sources
Fortunately, there are some important sources still existing for the study of the history of the Śunga period. Of the literary sources the Manu-smṛti, the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali and certain portions of the Mahābhārata are the most important. Next comes the Mālavikāgnimitram of Kālidāsa which contains some references to pushyamitra's son Agnimitra. Besides these, the Buddhist work, the Divyavadāna and Tibetan historian, Tārāṇātha are also useful sources of the history of the Śungas. Among the epigraphic sources, the Besnagar inscription and the Bharhut stūpa railing inscription are equally noticeable.

The Manu-smṛti is an ancient text of high authority and merit. It is held in the greatest respect even today. The popularity that is attributed to Manu-smṛti is evident from the fact that, since very old days, Manu has been considered not only to have been the progenitor of mankind but also as the founder of all social orders and customs, and important principles of law are directly put into his mouth. The Manu-smṛti is, therefore, said to have a divine origin. In its first chapter it is said, that this code of law is a work of Brahmā, the creator himself, who revealed to his son Manu. The latter in turn imparted it to the ten sages and at last entrusted to Bhṛgu, one of his sons, the task of explaining to the mortals. In theory the vedas are regarded as the ultimate source of dharma but in practice the Manu-smṛti is the real exposition of religious duties and usages.
Max Müller was the first scholar who brought out the fact that the metrical dharmaśāstras were possibly not different from adoptions and elaborations of older dharmasūtras. G. Bühler following Max Müller says that Manu-smṛti is a recast of an ancient dharmasūtra that of the Mānavacarana. He further adds that it possibly took place between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. Later on the basis of the internal evidence of the Manu-smṛti, K.P. Jayaswal came to the conclusion that the Manu-smṛti was finally recasted during the age of Pushyamitra Śūṅga.

The extant Manu-smṛti or Mānava-dharma-śāstra consists of twelve chapters. In the first chapter the great sages approach Manu and request him to reveal the holy laws of different castes. Manu agrees and begins with a discourse on the creation, which is further continued by Bhṛgu. The first five chapters, after a short introduction on the sources of dharma describes the samskāras, the life and conduct of Brahmachārī, the duties of the householders, the marriage, the Śrāddhas, the rules for the snātaka, regulations regarding vedic studies, rules regarding permitted and forbidden food, religious impurities and purification ceremonies and all sort of rules useful to women. The sixth chapter deals with hermits and ascetics, while the seventh chapter speaks about the duties of the kings and the rules about the administration and politics. The eighth chapter tells about civil and criminal laws and legal processes. The ninth chapter deals with the laws of inheritance and ends with a brief recapitulation of the duties of the kings. The tenth chapter
throws light on the mixed caste, professions of the three higher varnas and emergency laws. The eleventh section deals with various sins and their pāññāchitta. The twelfth chapter tells about the consequences of good and bad deeds in the future life, transmigration and the means of attainment of moksha.

Patañjali, the author of Mahābhāṣya is regarded as a great grammarian and paramount authority in all matters relating to sanskrit literature. There is a controversy regarding Patañjali's time. The earliest date was fixed by N.Bhattacharya in the tenth century B.C. and the latest limit was fixed by Peterson in the fourth century A.D. Patañjali's reference to Yavanas, Chandragupta and Pushyamitra clearly disprove these theories. According to Goldstucker Patañjali wrote his Mahābhāṣya between 140 and 120 B.C. Max Müller suggested 200 B.C. and Keith 150 B.C. as the probable date of Patañjali. In his Mahābhāṣya Patañjali mentions "Iha Pushyamitram Ya.Jayāmah" means that here we perform the sacrifice for Pushyamitra. The use of the present tense indicates that the sacrifice was begun but not yet finished, and that Patañjali was, therefore, a contemporary of Pushyamitra. Smith rightly says that the performance of the solemn rite probably was witnessed by the celebrated grammarian Patañjali who alludes to the event in terms which imply that it occurred in his time. Therefore, Mahābhāṣya becomes an important source of information for the social, religious, literary and political history of the Śuṅga period.
The Mahābhārata as an epic is unique in the world of classical Sanskrit literature. It consists of eighteen parvans. In the didactic sections of the Mahābhārata there was always great scope for additions. Thus, the Mahābhārata became very much inflated by additions made to incorporate the changes in the later periods. In the later sections of the Mahābhārata certain passages have been cited from the Manu-saṃhitā. According to Bühler there are about 260 verses in the vāna, śānti and Anuśāsana parvans alone which are identical with the verses of Manu. Therefore, it looks quite probable that some portions of the Mahābhārata were re-edited in the Śunga period, Patañjali, the contemporary of Manu, was also quite familiar with the story of the Mahābhārata. In his Mahābhāṣya he refers to Pāṇḍavas\(^\text{10}\), and the Kauravas\(^\text{11}\), Gāndhārī and Kuntī\(^\text{12}\) and the Brāhmaṇa senāpati Drona and his son Aśvatthāma\(^\text{13}\). He also mention Kuru fighting righteously\(^\text{14}\). The story of Sūka, the son of Vyāsa, who had imbibed all knowledge in the womb of his mother is also mentioned by Patañjali\(^\text{15}\). He mentions the stories of Yāvakṛtika\(^\text{16}\) and Yāyātika\(^\text{17}\) which are mentioned in the Mahābhārata\(^\text{18}\) in details. It appears that such portions of the Mahābhārata as denounced asceticism and extolled the grhastha-āśrama in Preference to samnyāsa-āśrama were incorporated newly or re-emphasised with greater stress during the Śunga period to bring this epic in line with the changed circumstances.

The Mālavikāgnimitram was written by the great poet Kālidāsa who had enjoyed wide popularity throughout the ages.
There is a lot of controversy regarding the date of Kālidāsa. However, it is beyond the scope of our thesis to determine the date of this great poet. It appears that the drama Mālavikāgnimitram was not played during the Śuṅga period but it gives many important informations about the Śuṅga rulers. It tells that Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra belonged to the Baimbika-kula and he was his father's Viceroy at Vidiśa. Pushyamitra performed an Aśvamedha sacrifice and vasumitra, the son of Agnimitra was made the protector of the sacrificial horse. One can say without much fear that the plot of Mālavikāgnimitram is based on historical characters of the Śuṅga period.

The Divyāvadāna is a collection of pious Buddhist legends which differ in style and language from each other. Most of the legends are written in fairly correct Sanskrit prose, but some parts are in kavya style with long compounds. It shows that the whole work is not written by a single man. According to G.K. Nariman the Divyāvadāna was redacted in third century A.D. It mentions that Pushyamitra resided at Pātaliputra which was his capital. It also mentions the activities of Pushyamitra against the religion of Buddha that Pushyamitra issued a proclamation to the effect that who ever would present him with the head of a Śramāṇa would be rewarded with one hundred dīnāras. According to Smith it is wholly baseless and exaggerated. Raychaudhury also says that the late Buddhist writers are alleged to represent Pushyamitra as cruel persecutor of Buddhism, but the Buddhist monuments at Bharhut erected during the sovereignty of Śuṅgas do not
bear this theory. Tārānātha was the Tibetan historian and his 
*History of Buddhism in India* was completed in 1608 A.D. He 
mentions that Pushyamitra burnt a number of monasteries from the 
Madhyadesa as far as Jalandhara. It appears that Tārānātha 
based his account on the *Divyāvadāna* and the fact is, that the 
Śuṅgas were the orthodox *Brāhmaṇas* but they were not the 
persecutors of Buddhism.

The inscriptions supply the most valuable evidence as to 
the political, social, economic and religious conditions of the 
period to which they belong. There are two important inscriptions 
of the Śuṅga period which throw light on the cultural history of 
the Śuṅgas.

At Besnagar the *Garuda* pillar bears an inscription dated 
second century B.C. Its language is *Prakrit* influenced by sanskrit 
and its script is *Bṛhamī*. It mentions "this *Garuda* column of 
Vāsudeva was erected by Heliodorus, a worshipper of Viṣṇu, the son 
of Dion, an inhabitant of Taxila who came as an ambassador from 
Greek king Antialicidas to king Kāśī-putra Bhāgabhadra, the 
saviour, then reigning prosperously in the fourteenth year of 
his kingship".

Marshall identified the so called fifth Śuṅga king with 
this king Bhāgabhadra of the *Garuda* pillar inscription. Jayaswal 
identified him with the ninth king Bhāgavata of the Purāṇas. According 
to Raychaudhuri, this theory has to be given up in view of the 
discovery of another Besnagar pillar inscription which mentions 
that there was at Vidiśā a king named Bhāgavata apart from 
Bhāgabhadra. However, the importance of this inscription lies in
the fact that during the Śuṅga period Bhāgavata religion was gaining popularity. It also enables us to bring the history of the Śuṅgas and the Yavanas into relation with each other.

The most notable Bharhut stūpa is in Madhya Pradesh. There is an inscription on the lower pillar of the eastern gateway. It was most probably written in the second half of the second century B.C. Its language is Prakrit and script is Brāhmī. The inscription states, within the dominions of the Śuṅgas, the gateway has been caused to be made and the workmanship in stone produced by Vatsiputra Dhanbhūti, the son of Gotiputra Āgaraju and grandson of Gārgiputra Viśvadeva.

In the Bharhut inscription the name of the Śuṅga monarch is missing, but the name of the dynasty is there. Cunningham mentions that the absence of the Śuṅga kings name in the inscription suggest that the Śuṅga power was then on the decline.
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