

UNIT 23 NORTHERN-WESTERN AND NORTHERN INDIA

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
 - 23.1 Introduction
 - 23.2 Sources
 - 23.3 The Sungas
 - 23.4 The Indo-Greeks
 - 23.5 The Sakas
 - 23.6 The Parthians
 - 23.7 The Kushanas
 - 23.8 Local Powers of North India
 - 23.9 Significance of Contacts between Central Asia and North India
 - 23.9.1 Trade and Technology
 - 23.9.2 Material Remains
 - 23.9.3 Polity
 - 23.9.4 Religion and Art Forms
 - 23.10 Let Us Sum Up
 - 23.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
-

23.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to comprehend :

- political events in India from the close of the Mauryan period to about 300 A.D.
 - the assimilation of diverse foreign elements into the mainstream of Indian society.
 - the impact of Central Asian contacts in the fields of trade and technology, religion, art and material remains of that period.
-

23.1 INTRODUCTION

In Block V, you read about the emergence and consolidation of the first empire in India, that of the Mauryas. You read in detail about the political expansion, the polity, the policy of Dhamma as envisaged by Asoka, and finally, the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. You will recall that the final blow to the last of the Mauryan Kings was rendered by Pushyamitra Sunga in about 180 B.C. The period which commenced from about 200 B.C. did not witness a large empire, but it is historically important as one in which there were widespread cultural contacts with Central Asia, and the assimilation of foreign elements into the Indian society. This period witnessed the emergence of a number of political regions in north and north-western India. We will take up for our study some of the more prominent dynasties like the Sungas, the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas. We will also study the cultural contacts in various fields, like trade, technology, art, and religion.

23.2 SOURCES

The political history of this period has to be pieced together by going through different types of sources. For some regions, the Puranic lists of dynasties and rulers become important sources of information. Inscriptional sources are also very important and in some cases, they supplement the information that we get from the **Puranas**.

For the period immediately succeeding the overthrow of the Mauryas scraps of information are found in such texts as: the **Gargi Samhita**, the **Mahabhashya** of Patanjali, the **Divyavadana**, the **Malavikagnimitra** of Kalidasa and the **Harshacharita** of Bana. Evidence of Sunga history comes to us also from the inscriptions from Ayodhya, Vidisa and Bharhut.

In the post-Mauryan period political power did not remain in the hands of one family. Two main trends are seen in this period. One is that in the north west, there was a succession of rulers, first of Greek Origin, then of Saka or Parthian origin and next of Yuch-chi origin. The second trend was that in the major part of northern India minor local ruling families came up. In some areas, we also find **gana-samghas** distributed over a wide area in this period. For all these ruling families, the most important data are provided by the different types of coins minted by them. Coins, with the names of rulers appearing on them, thus become a major source now, but for the political history of this period, this source has to be supplemented by other sources. Cultural contacts with parts of Western Asia but more with Central Asia became regular in this period. So for the north western region some other types of sources become important in this period. For example in addition to coins, inscriptions written in Kharosthi script are found in large numbers in this period in the region of Gandhara and there are many Kharosthi documents found in Central Asia as well. Similarly, there are stray references in Greek and Latin sources to regions of north western India and its rulers. In the Buddhist sources too we find evidence regarding this period. For example, the Pali work **Milinda-Panha** (The questions of Milinda) bears on the **Yavana** King Menander and on Buddhism in this period. The Chinese historical chronicles too contain references to contemporary events in Central Asia, Bactria and north west India. For example, for information on the early history of the Yuch-chis or the Kushanas, we have to depend on the chronicles of early Han and later Han dynasties of China.

23.3 THE SUNGAS

The Sungas, a brahmana family, possibly originally belonged to the region of Ujjain in Western India, where they worked as officials under the Maurya Kings. The founder of the Sunga dynasty was Pushyamitra Sunga who according to tradition, assassinated the last of the Maurya Kings Brihadratha in 180 B.C. This is corroborated by Bana, the Sanskrit prose writer and court poet of Harshvardhana of Kanauj. Pushyamitra appears to have been a keen supporter of Brahmanism and is known to have undertaken the performance of the **asvamedha** or horse sacrifice, a Vedic ritual symbolising royal glory. In the Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva, Pushyamitra is credited with the performance of two horse sacrifices. This is indicative of Pushyamitra's hold over a large territory and also of Brahmanical orthodoxy. Buddhist sources claim that he persecuted the Buddhists. The Buddhist tradition as is preserved in the **Divyavadana** depicts Pushyamitra as a destroyer of Buddhist monasteries and places of worship, particularly those constructed by Asoka. (For further discussion on this read Unit 25 in this Block.)

The **Puranas** assign a reign of 36 years to Pushyamitra, who was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. Very little information has been gathered about his rule. Muladeva appears to be an important King with whom may have started the disintegration of the Sunga dynasty. Some historians have identified him as the King whose coins have been found at Ayodhya and he may be regarded as a predecessor of Dhanadeva described as 'Lord of Kosala' in the Ayodhya inscription. Muladeva has been regarded as the ruler of the independent principality of Kosala. The original Sungas soon came to be confined only to Magadha and the Central Indian territories only. The last Sunga King was Devabhuti. He was the fourth ruler of the line and if we believe Banabhatta, author of **Harsha-Charita** he fell victim to the conspiracy of his brahmana minister Vasudeva. Thus, the Sunga line came to an end around 75 B.C. and although Vasudeva started a new line of rulers, called Kanva, it lasted only four generations.

23.4 THE INDO-GREEKS

From about 200 B.C. a series of movements across the north western borders of the Indian sub-continent took place. Among the first to cross the Hindukush were the Greeks, who ruled Bactria, south of the Oxus river in the area covered by North Afghanistan. Alexander's invasion in north western India did not result in Greece and India coming together in any significant manner. The mingling of the two cultures came about in the second century B.C. through the Greek kings of Bactria who moved into northwest India and came to be called the Indo-Greeks.

After the fall of the Achaemenid rule in Iran and the death of Alexander, Iran and the neighbouring areas passed under the rule of Alexander's generals. Gradually the Greek rulers of Bactria who were originally subordinate to the Seleacids, and the Arsacid rulers of Parthia started asserting their autonomy. The Greek rulers faced a severe threat from the Scythian tribes. With the construction of the Chinese Wall the Scythians could not move towards China and in turn attacked the Greeks and Parthians. Pushed by the Scythian tribes the Bactrian Greeks were forced to move towards India. These invasions had begun by the end of the Mauryan rule and the successors of Asoka were not strong to resist them. From the first half of the second century B.C. the Indo - Greeks occupied a large part of north western India. They also undertook occasional expeditions to the Ganga basin and other parts of the country and they came as far as Panchala, Saketa and Pataliputra.

One of the most famous Indo - Greek rulers was Menander or Milinda. During the period of his rule, the Indo - Greek power extended from the Swat Valley to Punjab as far as the Ravi river. He had his capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot) in Punjab. Menander is best remembered for his conversion to Buddhism by Nagasena, a Buddhist monk and philosopher. Menander asked Nagasena many questions relating to Buddhism. These questions and Nagasena's answers were recorded in the form of a book known as **Milinda - Panha** or **The Questions of Milinda**.

The names of at least thirty Bactrian Greek rulers are known from a large number of coins. Menander's coins have been located as far as Kabul in the north and Mathura near Delhi. The history of the Indo - Greeks has been reconstructed mostly with the help of their coins bearing legends in Greek and later in Kharosthi and Brahmi as well. The evidence is sometimes confusing, as many kings had identical names and the coins of one ruler can be distinguished from those of another only with great difficulty. Influence of Indo - Greek coinage, particularly silver coinage, which was excellent in workmanship is found present in some coin series issued by some local rulers of the period. The nature of the coinage and the wide area in which it circulated suggest wide trade contacts. The Indo - Greeks are also important for their introduction of Hellenistic art features in north-western India which culminated in the Gandhara art style.

23.5 THE SAKAS

The Sakas are referred to also as Scythians. In the Indian context, the sources sometimes mention the Scythians and Parthians together as Saka-Pahlawa. Even from the names of the rulers it is at times impossible to distinguish between a Saka and a Pahlawa. Even so some families of rulers, which were associated with different regions of north-western, northern and western have been distinguished as Saka. The Sakas poured into India through the Bolan Pass and may have first settled in lower Indus region. There are coins and other sources associated with different branches of the Sakas. One branch is believed to have settled in Afghanistan. Another line of the Sakas settled in Punjab with Taxila as the capital. There was another that ruled from Mathura. A fourth branch was that which established itself in Western and Central India from where they continued their rule till about the fourth century A.D.

The Sakas were successful in destroying the Greek suzerainty over Bactria. They belonged to the nomad hordes of Central Asia. The Sakas were forced by another Central Asian tribe, the Yueh - chi to leave their habitat on the Bactrian border and follow the Greeks into India. The Sakas gradually spread their supremacy over the northern and north-western regions of India at the expense of the local Indo - Greek rulers. There are different types of sources for the reconstruction of the Sakas in India. There are references to the people in Greek and Graeco-Roman annals and in early Chinese accounts. Epigraphic and numismatic sources are also useful. The earliest Indian textual reference to the Sakas is perhaps to be found in the Mahabhashya. The Puranic and epic texts also mention the Sakas along with the Kambojas and the Yavanas in the extreme north.

The first Saka King in India was Maues or Moga, who established Saka power in Gandhara. Maues is known from a series of coins and also from inscriptions, one of which contains a date. A dated copper plate inscription discovered in Taxila records the establishment of the relics of Buddha in a Stupa during the period of Maues. Maues was succeeded by Azes who successfully attacked the last of the Greek kings in Northern India, Hippostratos.

India : Century 200 B.C. to 300 A.D.

Although the Sakas established their rule in different parts of the country, it was only in Western India that they could hold power for about four centuries. The most famous of the Saka rulers of Western India was Rudradaman I (C. A. D. 130–152). His sway extended to Sindh, Kutch, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Konkan, the Narmada Valley, Malwa, Kathiawar and Western Deccan. His military achievements, his territories and his many personal qualities are highlighted in the famous Junagadh inscription, written in 150 A.D. This inscription also records in detail the repairs which his officials undertook of the damaged Mauryan dam of Sudarsana Lake in the semi-arid zone of Kathiawar. This lake had been in use for irrigational purposes from the time of the Mauryas. This lengthy inscription is the first major inscription to be written in Sanskrit. It is evident that Rudradaman patronized Sanskrit. After the death of Rudradaman the Sakas of this area continued to rule, despite occasional upsets until the end of the fourth century A.D.

The Sakas along with the Parthians introduced the **Satrap** system of government which was similar to that of the Achaemenid and Seleucid systems in Iran. Under this system the kingdom was divided into provinces each under a military governor called **Mahakshatrapa** (great **Satrap**). Governors with lower status were called **Kshatrapas** (**Satraps**). These governors issued their own inscriptions and also minted their own coins. This is indicative of a more independent status than was otherwise normal in an administrative set-up. The Saka kings used such prestigious titles as 'king of kings' (**rajadhiraja**) in addition to 'great king' (**Maharaja**) which they took over from the Greeks.

23.6 THE PARTHIANS

We have already mentioned that there are references in the ancient Indian Sanskrit texts to the Sakas and the Parthians together as Saka-Pahlawas. The rule of the Sakas and Parthians was simultaneous in different pockets of north western and northern India.

The Parthians originated in Iran and families of Parthian rulers may have moved into Indo-Iranian borderlands and into north-western India as representatives of Parthian rulers. The Sakas of Seistan were in close contact with the Parthians and this is why we find among the Indian Sakas admixture of original Scythian and Iranian Parthian elements.

The most prominent Parthian King was Gondophaes. His rule extended from Kabul to Panjab and possibly included certain Iranian areas of the Parthian empire. Different stages of his coinage show his rise from subordinate to independent status. His name is believed to be associated with that of St. Thomas. There is a tradition which suggests that St. Thomas travelled from Israel and came to the court of Gondophaes. He came to India for the propagation of Christianity.

There is a conspicuous scarcity of silver coins attributed to the Parthians. This might testify to the indifferent economic condition of the Indo-Parthian empire. It has been suggested by some scholars that it is not unlikely that the large number of silver coins that were issued in these regions by their predecessors, the Sakas and the Indo-Greeks, served the needs of the higher currency of the Parthian State in India. They might have been supplemented by coins of lesser value in which a small amount of precious metal was mixed up with comparatively cheap metal.

Abdagases appears to have been the immediate successor of Gondophaes. He was for sometime the subordinate ruler under his uncle as suggested by joint issues of some coins. There are many coins which bear the names of Gondophaes and his nephew Abdagases. The end of the Parthian rule in India is marked by several groups of small coins that were excavated at the Sirkap site of Taxila. The Parthians became assimilated into the Indian society in course of time.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).
 - i) The Sungas were the immediate successors of the Mauryas.
 - ii) The Puranic chronicles are important sources of information for the period between 200 B.C. – 300 A.D.

- iii) The author of **Harshacharita** is Kalidasa.
 - iv) Menander was a Buddhist convert.
 - v) The Junagarh Rock inscription was written in Sanskrit.
- 2) Who were the Sungas? Give an outline of their rule. Answer in 10 lines.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3.) What was the significance of the rule of the Sakas in north west India? Explain in 10 lines.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 4) What is the most important source for the reconstruction of the history between 200 B.C. – 300 A.D. ? Explain in five lines.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

23.7 THE KUSHANAS

We now take up for our study another dynasty, the Kushanas who succeeded the Parthians in the extreme north-west and spread themselves in successive stages in the regions of Northern India. The Kushanas are also referred to as Yueh-chis or Tocharians. They belonged to one of the five clans of the Yueh-chi tribe. They were a nomadic people, originally from the steppes of North Central Asia, living in the vicinity of China. They were responsible for ousting the Sakas in Bactria and also the Parthians in the Gandhara region. The Kushanas first consolidated territories beyond the Indian border. Gradually their authority in India

India : Century 200 B.C.
to 300 A.D.

expanded and came to extend to over lower Indus basin and most of the Gangetic plain down Varanasi. Although their empire lasted for about one century and a little more, their connection with India, their assimilation into Indian society as well as their contribution to Indian culture left a deep impression on the Indian mind. Like the Sakas and Pahlavas, they too are mentioned in Epic, Puranic and other literature. The Kushanas were particularly important as their empire became a meeting point of civilizations of the Mediterranean world, Western Asia, Central Asia, China and India.

We have coins, inscriptions and other sources which provide evidence about two successive dynasties of the Kushanas. The first line was started by Kujula Kadphises who is believed to have united the five tribes of the Yueh-chi and made successful inroads into India, establishing himself in Kabul and Kashmir. Kujula Kadphises minted different types of coins in copper and one type of his coins has a Roman-style male bust on it. Kujula Kadphises was succeeded by Vima Kadphises. Vima introduced a new phase of coinage in India. The practice of issuing gold coins by Indian rulers regularly started with him. He minted different types of gold coins which broadly followed the weight system of Roman gold coins and this system continued, with certain modifications, till the Gupta period. Obviously, Vima's gold coins and copper coins indicate further intensification of contact with the Roman world of the time.

The Kadphises rulers were succeeded by Kanishka I, who is the best known Kushana ruler in Indian history, particularly because of his association with Buddhism. The relationship between the first two kings (Kadphises) and Kanishka is shrouded in mystery, but he too was of Central Asian origin. He may not have been directly related to the first two kings. The Kushanas reached the zenith of their power under Kanishka I. His period is historically significant for general cultural development in Northern India as well as for the intermingling of peoples of different geographical regions.

The accession of Kanishka I to the throne has been variously dated somewhere between A.D. 78-144 and sometimes even later. An era with its initial date in A.D. 78 has popularly come to be regarded as the Saka Era and this date seems to be the most likely date for Kanishka's accession. The Kushana empire at its peak extended to Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh and to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Mathura appears to have been the second capital city, the first being at Purushapura near modern Peshawar. At Purushapura, Kanishka erected a monastery and a huge **Stupa**.

Kanishka I is an important figure in the history of Buddhism as being one of its great patrons. He sponsored the fourth Buddhist council during his reign to discuss matters relating to Buddhist theology and doctrine. The doctrines of the Mahayana form of Buddhism were finalized at the council. Missionary activity was given an impetus and during his period Buddhist monks started travelling to Central Asia and to China. Kanishka was also a patron of art and Sanskrit literature.

The successors of Kanishka I continued to rule for over a century, but Kushana power gradually declined. Some of the rulers used very Indian names such as Vasudeva. The Kushana empire in Afghanistan and in the region west of the Indus was superseded in the mid-third century A.D. by the Sassanian power which began in Iran. Peshawar and Taxila were lost to the Sassanians and the Kushanas were reduced to the position of subordinates of these rulers.

23.8 LOCAL POWERS OF NORTH INDIA

We have so far sketched the history of the prominent dynasties that ruled northern and north western India between 200 B.C. - 300 A.D. It may be pointed out that simultaneously with major powers there were many pockets of local dynasties and powers that ruled for varying lengths of time. We shall make a brief reference to them here.

We have already referred to the Kanvas or the Kanvayanas. Their rule was founded by Vasudeva after the Sungas. Their power was shortlived and perhaps confined only to Magadha. This line of rulers is mentioned in the **Puranas**. Some types of coins may have been minted by rulers of this family.

Further west, in the upper Ganga Yamuna basin, a number of local families came to power and coins provide us with names of numerous rulers who minted them. Thus numismatic evidence indicates that independent principalities came into existence at Ayodhya, Kausambi, Mathura and Panchala almost simultaneously.

The Punjab, which was perhaps a part of the Sunga territories during the reign of Pushyamitra was lost to his successors. The Greeks occupied the area as far as Ravi. Taking advantage of the weakness of the later Sungas and on the strength of their economic prosperity, some of the Kshatriya tribes living between the Ravi and the Yamuna asserted their autonomy. Some of them were the

- Audumbaras who occupied the land between the upper courses of Ravi and the Beas,
- Kunindas who ruled the territory between the upper courses of the Beas and the Yamuna along the foothills of the Siwalik ranges.
- Trigartas who ruled the plain country between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej,
- Yaudheyas who were famous as warriors and ruled the territory between Sutlej and Yamuna and parts of eastern Rajasthan,
- Arjunayanas, Malavas and Sibis distributed in different parts of Rajasthan.

Another region which came into prominence now was Kalinga in Orissa. You will recall that Kalinga was reconquered by Asoka from the local power although we do not know who Asoka's contemporary local ruler was. However, in the post-Maurya period we know of a local line of rulers named Mahameghavahana. The Mahameghavahanas were descended from the ancient line of the Chedis. Kharavela, the third ruler of this line, is known from his Hathigumpha inscription which was engraved on the Udayagiri hills near Bhubaneswar. The inscription which gives year-wise account of his reign till its thirteenth year shows that Kharavela was a great king with military victories in north India, western India and south India to his credit; he also undertook many public works for his subjects and as a practising jaina, he excavated cave-shelters for jaina monks on the Udayagiri hills.

23.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTACTS BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIA AND NORTH INDIA

The political domination over northern and north western parts of India by rulers coming from outside also implied coming in of new elements of culture, the assimilation of these elements into the mainstream of Indian society and resultant impact of this contact on the development of trade, technology, art forms etc. We shall examine the impact of Central Asian contacts under different sub-headings.

23.9.1 Trade and Technology

The movement of foreigners into India established firmly the basis of regular trade contact between Central Asia and India. Trade contacts with Afghanistan were already existing but now Central Asia also opened up to trade with new routes. One of these routes became famous as the old Silk Route. Traders of different ethnic origins established trading stations and colonies from which the merchants operated. Examples of such places are Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Miran, etc.

The impetus to trade was given not only by Indian merchants but also by the Buddhist missionaries. One result of trade movements was that communication with China improved. The Kushanas controlled the silk route which started from China and passed through Central Asia and Afghanistan and Western Asia. This route was a source of great income to the Kushanas. They levied tolls from the traders. India received a good deal of gold from the Altai mountains in Central Asia. Gold could also have been received from trade with the Roman Empire. It is significant that the Kushana rulers were the first to issue gold coins on a significant scale. You will read about trade routes and contacts in Unit 24 of this Block in greater length.

New elements in cavalry and techniques of war were introduced in India by the Sakas and the Kushanas. Horse riding gained popularity. They popularized the use of reins and saddles which find appearance in the Buddhist sculptures of this period. The passion for

India : Century 200 B.C.
to 300 A.D.

horsemanship is evident from the numerous terracotta figures excavated from Begram in Afghanistan depicting equestrian scenes. The Central Asians also brought in cap, helmet and boots which were used by the warriors. This military technology became popular in North West India.

23.9.2 Material Remains

The material remains in the form of structures and pottery and coins give us a clear picture of the introduction of new elements in the already existing techniques. The Saka-Kushana phase is demonstrative of an advance in building activities. Excavations have revealed several layers of structures in Northern India. They point to the use of burnt bricks for both the floor and the roof. Brick wells may also have been introduced during this period. The pottery of this period is red ware, both plain and polished, with sometimes medium and sometimes fine fabric. The distinctive pots are sprinklers and spouted channels. They have resemblance to the red fabric found in the same period in the Kushana layers of Central Asia. Some of the coins of the Kushanas borrowed many features of Roman coins. The Saka coins in many cases were adaptations from those of the Indo-Greeks, though striking originalities are met with.

23.9.3 Polity

The Sakas and the Kushana put great emphasis on the notion of the divine origin of kingship. The Kushana kings were referred to as Sons of God. This title may have been borrowed from the Chinese. They also sometimes used an Indian version of the Roman title Caesar. This was used to stress royal authority. Similar ideas are found in the work of the Brahmana Lawgiver, Manu.

The Sakas had introduced the **satrapa** system in the administrative set-up. The entire empire was divided to satraps. Evidence of governing through subordinate rulers is available. The method of administering districts and other smaller units with the help of such officials as **meridarkhs** was in vogue in the period of Indo – Greek rule. Epigraphic and numismatic data furnish us with names of a large number of **Kshatrapas** and **Mahakshatrapas**. (See Sec. 23.5 of this Unit.)

Some of the foreign rulers also introduced the practice of hereditary dual rule which meant two kings, holding higher and lower status, ruling in the same kingdom at the same time. For example, father and son would rule simultaneously. The practice of military governorship was also introduced probably by the Greeks. These governors were known by the title of **Strategos**. They were important for two reasons : (a) for maintaining the power of the rulers over the indigenous people and (b) for blocking invasions from the north west.

23.9.4 Religion and Art Forms

We have noted earlier in this unit that some of the kings like Menander and Kanishka were converted to Buddhism. Some of the rulers were worshippers of Vishnu; others of Siva. We have an example of the Kushana ruler Vasudeva, whose name is one of the many names of Krishna who was worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu. Some Kushana rulers worshipped both Siva and Buddha and the images of these two Gods appeared on some of the Kushana coins. We can discern therefore that in the process of assimilation into Indian cultural patterns, the foreigners adapted to Indian ideas and forms of worship. The foreign rulers were also patrons of Indian art and literature. We have evidence that masons and other artisans coming from outside interacted with local workers. Indian craftsmen thus came into contact with those skilled in Greek and Roman craftsmanship. We have the example of Gandhara in which images of the Buddha were sculpted in a style which was typical of the synthesis of many cultural elements present in the region. The influence of Gandhara art spread to Mathura. Mathura also has given us many beautiful images of the Buddha and other specimens of art of this period. Details of the art forms are discussed in the unit on Art and Architecture in this block.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read the following statements and make right (✓) or wrong (×).
 - i) The Kushanas belonged to the Yueh-chi Tribe.
 - ii) The Kanvayanas were a local dynasty ruling from Magadha.

- iii) The Yaudheyas were famous as warriors and ruled the territory between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej.
 - iv) The **Satrap** system was introduced into India by the Sakas.
- 2) Write short notes on the following in about 15 lines.
- a) Impact of Central Asian Contact.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- b) Assimilation of the foreigners into the Indian mainstream.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

23.10 LET US SUM UP

The Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas gradually merged into Indian society. They came to India as warriors and therefore most of them were absorbed in the Indian society as the warrior class or the Kshatriyas. The problem of assimilating them by applying

India : Century 200 B.C.
to 300 A.D.

Brahmanical norms to them was accomplished by Brahmana lawgivers in the following manner. They were regarded as belonging to that category of Kshatriyas who had fallen from their duties. Large numbers of the foreigners were thus given a status in the brahmanical set-up without which their assimilation in the Indian social order would have been incomplete.

We have, in the course of this unit, surveyed the main political trends in India from the post-Mauryan period till about A.D. 300. In north India, political control was exercised mainly by groups who originated in Central Asia and moved across India's north western border. This opened up communications and trade routes between different countries and had a far-reaching impact on the cultural patterns of the period through movements of peoples and ideas.

23.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (i) ✓ (ii) ✓ (iii) × (iv) ✓ (v) ✓
- 2) See Sec. 23.3
- 3) See Sec. 23.5
- 4) You should find out from Sec. 23.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (i) ✓ (ii) ✓ (iii) × (iv) ✓
- 2) a) You should emphasize the impact on trade and technology, polity and religion and art forms. Read Sec. 23.9.
b) See Sec. 23.7.