



5

FROM JANAPADAS TO EMPIRE

In the last chapter we studied how later Vedic people started agriculture in the Ganga basin and settled down in permanent villages. In this chapter, we will discuss how increased agricultural activity and settled life led to the rise of sixteen *Mahajanapadas* (large territorial states) in north India in sixth century BC. We will also examine the factors, which enabled Magadh one of these states to defeat all others to rise to the status of an empire later under the Mauryas. The Mauryan period was one of great economic and cultural progress. However, the Mauryan Empire collapsed within fifty years of the death of Ashoka. We will analyse the factors responsible for this decline. This period (6th century BC) is also known for the rise of many new religions like Buddhism and Jainism. We will be looking at the factors responsible for the emergence of these religions and also inform you about their main doctrines.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

- explain the material and social factors (e.g. growth of agriculture and new social classes), which became the basis for the rise of *Mahajanapada* and the new religions in the sixth century BC;
- analyse the doctrine, patronage, spread and impact of Buddhism and Jainism;
- trace the growth of Indian polity from smaller states to empires and list the sixteen *Mahajanapadas*;
- examine the role of Ashoka in the consolidation of the empire through his policy of *Dhamma*;
- recognise the main features— administration, economy, society and art under the Mauryas and
- Identify the causes of the decline of the Mauryan empire.

5.1 THE EMERGENCE OF NEW RELIGIONS

In this period, the centre of economic and political activity shifted from Haryana and western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar, which had more rainfall and better fertility of land. As it was now easier to exploit the iron ore resources of Bihar and adjoining regions, people started using more and more iron tools and ploughshare to clear thick forest cover and cultivate the hard soil of this area.

**Notes**

The evidence of the growth of agriculture comes from the archaeological and literary sources of this period. In fact, a ploughshare dated to around 500 BC has been found from Jakhera in Etah district in western U.P. Many other important pieces of evidence of the use of iron in this period come from Rajghat, Kaushambi, Vaishali and Sonpur. The Buddhist texts tell us how cultivation of paddy, sugarcane and mustard required utmost care and several rounds of ploughing. Expansion of agriculture resulted in improved food supply and helped in the development of craft production, trade and urban centres.

The sixth century BC is known as an era of 'Second Urbanisation' in the Indian Subcontinent. After the decline of the Harappan Towns urban centres now emerge again after a gap of more than a thousand years. However, this time towns developed in the middle Ganga basin and not in the Indus plain. It is said that more than sixty towns and cities such as Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Sravasti, Varanasi, Vaishali, Champa, Kaushambi and Ujjaini developed between 600 and 300 BC. These cities became centre of craft production and trade, and were inhabited by a large number of artisans and merchants. The goods produced by artisans like textile, silk, jewellery, pottery etc, were carried by merchants to other towns. Varanasi was a major centre of trade connected with Sravasti and Kaushambi. Sravasti was also connected with Vaishali through Kapilavastu and Kusinara. *Jataka* stories tell us that traders travelled from Magadh and Kosala via Mathura to Taxila. Mathura was the transit point for travel to Ujjain and coastal areas of Gujarat also.

Development of trade is reflected in the discovery of thousands of coins known as punch marked coins (PMC). Various kind of marks such as crescent, fish, trees, hill etc. are punched on these coins, they are therefore called Punched Marked Coins. Numismatists have identified nearly 550 types of such coins, made mainly of silver and sometimes copper.

The improvement in agriculture and development of trade, money and urbanisation had an impact on the society as well. Indeed, due to these changes traditional equality and brotherhood gave way to inequality and social conflict. People wanted some kind of reprieve from new social problems like violence, cruelty, theft, hatred, and falsehood. Therefore, when new religions such as Jainism and Buddhism preached the concept of peace and social equality, people welcomed it. These religions emphasised that true happiness does not lie in material prosperity or performance of rituals but in charity, frugality, non-violence, and good social conduct. Besides, the general economic progress had led to the rise of vaisyas and other mercantile groups, who wanted better social position than what brahmanas gave them. Therefore, they preferred to patronise non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism through substantial donations.

Buddhism and Jainism were not the only religions, which challenged brahmanical dominance. According to the Buddhist sources, more than 62 sects and philosophies flourished in this period. One of these sects was known as Ajivika, which was founded by Makkhali Goshal. Ajivakas were very popular in Magadh in the third century BC and Mauryan kings donated several caves in the honour of Ajivaka monks.



INTEXT QUESTION 5.1

1. Name those places where the evidence of iron tools during 6th BC has been found.

2. Describe some important trade routes and trade centres of this period.

3. Why were early coins called punch marked coins?

4. Who was the founder of the Ajivika sect?

5.2 DOCTRINES OF JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

Jainism

Vardhaman Mahavira, is regarded as the founder of Jainism. He was born in 599 BC near Vaishali in Bihar. He was twenty-fourth and the last *tirthankara* of Jainism. Jainism believed that the main goal of human life is the purification of soul and attainment of *nirvana*, which means freedom from birth and death. This can be achieved not through rituals and sacrifices but by pursuance of *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*. *Triratna* or three jewels are right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct, which can lead to liberation. Right conduct means observance of five great vows: *ahimsa* (do not commit violence) *satya vachana* (do not speak a lie), *asteya* (do not steal), *brahmacharya* (do not indulge in sexual act) and *aprigraha* (do not acquire property). Householders were expected to observe milder form of the practice of these virtues called *anuvrata* (small vows) in comparison to the monks. So, one can notice that while the Brahmanism was a ritual oriented religion this new faith was conduct-oriented.

The most distinguishing feature of Jainism was the concept of *anekantavada* or *syadavada*. It means that the truth can be viewed from *aneka* or various angles. Another important feature of Jainism was its emphasis on extreme form of penance, austerity, and strict non-violence Perhaps emphasis on strict discipline was one of the reasons why it could not attract the masses in large number. Mahavira used Prakrit language to spread his message. However, just like other religions, Jainism also could not remain united for very long and later divided into two sects called the Digambara (who remain naked) and Svetambara (who wear white clothes).

Buddhism

The founder of Buddhism was Gautama Buddha, who was born in 566 BC at Lumbini, located in the foothills of Nepal. One night he left his palace in search of truth and ultimately attained the true knowledge at Bodhgaya. He then began to be called Buddha or the enlightened one. He delivered his first sermon at Sarnatha near Varanasi. This event is known as *dharma-chakra-pravartana* (turning of the wheel of law). He also established his *samgha* here. He died at the age of 80 in 486 B.C. at Kusinara or Kusinagar near Gorakhpur in eastern UP.

Buddha asked his followers to avoid the two extremes of indulgence in worldly pleasure and the practice of strict abstinence and asceticism. This philosophy of *madhyama marga* or the Middle Path is reflected in all the issues related to Buddhism. The main



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teachings of Buddhism are encapsulated in the basic concept of four noble truths or *arya satya* and eightfold path or *astangika marga*. The first noble truth, Buddha said that suffering (*dukkha*) is the essence of the world and is like an ocean of miseries. Second noble truth is *dukkha samudya* i.e. every suffering has a cause. Third noble truth is *dukkha nirodha* i.e. suffering could be extinguished and fourth *dukkha nirodha gamini pratipada* i.e. there is a path leading to the extinction of *dukkha*. He said that every thing in this world like birth, old age and death leads to suffering. If one wants to get rid of suffering one has to conquer the desire. This removal of desire can be achieved through eight fold path, these are: right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, right self concentration.

Buddha used Pali language spoken by masses to propagate his teachings. Buddha allowed lower varnas and women to join the *sangha*. Four Buddhist councils organised over different periods played a significant role in the propagation of Buddhism. In the fourth council during the reign of Kanishka, Buddhism split into two major sects called Hinayana and Mahayana. Mahayana adopted Sanskrit as its language and started worshipping Buddha in the form of an idol, while Hinayana continued to follow Pali and treated Buddha as a guide.

Buddhism became weak by seventh century AD but the impact of Buddhism can be seen in all spheres of life in Indian history. Buddhist scholars created many literary texts like *Tripitaka*, *Milindapanho*, *Buddhacharita* etc. Buddhism became an inspiration for the promotion of art and architecture, in the form of stupas, rock cut caves and paintings. These can be noticed at Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, Ajanta etc. Buddhism inspired Gandhara and Mathura schools of art. Buddhism by opening its door to all the classes challenged the superiority of Brahmanism and gave better social position to lower castes.



INTEXT QUESTION 5.2

1. What are the three elements of the Jaina doctrine of *triratna*?

2. What are the two sects of Jainism called?

3. Where did Buddha deliver his first sermon?

4. What are the four noble truths and eightfold path in Buddhism?

5. What did Buddha say about *dukkha*?

6. Buddha used which language to preach his words?

7. How are Mahayana and Hinayana different?

8. What are the contributions of Buddhism in field of literature and art?



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5.3 THE SIXTEEN MAHAJANPADAS

The sixth century BC was not only a period of socio-economic and religious development but it also witnessed new political developments. In the later Vedic period, as we have seen earlier, people had started agriculture, which made them settle down at a particular place. These permanent settlements led to foundation of *janapadas* or territorial states under the control of the king. In the sixth century BC the main area of political activity gradually shifted from Western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar. This region was not only fertile on account of better rainfall and river systems but was also closer to iron production centres. The use of better iron tools and weapons enabled some territorial states to become very large and they came to be called *mahajanapadas*. Most of them were situated north of Vindhya, between Bihar in the east to the northwest frontier of the subcontinent. The list of these sixteen *mahajanapadas* is given below.

Table 5.1
The Mahajanpadas

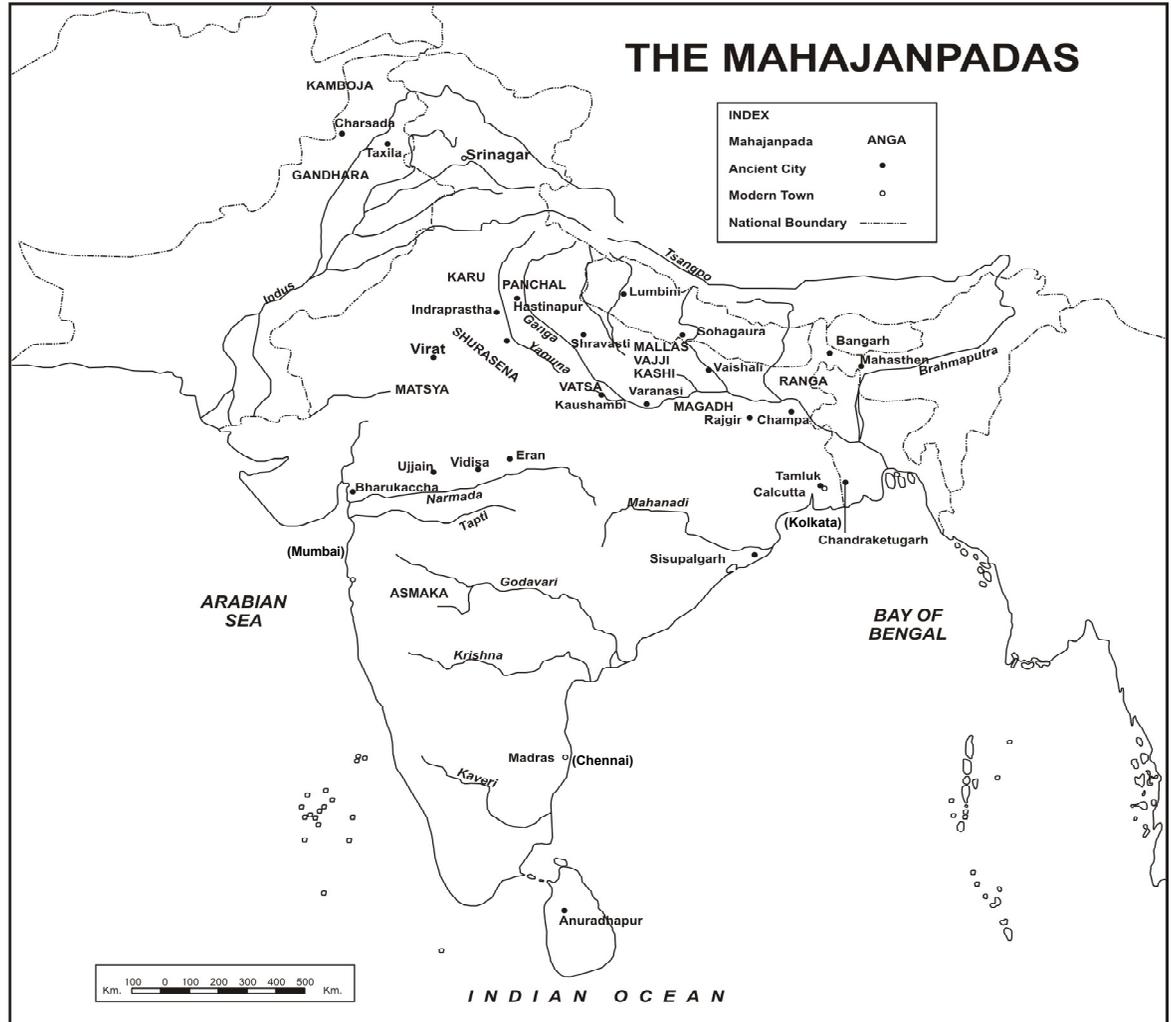
Most of these states were monarchical in nature but some of them, called *ganasangha*, had an oligarchical system of governance. In this system unlike monarchies, where a hereditary king rules, administration was run by an elected king with the help of a large council or assemblies comprising heads of all important clans and families. This system was certainly more democratic than monarchy, though the common man had no participation in the administration. The most important of these

Sl. No.	Mahajanapadas	Capital	Modern location
1	Anga	Champa	Munger and Bhagalpur
2	Magadh	Girivraja / Rajagir	Gaya and Patna
3	Kasi	Kasi	Banaras
4	Vatsa	Kausambi	Allahabad
5	Kosala	Sravasti	Eastern Uttar Pradesh
6	Saurasena	Mathura	Mathura
7	Panchala	Ahichchatra and Kampilya	Western Uttar Pradesh
8	Kuru	Indraprastha	Merrut and S.E. Haryana
9	Matsya	Viratnagar	Jaipur
10	Chedi	Sothivati / Banda	Bundelkhanda
11	Avanti	Ujjain / Mahismati	Madhya Pradesh & Malwa
12	Gandhar	Taxila	Rawalpindi
13	Kamboj	Pooncha	Rajori & Hajra (Kashmir)
14	Asmaka	Pratisthan / Paithan	Bank of Godavari
15	Vajji	Vaishali	Vaishali
16	Malla	Kusinara	Deoria & U.P.



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states was that of Vajjis with their capital at Vaishali, which was ruled by the Lichchhavis. These oligarchies mainly existed in the foothills of the Himalayas. They were gradually defeated and conquered by the Magadhan Empire.



Map 5.1 The Mahajanapadas



INTEXT QUESTION 5.3

1. Name any four mahajanapadas of the sixth century BC.

2. How *Ganasangha* different from monarchies?

3. Which was the most important ganasangha state in the 6th century BC?

**Notes****5.4 THE RISE OF MAGADH**

The political fight among these *mahajanapadas* led ultimately to one of them namely Magadh to emerge as the most powerful state and the centre of a vast empire. The earliest important ruler of Magadh was the king Bimbisara, who ruled for 52 years from 544 BC to 492 BC. He pursued a three-pronged policy, namely, matrimonial alliances, friendship with strong rulers and conquest of weak neighbours to expand the empire. Under the policy of matrimonial alliances, he married the sister of Prasenjit, the king of Kosala. She brought in dowry the territory of Kashi, which yielded a revenue of 1,00,000 coins. The control over Kasi and friendship with Prasenajit allowed Magadh to concentrate on other areas. His other wives were daughters of the chiefs of Lichchavi and Madra (middle Punjab) respectively. He also conquered Anga by defeating its ruler Brahmadata. Anga and specially its capital Champa were important for the inland and maritime trade. Thus, Kashi and conquest of Anga became the launching pad for the expansion of Magadh. He was a contemporary of both Buddha and Mahavira and paid equal respect to them. It seems that he was either killed or forced to commit suicide by his son Ajatasatru, who was eager to take over the throne himself.

Ajatasatru was an aggressive person and first came into conflict with his maternal uncle Prasenajit, who was aggrieved by the treatment meted out to Bimbisara. He asked Ajatasatru to return the territory of Kasi, which was given to his mother in dowry. Ajatasatru refused and it was only after a fierce battle Prasenajit agreed to leave Kasi with Magadh. Similarly he fought with his maternal grandfather Chetak, the chief of Vaishali and after 16 long years of war Ajatasatru succeeded in breaking the might of Vaishali. Therefore, he not only retained Kasi, but also added Vaishali to Magadh.

Ajatasatru was succeeded by Udayin and his main contribution was building a fort on the confluence of river Ganga and river Son at Pataliputra or Patna. It was strategically a significant step as this site was not only centrally located but also allowed easy movement of merchant and soldiers.

Udayin was succeeded by the dynasty of Shishunaga. The most important achievement of Shishunaga was to defeat Avanti (Malwa) and make it a part of Magadh. The successor of Sisunaga was his son Kalashoka. It was during his rule the second Buddhist council was held.

The Shishunaga dynasty was succeeded by the kings of the Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma Nanda was its most important ruler. According to the Brahmanical texts he belonged to a low caste or at least a non-kshatriya caste. He possessed a large army and added Kalinga to his empire. The last Nanda king was Dhannanand. He is believed to be an arrogant and oppressive ruler who imposed heavy taxes on the common man. It made them quite unpopular among the masses and ultimately Chandragupta took advantage of this public resentment and uprooted the Nanda rule and set up the Mauryan Empire.

The question is how Magadh could establish gradually its dominance over all other states of the period. Magadh certainly benefited from numerous able and ambitious rulers, but its strength was based primarily on certain geographical factors. Its earlier capital Girivraja or Rajagir was surrounded by five hills, which helped it to provide natural fortification. Secondly, its fertile river plain provided a vast amount of agricultural surplus, which was essential for raising a vast standing army. Forests in southern areas gave it timber and elephants. Magadh had another advantage in its control over iron deposits found very near south Bihar. Such access to iron made Magadhan weapons far superior and agriculture tools more productive. It was this material background which helped Magadh to become more powerful than other *mahajanapadas*.



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INTEXT QUESTION 5.4

1. What policies were adopted by Bimbisara for the expansion of his kingdom?

2. How did geographical factors play an important role in the rise of Magadh?

3. What was the name of the old capital of Magadh?

4. Name two rulers with whom Ajatsatru fought battles?

5. Who was the most important ruler of the Nanda dynasty?

6. In whose rule was the second Buddahist council held?

5.4 RISE OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

Mauryan Sources

The establishment of Mauryan dynasty by Chandragupta Maurya in 321 B.C. marks a turning point in the history of early India. For the first time now, we have at our disposal a number of sources which throw better light on the history of this period. The edicts issued by Ashoka are the most important source of information and there are at least 44 such edicts which have been found inscribed on rocks and pillars. These are composed mostly in *Prakrit* language and are written in *Brahmi* script in most of the areas. These inscriptions are also the first evidence of writing in ancient India. As far as archaeological sources are concerned, punch-marked coins, remains of the palace of Ashoka at Kumharar and several pieces of sculptures are important.

The most important literary sources are *Arthasastra* of Kautilya and *Indica* of Megasthenes. *Arthasastra* is a text on statecraft, which gives advice to kings as to how to rule his land and discharge his duties. *Indica* is an account left by a Greek ambassador Megasthenes sent by Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Two Ceylonese

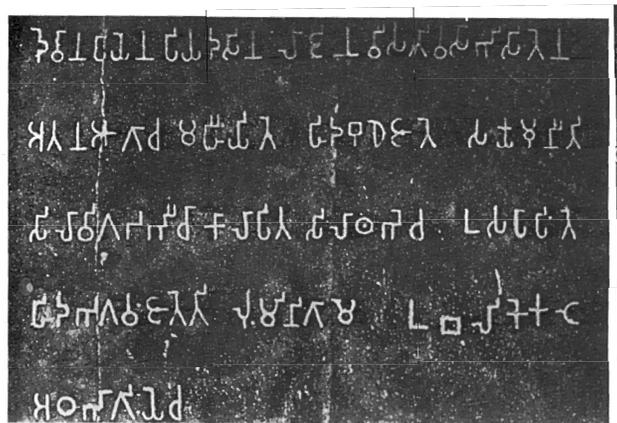


Fig. 5.1 Rummindei Edict

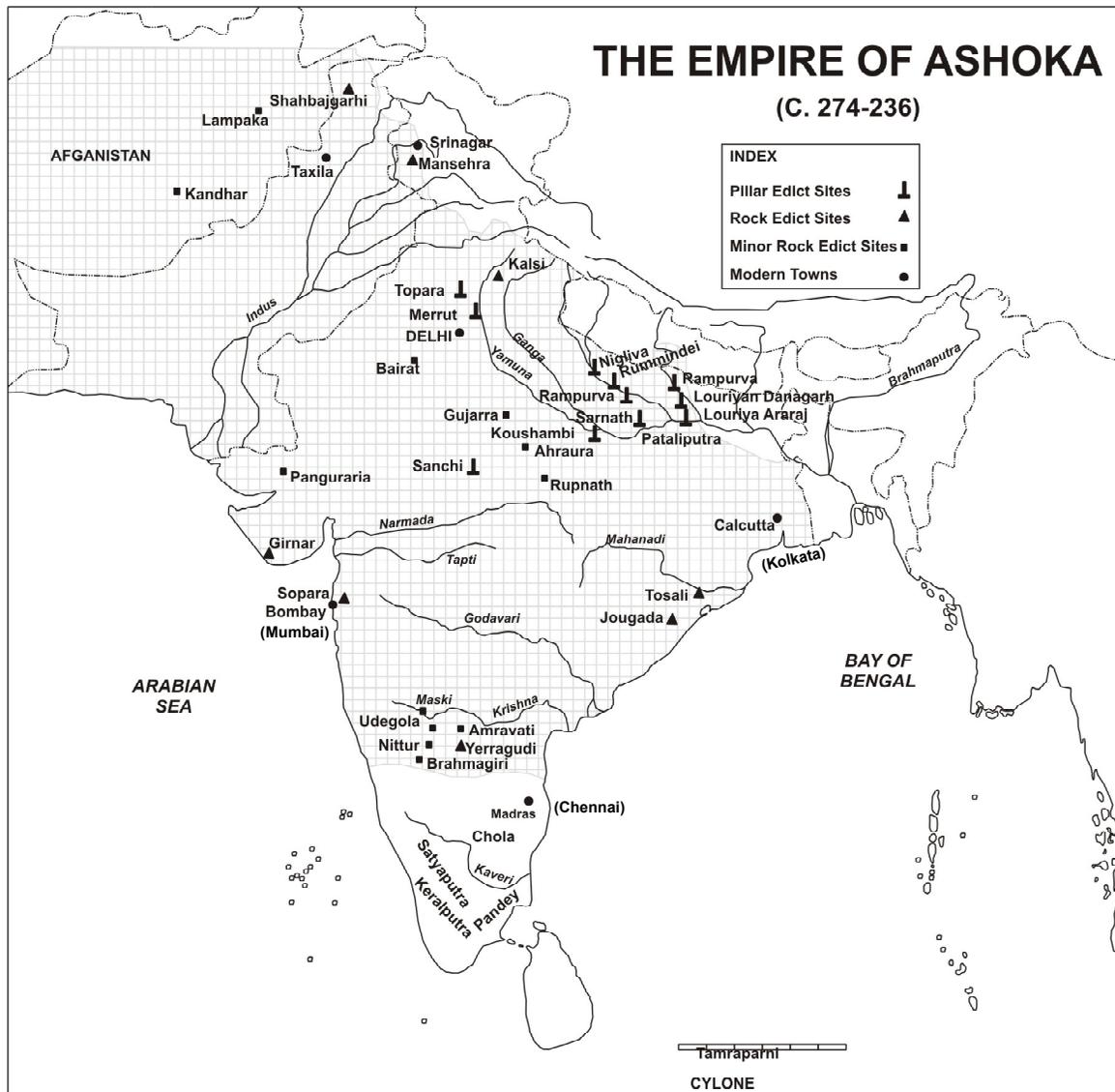


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Buddhist texts called *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* and a play called *Mudrarakshas* written by Visakhadatta are other valuable source books.

Mauryan Dynasty

The founder of the Mauryan dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya (321–297 BC) inherited a large army of the Nandas, which he used to conquer almost whole of north, the north-west, and a large part of the peninsular India. His son Bindusara (297–269BC) succeeded him. He promoted trade and cultural interaction with Greeks, but not much is known about him. Ashoka (269–232BC) succeeded his father Bindusara. According to Buddhist traditions he came to throne after killing his 99 brothers, but such stories cannot be trusted without confirmation from other sources. Ashoka fought a major war with Kalinga around 261 BC in which large number of people were killed or imprisoned. Perhaps this bloodshed moved his heart and he decided to abandon the



INDIAN OCEAN
Map 5.2 The Empire of Ashoka



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policy of military expansion and declared that he would in future favour *dhammaghosha* (drum of *dhamma*) than *bherighosha* (war drum). He spent the rest of his life in promoting and spreading the policy of *Dhamma*. However, his successors could not keep the empire integrated and it completely disappeared after the last king Brihadaratha was assassinated by his military chief Pushyamitra Sunga around 187 BC.



INTEXT QUESTION 5.5

1. What are the important sources for the writing of Mauryan history?

2. Most of Ashokan Edicts are written in which language and script?

3. Who is the author of *Indica*?

4. Who was the last Mauryan king?

5.4 ASHOKA AND HIS DHAMMA

Ashoka is considered as one of the greatest kings in Indian history. He is praised not so much for his militaristic activity as for his policy of *Dhamma*. According to some of scholars Ashoka was a follower of Buddhism and through *Dhamma* he tried to propagate the principles of Buddhism. But this does not seem to be true as *Dhamma* had nothing to do with the propagation of Buddhism. It was a code of conduct or ideal social behaviour common to all religions of the world, which he appealed to his subjects to follow. Although Ashoka himself believed in Buddhism, he never discriminated against other faiths or religions.

A closer look at Asokan edicts illustrates that basic attributes of *Dhamma* included compassion (*daya*), charity (*dana*), truthfulness, purity and gentleness. Pillar Edict III asks subjects to control violence, cruelty, anger and envy. Rock edict I call for a ban on animal sacrifice and social gatherings like *samaj*. The Rock Edict II declares measures to be taken for the construction of hospitals, roads, inns, wells and planting of shade giving trees. Third, Fourth and Twelfth rock edicts ask people to respect parents, relatives, brahmanas and *shramanas*(monks). He also appointed a special type of officials called *dhamma mahamatras*. Their main function was to over see and supervise the peaceful function of the principles of *Dhamma*. Twelfth rock edict is specially important since it says “ the king Piyadassi, the beloved of the gods, respected all sects whether ascetics or householders, and he honours them with gifts and honours of various kinds...let an alien sect also be respected on every occasion.” It shows clearly that neither *Dhamma* was Buddhism nor Ashoka was trying to convert people to Buddhism. However, the question is why did he give so much attention to this policy?

Historians believe that by the later half of Ashoka’s rule, expansion of the empire was almost complete. It was an empire having different cultural, social and religious groups. In order to save the empire from political tensions arising out of these differences there were two ways. He could either increase the size of armed forces to seek military solutions to these conflicts, which might have needed increased taxes and in turn could lead to more resistance. Another alternative was peaceful resolution of



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various conflicts by cementing and welding of divergent groups. Ashoka chose the second alternative in order to promote harmony and peace in his kingdom. Ashoka

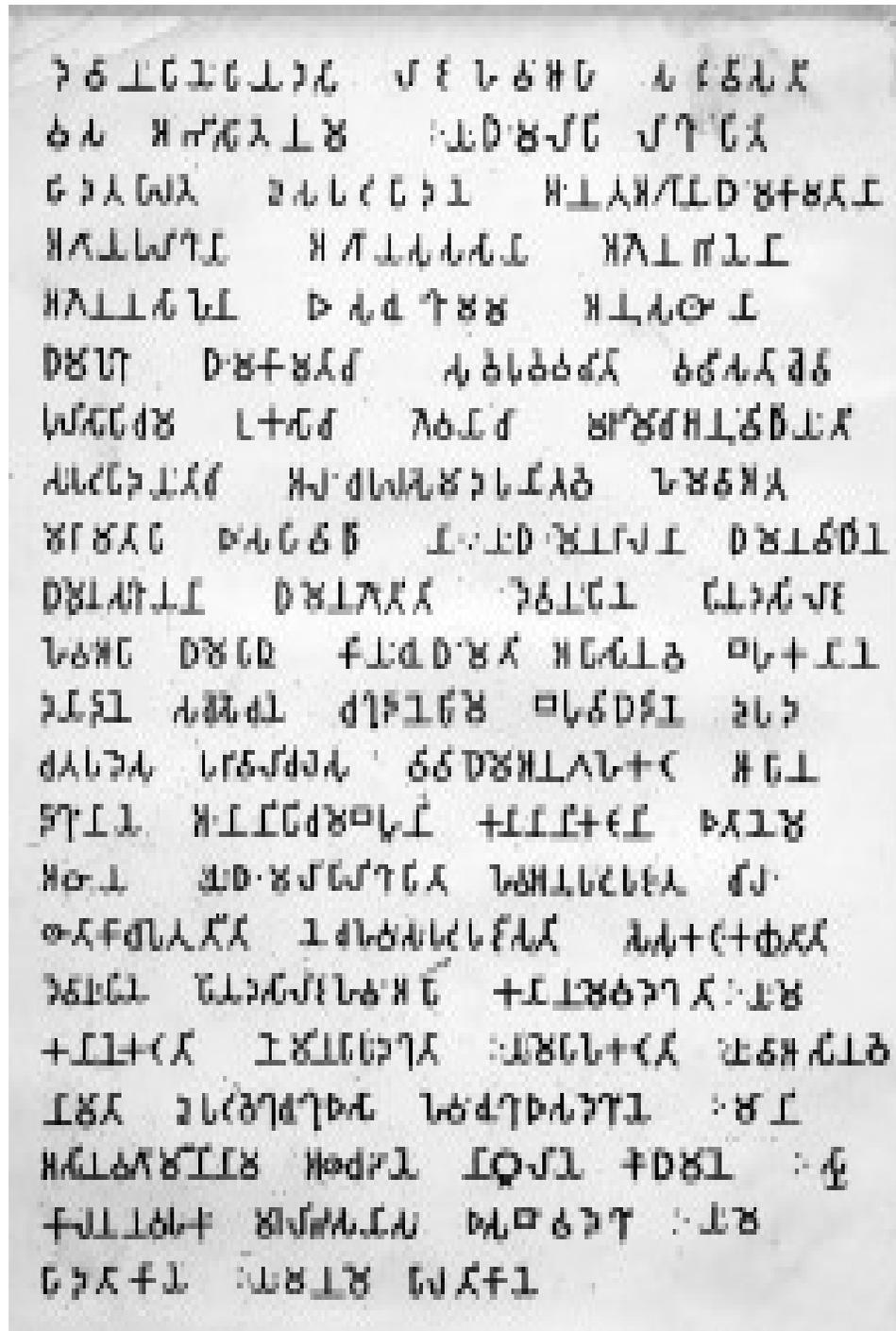


Fig. 5.2 Ashoka's Pillar edict

thus has an important place in Indian history because he was the first king to initiate policies of peace rather than of war and aggression.



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INTEXT QUESTION 5.6

1. What do Ashokan inscriptions tell us about *Dhamma*?

2. What was the attitude of Ashoka towards other religions?

3. What was the function of the *dhammamahamatras*?

5.7 DECLINE OF THE MAURYAS

Mauryas maintained a huge army, a vast bureaucracy and ruled over a large part of the Indian subcontinent. But soon after the death of Ashoka the empire got divided into two parts. While king Dasaratha controlled the eastern part of the empire, the western part was under Samprati. Why did such a large empire decline so early?

Some historians believe that Ashoka under the influence of Buddhism became a pacifist and weakened his army. It is also said that the religious policy of Ashoka antagonised the brahmanas as he banned the animal sacrifice, which affected the economic and religious activities of the brahmanas. Therefore, Pusyamitra, the brahmana chief of the army, killed the last Mauryan king. But this does not seem to be correct as the study of Ashokan inscriptions reveals that Ashoka paid full respect to brahmanas. Moreover it is true that Ashoka followed a policy of peace and harmony, but he did not disband his army and was always prepared to face any eventuality.

One of the main reasons for decline could be the succession of weak rulers. Who could not keep under check those, ministers and officials of far-flung regions, who had become oppressive and acted against the interest of the centre. It is also possible that Mauryan rule may have suffered some kind of economic crisis. It is reflected in the debasement of some coins of that period. This crisis might have developed either due to massive donations and charity or overspending on the imperial administrative system. In fact, the reason of decline was inherent in the structure of the vast centralized empire itself. The successors of Ashoka could not maintain the balance between the centre and the various provincial governors of the empire, and at the first possible opportunity, they made an effort to separate themselves from the centre. However, Mauryan empire though declined had a positive effect of spreading agriculture and iron technology in the different parts of the subcontinent. It facilitated the rise of several regional kingdoms in the post-Mauryan period.



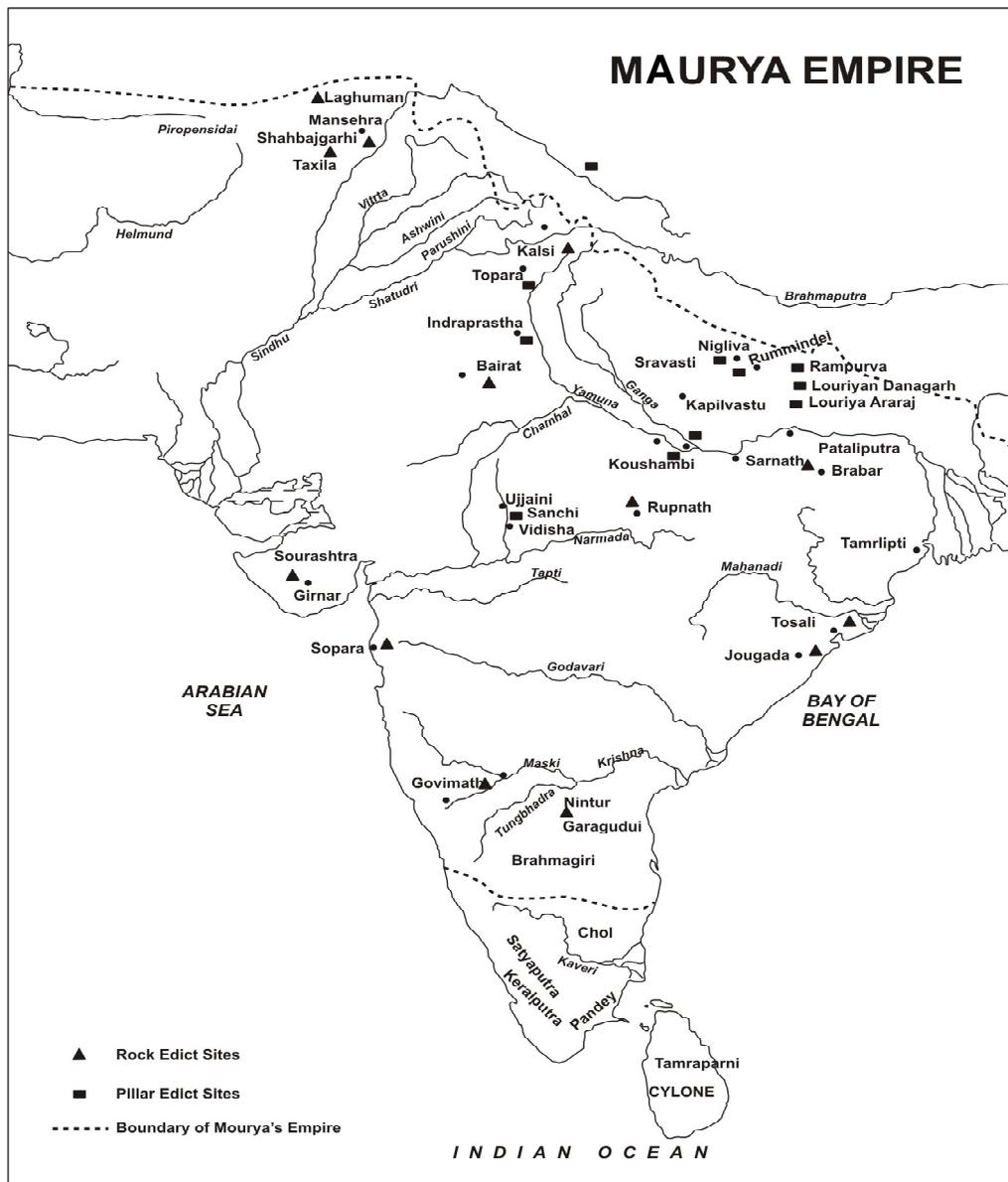
INTEXT QUESTION 5.7

1. Highlight the important reasons for the decline of the Mauryan empire.

2. Who ruled two parts of empire after the death of Ashoka?



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Map 5.3 Maurya Empire

3. What was the impact of Mauryan rule on the subsequent history of India.

5. 8 INDIA UNDER THE MAURYS

Administration

The Mauryas established an elaborate system of administration in which king played the chief role. He was assisted by a council of ministers but the king himself took all final decisions regarding revenue, law and order, war or any other matter related to administration. He was expected to be agile and accessible to his officials at all times. In the one of his rock edicts Ashoka declared that even common people could meet



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him any time. He also declared that all his subjects were like his children and he desired their happiness in this and the other world.

The king appointed a council of ministers called *mantriparishad*. There were various other officials, who helped him perform his duties. These officials were known as *amatyas*, *mahamatras* and *adhayakshas*. *Arthashastra* gives a list of 27 *adhayakshas* or superintendents who were responsible for running various economic departments like agriculture, mining, weaving, trade, etc.

Among all the executive officials *samaharta* was the most important. His responsibility was to supervise collection of taxes from all types of sources. Most of the superintendents mentioned above, functioned on his orders. The Mauryas also employed a large number of spies.

The Mauryans maintained a huge army and according to Greek writer Justin, Chandragupta had 6,00,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants, 8,000 chariots. Although, it seems to be an exaggerated figure but possession of a large army by the Mauryas cannot be doubted. Megasthenes reports that administration of different branches of army was carried out through six committees of five members each. An officer called *antahpala* was responsible for the security of frontier forts.

As far as judicial administration is concerned, the king was the supreme authority, but various civil as well as criminal courts functioned at the local level right from village to province. It seems most of the cases were disposed off at the village level by village elders.

Apart from Magadh with its capital at Patliputra, the Mauryan Empire was divided into four other provinces with capitals at Taxila (northwestern India), Suvarnagiri (southern India), Tosali (eastern India) and Ujjain (western India). These were put under the control of royal princes called *kumara*.

The city administration of Patliputra, according to Megasthenes, was conducted by six committees of five members each. Each committee was assigned different subjects such as industry, foreigners, birth and death registration, trade and market regulations and tax collection to look after. However, we are not sure whether the entire Indian subcontinent had similar type of city administration. It seems that while central province of Magadh was under strict supervision of the king, other far-flung areas might have witnessed varied degree of administrative control.

Economy, Society and Art

The Mauryas as mentioned above maintained a huge standing army and employed a large number of state officials. These soldiers and officials were paid in cash. As the normal taxes were not considered sufficient to meet all the needs of the state and hence the state undertook and regulated numerous economic activities to generate more and more resources.

The mainstay of economy in this period was agriculture. The Mauryan state founded new agricultural settlements to bring virgin land under cultivation. People from overpopulated areas and prisoners of war were brought to these new settlements to work on the fields. These villages belonged to king and were looked after by government official called *sitadhyaksha* or superintendent of agriculture. Besides state farms there were individual land holders who paid a variety of taxes to the state. The importance of irrigation was fully realised and peasants had to pay more tax on irrigated land. The *bali* or land tax was the main item of revenue, levied at the rate of one sixth of the produce. Peasants had to pay many other taxes like *pindakara*, *hiranya*, *bhaga*, *bhoga* etc. The exact nature of which is not clear. Principal crops were various varieties of rice, barley, millet, wheat, sugarcane and most of the pulses, peas and oilseeds, which we know today.



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Trade and urban economy received great impetus under the Mauryas and influenced almost all parts of the empire. The main centres of textile manufacturing were Varanasi, Mathura, Bengal, Gandhara and Ujjain. Mining and metallurgy was another important economic activity. Trade was conducted through land and river routes. Patliputra was also connected through various trade routes with all parts of the subcontinent. The main centre of trade in the northwest was Taxila, which was further connected with central Asian markets. Tamralipti (Tamluk in west Bengal) in the east and Broach in the west were important seaports.

Craft activities were also a major source of revenue to the state. Artisans living in towns had to pay taxes either in cash or kind or work free for the king. Traders and artisans were organised in associations called *srenis* or guilds. The Mauryas were responsible for introduction of iron on a large scale in different parts of the subcontinent. They maintained a monopoly over production of iron, which was in great demand by the army, industry and agriculture. It was done through the official called *loha-adyaksha*.

As far as society is concerned, despite the challenge posed by Buddhism and Jainism the *varna* system continued to exist and brahmanas and kshatriyas dominated the social hierarchy. However, as a result of greater trade and commerce, there was improvement in the social status of vaisyas or trading communities and shudras. Now shudras could be involved in the agricultural and artisanal activities. This period also saw increase in the number of untouchables.

The Mauryan period provides the earliest examples of ancient Indian art and architecture. Megasthenes has described the grandeur of the Mauryan palace at Pataliputra. Some remains of this palace have been found at Kumrhar near Patna. Ashokan pillars at Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh and Sarnath present excellent examples of stone sculptures which developed in this period. Our national emblem comes from the Asokan pillar at Sarnath near Benaras. All these pillars are circular and monolithic, and are made of sand stone found at Chunar, near Mirzapur in U.P. We also find some rock cut architecture like Lomasa Rishi cave in the Barabara hills near Gaya belonging to the Mauryan period. Among several stone and terracotta sculptures of this period, polished stone sculpture of a *chauri*-bearing female known as Didarganj Yakshini is most famous.

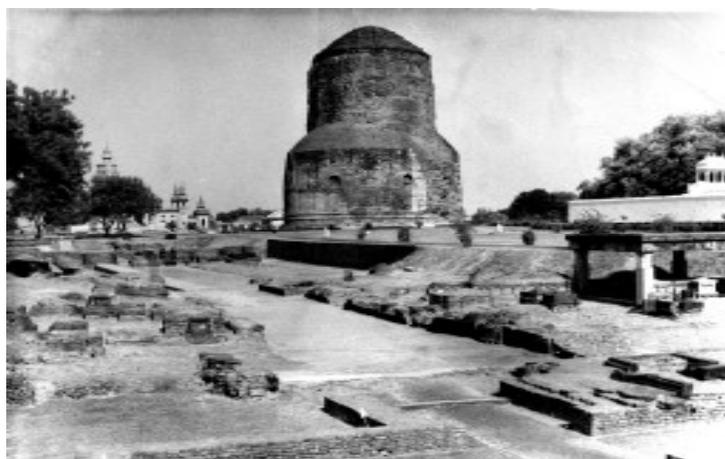
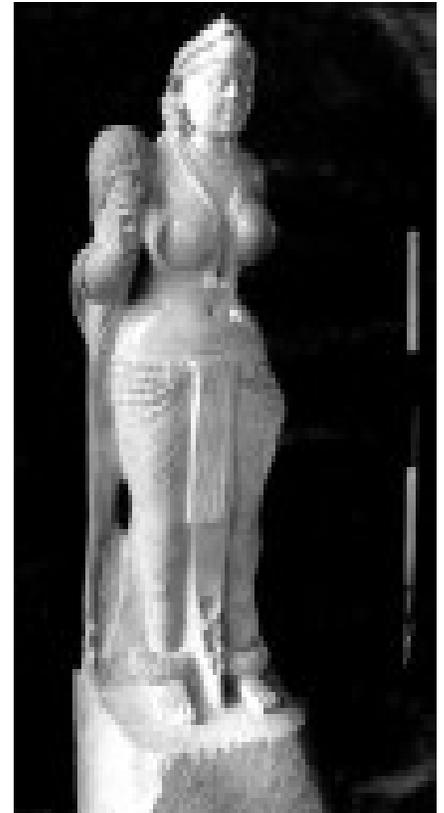


Fig. 5.3 Sarnath Pillar

**Notes***Fig. 5.4 Cave in the Barabar Hills**Fig. 5.5 Didarganj Yakshini***INTEXT QUESTION 5.8**

1. Which Mauryan officer was responsible for the assessment and collection of taxes?

2. Which officer looked after the cultivation of the land owned by the king?

3. What is the name of rock cut cave in the Barabar hills near Gaya?

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The use of iron tools and cattle-power in the fertile middle Ganga plain led to the increase of agricultural productivity and the food supply in the sixth century BC. This development of agriculture resulted in growth of towns, trade and money economy. That is why the sixth century B.C. is also known as a period of 'second urbanisation'. In this period, some non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism responded to the new social realities and argued for a ban on cattle sacrifice, money-lending and urban lifestyle. They advocated better social status for trading communities, who in turn



Notes

patronised these new religions. The main teachings of Jainism are *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*, while Gautam Buddha asked people to follow four noble truths and eight-fold path. The *Janapadas* of earlier times consolidated in this period and resulted in the rise of sixteen *mahajanapadas*. Some *janapadas* followed the non-monarchical system of governance. Ultimately, the utilisation of favourable geographical condition by the ambitious rulers of Magadh resulted in its rise as an empire. Later on Mauryas uprooted the Nanda dynasty and established their rule. They maintained a highly centralised bureaucracy along with a vast army, and administered a large part of the Indian Subcontinent. One of the greatest Indian rulers Ashoka adopted the policy of Dhamma, which was aimed at consolidation of the empire and resolving internal conflicts through peaceful means. After the death of Ashoka the Mauryan Empire declined due to inefficiencies of later rulers and unstable relationship between core and peripheries of the empire.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Why did vaisyas patronise Buddhism and Jainism?
2. What are the main teachings of Jainism and Buddhism?
3. What are the main attributes of Ashoka's policy of Dhamma?
4. Why did Ashoka adopt the policy of Dhamma?
5. What efforts were made the Mauryans to collect more taxes?
6. Describe the contribution of the Mauryan rule in the field of art.



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

5.1

1. Jakhera, Rajghat, Kaushambi, Vaishali and Sonpur
2. See 5.1 para 3
3. See 5.1 para 4
4. Makhali Goshal

5.2

1. Right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct
2. Digambar and Svetambar
3. Saranath
4. See 5.2 para 4
5. See 5.2 para 4
6. Pali
7. See 5.2 para 7
8. See 5.2 para 6

5.3

1. See chart in 5.3
2. See 5.3 para 2

**Notes**

3. Vaishali

5.4

1. See 5.4 para 1
2. See 5.4 para 6
3. Girivraja or Rajgir
4. Prasenajit and Chetak
5. Mahapadmanand
6. Kalashoka

5.5

1. See 5.5 para 1
2. Prakrit and Brahmi
3. Megasthenes
4. Brihadaratha

5.6

1. See para 1
2. See para 2
3. To take care of Brahamans & all other kinds of monks.

5.7

1. See 5.7
2. Dasaratha and Samprati
3. It led to the spread of iron technology and agriculture, which facilitated the rise of several regional kingdoms in India.

5.8

1. Samaharta
2. Sitadhyaksha
3. Lomasa Risi cave, near Gaya

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. See 5.1 para 5
2. See 5.2 para 1 and para 4
3. See 5.6 para 1
4. Rock edict I See 5.6 para 2



5. See 5.8 para 2 & 3 (Under Economy, Society & Art)
6. See 5.8 last para

GLOSSARY

Jataka	-	Collections of Buddhist stories about the previous births of the Buddha
Tirthankara	-	A tradition of prophets in Jainism; literally “ford-maker”
Nirvana	-	Extinction of human desire
Digambara	-	Sky-clad, a sect of Jainism which remains naked
Svetamabara	-	A sect of Jainism whose members are dressed in white cloths
Mahayana	-	A sect of Buddhism which believe in idol worship of Buddha
Hinayana	-	A sect of Buddhism which advocated the adherence to original teachings of Buddha
Samaj	-	Religious and merrymaking congregation of common people
Dhammamahamatta-		Officer appointed by Ashoka to look after his principles of Dhamma in society.
Chauri	-	A hairy fan waved to and fro around a king or a religious object.

Notes

