The Hūṇas in India are first mentioned in the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta (c.A.D.455-67) and lastly recorded in the Karanbela stone inscription of Malachuri king Jayasimhadeva, composed between A.D.1160 and 1180. Both these inscriptions cover a period of nearly seven hundred years which can be considered as a period of Hūṇa presence in India. This period of seven hundred years can not be attributed to the active role of Hūṇas in Indian politics but it witnesses the early invasion of Hūṇas during the time of Skandagupta causing a fatal blow to the power and prestige of the classical Gupta empire in India leading the country to a state of political disintegration and economic depreciation. Although, in the first instance, Skandagupta was successful in repulsing them back but the Hūṇas usefully exploited the weakness of the successive rulers of Skandagupta and this time they not only invaded India but established their rule in considerable part of northern and central India which continued for about fifty years during its zenith approximately ranging from A.D.490 to A.D.540. This was followed by Hūṇa rule in Kashmir, Rajasthan and Punjab still managing the status of a formidable force in the north–west region causing serious troubles to the
Maukhris and the Pushpabhūtis. After this the Hūṇa power particularly in India declined to the extent of eclipse of their power. Despite their loss of political power, the Hūṇas in India followed the process of Indianization which finally led to their assimilation into Indian culture. The Hūṇas were recognized as one of the thirty-six Rajput clans, the fact which was recorded in the contemporary and later writings and inscriptions.

The study under review is an effort to deal with the various aspects of Hūṇas history in light of new evidences and researches. The problem of the origin of Hūṇas is discussed in relation to the Hsiung-nu of the Chinese sources. The Hsiung-nu appears to be a confederacy of various tribes inhabiting the people of different ethnic stocks. It included the ethnic stocks of the Iranian, Mongol and Turk people. The Indian Hūṇas known as White Hūṇas are identified as belonging to the Turkish or Turko-Iranian ethnic stock. There had been wide controversies regarding the political developments in the north-west region where once time the Sassanians, the later Kushāṇas, the Kushāṇašāhs - the Sassainian governors, the Hūṇas, the Kidārites etc., had created a mess particularly in terms of establishing the chronology of the events and the dynasties. Gobl has divided the Hūṇas into the four groups viz. The Kidārites, the Alxon, the Napki Malik and the Hephthalites. It has been found that the Alxon and the Hephthalites represented the same group. Mitterwallner has
identified the Indian Hūṇas as White Hūṇas who were the Hephthalites. According to Gobi, the Hephthalites came into focus in A.D. 355 occupying Bactria, when they are found settling scores with the Sassanians following the love and hate relationship. The Hephthalites drove away the Kidārites into Gāndhāra and occupied Bactria. After that the Hephthalites occupied the territory being governed by the Kushāṇashāhas - the governors of the Sassanians. The coins issued by the Hephthalites, in the region earlier occupied by the Kushāṇashāhs, bear a close resemblance with the coins of the Sassanians and the Kushāṇashāhs. Upto C.A.D.460, the Hephthalites managed to occupy the area falling on the north-western part of India i.e. north Pakistan including Gāndhāra. It is at this time that the first invasion of India by the Hūṇas took place and as a result they experienced a severe defeat at the hands of Skandagupta.

The defeat of the Hūṇas by Skandagupta is recorded in the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta. The date of the said defeat of the Hūṇas is gripped with controversies. By carefully examining the contents and the circumstances as revealed by the Junagargh rock inscription and the Bhitari stone inscription of Skandagupta it appears that the battle between Skandagupta and the Hūṇas was fought approximately around A.D.456-57. If J.P. Singh's hypothesis is taken into consideration which is based on the Kahaum inscription of Skandagupta dated (= A.D.460), then it appears
that the battle was fought around A.D.460. The venue of the battle is another attention seeking controversial issue. Some scholars, who read Fleet's reading 'Gāṅga-dhavni' as 'Shāraṅga-dhavani' in line 15 of the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta, believe that the battle was fought somewhere near Saurashtra. But Fleet's reading, which appears to be correct, can not be referred to as out of the context. The said reading provides the clue that the battle was fought somewhere near the banks of the Ganges river. Although, Bhitari itself, from where was found the inscription which records the defeat of the Hūṇas by Skandagupta, is situated on the banks of the river Gaṅgā but it is difficult to believe that the Hūṇas, in the very first attempt, reached the heart of the Gupta empire. Although the battle appears to have been fought on the banks of Gaṅgā, but it was not the Bhitari. It seems more likely that the battle was fought somewhere in the western U.P. having a close proximity to the river Gaṅgā. It is in this region where Gaṅgā, flowing from its origin from north to south, takes a turn and now flowing from west to the east. Here the river Gaṅgā flows in such a direction that one could reach to the Bhitari without crossing it. As it is known that the rivers in ancient times formed the boundaries of the kingdoms and every measure was put into practice to prevent the enemy from crossing the river. Skandagupta, too would have attempted to check the Hūṇas before they could cross the river Gaṅgā. The task of crossing the river was viable and relevant in the western U.P. Only where
Ganga, before taking a turn to the east, flows from north to the south. In this context, Sanghol, a site in the Ludhiana district of Punjab attracts the foremost attention. The site yeilds the maximum discoveries specially coins related to the Hunas. And it will not be exaggeration to assume that the site enjoyed a special importance for Hunas. In Other words, it can be described as Indian head quarter of the Huna affairs. Perhaps, after facing a defeat at the hands of Skandagupts somewhere in western U.P., The Hunas, during the course of their next attempt, moved southwards from Sanghol. The Huna king during the time of first invasion was, perhaps Khiṅgila, the father of Toramāna, as observed by Gobl. Khiṅgila, according to Gobl, ruled approximately from A.D.430/40 - A.D.490. The second attempt to invade and occupy the territories was made by Toramāna perhaps in A.D.490.

The first conquest of Toramāna of Eran came in the first regnal year of Toramāna as revealed by the Eran stone inscription of Dhanyavīshṇu. The date can be calculate as A.D.491. The information regarding his further conquests are found to be preserved in the Sanjeli copper plates of Mahārāja Bhūta dated in the years 3, 6 and 19. In these plates Mahārāja Bhūta is described as meditating on the feet of Parambhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Toramāna. The dates mentioned in the plates has aroused controversies as to belonging to the regnal years of Toramāna or Mahārāja Bhūta. But it appears that the dates indicate
to the regnal year of 'parambhattāraka Mahārājādhirāja Toramāṇa,' and thus can be fixed as A.D. 493, 496 and 509. The conquests of Kauśāmbī by Toramāṇa can be ascribed in his initial years. Thus, it appears that the area surrounding Sanjeli was occupied by Toramāṇa in A.D. 493. Mandasor, which falls on the straight line between Eruṇ and Sanjeli, possibly came under the control of Toramāṇa sometime between A.D. 491 and 493. It may be A.D. 492. Mandasor remained under the occupation of the Aulikaras, earlier - varaman Aulikaras and later - vardhana Aulikaras. For a brief period, in A.D. 467, Mandasor passed into the hands of king Prabhakara, the feudatory of the Gupta emperor. But we find Mandasor again under the occupation of the Aulikaras with Aulikara king Adityavardhana ruling over Mandasor in A.D. 490. For a brief period, the Hūṇa under Toramāṇa, again brought change in the ruler of the Mandasor. But it was retained by Aulikara king Prakāśhodharman who inflicted a crushing defeat to Hūṇa ruler Toramāṇa. In this battle, the Hūṇa ruler was perhaps assisted by incharge of Eruṇ i.e. Bhānugupta whose inscription, we find in Eruṇ, mentions about a famous battle in which his commander of forces named Goparāja was killed and as a result Gopa's wife committed sati. Perhaps this stance of Bhānugupta brought the Aulikaras against the Guptas. The battle between Prakāśhodharman and Toramāṇa appears to be the last one for Toramāṇa and in consequence it brought an end to Toramāṇa's rule. The date of this can be placed around A.D. 510.
Toramāṇa was succeeded by his son Mihirakula, who attracted the attention of the Buddhist writers because of his cruelty, and intolerant attitude against Buddhism. He is found to be mentioned in the works of Kosmos, I-śing, Hiuen-Tsang, Kalahana etc. The sole inscription of Mihirakula, refers to him ruling in the 15th regnal year which comes to, approximately, around A.D.525. The Gupta rulers are found to be paying tribute to Mihirakula. His two defeats – one by Yashodharman and other by Narasiṃhagupta Bālāditya are noticed in the undated Mandasor inscription of Yashodarman and account of Hiuen-Tsang respectively. Here comes the controversy regarding the final defeat of Mihirakula. The Mandasor inscription of Yashodharaman dated M.S. 589 (= A.D. 532) has been taken by us as prior to his undated Mandasor Inscription which mentions the defeat of Mihirakula. On this basis, we place the defeat of Mihirakula some time after A.D.532. As the engraver of both the inscriptions is the same person, the gap of five to seven years between the issuance of both the inscriptions, can be accepted. Hence the date of Mihirakula’s defeat can be placed around A.D.540, and which led to the final departure of Mihirakula from Indian politics. The defeat of Mihirakula by Narasiṃhagupta Bālāditya raises many doubts. It appears very difficult, in light of cross examination of the facts available to us from various sources, to believe that Narasiṃhagupta Bālāditya, who was paying tribute to Mihirakula, was powerful and resourceful enough to ever inflict a defeat to
Mihirakula. It is interesting to note here that only the Buddhist writings mentions the defeat of Mihirakula by Narasimhagupta Bālāditya where as in the contemporary writings, it goes unrecorded and unnoticed. The story of Mihirakula’s defeat narrated by Hiuen Tsang is not free from many doubts and objections which strengthens the views not to believe the said defeat of Mihirakula by Narasimhagupta Bālāditya. Undoubtedly, Mihirakula was experiencing a lot of trouble on his western boundaries, and perhaps it consumed most of his time and energy to set the things right there instead of consolidating his power in central India.

After Mihirakula, the Hūṇa power was reduced to a regional power confining itself in the areas of Punjab and Kashmir particularly. But still they maintained their balance at political power and prestige which caused troubles to the Maukharis and the Pushpabhūtis. The period after Mihirakula is marked by the rise of the Maukharis, the later Guptas and the Pushapabhūtis. The Hūṇa interference in the political affairs of these kingdoms was least effective. The three kingdoms asserted to gain prominence and supremacy through mutual confrontations and negotiations in which, finally, the Pushapabhūtis emerged as more powerful and strong and dominated the affairs in northern India.

The Maukhari king Isanavaraman is credited of inflicting a defeat to the Hūṇas in the Aphsad inscription of later Gupta king Ādityasena. The kingdom of the Pushpabhūtis was lying between
the kingdom of the Hūṇas and the Maukhris. The question which
instantly strikes is - What inspired the Maukharis to come in
confrontation with the Hūṇas who were even not sharing a common
boundary? The possible explanation appears to be that the
Pushpabhūtis, at the same time, had accepted the Sovereignty of
the Maukharis. The Pushpabhūtis, were facing threat from the
Hūṇas on their western border and it was a political necessity
for them to accept the Maukharis' overlordship. The Maukharis
too felt that the Hūṇas could pose equal threat to their power
and prestige if they we are not checked on the western border of
the Pushapabhūtis. So with all such calculations in mind,
Iśānavarman invaded the Hūṇas and defeated them. The next defeat
of the Hūṇas in this series came from the Pushpabhūti king
Prabhākaravardhana who assumed the title of Maharājādhirāja -
the first among Pushpabhūti rulers to assume such title. The
Pushpabhūtis under Prabhākaravardhana were now an independent
power. It appears from the account of Bāpañabhaṭṭa In Harsh -
charita, that the Hūṇas faced such a severe defeat that they were
unable to strike again the boundaries of the Pushpabhūtis. This
appears to be the last notice the Hūṇas as a political power and
after that they were referred to more in social aspect rather
than political terms.
The second part of the study under review deals with the impact of the Hūṇas on the Indian culture. Although, the direct impact, except the political one, does not appear in sight but the invasion had deeper effects on the Indian economy that disturbed, to certain extent, the social and religions balance of equations as well. We have found that the impact of the Hūṇas on Indian economy is marked in two stages. The first stage is related to the rise of the Hūṇas in A.D.355-56 when they occupied Bactria. The Hūṇas in this stage, although living at a considerable distance from Indian borders, brought economic depreciation both for the Sassanians and the Indian. The main trade route during the Kushan period, which once connected particularly north India to the Central Asia, China, western Asia and the Mediterranean world, fell out of use due to the rise of the Hūṇas in Bactria - the focal point of the international trading and business activities. Thus India, in a sense, was deprived of the opportunity to exploit the maximum commercial benefits from this trade route which it had been bringing home during the time of the Kushanās. At the same time India's role of middleman for providing access to the Roman goods in China and the Chinese supplies in the Mediterranean market, was cut to considerable low size. The Indian economy under the Guptas, thus, was modelled or shaped where the trading benefits from across the western border, had least role to play. This situation gave impetus to the growth of semi-urban economy largely relying upon the agrarian economy. As a
result of it, we find considerable loss of the urban centers particularly in northern India, which flourished earlier under the Kushāṇas, due to the flourishment of trade on this route. But the sorry state of economic affairs had not reached to the extent of compensating the Brāhmaṇs through the land grants. It appears in the second stage which begins with the rule of Skandagupta.

The second stage begins with the invasion of the Hūṇas on India during the time of Skandagupta. In the course of invasion, the Hūṇas caused desertion and destruction of many urban centers of which we have evidences of only four cities viz. Taxilā, Sanghol, Kauśāmbī and the Ajram in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. The time of other deserted cities also corresponds to the Hūṇa invasion. The idea about how much effect on Indian economy the Hūṇas caused, can be got from R.S. Sharma's assertion that "Ordinarily the merchants lived on the profits of the trade, artisans on their manual earnings and religious and administrative functionaries on the gifts, taxes, tithes and tributes provided by the peasants, the artisans and the merchants".

With the loss of the western trade and consequently of the Urban centres, particularly in the north India disturbed the city infrastructure which reduced the importance and scope of functioning of the city guilds and their heads. It is important to add here that these guilds and their heads had considerable
influence in the local and central politics because of their economic status and close proximity to the people & political power. And perhaps it was due to this that the priestly class was finding itself unable to secure maximum political privileges and influence at local and central level. But loss of trade and other fruitful economic activities, the priestly class got the opportunity to increase its influence in local and central politics. This tendency is reflected through many land grants to the religious functionaries. And the explanation to the revival of Barahmanism through state in the Gupta period can be sought from it. Probably, this also gave impetus to the growth of religious centres at the time when the urban centers based on the trade, were declining. As a result of this economic loss, the population residing in the cities, which largely depended upon, for their livelihood, on the daily earnings from trade activities, had to think of other alternatives for their livelihood. Here, agriculture was the only sector which could absorb the larger percentage of the population. Moreover, agriculture did not require much special skills and techniques and any person can find his livelihood without having the technical skill required in other professions. This increased the pressure on the land.

The economic system thus developed, required less and less importance and use of the coins. The Gupta rulers after
Skandagupta, which marks the beginning of our second stage of economic impact, are not known to have issued equal number of coins particularly in gold. The economic decline barred the continuance of big business transactions, for which gold coins were expected to be more useful. The contemporary rulers—later Imperial Guptas, the Later Guptas, the Maukharis, the Aulikaras, the Pushpabūtis, the Maitrakas and obviously the Hūnas were less interested to promote the currency system keeping in view the market limitations. Only a few coin specimen of rulers of these dynasties are evidenced and that too mostly in silver and copper. Cowries and barter system fulfilled the local trade requirements.

The decline in the economy also affected to functioning of the social order. The new economic equations created a vertical social distance among the four varṇas. It adversely affected the economic relations between the four varṇas which instead of satisfying the social needs and functions, disturbed the inter-varṇa relationship and the institutional pattern that had been traditionally expounded, protected and established by the Dharmāṣṭras. As a result of it, the ritual status of the Brāhmaṇas become insufficient to provide them adequate and respectable means of livelihood. The Vaishyas, particularly the city dwellers, too, were left to live below the preserved economic status as their traditional occupations were no more in too better condition to bring them the required fruits. The Śūdras were
benefitted in this turmoil who could, now, opt for a profession which could bring them more economic gains and to some extent the social respectability. In the changed circumstances, the Brāhmans were opting for cultivation of the lands to attain the livelihood.

The impact of the economic decline on the social order is manifested through the land grants to the Brāhmans. The references of land grants to the Brāhmans are found in the inscriptions of the later imperial Gupta rulers whose area of operation was now confined to the areas of Bihar and Bengal and some eastern portions of U.P. and M.P. In these inscriptions land was donated to the Brāhmans by the individuals and not by the state. The individuals are referred as paying the requisite price of the land to the state and then in turn, the individuals donated that land to the Brāhmans or temples. In central India, the Parivṛajakas and the Uchchakalpas are found to be granting land to the Brāhmans. In the region of Saurashtra, the Maitraka kings granted lands to the Brāhmans. So, the land granting authority differed from area to area. Although certain judicial and administrative rights, in the areas of central India and Saurashtra, were extended to the grantees but the size and amount of the land granted was too small to cause challenge to the central authority. The aim of granting land was to provide as much area of land that could bring only livelihood through cultivation. The period that follows
Hūṇas witnessed a large scale migration of the Brāhmaṇs of north India which appear to be motivated by the intention to secure privileges in terms of land grants. These circumstances, though not directly related to the Hūṇas but emerged primarily because of the Hunas.

The social aspect directly concerned to the Hūṇas was the process of socialization that led to their assimilation and absorption into the Indian culture through Rajput fold. The problem of origin of Rajputs offers a score of opinions. The inclusion of the name of the Hūṇas in the list of 36 Rajput clans has given credence to the foreign origin of the Rajputs. At the same time, indigenous origin of the Rajputs is claimed by some scholars. But it appears certain that both the groups i.e. the foreign and the indigenous sought their entry into the Rajput fold. The assimilation of the Hūṇas into Indian culture particularly in Rajput fold was made easy and convenient by the religious background of the Hūṇas. The solar wheel on the coins of Toramāṇa not only reflects his personal religious outlook, i.e., a sun worshipper but also associates Hūṇas with the sun cult having foreign origin, which, later on, contributed to the assimilation of the Hūṇas in the Indian fold. The importance of sun cult with reference to the Hūṇas lies in the process of migration of the Sun priests of Iranian Origin in India. The foreign, first entered in India in the 5th century B.C. in the
wake of Achaemenid invasion, second time they entered in the 1st - 2nd centuries A.D. in the wake of Śaka - Kushāṇa invasions and lastly they entered in the wake of Hūṇa invasion in the 5th-6th centuries A.D. The Sūryāvamsīs in the Rajput fold can be associated with the outcome of efforts of these sun priests.

The Hūṇas were placed in the rank of Kṣatriyas termed as the Rajputs firstly on the basis of their warrior qualities, valour and valiant characteristics. Secondly they were more likely to be absorbed in the Kṣatriya fold since they could not be absorbed in the Brāhmaṇhood and the foundry fold because of the limitations of their qualities that could provide them a seat in the Kṣatriya fold only. Agriculture was not a preferable pursuit in Rajasthan due to the geographical limitations and hence their entry into the Vaiśya fold was barred. It may be possible that all the Huna folks were not adjusted in the Kṣatriya fold. The Hūṇas who were practising smaller occupations might be ranked as Śūdras.

Punjab also remained under the occupation of the later Hūṇas and the possibility that the Hūṇas, though not entirely but a seizable number of them, must have settled in that area can not ruled be out. Unfortunately, we do not have any evidence that could confirm their settlement in the area under discussion. Although, the Jāṭs, who constitutes the larger percentage of the population in the areas of Punjab, Haryana, northern Rajasthan,
western U.P. and the Punjab state of Pakistan, are sometimes referred to as of having foreign origin but their relation with the Hūṇas can not be established for lack of proper evidences.

In the last, an attempt has been made to arrange the coins of the Hūṇas in a chronological sequence. Although it is not claimed that the arrangement of the coins is final. Still the scope of further study is the requirement of the problem. Here, the works of Gobli and other western scholars has been taken into consideration but the limitation that Gobli’s work being not translated in English has not allowed us to utilize the voluminous work of Gobli on Hūṇas to the full extent.