Introduction

Indian civilization is known as the oldest civilization of the world history. At the very early age of the human civilization Indians had established a very rich cultural and social heritage which is known as the Indus-valley civilization. Mahenjodaro and Harappa are the first evidence of such an advanced civilization in the world history. *Rgveda* is the first work among the written documents not only in the history of India but also of the world. Sanskrit is the most resourceful language, which preserves the ancient Indian thought, knowledge, wisdom and cultural heritage as well. If we look into the chronological history of this literature we find two basic periods of its development viz., the Vedic period and the classical Sanskrit period. The *Vedas* include *Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas* and *Upaniṣads*. *Dharmasūtras* are also included in this period. According to the scholars the lower limit of the Vedic period is 500 B.C. It may be shown in a figure in a concise manner.
The main purpose of this thesis is to look into the concept of crime and punishment in ancient India. What were the judicial system that they followed and how the concept gradually developed, what are the basic differences if any in ancient and modern times so far as these concepts are concerned. To find out the answers to these questions we have collected data from the original texts also from some secondary sources as literature. In ancient India legal matters are discussed under the name vyavahāra, in the Dharmaśāstra (DS). The topic being very vast, we have limited our discussion to three prominent lawgivers of different periods of time. They are Kauṭilya, Manu and Yājñavalkya. They were not only famous in ancient India but their works are still honoured as the holy books and some part of this sub-continent the laws of Manu are still in rule.

For the detailed analysis of ancient Indian crime and punishment we have divided the thesis into six major chapters. In the first two chapters we have discussed the concept of crime and punishment through ages. That is the gradual development of the concept of crime and punishment from Vedic age to Smṛti literature. Sūtra period is the beginning stage of DS.

There are so many Dharmasūtras, which provide code of conduct at that time. After the Sūtra period we find the complete and advanced form of judicial system in ancient India i.e., the Smṛti literature. We find the name of twenty prominent Smṛtikāras, who prescribed law for the mankind. Among them we have chosen the laws of Manu and Yājñavalkya, who are the paramount authority of ancient Indian law. The chapters third, fourth and fifth deal with the crime, punishment and judicial administration as per these three prominent lawgivers. The last chapter of this thesis is a comparative analysis and conclusion. Thus the chapters are:

I. The concept of crime through ages;
II. The concept of punishment through ages;
III. Crime and punishment in Kauṭilya;
IV. Crime and punishment in Manu;
V. Crime and punishment in Yājñavalkya; and
VI. Conclusion.