



## THE GUPTA AGE OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROSPERITY

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In the beginning of the Gupta period, a tremendous reaction of Brahmins started against the flourishing of rival religions like Buddhism, Jainism. As a result of the expression of this movement in social life, the tendency of division of four basic varnas increased further and at the same time the dominance of Brahmins also increased. Along with this change, successful efforts were made to find a solution to the complex social problems created by the large number of foreigners settled in the western and north-western parts of the country. These barbarians had gradually adopted the religion, language and customs of the local people, even the legislators (law makers) of the orthodox Brahmin society had compromised with them by giving them the basic status of Kshatriyas. In the same period, as a result of the extraordinary development of industry and trade, along with wealth and prosperity, the standard of living also increased and the interest in urban life increased, at least in the upper class. The long period of peace provided by the Gupta kings in the northern parts of the country and their contemporaries in the south led to an unprecedented increase in economic and cultural prosperity.

(a) Gupta period happiness: state of wealth

**Social Life:** The age-old principle of dividing the society into four varnas is the basic principle of the social system of the Smritis. We have no reason to doubt that the rules relating to the mutual relations and duties of these four varnas were followed in general even in the Gupta period. As evidence, Hiuen Tsang can be cited, who was a follower of another religion as well as an intelligent foreigner. He has not only cited the four hereditary varnas of the Indian society and their respective occupations, but has also written that people of a caste used to marry within their own caste. Like Kautilya's Arthashastra, Varahamihira in the Brihat-samhita has fixed the residences of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras in different parts of the city. Despite this, no doubt there was a violation of the strict rules of Smritis in the Gupta period. This is proved by authentic instances, according to which Brahmins and Kshatriyas adopted professions of lower castes, and Vaishyas and Shudras adopted professions of higher castes.

In the Gupta period, we also find authentic examples of inter-caste marriages between different varnas. These are examples of not only anuloma marriages, but also of the pratiloma category. In contemporary Sanskrit plays and prose romances, we find that Brahmins and Kshatriyas married female courtesans and their daughters as well. The above mentioned facts prove that in the Gupta period, though people generally followed the Smriti's laws, but they did not



have that much fanaticism, as it came in the later period. On the other hand, according to the authentic accounts of the Chinese Buddhist travelers, the social status of the Brahmins was maintained as they are given in the Smritis. In the ancient Smritis, the maximum punishment for a Brahmin criminal was banishment. He could neither be given the death penalty, nor could his land and property be confiscated. The same rule has been repeated in Katyayan Smriti also. Clear references in the plays and prose romances of this period show that these rules were in force in that period.

Like the previous period, there were many hybrid castes in this period also. We know of the Chandalas and other similar castes, who occupied the lowest position in the hierarchy of mixed castes. They were not allowed to move in the towns and villages during the night, even during the day they had to carry the mark prescribed by the king, so that they could be easily identified. Fahien says that in the beginning of the fifth century the Chandalas of Madhya Desha had to live outside the limits of the cities and markets. When they came near these places, they had to sound a warning sound with a piece of wood, so that others would avoid their touch. There were also such tribal tribes (Pulind, Shabar, Kirat, etc.) who lived in the forests and mountains of Vindhya, away from the periphery of the Indo-Aryan society. Dashakumaracharita, Harshacharita, Kadambari and other works of the later Gupta period give a live glimpse of the costumes, their religious practices and social customs of these tribes.

The Smriti-Vidhan of the Gupta period developed the rules related to slavery in some directions. Katyayan, reiterating the law of Yajnavalkya and Narad, has prohibited the enslavement of two-breds and declared in clear words that a Brahmin can never be enslaved and the sale and purchase of Brahmin women should be stopped. The maximum punishment a Brahmin criminal could get was exile. Mentions given in Gupta's drama Mrichchhakatika corroborate the above mentioned facts as well as supplement them. The condition of the slaves named Sthavaraka and Madanika shows that whether or not to treat the slaves well or not depended on the nature of the masters. Madanika's mistress is a woman of lofty thoughts; She regards Madanika as her friend and confidant, but Sthavarak's ruthless owner handcuffs and beats her. Madanika's mistress frees her maidservant so that she can go to her lover, but Sthavaraka has to wait for his emancipation.

Marriage: In the rules related to marriage given in the ancient Smritis, the Gupta period There was no fundamental change during the period but there is a tendency to reduce the age limit of marriage of girls. According to the Vishnu Purana, the age of the bridegroom should be three times that of the bride, but according to Angiras, there should be less difference in the age of bride and groom. Vatsyayana's opinion about the proper age of marriage for girls, which reflects the customs of the time, is somewhat different from that of the Smritis. It is known from the statement of Hiuen Tsang that like in the previous period, in this period too, inter-caste marriage was prohibited, and self-caste marriage was preferred. Vatsyayana has said in the Kamasutra that a



man can get children, fame and praise only by marrying a girl of his caste lawfully and with love. Like the Smritis, according to Vatsyayana, the marriage should be arranged by the parents (or other guardians) of the bride and groom. The ceremony of bride selection is performed according to the four categories of marriages: namely Brahma, Prajapatya, Arsha and Daiva marriages.

It is also clear from the evidence of Vatsyayana that if there was a desire, under special circumstances, a young man could win the heart of the girl of his choice by courtship, even by deception and violence. Vatsyayana's description is also important because it gives an example of the rule of memory that under certain circumstances a girl can choose her own husband. Actually the girl should marry such a man, in whom she can get the shelter of happiness and who is completely devoted to her. Gandharva marriage is easily understood from the above description of love-request. According to the Kamasutra and the Smritis, the girl should circumambulate the sacred fire three times to complete the Gandharva marriage. The fire should be brought from the house of a listener, according to the method given in the Smritis, oblations should be put in it. After this the parents should be informed, because according to the scriptures, a marriage done under the witness of fire can never be illegal. Unlike Gandharva marriage, there is no need for religious rituals in Paishach and Rakshasa marriages, only informing the relatives after the consummation, and motivating them to bid farewell to the girl is sufficient.

There are frequent references to Gandharva marriages among prominent characters in Gupta literature. But usually it is related to ancient kings, heroic heroes or imaginary princes and nobles. Among these, Shakuntala's marriage to Dushyant, Urvashi's marriage to Pururva and Vasavadatta's marriage to Udayan are prime examples. There is also discussion of Swayambar, another marriage type similar to Gandharva marriage, in contemporary records and literature. The Junagarh inscription of Skandagupta figuratively mentions Lakshmi's marriage to Skandagupta. Similarly, in Budhgupta's Eran inscription, it has been said for Vishnu that Rajalakshmi voluntarily chose him. Swayamvar is also mentioned in contemporary literature. It is inferred from all this that even in the Gupta period, the upper class virgins must have had the freedom to choose their husbands. But in fact this type of practice was there in that period, some scholars have expressed doubts about it.

Status of Women: In pre-Gupta times, the Brahminical theology prohibited women from studying the Vedas and chanting Vedic mantras on the occasion of rites. Nevertheless, there is sufficient ground to believe that girls from high families had ample opportunities to master ordinary education. In Vatsyayan's Kamasutra, mention is made of those princesses and feudal girls, whose intelligence had become sharp because of the knowledge of the scriptures. Vatsyayana, in particular, gives us a long list of sixty-four sub-disciplines of knowledge, which were learned by women. Presenting the picture of a good wife, Vatsyayan has shown that she must be so educated that she can make an annual budget of the house and arrange the expenses of the house accordingly.



Apart from this, the girls of high families, especially of the royal courts, were given education in arts like music, dance etc. From later evidence it appears that there were regular institutions of this type from which girls were educated. Often male students also studied with them. Lastly, mention may also be made of the fact that in the Amarkosa, a work of the Gupta period, such words have been used, which mean women teachers (Upadhyaya and Upadhyayi) and teachers of Vedic mantras (Acharya).

The ideal wife portrayed by Vatsyayana is a description of the wife described in the Smritis. We can consider it as an authentic reflection of real life. It mentions the qualities of service, self-restraint and efficiency in household chores, which are the identity of Hindu wives till date. She participates in ceremonies, social festivals, yagyas and religious processions along with her husband.

As in the preceding period, along with ideal-pictures of conjugal love and loyalty, there are mentions of numerous unhappy and spoiled wives. The evidence of Vatsyayana confirms the practice of polygamy like the Smritis. The practice of polygamy was not confined only to the kings, but spread to other people as well. In fact, it seems that wealthy men usually had many wives. According to pre-Gupta Smritis, in general, a widow should observe self-restraint and strict celibacy, although according to Brihaspati, the other way is that the widow commits sati with her husband. Go The Smritis of the Gupta period, like the ancient laws, enjoined the widow to lead a life of asceticism, fasting and renunciation and also gave her the right to inherit her husband's property. But Sankha, Angiras and Harita strongly support the practice of Sati. An inscription of Eran which is of 510 AD mentions that Gopraj's wife became sati. This historical evidence of Sati Pratha has been revealed for the first time in the Gupta period itself. But the accounts of Chinese travelers are silent about this. Which proves that this practice was not very prevalent in the Gupta period. Overall, we can conclude on a general basis that as in the past, the widows in the Smriti period also led a simple and pious life as prescribed by the Smritis.

But gradually the remarriage of widows and other women came to be considered bad; Yet such marriages were not completely forbidden. Not only are synonyms for punarbhu (remarried widow) and her husband found in the Amarkosa; Rather, there is also a special word for that man of Dwij caste, whose main wife is Punarbhum. As far as Punarbhu's position is concerned, Vatsyayana's point of view is different. According to him, Punarbhu is such a widow who chooses her partner according to her wish. She is more independent than a married woman. From this it can be concluded that in the time of Vatsyayana, if a widow lived with a man of her choice, public opinion did not oppose her, but she never got the social status of a married man.

It is known in Vatsyayana's Kamasutra that a class of courtesans enjoyed a high social status as in ancient times due to their attractive looks, qualities and manners. Other contemporary works suggest that she was noted for her beauty, eloquence, wealth and luxury. There were also high class courtesans



like Vasantasena of *Mrichchakatika* and *Ragamanjari* and Chandrasena of *Dashakumaracharita*. Along with prostitutes, the practice of keeping virgins (devadasis) for deity worship in big temples was also prevalent. Such virgins (devadasis) were kept in the Mahakala temple of Ujjayini in the time of Kalidasa and also in the temple of the sun-god in a city in the eastern part of Sindh during the time of Hiuen Tsang.

The status of women in the past and the restrictions that were imposed on them continued till some time in the Gupta period. The most important change of this period was recognition of property rights of women by Katyayana. In the Gupta period there was no hindrance in the exercise of public rights by women, this fact is proved by the example of Queen Prabhavati-gupta, daughter of Chandragupta-II, who managed the administration of the Vakataka kingdom on behalf of her minor son in the fourth century. Mentions found in general and explanatory texts before and after the 1st century AD suggest that married women of high caste generally did not appear in public without a veil. Perhaps this practice continued in the Gupta period as well. But Hiuen Tsang and Fa Hien are silent on this subject, which is an indication that generally women were not closed in purdah. Certainly the practice of purdah was new and strange to both of them. Therefore, if it was prevalent among the subjects on a large scale, then surely their attention would have been drawn towards it. Moreover, as mentioned above, there is definitely no sign of purdah in female idols.

**People's Life:** In a vast country like India, there must have been diversity in the character of people from different places and classes. Vatsyayan has marked the surprising difference found in the nature and habits of the people of different regions of the country. In the seventh century, Hiuen Tsang, the prudent Chinese traveller, visited every part of India except the extreme south. He has written his opinion about the character of the people of each state. According to his story, people generally had a lot of honesty in their character. There was simplicity and purity in the life of Brahmins and Kshatriyas in particular. The proof of the philanthropy and charity of Indians is repeatedly found in the mentions of Chinese travelers. He mentions the distribution of free food and medicines and other such things by ordinary citizens and kings to serve the needy and sick.

In the literature of the Gupta period, there is an indication of the high standard of living that has been going on for centuries. According to the *Brihatsamhita*, which claims to be a compendium of the works of earlier scholars, sticks, umbrellas, goads, balls, bows, umbrellas, furs, flags, and chauris were common items of use. Naturally the most valuable of these were reserved for the people of the royal family and the officials. It is known from this work that according to tradition there was a law of five palaces for kings, queens and officials of the court; The four varnas were allowed four, three, two and one houses respectively. Other evidence also shows the prosperity and luxury of the people of this period. The description of the splendor of Vasantasena's palace at Ujjayini in the play *Mrichchhakatika* gives us an idea of the real life



of the women of this class of opulence and opulence. The kings and nobles used to wear very expensive clothes and lived with great pomp, others followed them. Literary evidence suggests that not only members of the royal families, but also their servants, were in the habit of wearing jewellery. The Brihatsamhita prescribes wearing ornaments not only for kings and queens, but also for those performing religious rituals. in Amarkosh There is a long list of ornaments worn on the hair, ears, neck, arms, wrists, fingers, waist (for both men and women) and legs. In this text, not only the definitional names of upper and undergarments have been given, but women have also been mentioned about braids, petticoats, a cloak worn in winter and long up to the feet. Many types of names of women's dresses are mentioned in the works of Kalidas.

The pre-existing high standard of comfort and cleanliness was maintained during the Gupta period as well. In the Brihatsamhita, it has been told how many qualities (or demerits) are there in the teeth of different trees. This proves that on a wide scale Datun used to be. In this work, recipes have been given to make hair dye, many types of frankincense, scented hair oil, lotion and other fragrances. The terracotta figurines are examples of different styles of hairstyles. There is also an impressive description of this in the play Mrichhakatika.

There is not much change in the description of food and drink in Smritis and other literature of this period. The Lankavatarasutra contains a list of approved foods which includes rice, wheat, barley, three types of pulses, ghee, oil, jaggery and sugar. But there is no doubt that people ate meat and fish and were addicted to drinking wine. It is surprising that in contemporary dramas and prose romances, women of high castes, even queens, have been shown drinking alcohol. In the unbiased accounts of Chinese Buddhist travelers, we get the most authentic description of the food habits of the people of that period. In the 4th century, Fa-hien says (maybe exaggerating a bit) that there was no trace of animal slaughter, drinking, the use of onion and garlic in the whole of Madhya Pradesh. Hiuen Tsang's account of the first half of the seventh century is more detailed and correct. In a general description of India, he says that bread, roasted grains, milk, sugar preparations and mustard oil were commonly eaten. Meat and fish were used occasionally and certain types of meat were forbidden. The caste used to go away by eating onion and garlic. Also, different types of liquor and beverages were reserved for different castes. Brahmins and Buddhist monks drank grape and sugarcane juice, Kshatriyas drank grape and sugarcane wine. The Vaishyas used to drink strong liquor, and the names of the beverages of the lower castes and hybrid people are not written.

In Indian literature, the tradition of magic spells and hypnosis has been going on since the time of Atharvaveda Samhita. Later people's faith in hypnosis, sorcery, astrology and omens increased so much that technical texts on these subjects were composed and later used in Varahamihira's Brihat-jataka and Brihat-samhita. Works called dharani (protector chants) originated within



Mahayana Buddhism in the 4th century AD and soon spread not only in India but also in other countries influenced by Indian culture.

In conclusion, we would like to present a general picture of the people living in the city, who were called citizens. This type of person was not new to the Gupta period, as Panini also defined it as follows: A citizen is a person who is skilled in arts as well as in cunning; This is the main characteristic of big cities. Vatsyayana's Kamasutra not only describes in detail the way of life of a citizen but also portrays him as an ideal person. The picture presents a picture of a brilliant young man endowed with abundant wealth and leisure, who leads a cultured and luxurious life. The author says that after completing education, when a man becomes a householder with ancestral property or his own earnings, he has to go to a big or small town, where many good people reside. Going there he adopts the life of a citizen. First of all he builds a house, and decorates it elegantly, beautifully. There are two parts of the house. The outer part is reserved for his courtship and the inner part is for his wife. In the garden of his house, there is a swing under the shade of trees and high places are made for sitting, on which flowers are scattered. There are two beds in the outer part of the house, on which white sheets and soft pillows are spread. At the head of the bed there is a pedestal for the idol of the deity, near it on a high pedestal the citizens' morning toiletries (boils, garlands, boxes filled with beeswax, perfumes, taranja peels and betel leaves) are kept. In Divargir, his flute, tapestry and paintbrushes, book and a garland of yellow evergreen flowers are kept. A carpet is spread on the floor near the bed, on which pillows, chess and dice boards are kept. Outside the room, his pet birds have cages and tools like lathe and chisel etc. are kept in a secluded place, with which he fulfills his hobby and entertains.

The daily life of the citizen is also in accordance with the above content. Waking up in the morning, he retires from the toilet and does his grooming. He uses ubtan and perfumes his clothes with the smoke of agaru and wears a garland around his neck. He shaves every fourth day and gets his hair cut on the fifth or tenth day. He eats twice a day, in the early morning and at noon (according to an ancient tradition, in the evening); After a meal he entertains himself in various ways (eg listening to parrots, pheasants, quails, rams). watching movies, demonstrating artistic skills, and chatting with friends) or he takes a rest in the afternoon. In the third hour, wearing full dress, he goes to attend social gatherings (meetings). In the evening he enjoys music, or sends messengers to call his beloveds, or goes to them himself. In addition to these luxuries, samaj and ghata (functions related to the worship of gods), goshti (social gathering), apanak (drinking feast), garden party, krida (public sports) are organized from time to time for the entertainment of the citizen. Every fifteenth day is a fixed day for the Samaj; on that day the actors, called by the citizens, gather in the temple of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. On these occasions, actors from outside also showcase their skills and get prizes. Lastly, the citizens participated in the festivals held in different



parts of the country along with the general public and tried to win maximum prestige and medals on these occasions.

Charudatta is an ideal citizen in Mrichchakatika. His chaste wife lives in the inner part of his house and he himself lives day and night with his companions and servants in the outer part of the house, to which a garden is also attached. The meager furnishings of the outer house included a large and a small drum (mridanga and panava), flute (dardur), veena, narkul's bean (vansh) and manuscripts. He used to wear expensive clothes even when he became poor. He also used to go to Sangeet Goshthi in the evening and returned home in the evening with sweet memories of songs and music in his mind. Although he was unable to accompany the companions on horseback himself, he would send his beloved in a covered bullock cart to meet her in a garden outside the city. Many indications of the luxurious life of the citizens are found in the works of Gupta literature.

The poets and prose writers of this period have given us laudatory descriptions of the splendor and magnificence of the famous cities of their era. We can counter these details with the objective accounts of careful Chinese travelers. On the basis of these combined evidences, it can be concluded that India was full of such cities, which had attained a high level of wealth and prosperity.

The level of civic culture was high in the Gupta period. In this era, the use of makeup and cosmetics was refined into a cultured and elegant art. The ideal citizens of Vatsyayana, and the plays and love stories of this period, have vividly described refined cosmetics. In fact, in this period, every way of beautifying the body and soul was brought to the level of fine art, whose main qualities were simplicity, delicacy and elegance.

#### (b) Gupta trade system

**Agriculture:** Like the previous period, agriculture was the mainstay of economic life in the Gupta period as well. The priority of agriculture from the point of view of livelihood has been repeatedly stated in contemporary sources. Paddy was the main crop among the various crops grown. Many types of paddy have been described in the works of Kalidas, in which the best was 'Shali' paddy. Although the central part of the Gangetic basin is said to be particularly favorable for the production of 'Shali' paddy, yet in the middle of the fifth century AD, 'Shali' was also grown in the area near Achalpur (present-day Elicharpur, Amravati district, Maharashtra) located in the Vakataka state. Paddy sowing is mentioned in a recently discovered inscription. The process of planting was very necessary to grow 'Shali' paddy, which is also described in the poems of Kalidas. Kalidas was fully aware that Pundra i.e. North Bengal used to produce excellent sugarcane. According to Amar Singh's Amarkosh or Namlinganushasan, the famous encyclopedia of this period, cotton, sesame, indigo and mustard were produced regularly.

Similar to the variety of crops, the variety of land also comes in our view. Total twelve types of land are described in Amarkosh - Urvara, Ushar (dry), Maru, (Desert or similar area), Aprahat (Uncultivated), Shadwal (Grassland), Pankil, Jalpray Anup (a part of water). land near the river), Kachchh





(waterlogged land), Sakhar (rocky), Siktavati (sandy land), Nadimatrak (irrigated by river) and Devmatrak (rainfed area). Many facts related to agriculture are certainly there in Tamrashasans as well, but there is no mention of so many types of land. In this context, special mention has to be made of several copper plates of the fifth and sixth centuries obtained from different regions of Bengal. In these Tamrashasans, the inhabited land ('Kshetra' or 'Vapkshestra') is clearly demarcated separately from Vastu Bhoomi and Aranya. There are many nouns of non-inhabited land - 'Aprahat' (which has never been plowed before), 'Aaghastamba' (natural grass covered i.e. inferior land), 'Aprada' (unproductive land), 'Apratikar/Utpratkar/ Zero compensation' (land from which no revenue came).

**Measurement System:** Tamrashasan Because there were government orders related to the transfer of land, it was natural to have various facts related to the measurement of land there. In western India under the rule of Maitraka kings, the officer who measured the land was called 'Pramatri'. Regarding the size and shape (area) of the land, many types of facts are found in the contemporary Tamrashasans of ancient Bengal. To tell the volume of the land, the units 'Adhavap', 'Dronavap', 'Kulyavap' etc. have been used here, and only once (Gunaidhar Tamrashasan, 507 AD) the unit named 'Patak' has been used. 'Dronavap' and 'Kulya' The behavior of these two units is seen most regularly. It is difficult to determine exactly how much land was understood by all these words. Following are the views of Dineshchandra Sarkar and Shachindra Kumar Maiti: According to Dineshchandra Sarkar – one Adhavap Tra (4-5 Bigha), one Dronavap Tra (16-20 Bigha), one Kulyavap Tra (128-160 Bigha), one Patak Tra ( 640-800 bigha). According to Shachindrakumar Maiti- one Adhavap Tra (1-1 Bigha), one Adhavap Tra (4-5 Bigha), one Adhavap Tra (34-48 Bigha), one Adhavap Tra (190-240 Bigha).

That's why the lowest unit of land measurement was 'Adhavap' and the highest unit was 'Patak'. There was a 'Dronavap' of four 'Adhavap', a 'Kulyavap' of eight 'Dronavap' and a 'Patak' of five 'Kulyavap' (i.e. there were 40 Dronavap in a Patak). The use of 'vaap' at the end of the above words was meaningful which indicated the sowing (farm). That is, one 'Aadhak' or one 'Drona' or one 'Kulya' is the volume of seeds that can be sown (sprinkled) in the area, which is spacious from the point of view of agriculture. Calculated as units of In other words, this method does not provide for linear measurement of land. In addition, there is definite evidence of measuring land by means of nalas (a unit of measurement) in ancient Bengal. Somewhere in Tamrashasans it has been called 8G9 (Ashtak Navak-Nalabhyam), somewhere 6G9 (Shatka Navak Nalabhyam) and somewhere 9G9 (Navak Navak Nalabhyam). It was a system of linear measurement.

**Land Transfer and Agrahara System:** One of the main features of the Gupta period Bengal's Tamrashasans is that there are enough examples of transfer of land through sale and purchase, which are extremely rare in other places of contemporary India. Kotivarsh i.e. the value of the degenerate (filled with grass straw from the beginning) land of Bangarh area of Dinajpur for almost



one hundred years was in the form of three 'dinars' per 'kulyavap' i.e. Gupta gold currency (five copper reigns of Damodarpur). In places other than Pundravardhanbhukti, the value of the same type of non-inhabited land was two dinars per 'kulyavap'. A clear explanation of why the value of the same type of land varied is not known. But in ancient Bengal (Dhaka-Vikrampur-Faridpur area, Bangladesh) population, the value of fertile land was four dinars per 'kulyavap'. Being of more good land, its value was higher.

One of the main significance of the Tamrashesans of ancient Bengal is that all these were basically the details of purchase and sale of land and donation. Vinaychandra Sen, Niharranjan Rai and Vary M. Morrison's research has revealed that in many cases the same land was first bought and donated. The recipient of the donation was a Brahmin or Brahmin class or a Buddhist vihara in most of the areas. Due to the donation of land for the purpose of Dharmacharan, the recipient of the donation used to get land in a tax-free form everywhere. The following process and method of transfer of land is seen in the Tamrashesans of Bengal- (a) the person desirous of purchasing land used to submit an application to the district administration ('Vishayadhishthan') ('Vijnapitam'), (b) 'Bookmaster' or Description This application was scrutinized by the keeper of letter accounts ('presumption') (c) On acceptance of the application, appropriate value of the land should be given by the person desirous of purchasing the land and giving the purchased land to the donor, (d) ) Separating the given land from other plots with the help of two taps ('Apavigya'), (e) Marking the boundary of the given land - sometimes by marking it with ashes ('ever-lasting-Bhushangar') or sometimes with pegs or stones. and (f) excessive praise of land donation, virtuous benefits to the donor, blessings and pronounced curse to the one who abducted the given land.

When tax-free land was transferred to a Brahmin or many Brahmins, or for the purpose of a religious establishment - Buddhist 'Vihar', Jain 'Vasadi' or Brahminical 'Math' etc. - it was called 'Agrahar'. Because the administration no longer used to collect tax from the given land. Therefore, that plot was practically converted into uninhabited area ('Bhumichhadranaya') and this transfer was considered permanent ('Akshayanivi'). Although the examples of donation of property for the purpose of religious establishment were seen in the first century AD in the south, but the strong position of 'agrahara' system took place in this critical period only. There are many examples of such 'agraharas' given to Brahmins in the Vakataka areas, but there is no information about the purchase and sale of land. The list of all the taxes on which the recipient of donation was exempted from the liability due to the benefit of tax-free land property, was also mentioned in the Vakataka Tamrashesans. 'Bhaag', 'Bhog', 'Kar', 'Hiranya' etc. famous taxes, the 'Agrahar' area remained free, on top of that 'Vishti' (free labor, forced labor) was also done. According to the Vakataka texts, the entry of regular and irregular constables into the given areas was prohibited ('Chatbhata apravesha'). The recipient of charity was only eligible for fine for ten types of minor offences.



Due to the effect of 'Agrahar' system, there was an increase in the right of individual ownership over the land. The very event of transfer of land is irrefutable proof of individual ownership of land. The main advantage of this changed situation was the Brahmins and Buddhist Viharas along with various religious establishments. In 507 AD, the land of eleven 'Patak' size in five separate sections in the flat area and was given for Buddhist Vihar, it was very vast in area. The increase in the incidence of transfer of landed property did not only lead to the spread of individual ownership, the brahmins and religious establishments respectively came to benefit from this system. Most of the land grants were made to increase the facilities of Brahmins only. But in the south-eastern border of Bengal, in the flat area, even in the hands of non-Brahmin individuals such as artisans (bilal), sutradhars (vardhikari, carpenters) who had individually owned agricultural land ('kshetra') and ponds, in about the sixth century A.D. Its evidence is found in Vainyagupta's Gunaidhar Tamrashasan.

Be it an individual, a group of individuals or an establishment, the recipient of the donation, the main purpose of donating land was to ensure the collection of necessary wealth for the conduct of Dharma in individual, group or establishment life. From the income of the donated land, the expenses of Brahminical religious rituals like 'Agnihotra', 'Panchamahayagya' or repair of Buddhist vihara, food, clothes and medicine, aromatic substances, garland, lamp, incense for the monks living in the vihara. Expenditure used to be organized (Gadh-Pushpa-Deep-Dhupadi-Pravartanay Tasya Bhikshusanghasya Cha Chivar-Pindapan-Shayanasan-Glan-Pratyay-Bhaishjyadi-Paribhogaya Vihare Cha Futt-Prati Sanskar Karanay'). It is a mistake to think that the brahmins who accepted the donation or the Buddhist monks living in the viharas themselves cultivated the crops in the given areas, which were usually huge in size. It is, therefore, reasonable to infer that in order to make proper use of the area received, the donees employed professional agricultural laborers, who were neither the owners of the land nor had any right to enjoy it. As a result of this, it was natural for a special class to emerge as the occupiers of the land between the king and the actual farmers. The growing complexity of land management is indicated in contemporary classical texts. There the three-tier land system has been mentioned – 'Mahipati', 'Swami' and 'Krishak'. The 'Krishak' was not only distinct from the 'Mahipati', but was also distinct from the 'Swami' or owner of the land. The prevalence and development of the 'agrahara' system gave rise to an intermediate landowning class, the rise of which is visible from AD 600 onwards. Scholars such as Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, Ramsharan Sharma, Krishnamohan Shrimali etc. have opined that the class of persons who enjoy the Agrahara ('agraharin') and the establishment i.e. the Math, apart from being entitled to all the economic comforts of the temple land, were given The taste of the administrative power of the area was also found. The reason for this was that, in his opinion, the entry of the State Guards and the army was also prohibited in the given area; As a result, the right to protect the



local law and order and the collection of property also remained with the donee till the end. He has said that the use of 'Agrahar' system led to the emergence of feudal system in India. This topic is full of arguments and also controversial.

But the way for the spread of agriculture in the non-inhabited area was paved through land grant because in many areas the given area was in the form of degraded land. Most of the transferred land in the Tamrashasans of Bengal was 'Aprada', 'Aprahat Khilkshetra' i.e. non-inhabited, anurvar (barren) land. Donation takers will populate the advanced areas gradually. With this hope, it was repeatedly stated in the Tamrashasans that the king would not suffer any financial loss by selling the unproductive plots of land ('Evan Vidhotpratikar-Shilkshetra-Vikraya Na Kashchid Rajarth Virodh').

**Irrigation System:** Irrigation system was integrally associated with the expansion of agriculture. In Tamrashasans, the discussion of ponds and puddles in rural areas is found continuously. Even though wells, ponds and reservoirs are prepared by individual or collective work in most places, examples of irrigation arrangements with state assistance are not rare. The most famous example of a massive dam-like bridge is the Sudarshan lake of Ashwaya Hi Kathiawar, which was probably built during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya in the 4th century BC and which was reconstructed by the efforts of Saka ruler Rudradan I (150 AD). In the first year of Skandagupta's reign itself (136 Gupta Samvat i.e. 455-6 AD), this bridge again needed repair. This work was accomplished with the efforts of two regional rulers of Skandagupta – Parnadatta and Chakrapalit. The bridge named 'Sudarshan Lake' continued to be used from the fourth century BC till the middle of the fifth century AD. It is a particularly attractive subject that the name of the lake prepared by a servant of Vakataka King Devasen in 458 AD was also named Sudarshan Lake. It is easy to understand that the bridge in Maharashtra was also named after the legend-like Sudarshan lake of Kathiawar. The in-charge of the construction of this project was a 'karmopadeshta' (engineer of the Irrigation-Department with the skill of workmanship?) named Bappa.

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