

came to India with the Greek ruler Alexander also recorded their views about India. Among these scholars, Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulus are prominent. Although the works of these scholars are no longer available, they have been cited by other Greek writers. Megasthenes came to India as a Greek ambassador during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. In his book 'Indica', he has highlighted Indian institutions, geography, agriculture etc. Although his book is not available, some of the quotes from this book are found in the works of ancient Greek writers Arion, Strabo and Justin etc. The Greek writer Ptolemy wrote a geographical description of India in the second century, from which much important information is obtained. Information about Indian animals, plants and minerals is found in the 'Natural History' composed by the Greek writer Pliny.

- (ii) **Chinese Writers:** The most important among Chinese travellers are the memoirs of Fahien, Hiuen Tsang and I Tsing. Fahien came to India in the fifth century AD. He lived in India for about 14 years. He wrote particularly about the state of Buddhism in India. Waensang, who came to India during the reign of Emperor Harshavardhana, stayed in India for about 16 years. Along with the religious condition of India, he has also described the then political condition in his memoir. The memoir of Hiuen Tsang highlighted the customs and education system of Indians. Historians have called Hiuen Tsang the 'King of Travellers'. I Tsing came to India in the seventh century AD, he lived at Vikramshila University and Nalanda University for a long time. He has also written about the institutions and the attire, food and drink etc. of Buddhist education in Indians.
- (iii) **Tibetan Writers:** The description of Buddha Lama Taranatha among Tibetan writers is also of historical importance. Information about the Mauryan period and subsequent events is obtained from the texts named Kangyur and Tangyur composed by him.
- (iv) **Arabic writers:** Arab travelers and historians were attracted to India after the eighth century. The memoirs of Arab travelers have a special significance from the point of view of Indian history. Alberuni's name is particularly noteworthy among Arab travelers. Alberuni wrote a book called 'Tahqueeq-e-Hind'. In this book, he highlighted the condition of India of the eleventh century AD. Apart from Alberuni, the memoirs of prominent travelers like Al-Biladri, Suleiman and Al-Masudi also reveal how the Muslims conquered India.

Thus we can say that foreign memoirs have a major role as a source of ancient Indian history.

(c) Discuss the evolution of ancient Indian coinage till the time of the Mauryas.

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Approach:

- ❖ Mark the beginning of coinage in the Indian subcontinent.
- ❖ Mark the different stages in coinage and minting, right from prehistoric period to the period of the Mauryas.

Answer: The beginnings of coinage in the Indian subcontinent can be traced to the first millennium BCE the initial evolution of which continued till sixth century CE. The metal used at this stage for the coins was predominantly silver and copper. The coins were mainly the bars of metal that were stamped and these became popular during the time of the janapadas.

Prehistoric and Bronze Age

- There is no significant evidence to substantially assume that people in stone age employed currency or they conducted exchange in barter.
- However, the Indus Valley Civilization conducted an extensive trade, but the trade was predominantly conducted on the basis of the barter system. However, the Harappan economy also employed metals like silver for trade and commerce related activities.

Minting in the Vedic Period

- The Rigveda has references to nishka (gold) and nishka greeva (ornaments of gold) but it cannot be substantially concluded if these were coins.
- The later Vedic texts have referred to nishka, suvarna, shatamana, and pada. But these terms do not indicate a wide circulation of conventional coins.

Coinage during Janapadas

- The most definite literary and archaeological evidence that suggests the usage of coins in the subcontinent, dates around 6th-5th Century BCE. It was against the backdrop of second urbanisation, and rising trade activities that the Buddhist texts and Panini's Ashtadhyayi give a detailed account of kahapana/karshapana, nikkha/nishka, shatamana, pada, vimshatika, trinshatika, and suvarna/suvarna.

