

2026

MPPSC

MADHYA PRADESH



STATE FOREST SERVICE

India's Ancient Past

Module - 1

HISTORY of INDIA : Concepts and Ideas - ♦ Ancient Indian Knowledge Tradition, ♦ Bharatvarsha, Vedas, Upanishad, Aranyaka, Brahman Granth, Shaddarshan, Smritiyan, Rit Sabha-Samiti, Gantantra (Republic), Varnashrama, Purushartha, Rin Sanskara, Panch Mahayagya/Yagya, Principle of Karma, Bodhisatva, Teerthankar. ♦ Salient features, Events and their administrative, Social and Economic Systems of Ancient India. ♦ **History of Madhya Pradesh** : Ancient History of Madhya Pradesh, Prehistoric Period, Protohistoric Period and Historic Period.



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History of Ancient India & Madhya Pradesh

MODULE – 1



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SYLLABUS

Unit	Syllabus
MPPSC (Pre) Unit - 1	HISTORY of INDIA : Concepts and Ideas - Ancient Indian Knowledge Tradition, Bharatvarsha, Vedas, Upanishad, Aranyaka, Brahman Granth, Shaddarshan, Smritiyan, Rit Sabha-Samiti, Gantantra(Republic), Varnashrama, Purushartha, Rin Sanskara, Panch Mahayagya/Yagya, Principle of Karma, Bodhisatva, Teerthankar. ♦ Salient features, Events and their administrative, Social and Economic Systems of Ancient India.
MPPSC (Pre) Unit - 2	History, Culture and Literature of Madhya Pradesh : Major Events and Major Dynasties of Madhya Pradesh.
MPPSC Forest (Main) Section (A) Unit - 1	History of Madhya Pradesh : Ancient History of Madhya Pradesh, Prehistoric Period, Protohistoric Period and Historic Period.

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वैधानिक चेतावनी



यह पुस्तक व सामग्री आपके व्यक्तिगत उपयोग के लिये प्रदान की गई है और इसे आपके व्यक्तिगत Contact No. से Watermark किया गया है। इस पुस्तक को किसी अन्य व्यक्ति / संस्था / समूह के साथ साझा करना, फोटो कॉपी करना आदि पूर्णतः वर्जित है, यदि आप इस प्रकार की किसी भी गतिविधि में सम्मिलित पाये जाते हैं, तो ऐसी स्थिति में आपका Registration समाप्त कर दिया जायेगा और आपके विरुद्ध उचित दण्डात्मक कार्यवाही की जायेगी।



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History: Introduction, Sources, and Interpretations

History is the **systematic and scientific study of human society's past**, which analyzes events, processes, and experiences to draw lessons for the present. It is not merely a record of dates and events but a medium to understand the dynamics of social, economic, cultural, and political transformations.

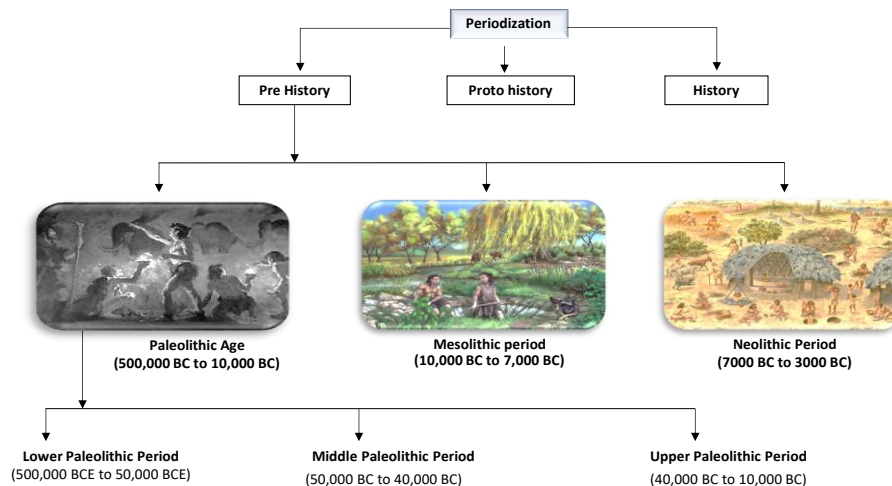
Indian history is a **rich tapestry woven over millennia**, shaped by diverse cultures, empires, and intellectual achievements.

PERIODIZATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

For a long time, historians divided Indian history into Hindu, Muslim, and British periods. However, upon closer observation, this division appears misleading. Therefore, most scholars classify Indian history into - Ancient Period, Medieval Period, Modern Period. This division allows us to study socio-economic changes more effectively.

Additionally, based on the early stages of human development, history can be broadly divided into three categories :

1. **Pre-History (Before 3000 BCE) :**
 - Human existence was present, but writing was not yet developed.
 - Knowledge comes only from **archaeological remains**.
2. **Proto-History (3000-600 BCE) :**
 - Some written records exist, but they are not fully deciphered (e.g., the **Indus Valley Script**).
3. **History (Post 600 BCE) :**
 - Written records are available and readable, providing clear insights into contemporary life.



1.1 DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF INDIAN HISTORY

Throughout time, Indian history has been interpreted from different perspectives, influenced by the **political, intellectual, and ideological conditions** of each period. Major schools of thought are as follows :

➤ Colonial Perspective (18th-19th Century) :

Objectives :

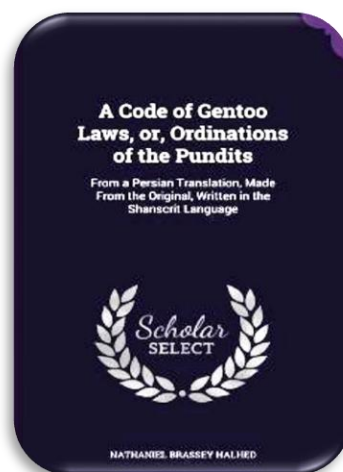
- To prove Indian society and culture as “backward.”
- To project British rule as the “civilizing mission.”
- To justify conversion policies and colonial administration.

Contributions :

- William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784).
- Max Müller edited the **Sacred Books of the East Series**.
- Early translations : *Manusmriti* (1776, Code of Gentoo Laws), *Bhagavad Gita* (1785), *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* (1789).

Criticism :

- Presented Indian history and social behavior in a generalized and oversimplified manner.
- Projected Indians as “without historical sense,” accustomed to despotism, and immersed in spirituality.
- *Vincent Smith* described India as “politically fragmented” before the British arrival.
- Karl Marx’s theory of Asiatic Mode of Production / Oriental Despotism was influenced by this perspective.



The European interpretation of Indian history aimed at **belittling Indian achievements** and **legitimizing colonial rule**. While chronological details were often accurate, most assumptions were **either baseless or exaggerated**. British rule used these interpretations as propaganda to justify the highly centralized Viceroy’s government in India.

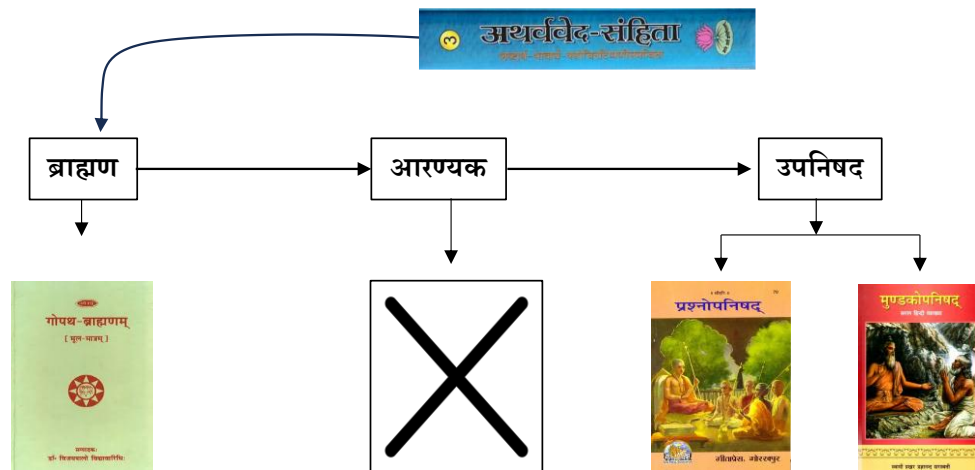
Orientalism ***: refers to colonies located in the Eastern regions. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Western scholars constructed a permanent framework of Eastern cultures, with themselves at the center, in order to establish their own superiority. As a result, they tended to look down on Eastern cultures. However, in the process, they also studied Eastern civilizations and translated their literary sources. Major Orientalist scholars include Vincent Smith, William Jones, Henry Colebrooke, Charles Wilkins, H. H. Wilson, and James Prinsep.

➤ Nationalist Perspective (Late 19th - Early 20th Century) : This category of scholars was a product of the emerging nationalist movement. Just as the Indian nationalist movement opposed colonialism, nationalist historiography developed in response and reaction to colonial historiography.

Features :

- Rediscovery of glorious periods like **Vedic and Gupta Age** as “**Golden Ages**.”
- Focused on **reconstructing political history** and countering colonial interpretations.
- Countering colonial interpretations.
- Integration of both **North and South India** into the mainstream narrative.

- Almost all aspects of life are touched upon in it, but especially there is more description of the **beliefs of that time**. In this sequence there is mention of **actions related to magic (marana, mohana, uccaṭana, etc.)**. There is discussion of spiritual knowledge, enemy-destruction, attainment of health, domestic happiness, increase in agriculture, removal of ghosts and spirits, destruction of insects, gain of desired objects, marriage, commerce, worship of ancestors, etc., in the mantras of the Atharvaveda.
- In the twelfth kaṇḍa of the Atharvaveda is the Bhūmi Sūkta *** (Pṛthvi Sūkta), in which the importance of the earth is stated. In this it is said - “The earth is my mother; I am the son of the earth.”



VEDA	MAIN SUBJECT	BRANCHES (MAJOR)	SPECIAL POINTS
RIGVEDA	Hymns of praise (prayers to deities)	Shakala, Ashvalayana, Shankhayana	10 Mandalas, 1028 Suktas, 10,580 Mantras; Battle of Ten Kings (7th Mandala); Gayatri Mantra (3rd Mandala); Purusha Sukta, Nasadiya Sukta, Dialogue Suktas (Urvashi-Pururava etc.)
SAMAVEDA	Mantras suitable for singing	Kauthuma, Jaiminiya, Ranayaniya	1875 Mantras (mostly from Rigveda); Basis of Indian music; Sung by Udgata priest
YAJURVEDA	Rituals of sacrifice (Yajna-Karmakanda)	Krishna Yajurveda (Katha, Taittiriya, Maitrayani, Kapishtala), Shukla Yajurveda (Madhyandina, Kanva)	Krishna - mixture of mantras and prose; Shukla - mantras and prose kept separate; Important sacrifices - Ashvamedha, Rajasuya, Vajapeya
ATHARVAVEDA	Spells, healing, folk practices	Shaunak, Paippalada	20 Kandas, 731 Suktas; Medicinal mantras, sorcery rituals; Bhumi Sukta - “The earth is my mother, I am her son”

- **Other remains** : Among other archaeological remains, **sculptures and ancient ruins** are mainly included. The tradition of sculpture in India probably began in the Kuṣaṇa period, when images of the Buddha were created for the first time. At that time the **Gandhara art** and the **Mathura art** were especially prevalent. In the sculpture of Bharhut, Bodh Gaya, Sanchi, and Amaravati, a vivid glimpse of the life of the common people is seen.

In **painting**, the paintings of the Bagh caves appear to be the basis of the Ajanta style. In the painting of Ajanta, a beautiful expression of emotions is perceived. In these, the artists' subtle vision and craftsmanship are displayed. The painting of "Bodhisattva Padmapaṇi" located at Ajanta is the most famous.

The Mesopotamian **cuneiform script** is dated to 3400 BC, and the Egyptian **hieroglyphics** to 3100 BC. However, the **earliest evidence** of script in the Indian subcontinent dates back to the **Harappan civilization of 2600 BC**. However, recent studies have found evidence that it dates back to the fourth millennium. This script is certainly the oldest known script on the subcontinent, but the earliest decipherable script is Brahmi, which dates back to the fourth century BCE.



Harappan script



Mesopotamian script



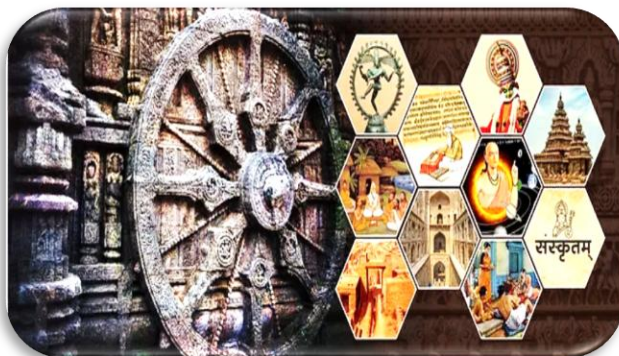
Egyptian script



Brahmi script

1.3 ANCIENT INDIAN KNOWLEDGE TRADITION AND BHARATAVARṢA

India has, since ancient times, been the land of scholars, ṛṣis, and great men, who earned fame throughout the world by their **ancient knowledge tradition**. India's Vedic, philosophical, scientific, and literary traditions have been guiding Indian society, and they have also influenced the entire world. The Indian knowledge tradition, while being a collection of ancient legends, is also a **living and progressive heritage**, which made invaluable contributions in the fields of science, philosophy, literature, art, and medicine. The Indian knowledge tradition can be viewed in the following ways :



- **Vedic Knowledge** : The foundation of India's knowledge tradition is embedded in the Vedas. The Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda are the **oldest sources of Indian knowledge**. Under Vedic knowledge, along with an extensive description of religious rituals, knowledge related to astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and ethics is also included. In the Upaniṣads, deep reflection has been done on **esoteric philosophical topics** such as the Self, Brahman, liberation, and Advaita Vedanta. Under this, the Brahmaṇa texts, Aranyakas, etc., also come, which are various kinds of expositions of the Vedas.

on the upper part. Second, thinner vessels with red-painted geometric designs. Third, wavy-line designs likely incised with a comb-like implement. Excavation was limited, so house plans are unclear. People likely **lived in mud-and-thatch houses**. No grain residues were found. Bones of domesticated cattle and horses were recovered. Copper items include axes, chisels, and bangles.

- **Nagda** Houses lined up along streets and lanes with unique mud ramparts. Around 1800 BCE the inhabitants fled in an emergency. About a century later a second culture developed showing traits similar to Ahar.
- **Navdātoli***** Located in present Khargone. Pottery is called Malwa ware. In the first 200 years inhabitants chiefly ate wheat. Later they ate rice, lentils, green gram, and peas. Excavations in 1957-58 in the Narmada valley yielded over 30,000 blades, cores, and flakes. Archaeologists infer a stone tool production center. Tools were mostly of chalcedony from the nearby Narmada.

Western Deccan

The earliest farming culture of the Deccan is called **Jorwe culture**. Circa 1400-700 BCE in the Pravara, Tapi, and Godavari valleys. Primary sites are Prakaś, Daimabad, Inamgaon, and Nevasa. Also called **Sawalda culture**. Identified by wheel-made, **chocolate-colored pottery**. The fabric is coarse and heavily slipped.

Houses were circular or oval with domed roofs. Bone tools and beads of shell, opal, carnelian, and terracotta occur. Crops include bajra, chickpea, and green gram. At **Daimabad** a linga-shaped object and remains of wheat, pulses, and chickpea occur. At **Inamgaon**, granaries and diversion-channel structures were found. Unique four-legged urn burials with an adult skeleton were recovered. In the Deccan and nearby regions, people kept ossuary urns under their houses in a north-south orientation.

(Megalithic Culture) : The term *Megalith* comes from the Greek words **megas** (great) and **lithos** (stone), meaning “large stone.” Thus, Megalith refers to the elaborate burial practice of interring the dead between stones in cemeteries located away from settlements. This culture is characterized by large stone monuments used for funerary or ritual purposes. From these structures (graves), evidence has been found of animal bones, iron objects and weapons, pottery, horse-related items, skeletons, as well as ornaments of gold, silver, and beads.

In South India, the Iron Age is marked by such distinctive burial practices known as Megaliths. Radiocarbon dating shows that the Iron Age in South India began around **1000 BCE** and continued till the 1st century BCE. The earliest excavation of a megalithic site was at *Adichanallur* in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. Excavations at *Brahmagiri* in Karnataka in 1975 helped in understanding the early culture of South India. The earliest megalithic burial sites with iron objects were found at *Piklihal* and *Hallur* in Karnataka. Other important megalithic sites include *Kadambapur* and *Amravati* in Andhra Pradesh; *Pulimattu*, *Tengakkal*, *Marayur*, *Senkota* in Kerala; *Junapani* near Nagpur in Maharashtra; and sites in *Rewa* and *Seoni districts* of Madhya Pradesh.



A megalithic site at Brahmagiri

Harappan Civilization: Introduction and Characteristics

A developed civilization of the past, whose discovery placed Indian civilization on par (Equal) with Mesopotamia or Egypt and introduced us to the earliest urbanization of the Indian subcontinent, is called the Harappan or Indus Valley Civilization. Its formal announcement (Formal Announcement) was made almost 100 years after **Charles Masson** visited the mounds of Harappa (1826), when the Director General of A.S.I. (Archaeological Survey of India), **John Marshall**, issued a formal note in 1924.

DISCOVERY SEQUENCE (SUMMARIZED FACTS)

- 1826 : **Charles Masson**'s visit to the Harappa mound (initial notice).
- 1831 : **Alexander Burnes** - survey-indication of the Amri (Sindh) area.
- 19th century : **Alexander Cunningham** - two tours; collection of stone tools, pottery, bull-seal; but assessment of importance remained limited.
- 1921-22 excavations and 1924 : **Formal announcement by John Marshall, Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India** - identification of the "Indus Vally Civilization".
- In the 1940s : **Mortimer Wheeler** - emphasis on urban-defense elements like fortification.

The Harappan civilization emerged as an **urban revolution** which, without being sudden and violent, was the result of social and economic changes continuing for centuries.

Chronology and periodization : main dates (including C14 calibrated standards) - Mature Harappan 2600-1900 BCE (core area : Indus, Ghaggar-Hakra, Gujarat).

- **Early Harappan** : about 3300-2600 BCE.
- **Mature Harappan** : about 2600-1900 BCE.
- **Late/Successor Harappan** : about 1900-1300 BCE.

NAMING

The Harappan civilization developed mostly in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. It is called the Harappan Civilization because the **first discovered site in**

1921 was Harappa, located in Pakistan's Punjab province. Since most of the sites of this civilization developed along the Indus River and its tributaries, it is also called the **Indus Valley or Indus Civilization**.



In recent years some scholars have also named it the **Indus-Sarasvati Civilization**, because most of the sites of this civilization are situated along the Ghaggar-Hakra river, which has been identified as the Sarasvati River described in the Rigveda. The same criticism linked to the Indus Valley applies to the name Indus-Sarasvati Civilization as well with respect to the naming of this civilization, because it was not confined to the valleys of the Indus or Ghaggar-Hakra rivers. Therefore, on the basis of the archaeological classical tradition of naming, calling it the **Harappan Civilization** appears most appropriate.

EXTENT

At present we have information about about 2000 sites related to the Harappan Civilization. The Harappan Civilization is estimated to have spread over a vast area of **680,000-800,000 square kilometers**, including a large part of Afghanistan, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, North-West Frontier Province (all in Pakistan); as well as Jammu, Punjab-Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and western Uttar Pradesh (all in India).

In the north **Manda (Jammu) in the Chenab river valley**, in the south **Daimabad (Ahmednagar) in the Godavari valley**, in the west **Sutkagendor near the Dasht river**, and in the east **Alamgirpur (Meerut) on the banks of the Hindon river** represent the limits of this civilization. Outside this region there is a separate Harappan center at Shortugai in Afghanistan.

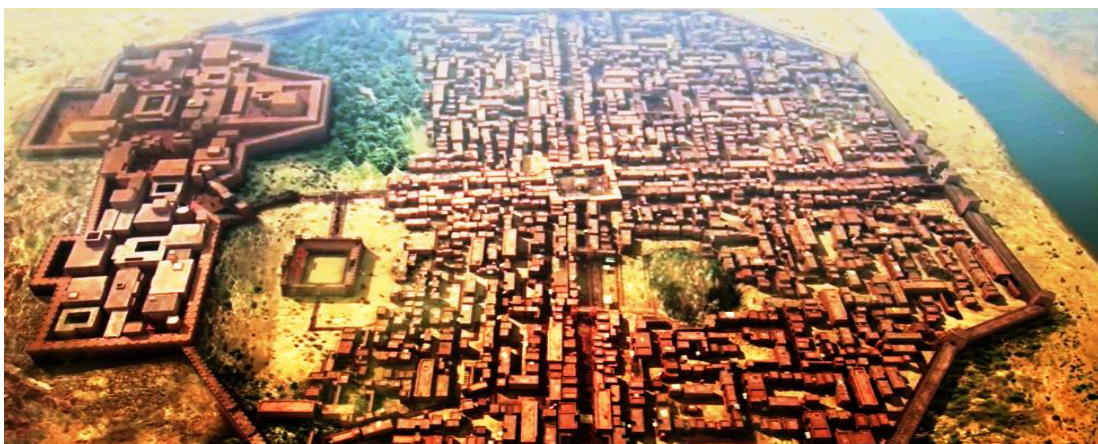
2.1 HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION : GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

TOWN PLANNING SYSTEM

The urbanization of the Harappan Civilization did not mean the urbanization of all Harappan sites; rather, **most of the Harappan region was rural** and city-dwellers depended on these villages for food and labour. On the other hand, goods made in the cities became part of village routine. Thus developed a civilization with an advanced exchange system. We can view the urban planning system of the Harappan Civilization in the following form -

Division of the city

- Standard bi-partite plan - most major cities (such as Mohenjo-daro, Harappa) **split into two parts** - the western part an elevated citadel area and the eastern part the lower town.
- Citadel - **generally fortified**; residences of ruler/administration, granaries, bathhouse, religious/ceremonial institutions.
- Lower town - **relatively extensive**; residences of common citizens, craft production, markets/traffic.



Vedic Civilization : Introduction and Characteristics

Vedic civilization, which flourished in ancient India, is traditionally considered to be from **about 1500 BCE to 600 BCE**. It is named after the Vedas, the oldest and most sacred texts of Hinduism. Our knowledge of this period of ancient Indian history often **relies purely on the interpretation of Vedic texts** rather than the interpretation of archaeological evidence. Sometimes those archaeological pieces of evidence are highlighted which confirm the facts described in the Vedic texts.

ARYA/INDO-ARYAN

A linguistic-cultural group (not racial)

- The word “**Arya**” appears 36 times in the Rigveda. It is primarily considered indicative of a **cultural community**. The composers of the Rigveda also addressed themselves as Arya, which has cultural implications.
- **Inscriptions** of the **Kassites of Iraq** and the **Mitanni of Syria** contain Vedic-like names/terminology.
- The root word ‘**ar**’ may mean agriculture, and the word ‘**Arya**’ can be seen as relatives or kinsmen. The Rigveda often shows similarity with the **Avestan text** of the Iranian language. In both texts, the same words are used for gods and for social classes.
- “Indo-Aryan/Indo-European” is taken in modern historiography as a **linguistic/cultural group**; reading it as racial is inappropriate.

ORIGINAL HOMELAND

There is a **debate among scholars** about where the original homeland of the speakers of Indo-European languages was. According to many theories, Tibet, Afghanistan, the Arabian Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, the Ural Mountains, the steppe plains of Central Asia, or India could be their original homeland.

Among all these theories, the **two most accepted places** are - the plains of Eastern Europe north of the Black Sea, and Central Asia. DNA foot-printing research conducted in 2018 proved that the Aryans departed from south of the Kazakh uplands and entered South Asia around 1500 BCE.

Scholar	Place of Origin Theory
Max Muller	Central Asia
Dayanand Saraswati	Tibet
Bal Gangadhar Tilak	Arctic Region (North Pole)
Garden Child and Nehring	Russia
Ganganath Jha	Land of the Brahmarshis
Vinayak Damodar Savarkar	Central Asia (Iran)

Mahajanapada Period

In the **sixth century BCE**, the Ganga valley was the **land of philosophical seekers**, where the currents of social, religious and economic changes were also flowing. In fact, these changes can be seen as the culmination of some processes that began at the end of the Vedic period. An era of ancient India, which is often known as the Mahajanapada period, symbolizes an important time in the history of the subcontinent, spanning roughly from the sixth century BCE to the fourth century BCE. The characteristic of this era is the rise of sixteen major states, known as the Mahajanapadas.

Spread across the Sindhu-Ganga plains, these states represent a shift from tribal society and institutions to more complex and organized societies (More organized and Complex societies) and political institutions. During this time, profound philosophical and religious movements (Philosophical and Religious movements) like Buddhism and Jainism emerged, which challenged the old Vedic traditions and contributed to developing a vibrant and dynamic intellectual environment (Vibrant and dynamic intellectual environment).

✽ **Throw light on the political condition of North India in the sixth century BC.** [MPPSC Civil (Main) 2018; 6M]

4.1 SOURCES

Literary and archaeological sources of the Mahajanapada period are available in abundance (Abundantly). For the first time in this period a situation arose where a comparative study (Comparative study) could be made between archaeological evidence and literary sources. We can divide the sources into two parts—literary and archaeological.

LITERARY

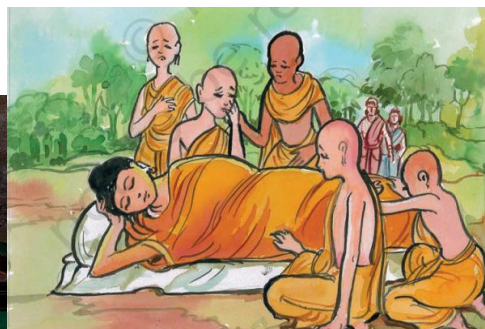
- Under literary sources come the **Dharmasutras** in the Brahmana texts, composed by Gautama, Apastamba, Baudhayana and Vasistha around 600-300 BCE. These shed light on the social life of this period; their real purpose was to bind social behaviour, according to the Brahmanical tradition, into rules and regulations.
- From the **Puranas** we get information about the history of royal dynasties, *although uniformity is not found in them*, and many times different kings and royal lineages are mixed together, due to which accurate information is not obtained.
- **Panini's Ashtadhyayi** is a unique book which, while being a Sanskrit grammar treatise, provides specific information about the traditions, institutions, coins, systems of weights and measures, beliefs, and spiritual practices of this period.
- In addition to this, **Buddhist literature** includes the Jataka tales, the Nikayas (Majjhima, Samyutta and Anguttara) described in the Sutta Pitaka, the Sutta Nipata, etc. Their composition is considered to be of the middle Ganga valley.

- According to Buddhist beliefs, after attaining knowledge he remained seated there for seven weeks and decided to keep the knowledge to himself, but, at the request of Brahma himself, agreed to spread the light of knowledge. At that time two merchant brothers named **Tapassu and Bhallika** passed by and offered to the Buddha rice of the land of Burma and honey cakes to eat. The Buddha gave them teachings and also presented eight locks of his hair, which were installed in a stupa by the two, and **thus these two became the first lay followers*** (upasakas) of Buddhism.**
- The Buddha gave his first sermon at a place called Mrigavana (Sarnath/Rishipatanam) to the five Brahman ascetics, including his fellow-seeker Kaundinya, and showed the path to the cessation of suffering. **In Buddhism this event is called dhammacakka pavattana*** (turning the wheel of dharma).** According to the Buddhist tradition, "morality (sila) is the spokes (pins) of this dharma-wheel, forgiveness and humility are its axle, and wisdom and mindfulness are its rim."
- After the sermon at Sarnath, the Buddha reached Gaya and there accepted the famous sage Kashyapa and his brothers as his disciples; after this the Buddha reached **Rajagriha to meet Bimbisara**, the ruler of Magadha. The Buddha taught Bimbisara the doctrine of non-self, by which he experienced supreme peace, and he presented the **Venuvana***** to the Buddha for his residence. In Rajagriha itself the Buddha initiated Ashvajit, Upatissa, Maudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Sudatta, and others.
- After this the Buddha went to Kapilavastu to meet his family members and gave **teachings to King Shuddhodana**, on hearing which he handed over his kingdom to his brothers. In the same sequence, Ananda, Nanda, Krimila, Aniruddha, Upali, Kundadhanya, and others also received initiation from him.
- After Kapilavastu, the Buddha went to **Shravasti**, the capital of the Kosala Mahajanapada, where **he received the gift of Jetavana**. King Prasenajit of Kosala came and received teachings and initiation from the Buddha.
- Thereafter, while touring many cities, the **Buddha reached the city of Angulimal***** and initiated into his religion Angulimal, who was engaged in cruel deeds. From here the Buddha went to Varanasi and initiated Katyayana, the nephew of the sage Asita. From here the Buddha went to Vaishali, the capital of the Licchavis, where he taught the **courtesan of Vaishali, Amrapali.**
- In this way, from ordinary people to great ascetics and many kings, such as Bimbisara and Ajatashatru (Magadha), Prasenajit (Kosala), and Udayana (Kaushambi); accepted his doctrines and became his disciples. In the same sequence, near Pava, close to Kushinagara, the capital of the Mallas, he stopped in a mango grove. There he ate the food offered by a disciple named Chunda Kumaraputta, due to which he fell seriously ill.

Shakya Muni asked in the mrigwana, "O Narottama! Have you attained enlightenment?" Kaundinya replied, "Yes, sir." Therefore, **Kaundinya** is considered the **foremost religious scholar** among all monks.

The Buddha's last meal consisted of **sukramadhava (pork)**, a view generally supported by Theravada (Hinayana), while Mahayana holds that it was a vegetarian dish.

परिनिर्वाण मंदिर, कुशीनगर, बिहार



existed folk art in that era, which is seen in stone art and terracotta objects. Mauryan architecture can be divided into the following parts -

PILLARS

Mauryan pillars were not only important from religious and administrative viewpoints, but their construction style and technical excellence gave a new direction to Indian art. The elements of Mauryan art are considered **essentially indigenous**. This art was a harmonious blend of folk and royal elements, which historian R. C. Majumdar called the “**swadeshi phase**” of Indian history. He considered the design and art of Mauryan pillars an integral part of Indian craftsmanship. The famous Mauryan polish (the art of burnishing) began in the pre-Mauryan period.



वैशाली लौरिया-नंदनगढ़ लौरिया-अरेराज दिल्ली-मेरठ दिल्ली-टोपरा इलाहाबाद-कोसम लुम्बिनी (रुम्मिनदेई)

These pillars were **made of extremely hard and durable stones**, which are proof of the extraordinary skill of Indian artisans. Motifs such as bull, lion, lotus, and goose engraved on Ashokan pillars are **symbols of indigenous tradition**. This shows that Mauryan art was not the result of a single event, but a continuity of Indian tradition whose roots were as old as the Vedas. Although the structure of Mauryan pillars resembles the pillars of **Persepolis (Iran)**, and their parity indicates West Asian influence, this art was entirely the product of Indian tradition. Symbols such as the lotus and the swastika are proof that Mauryan art was deeply rooted in Indian soil. The scholar **Nilakanta Sastri's** view is “Mauryan art was not a blind imitation of foreign models. Only certain features were adopted from them, but they were assimilated into local design in such a way that they became harmonious, beautiful, and perfect.”

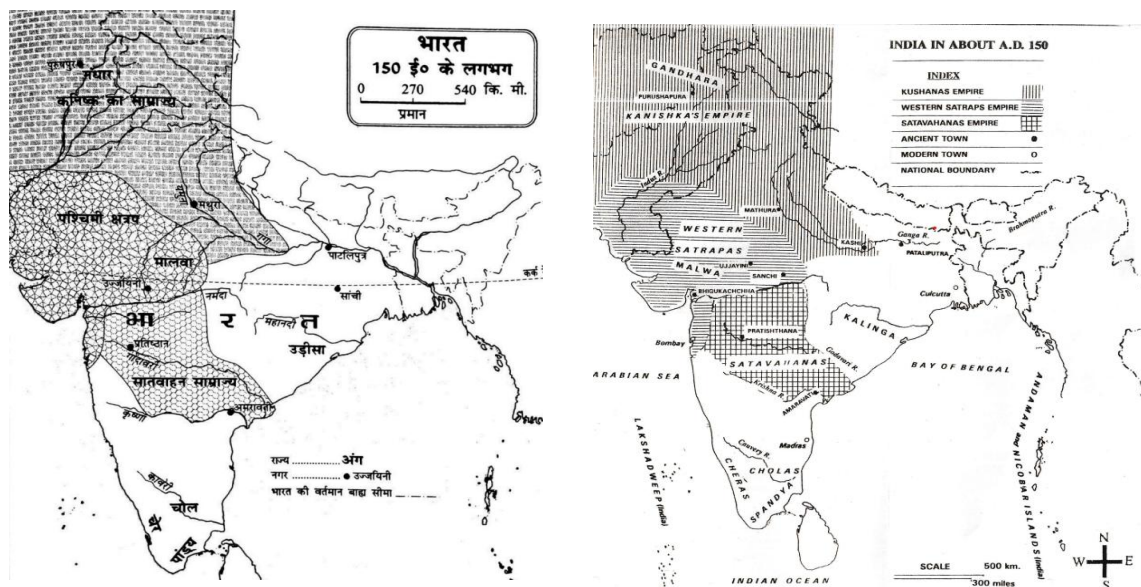
According to some scholars Ashoka got the inspiration for pillar construction from the **Achaemenid (Hakhamani)** empire. But Mauryan pillars are of a different type from Achaemenid pillars. Mauryan pillars are **rock-cut and monolithic pillars**, in which the artist's skill is clearly visible, whereas Achaemenid pillars were made by masons by joining many pieces. In the Mauryan period, the stone pillars were made from the **red sandstone of Chunar (Mirzapur)***** and were installed at many places throughout the Maurya empire; inscriptions too were engraved



वैशाली संकिसा गज रामपुरवा वृषभ लौरिया नन्दनगढ़ सिंह रामपुरवा सिंह सांची सारनाथ

Post Mauryan Period

From the disintegration of the Maurya empire to the Gupta age, the period is called the **Post-Mauryan period** (200 BCE to 300 CE), in which there was an **absence of a strong centralized authority** in the subcontinent. In this political vacuum, many regional powers emerged, such as Shunga/Kanva in the east-central region, Satavahana in the Deccan, and Indo-Greek/Shaka/Parthian/Kushan in the northwest. This period is called the **transitional period** from ancient to medieval India, where religious revival (Vedic/Brahmanical), regional expansion of Buddhist–Jain faiths, and global commercial–cultural contacts are seen together. From a religious viewpoint too, this period was a witness to change. In the Ganga valley and the Deccan there was a **revival of the Vedic religion**, while in Odisha the influence of Jainism was widely seen.



Map Source :- Early India: A Concise History

SOURCES

For the study of the history of this period the diversity of sources and their vast quantity can clearly be seen. These sources have been classified into the following categories –

Literary :

- **Patanjali's Mahabhashya** is an important literary source of the Shunga period. Patanjali was the **royal priest** of the Shunga king Pushyamitra, and from this work we get information about **Shunga history and contemporary society**.

Gupta Period

In Indian history the Gupta period is designated as the “Golden Age.” In this period India not only experienced **political stability**, but **unprecedented advancement** was also seen in the fields of art, literature, science, and mathematics. The Gupta rulers developed an organized administrative system, due to which their empire spread over a vast tract of North India. **Powerful rulers** like Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) expanded the empire and made India prosperous.

SOURCES

Gupta-period sources can be divided into two parts – **literary and archaeological.**

Literary

- Between 300 and 600 CE the **Sanskrit language saw notable development.** In this period the *Puranas* and *epics* were **given their final form**, from which the religious and cultural processes of that time can be inferred.
- During this very period the *Smritis of Narada, Vishnu, Brihaspati, and Katyayana* were **compiled**. In the fourth century **Kamandaka**, addressing a ruler, composed the *Nītisāra*, which is an important work based on politics. In a manuscript of **Bhoja’s Śrīngāra-prakāśa** is found a fragment of **Vishakhadatta’s** lost play *Devī-Chandraguptam*, which is an important source from the viewpoint of the political history of the Gupta dynasty.
- In addition, works such as Somadeva’s Kathāsaritsāgara, Maharshi Vatsyayana’s Kāmasūtra, and Amarasimha’s Amarakośa represent this age of specialization. Tamil epics such as **Śilappadikāram** and **Maṇimēkalai** are called rich sources for the history of South India in the 5th/6th centuries.
- In **Buddhist literature**, a chapter of a Mahayana text named **Mañjushrī** is focused on the history of India, in which the histories of the Gupta, Gauda, and Magadha are particularly prioritized. This text encompasses the historical sequence from the early centuries CE up to the early-medieval period.
- Political information is also obtained in **Jain literature**. In the Jains’ *Harivamsha Purana* (8th century) and texts such as *Tiloyapannatti* mention is found of **political chronology.**
- Between the third and eighth centuries many **Chinese Buddhist monks** came to India. They collected Buddhist texts and also toured many sites of Buddhist importance. The fifth century can be called the pinnacle age from the viewpoint of these journeys. Although many Chinese travelers came to India in that



Post-Gupta Period

The Post-Gupta period is also designated as the **Early Medieval period**. This term denotes the span between the ancient age and the medieval age. Often the idea of crisis, decline, and deterioration is linked with this age. In early histories the coming of “**Muslim rule**” was seen as the cause of this decline; later, supporters of the feudal-ideology view described this age in terms of political decentralization, the transformation of peasants into bonded laborers, and the decline of urban centers and the monetary system.

By the middle of the 6th century the **Gupta empire had almost disintegrated**. Thereafter, **with a new trend called feudalism arose decentralization** and a sense of regionality. Although in this period some major dynasties ruled, the whole of India could not be bound into a single thread. This tendency of political arrangement continued into later times. The various dynasties of the Post-Gupta period are described as follows –



Dynasty	Region	Key rulers	Noted achievement
Maitraka	Vallabhi	Bhattacharya; Dharasena; Dhruvasena I; Dharanapatta Guhasena; Shiladitya I	Ruled emergent post-Gupta states for the longest continuous span.
Maukhari	Kannauj	Harivarman; Ishanavarman; Sarvavarman	Defeated the Hunas and protected eastern India from their incursions.
Pushyabhuti (Vardhana)	Thanesar	Pushyabhuti; Prabhakaravardhana; Rajyavardhana; Harshavardhana	Established a vast realm.
Later Guptas	Magadha	Mahasena Gupta; Deva Gupta; Aditya Sena	Engaged in political rivalry with the Maukharis.
Chandra (Gauda)	Bengal	Shashanka	Maintained enmity with the rulers of Thanesar and Kannauj.

9.1 THE PUSHYABHUTI (VARDHANA) DYNASTY OF THANESAR

After the fall of the Gupta empire, among the royal dynasties of North India, the **Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thanesar (Haryana)** proved to be the most important and powerful. This dynasty, established by Pushyabhuti, is considered related to the **Vaishya caste**. Pushyabhuti were **feudatories*** of the Guptas**, but after the Huna invasions they declared their independence.

Mahajanapada period and Madhya Pradesh

In the Mahajanapada period, there were 16 main janapadas or mahajanapadas in North India. Their mention is found mainly in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the *Mahavastu*, and the Jain text *Bhagavati sutra*. In the Mahavastu's list of sixteen Mahajanapadas, in **place of Gandhara there is a mention of Shivi** and, in addition to this, **Dasharna** (eastern Malwa) is mentioned. Among these Mahajanapadas, Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti, and Magadha had become the four most powerful states of the Buddha's time, and the struggle for paramount sovereignty had begun among them.

Of the sixteen Mahajanapadas, the Avanti and Chedi Mahajanapadas were located in the ancient Madhya Pradesh region. In this period, the influence and expansion of the

Avanti Mahajanapada was at its peak. It brought under its influence the Matsya janapada of Rajasthan to the west and the Shurasena janapada of Mathura to the north. Along with

this, some parts of southern Panchala were also included in Avanti. During the lifetime of the Buddha himself, the Vatsa janapada also came under the control of Avanti. The merger in India of small janapadas into such large Mahajanapadas indicates the rise of a paramount sovereignty (a unified empire). Thus, in the sixth century BCE, Avanti had become a powerful and prosperous Mahajanapada of Madhya Pradesh.



Avanti and Chedi Janapadas

Avanti Janapada

- From the perspective of power and expansion, the Avanti janapada was India's most forceful and vast janapada. The word Avanti is mentioned for the first time in a richa of the Rigveda, based on which, scholars formulate the conception of the naming of this city. This name also appears in the Brahmanas and Aranyakas. However, from the standpoint of the name of a state or place, the first mention of Avanti occurs in Panini's Ashtadhyayi in the sutra "striyam avanti-kurubhyash cha."
- Both forms – Avanti (city) and Avanti (janapada); were in use. Its other names are found as Avantika, Avantipuri, Avantinagari, Amaravati, Kanakashringa, Kushasthali, Kumudavati, Pratikalpa, Vishala, Pushpakarandini, Nandini, Navateri, Kunalnagari, Bhogavati, Hiranyavati, Chudamani, etc. Two other places located in the Avanti state **Sudarshanapura***** and the **Kururaghara mountain*****; have also been importantly discussed.
- This state was divided into two parts: one northern part, which was called **Northern Avanti**, whose capital was **Ujjayini**. The second southern part, which is called **Avanti Dakshinapatha**. The capital of Avanti Dakshinapatha was **Mahishmati (Mahissati)**.

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