

**Ambedkar University Delhi**  
**Course Outline: HS403/H04 – Early India: Economy, Polity and Society**  
**Winter Semester (January – May 2019)**

**School: Undergraduate Studies**  
**Credits: 4 credits**  
**Type of Course: Compulsory Yes**  
**Elective Yes**

**Programme: BA (Hons.) History**  
**Semester to which offered: II**  
**Cohort BA (H) History**  
**Cohort Other Majors**

**For SUS only (Mark and X for as many as appropriate):**

1. Foundation (Compulsory)
2. Foundation (Elective)
3. Discipline (Compulsory)     **X**
4. Discipline (Elective)       **X**
5. Elective

**Course Coordinator: Aadil Zubair**

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**Pre-requisites: None**

**Aim:**

This course will familiarize students with economy, polity and society of the Indian subcontinent from the pre-historic times up to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and intends to analyse the significance of understanding the varied dimensions of India's historical past and its ramifications in the modern period. The purpose is to allow students to explore the diversity of the land and its people, as a geographical zone where races and tribes intermingled for centuries that shaped the contours of the country. Some of the fundamental questions as to how history is reconstructed and reinterpreted by historians will give an insight into the complexities involved in the process of writing history. The aim will be to evaluate /analyse the complex process of the evolution of religion, philosophy and cultures in the Indian subcontinent, emergence of power relations and state structures as well as social stratification with reference to *varna* system and gender. These will help trace the aspects of marginality and hierarchy in early India.

### Brief Description of modules/ Main modules:

- ❖ Significance of studying early history of Indian sub-continent; early Indian notions of history and history writing; historical views and interpretation: colonial and post-colonial; sources for reconstruction of history.
- ❖ Introduction to pre-historic to historic cultures; early human organizations; distribution/spread of pre-historic cultures; the advent of food production.
- ❖ Harappan Civilization/Bronze Age; distribution/spread of Harappan Civilization; town and urban planning; agriculture and domestication of animals/economy; material and spiritual culture of the Harappan people; decline.
- ❖ Advent of the Aryans: Use of iron; racial theory; spread of the Aryan culture; Vedic literatures; religion and culture; pastoralism; tribal polity and kinship, tribal assemblies - *sabha* and *samiti*; social differentiation, family and status of women.
- ❖ Later Vedic Phase: Transition to state and social orders; transition to agricultural economy, use and significance of iron; settlements: *Jana*, *Janapadas*; social organization: family, consolidation of patriarchal system, emergence of social stratification - caste, gender; political organization, emergence of the term '*rashtra*', tributaries, tax/revenues.
- ❖ Emergence of new religions and religious philosophies; Jainism and Buddhism: social change; contributions, significances.
- ❖ Rise of territorial states and early state formations; changing material conditions; early India's contact with Iran, Macedonia, cultural and literary influence
- ❖ Rise of the first Empire - Mauryan Empire; Sources: *Arthashastra*, *Indika*, *Mudrarakshasha*; imperial and state structures; significance of Mauryan age: political control, material culture and state mechanism, social structures, art and architecture; causes of its decline
- ❖ India and the outside World: contacts with Central Asia; socio-economic and political conditions of the time
- ❖ Early history of the Deccan; Sangam Age; state formations-kingdoms: Chola, Pandya and Chera; social classes, economy and trade links, Arab traders
- ❖ The Age of the Guptas; feudal beginnings, socio-economic condition of the time; re-emergence of Brahmanical cult; the later Gupta period; decline
- ❖ Art, architecture and literature/economy, trade and commerce: science and technology in early India

### Tentative Assessment Schedule with details of Weightage:

| S.No | Assessment Type                    | Date/Period            | Weightage |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| 1    | Home Assignment/class presentation | First week of February | 30%       |
| 2    | Home Assignment/Class Presentation | Third week of March    | 30%       |
| 3    | End Semester Exam                  | As per SUS Schedule    | 40%       |

### Essential Readings:

1. **Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to the A.D. 1300***
2. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*
3. Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*
4. A.L. Basham, *Wonder That was India*
5. A.L. Basham, *Cultural History of India*
6. D.N. Jha, *Early India*
7. **Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century***
8. Rajesh Kochhar, *The Vedic People: Their History and Geography*
9. Bhairabi Prasad Sahu (ed.), *Iron and Social Change in Early India*
10. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Studying Early India*
11. **R.S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past***
12. R.S. Sharma, *Rethinking India's Past*
13. Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *India: An Archeological History*
14. **Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas***
15. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*
16. **Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. A.D 1300***
17. **T.R. Trautmann, Ed. *The Aryan Debate***
18. **R. Gurukkal, *Social Formations of Early South India.***
19. **Bridget & R. Allchin., *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan***
20. **Shereen Ratnagar, *Understanding Harappa: Civilization in the Greater Indus Valley***

### Suggested Readings:

- D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*
- Sharma, R.S. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India.*
- Allchin, F.R. *et al. The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia: The Emergence of Cities and States.*
- Ratnagar, S. *Harappan Archaeology: Early State Perspectives*
- **Nayanjot Lahiri, ed. *The Decline and Fall of the Indus Civilization.***
- Udayravi S. Moorti, *Megalithic Culture of South India: Socio-economic Perspectives.*
- **Kumkum Roy, ed. *Women in Early Indian Societies.***
- R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives in the Social and Economic History of Early India.*
- Nayanjot Lahiri, *Marshalling the Past: Ancient India and its Modern Histories*
- Noboru Karashima, *A Concise History of South India: Issues and Interpretations.*
- Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, ed., *Approaches to History: Essays in Indian Historiography*
- Irfan Habib, *Post Mauryan India 200 BC – 300 AD*