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SOCIETY, RELIGION AND ART OF THE KUSHĀṆA INDIA





# Society, Religion and Art of the Kushāna India

*A Historico-Symbiosis*

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Kanchan Chakrabarti

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*In Loving Memory of*  
*My Parents*







## PREFACE

With every elusive year that passes, new thoughts and dialectics are gathering around, particularly after the recent excavations at Bactria, Soviet Central Asia and Sonkh in India. I cannot pretend to be meticulously uptodate in this regard and know for certain that I have had to leave out much that is significant and revealing.

Notwithstanding, whatever rudimentary has consolidated in these pages, has become at all possible because of the occasional enlightenment and inspiration tendered by a host of scholars I admire and my esteemed colleagues. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitudes to them all. But I would like to record especially the debt I owe to late Professor Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya who took pains in his failing health to read the major part of the manuscript and suggested necessary corrections and modifications.

My grateful thanks are due also to the Directors and Curators of the principal museums in the country and abroad, and the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, for supplying me with the photographs of my choice along with the kind permission for reproducing them. A special note of gratitude that I entertain is for Dr. N. P. Joshi, Director, State Museum, Lucknow and Shri R. C. Sharma, Curator, Govt. Museum, Mathura for rendering all possible help and cooperation whenever I visited their museums for study. I am indebted to Shri Gopi Krishna Kanoria for permitting me to reproduce a valuable specimen from his eminent collections. I have duly acknowledged them all in the Descriptive Notes of the Plates. I extend my grateful acknowledgements to the American Institute of Indian Studies, American Center, New Delhi.

I should also like to thank sincerely my research scholars and students who prepared the Index for me and assisted me at the proof-reading stages. But the responsibility is mine alone for the several printing mistakes that have crept in. However, more concerning than those, to my mind, are, possibly the errors of gaps and omissions, errors of judgment and observations, and perhaps, plain mistakes. They are not, obviously, revealed to me at the moment and I shall be extremely grateful if my attention is kindly drawn to them, in case there should ever be an opportunity to correct them, at least in the companion volume that follows.

Reader's attention is drawn, incidentally, to the same placenames, sometimes bearing diacritical marks and sometimes without, which should be regarded as used in two different connotations: ancient and modern respectively. A few of the spellings have not uniformly been applied, so also is the case with the principle adopted for using italics. They are due to my inadvertence, I readily admit.

Finally, I would like to record that my studies and investigations that have crystallized into this volume reflects but little of what I owe to my wife and daughter, Mukti and Antara.





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AIU. (The) *Age of Imperial Unity*, Ed. by R. C. Majumdar, The History and Culture of Indian People, vol. ii, 3rd edn., Bombay, 1970.
- ASI. Archaeological Survey of India.
- ASIAR. *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Reports*.
- AV. (The) *Atharva Veda*, Tr. by Whitney, *HOS.*, vols. vii and viii, U.S.A., 1905.
- BHG. (The) *Bhāgavad Gitā*, Tr. by K. T. Telang, *S.E.B.*, Oxford, 1908.
- B.M.C. *British Museum Catalogue of Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria*.
- CAH. *Cambridge Ancient History*, Ed. by Charlesworth et al., Cambridge, 1933.
- CHI. *Cambridge History of India*, vol. i, Cambridge, 1922.
- CII. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, 4 vols., London, 1888-1955.
- DHI. (The) *Development of Hindu Iconography*, by J. N. Banerjea, 2nd edn., Calcutta, 1956.
- EHI. (The) *Early History of India*, by V. A. Smith, 4th edn., Oxford, 1924.
- EHVS. (The) *Early History of the Vaisnava Sect*, by H. C. Raychaudhuri, 2nd edn., Calcutta, 1936.
- EI. *Epigraphia Indica*, Delhi and Calcutta.
- ERE. (The) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. by J. Hastings, Edinburgh.
- IIIA. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, by A. K. Coomaraswamy, Dover, Inc., New York, 1965.
- HIL. *History of Indian Literature*, 2 vols., by M. Winternitz, Tr. by S. Ketkar, Calcutta University Press, 1927-33.
- HOS. *Harvard Oriental Series*.
- Ind. Ant. *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay.
- IHQ. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta.
- JA. *Journal Asiatique*, Paris.
- JAOS. *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Baltimore, U.S.A.
- JAS. *Journal of Asiatic Society* (Bengal).
- JASB. *Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Calcutta.
- Jāt. *Jātaka*, Tr. and Ed. by E. B. Cowell et al., 7 vols., Cambridge, 1895-1913.
- JBRs. *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Patna.
- JGIS. *Journal of the Greater India Society*, Calcutta.
- JISOA. *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta.



- JRAS. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*,  
London.
- JRASB. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.
- JUPHS. *Journal of the U. P. Historical Society*.
- Mbh. *Mahābhārata*, Tr. by P. C. Roy, 11 vols., 2nd edn., Calcutta, and also  
Vangabasi edn., by P. Tarkaratna, Calcutta.
- MASI. *Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*.
- PTS. Pali Text Society, London.
- RASB. (The) Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
- SBE. (The) *Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford.

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## INTRODUCTORY

India's ancient past presents a delectable mosaic of ethnocultural fusion, continually metamorphosing the form and structure of the socio-religious fabric. The principal source of our knowledge is the mass of literary works, Brāhmanic, Buddhist and Jain, both canonical, and non-canonical, besides the contemporary records left by the foreign authors. In point of significance, coins, inscriptions and sculptures too play a vivifying role by way of ratification and concretization to fathom the terra-firma in the literary texts. The whole gamut of source materials has been closely examined, analysed and interpreted by celebrated pioneers,—Indian, Asiatic and Europeans alike whose names, the author presumes, need not be repeated here as a general convention. These works whether in the form of aperçu of things or in the style of enquiry and exposition are but monumental in stature and signify the extent of modern scholarship.

So far as the contexts and conformities of the present study are concerned, it is to be noted, however, that most of the postulations, so far, have been treated in either a panning or a zooming manner, so to say; sometimes the literary data predominate, sometimes the archaeological ones. Then again, some of those treatises emphasize on the Buddhist source in relative inattention to the Brāhmanic or the Jain ones or vice versa. An attempt has, therefore, been made herein to treat the period under study from the comprehensive point of view. The Brāhmanic, Buddhist and Jain sources have been utilised alike. According to the suitability of material, references have also been drawn from sources: philosophical, scriptural, grammatical or non-canonical in nature, corroborated wherever possible by the foreign accounts. Epigraphic and numismatic evidences have also been incorporated as far as practicable.

But *raison d'être* of the present study, in particular, is the citation of plastic materials as visual testimony to the doctrinal and ritualistic evolution interacted by socio-religious mobility in India's historical past.

The period under consideration falls between, generally speaking, a couple of pre-Christian and the early Christian centuries. But the focus of the study, to be in particular, is on the Scytho-Kushāṇa epoch of India. This is admittedly an era in the whole history of civilization when numerous peoples and cultures met and reacted in a coherent manner and a happy cross-fertilization of cultures was the enduring outcome. Central Asia, the bed-rock of human civilization, Bactria and Parthia of the Greco-Romano-Iranian culture pale, the Gangetic plain via north-



western India and the accession of the western commercial gateways of India, did not merely signify a politico-economic map of the Kushāṇas, they comprised the integral cultural map of the dynasty too. What was the password to this remarkable feat — simply, the tolerance, liberalism and cosmopolitanism of the sovereigns. Perhaps the other factors too were at work. But as it stands now, the amalgam of the historico-cultural components of the Bactrians, Greeks and that of the nomads with the original and independent socio-religious traditions of Iran, Afganistan and India under the umbrella of the Kushāṇas still remains an eloquent mystery in the annals of intra-culture contacts.

If one looks at the art scene, in particular, one has to interpret the same, belonging to the earlier historical epochs, as patently religious, emblematic or mystic. They were, *prima facie*, narrative and hieratic condensation of expression. The Kushāṇa 'koine', in this context provided positive impetus for the volcanic spurt in image and icon-making on one hand and secular portrayals on the other; sculpture, in general, transformed gradually into a refined vehicle of artistic expression. Syncretization in idea and image became the spirit of the Kushāṇa pantheon rendering the necessary protection and patronization to the territorial independence, identity and uniqueness. The latest discoveries at Butkara (Pakistan), Surkh-Kotal (Afganistan) and Khalchayan and Dalverzin-tepe (Soviet Central Asia) testify further that the foundations laid on the ancient traditions of many peoples rendered the Kushāṇa achievement so soulful and viable that they engendered many mediaeval cultures of the orient. This unusual phenomenon has prompted the author to concentrate the attention on the epoch in particular.

The present study is, in fact, intended to provide a conceptual and evolutionary background to the religio-social metamorphoses during or prior to the Kushāṇa era so that the logicity of the stylistic and syncretistic trends could be understood and objectively analysed. Though the genesis of the artistic and creative unfolding is not a direct concern of the present volume and is being treated in a companion volume to be followed, it has been kept in view to make this investigation to be a self-complete one by itself.

Broadly speaking, the present work comprises only a couple of chapters. Chapter one projects a general socio-economic picture. The traditional structure based on the Varṇāśrama principles was still the dominant feature of the social organization. The inroads of the foreigners like the Greeks, Parthians and the Śaka-Kushāṇas contributed to the assimilation and synthesization in ideas, thoughts and actions. The Buddhist sources further allude to a class of quassi-professional unorganised masses below



the status of the established castes. They formed a caste order of their own. The recognition of the occupational excellence and connoisseurship, as referred to very frequently in the Jātakas, promoted the rise and growth of new kinds and qualities of arts and crafts and a phenomenal progress in trade and industry too has been recorded. The tradition of slaves and the slavery was still a dominant factor in the socio-economic interacting front. The Buddha's reformist tenets and the doctrine of Metta (universal compassion) could not benefit the non-privileged for many centuries after the demise of the Master.

We know further that the independence of women was never accorded in the Brāhmanic ideology. Even a Buddhist nun had always been subordinate to even the youngest bhikshu in the saṃgha. But the womenfolk were expected to attain proficiency in sixty four kalā in order to be regarded as accomplished ladies. Only the class of courtesans were beyond the pale of censorship and enjoyed a position of fame and honour.

Both literary and archaeological evidences present a delightful picture of the dresses, fashions, toilets, perfumes and ornaments in vogue during the period. Assemblies, festivals, stage performances and recitals, amusements and entertainments including drinking, gambling and merriment are elaborately alluded to and sculptures provide an eloquent testimony to these aspects of the society.

The second chapter deals mainly with sectarian tendencies in the religious organizations interacted by the emergence of bhakti cultism since the pre-Christian centuries. For a necessary backdrop, the author has felt it imperative to present a short resume of traditions and heritage of a few particular centres like Mathurā, Gandhāra, Pushkalāvati and Taxilā, that played very significant role in captivating through plastic media the evolutionary and synthesizing elements of the religious faiths and beliefs as well as the socio-corporate tenets.

Among the religious systems, both atheistic and monotheistic, again, the principal ones are obviously represented by the Buddhism, the Jainism, the Śaivism and the Śakti cult, and the Vaiṣṇavism. The impact of the diversifications gave rise to new philosophical doctrinaire and promoted new type of religious solidarity.

Interaction and intra-action between and among them blossomed into a mutual tolerance, synthesis and syncretism. In the process, local, regional and exotic cults, and ritualism intruded and consolidated the theistic strain of the era. The Brāhmanic faith marched towards neo-Brāhmanism of a flexible orientation eventually to transform into Hinduism of the later connotation. Thus, though designated as minor sects, the worshippers of



the Sūrya, Nāga, Yakṣa-Yakṣī and Tree evidentially claimed a popular following and were gradually being absorbed in the growthful Hindu pantheons.

An attempt has been made to trace the nucleus of cultism right from the Vedic age in order to establish the rationale of their popular emergence under the aegis of the Kushāṇas. The Greco-Romano-Parthian tradition of making deified effigies and the native Indian bhakti cultism inspired by the convention of icon-oriented hero-worship gave resurgence to image-making and idol-worship. Religion and art intermingled together in mutual inclusiveness. The epoch saw, identified and documented the transformations from the speculative, mystic pantheism of earlier days to a state of suggestive reality, a crystallization and unfolding of the inner life of the people. It has, therefore, constantly been kept in view so that the icons, images and portrayals may vivify the trend, temperament and sensitivity of the age attained through an integral coherence. This is where the author braves a claim to be specifically original though the premises and treatments may apparently look identical with his celebrated predecessors.

The recentmost and uptodate treatises in the related area have been studied analytically along with the eminent authorities and exponents in the field. The author has also examined the publications and communications of the young and emerging scholars in the field as far as practicable with the identical degree of care and alertness. Everywhere alike he has pursued the usual travaux d'approche. The selection of the plates is also expected to reveal judiciousness as well as representativeness.



## CHAPTER ONE

# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

## SOCIAL PHENOMENA

The socio-economic phenomena of the pre-Christian and early Christian era provide us with a picture characteristically vital and comprehensive. The intrinsic social security guaranteed by a political stability tempered with a welfare and corporate outlook of the sovereigns conjoined to usher in an economic prosperity and proliferation of an unprecedented nature. They, together, set in an attuned and cultivated socio-cultural efflorescence.

Politically speaking, the Kushāṇa rule of North and North-West India in the period with which we are primarily concerned, was preceded by that of the Greeks, the Parthians and the Śakas.<sup>1</sup> But the basic structure of the Indian society remained essentially the same in spite of all these onslaughts, providing only room for comprehensive assimilation.<sup>2</sup>

The Brāhmanic social organization of the varṇāśrama eventuated by birth and not by wealth or profession, as was provided by the Sūtra and Smṛiti-Samhitā literatures of the earlier epochs, continued without considerable change in pattern.<sup>3</sup> The Brāhmanical hierarchy was still a living force,<sup>4</sup> so was the institution of śramanas of the Buddhist order. It may, in this context, be recalled that Buddhism as a socio-political force of the contemporary period sponsored the concept of cakkabatti. The political philosophy of the Tripiṭaka was also not antiterritorial. The Lekkhana Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya establishes an affinity between the ideal of Buddhahood

1. The Śakas, among all the foreign hordes, however, generated an unholy reaction among the orthodox Indians. Gārgī Samhitā states, they were greedy, wicked and sinful (Kern, *Bṛhatsamhitā, Introduction*, p. 38). McGovern points out that some of the Sarmatian tribes into which he includes the Śakas, were extremely lax in the code governing sexual relations (cf. Chattopadhyaya, S., *Śakas in India*, p. 91). As a result of the commingling with them the Saurasenakas (the inhabitants of Mathurā region) became the victims of immoral customs (*Kāma-Sūtra*, 1883 edn., p. 71, cf. Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India, chapter 1*), so also was the people of the Punjab (ibid., Benares edn., cf. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 91).
2. The Śakas, however, gradually moderated themselves and became thoroughly Indianised. The same orthodox Indian society proclaimed later that the Śakas were Śūdras but not untouchables and need not be expelled from the dining table. (*Mahābhāṣya*, vi, 3. 109).
3. Megasthenes allude, however, to the existence of seven castes (*Indica*, Schwanbeck ed., Fg. xxxiii, bk. iii, in, (Ancient India as Described by Classical Writers, pp. 83-86), which have been dismissed by Rhys Davids, Stein and Dikshitar.
4. Evidences in the R̥gVeda prompted R. P. Chanda to propound a 'Double Aryan theory in which the Brāhmins and the Kṣatriyas are referred to as belonging to



and that of cakkabatti.<sup>5</sup> A lofty status was enjoyed by the ruling class, the Kshatriyas. Buddhist sources in particular assign the highest honour to the Kshatriya caste.<sup>6</sup> It is in the fitness of things that the castes which produced the religio-spiritual leaders of the stature of the Buddha and Mahāvīra should claim the prestige and authority of the highest class in society. Literary references allude, categorically to the merchant castes or the Śreṣṭhins<sup>7</sup> and the Śūdras.<sup>8</sup> It is to be noted in the context of the entire caste organization of the period that the inroads of foreign hordes for many centuries and the cumulative interaction gradually loosened the erstwhile orthodox social segmentation. Hence, we witness Patañjali to include the Greeks and the Scythians not merely in the list of Śūdras, but also to proclaim them as touchable Śūdras, keeping others as untouch-

two different racial stocks. Even the Brāhmins were divided into two sections : i) Brāhmins by descent who were whites and came to be known as Vaśiṣṭhas (*RV.*, vii, 331) ; and the Brāhmins by adoption, who were dark and were alluded to in the *RgVeda* as Kānvas (*ibid.*, x, 31. 11).

Chanda recommends, in this connection, the existence of five Varṇas instead of traditional four ; they are, Brāhmins, Rājanyas or Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras and Niṣādas (Chanda, *Indo-Aryan Races*, pp. 17-35 ff)

Slater on the otherhand, opines that the priestly order was already existing in the pre-Aryan society of India and the Brāhmins of the later period were but a product of the commingling between the cultures of the Dravidians and Helio-lithic culture from Egypt. (See, Slater, G., *The Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture*). Both the theories cannot, however, be accepted *prima facie*.

5. Varma, U. P., *Early Buddhism and its Origins*, p. 350 ff.
6. *Cullavagga*, ix, 1.4 ; *Mahāvagga*, ii, 128 ; *Anguttara Nikāya*, ii, 194 ; *Jātaka*, i, 326 ; iii, 194 ; iv, 205. Cf. Singh, M. M., *Life in North-Eastern India in Pre-Mauryan Times*, p. 9, note 11.
7. The Śreṣṭhins whether in the cities or villages represented the richest and the aristocratic section of the Vaiśya caste enjoying a respectable position among the members, (*ibid.*, p. 13). They were usually charitable (*Jāt.*, iii, 129). Their sons received education along with the Kṣatriya and Brāhmaṇa youths and they used to offer respectable honorarium to the teacher (*ibid.*, iv, 38). They usually did not marry outside their caste (*ibid.*, iv, 37).
8. MBH. declares that from animals one is first born a Śūdra (*Anuśāsana Parvan*, 119. 23). Service to others is designated to be the only duty of the Śūdras (cf. Banerjee, S. C., *Indian Society in the Mahābhārata*, pp. 233-34). D. R. Bhandarkar, on the basis of Ptolemy who alludes to 'Sydroi', a tribe inhabiting in Arachosia, (*Ind. Ant.*, vol. xiii, p. 409), and S. K. Chatterjee, on the strength of 'Sodre' occurring in the classical writings (*Presidential Address, All India Oriental Conference*, 17th Session, Ahmedabad, 1953), concluded that Śūdra was originally a particular tribe. McCrindle (*Ancient India*, vol. i, p. 354) and Fick (*Social Organisation in N. E. India*, p. 315) however, argue that the Śūdras belonged to a single ethnic group of the primitive stock inhabiting India.

In order to establish a remote, corroboration we may refer to Pāṇini who alludes to some Śūdras living within the pale of Aryan society implying thereby some



ables (Chandālas).<sup>9</sup> Manu also qualifies his marriage-restrictions and codifies *Anuloma*<sup>10</sup> and *Protiloma*<sup>11</sup> marriages.<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding too overpowering sentiments for pride of birth and sanctity of the family through marriages within one's own caste as corroborated by the Jātakas, references are also not rudimentary therein which allude to the framing of contingent rules about connubium (the right of intermarriage) and commensality (the right of dining together).<sup>13</sup> The prescribed occupations and obligations of the castes had to be liberalised and even the Brāhmins could transgress their assigned duties. Mahāvastu alludes to wealthy Brāhmins possessing huge granaries and rich treasures.<sup>14</sup> Lalitavistara refers to a sort of caste-unification '*Śarvair ekajāti prati-boddhai*'. But, in all likelihood, the contention is academic rather than an endeavour to integrate the different social units.<sup>15</sup> Other Buddhist texts mention about peoples having the social status below the established four castes. They were known as *hīnajāti* designated by their pursuits of 'low crafts', *hīna-sippa*. Some texts refer a general term for them as *Milakkha* (Mlechchha). Vinayasutta-Vibhanga refers to five classes of *hīna-jāti*. They are Chandāla, Vena, Nesāda, Rathakāra and Pukkusa.<sup>16</sup> But, in spite of the denial of rights and comforts of the higher castes, their lot was not altogether miserable. They had access to the Buddhist monks and wandering ascetics. They could qualify for the heaven if they died in defense of the Brāhmins, women, children and the cows. The Rock Edict IX of Aśoka emphasizes human treatment to slaves as one of the four duties of a noble householder (dharma-maṅgala). The frequent warnings in the orthodox texts that evil would befall if the Sūdras and the *hīna-jātis* grew extremely powerful may be inferred in a way that they might occasionally exercise influence and authority.<sup>17</sup>

The Jatakas too refer to the existence of yet a class of unorganised masses who were outside the realm of official guilds of traders and other groups inhabiting beyond the pale. (Agrawala, V. S., *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 78).

9. Mahābhāṣya, vi, 3. 109; For a discussion as to how the foreign hordes became Indianised and gradually integrated into the caste order, see, Mukherjee, S., *Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India*, pp. 36-48; Chandāla became a generic term later to include many types of untouchables (Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 146).
10. Intermarriage between males of higher and females of lower castes.
11. Intermarriage between a male of a lower caste and a female of a higher caste.
12. Manu, x, 20; x, 45.
13. Mukherjee, S., *op. cit.*, p. 21f.
14. Cf. Puri, B. N., *India Under the Kushāṇas*, p. 88f.
15. Ibid.,
16. *Anguttara Nikāya*, i, 107; ii, 85.
17. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 146.



manufacturers. The *naṭas*<sup>18</sup> (dancers), the *gandhabbas* (musicians),<sup>19</sup> the puppetiers,<sup>20</sup> the acrobats,<sup>21</sup> *māyākāra* (the jugglers),<sup>22</sup> the herdsmen, the fishermen and the hunters and such other quassi-professional peoples represented this particular category. By reason of a common profession they tended gradually to form a class by themselves and some professions became hereditary.<sup>23</sup>

This class-affiliation did not necessarily display a sentiment of race-community but eventuated in forming a sort of despised castes. The isolation of living which was the social destiny thrust on these 'multiform and chaotic' mass of people by the upper classes led them to incorporate in the caste order of their own.<sup>24</sup> Rules about intermarriage and interdining among them, as alluded to in the *Jātakas*, had also been reasonably strict.<sup>25</sup>

The age old professions and social systems like the slaves and slavery as referred to earlier in the *R̥gVeda* (x, 22.8) and *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra* (ii, 4.9.11) has also been alluded to in the *Jātaka*.<sup>26</sup> The *Vinaya* texts,<sup>27</sup> the *Dīgha Nikāya*,<sup>28</sup> so also the *Jātakas* frequently refer to both male and female slaves. They were not confined to cities and palaces and rich households, but also existed in the villages and ordinary families.<sup>29</sup> The *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* refers to four kinds of slaves: the one by birth, a second by purchase, a third by self-choice and a fourth one transformed by fear.<sup>30</sup> *Kauṭilya*, however, refers to five kinds<sup>31</sup> and *Manu* to seven.<sup>32</sup> *Divyāvadāna* refers to a *vaivarnika* (outcast, *Divyāvadāna*, p. 424. i) and *matangi* (low caste, *Divyāvadāna*, p. 611.7.) *Mahāvastu* provides, besides commerce, sea-faring trade, trade in horses and the kind, a detailed list of various artisans, craftsmen and guilds of tradesmen and manufacturers.<sup>33</sup> They have again, three comprehensive categories: i) the *Gandharvikas* (musicians and instrumentalists) which comprise twenty-

18. *Jātaka*, vol. iii, p. 507.

19. *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 249 ff.

20. *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 16 G. 40.

21. *Ibid.*, vol. x, p. 430.

22. *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 495G, 337.

23. Mehta, *Pre-Buddhist India*, p. 259.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Mukherjee, S., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

26. *Jāt.*, vol. vi, p. 285.

27. *Chullavagga*, iv, 4. 6-7.

28. *Dīgha Nikāya*, 1, 64.

29. *Chullavagga*, vi, 4.2.

30. *Jāt.*, vol. vi, p. 285.

31. *Arthaśāstra*, iii, 13.

32. *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, viii, 415.

33. *Mahāvastu*, Senarts' edn., iii, 112-114.



one in type and class, ii) the Śrenīs (the corporate bodies of traders or guilds of industrial manufacturers) giving a list of thirty four occupational professions, and iii) the Silpāyatanas (the artisan and craftsman pursuing forty six specialised occupations).<sup>34</sup>

The Milindapañha indicates as many as seventy five occupations sixty of which are directly connected with various crafts. Some of the important industrial occupations of the period include textile and luxury items, carpentry, house building, smithy, jewellery and gem industry, ivory work, garland craft and perfumery, pottery, dyeing, fishing and meat industry, liquor distilling, cane and leaf industry and leather industry etc.<sup>35</sup>

It should, however, be adequately noted that the proficient artisans and craftsmen enjoyed a privileged and merited position among the creeds and guilds. Mahāvastu refers to a blacksmith's son who had to produce an exquisitely fine needle to win the hand of the daughter of another master craftsman.<sup>36</sup> The Lalitavistara too corroborates the emerging custom of giving the daughter in marriage to one provocatively proficient in arts.<sup>37</sup> These testifications lead one to identify a few significant sidelights of the period: that the various forms of ancient Indian marriages<sup>38</sup> though lost currency among the upper castes, some unorthodox forms still existed among the lowest class of society;<sup>39</sup> that this recognition of the occupational excellence and connoisseurship proved instrumental in the phenomenal rise of many new arts and crafts and a remarkable progress in trade and industry<sup>40</sup> between 200 B. C. and A. D. 200 and that they eventuated in the improvement of status of the despised castes engaged in these pursuits,<sup>41</sup> signifying a kind of social mobility and a corresponding social change.

Archaeological evidences on the ancient Indian caste organization in general are rare indeed. Whatever records are at our disposal speak more or less exclusively of the incorporation and amalgamation of certain foreign stock in the Indian society. Perhaps the earliest epigraphic document is provided by the Rock Edict No. XIII of Aśoka where we come across the word 'Yavana'.<sup>42</sup> The edict refers to a certain Amtiyoka along with other four foreign princes who came under the pale of Aśoka's 'Dharmavijaya'.

34. Cf. Basak, R. G., 'Indian Life Recorded in the Buddhist Work: Mahāvastu-Avadāna,' in *J. N. Banerjee Volume*, p. 331.

35. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-34.

36. Puri, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Manu*, iii, 21.

39. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

40. Mukherjee, R. K., *AIU*, p. 599.

41. Sharma, *Sudras in Ancient India*, p. 218 f.

42. Barua, B. M., *Aśoka and his Inscriptions*, pt. ii, p. 259.



Amtiyoka has widely been identified with the Greek king Antiochus, Soter, the king of Syria.<sup>43</sup> Yona or Yavana was evidentially, therefore, a term used in ancient India to denote the Greeks.

One of the Nasik Cave Inscriptions mentions about a certain Indrāgnidatta, son of Dharmadeva, a Yavana, who was a resident of Duttamitra.<sup>44</sup> He has been identified with the Greek king Demetrius of ancient literature. Mt. Triraśmi Inscription also records the gift of a chaitya griha by the same Indrāgnidatta, son of Dharmadeva, the Yonaka or Yavana.<sup>45</sup> Karle Cave Inscription alludes to the gift of a pillar in honour of the Buddha by one Yavana Sihadhaya from Dhenukata.<sup>46</sup> A similar gift by a Dhamma Yavana is recorded in the Junnar Buddhist Cave Inscription.<sup>47</sup>

The eminently known Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus,<sup>48</sup> an inhabitant of Takshaśilā who calls himself a Bhāgavata is again an eloquent testimony to the conversion of the Yavana to Vaiṣṇavism (*infra*). Quite a few other inscriptions and coins suggest the process of Indianization of the Śakas,<sup>49</sup> and a relative condensation of social distance. (The Kushāṇas have demonstrated their affinity and identification with the Indian society and religions most conspicuously by the issue of their numerous coin-types and the legends thereon.) (*infra*, chapter II).

The Lüder's List of Brāhmī Inscriptions provide an exhaustive list of those in casteless professions who were regarded as either the mixed castes or the Śūdras.<sup>50</sup>

Evidentially, therefore, in the ultimate analysis, the epoch represented socially, a 'federation of castes and sub-castes'. In spite of occasional inter-marriages, each individual caste was broadly a separate entity. But it has, at the same time, to be admitted that the caste order was not rigorously static. Because, new sub-castes emerged now and then necessitated by fusion, subdivision or migration. Old sub-castes sometimes tended to lose their identity and either happily improved or declined in social status. Yet they enjoyed autonomy in their social code, cultural tradition and in judicial law.<sup>51</sup>

To alleviate and sublimate the inescapable tension of a caste-ridden society, the Buddha as a socio-religious reformer had to adopt some sociological

43. Smith, V. A., *Early History of India*, p. 173.

44. *E. I.*, vol. viii, p. 90.

45. Lüder's List, *E. I.*, vol. x, no. 1140.

46. *E. I.*, vol. vii, p. 55; Lüder's List, *E. I.* vol. x, no. 1093.

47. *Ibid.*, no. 1156.

48. *Ibid.*, no. 169.

49. *E. I.*, vol. viii, p. 85ff; *ibid.*, Lüder's List, no. 1157; *Ind. Ant.*, vol. xxxiii, p. 429; Kanheri Buddhist Tank Ins., Lüder's List, no. 994.

50. Lüder's List, *E. I.*, vol. x.

51. *AIU.*, p. 551.



devices so that a sort of social integration and assimilation were attained.<sup>52</sup> His principal prescription is the cultivation of a sense of universal compassion (*Metta*) and creative altruism so that social exploitation and social tension are considerably reduced and some sort of social accommodation is ensured. His second thrust is to instal the right and authority of the qualitative achievement of an individual in place of the monopoly of birth. The third effective measure is his instruction not to give any place to caste in groups, organizations and associations,<sup>53</sup> reminding us of the contingent social change reinforcing vital variations in structure. Yet all these reformist endeavours of the Buddha could not bear fruits to the extent they were expected to. The cardinal reason seems to be that the Buddhism in its earlier stages, as Weber argues, served as a salvation doctrine of the intellectual class and failed to prove as a religion of the non-privileged classes.<sup>54</sup>

Vaiṣṇavism as also a socio-religious force could not present altogether a different picture. Early Vaiṣṇavism was a religion of the wealthy.<sup>55</sup> But the influx of the foreign hordes and the rise of new economic factors contributing to the improvement in condition of the lower varṇas prompted the privileged class to realise the requirement of the age. To be in tune with the social outlook of the times popular cults were integrated into Vaiṣṇavism on the one hand and on the other, popular Brāhmanical gods were identified with Nārāyaṇa (*Infra*, chap. II) so that Brāhmanical precepts of social and moral conduct might reach the masses through their worship by devotion and not by logic. This helped the masses to reconcile to their lot and stabilize the social divisions based on rural-agricultural economy.<sup>56</sup>

The intrinsic strength of the society cannot really be assessed until the status of women in that society is examined. But the position of the womenfolk during the period is indeed difficult to be portrayed in the conglomeration of inconsistency that crept into the ancient literatures both general and legal. Extending no independence and freedom the *Mahābhārata* proclaims that women should be protected in childhood by their fathers, in their youth by their husbands, and in their old age by their sons.<sup>57</sup> The maxim has been reiterated by *Manu*<sup>58</sup> and *Vaśiṣṭha*.<sup>59</sup> There again, one witnesses point of contradictions. *Manu* at one place declares that gods commend those

52. Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 367f.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 375-77.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

55. Grierson, *ERE*, ii, p. 548.

56. See Jaiswal, S., *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, pp. 169-215.

57. *MBH.*, *Anuśāsana Parvan*, 46, 14 and 20-21.

58. *Manu*, v., 147 and 148.

59. *Vaśiṣṭha*, v., 1.



households where women are respected and honoured<sup>60</sup> and in another occasion he maintains that the husband has the absolute right over the wife and may inflict corporeal punishment and discard her immediately, if necessary.<sup>61</sup>

Even the Buddha opined that admission of Bhikkhunis in the saṅgha was bound to destroy its sanctity and integrity.<sup>62</sup> However advanced in faith, a Buddhist nun was always subordinate to even the youngest novice among the brethren.<sup>63</sup>

Kautilya has, on the other hand, maintained that women may enjoy economic independence whenever occasion demands.<sup>64</sup> This is presumably in reference to the average middle class women only. The *Jātakas* too represent the identical view.<sup>65</sup> The Nānāghāt Cave Inscription exemplifies the executive role of women when queen Naganikā or Nayanikā served as the regent of her two sons when her husband died.<sup>66</sup> Most schools of law allowed a woman some personal property but the question of a woman's right to property has always been a realm of great controversy.

With regard to education, there are allusions to the highly educated women holding honourable position in society and the household.<sup>67</sup> Women could take up a life of religion but they could not perform the duties of a priest. The Buddhist nuns whose poems are preserved in the *Therīgāthā* and some of which are of great literary merit, came from wealthy families who renounced the world for the sake of spiritual salvation.<sup>68</sup> But generally speaking, the women received training in painting, music and dance. *Kāma-Sūtra* contends that the position of women differed according to the prevailing customs and manners in different parts of the country. Privileges and personal freedom of women were interwoven with inhibitions and censorship from time to time.<sup>69</sup>

A class of women in ancient India enjoyed a social standing of deference and were not bound by the censorship extended to general womenfolk. They were the class of courtesans frequently referred to in the Buddhist literatures as being beautiful, accomplished and wealthy enjoying a position of fame and honour.<sup>70</sup> Thus the phenomenon of mobility was much restricted with the

60. *Manu*, iii, 55-59.

61. *Ibid.*, viii, 299.

62. *Chullavagga*, x, 1.6.

63. Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

64. *Arthaśāstra*, iii, 2.

65. *Jāt.*, i, pp. 111, 421; ii, p. 180; vi, pp. 26, 105 and 336.

66. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, vol. i, p. 186, no. 82.

67. *AIU.*, p. 563.

68. Basham *op. cit.*, pp. 179, 458.

69. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 167f.

70. Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 184.



womenfolk in general.

Contemporary Buddhist literature, in particular, refers frequently about the dresses and ornaments of both men and womenfolk representing different social and economic status, meant for summer and winter months. They display a tremendous adaptability of the people to the different conditions and circumstances of life. The evolution demonstrated that over-ornateness of the earlier epochs were transformed gradually into something simple and refined.<sup>71</sup> Besides the different types of fabrics: woolen, silken, cotton and *kaṣeya* used in the tailored or untailored clothes, *Jātakas* refer also to animal skin as dress material.<sup>72</sup> Various kinds of ornaments: floral, vegetal and metal, besides ivory and such other materials, toilets and perfumes and hair dresses have most extensively been alluded to in the *Jātakas*.<sup>73</sup> In spite of local variations in size, pattern and manner of wearing, the general garb consists of a lower garment i. e. *dhoti* or *śāree*, an upper garment draped shawl-wise over the shoulders and a third one was worn or draped like a mantle or cloak. There was no marked difference between the male and female dresses. Both used turbans and ornaments. But it is discernible from the sculptures of the period that the women gradually discarded headdresses while the menfolk gave up ornaments.<sup>74</sup> With the advent of the foreign rulers, e. g., the Greeks and the Scythians, stitched clothes like trousers and overcoat for men and blouses, jackets and frocks for women came into fashion. But they did not become a general outfit.<sup>75</sup>

The sculptured female figures with their bare upper part of the body revealing in full the bosom and the navel has been a controverting issue among the scholars. Some maintain, this testify that there was no 'purdāh' system during the period<sup>76</sup> while others believe that this was merely due to the artistic convention of the age, as the literary references are directly in conflict with the former theory.<sup>77</sup>

Festivities and occasional gatherings were also important aspects of ancient Indian socio-religious life in which state also took interest. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mentions that the popular gatherings and festivities add to the eminence of the state.<sup>78</sup> *Kauṭilya* has recommended the organization of *yātrā*, *saṁāja*,<sup>79</sup> *utsava* and *pravahana*<sup>80</sup> by the state.<sup>81</sup> The *Jātakas* allude

71. *Mahāvastu*, ii, 467. 13; *Milindapañha*, 17, 337; *Lalitavistara*, iv, 63; vii, 83.

72. *Jāt.*, vi, p. 500.

73. *Ibid.*, v, pp. 156, 202ff, 215, 302; vi, 232; Puri, *India in the Time of Patañjali*, p. 107.

74. *AIU.*, p. 572.

75. *Chullavagga*, v, 11.2; *AIU.*, pp. 573-4.

76. Fergusson, J., *Tree and Serpent Worship* (1873 edn.), pp. 102-3.

77. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, pp. 338-44.

78. Cf. Barua, B. M., *op. cit.*, pt. ii, p. 224.

79. *Samāja* or the *Samājja* of the *Jātakas* means a fair or a merry-making gathering



to the large gatherings of people during festive occasions to witness the items of entertainment.<sup>82</sup> It has also been referred to that the festivals in royal cities are usually proclaimed by the king himself,<sup>83</sup> where the people from the neighbouring villages also participate along with the urban population. A further allusion states that during the period of festivals usual routine pursuits are suspended, feasting and drinking take place and friends are invited to the family.<sup>84</sup>

The *Jaina Sūtras* corroborate the statement and further elucidate that besides eating and drinking, merry making and amorous acts are, also, resorted to.<sup>85</sup> Brāhmaṇas, Śramaṇas, guests, paupers and beggars are also fed.<sup>86</sup>

Among the epigraphic evidences, Rock Edict I of Aśoka states explicitly that both religious and secular festivities were frequent and that he was against such festivals where animals were slaughtered.<sup>87</sup> Hāthīgumphā Inscription of king Khāravela exemplifies that he entertained the inhabitants of the capital by organizing festivals of music, songs, dances and contests.

Among the celebrated and popular festivals are Chaturmāsya Festival,<sup>88</sup> the Elephant Festival,<sup>89</sup> the Drinking Festival,<sup>90</sup> the Śālabhañjikā Festival<sup>91</sup> and the Ploughing Festival.<sup>92</sup> There were other local and regional festivals in honour of gods like Indra, Skanda, Rudra and Mukunda, in honour of demons like Yakṣas and Nāgas, to honour shrines and tombs and festive assemblage to worship cows, trees, rivers, seas, lakes, ponds and mines.<sup>93</sup>

If the descriptions of the festivities are analysed, it may be gathered

assembled on a religious occasion or on the occasion of auspicious constellation of stars, cf. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

80. Pravahana relates to community picnic, *ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Jāt.*, ii, 13.

83. *Ibid.*, i, 250.

84. *Ibid.*, vi, 328.

85. *SBE*, xxii, pp. 94-95.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

87. Cf. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

88. Seasonal festival at the advent of spring, rains and winter, the most popular being the kattikā (Kaumudī-Mahotsava), *Jāt.*, i, 508.

89. Known as Hāthī-Maṅgala, predominantly a royal festival (*Jāt.*, ii, 46-49; iv, 91).

90. Known as Surā-Nakkhata; *ibid.*, i, 362, 489.

91. *Infra*, ch ii; *Jāt.*, i, 52; 'The Woman and Tree or Śālabhañjikā in Indian Literature and Art,' *Acta Orientalia*, vol. vii, pp. 201-4; cf. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 159.

92. It is said that in the inaugural day the king, who enjoyed the divine status, held the plough. The Earth was known as Sitā and the wife of Indra. Offerings were made on that day to Sitā as well as Indra for invoking rains. (*Pārasakara-Grihya-Sūtra*, ii, 17. 9)

93. *S. B. E.*, xxii, p. 92.



that games, exercises, acrobatics, magical shows, dance, drama<sup>94</sup> and music recitals by both male and female folk, besides, hunting, wrestling and gambling formed the recreation and amusements of the adults. The entire range of early Indian sculpture can stand testimony to these literary references. *Saddharmapundarika* (1st-2nd century A. D.) alludes in this context to lovely gardens serving as resorts for recreation. *The Divyāvadāna* contains descriptions about sports and games of children,<sup>95</sup> all signifying the life of people liberally interspersed with pastime, recreation and merriment, an organic phenomenon of the social process.

Visual art as a cultural index of the society also present an exhilarating sidelight of the period under review. *Chittakarma*, the pictorial art with its long drawn heritage was in a highly developed stage. There were paintings on the walls (*bhitti*) as well as on the boards and panels (*phalaka*).<sup>96</sup> Besides the decorated halls and dwelling houses there were painted pavilions (*vimānas*)<sup>97</sup> and decorated peaks on gate-houses (*nāvācittam*).<sup>98</sup> Painters were also commissioned for decorating the pandals for great religious assemblies so that they might resemble Sakka's heavenly palace *Sudhammā*.<sup>99</sup> The science of painting comprising instructions on the methods of plastering the walls (*bhitti*), preparation of pigments and colours and the application techniques have been dealt with in an early treatise named *Sudhālepa-vidhānam*.<sup>100</sup>

With regard to the tradition of sculpture, the *Jātakas* mention that wood carving is more common though the stone images are not rare.<sup>101</sup>

The allusion to erecting a stone elephant at *Karandaka* Monastery<sup>102</sup> may immediately remind us of the Mauryan elephant at Dhauli, Orissa. An interesting description states vividly that sculptured female figures in the royal chambers of the king Mahosadha are so plastic and graceful that it is difficult to ascertain without touching them that they are not human damsels, warm and alive.<sup>103</sup> Gatehouses with the images of Indra, as

94. Drama was religious in origin and was essentially connected with epic recitations and for both reasons Sanskrit claimed in it a rightful place from the inception (Keith, *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 71). Sanskrit drama received fresh impetus and revival under the patronage of the Śakas (Chattopadhyaya, *Sakas in India*, p. 73). Thus the theory of Levi or Konow that the rise of Sanskrit drama is to be attributed to the Śakas may not be wholly accepted.

95. Puri, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-99ff.

96. *Jāt.*, vol. i, p. 304.

97. *Ibid.*, vol. v, pp. 196, 203-G.

98. *Ibid.*, vol. iv, pp. 125-26-G, 558f.

99. *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 333.

100. Cf. *I. H. Q.*, vol. iii, pp. 53-59.

101. *Jāt.*, vol. i, p. 287.

102. *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 95.

103. *Jāt.*, vol. vi, p. 432.



though guarded by tigers are also referred to.<sup>104</sup> Numerous descriptions are also available on the images of gold, *Suvannapattimā*.<sup>105</sup> Allusions to images of gods are almost rare in the *Jātakas*. But the mention of *cetiya*s, *thupas*, the *devakulas* and the temples beyond the cities may lead to an inference that the images of gods were not absolutely unfamiliar during the period.<sup>106</sup> Toys, dolls and play things of children (*Kilabhaṇḍakam*) were, ofcourse, much in vogue.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the various interacting forces provided a fulsome matrix to the society in general continually blossoming into creative and aesthetic reverberations.

### ECONOMIC SCENE

The period under review saw significant growth in the overall economy facilitated by the technological progress in the widespread use of iron<sup>108</sup> and bellows, improvement in the smithy,<sup>109</sup> extensive cultivation,<sup>110</sup> rise and development of numerous towns signifying an urban economy at work,<sup>111</sup> diversification of crafts and their organization into guilds<sup>112</sup> and the

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6-G.

105. *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 343; vol. iv, p. 105; vol. v, p. 282.

106. Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

107. *Jāt.*, vol. vi, p. 6.

108. *Jāt.*, iv, p. 210.

109. The Blacksmith's craft had attained absolutely a stage of specialization. Buddhist sources are much more informative than the contemporary Brāhmanical ones. *The Jātakas* refer to the Smith's furnace (*Ukkā*, vide., *Jāt.*, vi, 189, 437), anvil (*Adhikarānī*, vide., *ibid.*, iii, 285), and pincers (*Sanḍāsa*, vide., *ibid.*, 223; ii, 342; iii, 138). Allusion to villages having a thousand families of blacksmith (vide., *ibid.*, iii, 281) necessarily suggests that the craft was in a flourishing condition. The very specialized workmanship has been related in one place in which a blacksmith made a delicate yet strong needle which pierced a dice and floated on water (vide., *Jāt.*, v, 438-9; vi, 276). The exaggeration should however be interpreted with necessary reservations.

110. The process of cultivation became more perfect with new devices and methods included know-how in irrigation. During *Kauṭilya's* time the state took active interest in agriculture and provided maximum land for cultivation. Places for play and amusements in the villages were forbidden, (vide., *Arthaśāstra*, ii, 1.) Land could be confiscated and given to others from the idle cultivator (*ibid.*). Waste land had also been prescribed to be reclaimed (*ibid.*).

111. *Ācārāṅga Sutta* (P.T.S.), 1.7.6.4; *Kalpa Sūtra*, Jacobi ed., p. 89; *Antagaḍadasāo*, Barnett tr., pp. 44-45.

112. Guilds were autonomous bodies having their own laws and authorities as represented in the Brāhmanical and Buddhist literature, (cf. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 250). The *Jātakas* confirm that the state recognized the corporate existence of the guilds (*Jāt.*, iii, 281). Members were considerably loyal to the guilds (*ibid.*, i, 267; iv, 411).



booming inland and foreign trade resulting in the extensive use of coins and governing money-economy.<sup>113</sup> Localization of industries for purposes of specialization and excellence as, at times, is alluded to in the earlier literatures, gave rise to the growth of cottage industries.<sup>114</sup> The practice of partnership in trade seems to have been fairly common facilitating smaller traders to handle large scale transactions.<sup>115</sup> Co-operative investments and the principle governing allocation of dividends are also frequently alluded to.<sup>116</sup> Chronologically speaking, all these evidences go to suggest that the urban as well as rural economy developed on the even lines in the pre-Mauryan epoch though the precise role of the state has not been elaborated on. The earlier rulers were rather keen on the clearance of forests, regulation of the land system and the supervision of guilds to offset economic stability.<sup>117</sup>

The Mauryan economy, on the other hand, was based on confounded state control of agricultural industry and trade and a universal taxation.<sup>117a</sup> The Mauryan state also owned the manufacturing workshops of spinning and weaving, weapons and military supplies and the larger mines.<sup>118</sup> But the door was all the same open to individual entrepreneurs though the overall prices in the market were controlled by the state.<sup>119</sup> The state also appointed proficient artisans and craftsmen in all the production centres under the state monopoly. *Patañjali* refers to the growth of Mauryan exchequer by a novel means of selling the images of gods and goddesses.<sup>120</sup> The *Arthaśāstra*, however, recommends the device of enshrining images of gods for worship in order to enhance state income,<sup>121</sup> which evidentially suggests that the craft was already in an advanced stage of perfection.

The currency and coinage predominantly in vogue during the Mauryan and for that matter the pre-Mauryan period are attested by the early literatures. The principal unit was the Buddhist *Kāhāpaṇa*, *kāṣṭhapaṇas* of the Brāhmanical sources and *Paṇas* of *Pāṇini*. *Kauṭilya* indicated punch-marked silver coinage.<sup>122</sup>

After the Mauryas land seems to have been primarily in the possession

113. Sharma, R. S., *op. cit.*, pp. 60-65ff.

114. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

115. *Jāt.*, i, 111 ; i, 404 ; ii, 181.

116. *Arthaśāstra*, iii, 14.

117. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

117a. *Ibid.*

118. *Arthaśāstra*, ii, 12 ; Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

119. *Arthaśāstra*, ii ; *AIU.*, p. 605.

120. *Infra*, chap. ii.

121. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

122. *Ibid.*



of individuals as testified to by *Manu*,<sup>123</sup> *Gautama-Dharma-Sūtra*<sup>124</sup> and other literary works. But some sort of a state ownership must have been there according to *Milindapañha* which maintains that the king is the owner of all towns, sea-ports and mines which are situated on the earth.<sup>125</sup>

The earliest epigraphic record of state control of land is provided by the Sātavāhanas (1st century B.C.) which indicates taxfree landgrants to the priests.<sup>126</sup> The administrative rights on these lands were, however, withdrawn later by Gautamiputra Sātakarni (2nd century A.D.).<sup>127</sup>

With the establishment of the Kushāṇas the economic affluence of the peoples of Central Asia, Afganistan, Pakistan, India and Iran began to register a vertical trend when their peoples united into a single state and felt relatively safe from alien invasion, cities came up, urban industries developed, trade flourished and in the rural sector farming methods were improved with the development of agriculture and irrigation.<sup>128</sup> (With regard to land grants, the Kushāṇas perhaps introduced a land grant principle known as *Aksayanivi* or perpetual endowment of land revenues.)<sup>129</sup>

The small river valley of Gandhāra, the pivotal region in the Kushāṇa empire produced essential foodstuff for the people. The principal granary, however, was the fertile Indus Valley and no less the Gangetic Valley under their sovereignty. But the items of import found in the excavations testify that there were other resources much larger than the agricultural revenue alone. The change of coins from silver to gold and fixing the gold standard by the Kadphaiseses were obviously again, not necessitated by the transactions in agricultural revenue, but were intended primarily for international commerce and trade.<sup>130</sup>

This mercantilism of a multinational kind were undertaken through the Great Transcontinental Silk Road from China to Mediterranean Roman empire which was laid across the empire of the Kushāṇas and that of the Parthians. The second communication was the sea-route between Egypt, then conquered by the Romans and the Western Indian as well as the Lower Indus sea ports, the sea-gateway to the Kushāṇa kingdom.<sup>131</sup> The discovery of the monsoon

123. *Mānava-Dharma-Śāstra*, ix, 44.

124. *Gautama-Dharma-Sūtra*, xxviii, 4.

125. *Milindapañha*, p. 359.

126. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 118, 1. 11.

127. *Ibid*, pp. 192, 194-5.

128. Gafurov, 'Kushan Civilization and World Culture', in *Central Asia in the Kushan Period*, Book I, p. 76.

129. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 146. 11.

130. Dani and Khan, in *Central Asia in the Kushan Period*, vol. I, p. 97.

131. Warmington, *The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India*, p. 291 ; Periplus (1st century A. D.) testifies that the extensive silk trade was being undertaken



by the Hippalus in A. D. 46 added impetus to the developing sea-trade.<sup>132</sup>

The Kushāṇas eventually resorted to the second route via the Arabian Sea and gradually abandoned the Great Silk Route passing through Parthia. The reasons are obvious.

It was becoming imperative to avoid the course of the trunk route so that the Kushāṇas might dissociate themselves from the envious tax sharers of the commodities, the Parthians who had variable relationship with the Romans from time to time.<sup>133</sup> The Kushāṇas were after finding out also a less arduous and more economic an alternative sea-route<sup>134</sup> and be in absolute and exclusive command of the very vital silk trade lying beyond the area of either the predominating Chinese influence or the Parthian bickerings.<sup>135</sup> The Romans in the same vein, were interested to make the Kushāṇas in possession of the valleys of the Oxus and the Indus as well as the Ganges to dispossess the claims of the Parthians, the close competitor of the Kushāṇas and who strained their relationship with the Romans very often.<sup>136</sup>

Dani and Khan, however, believe that when Śaka-Kshatrapas, centred in Gujarat, had a flourishing trade with the West and circulated a standard silver coin to meet the demand, it seems doubtful whether the Kushāṇas at all entered into the sea-route trade.<sup>137</sup>

Mukherjee, on the other hand, argues further that the prospects of gain and monopoly offered by the thriving Indo-Roman commerce alone prompted Vima Kadphases to conquer *Shen-tu* or the Lower Indus Territory which rendered them to be the absolute master of at least one of the vital trading routes. This resulted in the increase in the flow of international trade, because the merchants had to cross a minimum number of tariff-posts and merchandise could pass through a secured road protected by a strong central authority. This entailed maximum possible taxes to the Kushāṇa exchequer and laid the foundation of the Kushāṇa economic structure.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps in no other period had money economy penetrated so deeply into the life of the common people of the towns and suburbs and fitted absolutely well with the growth of arts and crafts, on one hand, and the Indo-Roman trades, on the other.<sup>139</sup>

from China through Bactria to Barygaza and also along the Ganges and by sea. (*Periplus*, sec., 64; W. H. Schoff, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, p. 261; Ingholt has also suggested that Silk Road transactions were directed by the Kushāṇs through the Indus and across the Arabian Sea to the West, *Gandhāra Art in Pakistan*, p. 25).

132. Vyas, S. N., *India in the Rāmāyana Age*, p. 76.

133. Charlesworth et al (ed.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. xi, pp. 97-98 and 121f.

134. Warmington, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 34 and 50f.

135. Mukherjee, B. N., *Economic Factors in Kushāṇa History*, p. 15 ff.

136. Chattopadhyaya, B., *The Age of the Kushanas, A Numismatic Study*, p. xix.

137. Dani and Khan, *op. cit.*

138. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-16ff.

139. Vyas, *op. cit.*, p. 78.



It may be noted further that the road across Amu Darya and Syr Darya to the ancient East European cities north of the Black Sea was also revitalized during the same period providing wide contact between varied peoples enhancing the economic stability of the Kushāṇas. <sup>140</sup>

It is evidently true that predominantly the trade profits enriched the Kushāṇa exchequer. But the Kushāṇa rulers did not lose sight of the planned urbanization, necessitated by the commercial traffic, based on industrial development and trade entrepôts, on the one hand, and a constant impetus to agriculture and irrigation, on the other. Religious centres had also to be founded along the roads. <sup>141</sup>

The recent surveys at Swāt Valley have shown that the hilltops were exclusively utilized for the location of the Buddhist centres and the plains served as tillage fields to maximise the agricultural lands. <sup>142</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Hence, the socio-economic panorama vivifies that people in general were happy, contented and enjoyed the bliss of sustained security. Professional and occupational life were interwoven with pastime, merriment and festivity. The social life during the period was richer in content and comprehensive in outlook and expression. <sup>143</sup>

The urban centres demonstrated an evidential preference for a life of luxury and pleasure attuned with sophisticated refinements. (See figs. 1-3). The rural folk did not lag behind. They had also the round of programmes and performances, spontaneous in nature, and had the share of genuine amusement and avocations. Dharma, Artha and Kāma (happiness) came to be regarded intrinsically as the three ends in life, <sup>144</sup> to be simultaneously and coherently pursued without giving undue prominence to any of them in order to maintain a balance in life. The maxims were mutually inclusive. Truly indeed the religious texts demonstrated an emphasis on dharma. But the social ideal happened to be the harmony in the three pursuits of life, i.e., *dharmārthakāma*, during the period in question. <sup>145</sup>

140. Hallade, M., *The Gandhāra Style*, pp. 4-7.

141. The detailed accounts of the crop produce have been attested by the Chinese pilgrims (Dani & Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 102). Recent archaeological survey in the Peshāwar region has unearthed extensive agricultural lands all along the river courses and tilling fields have been located upon the hill terraces. Systems to channelize rain water from top fields to those at the bottom have also been noticed (cf. *ibid.*, 'Ancient Pakistan,' vol. I, pt. III, b).

142. *Ibid.*

143. *AIU.*, p. 579.

144. Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra*, vii, p. 14.

145. *AIU.*, p. 581.

The native traditions and heritage, again, had the occasion to be exposed to the wealth of influences in the foreign and alien cultures which were eventually assimilated and creatively absorbed. The initial conflict between the opposing ideals and aesthetics finally gave rise to the efflorescence and promotion of art and creativity the nature of which may simply be termed as nothing other than phenomenal.



## CHAPTER TWO

### RELIGION AND ART

#### AN OVERVIEW

The plastic art from Mathurā and Gandhāra, the two eminent sculpture-producing centres, eloquently testifies that religion was the dominant force in the Kushāṇa kingdom. Furthermore, the religious faiths were in the process of diversification and a rapid religious metamorphosis ensued.<sup>1</sup>

Mathurā was a river-side city in North India from the very ancient days. It represented an orthodox type of citylife and a common pilgrimage for the followers of all the principal religions. It, thus, proved to be an apt centre for the production of images and icons of all the religions, corroborated by *Ptolemy* in its admission as the 'City of Gods'. The pre-Kushāṇa folk and tribal tradition here paved the way and provided the models for the religious icons of the Kushāṇa period.<sup>2</sup> Gandhāra, in the North-West India, on the other hand, comprised a population of numerous ethnic origin. Culture and tradition here displayed Achaemenian, Parthian and Graeco-Roman elements.<sup>3</sup> Hence, there was a cosmopolitanism about it. This provided an impetus to Kushāṇa rulers to be tolerant and eclectic in religious attitudes. In the plastic art itself pantheons were borrowed freely from Rome, Alexandria, Hellenised Orient, Iran and India<sup>4</sup> to promote a spirit of synthesis and religious syncretism. The Kushāṇa coins alone reveal about thirty three divinities representing different religious faiths occasionally with heterogenous combinations.<sup>5</sup> (See pl. I, nos. 4-5 ; pl. II, nos. 6-9.)

The coins and sculptures both testify that all the three principal religions namely Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were gradually absorbing the popular and minor cults into their fold. A further analysis exemplifies that the local and regional deities were at times being combined with the exotic ones. The number and variety of divinities in icons and images of the Kushāṇa era evidentially demonstrate that the theistic and sectarian strain existing in India from the pre-Kushāṇa periods found the climate most congenial now, fertilized and gave expression to bhakti cults, and worship of deities.<sup>6</sup> The spirit of hero-worship<sup>7</sup> among the different tribes, 'the non-descript' folk and tribal gods

1. Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas*, p. 1.
2. Chattopadhyaya, *Evolution of Hindu Sects*, pp. 26-28ff.
3. Grishman, *Iran*, pp. 3-4.
4. Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. 69.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*. vol. ii, pp. 72-3, 169f ; Renou, *The Religions of Anc. Ind.*, p. 6 ; Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, 2-3 —he has differentiated between Vedism and Hinduism ; Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 735.
7. Pāṇini, *Aṣṭadhyāyī*, iv, 3. 95 and 98.



and goddesses of both benevolent and malevolent nature<sup>8</sup> provided further impetus to the growing cultism of the era.<sup>9</sup> (See figs. 5-15, 24-26, 33-38.)

To identify the tendency of the age, we discover, further that the economically independent Vaiśyas and Śūdras demanded for private and domestic deities of their own. This was principally responsible for the rise and foundation of such sub-sects like the Vaiṣṇavas, Śāktas, Sauras, Śaivas and a host of other heterodox ones. Hence, the demand for icons and images for worship were civic and popular in nature though, of course, the most liberal monarchical patronization of the Kushāṇas played a seminal role.

Obviously, the growing reaction against the high pretensions of the Brāhmins<sup>10</sup>, the inequity engendered by the Hindu caste system<sup>11</sup>, the popular desire for the salvation and emancipation of all individual souls and the eventual preference for a personal deity to be made intimate with 'bhakti' or devotion led to significant structural changes in the socio-religious pattern.

The atheistic and monotheistic movements of the age provided new philosophical tenets, reoriented the traditional code of morality and promoted a new type of religious solidarity around particular cult deities and cult symbols.<sup>12</sup> Subramanyan provides a very stimulating justification to this mythopoeic mind of the Indians. 'This is', he contends, 'probably of a succinct pantheistic vision the Indian has of his environment, whatever his religious persuasion; all things, from the most humble to the most sophisticated, have in them the 'animus' and so are different forms of the same.....' One can trace the Indian concepts of metamorphosis, rebirth and trans-substantiation to such a vision'. (Subramanyan, K. G., 'Religion and Art in India', *Moving Focus*, p. 99.)

Much of the thought currents of the primitive peoples were also manifested in all these religious diversifications.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, a kind of democratic and mass-oriented socio-religious organizations, independent of orthodox Brāhmanism, gradually appeared and consolidated their entities in the socio-religious fabric.

Though not our direct concern at the moment, a reference can be made as a side light to the portraits and royal figures of the Kuṣhāṇa rulers. The tradition of portraiture could be discovered among the ethno-cultural elements of the rulers. The objective of the aristocracy to introduce these group of sculptures, was, presumably, to invite homage and reverence from the less

8. Ray, *Idea and Image in Indian Art*, p. 69; *AIU*, p. 364ff.

9. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 27 —he refers also to De la Vallée Poussin, *Indo-Europeans et Indo-Iraniens etc.*, pp. 334ff.

10. *AIU*., p. 361

11. *Ibid.*

12. Ray, *op. cit.*

13. *AIU*., p. 363.



sophisticated populace.<sup>14</sup> These sculptures wearing the air of royal cults signify a sort of religious scepticism of the ruling class.<sup>15</sup> The idea and institution of *Devakula* was not exclusively a Kushāṇa innovation. The *Jātakas* and early literatures have references about it. With the Kushāṇas, however, it was not perhaps the formal attempt at deification of the emperors alone, but it was to identify the kings with the gods to represent the emperor as the godhead incarnate. The volume, massiveness, majesty, the poise and stances like the existing model of Yakṣas possibly suggest the fundamental objective of the Kushāṇa monarchs. The institution of *Devakula* seems, therefore, not merely imperial an ideosyncrasy or religio-spiritual ambition, but intrinsically diplomatic and political in intent, in order to perpetuate supremacy and sovereignty of the monarchs over the teeming millions under their domination.

14. Rosenfield, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

15. *Ibid.*; Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 12f.

## CITIES OF SIGNIFICANCE

## I. MATHURĀ

Mathurā was one of the renowned cities of ancient India. Its antiquity is not as old as the Vedic literature. But it has been located as the capital of the Surasenas and a great city since the time of early Indo-Aryan history. Rhys Davids suggested the location of Mathurā as 'immediately south-west of the Macchas and west of the Jumnā'.<sup>1</sup> Commercially, the riverside city was advantageously connected with the most important trade-routes of the time.<sup>2</sup> Culturally, it was 'too strong and eclectic a centre of past traditions and of influences from a variety of directions'.<sup>3</sup> In religious spheres too the city demonstrated a spirit of tolerance and co-existence that had created a chequered history of its own.<sup>4</sup>

In the Pāli literature it is known as Madhurā and is mentioned as one of the sixteen Mahājanapadas, prosperous and wealthy.<sup>5</sup>

The *Lalitavistara* suggests that Mathurā was one of the most prominent cities of India.<sup>6</sup> The *Dīpavaṃsa* refers it as not merely a great city but the best of towns.<sup>7</sup>

Buddhism seems to have its auspicious entry into Mathurā since the Buddha's visit to the city.<sup>8</sup> But any authentic record of this visit is not available until now. Mathurā was, however, the residence of Mahākaccāna, the eminent Pāli grammarian after whom the oldest Pāli grammar is named.<sup>9</sup>

A Stūpa which became very famous later, was dedicated here in honour of Moggaliputta Tissa.<sup>10</sup> Hiuen-tsang refers to a Stūpa still to be seen in his time where the relics of the disciples of the Buddha, Sāriputta Moggalāna, Pura-Maitrāyaṇī-putra, Upāli, Ānanda, Rāhula and Manjuśrī were preserved.<sup>11</sup>

The archaeological yields from one of the ancient mounds surrounding the city relate to the remains of at least two large Buddhist monasteries dating

1. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 27.

2. *CHI.* (Chand edn.), vol. i, p. 474.

3. *AIU.*, p. 522ff; N. R. Ray, *Maurya and Post Maurya Art*, p. 97.

4. Puri, B. N., *Cities of Ancient India*, p. 76.

5. *Anguttara Nikāya*, i, p. 213; iv, pp. 252, 256 and 260.

6. *Lalitavistara* (ed., Lefmann), pp. 21-2.

7. *Dīpavaṃsa* (ed., Oldenburg), p. 27.

8. *Anguttara Nikāya*, ii, p. 57.

9. Rhys Davids, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

10. *CHI.*, vol. i, p. 506.

11. Growse, *Mathurā*, p. 62.



from the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>12</sup> Mathurā became a popular Buddhist centre marking its beginning from the time of Sārnāth Inscription of the year 3 of Kaṇishka's reign,<sup>13</sup> and Buddhism remained to be predominant a religion here for several centuries.<sup>14</sup>

When we turn to the Brāhmanical sources we learn that according to *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Śatrughna, the younger brother of Rāma, founded the city after killing Lavana, the son of the monster Madhu.<sup>14a</sup> Mathurā was very intimately and significantly connected with the Bhāgavata cult. It was one of the ancient centres of Vāsudeva worship. *Pāṇini* refers to the followers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna.<sup>15</sup> According to *Kāśikā*, Vāsudeva was not a Kshatriya name but that of Krishṇa and the person attached to him was known as Vāsudevaka.<sup>16</sup> Megasthenes informs us that 'Heracles is held in especial honour by the Saurasenoi, an Indian tribe who possesses two large cities, Methora and Cleisobora'.<sup>17</sup> *Patañjali's* reference to Vāsudevaka<sup>18</sup> leads one to infer that originally a human hero of the Yādava race, Vāsudeva was deified by the time of Patañjali. He also alludes to the temple of Rāma (Balarāma or Samkarṣaṇa) and Keśava (Vāsudeva-Krishṇa).<sup>19</sup> With the evolution of bhaktism an increasing number of human heroes were deified. The *Cullaniddesa* enlists four such deified heroes as Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Punnabhadda and Manibhadda.<sup>20</sup>

Epigraphic records in connection with the Bhāgavata shrines in Mathurā itself are also not rare. Mora Well Inscription of the time of Śoḍāsa refers to the enshrinement of the image of the Pañcha-Vīra by a lady named Toshā.<sup>21</sup> Another Mathurā Inscription during the reign of the same king Śoḍāsa records the erection of buildings and gateways at the shrine of Bhagavat Vāsudeva by one Vasu.<sup>22</sup>

It would not, again, be altogether out of place if we refer to a few other epigraphic records outside the pale of Mathurā to understand a comprehensive pattern of metamorphosis of the Vaishnavism. The Pillar Inscription of

12. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography* (ed., Majumder), p. 374.

13. *E. I.*, vol. viii, p. 173.

14. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. ii, p. 159.

14a. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4th aṁśa, chap. 4.

15. *Aṣṭādhyāyī* iv., 3. 98.

16. *Pāṇini-Kāśikā*, p. 343.

17. Megasthenes, *INDICA*, part i., chap. viii (p. 206 of McCrindle, *Anc. India*); Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 429; Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 395 n-i; *CHI.*, vol. i, p. 167.

18. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 359.

19. Patañjali, *Mahābhāṣya*, ii., 2. 34.

20. *Cullaniddesa*, p. 173f.

21. *E. I.*, vol. xxiv, p. 194ff.

22. R. P. Chanda, *MAI.*, no. 5, p. 170.



Heliodorus<sup>23</sup> (See pl. I, no. 1) and the Column Inscription of one Gautamī-putra both at Besnagar (old Gwalior State) associate Vāsudeva with Saṁkar-ṣaṇa.<sup>24</sup> The records bring to fore that Bhāgavatism was very popular during this time and the foreigners even were attracted to this religion. Ghosundi Stone Slab Inscription (Chitorgarh Dist., Rajputānā) of the king Savatāta also alludes to the erection of 'Śilā-prākāro-Nārāyaṇa-Vāṭikā' for Bhagavat Saṁkar-ṣaṇa and Vāsudeva within the 'Nārāyaṇaṭaka'.<sup>25</sup> The worship of Saṁkar-ṣaṇa and Vāsudeva within the Nārāyaṇa compound relates again that the Bhāgavatas identified the cult-god Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa by the late second century B.C. The Nānāghāt Cave Inscription of queen Nayanikā too speaks of the dedication to Bhagavat Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, we find that the folk religion of bhakti necessitated the deification of the Five Heroes of the Vriṣṇi race as an initial measure. When it became strong and self-conscious, the human heroes were associated with the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the cosmic-philosophic god Nārāyaṇa. In course of time they were gradually identified, syncretized and spiritualized to form the cult of Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>27</sup>

The Brāhmanic faith and Mathurā can be associated with a reference in the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* where Mathurā region has been alluded to as the Brahmarshideśa, the country of the great Brāhmanical Seers.<sup>28</sup> There is also a later reference to a doner, the Lord of Wokhan (Butakshana) during the time of Huvishka, who set up a perpetual endowment for the exclusive use of the Brāhmins.<sup>29</sup> The endowment was towards a gallery of Brāhmanical deities, the *Puṇyaśālā* termed as *Frāchīnī*. The Hindus regard Mathurā as one of the seven holy places because of its association with the birth of Lord Kṛishṇa.<sup>30</sup>

The Jaina tradition maintains that Mahāvīra visited Mathurā. Mathurā's authentic affinity with the Jainism is however, since B.C. 300.<sup>31</sup> Its importance as a Jaina centre continued unaffected under the Śaka-Kshatrapas and thereafter the Kushāṇas.<sup>32</sup> The Jainas regarded the city as '*Siddhakshetra*'. While

23. ASI., Ann. Rep., 1913-14, part ii, pp. 189-90.

24. EI., Lüder's List, vol. x, Appendix, no. 6.

25. EI., ii, vol. x, Lüder's List, Appendix, no. 14.

26. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 193-96.

27. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism, Saivism etc.*, p. 100; Puri, *India Under the Kushāṇas*, p. 196; Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. xi.

28. *Manusamhitā*, ii, 19.

29. EI., vol. xxi, p. 55.

30. CHI., vol. i, p. 316.

31. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Puri, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

32. Rapson, *op. cit.*, p. 174; Vogel, *Cat. of Arch. Mus. at Mathurā*, p. 113; Smith, *Early History of India* (4th edn.), p. 18.



the earliest Jaina stūpa in Mathurā is dated first century B.C.,<sup>33</sup> the oldest available inscription is dated earlier, in the mid-second century B.C.<sup>34</sup> A large number of inscriptions of the Kushāṇa period from the year 5 to 98 of the Kushāṇas mentions different Gaṇas, Śākhās and Kulās connected with Jainism. They reveal also that a well-organized Śvetāmbara community was in existence with its four-fold order in Mathurā itself. The organization of the community is confirmed by the accounts from the *Kalpa-Sūtra* and the *Sthaviravali*.<sup>35</sup> The votive tablets or Āyāgapattas, the well-known among which is one dedicated by Āmohini, are also significant epigraphic records of the pre-Kushāṇa era.<sup>36</sup> The Girdharpur Inscription of the year 270 and the Lucknow Museum Inscription of the year 292 or 299 dedicated probably by the Parthian donors immigrated to Mathurā, suggested the acceptance of the foreigners in the religious order.<sup>37</sup> The largest number of epigraphic and dedicative records from Mathurā are Jaina.

The tradition of art and image-making in Mathurā seems to be quite ancient. The worship of Yakṣa, Yakṣī and Nāga cults<sup>38</sup> in Mathurā provided the necessary impetus for the native style of carving which characterized the robustness and self-assurance in the anthropomorphic images and icons.<sup>39</sup> (See fig. 18). But a full-fledged school of sculptors flourished here from the time of Rājuvula and Śoḍāsa drawing its inspiration from the Graeco-Buddhist tradition of Gandhāra.<sup>40</sup>

Mathurā carved the first Buddha image of an Indian ideal.<sup>41</sup> (See fig. 20) This became a national type and the same could be found at Śrāvastī, Gayā, Allahābād, Sārnāth, Kaśī, Pātaliputra, Rājagṛha and even at Taxilā.<sup>42</sup> The Jāmālpur Site near the present town has yielded the largest number of Buddhist sculptures here dating from the first century A. D. onwards.

It cannot be said with certainty as to when the Jains took to the practice of worshipping images. Stevenson however, states that an image of Mahāvīra was installed in Upakeśapattana in as early as fourth century. B. C.<sup>43</sup> It can however, be established with authenticity that the Tīrthaṅkara icon appeared

33. Smith, *The Jaina Stūpa at Mathurā*, p. 22.

34. Bühler, *El.*, vol. ii, p. 199, no. 1.

35. Chopra, Puri and Das, *A Social, Cultural and Economic Hist. of India*, pp. 240-1.

36. *E. I.*, op. cit., no. 2.

37. Bhandarkar Volume, p. 288.

38. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, p. 29, 36-37; Ray, *Idea and Image etc.*, p. 19f, 30; Puri, *Cities of Ancient India*, p. 75ff; *AIU.*, pp. 522-23.

39. *AIU.*, p. 518ff.

40. *Mathurā Lion Capital Ins.*, CII., ii. i; p. 30ff; Chattopadhyaya, *Śakas in India*, pp. 44-45.

41. Tarn, op. cit., pp. 404-5.

42. Coomaraswamy, *Indian Origin of the Buddha Image*, *JAOS.*, vol. 46, 1926, p. 67.

43. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 69.

initially in the āyāgapattas or votive tablets around first century B. C. (See fig. 32) Kankālī Tīlā in Mathurā is an exclusive site for Jaina sculpture in typically Mathurā style.<sup>44</sup>

With regard to the Brāhmanical images, the sculptors of Mathurā served both the heterodox and orthodox faiths. The *Lalitavistara* gives a list of icons worshipped during this period which includes Śiva (fig. 8), Surya (figs. 33-35), Brahmā, Vaiśravaṇa, Śakra, Skanda, Chandra Nārāyaṇa, Kuvera (figs. 24-26), and Lokapālas.<sup>45</sup> *Divyāvadāna* presents almost a similar list of popular devatās.<sup>46</sup> Among the goddesses predominant were Lakshmi (fig. 24), Durgā (figs. 14-15), Vasudhārā and Hārītī (figs. 24-25). Most of these images have been found in Mathurā.<sup>47</sup> Among the Vaiṣṇavite images, one of Balarāma from Mathurā is very well-known now.<sup>48</sup> (fig. 12). During the period under discussion Mathurā became a very active centre of image and icon-making. Hence it is aptly been termed by *Ptolemy* as Modoura, 'the city of the gods'.<sup>49</sup>

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the historic effigies of the Kushāṇa monarchs discovered at Māt, Mathurā, along with the panels of Bacchanalian and other social scenes contribute to a secular image of Mathurā<sup>50</sup> (See figs. 1-4). This also reflect the influences and traditions alien in nature but eventually synthesized and assimilated.

The genius of Mathurā itself, the foregoing native tradition of Bhārhut and Sāñchī and the eclecticism and catholicity of the Śaka-Kushāṇas contributed conjointly to project the image of Mathurā to the outside world and that of the outside world to India.<sup>51</sup> The role of this city in ancient Indian religious and social life proved to be both vital and pivotal.

44. Smith, *The Jain Stupa at Mathura*, p. 22.

45. *Lalitavistara*, viii, p. 84.

46. *Divyāvadāna*, i, p. 7; ii, p. 7; xxxviii, pp. 493-4.

47. N. P. Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, p. 30.

48. Agrawala, *A Short Guide Book to Arch. Sec.*, Prov. Museum, Lucknow, pl. 1.

49. *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*: by McCrindle, p. 124.

50. C. M. Keiffer, 'Kushana Art and Historic Effigies at Mat, *Marg.*, vol. xv, no. 2, 1962, p. 44; K. D. Bajpai, *The Kushāṇa Art of Mathurā*, *ibid.*, p. 28.

51. Puri, *India Under the Kushanas*, p. 197 ff.



## II. GANDHĀRA

Gandhāra formed an integral part of India since the earliest epoch of Indo-Aryan civilization.<sup>1</sup> It 'was one of the sixteen Janapadas of India in the sixth century B. C. It 'was scarcely further, as the crow flies, from the mouth of the Hellenized Euphrates than from that of the Buddhist Ganges'.<sup>2</sup> It comprised the modern districts of Peshawar (Purushapura) and Rawalpindi. It lay along the Kabul River between the Khaospes (Kunar) and the Indus.<sup>3</sup> Herodotus mentions the district of Gandhāra in India, as Gandarioi,<sup>3a</sup> Strabo informs us, however, that during the conquest of Alexander 'Gandaridae' was not a part of India. Seleucus is said to have offered it to Chandragupta Maurya in B. C. 305, as an agreement of a treaty.<sup>4</sup> It appears, however, from the accounts of different authorities that its boundaries varied at different periods in history. At one time it included Afganistan district round Kandahar and afterwards receded to the mountains on the Indian frontier.<sup>5</sup>

Gandhāra's socio-political, religio-cultural and commercial bearing assumed a phenomenal significance because of its situation in the centre of the important trade-routes of the time. These comprised the busy roadways from Pātaliputra to Taxilā and further across the Indus to Pushkalāvati and Kāpiśi linking up the Seleucid road to Bactria and further West.<sup>6</sup> It formed a unique position among all other centres of India because of its role as a connecting link between India and the West.<sup>7</sup> Marking an eminence right from B. C. 500 onwards its predominance continued for about a thousand years thereafter.<sup>8</sup> This was in effect the 'anti-chamber' of India and dictated Foucher to term the region as the 'Vestibule of India'.

The Gandhāris or the people of Gandhāra are mentioned in the Vedas.<sup>9</sup> They occur in other Vedic literatures too.<sup>10</sup> In the *Mahābhārata* also we find the reference to the Gandhāris.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to Buddhism in Gandhāra, the fifth of Aśoka's Edicts at Shāhbāz-Garhi indicates that Aśoka regarded Gandhāra as a frontier country

1. Law, *Some Kshatriya Tribes of Ancient India*, p. 253.

2. Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, p. 121.

3. Law, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

3a. *Herodotus*, bk. iii, c. 91 ; vii, c. 66.

4. Foucher, *op. cit.* p. 121.

5. Law, *op. cit.*, 256.

6. Marshall, *Guide to Taxilā*, p. 17.

7. Rapson, *Ancient India*, pp. 81-82.

8. Marshall, *Taxilā*, vol. i, p. xvi.

9. *R̥gVeda*, Wilson's tr., i, 126.7., ii, p. 78 ; AV., v, 22. 14.

10. *Ait. Brāh.*, vii, 34 ; *Śatapatha Brāh.*, viii, 1. 4. 10.

11. *MBH.*, *Ādiparvan*, ch. 67, pp. 77-79 ; ch. 95, p. 105.



'still to be evangelized'.<sup>12</sup> According to Sinhalese chronicle the *Mahāvamsa*, Gandhāra was converted to Buddhism during Aśoka's reign by the apostle Madhyāntika.<sup>13</sup> From then onwards Gandhāra attained the status of the 'second holy land' of the Buddhists frequented by the Chinese converts who were absolutely satisfied with the visit without making further pilgrimage to the Ganges basin.<sup>14</sup> Hiuen-tsang in giving a picture of the Buddhist Gandhāra related that about a thousand Buddhist monuments existed in Gandhāra alone.<sup>15</sup>

Gandhāra, however, earned its unparalleled reputation in art due to the production of a prolific number of stone sculptures and represented a tradition by itself, famed as Gandhāra School. The school perhaps had its beginning with the assistance imported from the Roman East.<sup>16</sup> But with the Indianization of the Greeks from about the beginning of the first century B. C. the situation had absolutely changed. The Indian influences progressively increased and its Hellenistic pale gradually diminished. Thus, the worlds of North-West India and that of the Hellenistic Orient transformed into a harmonious whole in Gandhāra.<sup>17</sup> It served as the 'theatre of a prolific union of Greeks art and the Buddhist religion'.<sup>18</sup>

Gandhāra school had a beginning with works eclectic and ecclesiastic in character. But eventually with the inroads of bhakti cults the school assumed new meaning and enlivened itself. The Western classical ideals and conventions were absolutely integrated with a compassionate Buddhist outlook and kept pace with contemporary Indian art.<sup>19</sup>

The history of Gandhāra, however, is the history of Taxilā and Pushkalāvati, two of its principal cities and capital towns situated on the east and west of the Indus respectively. An account of these two capital cities has been attempted at in the following pages..

12. Foucher, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

16. Rowland, 'Gandhārā and Late Antique Art': *Supplement to the American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. xlv, 1942, pp. 223-236.

17. Lohuizen, *The Scythian Period of Indian History*, pp. 90-91.

18. Foucher, *op. cit.* p. 121.

19. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 54.



## PUSHKALĀVATĪ

Pushkalāvati or Puṣkarāvati, in the north-east of present Peshawar, was the most ancient and afterwards, the western capital of Gandhāra (Cunningham). This is to be identified more approximately with the site of Mīr Ziyārat or Balā Hiṣār at the junction of the Swāt and Kābul rivers in the Peshawar Valley.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Periplus* it was an important trading centre of spikenard of various kinds and costus.<sup>2</sup> It is the Peukelaotis of *Arrian*, described by him as a very large and populous city lying north of the Indus.<sup>3</sup> *Ptolemy* terms it as Proklais and located it on the eastern bank of the river Souastene (Swāt).<sup>4</sup> *Hiuen-tsang* refers to the existence of the city as Pu-Se-kia-lo-fa-ti.<sup>5</sup> It is Fou-leon-cha (Peshāwar) of *Ma-twan-lin*.<sup>6</sup> In referring to the historical events of importance the Chinese account further relates that the Kushāṇa monarch Kadphises I invaded Ngan-si-(Parthia) and took possession of the territory of Kao-fu (Kābul). He also annexed Pou-ta and Ki-pin (Kashmir) and became masters of these kingdoms.<sup>7</sup>

It is the Calatura of *Pāṇini*.<sup>8</sup> The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* alludes to the city being founded by Pushkara, son of Bharata and the nephew of Rāma.<sup>9</sup> *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* refers to the people of the region as Pushkalas.<sup>10</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* locates Pushkalāvati around Peshāwar and Rāwālpindi.<sup>11</sup>

The archaeological excavations suggest that the earliest levels may go back to the period of first Achaemenian influence in Gandhāra. The second level alludes to the invasion of Alexander. One anecdote refers that Alexander invaded this capital town of one Indian prince named Hasti, ('Astes' in Greek), but was repulsed heroically by him before he died.<sup>12</sup> The city along with Taxilā came under the Śaka domination during the reign of Maues in c. 75 B. C.<sup>13</sup> Thereafter the Kushāṇas became the master of the region. The Panjtar Stone Inscription of A. D. 64 is an evidence that the Kushāṇas had

1. Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 55.

2. Cf., Puri, *Cities of Anc. Ind.*

3. Cf., Law, *Tribes in Anc. Ind.*, p. 14; *AIU.*, p. 45.

4. *Op. cit.*

5. Cf. Rapson *Anc. Ind.*, pp. 133, 141-42.

6. Martin, *JRASB.*, N. S., 1937.

7. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao Serie*, tome viii., 1907, p. 187.

8. Cf., Cunningham, *Anc. Geog of India*, quoted by Chattopadhyaya, *Early Hist. of N. India.*, p. 87.

9. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, (Wilson edn.), vol. iv, chap. iv.

10. Cf., Puri, *op. cit.*,

11. *Mahāvamsa*, Geiger tr., p. 82, n. i.

12. Law, *op. cit.*, p. 14; *AIU.*, p. 45.

13. *CHI.*, vol. i, p. 560; Brown, *Coins of India*, p. 24.



already established their rule in Peshāwar.<sup>14</sup> The *Mula-Sarvāstivādin Vinaya* is eloquent about the city because it possesses the highest pagoda of the country erected by Kaṇishka,<sup>15</sup> also corroborated by the Khotānese Buddhist literature.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese pilgrims are rhetorical about Puruṣhapura as the winter capital of Kaṇishka and the royal-residence of Kaṇishka's son.<sup>17</sup>

Pushkalāvati is the findspot of numerous significantly important Kharosthī records and about a thousand of coins belonging to Kadphises, Kaṇishka, Huvishka and Vāsudeva.<sup>18</sup> Some epigraphic records refer to dedications for the acceptance of the Sarvāstivādins. The Kurram Copper Casket Inscription dated in Kaṇishka's regnal year 21 has been found around Peshāwar itself.

The gigantic relic monument of Kaṇishka at Peshāwar<sup>19</sup> made him universally known as a great Buddhist king and during his rule Peshāwar became an eminent centre of religion and art. Cunningham and Foucher located the monument at Shāh-jī-kī-Dherī. Spooner reaffirmed their assumption.<sup>20</sup> Notable among other archaeological monuments is a group of stūpas found in Maṇikyāla, south-east of Rawālpindi which has yielded very valuable finds.<sup>21</sup>

Innumerable works of art in typically Gandhāra style have been found from a number of sites like Chārsada, Pālātū Dherī, Ghaz Dherī and others.<sup>22</sup> They are predominantly Buddhist. The figure of Kaṇishka shown between the sun and the moon in the famous Peshāwar Reliquary points, however, to the devices deliberately adopted by the Kushānas to deify the kings.<sup>23</sup>

In this connection, perhaps the figure of Śiva appearing in some of the Greek and Indo Scythian coins from around 200 B.C. onwards, may well be referred to. They were in continuation of the native tradition in earlier punch-marked coins and Śiva was perhaps the city deity of Pushkalāvati.<sup>24</sup>

That Pushkalāvati was not exclusively Buddhist is evident from the occurrence of a Śiva image (Maheśa ; a so called Trimūrti) from Chārsada of

14. *CHI.*, *ibid.*, p. 584.

15. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, bk. i, p. 99.

16. Bailey, *JRAS.*, 1942, p. 44ff.

17. Smith, *Early History of India*, (4th edn.), p. 227, f.n.i. ; Foucher, *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, pp. 128-29.

18. *JASB.*, 1881, p. 184.

19. *Infra.*, Buddhism, ch. II.

20. Konow, *CII.*, vol. ii, pt. i, p. 135ff.

21. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

22. Bachhofer, *i*, cf. *ibid.*, p. 55.

23. Altekar, *State and Govt. in Anc. Ind.*, (3rd edn.), p. 242.

24. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 49.



c. 3rd century. A. D. (fig. 13).<sup>25</sup> This also betrays the Indian stylistic influence on the contemporary Gandhāran art. This has further been established by the availability of another four-armed female figure from the Momand frontier.<sup>26</sup>

25. *ASIAR.*, 1914-15, p. i, pl. xvi d.

26. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 2, fig. 78.

## IV. TAXILĀ

Taxilā (Greek version of Takshaśilā), situated in the east of the Indus, was one of the early capital cities of the ancient Gandhāra Janapada.<sup>1</sup> To be more precise, it was located at the head of the Sind Sāgar Doāb between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers and in the shadow of the Muree hills.<sup>2</sup> Cunningham says that the site Taxilā is found near Shāh-jī-kī-Dherī just one mile to the north-east of Kālā-kā-Sarai in the extensive ruins of a fortified city. It was most advantageously situated, again, at the centre of three great trade-routes of the ancient world.<sup>3</sup>

As a city, it was most populous in India and an important one in the whole of Asia for religious, cultural and commercial reasons. It may be regarded as 'doubly Classic' because of its memories associated with two antiquities, Hellenic and Indian.<sup>4</sup> It was also pre-eminent as the seat of academic and applied learning facilitated by its geographical position on the north-west gateway of India as well as the cosmopolitan character of the population at large, and was in a constant state of interchange between the eastern and the western ideas since the days of the Persian Conquest.<sup>5</sup>

*Strabo* points out that the country round about was thickly populated and extremely fertile.<sup>6</sup> *Arrian* refers it as the greatest of all the cities between the Indus and the Jhelum (Hydaspes).<sup>7</sup> *Hiuen-tsang* speaks eloquently of the land's fertility, of its rich harvests, flowing streams and fountains, abundant flowers and fruits, and agreeable climate.<sup>8</sup>

The legendary history of Takshaśilā in Sanskrit and early Pāli literatures pushes back its antiquity to a remotest past. The *Rāmāyaṇa* alludes that Takshaśilā was founded by Bharata, the son of Kaikeyī and the younger brother of Rāma. Taksha, the son of Bharata, became the ruler here.<sup>9</sup> The *Mahābhārata* relates that the city was conquered by king Janamejaya of Hastināpura.<sup>10</sup>

Takshaśilā enjoyed the eminence of an ancient seat of learning.<sup>11</sup> The Brāhmin youths, Kshatriya princes and sons of Śreṣṭhins from Banaras,

1. B. C. Law, *Tribes of Ancient India*, p. 14.

2. Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, p. 1.

3. *Supra*.

4. Foucher, *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, p. 119.

5. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. i, p. 43.

6. *Strabo*, *Geogr. lib.*, xv, 28.

7. *Arrian*, *Arab.*, *Alex.*, lib., v, 8.

8. *Beal*, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, bk. iii, p. 137.

9. *Rāmāyaṇa*, viii, 101; vv, 10-16; *Raghuvamśa*, xv, v. 89.

10. *MBH.*, *Ādiparvan*, iii, 20.

11. For detailed informations about this reference see B. C. Law, *Historical Gleanings*, chap. i, pp. 1-8.



Rājagṛha, Kośala and many other places were either sent or went themselves for the learning of the first three Vedas and eighteen sciences and art.<sup>12</sup>

Buddhist literature besides Jātakas, refer to the city as a university centre for instruction in almost any subject : religious, theosophical or secular,<sup>13</sup> and the home of world famous teachers.<sup>14</sup> *Mahāniddesa*, however, restricts its reference to the city as one of the great centres of trade.<sup>15</sup>

Buddhism was provided with powerful impetus under the tolerant and sympathetic patronage of the Śakas. The Śaka rulers erected great number of huge and small Buddhist monuments, the earliest one being the Dharmarājikā Stūpa.<sup>16</sup> Religious benefactions by Śaka Satraps or their queens are recorded in the Taxilā Copper Plate (72 B.C.).<sup>16a</sup> Further consolidation of religion was rendered by the Kushāṇas who demonstrated an eclectic and cosmopolitan attitude by erecting imposing monuments and monasteries at Kalawān, Gīri, Jauliān and Mohṛā Morādu.<sup>17</sup> Cunningham was able to trace no less than 55 stūpas, (two of them as large as Maṇikyāla tope), 28 monasteries and nine temples in the ruins of Taxilā.

Taxilā has also been associated with Mahāvīra, the founder of the Jainism.<sup>18</sup> But with regard to the antiquity of the city the Jaina reference are extremely extravagant. They relate that Ṛṣabha, the first of Tīrthmakaras visited the city millions and millions of years ago. His footprints were consecrated by Bāhuvalī who erected over them a throne and 'Wheel of the Law' (*Dharmacakra*).<sup>19</sup>

The Jaina sources of the historical epoch allude to an epidemic of Plague in Taxilā, three years before the invasion of the Kushāṇas (c. 61 A.D.) when the local Saṃgha invited Mānadevi Sūri, a holyman of Naddulapura (Nodol) in Rājputānā in order to stem it. It is also claimed that during the time there were 500 Jaina chaityas in the city of Taxilā alone.<sup>20</sup>

12. *Jātaka*, i, pp. 431, 436, 505 ; ii, p. 52 ; iii, p. 18, 171, 194, 228, 248 ; v, p. 127, 177, 227 ; *Bhimsena Jātaka*, i, pp. 356ff.

13. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

14. For further details see Fousboll's edn. of the *Jātakas*.

15. *Mahāniddesa*, vol. i, p. 154 ; for further informations see Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddhist Time*, p. 272.

16. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

16a. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 49f.

17. *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

18. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 80, f. n.

19. Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, p. 10.

20. *Prabhāvaka Charita of Prabhūchandra Sūri*, ed. by Hirānanda, pp. 192-5  
*Hirasaubhāgya* by Devavimalāgni, pp. 163-4 ; For above and further references see ASR., 1914-15, p. 36, 41.

The archaeological finds in Taxilā, however, bring the historical antiquity not beyond sixth century B.C. or thereabout.<sup>21</sup> A few silver coinage of Persian standard found in the city itself speak of the commercial relations between Persia and its Indian satrapy.<sup>22</sup>

In c. 326 B. C., Āmbhī (Omphis or Taxiles of the Greeks), the independent Indian king surrendered Taxilā to Alexander to obtain him as his ally against Porus, the Paurava king.<sup>23</sup> But the impact of the great Macedonian invasion and its traces were so short-lived and insignificant that they never drew the attention of the Indian writers. The Greeks, who accompanied Alexander, on the other hand, had left no record of Taxilā in particular.<sup>24</sup> By the time of the Mauryas Taxilā earned the position of a prominent city in the North-West and became an integral part of a vast and flourishing empire.<sup>25</sup> A subsidiary seat of government was established there.<sup>26</sup>

The Bactrian Greeks became the masters of Taxilā (early 2nd century B.C.) after the Mauryas and they made it the capital of their kingdom.<sup>27</sup> The present archaeological site at Bhīr Mound in Taxilā is the earliest of the three city states of Taxilā representing the period between the Achaemenian rule of the sixth century B.C. and that of the Indo-Greeks of the 2nd century B.C.<sup>28</sup>

Taxilā, thereafter, passed on to the hands of the Śakas.<sup>29</sup> They were succeeded by the Parthians (1st c. A.D.). These people had evidentially an affiliation to the Hellenistic culture. The opening of the new trade-route between India and the Mediterranean through Parthia rendered the Hellenistic and Parthian communion closer and intimate leaving the indelible marks in Taxilā under their sway.<sup>30</sup> The Śaka-Parthian antiquities predominate in Sirkap, the second city state of Taxilā, transferred originally from the site of Bhīr Mound by the Bactrian Greeks sometime in the second century B. C.<sup>31</sup>

Taxilā saw its most glorious era under the Kushāṇas who founded a new capital city in the 1st century A. D., at Sirsukh, the third of the city states, perhaps to commemorate their victory over the region.<sup>32</sup>

21. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

24. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. i, pp. 19-20.

25. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

26. Puri, *Cities of Ancient India*, p. 116.

27. Law, *Tribes in Ancient India*, p. 14.

28. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

29. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. i, p. 32; Chattopadhyaya, *Early History of North India*, p. 40.

30. *CAH.*, xi, p. 112.

31. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

32. Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, p. 91.



Tradition of art in Taxilā, however, is of much earlier origin than of the time of the Kushāṇas. The Hellenistic inclination of Śaka-Parthians led them to encourage the artists and craftsmen to imitate Western models, which were imported in large number in Taxilā. Though the Indian type was discernible here and there most of the borrowings were quasi-Hellenistic with traces of Syrian and Egyptian characteristics.<sup>33</sup>

Significant among the Pre-Kushāṇa finds are the objects in the typically Scythian animal style.<sup>34</sup>

These West-Asian elements in early Taxilā art was bypassed by the Kushāṇas whose imperial patronization laid the foundation of a flourishing school later to be eminent in history as the Gandhāra school of art. The works of this epoch is distinctively different from that of the earlier tradition there, simply because the art of this period was the sum total of an indigenous growth inspired as much by the traditions of the early Indian schools that precede them as by those of the Hellenized Orient.<sup>35</sup> Inroad of the Indian bhakti cult proved to be a coincidence of significance. It should, incidentally, be remembered that the direct production centre of the Gandhāran art was not in Taxilā, but in the Swāt Valley.<sup>36</sup> Art of the period was predominantly Buddhist and the icons of the Buddha and the reliefs for the edification of the faithful were imported from the country beyond the Indus.<sup>37</sup>

The art tradition here revolutionized liturgical conventions by portraying the 'Blessed One' in the anthropomorphic form, the earliest dated one appearing in Kaṇishka's reliquary<sup>38</sup> (fig. 21). According to the numismatic records the earliest Buddha figure, however, appears on certain coins of Kaṇishka.<sup>39</sup> At least four such coins, one in gold and others in copper are known to us (see Ingholt, *Gandhara Art in Pakistan*, p. 25, pl. iii, 2-5).

Hence, India, Western Asia as well as Central Asia had the seminal role in the all-embracing history of Taxilā. The establishment and growth of the city were not independent of these positive entities. Its subsequent eminence, greatness and contribution in the intellectual and artistic domains were again, dependent much on the interrelationship of the countries in question.<sup>40</sup>

33. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

34. *A.S.I.A.R.*, 1920-21, pt. i, pl. xxiv, b and c; Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Ind. & Indonesian Art*, p. 24.

35. Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 72; Coomaraswamy, *ibid.*, p. 50.

36. Puri, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

37. Marshall, *op. cit.*

38. Lohuizen, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

39. Foucher, *L'art Greco-boudhique de Gandhāra*, vol. ii, p. 439, 519; Chattopadhyaya quoted, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

40. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 2.



## PRINCIPAL RELIGIONS

## I. ŚAIVISM

We may now consider the principal religions and the deities that dominate the epoch. The literary and archaeological evidences will lead us initially to Śaivism, one of the most ancient<sup>1</sup> and popular cultism that continued to flourish under the banner of both orthodox and heterodox traditions during the period under review. Śaivism as reflected in the coins, seals and icons alone in relative isolation from the epigraphic evidences signify again, it was predominantly the religion of the common masses. The enlightened upper classes are infrequently associated with them is shown by Dr. Bhandarkar while discussing the evidences furnished by the Mathurā Inscription of Chandragupta II.

The occurrence of Śaiva motifs in the form of either the deity Śiva or one of his emblems and the mention of Oesa (Bhaveśa) indicate that Śiva was popular as a deity during the Scytho-Kushāṇa rule and that the rulers were indeed eclectic to accept and popularise the deity (pls. I-II, nos. 4-6). This predominance of the Śaiva motifs in the Kushāṇa coins in particular, prompted Foucher to suggest that Śaivism was a dominant religious factor in the north-west region when the Kushāṇas came to India and that they were first converted to this religion.

In the coins of Wema Kadphises either Śiva or one of his emblems is depicted without any exception, where all other deities have been excluded. Śiva is Uṣṇīśī wearing a turban, like all earliest deities in India. He is two-handed with trident—battle axe in his right hand and a tiger-skin or gourd in the left.<sup>2</sup> He leans against the bull, his vehicle. Kadphises himself took the epithet M aheśvara or Mahīśvara<sup>3</sup> (pl. I, no. 4).

1. In fact, Marshall (*Mahenjodaro and the Indus Civilization* vol. i, 1.), Wheeler (*The Indus Civilization*), Hopkins (*Religions of India*), Hrozný (*Ancient History of Western Asia, India and Crete*), and others maintain that Śiva is originally a Dravidian deity. It is suggested that the term Śiva has been derived from the Tamil word 'Sivan' or 'Chivan' connoting the colour red. This has been echoed in the description of Śiva in the later Vedic literature where he is known as Nīla-lohita. Likewise, his epithet as Śambhu had its origin in the Tamil word Sembu or Champu meaning the red metal, copper, (cf. Chatterjee, S. K., 'Non-Aryan Elements in Indo-Aryan', *JGIS.*, ii, p. 42).

Keith is, however, of the view that undisputably sufficient data is still absent to establish for certain that the Śaiva cult is absolutely a Dravidian contribution, (vide : *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, p. 629 ff).

2. Trident—battle axe appear in the coins of several native and foreign rulers, (vide : Rapson, *Catalogue of Coins : Andhras, Western Kshatrapas, Taikutakas and Bodhi Dynasty*, pp. 55-58, 85 and 187 ; Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India* (in the British Museum), pp. 120 ff, 130-38, 154, 155ff.
3. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum*, pp. 183-84.



Śiva appears as both two-handed and four-handed in the coin-motifs of Kaṇishka and Huvishka. Trident-axe and gourd continue to be the attributes of the two-handed figures. In the four-handed ones, however, a host of other attributes occur, such as, vajra or thunderbolt, small drum, water vessel, club, wheel, antelope, elephant goad, horse and goat etc.. Kaṇishka adopted Śiva and Nandi as the reverse device of his coins. In one of the coins of Huvishka Śiva is three-headed with nimbus, clad only in waist band and Ūrdhvamudrā. He has four hands carrying goat, wheel, trident-axe and thunderbolt.<sup>4</sup>

In the coins of Vāsudeva, Śiva is frequently two-armed with a noose in the right hand and the trident-axe in the left. The bull is placed by the side of Śiva. Śiva and the bull became the reverse device in the coins of Vāsudeva too.

Now, Bhavēśa, the epithet of Maheśvara, the vehicle bull, and the attributes like trident-axe, club, goad, thunderbolt and other motifs in the Kushāṇa coins actually lead us to a remotest antiquity of Śaivism and its gradual metamorphoses.

In the earliest of the literary references Śiva can instantly be associated with the Rudra-Śiva of the *R̥gVeda* who weilds the lightning and the thunderbolt.<sup>5</sup> Though he is not any of the principal deities in the *R̥gVeda*, he appears with a well-organized and distinct personality of his own. He embodies reconciliation of irreconcilables in being malevolent and benevolent at the same time<sup>6</sup>. Almost similar notions are maintained in the *AtharvaVeda*,<sup>7</sup> Rudra's identification with Agni<sup>8</sup> and Indra<sup>9</sup> is also to be noted in understanding the complex evolution of the deity. Dr. Venkataramanyya has suggested that some of the names of the deity, such as, Aśani, Ugra, Bhīma, Paśupati, Nīlakaṇṭha, Sitikaṇṭha, Kapardin and Kumāra, had their origin in Rudra's association with Agni. The titles like Īśāna and Mahādeva were assumed by him as a mark of sovereignty over the universe as well as his superiority

4. Gardner, *The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India*, p. 148.

Note : The three-faced deity in Huvishka's coin as also the Indus Paśupati Seal referred to by Marshall, might have four faces, the fourth one being at the back. The face is not visible because of the frontal treatment of them. This has been inferred by Bagchi from a reference in an early Tantric Text where a four-faced Gāndharva (resident of Gandhāra) has been referred to in the name Tumburu. Bagchi, further connotes that in the Mahābhārata, there are references about fourfaced Śiva and that Tumburu-Śiva is particularly associated with Gandhāra region. Hence, the Tumburu of Gandhāra is none other than Śiva himself and it is quite possible that the Indus tradition was reflected on that of the epic, (vide : P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 14).

5. *R̥gVeda*, ii, 3, 3.

6. *Ibid.*, i, 114, 9; ii, 33, 5; ii, 33, 7; x, 92, 9.

7. *AtharvaVeda*, ii, 27, 6; vi, 93, 1; x, 1, 23; xi. 2.1.12.

8. *Op. cit.*, viii, 65, 2; *ibid.*, vii, 87, 1.

9. Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 12 ff.



over gods.<sup>10</sup> Rudra Śiva was known to the Iranians. Hence at least an inference may be drawn that he was a god of Indo-European pantheon and his antiquity obviously extended upto that era.<sup>11</sup>

The *Śatarudrīya* associates Rudra with activities in almost every aspect of nature.<sup>12</sup> This association may be interpreted as the transformation of the metaphysical deity of the Vedas into a kindred god amalgamated with an unorthodox, aboriginal forest or mountain deity or perhaps a vegetation spirit. This may, as well, signify the absorption of characteristics and traditions of the Indus Valley and the Proto-Australoids whose presence have also been detected in the pre-historic Indus country.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it has been stated that Rudra is called Sarva by the Prāchya (eastern) people and the Bahlikas (people of present Balkh in Afganistan) call him Bhava. This indicates a kind of geographical extent where the worship of the cult was prevalent among the eastern people as well as by the people in the north-west.

Dr. Venkataramanyya contended that those two appellations of the Rudra-Śiva originated in the association with the local deities having, in particular, the identical characteristics.<sup>13</sup> The Title of Puruṣa for Mahādeva-Śiva in a litany to eleven gods in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* of the *Black Yajur Veda* corroborates that the Rudra-Śiva has already transformed into auspicious (Śiva) as stated explicitly earlier in the *Śatarudrīya* (*Tam Śivānāmosi*). This Paruṣa is none but the Great Puruṣa, the life-force of the cosmos. The Gāyatrī mantra in the *Saṁhitā* referring to 'Bhakti' as an essential element suggests further the existence of a Śaiva sect in later Vedic age.<sup>14</sup>

The *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* equates Rudra-Śiva with the Supreme Brahman and adorns him with the epithets like Hara,<sup>15</sup> Rudra<sup>16</sup> Śiva<sup>17</sup> and Maheśvara.<sup>18</sup> Śiva assumes, by now, a superiority in stature and status and transforms into the 'self-subsisting mover of the unmoving manifold'.<sup>19</sup>

10. Venkataramanyya, N. *Rudra-Śiva*, p. 32.

11. Haug, *Essays on the Religions of the Parsis*, p. 272.

12. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, iv, p. 270; Keith presented an analysis to this litany : 'It is clear that this wide extension of the power which applies to the waters and the fish in them and to the whole animal and vegetable kingdom is due to the deliberate tendency to see in him a god with a comprehensive control over the nature'. (Vide. *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda etc.*, vol. 31, p. 145.

13. Venkataramanyya, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

14. *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*, ii, 9, 1.

15. *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, i, 10.

16. *Ibid.*, iii, 2.

17. *Ibid.*, iii, 14.

18. *Ibid.*, iv, 10.

19. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy* i, p. 100.



*Megasthenes* states that Dionysios or Śiva-worship was specially popular in 'the hill regions where grew the Vines'.<sup>20</sup> He also alludes to Dionysios as a human hero who founded large cities, formulated principles of worshipping deities and introduced law and courts of justice. He was later deified.<sup>21</sup> Other classical writers also refer to the tribes of the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province region who accompanied Dionysios in his expedition to India like the Nysians or the Siboi (or Sibae) who used to regard themselves as the descendants of Śiva.

Classical writers maintain that Śiva was worshipped in the West upto Bactria, the present Bālkh in Afganistan and in the north as far as Meros<sup>22</sup> or Meru which may be identified with Pamir.<sup>23</sup>

Levi refers to *Mahāmāyūrī* to state that the presiding deity of the Śivapura country (Udīcyagrāma of Patañjali, cf. Keilhorn, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 396-97) and the Siboi country of the Classical authors, is said to be Śiva. This also indicates that a Śaiva sect was in existence in the north-eastern India.<sup>24</sup>

This further implies that, belonging principally to the regions outside the Aryandom, Śaivism had imbibed many heterodox traits and gradually began extending its sphere of influence. This extension is corroborated by Strabo's reference to the procession of Dionysios by Sydrākai or Oxydrākai, the Kṣudrakas, on the river Beas with drums and cymbals, alluding to plains.

Pāṇini refers to Bhava, Sarva, Rudra and Mṛida in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.<sup>25</sup> He also alludes to Siva-worshippers (iv, 1.112). Kauṭilya refers to the apartments of many gods including that of Śiva to be erected in the centre of the town.<sup>26</sup>

*Note*: Śiva's spouse Umā has also been accorded the status of a great goddess in the Kena Upaniṣad.

20. McCrindle, *Antient India as Described by etc.*, pp. 34-35.

21. *Ibid.*, *Frag.*, I, 38, pp. 36-37.

*Note*: Perhaps, the concept and epithet of Giriśa and Giritra around Śiva in early Indian literature prompted Megasthenes to identify him with this Dionysios. In fact, affinities are more with Rudra-Śiva. The association of bacchic festivals and vines with Dionysios have some similarity with Saṃkarṣaṇa and Baladeva (drunkenness is an essential part of Baladeva's character, vide, Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 212).

In early Indian legends Śiva does not represent the characteristics associated with Dionysios.

22. McCrindle, *op. cit.*, p. 162 ff.

23. B. N. Seal, *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, p. 48 f.

24. Levi, *Mahāmāyūrī*, F. A., 1915, p. 21.

25. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, iv, 1. 49.

26. *Ārthaśāstra*, (ed., R. Shaṃa Sastri), p. 55ff.



Patañjali alludes to the images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākhā for worship, in commenting on the Pāṇini Sūtra v, 2.76.<sup>27</sup> The same passage refers to those images sold by the Mauryas to enhance the exchequer.<sup>28</sup> To mention the kind of deities worshipped during his time, Patañjali enumerates two categories of the same, e.g. i) Vaidika or Vedic and ii) Laukika or popular while commenting on the Pāṇini Sūtra : *Devatādvande ca* (vi, 3.96). Brahmā and Prajāpati belong to the former group while the later group is represented by Śiva and Vaiśrāvaṇa (Yakṣa), regarded as non-Vedic gods with sectarian followers for each of them. He uses the word 'Śaiva' to denote the sectarian Śiva-worshippers in general.<sup>29</sup> He also once referred to Śiva-Bhāgavatas carrying iron lances as an emblem of their deity.<sup>30</sup>

In the Epic, Śiva is conceptualised as representing sober and lofty ideas and became one of the great gods of the Brāhminism. He is regarded as the best of the Yogīs and is known under the appellations : Yogendra, Yogeśvara, 'Mahātapah', and Mahāyogī.<sup>31</sup> The Yogic epithets attributed to Śiva and the concepts that underlie may very likely be an inheritance from the Indus tradition.<sup>32</sup> His epithet as the 'Paśupati', 'the Pastor of the flock or herd' might have come from the same source.<sup>33</sup> Banerjee contends that this god-concept is the product of the commingling of many such concepts prevailing among different ethnic units of India (*DHI*, p. 147).

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* he is Mahādeva,<sup>34</sup> Śambhu,<sup>35</sup> Tryambaka<sup>36</sup> and Bhūtanātha.<sup>37</sup> In the *Mahābhārata* his religion is referred to as Pāśupata.<sup>38</sup> The

27. Kielhorn, *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya*, v, 3.99, vol. ii, p. 429.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Kielhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 282; R. G. Bhandarkar contends that the Śiva-Bhāgavatas and the Pāśupatas are identical (Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc., pp. 116-7).

30. *Ibid.*, v, 2. 76, pp. 387-88.

That the Śiva-Bhāgavatas and the Pāśupatas were allied sects has been elaborately discussed by Bhandarkar, cf. *Collected works of Bhandarkar*, vol. iv, p. 126.

31. Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India*, p. 83.

32. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 52, 59.

The Yogic current of thought associated with the Brāhmanic faith as referred to in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, chapter ii, in particular might, as well, have been imbibed from the Indus heritage.

33. With other religions too the idea seems to have been very favourite and is corroborated therein by the mythologies of Gopāla-Krishṇa, Jesus, the pastor or Pan, the shepherd, Orpheus, the charmer of animals, and the Vedic Pūshan. Cf., Macdonell and Keith, *The Vedic Index*, p. 357; Banerjee, *Early Indian Religions*, p. 27.

34. *The Rāmāyaṇa*, vi, 120. 3

35. *Ibid.*, iv, 43. 59.

36. *Ibid.*, ii, 43. 6.

37. *Ibid.*, vi, 59.9.

38. *MBH.*, vii, 82. 16; xviii, 6. 97.



Great Epic attributes it as a distinct system of religion and philosophy.<sup>39</sup> That the religion was regarded as non-Vedic in character is brought out in a dialogue between Dakṣa and Śiva where Śiva relates that the Pāśupata system propounded by him in early times is opposed to the four orders of man and four modes of life (*varṇāśramadharmā*).<sup>40</sup> This statement possibly presupposes the existence of the Sāṃkhya Yoga school of thought, as Muir has suggested.<sup>41</sup> The *Mahābhārata* informs us further that Śiva was also worshipped in his phallic form.<sup>41a</sup>

Notwithstanding the general epithet, 'Pañcha-Mahākālpa referring to the Scriptures, Āgamas of the five diverse sects of the period namely Sauras, Śāktas, Gāṇeśas, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas,<sup>42</sup> two among them, the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas shine with more brilliance than the others.

Eliot however argues that the worship of Śiva was not widely prevalent before 300 B.C. as it has not at all been referred to in the early Pāli texts, and that it fully developed about the time of the Bhagavad Gītā (little before the Christian era).<sup>43</sup> Vedic and Neo-Brāhmanic, or non-Vedic whatsoever might be the arguments in favour or against the origin or transformation, the historical evidences establish beyond doubt that Śiva was extremely popular as a deity. The Śaivic emblems such as the 'Bull' and the 'Nandipada' take back the antiquity of Śiva as far back as c. 6th-5th century B.C. when they occur in the punch-marked coins of the period.<sup>44</sup> This is later discernible in the innumerable Śaivic personal names occurring in the epigraphs of the Post-Mauryan India, though, of course, epigraphs of direct Śaivic connotation are absolutely rare (*supra*). In the Lüder's list of Brāhmī Inscriptions indicating the personal names we find a galaxy of names like Mahādeva, Rudra, Rudraghoṣa, Rudradāsa, Śivadeva, Śivaghoṣa, Śivasena, Śivanandi, Śivaskanda Gupta, Śivaskandavarma, Śivāyasa and a host of others.<sup>45</sup> The names of the rulers occurring in the seal-inscriptions of Taxilā also testify that most Satrap chiefs were devoted to Śaivism.<sup>46</sup>

Let us examine now in a little detailed manner the facts that emerge from coin devices of both the native and foreign rulers of the pre-Kushāṇa

39. *Ibid.*, *Sāntiparvan*, xii, 349.63 ff; *Vāyu Purāṇa*, chap. 23; *Linga-Purāṇa*, chap. 24.

Note: In most parts of the MBH, Śiva is seen being worshipped by all sections of people including the Pāṇḍavas, Yādavas and others, though the epic itself is a Vaiṣṇavite one.

40. MBH. (Tran, P. C. Roy), *Sāntiparvan*, p. 510.

41. Muir, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 169.

41a. MBH., xii, 14, 231-33.

42. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 115.

43. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. i, p. 69.

44. Smith, *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum*, vol. i, pp. 140.41.

45. *El.*, vol. x, Appendix.

46. Konow, *CII.*, vol. II, p. 102.



period. Our initial attention is drawn towards a number of Ujjain coins of the 3rd and 2nd century B. C. Śiva appears here in human form as a standing figure with a staff in the right hand and a vessel in the left. A bull, his vehicle, glances at him in a few of the coins.<sup>47</sup> The figure of Śiva also occurs with three heads in a few other coins and in his aniconic Liṅga form in some others.<sup>48</sup> Mention should also be made in this connection that in some of the coins from Taxilā too Śiva appears with the representation of Liṅga.<sup>49</sup>

In the coins of the Kuniṇḍas (2nd century A. D.) a standing figure of Śiva appears on the obverse with legend in the Brāhmī script. Śiva is shown here as Uṣṇīṣī carrying trident-battle axe.<sup>50</sup>

Śaiva shrines, termed by Coomaraswamy as 'domed pavilion' occurs on the early Audumbara (1st century B.C.) coins of Śivadāsa, Rudradāsa and Dharaghoṣa with perhaps a dhvajastambha on the obverse.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, these regional coins exemplify that Śaivism was in a dominant position in the western Ujjain and the north-western parts of India (Taxilā and Udumbara). It was no longer confined to the mountains referred to earlier by Megasthenes (*supra*).

Among the issues of the foreign rulers reference may be made to the 'Humped Bull' device on a gold coin with the legends Taures and Uṣabha (Vṛṣabha) in the Greek and Kharosthī scripts.<sup>52</sup> Figure of Śiva occurs on the coins of Maues, one of the earliest Indo-Parthian rulers of the 1st century B.C. Śiva is shown here with the elephant goad as an attribute, trampling a dwarfish figure.<sup>53</sup> Mention should also be made of the Billon coins of Gondaphares (1st century A.D.) where Śiva appears also as an anthropomorphic figure in a standing pose.<sup>54</sup> In the coins of both the Indo-Parthian kings Śiva strides powerfully carrying the club, khatvāṅga. It may be interpreted as the warrior's stride forerunning the ālīḍha and pratyālīḍha themes of the later periods.

47. Allan, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

48. Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 112 ff; Allan, *op. cit.*,

i) uninscribed cast coin, p. 85, pl. xi, no. 2.

ii) two copper coins (Taxilā) of 3rd-2nd century, B. C., p. 233, nos. 154, 155.

iii) Ujjain coins of 3rd-2nd century B. C., p. 243, no. 19, pl. xxxvi, no. 15.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Allan, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

51. Banerjea, *op. cit.*; C. Sivaramamurti, *Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature*, p. 178.

52. Gardner, *op. cit.*, pl. xxiv, 15.

Note : Bull traditionally represents passion and desire and symbolises 'Kāmadeva' of the pantheons. Bull or Nandi has become the mount and vehicle of Śiva because he subdues the bull by his yogic power which transcends all physical desires.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 71, pl. xviii, 3.

54. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 151, pl. xv.



We may take a short respite from our concern with the coins alone, to refer incidentally, to two metal seals from Sirkap belonging to the pre-Kushāṇa age (1st century B. C.). One is a round bronze seal (No. 12), where Śiva appears with Nandi trampling a figure. One of his leg is raised in ūrdhvajānu pose and this, with the attitude of the figure at the foot may very well be presumed as the precursory traits of the Naṣarāja Śiva of the later days.<sup>55</sup> The other is an elliptical copper seal showing Śiva with Khatvāṅga (club) and triśūla (trident). He is Uṣṇīṣī with a pair of arms and in the ālīḍha pose, as has been seen in the coins of Maues. The legend is Śivarakshita, on either side of the seal and is in both Brāhmī and Kharosthī letters of 1st century B. C.-A. D. It belongs to the Indo-Greek period of Taxilā.<sup>56</sup> We have referred in the opening pages to the Śaiva motifs and devices in the Kushāṇa coins to discuss on them at some length (*supra*). We now propose to elaborate a little on some of the most interesting and significant aspects of those coin motifs which eventually throw light on the evolution of religious belief of the period, in particular.

Our attention is immediately drawn towards a coin of Vāsudeva where Śiva appears five-headed. This is now in the collection of the British Museum.<sup>57</sup> The same Museum possesses a unique gold coin of the House where Oesa appears with his consort Umā on the obverse.<sup>58</sup> The Kharosthī legend refers to Ampa which may very likely stand for Ampā or Amvā or Ambā, 'a mother as well as Durgā, the consort of Śiva'.<sup>59</sup> In some coins of Huviṣka also Umā is depicted with Oesa with the legend 'Omma' most likely referring to Umā<sup>60</sup>, pl. II. no. 6. In some other, the 'Oesa' is coupled with the legend 'Nānā', identical in characteristics with the Sumero-Babylonian goddess Ishtār, perhaps eventually identified with Umā.<sup>61</sup> Hence, it has been assumed that in the

55. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-21.

56. Sivaramamurti, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69.

57. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 186 ff; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 69 ff.

59. Mukherjee, B. N., *Nānā on Lion*, p. 13.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

*Note* : Umā seems to have been originally a local divinity. The term cannot again, be claimed in any way, to be a derivative form from a Sanskrit root. On the other hand, in the Kena Upaniṣad she is given an appellation as Haimavatī (vide, *Kena Up.*, iii, 11. 12; iv 1.2) and is regarded as a heavenly lady with the knowledge of Brahman. Hence, she was very likely a goddess of the Himālayān region and was gradually identified with Śiva, the Giriśa, as his consort. Her association with the Dravidian word amma has been rejected by many scholars. Many of her traits as also those of Ishtār-Nānā, were later absorbed by Durgā, cf. Chattopadhyaya, *Ev. of Hindu Sects*, p. 154ff, 161.

61. Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 149 and 150.



early Christian centuries itself the Babylonian goddess was syncretized with the Indian Mother-goddess.

This further betrays the conceptual identification too of divine maternity associated with Indian Umā alias Ambā (Ambikā, vide., *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, iii, 57; *Taittirīya Br.*, i, 6.10, 4-5; *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, x, 18.) and the West Asian Nānā initiated by the Scythians of the north-west India and the process of syncretization was culminated by the most eclectic Kushāṇas. This is also a testimony as to how Indian religions absorbed gradually the non-Indian ideas and deities in their fold so that Umā could be personified as the Śakti or Māyā of the later days.

Weber has suggested that as Śiva is a combination of two gods, Rudra and Agni, so also Umā is an amalgamation of the wife of Rudra (e. g. Ambikā, Pārvatī, Haimavatī) and the wife of Agni (e. g. Kālī, Karālī etc., cf. Muir, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 361; *Muṇḍaka Up.*, i, 2. 4). His suggestion is acceptable in so far as we find allusions also in the *Mahābhārata* as to how the different female deities are associated with the wife of Śiva.<sup>62</sup> There are, however, paucity of references of Śakti-worship in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

It may be discussed incidentally that the association of Oesa with Omma or Ampa or Nānā had its nucleus in the Vedas itself where the supreme Puruṣa (Śiva) is described as both man and woman (*Tvam Strī Tvam Punam, Atharva Veda*, 108.27) and that each woman is half man and each man is half woman (*Ṛg Veda*, 1.164.16). This uninterrupted conceptual continuity suggests also a Śakti cultism personifying the female principle along with Śaivism. Hence, a discussion of Śaktism seems to be of relevance here.

The appearance of the figure of Umā with or without the figure of Śiva in the coins of Huvishka alludes that there were votaries of the Umā-cult and that a marital relation between Śiva and Umā had already been established in popular belief. (*AIU.*, p. 467).

Śaktism, along with Śaivism is considered to be as old as the Vedic period if at all its Indus tradition is disregarded. Notwithstanding, the terracotta mother goddesses and the ring stones representing the Yonivigrahas are testimonies that there seems to have been a category of Śakti-worshippers in the Indus Valley.

In the Vedic literature, the *Ṛg Vedic* conception of Yama and Yamī may contain the germ of two fundamental principles as is essential in the personification of Śakti. The *Devīsūkta* and the *Rātrisūkta* of the *Ṛg Veda* also suggest the Devī as the embodiment of divine power and energy. Dandekar, incidentally, refers to this concept as possibly of Indo-European origin. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* alludes that Ātman, the original Puruṣa was bisexual

62. *MBH.*, xii, 31f, 51, 284.

63. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*, i, 4.



and eventually divided himself into male and female and multiplied.<sup>63</sup> *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* too maintains that Prajāpati assumed a bisexual form to perpetuate the procreative principles.<sup>64</sup> In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* Rudra is regarded also as Umāpati, and Ambikā is described as the wife of Rudra (x, 18). She is known as Durgā (*MBH.*, iv, 6), Kātyāyanī (*Tai. Āran.*, x, 1,7), Karālī (*Muṇḍaka Up.*, i, 2, 4), Bhadrakālī, Varadā, Vedamātā, Sarasvatī and Kanyā Kumārī (*op. cit.*, cf. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 153).

Some stone discs of the historical epoch of the pre-Christian days, discovered at Taxilā, Kośām, Rājghāt and Pātnā, may well allude to the existence of a mother or Śakti cult.<sup>65</sup> One among the several types of terracotta figurines belonging to the Mauryan age<sup>66</sup> depicts a kind of god and his Śakti together. Their appearance in the coin motifs of Huvishka as already referred to (*supra.*), signify that the Mother cult had a notable status and that it came to be combined with a father god, popularly epitheted together as Umā-Maheśvara.

The idea of Umā-Maheśvara, metaphysically speaking, is the reconciliation of the opposite principles, both the duality and unity of the generative act, the union of the soul, the Puruṣa with the primordial Essence, the Prakṛti, captivated in an eternal cycle. They are the two faces of the cosmos : the Being and the Becoming, 'the oscillations of the fundamental unchanging Essence' - the Unity in Diversity (Sāṃkhya and Vedānta schools). This concept and belief have prompted the followers to worship Śiva invariably along with the worship of his female principle, the Śakti<sup>67</sup> for, the two are inseparable.<sup>68</sup>

A further process of syncretization under the aegies of the Kushāṇas can be discerned from a coin of Huvishka where Śiva appears with a Cakra (the emblem of Viṣṇu) as one of the attributes along with his usual one, i.e. triśūla and vajra. This amalgamation of the deities of the two principal sects of the period paved the way for the Hari-Hara icon of a later date (Hari-Vaiṣṇava).<sup>69</sup>

The association of the Devi with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa in the icon of Ekānaṃsā right from an early antiquity (i.e. Bṛhatsaṃhitā, chap. 57) indicate conclusively

64. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, xvii, 7.

65. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 171f.

66. Marshall, *Taxilā*, ii, p. 443.

67. Note : There are seven Śāktis mentioned in the early literatures. They are :—

1) Brāhmī, 2) Māheśvarī, 3) Kaumarī, 4) Vaiṣṇavī, 5) Vārāhi 6) Nārasinhī and 7) Aindrī, representing the powers and spirits of the respective gods with whom the respective names are associated.

68. Note : In the later metamorphoses of the Śaivism and Śāktism, they were associated with wisdom and power respectively. The votaries of the wisdom aspect of Reality came to be known as Śaiva and that of the power aspect or female principle were called Śākta.

69. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 124.



a general trend and tendency for the amalgamation and syncretization of the sectarian deities.

An extremely significant and rare specimen of cult syncretism has been provided by a Chaturmukhī Śiva-Liṅga from Nānd, Rajasthan (see B. C. Bhattacharya, *Jour. of Oriental Instt., Baroda*, vol. xiv., 1965, pp. 388-91). The colossal image is in spotted red sandstone, assignable to 2nd century A. D., signifying Kuṣhāṇa parenthood. The lowest portion represents Viṣṇu, Ekānamśā along with Vāsudeva and Baladeva. In the middle portion are Brahmā, Sūrya with a Scythic type conical cap and lotus stalk in hand, and Śiva. The topmost portion is mounted by ūrdhvareta Lākuliṣa seated in squattish pose, disappointingly mutilated. This is by far the earliest extant example of a syncretized image of all the four principal Brāhmanic deities (see R. C. Agarwal, 'Chaturmukh Siva-Liṅga from Nand, near Pushkar, Rajasthan, *Puratattva*, Ind. Arch. Soc., Varanasi, no. 2, 1968-69, pp. 53-54, pl. x, ABCD).

If we now turn our attention to the plastic rendering of the cult in question (Śaiva), the wider Mathurā region steal the entire show and the Kuṣhāṇas principally dominate the scene. Śiva's representation in several forms speaks eloquently for itself the popularity of the deity in the area.

Among both the iconic and aniconic images, the phallic form of Śiva seems to have been most widely venerated. These 'Liṅga-vigrahas' as available to us represent principally three types. The outnumbering one is i) the simple, erect, conico-vertical phallic form<sup>70</sup> (figs. 6-7), ii) Liṅga with single human form (Ekamukhī Liṅga), (figs. 5 and 9) and iii) Vahumukha Liṅga.

We may recall here that phallicism is one of the earliest forms of worship particularly in India and generally in the ancient world. Phallus worship, again, is associated with the cult of Śiva who is often regarded as the god of generation.<sup>71</sup> A large number of aniconic stones in phallic symbols relate that phallus worship in India is as old as Mohenjodaro.<sup>72</sup> Evidentially, therefore, Liṅga-vigraha is a pre-Aryan deity. This is corroborated by the fact that the places considered later as the sanctified mounts of the Jyoti-Liṅgas are generally in the south and north-east India outside the pale of the original settlements of the Brāhmanical faith, excepting perhaps Prayāga and Benares which are included as within the Brāhmanic pale by Manu and Rajaśekhara respectively.

The *RgVeda* remonstratively refers to the liṅga-worship of later date by the conquered (non-Aryan) masses whose god is the Phallus (Śiśnadeva) and implores god Indra not to allow Śiśna-deva to approach the sacrifice.<sup>73</sup>

70. Mathura Museum Antiquity no. 36.2661; Lucknow Mus. Antiquity no. B. 141.

71. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, vol. i, pp. 58ff.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 59ff. pl. xiv, nos. 2 and 4.

73. *RgVeda*, vii, 21.5.



In the era of neo-Brāhmanism liṅga-worship became widely prevalent in the Aryan society. The *Anuśāsana Parvan* of the Great Epic is full of references about the worship of the Liṅga.<sup>74</sup> During the period, Phallus worship was invested with a mystico-philosophical connotation and came to be recognized as an inseparable part of the Śaivic cult. The simple form embodies therein 'the divine life force of the universe, its all-comprising, all-generating essence'.<sup>75</sup>

The *Liṅga-Purāṇa* contains numerous references about the veneration of the phallus.<sup>76</sup>

The second type of Liṅga-vigrahas contain a single human face on the Śiva-liṅgas with matted hair and the vertical third eye, known as Mukha-Liṅgas.<sup>77</sup> The Ekamukhī Śiva-liṅga from Mathurā represented the full figure of Śiva standing against a towering Liṅga.<sup>78</sup> Another Ekamukhī Liṅga of the late Śuṅga or early Kushāṇa period, probably the earliest one in north India,<sup>79</sup> is now in the possession of the State Museum at Bharatpur.<sup>80</sup> Several other Ekamukhī Liṅgas belonging to the Kushāṇa period have been found at Mathurā and now are in the collections of the Mathurā Museum<sup>81</sup> (fig.9).

The remaining type of Liṅga-vigrahas are known as Pañcha-Mukhī Liṅga. The Liṅga bears four faces on the four directions and is crowned with another face. The earliest of such sculptures comes from Bhitā (U.P.) belonging broadly to post-Mauryan, most likely to Śuṅga period.<sup>82</sup> The crowning face in the vigraha from Mathurā<sup>83</sup> is now scarcely visible. Generally,

74. MBH., *Anuśāsana Parvan*, xiii, 14, pp. 129ff, (Bombay edn.), Leaf no. 20 ; Muir., *op. cit.*, vol. iv, p. 144.

75. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, vol. i, p. 23.

76. *Liṅga-Purāṇa* (ed. Jivananda Vidyasagar), chapters xvii and xviii.

Note : The Liṅga is here related as the Pradhāna (Nature) and the Parameśvara is designated as Liṅgin (the Sustainer of the Liṅga), *ibid.*, chapter xviii, 5.

It further alludes that the pedestal of the Liṅga is the Mahādevī. (Umā) and the Liṅga is the 'Visible Maheśvara', *ibid.*, chap. xviii.

77. Agrawala, *Ind. Art*, p. 257, fig. 173.

78. R. Sengupta, *More Sculptures of Śiva Liṅgin*, JAS., vol. iv, no. 2, 1962, pl. iv. b.

79. Note : The earliest one in India is, however, the Gudimallam Liṅga in South India of the 2nd-1st century B.C. The Mongoloid face and the absence of the sacred thread suggest its non-Aryan origin. Its dedication by one Nāgasiri in Brāhmī script is, again, a testimony as to how the Nāga cult was being fused gradually with that of Śaivism. This one seems to be the precursor of the combination of Agni-Rudra and to an extent Aṣṭamūrti concept of the later phases, (vide. Rao, *EHI.*, vol. iii, part i, pp. 65ff) ; The *Ūrdhvaliṅga* sign found to be common in the images of the post-Christian epoch is absent here indicating its uniqueness among the extant examples. (See fig. 5).

80. Agrawala, *op. cit.*

81. Agrawala, *Handbook to the Sculptures in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology*, p. 42 ; JISOA., vol. iv, 1937, pl. xxii, fig. i.

82. ASIAR., 1909-10, pp. 147-48.

83. Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p. 257, fig. 174.



the face on top is regarded as that of Lākuliśa who is said to have propagated the Pāśupata doctrine.<sup>84</sup> The four faces of the Liṅga-vigraha represent the four attitudes of the deity: 'the benign, the graceful, the pleasant and the equally destructive one.' (For a detailed classification of the types of Śivaliṅgas, see Gopinath Rao, *vol. ii*, pp. 75-79).

The Liṅga is, metaphysically, the symbol of creation, the universe (*supra*) and the five faces represent the five basic elements.<sup>85</sup> Conceptually speaking, the faces represent a 'likeness' (Pratimā) of merely momentary apparition—'a mask that the divine being has voluntarily assumed to make manifest some particular aspect of his divine nature...they are the inflexions of the totality of his supra-essence—his infinitude.'<sup>86</sup> Thus the rigid, silent form of the Liṅga came, at all events, to be symbolized as the 'inflexions of a single immovable, immutable fundamental eternal Essence.'<sup>87</sup>

Hence, we see that the Liṅga is the representation of Śiva, the formless. Even in the Mukhaliṅgas, Ekamukhī or Chaturmukhī where the concept is multilateral, still the formless, post-like 'sthānu' from of Śivaliṅga virtually dominate.

Now, the image of Śiva in human form independent of the phallic association is also not rare in Mathurā and the adjoining regions. One in the collection of the Mathura Museum, belonging to the Kushāṇa period represents Śiva as standing against Nandi, the symbol of Kāma.<sup>88</sup> In the other one from the same Museum we find the standing Śiva is consorted with his spouse Pārvatī in 'dampatibhāva'. Śiva is in 'Ūrdhvareta' pose representing the perfect Brahmachārin with the frontal Nandi standing on the right by the side of Pārvatī. The findspot has been Kośām. The sculpture belongs to the Kushāṇa period.<sup>89</sup>

The plastic rendition of the Śiva-Pārvatī images is the expression and exposition in concrete terms the idea representing the union of the soul, the Puruṣa with his Śakti, the primordial Essence—the creative force in its feminine

84. *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, chap. 23; *Liṅga-Purāṇa*, chap. 24

—both ed. by Panchanana Tarkaratna, Cal.

85. Note: The symbolism of various faces as described in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* is as follows:

- 1) Sadyojāta—Prithivī, the latest form.
- 2) Vāmadeva—Jala, symbolized as the female element.
- 3) Agorā—Agni.
- 4) Tatpuruṣa—Vāyu, most effective symbol of life.
- 5) Īśāna—Ākāśa, that overlords over all, as quoted by, Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 257, note i.

86. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

87. *Ibid.*

88. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 257, fig. 175.

89. *ASIAR.*, 1913-14, pl. lxxb. Agrawala, *Handbook*.....Curzon Museum, p. 44.



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aspect : Pārvatī. They are the reflections of the intense affinity between the two fundamental principles. (*supra*)

In the next stage of transformation the Śiva and Śakti become conjoined and composite in one and the single icon where the right half, represents the male figure with the attributes of Śiva and the left half representing a female counterpart, that of Pārvatī. This composite syncretistic image came to be designated as the *Arddhanārīśvara* aspect of Śiva.<sup>90</sup> Śiva, in association with Umā is invariably shown in his *Ūrdhavamadhra* (erect genital organ) position. Mathura Museum possesses two such specimens belonging to the Kushāṇa period. One is a statuette where the *Arddhanārīśvara* stand against his vehicle Nandi,<sup>91</sup> and the other is a two-armed one.<sup>92</sup> Both the images seem to conform to the iconographic injunctions of *Matsya-Purāṇa*.<sup>93</sup> Besides these very well-known specimens Mathura Museum possesses many more examples of various Śaivic pantheons. One of the pantheons that gained tremendous popularity in later Indian sculptures is Śiva, the Lord of Dance and Music. A terra-cotta plaque of Śiva in the *Vinādhara Dakshināmūrti* belonging to the Śuṅga period is, in this connection, extremely interesting (fig. 8). Śiva seems to be presiding over the *Gāndharva vidyā* which includes music and dance. This may easily be regarded as the precursor of the concept of Śiva as the presiding deity of the *Gandharva Vidyā*.<sup>94</sup> The terra-cotta is now in the collection of Gopikrishna Kanoria. Śaivic pantheon coalesced with numerous other sectarian deities is further evidenced in a panel from Mathura Museum belonging to the Kushāṇa period. The panel comprises the images of *Arddhanārīśvara-Viṣṇu-Gajalakshmi-Kuvera*.<sup>95</sup> It reflects the syncretization of the Śaivas with the *Vaiṣṇavas* (*Viṣṇu-Gajalakshmi*) and the *Śāktas* (*Kubera*). The panel is again a testimony as to how eventually this kind of fusion prompted gradual multiplication of the particular sectarian religions.

In this context, again, the reference to a *Trimūrti* image is significantly important though it has been discovered at a place far distant from Mathurā. This is from Chārsadda, ancient *Pushkalāvati*, assigned to Vāsudeva (2nd

90. Note : According to the *Sāṃkhya* and *Vedānta* systems of philosophy, the *Arddhanārīśvara* aspect symbolises both the duality and unity of the generative act and the fructification of the universe from the union of two principles, i.e. *Māyā* and *Ātmā*. From the point of evolution, Śiva, absorbing many of the traits of the Vedic Yama could advantageously be combined with the Śakti and contributed to the formation of the *Arddhanārīśvara* sects.

91. *Mathura Museum Antiquity* no. 15. 874.

92. *JISOA*, 1937, pl. xiv, fig. 2.

93. *Matsya-Purāṇa* (Vangavasi edn.), ch. 260.

94. *Sivaramamurti*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69, fig. 4.

95. *JISOA*, 1937, pl. xlv ; Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 181f.



century A. D.) and now belongs to the Peshawar Museum.<sup>96</sup> The central figure leaning against Nandi is obviously that of Śiva, the one in the proper right is that of Viṣṇu and the other in the proper left with a bearded face seems to be that of Brahmā, the original Hindu Triad.<sup>97</sup>

The above Trimūrti icon provides a significant sidelight on the religious situation of the period emphasizing the fact that the concept of triad was at home as early as the second century A.D. It further establishes that the Brāhmanical influences were not absent in the Gandhāra region provided by the Puskalāvati coins of the earlier age though otherwise dominated by the Buddhist religious thoughts and traditions.

The original Brāhmanical concept of the manifestation of the supreme spirit in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara alludes to their equality and none of them ought to take the precedence over the other; their functions were mutually changeable and each might take the place of the other to represent as the supreme Lord. But the sectarian enthusiasm from time to time might have led each sect to assign the central and the cardinal place to its own deity in preference to others. Bhakti or devotion which engendered sectarianism (*supra*) connotes not merely a personal god but a supreme deity. Thus, the monotheism could easily absorb the Upaniṣadic ideas of liberalistic traits. This typically liberal monotheistic standpoint of the neo-Brāhmanic age, in particular, contributed immensely to reconcile the sectarianism and promoted to evolve the syncretistic icon of the Trimūrti, the Triad. Practically it paved the way for a double theism.<sup>98</sup> The Yoga school which might have originated in the Indus Valley and has positively an antiquity far from the Upaniṣadic days, made its own god the only object of meditation.

Though theistic like the contemporary Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism lay more stress on the Yoga and Jñānamārgas than the exclusive path of devotion. Śiva does not appear as an incarnate (like Viṣṇu) though, of course, Vāyu and Liṅga-Purāṇas refer him to have incarnated himself as a Brahmachārin by the name of Lākuliṣa (*supra*).

96. *ASIAR.*, 1913-14, pp. 126ff.

97. Note: The concept of the 'Triad' is of-course, as old as the Vedic period. The Vedic triad comprised Agni, Vāyu or Varuna, and Sūrya. The later transformation under the aegis of the Mahāyāna Buddhism was with Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi.

98. Note: During the Epic-Purāṇic period a reconciliation move seemed to have been launched as an effective deterrent to the growing sectarianism. Thus, Brahmā enjoying the supreme status in the early epics receded to a de jure superiority in the later epics; Viṣṇu and Śiva were gradually assigned the supreme places. Still later the essential oneness of the two in particular were identified and presented as Hari-Hara. Eventually, the idea of Hari-Hara paved the way for the concept and icon of Trimūrti, as we find in the *Harivaṃśa*, a composition of a later date.



Śiva actually represents the force that rules this universe. He reproduces and destroys and thus, continually effects a change by his eternal role of Dakṣiṇā, the Benevolent, 'which answer prayers, grants wishes, bestows security and peace', and the Ghora, the Terrible which entails annihilation and disaster. Hence, 'Śaivism is more scientific and philosophic than mere emotional.'

In the eventual analysis, therefore, Śaivism as well as Śiva is a complex product and the religion is a composite unit of numerous cultism crystallized out of their interactions from time to time. Śiva is admittedly the Yogeśvara, the Maheśvara and the Mahādeva. He is Hara, the Seizer, Bhairava, the Terrible and yet Bhabēsa, the Supreme deity of this world. He is Paśupati, the Lord of the cattle symbolizing the human souls and identified at the same time with the Time, Mahākāla, and Death, Mṛtyu but he is simultaneously Mṛtyuñjaya. He is the presiding deity of the procreation, the Arddhanārīśvara along with the Liṅga form of Śiva in combination with the Yoni form of Śakti. His numerous ephemeral gestures and moods are the momentary inflexions of his infinitude captivated in a state of extreme opposites : 'generous and bountiful but spares nothing when wrathful'.

## II. VAIṢṆAVISM

It is evident from the discussions so far that during the period under review, the people at large were in search of a personality much distinct from the Upaniṣadic god who could be adored and worshipped, substituting the impersonal ātman.<sup>1</sup> The likeable gods from among the Vedic and non-Vedic pantheons existing among the masses became the natural choice as the object of devotion. With the growing insight, again, into the workings of the world and the nature of the godheads, the many gods of the Vedic era tended to melt into one. 'If the varied phenomena in nature demand many gods, should not the unity in nature require a single god who embraces all things that are' ?<sup>2</sup>

Viṣṇu, one of the celebrated Vedic gods could progressively be identified as one such personal deity and the idol of adoration. Viṣṇu suited most eminently for the theory of divine grace as the characteristic of this deity, in particular, displayed liberalism and beneficence of an unusual kind. The logical conclusion of the period happened to be that self-surrender of man to God the central fact of religious experience, was possible only with one God.<sup>3</sup> Theistic principles, therefore, formed the core and kernel of the religion of the two Vedic gods, i.e. Viṣṇu and Rudra Śiva. In its earliest form it came to be known as the 'Ekāntika Dharma'.<sup>4</sup>

The spirit of devotion to essentially a personal god, again, tended to absorb and synthesize various theistic elements into the religion and it passed through a continuous metamorphosis. The orbit of the religion having been around a Vedic god and its origin being in the centre of the Brāhmanic faith, its beginning seemed to have been orthodox (see Banerjea, *DHI.*, pp. 73-4). But it could not afford to be totally unpopular, (as, 'Indian philosophical thought could never be') and so, demonstrated gradual adaptability with greater compromises.<sup>5</sup> In the initial stages of identification local divinities of the non-Aryan folk and the totems of the tribal communities were absorbed into the Viṣṇu cult and was eventually transformed into one of the popular deities of the masses.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult, however, to determine the antiquity of the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult which became one with the cult of Viṣṇu. Literary evidence occurs in the ṚgVeda in reference to the enmity with Indra. The verse relates : 'The fleet Kṛṣṇa lived on the bank of Anisumati (Jumnā) river with ten

1. *AIU.*, p. 432 ; Keith, *Religion and Phil. etc.*, vol. ii, p. 497 ; Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 72.

2. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. i, p. 90.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

4. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*, p. 100.

5. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

6. Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Viṣṇu*, p. 212.



thousand troops'.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps 'Kṛṣṇa' was the deified hero of a tribe called Kṛṣṇas, humbled by Indra in the ṚgVedic period.<sup>8</sup> In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Viṣṇu is identified with sacrifice (xiv, 1, 1). The *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* alludes to Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, as the disciple of Ṛṣi Ghora of the Āṅgīrasa family.<sup>9</sup> The religion flourished at least earlier than Pāṇini as he refers to the followers of Vāsudeva.<sup>10</sup> Kaiata describes Vāsudeva as 'Paramātmā Devatā Viśeṣa'.<sup>11</sup> According to Kāśīkā, Vāsudeva was not a Kshatriya name but that of Kṛṣṇa and the person attached to him was known as Vāsudevaka : 'Vasudevabhaktir asya Vāsudevakah'.<sup>12</sup>

Megasthenes informs us that 'Heracles is held in especial honour by the Saurasenoi.....'.<sup>13</sup> 'Heracles' of Megasthenes is generally taken to be the Greek analogue of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Kauṭilya alludes to the legends of Kṛṣṇa and Kaṁsa and refers to the erection of temples dedicated to god Apratihata, i.e., Viṣṇu.<sup>14</sup> Patañjali provides us with a host of references.<sup>15</sup> His information about the Vāsudevaka<sup>16</sup> encourages one to assume that Vāsudeva, originally a human hero of the Yādava-Sāttvata race, was deified by the time of Patañjali<sup>16a</sup>. He also mentions Kṛṣṇa and Saṁkarṣaṇa as the joint leaders of an army<sup>17</sup>. Allusions are again, recorded by him to the existence of temples dedicated to Rāma (Balarāma or Saṁkarṣaṇa) and Keśava (Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa), besides those of Kuvera.<sup>18</sup> Patañjali's reference to Śiva-Bhāgavatas<sup>19</sup> connotes evidentially to the Śaivas, so named after their association with the bhakti-cult. His further allusions to the staging of Bali-bandhana, the famous

7. *ṚgVeda*, viii, 85, 13-15.

8. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

9. *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*, iii, 17, 6; B. C. Law, *India as Described etc.*, p. 198.

10. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, iv, 3, 98; Grierson, *J. R. A. S.*, 1909, p. 1122; Bhandarkar, *J. R. A. S.*, 1910, p. 170.

11. Quoted in V. S. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 359.

12. *Kāśīkā*, Commentary (on Pāṇini), Ed., A. S. Phadke, 1931 p. 343.

13. Megasthenes as restated by Arrian, *Indica*, part i, chap. viii; McCrindle, *Anc. India etc.*, p. 206ff.

Note : 'R. G. Bhandarkar was the first to identify the tribe of Saurosanoi with the Sātvatas, and Heracles with Vasudeva'. Cf. Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 77, n. 2.

14. *Arthaśāstra*, vii, 3; ii, 4.

15. *Mahābhāṣya*, iv, i, 11-12, 114, 257.

16. *Supra*.

16a. Raychoudhury endeavours to solve the problem of identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu by observing that Vāsudeva like Viṣṇu 'always was a deliverer of the mankind in distress and a great helper of other gods against the asuras. This feature fitted him to be at the centre of the famous avatāras'. (*E. H. V. S.*, pp. 108-9), cf., Gonda, *Aspect of Early Vaisnavism*, pp. 158-9.

17. *op. cit.*, i, 426.

18. *op. cit.*, i, 436.

19. *Mahābhāṣya*, under Pāṇini, v, 2, 76; *op. cit.*, i, 387.



exploit of Viṣṇu and that of the slaying of Kāṁsa, the celebrated deed of Kṛṣṇa, the Lord, addressed thus by different names and eventually identified as one and the same, led Weber to argue that the Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva legend was of great antiquity and that it was identified later with Viṣṇu.<sup>20</sup>

In the Śāntiparvan, *Mahābhārata*, Vaiṣṇavism has been alluded to as one of the systems of religion or philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Certain passages in the Bhagavad Gītā<sup>21a</sup> condemn the Vedic lores and rituals as they are oriented towards pleasure and power,<sup>22</sup> whereas some other commends them specifying that this world is not for him who performs no sacrifice, much less the other (world): 'n'ayam loko'sty ayajñasya, Kuto'nyūḥ, kuru-sattama'.<sup>23</sup> This gives rise to the inference that the Bhāgavatism of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva had a popular origin though it was later reconciled with the Brāhmanic system in the wake of the Neo-Brāhmanism. At a later stage Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu, was further identified with Nārāyaṇa, a deified sage.<sup>24</sup>

Other deities were later on associated with this cult, viz, Saṁkarṣaṇa or Baladeva, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, regarded as the partial manifestations of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu. Farquhar thinks that Baladeva was originally a god of the Nāga cult while Pradyumna and Aniruddha were similarly gods of different pantheons ultimately merged into the cult of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu thus making its orbit broader and broader. Such additions had to be justified especially where Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu became one with Prajāpati, his different appearances like Haṁsa, Kūrma, Varāha (Emuṣa), Hayagrīva, a unique example of Kushāṇa Mathurā (vide, fig. 345-46, *Chhabi*, Early Brāhmanical sculptures from Bharat Kala-Bhavana, N. P. Joshi, p. 178), eventually became His manifestations and thus was evolved a theory of Avatāra through the passage of which, at a later date, the Buddha came to be regarded as a Vaiṣṇava Avatāra. Incidentally it may be mentioned, curious though it may seem, Pradyumna and Aniruddha were never regarded as the Avatāras of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu but simply as belonging to the Yādava dynasty, to which Vāsudeva belonged.

20. Weber, *J.R.A.S.*, 1908, p. 847.

21. *MBH.*, xii, 63ff, 349.

21a. *BHG.*, This is regarded to be the earliest and best exposition of the doctrine of the Bhāgavata Sect founded by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa which was incorporated in the MBH. The main tenet of the gospel is that action is better than inaction. It cannot be dated definitely, but generally referred to in the 2nd or 1st century B.C., at least in its present form. *AIU.*, p. 440; Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

22. *BHG.*, (Zachner edn.), ii, 42-3, p. 143.

23. *Ibid.*, iii, 13; iv, 31.

24. *AIU.*, p. 435.

It may be suggested that one stream of religious thought emanated from Viṣṇu, the Vedic God, the other from Vāsudeva, the historic personality associated at first with the Sāttvatas and there, two mingling with another, i.e. Nārāyaṇa, the cosmic and



This theory of incarnation or avatāravād, is first propounded by the Bhagavad Gītā<sup>25</sup> which seems to be of pre-Christian age. Contrarily, it would not be out of place to mention that the theory of 'avatārhood' is not exclusively a doctrine of the Bhagavad Gītā itself.<sup>26</sup>

The Niddesa corroborates that with the consolidation of 'Bhaktism' an increasing number of human heroes like Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Puṇṇabhadda and Mañibhadda were deified.<sup>27</sup>

The numerous literary references examined so far with regard to the growth and popularity of Vaiṣṇavism has, however, not been substantiated by corresponding archaeological evidences, excepting, the epigraphic ones which outnumber in a comparison with the iconographic or plastic specimens.

Two important earliest epigraphic records are curiously obtained from outside the pale of Mathurā, the home of Vaiṣṇavism. One of them is from Besnagar (old Gwalior State) dating early second century B.C. and occurs in the 'Garuḍa-dhvaja' erected in honour of Vāsudeva, the devadeva (the greatest god) by his Yavana devotee Heliodorus, who calls himself a Bhāgavata.<sup>28</sup>

The Ghosundi (Chitorgarh Dist., Rājputānā) inscription dating first

philosophic god, gave rise to the Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva bhaktism.—Puri, *India in the Time etc.*, p. 173.

Nārāyaṇa according to early Sāṃhitās, was a devatā from whom all men had sprung and was the guardian of the cosmos. His human as well as the divine role earned for him the epithet 'Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa'. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28.

25. BHG., iv. 8.

S. Jaiswal observes that it is difficult to determine the stages by which the process of identification of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa can be ascertained, and suggests that perhaps the similarity in character and status in the social complex might have been one of the tangible reasons leading to the identification. (*op. cit.*, p. 213).

26. The nucleus can be discerned from the references of the worship of Vyūhas in the Pancarātra system of the Vaiṣṇavism occurring in the Nārāyaṇiya section of the Malābhārata. The Pancarātra sect, on the other hand, is associated with the Meru (Pamir), the Śvetadvīpa of Nārada, bordering India and the Central Asia. This implies that Vaiṣṇavism was propagated among the foreigners too, inhabiting the Meru, and that the 'avatārabād' is likely to be a doctrine of the foreign origin. But in absence of any evidence other than the literary ones in the lands beyond India, one is prone to argue that the theory of incarnation is indigenous in origin.

Dr. Raychoudhury contends that the Yamunā Valley was the original home of the cult, (EHVS., p. 72, 95) and until third-second century B.C., the Bhāgavatas were still a local sect confined to Yamunā Valley.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95; AIU, p. 437).

27. Niddesa, vol. i. p. 89, 173f.

Law, B.C., *History of Pāli Lit.*, vol. i, p. 281.

28. *El.*, Lüder's List, No. 669; ASIAR., 1913-14, part ii, pp. 189-90.



century B.C. alludes to the construction of 'pūjā-śilā-Prākāra-Nārāyaṇa-Vātikā' for Bhagavat Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva within the 'Nārāyaṇavataka' by a Bhāgavata performer of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice.<sup>29</sup>

Another inscription speaks of the erection of another Garuḍa column of an excellent temple ('Prāsādottama') of Bhagavat Vāsudeva by one Gautamīputra.<sup>30</sup> Both associate Vāsudeva with Saṁkarṣaṇa.

The Nānāghāt Cave Inscription, Bombay, Maharaṣṭra, of the same age, of the Sātavāhana queen Nayanikā speaks of the adoration to Saṁkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and other gods.<sup>31</sup> They, therefore, show that the Bhāgavatas identified the cult gods Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa and Nārāyaṇa with one another by the close of the pre-Christian era.

Banerjea observes that the fragmentary capitals having Garuḍa, Tāla (fan-palm) and Makara (crocodile) found at Besnagar and Pawāyā suggest the erection of dhvajās and shrines respectively of Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa and Pradyumna.<sup>32</sup>

Vaiṣṇavite inscriptions from Mathurā itself belong to much later dates around first century A. D. Mora Well Inscription of the time of Soḍāsa refers to the enshrinement of the images of the Pancavīra, the five Vṛṣṇi heroes (Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Baladeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba) of the Yādava-Sāttvata-Vṛṣṇi peoples, by a lady named Toshā.<sup>33</sup>

Another Mathurā inscription, also during the reign of king Soḍāsa, records the erection of buildings and gateways at the shrine of Bhagavata Vāsudeva by one Vasu.<sup>34</sup>

It may, therefore, be observed that the folk religion of 'bhakti' necessitated the deification of the Five Heroes of the Vṛṣṇi race as an initial metamorphosis. When it became strong, self-conscious and consoli-

29. *Ibid.*, ii, vol. x, No. 14, Appendix ;

Ghosundi, being the earliest Sanskrit inscription, testifies further that the Sanskrit language was flourishing in Rajasthani belt of Rudradaman (A.D. 150), evidentially a foreign ruler. It may not be unlikely again, that Sanskrit was the court language of the foreigners. Hence, Sanskrit enjoyed both the foreign and indigenous patronage of Western India, in spite of Manu's extollation of Madhyadēśa.

30. *Ibid.*, vol. xvi, no. 6, p. 27.

31. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 192-96.

32. *AIU.*, p. 448.

33. *El.*, vol. xxvi, p. 194ff.

34. R. P. Chanda, *MAI.*, no. 5, p. 170 ;

Banerjea, (*DHI.*, p. 386) maintains that the five Vṛṣṇi heroes as known to the Purāṇas are Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa (his elder brother), Pradyumna (his elder son by Rukmiṇī), Sāmba (his son by Jāmbavatī) and Aniruddha (Pradyumna's son), cf., *Vāyu Purāṇa* (Vangavasi edn.), ch. 47 (opening verses), vide, *JISOA.*, vol. x, pp. 65-68 ;

Vogel, on the strength of Jaina Texts like *Antagudadaḥūo* and *Hari Vamsa Purāṇa* identified the Pañcavīras as Balatāma, Akṛūra, Anādhṛiṣṭi, Sāraṇa, and Viduratha., vide., *El.*, vol. xxvi, p. 194ff.



dated, the human heroes were associated with the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the cosmic-philosophic god Nārāyaṇa. In course of time before the beginning of the Christian era, they were finally identified, syncretized and spiritualized to form the cult of Vaiṣṇavism<sup>35</sup> by transforming the Vīra concept into the Vgūha concept or 'emanation, concept coupled with the Vibhāva or the 'incarnation concept'.<sup>35a</sup>

Iconic evidences, however, are relatively much smaller in number, coins provide as usual the earliest examples. One with the Viṣṇu motif belongs to the Pāñcāla king Viṣṇumitra (early Christian era) where the deity is depicted as four-armed with a chakra in the upper left hand.<sup>36</sup> Cunningham has attributed a seal-matrix to Huvishka (second century A.D.) where Viṣṇu is shown with *Śaṅkha, Chakra, Gadā* and a ring like object in place of lotus. The king is represented in añjali mudrā.<sup>37</sup> In another coin of Huvishka Viṣṇu appears as four-armed with the name appearing on the obverse as Ooshna.<sup>38</sup>

So far as the sculptural rendition in round and relief having Vaiṣṇavite associations are concerned, Mathurā has provided valuable examples, though not in anyway numerous, whereas the Gandhāra region provides only a few examples like the bronze Heracles from Nigrai, now in the British Museum (cf. Puri, *Art Under the Kushāṇas*, p. 188).

Mathura Museum possesses a fragmented image of Viṣṇu (till now identified as Indra) with Saṁkarṣaṇa coming out from his shoulder and some other deity over the head. Found in Sapta-Samundari Well, Mathura, this is dated early second century A.D.<sup>39</sup> (fig. 11) Another eroded sculpture represents Viṣṇu sitting on Garuḍa and is dated c. second-third century A.D.<sup>40</sup> An interesting relief from Gāyatrī Tilā dated about the same time, portrays Vāsudeva wading through the waters carrying the child Kṛṣṇa to Gokula, the popular episode of the Janmāṣṭamī.<sup>41</sup> (fig. 10) The Balarāma image with the head, now absent, obtained from Girdharpur Tilā, dated about c. second century A.D.<sup>42</sup> provides also an important side light as to the popularity of the deity as a Vaiṣṇava cult-god. Balarāma from the Lucknow Museum dated about

35. Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 100 ;

Puri, *India Under the Kushāṇas*, p. 196 ;

Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. xi.

35a. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 386-7.

36. *AIU.*, p. 439.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. Joshi, N. P., *Mathura Sculptures*, p. 82, pl. 32.

40. *Ibid.*, pl. no. 63.

41. Sahni, *ASIAR.*, 1925-26, pp. 183-84, pl. lxvii, fig. 'c' ;  
Agrawala, *Cat. of Brāh. Im. in Mathura Art* ; p. 42 ;  
Banerjea, *JISOA.*, xiv, p. 18.

42. Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 84, pl. 61.



second century B.C.<sup>43</sup> establishes beyond doubt that the deity was worshipped much earlier right from the Suṅga age. V. S. Agrawala mentions as many as fourteen images of Viṣṇu ascribed by him to the Kushāṇa period.<sup>44</sup> (See, Agrawala, *Handbook to the Sculptures in the Curzon Mus., Muth.*, for a detailed list and discussion).

Among other icons related with Vaiṣṇavism, mention should be made of one statuette from Mathurā with Lakshmi holding lotus accompanied by Bhadrā having a fruit in hand and Hārītī with a child besides Kubera.<sup>45</sup>

Another early Kushāṇa slab represents a group of four deities with Arddhanārīśvara Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaja-Lakshmi and Kubera.<sup>46</sup> Jaiswal is of opinion that they were not the results of eclectic tendencies of the Kushāṇas and other foreign rulers as are usually presumed (vide, Banerjea, *DHI.*, 2nd ed., p.125; *CHI.*, vol. iv, p.332f) but because the Brāhminism was reasserting itself through these cults. It may also mark the first step towards the union of Lakshmi and Viṣṇu.<sup>47</sup> Iconographic representations of the period outside Mathurā consist mainly of an early image (earliest among the finds so far available) of Viṣṇu Paribāra having a Brāhmī inscription, from Burhikhas in Bilaspur Dist., dated c. 1st century B.C.<sup>48</sup>; another specimen, a Yakṣī with Banyan capital from Besnagar, of a little later date, discovered by Cunningham, has been attributed by Banerjea as actually that of goddess Śrī of the Pancarātra cult, the chief consort of Parā-Vāsudeva.<sup>49</sup> At Tumain in Madhyabhārat an original Vaiṣṇava temple has been discovered with illustrations of the early life of Kṛṣṇa with a figure of the Baladeva, assigned to second-third century A.D.<sup>50</sup> An Ekānamsā triad with Vāsudeva and Balarāma from Devangarh, Gaya Dist., in Bihar, provides an interesting specimen assignable to c. 2nd century A.D.<sup>50a</sup>

However, all these archaeological evidences form merely a fraction of the available mass of literary references. This may be pointing to the fact that Vaiṣṇavism became the religion of the orthodox elites since the coming of the Greeks. The case is evidentially opposite with the Śaivism where iconic

43. Lucknow Museum Antiquity no. G 215.

44. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 4f.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi, Ant. no. 0.241.

46. *Ibid.*, p. ix, pl. 41, Ant. no. 2520.

47. S. Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

48. *AIU.*, p. 452, f. n. 2.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 443-49.

50a. Banerjee, *Early Indian Religions*, p. 77.

Note : P. L. Gupta has also reported about an Ekānamsā triad from Mathurā belonging probably to the Kushāṇa period. This is also in relief but mutilated, vide., *JBRs.*, vol. vii.



representations are simply numerous, extensive and widespread signifying that it was the religion of the masses. This mass and popular appeal accompanied with inbuilt liberalism prompted the Kushāṇas, on their arrival and thereafter, to embrace and patronize Śaivism. Concurrently, the rigidity and orthodoxy kept them away from the orbit of the Vaiṣṇava Faith. This is perhaps one of the cardinal reasons as to why the art and archaeological evidences are so extant during the period without, on the one hand, the imperial patronage and on the other, a mass following. It was only later that kings like Huvishka could demonstrate some inclination to Vaiṣṇavism in his seal-motifs. The name itself of the Kushāṇa monarch Vāsudeva may also indicate that the later Kushāṇas bestowed favour to the Bhāgavata cult.

A larger number of epigraphic records in comparison with the number of coins available may, as well, suggest that Vaiṣṇavism, during the period, was a religion of the upper strata of the society. There is a general acceptance that epigraphs usually associate matters with the enlightened elites while coin represents that of the common people. With regard to the period under review, Raychoudhury argues that the city of Mathurā, the original home of Vaiṣṇavism had ceased to be a stronghold of the religion during the Śaka-Kushāṇa period<sup>51</sup> because, the wave of Buddhism, eclectic and rational in nature, captivated the affiliation of the rulers and Vaiṣṇavism lost the occasion and opportunity to find favour of the court.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps this accounts for the reason as to why Viṣṇu icons can not be traced in the entire gamut of Kushāṇa coins.

However, the literary as well as archaeological evolution of the religion stress alike at least on one aspect of the religion, that is, Vaiṣṇavism is the story of absorption, acceptance and synthesis of many systems. Though orthodox in origin, the religion eventually deified and identified the magnanimous human heroes and cult-deities into a Supreme Being or the God of gods. The system was essentially human and emotional and the deities demanded a worship of devotion and love instead of ritualism and intellectualism.<sup>53</sup> Bhandarkar is perhaps right in asserting that the point of identification attained by the numerous deities of Vaiṣṇavism was possible because of 'the universal denouncement of the spiritual monism and the world-illusion,' during the period under review.<sup>54</sup>

51. *E.H.V.S.*, p. 99.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

53. Eliot., *op. cit.*, p. 140.

54. Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 100.



## III. BUDDHISM

Among the various religious faiths, during the period, that made profoundest dent in the socio-cultural-corporate scenes was the Buddhism. Preference for speculative studies, observance of elaborate rituals and sacrifices and the increasing rigidity of the Varṇāśrama pursued by the Brāhmins in particular, paved the way for the propagation of the Buddhism in the sixth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> The comparatively democratic and socialistic elements of this religion, in practice and doctrinaire, made its appeal wider and immediate. It proclaimed a salvation which each man could get for himself during this life.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding, in effect, Buddhism could not prove to be a universal religion for many centuries after the 'turning of the Wheel of Law'.

Though thus Buddhism professed to deliver the society from the rigidity and orthodoxy yet eventually it became itself a prisoner of rigourism and conventionalism. Its stress on the absolute monasticism and its doctrinaire on Śrāvakahood and arhatship<sup>3</sup> proved to be only a narrow groove. It soon transformed into a non-flexible philosophic system. It could no longer justify as a body of truths 'still effective irrespective of metaphysics'.<sup>4</sup>

There was a formal acceptance of the laities in the Buddhist Order but that was not yet well-defined. The householder devotees had practically no positive role there except as supporters of the Saṅgha; they occasionally observed some of the precepts and mutter the formulae of *triśaraṇa*.<sup>5</sup> Hīna-

1. The orthodox Brāhmanical system gave rise to numerous non-Vedic theories in the eastern India (Aṅga and Magadha) propounded by such teachers as Purāṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Keśakambali, Pakudha Kachchhāyana, Sañjaya Belatthiputta and Nigantha Nātaputta and a host of others. Vide., Barua, *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, pp. 279ff; Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*, vol. i., pp. 35ff.

2. Rhys Davids, *Hibbert—Lectures*, p. 29.

3. Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 105.

Note : An Arhat is dogmatically is one who is walking on the fourth or the highest stage of the path which leads to Nirvāṇa. The path is divided into four stages each of which again is subdivided into a higher and a lower degree viz., the Mārga or Patha and its Phala or result.

Stage I : Śrotapanna or Neophyte, who has entered into the stream of saintship.

Stage II : Sakridagāmin or 'Ekabījīn', one who will be reborn but once in the world of men.

Stage III : Anāgāmin, one who will not be reborn in the world of living men or the Realm of desire.

Stage Final : Arhat, one who is no longer subject to rebirth. In later times the Mahāyānist came to apply the term Śrāvaka to denote their opponents, the Hīnayānist.

Cf. Yamakami Sogen, *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, pp. 89-99.

4. McGovern, *An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism*, p.14.

5. Dutt, N., *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p.3.



yāna, the earliest form of Buddhism disappointingly overlooked the agnostic and psychological aspects of the socio-religious demand.

Consequently, even after Aśoka's universal propagation and imperial patronization Buddhism was not yet a way of life with the masses to reflect the sentiment and aspirations of the society at large.

The early Hīnayānists<sup>5a</sup> of the Pāli Nikāyas<sup>6</sup> and of the Vinaya<sup>7</sup> were divided into almost a score of schools each having its own exclusive interpretation of the 'Original Doctrines.'<sup>8</sup> They only added to the confusion of the lay public eventually affecting the organic growth and popularity of the religion.

In this context, Pāli traditions as recorded in the canonical and non-canonical literatures alluding to the Four Buddhist Councils (Saṅgītis) need be mentioned. They were convened in different periods for the exigency of drawing up the canonical texts and creed in their pure form. The first council was held soon after the Buddha's death under the auspices of king Ajātaśatru at Rājagṛha. A century after the passing away of the Master came the second council, convened at Vaiśālī during the reign of Kālāśoka, a descendent of Ajātaśatru. The next council to follow was held under the aegis of Priyadarśī Aśoka at Pātaliputra. The fourth council which is not recognized by the Southern Buddhists<sup>9</sup> is said to have been held under the inspiration and

5a. The Hīnayānists represent the earliest system of the Buddhism which is also known as Śrāvakayāna. They are ethical and more historical. Their scriptures are in Pāli and later, in mixed Sanskrit. Their concept of non-ego (anātman) professes that the five elements (Skandhas) are anitya or kṣaṇika. They believe that emancipation (nirvāṇa) can be attained by eradication of impurities due to ignorance (avidyā), —Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 82-84.

6. Pāli Nikāyas are the earliest among the available sources and are included in the Sutta Piṭaka, one of the sacred scriptures of the Buddhists. They are divided into five: Dīgha, Majjhima, Saṃyutta, Aṅguttara, and Khuddaka (vide, *AIU.*, p.370).

7. The Pāli canon consists of three Piṭakas the Vinaya being the first among them. It deals with the rules of the monastic order. It comprises four principal texts. 1) Pātimokkha or the rules of discipline and atonements for transgressing them; 2) Sutta Vibhaṅga or the explanation of the suttas; 3) Khandhakas or the supplement to the sutta Vibhaṅgas and 4) Parivāra or an abstract of all other parts in the form of questions and answers.

8. The 'Original Doctrines' are believed to be contained in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya. Later they were incorporated in the Dhammapada which in a nut-shell professes, 'Abstain from all evil; accumulate what is good and purify your mind' (183). Cf., Dutt. in *2500 yrs. of Buddhism*, p. 157.

9. Southern Buddhists are those who belong to the countries of southern Asia comprising Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. They have accepted the principles of the Theravāda school and they do not have any serious differences on the fundamentals of Buddhism. Cf., P.V. Bapat, in *2500 yrs. of Buddhism*, p. 136 ff.



patronage of Kaṇishka around A.D. 100. Authorities differ with regard to the date, the venue of the assembly, being either at Jālundhar or in Kashmir.

However, all these saṅgītis, at some stage or other, primarily ventilated some dissensions in the saṅgha itself (first council), and indicated a sort of politicking for the domination of the Westerners (*Theravādin*)<sup>10</sup> over the Easterners (*Āchāryavādin*)<sup>11</sup> or vice versa (second council), and appeared to be more a party meeting of the *Theravādins* or the *Vibhājjavādins*<sup>12</sup> (third council), or virtually became the sectarian affair of the *Sarvāstivādins*<sup>13</sup> (fourth council). Hence, however ceremonious and elaborate the councils might have been and whatsoever might have been recorded, interpreted or claimed, the councils scarcely served any intrinsic purpose for the popularization and dissemination of the religion as a way of life and failed disappointingly to appeal to the people or devotees at large.

Thus, the entire trend in these councils point to the fact that the early or the pure form of Hīnayānism transformed into a mixed Hīnayānism almost a

10. In Sanskrit they are known as Sthaviravādin. They form the most orthodox school of Buddhism. The earliest available teaching of the Buddha to be found in the Pāli literature belong to this school itself. This school admits the human nature of the Buddha, though, He is believed to possess certain superhuman qualities. Their motto is to 'abstain from all kinds of evil, to accumulate all that is good and to purify mind' by practising Śīla, Samādhi and Prajñā. They lived mostly in Vaiśālī and Pāṭaliputra. Cf. Banerjee, A.C., *2500 yrs. of Buddhism*, p. 101 f.
11. The division came to be known only during the second council. The Easterners who were regarded as Āchāryavādin inhabited in Kausāmbī, Pāṭheyya and Avantī. They adopted ten rules of discipline against the protest of the Westerners. They were also known as Vajjaputtakas. *AIU.*, p. 378.
12. History of Buddhism during the centuries prior to the Christian era, centred round several monastic organizations independent of one another in different parts of India. The more influential of them compiled their own sets of Piṭakas. There was no supreme head of the Buddhist Church. But as a convention, Buddhist monks could reside in any monastery irrespective of their adherence to a particular sect. Herein arose the difficulty, particularly with regard to the observance of the Uposatha ceremony or the confession of one's offences, which differed in criterion from sect to sect. To bring about an order in such a situation Aśoka is said to have sought the advice of the most learned monk of the period, Moggaliputta Tissa. On his advice all non-Theravādins were dismissed by Aśoka and the Theravādins came to be known as Vibhājjavādins and the third council was held by these Vibhājjavādins under the chairmanship of Moggaliputta Tissa where the rules were compiled under the title *Kathā-Vatthu*, the fifth book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* of the Theravādins.
13. According to *Kathāvatthu* the Sabbathivādins believed 1) that everything existed, 2) that the dawn of right attainment was not through a momentary flash of insight but by a gradual process, 3) that consciousness or even samādhi was nothing but a flux and that arhat may fall away. Tr.—Rhys Davids, p. xix and sections i, 6, 7; ii, 9 and xi, 6, quoted by Das Gupta, *op. cit.* i, pp. 119-20; Sogen, *op. cit.*, p. 109.



century after the death of the Master. Rosenfield qualified the aspect as the period of transition from the Hīnayānism to the Mahāyānism.<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, the literary sources throw ample light on the evolution and metamorphoses of the Mahāyānism and the relative position and status of both the yānas.

The Prajñāpāramitās, the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, the Daśabhūmika-sūtra, the Guṇḍavyūha, the Laṅkāvatāra along with the works of Nāgārjuna, Aśvaghoṣa, Asaṅga and others amply demonstrate that the Buddhism was in a state of flux. The laity was no longer the mere supporters of the Saṅgha, but their adequate role and place in the religious complex were in the active process of being determined. However, various schools were making efforts to increase the number of their adherents. But the inscriptions in the early stone monuments show that gifts were being made for the benefit of a particular school or the Saṅgha of the four regions (*caturdiśa Saṅgha*), i.e. Buddhism in general. Perhaps the general public supported all the schools though they might have had faith in the tenets of one of the schools.<sup>15</sup>

If Aśoka's Edicts are closely examined, it is difficult to discern as to what particular school of Buddhism he used to patronize. 'Dhammavijaya' has been the keynote of his edicts. But it is difficult again, to establish that his dhamma meant Buddhism. 'The edicts do not contain a single reference to Nirvāṇa or Śūnyatā, Anātmā or Dukkha'.<sup>16</sup> The conception of Bodhisattva or Pāramitās also had not been alluded to. But it cannot be denied that though he used to advance identical treatments to the Buddhists and non-Buddhists, he actually proclaimed himself to be a Buddhist upāsaka. He used to frequent also the monasteries and the sacred places of the Buddhists. The tradition of the Mahāvamsa claiming him to be Vibhājjavādin or the opposite claim for his preference for the Avadānas can hardly be substantiated. He was obviously, not in favour of the extreme views and he advised his subjects to take the middle course, the way of the ideal Upāsaka.<sup>17</sup>

The role of Aśoka as a propagator of Buddhism was, however, fully explored by the Buddhist monks to popularize their religion. This effort provided them the occasion to reassess about their metaphysical controversies and the maxims of self-sanctification. It prompted them eventually to utilize as instrument the bulk of the Jātaka and Avadāna traditions then in vogue among the Buddhists. Perhaps Aśoka's orientation influenced the Buddhist monks to change their angle of vision and the result was the introduction of

14. Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. 220.

15. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, chap. i, pp. 13-14.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 19f.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. i, p. 20f.



these Jātaka and Avadāna traditions,<sup>17a</sup> where the place of the laity in the religious framework was determined.<sup>18</sup>

The Jātakas and the Avadānas both aimed at infusing into the mind of the common man a faith in Buddhism. They belonged, according to Winternitz, Oldenberg, Cunningham, Rhys Davids and others, to an ancient date. But they did not form the part of the scriptures (*Buddhavacana*). The doctrine of six Pāramitās or the meritorious acts was perhaps evolved in the 3rd century B.C. The Jātaka and the Avadāna literatures and their plastic rendering in the Bhārhut and Sāñchī testify as to how ideally the demand of the Pāramitās was being fulfilled.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in course of time the Jātakas and the Avadānas, gradually acquired significance in their objective to make the religion people-oriented.<sup>20</sup> After the doctrine of Pāramitā was evolved around the 3rd century B.C. the Bodhisattva concept followed. Bodhisattva and the Buddha from then onward represented a state of being in fulfilment of the Pāramitās. At a later stage came the deification of the Buddha and the popularization of the same by the Mahāsaṅghikas. Great religious merit was being attached to the reading and writing of such literatures and transfiguring them into painting and sculpture. The laity had now the direct opportunity to earn religious merit by means of a visual documentation based on such themes. The Bodhisattva concept of the Avadāna may be termed as the Hīnayānic Bodhisattvayāna,<sup>21</sup> or the semi-Mahāyāna or the Mahāyāna in the making.

Indications are plenty in the Avadānamālās that the authors were well-acquainted with the tenets and mythologies of Hinduism. They were also living in the regions where the worship of the different Hindu deities were in vogue. Avadānas had a prominent part in everyday life and likewise, significantly important in orienting relations between 'the clergy and the laity'.<sup>22</sup>

The Mahāyānism actually took the first two centuries of the Christian era

17a. The Jātakas had the Buddha as the invariable centre of the story of the previous births of the Lord. The Avadānas, on the other hand, accepted the Buddha, Bodhisattva or the Buddha-disciple as the hero. The most significant contribution of the Avadānas is their conception of the 'Bodhisattva', the ideal for the laity.

18. Dutt, N., *AIU.*, p385f.

19. *Ibid.*, p 386.

20. Spayer, J. S., *Avadānacataka*, Preface, p. iv-vii. He contends that 'both concern edifying tales with the purpose of inculcating moral precepts as taught by Saddharma revealed by the Buddha. Both are perfectly employed for preaching purposes.' Both exemplify the power of 'Karma' towards determining for each creature the course and fortune of his existence and the individual power of every creature attained through good action.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

22. *Ibid.*, p. xxvii f.



to assume as a systematic and viable doctrine. It was perhaps in the process of making from the days of Aśoka or somewhat little earlier even. The Mahāyānists were, of course, in constant conflict with the Hīnayānists in the attempt to belittle each other. The Prajñāpāramitās are full of Hīnayānic technical expressions and terms in an attempt to prove them insignificant and ridiculous. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* alludes to the insignificant, superficial religious knowledge and poor intellect. The Lotus Sūtra maintains a standpoint to the contrary; there is but one yāna or vehicle. Buddha recognized the human weakness and knew that the tastes vary according to the individual. Thus he let the 'yāna' appear as three, i.e. Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and the Buddhayāna or Mahāyāna.<sup>23</sup>

In fact there was little room for their mutual hostility. They were not incompatible. Until at least 2nd century A.D. all the yānas developed both horizontally and vertically. The doctrine of Pāramitās, the concept of the Buddha-Bodhisattvas as having fulfilled the Pāramitās and the deification of the Buddha by the Mahāśāṅghikas provided the masses to stimulate their religious emotions. All these factors promoted a religious enthusiasm of an uncommon kind. The pristine Buddhism had to yield to these popular feelings and the Mahāyāna Buddhism both sociologically and psychologically became a 'fait accompli'<sup>24</sup>.

23. Eliot classified Śrāvakayāna as the vehicle of the ordinary bhikṣu on his way to arhathood; Pratyekabuddhayāna, for those few who can become Buddha but do not preach the Law to others; and the Mahāyāna as the vehicle of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. *Op. cit.*, p. 4 f;

Suzuki maintains that the last one is not a single vehicle but 'rather a train comprising many carriages of different classes. *Op. cit.*, p. 8,

Sogen has classified the 'Kleśas' (delusion, both intellectual and emotional), to determine the three stages which lead to Buddhahood. They are as follows :

- i) Śrāvaka—the stage is attained by one who has extirpated all the fundamental *kleśas*;
- ii) Pratyeka Buddha—the stage is attained by one who has extirpated not only all the fundamental *kleśas* but also a part of *upakleśas* or the flavours of habit performed by *kleśas*;
- iii) Bodhisattva—'would be Buddhahood' is attained by one who has eradicated all the principal *kleśas* as well as the *upakleśas*. Mahāyānism considers the stage of Bodhisattva, in this connection, to be identified with, which is known as Arhatship in Hīnayāna.

Cf. Yamakami Sogen, *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, pp. 86-89 f.

Note : *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* : It is one of the earliest texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The prose portion of the work is in Sanskrit while the verse portion represents mixed Sanskrit. In view of its Buddhological conceptions and linguistic characteristics its date should be placed about first century A.D.

Cf. Dutt., 'Survey of Important Books in Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit' in *2500 yrs of Buddhism*, p. 159.

24. Dutt., *AIU.*, p 387 ff.



Gradual popularity of the Mahāyānism did, not, however, lie in the fact that it was less complicated and less orthodox, but for the simple reason that it attempted at going with the masses ; it produced a body of doctrinaire that was acceptable to the common man ; its emphasis on the monasticism was comparatively much less. It had always been extremely mass-oriented, 'more emotional, warmer in charity, more personal in devotion, more ornate in art and literature and ritual, more disposed to evolution and development'.<sup>25</sup>

References about the doctrines and principles of the Mahāyānism may be discovered even in the Pāli Nikāyas, yet it is difficult to assign a conspicuous date for the advent of Mahāyānism.<sup>26</sup>

From the traditions preserved in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, *Prākṛt Prajñāpāramitā* of the Sāila school and the accounts of *Paramārtha* and *Tāranātha* (chap xii), it may be assumed that the nucleus of the Mahāyānism already existed much earlier. It assumed a recognized form after the fourth Buddhist council during the reign of Kaṇṣka.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding the official recognition of the Mahāyānism in the fourth Buddhist council, the Mahāyānists had to wade their way through persistent oppositions from the well-founded Hīnayānists. The weapon that the Hīnayānists found effective was the refutation that the Mahāyāna doctrines were not those expounded by the Master and that the proposition for attaining Buddhahood by everyone was far from a practical one. But the inherent affinities between the metaphysical tenets of the two principal yānas had helped the Mahāyānists to forestall the Hīnayānist onslaught. The similarities between the two proved initially to be the most effective weapon to the Mahāyānists.<sup>28</sup>

The masterly exposition of the Mahāyānist doctrines by Nāgārjuna<sup>29</sup> and

25. Eliot : *op. cit.*, p.4.

26. Nalinaksha Dutt has suggested that, instead of in chronology, the elements of Mahāyānism could be recognized if only the form of in religion or that of the texts :

- i) teaches Dharmaśūnyatā besides Pudgalaśūnyatā ;
- ii) incorporates the conception of Buddha-Bodhisattvas ;
- iii) advocates worship of gods and goddesses ; and
- iv) recommends the use of mantras for attaining emancipation—*AIU.*, p. 387.

27. *AIU.*, p. 388 f.

28. Dutt enunciates the agreements between the two Yānas as follows :

- i) to overcome *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *moha*—attachment, hatred and delusion;
- ii) the world has neither the beginning nor the end;
- iii) everything worldly are *anītya* and *kṣhanika* and in a state of perpetual flux;
- iv) the Law of causation (*Pratītya Samutpāda*) is universally valid; and
- v) there are four *Aryasatyas* : *duḥkha*, *Sannidaya*, *Nirodha* and *Mārga*.

Cf. *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 84.

29. Nāgārjuna is considered to be the first man to have explained the Mahāyāna philosophy in a systematic manner in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. He was born in Vidarbha or



*Asaṅga*<sup>30</sup> from the state of neglect and confusion paved the path for the profoundest headway. The great majority of the epigraphic records relating to Buddhism that have come to light so far, show that the religion was in existence not merely in India from the North-west<sup>31</sup> to the southernmost part of India, but also outside the country.

The architectural remains testify that the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism enjoyed in India and Lower Asia the active support of and patronization from the ruling dynasties like the Greeks,<sup>32</sup> the Scytho-Kushāṇas,<sup>33</sup> the Pārthians,<sup>34</sup> the Ikshākus,<sup>35</sup> the Western Satraps,<sup>36</sup> and the Sātavāhanas.<sup>37</sup>

In India itself, Mahāyānism exhaled an air of liberty, flexibility and inculcated a spirit of tolerance. In fact, as we have already seen, even during

South Kośala towards the end of second century A.D. He is believed to have preached Buddhism in Orissa and South India. He propagated Mādhyamika doctrine.

Incidentally, the popular belief to regard Āśvaghōṣa as the earliest exponent of the Mahāyāna philosophy is unfortunately based on the confusion between the author of Buddhacharita and that of other kāvyas, nātakas and philosophical expositions indicating two different authors, cf., B. C. Law, 'Āśvaghōṣa', *RASB.*, Monograph Series, no. 1.

30. Asaṅga is regarded as one of the most important personalities of Buddhism. He was born in Puruṣapura, Gandhāra, in c. 4th century A.D. Originally he belonged to Sarvāstivāda school, but later he propounded Yogācāra school of Mahāyānism in which emphasis was laid on Yoga as the most effective method for attaining 'bodhi'. He converted his younger brother Vasubandhu who gave a different appellation to Yogācāra as Vijñānavāda. Most important of his works are the Mahāyāna-Sampari-graha, the Mahāyāna-Sūttālnkāra, the Yogācāra-Bhūmi-Sāstra, the Abhidharma-Samuccya (ed., P. Pradhan, Visva-Bharati Studies), etc.
31. *CII.*, vol. ii, part i, pp. 4-5.
32. King Menander of Milindapañha fame figures most prominently among the Greek kings: (Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 60). He dedicated a monastery (Milinda-Vihāra) and donated liberally to Saṅgha. His coins bore 'dharmacakra' symbols.
33. Dutt, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, 18; *AIU* p. 636, 638; Basham, *op. cit.* pp. 61-62.
34. As there is no evidence that Scytho-Parthians (Gondophares, in particular, c. 1st century A. D.) of Taxilā region were hostile towards Buddhism, it may be inferred that Buddhism flourished unabated during their rule.
35. The Ikshākus are regarded to have built more than thirty Buddhist establishments in the Krishnā and Godāvarī districts of south India (2nd-3rd century A.D.). The associated kings are: Virapurushadatta, Ehuṇula Sāntamūla II, and Rulupurashadatta *AIU.*, pp 224-25.
36. The Taxilā Copper Plate of Patika (78th year of reign of Moga, vide, Konow, *CII.*, vol. ii, part i, Kharosthi Ins., p. 23ff) c. 2nd century B.C., and the Stūpa Ins. of Ayasia Kamučā, c. early 1st century A.D., recording honour to all Buddhas, the Law, the Order and Śakastāna, reflect evidentially the patronization of the ruling House.
37. Sātavāhanas or the 'Lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha', Gautamiputra Sātakarni and Vāśiṣṭaputra Śrīpulumāvi (2nd century A.D.) made considerable gifts to the Mahāsaṅghikas (Vide Mitra Sastri, *An Outline of Early Buddhism*, p. 89)



the early monastic or Hīnayānist epoch the process of assimilation and acceptance was at work. From several allusions to the conversion of the Nāgas<sup>38</sup> by the Buddha it can be discerned that the early Buddhism had to combat with the Nāga-worshippers who eventually were brought into the Buddhist fold and Buddhist lore (figs. 16 and 17). The same story may be alluded to the cult of Yakṣa, Kubera (fig. 26), Tree (fig. 36, 37) and a host of other such popular folk deities. The difference lies in the fact that while the social, ethnic, religious and cultural factors prompted the early Buddhists to have a synthetic outlook, with the Mahāyānists, however, the entire outlook was but spontaneous.

It is not a rare phenomenon during the Mahāyānist epoch that there were common adherents of Buddhism and Śaivism or Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism. This could happen simply because all these sects complimented each other in one way or the other. While Buddhism provided for the ethical and metaphysical needs, the other sectarian religions catered to the religious and devotional sentiments. Moreover, all of them had a contemporaneity so far as their popular following was concerned.<sup>39</sup>

It has been in the tradition of India again, that the followers of the diverse religions only occasionally came into open war. They had never been regarded as incompatible with each other. Worship of and devotion to the deities belonging to two or more religions had not been a rare phenomenon here, on the contrary, such acts were regarded as equally meritorious.<sup>40</sup>

It is to be noted with interest that the Bodhisattva concept<sup>41</sup> in the Mahāyānism as plasticised in Mathurā and Gandhāra, had a close affinity with almost all the religions in the early Christian era. The neo-Brahminism itself was oriented with the doctrine of incarnations or Avatāravāda and laid

38. Nāgas : This is one of the greatest miracle that the Buddha performed. The anecdote states that once when the Buddha approached the fire altar of the Kāśyapa (Jaṭila) brothers at Uruvilva the Nāga divinity residing there, became furious and began to pour out venom. Buddha subdued him by his own tejas and put the Nāga in his alms bowl. See also Vogel, *Serpent Lore in India*.

39. Eliot, *op.cit.*, pp. 72-73; Dutt, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

40. Dutt, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

41. Eliot, *op.cit.*, p. 8; It is a characteristic doctrine of Mahāyānism signifying that man can and should try to become a Bodhisattva;

Dutt, in his *Aspects of Māhāyāna Buddhism* has summarized the concept of Bodhisattva as those who "have mastered the 'upāyakauśālas' (expedients), made the 'mahāpranidhāna' (the sublime resolution), given up all their passions, taken the Buddhayāna as their 'ālamba' (support), perfected themselves in the 'bhūmis' and 'pāramitās' and in them the 'Mahākaruṇā' (compassion) functions in the furthest degree"—p. 81.



emphasis on a frame of mind for worship rather than the sacrificial rituals and abstract speculations of the orthodox Brāhminism. Bhakti cult was initially regarded as something strange both by the Brāhmins and the Buddhists. But it was a tremendously popular upsurge. Neither the bhikshus nor the purohitas could impede its influence and integration.<sup>42</sup>

Bodhisattvas, the embodiment of compassion, has a close conceptual affinity with Viṣṇu, the liberal and beneficent god per excellence. The cult of bhakti is again common to followers of both the religions.<sup>43</sup> The Nārāyaṇīya section of the Great Epic testifies that the Pancarātra sub-sect professes the worship of the Vyūhas<sup>44</sup> and the theory of incarnation. It can be inferred that the system imbibed some parallelism of thinking from the Mahāyānist of the Central Asia. The intra-territorial communications and the Kushāṇa eclecticism proved instrumental in bringing in such synthesis.<sup>45</sup>

Śiva's association with Yoga as the principal means of Sādhana has a very close relationship with that of the Bodhisattvayāna. Metaphysically, the Mahāyānist theory of cause and condition finds a comparison in the Śaiva theory of reproduction and destruction. The Buddhist theory of Śūnyatā may also be compared with the Śaiva concept of Śānta.<sup>46</sup>

It is to be noted further that not merely in the sphere of morphology and metaphysics that these systems and sects display some close parallelism, but historically and chronologically too so far as can be determined, the figures and images of all the deities were being evolved about the same period. The iconography and iconometry of the personalities of Śiva and Viṣṇu too were attaining consistency. The impulse and the aspirations that played the role of common denominator were to evolve an anthropomorphic form and figure that would be kind, compassionate, sympathetic to human emotions and the forces that rule the universe. Around him alone could religious emotions and devotion might find an efflorescence.<sup>47</sup>

Suzuki contends that Bodhi is the reflection of the Dharmakāya in human soul. All the spiritual energy of a Bodhisattva is aimed at the welfare and spiritual realization of the fellow creatures.

—*Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*—p.9;

McGovern, *An Introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p.18f ;

Sogen, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-89f; *supra*

42. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

43. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*; p. 50.

44. *Supra*.

45. *ERE.*, ii. p. 688n; Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62f.

46. Dutt, *op. cit.*, pp.14-15.

47. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 12.



The evolution of the Mahāyāna from the Hinayāna is actually the story of a transformation from monastic system to the state of image-worship of an ethical and spiritual kind having its nucleus in the concept of Bodhisattvas and deified Buddhas (figs. 18—25). The worship of and prayer to the stūpas and symbols like the Bodhi Vṛkṣa, Pādukā or Triratna etc. were in effect the precursors of the Mahāyānism. The anthropomorphic tradition of the Greeks, the popularity of portrait-making among the Kushānas provided very direct stimuli to the introduction of images. The historical Bhagavan 'Buddha', the human teacher, was gradually transformed into an eternal principle manifested in human form, a supernatural state of being<sup>48</sup> (fig. 20). Thus from the Buddha as 'an omniscient human being of superior wisdom' to its later connotation as a supra-human being with divine powers and qualities can be explained in pure Hinayānic terms. The evolution that the original Buddha attained through the Mahāyānic concept was that of an eternal universal principle which was Śūnyatā or Tathatā<sup>49</sup> or Dharmakāya.<sup>50</sup> He was 'Nibbāna'<sup>51</sup> itself. It was without origin and without decay, without name and form. The physical reality of the historical Buddha has been explained by the Mahāyānists as the rūpakāya or nirmānakāya<sup>52</sup> of the eternal formless Buddha.

The tendency that has been registered through the evolution of all these concepts and doctrinaires paved the way for making the images of these

48. Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 14f.

49. The Mahāyānist doctrine of existence and non-existence.

50. This is one among the 'trikāya' concepts of the Mahāyānists which contends that it is the real kāya or the body of the Buddha. It is eternal, infinite, without birth and death and without form.—Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 30f ;  
'We are all one in the system of Being and only as such are immortal'.—Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

51. Conceptually speaking, Nirvāṇa is the "humanisation of 'Dharmakāya'". It has negative as well as a positive concept. Negatively it demands the annihilation of the undesirable passions and from the positive standpoint it signifies the practice of universal love and sympathy towards all". Cf. Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

52. Nirmānakāya denotes a body of manifestation. This apparitional and phenomenal body, from the point of ultimate reality is an assumption, 'a taking upon itself by the ultimate and invisibly Real the lineaments of the illusory world of appearance'.

—Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*. p. 13 ;

The eventual creation of the earthly form of the Buddha becomes necessary for the guidance and satisfaction of all the sentient beings. Gautama is the nīrmānarūpa of the real formless Buddha.

—Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 30 ;

Incidentally, it should also be noted that the Mahāyānist doctrine also speaks of yet another manifestation in the 'trikāya' theory which is the Sambhogakāya or the form which the Buddha assumed, for the satisfaction of the Bodhisattvas and his advanced devotees, a richly adorned and brightly effulgent form with the *mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa* made manifest.—*Ibid.*



divinities. Once the act of image-making earned the official sanction, it started to explore and utilize the traditions already current with regard to physiognomical features, iconographic attributes and the aesthetic and ideological sources.<sup>53</sup> The spurt and inspiration for image-making led the socio-religious situation to new cross-roads.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

## IV. JAINISM

It is now accepted by competent authorities that Mahāvīra, the last of the Jaina Tirthaṃkaras<sup>1</sup> was, a contemporary of the Buddha. Consequently, it is not difficult to understand that he was the product of the identically the same socio-religious situation. The authority and supremacy of the Vedic Brāhmanism came to be questioned. Ritualism, castism and oppression of the priests widened the gap of the intrinsic social relationship of the different 'Varṇas'. The reaction towards the monopolism found the most eloquent voice in the Buddha and likewise in Mahāvīra.<sup>2</sup> 'It was on the changing flux of thought that Mahāvīra moved and wove out for himself the solution of the riddle of the cosmos, which placed man's fate for weal and woe, here and hereafter, in man's own lands and taught him to look not beyond himself for hope and aid'.<sup>3</sup> It was therefore, not merely a historical coincidence that both Mahāvīra and the Buddha were savants of the contemporary time but also the traditions about their life, teaching, doctrinaire and philosophy happened to be similar to a large measure. Both propagated religions fostering equality of man.

Philosophically and sociologically both Jainism and Buddhism signify organizations having a code of morality and cults of their own. Both the religions aim at attaining salvation from the endless cycle of births and deaths which are the constant source of misery. The emancipation again, according to both of them is attainable only through the performance of 'karman' and through right conduct and practice of austerities in varying degrees of severity. Both laid emphasis, therefore, on monasticism. Similarly, life of layman in both the religions, has been regarded as the primary step in the religious and spiritual ladder having the prospect of attaining the highest goal through proper 'ācāraṇa'.<sup>4</sup>

1. Literally, Tirthaṃkara implies one who has crossed over, that is, the ocean. Cf. Hemachandra, *Abhidharma Chintamani*, i, VV, pp. 24-5. Generally speaking, however, Tirthaṃkara is one who forms the 'Chaturvidha-Saṅgha' (the fourfold order) of monks, nuns and male and female lay followers. But appropriately speaking, a Tirthaṃkara is one who sheds spiritual rays which bathe the ocean of this phenomenal world in a pure light, and it is through this that one is enabled to reach the heights of spiritual well-being. These Tirthaṃkaras, by endowing fresh vigour, and giving new light and revival to Dharma, bless the world and leave it ahead of all previous ages.—Shah, C. J., *Jainism in North India*, p. 45.
2. Hopkins observes: To a great extent both Jainism and Buddhism owed their success to the politics of the day. The West was more conservative than the East. It was the home of the rites it favoured. The east was but a foster-father.—Cf. *Religions of India*, p. 282; According to Radhakrishnan, the reaction was 'an expression of the general ferment of thought which prevailed at the beginning of the epic period'.—*Indian Philosophy*, vol. i, p. 293.
3. Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
4. Mazumdar, *AIU.*, pp. 362-63; Renou, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-12f.



The superhuman qualities of the Buddha, like 'Śākyamuni, the Mahā-puruṣa Chakravartin' were associated with Mahāvīra too. He is the Jina,<sup>5</sup> the victor of all human passions and infirmities.<sup>6</sup> He is also Jagataprabhu, Sarvajña, Trikālavit, Kṣhīṇakarma, Adhiśvara, Devādideva as entertained by his votaries along with all other Tirthaṅkaras.<sup>7</sup> He is said to have been born with three out of five degrees of knowledge. He attained the fourth and the fifth ones during his lifetime and became Jina Vardhamāna Mahāvīra.<sup>8</sup> Vardhamāna, 'the growing one' is an epithet of Vedic origin.<sup>8a</sup> Mahāvīra is the twenty fourth and the last religious reformer in the Jaina church which suggests that the nucleus of Jainism is much older than that of the Buddhism.<sup>8b</sup>

He is said to be preceded by Pārśvanātha, the twenty third Tirthaṅkara. Unfortunately, however, from Pārśva to Mahāvīra there are no data of any historical worth. A period of two hundred and fifty years in Jaina history has to remain blank because of the absence of any historical records or monuments on which we can rely for purposes of history. Anyhow this much is certain, that though it is not possible at present to fill up historically the gap between the last two prophets of the Jainas, it may safely be said that throughout this period Jainism was a living faith.<sup>9</sup>

The historicity of Pārśva may, however, be inferred from the story in the *Uttarādhyana* that a disciple of Pārśva met a disciple of Mahāvīra and brought about the union of the old Jainism and that propounded by Mahāvīra.<sup>10</sup>

5. The term Jina is also applicable to all those men and women who have conquered their lower nature and who have, by means of a thorough victory over all attachments and antipathies, realised the highest. Cf. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

6. Hemachandra, (*op. cit.*), incidentally, went on explaining the significance of the other specific terms like Kevali and Arhat. Kevali is the possessor of Kevala or spiritual nature, free from its investing sources of error; Arhat is one entitled to the homage of gods and men. *Ibid.*

7. Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

8. Mahāvīra was born with Motijñāna, Śrutijñāna and Abadhijñāna. His attainment of Manahpariyāya-Jñāna led him to read the thoughts of all sentient beings of five senses. He had only to obtain Kevala Jñāna or omniscience.—Stevenson (Mrs.), *The Heart of Jainism*, pp. 32-33.

8a. Renou, *The Religions of Ancient India*, (1953), p. 115.

8b. Note: It should, however, be noted that Buddhism also recognizes a group of twenty five Buddhas which could imply that Śākyamuni was the culmination of the sequence of twenty four forerunners described in Jaina tradition.—Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

9. Cf. Hoernle, *Uvāsaga-Dasāo*, ii, p. 6, n. 8, quoted in C. J. Shah, *Jainism in North India*, p. 84.

10. *Uttarādhyana-Sūtra*, *Adhyayana*, xxiii, v. 25;

Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 169;

Pārśva had laid down four great vows for the guidance of his followers and they are: Ahimsā, Sunṛta, Asteya and Aparigraha signifying non-killing, truthful speech, non-



The antiquity of the religion is of course discernible from the literary sources of the Hindus. Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Bhāgavata Purāṇa refer to the life of Rṣabha as the first Jain Tirthaṅkara. The Brahma Sūtras (200-450 B.C) maintain that there is a refutation of Jaina Syādvāda and the Jaina theory of soul.<sup>11</sup> References about Jainism are also numerous in the Yajurveda Samhitā, the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka, the Mahābhārata, the Manusmṛiti, the Śivasahasrā and elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> but there is enough scope for differences of opinion whether the nucleus of Jainism may be so old. Among the Buddhist works, Pāli Piṭakas refer to Niganthas<sup>13</sup> as opponents of the Buddha.<sup>14</sup> Turning to epigraphic sources, one finds that Aśoka's edicts mention Jainas as Niganthas.<sup>15</sup> Mathurā inscription dating more or less from the second century B.C. indicate a great number of Kulas and Śākhās in the contemporary Jaina Church. This suggests a widespread propagation of the religion in Mathurā and adjoining regions.<sup>16</sup> Most of these inscriptions are incized on pedestals or bases of nude Jinas either seated or standing, obtained predominantly from the site reputed as Kankālī Tilā. These inscriptions provide us with some well-preserved names which can be identified with those appearing in the traditional literature of the Jainas.<sup>17</sup> Some of them, again, indicate the existence of female ascetics among the Jainas of Mathurā.<sup>18</sup> In general, these archaeological documents tell us about a widespread and firmly established Jaina community and also suggest the existence of pious laities who were zealous in the consecration and worship of images and shrines dedicated to Mahāvīrā and his predecessors. After the Hāthigumphā Inscription of Kharvela in Orissa, the Kankālī mound at Mathurā has now given us the most complete and satisfactory testimony that the Jainism, even before the beginning of the Christian era, must have been in a condition almost as rich and flourishing as that of the Buddha.<sup>19</sup> Even the

stealing and renouncing of all illusory objects, respectively. Mahāvīrā being a reformer also saw that in the society in which he was moving, Brahmacharya, chastity, must be made a separate vow, quite distinct from the Aparigraha vow of Pārśvanātha. Cf. *Kalpa-Sūtra*, *Subodhikā Tīkā*, p. 3, quoted by Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

12. Hiralal, H., *Ancient History of Jaina Religion*, pt. ii, pp. 85-89, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

13. Niganthas, according to Jaina scriptures, are the Jaina sādhus and nuns (Niganthis) — Sanskrit: Nirgranthas, etymologically meaning 'without any ties'. (Cf. *Uttarādhyāna*, *Adhyāyana*, xii, 1b, xvi, 2; *Ācārāṅga*, pt. ii, *Adhyāyana*, iii, 2; *Kalpa-Sūtra*, Sūt. 130 etc., quoted in Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 5, n. 5).

14. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, iii, 74; *Mahāvagga*, vi, 31.

15. Bühler, *E.I.*, ii, p. 272.

16. Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

17. Bühler, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 378-79, p. 380.

18. *Ibid.*, Ins. no. 11, p. 282; Cunningham, *A.S.I.*, xx, Ins. no. VI, pl. xiii.

19. Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 203;

The Kankālī Tilā has yielded, besides the famous Āmohini Tablet, a four-faced Jaina figure, a Sarasvatī, one brick stūpa, images of Tirthaṅkaras, scenes from the life of



Vodva-stūpa at Mathurā of a later date, indicate that the Stūpa worship with the Jainas had also reached a definite stage.<sup>20</sup>

The Jainas do not believe generally, in the existence of a Supreme Being. But the iconographic evidences like the Āyāgapaṭṭas (fig. 32) as votive tablets from Mathurā, temple site and torsos (one polished and another unpolished) from Lohanipur (fig. 27) or the ornamental slab of the early Christian era representing the transfer of Mahāvīra's embryo by Naigamesa<sup>21</sup> suggest that icon-worship was perhaps in vogue among the Jainas since the pre-Mauryan days.<sup>22</sup> Reverence for the Master and other Teachers gradually transformed into adoration and took the form of religious cults. Finally images of these adorable personages were set up and idolatry became one of the chief institutions of orthodox Jainism. The process was precisely

the Tirthaṅkaras, gods and goddesses, āyāgapaṭṭas, toraṇas and railing pillars mostly assignable to the Kushāṇa period. Cf. Shah, *ibid*;

The stone tablets of the first century B. C. indicate that the Tirthaṅkaras were symbolized through stūpa, chaitya trees, dharmachakra etc. along with the anthropomorphic image of the Tirthaṅkaras. In addition such symbols as śrivatsa, swastika, lotus bud, a pair of fish and full vase, which later on crystallized into the sets of eight auspicious marks of both the Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras, were obtained. The Jinas in anthropomorphic forms were seated in padmāsana with open palms, placed one over the other, resting on the lap, eyes concentrated in meditation, and hair on the head either shaven or shown as curled locks.

The Jina images of the Kushāṇa period in particular, are, as a rule nude and are found both in Padmāsana or Kāyotsarga, standing posture. These images, though bulky, are devoid of any symbol, in most cases there is no halo behind the head (figs. 15-18). Such features as the long locks of hair, hanging over the shoulders (Rṣabhanātha and Pārśvanātha, figs. 15 and 11) got crystallized in this early period of Jaina art.

—Eberhard, F. and Jain, J., *Art and Rituals—2500 years of Jainism in India*, pp. 10-11.

20. The Vodva and other Jaina stūpas do not resemble, in any way, the primitive form of stūpa architecture. Wooden railings have been replaced here by a stone one and the exterior is ornate and lavishly decorated. But the cult of stūpas did not survive long and the Tirthaṅkaras were adored in the temples in the form of icons from the early Christian era itself—Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 295.
21. A Jaina belief is that a Jina must always come from a Kshatriya family of pure descent on both sides (cf. Jacobi, *S.B.E.*, xxi, p. 225). But because of certain actions in his former lives Mahāvīra had to take the form of an embryo in the womb of a Brāhmin lady named Devānandā (cf. *Kalpa-Sūtra*, *Subodhikā Tīkā*, p. 29). When the god Śakra (Indra) came to know of this he arranged to transfer the embryo to the womb of Triśalā, the wife of the Kshatriya king Siddhārtha of the Kāśyapa Gotra (*ibid.*, p. 35, 36) through Negamesi, the servant of Indra.
22. *AIU.*, pp. 425-26; For detailed informations one should consult: Bühler, *The Indian Sect of the Jains: Appendix 'A'*; Vogel, J. Ph., *Catalogue of the Arch. Mus. at Math.*; Smith, V.A., *Jain Stūpas and other Antiquities of Mathurā*; Shah, U.P., *Studies in Jaina Art*, p. 5, where he goes on to suggest that the image of Mahāvīra was carved in sandalwood during his lifetime according to the tradition of the Jivitaswāmī image, referred to in the works like the Āvaśyaka Cūrṇī, the Nisītha Cūrṇī etc.



parallel with that of the Buddhism.<sup>23</sup> In the Jaina pantheons too the twenty four Tirthaṅkaras are regarded as their principal divinities. The host of other gods and goddesses, according to later texts like Abhidharma Chintamoni and Uttarādhyana-Sūtra, are subsidiary divinities and are mostly adopted from the Brāhmanic pantheons.<sup>24</sup>

Immediately before and after the Christian era the worship of the Tirthaṅkaras was already a widespread practice<sup>24a</sup> (figs. 27, 29, 31). By that time the Tirthaṅkaras have acquired their individual cognizances, the attendant devotees and the Wheel of Law like those of the Buddhist divinities. By the time of the Kushāṇas there were concurrently an evolution of style and treatment in the plastic diction (fig. 30). It should be remembered in this context, that the worship of the Yakṣa cult provided to the Jains also the model for worship both in terms of rituals and icons.<sup>25</sup> But whatever might have been the evolution of rituals and icons the tenet of the Jaina metaphysics remained almost similar throughout. Though they underwent peripheral changes from time to time still it is impossible to separate the old from the new in the Jaina canon and doctrinaire.<sup>26</sup>

So far as the canons are concerned, the earliest ones supposed to have been existing before the schism of the Digambaras and the Śvetāmbaras,<sup>27</sup> are

23. Stevenson (Mrs.), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

24. *AIU.*, p. 426.

24a. Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

25. Shah, U.P., *Studies in Jaina Art*, p. 5.

26. *AIU.*, pp. 419-20; Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

27. Note: According to Jaina tradition, a serious famine at the end of Chandragupta's reign led to a great exodus of Jaina monks from the Gangā Valley to the Deccan, where they established important centres of their faith.

Out of this migration arose the great schism of Jainism, on a point of monastic discipline. Bhadrabāhu, the elder of the community, who led the emigrants, insisted on the retention of the rule of nudity which Mahāvīra had established. Sthūlabhadra, the leader of the monks who remained in the North, allowed his followers to wear white garments, owing to the hardships and confusions of the famine. Hence arose the two sects of the Jains, the Digambaras (Space-clad, i.e., naked), and the Śvetāmbaras (White-clad). The Schism did not become complete until the first century A.D.; and there were never any fundamental doctrinal differences. Cf. *ibid*, p. 291; Renou, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

Taking it historically and literally, it may be argued that the Śvetāmbaras are more akin to Pārśvanātha and the Digambaras are nearer to Mahāvīra. Because, Mahāvīra passed many years of his life as a prophet in a naked stage, while both Pārśva and his followers preferred to remain dressed.—Jacobi, *S.B.E.*, xiv, pp. 119-29;

Stevenson (Mrs.) suggests that the probability is that there had always been two parties in the community: the older and weaker section who wore clothes and are dated from Pārśvanātha's time and who were called Sthavira Kalpa (the spiritual ancestors of the Śvetāmbaras); and the Jina-Kalpa or Puritans, who kept to the extreme letter of the Law as Mahāvīra had done, and who are the forerunners of the Digambaras.—*op. cit.*, p. 79; Really speaking, it is very difficult to say as to where lies the origin of the division



not available. It is uncertain again, as to how far the presentday works in the nomenclature of the 'Aṅgas' retain the original contents. This impression is created by the fact that the available works are in an approximate standard of Prākṛt while the original gospels, according to later traditions, were in Ārdhva-Māgadhi, the language of the masses.

According to another Jaina tradition an oral sacred literature had been handed down from the days of Mahāvīra but Bhadrabāhu, the elder of the Jaina community, a contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya, was the last person to know it perfectly. On his death Sthūlabhadra called a great Council at Pāṭaliputra (3rd century B.C.). An attempt was made in this Council to reconstruct the canon as best as possible in twelve Aṅgas or sections which replaced fourteen 'former texts' or 'Pūrvas'. The Śvetāmbaras only accepted this canon<sup>28</sup> and the Digambaras claimed that the old canon was hopelessly lost and undertook to devise new scriptures for themselves, some of which are still unpublished.<sup>29</sup> The great schism of the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras also came to a head-on collision, but the question ultimately remained unanswered and unsolved. The two sects continued in their peaceful co-existence ever since without much of rapport or quarrel between them. Interestingly however, both the sects retained the same doctrine, ethics and philosophy. Both the systems believed in a logic known as Syādvāda or Anekāntavāda or the theory of 'May be'. According to this theory, no absolute statement is possible about anything. It implicates that knowledge is only probable.<sup>30</sup>

in the Jaina community. Both Jaina literature and Jaina history have suffered greatly from contradictory and retaliatory traditions put forward by the two divisions. In the zeal to keep up the prestige of belonging to the original church of Lord Mahāvīra, none of the two talks about its own origin. The Digambara tradition suggests that the origin of the Śvetāmbara was due to the wicked and loose-moral Jina Chandra, the disciple of Āchārya Śānti, a direct disciple of Bhadrabāhu (Premi, *Darśanasāra*, v. 11, pp. 7, 12-15). The Śvetāmbara attribution to the origin of the Digambara is to Śivabhūti (A.D. 83), as due to a schism in the old Śvetāmbara Church. (Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, i, p. 170).

28. The texts of the Śvetāmbara canon were finally settled and reduced to writing at a council at Valabhī in Gujarat in the 5th century A.D. By this time the texts had become very corrupt and one of the Aṅgas had been completely lost, while new material had been added to the original canon in the form of the twelve upāṅgas, or minor sections, and various lesser works. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *AIU.*, pp. 424-425f; Shah, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-56ff.

*Note* : Everything has to be considered in four different aspects : the matter (drāvya), space (kshetra), time (kāla) and nature bhāva). That is why the doctrine of Syādvāda holds that : since the most contrary characteristics of infinite variety may be associated with a thing, affirmation made from whatever standpoint (Nāya) cannot be regarded as absolute (Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 179). Comparatively speaking Advaitins proclaimed that there is only one really existing entity, the 'Ātman', the One-only without a Second (Ekamevādviṭīyam) and that this is permanent (Nitya), all else being non-existent



Both the sects have again a common theory of reality. The world, according to them, is not altogether unknowable. The world consists of two eternal aspects : Jiva and Ajiva, consciousness and unconsciousness. They are uncreated. They co-exist but remain independent of one another. The two are the exhaustive categories of the universe.<sup>31</sup> Jiva is again associated with soul,<sup>32</sup> distinct from body and matter. Soul is therefore eternal. Its source of misery lies in the contact with matter. So it strives constantly to free itself from this bondage by means of higher knowledge and meditation on great truth. Jivas are infinite in number and varied in kinds such as Nityasiddha or the ever perfect, Mukta or the liberated, and the Baddha or the bound.<sup>33</sup>

Ajiva or the unconscious, on the other hand, signify two main classes : (i) those without rūpa (form), amūrta as ākāśa (space, ether),<sup>34</sup> dharma, the means or condition of movement,<sup>35</sup> adharma or the means or condition of rest,<sup>36</sup> kāla (time),<sup>37</sup> and virtue and vice etc. as against (ii) those having rūpa (form), mūrta as Pudgala (matter).<sup>38</sup> The two, Jiva and Ajiva are the exhaustive categories of the universe. Of the six dravyas, Jiva and Pudgala form the chief ones. The others are the principles of their action or the results of their interaction. Saṁsāra is nothing but the entanglement of Jiva in matter.<sup>39</sup>

(A-sat) a mere illusion. This Nityavāda is combatted by the Anityavāda of the Buddhists who professed that man had no real knowledge of any such permanent entity ; it was pure speculation, knowledge being confined to changing phenomena, growth, decay and death. (Bhandarkar, *Report on Sanskrit MSS.*, pp. 95-96, quoted in Shah, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56). The solution of Jainism is thus a reconciliation of the two extremes of Vedāntism and Buddhism on grounds of common sense experience.—Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, i, p. 175.

31. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 314, 323ff ;  
Jivas are divided according to the number of sense organs they possess. The highest have five senses (Pañcendriya) and the lowest have one (Ekendriya).—*Ibid.*, p. 221f.
32. Soul is not only the property of animal and plant lives, but also of entities such as stones, rocks, streams, wind and a host like them which are not regarded as living beings by other religious sects. This has been termed by Jacobi as hylozoistic theory of the Jains.—Jacobi, *op. cit.*, intro., p. xxxiii ; Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 293 ; Shah, (C. J.), *op. cit.*, p. 47.
33. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 320f.
34. Ākāśa or space is divided into : (1) the part occupied by the world of things, lokākāśa and (2) the space beyond it, the alokākāśa, which is absolutely void and empty, an abyss of nothing.—Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
35. Dharma is the principle of motion. It is devoid of qualities of taste, colour, smell, sound and contact. It pervades the whole world, and is continuous because of inseparability, it has extension also because of coextensiveness with space.—*Ibid.*
36. Adharma is the principle of rest. It is also devoid of sense qualities, is non-corporeal and coextensive with lokākāśa.—*Ibid.*, pp. 315-16.
37. The function of kāla (time) is (to explain) existence in the present, change, movement and duration.—Radhakrishnan and Moore Ed., *A Source Book on Ind. Phil.*, p. 256f.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 315f ;  
Pudgala is the physical basis of the world. The question of touch, taste, smell, colour



Another dogmatic exposition of the Jaina creed is based on seven principles called : soul, non-soul, imprisonment, exclusion, dissipation and release (Jiva, Ajiva, Āsrava, Saṃvara, Nirjarā and Mokṣa, respectively). Sometimes Puṇya (merit) and Papa (sin) are added to the principles.<sup>40</sup>

According to Jaina belief, further, mercy of god or the creator cannot lead one to the aspired goal, but indeed, man shapes his own destiny. An austere, virtuous life is a pre-condition for overcoming miseries of a living being or the jiva. The radical conversion of the inner man is the way to freedom. The lower matter is to be subdued by the higher spirit.<sup>41</sup> Hence, an apparatus of morality is necessary to bring about the reformation of man's nature by following the moral rectitudes such as : (i) ahimsā, not merely negative abstention, but positive kindness to all creation, (ii) chastity and truth-speaking, (iii) honourable conduct like non-stealing, (iv) chastity in word, thought and deed, and (v) renunciation of all wordly interests.<sup>42</sup> The life of renunciation is by far the best and indispensable in the process, for, it is the shortest way to nirvāṇa or salvation.<sup>43</sup> Nirvāṇa, according to Jaina theory, is not the annihilation of the soul, but its entry into a blessedness that has no end. It is an escape from the body but not from existence. It is a state of being without qualities and relation. It is not an escape into nothingness of the Buddhist tradition.<sup>44</sup>

The Jainism professes no god as such ; however, it believes in a galaxy of super-human beings who are spiritually great. All perfect men are divine.

and sound are associated with pudgala. Things which we perceive consist of gross matter. There is also subtle matter beyond the reach of our senses and this is transformed into the different degrees of karma. Pudgala exists in the two forms : anu or atom and skandha or aggregate.—*Ibid.*, pp. 317-18ff ;

Karma, which again, ordinarily means deeds and their effects on the soul, is regarded, however, by the Jainas as a peculiarly subtle form of matter which enters the soul and by this influx defiles and weighs it down. Through the actions of body and mind the 'karmi c' matter gets into the soul and is tied to it according to modifications of consciousness consisting of passions. 'In the state of bondage the soul and karma are more intimate than milk and water'. The most effective means to non-action, therefore, is self-mortification, which not only prevents the entrance of new karma but annihilates what has accumulated. Hence, no other philosophical school admits that karma is also material.—Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. i, p. 107 ; Mehta, M. M. 'Contribution of the Jainas to Indian Philosophy', p. 18, in Dwivedi, R. C., *Cont. of Jains in Ind. Culture*.

39. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-24ff.

40. Eliot, *op. cit.*

41. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *AIU.*, p. 425 ;

To attain salvation a man must abandon all trammels including clothes ; fasting, self-mortification, study and meditation can help one to rid oneself from karma or fresh karma clinging to one's soul. Hence, a monastic life is essential for salvation.—Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

44. Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 46.



Gods, if at all, are only embodied souls like men and animals, different from them in degree and not in kind. The liberated souls are above the gods.<sup>45</sup> This belief has prompted the Jainas to accept any of the gods popular in Hinduism.

Unlike the Buddhists again, the Jainas accept also the theory of caste which they try to relate, specifically to character. They use the term 'Brāhmin' as an honorific title, applying it even to persons who did not belong to the caste of Brāhmins.<sup>46</sup> The exclusiveness and pride born of caste are condemned by the Jainas. Similarly, the relationship between the laity and the monk in the Jaina church is far more flexible than that of the Buddhist one. It should however be borne in mind that the Jaina laity was never a social force and did not prove to be as organized as that of the Buddhist fold. Thus the religion registered an unaggressive progress although. All these aspects together rendered the Jainism most accommodating in character and conciliatory in approach providing least hostility to the Hindus. Its attitude to civil power too had always been compliant. Thus Jainism helped itself most to survive in the country of origin throughout the centuries while the Buddhism could not outlive in the very same manner.<sup>47</sup>

45. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 331ff.

46. Cf. *S.B.E.*, *xxii*, p. xxx.

47. Basham, *op. cit.*, p. 295 ;

He suggests that the Jainism took better care of its lay folk. The laity was a definite member of the Order, was encouraged to undertake periodical retreats and to live as far as possible the life of the monk for specific periods. Jainism also encouraged the commercial virtues of honesty and frugality and at a very early period the Jaina lay community became predominantly mercantile.—*Ibid.*



## V. SUN-WORSHIPPERS OR THE SAURAS

With the dawn of the farming economy the importance of the Sun as the source of light, energy, fertility and rain must have been recognized in India as in other parts of the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> Eventually the Sun evolved as a theistic cult deity (figs. 33-35). But the most noticeable feature of the Sun cult was that it never held a supreme position in the post-Vedic age, yet it could remain to be popular throughout the centuries enjoying a steady and uninterrupted existence. It seems that the cult of Sūrya had first evolved centering an Indian concept and later on a Magian one. The Magian cult had its followers principally among the foreign hordes in the north-western India<sup>2</sup> and the native sects comprised the devotees primarily from the Pratihī and the Uttarāpatha deśa.

The earliest reference about the greatest luminary occurs in the Ṛgveda where at least ten hymns of invocation are addressed to him. The Vedic Gāyatrī is an eloquent testimony to such a direction. He is described as seated on a chariot drawn by steeds varying in number from one to seven.<sup>3</sup> It appears that the Sun was worshipped in the Vedic period in its different aspects such as the rising Sun, the Sun at the zenith, the setting Sun and the nocturnal Sun. Sūrya is the rising Sun.<sup>4</sup> This gave rise to the different names of the deity in its different aspects. Moreover, the different aspects of the Sun, as was worshipped, made it a necessity to proclaim independent Sun-gods. The Sūrya represents the light-giving aspect of the Sun.<sup>5</sup> Puṣan is the Sun-god of prosperity.<sup>6</sup> Savitṛ is the stimulation aspect of the god,<sup>7</sup> while the friendly and beneficent nature of him is idealized in Mitra.<sup>8</sup> In the Aśvins the healing aspects of the Sun is extremely prominent,<sup>9</sup> and thus go the Ṛgvedic descriptions and associations of the numerous nomenclatures of the god. It should, however, be remembered that there was always interactions, combinations and overlappings of different Sun-gods and they did not possess exclusive traits.<sup>10</sup>

There are inescapable evidences, again, that the Vedic literature presents a mixed picture of the Aryan and non-Aryan traditions of Sun-worship, though it is indeed difficult to determine the extent of amalgamation.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, it

1. Sur, A. K., 'Pre-Aryan Element in Indian Culture', *Calcutta Review*, Dec., 1932, pp. 293-303.
2. J. Przyluski, *J.A.*, 1926, p. 13, cf. *J.A.*, 1929, p. 315-17.
3. *Rgveda*, vii, 63.2 ; i, 50.8-9 ; iv, 13.3.
4. *Ibid.*, viii, 63.
5. *Ibid.*, i, 50.5 ; iv, 13.4 ; vii, 63.1 ; x, 37.4.
6. *Ibid.*, vi, 48.15 ; vi, 55.2-3.
7. *Ibid.*, i, 157.1 ; ii, 38.1.
8. Winternitz, M., *HIL.*, p. 76.
9. *Op. cit.*, viii, 18.8 ; viii, 22.10.
10. Srivastava, V. C., *Sun-Worship in Ancient India*, pp. 46-47.
11. Keith, A. B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, p. 12.



is very likely that the social and occupational differences among the Aryans and non-Aryans might also have contributed to the evolution of numerous gods out of the one and the same natural phenomenon.<sup>12</sup>

The numerous names, traits and aspects of the Sun could not however, lead always to a comprehensive anthropomorphism with the Sun simply due to his constant presence in material form.<sup>13</sup> Anthropomorphic approach, in any case, is first discernible in the *Ṛgveda* itself. The Sun is stated to have been born from the eye of the *Puruṣa*.<sup>14</sup> His rays are at times, considered as his hands,<sup>15</sup> simultaneously, not unoften conceived as his seven horses.<sup>16</sup> His path is prepared for him by *Varuṇa* and *Mitra*<sup>17</sup> and *Puṣan* is said to be his messenger.<sup>18</sup> He is the son of the sky and the dawn.<sup>19</sup> In the later evolution he is the lover of dawn itself.<sup>20</sup>

The entire Vedic literature also bears testimony to the fact that the worship of the Sun under one nomenclature or the other forms an important and essential theme of almost all the social and religious rites and ceremonies of the Vedic society. This mirrors the popularity of the Sun-worship in Vedic India.<sup>21</sup> With the rise of *Vaiṣṇavism* however, *Viṣṇu*, originally a solar deity, absorbed much of the elements and attributes of the Sun in himself.

In the *Chhândogya Upaniṣad* too *Kausitaki* instructs his son to worship the Sun in different forms differentiating *Āditya* from his rays.<sup>22</sup>

The classical writers refer to the worship of *Soroadeios* or *Sūryadeva* by the *Indains*. *Plutarch* mentions of a Sun-temple on the *Hydaspes* while *Philostatos* refers to another temple of the Sun at *Taxilā*, during *Alexander's* invasion.<sup>23</sup> *Curtius* refers to the image of *Heracles-Viṣṇu* carried in front by the advancing army of *Porus*<sup>24</sup> which suggests as to how *Viṣṇu-Heracles* was gradually absorbing the Sun-cult in himself.

*Pāṇini* made references to the worship of the *Sūrya*,<sup>25</sup> while *Patañjali* mentions the worship of both *Sūrya* and *Āditya*.<sup>26</sup>

12. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

13. *Ibid.*, p., 59.

14. *Ṛgveda*, x, 90.3.

15. *Ibid.*, i, 115.5.

16. *Ibid.*, i, 50.1, 8-9.

17. *Ibid.*, i, 24.8 ; vii, 87.6.

18. *Ibid.*, vi, 58.3.

19. *Ibid.*, x, 37.1.

20. *Ibid.*, i, 151.2.

21. *Srivastava*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

22. *Chhândogya Upaniṣad*, i, 5.2.

23. *Cunningham*, *op. cit.*, p. 22f.

24. *Cunningham*, *Coins of the Indo-Scythians*, p. 22 ; *Chanda*, "Archaeology and *Vaiṣṇava* Trad.", *MAI*, 5.

25. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, iii, 1.114.

26. *Puri*, *India in the Time of Patañjali*, p. 181.



Among the Buddhist literature the Cullaniddesa alludes to the worshippers of Sūrya along with other sectarian gods.<sup>27</sup> The Niddesa too refers to the sect of the Sun,<sup>28</sup> so also Milinda-pañha.<sup>29</sup>

With regard to the alien association of the god, Varāhamihira enjoins that the installation and consecration of the temple and the image of the Sun-god should be performed by the Magas, the priestly Brāhmaṇas of the Śaka community. This leads to the inference that the Magas or the Sun and the Fire-worshipping Magi of ancient Persia contributed something towards the development of the solar-cult in India and these Magas possibly came in the train of the Śakas. It may be noted in this connection that this points to a branch of the Śaka-Brāhmaṇas or the Magi who must have entered India before Alexander's time and, Przyluski, in fact, has shown that the name Śākala comes from the word Śaka. The 57th chapter of the Bṛhat Saṃhitā and many of the iconographic texts corroborate some alien features of the Sūrya image as Udiṣyaveśa (northern dress, fig. 35), avayaṅga (the Indian transformation of Iranian aiyyāonghen), the sacred woolen waist girdle and the like.<sup>30</sup> The anecdote in the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa that the Lord Viṣṇu was worshipped in the Śākadvīpa in the form of the Sun alludes indirectly too to the influence of the Scytho-Magai Solar cult in India.

As regards the Sun-god and his followers, the Sauras, representing particularly Indian characteristics, the Mahābhārata contains a number of references.<sup>31</sup> 'Pañcamahākālpa' of the Epic alludes actually to the 'Āgamas' or Śāstras of the five principal sects, the Sauras comprising one of them.<sup>32</sup> The Epic introduces revolutionary changes in the concept of the Sun-god as well as in the method of worship.<sup>33</sup> He is invoked as the soul of all corporeal existence and the origin of all existence (Tvamātmā Sarvadehinām/tvaṃ yoniḥ sarvabhūtānām).<sup>34</sup> The term Yoniḥ in the above verse is really interesting. Does it indicate that like Śiva, the Sūrya was also worshipped in the 'liṅga' form? This leads further to the question: is the dvādaśa Jyotirliṅga of Śiva, a copy of the Dvādaśāditya Liṅgas or did the Dvādaśāditya Liṅgas later on come to be worshipped as the Jyotirliṅgas of god Śiva himself? The expression 'Jyotirliṅga' is significant not so much for Śiva as, it is for the Sun, conspicuously associated with the radiant rays.

27. Cullaniddesa, pp. 173-74; Law, B. C., *India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, p. 191.

28. Niddesa, 1.89.

29. Milinda-pañha, iv, 8.12.

30. AIU., p. 466.

31. MBH., vii, 82.16; xviii, 6.97.

32. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 115.

33. Ray Chaudhury, *The Mahābhārata, Some Aspects of its Culture, Cultural History of India*, vol. ii, p. 77.

34. MBH., iii, 3.36.



The names of historical personages like Sūryadhvaja, Roçamāna, Añsumāna<sup>35</sup> and Sūryadatta<sup>36</sup> in the Mahābhārata may also prompt us to infer that there was a sect of the deity during the epic period. However, a considerable portion of the Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa, a later work, is devoted both to the Indian as well as the foreign cult.

The earliest archaeological finds allude to the pre-Vedic tradition of Sun-worship in India in the form of various symbols in seals, potteries, amulets and beads.<sup>37</sup> A different type of solar symbols appear on the coin tradition of the pre-Christian centuries. The Kāda coins (3rd cent. B. C.) introduce varieties of solar symbols with a horse on the reverse of each coin<sup>38</sup> whereas the round copper cast-coins of the Pāñchāla-Mitra series, (200 B.C. to 100 B.C.) specially of Sūryamitra and Bhānumitra symbolize the Sun as a ball radiating rays.<sup>39</sup>

The earliest iconographic representation of the deity is in Terracotta. Two such examples have been recorded and both speak of a Mauryan stylization of rendering. One is from Patna<sup>40</sup> and the other from Chandraketugarh, West Bengal.<sup>41</sup>

Curiously enough, icons in sculpture corroborating Vedic conception are of a little later date of the pre-Christian era. One of them is a medallion in the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā, of the Śuṅga period (1st cent. B.C.). It depicts the Sun-god in his chariot drawn by four horses accompanied by the goddesses of dawn, Uṣā and Pratyūṣā (fig. 33) who discharge their arrows at the demons of darkness.<sup>42</sup> In the other icon from Bhājā dating second century B.C. the deity has been shown with his consort in a chariot escorted by riders on either side of the two surfaces. This is a rock-cut relief figure.<sup>43</sup>

The Vedic deity has, in both the examples, been present in an allegorical capacity with reference to the Buddha's solar character.<sup>44</sup> The Vedic cult has also been depicted in the Ananta Gumpā of the Khandagiri Cave, Orissa, in the early Christian era (1st century A.D.). The Sūrya is as usual on his chariot holding reins in his left hand and a lotus in the right one, drawn by the

35. MBH. i, 85.10.

36. Ibid., iv, 31.15.

37. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization ; Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*.

38. Allan, *BMC*, p. 11, pls. xxxvii, xlii-7, vi-25.

39. Banerjea, *DHI.*, pp. 198-99.

40. *JISOA.*, vol. iii, no. 2, p. 125.

41. Dasgupta, P. C., 'Terracotta from Chandraketugarh', *Lalitkala*, No. 6, Oct., 1959, p. 46ff; *Indian Archaeology 1955-56*, pl. L xxii B.

42. Marshall, *JRAS.*, 1908, p. 1096; Coomaraswamy, *HIIA.*, pl. xvii. 61, Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 433.

43. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, pl. vii. 24; Banerjea, *ibid.*, p. 433; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, p. 57.

44. Rowland, B., *Art and Architecture of India*, p. 54.



horses. His two female companions flank his two sides. It is to be noted that this is a Jaina Cave pointing to the association of the deity with the Jinas.<sup>45</sup>

The other example of the god on a pillar fragment from Lālā-Bhagat, Kanpur Dist., U.P. (c. 2nd cent. B.C.—2nd cent. A.D.) depicts the deity in relief, in association with Kārtikeya-Skanda-Kumāra.<sup>46</sup> As Kārtikeya is usually taken to be the son of Śiva, does not this icon support our contention that through the Yoniḥ cult both Śiva and Śūrya proceeded towards an amalgam? In any case, this may be interpreted as a tendency of the era for religious synthesis and syncretism.

Among the icons of the Indo-Iranian and Iranian tradition, one relief<sup>47</sup> and two round sculptures from the collection of the Mathura Museum need examination. All of them belong to the Kushāṇa period. In the relief panel the deity wears a heavy tunic and is seated in a chariot drawn by two horses. He holds a lotus in one hand and a dagger in the other<sup>48</sup> (figs. 34, 35). This evidently exemplifies the endeavour to combine and synthesize the Indian and Iranian concepts about the god.

The small figure of the Śūrya in black slate from Gandhāra of the Kushāṇa period again depicts the god seated at ease on a commodious chariot drawn by four horses accompanied by four female figures on either side (the one on the right is broken), and a bearded Atlantos couches beneath the chariot. The god wears a pair of boots.<sup>49</sup> Here innovations have been introduced in conformity with the local convention and with the needs of the transformed cult,<sup>50</sup> displaying the fusion of the foreign cult with the indigenous one. The synthesis is more definite and comprehensive here than in the case of the Śūrya image of our early reference from the Mathura Museum.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the absence of the Sun-icon of the Iranian tradition before the Kushāṇa epoch may indicate that the Iranian tradition of iconography became popular and was established only during the Kushāṇa period.<sup>52</sup>

During the period under review, however, the Sauras as a religious sect in general could not register a remarkable progress due to the fact that much of

45. Banerjea, 'Śūrya, Āditya and the Navagrahas', *JISOA*, xvi, p. 53.

46. *ASIAR*, 1929-30, pp. 132-33, pl. xxxi; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 433, pl. xxix, fig. 1; Banerjea, *JISOA*, xvi, p. 55.

47. Agrawala, V.S., 'Cat. of the Brāhmanical Images in the Math. Mus.', *J.U.P.H.S.*, 194, vol. xxii, p. 167. Math. Mus. no. OOD46.

48. Math. Mus. no. 12.269 and 15.936.

49. Coomaraswamy, *HIIR*, p. 66; Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

50. Banerjea, *ibid.*

51. Agrawala, *op. cit.*; p. 167, Math. Museum no. 00D-46.

52. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

its elements were being assimilated by the Vaiṣṇavas, already a popular religious force, and that it was experiencing stiff oppositions from the Śaivas, in particular, the Pāśupatas, although at a later stage this enmity was transformed into a friendship.<sup>53</sup> (supra.)

53. Chattopadhyaya, *Evolution of the Hindu Sects*, p. 176.



## VI. THE NĀGA CULT

Nāga or Serpent is perhaps one of the oldest cults not merely in India but throughout the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> In India, in particular, the evolution of the serpent religion from the proto-historic era to the Vedic days and the periods thereafter form indeed a complex whole. It may be distinguished as (i) the direct adoration of the animal, the most formidable and mysterious among the enemies of men,<sup>1a</sup> (ii) worship of the deities of the waters, springs and rivers, symbolized by the waving form of the serpent and (iii) conception of the storm and the struggle of light and darkness.<sup>2</sup> The word Nāga has, consequently been used in India in more sense than one. It refers to the ordinary and deified snakes as well as to those people who claimed their descent from the Nāga parent or parents. It alludes, moreover, to those who are associated with the Nāga cult. As the Nāga cult has a significant role in the religious history of India, so also the Nāga people have played important role in the political and social history of the country by way of matrimonial alliances with the princes and dignitaries in the early and later periods of history.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest literary references about the Nāga cult occurs in the R̥gveda where the Nāga has at times been described as a demonical animal<sup>4</sup> and sometimes in the role of a divine being.<sup>5</sup> The Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā pays homage to the serpent.<sup>6</sup> The Atharvaveda calls the Nāgas as 'devajanas'<sup>7</sup> and describes them as protectors of quarters.<sup>8</sup> Religious or sacrificial rites to the serpent are prescribed in the Āśvalāyana<sup>9</sup> and Pāraskara Grihya Sūtras<sup>10</sup> indicating that ablutions to the Nāga became an integral part of the Aryans during the Sūtra period (c. 600-400 B.C.). The epics throw considerable light on the origin of the Nāgas as divine entity.<sup>11</sup> In the Epics they are stated to be prone to anger but at the same time they are bestowers of health, longevity and offsprings. They

1. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. xi, pp. 411-12; Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Introduction, p. 1.

1a. Fergusson justifies: 'There are few things which at first sight appear to us at the present day so strange and less easy to account for than the worship which was once so generally offered to the serpent god. If not the oldest, it ranks at least among the earliest forms of thought which the human intellect sought to propitiate the unknown powers'. *Ibid.*

2. Barth, A., *The Religions of India*, p. 166ff.

3. *Ep. Ind.*, vol. i, p. 392.

4. *R̥gveda*, 8.17.9.

5. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 94; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 153.

6. *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*, ii, 7.15.

7. *Atharvaveda*, vi, 56.1ff.

8. *Ibid.*, (Whitney's tran.) iii, 27.1.

9. *Āśvalāyana Grihya Sūtra*, ii, 1.9.

10. *Pāraskara Grihya Sūtra*, ii, 14.9.

11. *MBH.*, ii, 46.60; *Rāmāyaṇa* iii, 14.28.



are possessors of magic power. The Mahābhārata states that the abode of the divine serpent is below the earth graced by the presence of the Nāga Śeṣha with a thousand mouths supporting the earth on his head.<sup>12</sup> The Kārṇa Parvan refers to many anecdotes of hostilities between the Nāgas and others. In the Mahābhārata again, Nāga Śeṣha has been alluded to as one of the Prajāpatis and simultaneously as incarnating himself as human cult god Balarāma, the brother of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>13</sup> It further alludes to the endless serpent Ananta who lies on the waters, a creation of Viṣṇu's illusion, Uḍakaśaya (lying on the waters, like Viṣṇu himself as Nārāyaṇa).<sup>14</sup> In a further reference Ananta Nāga is associated with Viṣṇu where the Nāga has been described as a deva encircling the world and eventually curling himself over the head of Viṣṇu.<sup>15</sup>

In the Buddhist literature the Nāgas have been treated as independent deities in the form of semi-divine spirits or real human beings, originally fierce and rebellious but subdued ultimately by the Buddha through his regulative and persuasive power. The Nāga legends in the Buddhist works have been recorded by Vogel in his 'Serpent Lore in India'. As the Nāgas are as lustrous as fire, they have been associated in the Buddhist literature with fire.

Anecdotes also frequent in the Pāli literary works with regard to Buddha's victory over the Nāga of Uruvilva in Gayā whereupon the Kāśyapa brothers (Jatila) embraced Buddhism. But in general the worship of the serpents was underrated and the sister cult, Tree deity was more patronized to be adored and worshipped.<sup>16</sup> In the 'Classification of the Living Beings' of the Cosmic System in the Law of the Buddha, Nāga, however, comprises one of the fourteen highest beings with Pratyekabuddhas, Arhats, Devas, Brāhmaṇas and the like.<sup>17</sup>

In the Jaina literature numerous allusions are made to the association of Pārśva with the snake and Pārśvanātha possesses a snake emblem<sup>18</sup> (fig. 30). Supārśva has also an association with the snake. Nāgas have, again, been shown as attendant of Mahāvīra Vardhamāna.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, the incorporation of snake-worship as an integral part of all the principal religions lead us to infer that a systematic attempt was made to wean the people from the serpent cult.<sup>19a</sup>

Among the archaeological finds, the epigraphic records of the period provide significant informations. The various individual names like Mahānāga,

12. MBH., v, 103.2ff.

13. Ibid., iii, 14.7.

14. Ibid., vii, 104.5.

15. Ibid., iv, 40.49.

16. Fergusson, *op. cit.*, p. 62 (Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1976 Edn.).

17. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 59.

18. Bloomfield, *Pārśvanātha Charita*, p. 10.

19. Smith, *Jaina Stūpa and other Antiquities of Mathura*, pl. I.

19a. AIU., p. 460.



Jayanāga, Nāgadina, Nāgadatta, Nāgavati, Nāgasena, Nāgapriya, Nāgarakshita etc. in the Brāhmī inscriptions of the post-Mauryan period<sup>20</sup> indicate conclusively to the popularity of the Nāga cult in the pre-Christian era. An epigraph from Mathurā records the gift of one Devilla, the servant of the shrine of Dadhikarṇa;<sup>21</sup> Bühler has also reported about another shrine of Dadhikarṇa on the basis of a Brāhmī inscription,<sup>21a</sup> both suggesting thereby that there were shrines or temples of the Nāga Dadhikarṇa in Mathurā in the early Christian centuries. Epigraphic tablets of early historic period (185 B.C. to A.D. 319) record the dedication to the Nāgas.<sup>22</sup> In some others dedication of tanks are recorded having Buddhist associations.<sup>23</sup> Another inscription from Mathurā mentions the dedication of a garden and a tank to the serpent god (Bhagavat Swāmi Nāga).<sup>24</sup> Few other inscriptions suggest that among the Bhāgavata rituals practiced in Mathurā, the worship of the Nāgas formed a conspicuous part.<sup>25</sup> Serpents in the form of icons may be traced as far back as the Indus Civilization. Faience seals have shown serpents in half-man half-animal form.<sup>26</sup> A copper seal has been unearthed with a deity attended by two suppliant looped around his feet by two Nāgas.<sup>27</sup>

In the historic period the serpent has been a frequent device on the punch-marked coins (c. 600-300 B.C.).<sup>28</sup> Nāga symbols occur on some of the Andhra coins too of uncertain attribution where Nandipada are shown on the obverse.<sup>29</sup> The association of the Nāga and the Nandipada betray a close Nāga-Śaiva amalgamation. The Nāga-Śaivāite association may further be examined in the coins of the Ayodhyā rulers like Viśākhadeva, Dhandadeva and Naradatta (2nd cent. B.C.)<sup>30</sup> and also in some of the Nāga rulers where snake is on the reverse and the bull occurs on the obverse.<sup>31</sup> The earliest iconographic representations in the historical era, belong, however, to the Mauryan period and they are in

20. *Ep. Ind.*, vol. x., Index of Personal Names in Lüder's list.

21. Vogel, *Ep. Ind.*, vol. i, p. 381.

21a. Bühler, *ibid.*, vol. i, p. 390.

22. Bühler, *ibid.*

23. Bühler *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xxv, pp. 141-2;

Note: The association of the Nāgas with water is so inseparable that they are widely acclaimed as the water spirits. This justifies the dedication of tanks in honour of the Nāgas.—*Ep. Ind.*, vol. xvii, p. 10f.

24. *Ep. Ind.*; vol. xvii, p., 10ff.

25. Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

26. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, vol. i, p. 68, pls. Cxviii-11; Cxvi. 29.

27. Chanda, R. P., *Modern Review*, L ii, p. 15ff, pl. ii, fig. 'a'.

28. Allan, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

29. Rapson, *Cat. of Coins-Andhras, Western Kshatrapas, Traikutakas and Bodhi Dynasty* p. 53.

30. Allan, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-4.

31. *Ibid.*



terracotta, mostly in the collection of the Patna Museum.<sup>32</sup> A hollow terracotta head of Nāga of a much later date has very recently been discovered in Sonkh, Mathurā belonging to the Kushāṇa period.<sup>33</sup>

Naga icons in sculpture are fairly numerous during the period under review. Bhārhut panels represent the Nāgarāja Erāpatra of the Buddhist legend<sup>34</sup> (fig. 16), and the Nāgarāja Chakravāka in human form having a cobrahood, of again, the Buddhist lore. He is shown in the attitude of a devotee.<sup>35</sup> The legends apparently record the amalgamation of the Taxilā Nāga cult with the Buddhism. The story of Buddha's subjugation of the Nāga at Uruvilva has widely been depicted in plastic terms in Sāñchi, Amarāvati and Gandhāra.<sup>36</sup> In Gandhāra again, there is a panel portraying the taming and conversion of the Nāga king Apalāśla.<sup>37</sup> Buddhist account of distribution of the relics of the Buddha between the Devas and the Nāgas has interestingly been rendered in Sāñchi and elsewhere.<sup>38</sup>

Mathurā has, however, proved to be an eminent find spot for the Nāga images providing numerous examples of the icon, independent or associated with symbols or cult deities of other religious sects. The images found in Mathurā and surrounding regions are mostly in the collection of the Mathurā Museum representing both the pre-Christian and early Christian eras.

The earliest among this is a standing Nāga in anthropomorphic form having the serpent hood on the head (now mutilated). The figure has evidently been inspired by that of the Parkham Yakṣa. This is assignable to 3rd-2nd century B.C. In size and stature this is simply colossus.<sup>39</sup> The remaining sculptures belong to the early Christian centuries. Y. R. Gupte has reported about an inscribed Nāga image, from the village Bhadal, accompanied by two Nāginis. The deity has a canopy of seven hoods with forked tongues having a group of devotees (five males, five females and two boys) on the pedestal. The inscription speaks of the dedication of a tank and a garden in honour of Svāmi Nāga in the year eight of the Kushāṇa era.<sup>40</sup> A few

32. *ASIAR.*, 1926-27, p. 139, pl. xxxi; *Pathak Commemoration Vol.*, p. 255ff.

33. Harte Herbert, 'A Kushāṇa Nāga Temple at Sonkh', *Bulletin of Museum and Archaeology, U. P.*, No. 11-12, 1973, p. 4.

34. Barua, *Barhut*, Bk. i & ii, p. 61.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

36. Fergusson, *op. cit.*, pl. Lxx; Grünwedel, *Buddhist Art in India*, p. 61ff, fig. 35; Foucher, *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, p. 97ff, pl. ix. 1.

37. *ASIAR.*, 1906-7, p. 159, pl. iv; Hargreaves, *Handbook of Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum*, pl. 5a.

38. Fergusson, *op. cit.*, p. 4, pl. xci, *ASIAR.*, 1906-7, pp. 152ff, fig., Liiia; *The Catalogue of the Sāñchi Museum*, p. 21, pl. no. A 15, p. viii; *Journal of U.P. Historical Society* vol. xviii, p. 96, pls. i and ii.

39. N. P. Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, *Math. Mus. no.* 17-1303 p. 79.

40. *Ep. Ind.*, vol. xvii, p. 10f.



other Nāga images, both in standing and sitting positions datable in the 1st century A.D. need special mention. One is the Bhūmi Nāga from Ral Bhadar. A second one is the Nāgā Kāla obtained from Katrā.<sup>41</sup> The other one is a Nāga deity in Abhaya mudrā. References should also be made of the two other Nāga images.<sup>42</sup> The images of a later date, supposedly of the 2nd century A.D. are either represented as an independent deity or is associated with the patheons or symbols of other sects.<sup>43</sup> The life size sculpture of the Nāga with a seven headed snake-hood from Chhargaon clad in a dhoti and a scarf tied round his loins with a raised left hand (right hand mutilated), forms by far, one of the important specimens.<sup>44</sup> It reminds, again, the early Yakṣas as its model. The inscription relates the year 40 of Huvishka's reign. It concluded with the prayer "priyyati Bhagavā Nāgo" (May the Nāga deity be pleased). Incidentally, mention should be made about the recent excavation by the German team led by Herbert Harte at Sonkh (Dist. Mathura) which has unearthed an apsaidal brick temple dedicated to the Nāga cult belonging to the early Kushāṇa phase. This is of eminent importance as Nāga shrines are comparatively rare to be found during the period. The gateway lintel contains several reliefs including the king with the Nāga-canopy and servants of Nāga. A hollow terracotta head of a Nāga with a few other terracotta Nāga heads are also of interest.<sup>45</sup>

Among the other examples, mention should be made of a Nāga image from Kachery Ghat and a bust of a Nāga queen with five energies emanating from her.<sup>46</sup> This is in a mutilated condition. Two other Nāga icons are associated with Garuḍa. In one of them Garuḍa is carrying away a Nāgi<sup>47</sup> and in the other a torso of Garuḍa is shown holding serpents. A third one is the image of Balarāma, the incarnation of the Cosmic serpent collected from Maholiki Paur. These images not merely betray an association of the Nāgas with the Vaiṣṇavas, but also relate as to the initial enmity and the eventual synthesization of the sects concerned. It suggests also that the Bhāgavatas could popularize their religious doctrines among the Nāga-worshippers by propagating Baladeva as an incarnation of the Nāga Śeṣha.<sup>48</sup>

41. Mathura Museum Antiquity no. 40. 2886.

42. *J.A.S.B.*, 1875, vol. xlv., pp. 214-15, discovered in Sadabad Tehsil by Growse, (Growse, however identifies the image as that of Balarāma).

43. Found in the village of Khanni, *ASIAR.*, 1908-9, p. 161.

44. Math. Mus. Ant. no. 00C13, *ibid.*

45. Herbert Harte, 'A Kushāṇa Nāga temple at Sonkh' in *Bulletin of Museum and Archaeology in U. P.*, Mathura Museum Centenary Number, No. 11 and 12, 1973, p. 4.

46. Math. Mus. Ant. no. 00F2.

47. *Ibid.*, 41.2915.

48. Banerjee, *op.*, cit., p. 107.



## VII. YAKṢA AND YAKṢĪ OR TREE-WORSHIPPERS

The principal religions of the period in question seeking the quantum of recognition, endorsement and dilation had to look invariably for folk and tribal societies presided over by non-descript folk and tribal gods and goddesses.<sup>1</sup> Yakṣas and Yakṣīs<sup>2</sup> were most eminent among the deities of such primitive tribal conception and were worshipped in every village. The age-old Indian concept of ambivalence and the spirit of the opposites were at work signifying both the benevolent and malevolent nature of the deities.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to substantiate Yakṣa-worshippers as a separate sect. It is not unlikely, however, that Yakṣa-worship in general and that of Kubera, their lord,<sup>4</sup> in particular, formed an important part of folk religion<sup>5</sup> for a considerable period in early history of India. 'Yakṣa' may have been a non-Aryan, at any rate a popular designation equivalent to Deva and only at a later date was restricted to Genii of lower rank than that of the greater gods.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes they were mentioned as attendant gods and sometimes as objects of worship themselves.<sup>7</sup> Yakṣa-worship was a bhakti-cult with images, temples, altars and offerings and formed the natural source of bhakti elements common to the whole sectarian development which was taking place in the pre-Christian centuries. If not an isolated sectarian development, it was indicative of a general tendency.<sup>8</sup> Wealth and immortality were the two human factors which made Yakṣa-worship of irresistible appeal to folkmind.<sup>9</sup> Ancient classical literature of Sanskrit, Pāli and Prākṛt provide numerous references about the worship of the cult.<sup>10</sup> Yakṣa-worship is mentioned several times in the Ṛgveda but not in an approving vein. The followers of Mitra and Varuna are desired to remain free from Yakṣa-

1. Ray, *Idea and Image in Indian Art*, p. 69.

2. V. S. Agrawala has provided a comprehensive description on the meaning and cult of Yakṣa in '*Indian Art*', 114-118.

3. *AIU.*, pp. 516-17.

4. Kubera and his followers are genii of fertility, riches and prosperity principally associated with the earth, the mountains, and the treasures of the precious stones and the metals underground. They are tutelary divinities of the Indian household, deriving from the pre-Aryan, aboriginal tradition, and playing a considerable role in Hindu and early Buddhist folklore—cf. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*, p. 70; In Hindu mythology Kubera appears as the God of Wealth, so also in the Buddhist literature. He becomes the lord of the Yakṣas and the husband of Hārītī; In the Buddhist iconography he is also known as Jambhala. (Gupte, R. S., *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*, p. 51, pp. 114-15).

5. Joshi, N. P., *Mathura Sculpture*, p. 10; Agrawala, *Pre-Kushana Art of Mathura*.

6. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, Smithsonian Instt., 1928, p. 37.

7. Chopra, Puri and Das, *A Social, Cultural and Economic History of India*, p. 246.

8. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 27f, 37.

9. Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p. 118.

10. Bhattacharyaya, N. N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, 1977, p. 111; Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 10.



worship.<sup>11</sup> There is also an explicit reference of a Yakṣa-shrine.<sup>12</sup> In the Atharvaveda a Yakṣa abode is described as Aparājita or Brahma-puri.<sup>13</sup> It also alludes that all the chiefs in the kingdom pay homage to the great Yakṣa.<sup>14</sup> But a characteristic description is presented when it defines Yakṣa as 'a wonderful being of colossal size typified in a visible form Brahman itself'.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere a prayer for deliverance from calamity is addressed to Yakṣa and also to sky, asterisms, mountains etc.<sup>16</sup> The Rāmāyaṇa refers to Yakṣahood and immortal life as synonyms.<sup>17</sup> The Yakṣa city is called Brahma-Puram and is referred to as inviolable.<sup>18</sup> The Mahābhārata mentions that the flowers offered to Yakṣas, Gandharvas and Nāgas make glad the heart, hence they are called sumanasas, enmenides.<sup>19</sup> In a further allusion the MBH. states that Brahma conferred on Vaiśravaṇa Yakṣa three boons, viz., immortality, lordship of wealth, and sovereignty of the worlds.<sup>20</sup> A Yakṣa festival has also been referred to as Brahma Maha in which members of all the four varṇas take part in festive mood.<sup>21</sup> The Purāṇas refer the deities as imparting wealth and protection.<sup>22</sup> There is evidence also in the Purāṇas to indicate that originally the Yakṣa cult widely prevailed but it was supplanted by the Śiva cult.<sup>23</sup> Pāṇini also refers to the worship of the Yakṣa in the epithet of Regents of the Quarters, amongst whom is Kubera, Regent of the North, himself a Yakṣa.<sup>24</sup> His list provides the names of Yakṣas along with the names of Varuṇa and Aryamā.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Kubera and the other Yakṣas with a corresponding cosmology of the Four or Eight Quarters of the Universe, had been accepted as orthodox in Brāhmanical theology prior to Buddhism and Jainism.<sup>26</sup> In the Buddhist literature the Yakṣas are vegetative spirits bestowing and controlling fertility and wealth associating abundance.<sup>27</sup> The Milinda-pañha has a list of cults mentioning followers (gaṇas) of Manibhadda, Punnabhadda, Çandima and a host of

11. *RV.*, vii, 61.5 ; v. 70.4.

12. *Ibid.*, iv, 3. 13.

13. *AV.*, x, 2, 29-33.

14. *Ibid.*, x, 8, 15.

15. *Ibid.*, x, 7, 38.

16. *Ibid.*, xi, 6, 10.

17. *Kiskindhā*, xi, 94.

18. *Śānti Parvan*, 171.15 ('Avadhyaṁ-Brahma-Puram').

19. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

20. *MBH.*, *Āraṇyaka Parvan*, 258.15.

21. *Ibid.*, *Ādi Parvan*, 152.18.

22. *Vāmaṇa Purāṇa*, 34.44 ; 35.38.

23. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

24. Pāṇini, *iv*, 3.97.

25. *Ibid.*, v, 3.84.

26. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

27. *Ibid.*, Part ii, p. 13.



others.<sup>28</sup> Varuṇa has been mentioned elsewhere as a Yakṣa-chief along with Manibhadda and other Buddhist Yakṣas.<sup>29</sup> Both Pāli and Ārddhva-Māgadhī literatures stand evidence to indicate that during the Janapada period (c. 1200-500 B.C.) the Yakṣa cult established its authority over the whole people.<sup>30</sup> Yakṣas do not appear in the traditional Jaina texts like *Pūrva Purāṇa*, *Uttara Purāṇa* and *Chavandārya Purāṇa*. But they occur in the *Pratiṣṭha* texts. They are mentioned in the Purāṇic works not composed in Sanskrit.<sup>31</sup> Wherever the references are, they are sometimes mentioned as Devas and usually as *Śāsana-Devatās* or guardian angels.<sup>32</sup> There is a reference of Pūrnabhadra chaitya shrine in *Aupapātika-Sūtra*.<sup>33</sup> Jainism and Yakṣa-worship could be as closely interrelated as Buddhism and Hinduism have often been.

So far as the archaeological evidences are concerned, Yakṣa images are the earliest known images in India. Standing iconographic type is predominant which is stylistically massive and voluminous displaying energy. They have close similarities with the Dvārapālas of the East and West Gate of Sāñchl. Hellenistic type is absolutely absent.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes the right hands are raised and the left hands are placed on the hip. Sometimes a flower, a *çauri* or a weapon is held by the right hand while the left hand grasps the robe or holds a flask. But the position of the hand is by far constant. Yakṣa images do not provide evidence of a highly technical treatment and suggest experiments in mass and volume with an archaicism about them.<sup>35</sup> But the strength of these indigenous, iconolatric cults was such that not one of the great Indian religions managed to eliminate them.<sup>36</sup>

The early Yakṣa images of standing type have provided the model for later Hindu (Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu) and Buddhist (Buddha-Bodhisattva) iconography. The oldest monumental Yakṣa-Bodhisattva image known to us is the, Bodhisattva gifted by Friar Bala (year 2 and 3 of Śaka era, plate 17, fig. 2, in

28. *The Milinda-pañha*, 191.

29. *Dīgha Nikāya*, iii, 195; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. iii.

30. *Nāya-dhamma-kahā*, 1.25; *Rāyapasenīya, Kundikā*, 1.48.

31. Gupte, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

32. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

33. *Aupapātika-Sūtra*, S. 2-5.

34. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

35. Daridan, Jean, 'Remarks on Mathura Buddhist Sculpture', in 'Chhabī', *Bharat Kala Bhavan Golden Jubilee Volume*, 1971, p. 38.

36. Ganguly, O. C., *Modern Review*, Oct., 1919;

Note: Zimmer contends that 'the prominence in early Buddhist art of the nāga and the yakṣa may or may not have had some influence on their adoption as appropriate forms for the divine saviours of the Hindu tradition. In any case, the sublimating influence of the Buddhist transformation of these demonic earthy protectors certainly contributed to the stylistic development of the Hindu traditions of the great gods.'

Cf. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, vol. i, 1955, p. 354.



Coomaraswamy's 'Yakṣa', now in Indian Museum collection). Among the other important ones are the Parkham Yakṣa (*ibid.*, pl. 1, fig. 1), Yakṣa from Patna (*HIA.*, fig. 67), Buddha, now in Lucknow Museum (*ibid.*, fig. 79) and Bodhisattva now in Philadelphia Museum (*Art Bulletin*, vol. ix, part 4, fig. 50). They all belong to the pre-Christian or early Christian eras. The dedicatory inscription of the Pawāyā Yakṣa Manibhadra styles the deity as *Bhagavā*, a point to be closely noted.

The second type which well antedates Buddhism and Jainism is the yogic type in dhyāna āsana, obviously in a sitting posture. This was rooted in one of the most ancient traditions of Indian asceticism. This particular type inspired the image-making operations for the representation of the Jaina (early Christian era) and later the Buddha type from Katrā.<sup>37</sup>

Chronologically speaking, the Suṅga archaeological sites are predominated by the Yakṣa deities. It may be inferred that the Bhārhut and Sāñchī Stūpas are the dedications of a community devoted to the Yakṣa cult. The inscriptions also refer to *Kupiro Yakho*, *Supavaso Yakho*, *Suchiloma Yakho*, *Yakhī Sudaśanā* and two Devatas, *Mahā Kokā* and *Chula Kokā*, to mention a few among many.<sup>38</sup> The Kushāṇa epoch has also been prevailed by the Yakṣas and in particular, by Kubera accompanied by his consort Bhadrā or Hārītī.<sup>39</sup> Dr. Agrawala refers also to several important Yakṣa shrines (Yakṣa-Chetiya) including those of Hārītī. Earlier Yakṣa shrines were in the nature of a low platform on which a conical (peaked at the top, unlike the Śiva-liṅga) aniconic image was placed usually with a niché for lamp. The details of worship included music, dance, offering of lights, flowers, etables etc., a code different from the Vedic Yajñas.<sup>40</sup>

From among the galaxy of Yakṣas, Manibhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, Dirghabhadra, Yakṣabhadra and Svabhadra were designated as *Pañca-Vīras*. It is likely that these Yakṣa Pañca-Vīras eventually gave place to the emerging Bhāgavata deities, the Pañca Vṛiṣṇī heroes viz., Saṁkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Śāmba.<sup>41</sup> It should be noted in this connection that since the days of the Mauryas Mathurā became the most eminent producing centre of popular art of the subcontinent comprising Yakṣas and the tutelary

37. Daridan, J., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

38. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15.

39. The worship of Hārītī was widespread and extensive from the region of Gandhāra to Magadha in the east. Buddhist mythology recounts that she was converted by the Buddha from her nature as a cruel, blood-sucking ogress to a benevolent, protective mother. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-17f.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 118.



deities of the villages.<sup>42</sup> Although these images were either in high relief or in the round, they were intended to be looked frontally. We have to recall in this connection that the Yakṣa images did not merely serve as the model for the principal icons of all the religions but also the concept itself enriched and proliferated the Indian mythologies and folklores in many ways.<sup>43</sup>

### *Yakṣīs and Vṛkṣakās*

'There is no motif', says Coomarswamy, 'more fundamentally characteristic of Indian art from first to last than is that of the woman and tree.'<sup>44</sup> The female tree spirits or dryads have their abode in the trees and their power does not extend beyond the shadows of the trees. Hence, they were also, along with their male counterparts, the Yakṣas, primarily vegetation spirits bestowing fertility and wealth. (*supra*)

According to an ageless belief, nature requires to be stimulated by man; the procreative forces have to be aroused by magic means from semi-dormancy; women are regarded as human embodiments of the maternal energy of nature. 'They are diminutive doubles of the great mother of all life, vessels of fertility, life in full sap, potential sources of new offspring.' By touching and kicking the tree they transfer into it their potency and enable it to bring forth blossom and fruit. Yakṣīnis are visualized in this magic posture of fertilization.<sup>45</sup>

Trees as objects of invocation are referred to in the Ṛgveda itself.<sup>46</sup> Brāhmanic laws enjoin the faithful to dedicate offerings (bali) not merely to the great gods, to the waters, but also to the trees.<sup>47</sup> The antiquity of the tree-cult is pre-Aryan but it was absorbed in the Brāhmanic religion only to become an extensively popular deity. Similar references frequent in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures.<sup>48</sup> Along with her male consort, Yakṣīs had also contributed

42. Daridan, *op. cit.*, p. 37;

Agrawala reports that hundreds of Yakṣa images have been found in Mathurā alone. He also provides a description of no less than sixteen important Yakṣa images from all parts of India. — *Op. cit.*, p. 111ff;

It is believed that Aśoka made an attempt to suppress the boisterous Yakṣa festivals and erected a stūpa wherever such a Yakṣa held sway. Goetz, H., *India*, 1964, p. 49.

43. Coomarswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

45. Cf., Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 69.

46. *Ṛgveda*, v, 41.8.

47. *The Sacred Laws of Āpastamba, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. ii, p. 107; Manu, *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, iii, 88.

48. Banerjee, *Early Indian Religions*, p. 25.



enormously in early Buddhist folklore. Buddhist literature refer to Bhadrā or Hārītī (*supra*) as the consort of Kubera and the worship of Hārītī was widely prevalent in the Buddhist India (figs. 24-25).

In the Jaina texts, Yakṣīs, in particular are referred to as the female attendants of the Tirthaṅkaras, being the leaders of the women converts. They are endowed with semi-divine attributes. Their names and symbols however, indicate Brāhmanic influence.<sup>49</sup>

The plastic tradition of these divine patrons of fertility represents these goddesses or Vṛkṣakās as voluptuous, well-groomed and colossal in size. They stand in a characteristic posture, one of their arms entwined the trunk of the tree and the other clasp a bough, the goddess gives the trunk, near the root, a gentle kick. This curious formula derives from a ritual of fecundation.<sup>50</sup>

In another type, the çaurī or the fly whisk becomes the distinguishing emblem of the Yakṣīs as we find in the Yakṣī from Didargunj. It indicates that they were the attendants to the king Vaisrāvaṇa or Kubera. This was supposed to be a mark of honour proclaiming their relationship with the god of wealth and immortality transforming themselves eventually as semi-goddesses.<sup>51</sup>

The inscriptions at Bhārhut provide us with the names of Sudarśanā Yakṣī, Chandrā Yakṣī, Batanmārā Yakṣī and Chulakokā Devatā and many others. In Sāñchī, the plastic rendition became intensely sensitive, dynamic, rapturous, surging and pulsating. During the Kushāṇa period the Vṛkṣakās transformed into *Śālabhañjikās*<sup>52</sup> or *Aśoka-dohadas*<sup>53</sup> (figs. 36-37). But the Mathurā pillar deities and the Begram Ivory plaque lack in the impersonal ecstasy and became sensuous and mortal. Innovations and transformations in post-Kushāṇa epoch are of course not under our purview.

49. Gupte, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

50. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

51. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

52. The term *Śālabhañjikā* originally denoted a female sport implying gathering of Śāla flowers by women. This is referred to in Pāṇini as *Prāchinī Kṛtā* (6.2.7.); Avadānacātaka also alludes to it basing on a much earlier tradition. Mathurā railing pillars of the Kushāṇa period recreate them not merely as Yakṣīs of older tradition standing on the crouching dwarf but also reflect through them the joyous feeling and buoyancy of life in that age and present a complete form of *Śālabhañjikā*.—Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-26; Math. Mus. Coll. no. J-55, B-80.

53. The word '*dohada*' means a pregnancy longing and the tree is represented as feeling, like a woman, such a longing, its flowers cannot open until it is satisfied. Thus the whole conception, even in its latest form as a mere piece of rhetoric, preserves the old connection between trees, tree spirits and human life;

—Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 36;

*Aśoka-dohada* is a new motif of the Kushāṇa period where a woman bends low a branch of *Aśoka* tree and touches its stem with left foot (Math. Mus. J. 55, 2345).



## Appendix

Since the time the book has had gone to the press some new thinking has emerged and new light has been thrown on the theories and interpretations discussed therein. The particular occasion of significance has been the *International Seminar on Cultural History of Ancient Mathura*, held in New Delhi, under the auspices of the American Center, New Delhi, in January, 1980. The author had the privilege to attend the seminar and feels it obligatory to present a short résumé and some highlights of the sessions whichever have direct relevance to what all have been discussed in the previous pages. Though concise and partial in a way, this may fill in many gaps and omissions that might have occurred earlier.

The papers have been considered authorwise as far as practicable but the sequence remains identically the same as adopted in the main body of the text. The original premise of each author has been retained, supplemented occasionally by the informations and interpretations extended by other participants. The author acknowledges his sincere debt to these scholars whose papers he has the privilege to use and which are as yet unpublished, and to the American Center, New Delhi.

### Social and Economic Life :

Richard Solomon, (U.S.A.) in an attempt to reconstruct the socio-economic life of Mathurā in the Kushāṇa period, has studied and analyzed the sculptural representations and inscriptions and extrapolated data from literary sources.

The mode of dresses and ornaments, the different vocations and the guilds, planning of towns, dwellings and buildings, items of and customs about food and drink, varieties in crockeries and furniture, means of transportation and the range of pastimes and entertainment, as examined by him, have prompted him to emphasize that the people of Mathurā (and for that matter any typical city of ancient and early Classical period) testify to the harmonious coexistence of the 'sense of worldly and sensual delight with the supposedly austere Buddhist and Jaina religions. He impresses upon that this balanced and harmonious attitude of 'a prosperous, cosmopolitan and sophisticated existence' has been uniquely demonstrated in the practice of locating "bacchanalian scenes" within the Buddhist temples. This, he contended, is 'an expression of a culture which was able to reconcile and harmonize all the different phases and styles of human life'.<sup>1</sup>

In highlighting the significant position of Mathurā in the Kushāṇa India compared to eastern and southern regions over which Kushāṇa power held

1. Solomon, Richard, "Daily Life in Ancient Mathura", pp. 1-10.



sway, Prof. B. D. Chattopadhyaya (Visva-Bh. Univ.) contended that the Kushāṇa monarchs were most interested in Mathurā because of its strategic significance contributing ultimately to their economic authority. He argued that Mathurā could advantageously provide the Kushāṇas a base in the south of their empire enabling them to counter-act the powerful republics like that of the Yaudheyas on the one hand, and negotiate direct contact with the Ganges basin and the Malwa passage way, on the other.

On the basis of available records and sites, distributed over a wide area, Chattopadhyaya suggested an extensive urban dimension of Mathurā divided into 'numerous foci'. This obviously led to a 'proliferation of professional groups'. Groups and guilds occurring in the epigraphs represent the commercial and industrial segments. They are again, associated with the religious benefactions, which all, he derives, speak of a social and economic eminence of the groups in particular and the people in general.<sup>2</sup>

In his paper "The Growth of Society at Mathura" etc., Prof. B. N. Mukherjee (Cal. Univ.) contended that possession of wealth in the class-conscious society was a determining factor for status.

Prof. Lohuizen (Holland) dwelt on the foreign influences in Indian socio-cultural and religious life. It is difficult, however, to determine how much influence was imparted by a 'specific foreign tribe or people', or how much of them were exercised by 'the traders and the travelling artisans'. It is certain though, she maintained, that the intruding nomads must have acted as 'cultural-go-between'.

The occurrence of stirrup in the sculptures of Bhājā, Sāñchī stūpa II and Pathora, the Trojan horse from Chārsadda, the Heracles and the Nemean Lion from Mathurā along with the Graeco-Iranian architectural elements, the popularity of portrait images and 'typical hieratic frontality', all go to speak of a Irano-Hellenistic infiltration and gradual assimilation.

The active support to religious organizations and establishments by the Scythians, in particular, was instrumental to transform the religious life of the people. Scytho-Iranian influence may also be discerned in the development of the Mahāyāna concept of Bodhisattva and in the growing popularity of the Sun-God, and the prevalence of the Pāñcika-Hārīti icons.

Mode and materials of dresses and jewellery, crowns and head-gear, seats and thrones all saw enormous changes, eventually influencing the iconography in general. Halo, the flaming shoulders indicating divine kingship, the introduction of dynastic shrines, she observed, along with a patently stable and flourishing economy achieved by controlling the great caravan routes, all added to the eventual enrichment of Indian life and culture.<sup>3</sup>

2. Chattopadhyaya, B. D., "Mathura from the Sunga to the Kusana period : An Historical Outline." pp. 1-16.

3. J.E. Van Lohuizen-de-Leeuw, "Foreign Elements in Indian Culture introduced by the Scythians", pp. 1-12.



Dr. Kala, (Allahabad) with his years of study on terracotta art reported that during the Kushāṇa epoch the centre of terracotta art was in all probability, in Kauśāmbī and not in Mathurā. The Kauśāmbī ones are also much better executed, at least the busts and heads in terracotta. He also informed that the drinking scenes are much earlier in terracotta, available from the 1st century B.C. itself.<sup>4</sup>

These observations corroborate the predominantly urbanized and sophisticated character of the Mathurān populace and the socio-economic phenomena of the period.

Dr. Margabandhu (A.S.I.) observed that Kushāṇa terracottas might have provided more variety but Sunga artist unquestionably added more poise.

M. C. Joshi (A.S.I.) maintained that the archaeological evidences do not warrant that there was a settlement in Mathurā before 600 B.C.

### Icons in Principal Religions :

#### *Linga-vigraha with attendant Yakṣas :*

Prof. G. V. Mitterwallner (Munich) has referred in her paper to two peculiar pot-bellied yakṣas inserted in the brick altar of an *Ekamukha-Liṅga*, assignable to early Kushāṇa period. This may throw some light on the sectarian trends of the contemporary period as well as the religious syncretism of the people in general.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Vaiṣṇavism and the Vaiṣṇava Icons :*

In reporting about the new inscriptions discovered from Mathura, R. C. Sharma (Mathura Mus.) mentioned about an inscription in the collection of the Mathura Museum (No. 13.367) where Lord Vāsudeva has been invoked by one Vasu to bestow welfare to Mahākṣhtrapa Śoḍāsa. This seems to be the earliest archaeological evidence to prove the tradition of erecting Kṛṣṇa's shrine.<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. Doris Srinivasan (U.S.A.) referred, however, to the Saṃkarṣaṇa, Balarāma and Vāsudeva icons on the reverse and obverse of the Agathokles coins, found at Ai Khanum, to be among the earliest. They are assignable to 2nd century B.C.

A figure of Balarāma of the pre-Kushāṇa era, now in the collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan (No. 279) bears a miniature lion in the plough that the deity holds.

But nothing of the pre-Kushāṇa era can be found in Mathura. The earliest *Caturvyūha* icon came from Bhita. Only four kinship triads have been obtained from Mathurā, the fifth one coming from Devangarh, Gaya District. Mathurā workshop has eventually gave concrete expressions to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa icons, 'created a new vocabulary to express the *Caturvyūha* notion', and added variety to the representation of the *Vṛṣṇi* heroes.

4. Kala, S. C., "600 years of Terracotta art."

5. Joshi, N.P., "Some Kusana passages in the Harivamsa", (*Indologen-Tagung*, 1971, p. 243, fig. 181) cf. Mitterwallner.

6. Sharma, R. C., "New Inscriptions from Mathura".



In the representation of the *Viṣṇu*-(*Vasudeva* in Jaina terminology) *Balarāma* as attendant deities to a *Tīrthaṅkara*, (Lucknow Museum, No. J. 47) is only peculiar of Mathurā and rare elsewhere.

Srivatsa emblem adorning a *varāha* in human form obviously as *avatāra*, is the only example of the Vaiṣṇava art of Kushāṇa Mathurā.

Vaiṣṇava icons from seven centres other than Mathurā, in Mrs. Srinivasan's opinion, represent more or less the Mathurā idiom.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Kala informed that unlike the *Pañcavīra* of Mathurā, Kauśāmbī preferred the representation of *Saptavīra*. Prof. A. K. Narain (U.S.A.) added that the *Pañcavīra* concept came from the N. W. India to Mathurā.

#### *Buddhism and the Kushāṇas :*

It is not merely for the religious tolerance of the Kushāṇas that Buddhism could be propagated in Central Asia and upto the Oasis of Merv in the west, observed Dr. Frye (U.S.A.). The political policy was the essential factor which by and large again, echoed the Achaemenian principles and practices. The Kushāṇas brought in their trains more of Iranian elements than of Hellenistic. The "cult of the book" (*pustaka*), an Iranian concept assimilated into Buddhism, the adoption of Arapacana Syllabary, primarily of Śaka origin, the development of Maitreya icon (from Mithra ?) and that of Mañjuśrī speak eloquently of Iranian borrowings. Dr. Frye is, consequently, prone to trace the origin of the empire as well as its culture to be more of an Iranian kind than an Indian or post-Hellenistic one.<sup>8</sup>

In opposition to the theory of transcendental Buddha images upheld by Dietric Seckel (*The Art of Buddhism*, N. Y., 1964) Dr. Hal. W. French (U.S.A.) emphasized that the artists of Mathurā strove to have the Buddha real ; in all estimation 'an eternally living presence' rather than 'something entirely transcending human vision'.

The existing Yakṣa models commanding the reverence and adoration of the common man captivated the theological consciousness of the Mathurān sculptor. Popularity and prevalence of the Yakṣa worship (Nidāna-Kathā, Majjima Nikāya, cf. Coomaraswamy, *Origin of the Buddha Image*, 1972, pp. 12-14) provided also the necessary sociological connections. Yakṣa, representing an immanent nature, could also advantageously be regarded as a superman of divine stature. That is why both Buddha and Yakṣa of early period expressed a state of 'theological ambiguity' but they never entertained ascetic aloofness remaining, though, 'human and world-affirming'.

Even the philosophical refinements of *Prajñā-pāramitā* could not detract Mathurā artist to create an image which should not only convey his own faith but inspire the faith of the believers. His theological self believed in edification and regarded the images as concrete means to realize the spiritual potential of man.

7. Srinivasan, Doris, "Vaisnava Art and Iconography at Mathura", pp. 1-20.

8. Frye, Richard N., "Kushana Rule in the Subcontinent", pp. 1-10.



The legends on supernatural powers of the Buddha as depicted in early reliefs should be regarded, French argued, as a kind of *iddhi*<sup>9</sup> (Psychic powers) that the Buddha achieved. Yoga and the yogic attainments, again, exemplify the 'obvious human interest in the miraculous.' Dr. French impresses upon that this element of *iddhi* is the significant factor that served as the go-between in the human and super-human drama inherent in the plastic diction. This is why the early Buddha images are unlike the full-blown Brāhmanical ones.

This theological ingrain of the Mathurā sculptors provides the logical connection between the Buddha images and the existing prototypes and Mathurā could play the role of an eminent 'midwife'.<sup>10</sup>

His theory is worth-examining. In absence of seated Yakṣa prototypes (Lohuizen, *Scythian Period*, p. 154) the contemplative ascetics in Bhārhut (Coomaraswamy, *Origin of the Buddha Image*, p. 154, fig. 27) and seated Tirthankaras of the Jaina Āyāgapaṭṭas (Lohuizen, *op.cit.*, p. 155; Shah, *Studies in Jaina Art*, 1955, p. 77) served perhaps as the model for the seated Buddhas. And here also the human ease and air have been retained.

This human treatment might have helped, in turn, to add variety to the Buddha images whereas the Jaina icons of the period remained comparatively rigid for a long time. The liberalism of the Buddhists to allow the artists to imbibe different foreign elements might as well have something to contribute.

On the strength of the available finds and the situation from where the finds were obtained in the Surkh-Kotal *Devakula*, Gerard Fussman (France) presented a variant in the interpretation of the term '*Devakula*'.

The statue of Kaṇishka (almost similar with that of Māt *Devakula* at Mathurā) along with a badly defaced stone bas-relief (interpreted by many as a royal investiture scene) and a Clay Sculpture in fragments are the only finds from the excavations at Surkh-Kotal. There is a *triśūla* emblem engraved on the stone-steps of the staircase (temple-A). Kaṇishka's coins have been found in the lowest layer. The inscriptions have yet to be fully deciphered.

There are references about the Śaiva influence in Bactria in the pre-Christian era, but in all probability, was of much later date.

Now, none of the statues including that of Kaṇishka was placed on the cella of the proper shrine, nor even they had their own platforms. The bas-relief was on the other side of the shrine. From the inscription it could only be gathered that the temple was named *bago-lango*, house of god(s), in old Iranian : *Baga Danka*, sanskrit : *Devakula*. In Fussman's view, all these lead to an inference that the temple at Surkh-Kotal was a dynastic temple and not a temple of one or more Kushāṇa kings as entertained so far by many.

9. Rhys Davids, "Dialogues of the Buddha", pt.i, 1956, p. 88.

10. French, H. W., "Midwifed in Mathura : The Buddha Image and its Theo-genetic Properties", pp. 1-18.



Bhāsa's *Pratimāntaka* suggests two meanings of *Devakula*: (i) temple and (ii) house of god and royal gallery of former kings. Contrarily, *Mahāvastu I* (223, 4-10) and *Mahāvastu II* (26, 3-5) relate instances where *Devakula* pertains to Goddess *Abhayā* to whom, a royal practice was, to offer *padanandana*. He, therefore, justified that the *Devakula* at Māt, Mathurā, was a temple of a godhead. It might have been the goddess *Srī*, the protectress of the royal household. In absence of definite evidences to that effect, it might be deemed as a temple of the *iṣṭadevatā* of the family, which could have been that of the *Līṅga-vigraha* or *Nike*, *Anahita* or *Śiva* to whom they had shown their allegiance.

He concluded that the royal *Devakula* of Kanishka was primarily the temple of the deity supposed to impart protection to the family and the kingdom.

Prof. B. N. Mukherjee (Univ. of Cal.) was in favour of distinguishing between the terms *Devakula* and *Pratimāgrha*. *Devakula* is the temple complex, and the portraits of the kings are adorned in the *Pratimāgrha* within the *Devakula*.<sup>11</sup>

Prof. A. K. Narain (U. S. A.) presented the view that the *Devakula* concept was an importation from N. W. India into Mathurā.

R. C. Sharma reported about a slab he had discovered in Chaurasi Hill, Mathura where there is an inscription as *Devakula*. But that belongs, fairly certainly, to the Satrapa period, much earlier than that of the Kushānas.

These views need further investigations. Because, the *Devakula* institution, like many other, is still shrouded in comparative mystery.

With regard to the Buddhist icons of the Kushāna period Lohuizen reiterated that Foucher's theory of Gandhāra origin of the Buddha image is not accepted universally. She was for the view that the Mathurān Buddha is earlier than that of the N. W. India. Moreover, type of image and the depiction of groups in Mathurā influenced those of Gandhāra. She reported that not less than twenty three images in schist in N. W. India is dressed like that of the *Kapardin* type in Mathurā.

Prof. Joanna Williams (U.S.A.), on the other hand, emphasized that the features like sharp noses etc. in the Govindnagar standing Buddha (recently discovered) testify that the Gandhāran influences on Mathurā had not yet been fully assimilated.

Generally accepting Prof. Lohuizen's theory that the Buddha images of the first phase in Mathurā is of the 'National' type, she emphasized in her paper that under Huvishka (mid-century of Kushāna rule) 'an epidemic of Gandhāran influence infected the Buddha and Tirthamkara images of Mathura, and possibly other kinds of carving to a lesser degree'. Towards the end of

11. Fussman, Gerard (France), "Present state of Interpretation concerning the Deva-kula and Inscriptions of Surkh Kotal and the implication for Mathura", pp. 1-42.



Vāsudeva's reign there was a return to Indian forms and 'most of the individual elements within the Gupta idiom had been anticipated in the inventive workshops of Kushāṇa Mathurā.'<sup>12</sup>

Prof. Harbert Hartel (W. Germany), however, maintained that Mathurā and Gandhāra produced Buddha images of their own.

R. C. Sharma in one of his papers reported about a railpost in the collection of the State Museum, Lucknow (No. J. 339) obtained from Kankālī Tilā. A medallion in it shows a nobleman rider on a 'captured horse' with an attendant in the foreground. He liked to identify the rider as the Siddhārtha in a Renunciation scene, belonging to early 1st century B. C.<sup>13</sup>

### Jainiśm and Mathurā

Dr. N. P. Joshi of State Museum, Lucknow, in his fairly exhaustive paper reported that so far ninety two seated Tirthaṅkaras, twenty five standing Jinas, twenty eight Sarvatobhadrikās, eleven male and eight female divinities and one Śīlāpattā are known of which fifty six figures are dated. Finds from Mathurā alone constitute almost a third of the total number.

The earliest representation of a Tirthaṅkara, he spoke of, is on a lintel piece of 2nd century B. C. which was reused as a railing pillar at a later date (Lucknow Mus. Coll. No. J. 354 with 609). It depicts the story of *Dīksakalyāṇaka* of Ādinātha and shows two seated Jinas in meditation. According to him, Tirthaṅkaras on the *Āyāgapattas* (Śunga period) form the second stage of development. The earliest dated figure of a seated Tirthaṅkara (now only the pedestal remains) is dated 4 of K. E. (Lucknow Mus. No. J. 3).

No standing type of Tirthaṅkara of the pre-Kushāṇa era has yet been known from Mathura. Even during the Kushāṇa era itself seated types outnumber (92 in total) the independent standing type (25 in total).

He also informed that the epigraphic records reveal that a very big majority of the Jina figures have been donated or installed by ladies. This may throw some light with regard to the position of women in the Jaina society and their status in the Jaina religious organizations.

His further assertion was that reverse view of the Tirthaṅkara figures belonging to the Kushāṇa period provide some interesting sidelight.

A fragmentary sculpture in which two feet with anklets are present (Lucknow Mus. No. J. 23) leads Dr. Joshi to argue that the figure, in all likelihood, might be that of *Lakshmi*. His inference was based partly on the popularity of the *Abhiṣeka Lakshmi* among the Jinas of contemporary period.<sup>14</sup>

12. Williams, Joanna, "The Development of Mathura style During the Kushan Period", pp. 1-16.

13. Sharma, R. C., "The Study of the Buddhist Sculpture upto 300 A. D.", pp. 1-31.

14. Joshi, N. P., "Jaina Icons from Mathura in the Kushāṇa Period", pp. 1-28.



U. P. Shah (Gujarat) and Ernest Bender (U.S.A.) the Jt. authors on a paper on Jainism referred to the *Āvacyaka-curni* (vol. i, p. 472f), the *Acāranga Curni* (pl. 7, p. 281) and *Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya* (Jain, J.C., *Life in Anc. Ind.*, B'bay, 1947, p. 114, fn. 16 ; p. 115 fn. 29) that the Jainism opted for recruiting its follower from the middle and trading classes for the organization of its Saṅgha.

They further impressed upon [in tune with V.S. Agrawala (*Ancient Indian Folk Cults*) who suggested originally] that the epithet Mahāvīra was adopted from the vocabulary of vīra-worship. In *Viṣṇu-dharmottaram* Manibhadra is enlisted as a yakṣa and identified the form Vira of the Pañcavīra with the word Yakṣa.

Among other specific informations, they contend that the Jaina monks were wanderers and would not neglect to study the geographical and social condition of the places and peoples along with the study of the local languages and dialects for preaching purposes. Jainism was, again, the religion of the merchants. Consequently, the Jaina literature remains a fountain source of informations on the various aspects of the life of the lay-followers.<sup>15</sup>

#### Nāga Icons and Mathurā

N.P. Joshi reported about five pieces of sculpture where nāga figures with snake canopy appear as adorants (Lucknow Mus., J. 4 ; J. 60 ; J. 117 and Math. Mus. Nos. 34-2488, B-15).

#### Yakṣa Cult

Prof. Mitterwallner (W. Germany) in an illuminating paper classified the Yakṣa cult, mainly of Mathura, into two broad categories : (i) those standing and seated ones, fairly colossus, in round or relief, that represent the invoked cult images, and (ii) those serving as the attendant to some principal deities.

The *Gilgit Texts* mention about Yakṣas *Sara* and *Vana* who were among the 3500 Yakṣas in and near Mathurā, supposed to have been pacified by the Buddha (Moti Chandra, "Some Aspects of Yakṣa Cult in Anc. Ind.", *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Mus. of Western India*, No. 3, Bombay, 1954, p. 53.)

From among the sub-categorized attendant Yakṣas the author cited a few specific examples of unique phenomenon. One such specimen is the Govindnagar find of Yakṣa supporting the hooves of a horse, attributed as the Kaṇṭhaka of the Great Departure pantheon (Math. Mus. No 76, 87.)

Yakṣas emerging as half-figures from the Śāla trees during the *Mahāpari-nirvāna* of the Buddha, similarly represent the Mathurā idiom (Vide. Vogel, 'The Mathura School of Sculpture', *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Cal., 1914, pl. Liiia).

Yakṣa's association with Buddhism is highlighted by the figures as supporters of *Dharmacakra* (Lucknow Mus. No. J. 11) and as bowl-carriers

15. Shah U.P. & Bender Ernest, "Mathura and Jainism," pp. 1-9.



(Agrawala, 'Cat. of the Images of Brahmā, Visnu and Siva in Mathura Art', *JUPHS*, vol. xxii, pp. 179-88; State Museum of Ethnology, Munich, Neg. No. 14096, Cat. No. 28-15-1).

The newly-discovered Govindnagar Yakṣas (Mathurā Mus. No. 76 and 77.31) had been ascribed by the author, on paleographic grounds, as belonging to the pre-Kushāṇa or Kshatrapa era.

The Palikhera Yakṣa (Genii) from whose mouth emerges vines and lotus stems, had been classified by the author as a Yakṣa in Decorative art.

The observations when summarized would read like :

- (i) Parkham Yakṣa represents perhaps the earliest stage, executed during the Mitra rule of Mathurā.
- (ii) No independent Yakṣa of either the Kshatrapa or Kushāṇa times has so far come to light except the bowl-supporting dwarfs of the Kshatrapa era.
- (iii) The bowl-supporting Yakṣa of Kushāṇa era (Math. Mus., C. 3) is an example of 'later idiom of an earlier tradition'.
- (iv) Yakṣa of Maholi (period of transition or early Gupta) being the last cult image carved independently indicate, perhaps, that the worship of the cult was on the decline in Mathurā by the 4th century A.D.<sup>16</sup>

According to Lohuizen, in absence of seated Yakṣa icons, it is difficult to justify that they had anything to do with the execution of the early seated Buddha images (*Scythian Period of Ind. History*, p. 154).

16. Mitterwallner, Gritli V., "The Yakṣa Cult of Mathurā", pp. 1-27.



## DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

### INSCRIPTIONS & COINS

- Pl. I. No. 1 : *Column of Heliodorus* (Inscriptions in *Brāhmī*), Besnagar, M.P., c. 2nd cent. B.C., Courtesy, ASI.
- Pl. I. No. 2 : *Coin of Vima Kadphaises* (enlarged) :  
Obverse : Bust portrait of Vima in high cylindrical helmet having forward-portruding bill. Bearded face is shown in profile to l. r. hand holds club, l. hand holds hilt of sword. Flaming shoulder indicates divine power and energy.  
Courtesy, British Museum.
- Pl. I. No. 3 : *Coin of Azilises (Indo-Scythic)* enlarged :  
Reverse : *Gaja-Lakshmi* standing beneath two elephants on two flanking lotuses, who pour water over her head. The devī stands on a full-bloom lotus. The motif and concept are so very common in the relief-panels of Bhārhut and Sāñchī and elsewhere)  
Courtesy, British Museum.
- Pl. I. No. 4 : *Coin of Vima Kadphaises* (enlarged) :  
Reverse : Oesho (*Bhaveśa*) standing contrapposto with face in profile to l. The deity is entirely nude except for sacred thread or amulet ? tied over l. shoulder. The vehicle 'bull' is placed to rear facing r., head turned frontally. Oesho holds trident in his l. hand.  
Courtesy, British Museum.
- Pl. I. No. 5 : *Coin of Vāsudeva* (enlarged) :  
Reverse : Three-headed *Śiva* is standing frontally in contrapposto. He has however two arms, r. hand holds diadem while the l. holds trident. The bull is placed to rear facing left with the head turned frontal. (The treatment reminds the relief carving of *Trimūrti* from Chārsada, Gandhāra, in Pl. VII, fig. 13).  
Courtesy, British Museum.
- Pl. II. No. 6 : *Coin of Huvishka* (enlarged) :  
Reverse : Oesho and Omma codepicted standing frontally facing each other. On proper r. is Omma carrying



spear ? in her l. hand. She has a nimbus and a decorated crown on her head. Oesho is in proper l., face in profile, r. hand holds a ? staff. Attributes are not adequately distinguishable.  
Courtesy, British Museum.

Pl. II. No. 7 ; *Coin of Vāsudeva* (enlarged) :

Reverse : Skando-Komaro and Bizago, standing frontally facing each other. They are placed on an ornamental pedestal. On proper r. is Bizago (*Viśākha*) holding trident in l. hand, r. hand on hip. He has a sword at left hip, a necklace and wears a dhoti-like garment. On proper l. is Skanda-Komaro, similarly attired, holding a staff in his r. hand. The staff has a finial. (This is evident that *Skanda-Kumara* and *Viśākha* who were eventually integrated into a single divinity as the Lord of War and son of Śiva in the broader cult of Śiva, are as yet separate deities.)  
Courtesy, American Numismatic Society, New York.

Pl. II. No. 8 : *Coin of Kaṇishka* (enlarged) :

Reverse : Boddo standing absolutely enface, ushṇisha, long earlobe, nimbus about head and the aureole about body are the prominent *mahāpurusha lakshana*. His left hand holds lap of sanghāti and the r. hand is possibly in abhayamudrā. Absence of Contrapposto is the only exception here among Kaṇishka's coins, so also, is the treatment of drapery which reveals the underlying form of the body, almost a native Indian tradition. Face is extremely worn-out. (This is the earliest conspicuous image of the Buddha on coins.)  
Courtesy, British Museum.

Pl. II. No. 9 : *Coin of Huvishka* (enlarged) :

Reverse : Nānā sits frontally on a snarling lion. Her head is in profile to r. with nimbate behind. Her helmet-crown has a lunar crescent. Her left hand holds a staff and r. hand holds something indistinct.  
Courtesy, British Museum.



## SCULPTURES & TERRACOTTAS

- Pl. III. fig. 1 : TOILET SCENE : A lover intruder, Mathurā.  
Red Sikri Stone.  
Kushāṇa, early 2nd cent. A. D.  
Courtesy, Mathura Museum
- Pl. III. fig. 2 : DAME SQUEEZING HAIR AFTER BATH (drops of water being swallowed by a haṁsa).  
Red Sikri Stone.  
Kushāṇa, early 2nd cent. A. D.  
Photo Courtesy, Mathura Museum
- Pl. IV. fig. 3 : INTOXICATED LADY IN A FAMILY GROUP,  
from Maholi, Mathurā.  
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Kushāṇa, 2nd cent. A. D.  
Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi
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Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. V. fig. 5 : *PARAŚURĀMEŚVARA LIṄGAM*,  
from Gudimallam, Madras.  
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- Pl. V. fig. 6 : WORSHIP OF *LIṄGA-VIGRAHA*  
(by Indo-Scythic devotees),  
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Pre-Kushāṇa, c. 1st cent. B. C.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. V. fig. 7 : MYTHICAL BEINGS ADORING *LIṄGA-DEVA*,  
from Bhuteswara, Mathurā.  
Sandstone.  
Pre-Kushāṇa, c. 1st cent. B. C.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.



- Pl. VI. fig. 8 : *ŚIVA VĪNĀDHARA DAKSHINĀMŪRTI*.  
Terracotta.  
Śunga, c. 2nd cent. B. C.  
Courtesy, Gopi Krishna Kanoria, photo, by author.
- Pl. VI. fig. 9 : *EKAMUKHĪ ŚĪVALĪṄGA*,  
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Courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. VI. fig. 10 : *VĀSUDEVA CARRYING KṚṢṆA TO GOKULA ACROSS YAMUNĀ*,  
from Gāyatri Tilā, Mathurā.  
Mottled Sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, c. 2nd cent. A. D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. VII. fig. 11 : *VIṢṆU WITH SAMKARṢAṆA* Emerging from his shoulder,  
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Sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, early 2nd cent. A. D.  
Courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. VII. fig. 12 : *VANAMĀLĀ BEDECKED BALARĀMA WITH A DRINKING CUP*,  
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Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. VII. fig. 13 : *TRIMŪRTI*,  
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Peshawar Museum.  
Courtesy, ASIAR., 1913-14, pl. XXII, photo by author.
- Pl. VIII. fig. 14 : *TORSO OF DURGĀ, SIMHABĀHINI*,  
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Buff sandstone.  
Late Kushāṇa, c. 2nd-3rd cent. A. D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. VIII. fig. 15 : *FOUR-ARMED MAHIṢĀSURAMARDINI*.  
Terracotta relief from Mathurā.  
Early Kushāṇa, c. 1st cent. B. C.-1st cent. A. D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.



- Pl. IX. fig. 16 : *NĀGARĀJA ERĀPATRA* WORSHIPPING  
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Sandstone.  
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- Pl. IX. fig. 17 : *NĀGARĀJA* WITH QUEENS IN ADORATION,  
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Photo courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
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- Pl. X. fig. 18 : *BODHISATTVA* OF FRIAR BALA,  
Sārnāth Museum.  
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(showing Gandhāran influence),  
from Anyor, near Gobardhan.  
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Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XI. fig. 20 : *BODHISATTVA IN PADMĀSANA*,  
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Early Kushāṇa (undated, but regarded as one of the ear-  
liest in Mathurā school), c. early 2nd cent. A. D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XII. fig. 21 : *KANISHKA'S RELIQUARY*,  
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Courtesy, Peshawar, Museum.
- Pl. XII. fig. 22 : *SĀKYAMUNI* OFFERING BENEDICTION AT DEER  
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Late Kushāṇa.  
Photo courtesy, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington,



- Pl. XIII. fig. 23 : THE BATH OF THE *BODHISATTVA*,  
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Photo courtesy, Musée et Institut d'Ethnographie,  
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- Pl. XIV. fig. 24 : *KUBERA WITH TWIN CONSORTS, LAKSHMĪ AND HARITĪ*,  
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Red Sikri sandstone.  
Late Kushāṇa, c. 3rd cent A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XIV. fig. 25 : *KUBERA AND HARITĪ*  
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Terracotta relief.  
Early Kushāṇa, c. 1st cent. A.D..  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XV. fig. 26 : *CORPULENT KUBERA*,  
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Red Sikri stone.  
Kushāṇa-Gupta transition, early 3rd cent. A.D.  
Courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XVI. fig. 27 : *TORSO OF A TĪRTHAṆKARA*,  
from Lohanipur, Patna.  
Polished stone.  
Maurya, 3rd cent. B.C.  
Courtesy, Patna Museum.
- Pl. XVI. fig. 28 : *PĀRŚVANĀTHA*,  
Provenance and period unknown, stylistically, pre-Kushāṇa,  
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Courtesy, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.
- Pl. XVII. fig. 29 : *TĪRTHAṆKARA IN KĀYOTSARGA MUDRĀ : PRATIMĀ SARVATOBHADRIKĀ*,  
from Mathurā.  
Buff Sikri sandstone.  
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Courtesy, Lucknow Museum.
- Pl. XVII. fig. 30 : *PĀRŚVANĀTHA*.  
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Late Kushāṇa, c. early 3rd cent. A.D.  
Courtesy, Lucknow Museum.

- Pl. XVIII. fig. 31 : *TĪRTHAMKARA IN DHYĀNAMUDRĀ WITH ATTENDANS*,  
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Spotted red sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, late 1st cent. A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
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Red Sikri sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, c. 1st cent. A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XIX. fig. 33 : *SŪRYA IN PRĀCHYAVEŚA ATTENDED BY DAṆḌA PIṆGALA*,  
from a railing pillar, Bodh Gayā.  
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Courtesy, ASI., India.
- Pl. XIX. fig. 34 : *SŪRYA IN CHARIOT IN THE MIDST OF HALO*,  
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Mottled red sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, 1st-2nd cent. A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XX. fig. 35 : *SŪRYA IN UDĪCHYAVEŚA WITH DAṆḌA AND PIṆGALA*,  
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Kushāṇa, c. 2nd cent. A.D.  
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Early Andhra, late 1st cent. B.C.  
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- Pl. XXII. fig. 37 : *YAKṢĪ OR VRIKṢAKĀ*,  
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Spotted red sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, c. 2nd cent. A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.
- Pl. XXII. fig. 38 : *ARDDHADEVĪ IN ABHAYAMUDRĀ*,  
from Mathurā.  
Mottled red sandstone.  
Kushāṇa, c. late 1st cent. A.D.  
Photo courtesy, Mathura Museum.



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# PLATES

Nos. I to II : Inscriptions and Coins Contain Figs. 1 — 9

Nos. III to XXII : Sculptures and Terracottas Contain Figs. 1—38





INSCRIPTIONS AND COINS



Fig. 1



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 2



Fig. 5

PLATE II



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



SCULPTURES AND TERRACOTTAS



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4





Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10





Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15





Fig. 16



Fig. 17

PLATE X



Fig. 18



Fig. 19





Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22





Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25





Fig. 26

PLATE XVI



Fig. 27



Fig. 28





Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32





Fig. 33



Fig.34



Fig. 35





Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



## ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct Reading</i>
1	11	aperçu	aperçu
1	27	d'etre	d'être
3	25	resume	résumé
3	33	doctrinaire	doctrinaire
5	8	thai	that
6	14	Vaśiṣṭhas	Vāśiṣṭhas
6	29	Śreṣṭhins	Śreṣṭhins
6	40	<i>Presidentsal</i>	<i>Presidential</i>
6	43	Śūdras	Sūdras
7	2	Notwithstanding	Notwithstanding,
7	3	sentiments for	sentiments are evident for
7	17	Chandāla	Chandāla
7	24	Sūdras	Sūdras
7	27	Jatakas	Jātakas
7	33	Chandāla	Chandāla
7	34	untouchables	untouchables
7	43	<i>Teh</i>	<i>The</i>
8	21	<i>Kauṭilya</i>	<i>Kauṭilya</i>
8	27	Gandharvikas	Gāndharvikas
9	4	occupations	occupations).
14	31	<i>S. B. E.</i>	<i>S. B. E.,</i>
15	5	<i>Saddharmapundarika</i>	<i>Saddharmapundarika</i>
15	11	<i>Chittakarma</i>	<i>Chittakamma</i>
18	15	<i>Aksayanivi</i>	<i>Akṣayanivi</i>
27	21	doner	donor
29	6	Surya	Sūrya
30	22	'anti-chamber'	'ante-chamber'
32	25	donimation	domination
32	30	<i>Trbes</i>	<i>Tribes</i>
35	23	a remotest	a remote
35	37	<i>Raghuvaṃsa</i>	<i>Raghuvaṃśa</i>
36	8	great	a great
36	41	<i>ASR.</i>	<i>ASIR.</i>
37	24	indemitable	indelible
40	15	a remotest	a remote
41	22	<i>Paruṣa</i>	<i>Puruṣa</i>
43	8	Vaiśrāvaṇa	Vaiśravaṇa
43	26	Paśupatas	Pāśupatas
45	7	Siva	Śiva
46	34	form from	from
47	5	<i>Taittirīya Āranyaka</i>	<i>Taittirīya Āraṇyaka</i>
49	13	Nand	Nānd
49	24	form	face
52	4	single icc	single image
52	18	Siva	Śiva
52	20	Gandharva Vidyā	Gāndharva Vidyā
52	24	Kuvera	Kubera
53	11	Brahmanical	Brahmanical

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct Reading
53	30	Lākuliśa	Lakuliśa
55	15	God	God ;
56	42-3	<i>op. cit.</i>	<i>Op. cit.</i>
59	15	Pardyumna	Pradyumna
59	18	Pancavīra	Pañcavīra
59	19	Sāmba	Śāmba
59	21	Soḍāsa	Śoḍāsa
59	28	inscription	inscription
60	5	Vgūha	Vyūha
60	5	conpled	coupled
61	8	Hārītī	Hārītī
61	20	Pancarātra	Pañcarātra
61	24	Ekānamśā	Ekānamśā
61	39	Religions	Religions
63	7, 13	doctrinaire	doctrinaire
63	28	An Arhat is	An Arhat, dogmatically, is
64	34	sutta Vibhaṅgas	Sutta Vibhaṅgas
65	2	assembly,	assembly
65	42	conscioness	consciousness
68	27, 37	Sogen	Sōgen
69	28	in chronology	chronology
69	29	in religion	religion
69	42	Nāggrjuna	Nāgārjuna
70	2	headway	headway.
70	16	nātaka	nāṭaka
70	25	Sāstra	Śāstra
70	39	Tne	The
70	41	cenetury	century
71	19	only occasionally	, only occasionally,
71	28	wen	when
71	28	approaced	approached
72	34	Sogen	Sōgen
75	6	of	for
78	19	Digambaras.	Digambaras
79	8	coginzances	cognizances
80	39	bhāva)	(bhāva)
80	40	infinits	infinite
81	27	Pancendriya	Pañcendriya
83	23	live	lead
86	15	Udiṣyaveśa	Udiṣyaveśa
86	22	Pancamahākālpa	Pañcamahākālpa
93	31	Harte	Hartel
93	35	Grünwedel	Grunwedel
94	3	Nāgā	Nāga
94	14	Hārte	Hartel
94	26	Cosmic serpent	Cosmic Serpent

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