



मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय

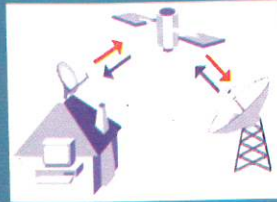
राजा भोज मार्ग, कोलार रोड, भोपाल

पाठ्य सामग्री

M.A. PRE- AIHCA FINAL

EPIGRAPHY,
PALAEOGRAPHY
OF ANCIENT INDIA

Self learning Material



आपकी शिक्षा आपके द्वार



M.A. PRE- AIHCA FINAL

**EPICRAPHY,
PALAEOGRAPHY
OF ANCIENT INDIA**



मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय, भोपाल

राजा भोज मार्ग (कोलार रोड), भोपाल-462016

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वेबसाइट : www.bhojvirtualuniversity.com

सर्वाधिकार सुरक्षित मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय, भोपाल (म.प्र.) के आधीन
इस प्रकाशन का कोई भी अंश म.प्र. भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय की अनुमति के बिना किसी भी तरह से पुनः
निर्माण, मिमियोग्राफ, फोटोकॉपी या अन्य विधियों द्वारा नहीं किया जा सकता इस पुस्तक में छपे विचार
लेखकों के हैं न कि म.प्र. भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय के।

M.P. BHOJ (OPEN) UNIVERSITY BHOPAL (M.P.)

मध्यप्रदेश विधानसभा द्वारा म.प्र. भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय अधिनियम 1991 द्वारा स्थापित एवं विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग (वृत्तस्थ शिक्षा ब्यूरो) से सम्बद्ध

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1985 emphasized that distance education is an important mode for the development and promotion of higher education. In this context, for the expansion and promotion of distance education, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), Government of India took an important decision that in the VIIIth year plan every State should establish a State Open University (SOU) following the distance education mode. On this basis Madhya Pradesh Bhoj (Open) University (MPBOU) was established under an Act of State Assembly in 1991 with the following objectives.

- To Extend and expand Higher Education by reaching the un-reached through various flexible means suited to the Open and Distance- Learning (ODL) mode using emerging information and communication technology.
- To promote national integration and the integrated development of human personality for the well being of the community.
- To determine/ maintain standards and promote Distance Education.

Special Features

Providing education to the doorsteps to the learner for easy accessibility.

- Flexibility in the system for wider coverage.
- Providing equitable access of quality education for different target group of learners irrespective of their age or status of employment.
- Freedom to the learners to study at his/ her own pace and convenience.
- Opportunity to learner to study from his/ her own chosen location.
- Omnipresent Education using emerging communication technologies.
- Sustainable intervention to develop, upgrade and recycle human resource for areas critical to national development including the well being of the community.
- Determination of standard and maintainance of quality in Distance Education in accordance with DEC norms.
- The University mainly delivers training and education through distance mode in the form of flexible and open learning. In general, the system consists of a main campus activity in the form of curriculum development, generation of self learning material, (SLM) preparation of assignments and extending student support services. The head quarter of the University which manages and operates the Distance Education Programmes is situated at Raja Bhoj Marg (Kolar Road) Bhopal.
- Extension and expansion of Higher Education by reaching the unreached through various flexible means suited to the open and distance education mode using emerging information and communication Technology.
- To promote National integration and the Integrated Development of Human Personality for the well being of the community.
- To determine/ maintain standards and to promote distance education.

Mission and Vision

Effective and sustainable interventions to develop, upgrade and recycle human resources for areas critical to national development including the well being of the community

Cost effective, extension and promotion of quality of education to reach the unreached.

Interventions for the well being of the community.

Omnipresent and omnipotent education using emerging information and communication technologies.

Success through Access.

Distinctive Features: Reaching The Unreached

Some study centers specially created in remote & tribal areas with heavy tribal population to focus on effective delivery of the university's programmes for the target group of learners from the tribal areas.

About 95% of the university's student population is from rural, remote and less developed areas.

Study Centres for Under Graduate Degree programmes through Higher Secondary Schools.

195 study centres functional in schools to provide higher education in remote, less developed areas of the state of Madhya Pradesh.

All the 195 study centres are in the process of being converted into multimedia study centres with satellite based connectivity using EDUSAT network.

All ten regional centres are connected through internet & website & edusat network.

Numerous study centres have been established across the state in different Government Colleges for undergraduate courses of the university.

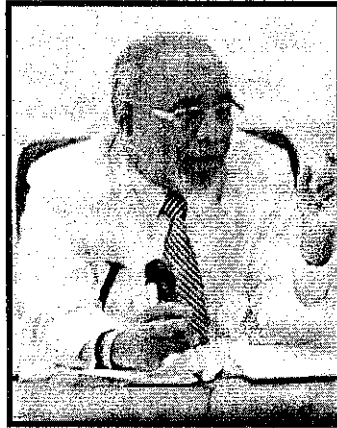
Recognition:- The Madhya Pradesh Bhoj (Open) University (MPBOU) was established under an act of State Assembly in 1991. Madhya Pradesh Bhoj (Open) University is recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India and Distance Education Council (DEC) Government of India duly recognized also by the State Government of Madhya Pradesh. The University has an important existence in the Association of Indian Universities (AIU). MPBOU's Degrees/ Diplomas/ Certificates are recognised by the AIU and are at par with Degrees/ Diplomas/ Certificates of all Indian Universities.

प्रो. (डॉ.) तारिक जफर
कुलपति



मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय, भोपाल
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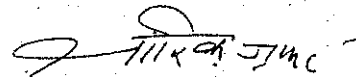
संदेश



प्रिय छात्र-छात्राओं

प्रदेश में दूरवर्ष शिक्षा द्वारा ग्रामीण, आदिवासी, पिछड़े एवं आवृक्षित वर्ग के विद्यार्थियों अहित अमरुत युवा वर्ग को, उच्च शिक्षा प्रदान करने के लिए, पाठ्यक्रम, अत्रीय कार्य एवं अम्पर्क कक्षाओं के आयोजन की सुविधा के साथ लोकार्पित, म.प्र. भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा देश-प्रदेश के ऊर्जावान एवं भारी भविष्य निर्माता, छात्र-छात्राओं का हार्दिक अभिनंदन एवं बेहतय शिक्षा के लिए मेरी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ।

आपकी शिक्षा-आपके द्वारा के अकल्प के साथ।



(प्रो. (डॉ.) तारिक जफर)
कुलपति

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MP Bhoj (Open) University Bhopal (M.P.) Fees & Details of Courses

Name of the Programme/Course	Course Code	Duration of Study		Eligibility	Annual Fee
		Min.	Max.		
Master of Computer Application (MCA)	006	3 Years	6 Years	Graduation with Maths**	16600
Master of Science (M.Sc., CS)	222	2 years	5 years	Maths/Physics/Electronics /Computer Science with Graduation	11000
Master of Science, Information Technology (M.Sc., IT)	221	2 years	5 years	Bachelor degree in Maths/Physics/ Electronics /Computer Science	11000
PG Diploma in Computer Application	PGDCA	1 year	3 years	Graduation	16600
Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (B.Sc., IT)	021	3 years	6 years	10+2 with Maths	8300
Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA)	004	3 years	6 years	10+2 with Maths	8300
Diploma in Computer Application	DCA	1 year	3 years	10+2	6900
Master of Science (M.Sc. Zoology)	235	2 Year	5 Years	Science Graduate with (Zoology)	8300
Master of Science (M.Sc. Botany)	231	2 Years	5 Years	Science Graduate with (Botany)	8300
Master of Science (M.Sc. Mathematics)	233	2 Years	5 Years	Science Graduate with (Math)	8300
Master of Science (M.Sc. Physics)	234	2 Years	5 Years	Science Graduate with (Physics/Electronics)	8300
Master of Science (M.Sc. Chemistry)	235	2 Years	5 Years	Graduation with Chemistry	8300
Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. Math)	009	3 Years	6 Years	10+2 Sc with Maths	1900
Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. Bio)	009	3 Years	6 Years	10+2 sc with Biology	1900
PG Diploma in Bio-Informatics (PGDBI)	028	1 Year	3 Years	Graduate (Biology/ Maths)	11000
PG Diploma in Chemo-Informatics (PGDCI)	035	1 Year	3 Years	Graduate (Biology/ Maths)	11000
PG Diploma in Dietetics and * Therapeutics Nutrition (PGDDTN)	029	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation in Home Science/Biology Sciences	14000
PG Diploma in Hospital and Health Management (PGDHHM)	014	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation in Biological Science	20700
Diploma in Nutrition and Health Education (DNHE)	013	1 Year	3 Years	10+2 with Biology/ Nutrition	4200
M.A. in Ancient Indian History Culture & Archaeology M.A. (AIHCA)	024	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with History	8300
Master of Arts (MA English Lit)	251	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with Eng.	5500
Master of Arts (MA Economics)	252	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with Eco.	5500
Master of Arts (MA History)	254	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with History	5500
Master of Arts (MA Political Science)	255	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate With Pol. Sc.	5500
Master of Arts (MA Sociology)	257	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate	5500
Master of Arts (MA Hindi)	253	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with Hindi	5500
Master of Arts (MA Geography)	258	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate with Geog.	7200

Name of the Programme/Course	Course Code	Duration of Study		Eligibility	Annual Fee
		Min.	Max.		
Master of Social Work (MSW)	034	2 Years	5 Years	Graduate	9600
Master of Law	LLM	2 Years	5 Years	LLB with not less than 55% Marks	15000
Bachelor of Arts (BA)	008	3 Years	6 Years	10+2	1600
Master of Library & Information Sc. (MLIS)	020	1 Year	3 Years	B.LIS	11040
Bachelor of Library & Information Sc. (BLIS)	019	1 Year	3 Years	Graduate in	8280
Master of Journalism & Mass Comm. (MJMC)	502	1 Year	3 Years	BMC or Public Relation or IT or PG Diploma in above	18000
Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Comm. (BJMC)	501	1 Year	3 Years	Graduate	12000
PG Diploma in Remote Sensing	PGDRS	1 Year	3 Years	Graduate	8400
Certificate in Human Rights	CHR	6 Months	2 Years	10+2	2760
Certificate in Rural Development	CRD	6 Months	2 Years	10+2	2760
Certificate in Environmental Studies	CES	6 Months	2 Years	10+2	2760
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	005	3 Years	6 Years	Graduation	13800
Master of Commerce (M.Com Accounts)	261	2 Years	5 Years	Commerce Graduate	5500
Master of Commerce (M.Com Management)	262	2 Years	5 Years	Commerce Graduate	5500
Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)	003	3 Years	6 Years	10+2	8300
Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)	010	3 Years	6 Years	10+2 with commerce	1750
PG Diploma in Management (PGDM)	051	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	9700
PG Diploma in Tourism and Hotel Management (PGDTHM)	030	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	8300
PG Diploma in Heritage Mgt. (PGDHM)	040	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	8900
PG Diploma in Company Secretaryship (PGDCS)	052	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	4200
PG Diploma in Disaster Management	PGDDM	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	4200
Diploma in Business Administration	DBA	1 Year	3 Years	Graduation	8300
Diploma in Management	DM	1 year	3 Years	Graduation	8300
(i) Master of Education	M.Ed.	2 Years	4 Years	B.Ed. or Equivalent Degree	45000
(ii) Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)	016	2 Years	5 Years	Graduation	25000
(iii) Diploma in Education	D.Ed.	2 Years	4 Years	10+2	16000
(iv) Master of Arts in Education (MA Education)	017	2 Years	4 Years	Graduation	24000
(v) Bachelor of Special Education (B.Ed. SEDE)	096	2 Years	5 Years	Graduation	20000
(vi) PGPD	098	9 Months	3 Years	Spl. Ed. Teacher	8000
(vii) FC-SEDE	097	3 Months	1 Year	10+2	2000

VICE CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

The Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University was established in 1991 by an Act of the Legislative Assembly. His Excellency, the Governor is the Chancellor of the University.

The University offers degree, diploma, certificate and research programmes in humanities, Social Science, Basic Science, Computer Science, IT, Commerce, Management, Education, Health Science and Nursing with an annual enrollment of about 1.5 lac students. The university has net work of 1049 study centres in different parts of the country.

The aim of the university is to provide education to a large segment of the population by the distance education. To realize this ideal self instructional study material is given to the students. I am proud to declare that MPBOU has taken the pioneer task in designing study material for innovative programme like Archaeology, Indological studies and Heritage Management.

The reconstruction of Ancient Indian History is not possible without the study of inscriptions and coins. They provide information regarding all the spheres of history-political, socio-economic and cultural. Palaeography is the key for deciphering the inscriptions. After studying this course material the student would develop the knack of discovering historical facts through original archaeological source-inscriptions and coins.

The book would not only benefit the students who are interested in chalking out careers in the field of archeology and heritage management but would also be an asset to the general reader interested in Indian history and culture.

I am thankful to the Distance Education Council and its chairman for the financial grant provided for the printing of the study material.

I congratulate the department of History, Archaeology, Culture and Tourism especially Dr. Susmita Pande for designing this unique material which is being developed for the first time in the distance mode by MPBOU.

I am also thankful to the directors especially Dr. S.K. Awasthi, Dr. Dinesh Nagar and Dr. S.B. Goswami for their various efforts in the publication of this book.

- Dr. Kamlakar Singh
Vice Chancellor

Editor's Note

It is a very happy augury that study material in the distance mode for Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology is being structured for the first time in the country by MPBOU. The scholars invited in this effort are eminent historians and archaeologists of national and international repute.

The Six blocks of course VII of M.A Final **Palaeography, Epigraphy and Numismatics** have been integrated in one volume for the practical convenience of the students and also since the understanding of one block involves the reference of another invariably.

The volume aims to introduce to the students of History and Archaeology the process of understanding the human past through important archeological sources.

The *first block* deals with much debated problem- the antiquity of the art of writing in India. The student is made aware of the problems related to the antiquity of the art of writing in India, the conflicting views related to this as well as positive evidences of the art of writing in India. It also explains the origin, evolutions of the scripts especially the deciphering of the Brahmi script. It also deals with the Asokan Inscriptions which shed light on the contemporary political and social scenario of the Mauryan age as well as on the personality of an enlightened emperor like Asoka.

The *second block* deals with the text and interpretations of important Pre Gupta and Gupta inscriptions which reflect our glorious past.

Block Three discusses the origin and development of coinage in India, the various techniques of their manufacture and the details of the various coins.

Block four tries to explain to the students the regional, Indo Greek, Kushan and Satvahana coins. The history of this period is shrouded in mystery and the chapter aims to explain it to the students in a lucid way through coins.

Block five deals with the Gupta coins which show the peak of development in Indian numismatics. The coins show excellence in their artistic quality, fabric and variety. They constitute unique sources in interpreting the history of the age.

Block six throws light on the coins of Hunas and Harsa. It also surveys the coins of early mediaeval period.

The publication of this volume would not have been possible without the support, encouragement and dynamism of our Hon'ble Vice chancellor Dr. Kamlakar Singh.

I must thank the eminent writers of the units-Dr. Anamika Rai, Dr. Abhay Kumar Singh, Prof. Devendra Handa, Prof. Shriram Goyal, who inspite of their very busy academic commitments completed their units. We are proud to say that the pioneer scholars of this field have contributed to our volume and have enhanced its prestige.

My thanks are due to the university personel-Registrar Dr. C.K. Jain and the Director PT&E- Dr. Dinesh Nagar, without whose incentive the book would not have seen the light of the day. I am also thankful to Dr SB Goswami, Dr Solanki, Dr.S A K Rao, Dr. S.K Awasthi, and my colleagues Dr Sadhana Singh and Dr Harkeerat Bains for their encouragement.

I am thankful to our Post doctoral fellow Dr. Manoj Kumar Sharma who assisted me in various ways. Shri. Bhupendra Singh Chauhan deserves my heartfelt thanks for preparing a neat typescript.

The volume would be helpful not only to the students of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology but also to the people who are interested in the discovery of our rich heritage.

(Susmita Pande)

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BLOCK - I
PALAEOGRAPHY, EPIGRAPHY AND NUMISMATICS

UNIT - I

ANTIQUITY OF THE ART OF WRITING IN INDIA

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Views of early Indologists
- 1.4 Foreign evidences
- 1.5 Evidences from the Buddhist and Jain literature
- 1.6 Evidences from indogenous and Brahmanical literature
- 1.7 Art evidences
- 1.8 Positive evidences
- 1.9 References - footnotes
- 1.10 Summary
- 1.11 Check your progress
- 1.12. Self activities
- 1.13. Suggested Readings -

1.1 Introduction :

The history of the art of writing in India, like the history of ancient India in general, is still shrouded in mystery, and a number of divergent and conflicting views are held on it. This state of affairs is mainly due to many lacunae in ancient Indian history and the scarcity of materials on the subject for study. It is not possible here to enter into the details of various theories. It is proposed to deal with the problem as briefly as possible.

1.2 Objectives :

In this unit the student would be made aware of the problems related to the antiquity of the art of writing in India as well as positive evidences of the art of writing in India. The student would know the a) Views of early Indologists, b) Indogenous tradition, c) Views of foreign writers, d) Buddhist tradition, e) Brahmanical tradition, f) Positive evidences.

1.3 View of Early Indologists :

Some of the early indologists of Europe obsessed with the comparative novelty of European civilization and the theory of the Aryan invasion of India in the second millennium B.C. and due to the paucity of evidence at their disposal, were inclined to fix the beginning of the art of writing in India rather late and they were not prepared to go beyond the first millennium B.C.

- (1) Max Muller, one of the earliest Indologists, opines, "I maintain that there is not a single word in Panini's terminology which presupposes the existence of writing." According to him Panini flourished in the fourth century B.C. Thus, the art of writing, in his opinion, started in India even later than the fourth century B.C.²
- (2) Burnell, another European indologist, held the view that the Indian script, Brahmi was derived from the Phoenician script and it was introduced in India not earlier than the fourth or the fifth century B.C.
- (3) Buhler, who was better equipped than the first two scholars to write on the history of Indian Palaeography, traced the origin of the Brahmi script. He fixes the date of its introduction into India in the following words:

"According to the results of the preceding inquiry, the elaboration of Brahmi, was completed about B.C. 500, or perhaps even earlier, about B.C. 800.

The above views were expressed either in the nineteenth century or in the beginning of the twentieth one. Since then a mass of new materials has become available on ancient Indian history, which has changed the views of historians about it.³

1.4 Foreign evidences:

They support the Indian traditions. Scholars in China and Western Asia were conversant with Indian traditions about the invention and antiquity of the art of writing in India.

- (1) The learned Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang refers to the very early invention of writing in India.⁴
- (2) The Chinese encyclopedia Fa-Wa-Shu-lin states that the Brahmi script written from the left to the right was invented by Fan (Brahma) and it was the best of the scripts.⁵
- (3) The Arab scholar Alberuni, referring to the antiquity of writing in India says, "As to the writing of alphabet of the Hindus, we have already mentioned that it had been lost and forgotten; that nobody cared for it, and that in consequence people became illiterate,

sunken into gross ignorance and entirely estranged from science. But then Vyasa, the son of Parasara, rediscovered their alphabet of fifty letters by an inspiration of God." According to him the history of Indian alphabets would begin with the Kaliyuga, in B.C. 3101."

- (4) Evidence of the Greek Writers : Some Greek writers, who either accompanied Alexander in his invasion to India or visited it afterwards, have recorded their observations regarding the art of writing and the material used for it in India of the fourth and the third century B.C.
- (5) Nearchus,⁷ one of the generals of Alexander, who accompanied him in the Punjab records that 'the people of this place know the art of manufacturing paper out of cotton and tattered cloths (certainly for writing purposes)'.
- (6) Megasthenes,⁸ who stayed at Pataliputra (Patna) from 305 B.C. to 299 B.C. as a Greek ambassador to the Mauryan court writes in his *Indica* that 'in India mile-stones are fixed on the roads at an interval of ten stadia to know the distance between the rest houses' for the use of the travelers, who were expected to be literate. He also refers to the customs of relating 'Varsaphala' (good or evil prospects of the year) according to an almanac (which could be prepared only with the help of writing), preparing of the horoscopes of individuals and delivering of judgment on the basis of (written) Smritis'. Unfortunately Megasthenes uses the word 'memory' for 'Smriti' which has been misconstrued by some to indicate that the Smriti were only remembered and not written. This view has been, however, refuted by Buhler⁹ who maintains that by 'memory' Megasthenes meant Smriti literature and not remembrance.

1.5 Evidence From the Buddhist and Jain Literature : The first stratum of the early Pali literature was collected and composed, without any doubt, before Alexander's invasion to India and it records some aspects of contemporary history and reflects even history of times before the fifth and sixth century B.C.

- (1) The Suttanta, while giving the sermons on the conduct of the Bhikkhus, includes Akkharika, a game, in the list of things forbidden for them.¹⁰ The game Akkharika (Aksharika) was played by children. In this game one had to recognize letters written with fingers either on one's own back or in the sky'.¹¹ Monks were further restrained from incising the rules, which induce people to gain heaven, riches and fame in the life after death through self-mortification.¹²
- (2) The *Vinayapitaka* praises the art of writing (lekhana) as innocent and commendable for monks.¹³ For householders and their sons, the profession of a writer was regarded as a good means of livelihood.¹⁴

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(3) The Jatakas refer to the art of writing in the following contexts:

- (i) Letters, private and official.¹⁵
- (ii) Royal proclamations.¹⁶
- (iii) Family affairs.¹⁷
- (iv) Moral and political maxims.¹⁸
- (v) Usury and bonds (inapanna)¹⁹ and
- (vi) Manuscripts (Pattra).²⁰

(4) The *Mahavagga*²¹ and the *Jatak*²² not only prove the existence of writing before the fifth century B.C. in India but they also refer to the existence of institutions where this art was taught, to the contents of writing on the subject taught and to the methods and material used for it. A later work, the *Lalitavistara*²³, describes how Buddha went to the lipisala (a school where writing was taught) and how his teacher Visvamitra taught him letters on a writing-board of sandalwood and with a golden pen.

The Jain works, *Samavayangasuttra* and *Pannavanasuttra*, and the Buddhist work *Lalitavistara*, like the Brahmanical ones, refer to the tradition of the high antiquity of writing in India.

All the Buddhist evidences clearly indicate that the art of writing was well known and widely spread in India in the period between the fourth and the sixth century B.C. And that it was not something new and it must have been preceded by a long period of the evolution of this art.

1.6 Evidences from indigenous and Brahmanical Literature :

In contradiction with the views of the most of European scholars, Indian traditions claim a very high antiquity for the art of writing in India. Some Indian traditions are given below:

Classical Sanskrit literature, consisting of epics, Kavyas, dramas, Smrtis, works on polity and morals, stories, philosophy and works on technical subjects contain ample proofs regarding the art of writing in India, by the nature of their contents, style and volume. Most of them are, however posterior to the age of the Asokan inscriptions and, therefore, their evidence is not pertinent to the problem of the earlier existence of writing in India. As opposed to the later Sanskrit literature, the evidence of the early Sanskrit literature is very valuable. A part of this literature was contemporaneous with the early Buddhist literature;

but mostly it preceded the rise of Buddhism. To the pre-Buddhist Brahmanical literature, Max Muller arbitrarily assigned the period between B.C. 800-1200.

- (1) The Narada Smriti, a work on ancient Hindu Law and assigned to the 5th century A.D., while dealing with the importance of writing in connection with documentary evidence in legal procedure, states, "that if Brahma, the Creator had not created the written (literature), the best of eyes, this world could have never attained to its happy condition." The only inference that can be drawn from this tradition is that the Indians in the fifth century A.D. believed that the art of writing was invented with the early development of literature and it was regarded essential for the progress of the world.
- (2) Brahaspati refers to the same tradition, though in slightly different words: "He says that because in a period of six months memory becomes confused regarding a particular thing, in very early times the creator produced letters depicted on leaves". This statement also maintains that the earliest and the most common writing material in India consisted of leaves available in abundance.
- (3) The greatest Sanskrit poet Kalidasa gives his considered opinion on the utility of learning the art of writing in the following words: "By the proper grasp of writing one reaches the vast treasure of literature, as one approaches the ocean through the mouth of a river".²⁴ Against European presumption that the early Indian literature was handed down orally without the help of writing from one generation to the other, Kalidasa regarded this art essential for the proper study of literature.
- (4) The two Great Epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which can be assigned to the period earlier than the fourth century B.C., though certain interpolations were added to them, contain a number of terms pertaining to writing, likh, lekha, lekhana, lekhaka, etc. In the introduction of the Mahabharata it is said that Vyasa, the author of the Epic, used Ganesa, obviously a human being expert in writing, as his scribe.²⁵
- (5) Another important Brahmanical work, the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya, of the fourth century B.C. contains direct and specific references to writing. Some of them are given below:
 - (i) Having gone through the tonsure ceremony, one should learn writing and counting. I.5.2.
 - (ii) In the fifth the king should consult his council of ministers through letters. I. 19.6.
 - (iii) With signs and writings he should send his spies. I. 12. 8.
 - (iv) The writer.....should be prompt in composing, elegant in writing and able in reading documents. II. 9.28

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- (6) The Sutra literature,²⁶ consisting of the Srauta, the Grihya and the Dharma Sutras, has been assigned to the period between the second and the eighth century B.C. This also yields evidence on the wide currency of writing. To take example, the *Vasistha Dharmasutra* and the *Visnu Dharmasutra*²⁷ mention written documents (likhita) as one of the legal evidences.
- (7) Early works on Sanskrit grammar, which belong to the Vedanga class in the early Sutra period, presuppose the existence of writing, as no developed systems of grammar, phonetics and philology can be evolved without the help of writing.²⁸ They also contain terms which indicate the existence of writing during their age.
- (i) The *Astadhyayi* of Panini²⁹ contains the following terms denoting the existence of the art of writing.³⁰
- (a) Lipi³¹ and Libi (script)
 - (b) Lipikara³² (a writer or scribe)
 - (c) Yavanani³³ (Greek Script)
 - (d) Grantha³⁴ (a book)
 - (e) Svarita³⁵ (a mark in writing)
- (8) The Upanisads, which form a still earlier layer of the Brahmanical literature, furnish references to aksaras (letters)³⁶ These letters are mentioned not only as pronounced with suffix 'Kara' (something to be made with *Varna* (something to be coloured or painted)).³⁷ *Varna* (written letters) and *Matras* (medical signs) are mentioned together.
- (9) In some of the *Aranyakas*³⁸ we find minute differentiation between *usma* (sibilants), *sparsa* (mutes), *svara* (vowels) and *ghosa*; between *murdhanya* (cerebral) and *dantya* (dental). We also come across discussion of *Samdhi* (joining of letters). The formation of aksara (letters) is explained as a combination of letters a, u and m.
- (10) Even when we approach the earliest layer of the Brahmanical literature, the Vedas, there are certain evidences to show that the authors of the Vedas were familiar with the art of writing. In the *Rgveda*³⁹ we get internal references to the names of the meters - Gvatri, Anustubha, Brhati Viraja, Tristubha, Jagati etc. In the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*⁴⁰ we find the names of some additional meters like Pankti, Dvipada, Tripada, Catuspada, Satapada. The *Atharvaveda*⁴¹ gives the number of meters as eleven. Illiterate people could not have evolved the names of meters and the technical terms regarding their composition. The modern primitive races and even the lower strata of the literate races

compose songs and sing them heartily, but they cannot name their meters nor do they know the technical side of prosody. Only that section of the literate community, which is acquainted with the bulk of the literature of the race and has the power of observation and analysis, can develop the art of prosody.

The Vedic literature also refers to high figures involving the knowledge of written arithmetic. According to the *Rgveda*⁴² King Savarni gave one thousand cows in alms, on the ears of which figure eight was imprinted. The *Vajasañeyi Samhita*⁴³ of the *Yajurveda* includes 'Ganaka' (an astronomer) in the list of people enumerated in connection with the Purusamedha. As regards the figures we get the following in ascending order:

dasa (10), *sata* (100), *sahasra* (1,000), *ayuta* (10,000), *niyuta* (1,00,000), *prayuta* (10,00,000), *arbuda* (1,00,00,000), *nyarbuda* (10,00,00,000), *samudra* (1,00,00,00,000), *madhya* (10,00,00,00,000)

Now the question may be asked: If writing existed so early, why is not a single specimen of it found before the fifth century B.C. in India? The answer is that only 'monumental writing' engraved on hard materials like stone or metal can survive for long centuries. All available survivals of early writing found in India are those on stone. Early Brahmanical literature and books were written on leaves, birch-bark and later on handmade paper. These frail and perishable materials could not be preserved for a long time; old manuscripts were discarded after some time and they were copied afresh for transmission to the new generation. As a result of this process even script under went change from time to time.

The system of education in ancient India that laid emphasis on learning personally from the mouth of the teacher⁴⁴ and remembering the texts has been misunderstood to suggest that the art of writing was unknown in the time when early Brahmanical literature was composed. The religion and beliefs of the ancient Hindus required that the Vedas should be correctly pronounced; the wrongly pronounced speech would kill the *yajamana*.⁴⁵

1.7 Art evidences

The literary traditions regarding the antiquity of writing in India are supported by the art traditions of the country also. In a sculptural representation at Badami, Brahma holds in one of his four hands a bundle of palm-leaves, denoting a book.⁴⁶ Similarly Sarasvati is always conceived with one of her hands decorated with a book. The earliest example of Sarasvati holding a book in her hand is found on a pedestal from Mathura, belonging to the first century of the Christian era. Thus both the deities associated with the beginning of knowledge and literature are also depicted with written books in their hands. On a panel from the

Gupta temple at Deogarh Visnu is depicted with a book in one of his hands. Siva, as a god of knowledge and learning, and his devotees are also represented in sculpture with a book in one of the hands.

1.8 Positive Evidences : The conclusions drawn from the traditional, literary, circumstantial and inferential evidences are supported by positive evidences in the forms of inscriptions, writing engraved or incised on permanent materials, stone, metal, earthen tablets, ivory, steatite etc., which have survived the long centuries intervening between them and the present time, while their contemporary works written on perishable materials like leaves, bark and paper have perished. The following are a few relevant documents:

- (1) The Mauryan Inscriptions.⁴⁷ The indisputably datable specimens of writing are found in the inscriptions of Asoka, belonging to the third century B.C. They are engraved in two main scripts of the country - Brahmi and Kharosthi on rocks, pillars of stone and the walls of caves. The inscriptions are distributed over a wide area from the Himalayas in the north to the state of Mysore in the south and from Girnar in Kathiawar (West) to Dhauli and Jaugada in S.E. The palaeography of these inscriptions is marked by the following characteristics:
 - (i) **Wide variations in the forms of letters** - The majority of letters have different forms obviously developed in different times and localities and by different persons in course of time. For instance letter 'A' has ten forms.
 - (ii) **Local varieties** - Broadly speaking there were two main varieties - northern and southern but other regional sub-varieties are also traceable.
 - (iii) **Cursive and advanced forms of letters** - The same letter possesses a monumental (mostly angular and carved with great care, paying full attention to its aesthetics) form and at the same times a cursive (having a tendency towards curves written in personal and day-to-day writing) one. This is possible only when a script is intimately familiar on account of its long use that prevents confusion regarding the identification and recognition of different forms. Besides, we get advanced forms of letters, which mean that the letters were changing in their basic forms due to evolutionary causes.
- (2) There are some legends and inscriptions which belong to a period earlier than that of Asoka and which carry the date of writing back to pre-Asokan times. They can be referred to as follows:

- (i) **Bhattiprolu relic-casket inscriptions**⁴⁸ - They can be assigned to a date earlier than that of Asokan inscriptions on the basis of (1) liquid characters of some of its letters (da, dha, bha), (2) archaic nature of some letters (cha, ja, sa) and independent forms of two of its signs (la and la).
- (ii) **Taxila coin Brahmi legends**⁴⁹ - On palaeographic and numismatic grounds they are placed in the fourth century B.C.
- (iii) **The Mahasthana stone plaque inscription**⁵⁰ - This inscription was found in the Bogra district of Bengal and records an endowment to the Panchavargiya Buddhist monks.
- (iv) **The Sohagarura copperplate inscription**⁵¹ - It was found in Gorakhpur district of U.P. and records a provision of grains and fodders during famines.
- (v) **The Piprahwa Buddhist vase inscription** - It was found in the Basti district of U.P. It records the dedication of a relic-casket containing the portion obtained by the Sakyas out of the remains of Buddha and it can be assigned to c. 483 B.C., the date of Buddha's Nirvana.
- (vi) **The Badli inscription** - It was discovered in a village of the Ajmer district. It contains the inscription '*Viraya Bhagavate chatusite vase*' (dedicated to Lord (Maha) Vira in his 84th year). By calculation we get (527-84) 483 B.C. as the date of this inscription.

On the basis of above positive evidences the age of writing is pushed back to the fifth century B.C. pre-supposing a previous long development of scripts. These epigraphs are almost contemporaneous with the early Buddhist literature.

- (3) Before the discovery of the Indus Valley script in 1921 the palaeographers in India stumbled on few pre-Mauryan inscriptions and could not go beyond the fifth century B.C. But the momentous discovery referred to above gave a rude shock to the complacent conception of the chronology of ancient India which was supposed to start in the middle of the second millennium B.C. on the consideration of stratifications and comparison between the Sumerian and Indus Valley civilization the age of the Indus Valley culture and with it that of its script is fixed in the fourth millennium B.C. at the latest, with the possibility of its being pushed back still further. It is not necessary to discuss here whether this script was indigenous or imported.⁵² This will be done in the chapter dealing with the origin of scripts in India. But this much can be said here that the absence of the discovery of monumental writing between the sixth century B.C. and the age of the

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Indus Valley culture cannot be construed to suggest that the art of writing was unknown in India during that period.⁵³ The beginning of the earliest Vedic literature, which contains evidences on writing, and the rise of the Indus Valley culture, was contemporary. Both the evidences combined strongly indicate the existence of writing in the fourth millennium B.C. in India.

Thus the traditions of the country, the testimony of foreign writers, literary evidences and positive palaeographical survivals all tend to prove a very high antiquity of the art of writing in India, stretching in the past up to the fourth millennium B.C. The earliest specimens of writing in India can be regarded as contemporaneous with those found in Sumeria, Egypt and Elam.

1.9 Footnotes - reference :

1. *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 262; the great scholar overlooked the fact that a work on developed grammar itself pre-supposes the art of writing. For terms denoting writing see infra p. 12.
2. *Ibid.* p. 507. Goldstuckor in his work '*Panini and his place in Sanskrit Literature*' thoroughly exploded the theory of Max Muller.
3. Even the latest European writer on Indian palaeography David Diringer in his book '*The Alphabet*' (1949), p. 334, mostly relying on the researches of the early European Orientlists, maintains, "On the whole, many different lines of evidence suggest a date between the eighth and the sixth century B.C. for the introduction of writing into "Aryan" India, thus confirming the conclusion that the Brahmi script was much later than the Indus Valley writing and that the knowledge of writing flourished from the seventh century
4. *Bela, Si-yu-ki*. I. 77.
5. *Babylonian and Oriental Records*, I. 59.
6. *Sachau, Albaruni's India*, I. 171.
7. *Strabo*, XV. 717.
8. *India of Megasthenes*, 91, 125-126; C. Muller, *Fragm. Hist. Graec.* 2, 421.
9. *Indian Palaeography*, p. 6.
10. *Suttanta*, I.
11. *Brahmajala-Sutta*, 14; *Samannaphalasutta*, 49.

12. *Vinayapitaka*, Parajika Section (3, 4, 4).
13. *Bhikkhupachhi putiya*, 2. 2.
14. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 108.
15. *Katahaka Jataka*; Kama Jataka.
16. *Ruru Jataka*.
17. *Kanha Jataka*.
18. *Kurudhamma Jataka*.
19. *Ruru Jataka*.
20. Buhler, *Indian Studies*, III. 120.
21. 1. 49; *Bhikkhupachhittiya*, 65, 1.
22. *Katahaka Jataka*.
23. Chap. X.
24. *Raghuvamsa*, III. 28.
25. *Adiparva*, I. 112.
26. Winternitz : A History of India Literature, Vol. I.
27. XVI. 10. 14-15; VI. 23.
28. No dialect or language of the world, without the knowledge of script, has been known to possess a codified grammar.
29. According to Max Muller (*History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*) and Buhler Panini flourished in the fourth century B.C. Goldstucker, on the basis of wide researches, fixed the date of Paninit in the eighth centryry B.C., which is more reasonable.
30. It is really suprising that Max Muller presumed that there is not a single word in the terminology of Panini, indicating writing. See ante, p. 1.
31. 13, 2, 21, Un the opinion of Buhler "Dipi and Lipi are probably derived from the old Persian Dipi, the Punjab by Darius about B.C. 500, and which later became Lipi". (*Indian Palaeography* p. 5; Buhler, *Indian Studies*, III. 21 D). This view presupposes borrowing on the part of Panini and drags him down to the fourth century B.C., In view of Panini's date fixed by Goldstucker, Buhler's opinion does not hold good. As regards the derivation of the word 'Lipi', Bhanuji Dikshita while commenting upon the *Amar-Kosa* II. 8. 16) writes and gives a Sanskrit derivation for the both Lipi and Lib

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32. Ibid.
33. I. 49; Katyana explains it ; Patanjali Comments,
34. I. 3. 75; 3. 87; 4. 3. 116.
35. I. 3. II.
36. *Chhandogya* II. 10.
37. *Chhandogya* I. 13; II. 2. 3.
38. *Aitareya*, III 2. I; II. 2. 4; III. a. 6; III. 1. 5.
39. X. 14. 16; X. 132. 3. 4.
40. *Yajurveda, Vaj. Samhita*, XI. XIV. 19; XXIII. 33.XXVIII.14.
41. VIII. 9. 19.
42. x. 62. 20.
43. XXX.20
44. *Regveda*, VII.103.5.
45. Patanjali-*Mahabhasya*, I.
46. *Indian Antiquary* Vol. VI, 366; XXXIII, P 1. The date of sculpture is 580 A.D.
47. Hultzsch, *Asokan Inscriptions*, C.I.I., Vol. I.
48. Buhler: *Indische Palaographic* Plate II, Cols. XIII-XIV.
49. Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*.
50. *Ep. Indica*, XXI, p. 85; *Indi. Hist. Quart.* 1934, p. 57 ff.
51. *Ep. Indica*, XXII, p.2; *Ind. Hist. Quart.* X. 54 ff.
52. There is no such argument to prove that this script was imported. The tradition of Sumeria, which is supposed to be the source of the Indus Valley script, themselves maintain that writing with the arts of agriculture and metal working went there from sea-side (Wolley, C.L., *Sumerians*, p. 189). The possibility of the derivation of the Brahmi script from the Indus Valley script has been suggested by some competent authorities on the subject Hunter, *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and its connection with other Scripts*, Kegan Paul, London, 1934, p. 4
53. Numerous mounds in northern India, which cover the ancient culture of the land, have not been excavated as yet. Unless it is done, it will be highly presumptuous to emphasize the negative evidence unduly

1.10 Summary :

The history of the antiquity of writing in India is shrouded in mystery. The earlier European scholars tended to bring down the antiquity of the art of writing in India. But ancient foreign travellers, Buddhist Jain, Brahmanical evidences as well as some inscriptions prove that the antiquity of the art of writing in India goes back to hoary antiquity.

1.11 Check your progress -

1. Discuss the views of early indologists regarding the antiquity of the art of writing in India.
2. Evaluate the Buddhist and Brahmanical evidences regarding the antiquity of the art of writing in India.

1.12. Self activities -

Visit any library which has books on Indology and check up the references quoted in this chapter of Buddhist and Brahmanical texts.

1.13. Suggested Readings -

1. Barua, B.M., *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Calcutta, 1946
2. Buhler, J., *Indian Palaeography*
3. Basak, R.G., *Asokan Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1959
4. Chakraborti, H., *Early Brahmi Records of India*, Calcutta, 1974
5. Dani, A.H., *Indian Palaeography*, Oxford, 1963
6. Diringer, D., *The Alphabet*, 2nd.ed., London, 1949
7. Pandey, R.B., *Indian Palaeography*, Banaras, 1952
8. Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscription*, 2nd ed., Vol.I, Cal. 1965; Vol.II, 1983.
9. Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Palaeography and South Indian Scripts*, 1954
10. Verma, T.P., *The Palaeography of Brahmi Script*, 1971
11. Winternitz, M., *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I and II, Calcutta, 1927, 1933
12. Weber, *Indische Studies*.
13. उपाध्याय, वासुदेव, प्राचीन भारतीय अभिलेखों का अध्ययन, दिल्ली, 1961
14. नारायण, अ०कि० और शुक्ल, मणिशंकर, प्राचीन भारतीय अभिलेख संग्रह, 2 खण्ड, वाराणसी, 1968
15. मुले, गुणाकर, भारतीय लिपियों की कहानी, दिल्ली, 1974
16. सिन्हा, चित्तरंजनप्रसाद, प्राचीन भारतीय अभिलेखिकी और लिपि, पटना, 1975

UNIT - II

ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF SCRIPTS- BRAHMI

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Development of different types of scripts
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2.1 Introduction :

Palaeography is the study of the science of ancient writing. It is one of the most important sources of ancient history. The student of ancient history should have knowledge of deciphering the ancient scripts and its evolution through the ages.

2.2 Objective :

The objective of this unit is to trace the palaeography of the Brahmi script through different ages. The student would be able to decipher the inscription as well as fix its date through the knowledge of palaeography.

2.3 Development of different types of scripts

Whenever scholars talk about civilization and culture there occurs a natural query about the agencies responsible for the continuity of culture. Obviously it was the knowledge of writing that not only gave continuity, but also transmitted knowledge from one generation to another.

The people of the ancient civilizations recognized its significance and this was the reason that all the ancient cultures regarded script as the creation of the gods. Thus in Egypt Toth, in Mesopotamia Nebo, in Greece Hermes and in India Brahma were regarded respectively the creators of the script.

It is not easy to ascertain as to when man began to write. One fact is certain that painting could be taken as the first step towards writing. This tendency of expressing one self through art led to the invention of pictographical script. The first script of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Crete was pictographical. Man tried to express his feelings through the pictures.

At this stage he picked up the familiar objects and drew very simple picture.

Few examples may be cited here:

A circle denoted the sun.

The conical form denoted legs of man.

What is the difference between painting and script? In painting these symbols are taken as art while in script they signify the utilitarian value. Gradually the value paved the way for the next stage of script writing. This stage is known as ideographical stage. Its outer form was similar to pictographical stage. But the symbols conveyed broader meanings.

O-heat, summer

- going away

- Cow ascended from the other side of the hills -alien cow.
- Women came from the other side of the hill-foreigner women, female slave.

Thus one single symbol delineated the entire concept or idea. Now man could express himself by lesser symbols.

After ideographical stage came the phonetic stage, when sound expresses the object. For carpet a man draws the sketch of a car and a pet; together they make the sound of carpet. During historical evolution. This phonetic script merged into alphabet. The alphabet gave birth to Greek, Roman, Arabic and Brahmi script. The Korean, Japanese and Chinese scripts on the other hand remained pictographical.

Though writing in India began with the Indus script, the material evidence of Brahmi came to the fore during the period of Asoka. It has led to an interesting debate between the two schools of palaeographers.

Thus before discussing the problem of the evolution of Brahmi, we face two questions.

- (a) Did it have an indigenous origin or was it borrowed from outside?
- (b) Did it appear during Asoka's period in its fully evolved form?

2.4 Theories regarding the origin of Brahmi :

First we will discuss the first issue that Brahmi was not an Indian creation and was modified according to the needs of Indian language.

a. Foreign origin theory :

The strongest advocate of this theory was George Buhler. According to him Asokan Brahmi was derived from north Semitic alphabet. He says that the parent place of all the alphabets of the world was the land between Syria and Palestine. This was the place where the people of Semitic language lived and they invented the first alphabet.

Thus Buhler gave a long list of Brahmi alphabets and the north Semitic alphabet. On the basis of outer similarities the Brahmi alphabets were supposed to be derived from north Semitic alphabet.

Buhler further says that the interaction between India and north Semitic people took place around 885 B.C. 750 B.C. and the Indians adopted it from the valley of Tigris Euphrates. To support his hypothesis Buhler cites a story from *Baveru Jatak*. This text narrates the tale of a group of Indian merchant, who had commercial contacts with Baveru or Babylon. This narration in fact establishes only the commercial contacts and not the cultural interactions.

More over, this story never establishes that India was at receiving end. Buhler's hypothesis took an interesting turn with the discovery of an inscription at Erragudi in Kurnool. The inscription consisted of twenty-six lines; it does not follow any rule or regulation. Sixteen lines of this inscription are engraved from left to right and then from right to the left. Sentences are left incomplete in one line and were continued from the next. Another discovery was that of a coin of Dhammapalas discovered from Eran in 1929. The legend on this coin was engraved from right to left Buhler very enthusiastically cited these inscriptions in support of his theory. Thus he tried to establish that these inscriptions are the examples of Boustrophedon style, which is a writing style of north Semitic alphabet. But Boustrophedon style is bound by several rules. It moves from right to left then again from left to right. Just like a farmer ploughs his field. The short coming of Buhler's theory is that both instances do not fulfill the rule of Boustrophedon where lines should run like this- right to left and again from left to right.

Taylor and Kenan put the second theory forward. They said that Brahmi was evolved on south Semitic alphabet of central Asia. They said that this place was closer to India. This argument is also not acceptable on the ground that geographical proximity can never prove cultural proximity. India came into contact with the Arab World at a much later stage.

Prinsep and Senart were of the view that along with the invasion of Alexander the Indians learnt writing from the Greeks. This theory is also shelved on the ground that Indians were aware of art of writing much before the coming of Greeks. Buhler has also supported the argument that the invasion of Greeks and spread of writing are two different events.

Actually Brahmi script appeared before us in its fully evolved form. This evolved form of Brahmi has led to another debate about the antiquity of Brahmi.

b. Theory of the origin of Brahmi from the Maurayan age :

One group of scholar says that though Brahmi was an Indian creation it was not older than the Asoka's period. Their main arguments can be summed up like this:

- (i) There is not a single evidence of writing before the period of Asoka. There is a big time gap between the period of Asoka and Indus script.
- (ii) The account of Megasthenes narrates that Chandra Gupta Maurya's Court was run by unwritten law. Thus the Mauryan Court did not have the knowledge of writing.
- (iii) The *Anguttara Nikaya*, a Buddhist text describes the materials used by the Buddhist monks. The book is not among them.

(iv) In Asoka's period Brahmi became universal. It was even used for Tamil language.

(v) It is also suggested that after Buddha's death, there was a need for the compilation of his teachings in the alphabetic script. Thus Brahmi was evolved during Mauryan period

Thus the evolution of Brahmi was not only related to the advent of Asoka but also to Sramanic tradition.

The main supporters of this school are Dr. A.K. Narayan, Prof. Nagaswamy Prof. L.G. Gopal and Prof. T.P. Verma.

c. Theory of the origin of Brahmi from the Vedic period :

The other School does not accept that Brahmi was the creation of the Mauryan period. Dr. Jagamohan Verma, Dr. Gauri Shankar Hirachand Ojha and Prof. S.N. Roy try to prove the indigenous origin of Brahmi and its antiquity up to the Vedic period.

They refuse to accept that Brahmi was fully evolved only during Asoka's period like a miracle. Their main arguments can be sketched here:

- (i) The outer forms of Brahmi are very simple and geometrical. Any pre-existing script can influence them.
- (ii) The origin of Brahmi can be traced to the pictographical Indus script.
- (iii) Megasthenese's account cannot be accepted fully. It may have been true for a limited area or official. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya on the other hand mentions terms like 'likh' and 'lekhan'.
- (iv) The *Astadhyayi* of Panini not only mentions the term 'Lipi' and lipikara, but also the signs on cow's ears.
- (v) One just cannot disagree with the argument that the Sanskrit alphabet was known orally. The idea of alphabet pre-supposes writing.
- (vi) The international trade, coin exchange that gave birth to second urbanization was not possible without the knowledge of script and numbers.

The most significant argument may be put up like this:

Asoka invaded Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign. Till that time Dhamma was nowhere is the scene. For one and a half year he pondered over his idea of the Dhamma. In the 12th year of his reign for the first time he got them engraved on the minor rock edicts. Thus the period of two and a half year was too short for the invention and evolution of an alphabet

like Brahmi. Had Brahmi been an invention of Asoka's period, he would have not introduced four scripts Aramaic, Kharosthi, Brahmi and Greek to his people of different origin.

Asoka had never pronounced in his inscriptions that he had invented the Brahmi script. Had he done so, he would have very definitely proclaimed in his inscriptions that he had invented the 'Dhamma Lipi' for the moral uplift of his subjects. He takes the credit of getting the Dhamma engraved on the stone pillars and made it permanent 'Chilithika Hotu'.

In the Buddhist texts *Suttanga*, a game *akkharika* is prohibited to the Buddhist monks. In this game letters are formed in the void. This evidence shows that people were aware of the art of writing.

The main supporters of this theory are Profs. Raj Bali Pandey, Vaji Mitra Shastri, Saundarajan and S.N. Roy.

In fact Prof. Raj Bali Pandey has given an etymology of the Brahmi. Brahma gifted the Brahmi script to the Brahmans to preserve Brahma or Vedic hymns, for the first time is the and of Brahmvarta.

This argument of Prof. Pandey is not acceptable to Prof. A.K. Narayan. He says that the script used by Asoka suited the Buddhists to write in Prakrit language. For centuries it was used by the Buddhist and Jain Monks and was avoided by the traditional society.

In fact this communal bias against Brahmi is baseless. The Besnagar inscription of the 2nd century B.C. was devoted to the Bhagavat sect. The year 28 inscription of Huviska records the arrangement of the feeding of the Brahmans. The Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva and Ghosundi inscription was of Brahmanical faith and was written in Brahmi.

In fact Pdt. K. Chattopadhyay had drawn our attention much before to a verse of the 4th Mandala of the *Rgveda*, where Brahmi vac is mentioned. This Brahmin vac is again mentioned in the dialogue of Devayani and Yayati.

Thus Brahmi did have a history of development before Asokan period.

1.5 The Development of Brahmi (Mauryan period) :

In Asoka's period Brahmi appears in its fully evolved forms. The fact, however, cannot be denied that it was still in its cumbersome form. For the Asokan Brahmi the Palaeo graphists have used the term cryptic. One comes across different forms of one letter like A- . . It seems that during Asoka's period the final form of the letters was still undecided. It was at its formative stage. The second specialty of Asokan Brahmi was that the letters are either angular or monumental. Different suggestions have come to the fore to explain the situation.

- (i) Asoka had employed two types of engravers. On the pillars more efficient engravers were employed, hence on the pillars the letters are more beautifully carved than on the rocks.
- (ii) The pillars bear Mauryan polish. Since the rocks have to face heat and rain, therefore the letterforms on the rocks could not be engraved beautifully.
- (iii) Despite Asoka's efforts to bring uniformity in the script the regional forms could not be checked. Asoka prepared the original document in his head office at Pataliputra. From there the copies were sent to different parts of the county. The Dhamma Mahamatras, officials of Asoka got them engraved under their own supervision. Buhler says that despite all these precautions, Asoka could not maintain uniformity and regional forms occurred in his inscriptions. Buhler has identified two rather four regional varieties: north, south, northwest and southeast. Buhler said that Narmada river was the dividing line for north and south. The northern branch is represented by Allahabad, Lauriya-Araraja and Lauriya-Nandangarh inscriptions

Girnar and Siddhapur rock edict and Separate rock edict of Dhauri and Jaugadh, represent the southern branch.

2.6 Second Stage (2nd cent. B.C.)

The Asokan Brahmi despite different variations bore uniformity and Asokan inscriptions were royal inscriptions. After the period of Asoka Brahmi script went through a radical change. Now we come across private and individual inscriptions mostly. This tendency led to the new forms and expertise. This sudden insurgence of individual inscriptions also owed to the spread of Buddhism. This was the period when the stupas were being built at different centers. Masses donated money for the construction of the stupa and get their names engraved. This temptation led to the increase in the number of inscriptions.

The major distinct features-

- (i) This stage is known as the second stage of the evolution of Brahmi.
- (ii) It retains quite a few features of the preceding phase.
- (iii) Despite this continuation, significant changes occurred.
- (iv) The script of this period provided a platform for the incoming scripts of the Kasatrapas.

The letter Forms

- (i) The elongated lines were shortened.
 - (ii) At some places the elongated verticals had completely disappeared.
 - (iii) At some places the upper verticals were thickened.
 - (iv) Sometimes a short horizontal line is found on elongated lines.
 - (v) The angular letters were made cursive.
 - (vi) The cursive letters were made angular.
 - (vii) The horizontal base line became cursive.
- (i) The horizontal middle line became cursive.

It should be mentioned here that this stage was established by Buhler in *Epigraphia Indica Vol-II*. But Dani does not choose to agree with it. He does not recognize any such stage as the 2nd century B.C. In his book he says that this script is not different from the script of the northern ksatrapas (1st cen. B.C.-A.D. 100). He also says that these changes occurred owing to the use of reed pen. This style was introduced by Greeks and brought to India by the northern ksatrapas. It thickens the upper verticals of the letters. The shortcoming of Dani's argument is that he recognizes the changes but is very rigid regarding the date. This tendency can well be noticed in the Mitra coins of Mathura, now in the British museum. Stratigraphically, they were found from the pre-ksatrapa layers. The second evidence is the Besanagar inscription of Heliodorus the ambassador of Antialkidas. For Antialkidas we have a date 120/110 B.C. and the inscription delineates the same palaeographical features.

Main Inscriptions are Bharhut, Sanchi, Nanaghat, Ghosundi, Pabhosa and Reh.

2.7 Northern Ksatrapa Alphabet (1st cen. B.C.- 1st cen. A.D.)

The most striking feature was that of wedge or nail head at the top of some of the letters. This nail headed or wedge shaped were a general feature of the 6th-7th centuries A.D. how and why this form occurred as the precursor is not clear. Other features are equalization of upper verticals and constant of serif. By serif the paleographers meant a small stroke at the top of the letter. So far as the medial signs are concerned both the Mauryan angular medial sign and Kusana cursive medial sign appear at this stage.

The representative inscriptions are Ayodhya stone inscription of Dhanadeva, Mathura Inscription of Sodasa and Ayagapatta Inscription of Kausambi.

2.8 Kusana Brahmi :

From the point view of development Kusana Brahmi succeeds the Ksatrapa Brahmi.

Its period is IST Century A.D.-to-A.D. 300. It is also divided into two categories. Early Kusana Brahmi, and late Kusana Brahmi. The first category includes the inscriptions of Kaniska I or the inscriptions, which mentions his reign. The script of this type retains archaism. Late Kusana Brahmi is represented by the inscription of Huviska, Vasiska, Vasudeva, Kaniska II, Kaniska III and the Magha rulers of Kausambi like Sivamagha Bhadramagha and Bhima Varman. In the early Kusana Brahmi some times archaic letters are found. Thus there was a co-existence of Pre-kusana and Kusana Brahmi.

The main letterforms are like this of Kusana brahmi are as foll.:

EARLY			LATE	
	East	West		
La	𑀮	𑀮𑀮	Ma	𑀮
Ha	𑀮𑀮	𑀮𑀮	Ga-	𑀮
Sa	𑀮	𑀮	La-	𑀮
			Na-	𑀮

2.9 Gupta Brahmi :

The Kusana Brahmi paved the way for the Gupta Brahmi. Gupta Brahmi appears to be the milestone in the development of Brahmi. After certain modification Gupta Brahmi spread into south India, where it came to be known as the box headed variety of Brahmi This box headed variety further spread into South East Asia.

The Gupta Brahmi provided a base for the northern alphabet of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. The Gupta Brahmi on the basis of the region is divided into two parts i.e. east and west. Allahabad was the dividing line for this division. The dividing letters are as follows:

Bhitari Pillar inscription is an exception to this tendency. This inscription is in Ghazipur, thus it should bear the eastern variety of the letters. Surprisingly, it is incised with the western variety of letters. Owing to the use of Sanskrit new letter forms occurred like, whom fleet called tiny shape of ma. In Gangam Payah we find for the first time letter nga.

2.10 Development of Brahmi into Northern Alphabet :

The northern alphabet of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. was a stage when the Gupta Brahmi evolved into the northern alphabet. There are other names for this like nail headed, wedge shaped (Tod) acute angled (Fleet) Siddha matrika (Al Baruni) and Kutil (James Prinsep).

This nomenclature signifies only one feature of the script. Thus the most favourable title could be the northern alphabet of the 6th- 7th centuries A.D.

Here the top of the letters is shown with a wedge. The right or left angle was now conical. There is a tendency towards ornamentation. This script paved the way for Nagari and Sharada.

2.11 Sharada Script :

The time bracket of this script is 9th-10th centuries A.D. It was derived from the western variety of the Gupta Brahmi or from the Kutila script.

First it was popular in Punjab and Kashmir. Later the written manuscript is found from Varanasi. The distinct feature of letters is stiff and thick strokes on the top of the letters.

2.12 Nagari Script :

It was derived from the northern alphabet of the 7th century A.D. The development of Nagari was based on the demonstration on the top of the letter.

6th Century A.D. Top line wedge.

7th Century A.D. Wedge

8th Century A.D. Wedge thick line.

Representative Inscriptions:

Chandvamsa- Laalan Deval Prasasti.

Parmararvansi Udayaditya

2.13 Summary :

The unit traces the development of Brahmi script through the ages. It discusses the various theories regarding the origin of Brahmi the foreign origin theory of Brahmi as well as the late origin of Brahmi (in the Mauryan period) has been criticized on the basis of various evidences. Brahmi has hoary antiquity which can be traced back to the Vedic age. Infact its similarity to the pictographic Indus script is also suggested. The palaeography of

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Brahmi showed various stages of development eg. Mauryan, Sungas, Kusana, Gupta. and post Gupta eras.

2.14. Check your progress

1. Write a critical essay on the origin of the Brahmi script.
2. Write shorts notes on
 - a) Theory regarding the origin of Brahmi from the Mauryan period.
3. Origin of Brahmi from the Vedic age.
4. Transliterate into Brahmi -
 - a) देवानपियेन पियदसिन लाजिन वीसति वसाभिसितेन
 - b) अतन आगाच महीयते हिद बुधे जाते सक्कमुनी ति

2.15 Activities

- a) Visit any ancient archaeological site temple which has inscriptions and write a report on them.
- b) Transliterate as many as ten inscriptions of the donors at Sanchi on your field visit.

2.16 Suggested readings

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| ALLAN J. | : | 1936 <i>Catalogue of Indian coins in the British Museum.</i> |
| ALTEKAR. A.S. | : | 1957 <i>The coinage of the Gupta Empire.</i> |
| BUHLER. G. | : | 1804 <i>Indian Paleography</i> (I.A. vol-XXXIII, Appendix. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> , Vol II, part II, Edited by H. Luders. |
| Dani. A.H. | : | 1963 <i>Indian Palaeography</i> , Oxford. |
| Diringer D | : | 1968 <i>The Alphabet</i> , New York |
| Hultzsch. E. | : | 1925 <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> , Vol. I |
| Narain, A.K. | : | <i>Indo Greeks</i> |
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UNIT - III

ASOKAN INSCRIPTIONS

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objective
- 3.3 Language and types of inscription and their situation -
- 3.4 Text of the Rock Edicts
- 3.5 Text of the Minor rock edicts
- 3.6 Text of Pillar Edicts
- 3.7 Minor Pillar Edicts
- 3.8 Pillar inscriptions
- 3.9 Cave inscriptions
- 3.10 Extent of Asoka's empire and the date of his inscriptions
- 3.11 Asoka's Dhāmma
- 3.12 Summary
- 3.13 Check your progress
- 3.14 Activities -
- 3.15 Suggested Readings and bibliography

3.1 Introduction -

Asoka's inscriptions are the most ancient records of the historical age. They reveal one of the most glorious chapters of ancient Indian history. The edicts throw first hand information about the political and socio cultural condition of the Mauryan age.

3.2 Objective -

The objective of this unit is to give information to the students about the various inscriptions of Asoka and to reconstruct and evaluate the history of the age on the basis of Asoka's inscriptions.

3.3 Language and types of inscription and their situation -

The inscriptions of Ashoka are written in Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic languages. The alphabets used are Aramaic and Greek in Afghanistan and Kharoshthi at Manshira and Shahbazgarhi lying in the north-western part of his empire, but Brahmi elsewhere in the empire. Kharoshthi was a modification of the Aramaic script of western Asia introduced in the Uttarapatha division of Bharatvarsha when that area was under the Akhmenians of Persia during the two centuries before Alexander's invasion. It was written from right to left. Kharoshthi died a natural death after some centuries as it was not quite suitable for writing Sanskrit and Prakrit. But Brahmi alphabet seems to have remained popular in the major part of Bharatvarsha. It is not only the mother of all the alphabets of the Sanskrit Dravidian languages prevalent in various part of India today, but is also the origin of many alphabets of South-East Asia including Tibetan, Ceylonese, Burmese, Siamese, Javanese etc.

Ashoka's inscriptions can be broadly divided into two classes, viz., engraved on rocks and those incised on pillars of stones.

The rock inscriptions fall into three groups viz.,

Minor rock edicts,

Rock edicts

and Cave inscriptions.

The pillar inscriptions can also be classified into three subdivisions, viz.,

Minor pillar edicts,

pillar inscriptions,

pillar edicts. The main rock edicts are fourteen in number. They have been found at eight places - Girnar,

Kalsi

Shahbazgarhi,

Manshira,

Dhauri,

Jaugar,

Sopara

and Erraguddi. The first five places have the fourteen rock edicts in complete or

partial forms. Dhauli and Jaugada have two new inscriptions along with the first ten and fourteenth inscription.

The minor rock edicts have been found at the following places -

- * Ahraura in Mirzapur District
- * Amar colony Delhi
- * Bairat in Jaipur Rajasthan
- * Gavimath in Raichur District Mysore.
- * Gujarra in the Datia District M.P.
- * Maski in the Raichur District Mysore.
- * Palkigundu near Gavimath
- * Rupnath in the Jabalpur District M.P.
- * Sahasram in the Shabbad District Bihar
- * Brahmagiri
- * Siddhapur

Jatinga Rameshwaram Chilradurga dist. Mysore.

Panguraria in dist. Sehore in M.P.

Rajul mandagiri - Kurnool dist of Andra Pradesh.

Share kuna edict - Southern Afghanistan

Nichura M.R.E. - In the Bellary dist of Karnataka. The name of Asoka is mentioned in this.

Pillar edicts - Sandstone pillars bearing a series of six edicts of Asoka were found at

Delhi Meerut

Prayaga

Lauriya Araraj

Lauria Nandangarh

Rampurva

Delhi Topra

Minor Pillar Edicts - The Allahabad pillar contains two other edicts of Asoka besides the pillar edict. The first of these two is also found at Sanchi near Bhopal and at Sarnath near Varanasi. The Sarnath text also adds a new edict which is called minor rock edict II.

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The second record on the Allahabad Kosam pillar is known as minor rock edict III or the Queen's edict. Another minor pillar edict is found at Amaravati in the Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. It may be regarded as minor pillar edict IV.

Pillar inscriptions - There are two pillar inscriptions of Asoka discovered in the Nepalese Tarai to the north of the Basti district of U.P. The first is in Rumindeyi and the other is at Nigali Sagar.

Cave inscriptions - These are four artificial caves. Three of them bear the inscriptions of Asoka in the Barabar hills about fifteen miles to the north of Gaya in Bihar. Border Edicts from Taxila and Pule Darunt.

3.4 Text of the Rock Edicts -

The first rock edict says that no living being should be slaughtered for sacrifice and no samaja or festive gathering should be held for the beloved of gods see manifold evil in festive gathering. There is however one kind of festive gathering which is considered good by king priyadarsi.

Many hundreded thousands of animals were formerly sloughtered everyday in the kitchen but now only three creatures were killed - two peacocks and one deer. This would also be stopped in future.

The second rock edict says that king priyadarsi has arranged for two kinds of medical treatment for men and for animals in the bordering territories such as cholera Pandyas, Satiyaputra and Kerala putra as also in the territories of the Yavana king Antioke and his neighbours. The edict also says that Asoka also caused trees to be planted by the roadside and wells to be dug.

Rock edict three declares the appointment of officers called *Rajjukas* and *pradesika*. Rock edict four was written twelve years after Asoka's coronation. It says that the beating of the drums has become the proclamation of dharma

भेरिघोसो अहो धम्मघोसो

Rock edict fifth says that Asoka appointed officers called *dharma mahamatras* thirteen years after his coronation. They looked after the matters of *dharma* even in the people dwelling in border states.

Rock edict sixth declares that Asoka would listen to the affairs of state even though engaged in pleasure past times. Rock edict seventh proclaims that all religious sects should live in harmony.

Rock edict eighth proclaims the commencement of *dharmayatras*. Rock edict ninth says that auspicious rites produce meagre result while ceremonies associated with dhamma produce great results.

Rock edict tenth also considers the obedience to *dhamma* as greater than any other glory or fame. Rock edict eleventh declares *dhamma* as the greatest gift. It prescribes proper courtsey to slaves and servants, obedience to father and mother, liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives.

The rock edict twelve says that there should be no extolment of ones own sect and or disparagment of other's sect.

The rock edict thirteen says that Kalinga was conquered by Asoka eight years after his coronation. Asoka was very remorseful and vowed not to wage war again. *Dharma vijaya* is also established in the kingdoms of Antiyoka, Turamaya, Antakine, Māka and Alikā Sundara. Antiyoka has been identified with Antiochus Theos of Syria (261-46 B.C.) Turamaya as Ptolemy philadelphous the greek king of Egypt (285-247 B.C.), Antakini as Antigoneess gonatus the king of Mecidonia (276-46 B.C.) Māka as Megas of North Africa of the Sirine state (300-256 or 250 B.C.) Alikā sundara as Alexander the king of Epirus (272-258 or 255 B.C.)

In rock edict fourteen the resolution to spread *dharma* is repeated.

The Dhāuli and Jaugada texts (or no XV) - The Jaugada text is addressed to the *mahamatras* stationed at Samapa. Asoka says that all men are his children. The Dhāuli texts lays down vertues for officers or *mahamatras* and says that they should show restrain and impartialty. It also speaks of the prince viceroy at Ujjaini and Taksasila.

3.5 Texts of the Minor rock edicts -

Rock edict one was written two and a half years after Asoka became the lay follower of the Buddha. It says that he was not able to exert vigorously for the cause of *dharma* for the first one year. But since then he has been exerting vigorously for the cause of *dharma*. Even a poor man is able to achieve great heaven if he is zealous in the cause of *dharma*. The officers were instructed to engrave this edict on stone whenever an opportunity presents itself and to go on tour throughout the district for the proclamation of this edict. The proclamation was issued by Asoka when he was on tour of pilgrimage and had spent 256 nights away from the capital.

Minor rock edict II is in continuation of minor rock edict I.

Rock edict III is peculiar in its text. It has been found at Bairat (Bhabru) and is now present in the Indian Museum Calcutta. Asoka salutes the monks of the Sangha and wishes them good health and comfort. He professes his faith in the Buddha, *dharma* and Saingha.

He says that the monks and nuns should constantly listen to and reflect on the following texts of Dharma- Vinayasamutkarshah

Āryavāśah

Anagatabhayāni

Munigāthā

mauneyasūtram

Upatisyaprasnah

Rahulavādah

Minor rock edict IV is in Greek and Aramaic and is discovered at two places in Kandhara in Afghanistan. It was written after ten years of coronation and it prohibits people to engage in the slaughter of animals.

3.6 Text of Pillar Edicts -

The same texts of pillar edicts I-VI is found on Delhi Topra, Delhi, Meerut, Lauriya Araraj and Lauriya Nandangarh and Rampurva Pillars. Pillar edict VII is only found on the Topra pillar now at Delhi.

Pillar edict one proclaims the successful propagation of Dharma by Asoka. It also instructs his officers of all ranks and *mahamatras* in charge of bordering districts to govern the people in accordance with dharma.

Pillar edict second defines dharma as consisting of least amount of sin, many virtuous deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity - कियंचु धम्मति। अपासिनवे बहुकयाने दया दाने सचे सोचये।

The inscription also says that gift of eyesight (spiritual sight) has been bestowed on criminals, Bipeds, quadrupeds, birds and aquatic animals have been given various kinds of favours including the grant of life.

Pillar edict number three reflects on the nature of sin and says that violence, cruelty, anger, vanity and jealousy lead to sin.

Pillar edict number four says that it was written twenty six years after Asoka's coronation. It lays down the functions of *Rajjukas*. Just as a person feels confident after having entrusted his child to an experienced nurse similarly the *Rajjukas* were placed by him. He also says that there should be impartiality in judicial proceedings as well as in punishment.

Text number five declares the various species of animals as exempt from slaughter viz parrots, mainan, geese, nandi mukhan bats, mango tree ants, terrapins, boneless

fish, spatefish, tortoise, porcupine, bulls, rhinoceros, white pigeons etc. slaughter was banned on certain days like chaturmasi and at the full moon, tisyā and punarvasa constellation days etc. It also proclaims the release of prisoners.

Pillar edict sixth proclaims that records related to dharma were written twelve years after his coronation for the welfare and happiness of the people and that all the religious sects were honoured by him and that he considered it his duty to meet the people of various sects personally.

Pillar edict number seventh says that kings in past were not successful in the adequate promotion of dharma. But Asoka had caused the proclamation of dharma on pillars and had appointed *Rajjukas* and *mahamatras* for their purpose. He had also done various other philanthropic activities like planting trees by roadside, causing wells to be dug, setting up water sheds by roadside etc.

3.7 Minor Pillar Edicts -

The Allahabad Kosam text addresses the *Mahamatras* stationed at Kausambi. It can be summarised thus -

Asoka says that he has made both the sangha of the monks and that of the nuns united. Who ever would break up the unity of the Sangha would be made to wear white robes and to be made to reside in what is not fit for the residence of a recluse.

The Sanchi text is also the same.

The minor pillar edict II at Sarnath instructs the *mahamatras* to go and instruct the lay followers of the Buddha who assemble on every fast day.

Minor pillar edict III is found on the Allahabad Kosam pillar. It says that whatever gift has been made by his second queen Charuvaki be it a mango grove or a garden or an alms house, it should be specifically registered in her name.

3.8 Pillar inscriptions -

The two pillar inscriptions are found on the Rumindei pillar and Nigali Sagar pillar.

The Rumindei pillar says that twenty years after his coronation the king Priyadarsi visited this spot which was the birth place of the Buddha. He caused to be built there a stone enclosure and a stone pillar. He also made the village of Lumbini free from taxes and subjects to pay only one eighth of the produce as land revenue instead of the usual rate.

The Nigali Sagar pillar says that Asoka enlarged the Stupa enshrining the relics of Kanakamuni Buddha to double its size. He also visited the spot in person and offered worship at this place and caused the stone pillar to be built.

3.9 Cave inscriptions -

The Sudama cave in the Barabar hills has this inscription. It says that the cave is dedicated to the Ajivikas twelve years after his coronation. The second cave - Vishva Jhopri cave on the same hill says that it was dedicated to the Ajivikas.

The third cave was dedicated nineteen years after Asoka's coronation for the residence of ascetics.

3.10 Extent of Asoka's empire and the date of his inscriptions

A volume of information about Ashok's career and exploits is available from literary traditions and his own records engraved on rocks and stone pillars.

The Gujjarra, Maski and Nichura versions of Minor Rock edict I are the only inscriptions of Ashoka which refer to him by name. Elsewhere in his records, the emperor is generally mentioned as *Devanam Priya Priyadarshi Raja*, 'the king who is beloved of the gods and who glances graciously upon all.' Some times he is called simply *Devanam Priya* or the king *Priyadarsi*.

In his inscriptions Ashoka is once represented as the king of Magadha which was the home province of the Maurya emperors, and the city of Patliputra is indirectly mentioned as his capital in a few cases. But on several occasions the inscriptions use a word meaning "here" to indicate the royal household the capital city or the entire dominions of Ashoka.

Other cities of the empire mentioned in the inscriptions are: Ujjayini, Taxila, Suvarnagiri, Tosali, Kausambi, Samapa, and Isila, of which the first four were provincial headquarters where viceroys of the royal blood were stationed. It seems that Pataliputra was the headquarters of the Prachya and Madhyadesha divisions of the ancient Bharatavarsha comprising the East Punjab, UP, Bihar and Bengal. Ujjayini, Taxila (in the Rawalpindi District of West Pakistan) and Suvarnagiri (near Erragudi in the Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh) appear to have been the headquarters respectively of the divisions called Aparanta or Paschadesha in Western India, Uttarapatha in the northwest, and Dakshinapatha in the south. Tosali i.e. modern Dhauli near Bhubaneswar in the Puri District of Orissa was the capital of the territory of Kalinga which was conquered by Ashoka in his ninth regnal year. Samapa was an ancient town near the Jaugada hill in the Ganjam District of Orissa, while Isila was the old name of modern Siddhapura in the Chitradurga District of Mysore. According to the Junagarh inscription of AD 150, Ashok's governor in Kathiyawar was a Yavana or Greek Prince.

According to the pillar edict VI, Ashoka began to issue edicts relating to Dharma twelve years after his coronation (269 BC.) or in the thirteenth year of his reign, i.e., about 257 BC. The Minor edicts were the earliest records issued by him. The Rock edicts were inscribed shortly afterwards. Rock edict XIII refers to the king's ninth regnal year (eight years after the coronation) and Rock edict VIII to his eleventh regnal year (ten years after the coronation) in the relation to the certain earlier events in his career. Rock edicts III-IV were issued in the thirteenth year (twelve years after the coronation) and Rock edict V in the fourteenth year of Ashoka's reign (Thirteenth years after the coronation). Of the three cave inscriptions the first and second were inscribed in the thirteenth regnal year (twelve years after the coronation) and the third in the twentieth regnal year (nineteen years after the coronation).

Among the pillar inscriptions, the minor pillar edicts bear no date. The two pillar inscriptions were engraved in the twenty-first regnal year (twenty years after the coronation) although one of them refers to an event of the fifteenth regnal year of Ashoka (fourteenth years after the coronation). Pillar edicts I, IV, V, VI were issued in the king's twenty seventh regnal year (twenty six years after the coronation) and pillar edict VII in the twenty eighth year of his reign (twenty seven years after the coronation). Pillar edicts VI also refers to an earlier event of the thirteenth regnal year (twelve years after the coronation). It is clear from Asoka's inscriptions that his empire extended in N. W. from Hindukush to Bengal in the east of Himalayas in the north to Chitaldurga district in the South.

3.11 Asoka's Dhamma -

The main theme of the Asokan edicts seems to be the propagation of *dhamma*. Scholars have debated and on about the nature of this dhamma.

It is now accepted by most of the scholars that although Asoka's personal religion was Buddhism the dhamma of his edicts was universal religion which comprised of the eternal values of all religions.

It is clear from the following inscriptions that Asoka had a predilection for Buddhism -

- a) Rupnath text proclaims that Asoka has been a lay follower of the Sangha and he vows to exert more for it in future.
- b) It is clear from Asoka's rock edict eighth and pillar inscriptions I and II that he went on pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places as sambodhi or modern Bodhgaya and Lumbini grama.

In his visit to Lumbini in his twentieth regnal year he abolished the cess probably charged from the pilgrims and reduced the normal revenue of the area to one eighth to commemorate his visit.

The Bhabru edict proclaims Asoka's unreserved faith in the truth of the Buddha, dharma and sangha. It advises the monks and lay devotees to constantly listen to and meditate on the seven dharma paryayas (canonical scriptures)

Vinayasamut karsha, Aryavasaha, Anagata bhayani, munigatha, mauneya sutram, upatisyaprasnah, Rahulavadah. These have been identified by Bhandarkar respectively with *Tuvataka Ariyavamsa (Anguttara Nikaya II.27), Anagatabhayanani (Anguttaranikaya II, 103), Muni sutta (Sutta Nipata) Nalaka sutta (Sutta Nipata), Ratha vinita sutta (Majjhima Nikaya).*

Asoka also tried to prevent schism in the Sangha as is evident from the Sarnath, Sanchi and Kosambi minor pillar edicts.

The Alhaura minor rock edict says that the declaration was made by him while he was on tour of pilgrimage for 256 nights since the relics of the Buddha were installed by him on the platform for worship. D.C. Sircar (Inscriptions of Asoka p. 42) Dr. Narayan (Bharati vol. 5 p. 105) interpret the line बुधस सलीले आलोडे to mean the installation of Buddha's relics.

Even though the above evidences point to the fact that Asoka had accepted Buddhism as his personal religion, we cannot deny the fact that his *dhamma* was the essential core of all religions. It comprised of least sins, many virtuous deeds, compassion, charity, truthfulness and purity अपासिनवे बहुकयाने दया दाने सचे सोचये ।

Dhamma is also the removal of sinful emotions which are *chandiye* (violence), *nithuliye* (cruelty), *hodhe* (anger), *mane* (pride) and *isya* (jealousy).

The other rules of conduct *anārambho prānānam* (abandoning the slaughter of animals), *avihisa bhutanam* (non violence to creatures) *matari pitari susrusa* (serving the parents) *thaira susrusa* (serving the elders), *gurunam apachiti* (respect to teachers) *mitasamstuta natikanam brahmana samanānam danam sampati pati* (liberality and proper behavior towards brahmanas and sramanas) *dasabhatakam hi sampatipati* (i.e. proper behaviour to slaves and servants), *apavyaya* (restrained expenditure)

To put the above principles in to practice Asoka innovated practical schemes.

The practice of *Dharmamangala*, *dhammadana* and *dhammavijaya* were introduced by him. Mangala comprised of the various entertaining activities during the auspicious occasions. *Dharma mangala* was the adaptation of such activities for the propagation of *dharma*. The normal *dana* was the charitable activity, *dhammadana* was the propagation of *dhamma*. Normal *vijaya* was the normal victory, *dhamma vijaya* was the conquest of the heart of people through the propagation of *dharma*.

Besides the above, Asoka appointed the *dharmamaha matras* for helping people. The problems of people were attended to at all times and places.

Rock edict I mentions various spectacles as *vimana hasti* and *agnikhandas*. These were divine spectacles for the propagation of *dharma* like the Jhankis and tableaux today.

Hence his *dhamma* was universal *dhamma*. We cannot attribute political motive behind it as the language of the edicts has a sincere touch which reveals his philanthropic motives. Rock edict XIII mentions the carnage of Kalinga war. Rock edict I has a remarkable confession which states that three lives were yet being slaughtered in the royal kitchen. Had the edicts been political Propaganda the above content would not have been inscribed.

3.12 Summary -

The unit classifies the Asokan inscriptions into six categories rock edicts, minor rock edicts, pillar edicts, minor pillar edicts, pillar inscriptions and cave inscriptions. It also gives the basic contents of the above edicts. Propagation of *dharma* was the main aim of these inscriptions. Asoka's philanthropic activities, administrative skill, and the inculcation of high values among people distinguish him from the other rulers of his age and the ages to come.

3.13 Check your progress -

1. Write a critical note on the different types of inscription engraved by Asoka.
2. Discuss critically Asoka's dhamma.

3.14 Activities -

Mark the various sites of Asoka's inscriptions in the map of India.

3.15 Bibliography -

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BLOCK – II
PRE-GUPTA AND GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS

UNIT - I

**IMPORTANT INSCRIPTIONS OF
THE PRE GUPTA ERA**

- 1.1. Objectives
- 1.2. Introduction
- 1.3. Origin of Script
- 1.4. Kinds of Inscriptions: Nature and Types
- 1.5. Dates and Eras on the Inscriptions
- 1.6. A Survey of the Important Inscriptions of the Pre-Gupta Era
- 1.7. Select Inscriptions for Detailed Study
- 1.8. Besnagar Inscription of Heliodorus
- 1.9. Bharhut Torana Inscription
- 1.10. Ayodhya Inscription
- 1.11. Hathigumpha Inscription
- 1.12. Junagadh Rock Inscription
- 1.13. Summary
- 1.14. Check your Progress:
- 1.15. Reference for Further Reading
- 1.16. Suggested Readings and bibliography

1.1. Objectives

The aim of the present Unit-1 is to introduce the important inscriptions belonging to the period following the decline of the Maurya dynasty up till the rise of the Imperial Guptas.

1.2. Introduction

Reconstruction of the ancient history of India becomes strengthened with valuable epigraphic evidences since the reign of Ashoka the Great. Inscriptions from the different

parts of the country, engraved on pillars, cave-walls, statue base or on reliquary-caskets, have been found. This variety provides a glimpse of the conditions of life prevailing in different regions under control of different dynasties. The development of script and the style of language are also noticeable to the scholars. Of the several such inscriptions we may take into account certain select ones and shall highlight certain portions of their respective texts for focussed study.

1.3. Origin of Script

The antiquity of script in India is perplexing. The script of the Harappan people has also been a debated issue. The scriptures of the Aryan community were transmitted to the next generations by an oral tradition and all knowledge was secured by memorising. The Greek envoy Megasthenes (circa fourth century BC) maintained that contracts among Indians were done verbally in the absence of writing. Many scholars believed that the deficiency of script in India was remedied by the advent of Greeks. However, recent scholarship has revealed that the Greek word "grammata" used by Megasthenes does not exclusively mean 'writing' or 'script', but has reference to "written laws". The presence of the Sanskrit grammatical treatise entitled the *Astadhyayi* by Panini (c. fifth century BC) prior to the invasion of Alexander and the visit of Megasthenes to the Mauryan capital Pataliputra, can well attest to the existence of well developed language and writing skills. A Greek writer, has mentioned the use of woven cloth for the purpose of writing in India. It seems probable that the use of perishable material for writing upon could have been the cause of lack of existence of written records of the early period of Indian history. However, knowledge of three scripts, viz., Kharoshthi, Brahmi and Greek stands firmly attested since the days of Ashoka the Great (270BC-234BC). The inscriptions in these scripts were engraved, with the suitable script used in the different parts of the vast empire.

1.4 Kinds of Inscriptions: Nature and Types

The inscriptions can generally be categorised into two broad types, namely, official and personal. Under the official type are royal edicts, grants and donations etc., The Dharmashastras mention the *sasana*, *jayapatra*, *āgyāpatra* and *pragyapana* as the four types of official records. Among the personal type are records of donations of any item, from a casket, idol to a cave for religious merit. Rajbali Pandey has classified the ancient Indian inscriptions by their nature as follows:

- a. Commercial e.g., Mandasor Stone Inscription dated Malwa Era 529
- b. Tantrik e.g., Harappan seals

- c. Religious e.g., Besnagar Pillar Inscription
- d. Administrative e.g., Ashoka's edicts, Soghaura Copper Plate, Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman
- e. Eulogy e.g., Ashokan Pillar Edict xiii, Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela, Junagarh Rock Inscription, Nasik Cave Inscription Prayaga-prashasti of Samudragupta, Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription of Chandra, Mandasor Stone Inscription, and Stone Pillar Inscription of Yashodharman.
- f. Dedicational e.g., Piprahawa casket Inscription, Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus, Mandasor Inscription, Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta and Aihole Inscription.
- g. Donation e.g., Barabar Caves, Mathura Inscription of the times of Huvishka, Nasik Inscriptions of Usvadatta and Pulumavi, Western Ghats Cave Inscriptions, Gupta Copper Plates.
- h. Commemorative e.g., Rummendei Inscription of Ashoka, Goparaj's Inscription of 191 G.E. (510 AD)
- i. Literary e.g., Ajmer Inscriptions recording Harikeli-nataka and Lalita-vigraha

The inscriptions vary in style of diction. However, certain segments of the inscriptions can be separated from the main text, and these are the prologue or beginning, the invocation, the blessing or wish, and the epilogue. Among the inscriptions under our present survey

- (i) The Besnagar Pillar Inscription begins straight from the main subject without any formula as prologue.
- (ii) The Nasik Cave Inscription of Krishna Satavahana and the Hathigumpha Inscription begin with auspicious symbols marked at their beginnings.
- (iii) 'Sidham' is the auspicious word at the beginning of the Junnar, Karle and Nasik inscriptions of Kshaharatas and Satavahanas; while
- (iv) There is 'Om Swasti' or 'Swasti' engraved at the beginning of the Copper Plates from Baigram, Paharpur, Banskhera and Madhuban.

A short prayer as an invocation at the beginning of the inscriptions was a style followed in the Hathigumpha Inscription ("Namo arhantanam...") and the Nanaghat Cave Inscription of Queen Naganika. There was no developed style of invocation in inscriptions till the days of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (the only exception being the Mathura Inscription of year

72 of the times of Sodasa). Thereafter, one finds prayers to Sun god in the Mandasor Stone Inscription of the time of Kumaragupta II, prayer to Lord Vishnu in Junagarh Stone Inscription since Skandagupta and the invocation of Lord Siva in the Mandasor Pillar Inscription of Yashodharman.

The text of the inscription contained a blessing wish and this was seen in the inscriptions of the Kushanas, like the Panjar Stone Inscription and Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription. Kanishka followed this style in his Sarnath Buddha Idol Inscription and the same was seen in Gupta inscriptions.

Often the inscriptions ended mentioning the name of the donor or the dedicator in the epilogue. Sometimes the name of the engraver artist (*nava-karmika*) and also the date of the record were given.

1.5 Dates and Eras on the Inscriptions

One very important factor for the inscriptions after the Mauryas is the developing tradition of mention of the dates of the engraving and thereby the use of calendar of different eras finds mention.

Among the inscriptions of the Mauryan emperors, Ashoka did not refer to any era, but only to the count of his regnal year. In the Shunga inscriptions also, the reference is to the reign independent of any calendar or era. The dated inscriptions of the Satavahanas begin since Gotamiputra Satakarni. However, neither the old nor a new era is clear due to dearth of any reference to a calendar. Besides the date, regnal year of the king, mention was also made about season, the *paksha*, and the count of the day. The first use of 'samvatsar' (*samvachhar*) for the "year" by the Satavahanas, later became popular. The inscriptions of the Western Sakas range from year 42 to year 201 of an unnamed era, which has been accepted by scholars as the era of AD 78. There is mention of the season's name but also of the Hindu calendar month, the either *paksha* of moon (*bahula* (*krshna-paksha*) or *shudha* (*shukla-paksha*), and the *vāra* (day name) and sometimes of the *nakshatra-muhurata*. However, the Northern Sakas seemed to refer to another calendar of the 58 BC (possibly commenced by Azes) and their inscriptions range between year 72 to year 191. The calendar months are named and at times they are Greek. The Kushana kings used a new era since the reign of Kanishka-I, founding it in AD 120. There is evidence of this calendar since year 3 to year 80. The season, month and count of the day is mentioned in their records. The early Gupta inscriptions are undated. The first dated record belongs to the fifth victorious (regnal) year of Chandragupta Vikramaditya dated in *samvat* 61. The same monarch is credited to have commenced the Gupta Era of AD 319, also known later in Saurashtra as Valabhi era.

1.6 A Survey of the Important Inscriptions of the Pre-Gupta Era

There are five important inscriptions found in North and Central India ranging within the second century BC to first century AD that corresponds to the period of the Sungas. These are the Ghosundi Inscription; the Pabhosa Inscription; the Besnagar Inscription; the Ayodhya Inscription and the Bharhut Inscription. The Ghosundi Inscription was found in three copies inscribed on stone slabs used for later constructions in Ghosundi and Hathibara in Nagari village near Chittor. It is possibly the earliest Sanskrit inscription belonging to the first century BC. It confirms the view expressed by Patanjali (c. 150 BC) that Sanskrit was an established language of the Brahmins of Aryavarta in his times. The inscription relates to certain construction for the worship of Samkarshana-Vasudeva by Parashari-putra Sarvatat, who had performed the asvamedha yajna. The inscription suggests that a person holding belief in Vedic sacrificial rituals could also have faith in Vasudeva Bhagavatism.

The Pabhosa Inscription was discovered on the wall of a cave near Kaushambi in Allahabad. It is written in Brahmi script and the language is Prakrit influenced Sanskrit. It mentions that a cave was built for the arhatas of Ahichchhatra, by Asadhasena, who was a maternal-uncle of Brahaspatimitra, king of Kaushambi. Another part of the inscription informs that Asadhasena was the son of Vangapala, king of Ahichchhatra. The Pabhosa Inscriptions throw light on the history of the kingdoms of Ahichchhtra and Kausambi. It confirms that Vangapala of Ahichchhatra was the maternal great-grandfather of Brahaspatimitra, king of Kaushambi. According to Furber it belongs to the second century BC to first century BC; Bühler places it around 150 BC and Dines Chandra Sircar prefers to place it in the first century BC.

Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus is a Prakrit inscription in Brahmi script is engraved in nine lines on a stone pillar, found situated in a temple at Besnagar, near Vidisha, capital of ancient Avanti, in Madhya Pradesh. The inscription has been ascertained to belong to the second century BC. The pillar was actually a garuda-dhwaja, erected by Heliodorus, the envoy of the Indo Greek King Antialcidas of Taxila, sent to the court of Kashiputra Bhagabhadra, the king of Vidisha region.

Bharhut Torana Inscription is in Prakrit language and written in Brahmi script on the stone railing of a stupa whose debris was discovered by Sir Alexander Cunningham at Bharhut in Nagod (M.P.). The antiquity is presently in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The inscription is considered by D.C. Sircar, to belong to early first century BC. The inscription throws light on the political sovereigns of the region after the decline of the Mauryas. Some scholars

believe it to be associated with the reign of the Shungas. The Ayodhya Inscription of Dhanadeva is another inscription belonging to the days of Shungas. This Sanskrit inscription written in Brahmi script was found engraved on a door lintel of a monument at Ayodhya, District Faizabad (U.P.). The inscription belongs to the first century and refers to Pushyamitra, the founder of the Shunga dynasty.

In the Eastern parts of India the Hathigumpha Inscription is an important source of the history of ancient Kalinga. Among the Udaigiri caves near Bhubaneshwar (Orissa), a natural cave hewn into the shape of a layana and now known as Hathigumpha, has a 15 lines long inscription engraved upon the upper side. It dates back to middle second century BC although some scholars date it in early first century AD. The Pali influenced Prakrit inscription is inscribed in Brahmi script. Scholars like James Prinsep, Alexander Cunningham, R. L. Mitra, B. L. Indrajit, Buhler, Fleet, Luder, K.P. Jayaswal, R.D. Banerji, B.M. Barua, Sten Konow, R.P. Chanda and D.C. Sircar have attempted to decipher and interpret the inscription. The inscription presents the account of the life, career and achievements of King Kharavela of Kalinga upto the 13th year of his reign. It also sheds light on the history of Magadha and other kingdoms.

The ancient Northwest India (including Pakistan and Afghanistan) has yielded a number of important inscriptions which cast light on the lesser known periods of ancient history. Among the epigraphic sources of importance to the history of the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian kings, are the Prakrit language: Kharoshthi script inscriptions, inscribed on relic caskets discovered in the north-western part of the Indian sub-continent. A steatite casket for Buddha's relics was found in Swat gives the name of "Theodor Meridarch". It is noteworthy that 'meridarch' was an official designation in Greek political organization. The Swat Casket Inscription, belonging to the first century BC, thus, throws light on the prevalent political system and the Buddhist leanings of the Indo-Greek officer. A broken copper plate, popularly called the Taxila Copper Plate Inscription of Patika has five lines of Prakrit in Kharoshthi which records the dedication of the Indo-Scythian (Saka) kings to Buddha, mentions the name of Moa (that is Maues, the Indo-Scythian king), and kshahrata Liaka Kusulaka, the satrap. The inscription is important for attesting the historicity of Maues, the existence of the satrapal system of administration and for confirming the kshahrata as the family/clan name which was also found in the Sakas of western India. The inscription highlights the popularity of Buddhism in the region.

Similarly, a Shinkot/Bajaur Casket Inscription mentions the name of Menander, the Indo-Greek king. It was first published by N.G. Majumdar, who had dated it in the first

century BC. There are two inscriptions upon the lid of the casket and they seem to have been inscribed at different times. One of it mentions the setting up of Buddha's relics in the reign of king Menander. Sten Konow thinks Menander dedicated them, while some scholars understand that Apracha king Viryakmitra was responsible. Harold Valley considers "apracharaj" as name for Bajaur kingdom. Recently, Harry Falk has opined that the casket inscription is an ancient fake and forgery. Another Bajaur Steatite Casket Inscription dated year 25 mentions the name of kumara Itravarman as the son of Apracha-rajā, and mentions the dedication in regnal year 25 and the year 63 of Azes Era. We learn of the Azes Era (suggested to have commenced in 57 BC) from certain other later day inscriptions like the Kalawan Inscription and the Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription.

The Takht-i-Bahi Inscription of Guduvahr, the Indo-Parthian king of Northwest India, is a Prakrit-Kharoshthi inscription engraved upon a stone tablet found near Mardan/Shahbazgarhi, which records the homage to Buddha by a certain Boyana family during the 26 year of reign of "Maharayasa Guduvharas" and samvat 103. The King Gondophares of the Indo-Parthians is known from the Bible and his coins have also been found. In the fifth line of the inscription there is a broken word which Sten Konow reads as "ka-pa-sa-sa" and suggests that it refers to Kushana Kujula, and hence he proposes a connection between the Indo-Parthian king and the early Kushanas. Regarding the year mentioned in the inscription, there are many views and doubts, but Parmeshwari Lal Gupta argues that it falls in the serial of 'Bajaur Steatite Casket Inscription dated year 25' (referred above) and should be in Azes Era.

The succession of the Indo-Scythians (Sakas of the Northwest) and the Kushanas (an integrated group of the Yueh-chi tribe) closely connect, or rather overlaps in history. Among the earliest of the Kushana inscriptions is the Panjtār Inscription, which was situated near Peshawar and Hazara where the river Indus flows, engraved on a rock surface in Kharoshthi script. The Prakrit epigraph refers to building of a temple of Lord Siva by certain Moike during the reign of 'Maharayasa Gusanas' in samvat 122. Gusana is the Prakrit form of the word Kushana, hence the inscription can be placed in the Kushana rule.

The Taxila Silver Scroll was discovered by John Marshall, who found it in a silver casket kept safely in a steatite casket and placed along with a golden casket containing the Buddha's relics, and all that were buried in a mound near the Dharma-rajika Stupa of Taxila. The Kharoshthi inscription engraved on the silver scroll testifies Lord Buddha's relics. It also mentions about the Bodhisattava, Sarva-Buddha, Pratyeka-Buddha and Arhat, which were conceptualised in the Mahayana sects prevalent in the Kushana times. The inscription

mentions "maharajasa rajatirajasa deva-putrasa khushanas" which was a Kushana title. The so called 'nandi-pada' mark at the end of the inscription matches with the marks found on the Kushana coins. However, the date of the inscription marked as 15th of Ashadha month 136 year had remained long debated. Marshall read the word 'Ayas' after the year and proposed that it was an era started by Azes. Many scholars rejected the connection, but after the discovery of the Bajaur Inscription of year 25 (see above) it is now settled that the author of the Taxila Silver Scroll Inscription, while engraving in the Kushana rule was using the Azes era samvat for counting.

Important Kushana inscriptions come from the regions of the Northwest India. The earliest inscription is the Sui Vihar Copper Plate, found from a stupa in Bahawalpur (Pakistan). The date mentioned therein is year 11. The Manikyala Inscription of Kanishka regnal year 18 is a Prakrit text in Kharoshthi script engraved upon the lid of a stone casket, excavated from a stupa near Rawalpindi. It informs about the building of many stupas by a foreigner during the reign of Kanishka. His name was Horamurta, and belonged to the Kushana clan. Another interpretation can decipher two other names (Lala and Vespassi) also alongwith as co-builders. But the earliest of the Kushana dated inscription comes from the Gangetic Plains. It is the Sarnath Bodhisattava Inscription, which is inscribed in Brahmi letters on an idol found at Sarnath, near Varanasi. The inscription in Prakrit influenced Sanskrit records the dedication of the Bodhisattava idol by the monks in the regnal year 3 of Kanishka. This is the earliest epigraphical reference of Kanishka's reign. However, the inscription does not establish that the limits of the Kushana kingdom reached upto Sarnath.

Later dated Kushana inscriptions of importance are the Mathura Jain Idol Inscription of Vasudeva, which was found from the Kankali-tila, Mathura, mentions the donation and installation of an idol in the reign of Kushana king Vasudeva in samvat 80. The Prakrit inscription is inscribed in Brahmi. The Sanchi Buddha Idol Inscription of Madhurika falling in the Vashishka's reign, was discovered by Furher in 1893 at Sanchi. It mentions the name of Kushana king with his full title as "maharajasya rajatirajasya devaputrasya sahi vasiskasya". The year mentioned in this Brahmi inscription (Prakrit influenced Sanskrit language) reads -28, while it should be 128. In fact, it had now become a tradition to drop the hundredth numeral from the Kanishka year reckoning. The inscription is also important from the point of view that it establishes the identity and place of Vashishka (after Vasudeva) in the Kushana dynasty. The Ara Inscription, found near Ara and Bagh Neelab (near Attock) records the sinking of water well by Dashavhara in year -41 of Kanishka. It refers to the reign of 'maharaja rajatiraja devaputra kaisarasa vajhispa putrasa kaniskasa'. The inscription records all the

titles of Indian, Iranian, Chinese and Roman influence. The king referred here is Vashishka's son, Kanishka-III and so the inscription has great historical importance. The inscription therefore dates to year 141 of Kanishka era.

The inscriptions of Saka satraps are very significant sources of Indian history. The Mathura Lion Pillar Capital Inscription is one of the earliest in the context. The Prakrit inscriptions in Kharoshthi script is disorderly arranged all over the sculptured piece, making it difficult to set the sequence of the inscriptions. It records that Naddiyaka, the consort of Mahakshatrapa Rajula (Ranjubula) got a stupa built and donated it to the Sarvastivadin Buddhist sect. The other two inscriptions are edicts of Sodasa, son of Rajula.

Inscriptions of the Western Sakas who migrated into western Indian are notable for their information regarding the economic life. The Nasik Cave Inscription of Usavadatta throws valuable light on certain financial system of the ancient India. Inscribed in the Cave No. 10 at Pandulena, it records two major donations of Usavadatta (Rishabhdatta), the benevolent son-in-law of Nahapana, the ruler of the Kshsharata dynasty. The donor had constructed a cave dwelling for the monks of all sects. He reposed 3000 karshapanas as (akshay-nivi) deposits with two separate guilds of weavers (kolika), each yielding a different rate of interest on the deposit. The accruals were to provide necessities to the monks. The other endowment consisted of 8000 karshapanas worth of coconut plantation in Karpurahara in village Chikhalapadra, which was exchanged (?) for 7000 karshapanas and 35 suvarnas. The endowments were declared at the Nigama-sabha and recorded on the board (phalaka). The inscription mentions years 41, 42 and 45 and belongs to the reign of Nahapana.

The Karle Inscription of the time of Nahapana's reign is concise but details the benevolence of Usavadatta, as having donated 30000 cows, established a tirtha at river Varnasha, donated 16 villages to brahmanas, got 8 brahmanas married, and fed 10000 each year. The Prakrit inscription in Brahmi script records that Usavadatta gave the village of Karajika for providing (food?) the monks of all directions while residing in the cave dwelling during the rainy season.

The Junagadh Inscription by Amatya Suvishakha during the reign of Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman is one of the most important inscriptions. It is situated on a rock surface near Girnar in Saurashtra, and shares space with the later day inscription by Skandagupta. The inscription runs in 20 lines of which eight lines (line no. 9 to 16) eulogise Rudradaman and describe his personal talents and exploits. It tells that Rudradaman had won eastern and western Akara, Avanti - Anupa, Anarata, Surashtra, Swabhra, Maru, Kachchha, Sindhu, Sauvira,

Kukura, Aparanta, Nishad etc. He defeated the Yaudheyas and twice defeated the dakshinapati Satakarni in the battlefield. The other lines of the inscription tell about the artificial Sudarshana lake, which the inscription notes, was initially built by Vaisya Pusyagupta, the rashtriya of Chandragupta Maurya, and channels and conduits were added to this lake by yavanaraj Tushaspa, the governor of Surashtra under Ashoka (lines 8 and 9). A breach was caused in the embankment during the 72 regnal year in Rudradaman's reign causing the drain of water and lake to dry up like a desert. Consultants and experts were dismayed and against the restoration work. Rudradaman spent a large sum of money from his treasury on the restoration which was three as large as earlier. Governor of whole Anarta and Surashtra, Amratya Sivasthaka, son of Pahlava Kulaipa completed the work for the dharmakirti-yasha of his master. The Sudarshan lake stood in a good shape records the inscription. The inscription is in Sanskrit.

The Satavahanas, who were also known as the Andhras in the Puranic genealogies, were kings of the western coastal India. Their inscriptions are found in Nasik region where they had conflicts with the Saka Mahakshatrapas. In Cave No. 19 of Pandulena, we find a Brahmi script record popularly known as the Nasik Cave Inscription of Krshna. It mentions in Prakrit language, about the excavation of a cave by the Mahamatras of Nasik (nasik-ken samanena mahamatena) in the reign of King Krshna of Satavahana kula (sadavahana-kule kanhe rajani). This king is known from the Puranas to be the successor of Simuka. The inscription is variously dated from second century BC to the first century BC. D.C. Sircar and P. L. Gupta prefer to place it in later half of the first century BC. Another of the Satavahana inscription is the Nasik Cave Inscription of Gautamiputra Satakarni in the year 18. This Brahmi : Prakrit inscription is engraved in Cave no. 3 at Pandulena and is an announcement record of a donation. It is in shape of an oral order by Gautamiputra Satakarni to Amatya Vishnupalita that a particular land was donated to the inhabitant Buddhist monks of the Trirashmi hill. The order was engraved by Amatya Sivagupta. The inscription gives insight into the administrative system and the legal rights of state over lands etc. It also tells of the liberal religious outlook of the Brahmanical Satavahanas. The inscription is short in text (only six lines) and is dated in year 18.

In the same cave is found another long inscription in Prakrit and scripted in Brahmi, records a declaration about the facts that Gautami Balashri, who was the mother of Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni, and the grandmother of Pulumavi, had got a cave excavated in the Trirashmi hill and had donated to the Bhadrayani sect of Buddhist; Dakshinapatheswar Sri Pulumavi granted a village named Pishachipadraka, free of all state taxation, for the

maintenance of the cave. The 11 lines of this inscription, known as the Nasik Cave Inscription of Vasishthiputra Pulumavi of year 19, relate many facts that are important for the reconstruction of the history of the Satavahanas.

Another of the Satavahana inscription of great importance but very damaged is the Queen's Inscription inscribed on the two sides of the hilly pass and popularly named as the Nanaghat Inscription. This twenty lines Brahmi inscription records in Prakrit language, the religious deeds and donations by a Satavahana queen who was the mother of Vedasri and Srimad Sati. Much of the text is obliterated, but what remains notes in good details the rituals and the donation. There are engraved sketches of kings and queens above the inscription, where some names were deciphered by scholars, and one of which were 'Devi-Nayanikaya rajno ca Siri Satakanino'. So it has been believed that the Queen was Naganika, who was a regent of minor princes, Vedasri and Satasri. However, scholars do not conclusively believe that the Queen's inscription belongs to Nayanika.

1.7 Select Inscriptions for Detailed Study

Of all the important inscriptions discussed above, we have selected a few for a detailed study. The essential aspects for detailed study are

(i) the palaeography

(ii) the transcription of the original text

(iii) the translation of the text into the modern language, and

(iv) the note on the historical commentary of the inscription. To illustrate this, we have taken up some inscriptions as under.

1.8 Besnagar Inscription of Heliodorus

The Original Text: in Brahmi script See Plate

The Transcribed Text:

'(दे) वदेवस वा (सु) देवस गरुडध्वजे अयं कारिते इ (अ) हेलिओदोरेण भागवतेन दियस पुत्रेण तख्वसिलाकेन योनदूतेन आगतेन महाराजस अंतलिकितस उ (पं) ता सकासं रजो (का) सी पु (त्र) स (भ) गभद्रस त्रातारस शुंग वसेन च (तु) दसेन राजेन वधमानस

त्रिनि अमुतपदानि (इअ) (सु) अनुठितानि नेयंति (स्वग) दम चाग अप्रमाद'

The Translated Text:

"This Garuda pillar of Vasudeva, the god of the gods, was erected by Heliodorus, a Bhagavata, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador

from the Great King Antialcidas to King Kosiputra Bhagabhadra, the Saviour, then reigning prosperously in the 14th year of his kingship. Three immortal precepts when practised lead to heaven - self-restraint, charity, conscientiousness."

Historical Commentary:

1. The inscription throws light on the political connections and religious life of the second century BC. It attests the close friendly ties between the kingdoms of Taxila in north-western India and Vidisha in central India.

2. It is particularly important that Antialcidas, king of Taxila and his ambassador, Heliodorus, both were of Greek origin. The epithets or titles referred as "maharajasa antalikitasa" (Great King Antialcidas) and "bhagabhadrasa tratarasa" (Bhagabhadra Soter) are important as these were popular with the Indo Greeks. The use of "tratarasa" for king Bhagabhadra is significant in denoting his importance.

3. John Marshall believed Bhagabhadra to be the same as Bhadra/Bhadra of the Puranas and a descendant of Vasumitra, the Shunga. But the suggestion is rejected because that particular king is said to have ruled for only 2 or 7 years according to the Puranas, whilst Bhagabhadra of the inscription had been ruling for 14 years. K.P. Jayaswal, R. P Chanda and D.R. Bhandarkar consider that the Bhagabhadra must have been the ninth Shunga descendant who is known in the Puranas as Bhagavata and had ruled for 32 years. However, some scholars consider him to be a local ruler having no connection with the Shunga dynasty, because in another inscription from Besnagar is found the name of the king Bhagavata in the 12th regnal year, and it is not wise to believe that the same king could be named differently in two inscriptions dated so close in regnal years.

4. The last two lines of the inscription, i.e., "trini amuta-padani [ia] [su]- anuthitani/ neyanti [svagam] dama-caga apramada" relates nearly to axiom "damas-tyagodadasca aitevyamrta mahitam" from the Mahabharata. The inscription suggests about the popularity of the Vaishnava faith or Bhagavata sect in the second century BC particularly among the foreign incumbents to India. An Indo Greek coin of Agathocles depicting Vasudeva (Krishna) and Samkarshana (Balarama) is relevant evidence to support the popularity of the faith among the Indo Greeks and their assimilation into the Indian society. The Besnagar Inscription is the final word.

1.9 Bharhut Torana Inscription

The Original Text: in Brahmi script See Plate

The Transcribed Text:

"Suganam raje rajno gagi-putasa visdevasa pautena goti-putasa agarajusa putena vachhi putena dhanabhutina karitam torana sila-kamianto ca capana"

सुगनं रजे रओ गागीपुतस विसदेवस पुतेन गौतिपुतस अगरजसपुतेन वाहिपुतेन धनभूतिन कारितं तारणं

The Translated Text:

"In the kingdom of [Shungas], the torana, rock karmanta, railing-pillar and ushnisha, built by Vatsiputra-Dhanabhuti, son of Gaupitiputra Agraraja, grandson of King Gargiputra Visvadeva."

Historical Commentary:

The inscription mentions a few names of the rulers of not much known significance. But as soon as we accept the reading of the first two words of the inscription, i.e., "suganam raje" the inscription finds great importance. The reference then reveals that the torana (gate) of the Buddhist stupa at Bharhut was built by the Shunga rulers. On the support of this inscriptional evidence, H.C. Raychaudhury claims that the Brahmanical Shunga rulers were not intolerant towards Buddhism and followed a liberal policy. This dilutes the notoriety for religious persecution, attributed to Pushyamitra Shunga in the Buddhist literary texts like the Divyavadana and the history by Lama Taranatha. Some scholars, however, believe that the reference to the construction "during the reign of the Shungas" does not imply that the sponsors were the Shunga rulers themselves. The builders could be other than the Shungas. Nevertheless, the inscription is important for shedding light on the religious situation of the Shunga period of history.

1.10 Ayodhya Inscription

The Original Text: in Brahmi script See Plate

The Transcribed Text:

'कोसलाधिपेन द्विरश्वमेधयाजिनः सेनापतेः पुष्यमित्रस्य षष्ठेन कोसिकीपुत्रेण धन (देवेन) धर्मराज्ञः पितुः फल्गुदेवस्य केतनं कारितम्।'

The Translated Text:

"The ketana of (his) father Dharmaraja Phalgudeva, built by Kaushiki-putra Dhana[deva], the sixth (descendant ?) from king of Kosala, Senapati Pusyamitra the performer of two asvamedha yajnas."

Historical Commentary:

1. The inscription confirms historicity of Pushyamitra, the founder of the Shunga. It mentions the name of Pushyamitra, prefixed with the title of "senapati", i.e., "General" which was the post he was holding in the Mauryan army, and he seems to have retained it as his title even after establishing his rule by a coup d'etat. There is much significance that the inscription attests of the two horse sacrifices performed by Pusyamitra. The *Mahabhasya* of Patanjali and the *Malavikagnimitram* by Kalidasa had mentioned about the asvamedha yajna by Pusyamitra.

2. The connection of the ruling dynasty of Ayodhya, is clearly established with the Shungas. The full name of Dhana is not legible but the scholars prefer to name him as Dhana[deva] considering the fact that his father's name was Phalgudeva, and also because certain coins with the name Dhanadeva have been discovered from Ayodhya.

3. The ketana referred could be a memorial flag-pillar, but D.C. Sircar thinks that ketana referred to devakula.

1.11 Hathigumpha Inscription

Out of the 17 lines long inscription, lines nos. 1, 4, 6, 8 and 12 are more significant. Line no. 1 mentions of the name and dynasty of the king; no. 4 tells his conflict with Satakarni king; no. 6 about an irrigational canal project accomplished by Kharavela and refers to the Nanda king; no. 8 of the retreat of yavanaraja, and line no. 12 about his treatment to Magadha.

The Transcribed Text of Select Lines:

Line no. 1:

"Namo arhantanam namo savasidhanam airena maharajena mahameghavahanena ceti-rajavamsa-vadanena pasatha-subha-lakhanena caturamtaluthana-guna-upitena kalingadhipatina siri-kharavelena..."

in Line no. 4:

"..... dutiye ca vase acitayita satakarni pachhima-disam hayam-gaja-nara-radha bahulam dandam pathapayati kanhabennam-gataya ca senaya vitasiti asikanagara....."

in Line no. 6:

".....pamcame ca dani vase nandaraja-ti vasa-sato [gha]titam tanasuliya-vata-panadim nagaram pavesa[ya]ti so—....."

in Line no. 8:

"...sena-vahane vipamumcitu madhuram apayato yavanara[ja] [vimika]yachhati ..."

in Line no. 12:

“(श्री वत्स) (स्वास्तिक) नमो अरहंतान (I) नमो सवसिधानं (II) ऐरेण महाराजेन महामेघवाहनेन चेति-राज-
व (.) स-वधनेन पसथ-सुभ-लखनेन चतुरंतलुठ (ण)- गुणउपितेन कलिंगाधिपतिना सिरि-खारवेलेन कारयति पनसि
(ति) साहि सत्त-सहसेहि पकतियो च रंजयति (II) दितिये च वसे अचितयिता सातंकनि पछिम-दिसं हय-गज-नर-
रध-बहुलं दंडं पठापयति कन्हूबेणा - गताय च सेनाय वितासिति असिकनगरं (II) ततिये पुन वसे भिंगारे (हि) त-रतन-
सपतेये सव-रठिक-भोजके पादे बंदापयति (11) पंचमे च दानी वसे नंदराज-तिवससत-ओ (घा) टितं तनसुलिय-वाटा
पणाडिं नगरं पवेस (य) ति घातापयिता राजगहं उपपीडपयति (1) एतिन् (I) च कंमपदान-स () नादेन..... सेन-
वाहने विपमुचितुं मधुरं अपयातो यवनरा (ज) (डिमित ?) यद्दति ... पलव म (I) गधानं च विपुलं मयं जनेतो हथसं
गंगाय पाययति (1) म (ण) ध () च राजानं बहसतिमितं पादे वंदापयति (I) नंदराज-नीतं च का (लि) गं-जिनं
सनिवेस.....अंग-मगध-वसुं च नयति (11),..... ”

The Translated Text of Select Lines:

"Reverence to arhatas. All the siddhas Acir Maharaj Mahameghavahana, enhancer of the Ceti dynasty,

Historical Commentary:

The inscription provides evidence of the ambitious King Kharavela who ruled in Kalinga. It is not a hyperbolic eulogy and the king's exploits and achievements have been simply stated. Scholars connect Kharavela with the ancient Chedis of the Puranas - with the Chedi dynasty or the Chedi territory, is a debatable issue. The epigraph does not mention about his parents or his lineage, although it can be inferred that Kharavela was the third descendant of Kalinga's ruling family-the Maha-meghavahanas. (The Maha-meghavahana also finds mention in Manchapuri and Guntupalli inscriptions and also in the Mahabharata.) The King became the yuvaraja at the age of 15 years and took charge of kingship at the age of 24 years. In his seventh regnal year a son was born to his queen.

Kharavela appears to belong to the Jaina faith

1.12 Junagadh Rock Inscription

The Transcribed Text of Select Lines:

In Lines nos. 3 and 4 :

“ पंचसप्तति - हस्तानवगाढेन भेदेन निस्सुत - सर्व्व - तोयं मरु - धन्व - कल्पमतिभृशं दु (र्द) (1) (स्य)
अर्थे मैर्यस्य राज्ञः चन्द्र (गु) (स) (स्य) राष्ट्रियेण (वै) श्येन पुष्यगुप्तेन कारितं अशोकस्य मौर्यस्य (कृ) ते यवनराजेन तुष
(I) स्फेनाधिष्ठाय वीर-शब्द-जा (तो) त्सेकाविधेयानां यौधेयानां प्रसह्योत्सादकेन दक्षिणापथ - पते स्सातकर्णेद्विरपि
नीव्यजिमवजीत्यावजीत्य संबंधा (वि) दूर (त) या अनुत्सादनात्प्राप्त यशसा (वाद) (प्रा) (स) विजयेन भ्रष्टराज-
प्रतिष्ठापकेन यथार्थ-हस्तो । परम-लक्षणं-व्यंजनैरुपेत-कान्त-मूर्तिना स्वयमधिगत-महाक्षत्रप-नाम्ना नरेन्द्र-क(न्या)

स्वयंव्रानेकमाल्य-प्राप्त-दाम्ना (ः) महाक्षत्रप रुद्रदाम्ना वर्षसहस्रत्राय गो-ब्रा (ह्य)(ण)..... (त्थं) धर्म-कीर्ति-वृद्धयर्थं च अपीऽपि (त्व) । कर-बिष्टि-प्रणयक्रियाभिः पौर-जानपदं जनं एवस्मात्कोशा महता धनौधेन अनतिमहता च कालेन त्रिगुण-दृढतर-विस्तारायामं सेतुं विधा (य स) व्यत (दे).... (सु)दर्शनतरं कारितमिति (1) (अस्मि) त्रत्थं (च) महा (क्ष)त्रप (स्य) मत्तिसचिवकर्मसचिवैरताम्य-गुण-समुद्युक्तैरप्यतिमहत्वा-द्भेदस्यानुत्साह-विमुख-मतिभिः (ः) प्रत्याख्यातारंभ (ः) पुनः - सेतुबन्ध - नैराश्याद्हाहाभूतासु प्रजासु इहाधिष्ठाने पौरजानपदजनानुग्रहार्थं पार्थिवेन कृत्स्नानामानर्त-सुराष्ट्रानां पालनात्थंनियुक्तेन पह्वेन कुलैप - पुत्रेणामात्येन सुविशाखेन यथावदर्थ-धर्म-व्यवहार - दर्शनैरनुरागमभिवर्द्धयता शकेन दान्तेनाचपलेनाविस्मतेना - व्येणाहाव्येण स्वधितिष्ठता धर्म - कीर्ति - यशांसि भर्तुरभिवर्द्धयतानुष्ठित (मि)(ति) ।”

".... tadidam rajno mahakshatrapasya sugrahitannannah swami-castanasya-pautra[sya]"

Lines nos. 8 and 9:

".....mauryasya rajnah candra [guptasya] rastriyena vaisyena pusvauguptena karitam asokasya mauryasya [kr]te yavanarajena tus[a]sphenadhisthaya pranalibhnamdam krtam..."

In Line no. 12:

".... dakshinapathapatessatakarnedvirapi niyarjamavajitvavajitya sambandha[vi]durataya anutsadanatpraptayasasa [vada][prapta]"

The Translated Text of Select Lines:

1.13 Summary

The origin of script in India was not as late as supposed by many Western scholars; and in fact the use of Greek, Kharoshthi and Brahmi is well attested since the days of the Mauryas. Various written texts were left behind by the ancient kings and common men (e.g., donors, merchants) which were inscribed on the medium which could serve the purposes. Stone tablets were used for the inscriptions recording donations, and large rock surfaces were utilised to place the edict of the king. Sometimes, the actual object like the casket or jar was inscribed with the message, and at times the silver foil was used to write upon. The inscriptions were recorded with part or full dates of the event as per the need. The different eras or regnal calendars come to our knowledge with this. We find the evolution of the script in the inscriptions of different times. The difference of the choices about the languages and scripts in the Northwest, Eastern, Western and Central India also give us good clues about the state of cultural conditions. Glimpses of the political, social, religious and economic life can be seen in the inscriptions. The genealogy and chronology of kings and dynasties finds their solution in the epigraphic sources. Artistic styles and poetic expression is also revealed in the inscriptions.

1.14 Check your Progress:

Answer the following questions :

- (a) Discuss the origin and antiquity of script in India.
- (b) What are the different kinds of ancient Indian inscriptions ?
- (c) Write a short note on the dated inscriptions of the pre-Gupta period.
- (d) What is so special about the inscriptions of the foreign kings of Northwest India ?
- (e) How have the inscriptions been as a source of information of the ancient Indian administrative, economic and social history? Illustrate with the help of the ancient Indian inscriptions.
- (f) Highlight the historical information derived from the (i) Hathigumpha Inscription OR (ii) Junagadh Rock Inscription; and also discuss about the problems of interpretation of the certain lines and words.

1.15 Reference for Further Reading

(Arranged alphabetically)

Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum by J.F. Fleet

Epigraphia Indica

Gupta, P.L., *Prachina Bharata ke Pramukha Abhilekha* (vols. 1 & 2)

Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscription bearing upon the History of India* (vols. 1 & 2)

UNIT - II

IMPORTANT GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS

- 2.1. Objectives
- 2.2. Introduction
- 2.3. Inscriptions related to Samudragupta
- 2.4. Inscriptions of Ramagupta
- 2.5. Inscriptions related to Chandragupta (II) Vikramaditya
- 2.6. Inscriptions related to Kumaragupta (I)
- 2.7. Inscriptions related to Skandagupta
- 2.8. Later Inscriptions
- 2.9. Excerpts from Important Inscriptions for Detailed Study
- 2.10. Allahabad Pillar Inscription / Prayag Prasasti by Harisena
- 2.11. Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription
- 2.12. Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 493 in the reign of Kumaragupta (I)
- 2.13. Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 524 in the reign of Govindagupta
- 2.14. Junagadh Inscription by Cakrapalita
- 2.15. Bhitari Pillar Inscription
- 2.16. Summary
- 2.17. Check your Progress
- 2.18. Reference for Further Reading
- 2.1. Objectives**

The aim of the present Unit-2 is to present an overview of inscriptions belonging to the period of the Imperial Guptas and highlight the select ones.

2.2. Introduction

Valuable epigraphic evidence forms an important source of the history of the Imperial Guptas. Inscriptions have been found engraved upon stone (e.g., pillars, rock surface, cave-walls, statues), metal objects (e.g., iron pillar, copper plates, coins) and clay tablets. Each inscription had an aim to fulfil; i.e., had a purpose for its having been engraved. Sometimes it was meant to declare a donation, and at times for commemorating the king's exploits for posterity. If one was a seal the other could be a coin legend. Some have been left behind by the kings themselves while others are the records of the lay people. This fact attests the prevalence of a tradition of recording for public information. That it may remain intact for a long duration of time, more durable medium was sought by the scribes to write upon.

The development of Brahmi script and the Sanskrit language in its graceful style are also noticeable in the inscriptions of the Gupta period. Most of inscriptions are contemporary of some ruling Gupta Emperor and so contains genealogical information and chronological clues into the dynasty. The territorial limits of the empire, the polity, administrative organisation and procedure, can be ascertained from the inscriptions. The source enhances our knowledge of the historical geography, political events, social, cultural, religious and economic conditions of the Age. It also throws light on the calendar and time reckoning of the period. Of several such inscriptions we shall take into account certain select ones and shall highlight certain portions of their respective texts for focussed study.

2.3 Inscriptions related to Samudragupta

Among the inscriptions that provide information about the history of Samudragupta are two copper plates both of which are documents of the royal orders of agrahara land grants. Both are Sanskrit texts written in Brahmi script. One of these, namely, the Nalanda Copper Plate was discovered in an excavation at Nalanda in 1927-8. It is a dated inscription, mentioning the date as "samvata 5, Magha divasa 2". The Gaya Copper Plate is dated as "samvata 9, Vaishakha divasa 10". Scholars like J. Fleet and D.C. Sircar have doubted the genuineness of the copper plates, due to some grammatical weaknesses in their texts. However, R.D. Banerji, D.R. Bhandarkar do not find adequate reasons to treat the copper plates as spurious. S.V. Sohoni has analysed the arguments on both sides and considers the two copper plates as (remade) copies of some original document. The inscriptions record the royal decree of Samudragupta issued from a military camp, issued verbally to "kumara Chandragupta" who orally ordered Gopaswami. Terms like "balatkausana", "agrahara", "uparikara", "maiya" and "hiranya" besides some official designations are named in the texts. It also mentions the ancestry of the emperor, his Licchhavi connection, and his epithet

"Sarvarajochchhetta". The dates of the two inscriptions raised a problem of chronology which could be sorted out by taking the reckoning to refer to some prevalent older calendar, and not the Gupta Era (Gupta samvata).

Two eulogies written in praise of Samudragupta are foremost sources which relate about his personality, heroic deeds and achievements. The first one in importance is the Prayag Prasasti by Harisena and the next in significance is the Eran Prasasti Inscription. The latter is almost a short version of the former eulogy.

The Prayag Prasasti is inscribed on a 35 feet high monolith situated in the Allahabad Fort at Prayag, which was originally at Kosam (Kaushambi). The monolith is in fact a pillar erected by Emperor Ashoka and also has his edict engraved upon its surface. It was upon the vacant space that the Brahmi inscription eulogising Samudragupta was engraved in the Gupta period. Its Sanskrit text consists of 33 slokas with prose pieces mixed up with verse, known as the Champu style of diction. It was composed by Harisena, a nobleman from the royal court, and engraved by Tilabhata. The inscription is undated, but was written during the lifetime of the emperor. It was first published by Capt. A. Troyer in 1834 and was later edited by noted epigraphists. The valuable pieces of information relate to the personal accomplishments and victories of Samudragupta, particularly his expeditions in the Aryavartta and Dakshinapatha. There are names of places and peoples, and their rulers, which perfects our knowledge of the geography and political conditions of the referred regions of northern and southern India.

The Eran Prasasti is a 28 lines inscription engraved on a 3 feet long red-sandstone plaque, discovered by A. Cunningham in Eran. It praises Samudragupta immensely but does not recount the actual military achievements.

2.4 Inscriptions of Ramagupta

The historicity of Ramagupta as the successor of Samudragupta was doubtful, despite the indirect mention about him in literature. Some coins of Ramagupta were discovered in Malwa, but the evidence of three idols bearing inscriptions about Ramagupta settled the problem. Three idols of Jain tirthankaras (Chandraprabha, Puspadanta and Padmaprabha) were unearthed in a mound at village Durjanpur near River Bes in Vidisha in 1969. All the three idols have identical inscriptions, with relevant changes. The best preserved and complete of the Jain Idol Inscription is on statue of tirthankara Chandraprabha. It mentions that 'maharajadhiraja sri ramagupta' installed the idol, at the behest of a certain sramana.

Two Sanskrit-Brahmi inscriptions of indirect significance to Ramagupta's history are the Basadh Clay-sealings (three impressions were discovered in Basadh, ancient Vaisali in

Bihar in 1903-04) which mentions the names of Dhruvaswamini as the queen of Chandragupta and mother of Govindagupta. The other one is the Mandasor Inscription of Malava samvat 524, found in 1923 inside the fort, which is a poetic composition by Ravila declaring about the charitable acts of certain Dattabhatta. The slokas 3 and 4 indicate that Govindagupta was the son of Chandragupta.

2.5. Inscriptions related to Chandragupta (II) Vikramaditya

The important inscriptions of the reign of Chandragupta II are from Mathura, Mehrauli, Udaigiri caves near Vidisha, and Sanchi. Luckily, most of them mention their dates. The Mathura Pillar Inscription of Arya Uditacharya informs about the consecration of Upamiteshwar and Kapileshwar in the fifth victorious regnal year of Bhattaraka maharajadhiraja Sri Chandragupta, son of Bhattaraka maharajadhiraja Samudragupta, in the samvat 61. Upon the testimony of this inscription's dating, Fleet's proposal of ascribing the commencement of the Gupta Era in 319 AD stands corroborated. It also indicates that the Kushana rule over Mathura had certainly ended by 61 G.E., that is 380 AD.

Brahmi inscriptions of the samvat 82 and 93 were found in the Vidisha-Sanchi region and suggest the presence of Chandragupta (II) in Malwa. The Udayagiri Cave Inscription dated 82 by Sanakanika Maharaja (Sodala) declares the donation of a cave for religious merit. Another inscription that is undated, and popularly known as the Udayagiri Cave Inscription by Saba Virasena, the minister of Chandragupta, enlightens that he had accompanied the king to Udayagiri and built a cave for Lord Siva. The Sanchi Inscription of year 93, is a donation record by Amrakardeva, inscribed upon the vedika of the stupa. The inscription was discovered by V.H. Hodgson in 1834, copied by Capt. E.G., Smith and deciphered by J. Princep. The Sanskrit text of the Brahmi inscription says that Amrakardeva purchased some land and gifted it to the Buddhist Samgha so that its accruals were used for food and lamp-lighting. The inscription gives us the name "Devaraja" as another name of Chandragupta (II).

A controversial inscription, now believed to refer to Chandragupta Vikramaditya, forms the part of a unique Vishnu-dhwaja, 23 feet-8 inches high, made of extremely pure iron, erected near Qutb Minar in Delhi. The Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription, as it is generally named, was first deciphered by J. Princep in 1834. This Brahmi inscription has three slokas in Sanskrit which briefly speak of the exploits and prowess of king Chandra. He had dispersed his enemies, who had gathered in Bengal, and had conquered the Vahlikas in the north and perfumed the southern lands with the breeze of his valour. He had erected that Vishnu-dhwaja on the Vishnu-pada hill.

Scholars have debated on the identity of the king Chandra and have variously identified him. Fergusson thought he could be any of the two Chandraguptas of the dynasty; Fleet thought he could be Chandragupta-I but finally proposed that the inscription referred to a younger brother of Mihirakula. R.G. Basak supported him. However, R.C. Majumdar thought that Chandra was none else but Kanishka; H.C. Raychaudhary believed that he was a Naga king. The view first proposed by A.F.R. Hoernle that the Chandra referred in the inscription was Chandragupta-II, received the assent from scholars like Vincent Smith, R.K. Mookherji, R.N. Dandekar, D.C. Sircar, N.N. Ghosh, A.S. Altekar and P.L. Gupta.

Quite under mistake, Fleet believed that it was a posthumous eulogy and Sircar also wrongly supposed that the pillar was installed by the king but inscribed later after him. Gupta clarifies that the inscription is not chiselled, but forms part of the mould in which the pillar was cast; hence it belongs to the lifetime of the king who had erected it. It is also not a eulogy but just a short introduction of a living king.

Recently, in 1979 many rock inscriptions have been discovered in the Hunza-Kantha region and published by Ahmad Hasan Dani. In almost 19 Brahmi-Sanskrit Hunza-Kantha Minor Rock Inscriptions mention the names like "Sri Chandra", "Sri Vikrama", "Sri Vikramaditya jayati" and "Harisena" and so it is probable that these relate to the expedition of the king in the north as suggested in the Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription

2.6 Inscriptions related to Kumaragupta (I)

Kumaragupta had inherited a well consolidated empire and he is credited with a prosperous reign, attested with a varied gold coinage and several epigraphs of economic nature. Inscriptions of his reign come from Bilsad (Etah), Gadhwa (Allahabad), Mathura, Tumain (Guna), Udayagiri (Vidisha), Sanchi in India and from Dhanaidah, Kulaikurai, Damodarpur, Baigram, Jagdishpur in (erstwhile East Bengal) present Bangladesh. Most of the inscriptions are in Sanskrit written in Brahmi script.

The Bilsad Pillar Inscription was discovered by A. Cunningham in 1877 on two stone pillars. It is dated in year 96 and records the construction of a pratoli (gate) and dharmasatra in a temple of Mahasena (Karttikeya) by Dhruvasharma. Its importance lies in the fact that it gives the full genealogy of the Guptas till Kumaragupta, mentioning their titles.

The Gadhwa Inscriptions are incomplete texts due to the broken stone panel. They are dated in the reign of Kumaragupta in year 98 and each mentions of a donation of dinaras by certain devotee. The Udayagiri Inscription of year 106 mentions the installation of a Jaina

tirthamkara Parsvanatha's idol in the cave, which naturally falls in Kumaragupta's reign, although the king is not named here. The Tumain Inscription is a record of the construction of a "deva-niwasa" (temple) at Tumbavana by five Vaisya brothers from Batodaka (village Vadoha in Vidisha?), in year 116, during the reign of Kumaragupta, whose royal ancestry is also mentioned.

The Dhanaidah Copper Plate of year 113 was discovered in 1908 in district Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), and published by R.D. Banerji and later by R.G. Basak. It speaks of the purchase of land for the purpose of donation by (...)-vishnu to Varahaswamin, a Samavedi brahmana, in the reign of Kumaragupta. It mentions terms like "akshaya-nivi" and "kulyavapa". The Kulaikurai Copper Plate Inscription of year 120, the Damodarpur Copper Plates of years 124 and 128, the Baigram Copper Plate Inscription of year 128, and the Jagdishpur Copper Plate Inscription of year 128; all have been discovered from Bengal and relate to the sale of state lands for religious purposes. They are dated in Gupta Era and fall into the reign of Kumaragupta. They throw light on the aspect of ownership and transfer of lands in Gupta empire.

The Mandasor Inscription of malava samvata 493 and 529 discovered on a stone panel in the stairs of the Mahadeva-ghat, is an important record left behind by the silk weavers, whose guild had constructed a sun temple. The composition by Vatsa-bhatti consists of 44 slokas, with as many as 12 different chhandas (kinds of verses), various alamkaras (figures of speech), and samasas (conjoined words), all in the classical style of poetry. It is mentioned (sloka 23) that the sun temple was built in Malava samvata 493 when Kumaragupta was the ruler of the earth. It is equated with year 116 of the Gupta Era by scholars, so Kumaragupta (I) is meant. The temple was later on renovated in Malava samvata 529 notes slokas 34, which should belong to reign of another king. Some scholars believe that he was Kumaragupta (II), known from a Buddha idol inscription found at Sarnath, which is dated in G.E. 154. The Mandasor Inscription informs about the social, cultural and religious life of the times. It tells about the economic organisation of the craftsmen of that period, i.e., the guild of silk-weavers, who had migrated from Gujarat to Dashapur in Malwa. The names of the local rulers (like Bandhuvarman) and the official designation (like gopta) are significant in knowing about the administrative structure of the Gupta empire.

2.7 Inscriptions related to Skandagupta

The inscriptions belonging to the reign of Skandagupta are few but are remarkable for their quality and utility. They highlight the valorous personality of the king. The Junagadh

Inscription is "sudarsana-tataka-samskara-grantha racana" and speaks of a recent breach in the embankment of the Sudarshana lake and its restoration (and enlargement) by Chakrapalita (governor of Girinar), son of gopta Parnadatta, in years 136-138 of the Gupta Era. The major beginning part of the text is a praise of Skandagupta and his beneficial reign. Its Saṅskrit text is written in Southern Brahmi script. The Kahawa Pillar Inscription (dated year 141) situated in Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh speaks of the "skandaguptasya sante varse" interpreted as the "peaceful reign of Skandagupta"; while the Supiya Pillar Inscription (dated year 141) found in Rewa, is not meticulous about the Gupta genealogy and names of the kings, but it praises "Maharaja Sri Skandagupta" and compares him with Lord Rama and Yudhisthira, indicating the kings popularity among his subjects. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription was situated possibly at a temple site (near Saidpur in district Ghazipur, U.P.), contains a eulogy of Skandagupta for his achievements and records the installation of an idol and grant of a village to the deity for the merit of his father. It is scripted in Northern Brahmi.

2.8 Later Inscriptions

Among the inscriptions of the kings who succeeded Skandagupta are the Bihar Pillar Inscription which mentions the name of Purugupta. It was discovered in Patna in 1839 and it is an order believed to be issued by Purugupta or his son.

The Paharpur Copper Plate of year 159, found in the ruins of an ancient vihara at Rajshahi, is a 25 lines of Sanskrit text in Later Brahmi script engraved upon a copper plate. It is a declaration of sale of land (like the Damodarpur Copper Plates, Baigram Copper Plate). The copper plate does not mention the name of the king, but it can be inferred from the year 159 that it belongs to the reign of Buddhagupta. His reign is settled from the Rajghat (Varanasi) Pillar Inscription which was erected by Damaswamini in year 159 "in the reign of Maharajadhiraja Buddhagupta". The Mathura Idol-base Inscription also establishes that Buddhagupta was ruling in the year 161 as well. The Eran Pillar Inscription found in Madhya Pradesh in 1838 by Capt. T.S. Burt and published in the same year by J. Princep, is important Sanskrit: Later Brahmi inscription is a garuda-stambh erected by Maharaja Matravishnu and Dhanyavishnu in the year 165 when Buddhagupta was the 'bhupati' and Sri Surashmichanda was governing (palyati). The Bhitari Stone Slab Inscription discovered by K.K. Sinha in 1974-75 at Bhitari (Saidpur tehsil, Ghazipur district, U.P.) is a Later Brahmi inscription which names Buddhagupta, and is dated in the year 170. This is the latest epigraphic record of his reign although his coins date as late as year 175.

The undated Nalanda Clay Seal, discovered in the Vihara (no. 1) at Nalanda and published by Hiranand Shastri introduces by its Sanskrit: Brahmi inscription, the genealogy

of Kumaragupta-Purugupta-Vainyagupta. The Gunaighar Copper Plate, discovered in 1925 in Tripura, is a Sanskrit text in 31 lines in Later Brahmi which record the donation of land at the orders of Maharaja Vainyagupta. The land grant was released from a military camp in year 188. This is the third land grant record from a Gupta king, the other two being the Nalanda and Gaya Copper-plates of Samudragupta.

A memorial stone, known as Eran Pillar Inscription dated 191 records the heroic death of Goparaj, who accompanied Maharaja Sri Bhanugupta to the battlefield. His wife entered fire at his mátrydom. This is the earliest epigraphic evidence of what was commonly named as the sati-system.

The last monarchs of the Gupta dynasty are known from their epigraphs. Besides the names of his ancestors, king Narasimhagupta is named as son of Purugupta in the Nalanda Clay Seal and in the Bhitari Metal Seal is named narsimhagupta and his son Kumáragupta, (the third). However, obviously, these are undated inscriptions.

A fragment inscription naming parama-bhagavato maharajadhiraja sri-Vishnugupta as son of maharajadhiraja Kumaragupta, is found upon a Nalanda Clay Seal. The Gupta king *parama-daivata-parama-bhattaraka-maharajadhiraja-sri- [Vishnu] gupta* (name illegible) is believed to be the ruler in the copperplate, popularly known as the fifth Damodarpur Copper Plate of year 224, which was discovered in Dinajpur district in 1915 along with four other copper-plates. It is in Later Brahmi script with a Prakrit influenced Sanskrit text of 22 lines which records like others, the declaration of sale of land in akshay-nivi-dharma.

2.9 Excerpts of Important Inscriptions for Detailed Study

Among the important inscriptions discussed above, few excerpts are chosen for a detailed study. The essential aspects for any detailed study are (i) the palaeography (ii) the transcription of the original text (iii) the translation of the text into the modern language, and (iv) the historical commentary of the inscription.

2.10 Allahabad Pillar Inscription / Prayag Prasasti by Harisena

The Transcribed Text of Selected Lines:

Slokas 7 and 8:

7. आ य्यो हीत्युपगुह्य भाव-पिशुनैरुत्कर्णितैः रोमभिः सभ्येषूच्च्वंसितेषु तुल्य-कुलज-म्लानाननोद्धीक्षितः (I)
8. (स्त्रे) ह-व्याकुलितेन बाष्ण-गुरुणा तत्वेक्षिणा चक्षुषा यः पित्राभिहितो नि (रीक्ष्य) निखि (लां) (पाह्वेव)(मुर्वी) मिति (II)(4)

Slokas 13-14:

13. उद्वेलोदित-बाहु-वीर्य-रभसादेकेन येन क्षणादुन्मूल्याच्युत-नागसेन-ग.....
14. दण्डैर्ग्राहयतैव कोतेकुलज पुष्पाह्वये क्रीडिता सूर्यो (?) नित्य (?) तट (7)

Slokas 19-24:

19. कौसलक महेन्द्र माह (1) कान्तारकव्याघ्रराज- कौरालकमण्डराज- पैष्ठपुरक महेन्द्रगिरि- कौटूरकस्वामिदत्तै रण्डपल्लकदमन- कांचेयकविष्णु- गोपा वमुक्तक-
20. नीलराज - वैद्भेयकहस्तिवर्म- पालकोग्रसेन- दैवराष्ट्रककुबेर- कौस्थलपुरक - धनंजय- प्रभृति सर्व्वदक्षिणापथ- राज-ग्रहण-मोक्षानुग्रह-जनित-प्रतापोन्मिश्र-माहाभागस्य
21. रुद्रदेव- मतिल- नागदत्त- चन्द्रवर्म- गणपतिनाग- नागसेना च्युत - नन्दि बल-वर्माद्यने कार्यावर्तराज- प्रसभोद्धरणोद्भृत- प्रभाव-महतः पारिचारिकीकृत- सर्व्वटविक- राजस्य
22. समतट- डवाक- कामरूप - नेपाल कतूपुरादि- प्रत्यन्त- नृपतिभिर्माल- वार्जुनायन- यौधेय माद्र- काभीर- प्रार्जून- सनकानीक- काक- खरपरिकादिभिश्च- सर्व्वकरदानाज्ञाकरण-प्रणामागमन-
23. परितोषित- प्रचण्डशासनस्य अनेक भ्रष्टाज्योत्सन्न- राजवंश- प्रतिष्ठापनोद्भूत- निखिल-भु (व) न (विचरण- शा)न्त-यशसः दैवपुत्रपाहिषाहानुषाहि-शक मरुण्डैः सैहलकादिभिश्च
24. सर्व्व-द्वीप-वासिभिरात्मनिवेदन-कन्योपायनदान- गरुत्मदङ्क स्वविषय-भुक्तिशासम- (या) चनाद्युपाय- सेवा- कृत-बाहु-वीर्य्य-प्रसारण-धरणि-बन्धस्य-पृथिव्यामप्रितिरथस्य

2.11 Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription

The Original Text: Sanskrit text in Brahmi script (See Plate)

The Transcribed Text:

Sloka 5 - 6 :

5. प्रासेन स्वभुजाज्जितं च सुचिरं चैकाधिराज्यं क्षितौ, चन्द्राह्नेन समग्रचन्द्रसदृशीं वक्त्रश्रियं विभ्रता ।
6. तेनायं प्राणिधाय भूमिपतिना धावेन विष्णौ मतिं, प्रांशुर्व्विष्णुपदे गिरौ भगवतो विष्णोर्ध्वजः स्थापितः

2.12 Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 493 in the reign of Kumaragupta (I)

The Transcribed Text:

Slokas 21-22:

21. स्पर्शवतावर्णान्तर - विभाग - चित्रेण नेत्र - सुभगेन ।
यैस्सकलमिदं क्षितितलमलंकृतं पट्टवस्त्रेण ॥

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22. विद्याधरीरुचिर - पल्लव - कर्णपुर-वातेरिता स्थिरतरं प्रविचिन्त्य लोकं ।
मानुष्यमर्थ- निचयांश्च तथा विशालां स्तेषां शुभा मतिरभूदचला ततस्तु ॥

2.13 Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 524 in the reign of Govindagupta

The Transcribed Text:

Slokas 3-4:

"bhuvah patinam bhuvi bhupatitvamachchidya dhi vikrama-sadhanena
nadyapi moksham samupeti yena sva-vamsya-pasairapasita bhuh
govinda vatkhyata-guna-prabhavo govindaguptorjjitanadheyam
vasundharesastanayam prajajne sa dityadityostanayaissarupam"

2.14 Junagadh Inscription by Cakrapalita

The Transcribed Text:

Slokas 5-6:

5. क्रमेण बुद्ध्या निपुणं प्रधार्य ध्यात्वा च कृत्स्नानुण-दोष हेतून् ।
व्यपेत्य सर्वान्मनुजेन्द्र-पुत्रां (त्रां)लक्ष्मीः स्वयं यं वरयांचकार ॥
6. तस्मिन्नृपे शासति नैव कश्चिद्धर्मादपेतो मनुजः प्रजासु ।
आर्तो दरिद्रो व्यसनी कदर्यो दण्डेन वा यो भृश-पीडितः स्यात् ॥

2.15 Bhitari Pillar Inscription

The Transcribed Text:

Sloka 4:

4. विचलित-कुल-लक्ष्मी-स्तम्भनायोद्यतेन क्षितितल-शयनीये येन नीता त्रियामा समु
ति-बल-कोशा (न्युष्यमित्रांश्च) जि (त्वा) क्षितिप-चरण-पीठै स्थापितो वाम-पादः ॥

2.16 Summary

The numerous inscriptions have given key to settling the genealogy and dynastic succession of the Gupta kings. The chronology of the Gupta dynasty is also clearly established since most of the records are dated, and that too in the Gupta samvat, except a few that are in Malava samvat. The exploits of the kings, the political achievements of the reign, the economic progress, the administrative organisation, the social structure and the cultural attainments get highlighted themselves in the inscriptional records. A lot of the information

derived from the inscriptions is not found in literary sources. The poetic expression revealed in the inscriptions can compare well with the literary compositions of the Gupta period. In this way the Gupta inscriptions are very important sources of ancient Indian history.

2.17 Check your Progress:

Answer the following questions :

- (a) Discuss the importance of the epigraphical source in reconstructing the history of the Gupta period .
- (b) What are the different kinds of Gupta inscriptions ? Illustrate.
- (c) Write a note on the inscribed eulogies of the Gupta period.
- (d) Highlight the importance of the inscriptions popularly named as:
 - (i) Prayag Prasasti (ii) Meharauli Iron Pillar Inscription (iii) Junagadh Inscription
- (e) How do inscriptions provide information of the ancient Indian administrative, economic and social history? Illustrate with the help of the Gupta inscriptions.
- (f) Narrate the historical information derived from the inscriptions of the later period of the Gupta dynasty.

2.18 Reference for Further Reading

(Arranged alphabetically)

Epigraphia Indica

Gupta, P.L., *Prachina Bharata ke Pramukha Abhilekha* (vols. 1 & 2)

Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscription bearing upon the History of India* (vols. 1 & 2)

Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*

BLOCK - III
ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND PROMINENT COIN TYPES

UNIT - I

**ORIGIN, ANTIQUITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF
COINAGE IN ANCIENT INDIA**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Medium of exchange from the prehistoric vedic period.
 - a Pre historic period
 - b Vedic period
- 1.4 Types of coinage in ancient India
 - a Nishka
 - b Satamana
- 1.5 Origin of coinage
- 1.6 Antiquity of Indian Coins
- 1.7 Development of Coinage
- 1.8 Summary
- 1.9 Check your progress
- 1.10 Assignment/activities
- 1.11 Suggested Reading

1.1 Introduction

Coins are an essential item of our daily life. Right from your childhood, you may have been using them. But have you ever thought as to what is a coin and how did it evolve?

The word 'coin' may be defined as 'a piece of metal of a fixed weight bearing the insignia of the issuing authority and used as a medium of exchange.' The evolution of coinage has been one of the most significant revolutions in the history of mankind

which, though slow and long process, has changed the face of the economic world. The evolution has passed through different stages, which represent fascinating phases of the development of human civilization.

1.2 Objective

The study of coins is called Numismatics. Numismatics forms an indispensable study of ancient Indian History and Culture as coins are important sources of knowing the political, economical and cultural history.

1.3 Medium of exchange from the Prehistoric – The Vedic Period

a Prehistoric Period

At the infancy of human civilization, people did not need any coins as they had to fulfill their needs by dint of their own labour. In the Palaeolithic Period (Old Stone Age), the basis of subsistence was hunting and food gathering. As a means of hunting, the early man acquired the knowledge of manufacturing stone tools. Initially living in small family groups, which may have been inimical to other such groups, people might have realized the necessity of joining hands with other groups to kill bigger animals for food. They thus started living in harmony with other groups and shared the meat of the hunted game. There is evidence that these groups exchanged their commodities also. Interdependence was the first step forward towards the development of economy.

Taking to animal husbandry, agriculture, production of various types of small tools (microliths) for which he needed fine-grained stone from other areas, evolution of pottery and storage pits, etc. are the characteristic features of the Mesolithic Period (Middle Stone Age). The excavation of the Mesolithic settlement of MAHADHA in the Gaᅅgā valley has yielded a large number of implements like the quern, muller, anvil, hammer, etc., which seem to have been exploited fully for the utilization of the vegetal food. CHOPANI MANDO in the Belan valley in U.P. is another Mesolithic site where stone objects like ring-stones, rubbers, mullers, querns, etc. have been found. BAGOR (Rajasthan), ADAM GARH, BHIM BETKA (M.P.), MAHADHA, etc. furnish evidence of the use of ornaments also by the Mesolithic people. The overall picture indicates that different people were engaged in different vocations and had been exchanging their products. The commodities used for exchange formed some sort of primitive money.

The revolutionary discovery of the wheel during the Neolithic Period (New Stone Age) really revolutionized the subsequent life of man as speed was added to his activities. Man had become the food-producer by this time and had started leading a sedentary life, as he had now to look after his crops. Barter system flourished further. The peasant

communities which developed from the Neolithic stage and subsequently acquired the knowledge of metals also, later developed into a grandiose civilization known as the Indus Valley or Harappan or Indus-Sarasvati Civilization. It was the biggest civilization of the contemporary world and showed a remarkably developed urban culture with an astonishing variety of cultural equipment, a surprising standardization and a highly flourishing state of trade and commerce, which had assumed international proportions. The enormous volume of trade during this period involved a considerable merchant class with subsidiary caravan organizations. Cubical weights, pans of balances, measuring scales, etc. found from Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Mitathal, Banawali, Surkotda, Dholavira, Rakhigari, etc. are indicative of the trade transactions. There is enough evidence of international trade via the sea but no coins have been discovered from any of the Harappan sites. Surprising it is, but very much true. Some scholars, however, think that the silver and gold pieces discovered from Mohenjodaro and some other sites may have served as the metallic currency (not coins), but even this is not incontrovertible. Some people feel inclined to identify the Indus-Sarasvati culture with the Vedic culture, but even this remains to be substantiated by definite evidence.

b Vedic Period

Barter continued to be the main system of exchange even during the Vedic period. The R̥gveda refers to Panis, an affluent trading class of the times. Their name itself may be derived from the root pan, meaning barter. The word paṇya used in the subsequent period in the sense of commodity indicates its adoption by the traders to denote the sense of exchange. Cows are mentioned at various places to have served as money and the medium of exchange. In later literature, however, the word paṇa has been used in the sense of a stake, wages, reward, price, wealth, property, and even a COIN.

There are some interesting references in the Vedic literature to the sale and purchase of commodities, exchange of commodities, payment of dāna and dakṣiṇā (donations and religious fees), rewards, etc. At one place we find a R̥gvedic sage announcing as to 'who will purchase this (image of) Indra of mine for ten cows?', but another sage refused to sell his (image of) Indra even for a hundred or a thousand cows. In a third passage, we are told that the Bharata army went out for war impelled by the desire to acquire cows. Again we find that Indra sent his messenger to recover his stolen treasure; and his treasure was nothing else but cows. Soma plant was in great demand amongst the Vedic Aryans; and it was usually exchanged for cows.

Yaska has given twenty-eight synonyms for wealth in his Nirukta and Nighaṇṭu, datable to circa ninth-eighth century BC. Money in the Vedic period was needed for sacrificial fees (*dakṣiṇā*), revenue (*rājasva*), and purchasing (*kraya*). We often find mention of

honoraria being paid to priests, guests and teachers in terms of cows. Cow, thus, seems to have become a unit for the purchase of articles. In the *Aitareya Brāhṃṇa*, wealth is frequently estimated in terms of cows. Śunaḥśepa was sold by his father for one hundred cows. The father charged further a fee of one hundred cows for fastening the boy to the sacrificial post. In the later Vedic literature, we get many instances where the priests were paid their *dakṣhiṇā* as cows. It may be pointed out here that India was not the only country in the ancient world where cows served as the medium of exchange. Homer refers to the use of oxen as standards of value. In Rome, fines were assessed in terms of oxen. The cow was the standard of value in Rome. And thus came the word 'Pecunia' (meaning 'cattle' in Latin) to mean money. The Frisians used to pay tributes to the Romans in hides of bulls. Some ancient societies, particularly the martial ones, used horse instead for obvious reasons. Ancient Indian texts, too, sometimes refer to other animals being exchanged for different commodities but the widespread use of cows shows that it well met the needs of the age. They were not quickly perishable and were more stable in value than agricultural products. They had a capacity for multiplication, for work and for the supply of milk (and hides in case of their death). But at the same time, cow as a standard unit of value had some inherent difficulties too. In the case of cow (or cattle-head) variations in size or quality or milk-producing capacity gave rise to difference of value. Thus in the *Aitareya Brāhṃṇa*, a cow of one year and immaculate is considered as the standard unit. There were, however, many other difficulties. As a means of payment and a form in which purchasing power could be accumulated, the cows were troublesome also. They required space, care and some degree of skill in rearing besides the daily fodder. They could not be used for the purchase of small things, as they could not be divided without killing them and converting them into beef. So the medium of this kind was not suitable for all kinds of transactions as well as for the purpose of long-term savings. An alternate medium was, therefore, necessary. And the Vedic people seem to have found it in an ornament called *nishka*.

1.4 Types of coinage in ancient India

a NISHKA

Nishka was probably some kind of necklace. The epithet '*nishka-grīvā*' (*Rigveda* V.19, 3) clearly indicates that it was an ornament worn on the neck. The monetary use of the *Nishkas* has been referred to at various places in the *Rigveda* and the later texts. In one passage, Rudra is described as wearing a *nishka*, which was *viśvarūpa* (i.e., round) in form. In one hymn of the *Rigveda*, sage Kakshivat describes as to how he obtained

from king Bhavya one hundred horses and one hundred *nishkas* as a reward for his services. In the *Atharvaveda*, a poet eulogizes the generosity of his patron who gave him a hundred *nishkas*, ten necklaces, three hundred horses and ten thousand cows. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* refers to a *nishka* of gold whereas a *Vṛitya* in the *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* is described as wearing a silver *nishka*. These references clearly reveal that along with the cows, *nishkas* were also the symbol of wealth in the Vedic period.

References to the giving away of hundred or numerous *nishkas* makes us ponder over the function of the *nishkas*. One would hardly require hundred ornaments or necklaces for personal adornment. Their use as currency, thus, easily and perhaps rightly is visualized.

The word *nishka* is found in later literature also, almost certainly in the sense of a monetary unit or coin. Pāṇini (circa fifth century BC) refers to articles purchased for one, two or three *nishkas* as *naishkikam*, *dvinaishkikam* and *trinaishkikam*. He also makes a reference to a person possessing one hundred *nishkas* as *Naishka-śatika* and the one possessing one thousand *nishkas* as *Naishka-sāhasika*, terms comparable to the lakhpatis and crorepatīs of our society. The word *nishka* finds mention in the epics also. In the *Rāmāyana*, we find king Kēkaya giving two thousand gold *nishkas* to Bharata. At another place, Rāma asks Lakshmaṇa to remunerate Lava and Kua with eighteen thousand golds (apparently *nishkas*) for their musical performance. Rāma himself also gave one thousand *nishkas* to Suyājñā. The Buddhist Jātaka stories are replete with references to *nishkas*.

Patañjali refers to *pāda* (quarter) as a sub-multiple of gold *nishka*. Manu and Yājñavalkya state that a *nishka* is equal to four *suvarṇas* or 320 rattis indicating that a *pāda-nishka* was synonymous with a *suvarṇa*. Literally, *suvarṇa* (good colour) means gold but in ancient times it was used for an 80-ratti piece. Ratti is a black-tipped red seed of a plant and has been traditionally used for weighing gold and silver, ornaments and other precious things. The relative weights of the *nishkas* and the *suvarṇas*, however, cannot be determined precisely for want of actual specimens. None has been found from anywhere in India as yet. Read in between the lines of the *Rigveda*, the word *nishka* seems to have been used both for a pendant and a necklace consisting of pendants whose weight and size have nowhere been mentioned in the *Rigveda*. No doubt that *nishka* means a gold/silver coin in later literature but during the Brahmanic and Upanishadic periods *nishka* was not recognized as a standard coin as it bore neither symbols nor figures nor any marks as the insignia of the issuing authority. There is, however, no doubt that it formed part of the currency system and was used for *dāna*, *dakṣhiṇā* and perhaps *rājasva* also.

b ŚATAMĀNA

In the Vedic literature, we come across another very important term - *Śatamāna*, which is interpreted by various scholars variously. *Śatamāna* finds mention in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Vārttika* and *Śrauta-Sūtra* of Kātyāyana, and Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. Literally, the word *śatamāna* means '(weighing or consisting of) one hundred units of measurement'. A.B. Keith speaks of the mention 'in the Brāhmaṇas of the *śatamāna*, a piece of gold, in weight equivalent to a hundred *krīṣṇala*' (*krīṣṇala* is the black-tipped ratti or raktikā seed). D.R. Bhandarkar understood *śatamāna* in the sense of a gold coin (and not a silver one) weighing 100 rattis. For taking *śatamāna* to be a gold coin, Bhandarkar quoted the following two passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*-

1. *Suvarṇam hiranyam bhavati rūpasyevāvaruddhaiḥ Śatamānam bhavati śatāyurvai puruṣah,*
and
2. *Hiranyam dakṣiṇā suvarṇam Śatamānam tasyoktam.*

[i.e., the *dakṣiṇā* will be *śatamāna* of gold (*suvarṇa* and *hiranya* both mean gold) since a human being lives for one hundred years]. Bhandarkar observed that "here *suvarṇa* is associated with *śatamāna* and both are called *hiranya* or gold." D.C. Sircar, although accepting the *śatamāna* as a gold coin, as suggested by Bhandarkar, holds that "the possibility of its being a silver currency cannot be ruled out, especially in view of the fact that later evidence associates it usually with silver." The word *hiranya* in the above-quoted passage according to him may also mean, besides gold, silver, any precious metal and wealth or property. Although, therefore, the *śatamāna* may have been a gold coin (or currency) as suggested by Bhandarkar, the possibility of its being a silver currency cannot be ruled out. Kātyāyana has actually mentioned both, the gold and silver *śatamāna*.

Just as Bhandarkar held a *śatamāna* to be a gold coin of 100 rattis, A.S. Altekar also believed that gold currency was prevalent 'during the age of the Later Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads.' He says, "*śatamāna* undoubtedly weighed 100 rattis or 175 grains. In later times, *suvarṇa* and *nishka* followed the weight standard of 80 and 320 rattis respectively. The same may have been the case in this period also."

We thus see that the belief that *śatamāna* was a gold coin originates from the passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* referred to by Bhandarkar and quoted above. But Sircar contends that *suvarṇa* and *hiranya* were used to indicate silver also. This fact has been recognized by Macdonell and Keith (Vedic Index) also when they say, "Gold is described sometimes as *harita*, 'yellowish', or sometimes as *rajata*, 'whitish' when probably silver is alluded to." Elsewhere, it is further stated that "Rajata as an adjective with *hiranya* designates

'silver'. And ornaments (*rukma*), dishes (*pātra*) and coins (*nishka*) 'made of silver', are mentioned." We thus see that the mention of silver Nishkas in the Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa and the reference to the silver Śatamāna in the Kātyāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra seems to render Altekar's statement that "there is no reference to any silver currency in the Vedic literature" unwarranted. The Vedic Index rightly points out that 'as early as the Rgveda (I.126, 2) traces are seen of the use of *nishkas* as a sort of currency.' Apparently, *nishka* and *satamāna* were different names of both the gold and silver currencies.

There is a great controversy regarding the weight of *satamāna* also. As noted above, Bhandarkar, Altekar, etc. regard Śatamāna as a coin of 100 mānas. Explaining māna, Sāyaṇa also says '*māna śabdo guṇjā-bijaṃ brūte*', i.e. the word māna means the Guṇjā seed (*ratti*). Śatamāna, thus, may have weighed 100 rattis. But Sircar refers to Kshīrasvāmī, the well-known commentator of *Amarakosha*, who explains *satamāna* as rūpya-pala (i.e. one pala of silver; *rūpya* = silver) on the authority of the Yājñavalkya-Smṛiti (I.364-65)

Dve kṛishṇale rūpya-māsho dharanaṃ shodaśiva te /

Śatamānaṃ tu daśabhirdharanaih palameva tu //

i.e., two *kṛishṇalas* or *rattis* are equal to one *māsha* of silver; sixteen *māshas* make one *dharana*; ten *dharanas* make one *satamāna*, also called *pala*. Thus

2 *rattis* = 1 *māsha*

16 *māshas* = 1 *Dharana* (i.e. 32 rattis)

10 *Dharanas* = 1 *Śatamāna* or *Pala* (i.e., 320 rattis)

The same view has been expressed in the Manu-Smṛiti (VIII.135-37) -

Dve kṛishṇale samadhṛite vijñeyo raupya-māshakah /

Te shodaśa syād=Dharanaṃ Purānañchaiva rājatam //

Dharanāni daśa jñeyah satamānastu rājataḥ /

[i.e., two rattis held together are known as one silver *māshaka*, sixteen of them constitute one silver *dharana*, also called *purāna*, and ten *dharanas* are known as one silver *satamāna*].

Đ.C. Sircar has referred to the epigraphic evidence also to support the view that the silver Pala or *satamāna* weighing 320 rattis was regarded as the standard of calculation in monetary transactions as late as even the medieval period. S.K. Chakraborty had offered a suggestion way back in 1931 that the unit of *satamāna* was not a *ratti* but *mañjādi*

seed (*Adenanthera pavonina*), commonly found in South India, which weighs $3 \frac{1}{5}$ rattis or 5.8 grains. The metric system of South India seems to have been based upon the weight of two kinds of seeds, the *mañjāḍi* and the *kalañju*, which was considered as equivalent to ten *mañjāḍis*. Thus, if we take the *mañjāḍi* seed to be a unit (*māna*) of the *satamāna*, it would have weighed $100 \times 3 \frac{1}{5} = 320$ rattis. But no real *satamāna* coin weighing 320 rattis has ever been actually found.

Like the *nishka*, *satamāna* too seems to have its multiples, i.e. $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, $\frac{1}{32}$, etc. some of which have actually been mentioned in the later literature. Taking the *Śatamāna* to be of 320 rattis (after Sircar) or 100 rattis (after Bhandarkar, Altekar, etc.), these multiples will weigh as follows-

	After Sircar		After Bhandarkar
1	<i>Śatamāna</i>	=	320 rattis 100 rattis
$\frac{1}{2}$	<i>Śatamāna</i> (ardha)	=	160 rattis 50 rattis
$\frac{1}{4}$	<i>Śatamāna</i> (Pāda)	=	80 rattis 25 rattis
$\frac{1}{8}$	<i>Śatamāna</i> (Śāṇa)	=	40 rattis 12.5 rattis
$\frac{1}{16}$	<i>Śatamāna</i>	=	20 rattis 6.25 rattis
$\frac{1}{32}$	<i>Śatamāna</i>	=	10 rattis 3.12 rattis

Chakraborty had, however, pointed out that the *satamāna* was a metallic currency and not a coin. Currency is the money-system of a country and money is the medium of exchange. In ancient times, we have noted above, money was measured in terms of cows and cows served as the medium of exchange also. Money in ancient times was thus of a primitive nature. It was both, metallic and non-metallic. *Nishka*, *satamāna* and their multiples constituted metallic money, no doubt, but there is no evidence to prove that *nishka* and *satamāna* were actually the coins. They were made of metal - gold or silver -, may have been even of a fixed weight, and they may have been used even as the medium of exchange, but since there is no evidence that they were stamped with the symbol or symbols of the issuing authority, they cannot be regarded as coins in the real sense of the term. They, however, represent an important stage in the development of coinage.

1.5 Origin of Coinage

The Birth of the Coin

Though *nishka* and *satamāna* were used in transactions, barter, which is still a living tradition in India, may have continued side by side. Though settling of bargains by transfer

of metal became a well-established custom, some inherent difficulties were still there. In spite of the definiteness of the weight of the ingots or sheets, there was no guarantee about the exactness of the weight and the quality of the metal. One had to satisfy oneself about these. And so, the necessity of scales and touchstones was still felt. To obviate these difficulties in India and in a few other countries, stamping of the metallic pieces with the mark or device of a responsible authority was thought of as sign of guarantee of accurate weight and the right quality of metal. Thus the coin was born. Since cows, bulls and some other animals have remained the media of exchange in some countries before the evolution of coins, we find that the earliest coins in some countries bear the figures of those animals - a coin bearing the figure of a cow/bull may actually have been a metallic piece (gold or silver) equivalent to the value of the animal. This stage of minting coins in India was not reached during the Vedic period but definite references to stamped metallic pieces in Pāṇini's *Ashṭādhyāyī* (circa fifth century BC) indicate that such a stage must have been reached sometime before Pāṇini. There is, however, ample evidence that cows, grains and other commodities continued to be exchanged in transactions even after the evolution of coinage. Pāṇini himself mentions purchases made by means of *go-puchchha*, a term (literally meaning 'cow-tail') used for the cows in transactions. It had perhaps originated from the fact that the cattle then changed hands by their tails. *Vasana* or a piece of cloth is also mentioned as a medium of exchange, and the thing purchased in exchange was known as *vāsana*. Transactions on a much bigger scale were also continuing to be conducted through barter. Patañjali (second century BC) in his *Mahābhāshya* refers to consignments of five hundred boats through barter. For smaller transactions, cowries too have remained in use for a long time in India while for the bigger transactions gems, ornaments, etc. were also utilized. In the post-Vedic period, however, a new class of coin, *kāṛshāpāna*, emerged for the first time in Pāṇini and Pali canon. It became very popular in the subsequent period. Pāṇini refers to the stamping of coins of various denominations.

1.6 Antiquity of Indian Coins

The birth of metallic currency in India seems to have been followed soon by regular issue of coinage in different parts of the country. *Nishka* and *satamāna*, the metallic currency of the Vedic period, also became coins subsequently.

Alexander Cunningham held that coins in India might have come into existence in about 1000 BC. Bhandarkar, Altekar, Ajay Mitra Shastri and many others, too, accepted

this date for the origin of coinage in India. Kennedy and Smith state that the "introduction into India of the use of coins, that is to say, metallic pieces of definite weight authenticated as currency by marks recognized as a guarantee of value, may be ascribed with much probability to the 7th century B.C., when foreign maritime trade seems to have been begun." Maritime trade, however, was there even during the Harappan period but that did not lead to the evolution of coinage. Prof. Wilson, however, seems to have stood on firmer ground when he stated "the Hindus had coined money before the days of Alexander."

Herodotus tells us that Darius received 360 talents of gold dust as the annual tribute from his Indian satrapy. Prof. A.L. Basham, however, is of the opinion that "uninscribed punch-marked coins were minted from the sixth century B.C. onwards and were in circulation for many centuries."

A sculpture from Bharhut belonging to circa second century BC exhibits the scene of the purchase of the Jetavana Park at Śrāvastī by the Śreṣṭhīn Anāthapiṇḍaka in order to dedicate it for Buddha's use. The owner of the Park was prince Jeta who agreed to sell it on the condition that its price should be the gold coins required to cover the entire ground. The Bharhut panel depicts a bullock cart, which brought the coins to the park and two persons engaged in spreading them on the ground. The coins are square and rectangular in shape. Anāthapiṇḍaka carries a water pot for pouring water indicative of the ceremonial offering. There are two cottages bearing the label inscriptions Kosabakūṭī (Kauśāmbī-kūṭī) and Gadha-kūṭī (Gandha-kūṭī) respectively. The whole scene also bears the label inscription. Though this is a panel of a later period, it indicates the use of square/rectangular coins during the period of Buddha (sixth century BC). A terracotta from Kauśāmbī near Allahabad, belonging to the Śuṅga period, also depicts king Udayana, a contemporary of Buddha, eloping on an elephant with princess Vāsavadattā who is throwing handfuls of coins from a bag towards the chasing soldiers, indicating the use of coins in the region in the sixth century BC.

An important clue, however, is provided by the Roman historian Quintus Curtius (Life of Alexander VIII.12, 42) who states that Alexander received as tribute 80 talents of "argenti signati", i.e. marked silver, from the king of Taxila, Omphis (Ambhi), in circa 325 BC. Though Curtius was writing in the first century of the Current Era, yet it is thought probable that he was using contemporary sources as his authority and that the 'argenti signati' may have been the punch-marked silver coins which have been found from the length and breadth of this country (and even from Sri Lanka). Dr. P.L. Gupta has studied the punch-marked coins of India in details and ascribes the earliest types to the emergence of the Magadhan Empire during the reign of Bimbisāra (a contemporary

of Buddha) and his son Ajātaśatru. There are scholars who disbelieve all literary and circumstantial evidence and hold that coins in India may not have come into existence before the fourth century BC. A hoard of coins from the Bhir Mound at Taxila consisted of 1055 silver punch-marked and 33 oblong bars (known popularly as the bent-bar silver coins), along with 79 minute coins, two coins of Alexander the Great, and one of Philip Aridaeus 'fresh from the mint'. Since Philip Aridaeus died in 317 BC, this hoard may have been deposited in circa 315 BC. Another very important hoard was discovered from Chaman Huzuri, Kabul in Afghanistan. It comprised of the following -

- (i) 30 coins of diverse Greek states of circa sixth-fifth century BC.
- (ii) 34 coins of Athens (5th century BC), some in mint state, but the latest coin in the hoard is dated to 394/393 BC also.
- (iii) 8 sigloi of the Persian Empire, c. 450 BC.
- (iv) 14 Gandhāran bent-bar silver coins.
- (v) 29 coins of otherwise unknown type on globular flans heavily stamped with a geometric-like mark on one side and with traces of a design on the other.

T.R. Hardaker observes "If the bent-bars in the Chaman Huzuri hoard were 100 years old when deposited, the origin of coinage in India can be dated to shortly before 500 BC."

It may be pointed out here that since the heaviest oblong bar weighs 177.3 grains, equivalent to 98.5 rattis, Dr. V.S. Agrawala had identified the bent-bar silver coins of Gandhāra with the Śatamānas of 100-ratti weight-standard. Following V.S. Agrawala, Dr. A.S. Altekar suggested, "some thin, large coins have been found in ancient Kosala, which weigh between 75 and 79 grains, may be identified as *ardha-śatamāna* coins." He also held that the coins of the Paila hoard weighing 44 grains may represent pāda or quarter Śatamāna (i.e. 25 rattis). Though some scholars controvert the views of V.S. Agrawala and Altekar on the ground that the bent-bar silver pieces were struck on Persian weight-standard of sigloi (maximum 86 grains, double sigloi = $86 \times 2 = 172$ grains), yet the 177.3 grain bent-bar silver pieces seem to have been nearer to the weight-standard of a *śatamāna* of 100 rattis or 180 grains. Recently, Prof. B.N. Mukherjee has also shown that it is *śatamāna* weight-standard, which has remained popular in the Indian sub-continent from the Vedic down to the British period. Gandhāra was a mahājanapada (great state) during the period of Buddha. So it seems that coins were current during the Mahājanapada period, which lasted up to the sixth century BC. Like the bent-bar silver coins, which bear a similar symbol on both ends of the bar, we know many other series of coins

bearing only one symbol on one side now. Different Mahājanapadas may have issued these. Dr. P.L. Gupta, Dilip Rajgor and others have identified the coins of most of the Mahājanapadas and lesser states bearing one, two, three or four marks punched on them. They had only regional circulation as they circulated only in the territories of the respective Mahājanapadas like Kāśī, Kośala, Avanti, Vatsa, Chedi, Aśmaka, Kuntala, Gandhāra, Śākya, Vaga, Kaliṅga, etc. The silver coins bearing five symbols on the obverse (main side) and issued on the weight-standard of 32-rattis (called Kārshāpaṇas), popularly called punch-marked silver coins, circulated throughout the length and breadth of the country and the earliest types may rightly be assigned to the evolution of the Magadhan empire during the reign of Bimbisāra and his son Ajātaśatru, who were contemporaries of Buddha. Hundreds of varieties of the Mahājanapada coins bearing one, two, three or four marks and issued in different denominations may have taken at least one or two centuries in their evolution. The hoard of coins excavated from Narhan in the mid-Gaṅgā plains datable to circa seventh century BC, if not earlier, provides the archaeological evidence for putting the antiquity of Indian coins in the first half of the first millennium BC.

1.7 Development of Coinage

We have noted above as to how the first coin took birth from probably the metal pieces of the Vedic period, which formed part of the currency along with other items of exchange. Those metal pieces became coins when some authority authenticated the purity of their metal and the weight by putting his insignia or symbol on them. Coins with one symbol on one side may thus have been the earliest followed by those bearing two, three and four symbols on the same side, sometimes with some symbol or symbols even on the other (reverse) side.

Whether all coins were issued initially by the State or by private bankers, merchants or guilds (*Śrenīs* or *Nigamas*), with or without the state approval, is somewhat controversial, but we do have some pieces bearing the names of the *nigamas* or collectively by five-*nigamas* (*pañcha-nehame*).

The almost universal occurrence of the sun and six-armed symbols on the five-symbol punch-marked series, however, is generally taken by scholars to represent a universal nature of at least two factors in the issuance of these coins which may possibly have been the eternal authority of the state and the mint from which they were struck. Kautilya's Arthaśāstra also acquaints us of the strict State control over coinage. When, however, the punch-marked coinage continued to be current even at the decline of an all India power, the silversmiths may have replenished the supply. There is sufficient evidence to show that the State in ancient and later times did not always think it a prerogative

to issue coins and silversmiths, moneyers, bankers, guilds and corporations were given the right to manufacture coins. The five-symbol punch-marked coins continued from the period of Bimbisāra-Ajātaśatru to the decline of the Magadhan empire in the second century BC. More than six hundred varieties of these five-symbol punch-marked coins are known now, The earliest of them had sun-symbol with oblique rays and on the latest this and the six-armed symbol were substituted by human and other figures.

India's contact with the western world following Alexander's invasion and the occupation of the northwest by his successors (called Indo-Greeks) had its impact on Indian coinage. Legends and figures started appearing on the coins. Die-striking technique substituted punching in most of the areas.

At the decline of the Magadhan empire smaller states came into being and started issuing their coins. Some tribes like the Kshudrakas, Rājanyas, Trigartas, Yaudheyas, etc. became independent and also started issuing their coins, mostly in lesser metals but very rarely in silver also. Some city-states like Vidiśā, Erikachchha, Vārāṇasī, Ujjayinī, Kauśāmbī, Tripurī, Mahishmatī, etc. also issued their copper coins.

The Scythians and Parthians who occupied parts of the country issued their coinages in silver and copper bearing legends and figures. The Kushānas occupied northern India and ruled from the first century to the first half of the third century. They issued copious gold and large copper currency in India. It was the first Indian gold coinage. Though the Indo-Greek rulers had issued gold coins in Bactria earlier, they did not circulate in India proper. The silver coins of the Kushāna are very scarce. Their allies, the Western Kshatrapas, however, issued coins, mostly in silver and a few in copper, lead, etc. Contemporary of the Kushānas were the Sātavāhanas in the Deccan who had a very favourable balance of trade with Rome as a result of which Roman gold was flowing to India. As many as one hundred and thirty hoards of Roman coins, mostly consisting of gold issues, have been discovered from South India and the adjacent regions. The Sātavāhanas themselves, however, did not issue any gold coins. They generally utilized copper, potin (copper alloyed with baser material), lead, etc. but some of their silver coins are also known. They employed silver to strike portrait types in particular.

The Kushānas were followed in north India by the illustrious Gupta dynasty. The Guptas have also issued copious gold, some silver and a few copper and lead coins. Gupta gold coins are the most beautiful indigenous coins with metrical legends, royal figures, divinities and social-cultural themes. From the fall of the Guptas till the advent of the Muslims in the twelfth century, we mostly find copper currencies with some silver and very scarce gold by different dynasties which came to power in different parts of

India. Dynastic diversities led to diverse currencies, which do not show sound economic conditions. Though there are glimpses of some good pieces here and there, yet the coinage remained crude, stylized and stereotype in general till the Sultans added gold to the colours and the Mughals struck some beautiful specimens with calligraphy, portraits, zodiacal signs and Persian couplets.

1.8 Summary

Like many other parts of the world there existed the barter system in India before the evolution of coinage. Even when coinage took birth, barter continued and is still a living tradition in India. The barter system had its difficulties as it required the coincidence of the needs of the buyer and the seller. Then it seems that the cow emerged as the standard unit of exchange. But it could not be cut into pieces for smaller transactions. In the Vedic period, metal pieces like the Nishka and the Śatamāna evolved as currency. Sometime during the first half of the first millennium BC these metal pieces seem to have been authenticated by some authority for the purity of metal and the required weight and thus emerged the first coin. The first coins bore one symbol and the number of symbols increased to two, three and four with the passage of time. These coins circulated in limited areas then ruled over by the Mahājanapadas, which lasted up to the time of Buddha. The Magadha Empire arose during Buddha's period and five-symbol 32-ratti coins became pan-Indian currency. At the disintegration of this empire in the second century BC there arose smaller monarchical and republican states, which started issuing their own currencies. Contact with the western world brought legends and figures of kings and deities on the coins. The Kushānas introduced gold currency in India in the first century of our era. The Guptas embellished their gold coins with beautiful figures, devices and metrical legends that were revived only by the Mughals after a gap of more than a thousand years.

1.9 Check your Progress

1. Define a coin.
2. Define money.
3. What is barter system?
4. When did sedentary life begin?
5. Which invention revolutionized Neolithic life?
6. Harappans had international trade but no coins. Why?
7. What was the medium of exchange in the Vedic society?
8. What is Nishka?

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9. What is Śatamāna?
10. What was the metal of the Nishka and the Śatamāna?
11. What was the weight of a Śatamāna?
12. What is a ratti?
13. With which coin has the Śatamāna been identified?
14. Which Mahājanapadas are known through their coins?
15. What is a kārshāpaṇa?
16. How many symbols does a kārshāpaṇa have?
17. What is the weight of a kārshāpaṇa?
18. Name the earliest coins of India.

1.10 Assignment/Activity

1. Draw the figures of early coins bearing one, two, three and four symbols and give their identifications also.

1.11 Suggested Reading

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UNIT - II
PUNCH-MARKED, CAST & DIE-STRUCK COINS
GENERAL FEATURES AND TECHNIQUES OF
MANUFACTURING

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objective
- 2.3 Punch marked coins
 - a. General features
 - b. Symbols
 - c. Chronology and dating
- 2.4 Techniques of manufacture
 - a. Cast coins
- 2.5 Die struck coins
 - a. Single die techniques
 - b. Double die technique
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Check your progress
- 2.8 Assignment/activity
- 2.9 References
- 2.10 Glossary of technical terms
- 2.1 Introduction

The extant ancient Indian coins are of three types- punch marked, cast and die struck coins. The coins which were manufactured by punching one or more symbols on metallic

pices of a fixed wight are called punch marked coins. Coins which were manufactured by pouring molten metal in the coins moulds are called cast coins.

Coins which were manufactured by planing a preheated metal pice on an anvil and hammering on it by a punch so that the impression of a die of hard metal is received on the coins is called a die struck coin. The die is either carved on the anvil or punch or both resulting in the manufacture of single-die or double die coins.

2.2 Objective

A deep study of the types of coins helps us in knowing the history of coins, political history, socio-economic and social history of the age.

2.3 Punch-marked Coins

By punch-marked coins we understand the coins produced by punching one or more symbols on silver pieces (rarely of other metals) of a fixed weight. Those coins, which bear one, two, three or four symbols, were produced locally by tribal states (Janapadas), some of which had emerged as large states (Mahājanapadas) by the time of Buddha in the sixth-fifth century BC. These Mahājanapadas made use of their particular symbols on their coins, which circulated in their respective territories. The coins were generally struck on the *satamāna* (320 or 100 rattis according to different authorities) or the *Viṃśatika* (i.e. 20 mashaka or 40 rattis) weight-standard or their multiples. Coins of different denominations issued by different Mahājanapadas have been identified on the basis of their symbols and weights. The symbols used by various Janapadas are illustrated in Appendix I.

The *Aṭṭhakathā*, a Buddhist work of circa first century BC, says that "In the city of Rajgir a coin of 20 *māshakas* was prevalent, and the five-*māshaka* coin was its *pāda* (quarter)." Rajgir was the capital of Magadha before king Ajātaśatru, a junior contemporary of Buddha (who died in 486 BC), shifted it to Pātaliputra (modern Patna in Bihar). Ajātaśatru annexed Kosala, Kāśī and Vaiśālī and laid the foundation of the Magadha Empire. Naturally, the coins struck by the Kosala and Kāśī Mahājanapadas came to an end and the coins of Magadha circulated in the extended territories of those former Mahājanapadas also. This new coinage of Magadha was struck on a new weight standard of 32 rattis, approximately 3.4 grams (initially called *paṇa* and later *Kārshāpaṇa*), and bore five symbols instead of the four. When the Nandas and Mauryas came to dominate the whole of the Indian subcontinent, these five-symbol 32-ratti silver *Kārshāpaṇas* became the pan-Indian currency.

2.3.a General Features

1. There are invariably five official punch-marks on the obverse of these coins.
2. Except on some coins of larger flans, the marks, put at random, overlap and even fall partly off the edges.

3. The first two marks are the sun and a six-armed symbol except on the latest coins, which instead show human figures.
4. The early *hārshāpanas* have sun with oblique rays but subsequently it has straight rays, which remain static till the end.
5. Six-armed symbol, in contrast, shows more than 90 varieties.
6. The third, fourth and fifth marks, which are called class, group and variety marks, also vary and the frequency with which they do so is the main criterion in determining their third, fourth and fifth position.
7. Sometimes some subsidiary marks are also seen on the obverse and/or reverse of these coins. The bankers or the schroffs to reauthenticate the coins while they were in circulation perhaps put them.
8. In all there are more than three hundred symbols punched on these coins.

2.3.b Symbols

Besides the sun and the six-armed symbols, the marks include the following -

1. Animals: bull, elephant, rabbit, hare, dog, pup, deer, cat, camel, horse, rhinoceros, etc.
2. Birds and Insects: peacock, duck, owl, butterfly, beetle, spider, etc.
3. Reptiles: snake, lizard, etc.
4. Aquatic animals: fish, crocodile, frog, tortoise, etc.
5. Plants: palm tree, cactus, branches, tree-in-railing, lotus-bud, etc.
6. Celestial objects: star, crescent, etc.
7. Geometrical forms: square, rectangle, circle, oval, treskelis, arches, cross, etc. sometimes with objects therein, on or under them.
8. Human figures: male figure, female with a child, male with a wheel
9. Weapons: bow, arrow, spoked wheel, etc.
10. Miscellaneous marks: taurine, triangle-headed standard, caduceus, steel yard, svastika, śrīvatsa, hand-palm, etc.

The symbols seem to have some discreet functions. The position, duration, recurrence, and forms of the symbols betray their significance. The sun may represent the eternal authority of the state. The six-armed symbol with its ninety odd varieties of different durations may represent the mints where the coins were struck. The state officials who supervised the purity of the metal used, the required weight of the coins, etc may have put the other symbols. All these, however, are the tentative conclusions drawn in the absence of any definite evidence.

2.3.c Chronology and Dating

On the basis of the different symbols and their groupings, more than six hundred varieties of punch-marked coins have been noted. Naturally such a large number of varieties must have taken a long period to be issued. Consideration of the size of their flans, sun's rays (oblique or radial), the forms of frequently occurring bull and elephant figures, the purity of silver used, restrikes, extra marks, characteristics of class marks, etc. have led P.L. Gupta and T.R. Hardaker to classify the Magadha-Maurya Kārshāpaṇas into seven Series ascribing them approximate dates ranging from about 500 BC to 150 BC (Appendix II). They observe that "The chronology used here assumes that the early, pre-kārshāpaṇa coinage of Magadha originated during the century 650-550 BC. It was during this period, the 'Age of the Janapadas', that local and international trade precipitated the need for a widely acceptable exchange medium, and local silver currencies sprang up in several Janapadas." They feel that the date of the origin of the five-symbol 32-ratti silver kārshāpaṇas of Magadha cannot be stated very accurately, but give some details of the factors which go towards making a rough estimate of the different series.

Coins of Series I are easily identifiable by their large flans, stylistic links with pre-kārshāpaṇa coins, primitive and crude symbols (with some exceptions), with known find spots falling only in Magadha (Golakhpur) and neighbouring Kāśī (Aurīhar), and are generally quite worn out. These coins thus predate the time of Magadha's conquest of the north Indian plains, Kāśī excepted. Bimbisāra, a contemporary of Buddha, had begun the expansionist policy by conquering neighbouring Aṅga and securing a matrimonial alliance with the royal family of Kosala, which could be serious rival of Magadha and had gained possession of Kāśī in the seventh century BC. His son, said to be a parricide, soon annexed Kosala and also absorbed Kāśī and Vaiśālī. The exact dates of the events are not known but about the middle of the fifth century BC Magadha was the most powerful state in the Gaṅgā plains. So the coins of Series I have been assigned to Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru and dated between 500-430 BC. This was a long period and witnessed the production of 264 new types in the seventy years averaging 3.81 new types every year. The sun symbol on all the types of Series I has oblique rays. Coins of series II are only a few and are very rare. They are nearly always restrieked on the original reverse by Series III and IV a, and have been attributed to Ajātaśatru's successors of the Brihadratha dynasty between 435 and 425 BC. The sun symbol on the coin-types of Series II has oblique and radial rays.

The types that restrike Series II and were also struck on fresh coins, together with other types linked by common class and group marks such as the dog and taurines, palm tree and rhinoceros, are characterized by medium flan size of 18-26 mm and belong to Series III which has been attributed to the later successors of the Brihadratha dynasty who ruled from

about 430-410 BC. The archaic bull now changes and the sun is always shown with radial rays. Though the definite developments of this period are not known, yet Magadha continued to be a great power and the coinage took an upward turn, indicating a growing economic strength. Probably an increased agricultural production and reliability of food supply freed many hands for crafts, trade and business requiring a greater volume of currency in circulation. 44 new types were brought out during this period as compared to 26 in the preceding phase. In 413 BC, the Brihadratha dynasty was deposed by one Śiśunāga, formerly a viceroy. The Śiśunāgas ruled up to 364 BC when the Nandas took over. They continued the policy of conquest and not only consolidated their control over Avanti which was probably conquered by the Śiśunāgas, but also defeated the Ikshvākus, Pāñchālas, Kāśis, Haihayas, Aśmakas, Śūrasenas, Kurus and others. They also subjugated Kaliṅga, though their hold over it was not lasting. The Nandas thus held sway over most of the subcontinent north of the Vindhya, except the northwest (modern Pakistan). The upward trend of coinage continued, and their wealth became legendary. Coins of Series IV (further divided into a, b, c, and d phases) are attributed to the Śiśunāgas (IV a-c) and Nandas (IV d). The size of the coins was reduced to 18-24 mm during the rule of the former and to 16-22 mm during the rule of the latter who ruled for about half a century. Three, five or six-arched symbol (as distinguished from the later three-arched crescented chaitya) appears as the class mark in conjunction with other symbols. The Śiśunāgas issued 73 new types during their reign and the Nandas 79 types with miniature bankers' marks. Coins up to this period consist of fine silver but grows more and more debased during the subsequent periods.

Coins of Series V are small in size (12-18 mm) and are nearly always without arches or three-arched crescented chaitya as the class mark. Bankers' marks become fewer on the reverse and virtually disappear from the obverse. Coins of this Series are divided into V a, and V b, the former without bold but with miniature marks on the reverse and the latter having bold reverse marks. V a is attributed to Chandragupta and Bindusāra of the Maurya dynasty (320 -270 BC) and V b to Aśoka, his successors and Pushyamitra Śuṅga (270-150 BC). This Series is coeval with Series VI (a and b) during which three-arched crescented chaitya becomes the distinctive class mark and the coins become slightly thicker. On the coins of the last Series (VII), the sun and six-armed symbol are substituted by human figures. It has been attributed to the Aśoka's successors between 210 and 190 BC.

2.3.d Techniques of Manufacture

The commonest method used for manufacturing punch-marked coins was beating the silver ingots into thin sheets and cutting them into strips and roughly square and rectangular blanks on which five symbols were punched one after the other. Though some care was

taken to put the symbols separately on the coins of larger flans, yet we generally see that these symbols overlap and are even out of the flan. The larger the size of the coin, the clearer the symbols are. The smaller the size of the coin, more jumbled the symbols are. Sometimes the corners of the blanks were cut to bring them to the required weight-standard. We see even two or three corners cut in this way. Sometimes the coins assumed roughly circular, oval, semi-circular, or even indeterminate shapes in the process.

Copper punch-marked coins are very rare. Their flans were also chopped out of long bars of copper and then punched with symbols.

The Chaman Huzuri hoard, however, has yielded evidence of the silver planchets cast in moulds.

There, however, were other techniques also of manufacturing the punch-marked coins. The metal scrap obtained from the shearing of the beaten silver sheets and chipping the corners of the coin-blanks was molten again and the process of beating the ingots into sheets was repeated. Sometimes, however, molten metal was solidified into small globules of required weight with the help of a ladle or spoon. These globules were then flattened to serve as flans. The drip tip of such coins, however, betrays that they are prepared by the droplet technique. Sometimes the metal drops, fresh from the furnace, were beaten with some convex tool resulting in saucer-like shape of the planchets, which were punched. The resultant coins were scyphate (cup-like) in shape. Another reason for such a shape was perhaps the putting of the thin blank on a wooden anvil and hitting the punch-die hard with a hammer from above. The wooden anvil being soft gave way resulting in saucer-shaped coins. Silver coins of exceptionally thin fabric and unusually wide, boat-like appearance; sometimes have the impressions of the symbols, which appear in relief on their obverse, and the intaglio of the same on their reverse. They appear to have been produced by hammering the relief die or the punch from the back. This technique was perhaps inspired by the desire to accommodate the entire symbols and has first been used for preparing fractional coins by the Kāśī Janapada. It is called Repousse or bracteates.

There is evidence that punch-marked coins were also manufactures by casting them into moulds. Such moulds bearing the negative impressions of punch-marked coins of various shapes and sizes connected by a channel for the supply of molten metal have been recovered from Mathura, Kondapur (district Medak, Andhra Pradesh), Dhulikatta (district Guntur, Andhra Pradesh), Sisupalgarh (near Bhuvaneshwar, Orissa), Jhusi (district Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh), etc. Two coin-moulds discovered from Sisupalgarh come from the layers belonging to the late levels of Period III datable to about CE 300, showing that the punch-marked silver coins continued to circulate up to that time and prompted the forger to try to reap profit by

counterfeiting these coins in moulds. Mathura, however, has yielded some complete moulds with all the technical details and devices intact making it possible to make an in-depth study of their technique and typological details in full. Three pieces from a complete mould show that the top and bottom discs were blank on their exposed faces and the middle disc bore five coin-sockets on both sides. Thus, at least fifteen coins could be produced by this mould in a single operation and if there were more intermediary discs, the number of coins increased by five each. The discs are provided with tenons and mortises on a couple faces enabling the operator to replace the discs in position after removing the moulded pieces, and the rims of most of these discs show oblique key-lines as on the well-known Rohtak Yaudheya coin-discs. There are traces of very thin film-like luting along the rim, which made it possible to dismantle the mould without damaging the moulds and thereby enabling their repeated use. The moulds have feeder channels only on one of the disc faces. Impressions on the discs were made by worn out coins more often than not with clipped corners and the impressions have been made from the known silver punch-marked coins of different Series and types. Stratigraphic position of these moulds is not known but they may have belonged to the early centuries of the current era. Kondapur yielded fifty-four fragments of punch-marked coin-moulds in-association with the coin-moulds of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas. This is, however, not certain whether such coin-moulds were used for official manufacture or for counterfeiting. Some scholars like Dr. P.L. Gupta think that this method being quicker for production was used when punch-marked coins were needed in large numbers and when the original punching technique of manufacturing such coins had become obsolete. Dr. Gupta has also stated that in a hoard of 400 punch-marked coins in the Lucknow Museum, he found twenty-four coins which were actually produced by casting process. Some others like Ajay Mitra Shastri, however, regard them as forgers' equipment for counterfeiting punch-marked coins. Kondapur was perhaps never an official mint but has yielded the coin-moulds of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapa coins also which were only die-struck and not produced by any other method. There are some examples of silver-plated punch-marked coins also. Planchets of copper were dipped in molten silver or an amalgam of silver and mercury before being struck. Subsequent heating made the mercury evaporate leaving the silver layer behind. Probably this method too was adopted by the forgers who could dupe the innocent people and could make quick profits.

Bent-bar silver coins of Gandhāra, generally identified with the *satamāna* coins, had a slightly different technique of manufacture. The oblong silver bar was first cut from the ingot. The width of the bar determined the length of the coin. After being cut the bar was adjusted correctly to the required weight by chiseling its corners. Then the bar was stamped

with a die, once at each end. Having been struck at the two ends they are bent inside and thus have their own exclusiveness.

2.4. Cast Coins

Quite a different technique from the above was employed in India almost in the very period of the silver punch-marked coins for the production of copper coins. These coins are more or less contemporaneous to the Kārshāpaṇa series. A few scholars believe even in their precedence over them. They are round as well as square in shape and are almost uniform in their size, generally bearing motifs or devices on both the sides, though uniface examples are also met with. Certain symbols are very common, especially the elephant, tree in railing, and the mountain or three-arched crescented chaitya symbol. They are usually found on sites, which yield punch-marked silver coins, indicating their contemporaneity with them. Occasionally these coins are found in pairs just as they were originally cast together. This shows how these coins were cast in batches. On most of these coins one can still see where the coin was broken from the mould and the adjoining piece. Allan has described nineteen varieties of these cast coins of which some are very rare, known only from a single or a few specimens. Coins with elephant and mountain symbol are quite common. The paucity of data renders it difficult to distribute the varieties of these cast coins geographically but some indications of the existence or absence of particular varieties in a particular region are there. i.e. coins with elephant and mountain are found all over north India; varieties with bull and lion are rarely found in Punjab; square coins with svastika and inverted taurine above an elephant, triangle-headed standard on left and ladder symbol below on the obverse and mountain, taurine to right, hollow cross and three branched tree in railing on the reverse is found chiefly about Varanasi; and so on. Such coins are not known from South India though they are quite common in the north, western and central parts of the country.

Casting technique continued subsequently also and we have Kāḍa coins of circa third-second century BC, some coins of Ayodhyā, Kauśāmbī, Kuṇindas, Yaudheyas, etc. prepared by this technique. Coin-moulds for casting Yaudheya coins have been found in large numbers from Rohtak, Naurangabad-Bamla (about thirty km from Rohtak on road to Bhiwani) and Sunet (near Ludhiana in Punjab) while Sanghol, about forty-five km from Chandigarh on road to Ludhiana (in district Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab) has yielded beautiful clay moulds for casting Kuṇinda coins. Cast coins can be distinguished from others through their edges which are rounded and not cut. Sometimes their edges retain the mould lines and ledges of the channels.

2.4.a Manufacturing techniques

Cast coins were prepared by pouring molten metal through a narrow channel leading to a cavity inside a pair of moulds. The moulds were either single box mould or multiple box mould. The single pair of moulds could also make more than one coin. Moulds of various types have been found. The Rohtak mould has multiple discs with light sockets in each the molten metal was poured from a funnel which sent up the discs the model reconstructed from Suncet. shows single coin discs with coin impressions on one side only. Two such discs were fitted together to form obverse and reverse and a whole series was plastered together.

The Mathura mould consisted of three discs in one mould. The middle one had coin five sockets on each of both the sides thus making two sets of five coins. Die struck coins. Die struck coins are prepared by hammering a complete design carved in intaglio on the die punch or anvil punch. The impression received was in relief. The early die struck coins of India are of four broad classes:

- a) Circumscribed single die coins.
- b) Circumscribed double die coins.
- c) inscribed single die pieces.
- d) inscribed double die coins.

2.5 Die-Struck Coins

2.5.a Single die technique.

Single-Die Technique: Some Janapadas used the die-striking technique also. In the process coin blanks of required weight were prepared either by cutting from metal sheets or by droplet technique. Then the planchets were stamped with a die having a complete design of the intended symbol. If the die was smaller than the flan of the coin it gave full impression on the blanks but if it was bigger, it resulted only in partial impression of the device.

A broken bronze die found from Eran (ancient Airakanya) in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, which incidentally happens to be the only ancient coin-die known so far, is a very interesting discovery. It is about half an inch thick and has beveled edge all around the top. There is a hollow at the back to keep in position the iron punch, which was to receive the blow of the hammer. The hollow is very rough with clear indications of having been used repeatedly. The preserved portion of the die bears the negative design of the sun with a taurine above it, an animal running by its side and part of the six-armed symbol placed

diagonally opposite to it. Alexander Cunningham, who discovered this unique die, pointed out that it was apparently forged 'for the purpose of stamping pieces of copper to be afterwards plated in imitation of the true punch-marked silver coins.' The different devices on the punch-marked coins, as indicated by the nomenclature itself and also noted above, were impressed with the help of as many different punches, but the forgers tried to simplify the process so that the coins could be produced in a single operation either by die-striking or casting in a mould bearing on it the negative impressions of all the devices to be stamped.

2.5.b Double die technique.











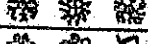






Double-Die Technique: The use of double dies seems to have been influenced by the Greek coins, which are unsurpassable specimens of numismatic art. In this method, the coin blank was placed on the anvil die and the punch-die was placed upon it and hammered. The planchet got squeezed between the two dies and received their impressions on both the sides. The dies were naturally engraved with negative designs, which were intended to be transferred to the coins. It must be admitted that in the whole range of Indian coins, the die-struck coins of the Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers stand out distinctly as the most beautiful and impressive, particularly for their portraits, which are often in high relief and seem to have been based on original models. The legends and devices on these coins, though sometimes quite complicated also, are quite clear. The art of die-cutting was perhaps at its zenith during that period. The die-struck Western Kshatrapa coinage has inherited some of the qualities of the Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins but has not been able to reach that height. Die-striking technique survived for many centuries and is still followed in most parts of the world.

2.6 Summary

Coinage seems to have evolved in India during the first half of the first millennium BC from the metallic currency of the Vedic period. The earliest coins were in silver and were issued by some Janapada states. They bore one, two, three or four symbols punched on them and circulated in their limited territories. Coins of the *Janapadas* were issued on the *satamāna*, *Vimsatika* or sub-multiples of *Kārshāpana* standards and had different denominations. Of these *Janapadas*, some grew more powerful and during the time of Buddha there were sixteen such great states (*Mahājanapadas*) whose coins have been distinguished along with those of other smaller states. Of the sixteen *Mahājanapadas*, Magadha became more powerful and emerged as an Empire, covering ultimately the whole of the Indian subcontinent. The Buddhist work *Alṭhakāthā* tells us that a change was effected in the weight of the coins after Ajātaśatru, credited with converting the Magadha Mahājanapada into an empire, shifted his

capital from Rajgir to Pātaliputra (Patna). Now the standard of 32-ratti (*kārshāpaṇa*) was followed exclusively and the coins bore five symbols. This became the pan-Indian currency and continued from the time of Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru down to the medieval times in India.

Different techniques of manufacture were adopted for producing these coins. Initially, however, cutting strips from metal sheets and adjusting them to the required weight standard by chipping off their corners and punching them with five different symbols was the most popular. The scrap metal resulting from such sheering and clipping was remolten to repeat the process. Sometimes the molten metal was converted into globules by dropping them with a ladle of required weight and then flattening and punching them. There is evidence that even cast blanks were used to impress the symbols. Later casting and die-striking methods were also used for minting these coins but some scholars regard such productions as forgeries.

Janapadas	State Symbols
Andhra	
Vanga	
Magadha	
Surashtra	
Avanti	
Ashmaka	
Kuntala	
Shakya	
Gandhara	
Kalinga	
Kashi	
Kosala	
Kuru	
Malla	
Panchala	
Shurasena	
Vatsa	

SERIES	APPROX. DATE	DYNASTY	NOTABLE RULERS	COIN SIZE (mm)	EXTRA MARKS	SUN'S RAYS	ELEPHANT	BULL	RE STRIKES	METAL	CHARACTERISTIC CLASS. MK	NO. OF TYPES	NO. OF YEARS	TYPES YEAR
I	500-430	Brihadrajata	Bimbisara & Ajatashatru	22-15	large bankers	oblique	early	early	(rare)	fine	variable	264	70	3.81
II	435-425	Brihadrajata	successors	19-28	small bankers	radial, oblique	late	early	nearly always	fine	variable	36	10	2.6
III	430-410	Brihadrajata	successors	18-26	bankers	radial	late	late	on II & fresh metal	fine	etc.	44	20	2.2
IVa	430-400	Shunga		18-24	bankers	radial	late	late	on II & fresh metal	fine	including 'anchors'	20	10	2.0
IVb	400-370	Shunga		18-24	bankers	radial	late	late	none	fine	variable no 'anchors'	29	30	1.43
IVc	400-370	Shunga		18-24	bankers	radial	late	late	none	fine	including 'anchors'	14		
IVd	370-320	Nanda		16-22	bankers + miniature	radial	late	late	none	fine	including 'anchors'	79	50	1.58
Va	320-270	Maurya	Chandragupta Bindusara	12-18	fewer bankers + miniature	radial	late	late	none	some debased	variable	37		
VIa	320-270	Maurya	Chandragupta Bindusara	11-16	fewer bankers + miniature	radial	late	late	none	some debased	variable	13	50	0.9
Vb	270-175/150	Maurya Shunga	Asoka & successors	11-16	bold	radial	late	late	none	often debased	variable	17		
Vlb	270-175/150	Maurya Shunga	Asoka & successors	10-18	bold	radial	late	late	none	often debased	variable	44	95/120	0.8/0.63
Vll	210-190	Maurya	successors	11-16	bold	none	late	late	none	often debased	—	13		

2.7. Check Your Progress

1. Define a punch-marked coin.
2. How many punches did the first coin bear?
3. What is a uniface coin?
4. What do you understand by the term ratti?
5. What weight-standards were followed by the Janapada coins?
6. What is a karsapana.
7. What is the weight of a karsapana.
8. What were the two invariable symbols on the karsapana.
9. What types of symbols exist on the karsapana.
10. What is the total number of such symbols?
11. What is the significance of symbols on the karsapana.
12. What do you understand by Droplet Technique?
13. What do you understand by scyphate?
14. What is Repousse technique?
15. What are the two dies employed in double-die striking technique called?

2.8. Assignment/Activity

1. Draw the symbols occurring on punch-marked coins.
2. Give an account of the various techniques of manufacturing punch-marked coins.

2.9 Suggested Reading

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2.10. Glossary of Technical Terms

1. Obverse: Main side of the coin
2. Reverse: Lesser important side of the coin
3. Flan: Area of the coin
4. Planchet: Coin-blank before being stamped or struck

BLOCK - IV

REGIONAL, INDO-GREEK, KUSHANA AND SATAVAHANA COINS

UNIT - I

REGIONAL COINS

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 City issues
- 1.4 Dynastic issues
- 1.5 Tribal coins.
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Check your progress
- 1.8 References
- 1.9 References for Further Study
- 1.1 Introduction

The period between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta Empire witnessed the rise of a number of small independent principalities all over Northern India and constant streams of alien invasions. There is evidence that the Mauryan authority started dwindling after Aśoka and some states took advantage of his weak successors and became independent. The Bactrian Greeks were hovering in the northwest and started making incursions. When Brihadratha, the last Mauryan emperor, found himself unable to resist the aliens, his commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Śūṅga assassinated him and took over the reigns in his hands. The empire, however, could not be kept united after his death in about 150 BC and fissiparous forces resulted in the coming into existence of various small states in different regions. Literary sources being meager and obscure, and epigraphic records sparse, they are comparatively more adequately known from their coins which generally circulated in their respective regions but sometimes crossed their frontiers also as a result of trade, pilgrimage, or bullion value. When the Śūṅgas and the Kāṅvas failed to hold intact the empire inherited from the Mauryas, there grew not only semi-autonomous and independent states but some cities and towns also took the opportunity to declare independence. This fact is generally betrayed by the coins issued by them. Some of these independent and semi-autonomous states were tribal, oligarchic and republican and others monarchical. The above-

mentioned states may thus be classified under three broad categories according to the nature of the legends on their coins as follows -

1. Coins bearing names of important cities, probably issued by autonomous city corporations;
2. The dynastic issues of monarchical states bearing the names of different rulers; and
3. The tribal coins issued by janapada or gaṇa states, sometimes bearing the names of the tribal chiefs also.

1.2 Objectives

The study of regional coins is important as they reflect the local history of different parts of India before the rise of the Guptas.

The symbols, devices and script on the regional coins not only reveal the history and chronology, social and religious belief of the local people.

The coins are mostly of copper. Though the Audumbaras, Kunindas, the Vimakas, Vrsni and the Yaudheyas used silver other metal or metal compounds were also used though very rarely. These were bronze lead and potin.

The regional coins were cast coins and die struck coins. Hence they reflect a good degree of technological advancement in the sphere of die cutting, casting techniques, palaeography and script, adoption of round shape etc.

1.3 City Issues

We know a large number of cities, which came into existence during the early historic period, through literature. Sāketa (Ayodhyā), Vārāṇasi, Kauśāmbī, Erakīṇa, Ujjayinī, Vidiśā, Māhishmatī, etc. lay on the important routs connecting Pāṭaliputra with Takshaśilā and western India. They were in a flourishing state in the second century BC and we know coins carrying the names of these cities, invariably in copper. Coins with the legend Ajudhe belong to Ayodhya. Two coins bearing the legend Vārāṇas[i] in the Brāhmī characters of about first century BC were picked up in 1944 from the ruins of Rajghat near Vārāṇasi. Alexander Cunningham had identified modern village of Kosam located about fifty km southwest of Allahabad on the river Yamunā with ancient Kauśāmbī. Some coins bearing the Brāhmī legend Kosa[m]bi, Kosambiya, or Kosabikanam in second century BC letters picked up from the mound here confirm this identification. These coins belong to the different types one of which shows the following details:

Obverse. Elephant to left on a pedestal, with triangle-headed standard, six-armed whorl, Ujjain symbol and wavy line on four sides with Brāhmī legend above Kosa[m]bi.

Reverse. Tree in railing, Ujjain symbol, six-peaked hill, tank with four fishes, etc.

Vidiśā is identified with the modern village of Besnagar near Bhilsa (district Vidiśā, renamed) and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh. Quite a good number of coins bearing on the obverse an eight-spoked wheel and on the reverse the Brāhmī legend Vedisasa, indicates that the city of Vaidiśā (a name occurring in literature and inscriptions also) or Vidiśā was one of the flourishing cities of the early post-Mauryan period.

Eran (24° 05' N. and 78° 10' E.) is an important ancient site in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, situated on the southern bank of the river Bina about eighty km northwest of Vidisha. Two square die-struck and one round cast coin with the second-century BC legend read as Erakanya and comparable with other city-coins of this period have generally been attributed to Eran, which has yielded numerous other series of punch-marked, cast, die-struck and inscribed coins. The earliest Indian inscribed coin with the name of its issuer 'Dharmapāla' (Dhamapālasa), which Allan dated to about third century BC, is also known from Eran. Their details are given below.

1. Copper, square, 0.7 inch, 24 grains

Obverse: An arched gate between tall (coconut?) trees, legend at top Erakana.

Reverse: Ujjain symbol; tree in railing; river symbol above.

2. Copper, square, 0.4 inch, 23 grains

Obverse: Bull to right, wheel symbol; legend Erakana.

Reverse: Ujjain symbol.

3. Copper, round, cast

Obverse: Horse to left, Ujjain symbol above.

Reverse: Vertical legend Erakan(n/nya) between two trees in railing.

Recently, however, Amitashwar Jha has pointed out that the legend has wrongly been read as Erakan(y)a on these coins. Actually it is Erikachchha (or Erikachchham) and the coins should be attributed to the city of this name identified with modern Erachh or Erich (25° 47' N. and 79° 07' E.), situated on the right bank of the river Betwa in Garautha tahsil, district Jhansi of Uttar Pradesh. From Jhansi, Erich is about seventy km towards the northeast and numerous inscribed

bricks, seals and coins, prove the antiquity of the place. Bhatt and Singh had deciphered the legend correctly earlier but they also attributed the coins to Eran. Jha has analyzed all the earlier coins attributed to Eran and published from the collection of the British Museum and individuals coins attributed to Erich. There are four varieties of punch-marked coins, ten varieties of cast coins and two varieties of die-struck coins. Erich coins thus present the unparalleled instance in Indian numismatics where all the three techniques of punching, casting and die striking have been employed. Some specimens betray even the use of the punching and die-striking techniques. The number of techniques and the number of varieties found indicate that these coins must have been issued in a fairly large number over a fairly long period of time. These coins seem to have generally been issued in two denominations of 3.9 to 4.0 gm and 1.9 to 2.0 gm, but some coins of higher weight-standard were also issued.

Some inscribed coins dated to about third-second century BC bearing the legend Bhāgilāya (Sanskrit Bhāgilāyāh), discovered from the banks of the river Narmadā near the village of Jamunia in district Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh, are also supposed to bear the name of the city Bhāgilā. The definite location of this city is a matter of guess only. But as the coins were found in the same region where several other copper coins with the legend Kurarāya (Skt. Kurarāyāh) are also said to have been found, and as Kurara is mentioned in some Sanchi inscriptions as a place-name, both Bhāgilā and Kurarā (or Bhāgilā and Kurara) may have been located somewhere near Sanchi. Bhāgilā and Kurarā may thus be included amongst the cities that flourished during the second century BC and issued coins. Two round copper coins (dia. 1.8/1.9 cm, wt. 11.2/11.4 gm), one with blank reverse, are also attributed to Kurara:

Obverse: Brāhmī legend Kuraghara in between three-arched crescented hill and a hollow cross above and the Kurara bird below. Rev: Hollow cross.

Kuraghara means the 'house of Kura(ra) (birds)'. Kuraghara also finds mention in the Sanchi inscriptions and may be the same as Kurara or Kurarā.

Ujjain, situated on the river Śiprā about twenty-five km north of Indore, is one of the most famous cities of ancient India and was a great center of trade and commerce through which passed the trade between Pāṭaliputra and the west. Amongst the numerous coins found from Ujjain are some inscribed copper coins bearing the Prakrit legend Ujeniya in the characters of the first half of the second

century BC. The coins bear the figure of the celebrated deity Mahākāla (Śiva) carrying a club in one hand and a water vessel in the other, both of which are characteristic of Śiva. There still exists the temple of Mahākāleśvara in the city.

Tripurī, identified with modern Tewar nearly twelve km from Jabalpur on road to Bheraghat (known after the demons Tripurāsura who built three strong forts here), was the capital of the Kalachuris in the medieval period. The coins with the legend 'Tripurī' in characters of the early second century BC reveal that it was a flourishing city in the post-Maurya period.

Māhishmatī, identified by some scholars with modern Maheshwar and by some others with Mandhata, both situated on the river Narmadā in the Nīmar district of Madhya Pradesh, was a capital city in ancient times. Coins bearing the legend Māhisati in the characters of early second century BC may certainly be attributed to the ancient city of Māhishmatī. Half a dozen varieties of these coins are known. Their reverses are blank.

- I. Standing male figure to left, a pellet surrounded four crescents on right, a svastika and the legend Mahisa below.
- II. Three peaked hill, a dot flanked by four crescents, tree within railing and legend below Mahisati.
- III. Crescented three-arched hill, triangle-headed standard (Indradhvaja), and human figure? Above from left to right, couchant lion, an inverted lotus within a railing with minute dot with four crescents around and a taurine above in the middle row, the legend to be read upside down Mahisati in the third row with fishes in a tank at the bottom.
- IV. A standing male figure with right hand raised and left hand akimbo on left and an animal (horse?) walking to left and a pellet surrounded by four crescents on right, legend below Mahisati.
- V. Tree within railing and a horse walking to left in the upper portion, wavy line below and the legend Mahisati at the bottom.
- VI. River symbol above, legend below Māhismati. From left to right below the legend a taurine over a vertical line (Nandipada-dhvaja), horizontally laid three-arched crescented hill and a hollow cross; at the bottom a fish.

A coin belonging to Śuktimatī, the capital of the Chedis according to the Mahābhārata, has been published some time back. It bears the following details -

Copper, square (12 X 14 mm), 1.4 gm

Obverse: Horse to left facing a tree in railing, Brāhinī legend above Sutimati.

Reverse: An elephant to left facing a post (?), Ujjain symbol in the top right corner.

The characters of the legend indicate that this city issue belongs to circa third-second century BC.

Tagara (modern Ter in district Osmanabad, Maharashtra) probably also issued coins. Dr. Shankar Tiwari of Bhopal has discovered coins of Nandapura also.

1.4 **Dynastic Issues**

Coins issued from about the middle of the second century BC (from around the death of Pushyamitra Śūṅga) bearing the names of rulers reveal the existence of monarchical states in Madhyadeśa, such as those at Ayodhyā, Kauśāmbī, Ahichchhatrā, and Mathurā, which were respectively the capitals of the ancient janapadas of Kosala, Vatsa, Pañchāla, and Śūrasena, e.g. Agnimitra (Kauśāmbī and Pañchāla), Bhānumitra (Punjab and Pañchāla), Gomitra (Kanauj and Mathurā), Satyamitra (Ayodhyā, Kauśāmbī and Kūluta), Sūryamitra (Kanauj, Māthurā, Pañchāla, Sudvāpa, and Uddehaki). Some scholars have tried to connect them to the Śūṅgas but literary, historical, numismatic, epigraphic, and circumstantial evidence goes against their dynastic or blood relationship and invalidates such a hypothesis except in the case of Dhanadeva of Ayodhyā and some other rulers connected matrimonially.

Kauśāmbī: Coins of Kauśāmbī are broadly grouped into four distinct classes. Class I consists of early round cast coins. A vast majority of these coins are uninscribed but some, as indicated above, are inscribed with the name of the city. The uninscribed cast pieces of Kauśāmbī bear the figure of a 'lanky bull', Gaja-Lakshmī, or an elephant and some other symbols on the obverse, and tree in railing, Ujjain symbol, svastika, etc. on the reverse. The inscribed cast coins generally bear the figure of an elephant on the obverse and tree in railing, Ujjain symbol, triangle-headed standard, etc. on the reverse. Class II comprises the die-struck coins of a large number of rulers with bull (or sometimes a lion, horse or a crude male figure), tree in railing, etc. as the main devices. Coins of Class III are distinct from those of Class II in style and fabric and represent the coins of Dhanadeva and their somewhat degenerate copies with bull (or sometimes elephant) and tree in railing as the main devices. Class IV comprises the issues of the Maghas, which also bear the bull and tree in railing devices.

The uninscribed coins may be dated to the end of the third century BC, the city issues of Kauśāmbī may have started about the beginning of the second century BC and the independent dynasty of Kauśāmbī may have been founded by king Sudeva followed by Bahasatimita (I).

Coins of Class II belong to a continuous series and are represented by more than two dozen rulers all of which must have flourished before Kanishka. They are Śivaghosha, Praushthamitra, Jyeshthamitra, Jyeshthabhūti, Agnimitra, Bṛhaspatimitra (II), Agarāja, Rāmamitra, (Udāka, known only from inscriptions), Varuṇamitra, Parvata, Aśvaghosha, Īśvaramitra, Rādhamitra, Priyamitra, (Devīmitra and Dāmamitra known only from inscription), Suramitra, Sarpamitra, Satamitra, Rājamitra, Prajāpatimitra, Rajanimitra (and Śivamitra, known from inscription). The chronological sequence and their inter-relationship can be worked out only on the basis of motifs in a majority of cases though sometimes clues are provided by some epigraphs and overstrikes also.

The local coinage of Kauśāmbī ceased only during the reign of Kanishka and started soon when it passed into the hands of the indigenous rulers. The coins of Dhanadeva and their degenerate imitations with the names of Nava, Mūlahasta, Vishṇusrī, and others may be assigned to the early centuries of CE. Dhanadeva closely followed the form of the tree as found on the coins of Rājamitra of Class II, probably the latest ruler of the earlier dynasty. Dhanadeva group certainly ruled in between the Kushānas and the Maghas as evidenced by Kauśāmbī excavations. Since the known dates of the Magha rulers range from 51 to 139 (= CE 129-217), Dhanadeva group must have ruled only for a few years after Kanishka and before the rise of the Maghas. It is just possible that Dhanadeva may have been the important ruler whose coins were imitated by his lesser contemporaries.

Magha (Megha according to the Purāṇas) dynasty was probably founded by a ruler of this name some of whose coins have been published. Magha was followed by Bhīmasena, Pothaśrī, Bhadradeva, Bhadramagha, Śivamagha, Vaiśravaṇa, Bhīmayarman, Satamagha, Vijayamagha, and others. The names of Krishṇasena, Harisena, Rājan Bhīmasena, Mahāsenāpati Rudramagha, and Kautsiputra Śivamagha are known from Rajghat sealings. The dates of the inscriptions of the Magha rulers cannot be referred to in the Kalachuri-Chedi era of CE 248, which would make some of them contemporary with the Guptas in their very heartland. Some other coins on which the reading of the legend is doubtful probably also reveal the names of a few more kings, such as Puramagha, Yajñamagha, Saṅkumagha, and Jayamagha (or Vijayamagha). Though the Purāṇas refer to nine

Magha kings the coins, inscriptions, seals and sealings indicate that there were probably more than nine Magha kings. Their power seems to have ended around the close of the third century CE.

Ayodhyā: The dynastic issues of Ayodhyā fall into two very distinct classes: 1. Square cast coins showing no trace of foreign influence, and 2. Round die-struck pieces, which have types rather than symbols.

The square cast coins generally bear on the obverse the figure of a bull or rarely an elephant before a symbol, and on the reverse five or more symbols in various combinations. The study of their coins indicates that they ruled in the following sequence: 1. Praushthadeva, 2. Mūladeva, 3. Vāyudeva, 4. Dhanadeva, 5. Viśākhadeva, 6. Sivadatta, 7. Naradatta, and 8. Jyeshthadatta. Their rule may have ended about the latter part of the first century CE. After the weakening of the Kushāna hold sometime about the middle of the second century CE, indigenous rulers asserted their independence and started issuing their round die-struck coins bearing on the obverse a bull and a cock or a nandipada on the reverse. Typological and symbolical considerations reveal that they probably ruled in the following chronological order: 1. Kumudasena, 2. Ajavarman, 3. Mādhavavarman, 4. Saṅghamitra, 5. Vijayamitra, 6. Devamitra, 7. Satyamitra, and 8. Ayumitra. Their rule extended to about the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century CE. The ruling dynasty of Ayodhyā was overthrown by one of the early Gupta princes as the Purāṇas inform us that Sāketa (Ayodhyā) was included in the Gupta Empire from about its very foundation.

Kānyakubja: Kānyakubja or Kanyākubja (modern Kanauj) is located in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The name occurs in the Rāmayaṇa, Mahābhārata and Patañjali's Mahābhāṣhya. A coin of Vishṇudeva is known from Kanauj and those of Brahmamitra and Sūryamitra are ascribed to this locality because of their general similarity with that of Vishṇudeva. An overstruck coin of Gomitra and still another coin are also connected with these. The square coin of Gomitra has been assigned to the latter part of the second century BC on palaeographic ground and those of Brahmamitra and Sūryamitra to the first century BC. Another coin of Śuṅgavarman bearing exactly the same obverse and reverse devices as that of Vishṇudeva, allegedly from Kauśāmbī, is known. K.D. Bajpai thinks that there was no separate dynasty at Kanauj and that Brahmamitra, Sūryamitra, Vishṇudeva and Śuṅgavarman belonged to Kauśāmbī. But in spite of

some symbolical interconnections, the two series are entirely different. The names of Brahmanitra, Sūryamitra and Gomitra occur on the coins of Mathurā also and some of the symbols are also similar. So a possibility of these coins belonging to the Mathurā rulers who extended their sway eastwards towards Kanauj has also been expressed. Mathurā is not very far off from Kanauj. Almost equidistant is Rairh in Jaipur district from where coins of Sūryamitra Uddehaki or Sudavapa have been discovered. These coins too show some similarities with the coins of Sūryamitra connected with Kanauj. Palaeographically, the coin of Suṅgavarman is earlier than that of Vishṇudeva and has been dated to the second half of the second century BC. Vishṇudeva probably ruled during the first century BC. There may have been some intermediary rulers but their coins are not known. The line of Suṅgavarman was contemporaneous with the early Mitras of Mathurā, who might have extended their sway towards some region between Mathurā and Kanauj, as indicated by the Mitra coins connected with the Kanauj area.

Rairh: Rairh has yielded coins with the legends 'Vachhaghosha' and 'Vapu' assignable to third-second century BC. The real identity of Vachhaghosha and Vapu has not been established with certainty. Interesting, however, is the find of square coins bearing the names of Brahmanitra and Sūryamitra, referred to above, as also of Dhruvamitra. They belonged to Udehaki and Sudavapa, the exact significance of which still defies satisfactory explanation.

Erich: Erich in district Jhansi, known for its city issues, has also yielded coins of Aditamitra, Īsvaramitra, Śivamitra, Mḷamitra and Ashādhamitra, who ruled between second century BC and second century CE.

Mathurā: Mathurā is one of the most ancient and celebrated cities of India. During the first century BC, it was ruled by a local dynasty of princes who seem to have ruled in the following order -

Main Line: Collateral Line

1. Gomitra
2. Sūryamitra
3. Brahmanitra
4. Ddīdhamitra
5. Vishṇumitra
6. Pūrushadāta
7. Rājā Rāmadatta

8. Rājā Uttamadatta
9. Rājā Kāmadatta
10. Rājā Bhavadatta
11. Rājā Śeṣhadatta
12. Rājā Balabhūti
13. Mahārāja Aparānta (?)

Pañchāla: Pañchāla coins form one of the longest and most uniform series of ancient Indian coins. They are characterized by three symbols on the obverse- a tree-like symbol with two horizontal branches and box-like bottom, trident-like three prongs placed on a horizontal line, and Brāhmī mya-like symbol - above in a row from left to right, with the king's name below, all within a square incuse. The reverses of the Pañchāla coins are more remarkable and often depict the deity or his attribute, connected with the name of the issuer. The names of the issuers may be arranged according to their name-endings as follows -

1. Ghosha: Bhadrghosha and Rudraghosha.
2. Gupta: Dāmagupta, Rudragupta, and Jayagupta.
3. Mitra: Agnimitra, Anamitra, Bhānumitra, Bhūmimitra, Brihaspatimitra, Dhruvamitra, Indramitra, Jayamitra, Phālgunimitra, Prajāpatimitra, Sūryamitra, Varuṇamitra, and Vishnumitra.
4. Nandi: Śivanandi-Śrī and Śrī-Nandi.
5. Pāla: Vagapāla, Viśvapāla, and Yajñapāla.
6. Sena: Vasusena and Yugasena.

Chronologically, they may be arranged like this: 1. Dāmagupta 2. Vaṅgapāla 3. Bhāgavata 4. Āshādhasena 5. Viśvapāla 6. Phālgunimitra 7. Rudraghosha 8. Bhadrghosha 9. Bhānumitra 10. Sūryamitra 11. Agnimitra 12. Bhānumitra 13. Indramitra 14. Vishnumitra 15. Jayamitra 16. Prajāpatimitra 17. Jayagupta 18. Rudragupta 19. Dhruvamitra 20. Yajñapāla 21. Varuṇamitra 22. Vasusena 23. Yugasena 24. Anamitra 25. Śivanandi-Śrī 26. Śrī-Nandi 27. Achyuta.

The last ruler Achyuta is generally identified with the king of this name conquered by Samudragupta as mentioned in his Prayāga Prasasti.

Mitras of Punjab: Some rulers bearing mitra-ending names, earlier thought to have been belonging to the Audumbara tribe, are known from their coins. They

are Ajamitra (Āryamitra), Bhānumitra, Mahābhūtimitra and Mahāmītra. Their coins differ typologically from the Audūmbara coins and have a different geographical distribution from district Hoshiarpur to district Patiala and Ambala in Punjab and Haryana. Excavations at Ghurani near Patiala had added the names of Indramitra also to this list. They seem to have ruled sometime during the first century BC/CE.

Almora: Almora in the Kumaon region of Uttaranchal has yielded coins of Haridatta, Śivadatta (Dr. P.L. Gupta suggests Haribhūti and Śivabhūti), Śivapālita, Śivarakshita, Mrigabhūti, and Vijayabhūti who may have ruled between the closing years of the first century BC and the third quarter of the first century CE.

Yugasāila (Jagatgrāma): Third century inscribed bricks of a Śyena-chiti at Jagatgrāma near Kalsi on the bank of the Yamunā in district Dehradun refers to king Śīlavarman but his coins are not known. Jayavarma and Bhānughosha known from the coins of the Chakkar Hoard, however, may be associated with Śīlavarman. The name of Rāvaṇa is also known from coins found with those of Bhānughosha. Some scholars regard them as local rulers of Garhwal.

1.5. Tribal Coins

Post-Mauryan coins issued by various people living in distinct geographical units using the term janapada or gaṇa, having a republican, oligarchical or even monarchical administrative system, have been designated variously as local, indigenous, regional or janapada coins but the term tribal coins for them used by Allan is still popularly used. These tribes were living mainly in the Punjab (now forming parts of Himachal and Haryana also) and Rajasthan and issued their coins for different durations from about the middle of the second century or later, with Kushāna interregnum, to the time of Samudragupta. We give below an account of these different tribes and their coins in an alphabetical order.

The Agras: The Agras or Āgreyas are known to us from Pāṇini's *Ashādhyaī* (circa fifth century BC), *Mahābhārata*, early historic Buddhist work *Mahāmāyūrī*, *Chāndravāyākaraṇa* (circa fifth century CE), *Kṣāikā* (seventh century CE) and *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharāṇa* (eleventh century). The Classical writers have referred to them as Agalassoi. Their coins have been found mainly from Agroha, an ancient site about 22 km northwest of Hisar on Delhi-Fazilka highway, or some nearby places like Barwāla. Agroha has been identified with ancient Agrodaka and has been mentioned (as Āgodaka) even in one form of the legend. The coins are of copper, square or round in shape. The legend in Brāhmī occurs on both sides but

is usually defaced on the reverse. The legend is of two types in general with some variations: Agodaka (or -e) Agāchajanapadasa and Agāchmitapadabhīhāyina (Agāchamitrapadābhishīhāyina) (or -nām). The word Agācha is derived from Agreya or Agrātya (belonging to or hailing from Agra). The second version of the legend is somewhat controversial. The main obverse device is the tree in railing, sometimes with other figures and motifs. The reverse shows bull, lion, curious composite animal or Lakshmī and determines the type (or class). The coins belong to circa second-first centuries BC.

The Arjunāyanas: Known from the Ganapātha of Pāṇini, Chāndrayākaraṇa, Brihatsamhitā of Varāhamihira (sixth century), Kāśikā, Sarasvatikāṇṭhābharana, Gaṇaratnamahodadhi (twelfth century) and the Prayāga Prasasti of Samudragupta, the Arjunāyanas were at the height of their glory during circa 100 BC and 200 CE with Kūshāna interregnum when they issued their coins. Cunningham had rightly observed that "the Arjunāyanas may have occupied some part of Rajputana, to the north of Mālava and to the south of Mādresa or Madra" but it is difficult to agree to Allan who places them within the triangle Delhi-Jaipur-Agra as some coins have actually been found from the ancient mounds of Nḡhar and Dhanasia in district Ganganagar of Rajasthan. Their coins also show some similarities with the coins of the Agras who were probably their eastern neighbours.

The number of their total known coins is less than a dozen. The coins are made of base silver and copper and bear three types of legends: Arjunāyanā(m), Arjunāyanā(m) jaya(h), and Arjunāyanā (m) jaya(h) Damarudasa (as read by P.L. Gupta but modified by Nisar Ahmad as Bhadrārāmasa). The coins may be classified as under.

Class I

Obverse: Standing (male?) figure between sacrificial post and tree in railing; Brāhmī legend Aj(u)nāyanā

Reverse: Bull standing to left probably on hill.

Class II

Obverse: Humped bull facing a sacrificial altar within railing, legend Arjunāyanā jaya(h).

Reverse: Tree in railing and elephant with upraised trunk.

Class III

Obverse: Tree in railing, Brāhmī legend Arjunāyanā(m) jaya(h) -

Reverse: Lion to right.

Class IV

Obverse: Same, legend *Ajunāyanāna jaya Bhadrarāmasa*.

Reverse: Elephant with upraised trunk before a tree in railing, a line below, *nandipada* symbol above the animal.

The Audumbaras: The Audumbaras (also spelled as Udumbaras or Odumbaras) are one of the oldest and prominent tribe known from literature, classical writers and coins. The *Kālikapurāna* refers to the story of the birth of sage *Viśvāmītra*, their titular god, as a result of the embracing of a fig (*udumbara*) tree by his mother. Their silver and copper coins have been discovered from the old Kangra district and Pathankot. Silver coins are very rare; only two pieces belonging to king *Dharaghosha* are known. Copper coins are square in shape and show a temple with trident-battle-axe by its side. All coins are biscriptual having legends in *Brāhmī* and *Kharoshthī*. The copper coins reveal the names of *Sivadāsa*, *Rudradāsa* and *Dharaghosha*. The coins may be classified as under.

Class I: Silver, Round

Obverse: *Viśvāmītra* standing facing with right hand raised, traces of skin over left arm; *Kharoshthī* legend in front *Viśvamitra*, around *Mahadevasa Raña Dharaghosha*, below *Odubarisa*.

Reverse: Trident-axe on right, tree in enclosure on left, *Brāhmī* legend around *Mahadevasa Raña Dharaghosha*, below *Odubarisa*.

Class II: Copper, Square

Obverse: Tree in an enclosure on left, forepart of an elephant to left on right, wavy line below, *Kharoshthī* legend *Mahadevasa Raña Sivadasa Odubarisa*.

Reverse: A storeyed temple with trident-battleaxe on right, *Brāhmī* legend *Mahadevasa Raña Sivadasa Odubarisa*.

The coins of all the three rulers in copper are similar. The silver coins of *Dharaghosha* seem to have been influenced by the Indo-Greek hemidrachms and issued on the weight standard of about 40 grains (2.6 gm approximately).

Till some time back, some silver coins of one *Mahādeva* and square copper coins on which the names of the above-mentioned three rulers were not found were also generally attributed to the Audumbaras. Some copper coins issued by *Ajamitra*, *Bhānumitra*, *Mahmitra* and *Mahābhūtimitra* (described above as the *Mitras* of

Punjab) were also attributed to the Audumbaras but their types and geographical distribution clearly reveal that they belong to different series. The Audumbaras may have ruled during the latter half of the second century BC.

Kshudrakas are known from two copper coins of circa second century BC found from district Ganganagar in Rajasthan.

The Kulūtas: The Kulūtas are known by a dozen copper coins, eleven square pieces discovered at Taxila, and one round piece of unknown provenance in northern Punjab. They reveal the names of Virayaśa, Vijayamitra and Sachamitasa who may have ruled some time during the first century CE. P.L. Gupta thinks that they shifted from Taxila to Kulu region. They bear legends in Brāhmī and Kharoshthī.

The Kuṇindas: Amongst the tribal republics, the Kuṇinda stand out very conspicuously to have issued the most copious silver currency and occupied a very large hilly tract extending from Kangra to Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal with the adjoining plains of these states as well as of Punjab and Haryana. They issued silver coins with Brāhmī and Kharoshthī legends but on their copper issues the latter is substituted by a border of dots. The silver coins are struck on the pattern of Indo-Greek coins. The substantial type carries the following details.

Obverse: Deer to right with different symbols above; below and above or between the horns; female figure (Lakshmi) standing, sometimes on lotus, holding flower in uplifted right hand; Brāhmī legend around Rājñah Kuṇindas(y)a Amoghabhūti(y)a Mahārājas(y)a.

Reverse: Different combinations of svastika, six-arched chaitya with umbrella having a nandipada above, tree in railing, triangle-headed standard, wavy line; Kharoshthī legend Raṇa Kuṇidasa Amoghabhūtiśa around, and Maharajasa below.

As pointed out above, a border of dots substitutes the Kharoshthī legend on copper coins, which show a large number of varieties and sub-varieties. Some scholars also attribute copper coins with the legends 'Bhagavata Chitresvara Mahātmanah' prepared on the Kushāna module to the Kuṇindas but they differ so substantially in type, fabric, metrology, legends, devices and geographical distribution that it is now difficult to accept that view. Similarly the Almora coins also cannot be attributed to the Kuṇindas. There was some controversy regarding the word Amoghabhūti occurring on these coins but some pieces from the Chakkar Hoard of Kuṇinda and other coins clearly indicate that it stands for the issuer and is neither the title of the ruler nor does it stand for any deity. The Kuṇindas ruled during the first century BC-CE.

The Mālavas: Mentioned in the epics, classical accounts, Mahābhāṣya, Chāndravyākaraṇa, Kāśikā, and some inscriptions, the Mālavas had fought against Alexander but subsequently shifted to Rajasthan. Nagar or Karkota Nagar, situated about forty km south of Tonk, and Rairh, about fifty-five km from Nagar, seem to have been the most important towns of the Mālavas as they have yielded the largest number of their coins, the former site in thousands. All in copper, Mālava coins are known for their very small size, the smallest weighing only 1.7 grains (nearly 110 mg) and .2 inch in diameter. They are rectangular as well as round in shape and carry the legend Mālava, Mālavānām, Mālavānām jaya, etc. or the enigmatic legends like Majūpa, Mapojaya, Mapaya, Magojava, Gojara, Pachha, Maraja, Jāmaku, Paya, etc. Tree in railing, sun, vase, lion, bull, peacock, snake, king's head, etc. are the usual devices shown on these coins. The coins betray numerous varieties which may have circulated between the middle of the second century BC to the middle of the fourth century CE when they were ultimately defeated by Samudragupta.

The Rājanyas have been referred to in literature from the Ganapātha of Pāṇini to the *Sarasvatikanthābharana*. They issued copper/bronze coins of round shape, all belonging to one particular type - standing figure (Lakshmi?): bull (usually in a rayed circle), and are divisible into two classes on the basis of Kharoshthī or Brāhmī legends. Coins with Kharoshthī legends have been found from Hoshiarpur district and those with Brāhmī legends come from eastern Rajasthan near Mathura-Dholpur region. They belong to circa second-first century BC.

Sāvītriputra-Janapada located somewhere north of the Ravi in circa second century BC is known from two square copper coins in the British Museum.

The Śibis, the Śivas of the Rīgveda, are one of the oldest tribes which, like many other tribes, shifted to Rajasthan under Indo-Greek pressure and ultimately settled at and around Nagari near Chittore from where most of their coins have been discovered. All their coins are in copper and round in shape showing bull, tree in railing, svastika with taurine-ends, multiple branches with or without circular base, multi-arched chaitya with a wavy line below, Brāhmī ta-like symbol are the main devices and the legend is of two types - Śibi-janapadasa or Majhamikāya Śibijanapadasa, Majhamikā (Mādhyamikā being the country around Nagar). The coins belong to second century BC.

The Sudavapas and the Uddehikas were also located in Rajasthan and have been referred to above. A solitary copper coin in the British Museum furnishes evidence

of the existence of the Trigarta state (Trakata janapadasa) somewhere in the Kangra region. The bscriptual Bull/Elephant type round silver coins of the Vemakis betray the names of Rudravarman and Bhavarman who ruled somewhere in the vicinity of the Audumbaras or succeeded them in that region. A solitary round silver coin of the Vrishnis found from somewhere in northern Punjab indicates their independent state during the second-first century BC. Their copper coins and clay sealings of circa second-third century CE have been found from Sunet near Ludhiana.

The Yaudheyas: The war-like Yaudheyas referred to as *ayudhajivī-saṅgha* by Pāṇini known from literature, inscriptions, seals and sealings, and coins were the most illustrious of the tribal republics. Their earliest coins of circa first century BC (copper, Bull/Elephant type) with the legend *Yaudheyānām Bahudhānake* come from Rohtak and surrounding region. During the Kushāna supremacy, they seem to have sought refuge in the Shiwalik hill tracts of Garhwal region where they issued six-headed Kārttikeya type coins with the legend *Bhagatasvāmino Brahmanyadevasya Kumārasya* (or a part of it) and after the exit of the Kushānas they occupied a very vast tract extending from Multan to Srinagar in Garhwal from west to east and from Kangra in the north to Sambhar in Rajasthan in the south, issuing their coins with the legend '*Yaudheya-gaṇasya jaya*' till they were subjugated by Samudragupta and ultimately perhaps by the Hūnas.

1.6 Summary

At the weakening of the central Mauryan empire, certain areas seem to have become independent and started issuing their coins. Such coins belong to three categories - City States, Monarchical States, and Tribal States. From about the middle of the second century BC, we find such coins being issued in the different regions ending ultimately with the conquests of Samudragupta.

Ayodhyā, Bhāgilā, Erikachhā, Kauśāmbī, Kurara (Kuraghara), Māhishmatī, Nandapura, Śuktimatī, Tagara, Tripurī, Ujjayinī, Vārāṇasī, and Vidiśā were the important cities whose coins have come down to us. Amongst the states issuing monarchical coins are Almora, Ayodhyā, Erikachhā, Kānyakubja, Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Pāñchāla, Punjab, Rairh, and Yugaśsaila. Different tribes, which issued their coins, are the Agras, Ārjunāyanas, Audumbaras, Kshudrakas, Kulūtas, Kuṇindas, Mālavas, Rājanyas, Sāvitrīputras, Śibis, Sudavapas, Trigartas, Udehikas, Vemakis, Vrishnis, and Yaudheyas.

1.7 Check your Progress

1. Give details of the political scenario after the death of Aśoka.
2. Discuss the relationship of the Mitra rulers of northern India with the Śuṅgas.
3. What are the city issues?
4. Name the cities that issued their coins.
5. What are the characteristic features of the city issues?
6. Why do we see an efflorescence of local coinages after the death of Pushyamitra Śuṅga?
7. Which are main states to have issued monarchical coins?
8. Discuss the relationship, if any, amongst the Mitra rulers of various regions?
9. Is there any temporal relationship amongst the Mitra rulers of different regions?
10. Give an account of the important tribes that issued coins.
11. Which of the tribes issued silver coins?
12. Which tribe issued the most copious silver currency?
13. Why didn't all the tribes issue silver coins?
14. Which tribe occupied the largest area?
15. Which tribe issued the smallest coins?
16. Which are the tribes whose coins are very scarce?
17. Which tribe issued the largest number of copper coins?

1.8 References

- a) Visit the state archaeology museum and try to make a catalogue of the local coins kept there.
- b) Make a chart showing the different types of coins in front of the names of various city states and tribes. Sketch the popular symbols also.

1.9 References for Further Study

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UNIT - II

GENERAL SURVEY OF COINS OF THE INDO GREEK KINGS

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Objectives
- 2.3. Beginnings of study of Bactrian-Indo-Greek coinage
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- 2.1. Introduction

In the year 1867 at Bukhara, seven peasants discovered a big gold coin. They fought over for its possessions and five men died in the fight. The largest gold coin to have been

struck in antiquity, this 20-stater of Eucratides I, is now reposed in the Cabinet des Medailles of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris since it had been acquired by Napoleon III of France for his Imperial Collection. Such was the wonder of the coinage of the Greeks in India! "Their coins are very charming aesthetically and technically very sound. These mark the real beginning of proper coinage in the sub-continent. The most significant contribution of these coins is their standard weight, and a high technique of die-cutting. These coins also display, for the first time, the portrait of the ruler identified with an inscription and a cult object whether in the form of an image of the deity and/or his/her attribute," wrote S. R. Dar.

2.2. Objectives

The aim of the present Unit-2 is to introduce ourselves with the (i) numismatists' definitions of the Bactrian-Indo-Greek (BIG) coinage; (ii) the salient features and characteristics of the coinage; (iii) their influence on later Indian coins; and (iv) their contribution of this numismatic source to the reconstruction of history.

2.3. Beginnings of study of Bactrian-Indo-Greek coinage

It was the discovery of a gold tetradrachm issued by the King Eucratides II with "standing Apollo" type that inspired Theodore S. Bayer to initiate the study of the Greek rulers of the frontier lands of the Indian sub-continent and publish his book *Historia Regni Graecorum Bactriani* in 1738. The interest was aroused in this episode of history due to the efforts of the amateur coin collectors, mostly the British administrators and military officers. Charles Masson was then collecting the coins in Afghanistan. The names mentioned in the coin-legends were those of sovereigns whose existence had until then only been recorded in ancient texts, thus considerably enhancing the credibility of classical authors. The first bilingual coins were discovered at the beginning of the 19th century and were helpful to J. Prinsep (between 1834 to 1837) to begin the deciphering of Kharoshthi and Brahmi alphabets.

2.4. Definitions

Since the discovery of the coins, their Greek antecedents were conclusive. Some of the Greek kings who issued the coins were identifiable due to their names been mentioned in the Greek Classical and other accounts about India. The other coin-features, like the language and script of the legend, the monogram, the quality craftsmanship of the dies and minting technique, as well as, the depiction of Greek deities on the coins; convinced beyond doubt that the coins belonged to the successors of Alexander and Seleucus who ruled over Bactria and the Indian north-western frontiers for some time. There is a general practise to name the coins after the issuing dynasty. R. B. Whitehead first used the name "Indo Greeks" for

those Greek kings of north-west India. Earlier, E. J. Rapson and G. MacDonald were referring to the issuer rulers as "Yavana". Tarn preferred to emphasise the aspect of Greek origin and treat their history as a "lost chapter of Greek history".

For the numismatists it became a necessity to find an appropriate name for the coinage. To avoid casual reference on dynastic or nationality basis, it has been agreed among numismatists that the classification should be into two basic categories, the (i) Graeco-Bactrian and the (ii) Indo Greek, on the criteria of coin features. These words have become terms. Bopearachchi has proclaimed this in a recent catalogue. "The term Graeco-Bactrian is used, as a rule, for the coins issued by the Greek kings who ruled in Bactria-Sogdiana north of the Hindu Kush. The coins were minted in conformity with the Attic standard and they bear Greek legends. The designation applies also to the coins bearing the same characteristics which were issued by the kings who reigned in the heavily hellenized regions bordering the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush. The coins issued by the Greek kings who reigned south of the Hindu Kush, but intended for their Indian-speaking subjects in the territories of Indian culture, are designated as Indo Greek."

2.5 Salient Features

The coinage of the Greek kings is remarkable due to certain characteristics. It possessed all the attributes that are considered as very essential to constitute the entity called 'coin', in the modern sense. These typical features, were absent in the earlier Indian coins i.e., the karshapaṇas or "punch-marked coins". In fact, these elements were introduced for the first time in Indian coinage.

The salient features of the coins can be enumerated as pertaining to :

- a) Coin metal, shape and weight standards
- b) Minting technique
- c) Coin type, stylistic typology, iconography and portraiture
- d) Coin legend, titles / epithets
- e) Monogram
- f) Overstrike

We shall deal with each aspect in brief details.

2.6. Weight standards, metal and shape of coins

The coins that are found vary in actual weight. The variation is due to the coin debasement and the metal been worn off during years. However, scholars attribute the

difference to the different metrological systems to which the coinage subscribed. The Attic standard was used in the coinage in conformity with the Greek coinage that was emulated by the kings. This was particularly true for the Graeco-Bactrian coinage meant for circulation in Central Asia and north of the Hindu Kush. The Attic standard refers to gold (AV) coins in the denominations of 20-stater and stater; silver (AR) coins as tetra-drachm, drachm and obol; and bronze (AE) coins as obol, chalkon and lepton. Later on, changes were made in the weights to suit the local traditions. For the coins of the 'non-Attic standard', P. Gardner held the Persian standard responsible; A. N. Lahiri saw the adapting of the Indian standard, while M. Mitchiner proposed a Light Afghan standard as the basis. However, the transformation reveals the wilful adjustment in currency. This view is strengthened by the facts that corresponding changes were done to the metallurgy and shapes of the coins. The circular/round shape of the coins continued but was supplemented by the adoption of square shapes for certain coins, which were of Indian preference. The introduction of bi-lingual legends and iconographical innovations further strengthen the argument of adjustments. Coins were also minted in nickel (NK), potin, copper and lead.

2.7. Minting technique

"It seems that the minters used only the most typical Greek process, striking, whereas India used casting at the same period," comments O. Guillaume. The coins of the Indo-Greek kings are die-struck coins where both sides of the flan, namely the obverse and the reverse, bear representation of the coin-type. A die was in one-piece punch, with the hollowed engraving of the entire face of the coin—composite of the border, legend, portrait/iconography and monogram. A set of two dies were needed to mint a coin and its multiples of the same series. One die-punch could produce a number of coins before it became unfit, being cracked or blunted due to its use. Each time, when a new die-punch was brought into use for minting, it generated a set of coins which is known to the numismatist as a new series. Therefore, there could be many series even though the general coin type remained the same. "No BIG punches have ever been found, but only a few unstruck flans (in the Ai Khanoum excavation). Presumably the punches were destroyed after use."

According to a general iconographical criterion, the obverse is the side upon which the portrait of the king appears, but the numerous portrait-less coins (e.g., certain coins of Agathocles, Antimachus, Lysias) pose the need to distinguish between the obverse and the reverse. Numismatists, therefore, formulated conventions about the distinction. O. Guillaume explained, "The main aspects of the striking process are known: the flan is placed on a punch which is held steady and is struck with another punch. The impression made by the

lower punch is what the minter calls the obverse, the mark made by the upper one, the reverse."

2.8. Coin-type, stylistic typology, iconography and portraiture

Generally, the picture of the ruler occupies the obverse of the coin. The portraiture is only the head or the bust, shown either in profile or three-quarter face; the full figure been seldom drawn. The facial features are realistic and attention has been paid to the head-dress and the attire worn by the portrayed royal figure. The diadem, or a helmet, is worn on the head and in unique pieces the king is shown wearing an elephant-scalp cap or a Macedonian kausia. Coats and armours are sometimes visible as the attire. Arms and weapons are also depicted. Coins of many Indo Greek kings highlight them as warriors.

More frequently, the deity finds place on the coin reverse. The deity, who is invariably from the Greek mythology, bears no inscription about name and is clearly identifiable by the attributes. Usually, the deity is shown in full form, either sitting or standing or in action. Sometimes, a combination of two deities is also depicted (e.g., Zeus with Nike, Zeus and Hecate). The preferential choice of deities has been as follows: Zeus, Herakles, Apollo, Dionysos, Dioscouri, Helios and Poseidon for the gods; and Nike, Athena/Pallas, Artemis, Demeter and Hecate for the goddesses.

Deity	Attribute	Kings who preferred to depict the deity on their coins
Zeus	Thunderbolt, sceptre, aegis	Diodotos, Demetrius, Pantaleon, Agathocles, Antimachus Theos, Eucratides, Heliocles, Antialcidas, Amyntas, Telephos, Hermaios, Plato, Peucaloas
Nike	Wreath, Palm-branch	Antimachus Theos / Nikephoros, Eucratides, Heliokles, Antialcidas, Archebius, Strato, Menander, Epander, Zoilus, Artemidorus, Philoxenos, Theophilus, Amyntas, Hermaios
Herakles	Club, lion-skin	Euthydemus, Demetrius, Agathocles, Antimachus Theos, Eucratides, Lysias, Antialcidas, Strato, Menander, Zoilus, Theophilus
Athena/Pallas	Aegis, shield, spear, buckle	Diodotus, Demetrius, Apollodotus, Strato, Polyxenos, Menander, Epander, Zoilus, Apollonphanes, Antimachus Nikephoros, Theophilus, Amyntas
Apollo	Tripod-lebes,	Euthydemus, Eucratides, Apollodotus, Strato, Menander,

	bow, arrow, lyre	Dionysios, Zoilos, Hipposstratus
Artemis	Bow, arrow, torch, dog	Diodotos, Demetrius, Artemidorus, Peucalous,
Dionysos	Panther/leopard	Pantaleon, Agathocles
Dioscouri	Pair of horses, palms, lanceer, levelled spear, pilie caps	Antimachus, Antialcidas, Diomedes, Archebius,
Helios	Quadriga, high boots, callipers	Philoxenos, Telephos
Poseidon	Trident, Palm + fillet.	Demetrius, Antimachus Theos, Nicias
Demeter	Cornucopia	Philoxenus
Hecate	Three headed	Pantaleon, Agathocles,
Hermes	Caduceus, flat-cap, win- ged ankles	Diodotos, Demetrius,

Fig.1. Deities on the Coins

Deities of the non-Greek origin, i.e., of Indian and native reverence have also found place on the coinage. The drachm of Agathocles depicts Vasudeva (Krishna with chakra) and Samkarshana (Balarama with plough) on either side; a "seated deity with palm twig" and indicated in the Kharoshthi legend as "Kavishe-nagaradevata" on the square bronze coin (di-chalkon) of Eucratides refers to the city-goddess of Kapisha region; and the crowned "Puskalavati-nagaradevada" on a gold coin (half-stater) are worthy worthy of note in this connection. City goddesses are placed on the silver of Amyntas, silvers and bronzes of Hipposstratus, and the bronze issues of Peucalao and Telephos, respectively.

The significance of the deities has been debated among historians. The deity could be a 'patron deity' and was portrayed as relates to the name of the king (e.g., Artemis on the coin of Artemidorus) or some event of the kings career which he chose to commemorate with the issue of the coin (e.g., Poseidon on Demetrius coin to denote some naval victory). The deity could have been a tutelary deity (e.g., Herakles has been supposed to be for the

House of Euthydemus). It is also believed that since the deities were associated with different places in Greece (e.g., Apollo with Delphi, Athena with Athens) the selection reflected the connections of the king with that original habitat in Greece, to which his ancestors probably belonged. Historians like Tarn and Narain have considered the deities as dynastic emblems in their respective historical reconstructions.

The smaller denominations often did not provide adequate space to portray the full-size deity on it. Therefore, on smaller coins just the characteristic attribute is marked to symbolise the presence of the deity (e.g., tripod-lobes for Apollo; piloi for Dioskuroi, panther for Dionysos). In this connection symbols like the wheel or dharma-chakra (on Menander's coin), stupa/three hills symbol, and representations of elephant, bull, horse, dolphin, are significant.

2.9. Coin legends and the titles / epithets

Coin legend is a set of words in a natural language inscribed on a coin. The coins of the Indo Greek kings provide a variety of legends. Some coins are unilingual, i.e., the inscription is solely in Greek language, written in Greek alphabets and are classified as the Graeco-Bactrian issues by the present-day numismatists. The coins that are bilingual, i.e., besides the Greek legend placed generally on the obverse, there is another inscription in Prakrit language, written in Kharoshthi script, on the reverse. The latter category of coins, numismatically termed as Indo Greek issues, were supposedly minted for circulation south of Hindu Kush, in territories like Gandhara and Punjab. There are exceptions, like a few rare pieces of legend-less coins, attributed to Menander, Agathocleia, Apollodotus I. The "Athena : owl" coin-type attributed to Agathocleia by A. N. Lahiri is believed to be an issue of Menander according to R. B. Whitehead and A. K. Narain.

Coin legends supply the identity of the sovereign as well as, much valuable details about the rulers' attitude and nature of polity. The Greek legends contain the word "**BASILEWS**" (=King) as the usual title, which is often aggrandised like "**BASILEWS MEGALOU**" (=King, Great) or "**BASILEWS SWTHROS**" (=King Saviour) or "**BASILEWS NIKATAROS**" (=King Conqueror) or "**BASILEWS ANIKHTOU**" (=King Invincible). The most arrogant titles were "**BASILEWS QEOU**" (=God King) and "**BASILISSES QEOTROPOU**" (=God-faced Queen), while the modest ones were epithets like "**DIKAIU**" (=Righteous), and "**EPIFANOUS**" (=Eminent). On the bi-lingual coinage, the Prakrit translation of the Greek legend was placed mostly on the reverse. Appropriate Prakrit equivalents were chosen for the Greek words, e.g., **BASILEWS** became *Maharajasa*; **MEGALOU** as *Mahata*; **SWTHROS** as *Tratara*; **DIKAIU** as *Dhramika*; **NIKATAROS** as *Jayadhara*; and **ANIKHTOU** as *Apadihata / Aparajita* in the Kharoshthi scripted version.

The coin-legends were stylishly placed, generally on the periphery of the circular coins. Sometimes, the legend was divided and placed differently beside the icon, vertically in two columns or as partly circular on top and partly in a horizontally line at the bottom.

The palaeography of the coin legends have acted as good clues to decipher the ancient coin imitations produced by the nomadic successors of the Greek kings, from the real ones.

Greek epithet	Prakrit equivalent	Kings who adopted the epithet
SWTHROS = Soteris = Saviour	<i>Tratara</i> <i>wadara</i>	Apollodotos, Apollophanes, Diomedes, Dionysios, Hermautes, Hippostratos, Menander, Nikias, Peukolaos, Polyxenos, Strato, Zoilos
NIKATAROS = Nicator = Conqueror	<i>Jayadhara</i>	Antimachus, Antialcidas, Amyntas, Archebius, Epander, Hippostratos
ANIKHTOU = Aniketou = Invincible	<i>Apādhata</i> <i>Aparajita</i>	Artemildorus, Lycias, Philoxenos
DIKAIΟΥ = Dikaiou = Righteous	<i>Dhramika</i>	Menander, Heliocles, Archebius, Zoilus, Peucalaos, Strato, Theophilus
EPIFANOUS = Epiphanous = Emanant / Pious	<i>Prachashcha</i>	Plato, Polyxenos, Strato
EUERGETHS = Evergetes = Benefactor	<i>Kalayankrama</i>	Teleplus

Fig. 2. Some popular epithets from the coin legends

2.10. Monogram

A monogram is a cryptic mark or a design composed of Greek alphabets. It was a tradition in Greek coinage in the West to devise monograms using the letters from the names of kings and strike it on the coin. The monograms on the coinage of the Indo-Greek kings also appear to be compositions of two or more Greek letters, joined together or overlapping stylistically. However, they do not usually match with the initials of the king's name. Therefore, the interpretation of monograms becomes the most puzzling question regarding the Indo-Greek coinage.

The monograms are also in a large numbers. More than 550 monograms were once proposed but now about 100 different monograms are accepted, which are unique and original. The rest of the large variety is the creation of either erosions or slight variations done

to any original monogram. A.D.H. Bivar suggested that the monogram-forms that look remarkably alike may belong to a homogenous series that was issued by the same mint. The partly matching and slightly different monograms have been classified together by Osmund Bopearachchi who is "inclined to think that the variants may represent perhaps the signs adopted by different officinae attached to the same mint." But how many mints could have existed? Till now not even one mint has been discovered by the archaeologists. Robert Senior wrote, "There is an overall impression that just two or three major mints were in operation, based in the largest cities, and that a few minor mints may have struck coins in more outlying area from time to time. The seeming plethora of monograms is due more than one officinae in a mint having the right to strike coinage."

Most of the numismatists agree upon some sort of connection of the monogram with the mint. Every monogram used on Indo Greek and Indo Scythic coins could presumably be allocated a place of issue by the authorities of that time. In this sense each monogram is a mint monogram. G. K. Jenkins identified a typical monogram linked with the mint situated in Taxila region. Monograms have been associated with Paropamisadae, Charsadda, Gardes-Chazni, West Punjab and East Punjab. Enthusiastic numismatists believe in such a direct relationship and connection between the monogram : territory and often treat the monogram almost as the emblem or a synonym for the specified territory. But the setting of spatial dimensions solely with the monograms, is risky. The monogram truly provides some significant information, but a limit needs to be imposed to the inference.

According to A.D.H. Bivar, kings may have struck coins when they were engaged in a military campaign. In this connection it is important to remind that overstrikes have been explained as coins struck in a hurry to pay off the soldiers. It is believed that the (Sigma) Σ monograms represent the mint of Sagala, but in the Robert Senior's opinion they denote a travelling mint like the ones that functioned in Parthia.

Monogram also links to the issuer king. The continuation of the same monogram on the different issues of two or more kings, termed as "monogram progression" puts the kings in reference into one classification. The kings should be associated, must have been historically connected — as allies or successors or foes. If one king copies the monogram of the other, i.e., "monogram borrowing", it would mean, taking-over the mint of the previous king, i.e., "mint succession". This would imply that the one king succeeded the other, not only in the mint, but also in the throne and territory.

The monogram coins have a purpose to establish the authenticity of the coin and to distinguish it from the fake ones. The monogram could have any explanation, but whatever it may be, the significance of this trait is not meagre.

Monograms		
Paropamisadae	Western Panjab	Eastern Panjab
Gandhar/Taxila		

Fig.3. Some ascertained Monograms from the coinage (courtesy : O. Bopearachchi)

2.11. Overstrikes

An "overstrike" refers to the coin which was struck twice, the second striking been done by a different die-punch. In this way, obliterating the original obverse / reverse, that lies underneath, an already existing coin is re-minted and re-issued with a new face. The undertype is faintly visible.

Among the Greek coinage, many examples of overstrikes have been discovered. Historians have used the overstrikes as evidence to settle the chronology of the kings. Between two kings, the one who overstrikes the coinage of the other certainly lived later. This is evident from the fact that the "overstruck" king's coin was already in circulation and the action of striking was later. Some historians propose that overstriking was one way to highlight the conquest of the "overstriking" king on the "overstruck" ruler.

Overstriker	Overstruck Undertype
Amyntas	Heliocles II
Antialkidas	Lysias
Apollodotos II	Maues
Archebios	Peukolaos
Archebios	Strato I
Archebios	Zoilos I
Artemidoros	Hermaios/Calliope
Epander	Philoxenos

Epander	Strato I
Eucratides I	Apollodotos
Heliocles I	Demetrios II
Heliocles II	Antialkidas
Heliocles II	Hermaios
Heliocles II	Philoxenos
Heliocles II	Strato + Agathocleia
Heliocles II	Strato I
Menander I	Zojilos I
Strato I	Lysias
Zoilos II	Apollodotos II

Fig. 4. List of Overstrikes (source: R.C. Senior, O. Bopearachchi)

2.12. Imitations and Posthumous Hermaues (P-H) issues

The counterfeiting of coins and preparing coin imitations was a prevalent practise in the past. Scholars believe that the successors of the Greek kings in different territories were responsible for the ancient imitations. The nomadic invaders from Central Asia, who displayed the Greeks from Bactria e.g., places like Ai Khanum near river Oxus (Amu-darya), Qunduz region and Kabul valley (all in Afghanistan), imitated the Greek currency by preparing fake imitations in moulds by way of "cast technique". The imitations of the issues of Eucratides I, Heliocles I, have been found and a large number of imitations of Hermaeus coins, now known as "post-Hermaeus coins" form a separate subject matter for the interest of historians to know about the successors of Indo Greeks.

2.13. Coin-hoards

A Coin-hoard signifies a deposit of coins, which was kept away safely and hidden, generally underground, by some person at some point of time in the past and that treasured money remained lost till its recent discovery. Once such a coin-hoard is unearthed, it provides interesting information. It contains a variety of coins, which the depositor had witnessed as circulating in his times and had considered them to be of value. A depositor would have generally collected coins of good weight and condition for his benefit. Within the hoarded lot of coins, the historians try to ascertain the latest issue which gives clue to the approximate

date of the deposit of the hoard. On the other hand, the date of deposit may indicate the date of the latest coins. The kings whose coins are found in the hoard were often rulers close in time or territory. The provenance of the coin hoard is often a key to determine the territorial limits of the kings whose coins are found. A coin hoard, therefore, comprises of much information in contrast of stray kinds of coins.

There have been many important accidental discoveries of about 15 coin hoards from Pakistan and 2 major deposits Afghanistan during recent few years. The study of the coins has helped in framing the list of kings and the tentative chronology of their reigns.

Named upon its provenance as:	Year of discovery
Bajaur - I and II	1926/1942
Mir Zakah - I	1947-1948
Rawalpindi	1972
Ai - Khanum - I	1970
Ai - Khanum - II	1970
Qunduz	1946
Siranwali (Daska) - I	1990
Mir Zakah - II	1992
Khatuzi-khelai (Swat)	1992
Ai - Khanum - III	1970
Ai - Khanum - IV	1973
Swabi	1993
Siranwali (Daska) - II	1993
Bajaur - III	1993
Mian Khan Sanghou	1993
Wesa	1994
Sarai-Saleh-I (Haripur-I)	1994
Haripur-II	1997

Fig. 5. Major Coin hoards comprising of coins of Indo Greek kings

2.14. Cataloguing of the BIG Coinage

A catalogue of coins contains the details and description of the coins in the collection to which it pertains to. Important coin catalogues of the coins of the Indo Greek kings treasured in various museums and collections were prepared by A. Cunningham (1884), P. Gardner (1886), V.A. Smith (1906), R.B. Whitehead (1917), A.N. Lahiri (1965), A.K. Srivastava (1969), M. Mitchiner (1978) and Osmund Bopearachchi (1991, 1993, 1997). The methods and styles of describing the coins in the corpus had been different. However, the conventions about the cataloguing of the coins of the Indo Greek kings have now become established. Firstly, coins are sifted under the name of the King (deciphered from the legend / identified otherwise), and secondly, selected as per the Coin-type. Thereafter, the under-mentioned style of classification is followed:

Heading:	name of the identified king, otherwise in its absence, the major coin type.
Metal:	AV / AR / AE
Shape:	Round / Circular / Square / Irregular
Denomination:	Attic Standard Tétradrachm or drachm / Indian Standard Drachm
Obverse:	description of the coin-type
Obv.	verbatim legend and its arrangement expressed by arrow; often mentioning the O clock position of the beginning letter.
Reverse:	description of the type
Rev. Legend:	verbatim legend, (its translation) with orientation depicted with arrow-line.
Monogram:	design and its placement on the coin
Weight:	in grams.
Size of the coin:	Diameter measured in millimetres / for rectangular issues the measured sides.
Dies orientation:	Axis of setting of the two dies is indicated by an arrow.
Inventory number:	(as given)
Provenance/donor:	(as given)
Comments:	Mention of same or similar coin if found in other catalogues and collections.

Fig. 6. Cataloguing pattern

2.15 Some Common and Characteristic Coins

Some of the most popularly known coins are the following:

Attic Standard Graeco-Bactrian coin in the name of Diodotus.

Obv. Diademed head of Diodotus to right.

Rev. Zeus striding to left, naked hurling thunderbolt; aegis on left arm and eagle with outstretched wings at his feet. Legend in Greek: BASILEOS DIODOTOU.

2.16 Historical Interpretation from Numismatic Source Material

The study of the numismatic material has contributed very much to the task of reconstructing of the history of the Indo Greek kings. Literary sources informed about only seven Greek rulers, viz., Diodotus, Diodotus-II, Euthydemus, Eucratides, Demetrius, Apollodotus, and Menander; and epigraphical evidence added another name viz., Antialcidas to the list. However, owing to the coinage at hand, scholars have been able to find out existence of more than 40 kings and queens.

Another important contribution has been the revelation of the fact that there were several instances of namesake kings. For instance, there was not one Demetrius, but two other kings of the same name. Scholars believe the existence of two kings named Menander, one with the title "Soter" and the other with the title "Dikaios", who lived decades apart and ruled over different territorial kingdoms. Similarly, there were more than one king named Diodotus; Euthydemus, Antimachus, Apollodotus, Eucratides, Heliocles, Strato and Zoilus.

King's name	Titles/Epithets	Single personage	Different personages
Diodotus	Soter/Soteros		Two: Tarn, Narain
Euthydemus	Theos		Two: von Sallet, Tarn, Narain
Demetrius	Aniketos/ <i>aparajita</i>	A.H.Dani	Two: MacDonald, Tarn, Narain, Dar. Three: Bopearchchi
Antimachus	Theos; Nikephoros <i>/jayadhara</i>		Two: Tarn, Narain, Bopearachchi
Apollodotus	Megalou; Philopator; A.K. Narain Soter / Soteros / <i>tratara</i>		Two: Tarn, Cunningham, Jenkins, Mac Dowall, Bernard, Petitot-Biehler;
Eucratides	Soteros Megas / Megalou / <i>Mahata</i>	A.Cunningham	Two: Bayer, Rochette, MacDonald, Tarn, Narain
Heliocles	Dikaïos / <i>dhramika</i>	W.W. Tarn, M. Mitchiner	Two: Narain, MacDonald, Bopearachchi
Menander	Soter; <i>Tratara</i> / <i>tradara</i> ; Dikaïos / <i>dhramika</i>	W.W. Tarn, A.K. Narain	Two: Bopearachchi
Strato	Soter; <i>Tratarasa</i> ;Epiphanes; Philo- pator;Dikaïos; <i>dhramika</i>		Two: Tarn, Jenkins, Narain, Bopearachchi Three: S. R. Dar; Four: R. C. Senior
Zoilus	Soter; <i>Tratara</i> / <i>tradara</i> ; Dikaïos; <i>dhramika</i>		Two: Tarn, Narain, Bopearachchi

Fig.7 : Namesakes or Homonymous kings

The coins have also been helpful in settling down the chronological succession of the kings in different territories: Kings having used the same monograms or its variant have been grouped into spatial connections. The territorial connection with the script and language of the legend also indicated to which place the coins were meant to circulate. Interestingly, rulers

of the south of Hindu Kush also minted the Graeco-Bactrian coin type, unilingual coins and Amyntas' large silver denomination is an example to illustrate the fact. It has been proposed that due to the nomadic pressure from the Central Asia, the Greek kings were compelled to move from Bactria to Kabul valley and thereafter to Gandhara region and finally extended into West Panjab. The combined inferences drawn from the coin-type, legend, monogram, overstrikes and the conspicuous absence or presence of any king's coins in the different coin-hoards, has been a useful clues to such endeavours in historical reconstruction.

2.17 Summary

Since the discovery of the coins of the Indo Greek kings, numismatic studies have been able to establish the existence of more than 40 different kings and queens of Greek origin. This contribution stands in contrast of the only 7 kings known from other historical sources. A number of namesakes or homonymous kings have been identified through their coins. Numismatics, thus, became the major source of Indo Greek history. Numismatists have classified the coinage into two categories, termed as Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek, distinguished on the basis of their being unilingual or bilingual; their subscribing to Attic or Indian weight standards and other traits. The two types of coinage is supposed to have served as currency in two different territories, the Graeco-Bactrian to the north of Hindu Kush and the Indo-Greek to the south of the mountains. The study of monograms has revealed that certain monograms were related to mints and its officials situated in particular regions, like Gandhara or East Panjab. Kings using the same monogram or its variant must have ruled in that region. The numismatic has given knowledge about the development of iconography, arts and techniques, Religious, cultural and economic conditions of those times, the concepts of polity and the social facts like assimilation and acculturation, are deduced from the coins. Finally, the Greek coinage inaugurated a new chapter in the currency system and its influence made a lasting impression on Indian coinage.

2.18. Check your Progress:

Answer the following questions :

- (a) What is so special about the coins of the Indo Greek kings, as a source of Indian history?
- (b) What do the numismatic terms "Graeco-Indian" and "Indo-Greek" signify?
- (c) Mention the salient features of the coinage of Indo Greek kings.
- (d) Who were the pioneers in the study of the Bactrian-Indo-Greek (BIG) numismatics?

- (e) Discuss the main coin-types of the BIG coinage ?
- (f) What are monograms and how do they help in reconstructing history ?
- (g) Describe few important coin legends of the Indo Greek kings.
- (h) What technique was used to mint the coins of the Indo Greeks ? Define Obverse and Reverse.

APOLLODOTOS-I Coins

Indo Greek type circular shape : Apollodotus I

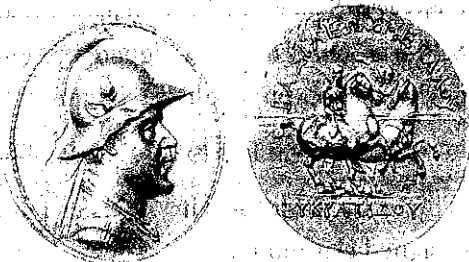
Obv. Elephant walking to right. Legend in Greek : BASILEOS APOLLODOTOU SOTEROS

Rev. Humped bull walking to right. Kharoshthi legend: Maharajasa Apaladatasā tradarasa

Indo Greek type square shape: Apollodotus I

Obv. Elephant walking to right. Legend in Greek : BASILEOS APOLLODOTOU SOTEROS

Rev. Humped bull walking to right. Kharoshthi legend: Maharajasa Apaladatasā tradarasa



Key to Indo Greek Coins

Graeco-Bactrian type: Eucratides I

Obv. Diademed bust of king to right., wearing crested helmet adorned with ear and horn of bull.

Rev. Mounted Dioscuri holding palms and spears, prancing to right. Greek legend: BASILEOS MEGALOU EUKRATIDOU.

Graeco Bactrian type. Eucratides I

Obv. Diademed bust of king to right., wearing crested helmet adorned with ear and horn of bull.

Rev. Mounted Dioscuri holding palms and spears, prancing to right. Greek legend: BASILEOS MEGALOU EUKRATIDOU.

2.19 Glossary of highlighted terms

- AE** : in numismatics refers to coin made of Bronze
- AR** : in numismatics refers to coin made of Silver
- Attic standard** : Corresponding to the Greek coin weight standards. The Greeks coins were Stater, drachms, chalkons, obols etc. One Stater weighed 8.48 gms. One Drachm weighed 4.24 gms., and one Obol was 0.71 gms. One Lipton weighed 2.12 gms.
- AV** : in numismatics refers to coin made of Gold
- Cast technique** : The technique of making coins by pouring molten metal in pre-designed clay moulds.
- Coin-type** : The design including picture engraved on the coin.
- Die Struck** : The technique of minting coins by striking the metal flan with a die which is a punch composite of the entire features (type, monogram, legend, border) to be engraved of the coin.
- Die-punch** : The metal punch with the engraved reverse image of what has to be marked on the coin.
- Flan** : The blank piece of metal of definite size, shape, weight and quality which on being struck becomes the coin.

- Indian standard : Coinage subscribing to the Indian currency standard, especially of the karshapana standard. According to Cunningham, 1 karshapana weighed 146.4 grains= 9.8 gms. Indians weighed in rattis or raktika seeds (gunja berry or abrus precatorius), each seed weighed 1.83 grain. About 32 rattis = 1 silver dharana; while 1 suvarna = 80 rattis.
- Kausia : A typical head-dress or cap
- Legend : Written text or inscription on the coin
- Monogram : A special mark of identification often made by joining letters or alphabets in design
- Nk : in numismatics refers to coin made of Nickel
- Obverse : in numismatics refers to the face of the coin which was struck by the anvil side die.
- Potin : in numismatics refers to coin made of mixed metal and impurities.
- Reverse : in numismatics refers to the face of the coin which was struck by the hammer side die.
- Series : The classification of a series represents the group of coins struck by the one and same die. Any variation, touching or correction marked on the die causes birth of a new series of coins.
- Tetradrachm : Coin denomination that is four times of a drachm. A drachm weighed 2.42 gms which was 1/7 of the Attic Tetradrachm.
- Grain : British small weight. 1 Grain = 0.064 grams; therefore, 1 gm = 15.625 grains.

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UNIT - III A

GENERAL SURVEY OF COINS OF THE KUSHANAS AND SATAVAHANAS

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Objectives

3.3. Beginnings of the study of Kushana coinage

3.4. Salient Features of Kushana coinage

3.5. Classification of Kushana coins

3.6. Early Yueh-eh / Kushana coinage

3.7. Major Kushana coinage

3.8. Later Kushana coinage

3.9. Symbols or Monograms on Kushana Coin

3.10. Historical Interpretation

3.11. Chronology of the Kushanas

3.12. Summary

3.13. Check your Progress:

3.14. References

3.1. Introduction

The Kushanas introduced a variety of gold coinage in a large quantity, meant for circulation in Central Asia and the entire Indian sub-continent. Although, the coinage had borrowed much influence from the coins of previous rulers, i.e., the Indo-Greek kings, yet it

may be rightly considered as the first Indian coinage of great significance.

3.2. Objectives

The aim of the present Unit-3 is to learn about (i) the salient features of the Kushana coinage; and (ii) the reconstruction of Kushana history on the basis of coins.

3.3 Beginnings of the study of Kushana coinage

Among the early scholars who contributed to the study of the Kushana coins, their collection and decipherment, were Alexander Burnes, Charles Masson, General Chevalier Ventura, A. Court, James Princep and Alexander Cunningham.

Burnes was an emissary of the British government and had gathered many different old coins during his excursions in North Afghanistan. In 1833, Princep studied his coin collection and noticing one particular coin, wrote in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, "This coin is of great value.....should my conjecture prove correct, the discovery of this coin will be hailed as of great value by all who are engaged in the newly developed study of Bactrian antiquity. I supposed it to be a coin of KANISHKA, a Tartar or Scythic conqueror of Bactria." Masson deserves the credit for the discovery of 68 coins of King Kanerkos (later identified as Kanishka) and 291 coins of King Kadphises. Much of our knowledge about the Kushana kings owe to the efforts of General Ventura who discovered an inscription at the Manikyala stupa near Kabul and to A. Court who proposed upon numismatic and archaeological evidence that Wima and Kujula were predecessors of Kanishka.

3.4 Salient Features of Kushana coinage

Among the salient features of the Kushana coins, we may count the standard - metal, weight, and denomination of the coins; the mint features like the typology, iconographic elements and the historical importance of the coins. Although the tradition of the Indo-Greek coinage was followed in certain aspects, there was significant departure from the Indo-Greek influence in other facets. Major innovations were attempted and new traditions also established.

Initially, the practises of the previous coinage were faithfully followed. Prevailing coins were imitated and almost their duplicates were minted. Soon, Kushanas coined the precious metals of gold and copper into circular shapes and design, by die-strike technique, but in their own names, effigies and style. Nevertheless, like the Indo Greek coins, their original

coins too had the king figuring on obverse and some deity, preferably Greek god, on the reverse. Their coins had bilingual inscriptions, and some symbols substituting the monogram. Later, inspired by Roman coins, Kushana coins improved in weight standard, gave up the bilingualism in legends, and selected Bactrian and Central Asian deities for the reverses. The tradition of adopting epithets continued with the Kushana kings but the titles were differently developed from those of the Indo Greeks. The changes were sufficient enough to lend an identity of its own to the Kushana coinage. The transformation that took place during the reign of the early Kushana kings, reached its maturity in the issues of Wima Kadphises, and its culmination in the coinage of Kanishka-I and Huvishka. The details of the coin characteristics of each phase are discussed below at proper places.

3.5 Classification of Kushana coins

Much information and knowledge has been added to the study of Kushana coins in recent years. The coins belonging to the Kushanas can now be dealt in two categories: Firstly, the coins issued by the early Kushanas when their Yueh-chi inclination was strong, and secondly, the coinage inaugurated by Wima Kadphises, who consolidated the Kushana empire, which possessed typical and original characteristic features.

The Early Kushana coinage includes the disputed and enigmatic coins which are found sometimes as overstrikes, or as joint issues or even as the imitations. There are the so-called "posthumous Hermaues" (P-H) issues, the copper coins of Heraus, Herkodes, Sagarcharis and the Soter Megas coins, which are attributed to the early rulers. P.L. Gupta is inclined to believe the coins naming Heraus, Herkodes, Sagarcharis to belong to different chiefs of the Kui-shuang tribe. The "posthumous Hermaues" issues are the earliest Yueh-chi imitations and some of them (Group 10 of Osmund Bopearachchi's reckoning) are considered as Kujula's coins. The 'Soter Megas' coins, that were once attributed to Wima Kadphises alone are now distinguished and divided among the two Wima namesake kings. Similarly, the "Bull ; Camel" issues are classified on legend arrangement and content and divided among Kujula Kadphises and Wima (now believed to be Wima - I, i.e., Wima Takto).

The Kushanas were rulers of a vast empire spreading from Tashkent in Central Asia up to Pataliputra in the Ganga Valley. The empire comprised of heterogeneous population which was widely divergent in ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, the kings tried to impose a uniform currency system for the entire realm. Wima Kadphises founded the monetary system based upon gold and copper issues. In gold coinage, staters and double-

staters were struck, the stater weighing 8 grams, which was quite close in standard of the Roman coinage under Augustus (31 BC-14 AD). Coins became instruments of propaganda. According to Martha Carter, the coinage subtly projected the official ideology of the Kushanas and portrayed "the image of the rulers as they wished to be seen by their subjects", depicting their "super human qualities".

3.6 Early Yueh-chi / Kushana coinage

The rulers of the early period of Kushanas have been identified on the basis of numismatic evidence. It is believed that the Yueh-chi tribes lived in the north west of China from where they were displaced by another Central Asian nomadic tribe, the Huing-nu (Hunas). The Yueh-chi moved southwards and encountered the Wu-sun (Scythians) and finally the former were divided into two branches, each under a Yueh-chi chieftain. The Ta-Yueh-chi ("Bigger Yueh-chi") reached Bactria in North Afghanistan and divided itself again into five chieftaincies. However, soon the chief of the Kui-shuang chieftaincy united the other four under his command, by force. This ruler was Kujula Kadphises, in whose reign the Yueh-chis came to be known as the Kushanas.

Coins of Kujula Kadphises were in silver and copper; depicted the Greek deities and they possessed Greek and Kharoshthi legends. Some remarkable phrases in the legends are "*sach dramadidasa*" and epithets like "yabgu", "jao" and "kusana". Some coins considered as 'joint issues' of Indo-Greek Hermaeus and Kujula, bearing "Bust of King: Herakles" coin-type are also found. According to Osmund Bopparachchi these issues are Kujula's first issues where he is named in the legend.

It is probable that Kujula Kadphises, temporally lived close to Indo-Parthian king Gondophares (c. AD 20-46), since there is evidence of overstruck coins of the latter, by Kujula. Possibly, he brought an end to the Parthian rule in Paropamisadae and Gandhara regions about AD 50. David MacDowall accepts circa AD 30-80 as the years for Kujula's reign, upon the strength of numismatic evidence. He believes that the "Bull: Bactrian camel" coin-type of Kujula was modelled under influence of "Bull: Lion" coin-type issued by Indo-Scythian Zeionises i.e. Jihonika, who was another king who had overstruck the coins of Gondophares. Joe Cribb is in favour of crediting the Heraus coins to Kujula because the designs of those coins seem to be copied from the coins of Gondophares and Zeionises, the contemporaries

of Kujula. Again, it is believed that the twin-title "Soter Megas" was adopted by the Kushanas from Sasan, an Indo Parthian king.

Coin Type	Metal	Obv. type	Rev. type
Bull : Two-humped camel	Cu	Standing Bull to right; + monogram	Bactrian camel
Hermaues and Kujula	AE	Bust of Hermaues to right with tied-up hair	Standing Herakles with club and panther-skin
	AE	Bust of Hermaues with tied up hair	Herakles standing fac ing with lion-skin and club.
	AE	Bust of Hermaues	Nike wearing wreath.
Diademed King : Enthroned Zeus	AR	Diademed head of king	Zeus enthroned; + monogram
Sitting King : Zeus		King sitting in padmas- ana with raises right hand.	Zeus standing to right
Helmeted King : Warrior		Helmeted head of king	Macedonian soldier with spear and shield

Fig. 1. : Coinage of Kujula Kadphises

Another Kushana king whose existence has been recently established was Wima Takto, son of Kujula. A coin from Hazara was published by V.A. Smith in 1898 which depicted "Seated King : Two standing figures" and a Bactrian legend ".OOHMO TAK.", but could not be correctly explained till the recent discovery of the Rabatak Inscription (found near Surkh Kotal), which informs about the king Wima Tak[to] as a son and successor of Kujula Kadphises. He is recognised with the assistance of the Dasht-e-Nawur Inscription, as well as, the Mat sculpture of a seated king which has an inscription tentatively read as 'Wima Takshamasya' or 'Wima Takpa-masya' or 'Taka damasya'. His regnal years are yet to be firmly determined. Recently, Joe Cribb proposed AD 80-110 as the possible reign.

Among the Kushana coins, numismatists ascribe to Wima Takto, those un-named 'Soter

Megas' coins which have the name "Vemasa" at the end of the Kharoshthi inscription. "Soter Megas" coins have legends in Greek script where the sigmas are cursive and the epsilons are square-shaped. The coin-type shows the king's hair-style as two rows of curls. The uniqueness of these silver and copper bilingual coins is that the two epithets, "Soter" and "Megas" have been adopted together. The coin type on silver issues is "King on horse-back : Zeus" and on copper issues as "Bust of King : King on horse-back" or "Bust of King : Standing Zeus" or "Helmeted King on horse-back : Zeus" or "Twin busts of helmeted kings : King offering at altar". The coins have either the "Kadphisian symbol" or monogram or Kharoshthi alphabet as well.

Of the "Bull : Camel" issues, the 4 gms coins with the legend "*maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa Vema[-]*" and the 10 gms denomination with legend "*maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa Vema Tak[-]a*" are also attributed to Wima Takto.

3.7 Major Kushana coinage

As mentioned earlier, the second Wima, i.e., Wima Kadphises, grandson of Kujula Kadphises founded the monetary system based upon gold and copper issues. The well developed features up on which the Kushana coins can be distinguished become visible in his coinage. On the obverse is shown the king exuberating divinity or royal grace and on coin reverse is a deity. But there are some notable points of difference. While on Wima's coinage the deity is not named, in the coinage since Kanishka, the different deities were identified by their names. It may have become necessary because while Kanishka portrayed various deities of foreign or syncretic origin it was needed to name them; but Siva the venerated deity of Wima, was well known. Also, the feature of bilingual legends in Greek and Kharoshthi ends on Kushana coins with Wima Kadphises. The latter coinage is uni-lingual in its legends.

The coinage of Wima can be explained with the help of the following table.

Coin Type	Metal	Obv. type	Rev. type
Enthroned King : Siva	AV	King sitting head to left, high cap, wearing buttoned coat, flames emerging from shoulders, holding club and thunder bolt; feet resting on foot-stool.	Siva standing with wreath, trident in right hand. Halo behind head; Nandi in back ground.
Enthroned King :	AV	Enthroned king with spear	Standing Siva with lion-

Siva (Sub-type)		and wearing boots	skin
Enthroned King :	AV	Enthroned king with shield;	Flames emerging from
Siva (Sub-type)		one foot off the foot-stool	Siva's head.
King on Clouds :	Siva AV		
Bust of King :	Siva AV		
King in window :	AV		
Trident and Battle-axe			
King in Chariot :	Siva AV		
King on Elephant :	Siva AV		
King at Fire-altar :	Siva Cu		

Fig. 2. : Coinage of Wima Kadphises i.e. Wima II

The coins of Kanishka - I were also issued in gold and copper. His innovations were limited to the coin reverses; on the obverse he maintained only one type for portrayal i.e., "standing king sacrificing at an altar". It has been pointed out by Martha Carter that Kanishka added "flaming shoulders" to the obverse figure as a stylistic depiction of the divinity aspect of king's person. The reverses depict the eclectic nature of the ruler featuring a repertoire of deities, each of whom was named.

Earlier Kanishka preferred three deities, viz., Helios, Salene and Hephaistos and named them in Greek language. But the iconographic forms of these deities were much different than are usually known to be. According to Robert Gobl, Kanishka's mints functioned at Peshawar and Taxila where initially the coins depicting Elios, Salene, Nanaia and Ephaistoi were struck in gold. Soon, they were substituted respectively by Miuro, Mao, Nana and Oesho. The gesture suggests inclination and favour towards Bactrian. In coin inscriptions, Kanishka gave up bilingualism — at first Greek remained while Kharoshthi was given up, but soon Greek was also discarded and Bactrian (Mid-Iranian)/Khotanese-Shaka was adopted. The characteristic legend became, "Shaonano Shao Kaneshki Koshano".

Later, Kanishka depicted several deities identified with Iranian names, e.g., Mihira/Mithira (Sun), Mao (Moon), Oado (Vayu =Wind), Orlagno (Vrithragna, an Iranian deity), Luhraspa (Druvaspa, guardian of health of animals), Athsho (Fire), Pharro (Khvareno=Imperial greatness), Manao Bago (Vohu-manah = Good Mind personified),

Mazdah (Ahurmazdah), Nana/Nanaia (Ishtar, the nature goddess) and Ardoksho (Fortune goddess). Oesho (Bhavesha/Havesha) and Baddo (Buddha) were respected by Kanishka.

It is believed that two successors of Kanishka-I were named after him. They ruled much after Huvishka, the immediate successor of Kanishka-I. The other two namesakes of Kanishka have been distinguished on the basis of their coin devices, the mentioned regnal years, and the inscriptions. For example, Kanishka-III mentions year 41 as the date of issue, spells his name as 'Kanishko', and uses Brahmi letters on obverse. His reverse types include Oesho (Siva with Nandi) and Ardoksho (seated en face on high-back throne with cornucopia in left hand and diadem in right hand).

Coin Type	Metal	Obv. type	Obv. legend	Rev. type
King at altar : Deity at	AV	King standing to right, high cap, wearing buttoned long coat, trousers and boots, flames emerging from shoulders, holding spear in left hand and offering at altar by right hand.	BASILEOS BASILION KANISKOU	Salene Manaobago Mao Hephaistos
			SHAONANO SHAO KANESKI KOSANO	Athsho Ardoksho Luhraspa Baddo/ Sakamano Boddo Mao Mihira/ Mithra Nana, Nanashao Oesho Orlagno Pharro Mazdohomo

Bust of King:	AV		SHAO	... As above
Deity			KANESKI
			KOSANO	
King at altar:	AE	King standing to right, high cap, wearing buttoned long coat, trousers and boots, flames emerging from shoulders, holding spear in left hand and offering at altar by right hand.	BASILEOS	Helios
			BASILEON	Nanaia
			KANISKOU	Athsho
			SHAO	Mao
			KANESKI	Miirō
				Nana
				Vat
				Oesho
				Boddo

Fig.3. : Coinage of Kanishka - I

Coins of Kanishka-I are dated from year 1 to year 23 of certain era. The worthy successor of Kanishka-I was Huvishka, who mentions the years from 26 to 64. His coinage reflects him to be a popular king. On his gold coinage he presents himself on the obverse as (a) "King mounted on elephant holding ankusha (goad) in left hand and spear in right hand"; or (b) "King seated cross-legged on rock / cloud". On the copper coins, in addition to the above devices, there are other types like (i) "King reclining on a couch"; (ii) "King seated frontally"; and (iii) "King seated in profile on cushion and holding spear". As an innovation, Huvishka introduced a new device for himself on obverse which had a variety to its major type, viz., "Profile bust of king, jewelled garments and ornamental head-gear either high or flat topped; holding sceptre/club in right hand or spear/ankusha in left hand and resting on shoulder". Supporting S. K. Maity and A.K. Narain about the existence of two or more Huvishka; P. L. Gupta classified the coins on the basis of the armaments of the king; but the proposition is no longer tenable.

Huvishka gave place to all the deities of Iranian origin, except Orlagno, who had been selected and depicted by Kanishka-I on his coin reverses. To this Huvishka added, Ahurmazda,

Ashaeixsho (Asa Vahista = Truth embodied), Oanindo (Vanainti = Goddess associated with Vrithiagna), Oaxsho (river god Oxus), Rishno (Rishnu, = Righteousness personified), Shaoreora (Shahrevar, god of metal and imperial might). He used the Mao and Miro as a joint device. Herakles from Greek pantheon, Oros (Horos) from Egypt, Serapis (Graeco-Egyptian deity) and Oron (Varuna) were also portrayed. The god Oesho (Siva) was shown alone, and also with consort Omimo or with Nana. God Kartikeya has been shown singly as Maasena (Mahasena), as a duo of Skandakumaro-Vizago (Skanda-Vishakha) or as triad of Skandakumaro-Maaseno-Vizago.

3.8 Later Kushana coinage

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudeva-I who ruled during year 64 and year 98. The coins were issued in gold and copper, and follow features from Huvishka coins. However, the variety is less. The king is generally depicted as sacrificing at the altar. Lord Siva, Siva with Nandi are the favourite reverse types. However, Nana and Ardoksho are also portrayed. The legends are in Greek but some letters/words in Brahmi are also seen. The style of placing the name of the king vertically below the arm commenced from the coinage of Vasudeva.

Kushana coinage deteriorated after Vasudeva-I. There is evidence of the existence of kings Kanishka-II, Vasishka, Kanishka-III, and Vasudeva-II. However, the 'Kushanashah' coins of Sassanians with Pahlavi legends and local coins soon deluged the Kushana remnants.

Kushana Coins



Kushana Coins

3.10 Historical Interpretation

The coins and inscriptions complement to form our knowledge about Kushana history. Information about Kujula Kadphises and his son, Wima-I have improved in this way. Thereby, the identity of the Soter Megas and the attribution of "bactrian camel" type issues have been partly solved. Coins have brought to light the kings like Vasudeva-II and Kanishka-II and III. Immensely useful has been the identity and iconography of dozens of deities that we find on Kushana coin reverses. The keen observation of the king's portraiture and coin legends are also keys to understand the concept of Kushana polity and concept of sovereignty.

3.11 Chronology of the Kushanas

The dates for the Kushana dynasty are still debated. The proposal that the Saka Era of AD 78 was inaugurated by Kanishka-I is not accepted by majority of the western scholars. Following is one of the latest presentations by Joe Cribb about the Kushana chronology:

Kushana Kings	Local Eras from the inscriptions		Tentative reign
Kujula Kadphises	Azes Era	Years 122-136	AD 30-80
Wima I Takto	Bactrian Era	Year 279	AD 80-110
Wima II Kadphises	Bactrian Era	Year 284/287	AD 110-120
Kanishka - I	Kanishka Era	Years 1-23	AD 120-146
Huvishka	Kanishka Era	Years 26-64	AD 146-184
Vasudeva - I	Kanishka Era	Years 64-98	AD 184-220
Kanishka - II	Kanishka Era	Years [1]05-[1]17	AD 220-242
Vasishka	Kanishka Era	Years [1]22-[1]30	AD 242-260
Kanishka - III	Kanishka Era	Years [1]41	AD 261-290
Vasudeva - II	—	—	AD 290-320

Fig.4. : Tentative Chronology of Kushana Dynasty.

3.12 Summary

Kushana coins form an important class among themselves. They were the first gold coinage of the country, which minted for circulation in the Indian mainland and the other parts of the extensive Kushana empire. It began with the early Kushana kings copying the prevalent coins, but soon the succeeding Kushana dynasts although retained the basic norms, changed the stylistic features of the coinage to the extent that it was transformed into a coinage possessing its own peculiar identity. Technically and qualitatively, the Kushana coinage is worthy of appreciation and the large variety of iconographic representations in the coin types is richer than any other coinage of the times. The Indianisation of the foreign elements is also visible. The Kushana coinage has the credit of bringing the ancient Indian coinage at parity with the contemporary international coin standards. The minting technique of the West was fully developed in India and ground was laid for the Gupta coinage to excel.

3.13 Check your Progress:

Answer the following questions :

- (a) Discuss the salient features of the Kushana coinage.
- (b) How do you assess the significance of Kushana coins in political, economic and cultural aspects of Indian history ?
- (c) Who were the pioneers in the study of the Kushana numismatics ?
- (d) What are "Soter Megasthenes" coins? To whom can you attribute these and why ?
- (e) Discuss the main coin-types of Kanishka-I ?
- (f) What innovations were made by Huvishka in the prevailing coinage ?
- (g) Mention few important legends of the Kushana coins. How do they help in the coin classification for different Kushana kings ?
- (h) What technique was used to mint the coins of the Kushanas ? Discuss the monetary specifications (like metal, weight standard, shapes etc.) of the Kushana coins.
- (i) Write a note on the coins of the Yueh-chis and early Kushana kings.

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General Survey of Coins of the Satavahanas

3.15 Objectives

The aim of the present Unit is to acquire knowledge about (i) the salient features of the Satavahana coinage; and (ii) the reconstruction of Satavahana history on the numismatic source.

3.16 Introduction

The Andhra/Satavahana coinage represents the development of the indigenous, native Indian coin system during the early Christian centuries. Punch marked coins (PMC) were prevalent in the Southern India in ancient days. Later, uninscribed coins of lead came in circulation, followed by coins of 'Sadakana' kings, the 'Ananda' kings and the 'Maharathi' kings. The Andhra came to prominence in Deccan after the downfall of the Mauryan empire and its succeeding Sunga and Kanva dynasties. They introduced a variety of lead, potin and copper coinage, which remained the premier currency in Deccan and Central India for centuries.

Although, the Satavahana coinage retained certain features from the local tradition like the metal choice, the symbols, and the metronymics, nevertheless it accepted some influence from the coins of contemporary Indo-Scythian rulers of the Western parts of India. Satavahana currency is rightly considered a unique Indian coinage.

3.17 The study of Satavahana coinage

The coins of the Andhra/Satavahanas received the first serious attention from E. J. Rapson, when he published A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum. Attempts by M. Rama Rao, V.V. Mirashi, A.M. Shastri have been very worthy and precious. Other scholars who have substantially contributed to the study of the Satavahana coins and their decipherment are K. Gopalachari, Gurti Venkat Rao, Dines Chandra Sircar, S.B. Deo, K.D. Bajpai, P.L. Gupta, and O. Ramchandriah. Recently, I.K. Sarma, Shobhana Gokhale and Sanjay More have added knowledge to the field of study.

3.18 Salient Features of Satavahana coinage

The salient features of the Satavahana coins are the choice of non-precious metals; denominations of the coins; the use of metronymics in the legends; besides the other mint features like the typology and design elements. Although the centuries old tradition is visible in the coinage, nevertheless, in certain aspects there was significant departure towards innovations. Many kings tried different styles and coin types, but there was a conspicuous

absence of any established monetary policy. There was also a variety of minting techniques.

The historical importance of these coins is momentous in view of the mention of the genealogical list of the Andhra dynasty in the Puranas. Interestingly, almost half of the rulers of the Puranic list are unknown in the numismatic series; the historicity of only 16 rulers of the list is supported from their coins. However, some coins attributable to unknown rulers of the dynasty, viz., Kubha (Kumbha) Satakarni are reported to have been found. Existence of Vasishthiputra Skanda Satakarni, the king before the last king Pulumavi has also been established by numismatic evidence. Coins of kings unknown in the literary sources and Puranas, e.g., Saka Satakarni, Rudra Satakarni and Karna/Krishna Satakarni are also discovered.

3.19 Classification of Satavahana coins

The coins of the Satavahanas can be sorted primarily under the name of the issuing monarch. Further, coins can be classified on the criterion of (a) the coin typology, or (b) the minting technique. Coins have also been grouped on the basis of the legends, in order to ascertain the chronology of the kings.

3.20 Stylistic Features of the coinage

Majority of the Satavahana coins were made of baser metals like lead and potin. The quality of the coins was therefore ordinary and the wearing off of the metal was frequent. The use of copper was meagre and silver was limited. Silver portrait type coins were meant for circulation in the Malwa-Vidisha region and were issued by Gautamiputra Satakarni and some other successors. Symbols from the ancient karshapana coins were taken. The combination of the prevalent minting techniques was applied. However, the coins incorporated the element of the legend, often bi-lingual, mentioning the royal title, metronymic, honorific and king's name.

3.21 Minting Techniques

Satavahana coins were in various shapes - circular, irregular, square or rectangular. They were largely circular and only one in oval shape is found from Kondapur. Copper coins in substantial quantity were square-like, while the lead ones were towards circular/round shape. It is believed that the circular coins preceded the square issues. While the square ones were meant for circulation in the northern parts of the realm, the circular ones were minted to the choice of the southern provinces of the Satavahana kingdom. The circular coins

were often marked by a set of square dies, and the square coins with round dies. The dies adjustment on the coin flan was e, 23, or 31, and often the symbols or parts of the legends were left out of the coin surface. Such incomplete legends have caused confusions and mistakes in deciphering many coins.

Coins were minted by cast and die-striking techniques, both. A combination of the cast, punch marking and die striking executed in making coins has been noticed. I.K. Sarma has opined that the 'homo sapien' coin-type of Satisiri, the Vidisha type bronze coin of Satakarni II are such specimen. Terracotta moulds to produce flans or blank coins have been discovered at Kondapur, Dhulikatta, Nagarjunikonda and Amravati, all the sites situated in the Satavahana kingdom. Blank coin flans of different metals were wholly cast to shape in the moulds; thereafter they were marked either by punches or struck between dies. Overstriking the coins of the defeated Western Saka king Nahapana, by Gautamiputra Satakarni is well known. Heated dies had been used to deeply impress the symbols and legend on those coins found in the Jogalthambi coin hoard.

Gautamiputra Satakarni was an innovator and his mint also prepared silver coins by total cast technique. Since then, the Satavahana lead and copper coins were wholly cast in inscribed and designed terracotta moulds and the earlier method of subsequent marking or punching was done with. Pair moulds have been excavated at Kondapur. Minting of coins was made inexpensive and easy in this way. It may be recalled that this technique was commonly used by forgers in preparing duplicates and imitations of circulating coins.

3.22 Major Coin-symbols of Satavahana coinage

The Satavahana coins derive the coin symbols from the ancient karshapanas or the punch marked coins. Each one coin had few symbols marked on it. The so-called 'Ujjayini symbol' had become a favourite and was probably the royal insignia. The main symbols in the repertoire can be detailed as follows:

(a) **Bull**: The bull is considered to be a symbol of energy. Humped bull is first shown on the obverse of Satakarni-I, where the bull is to the right with a single horn in view. The Nandipada or Taurine symbol also finds place on reverses. On a rare issue of Satakarni-II, a humped and double horned bull is seen.

(b) **Elephant**: Elephant is a sign of majesty. It was mostly an obverse symbol. The elephant is drawn as running or walking with upraised trunk. It is also associated with 'vajra' symbol or the 'tree in railing' mark. The combination of the elephant and the Ujjayini symbol dominates

since Vasishthiputra Pudumavi (II).

(c) **Hill / Arched Hill:** The symbol of the arched hills has been interpreted by A.M. Shastri as a chaitya symbol. However, more numismatists favour the hill identification because of the variety of three, six or ten arched hills, looped together or disjointed, in one symbol. The top hill is often topped by a crescent. The word "Rajno" is often set within the crescent. 3-arched hill with crescent became a combination symbol for coin reverses.

The '3-arched hill' (with disjointed arches) was seen on Bull-type obverse of king Satavahana as an auxiliary symbol. As the main symbol it was first depicted on the coin obverse of Satakarni-II and emulated by Pulumavi-I and none else. It was revived by Gautamiputra Satakarni, who also overstruck the Nahapan coins with a device of the 'three arched hill without crescent'.

A symbol of '6-arched hill without crescent' came into use as a reverse device on (Kondapur) lead coins of Satakarni-II. Its first major use begun with Gautamiputra Satakarni, opines A.M. Shastri. '6-arched hill with crescent' was used since then as obverse symbol on portrait issues.

'10-arched hills' was an auxiliary reverse symbol on the 'horse type' issues of Gautamiputra Satakarni from Dharnikota. Gautamiputra Satakarni again, made it an obverse symbol. Though discontinued by Vasishthiputra Pudumavi and Vasishthiputra Siri Satakarni, the symbol was reissued by Gautamiputra Yajna Satakarni alongwith a combination of Svastika, Srivatsa, lotus/conch-shell.

D.C. Sircar has interpreted the arched hill symbol to signify the territorial control of the Satavahana kings. The 3 arched hills denoted the Vindhya Rikshavat (East Vindhyas), the Pariyatra (Aravali/West Vindhyas) and the Sahaya (Western Ghats) that bounded the ancient Asika, Asmaka and Mulaka territories of the kingdom. The 6-arched hills mark denoted the addition of Krishnagiri, Maccha and Siritan hills signifying the territories of Vidarbha, Akara and Avanti. The 10-arched hills symbol further adds the Chakora, satagiri, Malaya and Mahindra hills signifying Aparanta, Surashtra, Anupa, and Kaccha regions.

(d) **Human :** A figure of an almost deified human being has been noticed on the coins found in the Tripuri-Vidisha regions. The coins bears Ujjaiyini symbol below right palm of the human figure.

(e) **Lion :** First depiction of lion is on the obverse of Satakarni-II coins from Malwa and Vidisha. The lion is either jumping or seated with the tail curled. Alert standing lion with curled up tail is a common motif on the lead and potin issues of Vasishthiputra Pudumavi,

Vasishthiputra Siri Satakarni and Gautamiputra Yajna (Sri Satakarni) found from Saurashtra.

(f) **Chakra** : V.S. Agrawal has defined Chakra as a perfect symbol of the cosmos and life. It was also an attribute of Vishnu. In Satavahana coinage, chakra (discus) with six or eight spokes became a main obverse device on the issues of Satakarni-II. Sometimes the

spokes projected beyond the rim in shape of arrowheads or at times the outer side of the rim was topped by dots. This seems to signify the Sudarshana chakra of Vishnu. According to I.K. Sarma, the placement of the legend, i.e., the name of the Vasishthiputra Pudumavi around the chakra symbol conveys the Chakravarti impression. However, to A.K. Narain, the chakra stands for twelve nidanas of Buddhism and hence may suggest the inclination of Vasishthiputra Pudumavi towards Buddhist faith.

(g) **Ship** : Very few but remarkable lead coins of Gautamiputra Yajna Sri Satakarni found at Pune and Brahmagiri, show a single or double mast ship on the sea. These coins circulated in coastal Andhra Pradesh. The coins attest to the sailing and sea-borne trading activities in the regime of the Satavahanas.

(h) **Horse** : Horse is considered to be the guardian of the western quarters. It represents swiftness. It is also associated with the aswamedha yajna ritual. On the coins of Gautamiputra Satakarni found at Dharnikota, the horse is depicted for the first time. Again, the coins of Vasishthiputra Pudumavi and Vasishthiputra Siri Satakarni from Nellore, Anantpur and Cuddapah in Andhra Pradesh, bear the horse symbol. Gautamiputra Yajna Sri Satakarni and Chanda Satakarni also issued the horse types.

3.23 Portrait Coins of Satavahanas

The conquest of Malwa from the Sakas was a turning point. Large number of Nahapana's coins was re-struck by the Satavahana device coin die. In the Jogalthambi hoard from Nasik about 13220, overstruck coins have come to light. Saka kings had produced coins with the profile face of the king on the obverse. Emulating this, Gautamiputra Satakarni inaugurated the silver series of coinage bearing his own profile head on the obverse. Portrait coins were also issued by Gautamiputra Yajna Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Skanda Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Siva Siri Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Vijaya Satakarni and Vasishthiputra Pulumavi.

3.24 Coin Legends

Coin legends form an important element of the Satavahana coins. While in their inscriptions on stone, the kings has used Sanskrit, in the inscriptions on the coins the popular Prakrit language in Brahmi script was preferred. Many kings issued bilingual coins with the translated version of the Prakrit legend in a Dravidian language, as well. The general rule since Gautamiputra Satakarni became mentioning the royal title, metronymic, honorific and king's name. Earlier till Vasishthiputra Pudumavi, the placement of the legend was on obverse only and the coin reverse was unscribed leaving sufficient space for the symbol. But since Vasishthiputra Sri Satakarni, the reverse Dravidian legend came into vogue. Some of the important coin legends are as follows:

Coin of King	Title	Metronymic	Honorific	King's name
Satavahana	Rano			Sadavaha
" " " " " "			Siri	Sadavaha
Satakarni (I)	Rano			Satakanisa
" " " " " "	Rano		Siri	Satakanisa
Gautamiputra Satakarni (III)	Rano	Gautamiputasa	Siri	Satakanisa

Bilingual Legends : Prakrit and Dravidian language

Vasishthiputra Pudumavi (II)	Rano	Vasithiputasa	Siri	Pulamavisa
Vasishthiputra	Arahanaka	Vahiri-makaranasa	Tiru	Pulamavisa
Sri Satakarni	Rano	Vasisthi-putasa		Satakanisa
Gautamiputra Yajna Sri Satakarni	Arahanasa	Vahathi-makanasa	Tiru	Hatakanisa
	Rano	Gautami-putasa	Siri	Yajna-Satakarnisa
	Rano	Gautami-putasa	Hira	Yajna-Hatakarnisa
	Rano	Gautami-putasa	Siri	Yajna-Satakarnisa
	Arahanaku	Gautami-putaku	Hiru	Yajna-Hatakarnisa

Fig. Table showing some legends of Satavahana coins

3.25 Historical Commentary

The Satavahana numismatics is a fine example to illustrate the relationship between archaeological source material and the traditional literary sources of Indian history. Out of the 30 kings of the (Andhra) dynasty mentioned in the Puranas, the existence of 14 kings is clearly established by their coins. This fact provides credibility and value to the Puranic accounts and an optimistic approach for the search of archaeological evidence for the missing kings.

Sl	Dynastic list in the Puranas	Years of reign	Corroborating archaeological source for establishing the king's historicity
1.	Simukha or Srimukha	230-207 BC	Mention in epigraph
2.	Kanhasa or Krishna	207-189 BC	Mention in epigraph
3.	Sri Satakarni (I)	189-179 BC	Mention in epigraph First king to issue coins
4.	Purnotsanga	179-161 BC	No evidence
5.	Satakarni (II)	161-105 BC	Mention in epigraph; Coins discovered
6.	Lambodara	105-87 BC	No evidence
7.	Siri Sapilaka	87-75 BC	Coins discovered
8.	Meghasvati	??????	No evidence
9.	Svati		
10.	Skandasvati		
11.	Mrigendra Svati		
12.	Kuntala Satakarni		
13.	Satakarni (Chhimuka)	40 BC	Siri Chhimukha Satavahana of Kotalingala coins
14.	Pulumavi (I)	40-16 BC	Coin evidence

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15.	Nemikrshna / Aristakarna	17 BC- AD 8	No evidence
16.	Hala	AD 8-13	
17.	Mandalaka	AD 13-18	
18.	Purindrasena	AD 18-23	
19.	Sundara Satakarni	AD 23-24	
20.	Chakora Svatikarna	AD 25	
21.	Siva Syati	AD 26-54	
22.	Gautamiputra Satakarni (III)	AD 54-88	Mention in epigraph; Coins discovered, own and overstrikes on Nahapana's coins.
23.	Vasishthiputra Pudumavi (II)	AD 88-116	Inscriptions & Coins
24.	Vasishthiputra Siri Satakarni	AD 116-145	Inscriptions & Coins
25.	Vasishthiputra Siva Siri Pudumavi (III)	AD 145-152	Inscriptions & Coins
26.	Vasishthiputra (Siva) Skanda Satakarni	AD 152-165	Mention in epigraph; Khada Satakarni and Siva Siri Khada on coins
27.	Gautamiputra Yajna (Sri Satakarni)	AD 165-194	Inscriptions & Coins
28.	Gautamiputra Sri Vijaya Satakarni	AD 194-200	Inscriptions & Coins
29.	Vasishthiputra Chanda Siri Satakarni	AD 200-203	Inscriptions & Coins
30.	Pulumavi (IV)	AD 203-210	Inscriptions & Coins

Fig. Genealogical Table showing the Satavahana (Andhra) Dynastic List

3.26 Summary

The dynasty known as the Andhra in the Puranas, but whose kings took the surname of Satavahana, ruled over Deccan and Central India for a long period of time and issued a large number of coins. The inscription of Queen Naganika at Nanaghat mentions a donation of 24000 karshapanas. Similarly, the Nasik inscription of Usvadatta speaks of 70000 karshapanas. This suggests of a sound monetary system existing in those times. Interestingly, the Satavahana money had developed upon the prevalent ancient karshapana currency system and the symbols for the coins were borrowed from the earlier punch marked coins. This attests to the deep roots of the original coinage of India. The use of metronymic was an influence from the Kura coinage. The choice of the baser metals and the use of varied minting techniques prove that there was no particular mint policy and coins were produced on practical strategy. The native appeal to value any standard was respected. The issue of silver portrait coins, the conversion of circulating Saka coins for re-use, the amending of Roman coins were practical measures. The coinage was not beautiful like the coins of the Indo-Greek kings, nor artistic like that of the Gupta dynasty, but the Satavahana coinage was unique and successful to serve its purpose.

3.27 Check your Progress:

Answer the following questions :

- (a) Discuss the salient features of the Kushana coinage.
- (b) How do you assess the significance of Kushana coins in political, economic and cultural aspects of Indian history ?
- (c) Who were the pioneers in the study of the Kushana numismatics ?
- (d) What are "Soter Megas" coins? To whom can you attribute these and why ?
- (e) Discuss the main coin-types of Kanishka-I ?
- (f) What innovations were made by Huvishka in the prevailing coinage ?
- (g) Mention few important legends of the Kushana coins. How do they help in the coin classification for different Kushana kings ?
- (h) What technique was used to mint the coins of the Kushanas ? Discuss the monetary specifications (like metal, weight standard, shapes etc.) of the Kushana coins.
- (i) Write a note on the coins of the Yueh-chis and early Kushana kings.

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BLOCK - V
COINS OF THE GUPTAS

UNIT - I

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE GUPTA COINS

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objective
- 1.3 History of the Gupta numismatics
- 1.4 Metrology of the Gupta coins
- 1.5 Technique of minting Gupta coins
- 1.6 Types of the Gupta Gold Coins
- 1.7 Obverse Motifs
- 1.8 Reverse Motifs
- 1.9 Legends
- 1.10 Palaeography
- 1.11 Symbols
- 1.12 Hoards and Stray Finds of Gupta Gold Coins
- 1.13 Importance of the Gupta Coins : For the Reconstruction of Political History
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- 1.16 Artistic Merits of Gupta Coins
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- 1.19 Copper coinage of the Guptas
- 1.20 Summary
- 1.21 Check your progress
- 1.22 Activities
- 1.23 Bibliography

1.1 Introduction -

Gupta coins show the peak of development in Indian numismatics. The coins are not only unique in their artistic excellence but also in their fabric and variety. They also form an interesting study if we analyse their purchasing power and consequently interpret the socio economic standard of the age.

1.2 Objective -

The objective of this unit is to highlight the numismatic development in the Gupta age and to discuss the general features of the Gupta coinage.

1.3 History of the Gupta numismatics -

The Gupta dynasty was founded in eastern U.P. with Prayaga as its political centre, by Maharaja Sri Gupta in c. 295 A.D. He and his son Ghatotkacha (c. 300-19 A.D.) were too insignificant to issue any coinage. Ghatotkacha married his son Chandragupta I to Kumaradevi, the princess of the Lichchhavi tribe of Bihar. It was decided that the son of Kumaradevi (future Samudragupta) would inherit not only his ancestral Gupta kingdom but also the Lichchhavi state of his maternal grand father. Thus by this alliance a compact block of Bihar and parts of eastern U.P. was sought to be formed. When Chandragupta I succeeded his father and became the defacto master of the Lichchhavi state during the minority of Samudragupta, he felt justified in assuming the imperial title Maharajadhiraja (in c. 320 A.D.) At that time he seems to have started the Gupta era. As stipulated, he nominated his son Samudragupta, born of the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi, as his own successor also. According to Altekar and many others the coins bearing the portraits and names of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi were joint-issues of this royal couple. But Allan and many others ascribe them to Samudragupta.

Samudragupta (c. 350 - c 375) proved to be a great organiser and conqueror. During his reign the imperial coinage recorded considerable progress in types, varieties and artistic excellence. Whether he issued any silver and copper coins is still not definitely known, but his gold coins, which were issued in large quantity, show several different types.

According to literary tradition Samudragupta was succeeded by his eldest son Ramagupta who, after a short reign, was overthrown by his younger brother Chandragupta II. In the Gupta epigraphs, however, it is said that Samudragupta had accepted Chandragupta II as his successor. Some copper coins have been found in

Malwa which clearly bear the name of Ramagupta. It seems that after the death of Samudragupta Ramagupta revolted in east malwa but was soon killed by Chandragupta II in the wake of a Saka invasion.

During the long reign of Chandragupta II the imperial coinage witnessed remarkable progress. Several new types in gold and also in copper and silver currencies were introduced, the latter being a close copy of the Kshatrapa prototype.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta I who also had a long but mostly peaceful reign of about 40 years. The tranquility and prosperity of his empire is reflected in his coinage. He issued as many as fourteen types of gold coins and some of them rank among the best specimens of the numismatic art of ancient India. He also introduced silver currency for the home provinces of the empire, and the type that was devised for this new currency was altogether free from the Kshatrapa influence. His silver currency is quite copious though he seems to have paid not much attention to his copper coinage. Very few coins of his in this metal have come down to us.

Towards the end of his reign the peace of the empire was considerably disturbed by the war of succession and the invasion of the Hun and Pushyamitras and probably Vakatakas and their allies. But the situation was saved by Skandagupta (known dates 455 to 467 A.D.)

The new emperor was probably too much occupied in military affairs to pay much personal attention to his coinage. According to some scholars he issued a new interesting type, the King and the Lakshmi type, probably representing that goddess as offering him royal glory. But others describe it as King and the Queen or the King and the Queen Mother type. His silver coinage is almost as copious as that of his father, and we find him introducing two new types, in this metal, the Bull type and the Altar type.

1.4 Metrology of the Gupta coins

According to A.S. Altekar the metrology of the Gupta gold coinage was considerably influenced by their Kushana prototypes. The traditional weight of ancient Indian gold coins (*suvarna*) was theoretically 80 rattis, that is about 144 grains. The early Gupta emperors did not care to revive this ancient standard but contented themselves by following the Kushana standard of 120 or 121 grains, which in its turn was based upon the standard of the Roman gold coins normally weighing 121 grains. Three standards

of 121, 124 and 127 grains were followed in the reigns of Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta.

Skandagupta apparently abandoned all these standards. His king and Queen type and one variety of the Archer type were issued to the standard of 130 to 132 grains, while his second variety of the Archer type was issued to the standard of about 144 grains, which is identical with the ancient Indian *suvarna* standard of 80 rattis.

The question as to 'why did the weight standard of the gold currency gradually increase from reign to reign in this fashion' is difficult to answer. It is possible to argue that gold was becoming cheaper in terms of silver, and hence the state felt compelled to give a progressively bigger gold coin to its subjects. But however, no evidence to show that gold was thus actually getting cheaper.

According to another explanation, the Guptas wanted to replace the Kushana standard of 121 grains by the national standard of 144 grains. But one wonders why did they take about 75 years to achieve this goal.

1.5 Technique of minting of Gupta coins -

Gupta gold coins were minted by the die striking technique. This is conclusively proved by a few coins carrying double impression of a part of the device on one side. This defect could have been due to minting the coins by striking carelessly the die from behind with a hammer.

In the die-striking process the required amount of molten metal was mixed with alloying materials and the hot mixed metal was cast into sheets of required thickness. These sheets were then cut into pieces of necessary size. An alternative course was to pour the molten metal into sockets of the size and thickness of the required coins. A blank so prepared could have been left cold or could have been slightly heated or softened by annealing to make it ready to receive the required impression, which were engraved in negative on two metal dies. One of the latter was fixed on or embedded in an anvil and the other was attached to a punch. After placing the die-end of the punch on a blank already set on the anvil-die the other end of the punch was struck with a hammer. As a result both sides of the blank received the required impressions in positive and it was transformed into a coin.

1.6 Types of the Gupta Gold Coins

No early Gupta king remained satisfied with a single coin type. Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I issued more than half a dozen coin types each. On the

Gupta coins, the king is shown standing wielding either a bow, or a *paras'u*, or a *dhvaja* (standard); sometimes there is an umbrella bearer by his side. The king is sometimes shown fighting a lion or a tiger or the rhinoceros. Sometimes we find him riding a horse, sometimes an elephant; sometimes he is playing on a lute and sometimes feeding a peacock. We see no such pleasing and artistic multiplicity of varieties on the Indo Bactrian coinage. Further, each type of the Gupta coins shows a multiplicity of varieties. For example, the Archer type was the most common type of Chandragupta II "but how bewildering is the variety we see in it. Sometimes the name of the king, Chandra, is written under the arm, sometimes between the bow and the bowstring, sometimes outside the string. We find this bewildering variety on the reverse side also. For instance on the Lion slayer type the goddess on the reverse is seated facing on the lion couchant sometimes to right, but sometimes she is seated astride her mount. In some cases the lion is walking to left and in some cases to right.

1.7 Obverse Motifs -

According to P.L. Gupta on the basis of the obverse motifs, Gupta gold coins may be classified into 21 varieties. We, however, think that what he describes as King and Queen on Couch type is really the rev. use of the Standard type motif of the obv. use of those coins. Thus there are only 20 known varieties of obverse motifs.

1. **Archer Type** : Here the king is shown holding a bow by the left hand and an arrow by the right. The Garuda standard, which was the royal insignia of the Guptas, is shown to his left. This type was introduced by Samudragupta and was followed by all his successors except Prakas'aditya.
2. **Standard Type** : On this type the king is shown standing to the left holding in his left hand a long staff, which has been variously identified as spear, javelin, standard or *rajadanda* (sceptre), in his left hand and offering oblations on a fire altar by the right hand. The Garuda standard is placed in the left field.
3. **Chakradhvaja Type** : On this type the standard held by the king has a chakra at the top.
4. **Swordsmen Type** : Here the standard held by the king is replaced by a sword. This was exclusively issued by Kumaragupta.
5. **Battle axe Type** : Here the king is seen standing with a parasu in his left hand and before him a dwarf is standing looking up to him. This is an exclusive type of Samudragupta.
6. **King and Queen Type** : On this type king and queen, Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi, stand face to face queen to left and king to right. Chandragupta I is holding a

chakradhvaja in the I. hand and an unidentified object in his right hand and is showing it to Kumaradevi and the latter is looking at it. Coins of somewhat similar type were also issued by Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta.

7. **Lyrist Type** : Here the king is shown seated upon a cushioned couch and playing upon a lyre (vina). This type was issued by Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I.
8. **Couch Type** : On it the king is shown sitting on a couch, bare bodied holding an object, which appears to be a flower. This is an exclusive type of Chandragupta II.
9. **Asvamedha Type** : Here a sacrificial horse is shown standing before a decorated yupa enclosed within a platform. This type was issued by Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I.
10. **Tiger-slayer Type** : On it the king is shown standing left, trampling and shooting at a tiger. Between the king and the tiger is a crescent topped standard. This was issued by Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I.
11. **Lion slayer Type** : This is very similar to the Tiger slayer type and can only be distinguished by its legend. Here the king is shown attacking a lion, generally by bow and arrow. The type was issued by Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I.
12. **Horseman Type** : On it the king is shown riding a caparisoned horse, standing to left or to right. This type was issued by Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I.
13. **Elephant rider Type** : On this type the king is shown driving the elephant with a goad in his hand. This type is exclusive to Kumaragupta I.
14. **Elephant rider Lion slayer Type** : Here the king is riding on a caparisoned elephant with a dagger in his right hand. The king is attacking a lion which is in front of the elephant. This type also belongs to Kumaragupta I.
15. **Rhinoceros slayer Type** : This is a combination of two types Horseman and Lion slayer but the lion is replaced by rhinoceros. This type belongs to Kumaragupta I.
16. **Horseman Lion slayer Type** : Here the king is shown on a horse with a sword in his right hand, stooping to attack a lion, which leaps at him. This type was issued by Prakasaditya.
17. **Chhatra Type** : On it the king is shown facing to left, offering oblations on an altar. Behind the king is a dwarf male attendant, holding a chhatra (umbrella) over the king's head. Coins of this type were issued by Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and probably Skandagupta.

18. **Chakravikrama Type** : A coin of this type was found in the Bavana hoard. On it God Chakra Purusha is offering three round objects to the king. Later another specimen of this type was yielded by the Madankola hoard. This type was issued by Chandragupta II.
19. **King and Peacock Type** : Here the king is shown standing left, feeding a peacock, the mount of Karttikeya, whose figure appears on the reverse. Kumaragupta I issued this type. To name this type as Karttikeya type on the basis of the reverse motif is not logical.
20. **Apratigha Type** : On this type of Kumaragupta I a male figure is shown standing in centre, facing, with his hands folded at the waist. To his right and left are two other figures. According to some scholars they are female, while others take one of them as male.

1.8 Reverse Motifs

The reverse motifs on the Gupta gold coins may be classified as follows. Here we are enumerating only general motifs; not their modification and variations.

1. **Goddess on Throne** : Goddess Ardoksho, seated on a highbacked throne, holding a cornucopiae (identified by some with subhasrnga or bijakosha) in the left hand and *pasa* in the right. On some coins of Samudragupta (Standard, Archer and Battle axe types) and Chandragupta II (Archer-Class I and Standard types) adopted it without any change. But on a number of other coins of these rulers, certain modifications are found in this motif.
2. **Goddess on Lotus** : In the time of Chandragupta II Ardoksho was gradually transformed into Lakshmi, i.e. the goddess is shown seated on lotus and as holding lotus in her left hand. But she still retains *pasa* in her right hand. This form is found on most of the varieties of the Archer type of Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I and on all the coins of his successors. But in some cases, certain modifications are found.
3. **Goddess Standing** : The goddess in both the forms Ardoksho (i.e. goddess holding cornucopiae) or Lakshmi (i.e. goddess holding lotus) is found standing on some coins.
4. **Goddess Seated on Wicker stool** : In this type Ardoksho or Lakshmi is found seated on a wicker stool to left.
5. **Goddess on Lion** : Goddess seated on a lion is seen on the Chandragupta I Kumaradevi type and on the coins of Chandragupta II (Lion slayer type) and Kumaragupta I (Lion slayer type).
6. **Goddess on Makara** : In this motif goddess is standing on an elephant headed fish (makara) holding a full blown lotus in left hand, her right hand outstretched and empty.

7. **Queen Standing** : In this motif a female figure, obviously queen of the issuer, is shown standing and holding a chouri in her right hand. This motif is found on the Asvamedha type of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I.
8. **Queen on Couch** : On some coins the queen is seated on a couch holding a flower in her right hand.
9. **Karttikeya** : On some coins of Kumaragupta I god Karttikeya is shown seated on his vahana peacock.
10. **Narayana and Lakshmi on Couch** : It is found only on one coin of Chandragupta II. It has been described by Altekar as King and Queen on Couch type.

1.9 Legends

Several types of legends are found on the gold coins of the Imperial Guptas. P.L. Gupta has divided them into five classes, four of which are found on the obverse and the fifth on the reverse.

- (i) A long legend is found on almost all the coins around the obverse motif. On some coins, specially on those of the later rulers, this legend is found missing probably because larger dies were used for smaller flans. This legend describes the issuing king with his royal title or eulogizes him. The eulogies on the coins are composed in various poetic metres Prthivi, Upajati, Upagiti, etc. These coin legends reflect the literary renaissance of the Gupta age. Here for the first time in the history of world numismatics, coin legends become mostly metrical. Their poetical merit is also very high. The credit of detecting the metrical nature of Gupta coin legends goes to Allan.
- (ii) On those coins where the king is shown standing, the name of the king, with or without the surname, or the initial letter of his name, is found under his left arm written vertically in the so called Chinese fashion. On the Chandragupta Kumaradevi type the names of the king and queen both are given.
- (iii) The letter *si* (probably standing for *siddham*) is found written over the pedestal below the horse on the Asvamedha type and on the pedestal beneath the couch on the Lyrist type coins of Samudragupta. On a variety of the Couch type coins of Chandragupta II the word *rupakrti* (probably a mistake for *rupakrti*) is found just below the couch. Technically *rupa* denotes a certain type of drama; as such, *rupakrti* would mean one who is well versed in the composition or performance of *rupa* (i.e. drama; see infra, discussion on this type).

- (iv) On the coins of Vainyagupta, Narasimhagupta I and II, Kumaragupta III and Vishnugupta and on some coins of Skandagupta in between the feet of the king and on the coins of prakasaditya below the horse, a letter is found engraved. Its significance is not known.
- (v) On the reverse of the Gupta gold coins the fifth legend is found as a *biruda* (epithet) of the issuing king (such as Parakrama, Vikramaditya or Vikrama, Mahendraditya or Mahendra, etc.) sometimes made appropriate to the coin type by some additional word (such as *Parakrama* is changed into *Asvamedha parakrama* on Samudragupt's *Asvamedha* type, *Vikrama* is changed into *Simha vikrama* on Chandragupta II's *Lion slayer* type, and *Mahendra* is changed into *Sri Mahendra Khadga* on Kumaragupta I's *Rhinoceros slayer* type). In a few cases the name of the king is found in place of the *biruda*.

1.10 Palaeography

From the point of view of script early Gupta coins reveal, as in several other aspects, the influence of Kushāna coins. C.S. Upasak, who has made an intensive study of the script of Gupta coins, opines that "the 'squat and broad' letters of the Kushana period had much influence on the palaeography of the Gupta period ... the letters of the legends on the coins ... are usually broad and thick and short." This feature is found in the palaeography of the Gupta inscriptions as well.

"In the Gupta coin legends", A.S. Altekar observes, "the letters usually display the same norms which are seen in the contemporary lithic records. The normal forms of letters, however, often get compressed on coin flans owing to the want of adequate space. This frequently happens on the Gupta silver coins where *ga* often loses its left limb and *ka* its horizontal line; *ta* and *na* often dwindle into a vertical line." Further,, "The well known characteristics of the Gupta script can be seen in the coin legends. *A*, *ka* and *ra* have a long vertical; it is but rare that this vertical develops a tail. The verticals of *gha*, *pa*, *ya*, *la* and *sa* dwindle down almost to the same height as the limbs on the right or left. The left limbs of *ga* and *sa* become shorter than the right ones and develop a scrib at the bottom. The letter *ma*, *la*, *sha*, *sa*, and *ha* show two forms in the lithic records, the so called eastern and the western ones. From among these letters the coin legends show both the forms in the case of *ma* and *ha* only. The eastern form of *sa*, *la* and *sha* do not appear on the coins. The so called eastern forms for *ma* or *ha* appear on some coins of the *Battle axe* and the *Archer* types, and on the variety *A* of the *Lyrical* type of Samudragupta, on some coins of *Kacha* and on all the coins of *Class I* of the *Chhatra* type of Chandragupta II. It is interesting to note that on several coins,

the so called eastern and western forms of ma appear together, one on the obverse and the other on the reverse. This would tend to show that both the forms were current in the same locality and had no special territorial significance. It is necessary to add that the eastern forms of ma and ha become rare in the reign of Chandragupta II and disappear in later reigns altogether.

On the Gupta coins mode of writing is always from left to right but the names of the issuers are given under the left arm from top to bottom in the so called 'Chinese fashion', but it does not mean, as Altekar has suggested, that this mode of writing (viz. from top to bottom) was due to Chinese influence. It was merely a device to fill up the vacant space artistically; it had nothing to do with Chinese mode of writing.

1.11 Symbols

In Gupta numismatics the term 'symbol' denotes a small geometric type of drawing occurring on the reverse of Gupta gold coins (symbols never occur on silver and copper coins of the Guptas) and consisting of a circle or parallelogram, usually hanging down from a line with a number of prongs or dots above it. The use of the term 'monogram' occurring on the Indo Greek and Indo Scythian coins are obviously combinations of Greek or Kharoshthi letters while it is impossible to interpret any symbol on the Gupta coins as a combination of Gupta letters. Altekar, therefore, prefers to call them 'symbols.'

The reverse with one symbol in the upper left corner is the usual feature on Gupta gold coins. However there are exceptions to this generalisation. The symbol occurs on the obverse also. On some coins two symbols occur on the reverse, one in the upper left corner and the other in the upper right one; on some types there is no symbol on the reverse, its place being usurped by some other object. On some coins of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II two symbols are found. In such cases second symbol is usually simpler. Later, the practice of giving two symbols was altogether abandoned.

In the earlier reigns Gupta artists introduced several varieties of symbols; in the later reigns the diversity of symbols disappears with the diversity of types.

Symbols cannot be regarded as auspicious signs as well, because none of them is known as such either to tradition or to literature. Svastika, lotus or conch, which are known to be auspicious, do not occur among Gupta symbols.

Nor can one regard the symbols as giving the date of issue by some conventional numbers. Dates of issue, when given on the silver coins, use the well known Gupta numerals and not any symbols.

According to Sitholey the symbols may denote the total number of coins of a particular type issued in a particular mint operation by conventional signs. But there is no evidence for this assumption.

After making an exhaustive study of Gupta symbols, Altekar came to the conclusion that "the symbols do not appear to have possessed any particular significance." "It appears most probable"; he opines, "that the early Gupta mint masters regarded these symbols on their prototype as merely decorative elements which they were free to diversify in any artistic way they liked.

1.12 Hoards and Stray Finds of Gupta Gold Coins

Gupta gold coins are found from the greater part of North India and from some sites of South India. Apart from stray finds they are found in hoards also, especially from the Gangetic valley. For the sake of convenience we shall call a find of about five or more coins a hoard; the rest will be called stray finds. The recorded hoards and stray finds of the Gupta gold coins from various regions are :

Kalighat Hoard : The earliest hoard of Gupta coins on record was found in 1783 at Kalighat on the east bank of Hughly, near Calcutta.

Hughly Hoard : A hoard of 13 coins was discovered near Hughly in 1883.

Hasnan Hoard : A hoard of 11 gold coins was discovered from Hasnan (district Hughly) in 1974.

Bainchigram Hoard : From Bainchigram (Hughly dist.) a hoard 7 Gupta gold coins was found in 1981.

Stray finds from Bengal (usually of one but sometimes of more than one coin) have been recorded from Sonakanduri, Mahamad, Bogra, Bamluk, Chakdighi, Mainamati.

Bihar

Hajipur Hoard : A hoard of 22 coins was found in Hajipur town.

Futwah Hoard : A hoard of 18 gold coins was found in the village Shahjahanpur, near Futwah in Patna district.

Among the stray finds in Bihar are included those from Banka, Nalanda, Gaya, Gomia, Sultanpur.

Uttar Pradesh

Kaserwa Hoard : A hoard of 17 coins was found at Kaserwa in Ballia district.

Devattha Hoard : A hoard of about 400 coins was found in the village Devattha (Ghazipur district) in 1940.

Bharsar Hoard : A hoard of about 160 coins was found at Bharsar near Banaras in 1851.

Gopalpur Hoard : 20 coins were found at Gopalpur in Gorakhpur district.

Kotwa Hoard : 16 coins were found in a rain at Kotwa in Bansgaon Tehsil of Gorakhpur district in 1886.

Basti Hoard : 11 gold coins were found in village Mauza Sarai (district Basti) in 1887.

Rapti Hoard : A hoard of Gupta gold coins was found in a mound on the bank of the river Rapti somewhere in the Basti district.

Jaunpur Hoard : A few gold coins were found in Jaichand mahal at Jaunpur.

Madankola Hoard : A hoard of about 100 gold coins was found in the village Madankola (Jaunpur district) in 1958.

Tekri Debra Hoard : A hoard of 40 coins was found at Tekri Debra (Mirzapur district) in 1912.

Tanda Hoard : It was found in Faizabad district in 1885.

Rajghat Hoard : It was found in the excavation of this site in 1963-64.

Allahabad Hoard : According to an information conveyed by Cunningham to Smith a hoard of about 200 coins was found at Allahabad.

Jhusi Hoard : 20 or 30 coins were found at Jhusi near Allahabad.

Kusumbhi Hoard : A hoard of 29 coins was found in 1947 at Kusumbhi (district Unnao).

Kanauj : Smith records that five or six gold coins were known to him to have been found at Kanauj and 10 to the west or north west of that city.

Several stray finds of Gupta gold coins are also known to have been made at Kausambi (dist. Allahabad), Soron (Etah district) and Lucknow.

Rajasthan

Bayana Hoard : A hoard of apparently about 2100 gold coins, the largest hoard of the Gupta gold coins, was discovered under the embankment of a field in village Hullanpur, near the town of Bayana in Bharatpur in 1946; but only 1821 of them could be recovered. A catalogue of these coins was published by A.S. Altekar.

Punjab and Haryana

Mithathal Hoard : A hoard of 86 coins was discovered at Mithathal (Hisar district) in 1915.

Gujarat

Kumarkhan Hoard : A small hoard of 9 coins was found at Kumarkhan (Ahmedabad district) in 1952.

Madhya Pradesh

Bamnala Hoard : 21 Gupta gold coins were found in 1940 at village Bamnala (Nimar district) alongwith a gold bar.

Pagara Hoard : A hoard of nine gold coins of the Guptas, alongwith some other coins, was found at Pagara (Dhar district in M.P.)

Sakaur or Sakori Hoard : A hoard of 24 coins was discovered at Sakaur or Sakori (district Damoh) in 1914.

Sagar District Hoard : A hoard of gold coins was found in Sagar district in about 1915-16.

Stray finds of one coin each are also reported from Madhya Pradesh from four places : Harda (district Hoshangabad), Ganeshpur (district Jabalpur), Patan (district Betul) and Seoni district.

Orissa

Behrampur Hoard : A gold coin of Vishnugupta was found in a hoard along with 47 repousse gold coins of Prasannamatra, in the village called Behrampur (Cuttack district)

Stray finds in Orissa have also been made at Bhanupur and Angul.

The find spots of the Gupta gold coins enable us to form an idea of the extension of the empire and the shifts in the area of influence of the rulers of the dynasty.

As these hoards obviously represent only an insignificant fraction of the actual number of the gold coins of the Guptas, it can easily be imagined that in the Gupta age North India must have experienced, literally advent of the 'Golden Age'.

1.13 Importance of the Gupta Coins : For the Reconstruction of Political History

The importance of the Gupta coins can hardly be overestimated. Their very find spots of stray finds as well as hoards give the historian a clue regarding the area of influence of a particular king. The profusion of the hoards of Gupta gold coins in Eastern U.P. suggests that this region was the main centre of their political activities probably their original home. To the students of political history Gupta coins also reveal the names and titles of the Gupta kings; their silver and copper coins give their dates as well. The existence of some kings is revealed to us by coins alone (such as kacha, Prakasaditya and Chandragupta III) while the

facts that some princes mentioned in inscription (such as Ghatotkachagupta) did actually rule claiming paramount status is attested by their coins. Occurrence of several events is revealed to us by coins (such as the performance of the Asvamedha by Kumaragupta I which is made known to us by numismatic evidence alone). The Chandragupta I Kumaradevi coin type gives us a clue of the importance of the Gupta Lichchhavi marriage alliance. The conquest of Western India by Chandragupta II was perhaps the most important event of the career of this emperor the occurrence and probable date of which are suggested by combined testimony of the Saka and Gupta silver coins.

1.14 Importance for Economic History

For economic historians Gupta coins are equally important. The number and gold content of the coins of an emperor suggest the prosperity or otherwise of his reign period while silver and copper currency give us an insight into the economic needs of the humbler sections of society. If we can determine the relative value of gold, silver and copper coins, much can be known about the economic condition of the period.

1.15 Importance for Religious History

The coins of the Guptas reveal the personal religion of the individual rulers and their preference for particular sects. They also help us in understanding the relationship between Vedic sacrificial tradition on the one hand and the Pauranika and Smarta ideologies on the other. For example, they tell us that Samudragupta adopted *garuda*, the vahana of Vishnu, as the emblem of his dynasty and also performed Asvamedha sacrifice. The numismatic evidence alone tells us that Chandragupta II claimed himself to be a direct recipient of prasada from Lord Chakrapurusha. Kumaragupta I was a Paramabhagavata and also performed Asvamedha. On the Apratigha type of coins he appears in the garb of a Buddhist monk and has been described as Apratigha that is the one who has overcome pratigha, regarded as one of the six klesas in Buddhism.

From the point of view of religious study, it is also perhaps not without significance that the river Ganga is deified on Gupta coins. Mounts of deities makara of Ganga, peacock of Karttikeya, lion of Durga, bull of Siva etc. also appear on Gupta coins. The depiction of Lakshmi simhavahini on some Gupta coins (Chandragupta Kumaradevi type and Lion slayer type of Chandragupta II) is also an interesting possibility from iconographic point of view.

Gupta gold coins also reveal that great emphasis used to be laid on good deeds of men. Thus, Gupta kings claimed that having conquered the earth they won heaven by good deeds *Gamavajitya sucharitaihdivam jayati*.

1.16 Artistic Merits of Gupta Coins

"Gupta gold coins display superb craftsmanship and are masterpieces of design and artistic technique. The Lion slayer coins of Chandragupta II, displaying his slim, muscular and graceful body have hardly any equal in their superb grace. The figures of standing queens or goddesses are slim, lovely and winsome the graceful manner in which they hold a lotus flower or scatter gold coins or feed the peacock, show the refined taste of the age. Their *tribhanga* posture is extremely charming. Lyrist and Asvamedha types of Samudragupta, of the Chakravikrama and Lion slayer types of Chandragupta II and the 'Apratigha', Rhinoceros slayer and the Elephant rider Lion slayer types of Kumaragupta I, are all original and show complete mastery of the artistic technique.

1.17 Importance for the Study of Domestic and Material Life of the Royalty

Gupta gold coins give us glimpses of domestic and material life of the royalty. They give us real pictures of the dresses popular among kings and queens. (of the earlier popularity of the Kushana dress, hair styles, ornaments, types of furniture used in the royal household (simhasanas, vetrasanas or modhas, pithikas, padapithas, paryankas, etc.) and weapons (bow and arrow, quiver, spear, javelin, parasu, sword, dagger, goad, mace, noose, shield, etc.) and musical instruments. A very significant fact in the costume of the kings is that they wear tunics and trousers like the Kushana kings, though goddesses and queens appear in purely Indian costume.

The fashions in hair dressing, costumes and jewellery in this period depicted on gold coins show an artistic trend of mind which delighted in elegant innovations. The artistic arrangement of pleats and folds of dhoti and sari, the graceful way of wearing dupatta and carefully arranged knots of kamarbandha testify that the people of the upper strata of society were not unaware of the aesthetics of dressing.

Various other aspects of royal life are known from Gupta coins, such as hunting of lions, tigers, rhinoceros (from the horseback, while riding the elephant and on foot), royal love of birds, ceremonial horse and elephant riding, etc. The depiction of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I playing vina on their Lyrist type of coins give us an idea of the shape of this instrument and how it was played.

Happy married life which the Gupta kings usually enjoyed is also reflected on a good number of their coins. Chandragupta I is shown offering a marriage ring or sinduradani to his beloved queen in a relaxed and homely atmosphere. On the Asvamedha type of gold coins issued by Samudragupta and his grandson Kumaragupta I we find their queens with chamara before a sacrificial post participating in the religious life of their royal husbands.

1.18 General features of the Silver coins of the Gupta rulers -

It is generally believed that Chandragupta II issued silver coins after conquering Gujrat and Kathiawar. His new subjects were used to the Saka type of silver currency for centuries. Hence the silver coins of Chandragupta are a close copy of the Saka coin. Although the obverse shows the king's bust like the Saka coins the reverse shows Garuda instead of the three-arched hill.

Another difference is the introduction of the Sanskrit legend and the Gupta era instead of the Saka era. One of the legends is परम भागवत महाराजधिराज श्री चन्द्रगुप्त विक्रमादित्य ।

The silver coins of Kumaragupta can be classified into two broad categories. a) the western province and of the Madhyadesa type.

The western province type shows the king's bust on the obverse and a cluster of dots on the reverse. The legend परमभागवत महाराजधिराज श्री कुमारगुप्त महेन्द्रादित्य is also engraved.

The Madhyadesa variety also shows the king's bust on the obverse but on the reverse in a peacock with fully opened features.

Skandagupta issued two new types also the bull and the alter types. The bull and alter are depicted on the reverse. The legend on the Garuda type is परमभागवत महाराजधिराज श्री स्कंदगुप्त क्रमादित्य

One of the legends in the Madhyadesa type was विजिताबनिरवतीपतिर्जयति दिवे स्कंदगुप्तोयम

1.19 Copper coinage of the Guptas -

The copper coinage of the Guptas are very rare.

Ramgupta's copper coins are of four types Lion type, Garuda type, Garuda-hvaja type and Border legend type. The details would be mentioned in the next unit.

The copper coins of Chandragupta II are of various varieties eg. Chattr type, standing king type, arches type, bust type, chakra type and vase type. The other types are crowned head type, Lakshmi type, crescent and Garuda type and *jitam bhaga vate* type.

The copper coins of Kumaragupta are also of different varieties Chattr, archer, standing king, Garuda, king's head, kalasa and peacock types.

1.20 Summary -

The Gupta coins show the classic perfection of the art of numismatics in India. They were made by the die struck technique.

The coins are of various types which reveal their political, social and economic and religious conditions. They are also famous for their artistic merit, iconographic representation and the material life of the age.

1.21 Check your progress -

- a) Discuss the general features of Gupta gold coins.
- b) Write a short note on the silver and copper coinage of the Guptas.

1.22 Activities -

Make a chart showing similarities and differences among the types of gold coins of the Gupta rulers.

1.23 Bibliography -

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UNIT - II

DETAILS OF THE COINS OF THE GUPTA RULERS

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objective
- 2.3 Chandragupta I - Kumaradevi Type
- 2.4 Coins of Samudragupta
- 2.5 Coins of Kacha
- 2.6 Coins of Chandragupta II
- 2.7 Kumaragupta I
- 2.8 Coins of Skandagupta
- 2.9 Silver coins of the Guptas
- 2.10 Silver Coins of Chandragupta II
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- 2.12 Silver Coins of Skandagupta
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- 2.14 Copper coins of Ramagupta.
- 2.15 Copper coins of Chandra gupta II
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- 2.17 Summary
- 2.18 Check your progress
- 2.19 Activities
- 2.20 Suggested Readings
- 2.1 Introduction -

The coins of the Gupta rulers need to be studied in detail. They set a unique trend in artistic merit and high standard of purity. The political, socio cultural history of the Gupta age is reflected in the Gupta coins.

2.2 Objective -

The objective of this unit is to make the students aware of the details of the coins of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Kacha Ramagupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta and Skanda gupta. This would help them to analyse the various aspects of the culture of the Gupta era.

2.3 Chandragupta I - Kumaradevi Type

The following is the general description of the Chandragupta I - Kumaradevi type : This type of coins has been an enigma for scholars. Some attribute this to Chandragupta I and other to Samudragupta. For some it shows the political marriage alliance between the Guptas and Lichchavis, for others the celebration of the marriage of his parents by Samudragupta. Let us analyze the details of the coin.

Obverse : Chandragupta, usually nimbate, is standing to left wearing trousers, head-dress, in some case with pearl-border, and a close-fitting tailed coat. He wears ear-rings, armlets and necklace and holds in left hand a crescent-topped standard adorned with fillets. With his right hand he is offering a present to Kumaradevi, usually but not always nimbate, who stands facing him to right, wearing a sari, an upper garment, a close-fitting head-dress, in some cases pearl-bordered, a necklace, ear-ring, and armlets. Her right hand is on waist and the left is hanging down. There is a crescent between the king and the queen on some coins. Legend : Under king's left arm, written vertically *chandra* (or *chandra*), outside the standard, also written vertically, *gupta*; on the left *Srikumaradevi* or *Kumaradevisri*.

Reverse: Within dotted border goddess, nimbate, wearing a bodice, a sari, an upper garment, a necklace and a circular pearl ornament round the forehead, seated facing on lion to right or left, holding a noose in right hand and a cornucopiae in the left; a circular dotted carpet under her feet; traces of back of the throne on most specimens. Symbol to left in all cases and also to right in some. Legend, on right in a straight line, *Lichchavayah*.

On these coins, the object in the left hand of the deity is described as *subhasrnga* by V.S. Agrawala and *bijaksha* by Sohoni. The goddess herself has been referred to as 'Ambika (?)' by Altekar and Rajyalakshmi by Sohoni. R.K. Dikshit has described her as Simhāvahini Lakshmi.

The identification of the issuer of the Chandragupta-Kumaradevi type is a highly controversial question. Allan attributed it to Samudragupta arguing that the Standard type of Samudragupta is a close copy of the later coins the Kushanas except for the

replacement of the Kushana head-dress by a close-fitting cap and the trident by a Garuda standard on the Obverse. The reverse is even more slavishly copied. Remarkably, portions of the back of the throne and the symbol are still drawn. On the other hand, the Chandragupta-Kumaradevi type is a step away from this prototype. Therefore, as the Standard type, being nearer to the Kushana original, should be earlier than the Chandragupta-Kumaradevi type, the latter type must also have been issued by Samudragupta. Prof. Shriram Goyal has supported the view of Allan. But A.S. Altekar did not accept the validity of Allan's argument for establishing the relative sequence of the two types.

In this regard Altekar has been closely followed by R.C. Majumdar, U. Thakur and many others. Scholars of the older generation, such as Smith and Aiyangar, also believed in this theory. These scholars believe that the relative originality of the coin was due to the special occasion. The marriage alliance of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi Samudragupta could not have issued the coins as his name is not inscribed on them and secondly, celebrating the marriage anniversary of the parents is not in keeping with the ancient tradition.

2.4 Coins of Samudragupta - The following are the coins types of Samudragupta. Their description is as follows -

a) The Standard type, -

This is the most popular coin type of Samudragupta

Obverse : King standing left, nimbate, wearing ear-rings, necklace, armlets, close-fitting cap, coat and trousers. The coat is tailed and often shows several ornamental buttons. He is holding standard in left hand and offering incense with right hand on an altar at his feet, behind which there is a standard decorated with fillet and surmounted by Garuda, facing. Beneath King's left arm, written vertically, Samudra; outside the standard, Gupta, on some coins.

Circular legend : *samara-sata vitatavijayo jita-ripurajito divam jayati*, 'The invincible (king) who had won victories in a hundred battle-fields and conquered the enemies, wins the heaven'. Metre Upagiti.

Reverse : Goddess (Lakshmi ?) nimbate, seated facing on throne wearing a sari, a bodice, an upper garment, a necklace, armlets and a circular pearl-bordered ornament round the face. She holds cornucopiae in left hand and a noose in right. Her feet rest on a circular mat. Back of the throne is visible in most cases but not all its four legs. Border of dots all round. Symbol always on left but sometimes on right also. On right, *Parakramah*.

b) Archer types :

The coins of the Archer type vary in size from .8" to .9" and in weight from 110 to 120 grains. Their recorded find-spots are Bhar-sar (Banaras district), Jaunpur, Bodhagaya and Bayana. This type persisted the longest in the history of the gold currency of the Guptas, and became extremely popular in the reign of Chandragupta II. Samudragupta, however appears to have issued only a few coins of this type. There were only three coins of his of this type in the Bayana hoard.

The coins of this type are usually divided into two classes. In Class I, the emperor is holding an arrow in the right hand and in Class II he is offering oblations by that hand. In Class I, Altekar has distinguished two varieties based on the difference in the legend. The type may be generally described thus

Obverse: King standing left, nimbate, dressed as on the Standard type, holding a bow with string inwards by left hand, and right hand either holding an arrow or offering oblations on altar. Garuda standard with fillets on left in front of the king; crescent between the king's head and the banner in some cases. Legend, Samudra under king's left arm; circular legend, commencing at I, *Apratiratho vritya kshitim sucharitair (or avanis) divam jayati*, 'Having conquered the earth, the invincible one (or lord of the earth) wins heaven by meritorious deeds.' Metre, Uapagiti.

Reverse: Goddess (Lakshmi ?) seated as on the Standard type, holding cornucopiae in left and noose in right hand. Symbol on left Only. Legend *Apratirathah*.

c) Battleaxe type -

The coins of the *Battle-axe type* vary from .75" to .85" in diameter and from 111 to 123.4 grains in weight.

Obverse: King standing left or right, nimbate, dressed as in the Standard type, but usually with sword at the belt; right hand rests on the waist, left hand holds a parasu (battle-axe) on left or right a dwarf attendant, standing before the king and looking up to him; crescent-topped banner between the two, with a dot within the crescent in some cases. Legend, *krtantaparasarjayajitarajajetatih*, 'Wielding the battle-axe of Krtanta, the unconquered conqueror of (till then) unconquered kings, is victorious.' Metre, Prthvi.

Reverse: Goddess Lakshmi seated on throne holding noose in right hand and a cornucopiae or lotus bud in left Her legs rest on a lotus. Sometimes the back of the throne is visible and sometimes not. Sometime the entire throne

is invisible being apparently covered by the lotus, and has to be inferred from the posture of the feet of the goddess. The idea may have been to represent the throne as lotus covered. Symbol on left, sometimes on right also. Legend, *Krtantaparasih*.

d) Asvamedha type -

The coins of this type are fairly numerous. The Bayana hoard contained twenty Asvamedha coins. They vary in size from .75" to .9" and in weight from 112.5 grains to 119 grains.

Obverse: Uncaparisoned horse, in some cases with a strap on the neck, to left before the sacrificial post (*yupa*) adorned with a pedestal; pennon flies over the horse from the top of the post. The mane of the horse is sometimes plaited, and there is string of beads and a crescent above the back in some cases. Beneath the horse is the letter *si*, and below also a pedestal in some rare cases. Circular legend, commencing at XII, IX or VI, *Rajadhirajah prthivimavitva (or vijitya) divam jayatyahrtavajimedhah*, 'The king of kings, who had performed the Vajimedha (Asvamedha) wins heaven after protecting (or conquering) the earth.' Metre, *Upagati*.

Reverse: The crowned queen standing to left on a pearl-bordered circular mat, dressed in a sari and bodice; ear-rings, necklace, armlets and anklets on her person; she holds a chouri over her right shoulder in her right hand and a towel in her left hand, hanging by her side. In her front is an ornamental suchi bound with fillet. On some coins, the ends of the sari look like a rope round the feet. No symbol. Legend; *Asvamedha-parakramah*, 'One powerful enough to perform Asvamedha sacrifice.'

e) Tiger Slayer type -

The *Tiger-slayer type* is one of the rarest types of Samudragupta, only six coins of it have been found so far. Two of them were found in the Bayana hoard. Their size is .85" and their weight varies from 111 to 117 grains.

Obverse: King standing to left wearing a turban, short jacket and a close-fitting dhoti; necklace, ear-rings and armlets on his person; he tramples on a tiger attacking him which falls back as he shoots it with bow in right hand, left hand stretching the bow-string to the ear; on left behind the tiger, crescent-topped standard adorned with fillet as on the Battle-axe type. Circular legend, *Vyaghraparakramah*, 'Valiant like a tiger.'

Reverse: Goddess Ganga standing on a makara (elephant-headed fish) wearing a sari and a close-fitting bodice; ear-rings, necklace, armlets and anklets on her person; full-blown lotus in left hand, right hand outstretched and empty; on the left crescent-topped banner with fillets; border of dots. No symbol. Legend, as above, or Raja Samudraguptah, 'King Samudragupta.'

Lyrical type -

Obverse: King nimbate, seated cross-legged to left wearing waist-cloth, pearl-bordered cap (in some cases), necklace, ear-rings and armlets, on a couch with high and cushioned back, playing (vina) resting on his lap; a pedestal beneath the couch inscribed with letter si (abbreviation of Siddham ?) in Var. A only. Legend (beginning at XII) *Maharajadhiraja-sri-Samudraguptah*, 'Samudragupta, overlord of kings.'

Reverse: Goddess (Lakshmi) nimbate, seated to left on a wicker stool, wearing a bodice, sari and upper garment (in some cases); necklace, ear-rings, armlets and anklets on her person; noose in right hand and cornucopiae in the left; symbol in one variety but not in another. A. Legend on the left, usually separated by a line, *Samudraguptah*.

2.5 Coins of Kacha -

There is a controversy among scholars regarding the identity of this king some regard him as identical with Ghatotkacha the others as a rival brother of Samudragupta. Still others like Allan, Fleet, Smith and Raichowdhry believe that Kacha was perhaps the less formal and original name of Samudragupta. Most of the scholars aver that Kacha was a near contemporary of Samudragupta.

The king Kacha is known to us by his coins alone. Till the discovery of the Bayana hoard his coins were known only in the unique Chakradhvaja type and in one variety. The Bayana hoard, however, yielded a solitary coin of a second variety also, bearing a Garudadvaja on the Obverse in front of the king. These coins follow the weight standards of 115 and 118 grains. The following is the general description of these coins.

Obverse: King dressed as in the Standard type of Samudragupta, standing to left holding chakradhvaja (standard surmounted by wheel) in left hand and offering incense on altar with right hand. Garudadvaja in front of the king in one Variety. Under the king's left arm, Kacha. Circular legend, commencing at I, *Kacho gamavajitya divam karmabhir-uttamair-jayati*, 'Having conquered the earth, kacha wins the heaven by excellent deeds.' Metre Upagiti.

Reverse: Goddess (Lakshmi ?) nimbate, standing to left on a circular carpet wearing sari, bodice, upper garment, ear-rings, necklace and armlets, holding a flower in right hand in variety A and a noose in Variety B, and cornucopiae in left hand. Symbol on left at the centre in Variety A and at top in Variety b.

2.6 Coins of Chandragupta II -

Chandragupta II had inherited a vast empire from his father. He also introduced new coin types while continuing tradition of some of the older types.

a) The *Archer type* was the most popular type of Chandragupta II.

Obverse: King standing left, nimbate, wearing kushana coat and trousers with an Indian close-fitting cap, often with a pearl-border; ear-rings, necklace and armlets on his person; he holds bow in left hand and arrow in r., whose palm is generally turned downwards. Garuda standard decorated with fillets in his front. Chandra, written vertically, usually under the left arm. Circular legend, *Deva sri-maharajadhiraja-sri Chandragupta*.

Reverse: Within dotted border Goddess Lakshmi (?) seated on throne and wearing a sari, a bodice, an upper garment, ear-rings, necklace, armlets and a semi circular pearl ornament on the forehead; her feet rest on a circular mat or lotus. Back of the throne is visible in some cases and invisible in others. In her left hand, the goddess holds a cornucopiae in some cases and a lotus in others. The right hand usually holds a pasa but it is sometimes empty and sometimes dropping down coins. Legend on right *Srivikramah* Border, of dots. Monogram generally on left

b) The coins of the *Lion-slayer type* are not quite rare. In the Bayanā hoard, out of 983 coins of Chandragupta II, 43 belonged to this type.

Obverse: King standing left or right, usually shooting an arrow at the lion at point blank range; bow in left or right hand, right or left hand stretching the bow-string. King is almost touching the lion but not trampling upon it. He wears waist-cloth and sash; he is bare-headed in some cases and wears an ornamental close-fitting head-dress in others. In some cases, he wears a coat; in others, he is bare-bodied. Legend, *Narendrachandrah prathitarano rane jayatyajeyo bhuvī simhavikramah*, 'The moon among the kings, who is famous for his warfare, who is invincible, and who is valorous like a lion, is victorious on the battle-field'. Metre Vamsasthavila:

Reverse: Goddess seated facing on lion to right usually with a noose in outstretched right hand and a lotus in left symbol on left Legend : *Simhavikramah*.

c) Horseman type -

Obverse: King sometimes nimbate, riding a fully caparisoned horse to right or left; wearing dhoti, sash (flying behind), ear-rings, armlets and necklace; without weapons in some cases, with weapons in others. Crescent on some specimens. Legend beginning at I or II, *Paramabhagavata-maharajadhiraja-sri-Chandragupta*, 'The great devotee of Vishnu, King of kings Sri Chandragupta.'

Reverse: Goddess sometimes nimbate, seated to left on wicker-stool, noose in right hand and lotus in left, the stalk in some cases showing leaves. Legend, *Ajitavikramah*. Symbol on some coins.

d) Chattra type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, standing left offering oblations (purodhas) on altar in his front with right hand left hand resting on sword; behind him a dwarf attendant holding state umbrella (chhatra) over him. Circular legend beginning at I, *Maharajadhiraja sri-Chandraguptah*, 'King of kings, Sri Chandragupta.'

Reverse: Goddess Lakshmi nimbate, standing three-fourths to left on a lotus, holding noose in right hand and lotus in left; border of dots. Symbol on left in most cases. Legend, *Vikramadityah*.

e) Couch type -

Obverse: King wearing waist cloth and jewelry seated facing, but head to left, on high-backed couch holding flower in uplifted right hand, the left hand resting on the edge of the couch; circular legend, beginning at VII, *Devasri-maharajadhirajasri-Cha*, on r., ndra (gupta) sya (Vikra) madityasya, 'Of the emperor, His Majesty, Chandragupta Vikramaditya.' Letters on right are blurred. Beneath the couch, rupakrti, 'successful in dramatic composition (?)' or 'of graceful figure (?)'

Reverse: Goddess seated on throne, her feet rest on lotus; her right hand is opened out and empty and the left one holds a lotus. Legend on left, *Sri-Vikramah*; symbol above it.

f) Standard type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, standing to left, offering oblations by right hand and holding a sceptre in the left; Garuda standard behind the right hand. Circular legend from VIII, rathamathata (?) sa (?) tha; at II, pravarah kshata. Under king's left arm, Chandra.

Reverse: A male figure to left and a female figure to right seated on a throne and facing each other. Both are nimbate and there is a crescent between the two. The female figure is reclining slightly on her right hand and the male figure is offering her an object with a fairly long handle and a circular top. A spittoon under the couch but not clear on this specimen. Legend, on the left, 'Sri-vi'; on the right, *Kramah*.

g) Chakravikrama type -

Obverse: God Chakrapurusha, (personification of Sudarsana-chakra of Vishnu) is standing to right within a double-rimmed wheel, oval in shape and going round his entire person above the knees. The deity is offering three round objects to the king standing facing him, nimbate. No legend on the obverse.

Reverse: Within dotted border, Lakshmi, wearing sari, a conch below the right hand and a symbol above it. Legend on r., *Chakra vikrama(h)*.

2.7 Kumaragupta I -

The coins of Kumaragupta match the variety and originality of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II but do not show uniform standard of artistic merit. The main coin types of Kumaragupta are as follows -

a) Archer type -

Obverse: King standing to left, having arrow in right hand and bow in the left. He is sometimes bare-headed, and sometimes wears a diadem. In some cases he wears a coat and in others he is bare-bodied. The bow is sometimes held at the top with string inside and sometimes at the middle with string outside. There is Garuda standard behind the king's right hand. On some coins, Kumara and on others Ku, sur-mounted by a crescent, is engraved under the left arm of the king. On some coins, Kumara is outside the string to right. On some, however, there is neither ku nor kumara. Circular legend varies in different varieties.

Reverse: Goddess Lakshmi seated on lotus usually with a noose in right hand and a lotus in left. Sometimes right hand is scattering coins or holding a flower. Except in rare cases, there is a symbol on the left. Legend on the right, *Srimahendrah*.

b) Horseman type -

Obverse: King, usually nimbate, wearing coat and trousers, riding caparisoned horse to right or left, usually holding bow in the right or left hand, sword sometimes

hanging by his side; in some cases he has no weapons. The saddle of the horse often shows artistic decorations. Legend varies with each variety.

Reverse: In Class I, Lakshmi is seated on a wicket stool to left, holding a flower or noose in right hand and a lotus in left. In some cases the latter is empty. Usually no symbol. Legend on r., *Ajitamahendrah.*

c) Swordsman type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, standing to right wearing head dress with crest jewel, necklace, armlets etc., offering incense on the altar before him by right hand; left hand resting on the hilt of the sword hanging below the waist. Garuda standard in front of the king. The letter ku under a crescent by the side of the sword. Circular legend, commencing at I, *Gamavajitya sucharitatih Kumaragupto divam jayati*, 'Having conquered the earth, Kumaragupta wins the heaven (also) by his meritorious acts.' Metre, Upagiti.

Reverse: Goddess Lakshmi seated to front on a lotus, holding a noose in right hand and a lotus with a long stalk in the left, resting on waist. Symbol on the left. Legend, *Sri-Kumaraguptah.*

d) Tiger slayer type

Obverse: King standing left, wearing waist cloth, jewelry and head dress, shooting with bow held in right hand and strung by the left; tiger falls backwards on left; right foot of the king is trampling on the beast. Crescent topped standard with fillet on left. Ku in the field in Variety A only. Legend, commencing at II, *Srimam vyaghrabalaparakramah.*

Reverse: Goddess standing to left on crocodile, holding lotus of long stalk behind her in left hand and feeding peacock with fruits by her right hand; symbol on left. Legend, *Kumaragupto' dhiraja.*

e) Elephant rider type

Obverse: King bareheaded with diadem, wearing necklace, ear-rings, armlets and wristlets, riding a caparisoned elephant, furiously marching to left; king is holding goad in right hand, left hand resting on waist. Behind the king is a seated attendant holding an umbrella over his head. Circular legend uncertain, but most probably, *Kshataripu Kumaragupto rajatrata jayati ripun,* 'Kumaragupta, who has destroyed his enemies and protects (feudatory) kings, is victorious over his foes.' Metre, Upagiti.

Reverse: Within dotted border, Lakshmi, nimbate, standing on a lotus, facing, wearing ear-rings, necklace, bangles, anklets, sari, a flat head dress and an upper garment whose ends fall on either side. Her right hand is bent up and holds a lotus creeper with buds and flowers; left hand rests on waist holding a cornucopiae. No symbol; conch in lower right corner. Legend on right, *Srimahendragajah*, 'The elephant of king Mahendra.'

f) Elephant rider, Lion slayer type -

Obverse: King bare headed, riding a caparisoned elephant furiously advancing to r., raising his right hand holding a dagger in the posture of attack. Dwarf behing him; holding a chhatra over his head. A lion is in front of the elephant, which the latter is about to trample with left fore-leg; the lion tries to bite the right front leg of the elephant by opening its jaw. Circular legend is uncertain and incomplete. It begins with Kshata; it may have been the same as that on the Elephant rider type, *Kshataripu Kumaragupto rajatrata jayati ripun*. The metre is Upagiti.

Reverse: Goddess, nimbate, wearing ear-rings, necklace, bangles and armlets, with hair on head tied in a knot above the neck, standing three fourths to right on a lotus, but looking to left, and holding in right hand some indistinct object before a peacock looking up towards it; left hand resting on waist and holding a lotus with long stalk. The goddess is wearing a sari, and an upper garment, whose ends are hanging on her either side. No symbol. Legend partly on the left and partly on the r., *Simhanihanta Mahendragajah*. 'The elephant of king Mahendra, destroyer of lion.'

g) Rhinoceros type -

Obverse: King bare-headed, with flowing frizled locks (alaka) on head, riding on caparisoned horse to right, wearing buttoned coat and trousers, leaning forward and attacking a rhinoceros with the sword in right hand. Horse raises up its head, slightly frightened, Rhinoceros stands at bay, turning back its head to attack, mouth being open. The beast is engraved realistically and beautifully, the horn on the head, left eye, two ears, circular spots on the body, the tail and the four feet being all clear. Full circular legend is (Bharta ?) *Khadgatrata Kumaragupto jayatyansam*.

Reverse: Within dotted border goddess, Ganga, not nimbate, standing to left on an elephant headed crocodile, holding lotus with long stalk in its trunk. right hand of the goddess extended, forefinger pointing out at some object, not

visible on the flan; left hand is hanging down by the side, empty. Hair on the head of the goddess is tied in a knot behind and she wears ear-rings, necklace and bangles. Behind the goddess a female attendant is holding in her right hand a chhatra (umbrella), without fillet, its staff being denoted on the right Legend on the left, *Sri Mahendrakhadga*, 'Rhinoceros (killed by) Sri Mahendra.'

g) Asvamedha type -

Obverse: Caparisoned horse standing to right before a yupa; penon flies above the horse. Circular legend Devo *jitasatruh Kumara (gupto'dhiraja)*.

Reverse: Within dotted border queen standing to left, wearing sari and upper garment, holding chowri in right hand over right shoulder, left hand hanging down, holding a small towel. In front of the queen is an ornamental suchi with fillet hanging down. Legend, *Sri-asvamedhamahendra*. No symbol.

h) King and peacock type -

Obverse: King, standing nimbate, bare headed and bare bodied, with sash round his waist and falling down, wearing sakachchha dhoti and jewelry and offering to the peacock, facing him, a twig of grapes held in right hand; left hand hangs on the hip. Legend, beginning at I, *jayati svagunainguna* and ending with *Mahendrakumarah* 'Victorious by his own merit is *Mahendrakumara* (a heap of merit ?)'

Reverse: Karttikeya, nimbate, riding a peacock, holding spear in left hand resting on his shoulder and apparently scattering something by right hand over an indistinct object before him. Peacock is perched upon a kind of platform. No symbol. Legend, *Mahendrakumarah*.

i) King and Chattra type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, standing to left, wearing dhóti, necklace and ear-rings. Torso and head bare, curly hair hanging down from the latter. RIGHT hand of the king is extended and is offering oblations on altar, which is off the flan. Behind the king is a dwarf with frizzled hair on the head, standing and holding a parasol by right hand; his left hand is resting on left leg raised up. Legend from I., incomplete, *Jayata Mahaha (Jayati mahitalam)*, 'the king conquers the earth.'

Reverse: Goddess, nimbate, standing to left, wearing necklace and bangles, holding a noose in right hand and a lotus with a long stalk in left, handing down by her side. Symbol on left Legend on r., *Srimahendraditya*.

j) Apratigh type -

Obverse: A male figure standing in the centre, wearing a dhoti, hands folded at the waist, hair tied in a knot. To the right a female figure standing to left, hair tied in a knot on the head wearing a sari and a tight bodice (kanchuki); left hand on the waist; right hand bent up and raised in the attitude of vitarka. Another figure, a male, standing to r., wearing a close fitting cap on left hand holding shield in front of the torso, right hand bent up either holding Garudadhvaja just behind the central figure or in the vitarkamudra. On right side, to be read from top to bottom, Kumara; on the left side, to be read from bottom to top., guptah. Circular legend, *Pratapapara*; what follows is not clear.

Reverse: Within dotted border, goddess Lakshmi, nimbnate, sitting on a full blown double petalled lotus. Crescent in the right upper corner in most cases. Legend on the right, Apratighah.

k) Lyrist type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, wearing ear-rings, necklace and armlets, sitting on a straight backed couch (paryankika), two sides of whose back are clearly visible; right leg folded on the couch; left leg over the right one and hanging below. Fingers of the king's right hand are playing over a four stringed lute placed on the lap; the left hand is over the lute, its fingers gesticulating appreciation. Legend beginning at I, *Maharajadhiraja-Sri-Kumaragupta(h)*.

Reverse: Within dotted border, goddess (or queen ?), with ear-rings, necklace and bangles, sitting on a couch with straight back: RIGHT leg of the goddess is folded under the couch and the left leg is hanging down in its front. RIGHT hand holds a long stalk; the left hand rests on the couch. Legend on the left, Kumaragupta.

l) King and Queen type -

Obverse: King standing to r., bare-headed and with frizzled hair, wearing coat, dhoti, ear-rings, necklace, wrist-let and armlets. The king's left hand is on the hilt of the sword at his waist and he is offering by the right hand, bent up, a bunch of flowers to the queen standing to right facing him. The queen wears ear-rings, necklace and bangles; her right hand is on the waist and the left one is hanging down. Crescent between the king and the queen. Indistinct traces of legend on the right.

Reverse: Goddess, nimbate, seated facing, on lion couchant to right, holding a lotus in right hand bent up, and leaning on the left hand resting on thigh. The goddess wears ear-rings, necklace bangles, armlets and a girdle. The folds of her sari are clearly visible. Dotted border all round. No symbol. Legend on the r., *Sri-Kumaraguptah*.

2.8 Coins of Skandagupta -

Skandagupta saw had to face the hostility of his brothers and the invasions of the Hunas and Pusyamitras when he ascended the throne. Hence although he issued gold coins they were not original types. His main coins are as follows -

a) Archer type -

Obverse: Skandagupta standing left, bare-headed, wearing coat, trousers and boots, necklace, ear-rings etc., holding bow at the top in left hand and arrow in the right hand; Garuda standard with fillet behind the right hand. Under left arm Skanda; circular legend from I (different in the two varieties) not fully read.

Reverse: Lakshmi, nimbate, seated facing on lotus, holding noose in outstretched right hand and a lotus in the left, resting on knee. Symbol on left, legend on right (*Sri Skandagupta* in one variety and *Kramaditya* in another).

b) King and Queen type -

Obverse: On left king bare-headed with curly hair, standing facing r., wearing waist-cloth and usual jewelry; holding by left hand bow by the middle with string outside; right hand rests on hip holding an arrow; on right queen facing left, not nimbate, wearing usual jewelry; behind her a lotus with a long stalk in her left hand; she holds some uncertain object in her right hand at which the king is looking with curiosity. Garuda standard between the king and the queen, parallel and just next to the bowstring. Legend is uncertain; it begins with *Jayati* and ends with the letter *nva* in front of the forehead of the king. It may have been the same as in the Archer type, Variety A, *Jayatimahitalam**sudhanvi* (i).

Reverse: Goddess Lakshmi, nimbate, seated on lotus, facing to front, holding noose in her right hand and lotus in left resting on the left knee. Symbol on the left. Legend, *Sri Skandaguptah*.

c) Chattra type -

Obverse: King, nimbate, standing to left, wearing necklace and armlets, right hand extended and in the posture of offering sacrifice, but no altar is visible below; left hand is on the hilt of the sword at the waist. Dwarf attendant behind, holding umbrella. Circular legend, not complete, but beginning with *Vijitavani*, partly truncated.

Reverse: Standing goddess, nimbate, facing left, wearing necklace and armlets; right hand extended holding a noose, left hand hanging down but holding a lotus with long stalk. Symbol on the left Legend on the right, *Kramadityah*.

d) Horseman type is also generally attributed to Skandagupta -

Obverse: King bare-headed, riding on horse to left not bearing any weapons, sash flowing behind; circular legend blurred and illegible.

Reverse: Goddess seated on wicker stool facing left, holding a noose in right hand and lotus with long stalk in the left Blurred symbol on left, blurred legend on r., *Kramadita*.

2.9 Origin of the Silver coins of the Guptas -

It is generally believed that Chandragupta II was the first Gupta emperor to issue silver coins and in this regard he adopted Kshatrapa coins as his prototypes. But in recent decades evidence is accumulating to show that before the issuance of silver money by Chandragupta II for the former Saka territories the Guptas had issued silver coins similar to their gold coins, though lighter in weight. Altekar, in 1959, reported a Lyrist type silver coin of Samudragupta (weight 74 grains) but declared it to be a forgery of ancient times. But now the situation has changed and it does not appear to be easy to dismiss this coin as a fake. Now more and more silver coins produced after their gold prototypes are coming to light. A.L. Srivastava has published a silver coin of Chandragupta Kumaradevi type (weight 87 grains) and Y.B. Singh has reported three silver coins of Chandragupta Kumaradevi type and one coin of the Standard type of Samudragupta - all of them weighing between 4 and 4.25 grams, that is approximately 60 grains each. Later, in 1981, B.R. Mani reported three silver coins, respectively of Chandragupta Kumaradevi type, Standard type of Samudragupta and Chhatra type of Chandragupta II, all weighing between 4, and 5 grams each. One more silver coin of the Chandragupta I Kumaradevi type was published by O.P. Singh in 1982 (weight 55 grains). Thus now it appears better to assume that till the reign of Chandragupta II the Imperial Guptas issued lighter weight coins in silver following

their gold prototypes, but after the conquest of western India by Chandragupta II they started the practice of issuing silver coins after the Saka prototypes.

2.10 Silver Coins of Chandragupta II

When Chandragupta II conquered Gujarat and Kathiawad he found that his new subjects had been accustomed to the use of Saka types of silver coins for centuries. He, therefore, issued a silver currency for them which they could easily accept. His silver coins of Western type are, however, very rare and the earliest date recorded on them may be 90 GE or 409 A.D., for so far no coin with a date in which the unit figure may be indubitably read, has been found. He did not introduce the white currency in his home provinces.

Silver coins of Chandragupta II are a close copy of the Kshatrapa silver issues. Their size varies from .5" to .55" and their weight is usually between 26.5 and 31 grains. On their Obverse is a close copy of the king's bust on the Kshatrapa coins and traces of the corrupt Greek legend persist. The date is engraved behind the king's head as on the Kshatrapa coins; only the Saka era is replaced by the Gupta era. On the Reverse the wavy line at the bottom and the crescent and the cluster of dots at the top are allowed to continue, but the three arched hill in the centre is replaced by Garuda (with entire bird body.).

The reverse of silver coins of Chandragupta II has a circular legend also. In class I the legend is *Paramabhagavatamaharajadhiraja Sri Chandragupta - Vikramaditya*. In Class II the legend reads *Sri - Guptakulasya Maharajadhiraja Sri Chandragupta Vikramankasya*. But the circular legend is found only on a few coins; on most of them its greater portion remains out of the flan.

2.11 Silver Coins of Kumaragupta I

The silver coinage of Kumaragupta I is copious and we can notice several classes and varieties in it. He issued silver coins for Madhyadesa also. His coins of the western provinces hardly differ from the silver coinage of Chandragupta II. Valabhi, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, Kaïra, Ellichpur and Samund and among the known find spots of these coins. Some of his coins of the Western variety are of debased silver; sometimes they are so debased that their metal looks like copper.

Smith divided Kumaragupta I's silver coins of the Western type into two varieties: Variety A consisting of the coins with the legend *Paramabhagavata Maharajadhiraja Sri Kumaragupta Mahendraditya*, and Variety B, in which the title *Maharajadhiraja* of the above legend is abbreviated into *Rajadhiraja*. On some coins the word *Parama* is deleted. Allan has classified them according to their fabric and workmanship. Altekar

has followed Allan in this regard. He has divided Kumaragupta's silver coins into the following Classes - Class I bears close resemblance to the silver coins of Chandragupta II and keeps the traces of corrupt Greek letter. Class III coins are like Class I coins but resemble Traikutaka coins also. Class IV coins have trident on Reverse. Only one specimen of this Class is known. On the coins of Class I to III the circular legends are as given above while on the solitary coins of class IV the last word of the legend in *mahendrasya* class V coins are small silver plated copper coins issued for western India. These bear the legend *Paramabhogavata Maharajadhiraja Sri Kumaragupta Mahendraditya*. Class VI coins are silver plated copper coins issued for Madhyadesa. These have the metrical legend *Vijitavaniravanipatih Kumaragupto divam jayati*.

The size and the weight of the Madhyadesa and Western Indian types of Kumaragupta I are nearly the same. The obverse continues to have the bust of the king and the reverse a bird with a circular legend around it. But there are several points of difference also. for example, (1) the face on the obverse in most cases is not an imitation of the Kshatrapa head. (2) The meaningless traces of Greek legend never appear on the Madhyadesa coins. (3) The date on the coins of the Western type is behind the king's head; it is in its front on the Madhyadesa coins. Numerical symbols used are also different. (4) Garuda is replaced by peacock. (5) As noted above, the legend on the Madhyadesa type is also different.

The dates, so far noted on the silver coins of Kumaragupta, vary from 122 to 136 GE (=441 to 455 A.D.) It suggests that the silver currency was introduced in the home provinces late in his reign.

2.12 Silver Coins of Skandagupta

Skandagupta was the second and the last Gupta emperor to issue silver coins of both the Western and Madhyadesa types. Epigraphical evidence also proves that he continued to rule over Gujarat. His Madhyadesa type shows the same characteristics as those of his father. The features of the bust betray no Kshatrapa influence and the Reverse shows peacock, which was first introduced by Kumaragupta. Skandagupta issued two new types also Bull and Altar types. The coins of the Altar type of all the varieties are very crude. They have no regular size and can be called neither circular, nor oval, nor rectangular. Legends found on his silver coins are :

- Garuda Type : *Paramabhogavata - Maharajadhiraja - Sri - Skandagupta Kramadityah.*
- Bull Type : Same as above; but *maharajadhiraja* is contracted into *rajadhira* or *mahara* or even *ma* on many coins.
- Altar Type : (1) *Paramabhogavata - Sri - Vikramaditya - Skanda guptah*; (2) *Paramabhogavata - Sri - Skandagupta Kramadityah*; (3) *Paramabhogavata - Sri - Skandaguptah.*

In none of the legends of the Altar type, the royal title *Maharajadhiraja* is seen.

The Madhyadesa type coins have the following legends :

- (a) *Vijatavaniravanipatir - jayati divam Skandaguptoyam.*
- (b) *Vijatavaniravanipatis - Sri - Skandagupto divam jayati.*

Dates as found on the coins of Skandagupta vary from 141 to 147.

2.13 The copper coins of the Guptas -

The copper coins of the Guptas are very rare, probably because Kushana copper currency had been issued in such an abundance throughout northern India that there was hardly any necessity for the Guptas to issue coins in this metal. Further, the common daily transaction were in all probability carried on with cowries. During the reign of Chandragupta II Fa-hsien noticed them in the markets of Pataliputra.

Allahabad Museum coin-cabinet, supposed to be that of Samudragupta, cannot be ascribed to this king. In the collection Sri R.K. Sethi, Bajpai saw a copper coin of Samudragupta. This coin is similar to the gold Archer type of Samudragupta. Its diam. is 2.00 cm. and weight 45.50 grains. B.N. Mukherjee has published a copper coin on the obverse of which the king is seated probably on a couch playing on a lyre and the legend *Nebuja* is written before the left feet of the king while on the reverse goddess *Lakshmi* is depicted with the legend *Majama*. T.P. Verma believes that what Mukherjee describes as lyre is actually a sceptre and, therefore does not find any reason to ascribe this coin to any Gupta ruler.

Thus, it is quite possible that Samudragupta initiated copper currency of his dynasty. But if he did not issue any copper coins, as most scholars still believe, then the first ruler to issue coins in this metal was Ramagupta, the elder brother of Chandragupta II.

2.14 Copper coins of Ramagupta. These are as follows -

- I. Lion Type : Var. A (lion facing left) and Var. B (lion facing r.) - The lion's stately figure on them resembles that found on several Malava and Naga coins and on some clay sealings from Basarh and Bhita.
- II. Garuda Type : This type shows on the reverse the figure of Garuda usually with outstretched wings. On the Obverse the name *Ramagupta* is written within a dotted border. Various varieties of Garuda found on the coins of Ramagupta are met with on the silver and copper coins of the Gupta rulers, from Chandragupta II onwards.
- III. Garudadhvaja Type : The coins of Ramagupta coming under this type show the bird on the reverse sometimes with three heads (instead on one) in

human form. In some cases Garuda, in human or bird form, is shown holding a serpent in each of the outstretched hands. On some coins Garuda in human form is seated crosslegged. On some coins the face of the bird seated on the standard is represented by a thick dot.

- IV. Border Legend (Sri Ramagupta) Type : This type shows a close imitation of the Naga coinage, in so far as the legend is concerned. Like the Naga coins the legend here is written on the border of the coin with the affix Sri before the name of Ramagupta.

2.15 Copper coins of Chandra gupta II - These are of following types -

1. Chhatra Type (with 2 varieties),
2. Standing king Type,
3. Archer Type,
4. Bust Type (with 5 varieties),
5. Chakra Type, and
6. Vase Type.

To these types, K.D. Bajpai has added the following :

7. Crowned Head Type,
8. Lakshmi Type,
9. Crescent and Garuda Type, and
10. Jitam Bhagavata Type.

2.16 Copper coins of Kumaragupta I -

Altekar in his Coinage has described the following four types of the copper currency of this king.

1. left Chhatra Type,
2. Archer Type,
3. Standing king Type, and
4. Garuda Type.

To these K.D. Bajpai has added the following four types :

5. King's Head Type,
6. Kalasa Type,
7. Garuda Type (with letter Ku), and
8. Peacock Type.

2.17 Summary -

The details of the gold, silver and copper coins of the Guptas are discussed in this chapter. The variety of motifs on coins reveal a lot about the political and socio-cultural scenario of the Guptas.

2.18 Check your progress -

- 1) Discuss the Chandragupta Kumaradevi type of coin
- 2) Discuss the gold coins of Samudragupta
- 3) Write short notes on
 - a) Silver coins of the Guptas
 - b) Copper coins of the Guptas
- 4) Write the name of the kings who issued the following types of coins
 - a) Lyrist type
 - b) Apratigh type
 - c) Chakravikrama type
 - d) Rhinoceros slayer type

2.19 Activities -

Visit any nearby museum and make a catalogue of their coin collection.

2.20 Suggested Readings-

- a) Allan, J., *Catalogue of Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Sasanka king of Gauda*, London, 1914
- b) Altekar, A.S., *The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, Bombay, 1954
- c) Bajpai, K.D., *Indian Numismatic Studies*, New Delhi, 1976
- d) Goyal, S.R., *An Introduction to Gupta numismatics*
- e) Handa, Devendra, (ed), *Numismatic Studies*, 3 Vols., New Delhi, 1991, 1992, 1993.
- f) Sircar, D.C., *Studies in Indian Coins*, Delhi, 1968
- g) Upadhyaya, V., *Prachina Bharatiya Sikha*, Prayag, V.S. 2005

BLOCK – VI
POST GUPTA & EARLY MEDIAEVAL COINS

UNIT – I

COINS OF THE HŪNAS & HARSHA

- 1.1 Introduction and Objectives
- 1.2 Coins of the Hunas
 - a. Silver Coins of Toramana
 - b. Copper Coins of Toramana
 - c. Silver Coins of Mihirkula
- 1.3 Kota Coins
- 1.4 Coins of Harsa
 - a. Gold Coin of Harsa
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Check your progress
- 1.7 Assignment/Activity
- 1.8 Bibliography/References for further study
- 1.1 Introduction and Objectives

From the Chinese works like the *Shih-chi* and the *Ch'ien Han-shu*, it appears that Hsiung-nu (Hūnas) and Yueh-chi were neighbouring nomadic tribes occupying the area in and near the Kan-su province of China and were often at war with each other from third century BCE, pushing one another away as and when they got any opportunity to do so. Lao-shan shan-yu (174-58? BCE) was the Hsiung-nu chief at the time of the exodus of the Yueh-chi from Kan-su. The Yueh-chi ultimately established themselves in Ta-hsia (south of the River Oxus, between Bactra and Kabul) and divided their country into five political or administrative units of which Kuei-shuang (Kushāna of the later period) was one. The Hūnas (Hsiung-nu) divided themselves into two mainstreams, of which one followed the Volga and the other proceeded along the Oxus. Alien sources also indicate the existence of two broad groups in the Hūna population, one being largely Mongolian in looks and built and the other being

Caucasian. The major distinction is confirmed in Indian references by the use of such terms as 'Śveta' (White) or Hāra-Hūnas, occurring in a number of ancient Indian works.

They continued their endeavours for supremacy and ultimately in the course of a few centuries the Hūnas of the Oxus valley grew powerful. They crossed the Hindukush and occupied Gāndhāra and started knocking at the doors of India.

Though Indian literary sources are virtually silent about how they looked like, a careful study of the Huṇa coinage which circulated in India after the establishment of their rule in the northwest India, Rajasthan and Kashmir throws a welcome light on the identification of their ethnic characteristics. Such a numismatic analysis, however, is quite difficult because of certain handicaps (which delimit its reliability) like the lack of skill of the artist employed by the mint, influence of the traditional ideas regarding the ruler's body, etc. Yet despite all these handicaps, some conclusions can be drawn based on relevant numismatic data. What is interesting is that the necks of the rulers, their chins, noses, eyes, etc. yield interesting material for evaluation and indicate that the Hūnas who reached India carried forward their original traits and belonged to that section of the community which was styled as Śveta Hūna (Ephthalites).

Chandra Gupta II's son Kumāra Gupta I (CE 415-50) performed two Aśvamedhas (horse-sacrifices) and added a greater part of Central India, Gujarat and Saurashtra to the Gupta empire. Towards the end of his reign, however, he suffered some setbacks probably at the hands of the Hūnas who were invading India during this period. His successor Skanda Gupta (CE 455-67) had to fight hard against them as is known from Skanda Gupta's Bhitari inscription. Ultimately, however, he succeeded in having a decisive victory over them. The indomitable Hūnas, however, attacked Persia in about CE 484 and killed its king Firoz and built up a vast empire. The Gupta Empire in India began to crumble soon after Skanda Gupta. By the time of Budha Gupta (CE 496-500), the western part of the empire was lost and the Hūnas were on ascendancy. They were able to establish their authority over a vast area in western India under the leadership of Toramāṇa. Even Eran in Madhya Pradesh was included in his dominions. He was succeeded by Mihirkula who established his capital at Sākala (modern Sialkot in Pakistan) and ruled over a vast territory extending from Kashmir and Punjab in the north to Panch Mahal - Sagar region in Gujarat-Madhya Pradesh in the south. He was, however, defeated by Yaśovarman-Vishnuvardhana at Daśapura (Mandasor) in circa CE 530 and retained sway in the north only.

1.2 Coins of the Hunas

Hūna coins are found from Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Sind, Madhya Pradesh and western Uttar Pradesh. Alexander Cunningham published Hūna coins of Bugo, Khing,

Bharana, Purāditya, Śrī Narendra, etc. from western Punjab (Pakistan). Vincent Smith attributed the coins of Mihiradatta, Prakāśāditya and Udayāditya found from district Hoshiarpur in Punjab to a local principality of the Hūnas in that district. Ropar in Punjab is another important archaeological site, which has yielded Hūna coins. Sanghol in district Fatehgarh Sahib of Punjab has also yielded a large number of Hūna coins indicating it to have been an important Hūna stronghold. Some of the coins are unique and give us the names of many new potentates betraying that the Hūnas, after being uprooted from the mainland, had set up small principalities during the sixth century in the region. At the time of the rise of the Pushpabhūti in the north, they were an important power. The Harshacharita of Bāna describes Prabhākaravardhana as "a lion to the Hūna deer." Rājyavardhana was sent to fight against the Hūnas.

The Hūnas did not have any numismatic tradition of their own and therefore took recourse to imitating or adopting the coinage of the alien or indigenous powers. Toramāna seems to have borrowed Sassanian type in Afghanistan, Kushāna type in Kashmir, and Gupta type in mainland India. His coins are rather rare.

a. **Torman's Silver Coins**

His silver coins may be distinguished into three classes -

(i) **Horseman Type**

Obverse: Horseman to right, discus and conch (śaṅkha) or vase in the field, a (Hephthalite) symbol and marginal Brāhmī legend Shāhi Jabula (or Janabula).

Reverse: Crudely executed fire-altar with supporters.

(ii) **Bust Type**

Obverse: Crude bust of the king to right, marginal Brāhmī legend Shāhi Jabula/ Shāhi Yabu(pu)lsara.

Reverse: Fire-altar in the centre, attendants on either side.

(iii) **Gupta Type**

Obverse: Head of the king to left, traces of the Brāhmī legend Vijitāvaniravanipati Śrī Toramāna.

Reverse: Fan-tailed peacock.

The last type is struck in imitation of the Fan-tailed peacock type silver coins of Kumāra Gupta I, Skanda Gupta, etc. with the only difference that that the king's head is turned to

left in stead of the right. The Guptas struck this type after their conquest of Gujrat in imitation of the Western Kshatrapa coinage which itself was influenced by the Greek and Roman types.

b Copper Coins of Toramana

Copper coins of Toramāna present many difficulties. Some of the coins bearing his name found from Kashmir, weighing approximately 100 to 120 grains (6.480 to 7.776 gm) struck on Kidāra Kushāna pattern showing on the obverse king standing offering oblation on the fire-altar and the Brāhmī legend Śrī Toramāna in the characters of fifth-sixth century and on the reverse a crude imitation of the goddess Ardoksho with the vertical Brāhmī legend Kidāra are not attributed by many scholars to the father of Mihirakula.

c Silver Coins of Mihirkula

As compared to the silver coins of Toramāna, the silver issues of Mihirakula are exceedingly rare and belong only to the Sassanian type. The following two varieties are known-

Var. 1: Bust of the king with an umbrella and a bull to left with the Brāhmī legend Jayatu Mihirakula on the obverse and fire-altar with attendants on the reverse.

Var. 2: Bust of the king with only the bull in front, sometimes with a trident, and the Brāhmī legend Jayatu Vrishadhvaja on the obverse, the reverse being similar to Var. 1.

This variety is smaller in size than Var. 1.

d Copper Coins of Mihirkula

Copper coins of the Kashmir type were struck in imitation of the late Kushāna Kidāra type weighing 100 - 120 grains (6.480 - 7.776 gm). They show standing king with marginal legend on the obverse and a crude imitation of goddess Ardoksho on the reverse, as noted above.

Sassanian Bust type copper coins show in a border of dots the bust of the king facing to right on the obverse and a Chakra or solar symbol in the upper field with the legend Tora below in bold Brāhmī characters on the reverse. This type of coins has been recovered from Sanghol in district Fatehgarh Sahib of Punjab. One coin from this site shows standing archer holding the bow in the left hand with letter Ja under the arm on the obverse, the reverse being similar.

Copper coins of Mihirakula belong to three distinct types -

(i) **Horseman type**

Obverse : King on horseback with Brāhmī legend Mihirakula.

Reverse : Goddess Lakshmi.

(ii) **Standing King type**

Obverse : King standing, holding spear in left hand held downwards over a small altar with the legend Shāhi Mihiragula or simply Mihiragula.

Reverse : Seated Lakshmi with cornucopiae.

(iii) **Sasanian Bust type**

Obverse : King's head with the legend Śrī Mihirakula.

Reverse : A humped bull with the legend Jayatu Vṛisha[h].

As far as the size of the three types is concerned, the first is large, the second medium and the third small. The second is the exact copy of the Kushāna prototype.

Copper coins of Mihirakula from Sanghol show bust of the king to right with the Brāhmī legend Śrī Mihirakula written downward in front of the face on the obverse and a bull to left with the chakra or solar symbol above, a line in the centre and Brāhmī legend Jayatu Vṛishah below on the reverse. The border of dots exists both on the obverse and the reverse. Interestingly enough, the site has also yielded a specimen showing Toramāna's coins over struck by Mihirakula and one piece of the latter over struck by Toramāna.

1.3. Kota Coins

Quite a good number of crudely executed copper coins bearing on one side a device looking like the Brāhmī monogram 'Kota' with some other marks or devices and a linear representation of Śiva with a bull standing behind on the other side are known for long. They are popularly known as Kota coins though they sometimes contains monograms looking like Kapa (or Kahā), Kota-Bala, Pacha, etc. and legends like Tri (or Bhri), Rudravarma, Śruta (or Ghuta or Ata), Viru, Vidisagu, etc. On some coins the reverse has Ardoksho or the legend instead of Śiva with Nandi device. One specimen with legends on both the sides is also known. Vincent Smith was the first numismatist to take note of these coins and observed: "The rude copper coins with Śiva and bull on the reverse and the monogram reading Kota, or another read as Śruta, Ghuta or Ata or sometimes trident and other marks on the reverse, are common in Delhi Bazar and in the Eastern Punjab. They are copied obviously from the money of Vāsudeva Kushāna, and some of the reverse devices may be an echo of the Sasanian

type. No body can determine their exact date or who struck them. Cunningham believed that 'they formed the common currency of the Punjab and Rajputana between A.D. 500 and 800.'" Rodgers also enlisted these coins in his Catalogue as 'Old Indian Coins' but did not assign them any specific date or attribute them to any king or dynasty.

As they contain on the reverse Śiva with Nandi which was one of the most popular device of late Kushāṇa coins from Vāsudeva onwards, these coins are definitely of a post-Kushāṇa period. The depiction of Ardoksho on some pieces also corroborates it. The Brāhmī letters occurring on these coins 'undoubtedly appear to be quite advanced form of Gupta Brāhmī.' Rapson was enticed by the similarity of the name Kota with Kota-kula of the Allahabad Prasasti of Samudra Gupta and attributed these coins to the Kota family whose scion was captured by the armies of the Gupta emperor. Some other scholars have also accepted this attribution though P.L. Gupta, relying on the dates given by Cunningham to these coins and their finds in the Punjab, denied such a possibility long back.

Kota type coins were found in a hoard at Jasat near Gurgaon in Haryana along with Kushāṇa and Yaudheya (Class 6: Yaudheya ganasya jaya type) coins. This hoard may not have been buried before the Yaudheya rule. Samudra Gupta subjugated the Yaudheyas as we learn from his Prayāga Prasasti. They were, however, made tax giving (karada) and left autonomous. As such, they may have continued as Gupta feudatories for some time after that. Kota type coins were found in a hoard from excavations at Ropar in Punjab, which "contained 600 specimens comprising the coins of the Kushāṇas, several varieties of Kushāṇa imitations, copper issues of Chandragupta II, the Yaudheyas and the Hūnas and pieces showing unmistakable Sassanian influence." This hoard was recovered from a stratum of Period IV at Ropar, which was dated between 200 BCE and CE 600 by the excavator. Surely, thus, this hoard was buried during or after the Hūna rule. The Pushpabhūti dynasty seems to have gained ascendancy in the Haryana-Punjab region during the second half of the sixth century CE. We have already referred to Prabhākaravardhana styled as *Hūna-hariṇa-kesarī*, i.e. 'lion to the Hūna deer' in the Harshacharita. At the time of his father's death Rājyavardhana was fighting against the Hūnas to the north of the capital Sthānvisvara (Thanesar). Smith attributed the coins of Mihiradatta, Prakāśāditya, and Udayāditya found from district Hoshiarpur to the Ephthalite Hūnas. Coins of Bugo, Khing, Bharama, Pūrvāditya, Śrī Narendra, etc. found from western Punjab by Cunningham were also attributed to the Hūnas. It thus seems that there were different small principalities of the Hūnas in the region. Kota coins, some of which bear inscriptions datable to circa sixth century may thus tentatively be assigned to such Hūna principalities as were in existence at that time. The anepigraphic

Kota type coins perhaps represents an earlier stage than the epigraphic ones. The former are very common whereas the latter are very rare. These types, however, seem to have fulfilled the needs of the people for quite a long time. It may be remembered here that unlike in the Islamic period where every king pronounced his ascending to the throne by issuing his coins kings in ancient period did not issue currency and we often observe that new coins or types were struck when a need for them was felt.

1.4. Coins of Harsha

In the early phase of the study of coins of Harsha there was a controversy regarding the attribution of coins bearing the names of Harsha, Śīlāditya and Pratāpāila to the kings of the Pushpabhūti dynasty or their homonymous rulers of Kashmir. It was in 1894 that Alexander Cunningham published *Coins of Medieval India* wherein he described and illustrated a coin showing a horseman with the legend Harshadeva on the obverse and the figure of a goddess seated on a throne (Ardoksho) on the reverse. Cunningham ascribed this coin to king Harshadeva of Kashmir. A.F.R. Hoernle suggested in 1903 that the coin belonged to king Harsha of Kanauj. Richard Burn rejected Hoernle's suggestion in 1906 as quite unsatisfactory. While this controversy was going on, an important hoard of 531 coins (containing one gold coin of a later Indo-Scythian type, eight copper coins of king Pratāpāditya II of Kashmir, and 522 silver pieces) in an earthen pot was discovered from the village Bhitaura in district Faizabad of U.P. As many as 248 silver coins of this hoard were inscribed with the legend Śrī Śāladata (i. e., Śrī Śīlāditya) and nine pieces belonged to Śrī Pratapaśāla (Śrī Pratāpaśīla). Of the remaining pieces, thirty-two belonged to the Maukhari rulers, one bore the name of Harśa (not Harsha), three were identified as Varāha drammas (< Greek drachmae). Most of the other coins were illegible. An examination of the contents of the hoard, however, reveals that 518 coins of this hoard are of the Gupta silver type bearing a large head of the king with a date on one side and a peacock with a long legend on the other. It is interesting to note that only on seven coins the head of the king faces to right as on the Gupta coins; on the rest, which include the coins of Śīlāditya and Pratāpaśīla, it faces to left. There are traces of the marginal legend around the peacock in general but the letters are truncated or illegible in many cases and the vowels are not discernible. In one case there existed the long legend *Vijitāvaniravanipati- Śrī—devo jayati* as generally found on the Gupta coins.

Burn attributed coins bearing the names of Pratāpāditya and Śīlāditya to Prabhākara vardhana and Harsha Śīlāditya of the Pushp[/y]abhūti dynasty while Hoernle identified them with the kings of these names belonging to Kashmir as known from Kalhana's *Rājatagīnī*. Kalhana describes king Pravarasena of Kashmir as replacing Pratāpaśīla, also

called Śilāditya, the son of Vikramāditya, who had been dethroned by enemies in the kingdom of his father. Hoernle identified this Vikramāditya with king Yaśodharman of Malwa who is described in the Mandasor inscription with extensive conquests as far as the Himalayas, and Śilāditya with his supposed son of this name. According to the reckoning of Hoernle, Pratāpaśila-Śilāditya's rule lasted from about 580 to 608 or 612, that is from the death of Vikramāditya (Yaśodharman) in 580 to the great victory or coronation of Harshavardhana.

Before coming to any conclusion, it is necessary to know these coins and their features more intimately and in greater details. The coins of Pratāpaśila show the crescent on the head of the king in about the center at the top (instead of at the crown, as usually seen in Maukhari coins), and each horn terminating in a knob. There are symbols for the date 10 and 1 (i.e. 11). The vowels are not clear in the legend. The peacock on the reverse of all the nine coins is shown with its head to left. On Śilāditya's coins the name is usually written as Śri Śaladata but a few specimens clearly betray the last syllable as the conjunct tya. The crescent on the head also shows variant forms and positions. The dates and the symbols for the dates vary considerably from the known varieties and present considerable difficulty in determining them with certainty.

Expressing his doubts about the ascription of these coins to Prabhākaravardhana and Harshvardhana, Hoernle argued that before attributing the Śilāditya coins to Harsha it must be proved that he ever assumed this title officially. Neither Bāna nor any other Indian source mentions this appellation for Harsha. It is only the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang who refers to Harsha by this epithet. It thus seems that Harsha was known so in the Buddhist monkish communities. Devahuti has, however, pointed out that the Chinese sources inform us that Harsha adopted this title on his accession to the throne of Kanauj. He is referred to as Śilāditya by the diplomatic envoys who had been deputed by the Chinese emperor to carry out the official business. They may not have obtained their information only from the Buddhist monkish community. Though the indigenous sources do not mention Harsha as Śilāditya they do refer to Prabhākaravardhana as Pratāpaśila, which shows that there may be truth in the Chinese evidence regarding Harsha's title. Some scholars therefore do not see any incongruity in ascribing these coins to Prabhākaravardhana and Harshavardhana. Though there were several Śilādityas who ruled from Valabhī in the sixth through eighth centuries, the site of the hoard containing so many coins of Śilāditya and the fact that the coins of Śilāditya and Pratāpaśila have been found together in the Bhitaura hoard is regarded to be evidence enough to support the identification of the two kings with Prabhākaravardhana and Harsha.

The dates on these coins, however, cause some difficulty. Each date on the coins of king Pratāpaśīla consists of three symbols. The first symbol is the letter sa and one would ordinarily expect this symbol to represent the hundred or hundreds. The other symbols are apparently 10 and 1 or representing 11. Devahuti holds that the initial letter sa stands for Saṃvat. It is well known that the dates in Harsha's inscriptions refer to his regnal years (Harsha era) and are preceded by the word saṃvat. This word thus stands for the Harsha saṃvat. Devahuti, therefore, believes that as in his epigraphs, Harsha used 'saṃvat' for his own era on the coins abbreviating the word into sa owing to the small size of the coins.

There is, however, another difficulty as the coins of Pratāpaśīla and Śīlāditya bear the dates 11 and 1 to 33 respectively. If both the dates are taken to refer to the same era, the two rulers have to be taken as ruling simultaneously. But this can easily be explained satisfactorily. The dates on the coins of the two monarchs refer to different reckonings. Pratāpaśīla used only his regnal years. Though even Harsha may also have done the same, his regnal years ultimately continued to form an era known after him as the Harsha Era. The dates on the coins of these rulers therefore are quite compatible with their rules and can easily be explained as above. The date 11 on the coins of Pratāpaśīla is quite in keeping with the duration of Prabhākaravardhana's reign which is generally believed to have started in about CE 580 and the dates ranging from 1 to 33 on Śīlāditya's coins are also quite in conformity with the duration of Harsha's reign which lasted from about 606 to 647. If we believe like Hoernle that Pratāpaśīla-Śīlāditya was the son of Yaśodharman, who was at the height of his glory in CE 532, then of course there will be the difficulty of explaining these dates.

a Gold Coin of Harsha

Prof. K.D. Bajpai brought to light a gold coin of Harsha which was acquired from Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh. It is about 2.0 cm in diameter and weighs 113.5 grains (7.322 grams). If we allow for some wear and tear during the period of its circulation, it may be believed to have been struck on the 118 grain standard like the early Gupta gold coins. The size and fabric also conform to the coins of the Imperial Guptas. The coin bears the following details -

Obverse: Brāhmī legend in five lines -

Parama-bhā(sha)-

ttāraka Mahārā-

jādhirāja Parame-

svara Śrī Mahārā-

[ja Ha]sshadeva

Reverse: Śiva and Pārvatī seated on the bull (Nandī). The nimbate four-armed God holds a rosary in the rear right and the trident in the additional left hand while the normal right hand rests on his right thigh the lower left is placed around the neck of his consort. Over the rosary in the upper right hand seems to be a snake on a staff. Śiva wears a jaṭā-jūṭa (matted hair) and circular earrings. Pārvatī is also nimbate and bears a beautiful coiffure at the back of her head. She wears forehead ornament (lalāatikā), pearl necklace (ekāvalī) and ear ornaments (*kunḍalas*). She is seated gracefully on Śiva's folded left leg with her left leg placed on her right thigh, looking fondly towards her lord. Her right hand touches Śiva's left thigh and her left hand is held out. Nandī is seated below facing to right.

The characters of the Brāhmī legend are quite similar to those of Harsha's Madhuban, Banskhera and recently discovered copperplates and leave absolutely little doubt to the date of the coin. The titles *parama-bhattāraka*, *mahārājādhirāja* and *paramēśvara*, too, are similar to those found on his copper-plates [Parama-māheśvara maheśvara iva . parama-bhattāraka-mahārājādhirāja Śrī-Harshah]. On the coin the name of Harsha has been given as Harshadeva. Bāna has also referred to his patron by this version in his Harshacharita. The Nausāri and Apsad stone inscription also refer to him as Harshadeva. There thus remains little doubt to this coin having been issued by king Harshavardhana of the Pushpabhūti dynasty.

The coins betrays Harsha's devotion towards Śaivism. In his Harshacharita, Bāna states that Pushpabhūti, the founder of the dynasty, was a believer in Śaivism, and during the time of Harsha's father, the worship of Śiva prevailed in the royal household as it did in the whole kingdom along with that of other deities of the Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist pantheons. Harsha was also an ardent devotee of Śiva and worshipped Nīla-lohita (Rudra-Śiva) before setting out on his conquests. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang also records the worship of Śiva at the time of Harsha's sixth quinquennial assembly held at Prayaga. Harsha betrayed his devotion to the deity by depicting him along with his spouse on his coins. The figures of Śiva and Pārvatī (Umā-Mahēśvara or Hara-Gaurī) on the coin are portrayed very beautifully and are reminiscent of the artistic portraiture of deities on the Gupta coins. It seems that the coin motif made the portrayal of Umā-Mahēśvara very popular in contemporary art, which continued to remain popular during many subsequent centuries also.

This definitely attributable coin differs substantially from the silver coins described above. Hence we need more corroborative evidence for their identification.

1.5. Summary

The Chinese sources are eloquent about the movement of the two nomadic tribes Hsiung-nu (Hūnas) and Yueh-chi from the third century BCE from China and indicate as to how the two being inimical were pushing each other westward till they reached Ta-hsia south of the Oxus river and were able to gain power ultimately. The Hūnas were divided into Mongolian and Caucasian stocks. Kuei-shuang (better known as the Kushānas), a branch of the Yueh-chi, reached India in the first century of the current era while the White Hūnas were able to conquer parts of northwest India and reach as far as Madhya Pradesh in central India during the late fifth-early sixth century CE. Their coins have been found from Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Sind, Madhya Pradesh and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Since the Hūnas did not have any numismatic tradition of their own, they imitated the coins of other dynasties/kings, which were current at the time when they felt the necessity of striking their own coinage. They thus followed the coin types of the Kushānas, the Sassanians and the Guptas, which were then current in Kashmir, northwest India and the mainland. Their coins, particularly the silver ones, are quite rare. However, some specimens have come down to us to give us a flash here and there about the numismatic developments of their times.

Toramāna who led the Hūna incursion in India issued three types of silver coins: (1) Horseman Type, (2) Bust Type, and (3) Gupta Type. His copper coins present many difficulties. His successor Mihirakula restricted himself to issuing only the Sassanian type silver coins of two varieties and copper coins of three types: (1) Horseman Type, (2) Standing King Type, and (3) Sassanian Bust Type.

The figures of the kings or their busts give us a peep into the personalities of the Hūna rulers. Their alien ethnic features may well be made out on their coins. Their busts also indicate a personal trait like ferocity. The adoption of Lakshmī and Vṛisha (bull, Nandī) betrays the fast speed at which they were being Indianized. Coins found from western Punjab carrying the names of Bugo, Khing, Bharama, Purādiya, Sri Narendra, etc. were also attributed to the Hūnas by Cunningham. Vincent Smith attributed the coins of Mihiradatta, Prakāśāditya and Udayāditya obtained from district Hosharpur in Punjab to a local principality of the Hūnas in this region. It seems that after Toramāna and Mihirakula, the Hūnas set up small principalities and issued coins with or without their names. Excavations at Ropar and Sanghol in Punjab have added a few more names like Vidiśagu (pta), Śrīvala, Bhīmasena, etc. The Kota type coins, both uninscribed and inscribed ones, too, may have been issued by the Hūna chiefs or army-commanders.

The Hūnas seem to have left copious currency, which was available when Harsha came to power. Harsha's coins are very rare. A few silver coins of Gupta bust type bearing the names of Pratāpaśīla and Śīlāditya from Bhitaura (Faizabad, U.P.) hoard are attributed to Prabhākaravardhana and Harsha but there is no doubt that a gold coin bearing his name and Umā-Maheśvara belonged to him.

1.6. Check Your Progress

1. Trace the early history of the Hūnas before their invasion of India.
2. What do you know about Yueh-chi & Hiung-nu relations?
3. When did the Hūnas reach India?
4. What light does the Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skanda Gupta throw on the Hūna invasion of India during his time?
5. Who was Yaśodharman?
6. Why did the Hūnas adopt the coin types of their predecessors or contemporaries?
7. What are the silver coin types of Toramāna?
8. What are the silver coin types of Mihirakula?
9. What light do the Hūna coins throw on the personalities of their rulers?
10. What is the numismatic evidence of the Indianization of the Hūnas?
11. What was the area of influence of the Hūnas?
12. Assess the possibility of assigning the Kota coins to the Hūnas.
13. Can Pratāpaśīla of the silver coins of Bhitaura hoard be identified with Prabhākaravardhana?
14. Why are Harsha's coins so rare?
15. Critically assess the attribution of silver coins to Harsha.
16. Can Śīlāditya of the Bhitaura hoard coins be identified with king Harshavardhana?
17. What light does the gold coin of Harsha throw on his religion?

1.7. Assignment/Activity

1. Give an account of the Hūna coins.
2. Critically assess the ascription of silver coins to Harsha.
3. Draw sketches of the coins attributed to the Hūnas and Harsha from relevant numismatic works and journals.

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UNIT - II

GENERAL SURVEY OF THE EARLY MEDIEVAL COINS

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Objectives

2.3 The main coins types of early mediaeval period.

a King and fire type or Sassavian type

b Standing king and seated goddess type

c Horseman and bull type

d Seated goddess type

2.4 Coins of early mediaeval dynasties

a Coins of Chandellas

b Coins of Chahamanas

c Dynasties adapting bull/Norseman and seated goddess types

d Dynastis adapting Hanuman types and Lion attacking elephant type.

e Dynasties adapting low suckling calf type

2.5 Appendix

2.6 Summary

2.7 Check your progress

2.8 Assinment and Activities

2.9 References for further reading

2.1 Introduction

The post-Gupta Indian coins are characterized by the decline in their quality as well as variety. In ancient and early mediaeval period before the advent of Islam, issuing coins in one's name was not considered a royal prerogative. So not only some dynasties but also even several rulers did not at all strike coins despite the fact that mostly the rulers had their mints.

We have instances of some crude and inferior coins betraying irregular metal content and quality, which might have been produced by private moneyers, who wanted to make profit from coining. Instances are not lacking where we find that coins bearing old types and sometimes also coins with names of dead kings were continued to be minted officially or by schroffs. Prof. R.S. Sharma believes that the diminished use and scarcity of coins, particularly the gold and silver specie, in the early medieval period covering CE 750-1200, was the result of a decline in international trade. So much so, even cowries were used for payments in certain areas. He points out the paucity of coins in India in this period coincides with the paucity of coins in Europe as well as in the Middle East. Prof. Romila Thapar views the scarcity from the angle of local economic units in the absence of an all India power and suggests that coins were issued during this period by local bodies, towns or merchants for use in limited areas. Many other scholars share the view of Prof. Sharma and Romila Thapar also.

The early medieval period witnessed a wave of feudal struggles and disintegration with frequent changes in the boundaries of different states. Political instability always leads to decline in trade, as trade always requires peaceful relations and environment. People during such period confined more and more to agricultural pursuits, which required lesser use of coins.

Prof. B.N. Mukherjee, however, views the problem from an altogether different viewpoint and states that the use of cowries itself indicates the continuation of maritime trade with Maldives islands from where they were imported. Several texts and commentaries like the *Agni Purāna*, *Abhidhānaratnamālā*, *Kāvya-mūlāmsā*, Medhātithi's commentary on the *Manu Smṛiti*, etc., indicate the existence of various centers of production of various articles of commerce and texts like Haribhadra Sūri's *Samarāichchakahā*, Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Bṛīhathathā-śloka-saṁgraha*, etc. refer to international trade. The Pehowa Prasasti (CE 882-83) of king Bhojadeva and the Ahar inscription of CE 953 acquaint us of the interregional trading centers. The intensity of production and commercial activities might have varied from region to region but to make a sweeping statement of the lack of trade is the travesty of truth. Prof. Lallanji Gopal has rightly referred to the appalling apathy of the numismatists to dismiss early medieval coins as of debased metal, bad workmanship and little artistic merit. The early medieval coins have not received a systematic and comprehensive analysis and study they deserve. Alexander Cunningham's book on *Coins of Medieval India* was published in 1894, more than a century back. Thereafter Vincent Smith's *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta* in 1906 and its supplement by B.B. Bidyabinod in 1923 covered these coins.

Naturally, these are not sufficient works for a proper study and analysis of the medieval coinages. When Lallanji Gopal wrote his *Early Medieval Coin-Types of Northern India* in 1966, he had limited sources to fall back upon. It is, however, in the recent decades that some new material has come forth and some good studies like John S. Deyell's *Living Without Silver* (1990) have been made.

In the post-Gupta period the Maukhari, Pushyabhūti, Pāla, Pratihāra, Chandella, Patamāra, Gāhaḍavāla, Chāhamāna, and Kalachuri were the main dynasties besides some smaller ones, who ruled northern India in quick succession or simultaneously. Whereas in the case of the Guptas we find coins (gold, silver and copper and very few even in lead) having been issued from the time of Chandragupta I or Samudragupta to Prakasāditya, the coins of most of the rulers of the early medieval dynasties have not been discovered as yet. Even the important rulers of the major dynasties did not issue coins in their names. As against the originality, artistic excellence and profusion of the varieties of the Gupta coin-types, those in the medieval period are restricted in number and with a few exceptions here and there, lack originality and novelty. The coins were issued generally imitating older types and betray rough execution.

2.2 Objectives

As mentioned above the survey of early mediaeval coins not only reflects the political conditions of the country but also high lights the socio economic conditions of the times.

Because of the decline in quality and variety of early indian coins scholars are divided in this view regarding the decline in trade and commerce during 600 AD - 1000 A.D.

A thorough study of the coins of early mediaeval period would help the student to asses the above problems.

2.3 The main coin-types of early mediaeval period

1. King and fire-altar type,
2. Standing king and seated goddess type,
3. Horseman and bull type, and
4. Seated goddess type.

a King and Fire-Altar Type

King and fire-altar type, also known as Indo-Sassanian Type or Gadhayā Coins, is characteristic type of coins circulating throughout the entire early medieval period and

covering the vast region of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. The term Indo-Sassanian is applied to coins minted in India with debased imitation of Sassanian type, especially of the device of a fire-altar on the reverse. Cunningham, Smith and other early scholars did not make any attempt to analyze the devices on these coins and into their sub-varieties but were content to make some rough classification based on broad distinctions and covered different sub-varieties by describing them as rude or degraded bust of king and fire-altar. It is generally believed that the Indo-Sassanian type can be traced through the Hephthalite coins to the coins of the Sassanian king Firoz, who was killed by the Haphthalites in CE 488. Some scholars have tried to distinguish the features of the head and the fire-altar on the obverse and the reverse. The early type of head is somewhat realistic and less stylized. The Uruli hoard from Poona shows traces, which remind us of the Hephthalite coins in regard to the treatment of the wings of the crown. Like the late Sassanian coins this type has the crescent on right and star on the left of the flame of the fire-altar on the reverse. The fire-altar is conventionalized and is shown through lines and dots. It is figured as consisting of a pedestal with three graded steps, a short shaft indicated by a six-rayed star, and the fire-receptacle indicated by three successively increasing horizontally placed lines or steps. In some cases the base seems to be shorter and there are other variations as well. Sometimes the star appears at the base. A pile of dots arranged in a triangular way or placed horizontally indicates the flame. Use of bigger and smaller dots and lines sometimes betray the presence of very stylized human figures on either side of the altar. On others only dots remain. Similarly the face also shows various changes. P.J. Chinmulgund noted the variations regarding the number, thickness and design of the dots. According to the depiction of the helmeted head on the obverse he classified these coins into three clear groups; (a) face with clear profile and square jaw, nostril, chin and lips; (b) face with rough profile; nostril, chin and mandible are represented only by dots, and the mouth too is represented by a dot and is joined to the cheek by a line; (c) degraded face with the eyebrow and the line joining the cheek to mouth being absent or very weak.

D.B. Diskalkar published coins of the Huzur Jwahirkhana hoard, Indore and pointed out similarities with the Uruli hoard. He also showed a further degradation of the bust with a high clean-shaven head, pointed long nose, thin lips and deep, socketed eyes, with dots, lines and symbols on both sides of the head. The next stage is represented by thick dumpy pieces on which the devices become so crude that it is very difficult to recognize the figures. The bust on the obverse is surrounded by dots and appears like the hoof of a donkey. These

pieces, thus, are known by the alternate name of Gadhayā coins also. The fire-altar on the reverse also becomes very crude with only the pedestal, shaft, and fire-receptacle and not other features found on other coins. Coins of the Piplaj (Ajmer-Merwara) hoard show the head to be of distinctly Indian features and a fine facial expression. The marks in front of the face have been interpreted by Dr. A.S. Altekar as a legend. J.M. Unvala, however, takes them to be only a part of the obverse motif. Cunningham regarded a mark in front of the Hephthalite coins as 'Ephthalite symbol.' A similar mark is sometimes found on Indo-Sassanian coins also.

In spite of all such efforts to distinguish the facial features or the depiction of the fire-altar, no definite conclusion could, however, be drawn as a correct perspective could be formed only by studying the different hoards from a wide area with the geographical distribution of the different types and their development or deterioration. A German scholar Bjorn-Uwe Abels who has studied the Gadhayā type coins found from the different regions distinguished their geographical and dynastic variations and has made an effort in this direction recently. He puts these coins into six types (which he calls emissions) and observes that the profile of the face on the obverse and the fire-altar on the reverse of these coins gradually deteriorate until they cannot further be recognized as such. Accordingly, the silver deteriorates and the flan becomes thicker but smaller in diameter. This is due to a chronological development, which starts in the first half of the 9th century and reaches its end in the 1st half of the 13th century. He assigns the different emissions with different dynasties as following (See Appendix I for illustrations)-

Emission	Metal	Diameter	Thickness	Weight	Dynasty
I	AR	2.1 cm	1.9 mm	4.11 gm	Late Gurjaras
II	AR	2.0 cm	2.1 mm	4.18 gm	Late Gurjaras
III	AR	1.9 cm	2.0 mm	3.9 gm	Pratihāras
IV	AR	1.6 cm	2.5 mm	4.1 gm	perhaps Solankis
V a-b	AR, n	1.6 cm	2.8 mm	4.04 gm	Late Pratihāras & successors of the Solankis
V c	n	1.4 cm	4.0 mm	4.06 gm	Chāhamānas, Paramāras, Silāhāras and other states
VI	n	1.35 cm	4.5 mm	3.95 gm	Pratihāras & others

Abel thinks that the Sassanian crown on the obverse and the fire-altar and its adjuncts on the reverse degenerate severely and can be traced up to Emission VI only and no further. This conclusion, however, remains to be tested on actual finds from different areas and the stratigraphical position of the Gadhayā coins found actually in excavations in the geographical distribution of such coins before being taken as final. The coins with legends are to be treated separately.

Bust with Legend Type

Śrī Vighraha Coins: One type of Indo-Sassanian coins shows the legend Śrī or Śrī-Vi in bold characters in front of the face: Some coins show the fuller form of Śrī-Vighraha also. Cunningham described them as Śrī Vighrapāla coins. Smith regarded them as the Eastern or Magadha type Indo-Sassanian coins. Their distribution extends from Uttar Pradesh to Bangladesh and pitchers full have been discovered from Naulagarh (Begusarai district, Bihar) and other places. Coins with the variant legend of Śrī-Pi, Ha, Ja, Śrī-La, Śrī-Hara, Śrī-Ga, Śrī-Bha, Śrī-Vara, Śrī-Dāman, Śrī-Omkāra, etc. are also known but not attributed satisfactorily.

Ādivarāha Type: The coins generally known as the Ādivarāha type are also regarded as a sub-variety of the Indo-Sassanian series. The obverse of these coins shows the figure of the Varāha incarnation of Vishnu to right with left leg raised (technically known as the *pratyāliḍha* posture) instead of the usual bust or head of the king of the Indo-Sassanian coins. On the reverse we have the legend Śrīmad=Ādivarāha in two lines in bold characters with a form of Indo-Sassanian fire-altar flanked by attendants and with star and crescent on the left. The flan being small, the reverse device is usually only partially visible. Specimens showing varying degrees of qualitative fineness or crudeness are available indicating their mintage for a very long period. The fine specimens were definitely issued by Mihira Bhoja Pratihāra (CE 836-98). Coins of this type with the legend Śrī-Vināyakapāladeva arranged in three lines have been attributed to his grandson Vināyakapāla (CE 914-43).

In a majority of cases Śrī-Vi(ghraha) coins are found mixed with Ādivarāha type coins. Excavations at Ahichhatra indicate that they were issued prior to the coins of Vināyakapāla. In some hoards they were found along with coins of Kashmir. Prof. Pratipal Bhatia has studied 123 hoards of Indo-Sassanian and related coins of Śrī-Vighraha, and Ādivarāha from the Gaṅgā valley and other areas and has distinguished numerous varieties and sub-varieties, some of which, of course, were known even earlier. She has concluded that (1) In the Gaṅgā valley, the bulk of the currency in the post-Harsha period consisted of these above-mentioned coins and their output was on the increase in the successive centuries; (2) they were not used for

long distance trade and heavy transactions; (3) Long distance or heavy trade transactions may have been carried on with the help of bullion, or exchange of precious commodities, or even gold coins as indicated by some specimens of Ādivarāha type gold coins (at Bharatpur and in the State Museum, Lucknow) whereas cowries may have been used for small local transactions.

During this period in north Konkan were issued Indo-Sassanian type coins with degraded bust in dotted border on the obverse and the legend Śrī-Chittarājadeva on the reverse. Fighting horseman type coins are known from Indore hoard. Probably the Pratihāra king Vatsarāja issued some other type of small silver coins bearing the legend Śrī-Ranahastin. Ranahastin was his epithet as known from literature. 123 hoards studied by Dr Bhatia and numerous unreported hoards, stray find of various other types clearly betrays that there was no paucity of silver, billon and copper coins during the early medieval period.

b Standing Kind and Seated Goddess Type: Coins of Kashmir

Strange as well as interesting it is to know that the coins of Kashmir remained unchanged for more than a thousand years from Kanishka down to the Muslim conquest of Kashmir in CE 1399. The Kūshāna type of standing king on the obverse and seated goddess on the reverse continued unaltered though some minor changes were wrought with time and the type got so much degraded that it became difficult to recognize the goddess. It seems likely that the coins bearing the name of Toramaṇa (different from that of his Hūna namesake), which remained in circulation for several centuries, served as the model for later coins of Kashmir. If Śrīvara's Jaina Rājataragīnī (III.213) is relied upon, they were current even as late as the fifteenth century. Taking into consideration the prolonged circulation of these coins, their actual abundance and the varieties of dies used for them, M.A. Stein concluded that these coins were struck "not only by the king who bore this name, but by a succession of rulers after him." The coins issued over a long period naturally betray palaeographic and artistic variations.

Of the Kashmir rulers, the coins of Lalityāditya Muktāpīda, who bore the title Pratāpāditya, have been found from several places in districts Fyzabad, Banda, and Banaras of Uttar Pradesh and Patna in Bihar. In the Rājataragīnī, Kalhana describes his successful war against king Yaśovarman of Kanauj, and even his march to Kālinga. These coins, therefore, must have come with the army. Amongst the rulers of Kashmir, Kshemagupta's queen Diddā's name also figures on the coins, first as Di-Kshema or Diddā-Kshema and later independently as Diddādevyā, when in 980 she put Bhimagupta to death and ascended the throne. Of the

early kings of Kashmir, Pravarasena II, Lakhana Narendrāditya issued gold coins, and the tradition was maintained by Durlabhavardhana, Pratāpāditya II Durlabhaka, Vinayāditya Jayāpīḍa, Vighraha, etc. of the Karkoṭa dynasty. Thereafter Avantivarman (CE 855-83, electrum coins), Śaṅkaravarman (Yaśovarman, CE 883-902), Śūravarman I (c. CE 933-34), Nandigupta (c. CE 972-73), Diddā (CE 980-1003, electrum coins), Harsha, and Jagadeva (CE 1193-1213) also issued gold coins. Most of the rulers struck copper and a few silver also.

c Horseman and Bull Type: Coins of Shāhi Kings and Others

The type showing a horseman on the obverse and a bull on the reverse with legends on one or both sides originated with the Brāhmaṇa Shāhi dynasty of Udabhāṇḍapura (Ohind) founded by Kallārapāla in about CE 850, and continued by some of the Rajput states and even by the Ghaznavis and the Ghoris. Spalpatideva of this dynasty was the first ruler to have issued silver and copper coins of the horseman/bull type. His coins show a recumbent humped bull to left with trident or other symbols on the flank, an ornamental covering of the body and the Śāradā legend Śrī Spalpati Deva on the obverse and the figure of a horseman to right with long lance in his right hand, left hand before face holding the reins or some indistinct object, with single letters A, Ka, Gu or Da to the upper left and the rest of the illegible legend on the right on the reverse. A ruler whose name has variously been read as Śrī-Ve(ṇ)kadeva or Vakkadeva or Paṅkadeva issued copper coins with a lion on the reverse, which Bhīmadeva also continued along with horseman/bull type. Sāmantadeva of this dynasty continued the type in both the metals and it will be no exaggeration to say that the latter struck his coins in millions and perhaps more. His coins are very common in the north and hoards and stray pieces have been found from many sites in Himachal, Punjab, Haryana and northern Rajasthan. Sāmantadeva may be equated with Sāmānd of Abū Rihān. Coins with the name of Sāmantadeva continued to be minted long after his death. Sometimes other names are also found on the coins of this type. Elliot accepted the equation of Sāmanta with Sāmānd of Al-Birūnī with some reservation and observed that "Sāmanta, whenever, it is found with another name, is throughout merely a title, meaning the warrior, the hero, the preux chivalier, the leader of an army, the Amīr." Scholars, however, generally take Sāmantadeva to be the name of a king of Kabul. Numerous varieties and sub-varieties of his coins have been distinguished and an effort has also been made to attribute them to different kings of other dynasties who copied them from the original coins of Sāmantadeva. Sāmantadeva issued Elephant/Lion type coins also but they are quite rare. Coins of horseman/bull type with the legend read as Khudarayaka (actually Khvadavayaka) are generally assigned wrongly. They belong to Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, who also copied this type. The type was so popular that

even the Abbasid king al-Muqtadir (of Baghdad?) copied it. There are numerous post-Shāhi coins of this type, which still await satisfactory attribution. Some Tomara and Chauhan rulers of Delhi like Sallakhanapāla (CE 978-1003), Kumārapāla (CE 1019-49), Anaṅgapāla (CE 1049-79), Madanapāla, Mahīpāla (CE 1103-28), Ajayarāja's queen Somaladevī, Prithvirāja II, Someśvaradeva, Prithvirāja III, etc. also copied the horseman/bull type. Kalhaṇadeva, perhaps Kelhaṇadeva of the Chāhamāna dynasty of Nadol; Amṛitapāla of Budaon; Kirttipāla ruling in the Gaṇḍakī valley in the twelfth century or perhaps king Kirttipāla who founded the Chāhamāna dynasty of Jalor; Pippalarājadeva, a chief at Machari in the Alwar state; some Katoch rulers of Kangra like Rūpachandra, Kapachandra, Apūrvachandra; etc. also adopted the model of Sāmantadeva's bull/horseman type. Interestingly enough the type remained popular with the Muslim rulers of Kabul after the Shāhi dynasty and even the Ghōris of Ghazna, Nasir-ud-Din Qubacha of Multan, and many of the Delhi Sultans from Muhammad bin Sam to Balban continued it. King Chāhaḍadeva, his grandson Āsalladeva, and latter's grandson Gaṇapatideva of the Jajapella dynasty of Narwar (Madhya Pradesh) also issued coins of this type by adding Śrī or Śrīmat before their names and also putting the dates on one side. Cunningham noted two versions of the legend - Asāvārī Śrī Sāmantadeva and Asāvārī Śrī Sāmasoraladeva. H. de S. Short describes the coins with the name of Sāmanta as being Chāhaḍa's independent coinage and explains the coins of the second type as issued by him as a tributary of Iltutmish. John S. Deyell has recently listed numerous varieties of the Bull/Horseman type coins and attributed them to various kings bringing out the changes in their symbols, their metal contents, and other variations.

d Seated Goddess Type

Coins of the Kalachuris of Tripuri: King Gāṅgeyadeva (c. CE1015-40) of the Kalachuri dynasty of Tripuri initiated another very common type of this period and issued coins, irrespective of their size and metal, showing on the reverse inside a circle of dots the figure of four-armed Lakshmī, nimbate, sitting cross-legged with lotus flowers in her upper two hands with lower ones spread out on the sides. The obverse carried king's name as Śrīmad=Gāṅgeyadeva in bold characters within a border of dots. The metal contents and the artistic excellence of the figure of Lakshmī varies considerably suggesting a long chronological sequence. Significantly enough "pure gold coins are found only with the earlier types, while silver occurs in the middle ranges and the most degenerate forms of the reverse type are found with the silver copper issues alone." The different stages of degeneration cannot be sandwiched within the twenty-five years of Gāṅgeyadeva's reign and have to be spread over a century or even more. D.W. MacDowall classifies them into nine types, ranging

from pure gold and goddess looking natural to copper coins with tracings of silver and highly stylized goddess. The weight of the coins also reduces successively from 4.2 gm to 3.7 gm. MacDowall has determined the approximate periods of the introduction of these types by comparing them with the coins of the contemporary neighbouring dynasties which copied his coins. He has concluded that the coins bearing his name appear to have continued to be minted throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries long after the death of Gāṅgeyadeva. Gāṅgeyadeva assumed the title of Vikramāditya and seems to have initiated this type in imitation of the Gupta coins.

He may have been personally devoted to the goddess and named his son as Lakshmīkarna. It is also notable that though the Kalachuri kings were Śaivas, the seals accompanying their land-grants have the figure of Lakshmi with an elephant on either side. The type initiated by Gāṅgeyadeva was imitated by others also.

2.4 Coins of early mediaeval dynasties

a Coins of the Chandellas:

Lakshmīkarna had occupied the Chandella dominions for some time. Seated Lakshmi type coins of Gāṅgeyadeva may have come in circulation in that territory at that time. When the Chandella king Kīrtivarman succeeded in driving away the Kalachuris, he might have adopted this type to proclaim his victory. MacDowall suggests that his coins were copied from type 4 of Gāṅgeyadeva. Sallakshana (Hallakshana on coins) continued this type but debased the gold. On his copper coins, however, he has replaced the figure of Lakshmi with that of Hanumān with a canopy. Though his successors Jayavarman and Prithivivarman and consequently others also adopted Hanumān type on their copper coins yet they adopted the usual figure of Lakshmi, though comparatively rudely executed than before, as is evident from the gold coins of Madanavarman, Paramardi, Trailokyavarman, Viravarman, etc.

b Chāhamānas:

King Ajayadeva was perhaps the first Chāhamāna ruler to issue coins. Silver and copper coins bearing the legend Śrī-Ajayadeva in bold characters on the obverse and seated goddess on the reverse are available in plenty. The Prithvirājavijaya of Jayānaka states that Ajayadeva filled the world with rūpakas (silver coins). The same text refers to his queen Somalekhā who used to strike new coins everyday. Her coins bearing her name as Śrī-Somaladevi are also aplenty. The name Somaladevi figures in the Bijolia inscription also. According to a Chāhamāna inscription, she committed sati in VS 1189 (=CE 1132) at the death of her husband. She issued Indo-Sassanian bust type (silver), elephant type and horseman type

coins, mostly in copper and potin (alloy of copper with baser material). These coins have been picked up in good numbers from Pallu, Pandusar, Dhanasia, etc. in district Ganganagar of Rajasthan.

Recently some gold coins have come to light which show the legend Śrīmad=Vigraharājadeva in two or three lines on the obverse and the figure of Śrī-Rāma (labeled) with raised right hand and holding a stung bow in the left on the reverse. These have been attributed to Vigraharāja IV (CE 1153-63) of the Chāhamāna dynasty.

We have already referred to the Bull/Horseman type coins of Someśvara and Prithvirāja Chauhan above. The legend above the recumbent bull on the reverse is read as Asāvārī Śrī-Sāmantadeva. Smith, and following him Thomas also, took it to stand for Durgā but the word seems to be nearer to Āśāpurī mentioned in the Prithvirājavijaya as the tutelary deity of the Chāhamānas protecting the Salt Lake in Śākambharī (Sambhar). The type was continued by Prithvirāja with his name as Śrī-Prithvirājadeva on the obverse, other details being the same. Some of his coins contain the legend Śrī Mahamada Sāme in place of Asāvārī Śrī-Sāmantadeva. Cunningham suggested that these coins were issued during CE 1191-93 when Prithvirāja ruled as a tributary of his Muslim adversary. This, however, is quite controversial.

It may also be mentioned here that the Chauhan dynasty of Patna founded in the beginning of the thirteenth century by king Rāmaḍeva (C. 1212-71) did not follow the tradition and struck gold coins with lion and conch on the obverse.

c Dynasties Adopting Bull/Horseman and Seated Goddess types

We have noted above that some Tomara and Chauhan rulers also adopted Bull/Horseman type of Sāmantadeva for their coins. Some rulers of these dynasties adopted the Lakshmī type also. Coins of the Chāhamān king Ajayadeva show the legend Śrī-Ajayapāladeva in bold characters in three lines on the obverse with the figure of four-armed seated Lakshmī on the reverse. Kumārapāladeva (CE 1019-49) issued Lakshmī type coins but Anagapāladeva reverted to the Bull/Horseman type and discontinued the goddess type. Mahipāla (CE 1103-28) adopted both the types. Muhammad bin Sam also struck in both these types. Lallanji Gopal regards these coins to belong to the Yadu dynasty of Bharatpur and not the Tomaras of Delhi. M.C. Joshi has suggested that Sallakshanapāla, Anagapāla and Mahipāla who issued Bull/Horseman type coins were the Tomaras and Ajayapāladeva, Kumārapāladeva and Mahipāladeva who issued seated goddess type coins were not Tomaras. Geographical location and the numismatic influence seem to be the main consideration of Joshi but numismatic influence transcends geographical boundaries. The Gāhāvalās also adopted the Lakshmī

type and this might have influenced the Tomara coinage. There is, however, no doubt that the Bull/Horseman and Lakshmī types were the dominant coin-types of the northwest and central India respectively. Banerji identifies Mahīpāla with the Gurjara-Pratihāra ruler, but the Gurjara-Pratihāra coins belong to Indo-Sassanian type as seen above. This identification poses chronological difficulty also.

In the Gāhāḍavāla dynasty only Madanapāla and his son Govindachandra issued coins, the former of the Bull/Horseman type in silver and copper and the latter with seated goddess in all metals. The Chāhamānas rulers also adopted these types as noted above, but only in silver and copper.

Though most of the coins of the early medieval period belong to the above-mentioned types, yet there are some others noticed in case of some other minor dynasties and regions.

d Dynasties adapting

Hanumān Type and Lion Attacking Elephant Type

Coins of the Kalachuris of Ratanapur: We have referred to the Hanumān type copper coins of the Chandella rulers like Jayavarman, Prithivīvarman, etc. It was believed that the Kalachuri king Jājalladeva of the Ratanapur branch, after forming an alliance with the Chandella king Śallakṣhanavarman, started his Hanumān type coins by slightly varying the type found on the coins of the Chandella king, but with the discovery of the Dhanpur (Bilaspur) hoard coins of this type seem to have been struck earlier by Kaliṅgarāja or Kamalarāja or both though they acknowledged the suzerainty of the main branch of the Kalachuris. So it is likely that Chandella Jayavarman adopted the Flying Hanumān type from the Kalachuri coins.

The Ratanapur branch of the Kalachuris has several kings named Jājalladeva, Prithivīdeva or Ratnadeva and it is very difficult to distinguish them and no final conclusion has been reached yet.

The gold coins of Jājalladeva show on the obverse the legend Śrīmaj-Jājalladeva in two or three lines within dotted border, and on the reverse a lion with up curled tail to right attacking an elephant. B.N. Nath and V.V. Mirashi suggest that this type was introduced by Jājalladeva I to symbolize his victory over the Gaṅgas who were known as Gajapatis or Gajādhisās (Lords of elephants). The fragmentary legends on some coins of this type, however, make it likely that these coins may have been issued even by some earlier ruler/s.

All known copper coins of Ratnadeva with the legend Śrī-Ratnadeva in two lines on the obverse show lion to right attacking an elephant or lion to right with upraised tail or possibly

the debased figure of a lion. No Hanumān type coin of Ranadeva is known as yet. The obverse of the gold, silver and copper coins of Śrīmat-Prithvideva have the legend in two lines and the reverse of the gold coins shows the lion attacking the elephant, the reverse of the silver coins some shapeless object, probably a lion, and that of the copper coins has lion as well as Hanumān. There are several varieties and sub-varieties showing four-armed Hanumān holding mace and the mountain in the upper hands and two demons in the lower pair of hands; Hanumān on right with a demon on the left; Hanumān to left with an attendant on right and trampling a demon on the left; etc. Pratāpamalla was the last ruler of the dynasty to issue coins. Besides the lion attacking the elephant type, he may have issued the seated goddess type also but the device is not very clear on the available specimen. Two-handed Hanumān is earlier than the four-armed one and this sometimes also provides a clue to distinguish and date some rulers of this dynasty.

e Cow-Suckling-Calf Type

Two gold coins showing on the obverse cow suckling a calf and the legend Śrī-Vatsadāmanārāyaṇa in the characters of about eighth century along the edge and Viṣṇu in his Varāha incarnation trampling the demon on the reverse were noticed by Rapson and Allan. Mirashi attributes them to king Vatsadāman of the Śūrasena dynasty, whose princes were ruling over Kaman and Bayana during the eighth century. Whether the device of cow suckling the calf has been adopted from the name of the ruler or from the earlier stone reliefs of Mathura is not certain.

G.H. Ojha had published a coin of this type with the legend Śrī-Voppa on the obverse. Richard Burn noticed a similar coin with the legend Śrī-Vopparāja. Altekar identified Voppa with Bappa Rawal of the Guhila dynasty of Mewar, but Mewar had altogether different types of coins in the eighth century. So it is more likely that Vopparāja was king Vappuka of the Śūrasena dynasty mentioned in the Bayana inscription of VS 1012 (= CE 955). On one gold coin of this type the name on the obverse is found to be Śrī-Kasava, most likely standing for a king named Keśava. The name, however, does not figure in the dynastic lists of the Śūrasenas or the Guhilas of Mewar.

In the south, the Cholas, Pallavas, Pāṇdyas and the Hoysalas were ruling and some of their rulers were issuing their coins. In the east, the first series of silver coins of Harikela was introduced in about the eighth century, as evidenced from the excavations at Mainamati (Bangladesh). The Deva rulers also introduced the Paṭṭikeda specie under the influence of the Harikela coinage, the second series of which was introduced by the Chandras who succeeded the Pālas in the area. This series along with others remained in circulation up to the 12th-13th century CE.

The Śilāhāras inscriptions of Maharashtra-Karnataka dated in the Śaka era and ranging between 765 and 1182 mention more than a dozen terms for coins: drama, porutha drama, dināra, gadyāna(ka), kumāragadyānaka, suvarṇa, nishka, hāga, hoga/honnu, aḍḍa, paṇa, viṃśopaka, solasa, etc. A Śilāhāra coin of Chittarāja was noticed by Rapson in 1900. Excavations at Brahmapuri during 1945-46 yielded 'the first gold coin of the Kolhāpur branch of the Śilāhāras. Now we know many other coins. The device of trisūla found on the obverse may be compared with the trident on some plates and Garuḍa, which figures on the reverse, was the insignia of the Śilāhāras. In fabric the coins of the Śilāhāras (stratigraphically dated to post-tenth century) are comparable to the coins of the Kadamba rulers of Goa. Gold pagodas of Chittarāja (c. CE 1147-87) shows the Nāgarī legend in bold characters on the obverse and a lion walking left, with sun and moon symbols above and a short inscription in front. Some coins bear dates also and specimens with trilingual legends in Nāgarī, Kanarese and Tamil are also known. Gold pagodas of the Kalchuris of Kalyāna, Kadambas of Hangal, Hoysalas of Dorasamudra, Kāyasthas of Kurnool, Pāṇḍya Dhanāñjaya, Telugu Chōlas, Eastern and Western Gāngas, Gāngas of Talkad, Chōlas of Tanjore (Rājendra, CE 1012-44), etc. etc. are also known now.

All these data together with the literary evidence does not betray any paucity of coins in the medieval India but it has to be conceded that evidence of their use in international trade is still a desideratum. These medieval coins are limited in their varieties and but for a few exceptions generally show lack of excellence also.

2.6 Summary

Regarding the coinage of the medieval period, there has been a controversy amongst scholars regarding their paucity because of the decline in the international trade. Prof. R.S. Sharma postulated a great paucity of coins, particularly gold and to a lesser extent of silver and copper also, and sought the reason of this paucity in the absence of an all-India empire and lack of international trade. Prof. B.N. Mukherjee and others have tried to bring out data regarding the actual finds and literary references to the use of coinage, even in international trade, on the other hand. A general survey of the medieval coinages of India, however, shows that there were only a few popular types like the Indo-Sassanian, King and Seated Goddess, Bull/Horseman, Seated Goddess, etc. but there was no paucity of coins. Even gold coins were issued in good numbers. Definite evidence of the use of coins in international trade, however, though evinced in literature, is actually lacking still.

2.7 Check Your Progress

1. What do you understand by medievalism?
2. When does the medieval period start?
3. What political developments took place in the medieval period?
4. Do you agree that there was a paucity of coins in the medieval period?
5. How is gold coinage related to international trade?
6. What were the dominant coin-types of the medieval period?

2.8 Activities

1. Prepare an inventory of the rulers of medieval Indian dynasties who issued coins.

2.9 References for Further Reading

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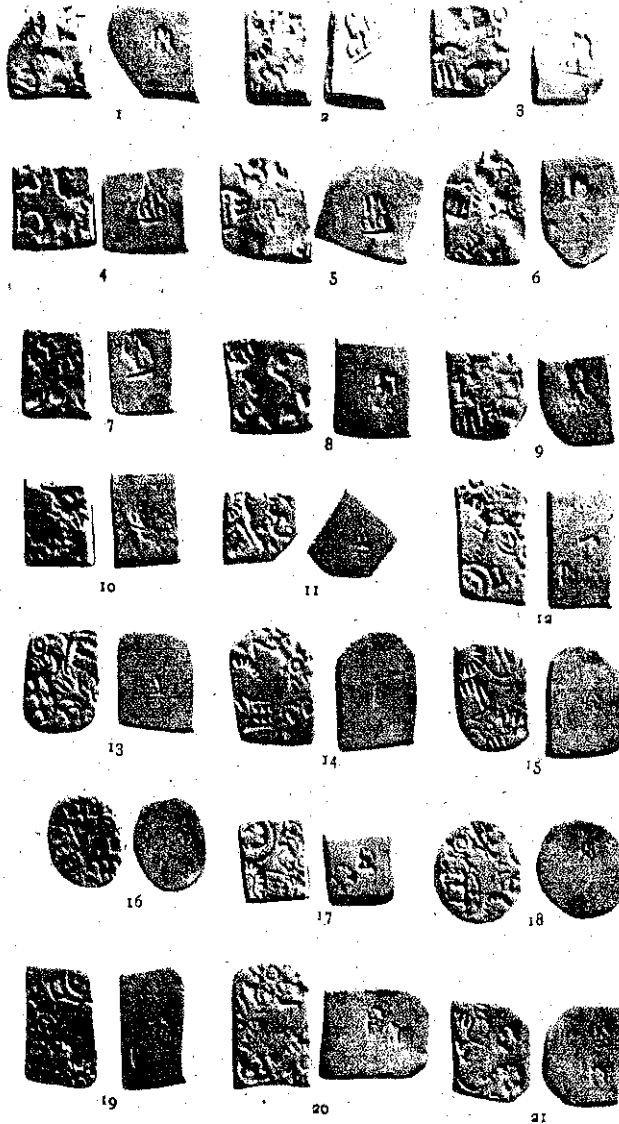
ASOKAN BRAHMI

असोक के अभिलेखों में प्रयुक्त अक्षर-आकार
(पूर्वीय महाभाषी युग पूर्व)

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PUNCH MARKED SILVER COINS



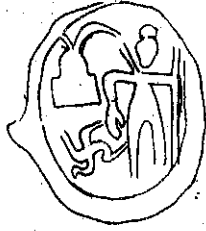
PUNCH-MARKED SILVER

Courtesy - Johan Allan

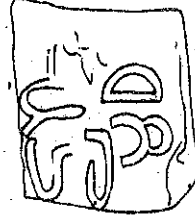
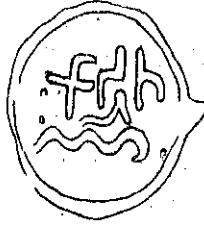
TRIBAL COINS AND
CITY COINS.

IKADA

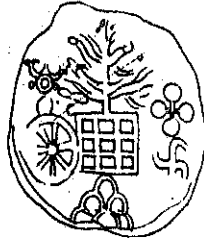
ERAN



1



2



3



KAUSAMBI



5



4



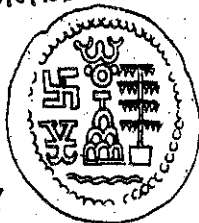
6



KUNINDA



7



MATHURA

8

Tribal Coins

Courtesy - Prof. Shriram Goyal

INDO GREEK COINS - MENANDER



Courtesy - Prof. Shriram Goyal

COINS OF SAMUDRAGUPTA

समुद्रगुप्त की मुद्राएं



४. शिवगुप्त-सौमी



५. कुमार-सौमी



६. अश्वमेध-सौमी

समुद्रगुप्त की मुद्राएं



७. शिवगुप्त-सौमी

Courtesy - Ram Prakash Ojha

COINS OF CHANDRAGUPTA -II

चन्द्रगुप्त द्वितीय की मुद्राएं



१. परिकर-हैली



२. वनूपमारी-गैली

चन्द्रगुप्त द्वितीय की मुद्राएं



३. वासुदेव-गैली



४. शिव-गैली



५. विद् हनुमन्-गैली

Courtesy - Ram Prakash Ojha

COINS OF KUMARGUPTA

कुमारगुप्त की मुद्राएँ



१. मारामोही-शैली



२. बभ्रुवर्मा-शैली



३. मण्ड-शैली

COINS OF SKANDGUPTA

स्कान्द गुप्त की मुद्राएँ



१. मनुज-बाल-शैली



२. हमाट्ट एवं कन्वी-शैली



SILVER COIN
३. रोम मुद्राएँ

Courtesy - Ram Prakash Ojha
PRACHINA SIKKE
(ANCIENT COINS)



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