka's Names

Ashoka has been mentioned by different names in different texts and edicts. In most of the edicts, he is mentioned as Devanampiya and Piyadassi. In Babru Inscription, he is mentioned as *Piyadassi laja Magadhe* (Piyadassi, King of Magadha). The Maski edict mentions his name as Asoka while Puranas name him Asokavardhana. Girnar Inscription of Rudradaman mentions him as Asoka Maurya.

Notes on Edicts and Inscriptions

Apart from defining the boundaries of Maurya Empire, the inscriptions of Ashoka provide many details about contemporary life, administration and religion. British archaeologist and historian James Prinsep decoded these edicts. Some important facts for your examination have been summarized here

Geographical dispersion

The edicts and inscriptions of Asoka are dispersed in modern India, Pakistan and Nepal.

Languages and Scripts

They are in four languages depending on their location viz. Prakrit (Magadhi / Ardhamagadhi), Sanskrit, Greek and Aramaic. The Prakrit and Sanskrit inscriptions have been written in Brahmi script. The inscriptions in Pakistan region were written in Kharoshthi script. Rest were written in Greek or Aramaic scripts. However, the Kandahar Rock Inscription is bilingual.

Subject Matters

Most inscriptions discuss about Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism, his efforts to spread Buddhism, his moral and religious precepts, and his social and animal welfare efforts. You can check the contents of these edicts-wise [here](#). The various subjects were as follows:

- Prohibition of animal slaughter, festive gathering and killing of animals.
- Care for man, animals, Brahmins and Monks. "Every human is my child..." Tolerance for all people. King's desire to know about conditions of people. Welfare measures.
- Discuss about the Chola, Pandyas, Satyaputra and Keralaputras (Cheras) as Kingdoms of Asoka in South India.
- Sending of Rajukas (rural officers), Pradesikas (district officers) and Yuktas (subordinate officers) to all areas of Kingdom every five years to spread message of Asoka's Dhamma policy.
- Supremacy of Dhammaghosha on Bherighosa and appointment of Dhammamahamattas for spread of Dhamma.



- Asoka's first Dhammayatra to Bodhgaya and Bodhi tree.
- Victory over Kalinga and how it changed his heart.
- Hint about Asoka's contemporaries' viz. Antiochus, Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas, Alexander, Cholas, Pandyas, Kamboj, Nabhaks, Bhoja, Andhra
- Giving away the Barabara cave to Ajivika sect.

Apart from the above, the following things must be noted with their respective pillar names:

- The Rummindei Pillar Inscription discusses about Asoka's visit to Lumbini & exemption of Lumbini from tax. This is the first direct archeological evidence of Buddha's birth in Lumbini.
- Nigalisagar Pillar Inscription was originally located at Kapilvastu. It mentions that Asoka increased the height of stupa of Buddha Konakamana to its double size.

Notes on Conquest of Kalinga

Several inscriptions have discussed about Asoka's conquest on Kalinga (modern Odisha). Asoka had invaded Kalinga in 9th year of his reign.

Reason for Invasion

Maurya Empire was probably in friendly terms with the southern kings such as Cholas and Pandyas.

Kalinga was strategically located because:

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- It was located in the heart of his territory
- It controlled routes to South India.

Once Kalinga was won, there was no much need to win over further territories. The Kalinga war was a horrifying event. It mentions that hundred and fifty thousand people were displaced, hundred thousand people were killed and many hundred thousand perished. The vivid description of Kalinga war is given in 13th Rock Edict. After the war of Kalinga Asoka realized the gravity of war and the event had a profound impact on his mind. He vowed to never wage such war and also directed his sons and grandsons.

The 13th Rock edict mentions Asoka's remorse after the war and his changed attitude from Digvijay to Dhammavijay. Asoka adopted Buddhism in 9th year of his reign after winning Kalinga. Nigrodha, a boy monk, inspired him. Later, he met **Moggaliputta Tissa, who ultimately become his mentor.**

Later his brother Tissa, queen Karuvaki also adopted Buddhism.

Asoka's Dhamma

In the Bhabru edict Asoka says that he has full faith in Buddha, Sangha and Dhamma. But he never forced his ideal on people. The **Pillar Edict II** says:

Dhamma sadhu, kiyam cu dhamme ti? Apasinave, bahu kayane, daya, dane, sace, socaye.

The meaning is: Dhamma is good, but what constitutes Dhamma? (It includes) little evil, much good, kindness, generosity, truthfulness and purity. In his **Pillar Edict VII**, he says that all sects desire both self control and purity of mind. In the **Major Rock Edict XII**, he directed and determined



request for tolerance among different religious sects. He says that he honors all sects and both laymen and monks. We can say that Asoka's Dhamma is a moral code of ethics. Asoka propagated his Dhamma with zeal and earnestness of a missionary. He mentions in Minor Rock Edict I that as a result of his efforts for 1 year (or more) "Human beings who were unmixed were caused to be mixed with Gods throughout Jambudweepa. This was because of his well planned measures such as celestial Chariots (*Vimana*), luminous balls of Fire (used for showing light in nights) and elephants. Asoka abandoned the pleasure tours (*vihara yatra*s) and hunting.

Note: Asoka sponsored the third Buddhist Council in 250 BC. This council was held at Pataliputra. It was presided by Moggaliputta Tissa. Abhidhamma Pitaka was established in this council.

Reasons for Decline of Maurya Empire

Asoka died in 232 BC after a reign of 40 years. The Maurya Empire declined in few decades of his death. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, immediately after the death of Asoka, the Maurya territories were partitioned into two parts viz. east and west. This partition disturbed the unity of the empire. Secondly, most of the successors of Asoka were weak and could not handle the highly centralized administration which only a robust political leader could manage. Thirdly, the pious policy of Asoka might have its own implications. However, this reason is debated because Asoka had left only policy of annexation but still maintained a huge army. Fourthly, it is argued that a Brahminical revolution ended Maurya empire. This argument has little weight.

The Insignificance of Coins

About the Mauryan Empire, we know from the literary sources, Epigraphic Sources and Foreign Accounts but the *Numismatic Sources are least significant because the coins were punch marked and not bear many details*. The coins became a major source of historic information only much later after Mauryas.

The Maski Edict revealed name of Asoka

Maski is a site near Tungbhadra river in Karnataka's Raichur District. In 1915, a minor rock edict of Emperor Ashoka (Maski Edict) was discovered by C. Beadon. This edict had the name of King Asoka. Prior to this edict, all edicts had the name of Devanampiyetiśa and after the discovery of this edict, the real name of Asoka was concluded and it was also concluded that all the edicts found in the Indian Sub Continent were of Asoka.

The lake constructed by Mauryas

Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman-I mentions that Girnar Lake was constructed by the Mauryas and he repaired some parts of this lake. It was a dam built by Mauryas to check floods.

Political, Social and Economical Life during Mauryas

The Mauryan imperial polity held sway over nearly three quarters of India's landmass for a period



little less than two centuries. As with any other great empire, the genesis of Maurya Empire was in the economic and military strength of its heartland and the ability of its leaders to assert their military power beyond their frontiers. This ability was asserted by first three emperors of the dynasty. There were three major governance factors behind the Maurya hegemony. *First*, there was a highly centralized administrative machinery with a steel frame of bureaucratic institutions and machinery comparable to modern Indian administration. *Secondly*, the administrative diktats were able to infuse a sense of security and belonging to the masses though it demanded strict obedience to the emperor. *Third* was a contradictory element which made its way after the conquest of Kalinga in the form of moral exhortation inscribed on stone in several parts of the empire. These messages instituted an ideal norm of benign and humane governance as a benchmark of political maturity. This third element did not last long beyond life of Asoka and is called the *Mauryan Paradox*. Here is a summary of the administration and life of the Maurya world.

The King

King was the supreme source of all powers and was center of all authorities, judiciary and administration. In the highly centralized administration, King used to select ministers, high officials and established a well-planned system of supervision and inspection.

The Mantriparishada

King was assisted by his council of Ministers (*Mantriparishadha*), which was headed by a *mantriparishadadhyakshya*. The *mantriparishadadhyakshya* was also head of the ubiquitous civil servants called *Adhyakshas* or *Amatyas* kept in touch with all sections of the society and made a highly skilled secretariat divided into several departments. Some of these departments and their *Adhyakshas* are listed below:

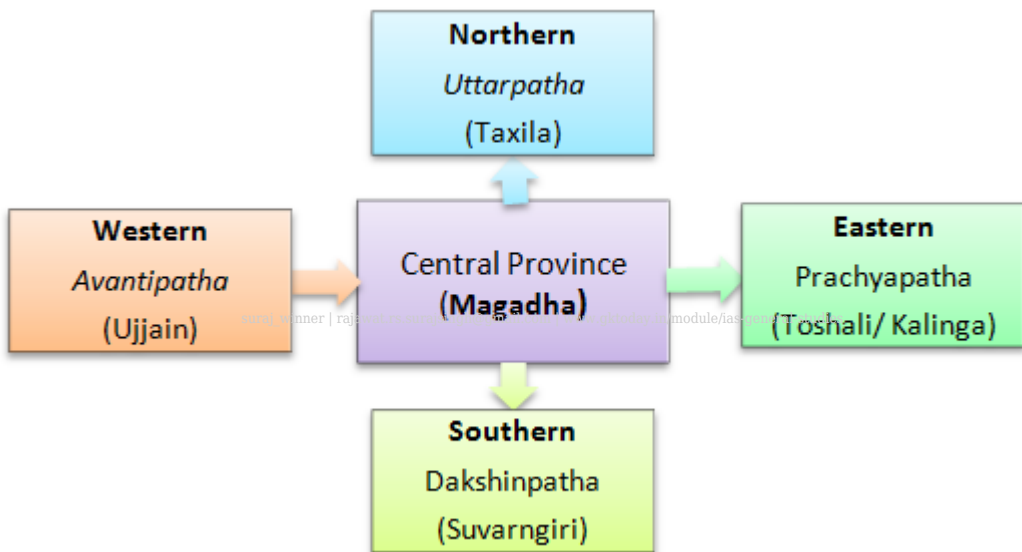
- Akahalapadhyaksha (Accountant General)
- Sannidhata (Royal Treasury)
- Koshthagara (Treasury Superintendent)
- Akaraadhyaksha (Mines Superintendent)
- Suvarnaadhyaksha (Gold Superintendent)
- Panyaadhyaksha (Commerce Superintendent)
- Kupyadhyaksha (Forest Officer)
- Lavanadhyaksha (Salt)
- Ayudhgaraadhyaksha (Armoury)
- Tulamanapantavaadhyaksha or Pautavadhyaksha (Weights and Measurements)
- Sutraadhyaksha (Textiles – spinning and weaving)
- Sitaadhyaksha (Agriculture)



- Suradhyaksha (Excise)
- Navadhyasksha (Shipping and maritime)
- Mudradhyaksha (Government documents)
- Pattanadhyasksha (Ports)
- Lakshanaadhyasksha (Mint)
- Samstha (Trade Routes)

Provincial Administration:

It is thought that the Maurya empire was divided into 5 provinces.



1. The Northern Province Uttarpatha was having its capital at Taxila and some mandals were Shakal, Kandhar and Saurashtra.
2. The Southern province Dakshinpatha's capital was Suvarngiri.
3. Western province Avantipatha's capital was Ujjain
4. The eastern Prachyapatha was having its capital at Toshali near Kalinga.
5. Magadha was the Central province & Capital of the entire kingdom.

The provinces were administered by either a prince or a member of the royal family which was the viceroy of the king.

District Administration

Each district was administered by three officers' viz. *Pradeshika*, *Rajuka*, & *Yukta*. *Pradesika* was senior and *Rajuka* was subordinate. *Yukta* was subordinate to both of them. It was duty of the *Pradesika* to tour the kingdom every five year and collect details of the administration.



Village Administration

Village was the smallest unit of polity and it was called *Grama*. The head of the *grama* was a *Gramika*. The *Gramika* was not a paid employee of the government but was elected by the village people. The 10 villages were collectively headed by a *Gopa* and 100 villages were collectively headed by a *Sthanaka*. Gramika in Open Panchayats solved most disputes.

Gudhapurusha or Spies

There was a well knitted espionage system of Gudhapurushas in the Mauryan administration. The spies were of two kind viz. *Sansthana* (stationary) and *Sanchari* (wandering). These spies were ears and eyes of the King, who kept the king informed about all the details of the bureaucracy. The agents included householders, merchants, disciples, ascetics, pensioners and Poisonous girls called “*Vishkanyas*”. The ambassadors who were appointed in the foreign countries were also sort of spies.

The Army

The overall in charge of the Mauryan army was Commander in chief, who was immediately junior to the King. The Mauryan army included 6 Lakh infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9000 war elephants, 1000 chariots and other things such as transport equipments. There was a War Council, which was further divided into 6 sub-councils each with 5 members which formulated policy for infantry, cavalry, elephant forces, chariots, navy and commisserate. *Navy, Transport in forces and commisserate were Mauryan innovations.*

Transport

There was a separate department of road. The width of the cattle tracks, pedestrians, chariots and other traffic were different. There were trunk roads which were managed by the department of Roads. Trees were planted on both sides of the roads. Inns were constructed at places on the road. Nurseries and drinking water facilities such as wells, canals were provided

The Agriculture

Sitadhyaksha was the chief of the Agriculture department. There was full-fledged irrigation department as well. There was a network of canals which provided the water for irrigation as per the measurements of the land i.e. requirements.

Pushyagupta, who was a provincial governor of Chandragupta Maurya, constructed “Sudarshan Lake” at Girnar in Gujarat. Rice of different varieties was grown, *Kondrava* was a kind of coarse grain. Wheat, Pulses, Saffron, Mustard, Linseed, Sesamum etc. were grown.

Caste System and Slaves

There was a well-developed “caste” system as per the accounts of Megasthenes. Megasthenes writes that there were seven castes viz. philosophers (he indicated Brahmins), farmers, soldiers, herdsmen, craftsmen, magistrates and soldiers. So based upon the account we can figure out that still the caste system was based upon “occupation” rather than birth. The marriage and polygamy both were present.



Polygamy was confined to Royal classes. Normal people could marry to other women if there was no “son”.

The women had their property in the form of *Stridhana*, which included bridal gift. Women enjoyed high status. The women were appointed as assistances and bodyguards of King. Offenses against women were punishable. There was no slavery in the sense that people used to work as *dasa*, out of their own compulsions. No Arya including a Shudra could be made *dasa* forcibly. The 14th book of Arthashastra titled Secret Means (*Aupanisadika*) deals with a number of rites and practices.

The Mauryan Art

Mauryas contributed to arts significantly. The palace of Chandragupta Maurya at the Pataliputra was mostly made up of wood. The traces of this palace have been found at Kumhrar near Patna. It's an 80-pillar hall, which speaks of Mauryan Palace art. A large number of Stupas were built in Mauryan Era, many of them by Asoka. The Buddhist tradition writes that Asoka built 84000 Stupas. The rock cut caves of Mauryan era are at Barabar hills, located near Gaya and they are oldest surviving Rock Cut caves. The Nagarjuna Hills rock cut caves are of Asoka and his successors. The barabar caves have been cut of granite and are large halls which provided place for worshippers. The Asokan Pillars are Monolithic and mostly used Hard sandstone procured from Chunar near Varanasi. They were finely chiselled and highly polished.

There are two distinct categories of Maurya art viz. Royal art and popular art. The Yaksha image from parkam and Yakshini Image from Besnagar are examples of popular art. While, the pillars are example of Royal art.

Census

There was a proper system of census, which registered all the details of the deaths and births. *Nagarika* was the census officer who was responsible to keep a ready reference data of the farmers, cattle, traders, cowherds etc. This was to ensure that proper tax is levied.

Public health

There were proper hospitals and *Bheshajas* (Doctors) appointed along with a team of midwives, nurses etc. Treatment was free universally. Food adulteration was a punishable offense which invited a death sentence.

Crimes and Judiciary

Suppression of crimes, maintenance of peace and protection of the subjects were the chief duties of the King. The antisocial elements were called “*Kantakas*”. There were two kinds of courts “civils” and criminals. The civils courts were *Dharmastheya* and the Criminal Courts were “*Kantakashodhna*”. The idea of *Kantakashodhna* was to weed out the antisocial elements. The king was the source of Supreme Justice. Death Sentences were common and Asoka's edicts detail that he gave additional time to the



persons under the Capital punishment to offer donations and repent so that they get a better life in next birth.

Economy: Revenue & Taxes

There was an advanced concept of “responsibility accounting” which envisaged a preparation of budget and activity planning, reporting on the revenue and expenditure, responsibility for both the revenues and expenditures. The “full treasury” was guarantee to the prosperity of state says Arthashastra. Treasury received revenues from farms, mines, forests, pasture lands etc. Tributes were received when a prince was born. Chief source for revenue was “land tax”. It was 1/6 to 1/4 of the total produce and it was collected by the revenue officers. The more productive lands and irrigated lands invited more tax. All craftsmen (except royal) and traders paid taxes.

Taxes were of two kinds viz. *Bali & Bhaga*. The Bali was religious tribute. Bhaga was the part of the produce. Asoka edict says that Lumbini was exempted from *Bali* and *Bhaga* was reduced to 1/8 parts of the reduce. *Bhaga, which was 1/6th of the produce, was called shadbhaga (6th part) or Rajbhaga (state part).* Maintenance of the Royal palaces, members, ministers and public welfare were the main avenues to use the revenue.

Foreign Trade

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Foreign Trade by means of the land and sea was prevalent, and it was regulated by **passports kinds of documents**. Indigo, cotton and silk was most traded property. Antiochus I with his joint rule with Selucus issued coins of Indian standard rather than the Attic Standard. This shows that the Mauryan Economy was world’s largest economy and the currency of Mauryas was accepted worldwide and was main currency of that time. The trade routes were called *Vanikpatha*.

Political History from Shungas to Hunas

The decline of Maurya Empire resulted in the loss of a pan-Indian authority exercised from Magadha. Gradually, a number of competing powers emerged in different parts of India. The imperial monarchy was thus replaced by regional monarchs and the centralized steel frame of Maurya Empire was lost in oblivion.

Many of the regional monarchs were of foreign / Central Asian origins and in the process of establishing their power; they had to subscribe to the *prevailing religion* and social customs of India. Some of them subscribed to the Brahmanic notion of caste and Varna system but for most of them including the mighty Kushans, *Buddhism provided a relatively easier route to become adjusted to the Indian social system.* {This answers why Kushanas embraced Buddhism}. Here is a brief political account of what happened from the reign Pushyamitra Sunga onwards till the rise of imperial Guptas.



Gangetic Heartland under Shungas, Kanvas and Mahameghavahanas

After the last Maurya ruler Brihadrath was killed by his commander Pushyamitra Sunga, Magadh passed into the hands of Sunga dynasty. Both Pushyamitra and his son Agnimitra ruled from Pataliputra but then later Sungas moved the capital of Magadh to Vidisha. The life of Sungas was not easy because of troubled neighbourhoods and frequent raids. They fought war with almost every contemporary including Kalinga, Satavahana, Indo-Greeks, Panchals as well as Mathura. For example, Pushyamitra had to repel not only two Greek attacks from western side by Demetrius and Meander; but also conquest of Kalinga's Kharvela from South-east side.

His son and successor Agnimitra {hero of *Malvikagnimitram* of Kalidasa} also had similar life. He ruled for only eight years and was mostly indulged in such fights including the fight to control Vidarbha. The last rulers of Shunga dynasty were Bhagabhadra and Devabhuti, about whom we have few details. Devabhuti was killed by his own amatya (minister) Vasudeva Kanva around 73 BC and Magadha passed to Kanvas who were Brahmins by origin.

By the end of Sunga Empire in 73 BC, their territory had narrowed down to some parts of Central India only between Ujjain, Mathura, Saket, Sanchi, and Kapilvastu.

Magadha under Kanvas | winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

When Magadha was under Kanvas, it had further lost its territories in west to ever strong Greeks and in east to different rulers such as Kosala Kingdom {set up by Muladeva after killing one Sunga remnant called Sumitra}. Kanvas were finally dethroned by Satavahanas and Magadha was annexed into Satavahana Empire.

Mahameghavahanas of Kalinga

One of the great regional powers that emerged by seizing the opportunity of declining Mauryas in the Gangetic heartland were Mahameghavahanas of Kalinga in modern Odisha. The third ruler of this dynasty Kharvela (ruled 209-170BC) emerged mightier and revived the old glory of Kalinga. He had left a Hathigumpha inscription in the Udayagiri cave near Bhubneswar wherein he has given a biographical sketch of his life year by year. He rebuilt the capital of Kalinga (Kalinganagara), destroyed the capitals of Hindu tribes (Musikas, Rastrakas and Bhijakas), extended a canal built by Mauryas, advanced his territorial possessions till Barabar hills by defeating king of Rajgir, built a Mahavijayaprasad (great palace of victory) on banks of river Pranchi, subdued the Brihaspatimitra of Magadha and built a magnificent temple at Bhubneshwar.

Thus Kharvela, who seems to be either a Jain / or a freethinker king was able to raid into the hitherto Maurya / Shunga / Kanva / others territories to consolidate his power. He also fought with Satavahana and spread his Kingdom from Ganga to Kaveri. However, after his death, his kingdom declined soon and was finally annexed into Satavahana Empire.



North West Indian Subcontinent: Indo-Greeks, Pahalavas, Shakas and Kushanas

During the last two centuries before Christ, most of India's north-west region was attacked and occupied by the invaders from Bactria (this referred to region between River Oxus and Hindukush Mountains in Afghanistan). Bactria at that time was one of the parts of Persian conquests of Alexander the great and a part of Seleucid Kingdom. One such notable king of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire was **Antiochus-II**, who was in good relations Asoka and had received Ashoka's Buddhist proselytism. {Apart from Antiochus-II, Asoka has mentioned names of four other Yavana kings viz. Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander in one of his edicts}.

Indo-Greeks

These kings used to appoint governors for local administration. In third century BC, **Bactria** and another such province **Parthia** revolted against the Seleucid Kings and their governors declared themselves Kings in their own might. These Graeco-Bactrian invaders clashed with Mauryas to grab few territories but were not successful during the heyday of mighty Maurya Empire. But as the decline of Mauryas set in, they became bolder. For example, one Yavana monarch called **Demetrius-I** used to rule from Sakala (Sialkot) but had occupied a large part of the Indus delta, Saurashtra and Kutch. Even the Sungas were powerless against them.

Thus, the result of a weakened Magadha was that at least thirty Yavana rulers belonging to various lineages established their tiny and often overlapping territories in areas of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan Gujarat etc. In Indian texts, all of these Greco-Bactrian kings were called Yavana. However, the British scholars classified those who invaded India and established territories in Indian sub-content as Indo-Greek rulers.

In India, the upper elite i.e. Brahmins hated the Yavanas. But Buddhism gave them some easier way to reach out to the masses. This was a key reason that many of them embraced Buddhism. Worth note here is the Yavana king Menander-II, who reigned between 90-85 BC and is called as *mighty Yavana King of Sakala (Sialkot)*. The Buddhist text *Milindapanho* records the dialogue between Meander II and **Nagasena**. He subscribed to Buddhism and is greatly revered by the Buddhist texts. His coins have been engraved with “*Dhammachakka*” of Buddhism.

However, Yavanas also had no cool life. Both the Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek rulers *faced invasions of the Parthians and Scythians*.

Indo-Parthians

At the time when Bactrians revolted against the Seleucid Kings, the governors of another such region Parthia also revolted in similar way. Parthia was around the south-east reaches of the Caspian Sea. From there, the newly independent Parthian kings went on raiding spree up to Punjab in India. The Parthians who set up their territory in Indian subcontinent were called Indo-Parthians. One



such Indo-Parthian ruler was *Gondophares-I* who was able to grab some small territories in modern Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Indians texts, **Parthians are called *Pahalavas***.

Shakas

But the Parthians themselves faced onslaught of a Central Asian group called Scythians. Scythians were a horse riding nomadic pastoralists with their original home near Aral Sea. In the second century BC, there was a great migration of various nomadic tribes such as Hiung-chi, Wu-san Yueh-chi tribes from Chinese region towards west and then towards south east. Before this migration, these tribes, particularly the Yueh-chi were living in the Xinjiang and Gansu region of China. They were defeated and then driven off towards west towards Aral Sea. The construction of Great wall of China was also aimed at keeping these nomadic groups away from the China's territory.

The Yueh-Chi people now squeezed persecuted and killed the Scythians in their own home and pushed them towards Iran. But there, the Parthians drove them off to further east and thus in first century BC, Scythians started inflowing Gandhara region to set up some small territories in that area.

The earliest Shaka ruler was Maues or **Moga**, who subdued Indo-Greeks and established a territory in Gandhara region between 80-65 BC. He ruled from capital Sirkap. Sirkap is located near Taxila in Punjab province of Pakistan and was actually established by Demetrius-I but was destroyed and rebuilt many times. Today, it lies as an archaeological site only. Moga issued a large number of copper coins with images of Shiva as well as Buddha. The famous Taxila copper plate (aka Moga inscription) testifies his authority and his allegiance to Buddhism.

However, Moga was unable to expand beyond Jhelum river. His successors Azes-I and Azes-II put an end to the Indo-Greeks and annexed their territories. Few years later, they penetrated deeper into India including areas around Yamuna Valley (Mathura), Upper Deccan, Saurashtra, Malwa etc.

In due course, they established two authorities in India viz. Northern Shakas of Taxila and Mathura; and Western Shakas of Malwa and Kathiawar. Some scholars divided them into five different branches, popularly called as Satraps.

Shaka Satraps

The Satrap system was directly influenced by the **Achaemenid and Seleucid administrations**. Satraps were basically governors of these kings who used to handle the local administration of their provinces. At times, satraps used to rebel against their kings as it was a case with Bactrians and Parthians. In India, the both Parthians and Shakas loved to be called as Satrapas. There were several different branches of Shaka Satrapas including Kapisa Satraps, Taxila Satraps, Mathura Satraps, Ujjaini Satraps and Satraps of upper Deccan. Their key rulers under these were as follows: {Don't remember}



- Kapisa Satrapas: Liaka Kusulaka and Patika Kusulaka
- Mathura Satraps: Hagana and Hagamasa, Rajuvula (his name comes from Mora inscription found near Mathura)
- Satraps of Western India: Bhumaka and Nahapana
- Ujjain Satrapas: Chastana {He fought and repelled the Satavahanas}

We note here that Chastana's grandson Rudradaman-I had not only indianized himself by name and methods but also considered himself a greatest Shaka rulers (Mahasatrapa). His court was decorated by a Greek writer Yavanesvara. Yavanesvara had translated the Yavanajataka from Greek to Sanskrit. It had influenced astrology in India.

In 150AD he described his exploits in the Junagarh Rock Inscriptions that he defeated Satavahana king Vashishtiputra Satakarni and chosen himself as protector of all castes. Satakarni and Rudradaman-I had family relations and that was the reason that despite defeat he spared life of Satakarni not once but twice.

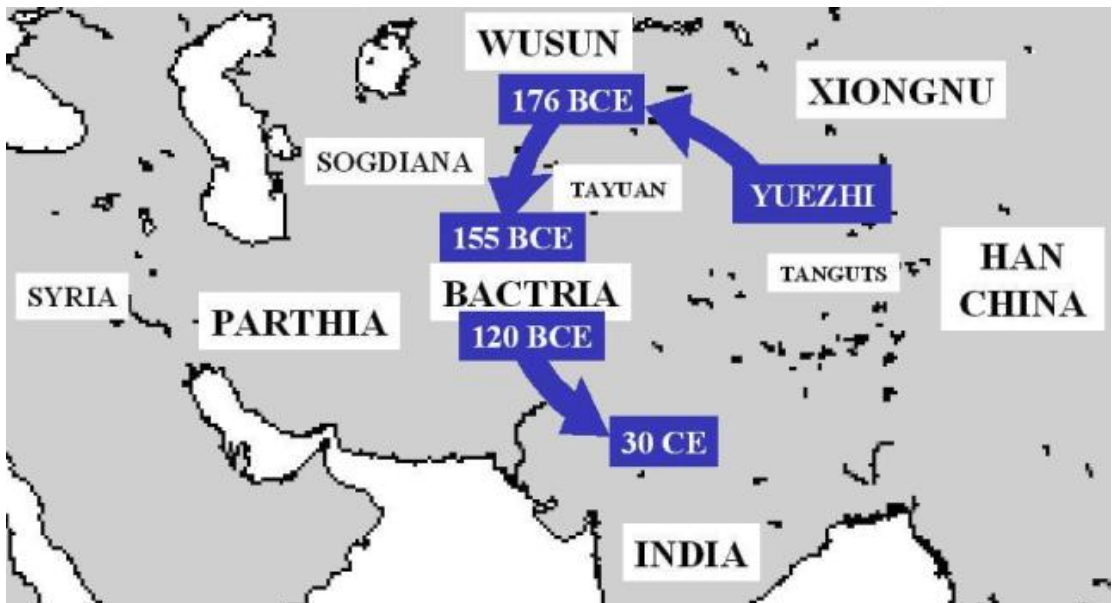
Junagarh Rock Inscription also credits Rudradaman-I with supporting the cultural arts and Sanskrit literature and repairing the dam built by the Mauryans. This refers to the repair of Lake Sudarshana, which was constructed by Mauryas probably to contain the floods.

The successors of Rudradaman-I ruled their territories till 4th centuries and by that time their lands slipped to either Satavahanas or Arab chieftains.

Kushanas

In the above description, we have studied that the Yueh-Chi and other tribes had suffocated the Scythians in their home near Aral Sea in 2nd century BC when they were driven out of China by King Xiongnu. They attacked and pushed the Scythians towards India and influx of Shakas finally established various Shaka satraps in India.

But these tribes from China were notorious in tribal / nomadic warfare. The Shakas had avoided them once but then there were several waves of these people moving in a circular path from China towards first west and then south and east towards India as shown in below map:



In the nomadic warfare, the Yueh-chis were defeated by the Hiung-nu tribe and pushed them towards Bactria. Here, they gradually evolved from nomadism to sedentary people and established different groups. One of these groups was called Kuei-shuang or Kushans.

Thus, Kushanas were originally from the Yueh-Chi tribes and *were also known as Tocharians*. In the beginning of Christian era, they subdued all the other groups and assumed control of Afghanistan and eastern Iran under their leader Kujula Kadphises (ruled 30-80AD). Kujula had cleared the region from not only Greeks but also Shakas and every other rival power. He adopted the title of Dharma-thida showing allegiance to Buddhism and Hinduism both.

His son, Wima Kadphises, entered north India in the middle of the first century AD and brought all of Punjab, Kashmir and the plain of the Ganges up to Kashi!

Wima is known for having introduced the Gold coins for the first time in India. He issued huge number of Gold coins which indicates the economic power of Kushanas. He also maintained a silk route for trade between India and China, Alexandria, and Roman Empire.

The most powerful ruler of Kushana was Kanishka-I, the able son of Wima.

Under him, Kushana Empire reached its climax and it extended from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to Mathura, Kashmir and Kashi. As per the Tibetan Sources, Kanishka is considered to have conflicted with the Pataliputra and Saket and *had taken Āśvaghosa, the Buddhist Monk to Purushpura*. Kanishka conflicted with Han Dynasty rulers of China and defeated its General in second attempt. He is also known to have subjugated the rulers of Khotan, Yarkand etc. and is considered to have established a



great kingdom only after the Mauryas in India.



Under him, the trans-Asian Kushana Empire became one of the great conduits for India's international trade.

Kanishka was succeeded by Vashishka. The last great Kushana ruler was Vasudeva-I who ruled till 225AD. By that time, the western region of Kushana Empire started breaking away under Indo-Sasanians (called Kushanshah) who in turn were displaced by Hunas.

Kushana Empire was nevertheless greatest empire expanding from Aral sea to Kashi and Kushans were great kings who kept northern India united for nearly two centuries.

Important Facts for Prelims on Kushans

- Kanishka-I's grandson was named Kanishka-II. He assumed the title of Kaisar.
- Kanishka's main capital was Purushpura (Peshawar) and he had three regional capitals at Taxila, Begram (in Afghanistan) and Mathura. His territory spread from Aral Sea to Kashi.



- Kanishka was a great patron of Buddhism and convened the **4th Buddhist council** in the Kundalvana of Kashmir in 78 AD. Vasumitra headed this council and it marked the collection of Buddhist texts and engraving of the commentaries on **Copper sheets**.
- Some scholars are of the view that the **Abhidhama Mahavishasa** was prepared in the fourth Buddhist council. Some of the scholars in the Court of Kanishka were Parsva, Vasumitra, Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Charaka and Mathara.
- Charaka has been **called the Court Physician of Kanishka**, though it is disputed. Sushruta who wrote Sushruta Samhita has also been connected to Kanishka.
- During Kanishka's time, Buddhism got divided between the Hinayana and Mahayana.
- The Gandhara, Mathura and Amravati Schools of art developed independently during Kushana reign and flourished.
- The central Asian Tribes introduced the Cap, Boot and helmet in India.
- Kushanas (Yueh Chi Tribe) is considered to have conducted the Horse trade by sea with the Korymbian kingdom of modern Malaysia.
- The Kushanas issued largest number of copper coins. Vima Kadphises released a large number of Gold Coins.
- Sindoor (Vermillion) and Bamboo was introduced in India by Chinese traders.
- India was known as Shen-tu in the early Chinese texts.
- Sun God has been depicted on the coins of Kanishka-1 and Vāsishka
- Kujala Kadphises and Kanishka-I adopted and patronized the Buddhism, but Vima Kadphises adopted Shaivism and was a Shiva Devotee.
- The 4 important schools of Jainism viz. Kottaka, Varana, Aryayudikiya and Vesavadiya have been mentioned in the Epigraphic Records of the Kushana Period.

The Satavahanas of the Deccan

For around four centuries (circa. 200 BC to 220 AD), Satavahana dynasty ruled in the regions comprising north-western Maharashtra and Andhra (between Godavari and Krishna rivers). This region had been a part of Maurya Empire. The Satavahana dynasty arose during the last phase of Maurya era. In Puaranas and coins, the Satavahanas have been mentioned as Satakarnis, Andhras, Andhrabhritiyas also. Various coins of Lead, Silver and Copper have given information about them but their origin is shrouded in mystery.

The Satavahanas are thought to be Brahmins. Most users used names of their mother with their own names. Their coins have bilingual legends (Prakrit and some Dravida language). They were patrons of Buddhism and under them Nagarjunkonda and Amravati flourished as famous Buddhist centres.

The dynasty was first founded by one **Simuka** after destroying the Sunga power with the help of



Rathikas and Bhojakas. Simuka was beheaded and killed by his brother Kanha who extended the empire to further south and made it a great power in Deccan. Kanha was succeeded by Sri Satkarni, who in turn was succeeded by Satkarni-II. These were some of the greatest rulers of Satavahana dynasty. The expansion of the Satavahanas was checked just after Satkarni II.

In the first century AD, the Satavahana rulers were challenged by Shakas, particularly by Nahapana who was able to grab western Deccan from them. Gradually, Satavahanas lost their power and territories and are thought to have ruled under suzerainty of Kanvas.

However, the Satavahana power was once again revived by Gautamiputra Satkarni (Reign 78-102 AD), who is described as the Destroyer of the Shaka, Pahalava and Yavana Power. The total and sharp recovery of Satavahana made them rulers of entire Deccan and south up to Kanchi.

After Gautamiputra Satkarni, the Satavahana empire was further strengthened by his son Pulumayi. However, in the evening of his life, Shakas once again revived under Chastana. This weakened their power. For the last time, Sri Yajna Satkarni tried to revive the Satavahanas again in around 200AD. However, his great grandson Puluyami-IV happened to be the last main Satavahana ruler. After that, the empire went into hands of feudatories and got disintegrated.

Notes on Satavahanas for Prelims

surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

- First King of Satavahana dynasty was Simuka. Last one was Pulumayi-IV.
- The 17th King of Satavahana dynasty was Hala who compiled the Gatha Saptashati on love theme.
- Satavahanas are considered the flag bearers of Aryanism to Deccan. They were the first native Indians who had issued the coins with portraits of their kings. All the coins of Satavahanas used Prakrit dialect and also on backside the southern language (Telugu or Kannada). Prakrit seems to be the official language of Satavahanas.
- The Satavahanas worshipped the Hindu Deities such as Rama, Krishna, Vasudeva etc. but they also patronized the Buddhism. The Nagarjunkonda and Amaravati in Maharashtra became the important centers of Buddhism during the reign of Satavahanas and their successors.
- Satavahana also built many Chaitya and Viharas. Most of them were rock cut from the solid rock in North Western Deccan and Maharashtra. The Karle Chaitya of 1st century BC is one of the most important Chaitya. The Viharas of the 1 century AD at Nasik bear the inscription of the Gautami Putra Satkarni and Nahapana. The Amaravati Stupa was built in the reign of Satavahanas.
- Satavahanas administration was simple and inspired by the Mauryas. The King was the protector of the religion and had divine attributes. He possessed the qualities of ancient Gods.



The Kingdom was divided into the Janapadas and subdivided into Aharas. The ruler of each Ahara was an Amatya. Ahara was divided into Grama which was under the headmen called Gamika. Two feudatories viz. *Mahasenapati* and *Mahataravalara* were created in the Satavahana Dynasty.

- King was called Rajan or Raja and he had the right to mint the coins. A Senapati was appointed as the provincial governor. The most important features of the state formation under Satavahanas were:
 - It was a result of a continuous process.
 - It was influenced by Mauryan Administration
 - It was influenced by North India
- Gautamiputra Satkarni is claimed to have re-established the four fold Varna System. .
- Satavahanas ruled in Modern Andhra Pradesh, but most of the inscriptions of Satavahanas have been found in Maharashtra.
- Nanaghat Inscription of Naganika (wife of Satkarni-I) has been found near Pune (District). The Two cave inscriptions found at Nasik are of Gautamiputra Satkarni. At Nasik, Inscription of Pulumayi II has been found. The Karle cave inscription is of Vashishtiputra Pulumayi II.
- The basis of Satavahana prosperity was in agriculture and trade. The Satavahana kings were some of the *greatest donors of land* and land revenue to communities of Buddhist monks, the *brahmins*, and to all who wished to engage fruitfully in agricultural pursuits. *The earliest land grant of India was issued by Satavahanas.*

Gupta Empire

The one century gap between the extinction of Kushana & Satavahanas (around 220-230 AD), till the rise of the Imperial Gupta Dynasty a century later, is known to be one of the darkest in the whole of history of India. After the disintegration of the Mauryas, the Kushanas kept the North united and Satavahanas kept the Deccan united. Further south there were three Cheras, Pandyas and Cholas. In north, the Malvas, Yaudheyas, Kunidas etc. contributed to the extinction of Kushanas and in Deccan, the Vakatas and Ikshwaku contributed to the death of Satavahana dynasty. This dark period of one century was followed by a dawn of classical age which is also known as the **Golden Age of Indian History**. The classical age refers to the period between 320 AD to 550 AD when India was united again under the Gupta Dynasty. This period marks the crystallization of Hindu Culture and known for developments in all walks of life including the science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion and philosophy. **The founder of this dynasty was Sri Gupta**. But there were other early Guptas mentioned in many inscriptions such as **Shiva**



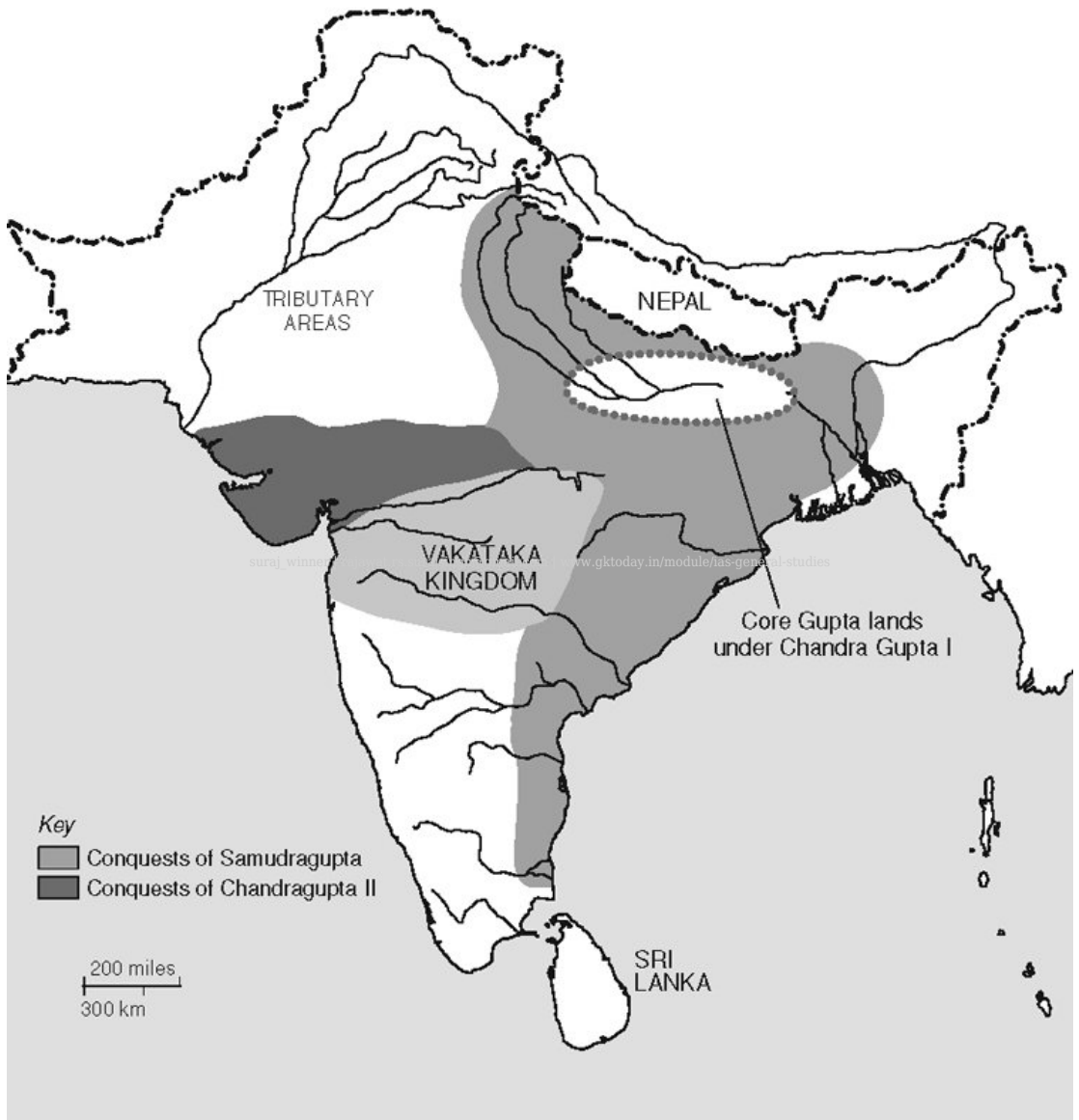
Gupta in Nasik Inscription and Puru Gupta in Karle Inscription.

Political History of Guptas

The earlier origins of the family of the Guptas are *not traceable* and they were originally the controllers of a minor principality in the western Ganga plains. Founder of this dynasty **Sri Gupta** (ruled circa 200 AD) appears to be a feudatory of Kushanas. Knowledge about Sri Gupta is scant. One reliable source about Sri Gupta was account of Chinese traveller I-tsing who had come to India in 672 AD. He mentioned Sri Gupta as *Che-li-ko-to* and wrote that 500 years before his arrival this king had built a temple. This information he wrote in 690AD so the scholars think that he might have ruled around 200AD. Nonetheless, we can't hope that something written after 500 years could be accurate. But some other sources indicate that he was indeed the founder of the Gupta dynasty.

Gupta family's fortunes rose when its third king, **Chandragupta-I**, extended his realms into Magadha itself in 320 AD. He was real founder of the Gupta Empire and was most powerful monarch of that time. He was married to Licchavi princess Kumara Devi and this helped him to get influence and extend the dominion.

Fourth Gupta King Samudragupta (335-380AD) was born of this dominion. He was greatest ruler of this dynasty and is equated by western Scholars as Indian Napoleon due to his extensive military conquests. His conquests and empire extended from Brahmaputra to Chambal and from Himalayas to Narmada. This implies that all the populous and fertile region of Indo-Gangetic plains came under his rule.



He established diplomatic relations with the Kushana Kings of Gandhara and Kabul and also the Buddhist king of Ceylon. In 330 AD, **Meghavarna, the Buddhist King of Ceylon** had sent two monks, one of whose was his brother to visit a monastery built by Asoka. But they got scant hospitality and returned with complaints. Later, Meghavarna sent a mission laden with gems and



gifts to Samudragupta with a request to build a monastery on the Indian Soil. The flattered Samudragupta gave permission.

This monastery was built near the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya. The purpose was recorded in a copper plate and it described the monastery with a height of 3 stories and containing 6 halls.

Fifth Gupta King Chandragupta-II (Chandragupta Vikramaditya) {reign 380 – c. 415 AD} was son of Samudragupta. Before his ascending to throne, his elder brother Ramagupta ascended to throne. However, he was not able to assert his bravery and eventually lost the throne. The drama **Devichandraguptam** of Vishakhadatta mentioned that Ramagupta was badly defeated by a Saka chieftain. To secure the people, Ramagupta agreed to surrender his queen to Sakas. However, his younger sibling Chandragupta objected this and then in disguise of queen, he entered enemy's camp and killed that Saka chieftain. This drama portrays Ramagupta as a coward and impotent person. Chandragupta-II killed Ramagupta and married his wife.

The area under Chandragupta-II also indirectly included Vakataka Kingdom. His daughter Prabhavati was married to a Vakataka prince who had died prematurely and thus administration was overseen by Prabhavati.

Sixth Gupta King Kumaragupta-I (415-455 AD) efficiently ruled for four decades and celebrated an Ashvamedha Yajna as his assertion to paramount supremacy. However, by the end of his reign, severe Huna invasions started in India.

The last powerful imperial Gupta King was seventh in line Skandgupta (reign 455-467AD). He was able to subdue the Huna invasions and bring back the glory of his father. He was able to withstand for two decades against Huna invasion but in the evening of his life, hordes of white Hunas came upon his territories. The scholars guess that Skandgupta had no male heir and was succeeded by his half brother Purgupta, who in turn was succeeded by many others in the line. However, there was *an accelerated feudalization of the state* and the empire decayed rapidly. The last of the Guptas we find working as feudatories of the Hunas.

Huna Kings

The Hunas had poured down from the steppes of Central Asia through the North-western passes and devastated the smiling cities of India. These central Asian hordes were in four cardinal directions they were known as follows:

- Northern Huna – Black Huna
- Southern Huna – Red Huna
- Eastern Huna – Celestial Hunas
- Western Hunas – White Hunas.



Hunas were the nomad Mongol tribes and they were first mentioned in Mahabharata among various Malechha people. We note here that the practice of *polyandry was common in Hunas* (several husbands one wife).

Kumaragupta, Skandagupta were able to withstand the Huna invasions for few decades. However, with the help of a scion of the Gupta family, earliest White Huna King Toramana was able to establish himself in the Malwa region in 510 AD. Further, the feudal structure of the administration was a facilitating factor for Huna's conquest.

Toramana was succeeded by Mihirkula, his son; who is known as the Huna Tyrant. He was an staunch anti-Buddhist who destroyed the temples and monasteries and massacred the monks. However, in 528 AD he was defeated by a confederacy of Narsimhgupta Baladityaraja and Yashodharman of Malwa. After this defeat, Mihirkula's life was spared and was allowed to take refuge in Kashmir where he died shortly afterwards. Thus, *King Yashodharman of Malwa was the one who checked the expansion of Hunas in India.*

Other Contemporary Dynasties of Guptas

The 6th century India was a fragmented polity. The Indian feudalism was on its climax and in the absence of a uniting central authority; different parts of India were under different sovereign dynasties which usually fought with each other. Some of these dynasties were as follows:

Maukharis

Maukharis or Mokharis or Mukharas ruled in parts of UP and Bihar and were feudatories of Guptas earlier.

Maghas

Magha dynasty ruled around Kaushambi and they were contemporary of Guptas.

Vakataka Dynasty

Vakataka dynasty was the most important follow up dynasty of the Satavahanas and they ruled in modern Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. They were contemporary of Guptas. This dynasty was founded by one Vindhyashakti but the real foundations of Vakataka were laid by *Pravarasena*. Another important ruler of this dynasty was **Rudrasena-I** who is mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

Gupta Empire: Important Notes for Prelims

Gupta Administration

With the imperial Guptas in power, once again there was a Brahmanic notion in the Kingship whereby King's right was divinely ordained and it was sanctified by the ceremonies that priests performed on their behalf. As put by the *Markendeya Purana*, the primary duty of a King was to follow *Rajadharma*, which put the duty to protect his subjects foremost.



However, during Gupta era, there were certain changes made in the very style of exercise of the monarchical authority in the country. For at least one thousand years, the Indian monarchs whether imperial or regional, had aimed to concentrate all the power in their hands. This absolute power usually manifested in subjugation of the provinces and regions through their bureaucracies. Both Nandas and Mauryas, as we have discussed earlier, were the greatest centralists. However, the model of Guptas was different and this difference lied in decentralized administration.

Decentralisation and devolution of power – The Samanta System

The Guptas had intentionally devolved power on a variety of the people and authorities. Rather than bolstering the bureaucratic steel-frame, they developed political hierarchies. The most vital information about this tendency of the Guptas comes from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, which discussed deeds of Samudragupta. It notes that *Samudragupta did not want to kill or destroy his enemies for his own gratification, but rather, after defeating them, he kept their domains within the empire and would allow them to rule. They were to be protected by the empire.*

This indicates that Samudragupta was basically developing a kind of contract between tributary kings {which were called *Samantas*} and himself as an overlord.

A *Samanta* literally meant a neighbour. In Gupta period, a *Samanta* was a neighbouring subsidiary ruler who was a friendly tributary of the Gupta overlords. The decentralization was also effected via various land grants, carrying varied immunities and concessions, to persons and institutions. This is one reason that we don't find an over elaborate bureaucracy in Gupta period as was a case with Maurya period.

This arrangement worked extremely well till Skandgupta, and it helped to keep peace among the various ruling families. However, afterwards, it did not work for weaker Guptas. But nevertheless, this system got much deeper with the evolution of Indian Feudalism and remained in force until the end of British Rule in the country.

Guptas: Imperial Government

The Imperial Guptas did not have an over elaborate bureaucracy due to effective decentralisation of administrative authority by land grants and the friendly *Samanta* contracts with subdued neighbours. At their imperial kingdom at Pataliputra, the King was advised by a Council of Ministers (*Mantriparishada*) led by a Pradhan Mantri. Pradhan Mantri headed the civil administration and there was a good number of other ministers and officials, who carried out the duties related to military and other matters. The Key officers of the Gupta machinery include the below:

Official	Functions
Mahabaladhikrita	Commander in Chief



Official	Functions
<i>Mahadandnayaka</i>	Chief Justice
<i>Mahapratihar</i>	Maintenance of Royal Palaces
<i>Mahasandhivigrahika or Sandhivigrahaka</i>	War and Peace
<i>Dandpashika</i>	Head of Police department
<i>Bhadagaradhikreta</i>	Royal Treasury
<i>Vinaysthitisansthapaka</i>	Education Department
<i>Sarvadyaksha</i>	Inspector of all central departments
<i>Mahashwapati</i>	Cavalary
<i>Mahamahipalapati</i>	Elephants
<i>Vinayapura</i>	One who represented guests to King's court
<i>Yuktapurusha</i>	Accounts of war booty
<i>Khadyapakika</i>	Royal Kitchen
<i>Ranbhandagarika</i>	Arms and ammunitions stores
<i>Mahanarpati</i>	Infantry

We note here that in the central government, the major emphasis was on defense and security, which reflected the major concern of the state power and security of the people. Further, the imperial Guptas did not interfere in the administrations of those regions which accepted their suzerainty. However, there was a five tiered administration system in the regions which were under the direct control of the Gupta Kings.

- The first tier was the King and his council as discussed above.
- The second layer of administration dealt with the administration of the provinces {provinces were called *Bhukti* or *Desa*}. The provincial councils were headed by the Kumaraamatyas
- The third layer of government was a district level. Each Bhukti or Desa was divided into various districts called Pradesha. The terms ***Adhithana or Pattana*** was also used for this third tier. A Vishya was headed by Ayuktas or Vishyapatis.
- The fourth layer of administration was at group or villages (Vithi) or town level. For each



village there was a *village assembly* consisting of village elders, guided by a village headman. This *Gram sabha* was smallest administration unit. The head of the village was called *Gramapati* or *Gramadhyaksha*. **Kutumbis** and **Mahattaras** are other words used for similar village level officers.

- In the towns there were city corporations, headed by a chairman, the *nagarashreshthin*, which consisted of many representatives of *guild merchants* including *Sarthavaha* who represented the trading communities, *Prathamakulika* who represented the crafting communities (artisans) and *Prathamakayastha*, who represented Government official community. *Pustapala* were junior (district level) record officers.

It's worth note here that all substantive decisions, affecting each town or village, were taken at the local level, reflecting the decentralising policies of the state. The *Kumaraamatyas* and the *ayuktakas* functioned as serving intermediaries between the centre and the periphery. This model of organisation was also replicated by some of the Samantas.

Implications of Decentralization

In the long run, the Gupta policy of devolution of power helped to create layers of responsibility in the governance. It also allowed self-governing communities to progress within the framework of their jurisdiction. The Gupta rule exerted a cohesive and beneficial effect upon the social classes of India. It was a highly pluralist world that was being created, a world in which groups of people came together to define their common interests or activities; they formed associations, solicited patronage and proceeded with creating prosperity for themselves. The Gupta state was there to guide and help, not to coerce.

Guptas Land Policy and Seeds of Indian Feudalism

The idea of Samanta system of Gupta era becomes much clearer when we examine their land policy. In contrast with the Mauryas who acquired as much land as much possible, the Guptas actively gave as much land as much possible in the form of land grants. Land grants were prevalent in post-Vedic period in its infancies. However, it became widespread under Satavahanas in Deccan, Shakas in western India, and Pallavas in south India. However, Guptas went one step ahead and made land grants a substantive part of discharge of their responsibilities.

The Guptas made three types of grants.

- First was the religious grants to *brahmins*, individually or collectively, known as *brahmadeya* grants
- Second was the grants to institutions such as temples and monasteries known as *devagrahara* or *devadana*
- Third were secular grants to crown officers, craft guilds or also military commanders in rare



occasions.

The objective of giving land grants, in case of Brahmadeya might be religious. However, the more pressing reason for the same appears to be the contraction of the monetary economy mainly because of contraction of international trade.

This system of the land grants got further accelerated in Post-Gupta period and created ideal conditions for development of Indian feudalism.

Gupta Taxation

There were several types of taxes in Gupta era as follows:

- **Bali:** Bali which was voluntary in Maurya era and was given to the King became **compulsory in Gupta Era**.
- **Bhaga:** King's share in all produce of the cultivators. It was $1/6^{\text{th}}$ part of produce.
- **Bhoga:** Bhoga refers to the tax in kind of gifts, flowers, woods, fruits etc.
- **Hiranya:** This was the tax paid in cash (Gold) {Hiranya means Gold}
- **Halivakara:** Halivakra was a kind of tax slab, those who owned a plough used to pay tax.
- **Kara:** It might have been some irregular tax charged from villagers.
- **Shulka:** It was custom or toll tax very much similar to Chungi / Octroi in modern times.
- **Udinanga:** It might be a social security kind of tax.
- **Klipta:** It was related to sale and purchase of lands.

Caste System in Gupta Era

One of the most notable features of Indian society till date has been caste system. So was it during Gupta era also. There were three notable features of caste system in Gupta era as follows:

- Firstly, upper castes although managed their respective position in the caste hierarchy, yet there was an indication mobility and fluidity, which allowed other castes (than Brahmins) to make some progress.
- Secondly, condition of Shudras improved mainly because the link between occupation and birth got loose for some time. As the shudras entered into farming, they upgraded themselves into sharecroppers.
- Thirdly, the condition of lowest strata of society, untouchables reached to nadir. They were forced to live away from population and engaged in most demeaning occupations.

With the increased political decentralization and liberal land grants, the hitherto tribal groups which lived isolated lives were brought into the caste system. In other words, Gupta era accelerated the detribalization of India. Further, the remnants of existing foreign groups such as Shakas, Yavanas, Kushanas etc. were also acculturated in the caste system. However, caste endogamy was not much



rigid now as compared to earlier times. The society approved and acknowledged the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages despite various restrictions on them in religious scriptures.

Further, there are indications of the weakening of the links between caste and its occupation. There are records of Brahmins and Kshatriyas adopting occupations of lower castes and Vaishyas and shudras of upper castes. Further, the Gupta period is marked by a remarkable improvement in the conditions of Shudras. They increasingly adopted the farming and turned into sharecroppers and peasants, craftsmen, joined the army and also were able to get education. This forward movement of shudras, though in limited extent, was a significant marker of social mobility.

But, this was counterbalanced by growth of a new outcaste group called Untouchables. The untouchables including *chandals* lived away from the other groups and were assigned the most demeaning and polluting occupations. They were at the lowest stratus of Indian society. Fa-Hien had rightly admitted that a Chandals or untouchables had to sound a clapper in the streets so that the upper caste people could be warned of his presence. The upper caste person would need to take a ritual bath in the event of close proximity with an untouchable.

Religion in Gupta Era

Buddhism was generally prevalent in Northern India including Kashmir, Afghanistan and Swat Valley two centuries prior to Christian era and 2 centuries after it. Jainism was prevailing but did not attain much popularity. Hinduism never ceased to exist and retained the large share of both the popular as well as Royal Favor. It is evident from the coins of Kadphises II {the Kushana emperor who adopted Hinduism} with such a great deal that he repeatedly put images of Shiva on his coins and described himself as a devotee of Shiva.

The development of the Mahayana School of Buddhism from the time of Kanishka was in itself a testimony to the reviving power of Brahminical Hinduism. This newer Buddhism was very much common to the Hinduism. The revival of the Sanskrit was first made possible by the western Satraps as evident from the Girnar inscription of Rudradaman, the Saka King who registered his achievements in elaborate Sanskrit. The Gupta Emperors made the Sanskrit fostered by the Satraps in the 4th and 5th century AD.

In Gupta empire both Buddhism and Hinduism received support and the Gupta Kings were perfectly tolerant about the three religions prevalent at that time, but they were beyond doubt zealous Hindus who were guided by the Brahmin advisors and skilled in the Sanskrit language.

The Jainism remained confined to the merchant communities of western India. Christianity had also arrived in India but it was confined to the Malabar Region.

Changes in Hinduism

However, Hinduism also underwent some important changes during these times. The sacrifice was



replaced by worship (pooja) and mediation of the Brahmins was somewhat replaced by Devotion and Bhakti. The *Shakti cult emerged in the Gupta era*, which was based upon the fact that the male can be activated only through union with females. Therefore, this was the beginning of worship of wives / consorts of Indian Gods such as Lakshmi, Parvati, Durga, Kali and other goddesses. The worship of Mother Goddess, which was prevalent in the Harappan India, finally got incorporated in the Hinduism by Guptas times.

By the end of 5th century, Tantrism had also become prominent.

Rise of Occult Practices

The emergence of Tantrism and worship of female deities also led to occult practices, which kept sexual union in the center. The sexual rites started becoming prominent and now they started taking shape of religious sexuality, which reached its zenith in India by the end of the 6th and 7th century, as evident from numerous temple arts centered on the religious sexuality in that era.

Rise of six schools

The six schools of Hindu Philosophy viz. *Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta* started taking definitive shape because of the philosophical debates between the Hindu and Buddhists on the question of presence of God, attaining salvation, karma, fate, Birth and Death and rebirth.

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Gupta Economy

The salient features of Gupta economy included a flourishing trade (which was badly affected in later periods due to Huna invasions), abundant custom revenue from ports in west and east, flourishing robust guild system, flourishing manufacturing industries and a high standard of living.

Trade

Gupta had a still a flourishing Roman Trade but in the later part, trade was badly affected by Huna invasions. The Trade contacts developed during the Kushana Period continued and Chandragupta II's conquest in western India further added to this trade. The people were prosperous and they were free to grow and flourish. The important port towns were **Brigukachchaha, Kalyana & Sind**, which were bulk trade centres with Romans. Ujjain had become a major commercial center and it was linked to southern and northern India. Nasik, Paithan, Pataliputra, Benares were other major trade centers.

Silk, Leather goods, Fur, Iron Products, Ivory, pearl, Spices and Indigo were major export items. The Port of Tamralipti was a good source of Trade with East Asia. Most of the commodities were taxed One Fifth of the value as a toll in international Trade.

Agriculture

Agriculture was the main occupation in Gupta Empire and there was no governmental interference. The land was fertile and means of irrigation were simple.



Occupations

Gupta period had many cloth centers and silk industry witnessed a significant development during this period. The Mandor Inscriptions give account that Gupta people were helped to a great extent for the growth of Silk Industry. Gold, silver and Copper was used in making ornaments and issuing coins. The Gold coins show the pomp, power and prosperity of the empire.

The Coins of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta issued after the Ashvamedha depict the horse tied to a Yupa-stambha. The coins of Chandragupta bear Garuda preying a snake.

Guild System

In ancient history, the glimpses of guild systems are seen in **Jatakas Tales**. Guilds refer to organizations of artisans, and traders, which have high place in the society. In Gupta Era, the activities of Guilds were increased and these activities are recorded in various literature, inscription, clay seals etc. There is a mention of **Guild of architects in Raghuvamsha**. The **Indore Copper plate** inscription mentions about a **guild of oilmen**. The **Mandor Inscription** mentions the guild of silk weavers. The guild system declined after the Gupta Period.

Gupta Architecture

Gupta Period is called Golden or Classical age of India partially due to the unprecedented activities and development in the arts, architecture, sculpture, painting and literature. The rock cut architecture reached at its zenith in Gupta era and a new beginning of free standing temple architecture began.

Key examples

The key examples of Gupta architecture among temples are Dasavatara temple of Deogarh, Bhitargaon temple, Vishnu Temple of Tigawa Jabalpur, Shiva Temple of Bhumara, Parvati Temple of Nachria Kathura, Mukund Darra Temple of Kota, Lakshman Temple of Raipur, Shiva Temple of Koh and Bhitari Temple at Ghazipur. Among stupas, the Dhamekh stupa is the most prominent masterpiece of Gupta architecture.

Gupta Temple Architecture

Most prominent architectural marvels of Gupta period are temples. Most of the temples built in the Gupta era were carved with representation of Gods (mainly avatars of Vishnu and Lingams) and Goddesses. The Shikhara was **not** much prominent in the early Gupta temples but was prominent in later Gupta era. There was a single entrance or mandapa or Porch.

Gupta style temple was modelled on the architectural norms of the Mathura school. Sanchi temple at Tigwa has a flat roof. Dasavatar Temple at Deogarh, Bhitargaon temple and Mahadev Temple at Nachna Kuthar have a square tower of Shikhara. Many Math at Rajgriha is a circular temple of Gupta Era. Main style of temple architecture in Gupta period is Nagara style.



Dasavatara temple, Deogarh Uttar Pradesh

The most important temple of Gupta era is Dasavata Temple of Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh. The temple was discovered by **Captain Charles Strahan** and was named so by Alexander Cunningham.

Comment on architecture of Dasavatara Temple

A transition to a new style had begun towards the end of the Gupta period in around 500 A.D. and it can be seen in the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, which is first North Indian temple with a shikhara, though its shikhara is curtailed and part of it has disappeared. It is said that originally, its shikhara was of about 40 feet. Its stones were secured together by dowels and its four porches afforded relatively more space for the worshippers to congregate. The shikhara in this temple is in three tiers rising on the top of square cells, and embellished with an elegantly carved doorway on one side and three big panels placed outside the three walls. The sanctum of this temple stood on a raised plinth occupying the central square of the open terrace. The doorway leading to the sanctum was the chief centre of the attraction, serving as an elegant outer frame to set off the image installed in the cells. The temple depicts the ten avatars of Vishnu. This temple has also been linked to the "Sarvatobhadra temple" mentioned in the Vishnudharmottara Purana by several scholars.



Dasavatara Temple, Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh

Bhitargaon Temple

Bhitargaon Temple is located in Kanpur District of Uttar Pradesh. It is the oldest remaining Hindu temple, and was built in the Gupta Era in 6th century. The special feature of this temple is that it is made entirely in bricks. It is conceived from top to bottom in terms of terracotta and bricks. It is beautified with several courses of well-preserved friezes and moulded bricks with designs exceedingly varied and beautiful. The temple has a pyramidal roof and its walls were decorated on the outside with terracotta panels, depicting scenes from Hindu mythology. Architecturally, the temple is important as it possesses the earliest true arch in India.



Bhitarqoon Temple

Dhamekha Stupa

The Dhamekha stupa is located at Sarnath, 13 km away from Varanasi. It marks the deer park or Rishipattana where Buddha gave his first sermon. It was constructed by Asoka. It is cylindrical in shape and about 34 m high and 28.3 m in diameter. The lower portion of the Stupa is covered completely with beautifully carved stones. The borders of Dhamekh Stupa have delicately carved geometrical and floral designs and figures of humans and birds. The base of the Stupa is made of stone with the upper areas of brickwork which probably once had a carved stone fencing. It is believed that Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon at the Dhamekh Stupa. Dhamekh Stupa bears special significance at Sarnath as it signifies the “seat of the holy Buddha”, as he proclaimed his faith.

Gupta Era Literature

Sanskrit literature reached its climax in the Gupta period. This era is known for *equal writing of prose and poetry*. Sanskrit became the *Lingua franca* of India. Final editing of the Ramayana and Mahabharata took place in Gupta Period. Puranas, Smritis and Dharmashashtra literature was developed in the Gupta period. *Yajnavalkyasmriti*, which is almost regarded as the official law book of Guptas, was composed in this era. Naradasmriti was also written during the Gupta period. All the successive redactions in the **Manu's Dharmashastras** were carried out in Gupta Period.

Kalidasa

The true beauty and grandeur of the literature in Gupta Era can be seen in the kavyas. The greatest among all the names is Kalidasa who lived in 4th century AD and was contemporary of Chandragupta-II. His earliest production was *Ritusamhara*, though his earliest drama was *Malvikagnimitram*. Meghaduta is pioneer *Dutakavya* in Sanskrit literature.

Mālavikāgnimitram

Its a Sanskrit play depicting love story of Sunga king Agnimitra and Malvika, a maid servant. This play also gives reference to the Rajsuya Yajna carried out by Pushyamitra Sunga.

Abhijñānaśākuntalam



A Sanskrit play which depicts the story of Dushyanta, king of Hastinapur, and Shakuntala, daughter of the sage Vishwamitra and the apsara Menaka.

Vikramōrvaśīyam

It's a Sanskrit drama depicting the love story of Puruvas, a Vedic King and Urvashi. Puruvas is chosen to reflect the qualities of *Chandragupta Vikramaditya*. Puruvas is a mythological entity representing Sun and Vikramaditya means the "Glory of Sun".

Raghuvamśa

Raghuvamśa is a Sanskrit epic poem narrating genealogy of Lord Rama's Raghu Vamsa beginning with King Dileep up to Agnivarna.

Kumārasambhava

Kumārasambhava is an epic poem depicting birth of Kartikeya, son of Shiva and Parvati.

Ritusamhara

Ritusamhara is a mini epic poem on six seasons (Ritu). It mentions the feelings, emotions and experiences of lovers in six seasons. *Ritusamhara is considered to be the earliest work of Kalidasa.*

Meghaduta

Meghaduta means a messenger of Clouds. It's a poem woven around a Yaksha, who is subject of Lord Kubera. His wife is waiting for him at Mount Kalidasa. Kubera at some place in central India exiled the Yaksha and he wishes to send his message to his wife. For that, he convinces a cloud to take his message and pass it on to his wife. The poem narrates about the beautiful sights and visual perceptions he would come across while going northwards to take this message to his wife.

Other Facts about Kalidasa

The Prakrit Poem Setubandha is believed to have been written/ revised by Kalidasa for king Pravarsena.

Kalidasa's style was imitated by Ceylon King Kumaradasa who has written Janakiharana. Kalidasa wrote *Malvikagnimitram* which accounts the celebration of Vasantotsava (Spring festival).

Bhāravi

Bhāravi is best known for *Kiratarjuniya*, written around 550 CE. Kirat is Shiva who speaks to Arjuna in form of a mountain dwelling hunter. This epic style Kavya is considered to be among the greatest works in Sanskrit which is known for complexity of the Sanskrit.

Bhatti

Bhatti or Batsabhhatti is best known for *Bhaṭṭikāvya* which is also known as *Rāvaṇavadha* and was written in the 7th century CE.

Magha

Śiśupāla-vadha was written by Magha in 7th century AD and is one of the Sanskrit Mahavakyas. It was inspired by the works of Kalidasa, Bhāravi and Dandin, all of them, as the author says but surpasses Bhāravi in his style and wordplay.



Sudraka

Mrichhakatika means a “little clay cart”. It is a Sanskrit play written by Shudraka in the 2nd century AD. Arthur W. Ryder translated it in 1905 as The Little Clay Cart. It’s a play full with romance, sex, court politics and comedy. It depicts the story of a poor man Charudatta with a nagarvadhu Vasantsena. The play seems to be a reworked version of Daridracharudatta, another play. Śudraka seems to be an Abhira King Indranigupta who used Shudraka as his pen name.

There is a description of a civil court in Mrichhakatika, whose headquarters were at Nalanda.

Vishakhadatta

We know about only two plays of Vishakhadatta viz. Mudrārākṣasa and the Devichandraguptam. Out of them Mudrārākṣasa is the only surviving play. Devichandraguptam is survived in fragments only. Mudrarakshasha means “Ring of the Demon”. It narrates the ascent of Chandragupta Maurya to throne. Rakshasha is the last Minister of Nandas who is lured in Chandragupta’s side, by Chanakya.

Dandin

Dandin had written Kavyadarshana and Dasakumarcharita. He lived in Kanchi and is best known for Dasakumarcharita “The Tale of the Ten Princes” which depicts the adventures of 10 princes. suraj winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies Dasakumarcharita was first translated in 1927 as Hindoo Tales and The Adventures of the Ten Princes

Bhatrhari

Bhartrhari was a fifth century Sanskrit author who wrote *Vakypadiya*, a treatise on Sanskrit Grammar and *Nitishatak*, which has 100 verses on philosophy. Bhatrhari seems to be a King but many scholars say that he was not a king but a courtier serving the king.

Ishwar Krishna

His main work is Sankyakarika. It was a commentary on Samkhya Philosophy.

Vyasa

Vyasa has written *Vyasabhasya*, it was a commentary on Yoga philosophy

Vatsyayana

Vatsyayana was the author of *Nyaya Sutra Bhashya*, which was the first commentary on Gautama’s Nyaya Sutras. Kamasutra is a treatise on Human Sexual behaviour and makes the part of the Kamashashtra. The first transmission of the Kama Shashtra is attributed to Nandi, the bull of Shiva, as per the traditions. The Nandi bull is Shiva’s doorkeeper and he overheard the lovemaking of the Gods and recorded his utterances, for benefit of humankind. However, Kama sutra seems to be the first treatise on the principles / advices in sexuality.

Science and Technology

The Gupta era is known for tremendous development in the development of astronomy, astrology,



mathematics and metallurgy.

Aryabhatta

Aryabhatta was the legendary mathematician of the Gupta Era. He wrote *Aryabhattachiya* at the age of 23 years and later, *Arya-Siddhanta*. He worked on the approximation for pi to 3.1416. In trigonometry, he concluded for a triangle, the result of a perpendicular with the half-side is the area. He also worked on the motions of the solar system and calculated the length of the solar year to 365.8586805 days. Aryabhatta lived in Kusumpur in Pataliputra.

Varahamihira

Varahamihira lived in Ujjain and was one of the nine jewels (Navaratnas) of the court of Chandragupta II. He wrote *Panchasiddhantaka*, the five treatises on astronomy (NOT astrology). It summarises five earlier astronomical treatises, namely the *Surya Siddhanta*, *Romaka Siddhanta*, *Paulisa Siddhanta*, *Vasishtha Siddhanta* and *Paitamaha Siddhantas*.

Other Notes for UPSC Prelims

Various Calendars of ancient India

Many a times, UPSC asks a question on different calendars of ancient India. Here is basic information about the same: rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

Buddhist Era

This era based on Buddha's birth and date. The dates of Buddha's birth and date are uncertain but as per current theravada and Sri Lankan traditions, the Buddha Era begins from 544BC. Thus, current year 2016 is equal to $2016 + 544 = 2560$.

Jain Era {Vira Nirvana Samvat}

Vira Nirvana Samvat began on 15 October 527 BC and commemorates the nirvana of Mahavira. The Jain year begins on Diwali day every year. The year 2016 corresponds to Vira Nirvana Era 2543

Vikram Samvat

This is the most well-known era used currently in traditional India. It has many versions which should be noted down:

- In the north India, it begins with chaitra, and each month begins with the full moon (purnima).
- In Gujarat, the year begins with Kartika and month begins with the new moon (amavasya)
- In some parts of Gujarat, the year begins with Amavasya of Ashadha.

The name of king associated with the Vikram Samvat is controversial. Most popular beliefs credit Chandragupta Vikramaditya of Ujjain (neither Chandragupta Maurya nor Chandragupta-II of Gupta dynasty) who started it in 56 AD.

Vallabhi Era

Vallabhi Era commemorates the event when Chandragupta-I of Gupta dynasty ascended to the



throne in 319-320 AD. The Valabhi kings were feudatories of the Guptas and they might have used it as era of their overlords. Dr. Fleet has treated with this at length and has established that beginning of this era is Saka era 242, which means $242 + 78 = 320$ AD. The first year of the Gupta Era may be taken as February 26, 320 AD to March 13, 321 AD, of which the first date is coronation of Chandragupta.

Saka Era

Śaka or Śālivāhana was probably started by Kushana King Kanishka in 78AD but this has been disputed. This era has been adopted by the Government of India. Its elapsed year is tropical solar and it begins on the day following the vernal equinox. The first month is Chaitra, with 30 days in a normal year and 31 in a leap year. The next 5 months have 31 days and the rest have 30 days.

Important Inscriptions of Ancient India (From Shunga to Gupta)

Here are some important notes on different inscriptions of ancient India giving us relevant information about Shungas, Satavahanas, Shakas, Kushana, Guptas and Hunas.

Junagarh Rock inscription

The Junagarh Rock inscription of Rudradaman is considered as an early example of chaste Sanskrit, written in mid second century AD. It mentions that one of Chandragupta Maurya's governors, Pushyagupta, was responsible for building a dam on Sudarshana Lake near Girnar in Kathiawar. From another inscription of Skandgupta we came to know that this very dam was repaired during his reign, almost 800 years after it was built

Mahrauli Inscription / Garuda Pillar

The Mahrauli Iron Pillar was originally placed on a hill near the Beas and was brought to Delhi by a King of Delhi. This pillar credits Chandragupta with conquest of the Vanga Countries by his battling alone against the confederacy of the enemies united against him. It also credits him for conquest of Vakatakas in a fight that ran across seven mouths of Sindhu. This pillar was established by Chandragupta-II of Gupta dynasty as *Vishnupada* in the honor of Lord Vishnu.

Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Prayag Prasasti)

This was issued by Samudragupta and was composed by Harisena. It is written in very simple and refined Sanskrit in *Champu kavya style*. It lists achievements of Samudragupta.

This Inscription is a eulogy of Samudragupta and mentions about the conquests of Samudragupta and boundaries of the Gupta Empire. As per this inscription, Samudragupta defeated 9 kings in North, 12 Kings in South, reduced all the **Atavika states** to vassalage. It also mentions that more than five states in the frontier states surrendered and accepted his suzerainty. He had close contact with the kingdom of Ceylon and South East Asian colonies. The eulogy of Harisena describes him as hero of 100 battles. He performed Ashvamedha Yajna, this has been testified by a seal of Samudragupta bearing a Horse. **This was probably first Ashvamedha after Pushyamitra**

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Shunga. He is depicted in his coins playing Veena. He allowed the king of Ceylon to build a monastery at Bodhgaya.

Another term used by Harisena for him is **Kaviraja**, which testified him as a patron of poetic arts and a poet himself. Samudragupta also assumed the title of **Vikramanka**.

Nasik Inscription

The achievements of Gutamiputra Satkarni were mentioned in Nasik Inscription that were composed by his mother Gautami Balasri. The Nasik Prasasti describes Gautamiputra as the ruler of the Aparanta, Anupa, Saurashtra, Kukura, Akara and Avanti and defeated the Saka King Nahapana and restored the prestige of his dynasty by reconquering a large part of the former dominions of the Satavahanas.

Nanaghat Inscription

The Nasik and Nanaghat inscriptions are the major sources that gives detailed information about the Satavahana empire. The Nasik inscription was made by Gautami Balasari and Nanaghat inscription was issued by **Naganika**.

Mandsaur Inscription

It was by Kumaragupta and was written by Vattasbhatta.

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Observations of Fa-Hien's visit during Vikramaditya reign

Pataliputra was considerably neglected by the warrior kings like Samudragupta and Vikramaditya, but it continued to be a magnificent and populous city though out the reign of Chandragupta II. Later Patliputra was reduced to reigns in the wake of the Hun invasions in the 6th century. However, Pataliputra was rebuilt and revived by **Shershah Suri** as today's Patna.

The accounts of Fa Hien give a contemporary account of the administration of Chandragupta Vikramaditya. Fa Hien (337 – ca. 422 AD) was so much absorbed in his quest for Buddhist books, legends, and miracles that he could not mention the name of the mighty monarch in whose rule he lived for 6 years. The picture he depicted cannot solve all the queries of the historians of today yet, they give a vivid picture of the state of the country.

At Pataliputra, he saw and was impressed by Asoka's palace so it is sure that Asoka's palace was in existence even in the Gupta Era. He also describes about 1 stupa and 2 monasteries nearby , also ascribed to Asoka. He mentioned about 600-700 monks living there and learning their lectures from teachers from all quarters. He mentions that towns of Magadha were largest in the area of Gangetic Plains and he calls it central India. He mentions that there were a lot of charitable institutions, rest houses, and there was an excellent Free Hospital in the Capital which was endowed by benevolent citizens. The poor and helpless patients suffering from all kinds of illnesses were taken care of and doctors attended them and they were given food and medicine as per their wants.



This depiction proves the earliest foundation of Charity and this charity was first of its kind in the world which spoke of characters of the citizens of the Gupta Era. India's is great as far as Charity was concerned and as we are told, earliest charitable hospital in Europe or anywhere else in the world was opened in 10th century.

Fa Hien further explains that the population of the western part (Malwa) lived happily and did not worry. He mentions that they don't have to register their household and not to have attend any magistrate. People did not lock their houses. The passports and those who were willing to stay may stay and those willing to go may go did not bind them. Fa Hien further mentions that no one kills the living things, or drinks wine or eats Onion or garlic. They don't keep pigs and fowls, there is no dealing of cattle, and there are no butchers. Only Chandals did all these.

Fa Hien mentions about the *Chandala*, who dwelt apart and they were required to keep a piece of wood as a warning of their approach so that other folk might not get polluted. Chandals were the only offenders of Dharma, as per Fa Hien. About administration, Fa Hien mentions that the authorities interfered as little as possible with the subject and they were left free to prosper and grow rich in their own way.

Fa Hien studied Sanskrit for 3 years at Pataliputra and two years at the **Port of Tamralipti** without let or hindrance. The Roads were clear and safe for the passengers. The accounts of Fa Hien give a clear indication that India was probably never governed better than the era of Chandragupta Vikramaditya. The prosperity of the Indians and tranquility of the empire have been testified by the account of Fa-Hien and his unobstructed itinerary all around gives the details about the Golden Era of India.

Nine Gems (Navratnas) of Chandragupta Vikramaditya

Chandragupta-II was known for his deep interest in art and culture and nine gems or Navratna adorned his court. The various fields of these 9 gems prove that Chandragupta gave patronage to arts and literature. Brief description about the nine Ratnas is as follows

Amarsimha

Amarsimha was a Sanskrit lexicographer and a poet and his *Amarkosha* is a vocabulary of Sanskrit roots, homonyms and synonyms. It is also called Trikantha as it has 3 parts viz. Kanda 1, Kanda 2 and Kanda 3. It has 10 thousand words in it.

Dhanvantri

Dhanvantri was a great Physician.

Harisena

Harisena is known to have composed the Prayag Prasasti or **Allahabad Pillar Inscription**. The title of this inscription of Kavya, but it has both prose and verse. The whole poem is in one sentence



including first 8 stanzas of poetry and a long sentence and a concluding stanza. Harisena in his old age was in the court of Chandragupta and describes him as Noble, and asks him “You Protect all this earth”.

Kalidasa

Kalidasa is the immortal poet and playwright of India and a peerless genius whose works became famous worldwide in modern world. Translation of Kalidasa’s works in numerous Indian and Foreign Languages have spread his fame all over the world and now he ranks among the top poets of all times. Here we should note that Rabindranath Tagore, not only propagated the works of Kalidasa but also expounded their meanings and philosophy that made him an immortal poet dramatist.

Kahapanaka

Kahapanaka was an astrologer. Not many details about him are found.

Sanku

Sanku was in the field of Architecture.

Varahamihira

Varahamihira (died 587) lived in Ujjain and he wrote three important books: **Panchasiddhantika**, **Brihat Samhita**, and **Brihat Jataka**. The Panchasiddhantika is a summary of five early astronomical systems including the Surya Siddhanta. Another system described by him, the Paitamaha Siddhanta, appears to have many similarities with the ancient Vedanga Jyotisha of Lagadha. Brihat Samhita is a compilation of an assortment of topics that provides interesting details of the beliefs of those times. Brihat Jataka is a book on astrology which appears to be considerably influenced by Greek astrology.

Vararuchi

Vararuchi is the name of another gem of Chandragupta Vikramaditya who was a grammarian and Sanskrit scholar. **Some historians have identified him with Katyayana.** Vararuchi is said to be the author of **Prakrit Prakasha**, which is first Grammar of Prakrit Language.

Vetalbhata

Vetalbhata was a magician.

Previous Years Questions from UPSC Prelims

1. Many of the Greeks, Kushanas and Shakas embraced Buddhism rather than Hinduism because
 - (a) Buddhism was in the ascendant at that time
 - (b) they had renounced the policy of war and violence
 - (c) caste-ridden Hinduism did not attract them
 - (d) Buddhism provided easier access to Indian society

Answer: Correct answer in above question is D.



2. The Allahabad Pillar inscription is associated with which one of the following?

- (a) Mahapadma Nanda
- (b) Chandragupta Maurya
- (c) Ashoka
- (d) Samudragupta

Answer: Correct answer is D

3. Anekantavada is a core theory and philosophy of which one of the following?

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

Answer: Correct Answer is B

- 4. With reference to the history of ancient India, which of the following was/were common to both Buddhism and Jainism?
- 5. Avoidance of extremities of penance and enjoyment
- 6. Indifference to the authority of the Vedas
- 7. Denial of efficacy of rituals

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: Correct answer is D

5. Which one of the following describes best the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism?

- (a) The extinction of the flame of desire
- (b) The complete annihilation of self
- (c) A state of bliss and rest
- (d) A mental stage beyond all comprehension

Answer: Correct answer is C

- 6. Assertion (A): The emphasis of Jainism on non-violence (ahimsa) prevented agriculturalists from embracing Jainism.

Reason (R): Cultivation involved killing of insects and pests.

Answer: Both are true and R is correct explanation to A.

7. Who among the following was not a contemporary of the other three?

- (a) Bimbisara



- (b) Gautama Buddha
- (c) Milinda
- (d) Prasenjit

Answer: Correct answer is C

8. Lord Buddha's image is sometimes shown with the hand gesture called 'Bhumisparsha Mudra'. It symbolizes

- (a) Buddha's calling of the Earth to watch over Mara and to prevent Mara from disturbing his meditation
- (b) Buddha's calling of the Earth to witness his purity and chastity despite the temptations of Mara
- (c) Buddha's reminder to his followers that they all arise from the Earth and finally dissolve into the Earth, and thus this life is transitory
- (d) Both the statements (a) and (b) are correct in this context

Answer: Correct answer is B

Among Buddhist symbols, Gautama Buddha used the Bhumisparsha gesture to summon the earth goddess, Sthavara, as witness to his attainment of Buddhahood. This gesture signifies the state of enlightenment after meditating under the bodhi tree for four weeks and withstanding all the temptations put before him by Mara, the god of evil. Please note the language of the statements a and b given in this question. Statement a says that Buddha calls Sthavara to prevent Mara from disturbing his meditation. This is incorrect.

9. Which of the following Kingdoms were associated with the life of the Buddha?

- 10. Avanti
- 11. Gandhara
- 12. Kosala
- 13. Magadha

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (b) 2 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 4

Answer: Correct answer is C

Avanti was not directly related to life of Buddha, so this needs to be opted out. We have read that Pasenadi (Prasenajit), king of Kosala, was the Buddha's contemporary and is frequently mentioned in Pali texts. Kosala and Magadha were linked through matrimonial ties. Buddha wandered through the towns and villages in the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha teaching his philosophy. Gandhara is not



directly associated with the life of Buddha. It was expansion of Maurya empire that Gandhara received much Buddhist influence, notably during the reign of Asoka.

10. Which one of the following ports handled the north Indian trade during the Gupta period?

- (a) Tamralipti
- (b) Broach
- (c) Kalyan
- (d) Cambay

Correct answer is Tamralipti

Model Questions for Prelims

1. With reference to the Maurya empire, which among the following statements is / are correct?

- 1. In Maurya period ring wells come into prevalence for the first time
- 2. The rulers of Maurya dynasty were characterized by their metronymics
- 3. The government of Mauryas was highly centralised in character

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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[B] Only 2 & 3

[C] Only 1 & 3

[D] Only 3

Answer: [D] Only 3

Ring wells come into prevalence for the first time in Gupta period, so first statement is not correct. Metronymics means a name derived from the name of a mother or female ancestor. The Satavahana rulers had the names of their mothers with their names such as Gautamiputra Satkarni, he adopted 'Gautami' on the name of her mother 'Gautami'. Thus second statement is also not correct. Third statement is correct.

2. Which among the following ancient Indian Play portrays the rise of Chandragupta Maurya and the machinations of Kautilya?

[A] Mricchakatika

[B] Mudrarakshasha

[C] Urubhanga

[D] Abhijnanshakuntalam

Answer: [B] Mudrarakshasha

Mudrarakshasha is the only surviving Sanskrit drama written by the playwright Vishakhadatta, who is believed to have lived in the sixth century. The play chronicles the rise



of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Maurya dynasty, and the machinations of Kautilya.

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Maurya Era is known for triumph of monarchy and collapse of republics / oligarchies in India
2. Kautilya was most ardent advocate of royal absolutism during Maurya era

Which among the above is / are correct statements?

- [A] Only 1
- [B] Only 2
- [C] Both 1 & 2
- [D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [A] Only 1

The first statement is correct because the many of the republics and oligarchies that were prevalent in the pre-Mauryan India had collapsed with the rise of Mauryas. The second statement is not correct. Though Kautilya supported monarchy but he never stood for royal absolutism.

He writes that the King should take advice of his ministry (Mantriparishada) in running the administration.

4. The first documented evidence of untouchability in ancient India comes from which among the following periods?

- [A] Maurya Period
- [B] Shunga Period
- [C] Gupta Era
- [D] Times after reign of Harsha

Answer: [C] Gupta Era

The term asprya or untouchable was first mentioned in Katyayana dharmasastra which belonged to the Gupta period.

5. The Gupta era is known for origin of ____:

1. Shakti cult in Hindus
2. Mahayana in Buddhism
3. Vedanta school

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
- [B] Only 1 & 3
- [C] 1, 2 & 3



[D] None

Answer: [A] Only 1

Mahayana Buddhism, also known as the Great Vehicle, is the form of Buddhism prominent in North Asia, including China, Mongolia, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. It started in the first century C.E. and Vedanta school is of much earlier time period.

6. In what way, the administration of the Guptas was different with the Mauryas?

1. The Kings in Gupta era became more and more interested in local administration in comparison to Mauryas

2. The Gupta era saw an increasing trend of paying salaries in cash in comparison to Mauryas

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 2

[C] Both 1 & 2

[D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [D] Neither 1 nor 2

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The Gupta kings took exalted imperial titles – 'the Great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord', etc., yet in the case of the later rulers these titles were exaggerated, since their claimants could hardly compare with the emperors of earlier centuries, their political sway being limited. In the Ganges valley, which was under the direct control of the Guptas, the administrative hierarchy was superficially akin to that of the Mauryas. The king was the centre of the administration, helped by the crown prince. The other princes were appointed as viceroys of provinces. Ministers of various kinds and advisers assisted the king. The province (desha or bhukti) was divided into a number of districts (pradesha or vishaya), each district having its own administrative offices. But local administration was for all practical purposes independent of the centre. Decisions whether of policy or in relation to individual situations were generally taken locally, unless they had a specific bearing on the policy or orders of the central authority. The officers in charge of the districts (ayukta) and a yet higher provincial official (with the title of kumaramatyā) were the link between local administration and the centre. This was the significant difference between the Mauryan administration and that of the Guptas: whereas Ashoka insisted that he must know of the doings of even the smaller officials in the districts, the Guptas were satisfied with leaving it to the kumaramatyās and the ayuktas.

The Gupta system of government did share some similarities with the Mauryan setup but was



on the whole a different style of government. Like the Mauryan system the Gupta kings were the center of the administration. The empire was divided into several provinces each of which had viceroys who were appointed from amongst the members of the royal family. The provinces were further sub-divided into a series of districts. Each district had its own administrative centre. The local administration of the district was free to make decisions on governing the area, essentially free from central control, except in matters which may have dealt with central policies. The highest officer in a district was known as the *kumaramatya* and he was the link between centre and the district. Unlike their Mauryan predecessors, the Gupta kings were not concerned with every nuance of local administration leaving such matters to the *kumaramatya*.

Villages were organized under rural bodies which consisted of the headman and village elders. In the cities there was a council which had several officers like the President of the City corporation, the chief representative of the guild of merchants, a representative of the artisans and the chief scribe. The Gupta system of urban and rural administration was based on encouraging as much local participation unlike the Mauryan system where royally appointed councils were the norm.

A significant change that had taken place was the increasing trend of paying salaries in land grants rather than in cash. Land grants usually gave the beneficiary hereditary rights over the land, although technically the king retained the right to repossess the land if he was unhappy with the conduct of the beneficiary. Brahmins were usually granted tax free lands which was another concession to an already privileged class. Land grants undermined the authority of the king as more and more land was taken away from his direct control. Also since the beneficiaries of land grants were usually Brahmins or government officials the king was not really able to exercise the repossession option fearing political backlash. The government revenue essentially came from land as commercial activity was no longer as big a contributor as it once was. Land revenue came from a variety of sources, like direct tax on the land as well as a tax on the produce of the land.

The Guptas also had a fairly good judicial system. At the bottom, were various councils which were authorized to resolve disputes that arose. Examples of these were the village assembly or the trade guild. Hence justice was usually available in the place a person lived or worked. The king presided over the highest court of appeal and he was assisted by various judges, ministers and priests etc, their presence dependent on the nature of the case. The judgment were usually made based on legal texts, social customs or specific edicts from the king.

Another significant feature of this period was that salaries were sometimes paid not in cash



but in grants of land, as is evident both from the frequency of land-grant inscriptions (in stone and metal) found from this period onwards and also from the specific reference to this practise by Hsuan Tsang in his account of India. Cash salaries were paid for military service alone. Land grants were of two varieties. One was the agraphara grant which was restricted to brahmans and was tax free

7. Each term of which of the following sets denotes a kind of tax / cess during Gupta Era?

[A] Bhaga, Bhoga, Vasti

[B] Bali, Udranga, Hiranya

[C] Khila, Udranga, Vasti

[D] Bali, Bhaga, Khila

Answer: [B] Bali, Udranga, Hiranya

Various forms of taxes / cess in Gupta era are as follows:

- Bhaga 1 /6th share of produce ‘
- Bhoga Flowers, fruits, milk etc; given to king
- Kara Additional cess
- Bali Religious Tax prajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies
- Uparikara Additional cess
- Udranga Tax from permanent peasants
- Hiranya Tax in cash
- Vata Bhuta Tax for wind and water gods

The meaning of some other terms are as follows:

- Khetra Cultivable land
- Khila Barren land
- Aprahata Jungle
- Vasti Basti- Habitable land
- Gapatha Saraha Pastures

8. Consider the following:

1. Persian Deities
2. Greek Deities
3. Indian Deities

Which among the above were engraved in the Kushana coins?

[A] Only 1

[B] 1 & 2

[C] 2 & 3



[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

All are correct

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies