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- 2.1 : The Age of the Mauryas : Chandra Gupta and Ashoka
- 2.2 : The Gupta Age : Samuder Gupta and Chander Gupta Decline
of the Empire
- 2.3 : Harsha and his Times (606 A.D. - 647 A.D.) Victories
- 2.4 : Dynasties in South : Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas and Cholas
- 2.5 : The Rajputs : Their Age and Administration

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B.A. PART -I (SEMESTER-I)

**HISTORY - PAPER A
(HISTORY OF INDIA UPTO 1000 A.D.)**

LESSON NO. 2.1

Section : B

Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka and Mauryan Administration Sources of Mauryan History

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2.1.1 Objectives

In this chapter you will study :

- Establishment of the Empire under Chandragupt Maurya
- Extension of the Empire under Ashoka

- Administration under the Mauryas
- Downfall of the Mauryas.

2.1.2 Introduction :

The history of Mauryas is very fascinating. Mauryan Empire was one of the old and big empires, established in India. A chronological account of the Mauryan period is available to the historians through the following sources :

2.1.3 Sources of Mauryan History

Indika : Megasthenes, Seleucus's Ambassador, at the Court of Chandragupta Maurya wrote a very interesting and detailed account of India in his book *INDIKA*. Unfortunately, when the ambassador was going back to his country, this book was destroyed and only a few pages of this book could be preserved. In the 19th century, these few pages were translated into English. These give an interesting account of that period.

Other Greek Writers : Besides Megasthenes, classical Greek writers like Arrian, Curtius, Plutarch and Justin have left vivid and detailed accounts of contemporary India. Some of them got first hand information from soldiers who came to India with Alexander, whereas others completed their work on the basis of reliable contemporary sources.

Arthashastra : Arthashastra is said to be a composition of Vishnu Gupta Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, the great minister of Chandra Gupta Maurya. It tells us about the politics and art of government.

Mudra Rakshasha : During the Gupta period, Vaisakha Dutta-the poet and dramatist wrote a play, based on an authentic material, named *Mudra Rakshasha*. It gives an account of how Chandra Gupta Maurya became the emperor of north-western India. In this play the ruler of the most important province of the north-west, has been given the name *Parivartak*, which is not found in Greek accounts. It seems that *parivartak* and "Porus" were one and the same person. *Mudra Rakshasha* can be considered as an important account, only this view is accepted. Otherwise its evidence becomes superfluous.

Buddhist Scriptures : Ashoka served Buddhism so devotedly that his name comes only next to Gautam. That is why we get chronological account about him in Buddhist literature, particularly in *Mahavamsa*.

Jain Scriptures : According to the Jain sources, Chandragupta Maurya believed in Jainism and helped in the spread of Jainism. However, we cannot rely much on these sources.

Inscriptions : Ashoka's inscriptions which have been found in different parts of India, are another important source of information about this period. In his

inscriptions, we find the name 'Devanam Priya' which means 'beloved of the gods'. This was a title which many kings of those days used with their names. Therefore, even now people doubt the person who got this inscribed. However, there is an evidence to prove that these inscriptions belong to Ashoka. Historians have come to the conclusion, as the word 'Ashoka' is inscribed after the above title. These inscriptions give a vivid account of the works of Ashoka. Small inscriptions, found in Mysore, throw light on the conquests of Chandra gupta Maurya.

Maurya Monuments : Perhaps Mauryan monuments are the oldest of all the ancient Indian monuments. From Sanchi and Barhut Pillars, we come to have very valuable rare accounts.

2.1.4 CHANDRA GUPTA AND HIS CONQUESTS (321 B.C. -298 B.C.)

Early Career : Correct information is not available about the birth and early life of Chandragupta Maurya. The Puranas refer to him as the son of Nanda king by a low-born woman named Mura from which the Mauryan dynasty derived its name. *Justin* and *Plutarch* also consider him to have been born in low family. The Jain books on the other hand, say that Chandragupta Maurya was the son of the Chief of *Mayurapashaka* or the keeper of king's peacocks. That is why he came to be called *Mauria*. Some historians are of the view that his mother was a 'Persian lady'. Yet another view point is that the Maurya of Pippalivana was a powerful tribe in itself who had shared a part of the ashes of Buddha. P.L. Bhargava also holds that Chandra Gupta was a *Mayurapashaka* and his dynasty , 'Maurya' was a prominent ruling tribe.

It is also said that Chandragupta was the Commander-in-Chief of the Nanda ruler but he ran away from there because of a dispute that arose between them. Nanda even offered a prize of his arrest. It is correct that Chandra Gupta remained wandering in the Punjab. Justin and Plutarch write that when Alexander came to the Punjab, Chandragupta Maurya met him with the intention of including him to advance upon Magadha but he failed in his mission. Now in Texila, he contacted Vishnugupta who is also known as Chanakya or Kautilya, Chanakya was also not on good terms with the Nanda ruler and joined him. With his help Chandragupta captured Magadha. Some historians believe that he had found somewhere a hidden treasure with which he collected a huge army and captured Magadha. Still other historians are of the view that with the help of the Nepalese king, he conquered Magadha and then the Punjab. Some scholars hold that first he captured Punjab and then Magadha. There is another view that in fact, he captured Magadha with the help of north-west Kings.

Accession and Conquests :

Whatever might have been the stages in his rise, it is certain that Chandragupta came to the throne in about 324 B.C. If at all there be any doubt about this year, it is clear from the Greek sources that by the year 321 B.C. North-western India had passed under Chandragupta Maurya's control

Conquest of Malwa and Kathiawar : Some sources depict that Gujrat and Kathiawara were the part of Chandragupta Maurya's empire. Junagarh Inscriptions of Rudhradhaman, dated 150 B.C. reads that Pushyagupta of Vaishya caste who had been ruling this territory on behalf of Chandragupta had got the Sudarshan Lake built for irrigational purpose.

Conquest of Deccan : An ancient Tamil writer Mulnamer has written on the basis of puranas that Chandragupta Empire had extended up to Podial mountain in Tinneveli district of Madras. In another inscription found in Mysore, is inscribed that Nagkhand in Shikarpur Taluka, was a part of this Empire. Thus, the western coast was included in his empire and it extended far into the Deccan.

War with Seleucus : Alexander had made Phillips the Governor of the North-western Punjab. In 324 B.C. Phillips was murdered and Andemos became the Governor. After the death of Alexander, Andemos was also recalled.

After about ten years, 'Seleucus a general of Alexander, made himself supreme in the eastern part of the empire of the Greek conqueror. Seleucus also declared his claim over the territory extending up to Beas. There arose a conflict. The detailed account of the war that followed is not available. It is presumed that either he lost then or concluded a treaty with the Mauryan King. He had to cede to Chandragupta Maurya, the *Satrapies of Archose* (Kandhar), *Paropanisadae* (Kabul) together with the Portions of Asia (Heart) and *Debrosi a* (Baluchistan) The treaty was strengthened by an matrimonial alliance by which Chandragupta Maurya married the daughter of Seleucus. Seleucus also sent Megasthenes as his ambassador to the Maurya Court. In return, Chandragupta sent 500 elephants to Seleucus.

Boundaries of Empire : With the addition of these provinces, Chandragupta Maurya's Empire extended in the north beyond Hindukush, in the west up to the Arabian sea, in the east up to Ganges and in the south beyond Vindhyas. Thus, he was first Indian king to have become the emperor of such a vast empire.

His Death : He died in about 298 B.C. According to the Jain traditions, Chandragupta ended his life by slow starvation after having relieved himself from the state affairs. Most probably he died in Mysore.

Note : For Chandragupta's administration See part III of this chapter

2.1.5 BINDUSARA (298 B.C. TO 273 B.C.)

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara about 298 B.C. Bindusara ruled for about 25 years. But very little is known about him. It is fact that he did not allow his empire to shrink. It goes to his credit that he could skilfully control such a vast empire. According to Buddhist scriptures, he had sixteen wives and one hundred sons. No historian has, however, vouchsafed this statement. Again according to Buddhist scriptures, Kautilya was his Prime Minister and he conquered sixteen states. It proves that the whole of Indian peninsula had come under the sway of the Mauryans except Kalinga and some districts of Deccan (Tamilnad, Travancore and Cochin). The period 273-272 B.C. marked the death of Bindusara followed by a struggle for succession among his sons. Finally, the coronation of Ashoka took place in 269 B.C.

PART II**2.1.6 ASHOKA (269 B.C. TO 233 B.C.)****Early Life and Coronation :**

Every historian considers Ashoka to be one of the greatest Kings of India. In the Buddhist religious books, accounts given to Ashoka are not very favourable. It is also said that Ashoka was not the eldest son of his father. He had 99 brothers. From the early Childhood, he was very vicious and cruel. He was made the Governor of Ujjain and later on of Taxila. In Taxila, he suppressed a rebellion and thus gave proof of his ability. Later on, he was called to Patliputra and his elder brother was sent to Taxila. When Ashoka's father died, he made bid for the throne. There began a war of succession among the brothers and Ashoka succeeded after killing all the 99 brothers.

There are different views about the truth of this story. Buddhists accept it. But modern historians reject it. They argue that there is a reference to Ashoka's brothers being alive at some later stages. It is possible that the Buddhist might have invented this story to add glory to the later life of Ashoka. Still there are some circumstantial evidences which cannot be ignored. Bindusara died in 273 B.C. and Ashoka's formal coronation was postponed for four years till 269 B.C. This lapse of four years confirms that there might have been some war during this period. At the same time, it does not mean that he murdered all the brothers. So, it is very difficult to ascertain the truth of this story.

Early Administration and Conquests of Ashoka :

In the beginning of his reign, Ashoka continued to rule in the traditional way. He went for hunting and enjoyment. He perhaps believed in Brahmanism. At this time he suppressed a revolt in Taxila.

Battle of Kalinga : After the eighth year of his coronation i.e. about 261 B.C. Ashoka, according to Rock Edict XII embarked on Kalinga's conquests. Kalinga had big force. We come to know from the inscriptions of Ashoka that in the battle of Kalinga, 1,50,000 people were imprisoned and 1,00,000 were killed and more died after the battle, of some disease etc. Ashoka was touched by the vast destruction. It made a deep impression on his mind and his heart was taken.

Result : Battle of Kalinga is a turning point in the History of the East. It was Ashoka's last war. He felt that it had caused so much sufferings; it should be given up. There should be *haramvijaya* instead of *Digvijaya* (conquest of territory). There should be *Dharama ghoshas* instead of *Yudh Ghosha*.

This was a new way of life. No other king before or after Ashoka with huge resources at his command even thought likewise. This was a departure from the tradition of ages, Battle of Kalinga also brought changes in Ashoka's personal beliefs. After this battle, he became an active member of the Buddhist Sangha. His administration also witnessed a marked change after this war. Now, Ashoka's Government took various measures to alleviate the sufferings of the people.

Extent of Ashoka's Empire : The conquest of Kalinga brought completion to the empire of Ashoka. His inscriptions show that his empire extended up to Shahbajgarhi in the north-west, up to the river Pennar in the south, upto Sauparn and Girnnar in the West and upto Dhauli and Joggad in the East. According to various accounts Kashmir was also a part of his empire and Srinagar was founded by him. Nepal and Pundar Vardhan (Northern Bengal) and Samatta (Eastern Bengal) were also under his rule. Although no monument of Ashoka has been found in Bengal but Hiuen Tsang has said with authority that he had seen many monuments of Ashoka in Bengal. In the Deccan, the valleys of Godavari and Krishna were under him and a way from these were the independent states of Cholas, Pandays and Kerlaputras.

2.1.6.1 ASHOKA AS A BUDDHIST

Change of Religion : Kalhan, the writer of 'Rajtarangni' mentions that Ashoka was a worshipper of Shiva. After the war of Kalinga he became a devotee of Buddhism. But for about one year, he showed no zeal for Buddhism. However, he became a staunch Buddhist after undertaking his pilgrimage to Gaya. Some scholars believe that he was influenced by a Buddhist monk named Upa Gupta. In the Bhabru inscription, it is written that Ashoka respected Gautama, Dharma and Sangha.

His Efforts to spread Buddhism :

Pilgrimage : Ashoka studied Buddhist books and tried to preach Dharma and to spread the message of the Dharma to different corners of his empire. After this, he set out on a Dharma Yarta. He visited almost all the important religious places of the

Buddhists. In the travels, he talked to the people about their welfare and Dharma. Quoting his own example he attracted their attention towards the pilgrimage. He undertook Pilgrimages in the 10th and 20th year of his reign. He visited Gaya, Sarnath, Lumbini Garden and Kapilvastu etc. He built many pillars and monuments to commence his pilgrimage.

Through Dharma Mahamatras : A major effect of the Kalinga war was that it led to change in the spirit of his administration. To start with, he preached the message of his Dharma to the people through the "Rajikas" (district offices), 'Pardeshkas' (provincial revenue and political offices) and "Yuktas" (scribes). These officers were ordered to lay stress on moral laws. They toured their territories every fifth year. Later on he assigned this work to 'Dharma Mahamatras' especially appointed for this purpose. They were ordered that moral laws and orders of the king be got inscribed on the pillars and rocks and these should be put at such places as might catch the eye of all passers-by.

Missions to Foreign Countries : It is mentioned in the inscription of Ashoka that the king sent successful missions to many countries to spread his gospel. His religious missions reached Syrius Atroches II (261-246 B.C.), Ptolemy II of Egypt (282 to 246 B.C.) and Antinomus of Macedonia (276 to 239 B.C.) etc. He also sent his mission to Tamil state and Ceylon. He sent not only the missionaries but his son and daughter also joined the Sanghas to spread Ahimsa. According to a Ceylonese book, these missionaries also visited Southern Burma and Eastern India.

Buddhist Convention : In the last days of his reign, Ashoka convened a Buddhist convention to settle disputes which had arisen among the Buddhists. It was held at Patliputra in 252 B.C. and was presided over by Moggalliputta Tissa. It came to a certain conclusion after deliberating for about nine months. It framed certain laws to show the true way to the monks. It also impounded some of the existing Buddhist laws. The most important recommendation of his council was for sending the great monks to various parts of the country and abroad for preaching Buddhism. Thus, Majjhantika was sent to Kashmir and Gandhara, Maharakshita to Yavana because his council was for sending the great monks to various parts of the country and abroad for preaching Buddhism. Majjhimsa to Himalaya, Mahadeva to Mysore, Mahadhamrakshita to Maharashtra, Rakshita to Naranasi, Uttara to Suvannabhumi and Mahendra to Ceylon.

Through 'Stupas' and 'Viharas' : According to Fa-hien, Ashoka got constructed 8400 'Stupas' and 'Viharas'. Among them, 'Stupas' of Sanchi and Bharhut are the most famous. He gave to the Buddhist monasteries and scholars, grants and scholarship also.

Thus, Ashoka tried his best to spread Buddhism by adopting active and vigorous measures to this effect. He also declared Buddhism as the Raj Dharma or state religion.

2.1.6.2 ASHOKA'S DHARMA (LAW OF PIETY)

Its Meaning : Ashoka's Dharma or his law of piety was one of the important aspects of his administration. In his inscription, he says that he was a Buddhist. He sent many Missionaries to 'various parts of the country as well as abroad. He sought help in the realization of this objective from his "Dharma Mahamatras" and other officers. But in fact what he preached was not Buddhism but moral laws, which are found in all the religions of the world. These were concerned not only with religious matters but were worthy of uplifting normal man from day to day existence.

There is no mention of Ashoka's Dharma in his inscriptions. These inscriptions do not refer even to Buddhism nor its principles. Dharma or law of Piety contained the following fundamental principles according to his Inscription Number VII.

- (a) **Sarayan** or Mastery of Senses.
- (b) **Bhawasudhi** or purity of thought.
- (c) **Karitainta** or Deep Gratitude.
- (d) **Dridh-Bhakti** or deep devotion.

In pillar Inscription Number 2, there is a mention of :

- (i) **Dan** or charity.
- (ii) **Daya**-Kindness
- (iii) **Satya**-Truthfulness.

In pillar Inscription No. III, it is mentioned that it is the highest Dharma of a man to be free from anger, cruelty, pride and jealousy.

All the above virtues for the sake of charity can be divided into the following two parts :

Practicals :

- (a) Obedience to the elders ;
- (b) Truthfulness ;
- (c) Reverence for all;
- (d) Charity.

Doctrinal :-

- (a) **Ahinsa** or Non-violence ;
- (b) **Sahinshilta** or Toleration ;

- (c) True conquest of heart ;
- (d) Industry or hard work ;
- (e) Belief in '**Swarga**' or '**Parlok**' or heaven.

Thus, we find that law of piety was not strictly confined to Buddhism only but was common to all religions.

Measures for the Spread of Piety : We have already noted that Ashoka used to go on pilgrimages. Although these directly influenced the propagation of Buddhism but indirectly attracted the people towards his Dharma and eventually helped to raise their morals.

It should also be noted that Ashoka was not a missionary. He began to lead a high moral life and actually lived and practiced of his beliefs. He stopped all such 'Yajnas' as involved the sacrifices of animals. The use of meat in the royal Kitchen was discouraged to a large extent.

However, Ashoka's greatest success was toleration. Although he was a Buddhist yet he did not hate other religions. He offered charity to the Buddhists as well as to others. He was kind to the Brahmans, Jains and others even though they belonged to different religions. In one of his inscriptions there is a mention of Ashoka having offered some village to 'Ajivkaas' for their living. These Ajivakas believed in "Makhli Gosai", which Gautam called the most unwise Guru. His Dharma Mahamatras looked after as much after the non-Buddhists. Thus, to uplift the morals of the people he stressed the Law of piety.

Ashoka's Character and Place in the History :

Ashoka is one of the greatest ruler of not only India, but the entire world. Although he was not a big conqueror yet he is the greatest of all the kings and saints so far as the preaching of peace is concerned. He was a saint-emperor of India. He employed all the state resources for the spread of Buddhism. He has done so much for Buddhism that it is difficult to say whether Buddhism survived and gained popularity because of the efforts of Gautama or Ashoka. The most significant aspect of Ashoka's personality is that he emphasized the importance of moral laws in preference to worldly pursuits.

Thus, by self example, religious travels, inscriptions and foreign missions etc, he served Buddhism in a remarkable manner. Besides he served his people through his public welfare works, moral laws and selfless service. He worked hard to give peace of the suffering millions. He felt that kings could be great by raising the morals and by adding to the material progress of their subjects and not by the conquests of territories. At the same time, by cultivating peaceful relations with other countries he opened a way of Indian trade and laid the foundation of Indian

colonies.

Every student of Ashoka's life and works had tried to compare his achievements with kings or saints. He is compared with Alexander, Caesar, Akbar, Napoleon, Constantine and St. Paul. But none of these comparisons seems to appropriate. Ashoka was unique in himself. Not a single king or saint is really his equal. His conquests are superior to any world conqueror. Their conquests came to an end with their deaths but Ashoka's name is worshipped from Volga to Ceylon and Hindukush mountains to Japan to this day.

Scholars have showered high praise to him. H.G. Wells, the Nobel prize winner said, "Admire the tens and thousands of names of monarchs that crowned the column of history, the name of Ashoka shines alone like a star."

He was a Buddhist but he showed reverence to other religions as well, and they were given maximum respect. His title 'Devanam Priya' shows that he was as much a Hindu as a Buddhist. In fact, his toleration was not due to any selfish interest. On the contrary, while, the Roman emperor Constantine adopted a policy of religious toleration for political ends, Akbar had become tolerant because of the influence of his Hindu wives and his selfishness. But no selfishness can be attributed to Ashoka's conversion. He loved all men from the core of his heart.

2.1.6.3 SUCCESSORS OF ASHOKA

In this transitory world, Ashoka's achievements testify his personal merit and perfection. The elevated and enabling stature of state policies could not be continued by his successors. As it is, from the contemporary sources we know nothing regarding the reign of his successors. The Brahmanic Puranas, Buddhist and Jain sources also differ. It is said that Kunala, Jaluka, Mahendra and Tivara were Ashoka's sons. In the absence of any definite information, the historians are of the view that after the death of Ashoka, his empire was divided among his sons. One of them became the ruler of the Central Provinces and the other became an independent ruler of North-western region including Kashmir. It is said Samprati was the ruler of Patliputra and Ujjain and he was also the protector of Jainism.

It is held that the last ruler of his dynasty was Brihadratha who was murdered by his Commander-in-Chief, Pushyamitra Sunga in 184 B.C. Thus, the foundation of Sunga dynasty was laid.

2.1.7 CAUSES OF THE DOWNFALL OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

The Mauryan Empire disappeared from the political map of India after a life span of about 137 years only (321 B.C. to 184 B.C.)

There were various causes of the downfall of the Mauryan Empire. Some critics hold that emphasising the moral purpose of the state government, Ashoka ignored other aspects of administration. Though these weaknesses were imperceptible during

Ashoka's life time but soon after his death, these assumed serious dimension. Cracks appeared on all sides and the glorious structure erected by Chandragupta, his son and grandson, collapsed abruptly. For the sake of convenience, causes of the downfall of the Mauryan Empire may be studied under the following heads :

(1) Neglect of Defence : Defence is the primary need for security of any empire. The money which should have spent on defence, was used on the propagation of ethical and religious ideals. Therefore, just after Ashoka's death, rebellions took place in various parts of the Empire.

(2) Ashoka's Policy of Peace : Dr. Bhandarkar has called Ashoka's Policy of peace as the main reason of the downfall of the Mauryan empire. This weakened the military spirit of the people and love of the country cooled down.

(3) Brahmanical Opposition : M.M. Haraprasad is of the view that Ashoka's policy of patronage to the Buddhist alienated the Brahmins. They began to spread hatred among the people against the king. Pushyamitra called himself the defender of Brahmin. But Dr. Rajchandari does not agree with this view.

(4) Weak Successors : After studying the different points of view, a student of History feels that the main reason for downfall of the Mauryan Empire were the weak successors of Ashoka. It is clear that after Ashoka's his empire was partitioned. This division was contributed much towards the weakening of the huge central structure.

(5) Foreign Invasions : Foreign invasions also contributed to the downfall of the Mauryan. The north-western territories of the empire were ravaged by the Indo-scythian and Indo-Parthian invasions. Simultaneously, the Mauryan power was weakened by the rise of Andhra in the Deccan. In the end, we may say it was not only Ashoka's policy of peace that brought about the downfall of the Mauryan Empire. Had it been so, Gupta Empire would have never seen the sun-set of its glory. The downfall of the Mauryan came due to a combination of various factors like weak successors, foreign invasions and the natural processes of decline and decay.

PART-III

2.1.8 MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

2.1.8.1 Chandragupta Maurya's Administration

(1) The King : Arthashastra of Kautilya and "Indika" of Megasthenes throw a flood of light on the administration of Chandragupta Maurya. The King was not a mere constitutional head but a source of all power. On the other hand, although people had no control over the King, but the King was always mindful of this duties towards them. According to Arthashastra, King's

Dharma lay in considering the public above himself. Megasthenese writes that he always thought of the welfare of the people.

(2) Ministers : There was a big secretariat to run the administration of the country. The Home and Finance Minister was called 'Samhartas' Minister of Rehabilitation was called Sanihart. The administration of imperial place was under 'Dauvarka'. Army was under the charge of a Commander-in-Chief. In addition, there was a 'Adhiyakash' or Superintendent and Amatya'. There is also a reference to the Council of Ministers but its composition and powers are not clearly mentioned. It seems that the King was not bound by the decisions of the cabinet. Officials were appointed irrespective of their caste/ creed.

(3) Provincial Administration : The country was divided into four provinces. Taxila was the capital of north-western province, Ujjain of the western province and Swarangiri of the Deccan. The Eastern province was administered from the capital, Patliputra. Provinces were under the Governors who were called. 'Kumars' or 'Arya Putras'. They were often princes of royal blood. Forts played an important role in the defence of the country. Therefore, Durgapals (the defenders of the forts) were considered very important persons and they helped the provincial administration in the maintenance of peace. Every Governor, according to Kautilya, was paid 1200 panas an year. There were small provinces also. The head of these small provinces were called Rashtriya. We come to know from 'Rudradamn's inscriptions that Kathiawar was a province of this type under Pushyamitra.

(4) Local Administration : District was the next unit of Administration. Its incharge was called 'Sthanik'. Every "Gope" ran the administration of many villages. Each 'Gramin' administered a village with the help of Panchayat. Municipal administration was run on the pattern of Patliputra through six boards.

(5) Justice : King was the fountain of justice and judges helped him in the judicial administration. These courts were under the charge of 'Mahamatras' and "Rajukas". There was a separate judge to hear the case of foreigners. Laws were very harsh, but justice was administered fairly and speedily. Witnesses were called and their statements were recorded and after that decision was given. Most of the cases were disposed off by imposing a fine. Big offences were punished with mutilation of limbs. Because of this severity of the Mauryan Penal code, there was peace. Megasthenese says that in Patliputra which had a population of about four lakhs there never occurred on any day thefts of more than 200 drams (or eight pounds).

(6) Army Administration : His strong army included 600,000 Infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants and 8,000 chariots. Three or four soldiers could sit on an elephant or chariot. Thus the total strength of his army was not less

than 6,90,0000. The army administration was run by a Board of 30 members. These members were grouped into six boards, each with five members. Each board looked after one of the branches i.e. Infantry, Cavalry, Chariots and Elephantry and Transport. Admiralty Board-incharge of the transport also looked after the ships, boats and bridges for the safe crossing of the river.

(7) Weapons : Infantry fought with swords, lances, bows, arrows and javelins etc. Horseman had two lances and a shield. There used to be there bowmen on every elephant. Every chariot had two bowmen, besides the driver. It may be concluded that bows and arrows were the principal weapons of war.

According to Arthashastra, medicines etc. were also made available in the battlefield.

(8) Finance and Revenue : The officer incharge of finance department was called 'Smaharta'. The share of the state was 1/4 of the produce which could be given in the form of kind or cash. Tax was also imposed on mines, forests, animals and roads.

(9) Espionage : The Department of espionage was very well-organised. It served two purposes. It kept the Government informed of the possible intrigues and also about the difficulties and wishes of the people. This department was very necessary during those days when there was no press. The officer incharge of this department used to be a person who could easily establish contacts with the people.

(10) Municipal Administration : Municipal Administration was well-planned. Megasthenese has given us some information in this respect. He has given us an account of the administration of Patliputra and it is presumed that this type of administration was in vogue in all the big cities.

The Municipal Administration was in the hands of a Board of thirty members. It was further divided into six boards each with five members. Every board was responsible for one department but they looked after the city collectively also. The first board was incharge of industry. It framed laws for the workers. It also checked that the material of inferior type was not on sale in the market. The second board attended the visitors and foreigners living in the market. Various sources reveal that they were looked after well. This board watched their property as well as their movements. The third board was incharge of the registration of births and deaths. The fourth board regulated trade and commerce and checked the sales, exchange, weights and measures. It also issued licenses to the merchants. The fifth board supervised the manufacture and sale of goods. The sixth board was responsible for the collection of taxes in the city.

In the collective capacity, the commissioners had the charge of the public welfare works such as the repair of the roads, maintenance of markets, temples, gardens, schools and harbours etc.

Megasthenese's Account of Chandragupta Maurya

(1) King and His Palace : Megasthenese was very surprised to see the Imperial Palace where the king lived with great splendour. There were pearls and diamonds of different types. The king came before the people very rarely in a golden palanquin. He was surrounded by women guards. From the chronicles, we learn that women were foreigners. King never slept in the same room consecutively for two nights.

King's palace was a magnificent building made of timber. There were parks and ponds with different varieties of fish within the palace. It was one of the big buildings of the country. It was by far the best palace in the world.

(2) Social Condition : Megasthenese has thrown a flood of light on the social condition of the country. He has written that the society was divided into seven classes. The philosophers belonged to the highest class. Farmers formed the second class whereas the third class consisted of the shepherds and herdsmen. The fourth class consisted of hunters. The fifth class consisted of artisans and tradesmen. They were employed in industry and trade. The sixth class consisted of warriors. The seventh class consisted of King's council of ministers and judges.

Thus, Megasthenese has given a list of seven classes instead of four in the past. It seems that he counted the different types of professions as classes by mistake.

(3) Morality : Megasthenes was surprised at the high moral of the people. Men took wine rarely, promises were not made in writing. People did not tender false evidence. There was no slavery, but polygamy was prevalent in the city.

(4) Patliputra : Megasthenese had given a vivid account of Patliputra. This city was situated at the confluence of the Ganges and Son rivers. It was about 80 stadias (about nine and half miles) long and 15 stadias (about one and three quarters mile) in width.

There was a wooden wall around the city and also a ditch 60 feet deep and 600 feet wide. There were 64 doors and 570 towers in the wall.

(5) Miscellaneous : He had never seen the cotton plants and sugarcane. Therefore, he has mentioned cotton and wool growing on the plants and sugarcane as honey without bees. On pressing it between the teeth it was sweeter than honey.

2.1.8.2 ASHOKA'S ADMINISTRATION

(1) Confederation and the Ammahatras : From Ashoka's inscriptions, we come to know that he was the head of a confederation of

many rulers. Rulers of these states were no doubt, under Ashoka, but they were independent in their internal administration. 'Mahamatras' were the Governors of frontier provinces and frontier districts.

(2) Council of Ministers and Purus : The cabinet considered the verbal orders of the King and the King waited for their decision with great anxiety. 'Purus' were the personal employees of Ashoka. They watched the administration and sent secret reports to the King.

(3) Rajukas : Rajukas were perhaps the Governors of small provinces. In Inscription Number III, it is inscribed that the Rajukas looked after the public in manner as a nurse look after the baby. King himself toured different parts of the country to estimate the work done for the welfare of the people. The governors of the big provinces were called 'Pradeshikas'.

(4) Ambassadors and Messengers : Ashoka sent ambassadors to the courts of independent foreign rulers. In Rock inscription XIII, Ashoka has expressed his wish of "Dharma Vijya" through messengers, in the territories of the independent rulers.

(5) Justice : Both types of courts, civil and military, existed. For big crimes, imprisonment and even death sentence was given. At least in six inscriptions, Ashoka has impressed upon the relatives, friends and neighbours of the culprits to request the judge on his behalf.

(6) Dharma and Mahamatras : They were responsible for high morals of the people. They made rules with respect to royal charity and looked after the scholars and saints. Mahamatras in charge of the female section, looked after the morals of the queens, princesses, and women and the female servants of the palace. It was their duty to manage the courtesan girls, prostitutes and actresses.

(7) Nagrika and Mahamatras : Nagrika was incharge of the capital city. Ashoka felt annoyed if any work has done in hurry. Mahamatras were in charge of different departments. From his Inscription No. VII, we learn that Ashoka stressed upon his officers to evince self-control, hard work and devotion. To serve the people best was obligatory for them.

(8) King's Ideal : Ashoka thought of the people as the best ideal for a king. In his Kalinga inscription No. II, he inscribed, "All people are members of my family. As I wish that my children should be happy and prosperous in all walks of life so I desire for my people." In his later days, he was no more interested in visiting Bodhi Viharas. He spent maximum time in performing the state duties. Reporters were allowed to see him at any time and at every place.

(9) Department of Public Welfare : Roads were built and shady trees were grown on both sides. Wells dug at a distance of every half kos. Rest houses

were also built water tanks were constructed for men and animals. He established hospital for animals and human beings. He was so much absorbed in the welfare of his people that his state was a true specimen of 'Ram Rajya'.

To conclude our study of the Mauryas, you have noted in the lesson, the rise and fall of the Mauryan dynasty, the establishment of a fairly centralized empire and the efficient system of administration built up by the Mauryans. Ashoka, the greatest of All Mauryas is remembered to this day, among the few distinguished ruler of the world.

2.1.9 Mauryan Art :

Under the Mauryans, all the branches of the fine arts-Architecture, Sculpture, Art of Polishing, Art of Engineering made a great progress.

(i) Architecture : The Mauryan buildings were finest and grandest in the whole world. The Chinese traveller Fahein also remarks, "these places are so beautiful and excellent that they appear to be the creation of God, rather than of men." The Buddhist tradition credit Ashoka with building as many as 84,000 stupas. The most famous are those of Sachi and Barhut. The Sanchi Stupas are at present 77 1/2 feet high and 120 feet in diameter. According to Kalhan, the author of Raj Tarangini, it was Ashoka who laid the foundation of Srinagar.

(ii) Sculpture : The art of sculpture reached zenith under Ashoka. Ashoka pillars are perhaps the best example of the Mauryan art. These pillars are 50 to 60 feet in height and about 50 tons in weight. How such high and heavy pillars were chiselled out of one single rock is still a wonder for us. Each pillar is surmounted by a head which is decorated with figures of animals like lion, the horse, the elephant or the bull. The Sarnath pillar is the most magnificent in figures of four lions, standing back to back are so natural that they have been praised all over the world. This figure of four lions has been adopted by the modern Indian Currency.

(iii) Art of Polishing : Another important feature of the Mauryan art is the art of polishing. The walls of the caves that have been found near Gaya, are so brightly polished that they shine like a mirror. The pillar which now stands in Feroze Shah Kotla have such a fine polish that some observers have been misled to the belief that it was made of metal rather than of stone.

(iv) Art of Engineering : During the reign of Ashoka, huge blocks of rocks were cut, handled and chiselled into monolithic and exceptionally fine pillars. How these pillars were taken to such distant places is nothing less than a miracle. A high degree of knowledge of engineering must have been required both in cutting these huge blocks and later on removing them hundreds of miles away.

According to Sir John Marshall, "the extraordinary precision and accuracy which

characterise all Mauryan art.....has never been surpassed even by the finest workmanship, of Athenian buildings."

2.1.10 Summary :

The history of the Mauryas have been fully proud of its salient features. It was established by Chandragupta Maurya and it become very prosperous during the reign of Ashoka. Art and Literature also achieved name and faame. But the fact remains that the successors of Ashoka were not able to maintain its significance. Resultantly Mauryan Empire witnessed downfall.

2.1.11 Key Words

Indika, Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara, Ashoka, Buddhism

2.1.12 Self Check Exercise

Q1. Fill in the blanks

- (i)was an ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
- (ii)was the Chief Minister of Chandragupta Maurya.
- (iii) Ashoka's coronation was performed in.....B.C.
- (iv) Battle of Kalinga was fought in.....
- (v) Bindusara died in

Q2. Mark () the correct statements.

- (i) Who wrote the Indika
(a) Vishnu Gupta, (b) Megasthenese, (c) Plutarch.
- (ii) Who wrote the famous play 'Mudra Rakshash ?
(a) Kautilya, (b) Justin, (c) Viasakha Dutta.
- (iii) Who wrote the Rajatarangini ?
(a) Kalhan, (b) Curtius, (c) Arrian.
- (iv) Who was in charge of Finance Department in Mauryan Administration?
(a) Samahatra (b) Rajuka (c) Mahamtra
- (v) Where did the Third Buddhist Council meet ?
(a) Kaniskapura (b) Patliputra (c) Sarnath.

Answer :

Q 1. (i) Megasthenes, (ii) Chankya (iii) 269 B.C., (iv) 261 B.C., (v) 273 B.C.

Q 2. (i) B, (ii) c, (iii) a, (iv) a, (v) b.

2.1.13 Suggested Questions**(A) Long Questions**

Q1. Write Notes on :

- (a) Achievements of Ashoka;
- (b) Ashoka's place in History;
- (c) Ashoka's Dharma;
- (d) Ashoka's service to Buddhism.

Q2. Give an account of the Mauryan administration.

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write Notes on :

- (i) Mauryan Art; (ii) Source on Mauryan History;
- (iii) Causes for the downfall of the Mauryans.

2.1.14 Suggested Readings

1. Narang, K.S. and Sethi, R.R. : A History of Bharat Upto 1526, pp.143-181
2. Smith V.A. : The Oxford History of India, p, 95-142.
3. Cambridge History of India, Vol. 1, pp. 420-62

**THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS-SAMUDRA GUPTA AND
CHANDRA GUPTA DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE**

Structure

- 2.2.1 Objectives
- 2.2.2 Introduction
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- 2.2.4 Samudra Gupta
- 2.2.5 Rama Gupta
- 2.2.6 Chandra Gupta-II or Vikramaditya
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- 2.2.9 Summary
- 2.2.10 Key Words
- 2.2.11 Self Check Exercise
- 2.2.12 Suggested Questions
- 2.2.13 Suggested Readings

2.2.1 Objectives :

In this chapter you will study :

- Chandra Gupta-I, who established Gupta Empire.
- Administration of Samudra Gupta
- Administration of Chandra Gupta-II

2.2.2 INTRODUCTION :

After the death of Kanishka in 162 A.D., there followed an insignificant period of almost one and a half century in the history of India till Chandra Gupta-I ascended the throne in 320 A.C. During those 150 years, we find the strength of Kanishka's successors had been progressively declining. Except his immediate successor Huvishka, none was able to keep the Empire intact and a large number of such small powers as north-western India, Persia, Nagas, Bharat Sivas and Vakatakas in northern rose to powers.

Gupta Dynasty :

Although Dodwell opines in the *Cambridge History of India*, "It is just possible that Shri Gupta and Ghatok Kacha are foreign Names.....and the Guptas were not of Hindu fold," Yet it was a dynasty that has ruled best in the known history of India. Allahabad pillar inscriptions and Itsing's (a Chinese traveller) account reveals that Shri Gupta (the grand father of Chandragupta I) was the first ruler of his dynasty who ruled from 240 A.D. to 280 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Ghatot-Kacha (father of Chandragupta I) who ruled from 280 A.D. to 312 A.D. However, very little information is available about both of them.

2.2.3 CHANDRA GUPTA-1 (320 A.D.-335 A.D.)

Chandragupta I was an ambitious ruler. He assumed the title of 'Maharaja Adhiraj (King of Kings). He married Kumaradevi, the princess of Vaishali and this marriage is regarded as a matter of great political significance by the historians. He got Patliputra in dowry and his influence increased due to his powerful in-laws.

His Empire, Gupta Era, and his Coins : His Empire included Magadha, Oudh, Trihuta and Allahabad. He is believed to have started a new Gupta Era whose first year commenced on 26th February, 320 A.D. He issued coins also and some of them bear the image of his wife Kumaradevi.

2.2.4 SAMUDRA GUPTA (335 A.D. - 375 A.D.)

Some historians hold that Chandragupta I was succeeded by Kacha, who ruled for some time and such historians regard Kacha instead of Samudra Gupta, the eldest son of Chandragupta I. However, this contradiction is not very authentic and it is believed that Kacha was the second name of Samudra Gupta, who ascended the throne in 335 A.D. Our information about Samudra Gupta is based upon Harishen's inscription of the Allahabad pillar. It has been rightly said. "Upon this single record rests the name and fame of the real founder of the Gupta Empire. "But Eran inscription (in Central India) and his coins also throw some light on his region.

Bad Political Condition : Political-condition of India at the time of his accession betrayed strength and political unity. No ruler, not even Chandragupta I had built a strong Empire out of the ruins, chaos and disorder, which followed the fall of the Kushan and the Andhra Empires. Credit goes to Samudra Gupta for reviving the glory of the old Magadha Empire, carrying out a strong empire, and bringing about peace and order. For his military achievements, Smith calls him "Indian Napoleon."

His Conquests

Samudra Gupta was the master of sword and is rightly compared with

Alexander, Ala-ud-din Khilji and Akbar. In the words of Dr. R.K. Mukerjee. "While Ashoka stands for peace and Non-violence, Samudra Gupta stands for opposite principle of war and aggression, he had a passion for them (conquests)."Immediately after his accession, he set out on a mission of "Digvijaya" i.e. "Kingdom-taking". His passion for conquests was so great that he did not sit quite till he had overrun the whole of India. His conquests may be classified into the following four groups :

- (i) Conquests of the North.
- (ii) Conquests of the South.
- (iii) Conquests of the Frontier Kingdoms.
- (iv) Influence over Ceylon and Satrapas.

(i) Conquests of the North :

Defeat of the Naga Kings : From the Allahabad inscriptions, we learn that Samudra Gupta spent early years of his rule in fighting against the Naga Kings, who were the masters of northern India. Naga King especially Naga Sena, Ganapati Naga and Nandi formed a war league against him, but they were all defeated in the battle of Kaushambi and their territories were annexed.

Conquests of northern-Rajputana and North-West India : He defeated the Kolta Kings of Northern Rajputana. Samudra Gupta also expelled and defeated nine kings of northern India from their territories.

(ii) Conquests of the South :

Prof. N. N. Ghosh says about his conquest of the south that "In the boldness of design and execution campaign can be classed with that of Alexander the great." It is said that during his southern conquests, he defeated no less than twelve Kings. First of all, he defeated King Mahendra of Kosala, whose territories constituted Mahandi Valley. Next he fought pitched battle, beyond Krishna river against the confederacy of Hastivarman of Vengi (eastern coast), Kubir of Devarashtra (western coast) under this leader. Vishungoya, the pallva King of Kanchi (eastern coast). However, we do not know about the results. There after Samudra Gupta conquered Maharashtra Palaghat and Khandes.

His Southern Policy : Samudra Gupta followed politically a wise expedient and timely policy of declaration towards the rules of South. On their part, the rulers of the south acknowledged his suzerainty and paid heavy tributes. Samudra Gupta restored their kingdoms to them. The importance of this policy can be seen from the fact that Ala-ud-Din Khalji also followed the same policy after almost 900 years.

(iii) Conquests of the Frontier Kingdoms :

He defeated the rulers of Brahmaputra (Samalata Devaka, Kamrup (Assam) on the eastern frontier, and Nepal and Kartiputra. He also subdued the north-west frontier tribes like Malavas, Abhiras, Sakas and the Yaudheyas.

(iv) Influence over Saka, Satrapas and Ceylon :

His conquests terrified the Saka Satrapas-Deviputra, Sahis and Murundas of the north-west. They solicited his friendship and made huge and rich presents to him. Same was the case with Meghavarana, the ruler of Ceylon. He established a big monastery at Bodhi Gaya with six halls, and it was three-storied. This paved the way for friendly relation between the Gupta ruler and the King of Ceylon.

Extent of His Empire : His empire with its capital at Patliputra, extended in the north upto the slopes of the Himalayas (some hold that Nepal and Kartipura were also the parts of his empire). In the south, it extended upto the river Narbada and rulers beyond as far as Ceylon were under his influence. In the west, it extended upto river Chambal. In the east extended upto the river Brahmaputra. However, some historians are of the view that Samatata, Devaka and Assam were not the parts of the empire.

His Miscellaneous Achievements : Samudra Gupta performed Asvamedha or Horse Sacrifice. He is rather believed to have revived this brave practice. Special coins were issued on that occasion to bear testimony to the fact. On coins, Samudra Gupta is shown playing Vina.....it was a fact that he was himself a 'Vina' player, poet and a patron of art, music and learning. He also held the title of 'Kaviraj' i.e. the King of poet, because of his various compositions. As mentioned earlier, Harisena was his poet laureate. Other scholars of his court were Vasu Bandhu and Asanga (both Buddhists). Although Samudra Gupta was himself a Vaishnavite by faith yet his secularism and religious toleration was of a commendable degree. He allowed the Ceylonese King to build a monastery at Bodhi Gaya and patronise Buddhist scholars Vasu Bandhu and Asanga. Thus, we see that Samudra Gupta was not only a warrior and statesman but also a poet, a musician and a great patron of learning and scholarship.

2.2.5 RAMA GUPTA (375 A.D. TO 380 A.D.)

According to Dr. Altekar and Prof. R.D. Banerjee, Samudra Gupta was not succeeded by the famous Chandra Gupta, II but by Rama Gupta. Their views are based on 'Devichandra Gupta.' composed by Visakhadatta and "Harsh Charita" of Bana. It is said that during the reign of Rama Gupta, the Saka Chief invaded the Gupta Kingdom defeated Rama Gupta the weak ruler who even agreed to hand over

his chief Queen Dhruva Devi. Prince Chandra Gupta who was very popular among his soldiers could not tolerate this humiliation of step brother. He invaded the Saka King's camp in the disguise of a woman and killed him. After murdering his brothers, he ascended the throne himself in 380 A.D. and later on married the above mentioned widow of Rama Gupta.

2.2.6 CHANDRA GUPTA II OR VIKRAMADITYA (380 A.D. - 414 A.D.)

Chandra Gupta II, popularly known as 'Vikramaditya' the Sun of power, is also known to the students of history by such names as Narindra Chandra, Sinn Chandra, Deva Gupta and Deva Raja etc. He has been held as the most powerful, courageous, and strong ruler of the Gupta dynasty. To illustrate it, it was his hobby to fight and play with tiger.

His Conquests : His Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription reveals that he defeated Chief of Vanga (Bengal) country. The same inscription reads that he defeated the Vehika tribe across the Indus. However, his most crowning victory was over the foreign Saka Chief of the western Satraps of Malwa (in Madhya Bharat) Gujarat and a part of present Maharashtra, who had proved their might to Andhras, Bharaisivas, Vakatakas and the Nagas. Conquest and annexation of the last three provinces is important in more than one way from the point of view of political and national renaissance. His territories extended up to the Arabian Sea. Three important parts of western India namely, Baroch, Cambay and Sopara passed under his control and consequently trade relations with Roman Empire were established. Lastly, the great cultural city of Ujjain was included in his Empire which is believed to have become his capital during the closing years of his rule.

Fahien has given a vivid account of his religious views, administration and the condition of the people during his times to which now we turn, (For the study of the progress of art, architecture and learning during his regime, please see these sub-heads under Golden age of Guptas).

Account Given by Fahien (398 A.D.-414 A.D.) of the times of Chandra Gupta II

Fahien, a Chinese traveller, gives a lot of information about the social, religious and political condition of India of the times of Chandra Gupta II. Fahien became a Buddhist monk very early in his life. He came to India on a pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist places and to study Buddhist literature and was so much absorbed in his work that though he spent six long years in his country, yet not even once does he refer to Chandra Gupta II by name. However, in spite of his pre-occupation with religious matters, his narrative contains valuable reference to the social and political conditions prevailing in India at that time.

His Route : Leaving his home in western China in 339 A.D. Fahien crossed the Gobi desert and passed through Khotan and described it as a Buddhist Country. From Khotan he took a southern route and crossing the Pamirs came to Ladakh and Gandhara. Marching through Peshawar and Banu, he entered Punjab. During his journey through Kashmir, Fahien was greatly impressed by the religious assembly of Kanauj, Ayodhya and other important places in the Gangetic Valley. He reached Patliputra where he spent three years in a Buddhist monastery studying the sacred Buddhist literature. After Patliputra, he stayed for two years in a Buddhist Monastery at Tamuluk (Tamralipti) on the eastern coast. He sailed back to China via Ceylon, Java and Sumatra.

General Condition of the people : According to Fahien, the population was large and people were contented and happy. He particularly mentions the absence of any severe restriction and espionage on the common people unlike the system prevailing under the Mauryas. Caste restriction were strictly followed but as a result of the Buddhist teachings the people had a firm belief in non-violence. Fahien writes, "Throughout the country no one kills any living being, drink wine or eats onion or garlic. They do not keep pigs or fowls. There are no dealings in cattle or butchers. "The Chandala or the low castes lived in separate localities outside the cities and had to carry a piece of burning wood to aware others of the approach. Rich people gave freely the help to poor and, many privately endowed hospitals were established in the country.

Patliputra : Fahien has left a detailed account of Magadha and Patliputra. He was greatly struck by Ashoka's palace at Patliputra which he thought to have been built by spirits rather than human hands. In the city, there were situated two monasteries. One each belonging to the Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhists. Monks, living in those monasteries enjoyed great reputations for their learning and attracted students from all parts of the world. the monks (Bhikshus) were treated with great respect and Fahien makes a prominent mention of the procession of gods. He also mentions that there existed a big hospital in the city which was helped by the rich citizens. In this hospital, sick and wounded received free treatment and food.

Religious Condition : Although Brahminical revival had already begun in all parts of the country, yet Fahien writes that Buddhism retained its glory of the past. Fahien during the course of his journey from the Indus to Mathura saw Buddhist monasteries full of monks (Bhikshus). He does not show consciousness of the sign of Brahminical revival. For him, King was the holy head of the Buddhist. However, he mentions decay of many places connected with the early history of Buddhist. He adds that a thick forest surrounded

Bodh Gaya and towns Kapilvastu and Kushinagra were completely deserted. But on the whole it appears from his account that Buddhism was still flourishing in the Punjab territories, around Mathura and in the east. But it had no hold in the Gangetic plain.

Administration : Fahien was greatly struck by the efficient and yet soft administration of the Guptas. There was very little interference, by the State in the private life of the people. The criminal law was mild and punishments were rarely given. Fahien also makes mention of the good and safe roads and other facilities for the travellers like the rest houses and free hospitals etc. However, he complains of the dangerous roads in the Deccan which were unsafe without a strong escort. Land revenue was the chief source of income and should be paid both in cash and kind. Fahien says that Indians should have been happy because 'they have not to register their house holds or attend upon magistrates and rulers. Those who want to go away may go, those who want to stay, may stay.' The King was a Brahmanical Hindu but followed a policy of toleration in religious matters. Government was popular with the people. Though the king issued gold coins, yet the common currency of the country constituted cowry shells. On the whole, Government's policy towards the subject was that of non-interference. It did not interfere with the economic activities of the people also.

Malwa : Malwa especially excited Fahien's admiration. He praises its climate, people and administration. Malwa, according to him, was a prosperous country. Its people were happy, climate moderate and the Government benevolent.

Historical Importance of Fahien's Account : As the object of Fahien's visit was exclusively religious so his account is full of descriptions of the monasteries, monks, nuns holy cities and many such things as miracles and demons. He was a Buddhist and looked at things through a particular point of view. V.A. Smith is of the opinion that the statements of Fahien need qualification. His remarks about the political condition of the people are inadequate. But in spite of the above limitations, the importance of his account in the words of Dr. Ghose lies in the fact that they were recorded from day to day, by one who did not suffer from any bias. His remarks about the general condition of the country were records of many with an open and unprejudiced mind as they occurred to him. Moreover, his observation on the Gupta administration was very useful because nothing concrete is known to us about this aspect of the Gupta history from any other contemporary source.

2.2.7 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS

Introduction : The period of the great Gupta rulers extending from 320 AD. to 462 A.D. comprising the regime of Chandra Gupta I, Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta II, Kumara Gupta and Sikand Gupta is the most

glorious age of the history of India. It has been aptly described as the Golden Age of the Gupta's and Elizabethan period of Indian History. Some describe this period of Hindu Renaissance and the period of great outburst in India. This period is marked by peace, prosperity, unity and great national progress in the sphere of art, literature, religion, commerce, trade and empire building. During this period, Indo-Aryan Culture witness a glorious revival. For the sake of convenience we study it under following heads.

1) Political Revival : After the death of Ashoka, for about 600 years, no Indian ruler could give the unity and protection to India from foreign invaders. Punjab was attacked during this period by foreigners a number of times and though one comes across some great personalities among these invaders, yet we hardly had any strong Indian ruler. As we pass on the 4th century A.D., we once again find Hindu political superemacy. Samudra Gupta, by waging ruthless wars against the northern, north western, north eastern and southern states and by performing 'Asvamedha' gave political unity of India. Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya defeated Sakas and freed India from foreign domination. Not only this Guptas gave their subject an ideal system of government as described by Fahien. Thus, in the political sphere the great boons which the Gupta rulers conferred on their people were unity; nationalism and good Government.

2) Social Revival : No less bright in the picture of society of those days when people lived high moral life. They were honest, generous, charitable and hospitable. They were also law-adding. They built big hospitals for the poor and disabled and expenses of such hospitals were borne by the people themselves. Fahien pictures an ideal society and the period in which society existed deserves to be called 'The Golden Age' (Also see Fahien's account of the condition of the people's discussed earlier).

3) Revival of Hinduism : For about six centuries after the death of Ashoka, Buddhism held a strong hold over the people in the country. Most of the religious buildings of the period were Buddhist stupas and monasteries and one seldom comes across many Hindu temples built during this period. But in spite of that it is notable that though Buddhism was supreme during this period, yet Hinduism was not dead. With the rise of the Gupta, Hinduism once again revived fast. Every Gupta Emperor from Samudra Gupta down to Kumara Gupta, patronised Hinduism Shastras and scriptures were recast. Most of the purans were revised during the period and both Ramayan and Mahabharata were rewritten under the first three Gupta rulers. Art was no longer used as handmade of the Buddhist religion. It served Hindu religion as well. Sanskrit language which was sacred to the ancient Hindus, received great encouragement at the hands of the Guptas. Beautiful temples, honour the gods like Shiva and Vishnu etc. Brahmas

were greatly honoured by the Emperors of the age. They were given their ancient place of Honour in performing ceremonies, religious rites and sacrifices. They were placed in the same exalted position which they had enjoyed in pre-Buddhist days. Thus, the Gupta age saw the revival of Hinduism and the Gupta Emperors restored this faith to its ancient glory.

4) Revival of Sanskrit : Associated with Brahmanical revival was the revival of Sanskrit. Though Buddhists had adopted Pali and other local dialects as their language. Yet Sanskrit had always remained the language of the intelligentsia of the higher Hindu classes. Gupta ruler made Sanskrit their official language and vernaculars like Pali were degraded to an inferior position.

5) Progress in Secular Literature and Science : Imperial patronage led to a considerable progress in the literature of all branches of knowledge. In the field of literature, Kalidas the Indian Shakespeare stands unmatched. He is regarded as one of the 'nine gems' of the Court of Chandra Gupta II. He wrote a number of plays. More famous being Shakuntla, Reghuvansh, Meghaduta etc. Other literary personalities of the period were Bhairavi and the author of the famous historical play 'Mudra Rakshasha', namely Vaisakhadatta. Other Great poets and the writers of the period were Dandin, Harisena, Sudaraka. Harisena was the court poet of Samudra Gupta and the Allahabad pillar bears testimony to his literary ability. Science, mathematics, astronomy also made a greater headway during Gupta Age. Aryabhatta, the famous astronomer advanced the theory of rotation of earth around its axis and explained the phenomena of solar and lunar eclipses.

6) Progress of Education : Gupta monarchies were liberal patrons of learning. They richly endowed many education institutions. As a result of the universities of Nalanda, Ajanta and Taxila were famous throughout Asia and Europe, as the seats of learning. The then University of Nalanda is called India's Oxford by the historians. Teachers were known as 'acharyan' and were supported by public charity. There were fourteen subjects of study including Vedas, Puranas, Niyaya and Dharma or law. Besides instructions were imparted in many secular subjects also.

7) Development of Art and Architecture : Peace and prosperity, enormous wealth of the rulers led to the fast development of art and architecture, Samudra Gupta himself was keenly interested in music. Fine arts also attained a high standard. Unfortunately, most of the arts of Gupta period have been destroyed by the ravages of the subsequent foreign invaders, but the few which have survived, clearly depict the grandeur of the Gupta art. A fresh naturalism replaced Gandhara School of Art. There are two remarkable temples, one at Deograh (Jhansi district) and the other at Bhitrigaon (Kanpur District) which remind us of

the high standard set up in sculpture and architecture. Some of the Guptas figure are still found at Sarnath. From some of the copper statues of the period, it appears that art of casting metallic statues was practised on a very prge scale. Most splendid achievements in the field of art are testified by Ajanta and Ellora caves. Another remarkable proof of the Guptas artist is the Iron Pillar of Mehrauli near Qutabminar in Delhi.

8) Development of Trade and Commerce : The growth of the strong power of the Guptas in northern India gave the people that security which was essential for the progress of trade and commerce. Under the Guptas, foreign trade was carried with Roman Empire, through parts of the western coast. On the eastern coast too, the enterprising members split up a profitable commerce with the East Indies.

9) Emergence of the Greater India : Gupta age also witnessed the spread of Indian civilization abroad. Indian merchants and missionaries went to distant lands across the sea, mountains and established new colonies and gave birth to Greater India. Dr Ghose has rightly said, "The Indian colonists went in search of fresh fields and pastures and sowed in the East Indies the seeds of a greater India."

The Hun Invasions of India :

The Huns for the first time invaded India in about 458 A.D., when Kumara Gupta was the ruler of India. The Gupta ruler gave them a crushing defeat and saved his empire. A few years later (481 A.D.) when the Huns conquered Persia they began to attack India with a greater force and their leader Toramana wrested large territories from the Gupta empire including the Punjab, Rajputana, Sind and Malwa.

Toramana was succeeded by his son MihiraKula. He is regarded as the greatest Hun ruler in India. He made modern. Sialkot as his capital. He was a great tyrant who took great delight in acts of bruality. He was very fond of animal fights and took great plesures in throwing the elephants down from hill tops. Accroding to Hieun Tsang. Mihira Kula persecuted the peaceful Buddhist monks and mercilessly plundered, destroyed and burnt the Buddhist monasteries and stupas. His cruelties assumed such a formidable from that the Indian rulers were forced to organize a confederacy against him. Mihirakula was defeated, taken prisoner and later on released. With the death of Mihirakula in 540 A.D. ended the rule of the Huns in India.

The Huns though ruled in India for a short time, in the North West of India and central India yet they left a deep impression on the history of India, (I) It gave a severe blow to the tottering Gupta Empire; (2) The unity of the country was

shattered and it was again divided into a large number of states; (3) The occupation of India led to the development of despotism in India; (4) The Huns entered into matrimonial alliances with the Indians, and as a result of these inter-marriages, the racial composition of the Indian people was greatly affected and the number of castes increased manifold; (5) The settlement of the Huns in India affected adversely the Indians society; (6) They ruthlessly destroyed some of the unique specimens of art, architecture and literature. In this way, the Hun occupation of India, culturally proved very disastrous.

2.2.8 The Decline of the Gupta Empire

The Gupta dynasty which made such a great progress under Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta and Vikramaditya could not maintain its dignity for long and it declined in the 6th century A.D. the following were the main causes for the downfall of the Gupta Empire.

1. Weak Successors : After Skanda Gupta (455-467) all his successors like Puru Gupta, Narasinha Gupta, Kumara Gupta II and Bhanu Gupta etc. were very weak and incompetent to rule the great empire. Gupta empire was divided into a large number of independent states.

2. Neglect of Frontiers : After Skanda Gupta, the Gupta monarchs began to neglect the defence of their frontiers. The result of this negligence was that the foreign invaders and especially the Huns began to enter India without any check.

3. Weakness of the Army : The Gupta period was a long period of peace and prosperity. This peaceful atmosphere not only made the people very luxurious but also affected adversely the martial spirit of the soldiers. They became very easy going and when they had to fight against powerful enemies like the Huns, they proved quite incompetent and suffered heavy losses.

4. Vastness of the Empire : The Gupta empire was very vast in its extent and it was very difficult to control such a vast empire especially in those days when the means of communication were very primitive.

5. Financial difficulties : The continuous wars which Kumara Gupta and his son Skanda Gupta had to fight against Dusyamitra tribe and the Huns, hardly affected the state exchequer. It became very difficult for them to carry on the day-to-day administration. Under such financial crisis, the machinery of the Guptas ceased to function and the Gupta Empire had to see the evil days.

6. The Hun Invasions : The chief cause of the decline of Gupta empire was the Hun invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries. They shattered the Gupta empire.

2.2.9 Summary

From above, it can be concluded that the Guptas age witnessed glory and greatness in every branch of national life. The Gupta Emperor gave to India peace, prosperity, rich literature, beautiful art, a reformed and revived Hindu faith and a large number of colonies. Certainly the period of the Gupta Emperors deserve to be called the Golden age of which Indians can rightly be proud of.

2.2.10 Key Words :

Gupta Dynasty, Chandra Gupta-I, Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta-II, Maharaja Adhiraj.

2.2.11 Self Check Exercise

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) Chandra Gupta I ruled from.....to.....
- (b)was the court poet of Samudra Gupta.
- (c)was the capital of the Gupta.
- (d) Gupta Era started in.....A.D.
- (e) Samudra Gupta is also called.....

2. Mark () the correct Statements ?

- (i) Who wrote the drama Shakuntla.
(a) Kalidasa (b) Harisena (c) Visakhadatta.
- (ii) During the reign of Chandra Gupta II which Chinese traveller visited India ?
(a) Huein Tsang (b) Fahien (c) Itsing.
- (iii) Which University was known as the "Indian Oxford" during Gupta reign?
(a) Texila (b) Ujjain (c) Nalanda.
- (iv) Which Gupta King was a great musician ?
(a) Samudra Gupta (b) Chandra Gupta II (c) Sakanda Gupta
- (v) Who was the first Gupta King ?
(a) Chandra Gupta (b) Shri Gupta (c) Ghatot Kacha

KEY TO ANSWERS

- 1. (a) 320 A.D. to 335 A.D.,
(b) Harisena,
(c) Patliputra

- (d) 320 A.D.,
(e) Indian Napoleon
2. (i) a (ii) b (iii) c (iv) a (v) b.

2.2.12 Suggested Questions**(A) Long Questions**

1. Discuss the achievements of Chandra Gupta II.
2. Give an account of the career and conquests of Samudra Gupta. Why is he called "Indian Napoleon"? Explain.

(B) Short Questions

1. Write a note on Fahien.

2.2.13 Suggested Readings

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Narang, K.S. & Sethi, R.R. | : | A History of Bharat to 1526 A.D.
pp. 230-260 |
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LESSON NO. 2.3

SECTION - B

HARSHA AND HIS TIMES (606 A.D.–647 A.D.)-VICTORIES

Structure

- 2.3.1 Objectives
- 2.3.2 Introduction
- 2.3.3 Political Condition
- 2.3.4 Kingdom of Thanesar and the Rise of Harsha
- 2.3.5 Prabhakar Vardhana and Rajya Vardhana
- 2.3.6 Harsha Vardhan
- 2.3.7 His Administration
- 2.3.8 Social Condition
- 2.3.9 Economic Condition
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- 2.3.11 Summary
- 2.3.12 Key Words
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- 2.3.14 Suggested Questions
- 2.3.15 Suggested Readings

2.3.1 Objectives

In this chapter you will study :

- Analysis of political condition of India after the downfall of Gupta Empire
- Analysis of life and achievements of Harsha Vardhan
- Study of Art, Literature and Education of India in the Seventh Century.

2.3.2 Introduction

In this lesson, we shall discuss the life and times of Harsha Vardhana. A brief background will help us putting together the missing links in the interval between the fall of the imperial Guptas and Harsha. Very little is known of the period in between the downfall of the Guptas and the rise of Harsha Vardhana of Thanesar (Kurukshetra in Haryana) in the 7th century A.D. In

the beginning of the 7th century, there were a number of independent states in north India as discussed below :

2.3.3 Political Condition

1) **Huns** : Huns who originally belonged to the neighbourhood of China, and came to India in large numbers in the close of the fifth century A.D. under their leader Torman, conquered Gandhara and Kashmir. He also attacked the western territories of the Gupta Empire, killed men and women and destroyed the ancient monuments of the Guptas. His son and successor Mihirkula followed the footsteps of his father but was defeated by Yashodharman of Malwa. His empire extended from Kashmir to Malwa.

2) **Malwa** : Another important Kingdom which rose after the Guptas was Malwa whose ruler Yashodharman, after defeating the Huns ruled Central India. He is claimed to have attacked the Gupta Kingdom in the east.

3) **Valabhi** : Another Kingdom was Valabhi, King Bhadrak extended his frontiers. His successors were patrons of art and literature.

4) **Gupta Rulers** : After the downfall of the Gupta Empire, some Gupta rulers ruled in north-eastern India and Malwa which they must have recovered after the destruction of the Huns. But their rule did not extend beyond Magadha.

5) **Kanauj** : A dynasty known as the Maukharis, played an important part in the politics of northern India during the period under review and occupied Kanauj. However, their origin is uncertain. From the scanty sources, we know of the first five rulers namely, Harivarman, Aditya Varman, Iswara Varman, Sara Varman and Avanti Varman who greatly extended their territories. The last ruler of this dynasty was Grahvarman who married the daughter of King of Thanesar (Prabhakar Vardhan) and was the brother-in-law of Harsha.

2.3.4 Kingdom of Thanesar and the Rise of Harsha

Sources : The most important kingdom in the 7th Century was Thanesar whose ruler was Harsha Vardhan. The primary source for the life and times of Harsha are the account of Hiuen Tsang and *Harsh Charitra* by Bana or Bana Bhalla. His early life and career forms the subject matter of *Harsh Charitra* of Bana, a poet of great repute in the history of classical Sanskrit. As his court poet, he had personal and intimate knowledge of his life and rule and has given to Sanskrit literature one of its early biographical works. But Bana deals with the early history of Harsha, ending abruptly at about 629 A.D. For the remaining reign of Harsha, we are helped by the writing of the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who visited almost every part of

India during 630–44 A.D. His book of travels 'Si-Yu-Ki' throws a flood of light on the social, religious, economic and the education prevailing in India during the time when he was visiting this country.

Besides, we have usual numismatic and epigraphic sources. Mention may also be made of the Sonapat copper seal ; the Banskhera copper plate of the year 628 A.D. and Madhuban copper plate of the year 631 A.D. and the Nalanda seals. The whole inscription of his contemporary Pulakesin II, is another useful epigraphic source.

2.3.5 Prabhakar Vardhana and Rajya Vardhana

It is again very interesting to know the circumstances which led to Harsha's accession to the throne in the beginning of the seventh century. Prabhakara of Thanesar was undoubtedly the premier King of northern India. He had humbled and defeated the Huns, overrran Sind and conquered Malwa and Gujrat. When in 605 A.D. Huns, again invaded the northern boundaries of the Kingdom, 'Prabhakar Vardhana sent his eldest son RajyaVardhana who defeated the Huns. But at this time Prabhakar Vardhana suddenly died and was succeeded by Rajya Vardhana. However, at this time news came that Dev Gupta of Malwa had attacked the young king Grahvarman of Kanauj. He had killed him and took his wife Rajyashri (the sister of Harsha Vardhan) as his prisoner. Rajya Vardhana lost no time and set out to punish Dev Gupta who, out of fear, released Rajyashri. But with the help of Sasank of Bengal , Dev Gupta was able to murder Rajya Vardhana by a bold stroke of treachery. Under these strange circumstances, Harsha ascended the throne of Thanesar at the early age of 16, in 600 A.D.

2.3.6 Harsha Vardhan

His Conquests :

First of all, we examine his military achievements by virtue of which he is known as a great conqueror. Immediately after ascending the throne he vowed not to rest until he had avenged the murder of his brother, the ill-treatment of his sister and free Kanauj from foreign occupation. He set on his mission with a large army.

1) Treaty of Assam : On the way, at Kathaka, Harsha met the confidential messenger of the King of Assam (Kamrupa), namely Bhaskar Varman who sought an alliance with him which Harsha readily consented to.

2) Occupation of Kanauj : Harsha's cousin told him that Rajyashri (Harsha's sister) has fled to the Vindhya forests after her release. Harsha followed his sister and with the help of Vyaghra Ketu, and Nirghata found Rajyashri when she was about to burn herself as ' Sati', Harsha prevented her from doing so

and both came back to Kanauj, Grahvarman, Harsha's brother-in-law had left no issue. Rajyashri was young and inexperienced, inclined more towards Buddhism rather than of state. So the ministers at Kanauj offered the throne of Kanauj to Harsha. In this way, Harsha became the King of Kanauj in addition to Thanesar and decided to remain at Kanauj.

3) Suppression of five Kingdoms : But in spite of the above offer , as noted by Hiuen Tsang, Harsha had to spend about six years (A.D. 606–12) in establishing his complete control over the Punjab, Kanauj, Bihar, Orissa and Darbhanga.

4) Conquests of Nepal and Sindh : Harsha had also conquered the Kingdom of Sind. Besides he also exacted tribute from an inaccessible snowy tract of Nepal.

5) Valabhi (Gujrat) : In 636 A.D., he attacked Valabhi. Its ruler Dhruvsena II submitted but he was treated generously. He was reinstated on his throne. Harsha also married his daughter with Dhruvsena II. He also conquered Anandpura, Cutch and Surat, all of whom were regarded as the dependencies of western Malwa.

6) War with Pulkesin II : Like Samudra Gupta, Harsha also wanted to conquer Deccan, but little did he realise that on other side of the Vindhya, there was a foe (enemy) Pulkesin II, stronger than him. Territories of Pulkesin II extended from the Vindhya to the borders of the Pallava Kingdom in the south. Harsha was defeated and was constrained to retire and accept the river Narbada at his southern frontier.

7) Conquest of Bengal : So far Harsha had not been able to fulfil his vow to punish and avenge himself upon Sasanka of Bengal. We come to know from the Ganjam plate that Sasanka was flourishing as late as 619 A.D. and it was after the death of Sasanka which took place between 620 A.D. and 637 A.D. that Harsha and Bhaskar Varman of Assam were able to annex and divide Bengal amongst themselves.

8) Attack on Ganjam : Harsha's last recorded campaign (war) was an attack on the sturdy inhabitants of Ganjam (Kongoda) located on the coast of the Bay of Bengal which took place in 643 A.D.

9) Friendly Relations with China : Harsha also maintained diplomatic relations with China. The coming of a Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang to the Court of Harsha bears testimony to it. Responding to this gesture of goodwill, Harsha also sent a Brahman envoy to the Emperor of China in 641 A.D. In 643 A.D. that envoy returned accompanied by a Chinese mission bearing reply to Harsha's despatch and remained in India till 645 A.D. The following year, the Chinese sovereign sent another mission under Wang-Hiuen Tse who had accompanied the earlier mission also.

10) Extent of His Empire : Before Harsha died in 647 A.D. , he had carved out an Empire which in modern geographical terms consisted of eastern

Punjab, U.P., (except Mathura and Matipura), Bihar, Bengal and Orissa including Kongoda or the Ganjam region. In the east, his Empire extended upto Brahmaputra and the ruler of Assam (Kamrup) had acknowledged his supremacy according to Bana, Assam was a part of his Empire. In the south, it extended upto river Narbada. In the west, it stretched upto Kathiawar and the ruler of Sind had acknowledged his supremacy (according to some Sind was included in his Empire). Some hold that Kashmir also formed a part of his Empire.

2.3.7 HIS ADMINISTRATION

Now, we shall deal with Harsha's administration. Though the sources of our knowledge about Harsha's administration are limited to Bana's *Harsha Charitra*, Hiuen Tsang's account and the contemporary inscription, yet it is not difficult to form a fair estimate of his government. Hiuen Tsang has given a detailed account of his (Harsha's) time in which now we turn.

1) King : King was the supreme authority for the control and efficient administration of his kingdom. Harsha relied upon his personal supervision. Hiuen Tsang informs us that the king's day was divided into three parts, of which one was given to the affairs of the Government and the other two were devoted to religious work . He was indefatigable and the day was too short for him Except during the rainy season he, like Ashoka, was constantly touring his vast dominations in order to be fully acquainted with the true conditions of his subjects and remove their grievances.

2) Council of Ministers and Bureaucracy : Harsha was assisted in the task of administration by a Council of Ministers (Mantri Parishad). They seem to have wielded real power on many occasions. As to the number of ministers we know nothing, besides, there was an organised bureaucracy to run the administration.

3) Provinces and Vaisayas etc. : According to an inscription of Harsha, the country was divided for an administrative purpose into provinces known as Bhuktis which were further subdivided into Vaisayas (equivalent of modern districts). Each Vaisaya was divided into Pathakas (Tehsils), a union of villages. Pathak was the smallest unit of administration.

4) Law and Order : It is really a wonder to know that in spite of the well-organised and benevolent character of the Government , the roads and river routes were by no means immune from the bands of brigands . Hiuen Tsang was himself looted by them more than once. But even then he says that the people lived together on good terms, the criminals were few.

5) Penal Code : The Penal Code appears to have been severe; Treason

against the king was punished by life long imprisonment. Ordeals through water and fire were regarded as efficient methods to determine the innocence or guilt of the accused,. For offences against social morality, and disloyal conduct, the punishment, was either mutilation of limbs or deportation of the offender. An other feature of the Penal code, as referred to in ' Harsha Charitra' was that the prisoners were released on festive and joyous occasions.

6) Revenue Administration : As regards revenue administration, we may again refer to the writing of Hiuen Tsang who says, "the government is generous, official requirements are few. Families are not registered and individuals are not subjected to forced labour, Taxation being very light and forced labour being very sparingly used every one keeps to his hereditary occupation and attend to his patrimony. " The main sources of revenue were the traditional 1/6th of the agriculture produce and light duties on ferries and at the barrier station. There was also a tax on weights and measures.

The expenditure of his empire again speaks of the enlightened nature of Harsha's Government. Hiuen Tsang writes, "Of the royal land there is a four-fold division. One part is for meeting the expenses of the government and state worship, one for the endowment of the great public servants, one to reward eminent intellectuals and one for acquiring religious merit by gift to various sects. " The officials and Ministers were paid through grants of land but the soldiers were paid cash.

7) Military Administration : As regard his military administration we can say with some certainty that Harsha kept a large army both to keep the unsubdued kingdoms overawed and fortify his position against internal upheavals or foreign aggression. His army consisted of 60,000 elephants and 1,00,000 cavalry besides a large contingent of horses.

8) Department of Administrative Records : The enlightened character of the administration is also shown by the maintenance of a separate department of Records and archives which seems to have been started by Harsha for the first time. Both good and bad deeds were faithfully recorded in the official annals and state paper.

2.3.8 Social Condition

1) Caste System : Before proceeding further this is necessary to describe the condition of society which was still based upon and governed by caste system. There were four castes Brahman, Kashatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Whereas the occupation and the purity of the first two castes continued, the other two had undergone many changes. Many Vaisyas had become Sudras. They were also inter-married. The occupation of the Vaisyas was confined to trade and agriculture became the mainstay of the Sudras. There grew

the fifth caste of the Chandals, which included butchers, fishermen, executioners and scavengers. They were forced to live outside the cities and had to keep to the left while moving about in the city.

2) Dress : It was fashionable for men to wear strip of cloth around the waist and upto the armbits leaving the right shoulder bare. Women wore a long robe which covered both shoulders and fell down loose. Hair of the head were woven into a bun. Some clipped their moustaches and practised other fantastic fashions also, Garanes were also worn. Most men and women remain barefooted.

3) Ornaments : People were very fond of ornaments. The taste of the Indian people in this respect is exactly the reverse of the people of the West. The ornaments of the Kings and the grandees were garlands of precious stones, and their bodies adorned with rings, bracelets and necklaces.

4) Conditions of Women : Only women of upper classes received education. Rajyashri was educated enough to follow the learned discourse of Hiuen Tsang. Bana tells us the Buddhist sage, Diwarkamitra, was appointed by the King to instruct her. She was also trained in music and dance. Early marriage was the order of the day. Rajyashri was married before she had attained puberty. She became widow in early life and remained so thereafter. There was no widow re-marriages, at least in the higher three classes. Widow had to wear white clothes whereas other women put on coloured clothes. The custom of 'Sati' was prevalent almost everywhere. Even men occasionally did the same out of the love for their deceased master.

5) Funeral Rites : The dead were usually cremated except the hermits, whose dead bodies were buried. Sometimes dead bodies were cast away in the wood to feed animals, Buddhist brethren were forbidden to wail a loud.

2.3.9 Economic Condition

1) Agriculture : Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people (particularly of the Sudras). India abounding with canals and dams was one of the A-Class irrigated countries of the world at that time.

2) Other Occupations : Artisans and the craftsmen were organised in guilds of leather workers, carpenters, etc. Guilds held property in common, gave justice to their members and enjoyed other privileges of a body corporate.

3) Industry and Commerce : Industrial life was organised on the basis of caste. Brahmins had no part in the industrial life of the country. Industry was mainly confined to the Kashatriyas. Trade, inland and foreign, was in the hands of the Vaisyas.

4) Coins and Foreign Trade : Medium of exchange included gold and

silver coins, cowries and small pearls. The peace and calm enjoyed by India lead to a great development of trade. Facilities of shipping and navigation existed. Maritime intercourse between Persia and the Chalukya Kingdom is commemorated by an Ajanta painting. The ports on the western coast carried on brisk trade with the western countries. Tamaralipti was great port on the Bay of Bengal and it is now acknowledged that India in those days carried an extensive trade with China, Japan and the pacific islands. So, we can easily say that India of the times of Harsha was a prosperous country.

2.3.10 Religious Condition

1) Religious Toleration : The most prominent characteristic of those days was religious toleration. Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism flourished side by side. In the same kingdom in the same city, and in the same family, Hindus, Jains and Buddhists lived peacefully. If father was a devotee of Shiva, the son could be a devotee of Buddha. A person could change his religion and it caused no commotion either in his family or the society.

2) Condition of Jainism and Buddhism : Of the three religions mentioned above, Jainism was the most popular. However, according to Hiuen Tsang, Buddhism appears to have been in quite a flourishing state although it was declining in several localities like Kosambhi and Vaisali. The monastic establishments were the centres of Buddhist life and Buddhism was bifurcated in two broad divisions i.e. Mahayanism and Hinayanism. Formers seem to have strong hold. Besides the two main divisions Buddhism was represented by as many as 18 sects, which differed widely in their practices. Controversy among them ran high and each of them claimed superiority over others.

3) Idol Worship and Ahimsa : Another common characteristic of all the three religions was the idol worship. They had placed idols in their respective temples constructed all over the country. People began to believe in superstitions irrespective of their religious beliefs. Vedic Ceremonies, 'Asvamedha' or horse sacrifice were still performed. Hiuen Tsang also came across many Yogis and Sanyasis. There was an important widely prevalent effect of Buddhism and Jainism. Followers of all the religions began to practise Ahimsa and animal slaughter had been almost stopped.

4) Religious Controversies : Controversies between the various religions were frequent and discussion followed. Followers of all the religions were allowed to participate freely in these discussions. One of such discussions was held under the Presidentship of Hiuen Tsang, when a Brahman pasted a declaration at the door of the Nalanda monastery which Hiuen Tsang tore and in the controversy that followed he defeated that Brahman.

5) Education : India of those times was the most literate country of the world. She was the academic centre of Asia, and students from China and far eastern countries visited Indian Universities. Buddhist monks took great interest in education. The monasteries served as colleges and provided adequate facilities for the training of the lay brethren. Hiuen Tsang mentions various monasteries where he himself studied during the travels.

The most celebrated of all educational institutions was the Nalanda University which had 10,000 students on the rolls. Even foreign students came as far as Mongolia. Kings vied with one another in their liberality to patronize this celebrated University . It provided free lodging, boarding, clothing, bedding and medicine, to its inmates. There was no tuition fee. University met its expenses out of the revenue of 100 villages granted to it by the sovereign. Only twenty or thirty percent of the applicants could secure admission which was allowed after a through examination of the capabilities and aptitudes of the candidates judged through discussions. Life at Nalanda was highly disciplined. Students strictly observed the rules and regulations. Number of teachers was 1500. Though it was a Buddhist University yet the subjects of study were by no means confined to Buddhism. Subjects of study included vedas, logic, philosophy, medicine, yoga, shastra, astronomy and mathematics. Teaching was done mostly through discussions. Thus, in the 7th century A.D., it was a unique International Centre.

6) Sanskrit Literature : Sanskrit Literature was flourishing in the days of Harsha as evidenced by several eminent names like Bana, the court poet of Harsha, Bharavi Kumardas, Maghu and Nikram.

7) Art and Architecture : Regarding the high quality of art and architecture, direct evidence provided by the monuments is very little. No works of the times survive, but Hiuen Tsang bears testimony to the most remarkable architecture of the Buddhist monasteries and public buildings. Capital of Harsha, Kanauj, the then premier city of Northern India (about four miles in length and half mile in breadth, very strongly defended with broad and high walls) reflects prosperity in its lofty structures, beautiful gardens and tanks of clean water. The best example of the architecture of those days was the Nalanda University with its multi-storeyed building and the richly adorned towers. Hiuen Tsang gives some details of town planning too.

8) Knowledge of Sea Routes : Sea voyages for commercial, missionary and political purposes were common. A Brahman was sent by Harsha as an envoy to China in 641 A.D. When Hiuen was about to commence his return journey, Harsha enquired about the route which he proposed to follow and said, " If you select the southern route, I will send official attendants to accompany

you." Thus, the people of those days seem to have been quite familiar with the sea routes of China.

9) Making of Greater India and a Great Civilization : The sea borne trade the colonization and missionary activities, showed a notable increase during those days. Although colonization of Sumatra, Java and other islands of the Indian Archipelago had begun in the first century A.D. yet it was in Harsh's time that the people of Saurashtra started migrating to Java and Combodia. Chronicles of Java also refer to a great immigration to about 5000 Indians from the western coast of India in about 608 A.D. Indeed, the age of Harsh witnessed a considerable development of Greater India, both towards the islands of the southern seas and the eastern countries. India in the first half of the 7th century A.d. had developed a unique civilization while in Europe. Forces of barbarism had completely destroyed the civilization of Rome and Persia which were in the last stage of decay.

10) Assemblies of Kanauj : Harsha's religious Assemblies were unique of over the world. An important assembly was held at Kanauj in honour of Hiuen Tsang. Harsha had been delighted with his discourse and at once, resolved to hold a special assembly at Kanauj for giving publicity to the doctrines of Mahayanism. Orders were issued throughout the country. Followers of different religions were invited to assembly at Kanauj to investigate the treaties of Master Law from China. Harsha marched from his camp accompanied by Hiuen Tsang and the King of Assam. About 300 Mahayana monks, 3000 Brahmans and Nigranthas, and kings of 18 countries gathered there. A golden image of Buddha equal to the size of the king himself was placed there. After making offerings to the image, proceedings began. Hiuen Tsang declared that he would offer his head to any one who could find a single word of his country to reason. The assembly went smoothly for five days. When Harsha smelling a conspiracy against Hiuen Tsang proclaimed that any one hurting the pilgric would be beheaded, and any one speaking against him, would have his tongue removed. Upon this, opponents of Hiuen Tsang left in a body, but the Assembly continued smoothly for another 18 days and Hiuen Tsang had not to offer his head to any one.

11) Prayaga Assemblies : Harsha used to hold a regular religious assembly after every five years at Prayaga. At the conclusion of the assembly at Kanauj, Harsha went to Prayaga to hold his sixth assembly, which lasted for 75 days. The first day saw the distribution of clothes and articles after worshipping of the Buddha. Next two days were devoted to the worship of Sun and Shiva. Fourth day was spent in distributing charities to the selected Buddhists. During the subsequent forty days, wealth was distributed among Brahmans. poor people destitute and the orphans. Thus, the whole wealth accumulated during the preceding

five years was exhausted excepting horses, elephants and military equipment, which were necessary for maintaining law and order, and the defence of the country. All being given away, Harsha begged from his sister Rajyashri, an ordinary second-hand garment. After wearing it, he worshipped the Buddha.

Estimate of Harsha : Harsha's claim to greatness rests not merely on his military conquests, but on his enlightened form of Government and the patronage of scholars. Harsha himself seems to have wielded his pen with no less dexterity and effect than the sword. There are three plays, Ratnavali, Naganda and Priyandarsika which are supposed to have been composed by a King Harshdeva who is identified with Harsha of Kanauj. Bana also describes him as a great writer. Itsing who visited India, records that Harsha was very fond of literature, Jayadeva, the author of 'Gita Govinda' ranks Harsha with Bana and Kalidas. According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha earmarked 1/4th of the revenue of the Crown land for rewarding eminent intellectuals of India. He also remitted revenue of 100 villages attached to the University.

Regarding the religion of Harsha, we can say that in early days he was a worshipper of Shiva, while his elder brother and sister were Buddhist. It was after his meeting with Hiuen Tsang that he was converted to Mahayana Buddhism and in order to give due publicity to Buddhism he organised an assembly at Kanauj. He practised toleration and gave alms and charities to all the religions.

Various works of public utilities, raised by Harsha; bring out the welfare activities of Harsha's government. Benevolent institutions, like those of Ashoka, for the benefit of the travellers, the poor and the sick were established throughout the Empire. On all the highways of India, he built hospitals, and provided in them food and drinks.

2.3.11 Summary

The importance of Harsha does not lie only in his political and military achievements. Literature and Academics achieved his patronage. Harsha showed keen interest in literature. Jaidev compared him with Kalidas. He was a staunch follower of Buddha besides he showed immense religious tolerance.

2.3.12 Key Words

Harsha Vardhan, Ban Bhatta, Nalanda University, Ahimsa.

2.3.13 Self Check Exercise

Q.1. Fill in the blanks

- (a) Harsha ascended the throne in
- (b) Grahvarman was the king.....

- (c) Harsha died in
- (d) King.....was Harsha's contemporary and ruled Bengal upto 619 A.D.
- (e) Rajya Vardhana was the successor of

Q.2. Mark (Ö) the correct statements :

- (i) Who wrote Si-Yu-Ki?
- (a) Hiuen Tsang
- (b) Fahien
- (c) Itsing.
- (ii) Which University was world famous during the reign of Harsha ?
- (a) Taxila
- (b) Nalanda
- (c) Ujjain
- (iii) In whose honour the Assembly of Kanauj called?
- (a) Vyaghra Ketu
- (b) Nirghala
- (c) Hiuen Tsang.
- (iv) Who wrote Harsha Charitra?
- (a) Bana
- (b) Kalidasa
- (c) Wang-Hiuen-Tse.
- (v) Which branch of Buddhism was flourishing during the reign of Harsha?
- (a) Hinayana
- (b) Mahayana.

ANSWERS

Q.1. (a) 606 A.D., (b) Kanauj, (C) 647 A.D., (d) Sasankas,
(e) Prabhaka Vardhana.

Q.2. (i) a, (ii) b, (iii) c, (iv) a, (v) b,

2.3.14 Suggested Questions

(A) Long Questions

- Q.1. Give an account of the career and achievements of Harsha Vardhan.
- Q.2. Religious Condition of India during Harsha Vardhana.

(B) Short Questions

Q.1 Write short notes on :

- (i) Ban Bhatta,
- (ii) Nalanda University,
- (iii) Assemblies of Harsha.

2.3.15 Suggested Readings

1. Narang, K.S. and Sethi : A History of Bharat to 1526, pp.271-91.
2. Smith, V.A. : The Oxford History of India, pp. 179-83.
3. Majumdar, Raychaudhri and Dutta India, : An Advanced History of pp.156-60.

DYNASTIES IN SOUTH : RASHTRAKUTAS, CHALUKYAS AND CHOLAS

Structure

- 2.4.1 Objectives
- 2.4.2 Introduction
- 2.4.3 Rashtrakuta Rulers
- 2.4.4 Chalukyas and their Achievements
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- 2.4.6 Summary
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- 2.4.9 Suggested Questions
- 2.4.10 Suggested Readings

2.4.1 Objectives

In this chapter you will study :

- Deccan and the extended territory.
- Give some hints about Regionalization of Indian Polity in the post Harsha phase.

2.4.2 Introduction

The dynasty that rose to power after the decline of the Chalukyas of Badami was known as the Rashtrakuta dynasty. It was Dantidunga, one of the Chalukya Governors, who defeated the Chalukya ruler Kirtivarman II in 735 A.D. and laid the foundation of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. This dynasty remained in power from 735 to 975 A.D.

2.4.3 Rashtrakuta Rulers

Dantidunga was the first ruler of this dynasty who ruled from 753 to 758 A.D. He ended the Chalukya dynasty and laid the foundation of the Rashtrakuta kingdom in 735 A.D. He increased the political strength by

overcoming the Pallavas of Kanchi and Priharas of Ujjain—some historians believe that Dantidunga had become so cruel and vicious that his uncle Krishna deprived him from the throne and ascended it himself. Thus, the founder of this dynasty was deprived of the throne that he had acquired by his strength and bravery.

Krishna II defeated Kirtivarman, the Chalukya ruler in 758. Once again he annexed Chalukya territory to his own kingdom. Moreover, he fought other battles with the neighbouring rulers. He defeated the Chalukyas of Vengi. He was also a great patron of art. He got built a Shiva temple at Ellora. This temple was cut out of rocks which is even now a pattern of art of that period.

Govinda III was another ruler of this dynasty. Rashtrakuta kingdom made further progress under him. He collected tribute from the Pallava rulers of Kanchi and installed a Rashtrakuta prince as the Governor of South Gujrat. He defeated the rulers of Ujjain who attempted to retrieve their lost kingdom and thus, all their hopes fall to the ground. Then he turned to the North and predominated over many rulers. Due to his absence from the capital when he had gone to the North, the rulers of the Chola and Pandya dynasties formed a confederacy against him in league with the rulers of Kanchi and Kerala, but he smashed this union of the hostile rulers with great force.

Amoghavarsha ruled from 815 to 877 A.D. He was the son of Govinda III. He was the greatest ruler of this dynasty. He laid the foundation of the new capital of Rashtrakuta Manyakhera. This place was situated on the border of the present Hyderabad. He had been fighting with the Chalukyas of Vengi for a long time. As a result, he failed to devote much time and attention to the Northern region like his father. In his time, the most important ruler of the Pratihara dynasty made a vigorous attempt to conquer the Rashtrakuta kingdom but Amoghavarsha frustrated all his designs and hopes and kept his kingdom safe and secure. By his matrimonial alliance, like the Gupta Kings, he established relationship and friendship with all the important kings of the South.

Amoghavarsha was the follower of the Jain Digambara sect. He worked hard to spread this faith. He was a great patron of learning. He composed and wrote many books, like *Kariraymarge* etc. himself. He collected sufficient wealth in the royal treasury because of very rich commercial conditions existing. He had established particularly good relations with Arabia. The Arab traveller, Sulaiman, spoke very highly of the bravery of the King, Amoghavarsha. After his death, Indra III came to the throne who completed the work of conquest of the Prihara kingdom, commenced by his ancestor, Govinda III by defeating the Prihara ruler Mahipala and dominating the capital of his kingdom.

Later Rashtrakuta Rulers : Indra was the last king of this dynasty. His successors were very weak and feeble. The ruler Talipa II laid the foundation of the Chalukya of Kalyani dynasty in 793 A.D. After defeating the last Rashtrakuta king, Kaka II. It has been rightly believed that the decline of this dynasty was the result of the later weak rulers of this dynasty.

Achievement of the Rashtrakutas : The kings of this dynasty were very mighty conquerors who defeated the rulers of the Pallava, the Chola, the Bhera, the Prihara and Chalukya dynasties several times .The kings like Govinda III, Indra III and Amoghavarsha set up their authority over the whole of Deccan. They had under them a vast kingdom which stretched over the areas of Malwa and Southern Gujrat and in the North from Baghelkhand to Tanjore in the South. The Arab traveller, Sulaiman acknowledged Amoghavarsha as one of the four most powerful and great kings of the world.

The rulers of this dynasty were not great conquerors only but they were also great patrons of art and literature. The temple built by Krishna, a king of this dynasty is a unique specimen of architecture. This temple was excavated out of hard rocks with great difficulty and built with laborious toil consistent with elegance of art. In the field of education and literature also, the rulers like Amoghavarsha made great progress and they themselves wrote many books. These Rashtrakuta rulers also established trade relations with other countries and this way, made this country wealthy and prosperous. Especially, the relations of India in their reign, with Arabia were very good and lasting. In brief, the Rashtrakuta kings were brave, learned and lovers of art and learning.

2.4.4 Chalukyas and their Achievements

The Chalukyas grew mighty in the South towards the mid of the 6th century A.D., who were the Chalukyas? It is a matter of great controversy. According to Dr. V.A. Smith, they were of foreign origin. He writes that the Chalukyas were a branch of the invading tribe of Gujars of Central Asia. But most of the Indian Scholars differ from this theory. .They say that they were Kashatriyas of Ayodhya, whence they went to the Deccan. Haniti,who was their ancestor, was a native of Ayodhya. Hiuen Tsang also writes that the Chalukyas were Kashatriyas. This dynasty had two branches–Vatapi and Kalyani. Vatapi is a place in the Bijapore district in the Maharastra state. It is at present known as Badami. The first branch of the Chalukyas lived in Vatapi and as a result, they began to be called the Chalukyas of Vatapi. They ruled in the Deccan from 550 to 735 A.D. for nearly two centuries . A little later after them, the Rashtrakutas seized power from them. Then after a lapse of 200 years, the role of the second branch of the Chalukyas of Kalyani began– Their reign lasted for nearly 200 years i.e. from 973 to 1190 A.D.

The Chalukyas of Vatapi : In about 550 A.D., the rule of the Chalukyas dynasty commenced. Jayasingha and Bananja were the first two rulers of this dynasty. Pulkesin was its third ruler who founded the Badami kingdom. In his reign, this dynasty came into great prominence. Pulkesin-I conquered Vatapi; and made it his capital . He performed the Ashvamedha Yaga owing to his many conquests. After the death of Pulkesin-I, his two sons, Kirtivarman and Mangalesa fought battles with the neighbouring kingdoms and increased the Chalukyas power greatly. Mangalesa also built a beautiful Cave-temple dedicated to god Vishnu at his capital.

PULKESIN THE SECOND:

The most prominent ruler of this dynasty was Pulkesin II, who ruled from 608 to 642 A.D. He won the throne from his uncle Mangalesa after fighting a battle with him in 608 A.D. The main cause of this fight was that Mangalesa wanted to leave the throne to his son and deprive his nephew, Pulkesin-II of it. When he ascended the throne there was disorder and anarchy prevailing throughout the kingdom and the greedy neighbouring rulers were waiting eagerly for an opportunity to grab this territory. Besides, the external danger, two of the chiefs of the kingdom, Govinda and Appayika were an impending evil. Thus, Pulkesin-II, was confronted with double task—to carry on the administration of the kingdom and resist the external foes.

He was a brave warrior and conqueror. He not only saved his kingdom from the foreign invasions but also conquered many regions and extended his kingdom. It is believed that Pulkesin established his influence over the whole of the Deccan from the Narbada to Kaveri. First of all, he turned his attention towards Govinda and Appayika. He established friendship with Govinda and defeated Appayika with his help. Thus, by his tactful policy, he increased his strength and resources. Thereafter , he defeated many tribes like Mannyas of North Konkana and Latas of Gujrat etc. The Ganga ruler gave his daughter in marriage to Pulkesin II and thus, established ties of relationships with him.

His most important contribution was his victory over Kanauj ruler in 600 A.D. By this victory, his power and influence increased all the more. He succeeded in predominating over the kings of Kalinga and Kasala.. Further, he established his superiority over the rulers of far off regions of the South i.e. the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas.

Pulkesin had established commercial or trade relations with the foreign countries also. He maintained Trade relations with Persia. Their relations are revealed by the paintings of Ajanta as well. Hieun Tsang writes, "the inhabitants of his kingdom were proud-

spirited and war like, grateful for favours and revengeful for wrongs—the benevolent sway of king reached far and wide and his vessels served him with perfect loyalty."

During his last days, enmity started between him and the Pallava dynasty, which continued until the end of his reign. In the early stages of the war, he defeated the Pallava ruler, Mohandira Varma and advanced forward till he arrived at Kanchi. But , after short time, Nasinha Varman, the son of Mohandira Varma, overcame Pulakesin in about 642 A.D. In this battle, Pulakesin lost his life and the Pallava king overran Badami completely.

After Pulakesin's death, his son Vikramaditya I ascended the throne. During his reign, the war with the Pallavas again broke out. Pallavas were defeated. Vikramaditya plundering and ravaging their territory reached their capital Kanchi. In this way, he revenged his father's defeat. He brought other dynasty of the South—the Cholas, the Cheras and Pandyas under his sway .Vikramaditya was succeeded by his grandson Vikramaditya II, the prominent ruler of the Chalukyas. He also continued the war against the Pallava dynasty. He succeeded in occupying Kanchi their capital , after defeating the Pallavas ruler—Nandi Varman. However, the downfall of the Chalukya dynasty started soon after his death.

The last ruler of this dynasty was Kirtivarman II, whom the Rashtrakuta chief Dantidurga defeated in 753 A.D. and captured his kingdom. In this way, the end of the Chalukya rulers of Badami came about.

THE LATER CHALUKYAS OF THE KALYANI (973-1100 A.D.)

The Chalukya king Talipa II defeated Kakka II, the last Rashtrakuta king in 973 A.D. He laid the foundation of the dynasty known as Chalukyas of Kalyani. He also fought a battle with the Parmara King—Munja. Jayasinha II was the prominent king of his dynasty. He gave up his belief in Jainism and adopted Shaivism. He fought bravely against Chola ruler— Rajendra I and the Parmara rulers. He laid the foundation of the Kalyani town also, which later on became the capital of this dynasty. Vikramaditya VI was the most important king of all those of the Kalyani Chalukyas. He started the Chalukya era. He defeated the ruler of Hoysala dynasty of Mysore and the ruler of the Chola dynasty— Rajendra II. He was a patron of art and learning and as a consequence of his patronage, learned scholars like Bihana and Vijayanesvara adorned the royal court.

All the successors of Vikramaditya VI were very weak. As a result, all the provinces declared themselves as independent. At last, the Yadva ruler of Deogri came as the last king of this dynasty in 1190 A.D. In this way, the domination of the Chalukyas of Kalyani at length came to an end.

Achievements of the Chalukyas

The rulers of this dynasty were very brave warriors who kept the Deccan and made their complete control for at least two centuries and thereafter from the 10th century to the 15th century A.D. They defeated not only the prominent kings like Harsha but also subdued several times the other important dynasties in the South, like the Cheras, the Cholas, the Rashtrakutas, the Pandyas, the Parmaras, etc. They tried to improve the economic condition of their country by establishing their trade relations with foreign countries like Persia. Not only this, they were also great patrons of art and learning. Much of the paintings and sculptures of Ajanta and Ellora caves were accomplished during their reign. In brief, arts and architecture made great advance in the times of the Chalukya kings. Several temples of this period testify the fact that those kings took keen interest in the progress of the arts of paintings, sculpture, architecture etc. The Chalukya rulers were great patrons of learning and literature. The scholars of great prominence like Bihana and Vigyanvara lived in their royal court.

2.4.5 The Cholas

This dynasty is considered to be one of the oldest civilised dynasties of southern India. In the first century A.D., a ruler of this dynasty named Karikal overthrew the Chera and Bandya tribes and became the most mighty ruler in the South. He established his authority over all these tribes in this way. Kaveri Patanam was his capital. It is held that he invaded Ceylon from where he brought with him several thousands of coolies. They were employed for raising both the banks of Kaveri for a distance of about one hundred miles. Thus, he protected his people against the ravages of the floods in Kaveri. He further provided easy means of irrigation by digging canals.

After him, nothing is known about the Chola Kingdom. The Pandyas and the Pallavas kept them under their sway. The Chola rulers were confined within the limits of 400 or 500 miles. Kadapa was their capital at that time. In the 4th century A.D., the Cholas once more began to gain power and came into prominence in the political life of the South. A Chola ruler named Vijayalaya captured Tanjore from the Pallavas and made his capital. His grandson, Prantika defeated the Pandyas, subdued the Banas and invaded Ceylon also. Prantika was succeeded by 5 weak and worthless kings. However, Raja Raj the Great, the most prominent and the greatest of the Chola rulers came to the throne in 985 A.D. and ruled till 1016 A.D. He was a very powerful king who put an end to the mutual conflicts of this dynasty. He also started the work of Chola conquests. He tried to conquer not only the Deccan but also several territories of the North. Firstly, he defeated the naval fleet of the Chera Dynasty at Kandlove. Then he

suppressed the revolt of Pandyas and included their territory in his own kingdom. He brought under his authority the territory of Kollom in Travancore, a sufficient part of Mysore and Coorg. His conquests were many and spread over vast area. He subdued the Chalukyas of Vengi and conquered Kalinga in the North and in the South his area extended to the border of Ceylon. Raja Raj had also maintained a very great fleet of warships and with their help he conquered the Indian Islands in the Indian ocean and in the Arabian sea. He established special relations with the East Indies and built a beautiful Shiva temple at Tanjore.

Rajendra Chola-I was also brave like his father. He defeated the Gangas and the Pallavas. He proved himself to be a great conqueror and his conquests extended upto Central India where the Kings of Gondwana had to submit to him. He also fought battles with the rulers of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He also maintained navy like his father and conquered the Andamans, Nicobar and the Malaya Islands. He was also a patron of art and learning.

After the death of Rajendra I, his son Raja-dhiraja sat on the throne. In his reign, revolts began to breakout in different parts of the country. At last he was killed in a battle while fighting with the Chalukyas in 1052 A.D. After him many rulers came to the throne until the 13th century. They had been fighting with the neighbouring Dynasties like the Chalukyas, the Pandyas and the Gangas. However, all of them except Kullotunger-I were weak kings. So, they failed to save their kingdom from its downfall. Their government deteriorated day by day. Different tribes that had been under the domination of the Chola dynasties, just as the Pandyas, the Cholas, the Gangas, the Hoysalas etc. declared their independence. In the end, in the reign of Alaudin Khilji, his general, Malik Kufur caused the final ruin of the Cholas.

Cholas Administration : Chola kings carried on the administration of their kingdom on very highly systematized lines. The administration was centralised in the hands of the ruler who was the fountain-head of the state. There were number of ministers and other high officials who helped him in running the administration. A successor to the king was selected out of the royal family. The king remained ever prepared to serve his people. He used to tour into different parts of his country like Ashoka and Harsha from time to time. Though the ruler was a despot, yet he regarded himself as a public servant. The high officers were first informed about the King's commands, which were later conveyed to the provincial and local officials. This was the reason why the subjects placed the images of the Chola kings in temples and worshipped them like gods.

There was sufficient democratic spirit present in the Chola administration. The greatest and the most admirable part of their administration was four assemblies

which performed the essential duties of the administration and carried on the work of the government. As a matter of fact, these assemblies made the Chola rulers popular with the people.

The Kingdom was divided into 6 provinces or Mandalams which were governed by their respective governors. They were generally appointed from among the people connected with the royal family. The provinces were further divided into divisions or kottans. Kottans were further divided into districts or Nadus and districts into Tehsils or Kurrams. Each Kurram contained many villages in it. Each province was administered by Viceroy. He generally belonged to the royal family or was a trusty comrade of the ruler. He continued to be in constant communication with the government at the centre and kept it well informed about everything that happened in his Province. Many Junior officials were also appointed to help him in the administration.

The local self-government had great significance in the Chola reign. The villagers carried on their business with full freedom. The administration of each Kurram was placed in the hands of a Panchayat called the Sabha. The members of this Sabha were elected by the people themselves. They remained in office for one year. The Sabha of each Kurram had full control over the income and expenditure of their Kurram. The Sabha spent their funds on public utility works. Police was too under the direct control of the Sabha. Not only this but the Sabha was vested with judicial powers also. Besides, it awarded such punishments as the cutting of hands or feet of the criminals. It could pass a sentence of death even on the culprits. The central government did not interfere in the matters of local self-government except general supervision. In this way, the Chola administration proved to be very successful.

As mentioned above, administration of justice was the subject of local self-government. The local assemblies were vested with ample powers in this field. Their arrangement and system of administering justice resembled much those of the modern time. Firstly, both parties gave their statements. Then they produced their respective witnesses. Afterwards, after examining their statements and considering all the ins and outs of the case, the decision was arrived at. Thereafter the judgement was delivered to parties.

The greatest sources of the government income or state revenue was the land tax which was usually 46th of the total produce. The land tax was often remitted in the time of famine or in case of ravages caused by floods. The agency for the collection of land rent was the village assembly that delivered it to the government in the form of coins or kind. The currency was designated Kam which was a sort of gold sovereign. Besides the land tax, there were other taxes levied on the public. They were salt tax, water, tax, etc. Other sources of the income of the state were fines, animals, tanks, etc. From this,

" It appears thus, that the government tapped almost every conceivable source of income." The main items of expenditure were the royal palace, administration, setting up new towns, constructing of roads and temples, completion of irrigation system and works of public welfare etc.

The Chola kings constructed several embankments in the rivers from which they dug out canals. They took out many canals from the river Kavery. In the time of Rajendra I, the banks of the lake were constructed to the length of 16 miles so that the poor peasants could profit by it. In addition to these, the Chola kings took interest in constructing roads, cities, temples, tanks etc.

The Chola rulers maintained a mighty army, consisting of infantry, cavalry, elephantry and navy for the expansion and defence of their kingdom. They were very particular about the maintenance of the navy by the help of which they captured several islands in the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea. They also took the Nicobar and the Malaya islands under their rule.

The Chola kings were not merely conquerors and good administrators but they were also patrons of art and learning. Both architecture and sculpture, advanced and made considerable progress. They adorned their empire with beautiful temples, system of irrigation , roads, canals and royal places. Firstly, they turned their attention towards the irrigation system. In the reign of Rajendra Chola, the banks of an artificial lake to the length of sixteen miles were made with great labour and difficulty near their new capital, Gangakonda Cholapuram. Beautiful embankments were made on the Kaveri and other streams. The Chola kings also adorned their towns and cities in a beautiful and systematic manner. They also got built beautiful temples. Most probably of all these temples, the Shiva temple at Tanjore in the most beautiful which was built by Raj Raja. This temple has 13 storeys and its top roof is 190 ft. high. The surprising feature of it is that the dome on the peak of its top is built of one stone only, though its height is 25 ft. and the weight about 90 tons. We can easily imagine how a stone of such a big size would have been lifted to such a great height at that time. Moreover, the vast labour and difficulty they would have faced in its raising to the top seems to be extraordinary. From it, we can guess how advanced the engineering art at that time was.

The Chola rulers made great progress in the manufacture of figures and images even of stone and metal. Of the metallic images and figures, the Natraj figure is unique in its beauty. The modern musician receives particular inspiration from. it. In many temples, the full-sized statue of the Chola rulers are found. Besides art, literature too advanced a good deal. They put in special efforts to promote the education and learning of the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Shastras, Astronomy,

Sciences, Grammar etc. In the temples, religious plays began to be enacted which contributed to the progress of music and dance.

2.4.6 Summary

The dynasty that rose to power after the decline of the Chalukyas of Badami was known as the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Vatapi is a place in the Bijapore district in the Maharashtra state. The Cholas dynasty is considered to be one of the oldest civilised dynasties of southern India. In the first century A.D., a ruler of this dynasty named Karikal overthrew the Chera and Pandya tribes and became the most mighty ruler in the South. He established his authority over all these tribes in this way. Kaveri Patanam was his capital.

2.4.7 Key Words

Vatapi, Kalyani, Badami, Ashvamedha Yaga, Manniyas.

2.4.8 Self Check Exercise

Fill in the blanks

- (a) _____ was the last Rashtrakuta Ruler.
- (b) Hiuen Tsang writes that the Chalukyas were_____.
- (c) All the successors of Vikramaditya VI were very_____.
- (d) _____are considered to be one of the oldest civilised dynasties of southern India.

Answer :

- (a) Indra (b) Kashatriyas (c) Weak (d) Cholas

2.4.9 Suggested Questions

(A) Long Questions

- 1. Life and Achievements of Pulakesin II should be explained.
- 2. Write a detailed note on the Chalukya Rulers.
- 3. Mention the causes of the Chola downfall.
- 4. Write a detailed note on Pulakesin the second.
- 5. Describe the Chola Administration.

(B) Short Questions

- 1. Write a short note on Rajendra I.
- 2. Write a short note on the Achievements of Chalukyas.

2.4.10 Suggested Readings

- 1. Romila Thapar, A History of India (Vol. I)
- 2. V.A. Smith, The Oxford History of India
- 3. S.N. Sen, Ancient Indian History and Civilization.

THE RAJPUTS : THEIR AGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Structure

- 2.5.1 Objectives
- 2.5.2 Introduction
- 2.5.3 Origin of the Rajputs
- 2.5.4 Principal Rajput States
- 2.5.5 Rajput Civilization
- 2.5.6 Political System
- 2.5.7 Social Life
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- 2.5.9 Religious Life
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2.5.1 Objectives

In this chapter you will study social, political, economic life of the Rajputs and administration of the Rajputs.

2.5.2 Introduction

In this lesson, we shall first briefly survey the events that transpired between the death of Harsha¹ and the coming of the Rajputs into political ascendancy in India. Immediately after the death of Harsha, the political unity, for which Harsha had laboured hard disappeared and the throne of Kanauj was usurped by a man named Arjuna. We know very little about him except that he opposed the Chinese mission which arrived in India

1. 647–A.D.

after the death of Harsha. Some of the members of the mission were killed and plundered, but somehow their leader and rest of the members managed to escape and sought shelter in Nepal. Thereafter the ruler of Nepal, the king of Tibet and Bhaskar Varman of Kamrup, helped the Chinese mission with soldiers against Arjuna who was defeated and taken to China as a prisoner. It was during this chaos and disorder that India was again disintegrated and many independent states came into existence. King Bhaskar Varman of Assam (Kamrup) asserted his independence, Magadha also became independent under Adityasena. Still the most important feature of this period was the rise of Rajputs who dominated the Indian political scene from the death of Harsha till 12th Century A.D., which is known to the students of Indian History as the Rajput age.

2.5.3 Origin of the Rajputs

By now some such questions and doubts might have arisen in your minds as to who the Rajputs were and from where did they come? In what respect did they differ from Kshatriyas of the earlier times? Because there are hardly any reference to Rajputs in the History of India till the death of Harsha.

The Origin of Rajputs is a matter of great controversy. According to some, Rajput is the corrupted form of a Sanskrit word, Rajputras which means the sons of kings. However, there are four popular theories about the origin of the Rajputs. According to the first theory of C.V. Vaidya and Pandit Gauri Shanker Ojha, the Rajputs were pure Aryans and have descended from the ancient Solar and Lunar dynasties. It is noteworthy here that Pandit Ojha has written a standard work in Hindi on Rajput history and has drawn his conclusion on the basis of tradition and ethnology. His arguments are : firstly, that the worship of the sun, practice of Sati and Ashvamedha and the worship of arms and horses was known to people of India since the times of Mahabharata; secondly, if the Rajputs had not descended from Indian stock they could never have shown such devotion to Hindu religion and culture as the Rajputs did ; thirdly, the physical features of the Rajputs closely resemble those of the Aryans; and lastly, the rulers of Bikaner, Mewar and Jaipur claimed their descent from Suryavanshi clan; and the princes of Jaisalmer and Cutch took pride in calling themselves the descendants of Chandravanshi clan. However, this theory is rejected by most of the historians on the following grounds: (i) there are no inscriptions to support the above theory, (ii) Rajputs, the new converts to Hinduism were bound to evince greater zeal of their new religion than those who had professed the faith since long; and (iii) the semblance of their physical features with those of the Aryans is also rejected

because cross-breeding of the races had taken place since many centuries.

(ii) Second theory is mainly the work of the historians like Tod, William Brooke and V.A. Smith. According to them, the Rajputs were not the descendants of ancient epic heroes but were of a foreign origin. They further hold that the Rajputs were the descendants of the Greeks, the Sakas and Kushans who accepted Buddhism or Hinduism, adopted Indian names, Indian practices, married Indian girls and made India their homes. So, they were admitted into the Hindu castes. The upper ranks of these foreigners constituted a separate warlike class and began to call themselves Rajputs while the lower classes were known as the Jats or Ahiras. This theory has also been criticised for the following reasons : (i) it looks strange that the Tod based his history of Rajasthan on traditions which he had rejected in the case of the earlier theory according to which Rajputs trace their origin to the epic heroes; (ii) Tod has mentioned only one Rajput class bearing the name of 'Hun' and has overlooked the fact that the name of a tribe was determined by its occupation.

(iii) According to the third theory, some of the Rajputs of Deccan and Central India claimed to belong to the aboriginal tribes like the Gonds and Bhars.

(iv) Fourth theory has been propounded by Chand Bardai, the biographer of Prithvi Raj. He gives a legendary origin of the Rajputs. According to him, a Brahmin Parshu Ram finished all the Kshatriyas to fulfil his vow. Consequently, Brahmins were left without a class to defend themselves. They lit a sacred fire at Mount Abu and from that Agnikund emerged four persons who later on became founders of the four Rajput tribes, namely, Pramars, Pratiharas, Chalukyas and the Chauhans.

On analysing we find that though there is some truth in each theory we have discussed but none can be held to be exclusively true. On putting the second and the third theories together, it seems that the Rajputs are a group of castes, some of whom are foreigners, some Kshatriyas while a few are descendants of the aboriginal tribes.

2.5.4 Principal Rajput States

(1) Pratiharas and Rathors of Kanauj : We start with the Pratiharas of Kanauj. They originally belonged to the Gujar stock who came into India after the Huns, but later on they traced their origin to Laksman, the brother of Lord Rama. Originally they were the rulers of Avanti. Their first known ruler was Nagabhata I (725 A.D.-740 A.D.) who was responsible for saving western India from the Arabs. He ruled over Malwa, eastern Rajasthan and Gujrat. The next important ruler was Vajra Raja who conquered Kanauj but at the time a triangular conflict was raging among the Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and the Palas of Bengal

for mastery over northern India. Nagabhatta I was succeeded by his son Naghabhatta II who suffered defeat at the hands of Govinda III, the Rashtrakuta King. The next important ruler was Mihir Bhoj or Raja Bhoj who ruled from 840 A.D. to 885 A.D. He defeated Devapala of Bengal but was defeated by Dhruva I of Gujrat. His empire included cis-Sutlej territories of the Punjab, Agra, Oudh, Rajputana and Gwalior. King Bhoja was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala who is also known as Nibhayaraja. During his reign lasting from 890 A.D. to 910 A.D., he conquered north Bengal and kept safe the empire bequeathed to him.

Mohinderpal was succeeded by weak rulers, Mahipal, Devpal, Vijayapal and Rajyapal. In fact, during their reigns the downfall of the Pratihars was completed. But nonetheless in 991 A.D. Rajyapal sent a contingent to help Jaipal against Sultan Subktgin. He sent another contingent in 1008 A.D. when Anandpal was threatened by Mahmud. But on both the occasions the Indians were defeated in 1018 A.D. Mahmud defeated Rajyapal and annexed a large portion of his territory. In 1019 A.D. his son Trilochanpal, the last king of Pratihars was again defeated by Mahmud.

After the fall of Pratihars, Kanauj was occupied by another clan of the Rajputs Gaharwars or the Rathors. The founder of the new dynasty was Chanderdeva who died in 1100 A.D. Govinda Chandra the most important ruler of the dynasty was his grandson and checked the advance of Masud II of Ghazni. In 1154 A.D. Vijay Chandra who succeeded his father, drove out Amir Khusro from Lahore. Vijay Chandra was succeeded by his son Jai Chand. But Jai Chand was not on friendly terms with Prithvi Raj of Delhi, as the latter took away his daughter forcibly at the time of Swayambar. So in 1192 A.D., when Ghauri came to India for the second time against Prithvi Raj, Jai Chand helped him. But two years afterwards in 1194 A.D. Mohammad Ghauri defeated Jai Chand. Thus, Kanauj passed under the control of Muslim rulers.

(2) The Chandelas of Bundelkhand (Central India) : The next Rajput kingdom that we are going to discuss is that of Chandelas who ruled over Bundelkhand. To begin with Bundelkhand was part of empire of the Pratihars. But in the 10th century A.D., Nanak Chandela declared Bundelkhand as an independent state and thus became the founder of the Chandela dynasty. The next important ruler of this dynasty was Yashoverman, who obtained the strong fort of Kalinjar also. He made Mahoba, the capital of his kingdom. Other important rulers of dynasty were Dhanga, Ganda and Kirtiverman. Dhanga joined the combination of the Hindu Princes against Subuktgin (father of Mahmud Ghaznavi) simultaneously, Kirtivarman was a patron of art and learning. He constructed a lake near Mahoba known as Kirti Sagar. The last ruler of this dynasty was Parmal who first submitted to Prithvi Raj Chauhan

in 1182 A.D. and was later defeated by Qutab-ud-Din Aibak in 1203 A.D. Thus, Bundelkhand passed under the Muslims.

(3) Kalachuris of Chedi : In the beginning, the capital of Kalachuris was Kalinjar. But later on Kalachuris were split into two sections. One made Tripuri, situated between Narbada and Godavri, and the other section made Ratanpur their capital. To begin with the Kalachuris of Chedis were under the sway of the Pratiharas but in the 10th century A.D., they became independent. More important rulers of this dynasty were : Ganga Deva (1015–1040 A.D.) and Karma Deva (1040A.D.–1070 A.D.). Thereafter the Kalachuri kingdom like that of the Chandela's was completely destroyed by the rising power of the Ganapatis, the Yadavas and Baghelas.

(4) The Parmars of Malwa (Central India) : After the downfall of Pratiharas, another Rajput kingdom was established in Malwa by Krishna Raja or Upendra of the Parmar dynasty. Next important ruler of this dynasty was Vakpati– or Munja Raja who ruled approximately from 974 A.D. to 997 A.D. He was a brave king and a great patron of poets. But the most important king of this dynasty was Raja Bhoja of Dhara who ruled from 1010 A.D. to 1060 A.D. He was a great patron of learning and himself wrote books on astronomy, grammar and poetry. He constructed a beautiful lake south east of Bhopal known as Bhojpur lake. This lake spread over an area of 250 square miles. He also constructed 104 temples and founded a university at Dhara which was known as the Temple of Saraswati. He was the independent ruler of the Parmars. His successor proved weak and therefore, Parmar power came to an end in 12th century A.D. approximately.

(5) Chauhans of Ajmer and Delhi : The Chauhan clan of the Rajputs ruled over Ajmer and Sambhar. The founder king of dynasty was Visalveva (1153 A.D.–1164 A.D.). He conquered Delhi from the Tomara chief Anandpal. He was a poet as well as a patron of poets. He is considered to be the author of the famous epic *Kiratar Juniva*. He was succeeded by his nephew Prithvi Raj whose name has been immortalised by Chand Bardai, his court poet who wrote *Prithvi Raj RASO*. Prithvi Raj was not on good terms with Jai Chand of Kanauj. Taking advantage of this rivalry, Muhammed Ghauri attacked India in 1191 A.D. but was defeated by Prithvi Raj. However, the following year he was able to defeat Prithvi Raj. Thus, a very powerful kingdom which was a strong bulwark against the foreign attack from the north west came to an end.

(6) Palas and the Senas of Bengal and Bihar : From the death of Harsha to the latter half of the 11th century when Gopala of the Pala dynasty was elected as king, we know very little. Gopala ruled from 765 A.D. to 770 A.D. His son Dharmapala ruled from 770 A.D. to 810 A.D. During his reign, Pratiharas and

Rashtrakutas endeavoured to establish their position in northern India and consequently Dharmapala found himself involved in a conflict with both of them. He even conquered Kanauj and held a *Darbar* there. Ghose on the authority of Tara Nath, the Tibetan historian, writes that Dharmapala's sway extended from the bay of Bengal in the east to Delhi and Jullundur in the west and upto the valley of the Vindhayas in the South. He was a great patron of Buddhism and founded the Vikramshilla monastery which ultimately developed into a great University. Dharmapala died in 815 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Devpala. Devpala's brave general Lavasena conquered Assam and Kalinga. He was also a follower of Buddhism. He is said to have built the *Mahabodhi* temple at Bodh Gaya. Vajradatta, the great Buddhist poet and the author of *Lokesvara Sataka* also lived in the court. Devpala was succeeded by worthless rulers like Vigrahapala. Narayanpala, Rajayapala, Gopala II and Vigrahapala II until 988 A.D. when a very strong ruler Mahipala came to the throne. Mahipala ruled upto 1038 A.D. Under him, the Pala Power was once again revived. However, Mahipala did not join the Hindu confederacy against the Muslims. After the death of Mahipala, the Pala dynasty began to decline.

Samanta Sena, founded the Sena kingdom by overthrowing the Palas towards the close of the 11th Century A.D. His grandson Vijaya Sena further extended the Sena territory. He was succeeded by Balala Sena and after the latter's death, his son Lakshman Sena came to the throne in 1170 A.D. In the year 1199 A.D., he was defeated by Mahammad Bin Bakhtiar Khilji, when a large part of Bengal was annexed by the Muslims.

(7) Karkotas, Utpalas and Loharas of Kashmir : In the seventh century, a great Hindu chief Durlabh Vaidhana, established his sway over whole of Kashmir. The greatest ruler of Karkota dynasty was Muktapada, popularly known as Lalita Ditya. He ruled from 725 to 780 A.D. He defeated *Asovarman* the ruler of Kanauj. He was a follower of Hindu religion and built the famous temple dedicated to the Sun God. The next ruler of the dynasty was Jayapada also known as Vinyaditya. However, in 855 A.D., the Karkota dynasty came to an end. In 855 A.D., a new dynasty known as the Lohara dynasty came into power. The most well-known rulers of dynasty were Didda and Harsha. Both these rulers were noted for their wickedness and cruelty. Now after a brief account of the principal Rajput States, we begin the study of the civilization of the Rajputs.

2.5.5 Rajput Civilization

Rajput Chivalry : Rajputs regarded themselves as the descendants of ancient heroes and cultivated a spirit of chivalry and lived up to it in spite of difficulties.

Although fighting was the dominant passion of the Rajputs, but they were generous and merciful even to the enemies, if the latter submitted and sought shelter. They had a very high sense of honour and respect for truth. Even when they were victorious, they would not resort to the wholesale massacre of their enemies. Besides, they would not cause needless misery to the poor and innocent people. They offered stiffest resistance to the foreign invaders but if they once submitted to the conqueror and took an oath of loyalty they remained faithful to their word and gave up allegiance only when the lord himself broke his promise. Further, it is notable that the whole life of a Rajput was devoted to war. On attaining maturity, a Rajput boy was initiated into knighthood by the ceremony of *Kharg* or binding of the sword. Right from the early childhood, stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata were narrated to him and his ideal was Rama. When not fighting he would spend his time in hunting, hawking and feats of arms. They loved war so passionately that they passed the preceding night of the battle listening of Mahabharata and longed for the morning restlessly. It was an interesting and touching sight watch them on the eve of battle. They preferred death in the battlefield than fleeing it.

2.5.6 Political System

Government : The dominant character of the government was feudalism. Each kingdom was divided into a large number of Jagirs held by the *Jagirdars* who mostly belonged to the family of the chief. The strength and security of the state depended upon these *Jagirdars*. They were required to render military service to the king. The *Jagirdars* were always anxious to prove that loyalty in times of emergency. They were also required to make certain payments to the king. However, the future of such governments was always uncertain because every thing depended upon the personality of the king. Administration could be paralysed if the king was weak. Next to the king, there was a regular bureaucracy known as the *Kayastha*. They mainly came from the Brahmin class. Another feature of the Rajput Courts was the appointment of the *Bhat* who recited the heroic deeds of the ancestors of the Rajputs. He was an undisputed authority on the family's births, deaths and marriages. Thus, his verdict was final in settling disputes about the division of the ancestral property.

Mutual Wars : Here notice may be taken of an important fact that feudal system and the clannish patriotism of the Rajputs led to some very serious consequences. For example, they cared only for their respective chiefs and did not bother about the security and integrity of country as whole; they were unable to unite and defeat the foreign invaders. Sometimes some Rajputs even helped the invaders with the result that each one of

them was defeated ultimately. They wasted all their time and energy in bickerings, and politically they accomplished nothing substantial. Had the Rajputs learnt to pool up all their resources together, it would have been impossible for the Muslim invaders to defeat them and the subsequent history of India would have a different story to tell.

Revenue System : The chief source of the income of the state was land revenue which was supplemented by taxes on commerce and trade. The Jagirdars also paid some money. Revenue was collected through the agency of the *Panchayats* who also administered civil and criminal justice. the headman of the village and Patwari collected land revenue and deposited it with the treasury.

2.5.7 Social Life

Caste System : Now coming to social life of the Rajputs, first of all, we study the caste system which was prevalent in those times. In addition to the four traditional castes of the Hindu Social System, many sub-castes had sprung up. In Rajput, society, Brahmins occupied the first place and commanded greatest respect. They acted as the councillors of the king; were known as the priests and the philosophers; and enjoyed certain privileges and one such was that they were not awarded capital punishment. The Rajput rulers and the soldiers came from the *Kshatriya* class. The *Vaishyas* did business and money-lending. Sudras followed the professions of agriculture and artisanship etc. The untouchables lived outside the village or the town. In the beginning of the Rajput period, the caste system was not very rigid and there were cases of inter- caste marriages also but later it did become rigid.

Position of Women : The Rajputs honoured their women folk. There was no *Purdah* system among the Rajputs. Rajput women enjoyed a great freedom and also exercised their right of choosing their husbands through *Swayamber*. Women generally married after attaining maturity. However, Brahmins and Kshatriyas could never marry their daughters in to lower castes. They took pride in *Parivar*, *Kulas* and *Gotras*. All Rajput women were educated and took an active part in public life. Girls could read and write and understood Sanskrit. They learned dance and painting also. Some of the women were so learned that they were a match to anybody in Debates. Daughters of the Kings and warriors took lessons in horsemanship also. Music and dancing were popular recreations among the ladies of the higher ranks.

The Rajput women had high standards of chastity and patriotism. There are many examples in Rajput history. When women smilingly entered fire in order to save their honour (*Jauhar*) or accompanied their dead husband's pyre (*Sati*) and thus, proved their devotion and love towards their husbands.

Simultaneously, they were so patriotic that they would refuse to welcome home husbands who had run away from the battlefield in order to save their lives. However, widow remarriage was not allowed. The practice of polygamy was common. The birth of a daughter was not liked by the Rajputs as it was felt that the father of a girl would have to act inferior at her marriage. So, they killed their daughter at the time of their birth. This practice was popularly known as infanticide.

Amusements and Ornaments etc. : About the recreation and pastimes of the Rajputs, we can say that they lived in big buildings and enjoyed all the comforts. They had even slaves. There were many festivals and fairs during a year. Music, dance, drama, dice, hunting, chess etc., were their favourite means of recreation. Both, men and women put on ornaments. Use of opium, wine and betel leaves was very common.

2.5.8 Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the people. They built many reservoirs, tanks, wells and canals for irrigation purposes. A lot of help was given by the state to the farmers. Trade and commerce also flourished during the Rajput period because big cities were linked up with roads. Consequently, people were wealthy and prosperous. The fame of their riches invited the cupidity of Muslim invaders.

2.5.9 Religious Life

Rajputs were mostly Hindus by faith. They worshipped many deities but the most popular deity whom they worshipped was Shiva. They also worshipped deities like Rama and Krishna. Rajput Kings raised a number of temples in their honour. They also built temples in honour of the goddess 'Kali'. Most of these temples were destroyed by Muslim invaders like Mahmud Ghaznavi.

The Puranas and the Vedas were their sacred books. They considered their religious duties to recite these granths. They celebrated religious festivals, observed fasts and undertook pilgrimages as the essential accompaniments of the Hindu religion. Brahmans commanded greatest respect in society.

2.5.10 Progress in Literature

Rajput kings were great patrons of literature. Drama writing particularly flourished in the court of many Rajput rulers. Some of the Rajput rulers were themselves authors of repute. Raja Munja was gifted with poetic talents of high order. The great Parmar ruler Raja Bhoja was himself the author of many books on various subjects such as medicine, astronomy, grammar, religion, architecture, poetry, lexicography, etc. Among his works, the following may be especially mentioned : *Ayurved*, *Saraswam*, *Rajamiraganka*, *Vyaharat*,

Samunchaya, *Sahadamusssnam*, *Yutikalpatar* etc. The foremost author is written in Prakrit. Another work is famous *Gita Govinda* written by Jayadeva, the poet laureate of the King Lakshman Sena of Bengal. In the contemporary period, a rich school of literature also flourished at the court of Kashmiri kings where Kalhana wrote his famous *Rajatrangini* and Somaveda wrote *Kathasartisagara* or 'Ocean of Tales'. It is to be noted that it was during the Rajput period that vernacular languages of India such as Hindi, Gujrati and Bengali were flourished. Poetry developed for the first time in the vernacular literature of this period. Hem Chandara Suri, a great Jain saint, made a great contribution towards our national literature. Chand Bardai in the famous book *Prithvi Raj Raso* celebrated the exploits of his king and patron Prithviraj.

2.5.11 Progress of Architecture and Art

Rajputs were great builders and constructed many tanks, reservoirs and forts. These prove the skill of their engineers and architects. Art critics divide the evolution of temple architecture during the Rajput period into the following two phases : first covers the period from 600 A.D., when there was regular progress in the evolution of architecture; and the second extends from 600 A.D. to 1200 A.D. The originality of the ancient style was lost and the artisans relied more on volume to give these buildings an expression of grandeur. During the second period, we come across obscure figures also.

Important specimens of the Rajput architecture are the majestic, extensive and strong forts of Chittorgarh, Ranthambor, Kumbhalgarh, Mandu, Gwalior, Chanderi and Asirgarh. Many of the Rajput cities and palaces are constructed on hills and by the side of beautiful lakes.

The Rajput rulers and nobles spent a lot of money on the construction of the temples. These temples have won admiration of the art critics. Although most of these temples were destroyed by the Muslims, yet few among or elegant proportions, grace, colours and rich surface treatment. The exterior and interior parts of temples have very fine sculptures. These temples are dedicated to *Jain Tirthankars* and Brahmanical deities like *Shiva* and *Vishnu*. The Jain temples at Mount Abu have white marble hall and a central dome of concentric rings and richly carved ceiling and pillars.

2.5.12 Summary

In the end, we can conclude that in spite of its loose political organisation and a caste-ridden society, culturally, the Rajput civilization was highly advanced. The Rajputs have enriched and made a solid contribution to the main stream of Indian Culture.

2.5.13 Self Check Exercise**1. Fill in the blanks :-**

- (i) After Harsha's death.....usurped the throne of Kanauj.
- (ii)was the first well-known ruler of the Pratiharas.
- (iii)was the most important ruler of the Parmar dynasty of Malwa.
- (iv)occupied first place in society and enjoyed many privileges.

Answers

- 1. (i) Arjuna (ii) Nagabhatta, (iii) Raja Bhoj of Dhara, (iv) Jagirdari, (v) Brahmins.

2.5.14 Suggested Questions**(A) Long Questions**

- Q.1. Write a brief note on the Origin of the Rajputs.
- Q.2. Discuss critically the Rajput Civilization and Culture.

(B) Short Questions**1. Mark (Ö) the correct statements :**

- (i) Which scholars have held the Rajputs as pure Aryans ?
 - (a) C.V. Vaidya and Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha.
 - (b) William Brooke and V.A. Smith.
- (ii) Who wrote Prithvi Raj Raso ?
 - (a) Visaldeva (b) Chand Bardai
- (iii) What was the name of Rajput practice of killing girls soon after their birth ?
 - (a) Jauhar (b) Sati (c) Infanticide
- (iv) How did Rajputs fight against the foreign invaders ?
 - (a) All the Rajput rulers would pool their forces together.
 - (b) Fought class-wise due to their own quarrels.
- (v) Who wrote 'Gita Govinda'?
 - (a) Jayadeva (b) Kalhana (c) Somadeva.

2.5.15 Suggested Readings

- 1. Narang, K.S. and Sethi, R.R. : *History of Bharat, pp. 313-25.*
- 2. Smith, V.A. : *The Oxford History of India, pp. 190-212.*
- 3. Ishwari Parshad : *History of Medieval India, pp. 1-40*