B.A. PROGRAMME IN HISTORY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, DELHI UNIVERSITY
Core Course I
History of India from the earliest times up to c. 300 CE

Course Objectives:
This course explores various stages and processes of Indian history from prehistoric period to early historic centuries. It examines the historiographical shifts pertaining to what is termed as ‘Ancient/early’ India. Underlining the pan-Indian historical changes, it also focuses on regional diversities. The varied experiences in the Indian subcontinent can be seen in archaeological cultures and questions concerning literacy, nature of state formation and attendant cultural growth.

Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Delineate changing perceptions on ‘Ancient/early’ India.
- Explain the importance of archaeological sources for study of proto-history and recognize the belated growth of literacy.
- Distinguish between civilization and culture, particularly in the context of first ever civilization in the Indian subcontinent.
- Outline the key features of the first ever empire under the Mauryas.
- Locate the shift of historical focus from Gangetic belt to newer areas.
- Discuss the processes of assimilations of people and ruling houses from outside the Indian subcontinent in to the mainstream.

Course Content:

I. Interpreting Ancient India; survey of sources
II. Prehistoric Cultures: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic; rock art
III. Harappan Civilization: Origin and extent, town planning, economy, society and religion, decline and continuity. Chalcolithic cultures
IV. Vedic Culture: polity, economy, society and religion. Beginnings of the iron age; Megalithic cultures
V. Post-Vedic Period: material and social changes, Mahajanapadas and the rise of Magadha, Buddhism and Jainism: doctrines; spread
VI. The Mauryan Empire: state and administration, society, economy, Ashoka’s Dhamma, decline, art and architecture
VII. The Far South: Tamilakam; polity, economy and society
VIII. Post-Mauryan age with special reference to Satavahanas and Kushanas: polity, economy, society, culture
ESSENTIAL READINGS AND UNIT-WISE TEACHING OUTCOMES:

Unit I. In this Unit the students shall be introduced to the varied sources used for writing history of ancient India. Key interpretations stemming from historians’ use of such sources shall be discussed. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)

- थापर, रोमिला. (2008). पूर्वकालीनभारत: प्रारम्भ से 1300 ई. तक. हिन्दीमाध्यमकालीनभारतकालितिहास, दिल्लीविश्वविद्यालय.
- शरम्मा, जार. एम. (2000). प्राचीनभारतकालितिहास. दिल्ली: हिन्दीमाध्यमकालीनभारतकालितिहास, दिल्लीविश्वविद्यालय, पुनर्प्रकाशन.
- शमाड, जार. (2000). प्राचीनभारतकालितिहास. दिल्ली: हिन्दीमाध्यमकालीनभारतकालितिहास, दिल्लीविश्वविद्यालय.

Unit II. This Unit shall familiarize the students with the essential features of early human societies and help them distinguish between various subsistence patterns and material cultures of these societies. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


Unit III. This Unit shall introduce students to one of the earliest urban civilizations in Asia of the Indian subcontinent. The unit shall also provide an overview of other material cultures. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)

Unit IV. This Unit shall provide the students a detailed overview of the evolving cultural traditions, socio-economic structures and political formations in the northern Indian subcontinent. The Unit shall also discuss the advent of material cultures and communities that developed the use of iron technology in the northern and southern parts of the subcontinent. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


b. शर्मा, आर. एस. (2000). प्रारम्भिक भारत का आर्थिक और सामाजिक इतिहास. दिल्ली: हिंदी माध्यमकार्यांचे विद्यालय, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय.


Unit V. This unit shall familiarize the students with major social transformations that unfolded from roughly c. 600 BCE to c. 200 BCE. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


Unit VI. This Unit shall introduce students to the evolving administrative framework, social structure, economy and cultural life of one of the earliest empires of the Indian subcontinent. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


Unit VII. This Unit shall familiarize the students with important social transformations and cultural traditions that developed within communities settled the southern reaches of the Indian subcontinent. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


Unit VIII. This Unit shall discuss the key features of polities and material life that emerged in the period c. 100 BCE to c. 300 CE, using the case studies of the Satavahanas and Kushanas. (Teaching Time: 2 weeks approx.)


Suggested Readings:

Teaching Learning Process:

Classroom teaching should be supported by group discussions or group presentations on specific themes/readings. Adequate emphasis shall be given during the lectures to what is broadly meant by the historical approach and the importance of historicising various macro and micro-level developments/phenomena. Interactive sessions through group discussions or group presentations shall be used to enable un-learning of prevailing misconceptions about historical developments and time periods, as well as to facilitate revision of issues outlined in the lectures. Supporting audio-visual aids like documentaries and power point presentations, and an appropriate field-visit will be used where necessary.

Assessment Methods:

Students will be regularly assessed for their grasp on debates and discussions covered in class. Two written submissions; one of which could be a short project, will be used for final grading of the students. Students will be assessed on their ability to explain important historical trends and thereby engage with the historical approach.

Internal Assessment: 25 Marks
Written Exam: 75 Marks
Total: 100 Marks

Keywords: Prehistory, Chalcolithic, Megalithic, Mahajanapadas, Empire, Dhamma, Tamilakam