

POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF ANCIENT INDIAN STATESHIP

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Annotation. *This article analyzes the political, socio-economic, and cultural development of ancient Indian statehood. The study examines the geographical conditions of ancient India, the development of agriculture and handicrafts, the expansion of trade relations, and the formation of the caste system. It also highlights the role of the Maurya and Gupta Empires in state administration, the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism on society, and the achievements in science, literature, and art. The significance of ancient Indian civilization in the history of world culture and statehood is explained on the basis of historical sources and scholarly research.*

Keywords: *Ancient India, Indian statehood, Maurya Empire, Gupta Empire, caste system, Buddhism, Hinduism, economic development, culture, science, trade relations, Indian civilization.*

Ancient India is considered one of the most ancient and developed civilizations in the history of mankind. The states that formed on the territory of India had a great influence on the development of not only South Asia, but also the entire Eastern civilization. The formation and development of statehood occurred as a result of a long historical process and was associated with economic development, the complexity of social relations, and the improvement of religious and philosophical views.

Ancient India was located in a geographically favorable area. The territory surrounded by the Himalayas in the north, the Hindu Kush mountain range in the west, and the Indian Ocean in the south served as a natural defense. The fertile lands in the valleys of the Indus and

Ganges rivers became the main centers of residence and economic activity of the ancient population. It was these natural factors that laid the foundation for the formation of the first cities and states.

The basis of the economy of ancient India was agriculture. Irrigated agriculture was developed in the basins of the Indus and Ganges rivers, and wheat, barley, rice, cotton, and various vegetable crops were grown. One of the first centers of cotton growing was India. The development of irrigation systems served to increase productivity, which strengthened the economic power of the state.

Crafts were also one of the important sectors of the economy. Pottery, metalworking, jewelry, textiles, and construction were highly developed. The artifacts found as a result of archaeological excavations in the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro indicate that the ancient Indian craftsmen had high skills. In particular, items made of bronze, copper, and gold are considered examples of high art.

Trade played a special role in the economic life of ancient India. Along with internal trade, foreign trade also developed. Indian merchants established trade relations with Mesopotamia, Iran, Central Asia, and Arabia. Archaeological finds confirm that economic relations existed between India and Mesopotamia as early as the 3rd millennium BC. Gold, silver, precious stones, and various handicraft products were exchanged through trade.

One of the important features of ancient Indian society is the formation of the caste system. During the Vedic period, society was divided into four main varnas. These were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Brahmins formed the priestly class that conducted religious ceremonies. Kshatriyas were considered military and state administrators. Vaishyas consisted of farmers, artisans and

merchants. Shudras formed the servant and dependent population. Over time, this system became more complex and was divided into thousands of castes.

The system of state administration improved throughout historical development. Initially, tribal rule prevailed, but later centralized monarchies were formed. During the Mauryan Empire, state administration was organized at a particularly high level. The territory of the empire was divided into provinces, and each province was governed by officials appointed by the central government. Tax collection, the judiciary and military service were under strict control.

The military system also played an important role in ancient India. The armies consisted of infantry, cavalry, war elephants and chariots. War elephants in particular were considered one of the main forces of the Indian army. During the Mauryan Empire, there was a regular army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. This allowed the empire to control vast territories.

Religious teachings also played a large role in the political history of ancient India. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism had a significant impact on the spiritual life of society. Hinduism developed from the time of the Vedas and became the main religious system of the Indian people. Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama in the 6th-5th centuries BC. Buddha preached ways to save a person from suffering.

Emperor Ashoka's services in the widespread spread of Buddhism are incomparable. Ashoka supported Buddhism by the state and made a great contribution to its spread to other countries. On his initiative, missionaries were sent to Sri Lanka, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, and Buddhism became one of the world's religions.

Ancient Indian science was also highly developed. Indian scientists made important discoveries in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine and philosophy. The number zero and the decimal number system are considered one of the greatest scientific achievements in the development of mankind. Later, this system spread to Europe through the Arabs and became the basis for the development of modern mathematics.

Indian scientists also achieved great success in the field of astronomy. Aryabhata expressed the idea of the rotation of the Earth around its axis and accurately calculated the duration of the solar year. His scientific views had a great influence on subsequent generations of scientists. In the field of medicine, ancient Indians developed surgical procedures and methods of treating diseases. The Ayurvedic system was formed as a perfect system for maintaining and treating human health. Some principles of this medical school are still used today. Culture and art are an important part of the development of ancient India. Religious temples, palaces and monuments were distinguished by their architectural perfection. The Pillars of Ashoka, the Sanchi Stupa, and the Ajanta Caves are famous examples of ancient Indian architecture.

A great legacy has also been created in the field of literature. The epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are recognized as masterpieces not only of the Indian people, but also of world literature. The Mahabharata is one of the greatest epics in the world, reflecting the political and moral views of ancient Indian society. The Ramayana expresses the ideal ruler and vision of society.

During the Gupta period, culture and science flourished further. Sanskrit literature reached its peak. The works created by Kalidasa are considered among the finest examples of world literature. Fine arts, sculpture, and music also developed during this period.

The international relations of ancient India were also of great importance. India was connected to the countries of Central Asia, China, and the Middle East through the Great Silk Road. As a result of trade and cultural ties, Indian culture spread to vast territories. In particular, the penetration of Buddhism into East Asia through Central Asia is a vivid example of inter-civilizational relations.

Ancient Indian statehood occupies an important place in world history. It had a great influence on other civilizations with its centralized system of governance, developed economy, rich culture and scientific achievements. The experience of state governance formed during the Mauryan and Gupta empires formed the basis of India's political development in subsequent centuries.

In conclusion, ancient Indian statehood is one of the most important political and cultural phenomena in the history of mankind. Its economic development, scientific achievements, religious and philosophical views and experience of state governance made a huge contribution not only to the development of India, but also to the entire world civilization. Even today, the heritage of ancient India is being studied in depth by historians and researchers and is valued as an invaluable part of world culture.

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