

ANCIENT HISTORY

STONE AGE

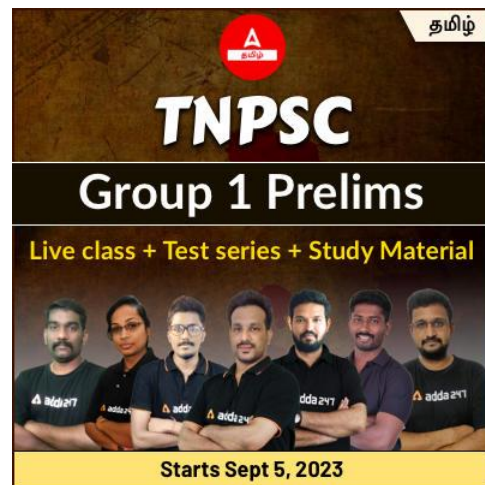
PALEOLITHIC OR OLD STONE AGE (5,00,000 B.C. – 10,000 B.C.)

- In India, the Palaeolithic Age developed in the Pleistocene period or the Ice Age and was spread.
 - In practically all parts of India except the alluvial parts of Ganga and Indus.
 - Food gathering and hunting were the main occupations of the people of this phase. They had no knowledge of agriculture, fire or pottery of any material.
 - Man during this period used tools of unpolished, undressed rough stones and lived in cave and rock shelters.
 - They mainly used hand axes, cleavers, choppers, blades, scrapers and burin.
 - Their tools were made of hard rock called 'quartzite'.
 - Hence Paleolithic men are also called 'Quartzite Men'.
 - Homo sapiens first appeared in the last phase of Paleolithic age.
 - The Paleolithic Age in India has been divided into three phases according to the nature of stone tools used by the people and also according to the nature of change in the climate – Early or lower Paleolithic, Middle Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic.
- (a) The Early Paleolithic Age covers the greater part of the Ice Age. Its characteristic tools are hand axes, cleavers and choppers. Such tools have been found in Soan and Sohan river valley (now in Pakistan) and in the Belan Valley in the Mirzapur district of UP. In this period climate became less humid.
- (b) Middle Paleolithic Phase is characterized by the use of stone tools made of flakes mainly scrapers, borers and blade like tools. The sites are found in the valleys of Soan, Narmada and Tungabhadra rivers. During this phase, Pithecanthropus or Homo erectus evolved.
- (c) In the Upper Paleolithic Phase, the climate became warm and less humid. This stage is marked by burins and scrapers. Such tools have been found in AP, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bhopal and Chhota Nagpur plateau.
- The Old Stone Age sites are widely found in various parts of the Indian subcontinent and are generally located near water sources.
 - In the Old Stone Age, food was obtained by hunting animals and gathering edible plants and tubers. Therefore, these people are called as hunter-gatherers.

- The hunting of large animals would have required the combined effort of a group of people with large stone axes. Their way of life became modified with the passage of time since they made attempts to domesticate animals, make crude pots and grow some plants.
- A few Old Stone Age paintings have also been found on rocks at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh and other places. The period before 10000 B.C. is assigned to the Old Stone Age.
- Some of the famous sites of Old Stone Age in India are:
 - (a) The Soan valley and Potwar Plateau on the northwest India;
 - (b) The Siwalik hills on the north India;
 - (c) Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh;
 - (d) Adamgarh hill in Narmada valley;
 - (e) Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh; and
 - (f) Attirampakkam near Chennai.
- At Chopani-Mando in the Belan valley of the Vindhyas and the middle part of the Narmada valley a sequence of occupation from all the three stages of the Paleolithic to Neolithic stage have been found in sequence. Chopani Mando is an important site where fossil animal bones have been found.
- The Son and the adjacent Belan valley (Mirzapur, UP) provide a sequence of artifacts from lower Paleolithic to Neolithic.

MESOLITHIC OR MIDDLE STONE AGE (10,000 B.C. – 6000 B.C.)

- The next stage of human life is called Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age which falls roughly from 10000 B.C. to 6000 B.C. and was the transitional phase between the Paleolithic Age and Neolithic Age.



- Various Mesolithic sites are found in the Chhotanagpur region, Central India and also south of the Krishna River.
- Mesolithic remains are found in Langhanj in Gujarat, Adamgarh in Madhya Pradesh and also in some places of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- In the sites of Mesolithic Age, a different type of stone tools is found. These are tiny stone artifacts, often not more than five centimeters in size. These characteristic tools of the Mesolithic Age are known as Microliths-pointed, crescentic blades, scrapers, etc, all made of stone.
- The paintings and engravings found at the rock shelters give an idea about the social life and economic activities of Mesolithic people. The hunting-gathering pattern of life continued during this period.
- However, there seems to have been a shift from big animal hunting to small animal hunting and fishing. The use of bow and arrow also began during this period.
- Also, there began a tendency to settle for longer periods in an area. Therefore, domestication of animals, horticulture and primitive cultivation started.
- The last phase of this age saw the beginning of plain cultivation. Animal bones are found in these sites and these include dog, deer, boar and ostrich.
- Occasionally, burials of the dead along with some microliths and shells seem to have been practiced.

NEOLITHIC AGE (6000 BC – 1000 B.C.)

- A remarkable progress is noticed in human civilization in the Neolithic Age. In the world context, the New Stone Age began in 9000 B.C.
- The only Neolithic settlement in the Indian subcontinent attributed to 7000 B.C. lies in Mehrgarh, which is situated in Baluchistan, a province of Pakistan.
- In India, Neolithic Age is not earlier than 6000 BC and at some places in South and Eastern India; it is as late as 1000 B.C.
- These include the Kashmir valley, Chirand in Bihar, Belan valley in Uttar Pradesh and in several places of the Deccan.
- The important Neolithic sites are:
 - (a) Burzahom and Gufkral in J&K (famous for pit dwelling, stone tools and graveyard in house),
 - (b) Maski, Brahmagiri, Tekkalakota in Karnataka, Paiyampatti in Tamil Nadu,
 - (c) Piklihal and Hallur in AP,
 - (d) Garo hills in Meghalaya,
 - (e) Chirand and Senuwar in Bihar (known for remarkable bone tools),
 - (f) Amri, Kotdiji, etc.

- Koldihawa in UP revealed a threefold cultural sequence: Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Iron Age.
- The chief characteristic features of the Neolithic culture are the practice of agriculture, domestication of animals, polishing of stone tools and the manufacturing of pottery.
- The cultivation of plants and domestication of animals led to the emergence of village communities based on sedentary life.
- There was a great improvement in technology of making tools and other equipments used by man.
- Stone tools were now polished and these polished axes were found to be more effective tools for hunting and cutting trees.
- Mud brick houses were built instead of grass huts.
- Neolithic people knew about making fire and making pottery, first by hand and then by potter's wheel. They also painted and decorated their pottery.
- Pottery was used for cooking as well as storage of food grains.
- Large urns were used as coffins for the burial of the dead.
- There was also improvement in agriculture. Wheat, barley, rice, millet were cultivated in different areas at different points of time.
- Neolithic sites in Allahabad district are noted for the cultivation of rice in the sixth millennium B.C. Domestication of sheep, goats and cattle was widely prevalent.
- Cattle were used for cultivation and for transport.
- The people of Neolithic Age used clothes made of cotton and wool.

CHALCOLITHIC OR METAL AGE

- The end of the Neolithic Period saw the use of metals of which copper was the first and a culture based on the use of stone and copper arrived.
- Such a culture is called Chalcolithic which means the stone-copper phase.
- The new technology of smelting metal ore and crafting metal artifacts is an important development in human civilization.
- But the use of stone tools was not given up. Some of the micro-lithic tools continued to be essential items.
- People began to travel for a long distance to obtain metal ores which led to a network of Chalcolithic cultures and the Chalcolithic cultures were found in many parts of India.
- Generally, Chalcolithic cultures had grown in river valleys.
- Gold was probably one of the earliest discoveries, but it served as a material for ornaments only.

- Important sites of this phase are spread in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar, MP, etc.
- In South India the river valleys of the Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Pennar and Kaveri were settled by farming communities during this period. Although they were not using metals in the beginning of the Metal Age, there is evidence of copper and bronze artifacts by the end of second millennium B.C.
- Several bronze and copper objects, beads, terracotta figurines and pottery were found at Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu.
- The Chalcolithic people used different types of pottery of which black and red pottery was most popular.
- These people were not acquainted with burnt bricks and generally lived in thatched houses.
- It was a village economy.
- The Chalcolithic age is followed by Iron Age. Iron is frequently referred to in the Vedas.
- The Iron Age of the southern peninsula is often related to Megalithic Burials.
- Megalith means Large Stone.
- The burial pits were covered with these stones. Such graves are extensively found in South India.
- Some of the important megalithic sites are Hallur and Maski in Karnataka, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and Adichchanallur in Tamil Nadu.
- Black and red pottery, iron artifacts such as hoes and sickles and small weapons were found in the burial pits.

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION IN INDIA

- The Indus Valley Civilization was an ancient civilization thriving along the Indus River & the Ghaggar-Hakra River in what is now Pakistan & north-western India.
- According to radio-carbon dating, it spread from the year 2500 – 1750 BC.
- Dayaram Sahni first discovered Harappa (on Ravi) in 1921. R.D. Banerjee discovered Mohenjodaro or 'Mound of the Dead' (on Indus) in 1922. Sir John Marshal played a crucial role in both these.
- Harappan Civilization forms part of the proto history of India & belongs to the Bronze Age.
- Copper, bronze, silver, gold were known but not iron.
- The Indus-Valley people were well-acquainted with the use both of cotton & wool.

Domestication of animals:

- Stock breeding was important in Indus culture. Besides sheep & goats, dogs, humped cattle, buffalo & elephant was certainly domesticated. The camel was rare & horse was not known.

Indus Valley Civilization Town Planning :

- Elaborate town-planning. It followed the Grid System. Roads were well cut, dividing the town into large rectangular or square blocks.
- Used burnt bricks of good quality as the building material. Elsewhere in the contemporary world, mud-bricks were used.
- In Mohenjodaro, a big public bath (Great Bath) measuring 12 m by 7 m & 2.4 m deep, has been found. Steps led from either end to the surface, with changing rooms alongside. It was probably used for ritual bathing.
- Underground Drainage System.

Major Cities & Their Features:

- Mohenjodaro (Sin(d) is situated on the right bank of the Indus. Great Granary, Great bath, Assembly halls, Shell strips, Pashupati Mahadev/Proto Shiva(Seal), Bronze image of Dancing girl, Steatite image of Bearded man, Clay figure of Mother goddess found in Mohenjodaro.
- Chanhudaro lies on the left bank of the Indus about 130 km south of Mohenjodaro. City without a citadel, Inkpot, Imprints of dog's paw on Brick, Terracotta model of a bullock cart, Bronze toy cart are important archeological findings of Chanhudaro.
- Kalibangan (Rajasthan) was on the banks of the river Ghaggar which dried up centuries ago. Ploughed field surface, 7 Fire alters, decorated bricks, wheels of a toy cart, Mesopotamian cylindrical seal are found in Kalibangan.
- Lothal is at the head of the Gulf of Cambay. Important excavations are Dockyard, Fire alters, Terracotta figurine of Horses, Double Burial, Terracotta Model of a ship, Dying vat, Persian/Iranian seal, Painted Jar (Bird And Fox).



- Banawali (Haryan(a) was situated on the banks of the now extinct Saraswati River. Important features of Lothal are lack of grid pattern town planning, lack of systematic drainage pattern, Toy Plough, Clay figures of Mother Goddess.
- Surkotoda (Gujarat) is at the head of the Rann of Kutch. Important archeological excavations are Bones of Horse, Oval Graves and Pot Burials.
- Dholavira (Gujarat) excavated is in the Kutch district. Bronze Images(Charioteer with Chariot, ox, elephant and rhinoceros) are important excavations.

Trade & Commerce in Indus Valley Civilization :

- There was no metallic money in circulation & trade was carried through Barter System.
- Weights & measures of accuracy existed in Harappan culture (found at Lothal). The weights were made of limestone, steatite, etc. & were generally cubical in shape.
- 16 was the unit of measurement (16, 64,160, 320).
- A dockyard has been discovered at Lothal. Rangpur, Somnath & Balakot functioned as seaports. Sutkagendor & Sutkakoh functioned as outlets.

Indus Valley Civilization Script :

- The script is not alphabetical but pictographic (about 600 undeciphered pictographs).
- The script has not been deciphered so far, but overlaps of letters show that it was written from right to left in the first line & left to right in the second line. This style is called 'Boustrophedon'

VEDIC CULTURE(1500 BC-600 B(C)

The Vedic Civilization was the culture and traditions of the society prevalent during the Vedic age (1500- 600 BC(E). It should be noted here that after the decline of Indus Valley civilization by 1500 BCE.

Vedic Literature:

The term Veda means "superior knowledge" in Sanskrit. Four major Vedas constitute the vedic literature. They are – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sam Veda, and Atharva Veda. Rig Veda – Earliest veda. Has 1028 hymns in praise Gods. Yajur Veda – Has details of rules to be followed during sacrifices. Sam Veda – Has a collection of songs. The origins of Indian music are traced to it. Atharva Veda – has a collection of spells and charms. Besides these Vedas, there were Brahmanas, Upnishads, Aryankas, and epics- Ramayana and Mahabharata. Brahmanas – Prose about vedic hymns, rituals and philosophies.

Aryankas – Deal with mysticism, rites and rituals. Upnishads – Philosophical texts dealing with soul, mysteries of nature. Ramayana was authored by Valmiki. Mahabharata was written by Ved Vyasa.

Classification of Vedic Period:

The period of Vedic Civilization(1500-500 BC(E) is divided into two broad parts – Early Vedic Period (1500-1000 B(C), also known as Rig Vedic Period. Later Vedic Period (1000- 600 B(C).

Political Organisation in Vedic Age:

In Early Vedic Age: 'Kula' was the basic unit of political organization. Multiple families together of kinship formed a 'grama'. Group of villages were called 'visu', headed by 'vishayapati'. The highest political and administrative unit was 'jana' or tribe. There were several such tribal kingdoms – Bharatas, Matsyas, Yadus and Purus. There were two bodies- Sabha(council of elders) and Samiti(general assembly of peopl(e).

Society in Vedic Civilization: The Rig Vedic society was basically patriarchal. The basic unit of society was 'graham' or family, its head was called as 'grahapathi'. Apala, Viswavara, Ghosa and Lopamudra were women poets. Women could attend the popular assemblies. No child marriage, sati practice. Social divisions were not rigid. Varna system in vedic civilization.

Economic Conditions in Vedic Civilization: The Rig Vedic Aryans were pastoral, cattle rearing people. After they permanently settled in North India they began agriculture. Carpenters produced chariots and ploughs. A variety of articles with copper, bronze and iron were made by workers. Spinning was an important occupation – cotton and woolen fabrics. Goldsmiths made ornaments. The potters made different kinds of vessels for domestic use. Trade was conducted by barter system in beginning but later shifted to use of gold coins called 'nishka' for large transactions. Rivers acted as means of transport. Coins: Besides 'nishka', 'satamana'– gold coins and 'krishnala' – silver coins were also used as a media of exchange.

Religion in Vedic Period: Rig Vedic Aryans worshiped natural forces like earth, fire, wind, rain and thunder by personifying them into many gods. Some important Rig Vedic gods – Prithvi (Earth), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Wind), Varuna (Rain) and Indra (Thunder). And 'Indra' was most popular. 'Agni' – an intermediary between the gods and the people.

'Varuna' – the upholder of natural order.
Female Gods – 'Aditi' and 'Ushas'. No temples and no idol worship. Prayers were offered to gods for rewards.

BUDDHISM IN INDIA

- Buddha Born in 563 BC on the Vaishakha Poornima Day at Lumbini (near Kapilavastu) in Nepal.
- His father Suddhodana was the Saka ruler.
- His mother (Mahamaya, of Kosala dynasty) died after 7 days of his birth. Brought up by stepmother Gautami.
- Married at 16 to Yoshodhara. Enjoyed the married life for 13 years & had a son named Rahula.
- Left his palace at 29 (with Channa, the charioteer & his favourite horse, Kanthak(a) in search of truth (also called 'Mahabhinishkramana' or The Great Renunciation) & wandered for 6 years.
- Attained 'Nirvana' or 'Enlightenment' at 35 at Gaya in Magadha (Bihar) under the Pipal tree.
- Delivered the first sermon at Sarnath where his five disciples had settled. His first sermon is called 'Dharmachakrapravartan' or 'Turning of the Wheel of Law'.
- Attained Mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar (identical with village Kasia in Deoria district of UP) in 483 BC at the age of 80 in the Malla republic.

Buddhist Councils:

- The monks gathered 4 times after the death of Buddha & the effect of these events had their effect on Buddhism.
- **First Council:** At Rajgriha, in 483 BC under the chairman ship of Mehakassaapa (King was Ajatshatru). Divided the teachings of Buddha into two Pitakas – Vihaya Pitaka & Sutta Pitaka. Upali recited the Vinaya Pitaka & Ananda recited the Sutta Pitaka.
- **Second Council:** At Vaishali, in 383 BC under Sabakami (King was Kalasok(a). Followers divided into Sthavirmadins & Mahasanghikas.
- **Third Council:** At Pataliputra, in 250 BC under Mogaliputta Tissa (King was Ashok(a). In this, the third part of the Tripitaka was coded in the Pali language.
- **Fourth Council:** At Kashmir (Kundalvan), in 72 AD under Vasumitra (King was Kanishk(a). Vice-Chairman was Ashwaghosh(a). Divided Buddhism into Mahayana & Hinayana sects.

Buddist Literature:

- Buddhist scriptures in Pali are commonly referred to as Tripitakas, i.e. 'Threefold Basket'.
- **Vinaya Pitaka:** Rules of discipline in Buddhist monasteries.
- **Sutta Pitaka:** Largest, contains collection of Buddha's sermons.

- **Abhidhamma Pitaka:** Explanation of the philosophical principles of the Buddhist religion.

JAINISM IN INDIA

- There were 24 tirthankaras (Prophets or Gurus), all Kshatriyas.
- First was Rishabhanath (Emblem: Bull).
- The 23rd Tirthankar Parshwanath (Emblem: Snake) was the son of King Ashvasena of Banaras. His main teachings were: Non-injury, Non-lying, Non-stealing, Non-possession.
- The 24th & the last Tirthankar was Vardhman Mahavira (Emblem: Lion).

Vardhman Mahavira :

- He was born in Kundagram (District Muzaffarpur, Bihar) in 599 BC.
- His father Siddhartha was the head of Jnatrika clan. His mother was Trishala, sister of Lichchavi Prince Chetav of Vaishali.
- Mahavira was related to Bimbisara.
- Married to Yashoda, had a daughter named Priyadarsena, whose husband Jamali became his first disciple.
- At 30, after the death of his parents, he became an ascetic.
- In the 13th year of his asceticism (on the 10th of Vaishakh(a), outside the town of Jrimbhikgrama, he attained supreme knowledge (Kaivalya(a).
- From now on he was called Jaina or Jitendriya & Mahavira, & his followers were named Jains. He also got the title of Arihant, i.e., worthy.
- At the age of 72, he attained death at Pava, near Patna, in 527 BC.

Note: In Jainism, three Ratnas (Triratnas) are given & they are called the way to Nirvana. They are Right Faith, Right Knowledge & Right Conduct.

History of Jain Councils:

- **First Council:** Held at Pataliputra by Sthulabhadra in the beginning of third century BC. It resulted in the compilation of 12 Angas to replace 14 Purvas.
- **Second Council:** It was held at Vallabhi (Gujarat) in the fifth century AD under the leadership of Devridhigani.

THE MAGADHA EMPIRE

- **Period of Magadha Empire:** 6th Century – 4th Century BC.
- **Extent of Magadha Empire:** Magadha embraced the former districts of Patna, Gaya & parts of Shahabad & grew to be the leading state of the time.

Haryanka Dynasty: Originally founded in 566 BC by the grandfather of Bimbisara, but actual foundation by Bimbisara.

King Bimbisara of Magadha (544 BC - 492 B(C):

- Contemporary of Buddha.
- His capital was Rajgiri (Girivraj(a)
- His capital was surrounded by 5 hills, the openings in which were closed by stone walls on all sides.

Ajatshatru (492 BC - 460 B(C):

- Son of Bimbisara killed his father & seized the throne.
- Buddha died during his reign; arranged the first Buddhist Council.

Udayin (460 - 444 B(C): He founded the new capital at Pataliputra, situated at the confluence of the Ganga & Son.

Shishunaga Dynasty:

- Founded by a minister Shishunaga. He was succeeded by Kalasoka (IInd Buddhist council).
- Dynasty lasted for two generations only.
- Greatest achievement was the destruction of power of Avanti.

Nanda Dynasty:

- Founder was Mahapadma Nanda.
- Alexander attacked India in their reign. Dhana Nanda was there at that time.

Alexander's Invasion of India

- Alexander (356 BC - 323 B(C) was the son of Philip of Macedonia (Grec(e) who invaded India in 326 BC.
- At that time NW India was split up into a number of small independent states like Taxila, Punjab (kingdom of Porus), Gandhara etc.
- Except Porus who fought the famous battle of Hydaspes (on banks of Jhelum) with Alexander, all other kings submitted meekly.
- Except Porus who fought the famous battle of Hydaspes (on banks of Jhelum) with Alexander, all other kings submitted meekly.
- When Alexander reached Beas, his soldiers refused to go further, so he was forced to retreat.
- To mark the farthest point of his advance, he erected 12 huge stones altars on the northern bank of Beas.
- Remained in India for 19 months & died in 323 BC at Babylon.

THE MAURYAN DYNASTY

Chandragupta Maurya (322 - 297 B(C):

- With the help of Chanakya, known as Kautilya or Vishnugupta, he overthrew the Nandas & established the rule of the Maurya dynasty.
- Built a vast empire, which included not only good portions of Bihar & Bengal, but also western & north western India & the Deccan.

- This account is given by Megasthenes (A Greek ambassador sent by Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maury(a) in his book Indica. We also get the details from the Arthashastra of Kautilya.
- Chandragupta adopted Jainism & went to Sravanabelagola (near Mysor(e) with Bhadrabahu, where he died by slow starvation.

Bindusara (297 - 273 B(C):

- Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara in 297 BC.
- He is said to have conquered 'the land between the 2 seas', i.e., the Arabian Sea & Bay of Bengal.

Ashoka (269 - 232 B(C):

- Ashoka was the most famous Mauryan king and one of the greatest rulers. Ashoka assumed the title of Priyadarshi (pleasing to look at) and Devanampriya (beloved of Gods). In the Sarnath inscription, he adopted the third title, i.e. Dharmshoka.
- Ashoka's Rock Edicts - Major rock edicts (a set of 14 inscription) found at following 8 places: Dhauli, Girnar, Jaguguda, Kalsi, Mansehra, Shahbazgarhi, Sopara and Yenagardi.
- Minor rock edicts found at 13 places: Bairat, Brahmagiri, Gavimath Gajarra, Jatinga-Rameshwar, Maski, Palkigunda, Meadagiri, Rupanath, Sasaram, Siddhapur, Suvarnagiri and Verragudi.

Major rock edicts-

- 1st Major Rock Edict- Prohibition of animal sacrifice.
- 2nd Major Rock Edict- Related to measures of social welfare.
- 3rd Major Rock Edict- Respecting one's parents.
- 4th Major Rock Edict- Impact of Dhamma, Non-violence towards animals.
- 5th Major Rock Edict- Appointment of Dhamma Mahamantras to spread Dhamma.
- 6th Major Rock Edict- Welfare measures of efficient



The Kalinga War:

(261 BC, mentioned in XIII rock edict): It changed his attitude towards life. Ashoka became a Buddhist after that.

Ashoka's Dhamma

Dhamma is the Prakrit word form of the Sanskrit term 'Dharma' which means religious duty. Ashoka gave up the policy of conquest through war (dig-vijay(a) and began to follow a policy of conquest through dharma (dharma-vijay(a). Ashoka's Dhamma was related to norms of social behaviour and activities. Its norms are mentioned in Ashoka's edicts. Due to this policy, his name shines with unique brilliance.

Causes of the fall of Mauryan Empire:

- Ashoka's patronage of Buddhism & his anti-sacrificial attitude is said to have affected the income of the Brahmins. So they developed antipathy against Ashoka.
- Revenue from agrarian areas was not sufficient to maintain such a vast empire as booty from war was negligible.
- Successors of Ashoka were too weak to keep together such a large centralized empire.

Note: The last Mauryan king Brihadratha was killed by Pushyamitra Shunga (Commander in Chief) in 185 BC, who started the Shunga dynasty in Magadha.

SANGAM AGE IN INDIA

Cholas :

- The kingdom was called Cholamandalam or Coromondal. The chief centre was Uraiyur, a place famous for cotton trade. Capital was Kaveripattanam/Puhar.
- A Chola king named Elara conquered Sri Lanka & ruled it over for 50 years.
- Karikala was their famous king.
- Main source of wealth was trade in cotton cloth. They also maintained an efficient navy.
- The Iron Age in South India laid the foundation stone for a golden period which began in 300 BC and lasted till 300 AD. This period, popularly known as SANGAM AGE, is widely regarded as the golden age of the Tamils.
- The literature collectively produced by the ancient Tamil poets is commonly known as the Sangam literature.
- Sangam literature makes a mention of three kingdoms— Chola, Chera and Pandiyan.

THE GUPTA DYNASTY

Gupta Empire Golden Age of India

- On the ruins of the Kushan empire arose a new empire, which established its way over a good part of the former dominions of both Kushans & Satavahanas. The first two kings of the dynasty were Srigupta & Ghatotkacha.

Chandragupta I (AD 319 - 335):

- First important king of Gupta Dynasty.
- Started the Gupta era in 319-320 AD.
- He enhanced his power & prestige by marrying Kumara Devi, princess of the Lichchavi clan of Nepal.
- He acquired the title of Maharajadhiraj.
- Struck coins in the joint names of himself, his queen & the Lichchavi nation, thereby acknowledging his marriage alliance.

Samudragupta (AD 335 - 375):

- The Gupta kingdom was enlarged enormously by Chandragupta's son & successor Samudragupta.
- Samudragupta believed in the policy of war & conquest & because of his bravery & generalship he is called the 'Napoleon' of India (by the historian V.A. Smith).

Chandragupta - II (AD 380 - 413):

- Samudragupta was succeeded by Ramgupta but Chandragupta II killed him & married his queen Dhruvadevi.
- He was the first ruler to issue silver coins. Also issued copper coins.
- His court was adorned by celebrated nine gems (navratnas) including Kalidasa, Amarsimha, Varahmihir, & Dhanvantri.
- Chinese pilgrim Fahien visited India at this time.

Kumaragupta - I (AD 413 - 455):

- He adopted the title of Mahendraditya.
- Founded Nalanda University (a renowned university of ancient India).
- He was the worshipper of Lord Kartikeya (son of Lord Shiv(a)).
- In the last years of his reign, the peace & prosperity of the empire was disturbed due to the invasion of Turk-Mongol tribe, Hunas. During the war with the Hunas, Kumaragupta died.

Skandagupta (AD 455 - 467):

- Kumaragupta-I was followed by Skandagupta.
- Restored Sudarshana Lake.
- After his death, the great days of the Guptas were over. The empire continued but central control weakened & local governors became feudatory kings with hereditary rights.

Gupta Literature in India:

- Kalidas, the great Sanskrit dramatist, belonged to this period. His books are: Abhigyanashakuntalam (considered as one of the best literary works in the world & one of the earliest Indian work to be translated into European language, the other work being the Bhagavadgit(a), Ritusamhara, Meghadutam, Kumarasambhavam, Malavikagnimitram, Raghuvansha, Vikramurvashi etc. Out of these, Ritusamhara, Meghadutam, Raghuvansha were epics & the rest were plays.
- Vishakhadatta wrote Mudrarakshasa & Devichandraguptam.
- Vishnu Sharma wrote Panchtantra & Hitopadesh.
- The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on Panini & Patanjali.

- Ramayana & Mahabharata were almost completed by the 4th century AD.

Other Dynasties & Rulers (7th Century–12th Century A(D)

Harshavardhana (AD 606 – 647)

- Belonged to Pushyabhuti family & son of Prabhakar Vardhan.
- Originally belonged to Thaneshwar, but shifted to Kannauj (after Harsha's death Kannauj was won from Harsha's successors by the Pratiharas).
- Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsang (Prince of Travelers) visited during his reign.
- Harsha himself wrote 3 plays – Priyadarshika, Ratnavali & Nagananda.
- After the death of Harsha in 647, the empire once again broke up into petty States.
- I-tsing, another Chinese pilgrim, visited in 670 AD.

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