

B.A. (Hons.) Part - II
History Paper - III

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**Historical Writings on Early Mediaeval
India : Trends and Prospects****Lesson Structure**

- 1.0 Objective
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Lack of Historical Texts in Early Mediaeval India
- 1.3 Nature of Early Mediaeval Historiography
- 1.4 Banabhatta and Harshacharita
- 1.5 Kalhana's Rajatarangini
- 1.6 The Chinese Account
- 1.7 The Arabic and Persian Historiography
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- 1.9 Summing-up
- 1.10 Key Notes
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1.0 Objective

In this unit we shall discuss the trends of Indian historiography in early mediaeval India as well as important texts written during this period. An attempt has been made to suggest that the early mediaeval historiography can not be evaluated properly according to modern standards of history writing. Under different sub-sections the nature of early mediaeval historiography, Sanskrit, Chinese, Arabic and Persian Texts have been analysed. An attempt has also been made to point out the features of modern historiography on early mediaeval India. The above matter has been discussed under following sub-headings :

- (a) Lack of Historical Texts in Early Mediaeval India
- (b) Nature of Early Mediaeval Historiography
- (c) Banabhatta and Harsha Charita

- (d) Kalhana's Rajatarangini
- (e) The Chinese Account
- (f) The Arabic and Persian Historiography
- (g) Modern Historiography

1.1 Introduction

In this unit an attempt has been made to acquaint you with the trends and prospects of historical writings on early mediaeval India. The general perception is that there was neither the tradition of history writing in early mediaeval India nor any historical text was written. However, this is a false presumption. Early mediaeval historical writings have to be judged in accordance with contemporary standards; it would not be proper to evaluate them on the basis of features or modern historiography. Keeping in view standards of early mediaeval writing, it can be suggested that several texts of historical importance were written in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Chinese, Arabic and Persian languages. Though these texts lack features of modern historiography, nevertheless, their importance can not be disputed. In fact, the tradition of history writing begun by early mediaeval writers developed further in modern times. A remarkable change has taken place in the objective of history writing. Efforts are being made to present history in more objective and scientific way. This trend is continuing. New publications are constantly appearing with objectivity and rational approach.

1.2 Lack of Historical Texts in Early Mediaeval India

1.2.1 Every age has a definite notion about history. The trend of history writing of any particular period can be understood in this background. To understand the trend of historical writing of early mediaeval India we have to keep in mind the salient features of that age. In fact, the art of history writing is a developed and recognised pattern of modern age. If we view the history writing in early mediaeval times on the basis of modern historiography, it appears, as many scholars have suggested, that there was neither the tradition of history writing in ancient and early mediaeval India, nor any historical text was written. It is, therefore, aptly remarked that upto early mediaeval India neither any Herodotus, Livy, Tacitus, Ferishta or Abul Fazal appeared in India nor any historical text was written.

1.2.2 Several factors have been suggested for the lack of historical texts. For example, Surendranath Banerjee was of the opinion that there were many historical texts in ancient India (including early mediaeval period) but they perished due to invasions and ravages of time. However, this argument appears to be funny when we still possess a large number of religious, philosophical, scientific and legal treatises dealing

1.2B Short answer questions

1. Examine the factors responsible for the lack of historical texts in ancient and early mediaeval India.

1.3 Nature of Early Mediaeval Historiography

1.3.1 In early mediaeval India history meant biographies, morals, legal texts and writings of writers and poets in ornate style, the life and life-style of kings, feudal lords, religious texts of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism and other miscellaneous subjects. For example, the Harshacharita of Banabhatta, Vikramankadevacharita of Vilahan, Prithaviraj Raso of Chandabardai, Puranas, Smritis, dramas, philosophical texts, legal texts etc., are all taken as historical texts. These texts give idea not only about a particular king and his achievements but contemporary political, administrative, socio-economic, religious and cultural life as well. However, it is difficult to accept such writings as truly historical in the modern sense of the term. In modern times history is viewed in a broader perspective. Mere account of historical events can not be termed as history. It is more pertinent to indicate how events influenced the course of history. A historian is expected to examine the causes of events, analyse the consequences and probe into the factors of events. A probing eye to the past, sense of dedication to truth, objectivity and analytical judgment form essential conditions for objective and scientific historiography. In fact, history is more concerned with groups of people than individuals, human judgments than divine actions, with the study of past than explanation of facts and their consequences, of living personalities and their descriptions. However, in feudal, political and social set up of early mediaeval India, these objectives do not acquire any importance. Hence, the writings on early mediaeval India has to be viewed in the contemporary background.

1.3.2 The early mediaeval India was an age of the rise and fall of several dynasties in which individual kings played a significant role. Both in north and south India, several dynasties, e.g.; the Pushyabhutis, Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas, Senas, Rajputs, Pallavas, Chalukayas, Rashtrakutas, Cholas etc. rose to power and after a certain time, declined. Therefore, wars, conquests and territorial expansions became the main features of political life. Due to large scale land grants the feudal forces gained ascendancy. They had a special life style. The feudal class survived on the exploration and labour of others and by dint of its power and wealth patronised art, education and literature. Socio-economic disparities were other features of the age. In religious sphere the influence of bhakti, jnana and tantra increased considerably. Relations with China and the Arab world also became strengthened. Therefore, many Chinese and Arab travellers came to India and wrote their travelogues which are like mirrors of contemporary history and culture. Among the writers on early mediaeval India names of

Banabhatta, Kalhana, Hsuan-Tsang, Alberuni and the Arab geographers deserve special mention.

Assess yourself

1.3A Objective Questions

1. Who was the author of Vikramankadevacharita ?

- (a) Vilahan (b) Anandabhatta
(c) Chandabardai (d) Kshemendra

2. On which of the following subjects maximum attention was paid in historical texts of early mediaeval India ?

- (a) On the life of the peasants
(b) On the life of the slaves
(c) On the life of the women
(d) On the life of the feudal lords

1.3B Short answer questions

1. Discuss the nature of the historical texts of early mediaeval India.

1.4 Banabhatta and Harshacharita

Banabhatta enjoys first and foremost place among the historiographers of early mediaeval India. This is because he started a new trend in the writing of biographies which was followed by several other writers later on. Bana was a contemporary of Harshavardhana and his court-poet. He wrote the Harshacharita as an eulogy of his patron king. His other works are Kadambari and Parvatiparinaya. However, of all the works, the Harshcharita is regarded as the best literary text of Bana. This is because, according to confession of Bana himself, the Harshcharita is an akhyaika (containing historical facts) while the Kadambari is a gatha (imaginary). Harshcharita is the earliest extant chronicle, written in the Kavya style of a contemporary monarch. It is presented on the pattern of a Purana. The text is divided into eight chapters in which, besides his own ancestry and early life, Bana gives a vivid account of Harsha's birth, his childhood, the marriage of Rajyashri, the deaths of Prabhakarvardhana, Grahavaramana, the accession of Harsha, search for Rajyashri and other important events connected with Harsha. However, Bana's account abruptly comes to an end with the meeting of Harsha and Rajyashri. Bana does not give any idea about Harsha's later life.

1.4.1 Bana's own ancestry and the circumstances under which the biography was written, given at the very outset of the text, suggest that Bana's biography of Harsha is presented in the setting of his autobiography. This style of Bana's presentation was

later on followed by the biographers in their works like the Gaudavaho, Navasahasankacharita, Vikramanakadevacharita, Ramacharita and some of the biographies wherein the poet chronicles added sketches of their career. However, contrary to Vikramankadevacharita, Navasahasankacharita or the Prithaviraja Vijaya Bana does not tell any thing about Harsha's family and its social status. Bana also closes his account abruptly. Bana has given an eye witness account of many events, but as he was associated with the court, his description is highly ornamental and exaggerative. In fact, Bana has failed to rise above the sentiment of exaggeration. His description of events and personalities are overshadowed by his style of writing and do not become fully exposed. Bana's account of Harsha's wars and conquests, his relationship with other contemporary powers are incomplete as compared to Hsuan-Tsang's account. Similarly, Bana does not throw much light on Harsha's administration. Chronological sense is also awfully lacking in him. His idea of geography and topography is also inadequate. Bana's greatest weakness is his inability to distinguish legend from history. Despite these drawbacks in Bana's writing, the Harshacharita has always been recognised as a high authority on the early history of Harsha's reign and the history of his immediate predecessors. According to a critic, despite all its drawbacks and limitations, probably the portrayal of contemporary life in the Harshacharita is unparalleled and is not to be found even in Kalhana's Rajatarangini or any other chronicle. Bana's style of biography was later followed extensively in north and south India alike.

Assess Yourself

1.4A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following statements is true about the Harshacharita ?
 - (a) It is an akhyaika
 - (b) It is a gatha
 - (c) It is an epic
 - (d) It is a travelogue
2. Which of the following is the weakest point of the Harshacharita ?
 - (a) Its account is ornamental
 - (b) It does not give complete account of Harsha's wars and conquests
 - (c) It awfully lacks sense of chronology
 - (d) It does not distinguish between history and legend

1.4B Short answer questions

1. Write a short note on Banabhatta.
2. Give a brief introduction of the Harshacharita.

1.5 Kalhana's Rajatarangini

1.5.1 Bana is followed by Kalhana. His Rajatarangini (River of Kings) is regarded as the first historical text of India. The importance of Rajatarangini increases as it confirms to many features of modern historiography. This happened because Kashmir was in close contact with China and Central Asia where historical consciousness prevailed. Another possible factor was the dominating influence of Buddhism in which historical thinking was quite apparent. In this background, Kalhana wrote for the first time an authentic history of Kashmir.

1.5.2 Kalhana's father Champaka was a high official in the Royal Court of Kashmir. Later on, Kalhana also received state patronage. He composed Rajatarangini in 1149-50 AD in Sanskrit language. Like Bana, Kalhana also adopted the Kavya style of writing. The text is divided into eight sections containing nearly 8000 verses. Kalhana has presented an interesting and chronological account of Kashmir from earliest times upto the second Lohara Dynasty. The entire text may be conveniently divided into two sections—"ancient" and "modern". Chapters I-III deal with ancient section while IV-VIII with modern section. Broadly speaking, the ancient phase describes the history of Kashmir from the Gonanda dynasty while the modern one from the Karakota dynasty upto the second Lohara dynasty.

1.5.3 A distinguishing feature of Kalhana is that he clearly mentions the sources utilised for writing the history of Kashmir. As a source material he mentions eleven royal chronicles which existed before him, the Neelamata Purana, inscriptions, coins and many events to which he himself was an eye-witness. Therefore, Kalhana's account seems to be authentic. Although the account of the ancient phase, based as it is more on the basis of the account of earlier writings and legends, is not much trustworthy; but the description of modern section is more authentic and reliable. Kalhana strictly adheres to chronology in his description of important events. This is a speciality of Kalhana. Kalhana's account includes political history, rise and fall of dynasties, court intrigues, administrative setup, judicial system, municipal administration, towns and temples constructed by Kashmiri kings, and donations made by them. Kalhana has also analysed poets and scholars of Kashmir and their writings. Similarly, the historian has expressed his views on the role and impact of the Tentrins (Military class), Damaras (Feudal class), role of the Kayasthas in administration, the influence of the brahmanas, status of women, religious life and other important subjects. He has also examined the character and achievements of Queen Didda, Harsha, Uchchala and others and keeps a sharp eye on court intrigues and corruption prevalent in court and administration. Thus, contrary to Bana, Kalhana does not always present a rosy picture and dwells at length on the weak character of Kashmiri rulers and drawbacks of administrative set-up. Kalhana's writings are full of pathos as well as humour. He has paid special attention to the geography and

topography of Kashmir. In the contemporary setting he regards virtues of loyalty, patriotism and bravery very laudable. Kalhana's another merit lies in the fact that he has made an impartial observation of many events. This quality distinguishes him from Bana and other contemporary biographers.

1.5.4 A comparative study of Bana and Kalhana suggests that both adopted the Kavya style in their writings, but whereas Bana only presents the biography of a king, Kalhana adopts, as his theme, the entire history of Kashmir. Moreover, while in Bana we find a strong sense of realism, in Kalhana the instinct of a true historian triumphs over his realism. Whereas Bana gives a short account of historical characters, Harsha's wars alliances and his internal administration, Kalhana gives a detailed and critical account of political history, court life, administration, natural calamities and similar other details. Bana's main source of information is eye-witness observation but Kalhana has used a vast range of sources, including eye witness observation, made a critical analysis of those sources for writing the history of Kashmir. Bana describes his characters according to his bias in ornate style and language but Kalhana presents a balanced account of his characters. However, there are some shortcomings in Kalhana's account also. Like Bana, Kalhana too has failed, sometimes, to distinguish history from legend and believes strongly in the operation of supernatural powers or fate determining many events. Kalhana also suffers from the tendency of regional glorification. He attempts to connect many kings (Ashoka, Kanishka, Mihirakula etc.) and systems with Kashmir. Despite these limitations, "among authors of historical Kavyas, Kalhana, beyond doubt, occupies a position of pre-eminence by virtue of his attention to the minutiae of general administration and its influence for good or for evil upon the people's fortunes in a small Himalayan kingdom, his understanding of military operations, his exact topography and chronology, the individuality of his extensive series of historical characters, his impartial judgment and his approach towards the standards of historical criticism".

Assess yourself

1.5A Objective Questions

- 1. Which of the following regarded as the first historical texts of India ?**
(a) Harshacharita (b) Ramacharita
(c) Kitab-ul-Hind (d) Rajatarangini
- 2. In how many sections Kalhana's Rajatarangini is divided ?**
(a) Two (b) Four
(c) Eight (d) Ten
- 3. Which Purana is mentioned by Kalhana in the Rajatarangini as a source book ?**

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| (a) Neelmata Purana | (b) Brahmavaiarta Purana |
| (c) Markandeya Purana | (d) Vishnudharmotter Purana |

1.5B Short Answer Questions

1. Point out the subject matter of the Rajatarangini.
2. Give a comparative evaluation of Bana and Kalhana as historians.

1.6 The Chinese Account

1.6.1 The Chinese travellers who visited India in the 7th century A.D. have also left their account of this country. Two travellers, Hsuan-Tsang and I-tsing deserve special mention in this connection. Both the travellers came to India to study Buddhist religion and philosophy. Hence, the glorification of Buddhism in their accounts is not at all surprising, still their accounts contain valuable information on Indian politics, administration, society, religion and culture.

Hsuan-Tsang visited India in 629-30 when Harshavardhana was the sovereign monarch of North India. He stayed in India till 644 AD. During his stay in India he visited important towns and Buddhist monasteries. He also visited the court of Harshavardhana on his invitation. After his return to China he wrote his travelogue in the form of Shi-Yu-Ki or Records of the Western World. His account provides valuable information about the king Harshavardhana himself, his extent of empire, administration, religious policy, his liberality and charity and other similar subjects. In this context Hsuan-Tsang's (Yuwan-Chwang) account is even more useful and informative than Bana's account given in the Harshacharita. Although, Hsuan-Tsang's writing was greatly influenced by Buddhist religion and philosophy, the information provided in the Shi-Yu-Ki on socio-economic, religious and educational conditions, have been more or less confirmed on the basis of archaeological sources. Hsuan-Tsang's account is a valuable source material for conditions prevailing in India, particularly the Mid-India of the 7th century AD.

1.6.2 Similarly, the account of another Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing (671-95 AD), written as the Biographies of Eminent Monks, presents an interesting account of India during the later part of the 7th Century AD. The account of Tibetan monk Dharmaswami may be utilised for the study of Turkish invasion of northern India and its impact in the early part of the 13th century. The main feature of the Chinese writing is that all these writers have tried to view events and systems in right perspective.

Assess yourself

1.6A Objective Questions

1. During which king's rule the Chinese traveller Hsuan-Tsang came to India ?

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| (a) Kanishka | (b) Samudragupta |
| (c) Harshavardhana | (d) Dharmapala |

2. Who was the author of Shi-Yu-Ki ?

- (a) Fahien (b) Hsuan-Tsang
(c) I tsing (d) Dharmaswami

1.6B Short Answer Questions

- 1. What information do you gather on early mediaeval Indian history from the Chinese and Tibetan accounts ?**
- 2. Write a brief note on Hsuan-Tsang.**

1.7 The Arabic and Persian Historiography

1.7.1 Due to contact with the Islamic world several treatises appeared on Indian history and culture in Arabic and Persian languages. History writing developed as a profession among the Muslims. Therefore, stress was put on the quality of historical writings. Authentic sources were utilised for this purpose. The greatest contribution of Muslim historiography is to provide a fixed chronology for events based on the Hijri (622 AD). Indian history acquired a definite chronological order due to the writings of Islamic writers. However, the Muslim historiographers put stress on the description of events but did not examine the factors of these events. Similarly, the upper section of society finds representation in their writings while the common people remain a neglected lot. In early mediaeval India many Arab travellers also came to India who have left their account of India. Their accounts are a valuable source of information on Indian geography, economy, society and religion though some texts include matters of political significance as well.

1.7.2 The first text dealing with the political history of India, written in Arabic, was the Minhajal-Masslik. It was written around 753 AD. The name of the original writer is not known. However, it was rendered into Persian later on as the Chachanama. It was Muhammad-Ali-Bin Hasim Kufi who translated the text into Persian in 1216 AD in the time of Nasiruddin Kabacha. It is the first regional text dealing with the history of Sindh. It describes the conquest of Sindh and Multan by Muhammad Kasim as well as his policies and administration of the region. Apart from Chachanama, several other Arab geographers and travellers have written on Indian geography, Indo-Arab trade connections, Indian ports and items of export-import. These also contain information about the role of contemporary political powers like the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas. The first of the Arab travellers to India was Suleiman-al-Jagir who visited India in 861 AD. His book the Silsilat-ut-Tawarikh preserves an interesting account of Indian places, trade-centres, ports, commodities of import-export as well as information about the social life of the coastal people and glimpses of the Gurjara-Pratiharas and Palas. Ibn Khurdadib was an Arab geographer. His book Kitab-i-masalik-waal-mamalika

is in the form of a guide book containing an indepth analysis of Indian geography and routes. Al-Masudi, a native of Baghdad, came to India in 915-16. His book *Muruj-al-jahabwa Mardain* gives valuable information about Indian geography, ports and towns, social and cutlural life in the 10th century as well as religious condition and the history of the Rashtrakutas. Similarly, Ibn-Haukal's *Ashkal-ul-Bilad*, *Futuh-al-Baldan* of Al-Biladuri are highly informative and interesting. Some texts dealing with the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazani and Muhammad Ghori are also available in the Persian language. To have an idea about the sequence of political events in the 11th and 12th centuries. these are invaluable source material. This category of texts include Utabi's *Tarikh-i-Yamani*, Hassan Nizam's *Tajul-Masir* and *Tabqat-e-Nasiri* of Minhaj-us-Shiraj. The first text describes Mahmud Ghazani's invasions of India. The second book contains an authentic account of the events after the first battle of Tarain. Although Minhaj writes a general history of Islam, it gives an account of Muhammad Ghori's invasion of India and struggle for political supremacy among the Turks and local chieftains also.

1.7.3 Among all the texts written on India in Arabic, the *Kitab-ul-Hind* or the *Tahqique-Hind* of Abu Raihan or Alberuni stands out prominently. It was written in the time of Sultan Mahmud Ghazani in 1030 AD. Alberuni originally lived in Khwarizm of Khiva but he was carried to Ghazani as a captive after the occupation of Khwarizm by Mahmud Ghazani. Later on he came to India with the Sultan. Here, he acquired the knowledge of Sanskrit. Alberuni was master of several languages and a great scholar. His interest was more in the cultural history than the political history of India. Therefore, he concentrated his attention on Indian society and philosophy than on the military expeditions of Mahmud Ghazani.

Alberuni is regarded as the first modern Indologist. His *Kitabul Hind* (the name of his another work is *Atharul Wakiyan*) is divided into eight chapters and many sub-sections. It deals with Indian social order, the life style of the Indians, their food, dress, different customs and traditions, festivals, religion, philosophy, law, crime and punishment, scientific development, astronomy, medical science and several other subjects. Alberuni also gives an idea about the prevalence of different eras, the geographical setting, important towns and their distances. Alberuni's account in its totality, presents an indepth study of Indian culture in the early part of the eleventh century. Since the time of Alberuni, the tradition of historiography had developed in Arabic; Alberuni adopted in his text several of those historical methods. He minutely examines the Indian system, makes its indepth study and puts his arguments in a logical way. Viewed in this background, the *Tahquique Hind* ranks as a highly important historical text on early mediaeval India.

Apart from the texts described above, innumerable texts dealing with history, biography, law, religion, tantra, administration, ethics, philosophy were written in Sanskrit

and other regional languages during early mediaeval times. Although these do not confirm to the standards of modern historiography and are difficult to be recognised as true historical texts, nevertheless, they contain many valuable facts.

Assess yourself

1.7A Objective Questions

1. On which of the following aspects of historiography to Muslim writers did not put stress ?
 - (a) on the quality
 - (b) on the use of authentic sources
 - (c) on the use of fixed dates
 - (d) on the causes of the events
2. Which of the following texts describes Muhammad Ghoris' invasions and struggle between the Turks and local rulers ?
 - (a) Chachanama
 - (b) Tabqat-e-Nasiri
 - (c) Tarikh-i-Yamani
 - (d) Tahqique-Hind
3. At which place the Arab traveller Al-Masudi lived ?
 - (a) Baghdad
 - (b) Ghazani
 - (c) Kandhahar
 - (d) Cairo

1.7B Short answers questions

1. Discuss the salient feature or Arabic and Persian historiography.
2. Give a brief introduction of Alberuni.

1.8 Modern Historiography

1.8.1 During the British rule over India, Indian historiography was influenced by colonial outlook. Therefore, the English historians who wrote during this period made a scathing attack on Indian politics, administration and socio-economic set up. As a response to this attack, the Indian historians adopted nationalist approach to history writing in which Indian virtues to tolerance, liberality, its bravery and prosperity were over-emphasised. The colonial as well as the nationalist writings did no project an objective and scientific historiography. Therefore, from the later part of the 20th century, the historians influenced by Marxist conception of history, began to view Indian history in an altogether new context. Their writings highlight problems of common masses and their historical aspects, not the glorification of royalty. The marxist historians regarded enquiry of events, their impacts, their social-economic background as more vital than enumeration of events.

1.8.2 In the third, fourth decades of the 20th century and the post-independence era, several books, in different languages, appeared on early mediaeval India. The important works on political history include, H.C. Ray's *The Dynastic History of Northern India*, R. S. Tripathi's *History of Kanauj*, Devahuti's *Harsha—a study*, R. C. Majumdar's *A History of Bengal*, Nihar Ranjan Ray's *Bangalir Itihasa* as well as several other texts dealing with the dynastic history of the Rajputs, Kalchuris, Palas, Gurjara-Pratiharas and others. Similarly, Nilkantha Shastri's *Cholas* and *A History of South India*, Meenakshi's *Pallavas of Kanchi*, A. S. Altekar's *Rashtrakutas and Their Times*, G. Yazdani's *Early History of the Deccan* provided valuable information on South Indian history. *The History and Culture of the Indian People* in several volumes, presents a total picture of Indian history and culture. *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, published by the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, in its relevant volumes, presents a good picture of early mediaeval Bihar. The studies connected with social history include writings on the position of the Sudras, untouchability, position of women and similar other topics. Prof. R. S. Sharma wrote two invaluable books on the feudal system and its culture prevalent in early mediaeval India. These were *The Indian Feudalism* and *Purva Madhyakalin Bharat ka Samanti Samaja Aur Sanskriti* (in Hindi). Similarly, his *Urban Decay in India* examines Indian economy in an altogether new perspective. The other notable writings include Lallanji Gopal's *Economic Life of Northern India* (c. AD 700-1200), B. N. S. Yadava's *Society and Culture in Northern India* (in the twentieth century), Devangana Desai's *Erotic Sculptures of India*, *The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism* by Suvira Jaiswal, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan* (C AD 600-AD 1000), by R. N. Nandi the *History of Dharmasastra* in several volumes by P. V. Kane and V. S. Agrawal's *The Indian Art*. All these books were written by Indian historians and an attempt has been made in them to examine the subject matter from historical angle.

The above discussion quite clearly suggests that several texts were written in early-mediaeval India which appear as historical texts from contemporary standards of historiography but un-historical by modern standards. The need of the hour is to view history in the time frame of a particular age. Modern historians are trying to present early mediaeval Indian history with more objectivity and new scientific approach. This is quite appreciative.

Assess yourself

1.8A Objective Questions

- 1. Which of the following statement is true about the Marxist historians ?**
 - (a) They put stress on the achievements of individual kings in their writings.
 - (b) They put stress on the spirit of tolerance of the Indian society in their writings.

- (c) They put stress on the glorious achievements of ancient royal dynasties in their writings.
- (d) They put stress on the analysis of causes of events and their effects in their writings.

2. Who is the author of the book entitled "Purva Madhyakalin Bharat Ka Samanti Samaja Aur Sanskriti ?

- (a) Ram Sharan Sharma
- (b) Irfan Habib
- (c) Nurul Hassan
- (d) B. N. S. Yadav

1.8B Short answer questions

1. Present a brief review of important books written on early mediaeval India.

1.9 Summing-up

Although several texts were written in early mediaeval India but they can not be regarded as historical texts according to standards of modern historiography. This has led to a strong presumption though false, that the art of history writing was not well developed in early mediaeval India. The element of historicity in those texts should be evaluated in contemporary situation only. Viewed from this angle, we can suggest that several texts, dealing with a diverse range of subjects were written in Sanskrit and other languages during period under review. Bana's Harshacharita and Kalhana's Rajatarangini, both written in Sanskrit, occupy an important place in early mediaeval historiography. Similarly, the travel account of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang is quite valuable from historical point of view. Likewise the Persian texts Chachanama, Alberuni's Tahqique-Hind and writing of Arab travellers and geographers are of great historical value. In modern times, a large number of books dealing with different aspects of early mediaeval Indian history have been published. Many of these books strictly follow the standards of modern historiography. These are of more objective and scientific nature. Modern historians are trying to present an analytical account of socio-economic condition of common masses. This is a welcome step.

1.10 Key Words

Herodotus—Greek historian known as the "Father of History"

Thucydides—Greek historian who described war between Sparta and Athens

Tacitus—Lively-Roman historians who wrote Annals and Histories.

Ferishta—Muslim historian

Ibn-Khaldun—Arab traveller

Charitavali—Biography of a king

Gaudavaho—Written by vakapati

Navasaha Sankacharita—Written by Padamagupta

Vkramankadevacharita—Written by Villiam

Ramacharita—Written by Sindhu Lal Nandi

Prithavirajavijaya—Written by Jahanaka

Damer—Feudal class of Kashmir mentioned in Rajatarangini

Hijri—Muslim Era

Nasiruddin Qubacha—A military officer of Muhammad Ghori

1.11 Answer to Self-Assessment questions

Objective Questions

1.2A 1. (d) 2. (c)

1.3A 1. (a) 2. (d)

1.4A 1. (a) 2. (d)

1.5A 1. (d) 2. (a)

1.6A 1. (c) 2. (b)

1.7A 1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (a)

1.8A 1. (d) 2. (a)

Short answer questions

1.2B 1. See, 1.2.2

1.3B 1. See, 1.3.1

1.4B 1. See, 1.4.1

2. See, 1.4.1, 1.4.2

1.5B 1. See, 1.5.2, 1.5.3

2. See, 1.5.4

1.6B 1. See. 1.6.1, 1.6.2

2. See, 1.6.1

1.7B 1. See, 1.7.1 1.7.2

2. See, 1.7.3

1.8B 1. See, 1.8.1, 1.8.2

1.12 Questions for Exercise

1. Discuss the trends of historical writings on early mediaeval India. What are the causes for the lack of historical texts in early mediaeval India ?
2. Give a comparative estimate of Bana and Kalhana as a historian.
3. Discuss salient feature of Arabic and Pesian historiography.
4. Give an account of modern historiography on early mediaeval India.

1.13 Suggested Readings

1. **A. K. Warder** : Introduction to Indian Historiography
2. **Satish Chanda** : Madhyakaleen Bharat Mein Itihas Lakhen (in Hindi)
3. **R. S. Sharma** : Purva Madhyakalin Samanti Samaj Aur Sanskriti (in Hindi)
4. **U. N. Ghoshal** : Studies in Indian History and Culture



Survey of Sources for the Study of Early Mediaeval Indian History

Lesson Structure

- 2.0 Objective
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Literary Sources
- 2.3 Foreign Travel Accounts
- 2.4 Archaeological Sources
- 2.5 Summing-up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Answer to Self-Assesment Questions
- 2.8 Questions for Exercise
- 2.9 Suggested Readings

2.0 Objective

The main objective of this lesson is to make you aware with different sources of early mediaeval India (6th-13th Centuries AD). These sources are of literary and archaeological nature. This unit has been divided into two sections : literary and archeological sources. There is a vast mass of literary sources. It includes historical and semi-historical texts written in indogenous languages. Besides, the accounts of Chinese, Tibetan, Arab and Muslim travellers also shed important light on contemporary history. However, keeping in view, shortcomings in literary sources archeological sources acquire special importance. Therefore, for historical studies the study of incriptions, coins, monuments and art objects become essential. In this unit an analysis of different sources, their nature, their weeknesses their utility has been made. This unit may be studied under the following sub-headings.

1. Literary Sources
 - (a) Historical texts
 - (b) Semi-historical texts
 - (c) Foreign travel accounts
2. Archaeological Sources
 - (a) Inscriptions
 - (b) Coins
 - (c) Monuments

2.1 Introduction

The term early mediaeval India refers to the period between the fall of the Gupta empire and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate or the period encompassing the later part of the 6th century and the early part of the 13th century of the Christian era. This period is important not only from the point of view of political and cultural developments but also for the increase in the number of sources and their varieties. In fact, one of the grounds, for demarcation between ancient and middle ages in Indian history is the number and diversity of languages of the sources. It is true that like ancient phase of Indian history, the early mediaeval phase is also bereft of true historical texts but semi-historical texts in the form of dramas, epics, religious texts, texts dealing with different subjects, chronicles of local dynasties in Sanskrit and other regional languages, enable us to study the contemporary history and culture. Similarly, many foreign travellers came to India during this period. Their accounts also throw light on early mediaeval Indian history. Archaeological sources inscriptions, coins, ancient monuments also throw light on the history of this period.

2.2 Literary Sources

A large number of literary sources are available to us. These include historical, semi-historical texts, dramas, biographies, texts dealing with religion and other subjects in Sanskrit and other regional languages. These are helpful for the study of political as well as cultural history. Most of the literary sources are of indigenous nature, though foreign travel accounts may also be included in this category. Their importance in the study of contemporary history and culture can not be minimised.

2.2.1 Historical Texts

Kalhana's Rajtarangini, composed in Sanskrit, is the only text of early mediaeval Indian which qualifies for being the true historical text. It gives an interesting account of

the history of Kashmir. The text was written in 1148-49 AD. Kalhana was closely connected with developments taking place in Kashmir in the 12th century. He was an eyewitness to many important events. Therefore, his account appears to be authentic. The real merit of Kalhana's work lies in the fact that for writing the history of Kashmir, he utilised writings of his predecessors, myths and legends traditions, texts prevalent on Kashmir, land grants and religious endowments as source material. Therefore, his account rises above other contemporary panegyrics.

The Rajatarangini is divided into eight parts and consists of nearly 8000 slokas. It presents an analytical account of Kashmir from earliest times down to the rule of the Naga-Karkota, Utpala and Lohara dynasties. The early accounts of Kalhana are based on legends and myths but later accounts appear to be more authentic. Kalhana has not only described political events but also thrown light on material and social life and the character of bureaucracy. Kalhana also underlines relationship between political and economic forces. Kalhana's account is of secular character as well. The Rajatarangini throws light not only on the history of Kashmir but other contemporary political developments also. However, the greatest weakness of the Rajatarangini is its undue emphasis on regionalism.

2.2.2 Semi-historical Texts

In early mediaeval India several semi-historical texts appeared in the form of dramas and biographies (charitavalis). Although the main purpose of such writings was to eulogise the achievements of specific kings and royal dynasties, nevertheless they reflect historical events also. A large number of such texts were written in Sanskrit and Prakrit. The most celebrated name in this category is Banabhatta. Banabhatta was a contemporary and court poet of Harshavardhana of the Vardhana (Pushyabhuti) dynasty. He wrote three important dramas, the Harshacharita, Kadambari and Parvatiparinaya, but for the study of political history of 7th century India, the most important is the Harshacharita or the life of Harshavardhana. Bana has described the history of the Vardhana dynasty and achievements of Harshavardhana with elegance. Besides, the Harshacharita also contains information on important contemporary political powers, Harsha's administration and his religious inclinations. The Kadambari, however, contains less information on political matters. Harshavardhana himself is credited with the composition of three dramas—the Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and the Nagananda, but they are not much helpful for historical studies. Many critics have expressed doubts about the historical authenticity of Bana's account. It is also bereft of chronological sequence; still as Bana was a contemporary of Harshavardhana, his account may not be discarded as pure fiction.

2.2.3 Later on, several other biographies were written in Sanskrit and in other languages on the pattern of Harshacharita. Poet Vakapati has described the exploits of

king Yasovarmana of Kannauj in his Gaudavaho. Bilhana eulogizes works of Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukyas of Kalayani in his Vikramanakadevacharita. He credits Vikramaditya with the conquest of many areas. A new literary style known as the Gaudiya style developed in Bengal under the Palas. Sandhyakar Nandi composed Ramacharita in Slesha kavya style. A good account of the events pertaining to the reigns of Ramapala, the Pala king, and specially the Kaivarta rebellion, is given in this work. Similarly, Anandabhatta described the achievements of Vijaya Sena of the Sena dynasty of Bengal in the Vallalacharita, Jayadeva composed Gitagovinda in the time of Lakshman Sena. Similarly, the Dasakumaracharita of Dandin, Kumarapalacharita of Hemachandra, Navasahasankacharita of Padmagupta, Prithvirajavijaya of Jayanaka, Prithviraja Raso of Chandabardai also throw light on contemporary history, though the account given in them is not entirely historical. There is excess of exaggeration in those accounts.

2.2.4 Several dramas, epics, religious texts and texts dealing with different subjects were written between 7th and 12th centuries of the Christian era. The most important dramatical work of this age is the Mudrarakshasa of Vishakhadatta. Vishakhadatta gives not only an account of political events but also of customs and manners of different regions, regional dresses and languages. The drama clearly points to the emerging pattern of regional cultural units. Bhavabhuti was another celebrated dramatist of the age. He was a court poet of king Yasovarmana of Kanayakubja or Kannauj. Bhavabhuti's three outstanding plays are the Malatimadhava, Mahaviracharita and Uttarar-Ramacharita. These dramas portray the picture of contemporary feudal society. The other notable texts of this period are the Sisupalabadha of Magha, Naisadhyacharita of Shri Harsha, Bhattikavya of Bhatti, Srinagarasataa, Nitisataka, Vairagayasataka of Bhartihari, Mallatasataka, Nitivakayamrita of Mallata, Kuttanimattam of Damodaragupta, Karpuramanjari, Kavayamimasa of Rajasekhara, Krityakalpataru of Lakshmidhara, Lalitavigraharaja of Somadeva and Samaranganasutradhara, Kurmasataka, Sringaramanjari of Bhoja. All these texts contain valuable information on contemporary political and social set up. Similarly, important information may be gathered from the Brihatakathamajari of Kshemendra, Brihataratha of Gunadhaya and Kathasaritasagara of Somadeva.

2.2.5 Several chronicles were written in Gujarat which throw light on the history of that region. Some important works of this category are the Rasamala, Prabandhakosa of Rajasekhara and the Kritikamudi of Somesvara. In the 11th century Atul wrote the Mushikavamsa which throws light on the history of the Mushika dynasty of Kerala. The Vamsavalis written in Nepal also help us in the reconstruction of the history of early mediaeval India. It was also during the early mediaeval times that majority of the Puranas were written. The Puranas are valuable source of information for the study of contemporary social and religious condition. For example, the Brahamavaivarta and Visnudharmottara Puranas mention about the proliferation of castes. In the Markandeya

Purana there is description of the worship of Shakti or Devi. The Puranas also highlight the importance of pilgrimage, dana and other aspects of religious life. They give an idea about the development of neo-brahmanism.

2.2.6 Several philosophical and scientific treatises were also written in early mediaeval times. Many Smritis of Dharmasastras were also prepared and commentaries were written on them. Similarly, several lexical texts, texts on dramatics, architecture, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, music and polity were written during this period. Varahamihir's Brihat-Samhita is an important contribution to the study of Indian mathematics and astronomy. It acquaints us not only with scientific development but also with agrarian expansion and social organisation. On the art of politics or Arthasastra the Yuktikalpataru of Bhoja, Nitiratnakara of Chandesar and the Sukranitisara of Sukra stand out prominently. The period under discussion is specially notable for writings on different aspects of Indian philosophy. The notable titles in this category include the Nayayavartika (udhyotkar), Samkhayatatva Kaumudi (Vacaspati Mishra), Gaudabhasya (Gaudapada), Slokavartika and Tantravartika (Kumarilabhatta), Vidhiviveka, Bhawanaviveka, Vibhramaviveka (Mandan Mishra), and Brahamasutrabhasya and the Bhagavadagitabhasya of Shankaracharya. Lakshmidhara wrote the Kritayakalpataru while the Dayabhaga was written by Jmutavahana. The smriti text Danasagar was written by Vallalaseana. Vijayanesvara wrote his Mitakshara commentary on the Yajnavalkya Smriti. Vallalaseana was also the author of Adbhutasagara, a text on astrology. Amongst the texts on medical science special mention may be made of the Ayurvedasamgraha of Bhoj, Rogavinischaya of Madhavakar, Nighantu of Dhanwantari, Rasa-Ratnakar of Nagarjuna, Salihanna of Bhoj and Chikitsasangraha and Ayurvedadipika of Chakrapanidatta. Mention may also be made of the Dasarupaka of Dhananjay on Dramatics, the Samaranganasutradhara of Bhoja on architecture and Sangitamakaranda of Narada, Manasollasa of Somesvara and Sangitaratanakra of Sarangadeva on music. Lexicons like Bhoja's Namamalika, Sabdanusasana and Hemachandra's Desinamamala etc. were also prepared during the period under review.

2.2.7 Several texts were written in Prakrit and apabhramsa also. The Jains contributed immensely to the growth of Prakrit language and literature. For example, Haribhadra, a Jain scholar, wrote the Samaraichakaha and Dhruvaakhyana. Similarly, the Kavalayamala of Udyotansuri, Mahaviracharita of Gunachandra, Parsavanathacharita of Devabhadra, Kumarapalacharita and Prakrit grammar of Hemachandra are important contributions of the Jain scholars. In the field of apabhramsa writing mention may also be made of the Paumacharita of Svyambhudeva. In Bengal the Buddhists composed the Charyapadas and the Dohakosha. All these texts throw valuable light on contemporary political and cultural set-up.

2.2.8 In south India and Deccan also, apart from Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada language and literature flourished under the patronage of the Chalukyas,

Pallavas, Rashtrakutas and Cholas. These constitute valuable source material for the study of early mediaeval Indian history. It was under the Chalukyas and Pallavas that celebrated playwrights and poets like Bilhan, Bharavi and Dandin flourished. Bharavi was the author of the Kiritarajuniya. The Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I was gifted with literary skill. He wrote the Mattavilasa prahasana and the Bhagavadajjuka. In the time of Nandivarman III, the Nandikkalambakam and Bharatam were written. The Tamil Kural was also probably written during this time by Tiruvalluvar. The Saiva and Vaisna saints (Alvars and Naynaras) composed many devotional songs in Tamil. The Prabandham of the Alvars and Tevaram of the Nayanars reflect significant aspects of social life. The Kannada language and literature developed under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha I himself wrote in Kannada the Kavirajamarga and Prashnottaramalika. It was also under the Rashtrakutas that the Campu style of composition began. The great master pioneer of this literary art style was Pampa. He is called the father of the Kannada poetry and he is to Kannada what Valmiki is to Sanskrit. The important works composed in the time of the Rashtrakutas include the Harivamsa of Jinasena, Ganitasarasamgraha of Mahaviracharya, Adi Purana, Vikramajunavijaya or the Pampa Bharat of Pampa, Shanti Purana of Ponna, Ajita Purana of Ranna, Nitivakayamrita, Yasastilaka Champu of Somadeva, Kavirahasya of Halayudha, Slokavartika, Tantravartika, Tuptika of Kumarila and the Nayayakanika of Vacaspati. The growth of Tamil language and literature attained its high watermark under the imperial Cholas. The notable works of this period include the Jivakachintamani, Kalingathupparani, Periya Puranam, Rasolium, Kundalakesi and the Ramayana or Ramanataka of Kambana. All these texts are precious source material for the study of history and culture of South India.

Assess yourself

2.2A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following statements is true ?

- (a) Rajatarangini deals with different royal dynasties of India
- (b) Rajatarangini deals with different royal dynasties of Kashmir.
- (c) Rajatarangini deals with different royal dynasties of Panjab
- (d) Rajatarangini deals with different royal dynasties of Rajasthan.

2. Which of the following dramas was written by king Harshavardhan ?

- (a) Harshacharita
- (b) Parvatiparinaya
- (c) Malatimadhava
- (d) Priyadarshika

3. In which of the following texts an account of the Kaivarta rebellion in Bengal is given ?

- (a) Galidavaho
- (b) Ramacharita
- (c) Gitagovinda
- (d) Kumerapalacharita

4. **With whose royal court the dramatist Bhavabhuti was associated ?**
(a) Vikramaditya VI (b) Yashuvarman
(c) Vijaya Sena (d) Ramapala
5. **With which region's history the Rasamala deals ?**
(a) Kashmir (b) Sindh
(c) Gujarat (d) Bengal
6. **Who was the author of the Samaranganasutradhara, a text on architecture ?**
(a) Bhoja (b) Varahamihir
(c) Sri Harsha (d) Somadeva
7. **Which of the following Puranas describes the worship of devi ?**
(a) Vishnudharmothor Purana (b) Markandeya Purana
(c) Bhahamavaivarta Purana (d) Kurma Purana
8. **Which of the following wrote the Nitiratanakar ?**
(a) Bhoja (b) Chandesvar
(c) Sukra (d) Jiumutavahana
9. **Which of the following texts was written by Bharavi ?**
(a) Karpuramanjari (b) Sringaramanjari
(c) Kiratarjuniya (d) Vikramarjuna Vijaya
10. **In which language the Kaviraja-marga was written by the Rashtrakuta King Amoghavarsha I ?**
(a) Sanskrit (b) Tamil
(c) Kannada (d) Malayalam

2.2B Short answer questions

1. Give a brief account of historical texts written in early mediaeval India.
2. Discuss the importance of biographies written in early mediaeval India.
3. Give a short account of texts written on political philosophy, medicine, dramas and music in early mediaeval India.
4. What do you know about important texts written in South India in early mediaeval India.

2.3 Foreign Travel Accounts

The literary sources mentioned above throw light on the early mediaeval Indian history but they are deficient in many ways. Most of the literary sources have a religious tinge. The dating and the region of composition of these text is also not certain. Moreover,

their accounts are highly exaggerated. In such a situation utmost care has to be taken in utilising the literary texts as source material for the history of early mediaeval India. Fortunately, several foreign travellers visited India during early mediaeval times. They have written their travel accounts. Although these travel accounts are also not free from defects, at least their dates are more or less confirmed. These travel accounts help us in understanding the history and culture of specific regions during particular times. Amongst the foreign travellers the Chinese, Tibetan and Arab travellers stand out prominently.

2.3.1 The Chinese Travellers

Hsuan-Tsang or Yuwan-Chwang stands out prominently among the Chinese travellers who visited India in the 7th century AD. He came to India in 630 AD to learn Buddhist religion and philosophy. He stayed here till 644 AD. During his stay Yuwan-Chang visited important Buddhist centres. He also met Harshavardhana, the king of Kanauj. After his return to China he got published his travel account which is known as the Shi-Yu-Ki or the Account of the Western World. Hsuan-Tsang describes in his book contemporary political, social, religious, economic conditions and the development of education and literature. He eulogizes Harshavardhana, the king of Kannauj. He considers him as the master of the whole of northern India (uttarapathasvami). There was peace and prosperity in his kingdom. The burden of taxation on people was not heavy. The Indian society was structured on the basis of varna and caste system. The menace of untouchability was quite effective. The standard of living of the people was generally good. People of different regions had their own characteristics. Although agriculture, industries and trade were in good condition, many old cities and towns had lost their old glory and become desolate. Along with Buddhism, Brahmanism was also a dominant religion. Nalanda and Vallabhi were renowned educational centres. Hsuan-Tsang's account throws considerable light on the condition prevailing in mid-India in the 7th century and the achievements of Harshavardhana. Although there are many discrepancies in Hsuan-Tsang's account, still its importance can not be ignored as a source material for the study of early mediaeval India.

After Hsuan-Tsang, I-Tsing, another Chinese traveller, also visited India. He lived in India between 671-705 AD. Although as compared to Hsuan-Tsang's account, the account of I-Tsing is sketchy, still it provides important information on history and culture of India.

2.3.2 Tibetan Travellers

In the 13th century the Tibetan monk Dharmasvami came to India from Nepal. He stayed here between 1234-1236 AD. His account throws light on the political condition of Bihar. The political situation was in turmoil due to Turkish invasion. The Mahavihara of Nalanda was a mere ghost of its past glory. However, Vikramshila Mahavihara had

been completely destroyed. Buddhism was on decline. Lama Tarnanath's History of Buddhism in India, though a late work, also throws light on the history and culture of early mediaeval India.

2.3.3 The accounts of Arab and Muslim Writers

Indian came into contact with the Islamic world after the Arab conquest of Sindh and Multan in the early phase of 8th century AD. After this event many Arab traders and travellers came to India. Their accounts are immensely valuable for historical, economic and cultural study. The first text written in Arabic is the Chachanama. It gives an account of the history of Sindh. The Arab merchants, geographers and other writers throw considerable light on the Indo-Arab relations. Amongst such writers, mention may be made of Ibn-Khurdadib, Suleiman, Al-Masudi, Ibn-Haukal etc. Their accounts provide information not only on contemporary political history but Indian ports and trade carried on through them. The Arab writers generally praise the Rashtrakuta rulers.

2.3.4 Abu-Rihan Alberuni stands out prominently amongst the Muslim writers who visited India in the 11th century AD. He was born in 973 AD. in Khwarizm situated in Central Asia. Alberuni was taken to Ghazani as a war captive after the conquest off Khwarizm in 1017 by Mahmud Ghazani. Later on he came to India with Mahmud Ghazani. Alberuni had mastered many languages. While living in India he learnt Sanskrit and made a deep study of Indian culture and civilization and its scientific developments. Alberuni is credited with having written many books but the most outstanding of these is the Kitab-ul-Hind or Tahqique-Hind. This text was written in the Arabic language. This text does not throw light on political developments, not even on the conquest of Mahmud Ghazani. However, it is immensely valuable for the study of contemporary Indian society, religion, philosophy, scientific developments and geography. It is an important source material for the study of cultural life of India in the 11th century.

Assess yourself

2.3A Objective Questions

1. **During whose reign the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang came to India ?**
(a) Chandragupta Maurya (b) Chandragupta II
(c) Rajayavardhana (d) Harshavaradhana
2. **Who was the author of the book History of Buddhism in India ?**
(a) Hsuan-Tsang (b) I tsing
(c) Dharmasvami (d) Lama Taranatta
3. **In which language the Tahqique-Hind was written by Alberuni ?**
(a) Arabic (b) Persian
(c) Urdu (d) Sanskrit

4. Of which region's history the Chachanama deals with ?

- (a) Sindh (b) Gujarat
(c) Tamilnadu (d) Karnataka

5. With which of the following invaders Aberuni came to India ?

- (a) Mahmud Ghazani (b) Muhammad Gori
(c) Changez Khan (d) Babar

2.3B Short answer questions

1. Give a brief introduction of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang.
2. Write a short note on Alberuni.

2.4 Archaeological Sources

Although literary sources are helpful for history writing, there are many drawbacks in them. Their greatest weakness is the lack of fixed chronology. Most of the texts are of semi-historical nature and their writings are influenced by religious motives. There is also the problem of stratification in these texts. Moreover, the descriptions preserved in literary texts do not have an all India application. In such a situation we have to take help of the archaeological sources which are more authentic. Their dates are also almost fixed. The archaeological sources include inscriptions, coins, monuments and art objects.

2.4.1 Inscriptions

In the category of archaeological sources, the most useful and important are inscriptions, engraved on stone slabs, copper-plates, sculptures and even on walls of temples. Some inscriptions are engraved on seals also. Almost all important kings and royal dynasties of early mediaeval India, like Harshavardhana, Palas, Gurjara-Pratiharas, Rajput kings, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Cholas and others have left their inscriptions in large number. The language of these inscriptions is Sanskrit as well as regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada etc. There are two main categories of inscriptions—official and private. Official inscriptions are either in the form of prasastis or they are religious endowments. Private inscriptions mostly relate to gifts. These inscriptions throw light not only on political history but social, economic and religious organisations as well. Many inscriptions have dates. The inscriptions contain titles of kings, terms for administrative units, names and designations of officials, type and amount of taxes etc. in the prasastis achievements of particular kings are described. The land grants describe the nature of the grant as well as special privileges of the donees.

2.4.2 In northern India several inscriptions of Harshavardhana are available. His two important inscriptions are the Madhuban and Banskhera copper plate grants. The first inscription is dated in the 22nd year of the Harsha era corresponding to year 628

and the second is of year 25 of the same era corresponding to year 631 AD. Both the inscriptions contain valuable information on important events and administrative set-up under Harshavardhan. Both the inscriptions are religious endowments and describes grant of villages. Two inscribed seals of Harshavardham have also come to light from Nalanda and Sonapat. The Gwalior prasasti of King Mihira Bhoj is the most important inscription of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty. Similarly, the Udaipur Prasasti of King Bhoj of the Parmara dynasty throws light on his achievements. Inscriptions belonging to the Gahadawalas, Chauhanas, Chandelas, Solankis and Kalachuris have also come to light in large number. Pala inscriptions have been found in good number from Bihar-Bengal. These include the Khalimpur Copper plate of Dharampala, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Badal and Nalanda inscriptions of Devapala. Bhagalpur inscription of Narayanapala, the Banagarh inscription of Vighrapala and many others. The Deopada and Maghainagar inscriptions provide important information on the history of the Sena dynasty of Bengal.

2.4.3 The main source for the study of South Indian history are inscriptions belonging to different royal dynasties. Large number of inscriptions of the Chalukyas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas and Cholas are available. The Aihole Prasasti written by Ravikirti and belonging to Pulakesin II stands out prominently amongst the Chalukyan inscriptions. This inscription gives an account of the achievements of Pulakesin II. The political history of the Pallavas is known mainly from their inscriptions. These inscriptions give an idea about the Pallava-Chalukya and Pallava-Rashtrakuta struggles. Amongst the Rashtrakuta inscriptions mention may be made of the Samangarh copper plate, Ellora Dasavatara cave inscription of Dantidurga and the Sirur copper plate of Amoghavarsha I. Similarly, important information may be derived from the Baroda and Sanjan copper-plate grants of Krishna I. The Velvikudi grant and Sinnamannur plates which are both bilingual, acquaint us with the history of the Pandyas. Similarly, the Leyden grant, Tanjore inscription of Rajaraja I, Triuvalangadu and Karandi inscriptions of Rajendra I, Tiruvendipuram inscription of Rajaraja III, several inscriptions of Kullotunga and other Chola rulers are valuable source material for the study of the history of the Cholas. Land grants were also issued in large number in South India. All types of inscriptions discovered from South India, provide valuable information on politico-administrative set-up, social organisation, economy, religious conditions, role of different administrative units in local self-government, role of temples in cultural and religious life and other allied topics.

2.4.4 Coins

Although the circulation of coins declined in the early mediaeval India, we have some coins belonging to this phase of Indian history. These include the coins of Gahadawalas, Paramaras, Pratiharas, Chandelas, the Adivaraha type of coins, Harikela

coins, Gadhैया coins, the coins of Chalukyas, Cholas and the coins of Kashmir. However, the paucity of coins in the post-Gupta times is indicative of a major transformation in Indian economy. During this period urban economy was giving way to rural economic formation. Thus, the coins indicate changing economic pattern in early mediaeval period.

2.4.5 Ancient Monuments and Art Objects

Ancient monuments and art objects form another category of valuable source material for the study of early mediaeval India. A large number of temples, mahaviharas were constructed and stone and metal images were carved during this period. These give an idea about the artistic development. Nalanda, Vikramshila and Somapura mahaviharas were important educational centres under the Palas. The remains of Nalanda and Vikramshila speak highly of the glory of these centres. Many forts (Skandhavaras) were also built under the Palas. Remains of several such forts have come to light during archaeological excavations. The most important of these are Jayamanagalagarha and Naulagaraha in Begusarai district of Bihar. Construction of temples reached a new high watermark in the post-Gupta times. Several beautiful and impressive temples were built in north and south India. Remains of a cave temple belonging to the Pala period have come to light from Kahalgaon near Bhagalpur. The temples of Gadadhara and Janardana and Bateshwar and Pitamaheshwar were constructed in India during the reigns of Nayapala and Vighrahapala respectively at Gaya in Bihar. The Parmara King Bhoja got the temples of Kedareshwar, Rameshwar and Somanatha constructed. A distinct style of temple architecture developed in north India which is known as the Nagara style of temple architecture. The most important temples constructed in north India are the group of temples constructed at Khajuraho by the Chandela kings. In Rajasthan the Dilwara temple was built on Mount Abu. In Gujrat the temple of Somanatha was constructed in the Solanki style. In Orissa also distinct temple architectural style developed. The notable temples of Orissa include the Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneshwar, the Jagannatha temple of Puri and the Sun temple of Konarka. The Chalukyan temples were constructed in the Besar style. The Chalukyas got their temples constructed by cutting rocks and mountains. The notable temples of the Chalukyas are of Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal, Under the Pallavas different temple architectural styles developed, i.e., the Mahendravarman style, Mamilla style, Rajasimha style and the Aparajita style. Amongst the Pallava temples special mention may be made of the sea-shore temple of Mahabalipuram and the Kailashnatha temple of Kanchi. The Rashtrakuta and Chola temples were built in the Dravida style. Mention may be made of the Kailash temple and the Dasaavatara temple of Ellora and the Rajarajeshwar or the Brihadeshwar temple at Tanjore built respectively by the Rashtrakutas and the Cholas.

2.4.5 The art of sculpture also made distinct progress during this period. Beautiful images of stone and metal of Siva, Visnu, Buddha, Tirthankaras and other Gods and Goddesses were made in large numbers. Under the Palas, a distinct sculptural style developed which is known as the "Eastern style of mediaeval Art". The Pala sculptures are made of black basalt stone and alloy (astadhatu). The Pala images belong to Buddhists as well as brahmanic deities. Nalanda, Bodh Gaya and Kurkihara were important centres of Pala sculpture. Under the Cholas beautiful bronze images of Nataraja were made in large number. The art of Manuscript painting and making of frescoes attained new heights of excellence during the period under review. A painted Pala manuscript known as the Astasahasrikapragyaparamita is still available. The walls of temples were decorated with beautiful and lively frescoes. In the frescoes found on the walls of Ajanta there is a scene in which the Chalukya king Pulakesin II is according welcome to the Persian envoy. The scenes depicting the emergence of Ganga (Gangavatarana) and raising the Kailash mountain by Ravana in the Kailash temple at Ellora are simply superb. The walls of the temple of Apsad were decorated with Ramayanic scenes.

Thus we notice that different types of sources are available for the study of early mediaeval Indian history. By using all these sources in a judicious and balanced manner we can form an idea about contemporary history and culture.

Assess yourself

2.4A Objective questions

- 1. Which of the following statements is untrue ?**
 - (a) Most of literary sources are of semi-historical nature
 - (b) The dates of most of literary texts are fixed
 - (c) The accounts of most of literary texts are exaggerated
 - (d) The accounts preserved in most of literary sources may not be applicable to whole of India.
- 2. To which of the following Kings belongs the Modhubana copperplate inscription ?**

(a) Harshavardhana	(b) Prabhakaravardhana
(c) Dharmapala	(d) Devapala
- 3. On whose King's achievements the Aihole prasasti sheds light ?**

(a) Pulakesin I	(b) Pulakesin II
(c) Mahendravarman I	(d) Mahendravarman II
- 4. The Uttaramerur inscription mainly sheds light on which of the following ?**

(a) Military organisation	(b) Construction of temples
(c) Position of women	(d) Local Self-government

5. In which of the following architectural styles the temple of somanatha was constructed ?

- (a) Dravida style (b) Besar style
(c) Nagara style (d) Solanki style

2.4B Short answer questions

- 1. Discuss the importance of inscriptions as a historical source.**
- 2. Write a short note on inscriptions and their importance discovered from South India.**
- 3. What light do monuments and art objects throw on early mediaeval Indian history ?**
- 4. Give a brief outline of early mediaeval currency system.**

2.5 Summing-up

Historical sources increase as well as diversify in early mediaeval India. These may be broadly divided into two parts — literary and archeological. The number of literary sources is very large written in Sanskrit and other languages. Likewise, the Chinese, Tibetan, Arab, Muslim writers and travellers accounts also throw significant light on early mediaeval Indian history. Several texts were written in South Indian languages also. Majority of Indian sources are of semi-historical nature. Kalhana's Rajatarangini only may be placed in the category of historical texts. The semi-historical literature includes biographies, dramas and texts dealing with politics, philosophy, law, medicine, architecture, drama, music, dictionaries, etc. The Jains produced many texts in Prakrit. Similarly, several texts dealing with different subjects were written in apabhramsa, Tamil, Kannada, Telegu etc. We also get valuable information on contemporary history from the accounts of Chinese pilgrims Hsuan-Tsang, I-tsing, Tibetan Dharmaswami, Arab travellers and geographers and the Tahquiqe Hind of Alberuni.

However, the literary sources suffer from many short comings. They lack chronology, their accounts are highly exaggerated and their contents are not applicable to whole of India. The archaeological sources do not suffer from these deficiencies. Therefore, study of archaeological sources become unavoidable for objective and scientific history.

The archaeological sources include inscriptions, coins, monuments, art objects and materials exhumed from archaeological excavations. The number of archaeological sites belonging to early mediaeval India have not been excavated in plenty but inscriptions are available in large numbers. These belong to different dynasties of North and South India, e.g., the Vardhanas, Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas, Senas, Gahadawalas, Paramaras, Kalchuris, Chalukayas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Cholas and others. The in-

scriptions inform us on subjects like achievement of Kings, administration, social, economic, religious life and land system. Though some coins of this period are also available but they are not in good number. The paucity of coins suggests a change in economy. Remains of several temples, forts, statues of stone and metals have also been discovered. They not only inform us about socio-economic and religious life but about technological advancement as well. Thus, the sources for the study of early mediaeval India are in plenty of varied nature. However, their balanced use is essential for an objective and scientific history writing.

2.6 Key words

Charitavali—Biography or a king

Gandiya style—Literary style prevalent in Bengal under the Palas

Slesha Kanya—Having double meaning

Kaivarta rebellion—Rebellion under Ramapala in Bengal

Vamsavali—Dynastic records

Neo-brahmanism—New form of brahmanism

Smriti—Known as Dharmasastras also earliest law books on social order like Manu Smriti.

Prasasti—Composed in praise of some one

Nagar style—Temple architectural style prevalent in North India.

Solanki style—Temple architectural style of Gujarat

Besar style—Mixed form of Nagarpal Dravida styles of temple architecture

Dravida style—Temple architectural style of South India under the Pallavas and Cholas

Nataraja—Dancing Shiva

2.7 Answer to Self-assessment Questions

Objective questions

2.2A 1. (b), 2. (d), 3. (b), 4. (b), 5. (c), 6. (a), 7. (b), 8. (b), 9. (c), 10. (c)

2.3A 1. (d), 2. (d), 3. (a), 4. (a), 5. (a)

2.4A 1. (b), 2. (a), 3. (b), 4. (d), 5. (d)

Short answer questions

2.2B 1. See, 2.2.1

2. See, 2.2.2, 2.2.3

3. See, 2.2.6

4. See, 2.2.8

- 2.3B 1. See, 2.3.1
2. See, 2,3.4
2.4B 1. See, 2.4.1 2.4.2, 2.4.3
2. See, 2.4.3
3. See, 2.4.5, 2.4.6
4. See, 2.4.4

2.8 Questions for Exercise

1. Give an account of the literary sources for the study of early mediaeval India.
2. What light do foreign travel accounts throw on the history and culture of early mediaeval India ?
3. Describe important archaeological sources for the study of early mediaeval India.
4. Write short notes on the following :—
 - (a) The Rajatarangini
 - (b) Alberuni
 - (c) Inscriptions as a source of history
 - (d) Temple architecture in early mediaeval India

2.9 Suggested Readings

1. K. A. N. Sastri : Sources of Indian History with Special Reference to South India
2. R. S. Sharma(ed.) : A Comprehensive History of South India
3. R. S. Sharma : Purva Madhyakalin Samanti Samaj Aur Sanskriti (in Hindi)
4. R. K. Chandhary : Prachin Bharat Ka Rajnitik Aur Sanskriti Ka Itihasa (in Hindi)
5. Vishudhananda Pathak : Uttar Bharat Ka Rajnitika Itihasa (in Hindi)
6. D. C. Sirear : Select Inscriptions
7. KAN Sasti : A History of South India



Transition from Ancient to Mediaeval : Main Features**Lesson Structure**

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Problem of periodisation of Indian history
- 3.3 Economic Changes
- 3.4 Social Changes
- 3.5 Change in Religion
- 3.6 Change in political set-up and administration
- 3.7 Other Changes
- 3.8 Summing-up
- 3.9 Key Words
- 3.10 Answer to Self-Assesment Questions
- 3.11 Questions for Exercise
- 3.12 Suggested Readings

3.0 Objective

This lesson seeks to familiarise the students with the problem of the periodisation of Indian history. It explains the factors which transformed ancient India into mediaeval India. These factors were mainly of social, economic and religious nature though the political system also underwent a change as a result of above-mentioned causes. The present lesson explains the following points :

1. Prblem of periodisation of Indian history.
2. Economic changes
3. Social changes
4. Change in religion

5. Change in political set-up and administration.
6. Other changes

3.1 Introduction

The question of transition from ancient to mediaeval in Indian history is quite complex. Several scholars have suggested that this transformation can be determined on the basis of political and dynastic changes. However, modern scholars do not subscribe to this view. They are of opinion that the transition from ancient to mediaeval should be viewed in the background of social, economic, religious and administrative changes. Likewise, the growth of regionalism, regional script, language and literature, changes in art and architecture actually mark the end of "ancient" and the beginning of "mediaeval" phase of Indian history. The land grants played a decisive role in this transformation.

3.2 Problem of Periodisation of Indian History

3.2.1 Indian history is generally divided into three periods : ancient, mediaeval and modern and is equated with the Hindu, Muslim (Turkish and Mughal rule) and the British rule. This division is based on the British scheme of periodisation of Indian history. The colonial historians normally equated ancient India with the pre-Turkish rule and suggested that the ancient period of Indian history came to an end with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206 AD. Many eminent Indian historians, too, e.g., R. S. Tripathi, R. C. Majumdar, K. A. N. Sastri and others have accepted this division. Even the Indian History Congress, the representative body of Indian historians includes the period up to 1206 AD in its section on ancient India. Several other scholars suggest that dates such as 647, 712, 750, 916, 985, 1174, 1206, 1325 may be taken as dividing line between ancient and mediaeval India. These dates are suggestive of significant changes in political and dynastic history of India. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri even takes the fall of the Gupta dynasty as a dividing line between ancient and mediaeval. Still there are many other scholars who suggest that the beginning of the use of Arabic and Persian sources actually heralds the beginning of mediaevalism in Indian history.

3.2.2 These views are mainly based on the study of political and dynastic history. It does not take into account significant changes taking place in polity, society, economy, religion, art architecture, script, language and literature in the Gupta and post-Gupta times. In fact, these new developments actively transformed "ancient India" into "mediaeval India". In a scientific and detailed study Prof. R. S. Sharma has examined these forces of transformation and suggests that transition from ancient to mediaeval should be viewed in the perspective of socio-economic changes which heralded the beginning

of mediaevalism in Indian history. However, it should be always kept in mind that there are some elements common to ancient and mediaeval times, i.e. the institution of state, Varna and Jati system, patriarchal family, use of iron plough-shares in agriculture, bricks, pottery, etc. Similar common features may also be noticed in the context of rituals and socio-religious reform movements. Still, there are striking differences between ancient and mediaeval times.

3.2.3 Land grants and their role

According to R. S. Sharma, "The central factor that ultimately transformed ancient Indian society into mediaeval society was the practice of land grants". This practice started due to a serious crisis which affected ancient Indian social order. The consequences of land grants deeply affected contemporary political set-up, polity and socio-economic structure. Its impact was felt on religion, art and literature too. The central point of argument is that the practice of land grants marked the end of ancient and the beginning of mediaeval phase of Indian history. It is essential for us to know as to why and how this practice started.

3.2.4 The concept of Kaliyuga and land grants

The early Pali literature and the Arthashastra of Kautilya suggest the grant of land of brahmanas and other persons but their nature differed from later grants considerably. The purpose of the earlier grants appears to be "extension of agriculture" but later grants were made with specific purpose of "acquiring religious merit and counteracting the effects of social crisis" in the 3rd-4th centuries of the Christian era. This crisis is aptly referred to in the Puranas in the concept of Kaliyuga. In the new situation the Varna system lost its relevance; the lower Varnas discarded the functions assigned to them and adopted professions and status of higher Varnas. They refused to pay taxes and do menial and forced services. This led to the Varnasamkara or the inter-mixture of Varnas and castes. This type of situation prevailed in the Deccan and Central India where the brahmanic culture had not acquired deep roots. Now the problem before the law givers and the state was how to tackle the situation. The earliest law giver Manu recommended the use of coercive power and suggested that the Vaisyas and Sudras be asked to stick to their traditionally assigned duties.

3.2.5 However, the coercive methods might have proved counter-productive. Instead of defusing the social tension it could have enhanced the social crisis in the form of organised protests and even rebellions. Therefore, it was considered more prudent to grant land to priests and officials in lieu of gold and cash as dana and salary. The new arrangement could lessen the burden of state of revenue collection and maintenance of law and order in the donated areas. Land grants could even help in the extension of agriculture. Moreover, the brahmanas could be even helpful in teaching the brahmanical way of life and the need for obeying royal command and paying taxes in

conquered tribal areas. Keeping in view all these advantages, kings began to make land grants to religious beneficiaries in the early stage: later on, grants were made to officials also. Subordinate rulers and feudal lords also followed this practice subsequently.

3.2.6 The practice to make land grants was initiated by the Satavahanas in Deccan. The satavahanas were regarded as improvised brahmanas and they badly needed the support of the priestly class. It was Gautamiputra Satakarni (2nd century AD) who for the first time made tax-free land grant to Buddhists and granted complete freedom to the donee from governmental intervention. The practice assumed new dimensions from the middle of the 4th century AD when land grants to brahmanas, often villages, with full revenue and police powers, began to be made on large scale. A large number of inscriptions bear testimony to this fact. Moreover, the grants were made on permanent basis (aksayanivi) and villagers, cultivators, artisans were explicitly asked to obey command of the donees. From Gupta period onwards land grants were made to civil and military officials also on the similar pattern. The impact of land grants were felt on every sphere of life. It brought an end to the prevailing system and marked the emergence of a new set-up which is termed as the "transition from ancient to mediaeval" in Indian history.

Assess yourself

3.2A Objective Questions

- 1. When did ancient phase of Indian History come to an end according to colonial view point ?**
(a) 647 AD (b) 712 AD
(c) 1206 AD (d) 1325 AD
- 2. Which of the following was the crucial factor in transition from ancient to mediaeval ?**
(a) The Arab conquest of Sindh
(b) The Turkish conquest of India
(c) The growth of trade and commerce
(d) The practice of land grants
- 3. Which of the following changes took place in the "Kaliyuga" ?**
(a) End of monarchies (b) End of Idolatory
(c) End of the caste system (d) End of the utility of Varna system
- 4. Which of the following Kings made land grant for the first time ?**
(a) Gautamiputra Satakarni (b) Yajnasri Satakarni
(c) Nahapana (d) Rudradaman

3.2B Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the problem of periodisation of Indian history.
2. What do you understand by the term "Kaliyuga" ? Explain.
3. With what purpose land grants were made ?

3.3 Economic Changes

3.3.1 The most significant economic change brought about by the practice of landgrants was the decline of urban economy and unprecedented growth of rural economy. The land grants helped the decline of trade, paucity of coins, decline of towns, expansion of agriculture, increase in the number of rural settlements, new agrarian relations and the growth of closed economy.

3.3.2 Decline of Urban Economy : Urban economy before 3rd-4th century

The early centuries of the Christian era were marked by intense inland and foreign trade, abundance of coins and efflorescence of towns and cities in west and north India under the Satavahanas and Kushanas. During this period India traded profitably with the Roman Empire, Central Asia and South East Asia. Indian spices, muslin, ivory products and other luxury items were in good demand in foreign lands. The Indian sea-ports, the Uttarapatha and the Silk Route connected Indian commercially with the Roman Empire, Central and South East Asia. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and the accounts of Greek and Roman writers suggest that the balance of trade was in India's favour. Gold poured into India from the foreign trade. This fact becomes clear from the discovery of large number of Roman gold coins in India. How far the situation was favourable to India also becomes clear from Pliny's lamentation. He says, "India took away from Rome not less than fifty-five million sesterces yearly, giving in return merchandise which was sold for one hundred times its original cost...."

3.3.3 As a consequence of thriving inland and foreign trade monetary economy became the order of the day. The Satavahanas and the Kushanas issued large number of coins. The Kushanas, particularly, issued large number of copper and gold coins. Many coins and coin moulds of this period have been unearthed from excavations conducted at different sites. The monetary economy helped the growth of arts and crafts, trade as well as towns. A large number of towns flourished under the Satavahanas and the Kushanas in the Deccan and northern India. A similar situation is noticed in Pakistan and Central Asia during the Kushana period. The whole picture appears to be of a thriving urban economy.

3.3.4 Change in Urban Economy—Decline of Trade

The situation began to change from 3rd-4th centuries of the Christian era. The Gupta and the post-Gupta period witnessed the decline of trade, paucity of coins and

decline and desertion of urban settlements. During this period both inland and foreign trade registered a sharp decline as compared to earlier period. Commercial contact with the Western World was snapped due to several factors. Contacts with Central Asia and Western Asia also were broken as a result of the Huna's invasion in the Gupta period. Though Indian carried on some trade with China and South East Asia but its benefits were reaped by the Arabs who acted as middlemen and practically monopolized the export trade of India. Inland trade also suffered adversely as links between coastal towns and interior towns and towns and villages were snapped. Sea voyages and long distance trade were disapproved by law books. The rise of self-sufficient economic units in the form of villages also had adverse impact on long distance trade. Large scale commodity production declined considerably. All these factors contributed to the decline of trade. Although trade in basic necessities like salt, pots etc. and prestigious luxury goods like precious stones, ivory and horses used by aristocracy continued in some measure, the organised trade declined considerably.

3.3.5 Paucity of Coins

One direct result of the decline of trade, specially foreign trade, was the stoppage of gold from Roman world in India. It adversely affected monetary economy. Though the Guptas issued large number of gold coins, the percentage of gold in them continued to fall throughout the Gupta times. Moreover, as compared to earlier period copper coins which were medium of common circulation declined sharply in the Gupta period. The situation becomes astounding when we do not find coins in adequate number in the post-Gupta period. The coins of Harshavardhana, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas are almost negligible in number. Coins became almost non-existent in most parts of north India, Bengal, Orissa, Central India and the Deccan. This was because of the decline of trade and the grants of land to officials in lieu of cash payments made the use of coins redundant. Moreover, in closed village economy barter and cowries became the medium of exchange.

3.3.6 Decline and desertion of towns

Closely linked with the decline of trade and paucity of coins was the decline and desertion of urban centres in Gupta and post-Gupta times. This facts is clearly demonstrated by contemporary literature like the Brihat Samhita of Varahamihira and the travel account of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang. The decline of towns is also confirmed by archaeological excavations conducted at numerous urban centres of post-Gupta times. This was because the towns lost their economic importance. They no longer remained centres of artisanal activities, craft production or centres of exchange. Several important cities and towns which thrived under the Kushanas and Satavahanas i.e. Purushapura, Taxila, Hastinapura, Atranjikhhera, Mathura, Sravasti, Kausambi, Chirand, Vaisali, Pataliputra, Tamaluk situated in north western part and in upper and middle Gangetic

plains registered sharp decline in the Gupta period and even went out of occupation in the post-Gupta times. Similar situation prevailed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Gupta and post-Gupta layers at these urban settlements exhibit poor habitational layer, structural and material remains. Even those urban centres which survived in the post-Gupta times lost their economic identity and existed merely as administrative, military, educational or religious centres. Thus, by the end of the Gupta period the urban economic phenomenon was giving way to the growth of rural economy.

3.3.7 Growth of Rural Economy : Extension of Agriculture

With the decline of urban economy agrarian growth and rural expansion took place in an unprecedented scale in the Gupta and post-Gupta times. This in turn created self-sufficient villages as economic units and a closed rural economy. With the decline of trade and towns merchants and artisans moved to rural settlements and many of them even changed their occupations. For example, a group of silk weavers from the western coast migrated to Mandsor in Malwa, gave up silk weaving and adopted other vocations. This stimulated agrarian growth. Moreover, with the rise of numerous new petty states in the Deccan, Central and Eastern India more and more virgin land was brought under cultivation. Land grants in tribal areas also helped agrarian expansion. *Agrarian* expansion was also due to increase in agricultural knowledge and technology. The contemporary sources, like the Brihat Samhita, Krishiparasara, Harshacharita, speak about manuring of fields, different types of cultivation, improved irrigational facilities and the use of new irrigational devices like the Udghataghati, ghatiyayantra, arghattas etc. New types of plants and crops also appeared. The Amarakosha and other literary sources refer to variety of cereals, plants, fruits and vegetables. With agricultural expansion the number of rural settlements also increased considerably. These settlements were of different kinds like ghosa (settlement of herdsmen), brahamadeya (villages donated to brahamanas exclusively), agrahara or mangalam (inhabited by brahamanas and non-brahamanas also). The villages included different types of land, both cultivable and uncultivable, pasture grounds, irrigational projects like water, tanks, wells, ponds, forests as well as residential houses and religious establishments. However, these were devoid of organised crafts industries and marketing complexes.

3.3.8 Emergence of closed economy

In the agrarian set-up the mainstay of state revenue was land revenue, in the pre-Gupta times and especially under the Mauryas the sources of revenue included land revenue as well as taxes from industrie, trade etc. but from the Gupta period onwards revenue from land increased and other types of taxes declined. The inscriptions refer to land taxes like bhoga, bhaga, kara, uparikara, udranga etc. This clearly suggests the importance of land and agriculture in economy. The land grants empowered the donees

not only to extract these taxes but also to increase them and impose new taxes. They could also realise Vishti or forced labour. In such a situation peasants and artisans were tied to villages. They could not migrate from donated villages to non-donated villages. They had to work for the donees only whether these be individuals or landed magnates in the form of religious establishments. In such a situation production for mass consumption declined considerably. The villages became self-sufficient economic units. This situation led to the growth of a closed economy which was in contrast to the open urban economy of the pre-Gupta times.

Assess yourself

3.3A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following changes took place in economy as a result of land grants ?
 - (a) The number of towns increased
 - (b) The circulation of coins increased
 - (c) The trade and commerce increased
 - (d) The number of villages increased
2. Who was the author of the book the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea ?
 - (a) Megasthenes
 - (b) Pliny
 - (c) Fahien
 - (d) Name of the author is not known
3. Which one is the chief feature of the Gupta economy ?
 - (a) Trade with Western World increased
 - (b) Circulation of coins increased
 - (c) Urban economy developed
 - (d) Rural economy developed

3.3B Short Answer Questions

1. How land grants affected contemporary trade and commerce ?
2. What were the results of the decline of urban economy ?

3.4 Social Changes

3.4.1 Weakening of Varna and Jati system

The social changes which took place in the Gupta and post-Gupta times were also closely linked with economic changes discussed above. Land grants not only created economic but social disparity as well. Land based social divisions appeared in which the old Varna and Jati based social organisation underwent transformation. Now the social status of a person began to be decided on the basis of land holdings. Varna and

Jati became redundant in this context. Due to land grants a new landed aristocracy known as Samantas or feudal lords emerged. It included brahmanas, Kshatriyas and others who were given the titles of thakura, raut, ranaka etc. This tendency became more acute from 9th-10th centuries of the Christian era.

3.4.2 Proliferation of castes

The period also witnessed proliferation of castes on a large scale. Every varna came to be divided in several jatis. At the same time the number of mixed castes and untouchables increased considerably. The untouchables included mainly non-agriculturists like hunters, fishermen, butchers, scavengers, executioners, chandalas etc. They normally provided labour to the society and lived outside village. It was also during this period that several artisans and craftsmen like weavers, dyers, tailor, barbers, shoemakers, washermen were reduced to the status of untouchables. However, a major social change which took place during the period was the rise in the social and economic status of the sudras and decline in the position of the Vaisyas. This was because the sudras gradually came to be associated with agriculture and the vaisyas at the lower level were descending to the status of the sudras. The growth of rural economy and expansion of agriculture raised the economic condition of the sudras but on the other hand decline of urban economy adversely affected economic and social status of the vaisyas. Gradually, the vaisyas also adopted cultivation as their occupation. This minimised the distinction between the Vaisyas and Sudras.

3.4.3 Emergence of Kayasthas

Other significant social developments were the growth of the Kayasthas and decline in the position of women. Initially the Kayasthas emerged as a social community. Their growth was closely linked up with economic changes, particularly the grant of land. With the increasing practice of land grants the demand for scribes or record keepers got momentum to draft assignment of land to priests, officials, religious establishments as well as to keep records of land transfer and items of revenue. Their assistance was also required in settling boundary disputes of villages or plots of land. This work was assigned to a group of educated persons known by several names, e.g. Kayastha, Karnika, Karna, Chitragupta, Akshapatalika etc., but later on all types of scribes were given the name of Kayastha. Originally, only members of upper varnas were recruited as scribes as only they were educated persons, but gradually the varna division was discarded. In subsequent times the community of scribes changed into the caste of the Kayasthas. With the growth of regional powers the Kayasthas also emerged as a strong and powerful official class.

3.4.4 Decline in the position of women

The position of women also declined considerably in the Gupta and post-Gupta times. Though the economic position of the widows improved slightly as they were given

proprietary rights, generally the position of women registered a sharp decline. Polygamy and pre-puberty marriage became common. Women were denied educational and sacrificial rights. The heinous practice of sati also emerged and developed. The women came to be regarded as mere chattel. Several literary texts of the period jointly refer to women and property and women and sudras. This amply demonstrates the sad plight of women.

Assess yourself

3.4A Objective Questions

- 1. Which of the following social changes did not take place in post-Gupta times ?**
 - (a) Social distinctions increased
 - (b) Number of castes increased
 - (c) The position of Vaisyas declined
 - (d) Decline set in the social-economic status of the Shudras
- 2. Which one of the following factors played an important role in the emergence of the Kayasthas ?**
 - (a) Development of the feeling of untauchability
 - (b) End of dominance of priests over religion
 - (c) Growth of the practice of land grants
 - (d) Emergence of regional states
- 3. Which of the following reforms took place in the position of women in Gupta and post-Gupta times ?**
 - (a) The practice of polygamy came to an end.
 - (b) The prevalence of practice marriages came to an end
 - (c) The practice of sati system came to an end
 - (d) Women were given proprietary rights.

3.4B Short answer questions

- 1. Indicate the changes in caste Varna and caste systems in Gupta and post-Gupta times ?**
- 2. Discuss the origin of the Kayasthas as a social class.**

3.5 Change in Religion

3.5.1 Emergence of the Cult of Bhakti

The period under review witnessed changes in religious life also. These were mainly the emergence of Bhakti cult, Tantricism, institutionalisation of religions and

importance of tirthas. Although the cult of bhakti in India had developed in the 4th century B. C. itself in the form of Bhagvatism, the bhakti cult assumed new dimensions during this period. The bhakti cult became a special feature of neo-Brahmanism which put more emphasis on devotion to God than on the performance of vedic yajnas. Bhakti was a theistic cult centred around Vaisnavism and Saivism. It became common not only among the ruling dynasties but common masses as well. It gained popularity in South India in the 6th century due to the efforts of Nayanars (Saiva saints) and Alvars (Vaisnava Saints). They composed hymns and songs in popular Tamil language in praise of their supreme God, sung those songs and moved from place to place. They criticised the heterodox sects like Buddhism and Jainism, attacked brahmanical caste regulations and gave equal status and devotional right to women also. This had an electrifying impact on the masses. With the popularity of Vaisnavism and Saivism, Buddhism and Jainism lost their ground in South India. Vaisnavism and Saivism received royal patronage. Temples and idols were made on large scale. Land and other forms of donations were made to temples. Temples in south India emerged as landed magnates and played a crucial role in contemporary socio-economic and cultural life. Bhakti also directly or indirectly patronised the concept of tirthayatra or pilgrimage.

3.5.2 Emergence of Tantricism

Another significant religious development was the emergence of Tantricism as a powerful religious sect. Its root lay in the primitive fertility rites prevalent among non-Aryan tribes. In this cult women occupied a significant place. Tantricism sought to raise the status of women by worshipping female deities in the form of Shakti, Durga, Kali, Parvati etc. There were five main components of Tantricism : five makaras, i.e. matsya, mamsa, madya, maithuna and mudra. Tantricism, like Bhakti cult, offered a challenge not only to organised Brahmanism and social order but also to Buddhism and Jainism. It offered equal status to women and low caste men in society. The tantrics took recourse to magical powers also. They had no faith in prevalent religious rites. In due course of time all the major religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism adopted many features of Tantricism. A vast literature dealing with tantric philosophy and rites appeared in the post-Gupta times.

Assess yourself

3.5A Objective Questions

1. On which of the following aspects the neo-Brahmanism put stress ?
 - (a) On the cult of bhakti
 - (b) On the performance of vedic sacrifices
 - (c) On the practice of animal sacrifices
 - (d) On the philosophical aspect of religion.

2. To whom important place was accorded in the Transism ?

- (a) To priests (b) To Gurus
(c) To women (d) To performance of religious rites

3.5B Short answer questions

- 1. Analyse important changes taking place in religious life in early mediaeval India.**

3.6 Change in Political Set-up and Administration

The Gupta and post-Gupta periods are also remarkable for transformation of state and polity. It witnessed the weakening of the central authority and rise of several semi-independent and independent states. The monarchical system of government became the order of the day but the position of king and bureaucracy changed considerably. Symptoms of proto-feudal polity are discernible during this period. This picture emerges on the basis of contemporary literature as well as epigraphical evidence.

3.6.1 Decline in royal power and emergence of feudal lords

It was essentially an age of localised or regional monarchies. Neither Harshavardhana, the Palas and Senas, Gurjara-Pratiharas nor the Pallavas, Chalukayas or Cholas could establish an empire extending over whole of India. Moreover, the actual areas of direct control under these empires were much less than the total area of empire. The part of different empires was ruled by subordinate semi-independent powers. This fact becomes clear by the titles of sovereigns like Paramamahesvara, Paramabhattaraka, Maharajadhiraja, Sarvalokesvara etc. These titles suggest the existence of lesser kings under the sovereign. The element of divinity began to be associated with the king more forcefully than in the earlier times. This enhanced the position of the king in the eyes of subjects but his actual powers declined considerably as the king had to take into account the authority wielded by semi-independent ruling chiefs as they were potential challenger of king's authority. This situation developed because the land grants to civil and military officials created a class of samantas or feudal lords. They were given special privileges and administrative autonomy. The sovereign had to depend on them not only for running administration smoothly, maintaining law and order in their areas but also for the supply of army in time of war and regular taxes. Gradually the samantas and mahasamantas became so powerful that they overthrew the ruling dynasty and established their independent ruling families. This is true in the case of north as well as south India. For example, the predecessors of Harsha, the Rajput powers, the Pallavas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukayas, Cholas all rose to royalty from the position of vassals. Other factors which undermined the central authority was that the bureaucracy like kingship also assumed hereditary character and the king depended

for purse and sword on his vassals. These changes transformed the character of state and government and undermined the real authority of the sovereign ruler. The elements of centralisation in administration gave way to forces of decentralisation.

Assess yourself

3.6A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following changes took place in political system and administrative set-up during early mediaeval India ?
 - (a) Power of the king was strengthened
 - (b) Power of the king was weakened
 - (c) Decline in the divine attributes of kingship
 - (d) Bureaucracy became elective

3.6B Short answer questions

1. Indicate the changes which took place in political system and administrative set-up in early mediaeval times.

3.7 Other Changes

Emergence of regional features : The period under review is also important for the emergence of regional cultural units, growth of regional languages, regional scripts, development of literature, art and architecture. It is during 6th-7th centuries of the Christian era that faint beginnings of the formation of regional cultural units in Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and other parts of the country are noticed. For example, the beginning of the emergence of Gurjaradesa, Rajasthan, Vanga as regional cultural units can be traced. With it new ethnic groups also emerged. Around seventh century AD the use of apabhramsa language led to the emergence of proto-Hindi, proto-Bengali, proto-Rajasthani, proto-Gujarati, proto-Maithili languages. This was mainly due to increasing social mobility and interaction with different regions. The land grants played a significant role in increasing social mobility and inter-regional communication. With the growth of regional languages regional scripts also appeared. There was spurt in literary activities also. With the changing life style of royalty and feudal lords the style of Sanskrit prose and poetry also underwent change. The literature of the period centred round sex, religion, commentaries on ancient texts, law books and Charitavalis. Regional styles appeared in art and architecture also. Its impact is particularly noticed in the field of sculpture and temples. The sculptures of north, east, central and south Indian differ artistically from each other. Similarly, three distinct architectural styles appeared in temple construction; i.e. the Nagara style, the Besar style, the Dravida style as well as the Orissa style, Solanki or

Chalukaya style, Pallava style etc. With the increase in the number of temples their importance also increased considerably in socio-economic and cultural life.

Assess yourself

3.7A Objective Questions

1. Which of the followings changes did not take place in early mediaeval India as a result of increased social mobility and practice of making land grants ?
 - (a) Regional cultural units emerged
 - (b) Regional languages emerged
 - (c) Regional art and architecture developed
 - (d) The concept of monotheism emerged and developed

3.7B Short Answer Question

1. Discuss the changes which took place in cultural life, language, script, literature and art during early mediaeval India.

Thus by 5th century AD significant changes began to take place in state organisation, social set-up, economic situation, religion, art-architecture, language, script and literature. Many of these elements fructified in the post-Gupta and subsequent times. These completely changed the political and cultural scenario and transformed "ancient India" into "mediaeval India."

3.8 Summing-up

The problem of transition from ancient to mediaeval in the context of Indian History is very grave. Normally, this transition is determined on the basis of the political changes; but according to modern perceptions it is only on the basis of socio-economic, religious, political, administrative and cultural changes that one can indicate transition from ancient to mediaeval phase of Indian history. The land grants played a crucial role in bringing about these changes. The land grants brought in its chain, decline of trade and towns and paucity of coins. It led to the development of rural economy based on agriculture. It also led to the development of closed economy in place of market and urban economy. These changes left its impact in other sphere too. Now the Varna and caste systems weakened considerably, number of castes increased and as a consequence of land grants a new social group of the Kayasthas emerged. The position of women also registered a decline. In the religious field the concept of bhakti or devotion to God became stronger. Tantrism also emerged as a powerful sect. It also led to the weakening of royal authority. Instead, the samantas and Mahasamanta's became more powerful. As a consequence the forces of decentralisation became dominant whereas

the elements of centralisation were pushed to the background. Due to increased social mobility and the practice of land grants regional elements gained supremacy in the domain of culture script, language, literature, art and architecture. These new features actually transformed ancient India into mediaeval India.

3.9 Key Words

647 AD—Death of Harshavardhana

712 AD—Arab conquest of Sindh

750 AD—Establishment of Pala dynasty

985 AD—Accession of Chola Rajaraja I

1194 AD—Battle of Chandawar

1206 AD—Establishment of Delhi Sultanate

1325 AD—Accession of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq

Varna system—Vedic system according to which society was divided into four classes.

Land grants—Donation of land

Kaliyuga—An age described in the Puranas in which social order crumbled

Visthi—Taking work without making wages.

Dharmasastrakarars—Law givers

Periplus of the Erythrean Sea—Written by an anonymous writer

Pliny—Roman historian

Udghatghati, Ghatiyayantra, arghathas—Irrigational devices

Closed economy—An economy designed to cater local needs only

Bhoga, bhaga, kara, uparikara, udranga—Types of land taxes

Kayastha, Karnika, Karna, Chitragupta, Akshapatalika—Class of writers

Tantrism—A religious sect in which women were given special status

Param maheshwar, Paramabhattaraka, Maharajadhiraja, Rajadhiraja, Sarvalokeshwar—Royal titles

Thakur, Raut, Ranak—Feudal titles

3.10 Answer to Self-Assessment Questions

Objective Questions

3.2A 1. (c), 2. (d), 3. (d), 4. (a)

3.3A 1. (d), 2. (d), 3. (d)

3.4A 1. (d), 2. (c), 3. (d)

3.5A 1. (a), 2. (c)

3.6A 1. (b)

3.7A 1. (d)

Short Answer Questions

3.2B 1. See, 3.2.1, 3.2.2

2. See, 3.2.4

3. See, 3.2.5

3.3B 1. See, 3.3.4, 3.3.6

2. See, 3.3.7, 3.3.8

3.4B 1. See, 3.4.1, 3.4.2

2. See, 3.4.3

3.5B 1. See, 3.5.1, 3.5.2

3.6B 1. See, 3.6.1

3.7B 1. See, 3.7

3.11 Questions for Exercise

1. Discuss the problem of periodisation of Indian History.
2. Examine the role of land grants in transforming ancient India into mediaeval India.
3. Analyse economic changes in the Gupta and post-Gupta times.
4. Discuss the main features of social and cultural changes in Gupta and post-Gupta times.
5. Write short notes on the following :
 - (a) The concept of Kaliyuga
 - (b) Decline of towns
 - (c) The Kayasthas
 - (d) Tantricism

3.12 Suggested Readings

1. R. S. Sharma : Purva Madhyakalin Samanti Samaja Aur Sanskriti (in Hindi)
2. Nihar Ranjan Ray : Mediaeval Factor in Indian History.
3. R. S. Sharma : Transition From Ancient to Mediaeval in Indian History.
4. M. Habib : Politics and Society in Early Mediaeval Period.



The Pallavas of Kanchi

Lesson Structure

- 4.0 Objective
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 An Outline of Political History
- 4.3 Administration
- 4.4 Religious Condition
- 4.5 Growth of Education and Literature
- 4.6 Art and Architecture
- 4.7 Summing-up
- 4.8 Key Words
- 4.9 Answer to Self Assessment Questions
- 4.10 Questions for Exercise
- 4.11 Suggested Readings

4.0 Objective

The main objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the history of the Pallavas of Kanchi. A large number of Pallava inscriptions are available in Sanskrit and Prakrit which form the main source material for the study of the history of the Pallavas. The Pallavas constantly fought with the Chalukayas and Pandayas and succeeded in maintaining their political hegemony till around 10th century AD. The Cholas emerged as political successors of the Pallavas. The rule of the Pallavas is very remarkable from the point of view of cultural developments. Significant developments took place in the field of religion, literature, art and architecture. We shall therefore, discuss in this unit, under the following sub-headings different aspects of political and cultural history of the Pallavas

- (a) An Outline of Political History
- (b) Administration

- (c) Religious Condition
- (d) Growth of Education and Literature
- (e) Art and Architecture.

4.0 Introduction

On the ruins of the Satavahana empire several political powers emerged in South India. Between 6th-10th centuries three important dynasties established their strongholds. These were the Chalukayas of Badami, the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Rashtrakuts of Malkhed. The Pandayas of Madura also occupy a significant place in the South Indian history. These powers fought constantly for political supremacy. The political rivalry and interencine wars amongst these powers ultimately weakened their authorities and paved way for the political rise of the Cholas. In this unit, we shall give you an outline of the political and cultural history of the Pallavas.

4.2 An Outline of Political History

4.2.1 The early history and origin of the Pallavas is not well known. It appears that in the early stages the Pallavas were subordinate rulers of the Satavahanas. With the decline of the Satavahana empire in the 3rd century AD, several new powers emerged on the political horizon of Deccan. Important amongst such rowers were the Abhiras, Chuttus, Ikshavakus, Vakatakas and Pallavas. The Pallavas rose to power in the south-eastern part of the Satavahana empire. They established their capital in the city of Kanchipuram (Kanchi) and laid foundation of a new imdependent ruling dynasty.

4.2.2 The question of the orgin of Pallavas is quite controversial. Several views have been expressed in this connection. Many Indian and foreign scholars opine that the Pallavas were originally non-Indians and were related to the Pahalvas or the Parthians. In supoprt of the Pahalava origin of the Pallavas a picture of the Vaikunthaperumal temple is cited. In this picture, the crown being offered to Nandivarman II. The Pallava monarch, at his accession to the throne is in the form of an elephant's scalp. This crown resembles with the crown of the Indo-Greek ruler Demetrius. Some scholars have even tried to connect the Pallavas with aboriginal tribes of far south. It has alos been suggested that the Pallavas were related to Naga-Chola clan, However, K. P. Jayaswal and K. A. N. Sastri refute these arguments and consider them as baseless. They regared the Pallavas as belonging to north-India. The Pallavas are described either as Brahmanas or Kashahiyas. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang also suggests that the Pallavas were Kshatriyas of Kadhadesha. In view of these conflicting opinions, it is difficult to suggest any thing conclusively regarding the origin of the Pallavas. There is no definite or irrefutable evidence to suggest that the Pallavas were either foreigners or

belonged to north India. Most probably they were original inhabitants of Tondaimandalam. They were subordinates of the Satavahnas. After the decline and disintegration of the Satavahana empire, they established their independent kingdom in Kanchi.

4.2.3 The beginning of the Pallava history can be traced on the basis of three copper plate inscriptions in Prakrit. These refer to a king named Skandavaraman. He is described as a brahamana belonging to the Bharadwaja gotra. He is said to have performed vedic sacrifices like **agnishtoma**, **vajapeya** and **asvamedha**. His capital was at Kanchi. His kingdom extended from river Kaveri in north and upto the Arabian sea in the west. Names of other Pallava monarchs also find mention in Prakrit inscriptions. The Sanskrit inscriptions also contain list of Pallava kings. The most important of such kings was Vishnugopa. His name occurs in the Prayaga **Prasasti** of Samudragupta also. He was defeated by the Gupta emperor.

4.2.4 The Pallavas rose to political prominence from the time of Simhavishnu (560-80AD). He is regarded as the founder of Pallava power. He was the son of Simhavaraman. Simhavishnu was a brave king. He suppressed power of the Kalabhras, conquered the entire region upto Kaveri river and fought with the Pandayas and the king of Ceylon. He was a devotee of Vishnu. He adorned the title of "Avanisimha". He gave patronage to the growth of art and literature. Renowned poet Bharavi, who composed the **Kiratarjuniya**, lived in his court.

4.2.5 The first great king of line of the Pallavas was Mahendravarman I (580-630). He was a versatile genius. He was a brave warrior, an able administrator and patron of art and literature. His reign marked the beginning of the long-drawn Pallava-Chalukya rivalry and conflict for political supremacy. Both the powers were trying to extend their influence. Therefore, conflict between two became inevitable. The Pallava-Chalukya struggle started with the invasion of Chalukya king Pulakesin II. He defeated Mahendravarman and captured northern parts of his kingdom. However, despite this defeat and humiliation, Mahendravarman succeeded in maintaining the Pallava influence in contemporary politics.

Mahendravarman I patronized cultural development. He was a patron of scholars. He was himself a great scholar. He is said to have written the **Mattavilasaprahasana**. He was a renowned musician as well. His rule witnessed the growth of a new style of temple architecture, known as the Mahendravarman style. In this style temples were constructed after hewing rocks. The Pallava king adopted the policy of religious tolerance. Initially his inclination was towards Jainism but later on, he became a worshipper of Siva. He gave patronage to Vaishnavism also. He adopted titles like **Mattavilas**, **Vichitra-Chitta**, **Gunabhar** etc.

4.2.6 Mahendravarman I was succeeded by Narasimhavaraman I "Mahamalla" (630-668). The Pallava-Chalukya conflict continued in his reign also. However, he

maintained and protected the empire bequeathed to him. He defeated the Cholas, Kalabhras and Pandayas. He had also to fight with the Chalukyan king of Badami, Pulakesin II. Pulakesin invaded the Pallava empire. However, Pulakesin was defeated in the Battle of Manimangaal near Kanchi. In this battle the Pallava monarch was assisted by Manavarma, a Ceylonese prince. Now Mahendravarman decided to teach a lesson to his hereditary enemy, the Chalukayas. He himself attacked the Chalukayas and advanced upto their capital Badami. He plundered the city and captured it. Pulakesin II, on his part, was killed in the battle-field while defending his capital city. The victory over the Chalukyas greatly enhanced prestige of the Pallavas. To celebrate victory over Badami, Narasimhavaraman adopted the title of "**Vatapikonda**". He also helped the Ceylonese Prince to get the throne of this country. However, the Pallava victory over Chalukayas, proved to be short-lived. The new Chalukaya king, Vikramaditya compelled Narasimhavaraman to withdraw from Badami. Still Narasimhavaraman's regime witnessed the Pallava power and prestige at top. Internally, there was peace and prosperity in the Pallava empire. Mahammallapuram (Mahabalipuram) became the chief sea-port of the Pallavas. Beautiful temples were constructed here. The Chinese Pilgrim, Hsuan-Tsang, visited Kanchi in 641AD at the time of Narasimhavaraman I. Hsuan-Tsang showers praise on the Pallava king and his empire.

4.2.7 After the death of Narasimhavaraman, Mahendravarman II became king, but he ruled for two years only. He was succeeded by Parameshwaravarman I (670-700). The Pallava-Chalukaya conflict again intensified under him. Earlier, Mahendravarman II had also faced onslaught of the Chalukayas. It was probably in one such military engagement that Mahendravarman lost his life. During Parameshwaravarman's time the Chalukaya king Vikramaditya, made alliance with the Pandaya king Arikesari, and waged war against the Pallavas. In the beginning, the Pallava king was defeated and compelled to leave Kanchi. However, Parameshwaravarman did not lose heart at this defeat. He reorganised his army and attacked the Chalukayas. Now, it was the turn of Vikramaditya to evacuate the Pallava dominions. Parameshwaravarman was a worshipper of Siva.

4.2.8 The next notable Pallava king was Narasimhavaraman II "Rajasimha" (700-728). His reign is important for cultural developments. By the time of his accession to the throne the Pallava-Chalukaya struggle had halted temporarily. He therefore, devoted his time and energy to the construction of temples and other cultural activities. A good number of beautiful temples were constructed, the most important being the Sea-Shore temple of Mahabalipuram and the Kailashanath temple of Kanchi. Literary activity also got impetus. Dandin, the celebrated author of **Dasakumaracharita** and **Kavayadarsh** adorned the court of Narasimhavaraman II. Oceanic trade was in a flourishing condition. The Pallava monarch sent two missions to China.

4.2.9 After Narasimhavaraman Parameshwaravarman II (728-31) ascended the Pallava throne. The Pallava-Chalukaya struggle was renewed during his reign. The Chalukaya prince Vikramaditya, with the help of the Ganga attacked Kanchipuram. The Pallavas were compelled to buy peace at a heavy price Parmeshwaravaraman tried to reassert his power and fought with the Gangas, ally of the Chalukayas, but was decisively defeated. Moreover, in a retaliatory measure the Ganga king Shripurush defeated and killed the Pallava king in the battle of Vilandi. The royal umbrella of the Pallava king was also taken away.

4.2.10 After the death of Parameshwaravarman, gradual decline set in the Pallava empire. Now, other than the Chalukyas, the Ganga, Pandayas, Rashtrakutas and Cholas became political rivals of the Pallavas. The war of succession in the royal family further eroded power and prestige of the Pallavas. Parameshwaravaraman had left no successor to the throne. Therefore, the throne was offered to the descendants of Bihmavaraman, the brother of Simhavishnu. The son of Hiranayavaraman, Nandivaraman II (731-796) was installed on the throne Nandivaramn II "Pallavamalla" proved to be a powerful ruler. As soon as he ascended the throne, he chalked out a plan to check growing power of his political rivals. He defeated the Ganga king Sripurusha, realised tribute from him and captured some territories of his state. He also organised a confederacy against the Pandayan king Varaguna I and sought to defeat him, This plan, however, did not fructify. Nandivaraman was a devotee of Vishnu. He renovated many old temples and got constructed some new ones. The most important temple constructed by him is the Vaikunthaperumal temple of Kanchi. The famous Vaishnava saint Tirumangal Alvar was his contemporary. The reign of Dantivarman (796-847), the successor of Nandivarman, was full of troubles. He had to face invasions of the Pandayas and Rashtrakuts. The Rastrakuta king Govinda III invaded Kanchi. Tondaimandalam passed under control of the Telegu-Cholas.

4.2.11 The last powerful king of the Pallava line was Nandivaramn III (846-69). He defeated his Pandaya rival Srimarsrivallabh in the battle of Tellaru. The Pallava king received help of the Gangas, Tamil-Cholas and Rashtrakutas against the Pandyas. The victory of Tellaru gave Nandivaraman the permanent tite of "**Tellarerinda**". However, the tide turned against the Pallavas soon after this victory. The Panday king defeated Nandivaraman as well as his allies in the battle of Kumbakonam. Despite this defeat Nandivarman succeeded to a great extent in restoring the lost prestige of the Pallavas. The Pallava king was a great patron of art and literature also. He got constructed a Vishnu temple and tank in Siam. He possessed a powerful fleet. After Nandivaraman Nripatunga (869-879) and Aparajita became kings. Nripatunga, though defeated the Pandaya king, but had to face the revolt of his brother Aparajita. Aparajita, with the help of the Gangas and Cholas, removed Nandivaraman from the throne and himself became king in 876 AD. He succeeded in checking power of the Pandayas but could not control

the Cholas. Aditya II of the Chola line, defeated and killed Aparajita. With his death the Pallava rule came to an end. The Cholas captured their state. Thus, constant wars and rivalries brought an end to the Pallava rule.

Assess Yourself

4.2A Objective Questions

1. In which language the Pallava inscriptions were inscribed ?
(a) Sanskrit (b) Malayalam
(c) Kannada (d) Telegu.
2. Which of the following Pallava kings adorned the title of “Avanisimha” ?
(a) Vishnugopa (b) Simhavishnu
(c) Narasimhavaraman I (d) Narasimhavaraman II
3. During whose reign the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang visited Kanchi ?
(a) Mahendravarman I (b) Mahendravarman II
(c) Narasimhavaraman I (d) Narasimhavaraman II

4.2B Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss different views regarding the origin of the Pallavas.
2. Describe the achievements of Narasimhavaraman I “Mahamalla”

4.3 Administration

4.3.1 The Pallavas followed the contemporary administrative pattern. Impact of the Gupta administration is discernible on the Pallava administrative set up. We can form an idea about the Pallava administration on the basis of their inscriptions. The Pallavas, like other South India ruling dynasties, adopted monarchical form of government. The king himself was the centre of administration. The Pallava kings enjoyed absolute power. All powers of state were vested in them. The Pallava kings adopted many high sounding titles like “Maharaja” “Dharmamahadhiraja” etc. The kingship was normally of hereditary character and rules of succession were almost fixed in favour of the eldest son. It was only Nandivarman II who was nominated to the throne by the **Ghatika** and officials of the state. The Pallava kings normally adopted a secular policy. They did not impose their personal religious beliefs on others. They also took keen and personal interest in the affairs of the government. The aim of their government was public welfare. They tried their best to maintain existing social, economic and religious order and did not disturb existing grants. The main duty of the king was to maintain internal peace and order and protect subjects from external dangers. Every Pallava king was inclined towards conquests and extension of the boundary of empire also. The

king had his own flag and seal. Special provisions were made for the safety of palace and its inmates. Some Pallava queens also took interest in the works of public welfare. For example, queen Rangapataka of Narasimhavaraman II "Rajasimha" took personal interest in the construction of Kailashnath temple of Kanchi. Royal princes participated in administration in an effective manner. The post of provincial ruler was mostly given to them only.

4.3.2 The king discharged his administrative obligations with the assistance of ministers and other officials. Probably the institution of the Council of Ministers existed under the Pallavas. Administration was split into several departments, headed by ministers. It was the duty of secretaries (Sachiva) to get recorded oral orders of the king. The names of civil and military officials like **Yuvaraja, Amatya, Mahasenapati, Mahadandanayaka, Senapati, Raktika, Mandambas, Gramabhojka, Vinayasthis-thapaka, Gaulmika** etc. occur prominently in Pallava inscriptions. However, the mode of their appointment is not clear. Perhaps, high official posts were hereditary, land grants were made to important officials in lieu of salary. Land grants were issued in favour of scholars and religious institutions also. The main sources of income of the state were land revenue, customs duties and taxes imposed on artisans. The state also received income from trade. Land was measured by the state and revenue fixed according to the produce of land. The state provided irrigational facilities to farmers. The Pallavas also gave proper attention to the organisation of army, judiciary and police system. Their navy was also well organised. Infantry and cavalry enjoyed special status in the army. Apart from regular judicial courts, village panchyats, caste courts and guilds (Sreni) also administered justice.

4.3.3 For administrative efficiency the Pallava empire was divided into several administrative units. The highest unit was **Rashtra** or **Manadala** headed by **Rashtrika** or **Mandalika**. Below Rashtra there were **Kottams, Nadus** and villages. **Kottam** was headed by Deshatika while **Vapitra** was the village headman. The Pallavas gave due importance to autonomous administrative units in local administration. This tradition fully developed under the Cholas. Every village and town had its own autonomous administrative unit known as **Ur** and **Nagaram**. They dealt with local requirements and problems. Besides, there were organisations of artisans professionals, traders, etc. These autonomous units lessened administrative burden of state as well as fulfilled local requirements of the people.

Assess Yourself

4.3A Objective Questions

1. With which administrative unit the Deshatika was associated in the Pallava administration ?
 - (a) Rashtra
 - (b) Kottam
 - (c) Nadu
 - (d) Village

4.3B Short Answer Questions

1. Indicate the importance of king in the Pallava administration.
2. Write a short note on the growth of local government under the Pallavas.

4.4 Religious Condition

The rule of the Pallavas witnessed growth of every major religion. Majority of the Pallava rulers were adherents of brahmanic religion. They performed many Vedic sacrifices. However they followed the policy of religious tolerance. Both Vaishnavism and Savism flourished under the Pallavas due to effortes of Shankaracharya and Alvar and Nayanar saints. A large number of massive and beautiful temples of Siva and Vishnu as well as sculptures were made. Brahmanas and temples received liberal endowments. Jainism was also in a flourishing state under the Pallavas. King Mahendravarman I was a Jain. Some Pallava rulers gave patronage to Buddhism also. The account of the Chinese pilgrim suggests that Buddhism was in a prosperous condition. He visited the Pallava capital Kanchi in 641AD. He suggested that every religious sect enjoyed complete religious freedom. There were many followers of the Buddha. He suggests that there were one hundred **Sangharamas** of the **Sathavira** sect in which ten thousand Buddhist monks lived. The Mahayan form of Buddhism was also in good condition.

Assess Yourself

4.4A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following religions was patronised by majority of Pallava rulers ?
 - (a) Buddhism
 - (b) Jainism
 - (c) Brahamanism
 - (d) Christianity

4.4B Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the religious condition under the Pallavas.

4.5 Growth of Education and Literature

4.5.1 The Pallava rule was quite significant from the point of view of growth of education and literature. Kanchi was a renowned educational centre. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang shower praise on this city. He himself stayed and studied in Kanchi for some years. Another Buddhist scholar Dinganaga also received education here. Mayurasharaman, another scholar, received vedic education here. Liberal grants were made to scholars and educational institutions by the State. Temples, Mathas, Ghatikas, Pallis and **Viharas** were main recited in temples. The Bhakti saints also helped the

growth of education. Subjects of education included besides **Anaviksha, tryi, Varta, Dandaniti, Purana**, logic. **Mimamsa, Ayurveda** and **Gandharvaveda**. Special emphasis was given on the education of princes. Many Pallava kings, like Mahendravarman I were renowned scholars. Vocational training was provided in families. The Jains and Buddhists also contributed to the growth of education.

4.5.2 The growth of education facilitated the development of language and literature. Many texts were written in Sanskrit and Tamil under the Pallavas. Prakrit and Sanskrit was used in the Pallava inscriptions. Sanskrit was accorded the status of state language. There were several renowned scholars under the Pallavas. The states accorded them honour and patronage. The Pallava king Mahendravarman I was himself a celebrated scholar. He is said to have composed two farces (**prahasans**), the **Mattavilasa** and **Bhagavadajjuka**. Satirical comments are made in them about the Kapalikas and the Buddhist monks. The names of Bharavi, Dandin and Matridatta appear prominently in the list of the scholars of the Pallava times. Bharavi lived in the court of king Simhavishnu. He wrote the **Kiritarajuniya** which beautifully describes struggle between Shiva and Arjuna, one of the heroes of Mahabharata. Dandin was a courtier of king Narasimhavarmman. Dandin is known by his two important works the **Dasakumaracharita** and **Kavyadarsha**. Matridatta was another contemporary scholar of Dandin. The **Nandikkalambakam**, written during the reign of Nandivarman III, describes many important events of his rule. The **Bharatam** and Tamil **Kural** was also written under the Pallavas. Abridged recensions of the play of Bhasa and Shudraka were prepared for dramatic performance in the Pallava courts. Devotional literature also developed in Tamil language.

Assess Yourself

4.5A Objective Questions

1. In whose Pallava king's court Bharavi lived ?

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Vishnugopa | (b) Simhavishnu |
| (c) Mahendravarman I | (d) Narashimahavarmman I |

2. Which of the following texts was written by Dandin ?

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Kiratarajuniya | (b) Kavyadarsha |
| (c) Bhagavadajjuka | (d) Nandikkalambakam. |

4.5B Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on educational development under the Pallavas.
2. Trace the growth of language and literature under the Pallavas.

4.6 Art and Architecture

4.6.1 The Pallava rule is specially noted for the growth of art, particularly architecture. Sculpture, painting, music, acting and construction of temples was in a highly advanced stage. The Pallavas got constructed many massive and impressive temples and decorated them with beautiful sculptures. The walls and pillars of temples were tastefully decorated with frescoes. Dance and music also witnessed remarkable growth. The bhakti saints spread their message through the medium of music. The Kundumiyamalai inscription of the time of Mahendravarman I gives instructions about playing musical instruments. The inscription also refers to Mahendravarman as a disciple of great musician Rudracharya. Beautiful trained dancers and actors added to the splendour of royal court and temples. The **Kuttu** and **Bharatanatayam** forms of dance were quite popular under the Pallavas.

4.6.2 Remarkable development took place in the field of temple architecture. Large number of temples were constructed in the Dravida style. In Pallava temples stone was used on massive scale. Under the Pallavas, four distinct temple architectural styles developed, each named after a particular king. These were in **Mahendravarman style**, **Narasimha** or **Mamalla style**, **Rajasimha style** and **Nandivarman style**. These different styles not only indicate the growth of temple architecture but the political ups and downs in Pallava history also. The temples constructed under the Mahendravarman style are simple and devoid of ornamentation. These were mostly rock-cut temples with pillared halls and **mandapas**. The construction of mandapas was influenced by the Buddhist Chaityas. The base and capital of Pillars was made in the form of a lion. The temples of this style have come to light from Dalavanur, Pallavaram, Mahendravadi, Mogalarajapuram, Bhairavakonda and other places, Eight mandapas have come to light from Bhairavakonda. In the temples of Mamalla style apart from mandapas impressive **rathas** were also constructed. The Pillars were decorated with the figures of Varaha, Vamann, Surya, Durga and other brahmanical deities. Such temples were mostly constructed at Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram. Ten mandapas of the Mamalla style have come to light. These were named after characters of **Mahabharat**, like the Dharmaraja mandapa, Panchapandava mandap, etc. besides rathas or chariot-shaped temples were also constructed in this style. Eight such ratha temples have come to light. The most important of these are the Seven Pagodas. These were also named after Puranic characters. The construction of was also influenced by the Buddhist art tradition. Both the mandapas and rathas were beautifully decorated with frescoes. The temples belonging to Rajasimha style were constructed under a large compound. Special stress was put in this style on the construction of **sikhara** and **gopuram**. Pillars and walls were decorated in that style also. Two temples stand out prominently in this style. These were the Sea-shore temple of Mahabalipuram and Vaikunthaperumal temple of Kanchi.

The temples constructed in the Nandivarman style are neither massive nor attractive. Rather these are small temples. No architectural innovation is noticed in these temples. Five such temples are known, notable amongst them being the Mukteshwar and Parameshwar temples. The Pallava temple architecture left its deep imprint on the temple style of the Pandayas, Cholas and South-east Asian temples.

Assess Yourself

4.6A Objective Questions

- 1. In which of the following styles the Sea-shore temple of Mahabalipuram was built ?**
 - (a) Mahendravarman style
 - (b) Mamalla Style
 - (c) Rajasimha style
 - (d) Nandivarman style.
- 2. Which of the following is the speciality of temples constructed in the Mamalla style ?**
 - (a) These temples are simple and devoid of ornamentation
 - (b) The construction of mandapas and rathas
 - (c) The temples were constructed within courtyards
 - (d) Small temples were constructed in this style.

4.6B Short Answer Questions

- 1. Give an introduction of the temple architectural style of the Pallavas.**

4.7 Summing-up

The Pallavas of Kanchi ruled in south India between 6th-10th centuries of the Christian era. The questions of their origin is controversial. Their relationship has been traced with the Palhavas, Naga-Cholas, and tribals of South India. Some scholars trace their origin from some ruling north Indian dynasty. The Pallavas are regarded as belonging to the brahman or Kshatriya caste. Most probably, the Pallavas were original inhabitants of Tamil land. In the beginning, they were subordinates of the Satavahanas but later on they established their Independent Kingdom. A large number of Pallava inscriptions, inscribed in Sanskrit and Prakrit have come to light. The important rulers of the dynasty were Simhavishnu, Mahendravarman I, Narasimhavaraman I and Narasimhavaraman II. The Pallavas had to fight for long period first with the Chalukayas and later on with the Pandayas and other south Indian dynasties, for political supremacy. It considerably weakened the power of the Pallavas. After Parameshwaravarman, the Pallava power declined swiftly. Nandivarman III sought to check the declining trend but after him the end of the dynasty became certain. The last Pallava king Aparajita was defeated and killed by the Chola king Aditya I. He usurped power himself. It brought an end to the Pallava rule.

The rule of the Pallavas is significant not only politically but culturally also. The Pallavas set up a well organised administration. Considerable importance was given to local autonomous units in administration. The Pallavas adopted the policy of religious tolerance. Apart from Vaishnavism and Saivism, Buddhism and Jainism were also in good condition under their rule. Their rule witnessed the growth of education and literature also. Kanchi was a renowned educational centre. Hsuan-Tsang studied for some time. In Kanchi. Scholars received state patronage. Scholars like Bharavi and Dandin were related with the Pallava court. Many texts were written in Sanskrit and Tamil. Similarly, the period also witnessed development of sculpture, painting, music, drama and dance. However, most remarkable progress was made in the field of temple architecture. Under the Pallavas four distinct styles of temple architecture developed. Attractive temples were constructed at Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram. The Pallava temple architectural style left its deep imprint on later temple architecture of South India as well as South-east Asia.

4.8 Key-Words

Pahalava or Parthian—The inhabitants of Central Asia who invaded India in post-Maurya times. They also set up their kingdoms in India.

Tondaimandalam—Area around Kanchi.

Agnishtoma, Vajapeya and Asvamedha—Vedic Sacrifices.

Simhala—Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

Avanishimha—Lion of the earth.

Vatapikonda—Conqueror of Vatapi.

Rellarerinda—Conqueror to Tellaru.

Ghatika—Assembly of learned scholars.

Amatya—Minister or high official class.

Mahadandanayaka—Head of police department.

Raktika—District officer.

Mandambas—Toll collector.

Gramabhojaka—Village headman.

Vinayasthithapaka—Officer to look after works of public welfare.

Gaulmika—Head of a contingent of army.

Rashtra, Mandala, Kottam, Nadu—Administrative units.

Ur—Village assembly

Nagaram—Assembly of traders and artisans

Sthavira—Orthodox sect of Buddhism

Palli—Jaina monastery

Vihara—Buddhist monastery

Anaviksha—Philosophy

Trai—Vedas

Varta—Economics

Dandaniti—Politics

Ayurveda—Medical science

Gandharaveda—Science of music

Kuttu, Bharatanatayam—Dance styles

Sikhar—Top portion (Pinnacle) of temple

Gopuram—Entrance.

4.9 Answer to Self-Assessment Questions

Objective Questions

4.2A 1: (a), 2. (b), 3. (c)

4.3A 1. (b)

4.4A 1. (c)

4.5A 1. (b)

4.6A 1. (c), 2. (b)

Short Answer Questions

4.2B 1. See, 4.2.2

2. See, 4.2.4

4.3B 1. See, 4.3.1

2. See, 4.3.4

4.4B 1. See, 4.4

4.5B 1. See, 4.5.1

2. See, 4.5.2

4.6B 1. See, 4.6.2

4.10 Questions for Exercise

1. Who were the Pallavas ? Trace the history of the Pallavas upto Mahendavaraman I.

2. Give a brief account of the history of the Pallavas.
3. Review the cultural contributions of the Pallavas.

4.11 Suggested Readings

1. R. Gopalan : **Pallavas of Kanchi.**
2. C. Meenakshi : **Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas.**
3. K. A. N. Sastri : **A History of South India.**



Harshavardhana (606-647 AD)**Lesson Structure**

- 5.0 Objective
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Sources for the study of Harshavardhana
- 5.3 Early life and circumstances leading to the accession of Harshavardhana to the throne of Kanauj
- 5.4 Political Achievements of Harshavardhana-Military Expeditions and Extent of Empire
- 5.5 An estimate of Harsha's administration
- 5.6 Cultural Achievements of Harshavardhana
- 5.7 A Critical Appraisal of Harshavardhana
- 5.8 Summing-up
- 5.9 Key Words
- 5.10 Answer for Self-Assessment Questions
- 5.11 Questions for Exercise
- 5.12 Suggested Readings

5.0 Objective

The main objective of this unit is to let you know about the career and achievements of Harshavardhana. For this, it is essential to know about the sources for the study of Harshavardhana. Moreover, an analysis of the achievements of Harshavardhana is also required so as to evaluate his works in proper perspective. Therefore, this unit puts special stress on the following aspects.

- (a) Early life and sources for the study of Harshavardhana.
- (b) Circumstances leading to the accession of Harshavardhana to the throne of Kanauj.
- (c) Political achievements of Harshavardhana-military expeditions and extent of empire.

- (d) An estimate of Harsha's administration.
- (e) Cultural achievements of Harshavardhana.
- (f) A critical appraisal of Harshavardhana.

5.1 Introduction

One of the most significant events of the post-Gupta Indian politics is the rise of Harshvardhana to power. He put an effective curb on the prevalent tendency of political disintegration and sought to carve out a powerful empire in northern India. It was during his reign that Kanauj became the epicentre of North Indian politics. Harshavardhana is often regarded as a great ruler of the "last Hindu emperor" of northern India. It is, therefore, essential for you to know about the different aspects of Harsha's life and rule. In this unit we would try to acquaint you with the sources for the study of Harshavardhana's history as well as circumstances leading to his accession to the throne of Kanauj. Besides, an attempt would also be made to analyse the achievements of Harshavardhana. On the basis of this analysis you would be able to know about the political and cultural contributions of Harshavaradhana during the early decades of the 7th century.

5.2 Sources for the study of Harshavardhana

5.2.1 We have plenty of sources for the study of the history of Harshavardhana. You may conveniently divide these sources into two categories—literary and archaeological. You must know about two important literary sources. These are the **Harshacharita** and **Si-Yu-Ki**.

5.2.2 The **Harshacharita** was authored by Banabhatta, a court poet of Harshavardhana. Besides Bann also describes in ornate style the history of the Pushyabhuti dynasty and other contemporary political events. Although this text throws significant light on Harsha's career and achievements, it suffers from many pitfalls. The author has given an exaggerated account of Harshavardhana. Moreover, it suffers from serious lack of chronology. Despite this deficiency, we have to keep in mind that Bana was a contemporary of Harshavardhana. Therefore, many informations about Harsha may be regarded as trustworthy. Banabhatta also wrote another text **Kadambari**, but comparatively, **Harshacharita** is more valuable than the **Kadambari** as a source material for Harsha's study. Harshavardhana himself composed three dramas—**Ratanavali**, **Priyadarsika** and **Nagananda**. You may get some information about Harsha from these dramas also. All these texts were written in Sanskrit.

5.2.3 Another important literary source for the study of Harshavardhana is the **Si-Yu-Ki**, written by the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang. He was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India. He came to India in 630AD with a view to studying Buddhist religion and philosophy. Hsuan-Tsang stayed here upto 644AD. While in India he visited important

Buddhist centres. After his return to China he wrote his travelogue in Chinese. It was, later on, rendered into English by Watters. In the **Si-Yu-Ki** a detailed account of Harsha's military expeditions, the extent of his empire, his administration, his religious policy, the working of the Nalanda University (**Mahavihar**) and other details are given. Comparatively Hsuan-Tsang's account is more important source material for the study of Harshavardhana than Bana's **Harshacharita**.

5.2.4 In the category of archaeological sources, Harsha's inscriptions deserve special mention. His two inscriptions are available to us. These are the Banskhera and Madhuban copper plate grants. Both were discovered from Shahjahanpur and Azamgarh respectively in Uttar Pradesh. Both the inscriptions are dated in the Harsha era. The Banskhera inscription belongs to **Harsha Samvat 22** (628AD) while the Madhuban grant is dated H.S. 25(631AD). Both the inscriptions are land grants. They contain information regarding Harsha's administration. Harsha's two seals have also been discovered from Nalanda and Sonapat. The Aihole **prasasti**, belonging to Harsha's political rival, the Chalukya King Pulakesin II, also gives information about Harshavardhana. This prasasti was composed by Ravikirti. No authenticated coin of Harshavardhana, however, is available. On the basis of these important sources, you can make a critical appreciation of Harshavardhana.

Assess Yourself

5.2A Objectiv Questions

1. **Who is the author of Kadambari ?**

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Harshavardhana | (b) Banabhatta |
| (c) Ravikirti | (d) None of these. |

2. **When did Hsuan-Tsang visit India ?**

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| (a) 606 AD | (b) 630 AD |
| (c) 644 AD | (d) 647 AD |

5.2B Short Answer Questions

1. **Give a brief introduction of Banabhatta.**
2. **What do you know about archaeological sources pertaining to the study of Harshavardhana ?**

5.3 Early life and circumstances leading to the accession of Harshvardhana to the throne of Kanauj

5.3.1 Harshavardhana was the younger son of Prabhakarvardhana, the greatest king of the Vardhana or the Pushyabhuti dynasty. He was born in 590AD. Prabhakarvardhana was a powerful king. His capital was at Thanesar. Banabhatta

eulogises Prabhakarvardhana in the following words. "A lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of the Indus land, a trouble to the sleep of the Gurjaras a bilious plague to the lord of Gandhara, a looter to the lawlessness of the Latas, and an axe to the creeper of Malawa's glory." It becomes evident from Bana's above account that Prabhakarvardhana defeated the kings of the Hunas, Gajaras, Sindhu, Latur and Malawa and established his superiority over them. In the later part of the 6th century AD, apart from the Vardhanas, the maukharis of Kanauj, the later-Guptas of Magadha, Sasanka of Gauda and the Maitrakas of Vallabhi were important powers. Prabhakarvardhana, in order to consolidate his power married his daughter Rajyasri to Grahavarman, son of the Maukhari king Avantivarman. The later-Gupta King of Magadha, Mahasenagupta, also established matrimonial and friendly relations with the Vardhanas. Sasanka, the king of Gauda, remained passive till the time of Prabhakarvardhana and Avantivarman, but soon after their demise he made alliance with the king of Malawa and began to increase his power.

5.3.2 Prabhakarvardhan had to face the onslaught of the Hunas towards the end of his life. However, due to old age and poor health, he sent his son Rajyavardhana against the Huna. While he was engaged in fierce fight with the Hunas, he received the bad news of his father's declining health. He, therefore, rushed to Thaneswar. However, he could reach the capital only after the death of his father. Rajyavardhana, therefore, was installed on the throne of Thaneswar in 605 AD. At the time of his accession the situation was quite critical. Devagupta of Malawa and Sasanka of Gauda had attacked and captured the Maukhari capital Kanauj, killed its king Grahavarmana and made Rajyasri, sister of Rajyavardhana captive. Moreover, they were planning to invade Thaneswar also. Under the circumstances, Rajyavardhana was compelled to move to Kanauj for the safety and protection of Kanauj as well as his sister. He handed over the administration of Thaneswar to Harshavardhana and himself moved towards Kanauj. He succeeded in defeating Devagupta but Devagupta and Sasanka treacherously assassinated Rajyavardhana. In such situation Harshavardhana became the king of Thaneswar in 606 AD.

5.3.3 Harshavardhana had two immediate objectives. Firstly, to provide due protection to his sister Rajyasri. Secondly, he wanted to avenge the killing of his brother-in-law and brother and punish Devagupta and Sasanka. He, therefore, moved out of Thaneswar and advanced towards Kanauj. While Harsha was on way to Kanauj, the messenger of King Bhaskaravarmana of Kamarupa met Harshavardhana, and proposed a friendly alliance. It was gladly accepted. Moving still further, Harshavardhana received information that his sister had escaped from prison and was in forests of Vindhyachala. Harsha, therefore, moved towards Vindhyachala. When he reached there Rajyasri was making preparations to become a Sati. Harsha persuaded her not to do so and brought her to Kanauj. As there was no heir to the throne of Kanauj after the assassination of

Grahavarmana, the ministers of Kanauj, with the consent of Rajyasri installed Harshavardhana on the throne of Kanauj also. Now, the Maukhari and Vardhana states were unified with the capital at Kanauj. It was under such circumstances that harshavardhana became the emperor of Kanauj.

Assess Yourself

5.3A Objective Questions

1. Who became the King of Thaneswar after Prabhakaravardhana ?

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| (a) Harshavardhana | (b) Rajyavardhana |
| (c) Avantivarmana | (d) Grahavarmana |

2. Of which state was Bhaskaravarman the king ?

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| (a) Malawa | (b) Gauda |
| (c) Kamarupa | (d) Kanauj |

5.3B Short Answer Questions

1. Clarify relations between Prabhakaravardhana and other contemporary powers.
2. Give an account of the circumstances leading to Harshavardhana's accession to the throne of Kanauj.

5.4 Political Achievements of Harshavardhana—Military Expeditions and Extent of Empire

5.4.1 We have already discussed that at the time of his accession to the throne of Kanauj, Harshavardhana had two strong enemies. These were Devagupta of Malawa and Sasanka of Gauda. Apart from defeating them, Harsha also planned to consolidate his power by subduing other states. He had, therefore, to take up many military expeditions. Unfortunately, the details of these military campaigns, their sequence and chronology are not well recorded in contemporary sources. It seems plausible that after having snatched Kanauj from Devagupta and Sasanka, Harsha embarked on the path of **digvijaya** or world conquest. The **Si-Yu-Ki** contains significant information about his military expeditions.

5.4.2 According to Hsuan-Tsang's account, moving eastward Harshavardhana attacked those states who had not accepted his sovereignty and for six years he waged constant war until he subjugated the "Five Indias". The Chinese pilgrim also informs us that having extended the area of his empire Harsha enlarged his army and ruled peacefully for thirty years. The "Five Indias" of Hsuan-Tsang represent Saraswat (eastern Panjab), Kanyakubja (Kanauj-Uttar Pradesh), Gauda (Bengal), Mithila (Eastern Bihar) and Utkala (Orissa). Another translation of **Si-Yu-Ki** suggests that after an initial struggle

for six years Harsha conquered "Five Indias" and waged incessant war for thirty years. The second explanation seems more plausible as his position at the time of accession was quite shaky. In the beginning of his reign itself he had to fight with the rulers of Malawa and Gauda and establish his control over Kanauj. Having accomplished this task first, he planned conquest of other states.

5.4.3 We come to know about Harsha's eastern and western military campaigns from the Chinese account. Having brought Kanauj under his control Harshavardhana moved towards Sasanka. Banabhatta suggests that Harshavardhana defeated Sasanka, captured Gauda and subjugated the states situated between Kanauj and Gauda. Hsuan-Tsang refers to 17 such states of places between Kanauj and Gauda. All these states probably accepted Harsha's suzerainty. He defeated Sasanka near Pundravardhan with the help of his friend and subordinate ruler King Bhaskarvarman of Kamarup. However, he could not gain decisive victory over Sasanka. As a result of his eastern expeditions, Harsha established his control over Kausambi, Sravasti, Varanasi, Vaishali, Champa, Magadha and other states. Magadha became a part of Harsha's seal from Nalanda also suggests Harsha's hold over Magadha. Other epigraphical evidences suggest Harsha's control over the entire region lying between east of Kanauj and Bengal.

5.4.4 Harsha next moved towards west. West of Kanauj, the area lying between Sutlej and Ganga, formed part of the empire of Harsha's predecessors. However, in the changed political scenario after the death of Prabhakarvardhana, Harsha's influence had considerably weakened. Harshavardhana therefore tried to reestablish his firm hold in this region. Hsuan-Tsang refers to 15 places of this area, such as Sankisa, Sthaniswar, Mathura, Pariyatra, Sirhind eastern and western Panjab. The rulers of all these places accepted overlordship of Harshavardhana. Thus, as a result of his early military campaigns Harshavardhana extended his power from Pundravardhana in the east upto Panjab in the west.

5.4.5 After the death of Sasanka, Harsha again invaded Gauda in 619-20 AD. During this invasion he succeeded in capturing Samtata, Tamralipti, Karnasuvarna and Pundravardhana.

5.4.6 Bana suggests that Harshavardhana defeated the King of Sindh in western India. However, Hsuan-Tsang's account does not confirm it. The Chinese pilgrim suggests that Sindh was an independent state.

5.4.7 Harsha had to measure swords with the Maitrakas of Vallabhi also. Dhruvasena II was a powerful king of Vallabhi. His boundary of state was in close proximity to that of Harshavardhana. Moreover, by bringing Vallabhi under his control Harshavardhana sought to exercise effective check over the Gurjaras and the Chalukyas. Keeping these objectives in mind, Harsh decided to engage the Maitraka King in battle. The Nausari inscription of the Gurjaras informs us about the fight between

Harshavardhana and Dhruvasena II. This inscription suggests that after being defeated by Harshavardhana Dhruvasena II approached the Gurjara King Dadda for help, but he returned disappointed. Having failed to procure assistance of the Gurjaras, Dhruvasena accepted overlordship of Harshavardhana. He was allowed to rule as a subordinate King. Friendly and matrimonial relations were established between the Maitrakas and the Vardhanas. To cement this friendship Harsha married his daughter to Dhruvasena.

5.4.8 The most significant battle of Harshavardhana took place with the Chalukaya king Pulakesin II. Pulakesin too, was an ambitious and powerful ruler. The boundary of his empire was very close to that of Harshavardhana. They were political rivals of each other. The Aihole prasasti (inscription) and other Chalukayan inscriptions inform us about the fight between two powers. The Aihole inscription explicitly refers to Pulakesin as "the conqueror of Shri Harsha lord of northern India." The Chinese pilgrim also suggests that Harshavardhana was defeated by Pulakesin. The fight between Harsha and Pulakesin probably took place between 630-634 AD. After the battle, river Narmada became the boundary line of two empires. Harsha's plan to move towards south was effectively frustrated by Pulakesin.

5.4.9 Harshavardhana captured Bundelkand, Gwalior and Ujjain in Central India.

5.4.10 Both Bana and Hsuan-Tsang suggest Harsha's victory over Nepal and Kashmir but it seems doubtful.

5.4.11 In the last leg of his career, around 640 AD. Harsha also conquered Odra (northern Orissa), Kogonda (South Orissa) and Kalinga. Thus, as a result of victories in many wars, Harshavardhana expanded his empire. To indicate his mastery over entire northern India, he adopted the title of "**Sakalottarapathanath**".

5.4.12 The precise extent of Harshavardhana's empire is a moot point of discussion among scholars. Some scholars suggest his hold over entire northern India while others suggest that it was confined only to "Central India". Both Bana and Hsuan-Tsang give an impression that the whole of northern India was included in Harshavardhana's empire. K. M. Panikkar regards Harsha's empire as very extensive. He suggests that it extended from Assam to Kashmir and Himalaya to Vindhayachala. Nepal also formed part of Harsha's empire. However, other scholars like R. C. Majumdar distinguish between the areas coming under his direct control and those falling within his sphere of influence. They suggest that the areas coming under his direct rule were very limited but his influence was over a large area.

5.4.13 We can determine the extent of Harsha's empire on the basis of sources discussed earlier and Sravasti **bhuktis** were under Harsha's empire. Kanauj, Prayaga and Magadha also formed part of his empire. According to Aihole inscription Harshavardhana was the lord of entire **Uttarapatha** (from Takshasila to Sravasti). Hsuan-

Tsang does not refer to political condition of 19 places of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, i. e., Mathura, Prayaga, Kausambi, Varanasi, Vaisali, etc. All these places were included in Harsha's empire. Hsuan-Tsang gives a list of 20 kings who had assembled at Kanauj on the occasion of religious congregation. This list includes rulers of states falling under Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Kashmir, North-west as well as Nepal. He also suggests Harshavardhana's hold over Malawa, Vallabhi, Gurjara and Sindh. It appears from the aforesaid that Harshavardhana exercised direct control over some parts of eastern Punjab, whole of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Vallabhi, Malawa, Sindh and Kamarupa were under his influence. Kashmir and Nepal were independent states. Harsha maintained friendly relations with them. He also sent his envoy to china. Chinese missions also came to India in the time of Harshavardhana.

Assess Yourself

5.4A Objective Questions

1. Near which place was the battle between Harshavardhana and Sasanka fought ?

(a) Gauda	(b) Samtata
(c) Tamralipti	(d) Pundravardhana
2. Which of the following inscriptions describes the battle between Pulkesin II and Harshavardhana ?

(a) Banskhera inscription	(b) Madhuban inscription
(c) Alhole inscription	(d) Kanauj inscription

5.4B Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss Harshavardhana's eastern Military campaigns on the basis of Hsuan-Tsang's account.
2. Clarify relations between Harshavardhana and Pulakesin.

5.5 An estimate of Harsha's administration

5.5.1 Harshavardhana not only carved out an empire for himself but also provided a sound administration to it. You have to depend on the same literary and archeological sources mentioned earlier to form an idea about the basic features of his administration. However, while analysing Harsha's administration you should always keep in mind that he did not introduce any new pattern of administration. On the other hand, he adopted the model of Gupta administration with minor and necessary modifications.

5.5.2 According to prevalent traditions the emperor enjoyed the center-stage position in administration. Naturally, therefore, he exercised unlimited powers. However,

Harshavardhana did not misuse his power and always worked for the welfare of his subjects. Both Bana and Hsuan-Tsang eulogise Harsha's administration. He used to undertake tours of inspection at regular intervals, to keep an eye on administration.

5.5.3 Harsha's administration was based on feudal pattern. We have already pointed out that the king ruled directly over a small portion of empire; larger areas were under the control of his subordinate rulers. The emperor stood at the head of these subordinate kings. To indicate his exalted status the emperor adopted high sounding titles like **Maharajadhiraja, Parambhattaraka, Sarvabhaum, Parmeswar, Sakalottarapathanatha, Siladity** etc. His subordinate Kings, on the other hand, used less pompous title like **Maharaja, Samanta, Mahasamanta, Kumar** and other such titles. They were granted administrative autonomy by the emperor. It is precisely due to this factor that we do not notice administrative uniformity in Harsha's empire. The subordinate kings regularly paid taxes, offered presentations and military assistance to the emperor.

5.5.4 The council of ministers assisted the King in smooth functioning of the government as well as initiating and determining state policies. Harsha's ministers were quite able and efficient. Many of them possessed excellent military skill. Names of Bhandi, Avanti, Simahanada and Kuntala as ministers appear in contemporary sources. The **Harshacharita** contains a list 50 important officials of the state. It includes the **Mahasandihvigraphadhikrta, Sandhivigraphika, Mahabaladhikrta, Baladhikrta, Senapati, Vrihadaswar, Katuka, Patti, Chatta-bhatta, Kumaramatya, Uparika, Mahapratihara** and **Duta**. These officers were associated with military and civil administration.

5.5.5 Harsha paid special attention to the organisation of army. Hiuen-Tsang suggests that Harsha's army was four-fold (**Chaturangini**). Harsha also possessed fleet of boats. Harsha's army was large and well-trained. It was also of standing nature. The Chinese pilgrim suggests that there were 60,000 elephants and one lakh cavalry in Harsha's army. **Mahabaladhikrta** was the chief commander of the army.

5.5.6 To maintain peace and control crime in state Harshavardhana paid due attention to the maintenance of law and order and judicial system. The Chinese pilgrim informs us that there was complete peace and order in the state. Several officers like **Mahaparamtra, Dandika, Dandapasika, Chatta-bhatta, Chaurodharnika** were given judicial and police powers. The emperor himself took keen interest in judicial matters.

5.5.7 Harsha's reign witnessed economic prosperity of the state. The main source of income was land revenue. The state got entire land of state measured and 1/6 part of the produce (**Bhaga**) from the peasants realised. Besides, they also paid **Uparikara, Hiranaya** and other imposts. The state also got revenue from forests, trade, industry and fine. An officer known as **Bhogika** was entrusted with the task of realising revenue. The **Pustapala** kept land records. A major part of state revenue was spent on the works

of public welfare, charity and promotion of education and literature. The University of Nalanda was assigned revenue of many villages for its maintenance. The state officials were paid in the form of land grants as their salary.

5.5.8 For administrative efficiency, the areas falling under direct rule of Harsha, were split in several administrative units. The empire was divided into **Bhukti** or **Desha**. Names of five such **bhuktis** find mention in inscriptions. These were Ahichahhatra, Sravasti, Kausambi, Nagar and Pundravardhana **bhuktis**. The head of **bhukti** was known as **Uparika Maharaja**, **Rajasthaniya** or **Rashtirya**. A **bhukti** was further subdivided into **Vishaya** and **Pathaka** respectively. A **Pathaka** consisted of many villages. The head of **Vishaya** was known as **Vishyapati** while the village head man as **Mahattara**. The **Karnika** or **Kayastha** played significant role in local administration.

5.5.9 The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang praises Harshavardhana's administration. He suggests that administration was honest. Taxes were light. Forced labour of **Vishti** did not exist. The emperor took keen interest in administration. Roads were constructed to facilitate movement. Proper security measures for protection of roads were made. Harsha's administration was people oriented.

5.5.10 However, many weaknesses of Harsha's administration may also be pointed out. Its basic weakness was that it was based on feudal pattern. The local elements enjoyed excessive influence in administration. There was also lack of administrative uniformity. The practice of making land grants accorded extraordinary power to local elements. Thus, disruptive forces were inherent in Harsha's administration. It was due to this weakness that soon after Harshavardhana's demise his empire collapsed like a house of playing cards. Moreover, as the state spent large amount of its income on unproductive works like charity, it undermined the economic prosperity of state. As the state did not exercise effective control over its officers they became unbridled and indulged in malpractices. Law and order also eluded that state. Even the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang admits that on many occasions he fell into the hands of highway robbers. Even an attempt was made at the life of Harshavardhana by disgruntled elements during the conclave at Kanauj. Despite this sorry state of affairs, there is no evidence of any open revolt during Harsha's reign.

Assess Yourself

5.5A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following titles was adopted by Harshavardhana ?

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| (a) Maharaja | (b) Kumara |
| (c) Kattuka | (d) Shiladitya |

2. By which term was the head of bhukti in Harsha's administration known ?

- (a) Sandhivigrahika (b) Rajasthaniya
(c) Dandika (d) Pustapala

5.5B Short Answer Questions

1. What do you know about Harshavardhana's military organisation ?
2. Discuss the weak points of Harshavardhana's administration.

5.6 Cultural Achievements of Harshavardhana

Harshavardhana was not only an empire builder and able administrator but also a king with keen interest in cultural activities. He accorded patronage to religious and cultural developments.

The line of Vardhana Kings were devotees of Shiva. Harshavardhana also, therefore, naturally became a devout shaiva. Bana testifies to this fact. Harsha was also a worshipper of sun god. However, the Chinese pilgrim represents Harshavardhana as a follower of Buddhism. In the face of these contradictory statements you can well visualise that keeping his family tradition alive, Harshavardhana, during early part of his reign, followed Brahammanism but subsequently after his contact with Hiuen-Tsang, he gave patronage to Buddhism. In fact, Harshavardhana adopted the policy of religious tolerance. He took great interest in religious matters. He often used to consult religious leaders of different faiths and had religious discourses with them. He accorded equal honour and patronage to Brahammanism and Buddhism. He organised a conference in honour of Hiuen-Tsang at Kanauj. Scholars of different sects assembled at this congregation. This conference accepted the superiority of Mahayana sect of Buddhism. A huge **Sangharama** was erected on this occasion in Kanauj Harshavardhana got installed a life-size golden statue of Buddha in Kanauj. He also brought Buddha's legendary teeth from Kashmir and kept it in the **Sangharama** at Kanauj. As a result of Harsha's efforts Mahayana Buddhism flourished during his reign. As Harsha was inclined towards Brahammanism also he organised the **mahamoksh parishad** at Prayaga every fifth year. Hiuen-Tsang refers to the sixth parishad held at Prayaga. On this occasion the Buddha, Shiva and Surya were worshipped on alternate days. During the parishad, Harsh used to give in charity his accumulated wealth of five years to brahmanas, poor and other needy and helpless persons. Hiuen-Tsang goes to the extent of suggesting that Harsha used to give in charity even his clothes and ornaments.

5.6.2 Harshavardhana was himself a great scholar and man of literary taste. He is credited with the composition of three dramas—**Ratanavali**, **Priyadarsika** and **Nagananda**. His court had a galaxy of scholars and poets the most illustrious being Banabhatta. Matanga Diwakar, Mayura and Jayasena were other celebrities of the

court. Harshavardhana gave due respect as well as financial support to scholars. He made liberal donations to educational institutions as well. Vallabhi and Nalanda were renowned educational centres during Harsha's reign. Nalanda enjoyed the status of an international university. Many foreign scholars and students resided at Nalanda. Hiuen-Tsang himself spent many years at Nalanda in the study of Buddhist religion and philosophy. He gives a detailed account of the working of this university. Harshavardhana made liberal grants to this university.

Assess Yourself

5.6A Objective Questions

- The superiority of which of the following religions was established in the conference held at Kanauj ?**
 - Vaisnavism
 - Buddhism
 - Saivism
 - Jainism
- At how many years interval Harshavardhana used to organise mahamoksha parishad at Prayaga ?**
 - Two years
 - Four years
 - Three years
 - Five years
- Which of the following deities was worshipped in the mahamoksha parishad according to Hiuen-Tsang ?**
 - Balrama
 - Surya
 - Ganesh
 - Lakshmi

5.6 B Short Answer Questions

- Give a brief account of Harsha's religious policy.
- Trace Harshavardhana's policy towards literature and education.

5.7 A Critical Appraisal of Harshavardhana

5.7.1 The question of the actual evaluation of Harshavardhana is quite controversial. Many scholars regard him as the "last Hindu emperor and empire-builder." The circumstances under which he ascended the throne of Kanauj, carved out an empire for himself in adverse situation gave patronage to cultural uplift, is undoubtedly commendable. It was not an easy task to form a vast empire in the light of the political anarchy prevailing in the post-Gupta times. Despite it, many modern scholars do not regard Harsha either as the "last Hindu emperor or empire builder." In fact, both in northern and southern India, there emerged many kings after Harshavardhana who ruled over larger empires and were more powerful than Harsha. In this context, special

mention may be made of the Palas. Harshavardhana's empire collapsed with his death but the Pala empire existed for nearly four centuries. The dynasty produced many kings who were more powerful and energetic than Harsha, Dharmapala, Devapala and other kings of the line were in no way inferior to Harsha either militarily or in regard to according patronage to cultural developments. Moreover, Harsha does not seem to be a great military leader. He could not defeat Sasanka, the King of Gauda decisively during his lifetime. Harsha was also vanquished by the Chalukaya King Pulakesin II. Harshavardhana can not be regarded as an efficient and able administration. He did not set up any new administrative set up. On the other hand, his administration contained elements of disintegration. Hiuen-Tsang, who normally praises Harsha's administration, admits that he himself fell prey to robbers many times. Even an attempt was made to assassinate Harshavardhana at the time of Kanauj conclave. Despite all these criticisms, it has to be admitted that by putting an effective check on the process of political disintegration, by adopting policy of religious tolerance, by providing patronage to growth of education and literature, Harshavardhana definitely claims to be ranked as a great King. He was undoubtedly a powerful king of north India during the 7th century of the Christian era.

Assess Yourself

5.7A Objective Questions

1. **When was an attempt to assassinate harshavardhana made ?**
 - (a) On the occasion of Kanauj conclave
 - (b) On the occasion of Mahamoksha Parishad
 - (c) On the occasion of war with Sasanka
 - (d) On the occasion of war with Pulakesin II

5.7B Short Answer Questions

1. **“Harshavardhana was the last Hindu emperor and empire-builder”. Do you agree to this view ?**

5.8 Summing-up

Having gone through this unit you must have been aware of different aspects of Harshavardhana's career and achievements. The **Harshacharita**, **Si-Yu-Ki** and inscriptions of Harshavardhana, have enabled us to evaluate the works of Harsha. After the assassination of Rajyavardhana, he was crowned King of Thaneshwar and Kanauj. He defeated his enemies Devagupta and Sasanka. He fought many battles successfully but was defeated by the Chalukayan King Pulakesin II. He unified almost whole of northern India in a political string. For the administration of his empire he adopted the

Gupta administrative pattern with minor modifications. He pursued the policy of religious tolerance and patronized the growth of education and literature. Harshavardhana was undoubtedly a great King of northern India in the 7th century of the Christian era; but by no means he can be regarded as the "last Hindu-emperor or empire builder."

5.9 Key Words

Harshacharita—The life of Harshavardhana, written by Banabhatta

Si-Yu-Ki—The travelogue of Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang

Sakalottarapathanatha—The lord of entire uttarpatha, a title used for Harshavardhana in the Aihole inscription.

Mahasandhivigrahadhikrta—Head of the Department of Foreign affairs

Sandhivigraha—An officer related with the works of war and peace

Mahabaladhikrta—Chief commander of the army

Baladhikrta, senapati—Military officers

Brihadaswar—Head of Cavalry

Kattuka—Head of elephant corps

Patti—Infantry

Chatta-bhatta—Temporary army men or officers connected with the administration of law and punishment

Kumaramatya, Uparika—Local administrative officers

Mahapratihara—Chief guard of the palace Mahaparamatra, Dandika,

Dandapasika, Chaurodharnika—Officers to look after justice award and punishment

Bhaga, Uparikara—Tax realised in kind

Hiranaya—Tax collected in cash

Visti—Forced labour

Bhogika—Revenue collector

Pustapala—Keeper of land records

Bhukti—An administrative unit corresponding to province

Vishaya—Administrative unit similar to district

Pathaka—A group of villages of **tehshil**

Uparika—Maharaja, Rajasthaniya,

Rashtriya—Head of the **bhukti**

Vishayapati—Head of the **vishaya**

Mahattar—Village headman

Karnika, Kayastha—Accounts officers

Mahayana Buddhism—A sect of Buddhism in which Buddha was accorded the status of a deity

Sati—An ancient social custom prevalent in India in which widows immolated themselves on funeral pyres of their deceased husbands.

Chaturangini army—Fourfold army consisting of infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants.

5.10 Answer to Self-Assessment Questions

Objective Questions

- 5.2A. 1. (b), 2. (b),
 5.3A 1. (b), 2. (c)
 5.4A 1. (d), 2. (c)
 5.5A 1. (d), 2. (b)
 5.6A 1. (c), 2. (c), 3. (c)
 5.7A 1. (a)

Short Answer Questions

- 3.2B 1. See 5.2.2
 2. See 5.2.4
 5.3B 1. See 5.3.1, 5.3.2
 2. See 5.3.2
 5.4B 1. see 5.4.3
 2. See 5.4.8
 5.5B 1. See 5.5.5
 2. See 5.5.10
 5.6B 1. See 5.6.1
 2. See 5.6.2
 5.7B 1. See 5.7

5.11 Questions for Exercise

1. Discuss important sources for the study of Harshavardhana.
2. Give an account of the career and achievements of Harshavardhana.
3. Determine the extent of Harshavardhana's empire on the basis of his military campaigns.

4. From an estimate of Harshavardhana's administration.
5. Do you consider Harshavardhana as the "last Hindu emperor and empire-builder" ? Clarify.

5.12 Suggested Readings

1. R. S. Tripathi : **History of Kanauj.**
2. D. Devahuti : **Harsha A Political Study**
3. L. P. Sharma : **Prachin Bharat**
4. D. N. Jha and K. M. Shrimali (ed.) : **Prachin Bharat ka Itihasa**
5. R. K. Chaudhary : **Prachin Bharat ka Rajnitik aur Samskritik Itihasa**
6. S. R. Goyal : **Harshavardhana**
7. B. N. Shrivastava : **Harsha and his Times**
8. Kameshwar Prasad : **Teach Yourself History of India (Earliest Times to 1206 AD)**



The Arab Invasion of Sindh

Lesson Structure

- 6.0 Objective
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 The Background of the Arab Invasion and its Causes
- 6.3 The Nature of the Arab Invasion
- 6.4 The Causes of Success of the Arabs and Defeat of the Indians
- 6.5 Political and Cultural Significance of Invasion and Conquest of Sindh
- 6.6 Summing-up
- 6.7 Key Words
- 6.8 Answer for Self-assessment Questions
- 6.9 Questions for Exercise
- 6.10 Suggested Readings

6.0 Objective

The objective of this unit is to let you know about the Arab invasion of Sindh and the following aspects of this invasion :

- (a) The background of the Arab invasion and its causes.
- (b) The nature of the Arab invasion.
- (c) The causes of success of the Arabs and defeat of the Indians.
- (d) Political and cultural significance of invasion and conquest of Sindh.

6.1 Introduction

In this unit an attempt has been made to familiarize you with various aspects connected with the Arab invasion of Sindh and its subsequent conquest along with that of Multan in 712AD. For convenience the present lesson has been divided into three

sections. In the first section the background of the Arab invasion has been analysed. The second section deals with nature of the invasion. The last section gives an idea about the significance of the Arab invasion and the conquest of Sindh. On the whole, this unit acquaints you with the Arab invasion of Sindh, the sequence of the conquest and its importance.

6.2 The Background of the Arab invasion and its causes

6.2.1 A significant event of the 8th century Indian history is the Arab invasion of Sindh. The process of political disintegration had begun with the fall of the Gupta empire. Emperor Harshavardhana of Kanauj had tried to check the process of political disintegration. He, however succeeded only partially in his efforts. Soon after his death, India once again lost her political unity. Several regional states emerged on the ruins of Harsha's empire. Many of these emerged as powerful states. In the early part of the 8th century AD, the states which exercised considerable influence in contemporary politics were the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj, the Palas of Bengal. The Turki Sahis of Kabul and the Brahamana dynasty of Sindh. Sindh was a vast and prosperous state. The Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan-Tsang, who visited India in the time of Harshavardhana (606-647AD) informs us that at the time of his visit Sindh was ruled by a Buddhist king of Shudra origin. Later on, Raj Sahasi II became the famous king of Sindh. However, he was assassinated by his Brahamana minister Chacha who usurped power and himself became the king of Sindh. Later on, a text known as the **Chachanama**, based on Chacha was written in the Arabic language. This text throws light on the history of Sindh. However, the name of the writer of this text is unknown. Muhammad Ali-bin-Hashim Kufi, later on translated it into Persian language. Apart from Chachanama, The **Kitab-Futuh-Al-Baldan** of Al-Biladuri also helps us in knowing about the Arab invasion. It was during the reign of Dahir, the son of Chacha, the Muhammad-bin-Kasim invaded Sindh.

6.2.2 Causes of the Arab invasion of Sindh

The Indo-Arab relations had developed even before the rise of Islam. The Arab traders used to visit coastal areas of India for mercantile purposes. They had set up their permanent habitations on the western sea-coast. Thane, Debal, Khambhat, Sopara and other such ports were centres of their activities. They enjoyed portection of local rulers as well as cordial relation of the common people. Until now, the main aim of the Arabs was to earn wealth through Indo-Arab trade. However, with the rise and expansion of Islam, the attitude of the Arabs towards India witnessed considerable change. After the death of prophet Mohammad (632AD), Islam became a wide-spread religion. Under the leadership of various Calipha, large parts of Europe, Africa and Asia were brought under the banner of Islam. Islam spread in these regions as a result of military expeditions and subsequent conquests. The Arabs also took keen interest in the spread of Islam.

They were well familiar with India. They wanted to bring her under the cover of Islam. By conquering Sindh, and making it centre of their activities in India. This prompted them to invade and conquer Sindh. The letters exchanged between Muhammad-Bin-Kasim, the leader of Sindh invasion and Al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, fully corroborate this point. It becomes quite apparent from these exchanges that one of the main causes of the Arab invasion of Sindh was to bring India under the banner of Islam.

6.2.3 Economic factor seems to be more weighty than the religious one for the Arab invasion of Sindh. The Arabs were quite familiar with economic prosperity of India. Sindh was an economically sound state. The Arabs hoped to get sufficient wealth from here. The conquest of Sindh might further enhance prospects of Indo-Arab trade. Moreover, they could use Sindh as their base for carrying on trade with inner parts of India and earn wealth. They also hoped to get wealth from the plunder of rich temples. Thus, economic considerations also impelled the Arabs to invade and conquer Sindh.

6.2.4 The immediate cause of the Arab invasion was animosity between king Dahir of Sindh (son of Chacha) and Al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq. The background for this animosity was prepared by the pirates active around the port of Debal. They constantly plundered ships passing through this port. In their looting spree a ship of Sri Lanka, also became their victim. The Sri Lankan ship was carrying rich and valuable presents, including women, as gifts from the king of Ceylon to the governor of Iraq. It was plundered near the port of Debal. This incident infuriated Hajjaj. He demanded compensation from king Dahir as Debal formed a part of his dominion. Dahir, however, gave a terse reply to this demand and said that he had no control over the pirates. Dahir's reply added to the fury of Hajjaj. Having secured the permission of Caliph Walid (705-715AD) he planned the invasion of Debal. However, his two early military expeditions were repulsed by the Indians. The Arab military commanders Ubbaidullah and Bundail even lost their lives in these expeditions. Being humiliated and infuriated at these reverses, Al-Hajjaj, sent the third expedition to invade Sindh. The leader of this military expedition was Muhammad-Bin-Kasim, the nephew as well as son-in-law of the governor of Iraq. This expedition proved to be successful.

Assess Yourself

6.2A Objective Questions

- 1. To which caste the ruler of Sindh belonged according to Hiuen-Tsang ?**

(a) Brahman	(b) Kashatriya
(c) Vaisya	(d) Shudra
- 2. In which language the Chachanama was originally written ?**

(a) Turkish	(b) Persian
(c) Arabic	(d) Sanskrit

6.2B Short Answer Questions

1. Give a brief account of the history of Sindh before the invasion of Muhammad-bin-Kasim.
2. What was the immediate cause of the Arab invasion of Sindh ?

6.3 The Nature of the Arab Invasion

6.3.1 We have already pointed out that taking into consideration the economic, political and religious factors the Arabs were planning the conquest of Sindh even before the invasion of Muhammad-bin-Kasim. Their first invasion took place in 636AD in the time of Caliph Umar. They invaded Thane near Bombay as well as Barygaza (Broach) and Debal; but these proved to be futile expeditions. Similar other raids made through sea-route met with same fate. Now the Arabs changed their strategy. They planned to reach Sindh through land-route. However, the Arabs could not move further through Khyber and Bolon passes. Therefore, they tried to reach Sindh through Makaran. They captured Makaran and Sistan and ultimately reached Sindh.

6.3.2 After the failure of two military expeditions, Al-Hajjaj despatched another army from Shiraz under the command of Muhammad-bin-Kasim. It consisted of selected Syrian cavalry and a contingent of camels. The young and energetic military commander, Muhammad-bin-Kasim, passed through Makran uninterrupted and arrived at Debal near Thatta in 712AD. Dahir, on his part, having received the information of the Arab invasion, withdrew himself from the Western region of the Indus, moved towards eastern side of the river and started preparations for war. Dahir perhaps took this step in order to check the forward movement of the Arabs. However, he made a great mistake militarily by leaving Debal unprotected. It made the task of Kasim quite easy. The Chaachanama, informs us that Kasim, with the help of a Brahmana, removed the red flag fluttering over the temple of Debal. It caused panic among the citizens which subdued their zeal to offer resistance to the invaders. Kasim, taking advantage of the situation, easily captured the town. The Arabs tasted the first fruit of victory at Debal. They plundered the town and put to sword many innocent people. The citizens were compelled to embrace Islam. A huge mosque was built in Debal at the site of the temple. Large number of Muslims were settled there to protect the city. Kasim got enormous wealth from Debal. 1/5 part of the booty and 75 beautiful women were sent to Hajjaj. The Arab soldiers were also given share in the booty. Many women and children were enslaved.

6.3.3 Being enthused with the victory of Debal, Kasim moved to Nirun and gained victory there also. The victory at Nirun was gained through the cooperation of the Buddhists. From Nirun Kasim reached Sibistan or Sehwan where the cousin brother of Dahir, Bajhara was ruling. At the approach of the Arabs, Bajhara fled away from the city.

Kasim captured Sehwan and moved towards Sisam. Here he defeated the Jats. Bajhara was also killed here. From Sisam Kasim returned towards Nirun. He waited for long period to cross Mehran the main channel of the Indus river, Dahir, on his part remained idle. He did not attack Kasim and allowed him to cross Mehran unhindered. Having crossed Mehran, Kasim moved towards Brahamnabad. Now Dahir was compelled to check the march of Kasim. He moved out of Brahamanabad and reached Raor or Rawar. It was at this place the Kasim and Dahir met for the first time in the battle ground on 20 June, 712. Dahir had fully prepared himself to meet the invader. He possessed a large but untrained army. Dahir fought valiantly. The **Chachanama** eulogises his bravery, but luck did not side with him. Being injured by an arrow he died in the battle field. The death of Dahir caused panic among his army. It deserted the battle-field. Now Jay Singh, the son of Dahir, assigned the task of protecting fort of Rawar to a widow of Dahir and himself moved to Brahamanabad to protect it from the invader. The widow of Dahir did her best to keep the fort of Rawar out of the reaches of Kasim but failed in her attempts. Having failed in her efforts, she along with other female inmates of the fort performed Jauhar. Kasim captured Rawar and advanced towards, Brahamanabd. Jay Singh was waiting for Kasim at Brahamanabad. He offered a stiff resistance to the invader but was ultimately vanquished due to the treachery of one of his ministers. Jay Singh fled away from Brahamanabad in disgust. Kasim captured Brahamanabad and married another widow of Dahir. He also captured two daughters of Dahir—Surya Devi and Paramala Devi—and sent them in the service of the Caliph. He also got enormous wealth from the plunder of the fort of Brahamanabad. Form Bradhamanad Dahir went to Alor, the capital of Dahir. Here another son of Dahir engaged Kasim in battle but he too was defeated. Kasim captured the capital city. With the conquest of the capital Kasim's conquest of Sindh was accomplished.

6.3.4 Having conquerd Sindh, Kasim planned the conquest of Multan. In the beginning of 713 AD, he moved towards Multan. Despite facing several odds he ultimately became victorious in Multan also and captured it. Here also Indian made his victory easy. In Multan Kasim got huge quantity of gold. From Multan Kasim planned to advance towards Kanauj, the seat of the power of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. However, this time Kasim's plan did not fructify. This was because the new Caliph Suleiman was not pleased with Hajjaj and his relatives. Kasim was, therefore, called back by the Caliph. Although Muhammad-bin-Kasim could not move out of Sindh and Multan but by dint of his bravery and military superiority he succeeded in conquering Sindh and Multan.

Assess Yourself

6.3A Objective Questions

1. Which of the following places was invaded first by the Arabs ?

- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| (a) Thane | (b) Debal |
| (c) Brahamanabad | (d) Rawar |

2. Which of the following places served as the capital of Dahir ?

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| (a) Thatta | (b) Nirun |
| (c) Shehwan | (d) Alor |

3. At which place the battle between Dahir and Kasim took place ?

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| (a) Debal | (b) Shehwan |
| (c) Rawar | (d) Multan |

6.3B Short Answer Questions

1. Give a brief account of the conquest of Debal by Muhammad-bin-Kasim.
2. Describe the battle between Dahir and Muhammad-bin-Kasim.

6.4 The Causes of Success of the Arabs and Defeat of the Indians

6.4.1 The Arab conquest of Sindh and Multan appears to be a surprising event. The Arab invaders succeeded in capturing a powerful state like Sindh with the help of a small army. If you analyse minutely factors responsible for this event you would notice that it was mainly because of the ability of Muhammad-bin-Kasim and inability of King Dahir. Moreover, the internal condition of Sindh was also favourable to the Arab conquerors. The success of Muhammad-bin-Kasim and defeat of Dahir may be explained under the following points.

6.4.2 Dahir himself was responsible for his defeat. He did not take the invaders seriously. His military blunders led to his defeat. Dahir should have become cautious as early as the Arab conquest of Makran, but he remained idle. He made no effort to check his advance. Moreover, after the conquest of Debal he allowed Kasim uninterruptedly to advance further, cross Mehran and reach Brahmanabad easily. If he would have challenged Kasim in Debal itself, the situation might have been different.

6.4.3 Although the army of Dahir was numerically larger than that of Kasim but it was ill organised and devoid of experience. Dahir's army was composed of mercenaries and elephant troops while Kasim's army consisted of well trained Syrian cavalry and camels. The commanders of Dahir's army had no experience of waging wars. Moreover, Dahir himself did not exhibit the qualities of a good military leader and lacked farsightedness. Muhammad-bin-Kasim on the other hand was an young and energetic military commander who moved his army in the battle ground in a well planned manner.

6.4.4 Dahir had to face the Arab invaders single handedly as no Indian power came forward to rescue him in the hour of crisis. On the other hand, Kasim had the support and backing of Al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq and even indirect backing of the Caliph.

6.4.5 Dahir and Indians were fighting a defensive battle. Arabs on the other hand had set goals. It was to spread of Islam in India and get wealth from the plunder of Sindh. Naturally, therefore, they fought more enthusiastically and became victorious.

6.4.6 The success of Muhammad-bin-Kasim was also due to the cooperation extended to him by groups of Indians. On several occasions the Brahamanas, Buddhists, Jats and even ministers of Dahir sided with the invaders. It weakened the position of Dahir.

6.4.7 The internal condition of Sindh, its political and social set up had considerably weakened Sindh. The administration was incapable and inefficient. The king did not have effective control over provincial rulers. Moreover, the dynasty of Dahir did not enjoy support and goodwill of the people. The society was sharply divided between high and low, privileged and unprivileged. Dahir, therefore, could not get support of every social section. Not only this, many Indians took side of Muhammad-bin-Kasim against Dahir.

These and many other factors contributed to the victory of Kasim and defeat of Dahir.

Assess Yourself

6.4A Objective questions

1. Which of the following causes was mainly responsible for Dahir's defeat ?
 - (a) His military blunders
 - (b) His weak army
 - (c) Treachery of his ministers
 - (d) Non-cooperation of Indian rulers.

6.4B Short Answer Questions

1. Explain how the internal condition of Sindh contributed to the defeat of Dahir ?

6.5 Political and Cultural Significance of Invasion and Conquest of Sindh

6.5.1 The significance of the Arab invasion and conquest of Sindh has been viewed by historians from different angles. Some historians are inclined to term it as an insignificant event while other set of scholars over-emphasise it. According to Lanepoole, "the Arab conquest of Sindh was a mere episode in the history of Indian and Islam, a triumph without results. However, Colonel Todd suggests that due to the Arab invasion whole of northern India trembled. In fact the Arab invasion was neither an insignificant event nor its effects were very grave. The results and significance of the invasion may be pointed out under the following points.

6.5.2 The Arab conquest of Sindh does not appear to be an event of very grave consequences at least politically. The Arabs remained confined to Sindh and Multan for a pretty long time. They could make no further expansion out of Sindh. The Indian politics too, remained unaffected for the time being. However, we must admit that the Arab invasion prepared the background of the Turkish invasion subsequently.

6.5.3 Initially, the Arabs adopted an intolerant attitude towards the Hindus and followed a policy of religious fanaticism. Consequently, Hindu temples were plundered and razed to ground. The Indians were subjected to atrocities also. However, the Arabs gradually became more tolerant and brought about a change in their religious policy. They left many temples undevastated. To give you an example, they did not destroy the famous sun temple of Multan. Moreover, they reorganized the administrative of Sindh with the help of the Indians. The Indians were assigned important administration posts and fiefs. The task of revenue collection was completely entrusted to them. It was in fact the cooperation of the Indians which enabled the Arabs to run the administration of Sindh.

6.5.4 It was with the conquest of Sindh by the Arabs that the Islam made its entry into India. As we have pointed out earlier, in the beginning the Arabs made efforts to thrust Islam on Indians forcibly but later on they changed their attitude. They adopted the policy of religious tolerance. The destruction of Hindu temples was stopped. The Hindus were only asked to pay **Zaziya** instead of accepting Islam. This liberal outlook followed by the Arabs made spread of Islam in India quite convenient and simple. Those Indians, who were oppressed by Brahmanical socio-religious set up, were greatly enamoured by the principle of equality of Islam. They became converts to Islam in large numbers.

6.5.5 On social level, contact between the Arabs and Indians increased. The Arabs established matrimonial relations with the Indians, they married Indian women. It led to the emergence of a new class of Indian Muslims. This class strengthened the process of cultural assimilation between the Hindus and Muslims.

6.5.6 The economy of Sindh underwent a major change after its conquest by the Arabs. The Arabs gave top priority to agrarian expansion. Several canals were dug to provide irrigational facility. It helped the growth of agricultural produce. The increased agricultural output also facilitated the growth of trade and commerce. Sindh now became closely connected with the Arab world, Africa, and Europe through land and water-routes. Commercial contact with south-east Asian countries also became accelerated now. As a result of far-flung commercial contacts Sindh became a prosperous state. Later on, the Arabs brought eastern, western and Coromandal coasts under their mercantile hegemony and added to the prosperity of many Indian ports. The Arab geographers and travellers who visited India speak highly of the Indo-Arab trade.

6.5.7 The expansion of Arab trade in South India was accompanied by the spread of Islam in that region. The Arabs enjoyed the patronage of the Rashtrakutas. They set up their permanent colonies in south India.

6.5.8 The most significant and everlasting impact of the Arab invasion was cultural exchange between Sindh and the Arab world. The Indian culture travelled to the Arab

world through cultural contacts. The Indians adopted Arabic manners and customs. The Arabs, on their part, were greatly influenced by Indian philosophy, medical science, astrology, chemistry and mathematics. The Arabs learnt the knowledge of zero from India. The growth of Arabic painting, music and architecture witnessed the impact of India. Even Sufism was greatly influenced by Buddhism. The Arabs not only learnt from India but also transmitted Indian knowledge and philosophy to Europe. After the conquest of Sindh many Arab scholars visited India. They carried with them several Sanskrit manuscripts and got them translated into Arabic. The **Brahmasidhanta** and **Khandanakhadaya**, two Sanskrit texts written by Brahamagupta, stand out prominently in this category. The **Panchatantra** was also translated into Arabic.

The above analysis would make it clear to you that politically the conquest of Sindh was not an event of great significance. However, from cultural point of view the Indo-Arab relations produced far reaching and everlasting impact.

Assess Yourself

6.5A Objective Questions

1. Put (✓) mark on correct statement.

- (a) The Arabs destroyed all temples of Sindh.
- (b) The Arabs adopted the policy of religious intolerance.
- (c) The Arabs adopted the policy of religious tolerance.
- (d) The Arabs put a ban on Buddhism.

2. From whom did the Arabs learn the knowledge of Zero ?

- (a) India
- (b) Persia
- (c) Greece
- (d) China.

6.5B Short Answer Questions

1. Outline the political significance of the conquest of Sindh.
2. Analyse economic impact of the conquest of Sindh.

6.6 Summing-up

In this unit we have endeavoured to acquaint you with the Arab invasion of Sindh in 712 AD. While doing so we have analysed factors behind the Arab invasion of Sindh, circumstances leading to the conquest of Sindh and Multan, the nature of Arab conquest, the causes for the success of the Arabs and its significance. Our knowledge of the conquest of Sindh is based primarily on the **Chachanama**. Sindh was a rich state. It was ruled by King Dahir. The Arabs had established commercial contact with coastal areas of India even before the rise of Islam. Initially the Arabs did not nourish any

political ambitions. However, the rise and expansion of Islam changed the Arab outlook towards India. Political, economic and religious considerations compelled the Arabs to plan the conquest of Sindh. The immediate cause of the invasion was animosity between Dahir and Al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq over the question of pirates. Two early military expeditions aimed at capturing Debal proved futile. Hajjaj, therefore, sent another army to conquer Sindh under the command of Muhammad-bin-Kasim. Kasim became successful in his mission. He captured Debal, Nirun and Sisam. Dahir, on his part, made no effort to check the advance of Kasim and waited for him at Brahmanabad. Dahir was compelled to move out of this city and proceed towards Kasim. The two armies met at Raor. Dahir fought valiantly but was killed in the battle-field. After the death of Dahir Muhammad-bin-Kasim captured Raor, Brahmanabad and Alor. Multan also fell in the hands of Kasim. Kasim also planned the conquest of Kanauj but in the meantime he was called back by the new caliph Suleiman.

The victory of the Arabs over Sindh was mainly due to the superiority of Arab army efficient command of Kasim as well military blunders of Dahir and internal bickerings in Sindh. The Arab conquest of Sindh was not of much political significance but its cultural and economic implications were quite significant. Moreover, Islam also made an entry into India with the Arabs. This started the process of cultural assimilation between Indian and Islamic cultures. The Arabs became deeply influenced by Indian philosophy, medical science, mathematics, art and architecture.

6.7 Key Words

Chachanama—A book on the history of Sindh in Arabic, written by an unknown author.

Caliph—The political and religious leader of the Islamic world.

Zaziya—A kind of tax realised from non-Muslims.

Sufism—An Islamic religious sect which puts stress on devotion (bhakti) to God.

Panchatantra—A collection of moral stories written by Bishnusharma in Sanskrit.

Jauhar—The practice of self-immolation by Rajput women after defeat in battles.

6.8 Answer to Self-Assessment Questions

Objective Questions

6.2A 1. (d), 2. (c)

6.3A 1. (a), 2. (d), 3. (c)

6.4A 1. (a)

6.5A 1. (c), 2. (a)

Short Answer Questions

- 6.2B 1. See 6.2.1
- 2. See 6.2.4
- 6.3B 1. See 6.3.2
- 2. See 6.3.3
- 6.4B 1. See 6.4.7
- 6.5B 1. See 6.5.2
- 2. See 6.5.6

6.9 Questions for Exercise

1. Analyse the causes of the Arab invasion of Sindh.
2. Give an idea about the nature of the Arab invasion of Sindh.
3. Account for the success of the Arabs in Sindh.
4. Examine the significance of the Arab conquest of Sindh.
5. "The Arab conquest of Sindh was a mere episode in the history of India and Islam. a triumph without results." Do you agree with this view ?

6.10 Suggested Readings

1. H. C. Ray : The Dynastic History of Northern India.
2. A. B. Pandey : The Early Mediaeval India
3. D. N. Jha and K. M. Shimali (ed.) : Prachin Bharat Ka Itihas
4. R. K. Chaudhary : Prachin Bharat ka Rajnitik evam Sanskritik Itihas.
5. Kameshwar Prasad : Teach Yourself History of India (Earliest Times to 1206 AD)



The Palas—Political and Cultural Developments**Lesson Structure**

- 7.0 Objective
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Political History of the Palas with Special Reference to Dharmapala and Devapala
- 7.3 Administrative Set-up of the Palas
- 7.4 Society and Economy under the Palas
- 7.5 Growth of Education and Literature
- 7.6 Artistic Developments
- 7.7 Religious Condition
- 7.8 Summing-up
- 7.9 Key Words
- 7.10 Answer Self-Assessment Questions
- 7.11 Questions for Exercise
- 7.12 Suggested Readings

7.0 Objective

The main objective of this unit is to give you an idea about the political and cultural achievements of the Palas. The Palas ruled over Bihar and Bengal between 8th and 12th centuries of the Christian era. No other dynasty ruled over this part for such a long period. The Pala period witnessed remarkable growth of education, literature, art and religion. In this unit you will learn about the political and cultural history of the Palas under following headings—

- (a) Political history of the Palas with special reference to Dharmapala and Devapala.
- (b) Administrative set-up of the Palas.
- (c) Society and economy under the Palas.
- (d) Growth of education and literature.

(e) Artistic developments.

(f) Religious condition.

7.1 Introduction

The Palas ruled over large areas of Bihar and Bengal for nearly four centuries. Taking advantage of political anarchy prevalent in post-Harsha era, the Palas established a vast empire. The dynasty produced many renowned kings. They fought incessantly with contemporary powers, defeated them and carved out an empire for themselves. The Palas not only founded an empire but also provided it a sound administration and gave patronage to cultural developments. The Pala period witnessed significant growth of art, education, literature and religion. For the study of the Palas we have a vast source material consisting of inscriptions, literature, art objects and architectural remains. From this unit you would be able to form an estimate of the political and cultural achievements of the Palas. The unit is broadly divided into two parts. The first part outlines political and administrative history while the second familiarises you with cultural developments.

7.2 Political History of the Palas with Special Reference to Dharamapala and Devapala

7.2.1 The early history of the Palas, their origin and original homeland is shrouded in mystery. Contradictory views have been expressed by scholar as in this context. Vappayat is generally regarded as the founder of the Pala line. His son was Daiyata Vishnu. He has been associated with the Khanga dynasty. However, it appears that he belonged to a humble family. Taking advantage of the anarchical condition prevalent in Bengal after the death of Sasanka, he consolidated his power. He seems to be a petty military chief. Later on, the people of Bengal in order to overcome the prevailing chaotic condition (**matsyananaya**), elected Gopal as their king. With Gopal, the political rise of the Palas began.

7.2.2 The Palas belonged either to Shudra or Kashatriya caste. Their relation has been connected with solar race (**Surya Kula**) and ocean race (**Samudra Kula**). Sandhyakara Nandi, the author of **Ramacharita** and the Tibetan historian Lama Taranath regard Palas as Kshatriyas. On the other hand, the Buddhist text, **Aryamanjusrimulakalpa**, describes Palas as Shudras. It appears that originally the Palas belonged to some ordinary family but after gaining political ascendancy they represented themselves as Kshatriya.

7.2.3 The original homeland of the Palas is also not certain. It has been suggested that their homeland was either Pundravardhana or Varendri in Bengal of Magadha in Bihar. According to Sandhyakara Nandi, the fatherland (**pitribhumi**) was Varendri (Eastern Bengal). However, according to Lama Taranath, the Palas were inhabitants of

Pundravardhana (Bogra district). Several scholars suggest that the Palas belonged to Magadha. Majority of Pala inscriptions have been discovered from Bengla-Bihar. It appears that the Palas originally belonged to Bengal. Subsequently, they brought Bihar also under their control.

7.2.4 The first notable king of the Pala dynasty was Gopala (750-770 AD). From the account of Lama Taranatha and the Khalimpur copperplate inscription of Dharamapala it appears that military chiefs and feudal lords, in order to bring an end to the prevailing chaotic condition (**matsyanayaya**) in Bengal, elected Gopal as their ruler. This is the first example of election of a king in historical period in India. Gopala restored peace and order and established his hold over Bengal and Bihar. Gopala was a follower of Buddhism. He got the Odantapuri Mahavihara established near Nalanda.

7.2.5 The greatest king of the early Pala line was Dharamapala (770-810 AD). His reign is considered very important for the expansion of Pala power and cultural developments. He laid the foundation stone of the Pala empire. It was during the regime of Dharmapala that the tripartite struggle between the Palas, Gurjara-Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas for the mastery of Kanauj began. This struggle continued for over a century. From the time of Harshavardhana, Kanauj had become the centre of north-Indian politics. Kanauj was of considerable economic importance also. Therefore, every ambitious king wanted to establish his hold over it. The conquests of Dharmapala started the tripartite struggle. Having consolidated his hold over Bengal he extended his power over Magadha, Varanasi and advanced upto Allahabad. Now he planned to capture Kanauj. He defeated Indrayudha, the contemporary King of Kanauj, who belonged to Ayudha dynasty. Dharmapala installed Chakrayudha as the king of Kanauj as his subordinate ruler. This action brought Kanauj under Dharamapala's influence. The Gurjara-Pratiharas of Malawa and Rajputana were unwilling to accept this situation. Therefore, the Pratihara king Vatasaraja defeated both Chakrayudha and Dharmapala and brought Kanauj under his control. In the meantime Rashtrakuta king Dhruva defeated Vatasaraja and forced him to retreat to Rajputana. Rashtrakuta dominance was now established over Kanauj. However, this situation did not last for long.

Compelled by the politics of Deccan, Dhruva had to return to his home state. Taking Advantage of the absence of the Rastrakutas from north India, Dharmapala recaptured Kanauj and again re-installed Chakrayudha as his subordinate king. To exhibit his sovereignty, Dharmapala also held his court at Kanauj. Nearly twenty kings of different states attended his court. The Khalimpur copperplate grant refers to this congregation of kings at Kanauj. Some of the important states which participated in the court were Bhoja, matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yavana and Gandhara. The assembled kings at Kanauj recognised the suzerainty of Dharamapala. The Gurjara-Pratihara king Nagabhatta II, planned to check the rising tide of the Palas. He defeated Dharmapala near Munger.

Kanauj once again passed under Pratihara dominance. Indrayudha was re-installed on the throne, of Kanauj. Meanwhile Dharmapala and Chakrayudha made friendship with Govinda III. Assured of the assistance of the Palas and the ruler of Kanauj, Govinda III defeated Pratihara king Nagabhata II in northern India. It considerably weakened Gurjara-Pratihara power. Taking advantage of the discomfiture of the Pratiharas, Dharmapala re-established his political supremacy in north India.

Thus, Dharmapala became the sovereign power of north India. He converted the Pala state founded by Gopala into an empire. As Lama Taranatha suggests, Dharmapala's empire extended upto Bengal in east, Jalandhar in West, Himalayas in north and Berar (Vidarbha) in south. Other evidences suggest that Bengal and Bihar were under direct control of Dharmapala. Kanauj was his subordinate state. Punjab, Rajputana, Malawa and Vidarbha were under his influence. In fact, Dharmapala became the lord of whole of northern India. He adopted high sounding titles like **Maharajadhiraja, Paramesvar, Parambhattaraka** etc. He accorded patronage to Buddhism. Dharmapala was an able ruler. He gave patronage to the development of art and literature. He made liberal grants to educational institutions also.

7.2.6 Dharmapala was succeeded by his able son Devapala (810-850 AD). He ruled for forty years. Devapala not only maintained his hold over the empire bequeathed to him but also extended its area. Several inscriptions of this king have come to light. These give an idea about his victorious military campaigns. He established his political supremacy in north India by defeating Gurjara-Pratihara kings Ramabhadra and Mihir Bhoja. It was only after the death of Devapala that Mihir Bhoja succeeded in consolidating the Pratihara Power in north India. Besides, Devapala's inscriptions suggest that he undertook several military campaigns between the Himalayas and Vindhya and became victorious in these. He also conquered Assam and Orissa. He fought successfully either with the Rashtrakutas or the Pandayas. His inscription discovered from Munger suggests that he established his hold upto Rameswaram. Thus, during Devapala's reign, the Pala dominance was established not only over north India but parts of south India as well. Apart from being an empire-builder, Devapala was a patron of art and religion. He gave patronage to Buddhism. He established friendly relationship with South-east Asian countries. During his regime, King Balaputradeo of Suvarnavarsha, with the permission of Devapala, got a monastery constructed at Nalanda and granted five villages to the Nalanda university. The Arab traveller Suleiman was highly impressed by Devapala. He regards him as more powerful than the Rashtrakutas and Gurjara-Pratiharas.

7.2.7 After the death of Devapala, gradual decline set in the first Pala empire set up by Dharmapala. The Palas faced a critical situation between 850-988 AD. A number of Pala kings like Vigrahapala, Narayanapala, Rajayapala, Gopal II, Vigrahapala II came to power but failed to arrest the declining trend. Their power and authority was

considerably undermined by the Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas. The Chandelas, Kalachuris and Kambojas also posed a serious challenge to the Palas. The Pala power virtually became confined to Bihar only.

7.2.8 Mahipala I (988-1038) ascended the throne in a very critical situation but by dint of his ability and military skill, he re-established power and prestige of the house of the Palas. He fought many battles successfully and brought whole of Bengal, South Bihar and Tirhut under his control and extended his hold upto Benaras. However, the victorious march of Devapala was checked by the Cholas and Kalachuris. In 1021-23, Rajoendra Chhla invaded Bengal and defeated Devapala. Probably, the Kalchuri king Ganagayadeva also defeated Devapala. Despite this setback Mahipala succeeded in maintaining his hold over large parts of Bengal and Bihar. The Banagarh inscription of this king suggests that he re-established his hold over the empire set up by his predecessors. Mahipala gave patronage to architectural activities. Many temples and viharas were constructed during his reign at Benaras, Sarnatha, Bodh Gaya and Nalanda. He reorganised the internal set up of the empire and took keen interest in works of public welfare. In fact, Mahipala I is regarded as the founder of the second Pala empire.

7.2.9 After Mahipala, the Pala empire once again rolled rapidly on the path of decline. King Nayapala (1038-1055) had to fight a long and protracted battle with the powerful Kalachuri king Karna. This fight was brought to an end by the mediation of Dipanakarsrigyan Atish, the chief Abbot of the Vikramashila university. Both the parties retreated to their original boundaries of the empire and established friendly and matrimonial relations. In the meantime, taking advantage of the Pala-Kalachuri conflict, an independent state was set up in Magadha by the Sudraka dynasty. Vigrahapala III (1055-70) had to face the onslaught of the Kalchuris once again. Discarding the old alliance between the two powers, Karna again invaded Bengal. The Chalukayas of Gujarat and Somavamsi kings of Orissa also invaded Bengal. These invasions weakened Pala power considerably. New powers emerged in Anga and Magadha. The situation after Vigrahapala III went beyond control. Mahipala II (1070-75) had to face the revolt of the Kaivartas. Their leader Divya killed Mahipala and set up an independent kingdom in Varendri (eastern Bengal). After Mahipala's assassination war of succession started between two contenders of the throne—Surapala II and Ramapala. It further weakened power and prestige of the Palas.

7.2.10 Ramapala (1077-1130) was the last powerful king of the Pala dynasty. He tried his best to check the declining trend of the Pala empire. The **Ramacharita** of Sandhyakara Nandi, his court poet, gives information about Ramapala's achievements. Nandi suggests that with the help of his feudatories, Ramapala killed the Kaivarta leader Bhima and brought eastern Bengal under his control. Later on, he succeeded in extending his hold over entire Bengal, Kamarupa and Orissa. However, it was during his reign that

eastern Bengal passed into the hands of Senas while the Karnatas occupied Mithila. After Ramapala, the Pala empire declined swiftly. Kumarapala and Madanapala failed to check this decline. Kamarupa passed out of their hands, Vijayasena in Bengal and the Gahadawalas in Magadha established their dominance. Madanpala's rule remained confined to some parts of central Bihar only. Govindapala was the last king of the dynasty. Around 1160 AD the Gahadawalas deposed Govindapala in Magadha and brought an end to the Pala rule. Thus, you have seen that after ruling for over four centuries, the Palas lost their identity in the pages of history. Constant wars, mutual rivalries and imperialist designs of other contemporary powers brought an end to the Pala rule.

Assess Yourself

7.2(A) Objective Questions

1. Who is regarded as the founder of the Pala dynasty ?
(a) Vappayat (b) Gopala
(c) Dharamapala (d) Devapala.
2. Which of the following books was written by Sandhyakara Nandi ?
(a) Dashakumaracarita (b) Ramacarita
(c) Mahaviracarita (d) Kumarapalacarita
3. To which of the following dynasties did King Chakrayudha of Kanauj belong ?
(a) Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty (b) Maukahari dynasty
(c) Ayudha dynasty (d) Gahadawala dynasty.

7.2B Short Answer Questions

1. Write a note on the origin and original home of the Palas.
2. Give a brief introduction of Devapala.
3. Write short notes on Mahipal I, Ramapala.

7.3 Administrative Set-up of the Palas

7.3.1 The Pala inscription, discovered in large number from Bihar and Bengal, provide us an insight into the Pala administrative organisation. According to prevalent tradition, the Palas also adopted monarchical form of government. King was the supreme authority in such a system. All powers were vested in king's hands. The Pala rulers ruled according to the kingly ideals set in the **Dharmasastras**. They took special interest in the works of Public welfare. The impact of the Gupta administration is distinctively discernible in the Pala administration. Feudal elements were quite strong in this set-up. Sandhyakara Nandi refers to many feudatories of Ramapala in his **Ramacharita**. Due