THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS
 AND
 OTHER ESSAYS

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This fourth volume of my Select Writings consists of two parts. The first part (pp. 3-172) constitutes a comprehensive and well-documented study of the culture and civilization of the age of the Guptas. The second part (pp. 175-358) contains essays resulting from a new approach to such subjects as dramatic criticism, history of literature (Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit), India's cultural expansion, and religion, philosophy, and mythology. The fairly detailed index will, it is hoped, be found useful.

As in the earlier volumes, an attempt is made also in the present volume to render the treatment of the various topics as complete and up-to-date as possible, mostly through foot-notes.

As usual, the Bhandarkar Institute Press and the Ajanta Publications (India) have been uniformly cooperative and accommodating.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona
AIoC All-India Oriental Conference
Ait. Br. (AB) Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa
Arch. Or. Archiv Orientalni, Prague
ASI Archaeological Survey of India
ASR Report of the Archaeological Survey of India
ASRWC Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, Western Circle
ASWI Archaeological Survey of Western India (Report)
BC Buddhacarita
BDCRI Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Poona
Bh. Vid. (BV) Bhāratīya Vidyā, Bombay
Bibl. Ind. Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta
Br. Up. Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad
BSS Bombay Sanskrit Series, BORI, Poona
Bull. MFA Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
CGD Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśāṅka (Catalogue), ed. J. Allan, London 1914
Ch. Up. Çhāndogya-Upaniṣad
CIC = CGD
DKC Daśakumārakarita
GOS Gaekwad’s Oriental Series, Baroda
EI Epigraphia Indica
IA Indian Antiqury, Bombay
IE Indo-European
IF Indogermanische Forschungen, Berlin
IHQ Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta
IIJ Indo-Iranian Journal, The Hague


Ind. Streif. Indische Streifen, Berlin
JA Journal Asiatique, Paris
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven
JASB Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
JBBRAS Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay
JBomU Journal of the University of Bombay
JBORI Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Institute, Patna

JIH Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum
JORM Journal of Oriental Research, Madras
J Un Pr HS (JUPHS) Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society, Lucknow

JUPHS Journal of the University of Poona, Humanities Section, Poona
KA Kautiliya-Arthaśāstra
KSŚ Kathāsaritsāgara

Lüd.  A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about A. D. 400 with exception of those of Asoka, ed. H. Lüders, Calcutta 1912

MASI (Mem. ASI)  Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India

MBh.  Mahābhārata
MS  Manusmṛti
Mudrā.  Mudrārākṣasa
NPP  Nāgarī Pracārini Patrika, Varanasi
P.  Purāṇa
PP  Pūrvapīṭhikā

Proc. IHC (PIHC)  Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PTS  Pali Text Society
PUOP  Panjab University Oriental Publications
Raghu.  Raghuvamśa
Rocz. Or.  Rocznik Orientalistyczny, Lwow
ŚPB  Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa

SVUOJ  Sri Venkateshwar University Oriental Journal, Tirupati
TSS  Trivandrum Sanskrit Series
UCR  University of Ceylon Review, Peradeniya
Up.  Upaniṣad
VBQ  The Visvabharati Quarterly, Santiniketan
YS  Yājñavalkyaṃśṛti
THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS
The Age of the Guptas generally presupposes the political history of the Guptas as set forth in my A History of the Guptas (Poona, 1941). As a matter of fact, The Age of the Guptas was originally planned as a companion volume of that History. Owing to various reasons, however, these chapters, instead of being issued in a book form, were published separately in different journals and volumes at different times. They are now being reproduced here mostly in their original form — but, of course, not in the chronological order of their first publication.

R. N. D.
THE GUPTA EMPIRE

Introduction

With the advent of the Guptas on the stage of Indian history, there was ushered in an epoch characterised by great spiritual enlightenment and material progress. Particularly on the background of the immediately preceding period, the political and cultural history of which cannot still be said to have been fully and satisfactorily reconstructed, the achievements of the Indians in every sphere of cultural activity, during the age of the Guptas, almost dazzle our eyes. After the more or less obscure times of the Śuṅgas and the Āṇdhras, of the Śakas, the Pahlavas, and the Kuśāṇas, light returns again, in 319–20 A.D., when a new dynasty arose in Magadha – a dynasty, which built up, in course of time, a very powerful and extensive empire in the country. This new empire must be said to have been essentially Indian – or Hindu – in character. It was heralded by Vedic mantras chanted by Brahmanic priests at the āśvamedha sacrifice performed, after a considerable lapse of time in history, by Samudra Gupta, who was, in the galaxy of Indian kings, an irresistible yet a generous conqueror. He and his equally great son, Candra Gupta II, who combined in himself the vaiṣṇava piety with passion for war, made the Gupta eagle fly triumphanty, in its imperial glory, over a major portion of India. The imperial Guptas created conditions which freed the people from fear and ensured for them considerable economic and social security. This fact naturally resulted in a remarkable outburst of the creative activity of the Hindu genius. In the realms of art and literature, in political and economic enterprises, in religious and philosophical speculations, we see, in this period, perhaps, the best and the highest of which the ancient Indians were capable. It was an age of unique and most typically Indian achievements in the fields of thought and deed, and amply deserves to be called the Golden Age of Indian History. A critical survey of these achievements will more than
substantiate the claim that the Guptas had opened up a happy and progressive era for India and the Indian spirit by establishing conditions of a high state of civilization.

Let us begin with a general consideration of the nature of the Gupta empire. The foundations of the Gupta empire were laid by Candra Gupta I; it was expanded and consolidated by Samudra Gupta; and it may be said to have attained its acme under Candra Gupta II Vikramāditya. In the last years of the reign of Kumāra Gupta I the disintegration set in, and only the last vestiges of that enormous imperial structure could be seen in the days of Skanda Gupta and his successors. Though the concept of 'empire' as such cannot be said to have then been a new one in Indian political thought inasmuch as sāmṛāṭya or imperial power has already been mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa1 as one of the forms of state and also inasmuch as Indian history provides ample evidence to prove the existence of several empires prior to the age of the Guptas, on the background of the many republics which flourished in India for a long period up to the advent of the Guptas, special significance attaches to the foundation and the growth of the Gupta empire. Megas-thenes, writing about 300 B. C., has recorded that sovereignty or kingship had been dissolved and democratic governments set up in many places. Historians of Alexander's campaign also testify to the existence of a number of such autonomous republics. The imperial Mauryas and their successors do not seem to have interfered with those republics to any appreciable extent, and they existed side by side with the former. These tribal republics or political corporations usually issued coins in the name of the entire tribe and not of any particular king. The word, gaṇa, was often used with the tribal name, and the Avadāṇa-śataka, belonging to about the first century B. C., clearly states that some countries were ruled by gaṇas while others were ruled by 'monarchs'.2 Invasions from without and growth of monarchi-

cal power within the country were, however, responsible for the

1. Ait. Br. 35. 6; 37. 2; 38. 1.
2. Avadāṇa-śataka, avadāna 88.
downfall of these republics, and we find that, under the Guptas, most of them came to be gradually absorbed into the larger governmental scheme of the Gupta empire. The Allahabad pillar inscription, for instance, records the subjection, by Samudra Gupta, of the Mālavas, the Ārjunāyanas, the Yaudheyas, and other such republican tribes, which subsequently recognized his imperial suzerainty by paying all taxes, obeying all orders, and personally performing the necessary obeisance.

But the Gupta empire was not an empire in the sense of a single power extending and maintaining direct rule over a number of peoples belonging to different races and vaunting different cultures. Extension of imperial power with a view to imposing the culture of the conqueror on the vanquished people and to exploiting them economically was almost unknown in ancient India. It was sheerly for the exhibition of the conqueror’s valour—parākrama—that several states were brought under the control of a single authority. The age-old ideal of an Indian king has been that of a vijigīśu. He must ever be a hammer to the neighbouring princes lest he be himself reduced to the position of the anvil. The activities of a vijigīśu rarely interfered with the normal life of his own subjects or of the subjects of the vanquished states. Indeed, the establishment of an empire made little difference to the newly acquired regions, the social and political life of which went on mostly as before. It only satisfied the vanity of the conqueror without producing a sense of inferiority or a feeling of oppression among the conquered. The political institutions and the social organizations in the subjugated lands were left undisturbed, and the conqueror did not bother himself as long as his sovereignty remained unchallenged. This may be made clearer by a reference to Samudra Gupta’s conquest of Āryāvarta on the one hand and to his campaign of Dakṣiṇāpatha on the other. He conquered the kingdoms in northern India with the obvious purpose of his own taking over the administration of those kingdoms. The campaign of Dakṣiṇāpatha, on the contrary, was mainly intended for military glory.

3. CH III, 1.
and, perhaps, possession of wealth. Of course some effect of these military promenades on the pre-existing conditions was inevitable, as was, for instance, evinced by the upsetting of the balance of power in the Deccan consequent upon Samudra Gupta's daksīṇa-digvijaya. Except for this, Samudra Gupta's imperial power must have hardly influenced the general political and social pattern subsisting to the south of the Narmadā.

The real virtue of the Gupta empire, indeed, lay in its unifying character. An emperor, an army, and a bureaucracy controlled from the centre were the chief bonds of the imperial unity, and the external pomp and glory of the emperor, who was the symbol of this unity, were displayed in all imperial dominions through the members of the royal family who held viceregal positions there. Another significant result of such central political and military organization was that, under the imperial Guptas, the country was rendered quite free from the danger of foreign invasions. But the main achievement of the Gupta empire cannot be said to have been the strength of its military organization or the ubiquity of the cleruchy; it was the propagation and active promotion of Indian art and thought, even in the remotest parts of the country, which the Gupta emperors had accomplished mainly through the agency of the agrahāras or religious endowments.

It may be mentioned at this stage that, though since the foundation of the Gupta empire India had become almost free from foreign invasions, she was not altogether cut off from the outside world. As a matter of fact, her contacts with the West and more particularly with the Far East and the South-East became closer and more frequent than ever before. But these contacts were peaceful. Special efforts seem to have been made by the Gupta sovereigns to establish friendly political relations with foreign rulers. Sylvain Lévi, for instance, points out, on the testimony of Chinese sources, that a king of Ceylon, Chi-mi-

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kia-po-mo (Śrī Meghavarṇa: Siri Mehhavaṇṇa) sent an embassy to the Indian king San-meon-to-lo-kiu-to (Samudra Gupta) seeking permission to erect a monastery at Mahābodhi (Bodh Gayā) for the accommodation of Buddhist monks from Ceylon. The Gupta emperor graciously granted the request whereupon the erection of a spacious monastery was duly carried out. The fact of the erection of a large and magnificent monastery at Bodh Gayā by a king of Ceylon, whose name is however not mentioned, for the residence of Sinhalese monks is attested by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, who visited the sacred bow-tree about three centuries later. He describes it as having six courts, with terraces and halls of three storeys, enclosed by walls between thirty and forty feet high, and as providing accommodation for a thousand monks. The sculpture and painting were, according to the pilgrim, perfect. The statue of the Buddha was cast in gold and silver, and was decorated with gems and precious stones of various colours. These friendly relations seem to have continued even between Candra Gupta II and Kumāra Gupta I on the one hand and their Ceylonese contemporaries, Buddhādāsa, Upatissa I, and Mahānāma on the other. There is also sufficient evidence to show that Indian ambassadors were sent out to foreign countries during the Gupta regime. The emperors Constantine and Julian are reported to have received at their courts ambassadors from India in 336 A. D. and 361 A. D. respectively. From the records of the Sung dynasty we know that an Indian ambassador reached China in 428 A. D. Another ambassador from Western India is said to have attended the court of the Chinese emperor, Hio-wen-ti in 477 A. D. Twenty-five years later we hear of an ambassador, by name Chu-lot, who was sent to China by one Kiu-to (probably, Gupta-Śāsaka).

6. The plinth of the monastery survives even to the present day.
8. GEIGER, Cūrṇaṭa, PTS Translation Series No. 20, intr. p. xi.
10. Fuller details regarding the interaction between the Gupta empire on (Continued on the next page)
The contact between India and the outside world had, indeed, begun to develop already in the period preceding the age of the Guptas. That period witnessed such intercourse consolidating itself in two main directions. Certain foreign races, like the Sakas, invaded India, ruled over a part of the country temporarily, and were ultimately absorbed into the Indian community. They came as foreigners but stayed on as Indians. Of more far-reaching significance, however, were the cultural and commercial contacts, which led to the birth of Greater India. The pre-Gupta period was characterized by the gradual spread outside India of Indian cultural activities, particularly in the fields of art, letters, and religion. The vanguards of this movement were the bands of Buddhist missionaries who were inspired by the noble ideal of carrying the message of the Buddha to distant lands beyond the mountains and across the seas. Their forward march towards Tibet and China, Java and Sumatra, Cambodia and Malay Archipelago was but a silent drift of an enormous religious and civilizing movement, and, wherever they went, these ambassadors of the holy realm of the Buddha were received with open arms by the people of those regions. From the first centuries of the Christian era onward, the Indian ocean served as a popular highway of migration and trade. In the wake of the Buddhist missionaries followed also the Hindu adventurers, who, in course of time, settled down and established political power in certain parts, particularly round about the Malay Archipelago. This remarkable enterprise of colonisation outside India seems to have been specially encouraged by the Gupta sovereigns, and the result of all this was that, in the age of the Guptas, several small colonial kingdoms came to be established in south-east Asia. From the cultural point of view they may be regarded almost as the reproductions of Indian conditions; indeed, they were smaller Indias across the seas. Without going into details, we may

(Continued from the last page)

the one hand and the contemporary Roman, Sassanian, and Chinese empires on the other are, however, not available. It has been suggested on the strength of the evidence of Candra Gupta II's unique cakrasikrama coin-type that that monarch must have had military confrontation with the Sassainian rulers,
emphasize one very outstanding characteristic of this great colonising activity of the Indians, namely, that the driving force behind it was neither imperial ambition of overseas expansion nor economic exploitation aided by military power. It was the natural efflorescence of the most creative period of India’s cultural history.

THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The King

The Guptas had developed a highly efficient administrative machinery, and its sphere of operation extended over a large area of the life of the people. The principal motive force behind this entire machinery was obviously the king. About the nature of the Gupta kingship, we know but little from literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources. One thing, however, would appear to be certain, namely, that the Gupta sovereigns claimed for themselves some sort of divinity. This is indicated by the characterization, in the inscriptions, of some of them as equalling the gods, Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra, and Yama, and also as gods in mortal form. It is true that normally no king of ancient India was ever actually worshipped as a god in his life-time. But the divinity of his person was more or less clearly suggested in more ways than one. In the literature produced in the age of the Guptas, the king is represented as the incarnation of Dharma and as the earthly counterpart of Viṣṇu, the All-God in his aspect as the Preserver.

From the Gupta inscriptions and contemporary literature, we find that, according to the extent of the authority vested in them, kings were classified as janendra, mahārāja, mahāsenāpati, rājānaka, sāmanta, rājādhīrāja, mahārājādhirāja, etc. At the same time, the same sovereign is referred to differently in different records, presumably in accordance with the position which he happened to hold at the particular time when that record was

1. CII III, 1: dhanadavarpundrāntakasamasya; lokasamayakripānvidhānamātramaṇuṣaya lokadharmo desasya. Other epithets used in the inscriptions are acintya (paruṣa), paramādadiva, etc.

1a. About kingship in ancient India, see DANDEKAR, Exercices in Indology, pp. 141-143.
published. With the downfall of the republics and their gradual absorption into the Gupta empire, the truly Hindu ideal of a sārvabhauma or a cakravartin came to be definitely established in Indian political thought. Kālidāsa, who may be regarded as one of the best interpreters of the Gupta age, has often glorified this ideal in his works. His descriptions of imperial sovereignty seem to elaborate what the epithets in the Gupta inscriptions and the legends on the Gupta coins indicate. The entire world was included in the concept of the cakravartin or the world-sovereign. It may be pointed out, in this connection, that the title of ‘universal overlord’ may be an exaggeration in the geographical sense, but the Gupta sovereigns like Samudra Gupta and Candra Gupta II were certainly universal overlords in the spiritual sense.

A Gupta sovereign, as the inscriptions seem to suggest, was often nominated by his predecessor. This custom led to occasional disputes about succession, as for instance, in the case of Samudra Gupta and Kāca, and of Candra Gupta II and Rāma Gupta. It also meant that the right of primogeniture was not always strictly observed in practice. The fourth stanza in the Allahabad pillar inscription clearly points out that, in view of Samudra Gupta’s proved worth and capacity to assume a responsible position, Candra Gupta I had nominated him as his successor, thereby causing great discomfiture to the other princes. More often than not, all the princes were entrusted with some responsible work during the regime of the sovereign, and their ability was thereby properly tested. Skanda Gupta, for instance, was commissioned to fight the Hūṇa invaders when he was crown-prince. From the works of Kālidāsa, we can glean a few facts

2. Samudra Gupta is called dharmarāja in CII III, 1, and rāja on the tiger type of coins (CIC, p. 17). Kumāra Gupta I is referred to as mahārāja in CII III, 11.
3. Cf. Ratnasambhava II. 47; Śākuntala VII. 33.
6. Ibid., pp. 70-79.
7. CII III, 1.
8. CII III, 13.
pertaining to the different aspects of the career of a contemporary king. Special efforts were made to give proper theoretical education and practical training to a prince, so that, after having gone through that discipline, he became fit to assume the responsibilities of an heir-apparent, and subsequently, of a ruling sovereign. The personal accomplishments of Samudra Gupta and Candra Gupta II, in literary, artistic, martial, and diplomatic spheres, to which frequent references are made in the inscriptions, indicate the wide range of subjects taught to the princes. When Kālidāsa tells us that Dilipa was learned without being a demagogue, strong without being spiteful, and charitable without being a braggart, he seems to be actually referring to the virtues acquired and the vices avoided by his Gupta patrons. Ancient Indian polity had devised two main safeguards against the possible abuse of centralised sovereignty. The first was suggested through the fiction, found in most of the ancient polities, that, though law actually changed from time to time in conformity with the changing circumstances, it was never to be represented as changing. Kālidāsa has accordingly pointed out that kings administered no laws other than the laws of Manu. Further, in the works of Kālidāsa, kings have been represented as taking the aid of men well-versed in ancient law at the time of administering justice. The second safeguard was to insist on proper education and training being imparted to princes and high moral character and sense of responsibility being inculcated in them. Consequently, the possibility of a prince turning into a tyrannous autocrat was substantially reduced. As a matter of fact, Indian polity embodies not so much the doctrine of state as the art of government, and the proper education of a prince constitutes the corner-stone of this latter. The qualities required of a monarch

10. Ibid. I. 22.
11. Ibid. I. 17; XIV. 47.
12. Ibid. XVII. 39.
13. Ibid. IX. 7ff.
13a. Also see: Dandekar, “Checks on monarchy,” Exercises in Indology, pp. 149-154.
are defined almost canonically. Through the descriptions of the kings belonging to the Raghu race, Kālidāsa has indicated how the personal life of a Gupta monarch must have been properly regularised and apportioned for the carrying out of kingly duties and the enjoyment of private pleasures. In his Arthaśāstra, Kauṭilya has set forth a detailed time-table for the daily chores of a king. He has divided the day and the night into sixteen parts, and has assigned each of those parts to some definite items in the king’s programme, such as, administrative work, study, planning for the future, cabinet meetings, sport, rest, etc. The kings in Kālidāsa’s Raghuvānśa, who, as suggested above, are presumably more or less idealised versions of his Gupta patrons, are represented as scrupulously following that time-table.

As regards the domestic life of the Gupta sovereigns, the epigraphic records provide but little information. All that we can gather from some of them is the names of the Gupta queens, at least of the Paṭṭadeviś. From the works of Kālidāsa and other contemporary literature, however, we can have a few glimpses into that aspect of a king’s life.

Ministers: Civil and Military Officers

In the administration of the state, the Gupta monarch was assisted by a council of ministers, and, under certain special circumstances, presumably also by an assembly of elders. A reference to such an assembly is made in the Allahabad pillar inscription, where we are told that Candra Gupta I nominated Samudra Gupta as his successor in the presence of the assembly, whose members thereupon approved of the appointment and heaved a sigh of relief. It is, however, difficult to say whether a

15. I. 19.
16a. A reference may be incidently made here also to the Candra Gupta I–Kumāradevi coin-type.
17. CH III, 1.
central political assembly was a regular feature of the Gupta administrative system. There is a reference, in the Bilsad inscription, to a (pā)ṛṣada, and a Basarh seal discovered by BLOCH, mentions the parīṣad of Udānakūpa. It would thus appear that some sort of a consultative body did find a place in the political set-up under the Guptas.

The business of the state was elaborately distributed into various portfolios, which were then assigned to the ministers. It must be pointed out, in this context, that literary, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence pertaining to the Gupta period is not comprehensive enough to give a complete idea of the details of administration in those times. Only certain general features become clear, such as, predominance of monarchy, occasional disputes about succession, council of ministers, system of spies, some broad facts regarding civil and military organisations, items of taxation, procedure of founding an endowment, guilds, and dispensation of justice. The designations of ministers and other high officials under the Guptas have changed from time to time. It is, therefore, often difficult to determine the exact functions of a particular minister. The general designation of a minister as mantrin occurs rarely in the Gupta inscriptions. Hariśeṇa, the author of the Allahabad pillar inscription, was himself Saṁdhivigrāhika, Kumārāmātya, and Mahādaṇḍanāyaka. This fact would show either that a minister was transferred from one portfolio to another or that he held charge of several departments simultaneously. The Saṁdhivigrāhika or Mahāsaṁdhivigrāhika seems to have been responsible for matters concerning peace and war with other kings and may be said to correspond more or less to the minister for foreign affairs in modern times. From the constant reference to Saṁdhivigrāhika and Mahāsaṁdhivigrāhika in the Gupta records it would appear that the foreign office played an important part in the administration of the Guptas. It may also be mentioned in this connection that exchange of Dūtas or

18. CH III, 10.
20. CH III, 1.
ambassadors was a significant feature of Gupta diplomacy. Friendly relations were thereby actively promoted between the Gupta sovereigns and foreign rulers. A reference has already been made to the ambassadors from India who were received at the courts of Constantine, Julian, and Hio-wen-ti, during the age of the Guptas, as also to the mission from Ceylon received by Samudra Gupta. 21

As regards Mahādaṇḍanāyaka, one need not assume that he was purely a military officer; it is more probable that here the word danda is to be understood in the sense of general administration of the state. Though the term Kumārāmātya occurs frequently in the Gupta inscriptions, its exact connotation is difficult to determine. From the literal meaning of the designation, however, it may be surmised that Kumārāmātyas were close relations of the ruling sovereign, often princes of royal blood, who were appointed to hold the office of governors of provinces and were given ministerial rank. 22 It was these members of the royal family who carried the pomp and circumstance of imperial glory into the provinces. A Sāciva is often mentioned, but his exact function is not clear. He seems to have been a minister-in-waiting, for, the Udayagiri inscription 23 records that Candra Gupta II was accompanied to the battlefield by his Sāciva, Virasena. That term seems to have been used also to indicate a minister in general. Another office mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription 24 is that of Khādyaṭapākika, but its nature is quite obscure. 25 There is considerable evidence to show that ministerial posts were often hereditary. Pṛthviṣeṇa, a minister of Kumāra Gupta I, was, for instance, the son of Śikharasvāmin, who was a minister under Candra Gupta II. 26

21. See p. 7 above.
22. The other meanings of the term Kumārāmātya, suggested by scholars, such as, 'minister of the prince' or 'a person who has been minister since he was but a Kumāra,' are not satisfactory.
23. CH III, 3.
24. CH III, 1.
25. Can it have anything to do with Food Ministry? Or was this officer in charge of the royal kitchen?
The term Senāpati is used rather loosely in the Gupta inscriptions. The proper minister for defence seems to have been then designated as Mahābalādhikṛt or Mahābalādhyaṅka. The Guptas had set up a more or less centralised military organisation, and military officers of several grades, such as, Senāpati, Mahā-senāpati, Balādhyaṅka, Balādhikṛt, etc., have been mentioned. It is, however, not possible to specify the respective ranks of these officers in the military hierarchy. Other military officers were: Bhaṭasvapati, who was a commandant of infantry and cavalry; Katuka, who was in charge of an elephant-corps; and Camūpa or Daṇḍābhinātha, who commanded a unit in the army, called camū. Above the Camūpa, there was an officer who commanded an anākini unit, and above him again was another officer, who perhaps commanded an akṣauṇiṇi.

**Administrative Divisions**

For administrative purposes, the Gupta dominions were normally divided into three main kinds of territorial units called deśas, bhuktis, and viṣayasyas. The extent and jurisdiction of these territorial units cannot, however, be said to have been uniform in the various periods of the Gupta history, the same region having been referred to differently as deśa or bhukti or viṣaya in different records. It thus seems that either the status of a particular region in the administrative set-up changed from period to period or the terms, deśa, bhukti, and viṣaya, connoted different things in different periods. Among the deśas mentioned in the Gupta records are Šukulideśa, Madhyadeśa, Surāśṭra, Kosala, Antarvedi, Daḥhālā, etc. These provinces were normally governed by

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28. *Kaṭṭilīya Arhaṇasra* X, 6 gives the following gradation of military officers: a padika in charge of ten members of each of the four constituents of the army; ten padikas under a senāpati; and ten senāpatis under a nāyaka. *Manumṛti* VII. 189 mentions senāpati and balādhyaṅka.

29. Theoretically camū was an army-division consisting of 729 elephants, as many chariots, 2187 horses, and 3645 foot-soldiers.

30. *Anākini* was a unit consisting of three camūs.

31. Ten anākini made up an akṣauṇiṇi.
Kumārāmātyas; but, in times of emergency, special officers called Gopṭṛs were also appointed. The Junagadh rock inscription records that Skanda Gupta had appointed Gopṭṛs in all the delas with a view to adequately meeting the serious situation that had arisen in the country consequent upon foreign invasions. One such officer, appointed after great deliberation, was Parṇadatta, who was asked to assume administrative charge of Surāṣṭra. It may be noted here that in his administration, Parṇadatta was ably assisted by his son Cakrapālīta, who, presumably, also succeeded his father as Gopṭṛ. In a province, which happened to be particularly vulnerable, the civil administration was sometimes entirely—or partially—suspended, and a military officer of high rank was entrusted with the duties of the governor. The appointment of Senāpati Bhaṭṭārka to govern a part of Kathiawar, as a political expediency, is an instance in point. It may be mentioned in passing that, in course of time, Bhaṭṭārka founded an independent ruling dynasty in Kathiawar and thus accelerated, to a certain extent, the disintegration of the Gupta empire.

The next principal territorial unit was bhukti. As bhuktis under the Gupta regime are mentioned, among others, Puṇḍravardhana, Tirabhukti, Nagarabhukti, Śrāvastibhukti, Ahicchatra-bhukti, etc. The bhuktis were usually governed by Uparika Mahārājas, many of whom, like Govinda Gupta of Tirabhukti, were princes of royal blood. The inscriptions also mention feudatory chiefs or Mahārājas as ruling over viṣayás, which were small but politically more or less autonomous principalities. Such were, for instance, the Parivrājaka Mahārājas of Daḥbāla and the Mahārājas of Ucchakalpa. Some of the provincial governors, like Sarvanāga of Antarvedi, were directly responsible

32. CII III, 14.
33. EI XVI, 18.
34. A son of Candra Gupta II.
35. CII III, 21–24; EI XXI, 124; VIII, 284; CII III, 26–31; EI XIX, 129.
36. Indor copper-plate of 465–66 A.D.
to the Emperor, while others, like those of Koṭivarṣa³⁷ and Arikiṇa,³⁸ worked under other senior governors.

The provincial administrators had under them a highly organised bureaucracy. A regular hierarchy of officers and functionaries is mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions. These officers and functionaries were responsible for, among other things, law and order, supervision of economic and other corporations, civic life, and keeping of state records. Happily, the Basarh seals³⁹ throw considerable light on the provincial and district administration and economic organisation in the territorial unit of Tṛabhukti. They mention a large number of officials, such as Uparika, Kumārāmāya, Mahāpratihāra, Mahādaṇḍanāyaka, Vinayasthitisthāpaka, Bhaṭasvapati, etc. The designations of these officers may be taken to indicate the nature of governmental business entrusted to them. On the basis of these seals, it is possible to prepare a long list of government offices, which would show how complex, and yet how well-organised, the administrative system of the Guptas must have been. Among these offices are mentioned: Īḷvarōjapāḍlya-Kumārāmātyādhikaraṇa, Raṇabhāṇḍaṅgarādhikaraṇa, Balādhikaraṇa, Daṇḍapāḍadhikaraṇa, Tṛabhukti-uparikādhikaraṇa, Vaiśālīyadhiṣṭhitādhikaraṇa, Vinayasthitisthāpakādhikaraṇa, and Śrīparamabhaṭṭarakaṇḍiṣya-Kumārāmātyādhikaraṇa. Attention may first of all be drawn to the offices of two kinds of Kumārāmāyas known from the seals, namely, the Īḷvarōjapāḍlya Kumārāmāyas and Śrīparamabhaṭṭarakaṇḍiṣya Kumārāmāyas. This would indicate that the princes of royal blood, who were appointed provincial governors, did not enjoy the same status in the imperial household. The Daṇḍapāḍadhikaraṇa must have obviously been an office similar to that of a modern district magistrate, and its main functions must have been the maintenance of law and order. The Vinayasthitisthāpakaṇḍhikaraṇa is a strange office and reminds us of the office of the Dharma-mahāmātra of Aśoka. The principal business of that

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³⁷ Damodarpur copper-plate of 443 A. D.
³⁸ Tumain inscription of 435 A. D.
³⁹ ASR 1903-04, p. 107.
office must have included the enforcement of civic discipline and censorship of public morals. The military head-quarters in the province were called the Balādhikaraṇa, while the Adhiśthitādhihikaraṇa seems to have represented the head-quarters of the district officer. The Raṇabhāṇḍāgārādhihikaraṇa possesses special significance from the administrative point of view, inasmuch as it shows that the office of military finance was separated from that of civil finance in the provinces as well as at the centre. The Gupta monarchs appear to have very scrupulously seen to it that their military enterprises did not interfere with the normal civil life of the country. While fighting victorious battles in order to fulfil their imperial ambitions, the Guptas did not allow the standard of life of their subjects to deteriorate on that account. It is also clear from the mention of the Raṇabhāṇḍāgārādhihikaraṇa that the Gupta sovereigns had found it necessary to prepare separate military budgets regularly in order to be able adequately to counter the frequent foreign incursions.

From the copperplate inscriptions of Dhanaidaha, Damodarpur, Paharpur, and Faridpur,40 ranging from 432 A.D. to the middle of the sixth century A.D., we get a few striking glimpses into the constitution of the district head-quarters. This office generally called the Adhiśthitādhihikaraṇa was composed of the district officer, who is described under different titles, and his council. The council normally consisted of the Nagarā-śreṣṭhin or the guild-president, the Sārthavāha or the leading merchant, the Prathamakulika or the leading banker, and the Prathamakāyastha or the leading scribe. We do not have enough evidence to determine whether this council was merely an advisory body or whether it actually exercised any specific authority. However, from the elaborate procedure followed in connection with the founding of an endowment, it would appear that these representatives of financiers, merchants, and craftsmen did have some voice in the administration of the local authority. The procedure in respect of an endowment seems to have been something like this: The person

40. Dhanaidaha inscription (EI XVII 23); five Damodarpur grants (EI XV, 7; EI XVII, 193); Paharpur copper-plate (EI XX, 61); Faridpur grants (IA 1910, pp. 193-216; JASB 1911, pp. 289-308).
desiring to found a religious endowment applied to the district officer and his council requesting them to sell him the piece of land which he required for that purpose. Before the application actually came before the council for consideration, the district officer asked the record-keeper, Pustapāla, who was mainly concerned with the registers of lands, to report on the application. On receiving his report, the district officer, in consultation with the members of the council, fixed the terms of sale. The land was then properly measured and demarcated by the surveyors and the sale-deed formally executed. Instructions were thereupon issued by the administrator to local officers to hand over to the purchaser peaceful possession of the land under the conditions specified in the document. It will be thus seen that the Adhīṣṭhānādhikaraṇa was well organised and was entrusted with certain administrative functions, particularly in connection with the alienation of land. It is, however, not possible to say whether the Nagarā-śreṣṭhin, the Sārthavāha, etc., mentioned as having been associated with the district officer in his administration, were elected representatives or nominees of the monarch. A Faridpur grant of the time of Dharmāditya, dated his third regnal year, mentions the adhikaraṇa and the prakṛtis headed by eighteen viṣayamahattaras, that is to say, leading men of the region, as the authority for receiving applications for purchase and disposal of waste lands.

Every township and village was administered, to a certain extent, by a corporation of representatives besides the regular officers of the bureaucracy. Four clay-seals found at Bhita contain the word nigamasa in Kuśāna characters while a fifth has nigamasya in Gupta characters. These references clearly point to the existence of town- and village-corporations in the fourth and the fifth centuries of the Christian era. Their existence is further

41. See the preceding foot-note.

42. This Dharmāditya is sometimes wrongly identified with Samudra Gupta.

43. ASR 1911-12, p. 56,
corroborated by the seals discovered at Vaiśālī. According to Fleet, the expressions like pañcamaṇḍali, pañcāli and pañca-like, occurring in the inscriptions, denote institutions which were more or less similar to 'the pañcāyata of modern times, the village jury of five (or more) persons, convened to settle a dispute by arbitration, to witness and sanction any act of importance etc.' We have ample evidence to presume that the village council was a living and actively functioning institution in the Vedic age. But, in later times, it appears to have degenerated into a more or less informal body of village elders. Kauṭilya, who describes the administrative system in great detail, never refers in his Arthaśāstra to anything like a grāmasabhā; he only mentions grāmarddydhās. This would show that, though village-assemblies as such were not officially recognised, the elders of the village did often act in an advisory capacity. It was not unlikely that, on account of their position in the village, the advice of the grāmarddydhās was, more often than not, regarded as imperative. The Grāmaṅḍ or the village headman also seems to have originally played a significant role in the village administration as a representative of the people. But later on he was more or less reduced to the position of a petty government official, just a small wheel in the huge bureaucratic machinery. Various other government servants were appointed to help him in the execution of his duties. With the establishment of an empire, the system of government naturally tended to become increasingly complex and, therefore, increasingly bureaucratic. The result of all this was that the village communities which had once virtually been small independent republics, reflecting, in a large measure, the real life of the people, had gradually to surrender their right to manage and control their own affairs. Through the bureaucracy, the hand of the sovereign reached even the remotest parts of the country over which he ruled. The form of the age-old pañcāyata was, however, retained, though the spirit behind it was almost lost. It

44. ASR 1903–04, p. 107.
45. CH III, p. 32, f. n. 5.
has to be confessed, in this connection, that, though the imperial Guptas deserve all credit for having evolved a highly efficient administrative system, one of its consequences, whether good or bad, was that the people as such came to be gradually dissociated from the actual government of the country.

Revenue Administration

Before describing the system of revenue administration in the age of the Guptas, one must tackle the highly controversial problem regarding the ownership of land in ancient India. Politically in ancient India, it has to be remembered, hardly implied anything more than art of government. It concerned itself with various aspects of practical administration rather than with doctrinaire discussion of such topics as political obligation, theory of state, individual and society, supremacy of law, etc. It is, therefore, only in an incidental manner that the old Dharmashastra texts touch the question of the ownership of land. Two crucial texts in this connection are Manusmrti VIII. 39 and the bhāṣya of Śabara on the Jaininiya-Sūtra VI. 7. Speaking about the viśvajit sacrifice, wherein a sacrificer is enjoined to make a gift of his entire property, Śabara states that a king cannot make a gift of the whole land in the country, as that land is common to all beings and does not belong to the king alone. As regards proprietary rights in the soil, the king does not differ from any other ordinary subject, except that, as king, he is entitled to a share (usually one-sixth part) in the produce from it. As against this, while dealing with the king’s right over treasure-troves, the Manusmrti makes a direct statement to the effect that the king is the overlord of the earth.47 It may be suggested that, in the statement of the Manusmrti, the word adhipati (overlord) implies a king’s general right of control and regulation of the kingdom, and not his absolute proprietorship of the land. Other relevant texts48 also need to be critically considered in this connection.

47. bhūmer adhipatīr hi saḥ (MS VIII. 39).
48. The stanza, rāja bhūmesh paitr dṛṣṭaḥ etc., cited by Bhāṭṭasvāmin in the commentary on KA II. 24; the two stanzas, bhūtmati tu smīto rājā, etc., from Kātyāyana cited by Mitramitra; dhananām itevaro rājā etc. from the Manusollāsa,
Various interpretations of these texts have been proposed by scholars.49 However, without discussing them at any length, we may say that here we have to deal with two distinct schools of legal opinion in ancient India – one emphasising that the king did not have any proprietary right in the soil, and the other being strongly inclined to concede his ownership of land.

It is, however, not impossible to harmonize the two sets of texts; and the Gupta inscriptions help us a good deal in this direction. The copperplate grants of Damodarpur, Paharpur, and Faridpur50 indicate that, in the matter of the alienation of land, the Viṣayamahattaras, the Nagarāśreṣṭhin, the Sārthavāha, etc., had some say. This does not, however, mean that these latter, as the representatives of the people, were required to sanction the alienation. It was only expected that information regarding the transaction should be formally conveyed to the persons mentioned in the inscriptions. Moreover it is more than likely that these persons were actually official or semi-official functionaries. It is also to be remembered that the purpose of these grants was to secure material gain as also spiritual merit for the sovereign. This fact seems to substantiate the king’s ownership of those lands. The entire procedure in this regard, consisting of formal application (vijñāpya; abhyarthana), verification of the application of the record-keepers, and measurement and final conveyance of the land to the grantee through minor government officers and in the presence of certain specified persons, clearly suggests that the type of land mentioned in the grants belonged to the king or the state. Epigraphic evidence further shows that the land which formed the subject of such alienation transactions was normally the uncultivated land or the waste land or the land surrendered by cultivators. The king was the absolute owner of such land and, in his proprietary right, could dispose of it through his officers. The stanza from the Manusmṛti and those cited by

50. See foot-note 40.
Bhaṭṭasvāmin and Mitramiśra would seem to refer to this kind of land. Śabarā, on the other hand, may be understood to be referring to the land which was brought under cultivation. The king could not oust the cultivators, and the only right that he could claim was that of receiving a share in the produce. The unappropriated waste land was held by the sovereign in absolute ownership, and he could dispose of it as he chose, through sale or grant. In some cases, even after sale, he retained, to a certain extent, his right over the land, by virtue of which he could exclude the purchaser from the privilege of further alienation of his holdings. A majority of the Gupta records refer to transactions in respect of this kind of land. We know from the Damodarpur copperplate grant, dated 533–34 A.D., during the regime of the Gupta sovereign Bhānu (?) Gupta, that the lands which were alienated normally belonged to three categories, namely, samudaya-bāhya (revenue-free lands), aprahata (untilled lands), and khilakṣetra (fallow lands). Originally the waste lands were exempted from all revenues (samudaya-bāhya), but, after sale, they became liable to progressively increasing assessment of revenue. As suggested above, apart from sale, such lands were disposed of also through royal grants. In connection with these latter, we know, on the testimony of Hiuen Tsang, that the king's lands were divided into four classes: (1) lands for the provision of the expenses of the religious activities of the sovereign himself; (2) lands to be endowed to great public servants by way of remuneration; (3) lands to be given away as reward for high intellectual eminence; and (4) lands to be given as gifts to various sects and communities.

As regards the land revenue payable to the state, the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien, who visited India between 399 A.D. and 414 A.D., records that 'only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the gain from it.' This is, however, not to be understood to mean that 'the revenue was mainly derived

52. Leong, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (being an account by the Chinese monk Fa Hien of his Travels), pp. 42–43.
from the rents of the crown lands. Fa Hien’s statement would only suggest that he regarded the entire land as belonging to the state, which seems to have been the case, virtually though perhaps not legally. The payment of taxes was made in cash or in kind or in both. The Gayā grant of Samudra Gupta, dated 339 A.D., records that the revenues assigned by the emperor to the grantee consisted of meya and hiranya. The term meya in this context is clearly equivalent to bhāgabhogakara mentioned in the grants of the Ucchakalpa Mahārājas. These two terms denote the king’s share in the grain-produce, while hiranya represents the cash payments made by the cultivators. It further appears, from the Gayā grant and the grants of the Parivrājaka Mahārājas and the Ucchakalpa Mahārājas, that, in the age of the Guptas, two kinds of tenants lived in an ordinary revenue-paying village. There were temporary tenants who were required to pay a tax called uparikara; and there were permanent tenants who had to pay to the state several other contributions besides the actual land-revenue, which latter was called udraṅga. The Vākāṭaka grants mention that the Brāhmāṇas, in whose favour those grants were made, were to enjoy immunity from certain obligations, which, in normal circumstances, they would have had to honour in respect of those lands. The list of immunities given in those grants indirectly indicates the contributions which a permanent tenant had to make to the state in addition to the usual land revenue. It would appear from that list that, in certain emergencies, the tenants were required to accommodate and feed the king’s regular and irregular troops; to supply, when called upon to do so, draught-animals for transport; to offer milk and flowers to the king’s officers; and to help the king’s spies in every possible

54. CH II, 60.
55. See foot-note 35.
56. See foot-notes 54 and 35.
57. CH III, 55; 56; IA XII, 35; EI XV, 4.
58. akaradhyā, abhāśachatraprāceya, apāramparaye gahalivard, aprupakṣirana-
  doha, atarṣasancaarmāṅgara, alavacaklimnakreṇikhānika, opasumadhyā, sanidhi, sopan-
  nidhi, etc.
manner. It is further clear from those grants that the right to work salt-mines and the ownership of treasure-troves and deposits also belonged to the king. Some of the grants of the Parivrajaka Mahārājas\(^{59}\) seem to suggest that, in the Gupta period, the sovereign used to impose upon villagers a tax for the village police.

Among other sources of revenue, which become known from the grants belonging to the age of the Guptas,\(^{60}\) may be mentioned śulka (tolls or custom duties), āvātāya,\(^{60a}\) or bhūtāvātāpratyaśya (revenue derived from the elements),\(^{61}\) and daśāpradāha (fines imposed for the commission of ten specific offences). When the grants of lands were made, the grantees became immune from all these levies due to the state. In most cases the donee enjoyed all the privileges originally enjoyed by the donor. There is, however, evidence\(^{62}\) to show that the state did not allow the grantee to admit in the village granted to him revenue-paying house-holders, artisans, etc., from other villages. It thus saved itself from the loss in revenue which it would have otherwise suffered. This vigilance on the part of the state clearly points out how very well organised the system of revenue administration of that period must have been. The sovereign also usually reserved to himself the right of resumption of grants,\(^{63}\) if the grantee were proved to be guilty of treason or of some other pātaka or of breaking the conditions of the grant. There is on record\(^{64}\) an interesting case of a village, which, though it had originally been a gift, became in course of time liable to payment of land-revenue, as the original royal grant was lost. It thus appears that a thorough inspection of all royal and private charters was made by the revenue officers from time to time.

The assessment of revenue was made with reference to individual holdings and not with reference to the whole village

\(^{59}\) See foot-note 35.
\(^{60}\) *CH* III, 27; 31; *EI* IV, 8.
\(^{60a}\) FLEET reads śvāta and āya.
\(^{61}\) It is not clear what this tax was like.
\(^{62}\) e. g. Gaya grant of Sumadra Gupta.
\(^{63}\) Cf. *CH* III, 55.
\(^{64}\) Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman (*EI* XIX, 19).
collectively. This becomes clear from the fact that, in some grants of the period, a portion of land in one village or portions from two different villages formed the subject of the grant. As indicated elsewhere, a regular official procedure had to be followed in the matter of alienation of lands. The land was properly surveyed by the officers of the state for the purpose of revenue-assessment and also as part of the alienation procedure. The unit of land measurement, as mentioned in the Dhanaidaha copper-plate of Kumāra Gupta I, dated 432-33 A. D., the Damodarpur grant of Budha Gupta, the Paharpur the grant of Budha Gupta dated 479-80 A. D., and the Faridpur grants of Dharmāditya and Gopacandra, 66 was an oblong nine nālas (reeds) in length and eight nālas in breadth. Another unit of measurement referred to in the Damodarpur grant of Kumāra Gupta I is kulyāvāpa, which is explained by Pargiter 66 as ‘so much land as is usually sown with a kulyā of seed.’ With reference to the lands mentioned in the Vākāṭaka grants, 67 the terms bhūmi and rājabhūmi are used, which fact indicates that these latter were the units of land-measurement current in the Deccan.

On the whole, from the nature of the large number of the Gupta records referred to above, it becomes quite obvious that, in that period, land-revenue was the principal source of income for the state. It was no wonder that, with the elaborate but efficient revenue administration under the Guptas, the imperial treasury used to be constantly replenished. It, however, undoubtedly redounds to the credit of the Gupta sovereigns that they diverted a considerable portion of this regular flow of wealth in their coffers towards the promotion of art, literature, and other cultural activities.

Administration of Justice

The inscriptions of the Gupta age throw but little light on the administration of justice under the Guptas. It is not unlikely

65. See foot-note 40.
66. IA 1910, p. 214.
67. See foot-note 57,
that the Adhīṣṭhānādhikaraṇīka referred to in the Damodarpur copper-plates of Kumāra Gupta I was responsible not merely for the revenue administration but also for the administration of justice. The terms, adhikaraṇa, vyavahāra, etc., used in those grants are clear pointers in that direction. Reference may also be made, in this connection, to the two offices mentioned in the Vaiśāli seals, namely, the Daṇḍapāśādhikaraṇa and the Vinayasthitiṣṭhāpakādhikaraṇa. Presumably these offices were entrusted with the magisterial and police functions and with the maintenance of civic rights and the censorship of public morals respectively.

Though there is paucity of epigraphic evidence as regards the functioning of the legal side of the state administration under the Guptas, we do get a few remarkable glimpses into it from the contemporary literature, which reflects, to a considerable extent, the social conditions of the period. In the works of Kālidāsa, for instance, we come across frequent references to the duties of kings, the principal among which were the guardianship of dharma and the administration of justice. The king was expected to see that the varṇāśrama-dharma, prescribed by the Smṛtis, was not violated by his subjects. There is ample evidence to show that the king was regarded as the highest tribunal and himself tried important legal suits. In the Śākuntala, for instance, the chamberlain of Duṣyanta expresses his unwillingness to announce to the king the arrival of the hermits since the king had only just then risen from his tribunal. In the sixth act of the same drama, the portress brings to King Duṣyanta a message from his minister saying that, on account of the heavy work of counting the various items of revenue, only one public suit had been attended to. That suit, which was committed to writing, was now being submitted to the king for his orders. A sea-

68. EIXV, 130.
69. See foot-note 44.
70. Śākuntala, Act V: tathaḥ pādī dvaśm eva dharmāsanaḥ uhiḥtāya punar upara-
   dhakāri kṣayatipṛgyamanam anavi no tuḥe niveditum.
71. Ibid., Act VI: deva omāyā vyijāpa-vatū: arthajñataya gopanābhaḥatalavy
   skam eva paurakāryam avajītam tad devah patrāraṇah praṇyakṣikaro't iti.
faring merchant, named Dhanamitra, had been lost in shipwreck. He had died childless, and, therefore, his immense property stood, according to the law of the land, forfeited to the king. On looking into the matter, however, Duṣyanta asked for an inquiry being made as to whether any one of the wives of the deceased merchant was with child at the moment. When he was told that one of the wives was soon to become a mother, the king decided that her child should receive the inheritance. The unborn child had a title to the father's property. Apart from the light which this scene throws on the legal procedure, it also provides us with some information regarding the law of inheritance as it must have obtained in the days of Kālidāsa—that is to say, under the Guptas. It appears that a widow was not then entitled to inherit her deceased husband's property. The minister had, therefore, merely inquired if there was a living child, and, since there was none, he had suggested that, according to law, the entire property should be forfeited to the state. Duṣyanta, who is represented to have been a scrupulous administrator of justice, was not satisfied with his minister's recommendation. He raised a subtle point of law. Even though there was no living child, there might be one that was conceived. And, as the law recognized the right of inheritance of even an unborn child, the king passed orders in accordance with that law. We also get, from the opening scene of the same act, some idea about the contemporary law relating to theft.

Another literary source of great value is the Mrčchakāṭika, which was most probably written in the fourth century A. D. There is sufficient evidence in that drama to show that law was universally respected, and that the powers and privileges of the legal tribunals were fully recognized. The law laid down in

72. Ibid.: garbhaḥ pitryāḥ riktham arhati.
73. Cf. the fisherman-scene in Act VI. For the theft of a gem the punishment is suggested to have been death.
74. See "Literature and Sciences," in the sequel.
75. Cf. Mrčchakāṭika, Act II: tva yadi rūjakula taśayiṣayasi tada drakṣyasi; Act VI: adhikarāṇamadbhe yadi te satvakāṅgagha na kartapīmi tadi na bhasmin viśrakṣaḥ.
76. Act IX: vyavahāras evāḥ pṛcehati.
the *Smṛtis* was regarded as authoritative; definite rules of evidence and procedure were also formulated, and they were binding upon the trying judges. 77 It seems likely that the law of the period distinguished between compoundable and non-compoundable offences. 78 It was the judge’s duty to ascertain the facts of the case and to examine the truth of the statements made before him. He was assisted in the trial by assessors, who, in the *Mṛcchakaṭṭika*, are shown to have been a Kāyastha and a Śreṣṭhin. One is reminded, in this connection, of the constitution of the *Adhiṣṭhānādhiṅkaraṇa* mentioned in the Damodarpur copper-plate grants. 79 There too the district officer was assisted in the transaction of his business by semi-official functionaries or non-official representatives, such as Nagaraśreṣṭhin, Prathama-Kāyastha, etc. It would appear that the *adhiṅkaraṇa* referred to in the *Mṛcchakaṭṭika* is only a less organized counterpart, in the capital, of the well-organized district head-quarters mentioned in the Gupta records. As the legal procedure had become rather complicated, the Kāyasthas, or the writers, had assumed an important position in the society. Where the facts of the case could not be clearly proved by evidence, recourse had to be taken to trial by ordeal. 80 A person who was given capital punishment could be reprieved if adequate fine was paid, or if some significant event occurred. As regards the law of debt, we know from the *Mṛcchakaṭṭika* that creditors had absolute lien upon the person of the debtor, and the latter could be tormented with impunity. 81

Clearer indications of the law and the administration of justice in the age of the Guptas can, however, be had from the law-books which were produced about that time. A great movement seems to have been started just before or contemporaneously with the rise of the imperial Guptas to revise the ancient law in

77. Act IX: *ako vasahāra parādhiṅnatayā duṣkaraḥ khalu paracittograhaṇam adhiṅkaraṇikaiḥ.*

78. Act IX: *artha-pratyaśthinor vasahāraḥ .. etc.*

79. See foot-note 40.

80. *Mṛccha.,* Act IX. 43,

81. Act II. 12.
THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

order that it should keep pace with the growing needs of the Hindu society. The new Smṛtis put a more or less liberal interpretation on the ancient law and adapted it to the changing social conditions. The Smṛtis of Yājñavalkya and Pārāśara may be regarded as the most outstanding result of this great movement. Though inferior to the Manusmṛti, from the point of view of name and traditional sacredness, the Yājñavalkyasmṛti is far superior to it from the practical point of view. It is well known that the Mitākṣara, which is a commentary on the Yājñavalkyasmṛti, is recognized in the law-courts of several parts of India, even to this day, as the most authoritative text embodying the principal tenets of Hindu law. There is sufficient ground to assume that the compiler of the Yājñavalkyasmṛti was a contemporary of Candra Gupta I and, perhaps, even of Samudra Gupta. That great law-giver must have, accordingly, codified the law as it actually obtained in the days of the early Guptas. It may be also presumed that this law-book, traditionally ascribed to the sage of Mithila, had received official recognition from the imperial rulers. In this sense, the Yājñavalkyasmṛti may be regarded as embodying the law of the Guptas as much as the Kautukīya Arthashastra embodies the law of the Mauryas and the Manusmṛti that of the Śuṅgas. Several changes of a fundamental character have been made by the author of the Yājñavalkyasmṛti in the pre-existing theory and practice of law. Here we may not go into the details of all these changes or discuss their significance. Attention may, however, be drawn to some salient features of that law-book, particularly so far as they reflect the culture of the age of the Guptas. The ancient law of India, as has been, for instance, taught in the Manusmṛti, presents a queer mixture of secular and canonical law. It was a historical necessity of the Gupta period that the law proper should be separated from much other material which had overgrown it. The first step in that direction was taken by the Yājñavalkyasmṛti, which makes a sharp division of law into three sections, namely, ācāra or custom,

82. KERTH, History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 446; JOLLY, Hindu Law and Custom, p. 44.
vyavahāra or law proper, and prāyaścitta or penance. Out of these three, the first and the third belong, as a matter of fact, to dharma (canonical law), while vyavahāra alone constitutes the law proper. The Yājñavalkyasmṛti prescribes law in a more or less clearcut fashion by dividing it into so many sections. Even the style of the author is severe and straightforward, as, indeed, it ought to be in the case of law-books. The author of that Smṛti puts greater stress upon private law than upon criminal law, which fact would clearly indicate that, in the days of the Guptas, the life of a private individual was becoming increasingly complex. The Yājñavalkyasmṛti enunciates, in a very systematic manner, the principles of the law of possession and usucaption,83 which is barely alluded to in the Manusmṛti. Similar details are given in regard to deeds of debt, mortgages and their foreclosure, securities of various kinds, liability, distinction between inherited and self-earned property, and right of representation.84 In the age of the Guptas, a very remarkable advance seems to have been made in the law of inheritance. A widow's and a daughter's claim to property came to be gradually but definitely recognized.85 The law of inheritance indicated by Kālidāsa in the Sākuntala86 was presumably the older law. The provisions made by Yājñavalkya in that respect must have soon received the imperial sanction.

Another point to be noted in this connection pertains to charity. The imperial Guptas were renowned for the large number of their grants and endowments. Several Indian sovereigns, in other periods of history, were also equally, if not more, famous for their munificent gifts. But, as can be seen from the Yājñavalkyasmṛti, there must have been a distinct philosophy underlying the charities of the Guptas. They gave gifts not to all and sundry, but only to the true apostles of culture; not in order to show off their munificence, but with a view to promoting the cultural activities in their dominions; not

84. *YS* II. 37 ff.
85. *YS* II. 135.
86. See supra.
in a spirit of patronising condescension, but in respectful humility. They founded several agrahāras for the Brāhmaṇas all over the country so that those selfless missionaries of Hindu culture should be enabled to carry on their work, in the remotest parts of the empire, without any financial anxieties to worry them. True charity is intended for securing economic independence for the votaries of culture without in any way undermining their independence in cultural matters. It was this ideal sponsored by the Yājñavalkyasyaṁṛti, which guided Samudra Gupta, Candra Gupta II Vikramāditya, and their successors, and which eventually helped the propagation of Hindu culture in the Gupta empire.

The particular emphasis which the Yājñavalkyasyaṁṛti has put on the varṇāśrama-dharma becomes easily understandable when we take into account the active commingling of foreign tribes which was a characteristic feature of the preceding period. It is a purposeful conception of the varṇāśrama-dharma which has influenced the entire body of law as administered under the Guptas. It may be pointed out, in this connection, that the aim of the Gupta monarchs had always been to preserve intact the purity and the integrity of the Hindu society and culture.

A striking feature of the administration of justice under the Guptas seems to have been that all persons, irrespective of caste, property, and position in the society, were brought under the purview of the king's supreme law. No person was considered, under any circumstances, to be above law. The Yājñavalkyasyaṁṛti, for instance, rejects the extravagant claims of the Brāhmaṇas, by virtue of which they enjoyed immunity from law to a certain extent. That Smṛti further bestows upon the Śūdra a proper

87. YS I. 6, 200.

88. The Yājñavalkyasyaṁṛti may be said to be doing this only in a negative sense, that is to say, in the sense that it does not, for instance, explicitly allude to the concessions in respect of punishment allowed to the Brāhmaṇas by the Manusmṛti (cf. VIII. 379-81). It may also be noted that, in the Mṛchakāṣṭika, Cārvāka, though a Brāhmaṇa, was condemned to death. YS I. 358 suggests equality before law of all persons irrespective of their positions. Also see: K. P. Jayaswal, Manus and Yājñavalkya, pp. 85, 86, 90, 145.
legal personality. Most of the earlier repressive laws against him were abolished. Similarly the age-old legal disabilities of women were being gradually set aside and laws about them were being brought in conformity with their social position, which had been, by that time, substantially raised. In the matter of court procedure also the Yajnavalkyasmṛti has prescribed more systematic rules. It speaks of the four stages in a legal suit, namely, the plaintiff's coming to the court, recording of pleadings, evidence, and judgment. No case was tried in camera. There was only one judge in the tribunal, and he was appointed by the king. Though the judge was always a Brähmana by caste, the condition, which was emphasized in the earlier Dharmaśāstra, namely, that even the jurors should be Brähmanas was discountenanced in the Gupta regime. The caste-wise priority in the matter of the hearing of cases, which was allowed in former times, was also discontinued. We further know from the law-book of Yajnavalkya that the fanatical penances and the severe punishments, prescribed by the Manusmṛti, were considerably moderated in the days of the Guptas. Their administration of justice had on the whole become more kindly and sympathetic. According to the Yajnavalkyasmṛti, in pronouncing punishment, the judge was expected to take into consideration the place and time of the offence, the age of the offender, the gravity of the actual offence, and the capacity of the offender to pay. Repeated offences were more severely punished. Improvements of a far-reaching character seem to have been made in the law of evidence under the Guptas. For the first time, special emphasis came to be put on documentary evidence. The general attitude of the Guptas

89. For instance, YS III. 262 allows a Śūdra to perform the Cāndrāyaṇa expiation rite. Also see: Jayaswal, Op. cit., pp. 91-92, 144-45.
90. For instance, in the matter of succession to Strīdhana; cf. YS II. 145. Regarding a woman's right to inheritance, see sūtra. Also see: Jayaswal, Op. cit., p. 257.
91. YS II. 5-21.
92. YS II. 2.
93. YS I. 368.
94. II. 22.
in the matter of law and its administration is best seen from their law-book, the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*. They seem to have generally encouraged progressive tendencies in that behalf at the same time seeing to it that they did not thereby offend against orthodox conservatism.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Growth of Cities

The highly organized and efficient system of political, military, revenue, and judicial administration evolved by the Guptas naturally proved conducive to the general prosperity and happiness of their subjects. The economic stability and development, which characterised the Gupta period, must, indeed, be said to have constituted the true basis of the all-round cultural progress made during that period. One of the indications of the economic prosperity under the Guptas may be seen in the rapid growth of cities. The Gupta inscriptions confirm Fa Hien’s testimony\(^1\) that Magadha was a prosperous country with rich towns possessing large populations. Pātaliputra, which was the imperial capital, must have been the centre of all economic activities. This fact is corroborated by Fa Hien. We know from the Gaya grant of Samudra Gupta\(^2\) that Ayodhya was the seat of the Gupta Jayaskandhāvāra as early as that emperor’s time. It also appears from other epigraphic records, such as the Karamanda inscription of Kumāra Gupta I\(^3\) and the Damodarpur copperplate of Bhanu Gupta,\(^4\) that, though Pātaliputra remained the official capital of the imperial Guptas, Ayodhya too rose to great prominence and was perhaps regarded as the second capital of the empire. Ujjain, the capital of Malwa, was the head-quarters of the Kṣatrapas, and, after having conquered that part of the country, Candraw Gupta II seems to have become particularly fascinated by that city. He, therefore, made it a practice to treat that city as his capital and used to live there for some months in the year. It is not unlikely that this practice was actually

\(^1\) James Legge, A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms, being an account by the Chinese monk Fa-Hien of his travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399–414) in search of the Buddhist books of discipline, Oxford, 1886, p. 79.
\(^2\) CII III, 60.
\(^3\) EI X, 71.
\(^4\) EI XV, 142.
necessitated by the special exigencies of administration, which had arisen on account of wars against the Sakas, and the political reorganisation of the newly acquired territory in that region. In accordance with the special inclinations of Candras Gupta II, Ujjain soon became the centre of all cultural activities sponsored by that emperor, and, has, since then, been immortalised in the annals of ancient India as the seat of Vikramāditya and the Nine Gems in his court. Gargarātaṇapura, which was a city situated on the bank of the river Gogra in Saran district, is described, in an inscription, as having been adorned with wells, tanks, temples, worship-halls, pleasure-gardens, etc. Daśapura in Western Malwa was a flourishing town, where a guild of silk-weavers, being attracted by the virtues of the sovereign, migrated from the Lāṭa province. Airikīṇa is described as the svabhaganagara (pleasure resort) of Samudra Gupta. Vaiśāli, where a large number of Gupta seals were discovered, was situated to the north of Pāṭaliputra, in the modern Muzaffarpur district, and seems to have been an important industrial and administrative centre. Among other cities mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions are Indrapura, Mānapura, and Girinagara. It is needless to suggest that all these cities must have been characterised by great architectural beauty. Mention may also be made, in this connection, of prominent sea-ports, like Tāmralipti on the eastern coast and Bhṛgukaccha on the western coast, which served as the main spring-boards for Indian merchantmen and which thus played an important part in the economic life of the country.

**Guilds**

The Gupta sovereigns seem to have made special efforts to develop industrial and commercial settlements in various parts of
their dominions by offering concessions and patronage to guilds of merchants. A typical example in this respect is that of the guild of silk-weavers who migrated from Lāṭa to Daśapura in Western Malwa. There they flourished in their business under the patronage of the Gupta monarch; and, perhaps, in grateful remembrance of this event, they built in that city, in 437 A. D., a "noble and unequalled" temple of the Sun-god with the large amounts of wealth acquired by them through their craft.  

Another guild, namely, that of oilmen, is mentioned as carrying on prosperous trade in the town of Indrapura. Apart from the fact that the activities of such guilds of traders, craftsmen, and merchants testify to the favourable conditions specially created for them by the Gupta emperors, they also throw much light on an important feature of the economic life in the age of the Guptas. It is a well-known fact that many departments of public life in ancient India functioned on corporate lines. This fact becomes all the more patent from the study of the economic institutions such as the guilds of the Gupta period. We know from the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya and the Dharmaśāstra of Manu that corporate trading had been a significant feature of the economic life of ancient India since very early times. The fact, however, that, in his law-book, Yājñavalkya deals with the law of corporations—sambhūya samutthāna—in greater detail would show that such corporate activity had become far more common in the days of the Guptas. A guild was a corporation of businessmen who came together and bound themselves by specific rules and conditions with a view to carrying on trade on co-operative basis. It had its own constitution and organisation, and it functioned more or less as an autonomous unit in its own sphere. A guild seems to have possessed considerable executive and judicial authority over its members. It was often referred to by the name of its elected leader or by the principal trade followed by its members. The guild of oilmen, which carried on business at Indrapura, was, for

12. CII III, 18.
13. CII III, 16.
instance, designated after its head, Jīvanta.\textsuperscript{15} There is enough epigraphic evidence to show that the guilds were often mobile, and moved from one place to another in order to improve their prospects. The unity of the members was the very essence of these guilds, as is indicated by the stipulation, in the above-mentioned record, that ‘(the temple of) the Sun (is) the perpetual property of the guild of oilmen, of which Jīvanta is the head, residing at Indrapura, as long as it continues in complete unity, (even) in moving away from this settlement’.\textsuperscript{16} The Mandasor inscription\textsuperscript{17} shows that the guilds usually carried on prosperous business, and, in spite of occasional set-backs, enjoyed quite a long existence. The details about the guild of silk-weavers given in that inscription are very important for the study of the corporate activities in the age of the Guptas. We are told that several members of that guild, after having migrated to Daśapura, took to various pursuits other than silk-weaving, such as, archery, religion, astrology, story-telling, and asceticism, while, at the same time, continuing to be members of the guild. It thus becomes clear that the guilds were not necessarily closed corporations of businessmen occupying themselves with one particular business alone. Members were given considerable freedom in the choice of their individual professions. It is also to be noted that the members of these commercial guilds were interested not only in their own trade exclusively, but also in several other cultural activities. Interesting side-light is thrown by inscriptions\textsuperscript{18} on several other works of public utility carried out by the various guilds. Such works included the construction of assembly-houses, water-sheds, public gardens, wells, etc., aid given to poor people in the performance of sacrifices and other religious rites, banking business, and trusteeship of public funds and private bequests.

\textit{Public Works}

It has to be mentioned, in this connection, that public works were undertaken and executed also by the state itself for the welfare

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] CH III, 16.
\item[16] CH III, p. 71.
\item[17] CH III, 18.
\item[18] \textit{Lid}. 1133; 1180; \textit{EI} VIII, 82-86; CH III, 18.
\end{footnotes}
and prosperity of the people. Reference may be specially made to the repairs of the Sudarśana lake and the connected irrigation plant, carried out in the province of Surāṣṭra, under the benevolent rule of Skanda Gupta’s provincial governor, Parṇadatta, and his son Cakrapālita.  
It may be presumed that when Kālidāsa says that, during the regime of Daśaratha, ‘no illness set its foot among his folk,’ he must have in his mind the measures taken by his imperial patrons in the matter of public health. It may be further presumed that, through his poems and dramas, Kālidāsa gives indications about other works of public utility carried out by the Gupta sovereigns, such as, construction of roads and bridges, improvement of communications, setting up of big and small industries and working of mines which afforded means of livelihood to a large number of people, capture of wild elephants and such other animals which were a menace to the neighbouring locality, etc.  
Endowments of religious as well as of secular character made by the Gupta sovereigns in favour of a community as a whole or of individuals, as known from epigraphic evidence, are too numerous to be mentioned here.

**Industries**

Several industries, even heavy industries, seem to have grown under the patronage of the imperial Guptas. The casting of the wonderful iron pillar at Meharauli would not have been possible except in a fully equipped iron and steel plant. The Allahabad pillar inscription mentions a large number of weapons which also must have been manufactured in such iron works. Ship-building was another big industry which had developed in the age of the Guptas, and it must have considerably facilitated the activities of the Indians in the field of trade and colonisation. Silk industry has been a speciality of the Indians since very early

19. CII III, 14.
21. Ibid. XVI. 2; XVII. 64 ff., etc.
22. CII III, 32.
23. CII III, 1.
times. Reference has already been made to the prosperous guild of silk-weavers of Daśapura. There is a tradition that Roman ladies of those days were particularly fascinated by the silk gowns manufactured in India. These gowns are said to have been so fine in texture that they were then regarded as having been woven out of air. Great commotion was caused in the city of Rome on account of the steadily growing flow of Roman gold into India through the silk trade. The fairly developed condition of trade and industry in the age of the Guptas is clearly indicated also by the elaborate laws of partnership, contract, foreign trade and commerce, and allied topics, prescribed in the Yājñavalkya-smṛti.

**Agriculture**

Not only did the Gupta emperors promote industries in urban areas but they also paid equally great attention to rural economy. Agriculture has, as a matter of fact, been the main occupation of the Indians in all ages. Special efforts seem to have, therefore, been made by the Guptas to bring under cultivation as much land as possible. The very large number of royal grants, mostly relating to waste lands, clearly testify to the active agrarian policy adopted by them. Constant supply of water was made available to agriculturists through irrigation works and wells constructed at several places throughout the country. Irrigation works seem to have been a special responsibility of the state. They were regularly supervised by the state officials and scrupulously maintained in good condition. When, for instance, on the night of the sixth day of Bhādrapada in the year 136 of the Gupta era (= 455 A. D.), the Sudarśana lake near Girinagara in Surāśṭra burst owing to excessive rains and consequently caused damage to the irrigation plant, it was very promptly repaired by Cakrapālīta within a short period of two months and at an

24. CII III, 18.

25. The construction of vāpiśs and udapānas is frequently referred to in the Gupta records. It may be presumed that vāpiśs were wells for agricultural and allied purposes, while udapānas were wells of drinking water. Cf. CII II, 17.
immeasurable expenditure of wealth.26 The construction of an embankment of solid masonry, 'hundred cubits in length, sixty-eight cubits in breadth, and seven puruṣas in height,'27 within such a short time, cannot be said to have been a mean achievement and would clearly testify to the efficiency and the equipment of the public works department under the Guptas. We learn from archaeological and literary sources that all the principal features of agricultural operations, such as, cultivation, sowing, harvesting, irrigation, animal husbandry, and precautions against insect-pests were known and practised in an expert manner during this period. It seems that the basic principles and methods of agriculture, with which the ancient Indians had been familiar since early days, underwent but little change in course of time.

Minor Sources of Income for the State

While thus trying to make their subjects economically happy and secure, through the various state measures indicated above, the imperial Guptas also saw to it that the state treasury was always adequately replenished. In order to achieve this, they seem to have exploited every possible source of income, presumably without adopting any extortionist policy. We learn, for instance, from the Yājñavalkyasmitī28 that gambling was brought under state control and was thus turned into a source of revenue for the king. In this respect the attitude of the Gupta monarchs appears to have been quite realistic—as, indeed, it should be—as opposed to the puritanism of the Manusmṛti. A striking indication of the prosperity and the wealth of the Gupta empire is to be found in its gold coinage. In times of emergency, however, the Guptas had to modify their gold standard. We know from the evidence of the available Gupta coins that, in times of extraordinary crisis, the Guptas adopted a specific expedient, in their currency policy, by

27. It is suggested by some scholars that utsedhato anyat puruṣādi sapta in stanza 36 of the Junagadh Rock Inscription might be translated as 'in height another seven puruṣas' (that is, in all seventy-five puruṣas).
28. Yājñavalkyasmitī II, 200-03.
virtue of which the weight of coins remained unchanged but there was definite deterioration in the amount of pure gold.\textsuperscript{29}

It will be thus seen that, in the matter of industries, agricultural economy, overland and sea-borne trade and commerce, corporate activities in the economic field, and execution of works of public utility, the imperial Guptas had made great progress. Under them the country attained a high state of material civilization, and the national wealth increased considerably. Just as the political and military organisation of the Guptas helped to establish peace and order in their dominions and thus secured, for the people, freedom from fear, their planned and vigilant development of national economy ensured, for the country as a whole, freedom from want. Their entire economic policy aimed at creating conditions of economic security for the people as also at raising the general standard of life by increasing the national wealth. The great cultural activities, such as those in the fields of art and letters, which characterise the Gupta age, would not have been possible without such universal sense of economic security and prosperity.

\textit{Fa Hien's Testimony}

Apart from the inscriptions, coins, and literature belonging to the age of the Guptas, the travel-diary written by the Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hien,\textsuperscript{30} provides us with much first-hand information about the general political, social, and religious conditions of that period. Fa Hien arrived in India in 399 A. D. and remained in this country up to 414 A. D. He was thus able to see the very acme of the Gupta imperial glory. He came to India overland to visit the Buddhist holy places and obtain authentic copies of Buddhist scriptures. Entering India at Peshawar, Fa Hien travelled over the mountains to the north and the west, crossed over Panjab to Mathurā, and, visiting on his way Kanauj, Ayodhya,

\textsuperscript{29} Vincent Smith, \textit{The Early History of India}, 1904, p. 270.
and several holy places in Magadha, finally reached Pāṭaliputra. In this capital of the Guptas, he was at last able to find some scriptures, and so he stayed there for three years learning the language and copying those scriptures. From there he proceeded to Tāmralipti near the mouth of the Hooghly, where he spent two years in similar occupations, and then sailed for Ceylon on his homeward journey. He thus had excellent opportunities of observing the life of the people in Northern India, and, though his mission was mainly religious in character, he has left behind sufficiently full reports regarding secular matters also.

It would appear from the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim\(^{31}\) that distant parts of the country, on the frontiers of the Gupta empire, were comparatively desolate. The holy places in North Bihar, which Fa Hien visited, were, according to him, situated in a wilderness, and he saw only some priests and a few families living near the shrines. The bulk of the Gangetic plain, however, was well populated and prosperous. Throughout the imperial dominions, the pilgrim was able to travel in peace and free from fear, as if he were the cloud in Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta (Cloud-Messenger), and he pays the highest tribute to the contemporary rulers for the happy condition of India during their regime. The general administration in that period was, he tells us, free from all sorts of vexations which state interference in individual life normally causes. The severe bureaucratic restrictions, with which the pilgrim had become so familiar in China, were almost absent. The people paid no head-tax, and remained generally unharassed by officials. The subjects were left largely to follow their own intentions, and the criminal law was singularly lenient. The kings governed without corporal punishment, but criminals were fined, according to circumstances, lightly or heavily. ‘Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion,’ writes Fa Hien, ‘they only have their right hands cut off.’\(^{32}\) Trials were conducted without torture. There was no bother

about passports for journeys from one part of the empire to another, and this fact helped to create a general sense of imperial unity and solidarity. Land-revenue had, of course, to be paid, but there was no registration or official restriction. Fa Hien writes about the people: 'If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay.'

Elsewhere, writing about Magadha, Fa Hien says that, 'of all the countries of Central India, this has the largest cities and towns. Its people are rich and thriving and emulate one another in practise.ing charity of heart and duty to one's neighbour.' Various kinds of charitable institutions were established. Fa Hien was particularly impressed by a free hospital, which he describes in some detail. 'Hither come all poor or helpless patients, orphans, widowers, and cripples. They are well taken care of, a doctor attends them, food and medicine being supplied according to their needs. They are all made quite comfortable, and when they are cured they go away.' This is, perhaps, the first instance of a free general hospital recorded in history. From his writings, Fa Hien appears to have been a keen and discreet observer of things. Even making allowance for the facts that he was inclined to see only the best in this holy land of the Buddha, that, by his descriptions of the conditions in India, he perhaps wanted to attract a large number of Chinese pilgrims to this country, and that, while recording his observations in his travel-diary, he always had the conditions in China before his eyes, we have to concede that India under Candra Gupta II, as represented by Fa Hien, was happier and better governed than in many other periods of ancient Indian history.


SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS

Varṇāśramadharma: Historical Background

In most of the epochs of ancient Indian history, the ideal of varṇāśramadharma had been the essential driving force behind the Indian society and its functioning. The social conditions in any particular period of Indian history have, therefore, to be evaluated primarily with reference to the manner in which this system of four social orders and four stages in an individual's life functioned during that period. Whatever may have been its origin, it has to be admitted that, in course of time, cāturvarṇya, in its ideal form, came to be looked upon as an organisation of society based on certain principles of social ethics. Each of the four social orders or varṇas was expected to follow its own specific dharma or code of duties in order that the purity, solidarity, and integrity of the society as a whole should remain undisturbed. What varṇadharma was in respect of the life of the society as a whole, āśramadharma was in respect of the life of an individual. The life of an individual, in its ideal form, was also organised into four distinct stages or āśramas, so that he should be in a position to make the best possible use of his entire earthly life and thus contribute to the society the maximum that he was capable of. It is, however, needless to add that, in Indian history, the systems of varṇa and āśrama have not always functioned in their ideal forms. It was but natural that where there was this kind of division of society into classes—a division which was supposed to be sanctioned by religion and to be based on birth and which, therefore, was unalterable—there should necessarily ensue the exploitation of one class by another. It was often the character of the interrelations among the principal social orders which has mainly conditioned the social dynamics in any particular period of ancient Indian history.

1. For a detailed discussion about varṇa and āśrama, see: DANDEKAR, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 70–101.
We can clearly see how, since the days of the Nandas, the conflict between the different social orders had been reflected in the political sphere. The Purāṇa-tradition that the race of the Kṣatriyas would come to an end with the Nandas seems to give us a clue in this connection. It can be assumed, on the basis of that tradition and much other historical evidence which confirms that tradition, that, with the rise of Candragupta Maurya, the ruling power was transferred from the hands of the Kṣatriyas to those of the Śūdras. The former ruling class of the Kṣatriyas lost its position and a new class of rulers was created. From the point of view of social history, therefore, the Maurya epoch must be regarded as a revolutionary epoch. For the first time in the historical period, a vṛsha had become an emperor. Candragupta seems to have been particularly bitter against the Kṣatriyas, and this fact may have been indirectly responsible for his close association with a Brāhmaṇa prime-minister like Kauṭilya. In response to the changed conditions, Kauṭilya also was inclined to invest a Śūdra with a legal personality. In his Arthaśāstra, he has pleaded against the selling or the mortgaging of the life of a Śūdra. But, by and large, Kauṭilya’s attitude in this respect seems to be half-hearted. He continued the old policy of being hard on the Śūdras in the matter of wergeld and upheld the sanctity of the Brāhmaṇas, in spite of his attempt to abolish slavery of the Śūdras – of course, in a roundabout manner – and in spite of his having referred to them as ārya.

Āsoka, the grandson of the first vṛsha emperor in India, sought to do away with all the legal inequalities of a Śūdra. Evidently he received his inspiration from Buddhism. In true Buddhist spirit, Āsoka tried to build up a classless society and a

2. Cf. Dhamārāja’s commentary on the Muḍrārakṣasa, second Nāndī verse, where he quotes from the Viṣṇupurāṇa: nasa cai ‘tām nāndān kauṭilya brahmaṇoḥ saṃuddhāhīratyaḥ / kauṭilya eva condraguptaḥ rūṣye śhīśekṣyati / atāhāraḥ śudrāḥ prthivīḥ bhokṣyanti. Also cf. nandanaḥ kṣatriyakulam iti purāṇadāsanāt.
3. Cf. Muḍrārakṣasa, Acts 3 and 7, where Gāpakiya invariably refers to Candragupta as vṛsha.
4. Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra III. 13,
5. Ibid.
classless administrative machinery. Such efforts on the part of a scion of a \textit{vṛṣala}, and a Buddhist at that, naturally provoked a strong opposition from the Brahmanic and other high-caste sections. The classless beaurocracy, which Aśoka tried to establish, must have, indeed, dealt a heavy blow to the long-enjoyed monopoly of those sections. When, therefore, they saw that the Maurya imperial power was declining, they availed themselves of that psychological moment. Under the leadership of the Brāhmaṇa commander-in-chief of the last Maurya monarch Brhadratha, they rose against the ruling dynasty. This was the revolt of Puṣyamitra Śunga. It was now the turn of the Brāhmaṇas to elevate themselves to the status of a ruling class. The \textit{Manusmrīti}, which may be regarded as the great gospel of this successful Brahmanic counter-revolution led by Puṣyamitra, seems to suggest in almost unmistakable terms that only a Brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Veda deserves to be a general, that he alone deserves to be a king. It was the first time that the right of a Brāhmaṇa to rule had been formally recognised in a \textit{dharmaśāstra} text. The author of the \textit{Manusmrīti} is fanatically hard on the Śūdras. His laws are reactionary and almost smack of vengeance. They clearly reflect the fierce class-struggle of that epoch. The classless administrative machinery set up by Aśoka was replaced by a Brahmanic beaurocracy. Only persons of good birth, insists the author of the \textit{Manusmrīti}, should be appointed officers of the king. Since the time of the \textit{Manusmrīti}, the Brahmanic hierarchy and its claim to sanctity began to take firm root in India’s body politic. The right of the Brāhmaṇa as the first \textit{varṇa}, superior to all the other \textit{varṇas}, came to be emphatically asserted. Though the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas in the political field soon came to an end, the \textit{varṇāśramadharma}, as it had been elaborated in the \textit{Manusmrīti}, had come to stay and continued to be the ruling factor in the Hindu society for all time to come.

\textit{5a.} By classless administrative machinery is to be understood an administrative machinery set up without any consideration of the class or the social order of the constituents of that machinery.

\textit{6.} Cf. \textit{Manusmrīti} XII. 100,
The period in Indian history which intervened between the fall of the Śuṅgas and the rise of the Guptas was characterised by considerable political and social upheaval. No central political and military power like that of the Mauryas was in existence at that time. A constant struggle for political supremacy went on among the different royal families who ruled over small kingdoms in various parts of India, such as, the Āndhras, the Nāgas, the Bhārāśivas, and the Vākāṭakas. It was also a period which witnessed the raids upon India by foreign tribes like the Sakas, the Kuśāṇas, and the Pahlavas. These tribes originally came to India as foreign marauders, but ultimately remained in the country not as foreigners but as naturalised Indians. A study of the historical records pertaining to these tribes would make it sufficiently clear that, during that period, a vigorous intermingling of races and nationalities had almost become the order of the day. This was historically inevitable. The foreigners abandoned their alien character and were eventually absorbed into the Hindu fold. The epigraphic and numismatic evidence shows that they soon became adherents of different Hindu religious sects. This hinduisation of foreign immigrants naturally resulted in some modifications being made in the existing Hindu social set-up. It has already been pointed out that the cāturvarṇya, as envisaged by the Manusmṛti, which may be properly characterised as the law-book of the Śuṅgas, was of the most reactionary character. It was intended mainly to safeguard the power and privileges of the Brāhmaṇas, and incidentally of the next two varṇas in the social hierarchy. The Manusmṛti further wanted that this social hierarchy should remain unalterable under any circumstances and had, accordingly, put in the necessary safeguards to secure that purpose. But with the absorption into the Hindu society of foreign elements of diverse nationalities, it became inevitable that that rigid social order should be made a little fluid and elastic. There was also another factor which we have to take into account in this context. The period between the fall of the Śuṅgas and the rise of the Guptas saw vigorous activity on the part of the Hindus in the matter of colonisation in and trade with foreign...
countries. It was in this period that Greater India was born. The intellectual, religious, and cultural movements of the Indians spread out far beyond the frontiers of their mother-land. This fact consequently necessitated that the rigid social order of the \textit{varṇāśrama-dharma} should be considerably liberalised—at least in practice.

Nevertheless it has to be noted that, while this movement of the liberalisation of the social organisation was going on, it was also being felt by some social thinkers of the time that \textit{varṇa-dharma} should not be altogether dispensed with. Owing to the free intermingling of persons belonging to different races and possessing different cultures, the Hindu social structure was in the danger of being gradually disintegrated. It was further felt that the \textit{cāturvarṇya}, properly practised, would alone be conducive to the solidarity and progress of the society. In its ideal form, a caste could be regarded as the best form of a social corporation. It had proved particularly effective in the matter of the advancement of different professions followed by the castes. A caste was more or less like a trade-guild which helped to maintain and, wherever possible, to develop the expert knowledge in a particular trade. A father taught his craft to his son, and thus the expert knowledge in that craft was carried on to posterity from one generation to another. The continuity of a caste, therefore, meant correspondingly the continuity of a trade or an art. Like an economic guild, each caste had its own ethical code, and, in accordance with that code, it governed the social life of its members and also regulated their relations with the members of other castes. The caste-system consequently helped to hold the Hindu society together. It had, indeed, been an effective force by means of which quite a lot of good in Hindu social and economic life had been conserved. But, side by side with this, it had also proved an agency for conserving evil, inasmuch as it had helped to consolidate the functional conflict among the castes and the consequent invidious distinctions among them in social and legal matters,
Social Organisation under the Guptas

On the eve of the rise of the Gupta imperial power there were thus two forces working in connection with the varṇadharma. On the one hand it had become historically inevitable that the social order imposed by the varṇadharma be rendered less rigid and more liberal; on the other hand, it was also realised that, for the sake of the preservation of the sanctity, integrity, and solidarity of the Hindu society, the varṇadharma could not be allowed to vanish altogether. The conflict between these two contending trends, no doubt, finally resolved itself in the cāturvarṇya being theoretically established as a permanent and effective feature of the Hindu social system. But, at the same time, this social system inevitably became more liberal in practice. It was such liberal cāturvarṇya which must be said to have been the most characteristic feature of the social organisation under the Guptas. This assumption is supported by the evidence of the Yājñavalkyayasmṛti. While, for instance, Yājñavalkya has strongly opposed the marriage of a Brāhmaṇa with a Śūdra woman, he has generally raised the legal and social status of a Śūdra. The cāndrāyaṇa penance, which had till then been open only to the twice-born, was now allowed to him. He was not denied opportunities for education, and, when gifted with true knowledge, he commanded the same amount of respect as a Brāhmaṇa. Trade with the Śūdras was also permitted by the Yājñavalkyayasmṛti. It may be presumed that, under the Brāhmaṇa ruling family of the Śungras, the Brāhmaṇas had claimed for themselves certain legal privileges. As can be gathered from the Manuṣmṛti, even when convicted of adultery, rape, theft, felony, murder, etc., a Brāhmaṇa did not become liable to branding and capital punishment. He could not be tortured like culprits belonging to other varṇas nor could his property be confiscated. Yājñavalkya sought to

7. Yājñavalkyayasmṛti I. 57. The marriage of a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya with a Śūdra woman is also discountenanced.
8. See supra pp. 33-34.
9. Yājñavalkyayasmṛti III. 262, 268; I. 120, 166.
10. Manuṣmṛti VIII. 374-381. Also see supra p. 33.
do away with such invidious distinctions. He did not admit many of the legal privileges of a Brāhmaṇa.\textsuperscript{11} Torture was generally abolished, and, therefore, a Brāhmaṇa as also a Śūdra automatically became free from it. In contrast with the Brāhmaṇas, the Śūdras had been suffering many disadvantages in early law. With the growth of the imperial power under the Maurya rulers, in the 4th century B.C., the position of the Śūdras had improved considerably. The spread of Buddhism was another factor which had worked favourably in this direction. In spite of some of his orthodox views, Kauṭilya was apparently favourable to the Śūdras.\textsuperscript{12} But, after the fall of the Mauryas, the Manusmṛti, the law-book of the Śuṅgas, seems to have assumed rather a reactionary attitude vis-a-vis the Śūdras. However, as indicated above, far-reaching social changes had taken place between the fall of the Śuṅgas and the rise of the Guptas. The Gupta sovereigns could not have remained unmindful of these changes. Accordingly, their laws, as represented in the Yājñavalkyasṛṇṭi, were much liberalised. There was no repressive law against the Śūdra in the law-book of the Guptas. A Śūdra could have a legal dispute with a Brāhmaṇa; he could teach; he could also own property.

This liberal outlook was also reflected in the actual functioning of the cāturvārṇya. Though the rigidity of the cāturvārṇya, as an organization primarily based on birth, continued, and though varṇa as such consequently remained unalterable, considerable freedom appears to have been allowed, under the Guptas, in the matter of intermarriage and choice of profession. This assumption can be supported by a fair amount of historical evidence. The amuloma type of intermarriage, that is to say, the marriage of a male of a higher varṇa to a female of a lower varṇa, was not uncommon. Rudrasena II, who belonged to the Brāhmaṇa royal family of the Vākāṭakas, married Prabhāvatī Gupta, a princess from the Gupta family which belonged to a lower

\textsuperscript{11} Yājñavalkyasṛṇṭi I. 356-58; II. 230; Mitakṣarā on III. 257.
\textsuperscript{12} See supra p. 47.
varna. Samudra Gupta himself descended, on the mother's side, from the Licchavis, who were vrātyas. In his law-book, Yājñavalkya has allowed a wife belonging to a lower varṇa to take part in religious rites by the side of her husband of a higher varṇa, if a wife of an equal varṇa was not present. It may also be pointed out, in this context, that Yājñavalkya's opposition to the marriage of a Brāhmaṇa to a Śūdra woman seems to have been merely theoretical, for, the commentary on a later stanza in the Yājñavalkyasūtra clearly discusses, among other things, the right of the son of a Śūdra mother to inherit the property of his Brāhmaṇa father. There is also evidence to show that even the pratiloma type of intermarriage, that is to say, a female of a higher varṇa marrying a male of a lower varṇa, was in vogue in those days. From the Talgunda pillar inscription of Kākutsthavarman of the Kadamba dynasty.

12a. [The question as to the varṇa to which the Guptas themselves belonged still seems to defy definitive solution. It is suggested that they must have been Brāhmaṇas because they had established matrimonial alliances with nondoubtful Brāhmaṇa dynasties. When, however, one took into account the fact that, in those days, political expediency, rather than varṇa-consideration, often governed matrimonial alliances among the ruling families, one would not attach much probative value to this argument. Then there is the view that the Guptas belonged to the Vaiśya varṇa, because their gōtra, namely, Dhārana, is found exclusively in the Agrawal Vaiśya community. Attention is also drawn to the fact that some later rulers of Karṣṭikara claimed that they were Somavaradhī Kṣatriyas descended from Candra Gupta II Vikramāditya.

A reference may be incidentally made here to the question of the original home of the Guptas. Usually scholars have assumed their Magadhan origin. I-tsing's statement (Beal, Life of Hsuan Tsang, Introduction, xxxvi–xxxvii; Chavannes, Voyages des Pelerins Budhhistes, 82, 84) seems to point to other regions—Sarnath in eastern U. P. and Mursidabad in west Bengal. It is suggested that the early inscriptions and coins of a dynasty are usually found in the region of its origin. From this point of view, eastern U. P. could be regarded as the original home of the Guptas. The Guptas may have gone over to Magadha after their matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis. Also see: Dandekar, A History of the Guptas, pp. 20–21; D. G. Ganguly, “The early home of the imperial Guptas,” IHQ, 14, 532–33.]

13. Yājñavalkyasūtra I. 88 indirectly suggests this.
15. Cf. Mitakṣarā on Yājñavalkyasūtra II. 133.
belonging to the first half of the sixth century A.D., we know that the daughter of that monarch, who was a Brāhmaṇa, was married to a prince from the Gupta family. It should, however, be noted that, though the various mixed castes, which resulted from such intermarriages, have been duly recorded by Yājñavalkya, there is hardly any mention of any of them in the Gupta inscriptions. As a matter of fact, in a Vākāṭaka record, the son of a Brāhmaṇa father and a Kṣatriya mother is referred to as a Kṣatriya, though Yājñavalkya has theoretically called such a son a mūrdhāvasikta.

The rigidity of the cāturvarṇya in regard to professions also seems to have been preserved only in theory. For, in actual practice, we find that the Brāhmaṇas, who were theoretically entitled only to study and to teach, to sacrifice and to officiate at sacrifices, and to give and to receive gifts, had become traders and architects. Many Brāhmaṇas served in the imperial bureaucracy, while some, like the Kadambas and the Vākāṭakas, who were ambitious, even took to the profession of arms and founded their own kingdoms. The Eran pillar inscription records the erection, in 484 A.D., of a column, which is called the dhvajastambha of Viśṇu under the name of Janārdana, by Mahārāja Māṭrīviṣṇu, with a view to increasing the religious merit of his ancestors who had been pious Brāhmaṇas. It was the father of Māṭrīviṣṇu, who, though a Brāhmaṇa, had founded a feudatory principality under the Gupta. Of course it is to be remembered that the majority of grants made to the Brāhmaṇas,

17. Tājñavalkyasmyti I. 91 ff.
18. ASWI IV. 140.
18a. A reference may be made here to the view that Skanda Gupta was not a legal successor of Kumāra Gupta I. Indeed, he is said to have not been even his legitimate issue. It is significant that Skanda Gupta’s mother is not mentioned in any of his records. [BASHAM has suggested that Skanda Gupta was an offspring of Kumāra Gupta I from a Śūdrā concubine.] However, Skanda Gupta himself emphatically declares that he was Kumāra Gupta’s son. His mother seems to have survived her husband.
20. CH III, 19.
under the Guptas, were primarily intended to enable them to follow their own prescribed dharma. It was these Brāhmaṇas, who, through their learning and religiosity, carried Hindu culture even to the remotest corners of the Gupta empire. A careful study of these grants would make it possible to ascertain when and how the various gotras or Vedic families of the Brāhmaṇas spread over different parts of India. Like the Brāhmaṇas, some Kṣatriyas also had taken to a profession other than the one prescribed for them in the law-books. For instance, the oilmen mentioned in the Indor copper-plate of 465 A.D. are said to have been Kṣatriyas. It can be further presumed that the Śūdras, who, according to the strict theory, had to remain content with the menial type of service of the three higher varṇas, took to the martial profession and formed the bulk of the Gupta army. The Kāyasthas, as professional scribes, are frequently referred to in the Gupta records; but these references are hardly helpful in determining their exact position in the cāturvāṃśya.

Evidence of Contemporary Literature

The literature produced during the regime of the Guptas also supports the foregoing observations regarding the theory and practice of the varṇāśramadharma. In his works, Kālidāsa glorifies the cāturvāṃśya as the most ideal social order, and the kings belonging to the race of Raghu are represented to have been keen on seeing that their subjects did not swerve from the paths of duty prescribed for them according to their respective varṇas. The Raghu kings are also said to have themselves scrupulously adhered to the scheme of the four āśramas. In actual practice, on the other hand, considerable freedom seems to have been allowed to the different varṇas in the matter of choice of profession and intermarriage. From the Mṛcchakatika, which contains perhaps the most vivid picture of the contemporary society that has ever been drawn in a play, we find that the

21. CII III, 16.
22. Raghuvamśa XIV, 66.
23. Ibid. I, 5 ff.
Brāhmaṇas were not exclusively a priestly or spiritual community. There were among them big merchants as well. For instance, the grandfather of Cārūdatta, who was a Brāhmaṇa, is said to have been a prominent śreṣṭhin. A Brāhmaṇa dining at a courtesan’s house,²⁴ or lawfully marrying a courtesan or a slave,²⁵ or engaging in active politics or even in theft; the Cāṇḍālas not being regarded as particularly untouchable; and low-caste persons, like Vīraka and Candanaka, having opportunities to rise to high offices—these are, further, some of the striking features of the liberal cāturvārya of the period depicted in the Mṛcchakaṭṭha.²⁵ᵃ

Position of Women

Besides the functioning of the varṇāśramadharma, there is another criterion which helps us to form an estimate of the social conditions in any particular period of ancient Indian history. That criterion is the position of women. Though, from the epigraphic records of the Guptas, we get but little information regarding the position of women, the law-book of Yājñavalkya and the contemporary literature can be exploited as very useful sources in that connection. The laws about woman, under the Guptas, clearly show that her status in the society had been considerably raised. It may be presumed that this fact was due to the kindly and liberalising influence of Buddhism. Buddhism tried to remove, as far as possible, the invidious distinctions between the status of a man and that of a woman. As has been indicated elsewhere, it had rendered similar service in favour of the Śūdras.²⁵ᵇ In the eyes of Buddhism all persons, irrespective of sex and varṇa, were equal in spiritual matters. This lead given by Buddhism, in spiritual matters, was followed, to a certain

²⁴. Mṛcchakaṭṭha IV.
²⁵. Ibid. IV. 24; X.
²⁵ᵃ. A significant development in connection with the caste-system in this period was the emergence of the Kāyasthas as an important caste (cf. Mudrā I; YS I. 336). Two Bhāgas belonging to the age of the Guptas, namely, the Padmaprābhātikam and the Padmaprabhātikam, also throw considerable light on the social life in Ujjayinī.
²⁵ᵇ. See supra p. 52.
extent, in legal and social matters as well by the Guptas. For,
the first time in the history of Hindu law, the right of a woman to
inherit was fully recognised in the Yājñavalkyasmṛti. The same
is the case in respect of niyoga, that is to say a widow's preroga-
tive to beget a son by her deceased husband's brother. The
author of the Manusmṛti has no doubt referred to niyoga, but
only with a view to condemning it ultimately. Yājñavalkya
seems to have recognised the historical necessity of the changed
social conditions in the Gupta epoch and to have formulated his
laws accordingly. Though he does not actually recommend
niyoga, he does not at least condemn it. A similar attitude was
taken, in those days, in regard to widow-remarriage. In the
family of the Gupta emperors themselves, we have the example
of Candra Gupta II marrying Dhruvadevi, the widow of his elder
brother Rāma Gupta. Yājñavalkya further suggests that, after
puberty, a girl may select her own husband. It can be gathered
from the plays of Kālidāsa that post-puberty marriages were not
uncommon in the days of the Guptas. Most of his heroines are
shown to have been adults.

In the age of the Guptas, the custom of suttee seems to have
been almost unknown among the common people, though, from
that period onwards, one begins to come across instances of it,
particularly among the aristocratic circles. There is a stone-pillar
inscription at Eran, dated 510 A. D., which records that a chieftain
by name Goparāja had gone to that place in the company of
Bhānu Gupta, and fought a battle. Eventually Goparāja was
killed in that battle, and his wife, who had accompanied him, burnt
herself on her husband's funeral pyre. In the contemporary
literature we do come across some stray references to the practice
of suttee, as, for instance, in the Kumārasambhava, where Rati

26. Yājñavalkyasmṛti II. 135. Also see supra p. 32.
27. Manusmṛti IX. 64-68.
29. Ibid. I. 64.
31. Kumārasambhava IV. 34.
desires to burn herself after her husband, Madana, and, in the *Mṛcchakaṭāka*, where Dhūtā, the wife of Cārudatta, prepares to enter fire in the belief that her husband is already executed. But these references cannot be said to depict the normal practice of those days. They are mainly intended to idealise the characters concerned. It may also be pointed out, in this connection, that Bāna, in the seventh century A.D., seems to look upon this practice with certain disfavour.

A point of great interest in regard to the position of women in the Gupta society is clearly brought out in the sculptures and paintings belonging to the period. The Ajanta paintings show women moving without veils and mixing freely with men in public life. There are, as a matter of fact, instances, in the history of the Guptas, of ladies in royal families taking upon themselves the responsibility of governmental administration. During the minority of her son Pravarasena II, Prabhāvaśi Guptā, the daughter of Candra Gupta II, carried on the administration of the Vākāṭaka dominions. Her regency, indeed, constitutes a significant period in the history of the Vākāṭakas. We may also presume, on the basis of numismatic evidence, that Kumāradevī, the Licchavi princess, who was married to Candra Gupta I, had been a capable woman and had played an important role in connection with the foundation of the Gupta empire. The coins, with the joint figures of Candra Gupta I and Kumāradevī on the obverse, issued by the founder of the empire during his regime, bear an eloquent testimony to the help and cooperation received by him from his consort. It is obvious that girls in royal families were given the training necessary to make them fit for the responsible position which they were expected to occupy later.

32. *Mṛcchakaṭāka* X.

35a. This coin-type is said to point to the joint rule of Candra Gupta I and the Licchavis. It is, however, more probable, that the coin-type was issued by Samudra Gupta.
System of Education

A few general observations on the system of education as it must have obtained in the age of the Guptas may be apropos at this stage. The system of education often determines the character of the society in any particular period. Moreover, according to the ancient Hindu Dharmasāstra, the beginning of formal education was considered to be one of the most important sanskāras in a man's life. On the basis of historical and literary evidence available for the age of the Guptas, it can be assumed that the Gupta sovereigns patronised several centres of education and a large number of individual teachers. As a matter of fact, education seems to have been regarded as an essential part of the state administration. Kumāra Gupta I is traditionally credited with having been responsible for the foundation of the famous university of Nālandā. We further know, from the records of Hiuen Tsang,36 that Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya was the most generous patron of that university and that, in course of time, he himself joined the holy order in that centre as a new initiate. It is interesting to note that no special concessions or privileges were granted to him, and that his status in that order was naturally lower than that of the other fully ordained monks. There are numerous references in the works of Kālidāsa to the solicitude which kings evinced for the proper functioning and progress of the āśramas or hermitages which must, indeed, be regarded as the most common and popular educational centres. They considered it to be their principal duty to create, for those āśramas, conditions of security and well-being. From the Śākuntala,37 we know that a special officer of the state was appointed for this purpose. These āśramas were usually situated on river-banks away from the crowded cities. Students lived at the universities or in the āśramapadas for their study and were fully taken care of by the teachers. I-ting gives

37. Act I. The financial help which Raghu gave to his fellow-student, Kautsa, so that the latter might pay the fees asked for by his teacher (Raghu-
ccheda V. 1 ff.) is also suggestive in this connection.
a very interesting account of how, in India, the pupil waited upon his teacher and how the teacher treated the pupil. He records, among other things, that the teachers themselves nursed the pupils when they became ill. Several other facilities also were available to the students, such as free boarding and exemption from usual fees. According to Hiuen Tsang, the deep scholarship of a large number of Indians was mainly due to the circumstance that students in India did not have to worry about food, clothing, medicine, etc. It may be mentioned, in this connection, that students who were given such concessions were required to do some manual service for the establishment.

Hiuen Tsang eulogises the methods of teaching which were specially developed in these educational centres. He makes a special mention of the scrupulous efforts which were made by teachers to create among their pupils a genuine interest in the subject which they studied. Kālidāsa may be said to be laying down the essential qualifications of an ideal teacher when he says that a teacher, who has a profound knowledge of his subject and who also possesses the knack of adequately imparting that knowledge to others, deserves a pre-eminent place among teachers. On Kālidāsa's testimony, again, we may assume that pupils began to study the alphabet at the age of five. This assumption is confirmed also by I-tsing's account. Hiuen Tsang records, in this connection, that a student was initiated in the study of the five great sciences when he was seven. The time required to complete any particular course of studies depended on the capacity, the will, and the circumstances of each individual pupil. The Chinese pilgrims, who visited India about the time of the

38. TAKAKUSU, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion by I-tsing*, Oxford, 1896, p. 120.
42. Mālavikāgānimitra III, 28.
43. Raghunāṭa III, 28.
Guptas and saw for themselves the actual conditions obtaining at
different educational centres, have stated that normally it took
fifteen years to complete such a course in those days. Students,
who could not join a university from the beginning of their career,
finished their courses at private āśramas and then spent two or
three years at the university as advanced students both learning
and teaching at the same time.\textsuperscript{45} It seems that instruction in all
the fourteen traditional vidyās was given in the āśramas and at the
universities. Facilities for specialisation in any specific branch of
knowledge were also available to students belonging to a particu-
lar caste or desiring to follow a particular profession. Proper
adjustment between theoretical knowledge and practical training
was always aimed at. In one of his plays, Kālidāsa seems to
suggest that students were examined both in theory and practice.\textsuperscript{46}
It can be gathered from the records of Hsiian Tsang that among
the branches of learning those more commonly selected for spe-
cialisation were grammar, mechanical arts, astrology, medicine,
and philosophy.\textsuperscript{47} It may be presumed that adequate provision
was made for training in different professions and crafts mentioned
in the Gupta inscriptions,\textsuperscript{48} as also in military science and art of
government. There is evidence to show that, in the age of the
Guptas, equal attention was paid to liberal education and voca-
tional training.\textsuperscript{49}

The accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, who visited India
between the fifth and the seventh centuries A. D., throw consi-
derable light on the working of the various universities which
flourished in India during that period. Fa Hien, who visited
Takṣaśilā during the regime of Candragupta II, seems to suggest
that the importance of that place as a university centre had then

\textsuperscript{46} Mālavikāgūnimitra I. Cf. \textit{tad abhābhavān imam māth ca sāstre prayoge ca
vimaśīlu}.
\textsuperscript{48} CHII III, 16; 18.
\textsuperscript{49} CHII III, 18.
already been a thing of the past.\textsuperscript{50} It appears that the raids of the Little Yueh-Chi were primarily responsible for the devastation of that once great seat of learning.\textsuperscript{51} In the fifth century A.D., the Hūṇa inroads must have struck the final death-blow, and consequently, in the seventh century A.D., Hiuen Tsang found the place entirely robbed of its ancient glory and dignity.\textsuperscript{52} The most prominent seat of higher learning in the epoch of the Guptas was certainly the university of Nālandā. When Fa Hien visited Nālandā in about 410 A.D., it was more or less an unimportant place possessing only one stūpa dedicated to the memory of Sāriputta.\textsuperscript{53} But, within the next few years, it suddenly rose to almost international eminence under the patronage of the Gupta sovereigns. As indicated above, the university of Nālandā owed its inauguration and early growth to the munificence and the personal solicitude of Kumāra Gupta I, who started by constructing a temple of the Buddha and endowing a Buddhist monastery at that place. Epigraphic and literary evidence shows that Tathāgata Gupta, Narasiṁha Gupta Bālāditya, Budha Gupta, and Vajra further contributed towards the all-round development of the university. Hiuen Tsang gives a very vivid picture of the whole university establishment at Nālandā.\textsuperscript{54} We are told that 10,000 students, selected out of several thousands who sought admission, studied various subjects under nearly 1,500 teachers. Among these students, there was to be seen a large contingent of foreign scholars who were attracted to the place on account of the high eminence of the teachers.\textsuperscript{55} It was altogether a huge establishment and its central college had seven spacious halls. The Nālandā university was a residential university. There the students were accommodated in monasteries

\textsuperscript{50} Lege, A Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms, being an account by the Chinese Monk Fa Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{51} MASt VII, p. 20.


\textsuperscript{55} Śhlabhadra, who was a great authority on Yogaśāstra, is reputed to have been the Chancellor of the Nālandā University.
which are reported to have been several storeys high. The expenses of a large number of students were borne by the university itself. Hundreds of villages were endowed by the state and by individual donors to provide the large funds necessary for the proper up-keep and advancement of the university. When I-tsing visited Nalanda in about 675 A.D., there were over 3,000 monks in residence in the monasteries. The university of Nalanda was primarily Buddhist in character and one of the Gupta emperors himself is known to have joined the holy order of the Buddha at that place. But there is evidence to show that non-Buddhist subjects also were taught there by Brahmnic teachers.

Valabhi, which was the capital of the Maitrakas, between circa 475 A.D. and 775 A.D., was another famous seat of learning in the age of the Guptas. Though Hiuen Tsang is silent about this aspect of that place, I-tsing refers to its importance as an educational centre. Special mention is made in an inscription of the valuable library at Valabhi and of the grant made by Devapala towards its expansion.

Apart from these principal seats of learning reference must also be made to minor educational establishments, such as those at Jalandhara, Dhanakaṭaka, and some places in South Kosala, where Hiuen Tsang met quite a large number of eminent monkscholars. Some of these establishments, according to the Chinese pilgrim, specialised only in specific branches of learning. The importance of the agrahāras from the point of view of the system of education during the times of the Guptas cannot be overlooked. These agrahāras, endowed by the Gupta sovereigns and their feudatories in favour of Brahmnic, Buddhist, and Jaina votaries of learning, must be regarded as veritable centres of culture from

57. See supra p. 59.
59. El XVII, 310.
which light and knowledge were disseminated throughout the vast Gupta empire.

In the works of Kālidāsa we come across some observations made by the poet, which, though incidental, may be considered to be suggestive of the educational system prevailing in the days of his imperial patrons. It seems that teachers were highly respected members of the society and wielded great influence in its affairs. They are said to have played the same role in relation to society as the sun did in relation to this world. It is further suggested that a true teacher never trafficked in knowledge. Selfless service in the cause of the enlightenment of the people was his sole aim. A teacher was expected to make a proper selection of his pupils, for, as one of the characters in the Mālavikāgnimitra remarks, the acceptance of a bad pupil only indicates the dullness of the teacher’s intelligence. As has been pointed out elsewhere, only 10,000 candidates, out of several thousands who applied, were admitted, after proper selection, as regular alumni of the Nālandā university. Efforts when directed to proper objects, says Kālidāsa, alone bear fruit. Another practical hint which concerns a student is given by the poet when he says that one should not exhibit knowledge which is not yet well assimilated. And such assimilation of knowledge is possible only through diligent application. In his usual epigrammatic style, Kālidāsa states his view regarding the goal of education, which, presumably, reflects the ideal set down in that behalf by the Gupta state. Properly acquired knowledge, says the poet, should engender vinaya and prabodha, that is to say, sweetness and light.

61. Raghuvamśa V. 4.
63. Ibid I: vinetur adrasyoparigrahau ‘pi buddhilāghavanś prakūśayati.
64. See supra p. 62.
65. Raghuvamśa III. 29.
68. Ibid. X. 71.
Social Life: Fa Hien’s Description

Not much information is available from the Gupta records about the minor details of the social life during that period. It would, however, be interesting to note, in this context, the observations made by Fa Hien on the general mode of life as he saw it in what he calls the Middle Kingdom during his visit there which more or less coincided with the reign of Candra Gupta II. About the normal habits of the people, the wise Chinese pilgrim points out that the bulk of the population was abstemious and vegetarian; ‘they do not keep pigs or fowls, there are no dealings in cattle, no butchers’ shops or distilleries in their market-places.’ The pilgrim further reports that ‘throughout the country no one kills any living thing, nor drinks wine, nor eats onions or garlic.’ Only the Cândalas went hunting and dealt in flesh. The Cândalas were segregated, ‘and when they approach a city or market, they beat a piece of wood in order to distinguish themselves. Then people know who they are and avoid coming into contact with them.’

Dress

The Ajanta frescoes and the contemporary literature throw an interesting side-light on the types of dress worn by the people in the Gupta period. It appears from the Ajanta paintings that head-gear had then almost gone out of use. The art of stitching and tailoring must have been quite in vogue, though common people normally used unstitched garments. Their dress usually consisted of a white lower garment reaching up to the ankles and worn in the same way as the present-day dhotee, and an upper garment which was a well-trimmed loose piece of cloth thrown round the left shoulder, like the modern dupatta. Sometimes the body was covered with the skirt of the lower garment itself, one end of it being thrown over the left shoulder. Ladies wore coloured garments, like the saris of today, in such a manner that

they were tied up by means of two knots on the two shoulders. In Bagh caves, there are paintings of women who are wearing sari-like garments and also a kind of tailored close-fitting garment like colī to cover the breasts. This type of dress is also to be seen in the Ajanta paintings, where we have a picture of a dark-coloured woman who has put on a sari and a tailored colī-like garment. The Kankāli Tīrā paintings at Mathurā show women with petticoats and tight upper garments. As pointed out elsewhere, women in those days did not normally use veils. In the contemporary literature, women are represented as covering their faces—and sometimes practically their whole bodies—with veils, but that was for some special occasions only. It may be that a veil was regarded as a symbol of dignity and aristocratic isolation.

The art of printing on cloth seems to have developed considerably in the Gupta age, and quite a lot of originality of colours is to be found among the beautifully woven and printed clothes. Several types of cloth, including those made of silk and of wool of sheep or some other wild animal, and a surprising variety of garments are mentioned in the contemporary literature and described by the Chinese pilgrims. The monks usually wore silk garments, and the colour of those garments often indicated their religion. The Buddhist bhikṣus used red garments, the Jaina mendicants used white garments, and the Brahmanic saṁnyāsins used yellow garments. According to I-tsing, the Buddhist bhikṣus usually wore three garments, namely, saṁghāṭī (double cloak), uttarāsaṅga (upper garment), and antarvāsa (inner garment), though, under special circumstances, they could use other types of garments, such as, nivāsana (underwear), saṅkakṣikā (shoulder garment), etc. The bhikṣunīs also used saṁghāṭī, uttarāsaṅga, antarvāsa, and saṅkakṣikā, but their special garment was the lahanga-like kusūlaka. Where it was cold, the bhikṣus

70. Cf. scene 6.
73. See supra p. 58.
as well as common people dressed themselves in a peculiar type of garment called *li-pa.* I-tsing notices the use of this kind of dress in Northern and Western India. The uniform of soldiers was made in two pieces— from breast to waist and from thigh to soles. They often used helmets and skull-caps.

It may be noted, in passing, that interesting information can be gleaned, from the Ajanta frescoes, about the weapons which must have been in vogue in those days. The weapons represented in those paintings are more or less primitive in character. In one painting, for instance, we find a curved dagger, held in the left hand, and in another, a scimitar without scabbard, placed on the right shoulder. Spears, long lances, ornamented swords, short clubs, battle-axes, and bows are other weapons which seem to have been quite commonly used. Soldiers also used a peculiar kind of semicircular shield and quivers for holding arrows. A picturesque array of soldiers carrying a variety of weapons is depicted in a couple of paintings. From the effigies of the Gupta sovereigns shown on their coins, we can form an idea about the royal apparel. On the *vyāghraparākrama* coins, for instance, Samudra Gupta is represented as standing with his large head proudly thrown back, his eyes flashing power, and his broad muscular chest thrown out. He is holding in his hand a lance or an axe in a manner clearly indicating defiance. Gigantic in size, he is wearing large ear-rings, tight-fitting trousers, armour cut very much like the modern frock-coat, and a Kuṣāṇa cap. It may be generally observed that the dress worn by people in the Gupta age—by aristocrats as well as by common folk—bespeaks their simplicity, grace, and refined taste.

76. *The Ajanta Frescoes* (India Society), pl. vii.
77. *Ibid.,* pl. viii.
78. *Ibid.,* plates xxi, xxxviii, xxiii, xix, xxxvi, etc.
80. *Ibid.,* plates xvii, lvii. [For weapons, also see: M. K. Dhaivalkar, *Ajanta: a cultural study, Fig. XXVII.*]
81. *Ind. Mus. Cat.* I, pl. xv, coins 6–12.
Normal Life of the People

As a matter of fact the foregoing statement holds good in regard to almost all the aspects of the social life under the Guptas. A reference may be made, in this context, to the beautiful and prosperous Gupta cities, whose planning and construction revealed a high degree of architectural skill. The general standard of life must have been fairly high. The citizens of Daśapura, for instance, are described as enjoying themselves on the flat-roofs of their houses with sandalwood-paste, palm leaf fans, and necklaces. Fashionable ladies moved about wearing artistically prepared garments and different kinds of beautiful ornaments. Men and women freely used betel leaves and flowers. The country as a whole was on a sound economic footing, and there was a general feeling of security, well-being, and progress.


82. See supra pp. 36–37.
83. CII III, 18.
RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Hinduism: Historical Background

It is often said that the age of the Guptas was an age which marked the renaissance of Hindu religion and culture. If, however, we were to trace critically the development of Hindu thought and practice through the various periods of the cultural history of ancient India, we would find that the age of the Guptas might be more appropriately characterised as the age not of the renaissance but of the efflorescence of Hindu religion and culture. The religion of the early Vedic Aryans, as represented in the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda, was mainly of two types. On the one hand it consisted of cosmic religion (Dyāvāpṛthivī; Ṛta-Varuṇa), hero-religion (Indra), and elementary Agni-Soma cult; this may be said to have been the religion of the so-called classes. On the other hand, the early Vedic religion also included practices which were more or less akin to magic and witchcraft; this was the religion of the masses. On the basis of this broad categorisation of Vedic religion, the Ṛgveda may then be very well called the Veda of the classes among the early Vedic Aryans and the Atharvaveda the Veda of the masses. When, in course of time, the nomadic tribes of the Vedic Aryans settled down, to a moderate extent, in the Saptasindhu region and consequently enjoyed a greater security, prosperity, and leisure, they elaborated, out of their own original simple faith, a highly complicated system of ritualism. This new religion was overlaid with so many minute details of a formal character that the common people could hardly think of practising it except through the agency of the newly revolving class of priests who made it their business to master those details. These priests interpreted the Vedic hymns exclusively from the ritualistic point of view, and their interpretation

had to be accepted as authoritative. Tall claims came to be made on behalf of this religion of sacrifice. Sacrifice was regarded not merely as a means to an end; it became an end in itself. And because the key to the supreme mystique of sacrifice was in the possession of the priestly class, that class naturally came to dominate the other classes in the society. This period of the religious history of ancient India was characterised by three main features: Firstly, the spirit of religion was generally ignored and undue emphasis came to be placed upon its formal details. Secondly, the priestly class took advantage of its unique position to domineer over the other classes in the society. And finally, in the matter of religion and philosophy, an attitude of blind acceptance was deliberately engendered among the people at large, which fact eventually resulted in the temporary stagnation of Brahmanic thought.

A vigorous reaction against this state of affairs which is seen clearly reflected in the Brāhmaṇas soon followed in the form of the religion and the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. In ancient India, religion and philosophy were often indistinguishable. They were the two aspects of the human spirit’s search after truth. Philosophy was the result of the investigations and speculations in regard to the secret of the man and the universe, while religion represented the response of the human spirit to that secret. Religion and philosophy were thus the two sides of the same spiritual process. The teachers of the Upaniṣads may be said to have raised the banner of a twofold revolt—a social revolt and an intellectual revolt. They proclaimed that the spirit was more important than the form, and that the true religion consisted in the proper mental and intellectual discipline rather than in external practice. It was, therefore, not necessary to follow the lead given by the Brahmanic priests who had disproportionately exaggerated the importance of the formal details of the ritual. Each person could think for himself and discover for himself the path of truth. The portals of the temple of knowledge and spiritualism were thrown open to all those who cared to enter. This naturally resulted in a perceptible decline of the priestly class.
Religion and Philosophy

Intellectually, the attitude of blind acceptance engendered by the Brahmañas gave place to an attitude of critical inquiry, which latter, incidentally, has often served as the most effective stimulus of philosophical thought. Truly the Upaniṣads must be said to have inaugurated an age of free and creative thinking.

But, in their enthusiasm for search after truth, the Upaniṣadic thinkers must also be said to have gone almost to the other extreme. Their speculations, which were usually presented in the form of philosophical dogmas without any reference to the thought-process which led up to those dogmas, were too subtle for the common people to comprehend. The proper logical method was generally at a discount, and the entire religious and philosophical thought of the period consequently became highly mystical. The special intellectual equipment and the rigorous spiritual discipline, which were necessary for the comprehension and the direct realisation of truth as propounded by the Upaniṣads, could not possibly be expected from the people at large. As a result, the Upaniṣadic teachings remained more or less secluded; they could not strike deep roots among the masses.

Paradoxical as it may sound it is none the less historically correct to say that the heterodox or non-Vedic thought virtually thrived on the ground which had already been prepared by the Upaniṣads. The atmosphere of free thinking symbolised by the non-acceptance of the ultimate authority of the Veda, which was created by the Upaniṣadic thinkers, proved beneficial to the rapid growth of the heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism, the beginnings of which have, indeed, to be traced back to very early times. Moreover these heterodox religious movements may be said to have learnt a lesson from the failure of the Upaniṣads to make an effective impact upon the masses. They, therefore, tried to improve upon the Upaniṣads by bringing religion and philosophy closer to the people. The Buddhist teachers, for instance, were enjoined to preach and write in the language of the people. They simplified their teachings by stressing just a few concrete and tangible points instead of dilating upon subtle and commonly
incomprehensible philosophical issues. At the same time, in the place of the mystic and intuitive methods of the Upaniṣads, the heterodox schools of thought developed independent systems of logic. Further, Buddhism and Jainism promoted close contact with the masses through their religious missions and orders. Instead of mere individualistic meditation and introspection, these saṅghas sponsored definite religious practices in which many could participate. Buddhism and Jainism thus caught the fancy of the people and soon became popular religions in the literal sense of the word. As a result of all this, the Brahmanic religion which has to be understood as comprehending the simple religion of the early Vedic Aryans, the elaborate ritualism of the priestly class, and the subtle speculations of the Upaniṣadic free thinkers, found itself in the danger of being gradually pushed into oblivion.2

The rearguards of Brahmanism seem to have exerted themselves to counteract this increasingly alarming situation in several ways. The content of Brahmanism, as such, can by no means be said to have been inferior to or less stimulating than that of the heterodox ideologies. Only its form and the ways of its propagation had to be adapted to the changing conditions. First of all, therefore, attempts were made to reorganise and systematise the entire sphere of Brahmanic thought and life. A more or less definite and concrete form was given to the various aspects of Brahmanism. The literary monuments of this great Brahmanic resuscitation were the vedāṅgas, particularly the kalpasūtras, and, to a certain extent, the sūtras of the six orthodox darśanas. But far more effective in the confrontation between Vedic orthodoxy and non-Vedic heterodoxy than such steps taken for the revival and consolidation of the ancient orthodox thought and practices was the emergence to power of the popular religious cults which had presumably existed side by side with Brahmanism but which had been temporarily overwhelmed by the latter. In a truly pragmatic spirit these popular cults federated themselves, as it

2. The foregoing statement is a slightly amplified version of what has actually appeared in the original paper.
were, under the obviously nominal aegis of the enfeebled Brahmanism, into a single religious entity, which, incidentally, later came to be known as Hinduism. The protagonists of Brahmanism, on their part, having realised that the emergent Hinduism was the last bulwark of orthodoxy, conceded recognition to the gods and the religious practices of these popular cults. Indeed, the gods of the people soon superseded the gods of the hieratic Vedic pantheon, and, among other things, the cult of bhakti, which had been sponsored by most of the popular religions, made religion the concern not only of a select few as heretofore but of any one who cared to practise it. It was, verily, this new popular Hinduism which helped, more than anything else, to arrest successfully the onward march of the heterodox religions. Its message and its teachings were conveyed to the masses through the vehicle of the popular epics, which must have been in their formative phase during this period. Brahmanism thus gave place to, or, in a certain sense, enlarged itself into, Hinduism. Theistic devotionalism, a new code of conduct, a popular synthesis of the conflicting religious and philosophical ideologies each one of which proclaimed its allegiance to Brahmanism, and, above all, the shrewd claim that it only continued and, in a way, consummated the orthodox Vedic religion—these were the main features which invested Hinduism with a tremendous popular appeal.

But politically Hinduism must be said to have suffered a kind of set-back in the ensuing period. Buddhism and, to a certain extent, Jainism were actively patronised by the Mauryas. Particularly, under the great Asoka, Buddhism reached almost the peak of its glory. However, the deterioration in the Maurya imperial power was accompanied also by the gradual decline of Buddhism and the spectacular come-back of Hinduism. When Puṣyamitra Suṅga established himself as the ruler of Magadha, after having overthrown his Maurya master, he signalised his

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2a. In order to distinguish it from the pre-Vedic protohistoric Hinduism, this Hinduism may be referred to as historic Hinduism. Cf. the books mentioned in footnote 1.
victory by performing the aśvamedha sacrifice in the right Brahmanic fashion. This Vedic sacrifice, which was performed after a considerable lapse of time, may be said to have marked the beginning of the Hindu renaissance. But far more significant from the point of view of this renaissance than the resurrection of Vedic ritual was the popularisation of Hinduism through the epics which must have almost assumed their final shape about this time. Through them, the cult of bhakti, which was associated with the gods of the people, reached even the lowest strata of the society. The popular form of Hindu religion and philosophy as presented in the final redactions of the epics; the Hindu ideal of social and political organisation as taught in the Manusmṛti; the revival of ancient Brahmanic sacrifices as exemplified by the performance of the aśvamedha by Puṣyamitra; and the resurgence of Sanskrit as indicated by the Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali—these were the main characteristics of the Hindu renaissance in the Śuṅga period.

The fall of the Śuṅgas, however, marked the beginning of a period of uncertainty in the fortunes of Hinduism. Several circumstances may be said to have conspired to bring about this state of things. For one thing, there was at that time no single paramount power which could have, by virtue of its imperial sovereignty, kept the banner of Hinduism flying over its dominions in all its freshness and glory. It was a period of great social upheaval and of unsettled political conditions. Adequate attention could not, therefore, be paid to the continuance of the great movement of the Hindu renaissance, which had been started under the aegis of the Śuṅgas. Efforts in the direction of accelerating that movement were no doubt made by the Kāṇvas, the Āndhras, the Bhāraśivas, and the early Vākaṭakas, but, naturally enough, these efforts could not command the necessary nation-wide appeal. The religious affiliations of the foreign tribes like the Bactrian Greeks, the Śakas, the Pahlavas, and the Kuśāṇas, who made inroads in India during this period and eventually settled down in this country as its inhabitants, were divided between Hinduism and Buddhism. Most of these
foreigners had sojourned in Serindia before they came over to India and had, therefore, already come under the influence of Buddhism which had spread far and wide in that region. In course of time, however, they seem to have been converted to one or the other sect of Hinduism. Another significant factor, which must have seriously affected the growth of Hinduism, was the rise, during this period, of a strong rival to that religion in the form of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Hinayāna, which represents an earlier scholastic formulation of the original teachings of the Buddha, did not concern itself very much with metaphysical speculations and logical subtleties. It rather put an emphasis on a life of rigorous self-discipline and supramundane contemplation. As against this, the Mahāyāna was a more popular religion. It was more popular "not in the sense of being simpler, for parts of its teachings were exceedingly abstruse, but in the sense of striving to invent or include doctrines agreeable to the masses. It was less monastic than the older Buddhism, and more emotional, warmer in charity, more personal in devotion, more ornate in art, literature and ritual, more disposed to evolution and development, whereas the Hinayāna was conservative and secluded in its cloisters, and open to the plausible, if unjust, accusation of selfishness." The Mahāyāna, richer in mythology and teaching selfless devotion, thus substantially resembled the popular Hinduism of the epics. Just as the latter superseded the ritualism and mysticism of Brahmanism, the Mahāyāna superseded the Hinayāna. In a sense, the Mahāyāna may be said to have been a Hinduised version of early Buddhism. It, therefore, wielded among the masses an influence more or less similar to that of Hinduism.

_Hinduism under the Guptas_

When, early in the fourth century A. D., the Guptas came to power, they picked up the threads left by the Śuṅgas in the matter of the Hindu renaissance and raised the glory of Hinduism to

unprecedented heights. The imperial suzerainty of the Guptas, the sense of security and affluence engendered among the people during their regime, and the strong creative urge which generally characterised that epoch made this great achievement possible for them. The epigraphic records of the Guptas clearly show that they were staunch adherents of Hinduism and followed the religious practices both of orthodox Brahmanism and popular Hinduism. While, on the one hand, they called themselves paramabhogavatas, on the other, they themselves performed or helped others to perform various Vedic sacrifices. Kumāra Gupta I, for instance, is styled paramabhogavata on his coins, and, at the same time, numismatic evidence itself clearly points to the celebration of the aśvamedha by that monarch. In the Mathura inscription of Candra Gupta II and the Bihar and Bhitari inscriptions of Skanda Gupta, Samudra Gupta is credited with having performed the aśvamedha sacrifice, which had been for a long time out of vogue. The gold coins of the aśvamedha type issued by Samudra Gupta also corroborate the fact of the performance of the aśvamedha by him. Apart from the Horse-sacrifice, which was the symbol of imperial sovereignty, other Vedic sacrifices, small and big, have also been mentioned in the Gupta records. The first and the second Damodarpur copper-plates, dated 124 G. E. and 129 G. E. respectively, are clearly Brahmanical in character, for, they refer to agnihotra and mahāyajña. A reference may also be made in this connection to the fact that the Vākāṭaka monarch, Pravarasena I, performed many Vedic sacrifices including agnīṣṭoma, āptoryāma, ukthya, ṣoḍaśin, and bṛhaspatisava. Further, with a view to proclaiming his imperial power, he also performed the vājapeya and the aśvamedha. There is epigraphic evidence to show that the Maukharis, who were contemporaries of the later Guptas of Malwa, performed quite a large number of Vedic sacrifices. Thus, in the age of the Guptas, Brahmanic ritualism seems to have been

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4. CH III, 4.
5. CH III, 12; 13.
6. E1 XV, 129; 132.
regarded as an essential feature of the greater Hinduism. References to sacrifices in the works of Kālidāsa and other contemporary writers would also support this assumption. In the subsequent period, however, the practice of performing Vedic sacrifices seems to have gradually fallen into abeyance.

More prominently than this ritualistic aspect of Hinduism is its popular theistic aspect reflected in the Gupta records. On the basis of the available evidence in this connection it may be assumed that several sects of this popular Hinduism, such as Vaiṣṇavism, Šaivism, Śaktism, Tāntricism, etc., flourished in the days of the Guptas, and that each of them could boast of a fairly large following. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that the lack of mutual amity among the followers of these several sects, which not unoften characterised later Hinduism, was almost unknown in the age of the Guptas. There are instances of the members of the same royal family having been the devotees of different gods. Individual rulers are seen to have changed their religious affiliations according to their own personal inclinations. The first three rulers of Valabhi, for instance, were Māheśvaras, the fourth was a Bhāgavata, and the fifth was a worshipper of the Sun-god. Hastin of the Parivrajaka dynasty was a Śaiva, but his son, Saṅkṣobha, was a Vaiṣṇava. Kālidāsa, the court-poet of Candragupta II, was himself a staunch devotee of Śiva. In the nāndī stanzas of his dramas and also at several places elsewhere he clearly indicates his avowed inclination towards the worship of Śiva. But he was not a bigotted fanatic. In conformity with the remarkably catholic attitude in religious matters, which distinguished the age of the Guptas, Kālidāsa is seen to glorify also the gods, Brahmā and Viṣṇu. As a matter of fact he points out that Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are the three aspects of one and the same supreme divinity.

7. CH III, 23; 25.  
8. Kumāravatihpava II. 6; Raghuvatihpava X. 16.  
9. Kumāravatihpava VII. 44.
Vaiṣṇavism

Epigraphic and numismatic evidence would, however, indicate that most of the Gupta sovereigns were devout Vaiṣṇavas or Bhāgavatas. Candra Gupta II, Kumāra Gupta I, and Skanda Gupta style themselves as paramabhāgavatas on their coins.\(^{10}\) The emblems normally used for the personal and official seals of the Gupta monarchs, such as, śaṅkha, cakra, Lākṣmī, garuḍa, etc., also point to the Vaiṣṇava affiliations of those monarchs. Another significant point to be noted in this context is that sovereign power is often personified and represented in the Gupta epigraphic records as Lākṣmī, Śrī, Kamalā, and Padmā.\(^{11}\) The Mahārauli pillar is called viṣṇudhvaja, which fact indicates the Vaiṣṇava character of that inscription.\(^{12}\) The Udayagiri cave inscription of Candra Gupta II\(^{13}\) is engraved on a smoothed panel over two figures, one of Caturbhuj Viṣṇu, attended by his two consorts, and the other of Dvīdaśābhūja Devī. The object of the inscription is to record the gift, by a Mahārāja of the Sanakānika tribe, who seems to have been a feudatory of Candra Gupta II, of the two groups of sculptures, above which the record is inscribed. The Junagadh rock inscription,\(^{14}\) of Skanda Gupta’s time, records the construction of a temple of Cakrābhṛt, and the Bhitarī inscription,\(^{15}\) belonging to the regime of the same Gupta monarch, speaks of the installation of the image of Śāṅgīn. Mention of a

\(^{10}\) D. C. Sircar ("Sectarian difference among the early Vaiṣṇavas", \textit{BV} VIII, 109–111) draws attention to the fact that, unlike his successors, Samudra Gupta is never referred to as \textit{paramabhāgavata} in any of the Gupta records or on any of the Gupta coins. There is, at the same time, enough evidence to prove that he was a Vaiṣṇava. That is to say, Samudra Gupta was a Vaiṣṇava but not a Bhāgavata. \textit{Sircar}, therefore, suggests that the word, bhāgavata, indicates a specific sect of Vaiṣṇavism, and that it was from the times of Candra Gupta II onwards that the Gupta sovereigns adopted the bhāgavata form of Vaiṣṇavism. [For the sects of Vaiṣṇavism, see: Dandekar, "Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism", \textit{Insights into Hinduism}, 1979.]

\(^{11}\) \textit{CH} II, 9.

\(^{12}\) \textit{CH} II, 4.

\(^{13}\) \textit{CH} II, 3.

\(^{14}\) \textit{CH} II, 14.

\(^{15}\) \textit{CH} II, 13.
temple of Viṣṇu is also made in the Gangadhara inscription of Viśvavarman, dated 480 V.S.16 The erection of a dhvajastambha, dedicated to Janārdana, by Mātrvīṣṇu and Dhanyakaviṣṇu, is recorded in the Eran inscription of Budha Gupta.17 In that inscription, Mātrvīṣṇu is described as a great devotee of Bhagavān Viṣṇu.

It thus becomes clear that Viṣṇu was worshipped, in the age of the Guptas, under several names, such as Cakrabhṛt, Janārdana, Śaṅgin, etc. The varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu is associated with another Eran inscription18 relating to Toramāṇa and Dhanyakaviṣṇu. A Gupta sculpture at Udayagiri represents very artistically the rescue of the earth by Viṣṇu in his boar-incarnation. In Puṣṇaravardhana also there was a temple of varāha. No other avatāra of Viṣṇu seems to have been glorified during the regime of the Guptas as prominently as the varāha-avatāra. This fact may indicate that the Guptas perhaps claimed the greatest affinity with the varāha, by virtue of their having rescued the earth from distress, like Viṣṇu in his third avatāra. A very striking reference to Lord Kṛṣṇa is made in the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta.19 Describing, in a picturesque manner, Skanda Gupta’s encounter with the Hūṇas, after his victory over the Puṣṇamitrās, the inscription goes on to say: “Who, when (his) father had attained the skies, conquered (his) enemies by the strength of his arm, and established again the ruined fortunies of (his) lineage; and then crying, ‘the victory has been achieved’, betook himself to (his) father, whose eyes were full of tears of joy, just as Kṛṣṇa, when he had slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) Devaki.” Incidentally, attention may be drawn to the curious fact that, though the history of the kings of the Raghu race is given, in such detail, by Kālidāsa in his magni-

16. CH III, 17.
17. CH III, 19.
18. CH III, 36.
19. CH III, 1
ficent epic poem, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, the Gupta records do not anywhere allude to the Rāma-incarnation of Viṣṇu. 20

Śaivism

It may be generally assumed that the Guptas, the Pallavas, and the Gaṅgas were Vaiṣṇavas, while the Vākāṭakas, the Bhārāśivas, the Maitrakas, the Kadambas, and the Parivrājakas were Śaivas. However, as indicated elsewhere, the Guptas exhibited a remarkably catholic spirit in the matter of religion. It has been seen, for instance, how, while themselves being devout Bhāgavatas, the Gupta monarchs freely patronised the ancient Brahmanic ritualism. A similar attitude was taken by them in respect of the other sects of Hinduism. The very fact that the Gupta emperors, who styled themselves as *paramabhāgavata*, had their own personal names, such as Kumāra and Skanda, adopted from the Śaivite sect, is a sufficient testimony in this regard. There is also epigraphic evidence to show that the Gupta sovereigns, who were Vaiṣṇavas, had Śaiva ministers, like Śaba and Pṛthviśeṇa. 21 While one Udayagiri cave inscription 22 of Candra Gupta II is Vaiṣṇava in character, another, 23 which in undated, records the excavation of the cave as a temple of Śiva by order of Śaba, who was the king’s minister of peace and war ‘having got the position by hereditary rights’. The Karamdanda inscription, 24 dated 437 A.D., mentions that Pṛthviśeṇa, the son of Śikharasvāmin, who was *mantrin, kumāra-mātyā*, and afterwards *mahābalaḍhikṛt* of Kumāra Gupta I, got a temple of Śiva constructed, in order to commemorate his own name. Similar references to the construction of temples of Śiva, in commemoration of some events, are found in several other

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20. This may, however, not be understood to indicate that Rāma was not then an object of popular worship. Varāhamihira, who died in 587 A.D.; has given in his *Bṛhatāśvalayā* the measurements for the image of Rāma. This fact would point to the existence of Rāma's temples in the Gupta period.

21. Similarly Kālidāsa, who was avowedly a follower of the Śaiva religion, was patronised by the Vaiṣṇava sovereign Candra Gupta II.

22. *CH* III, 3.


Inscriptions of the Gupta period. For instance, the wife of Candragupta, a petty chief of Jallundhur, is said to have built a Śiva temple in memory of her husband, and Mihiralakṣmī is credited with having dedicated a temple, in the Kangra district, to Mihireśvara. Śiva is represented in Gupta sculptures, both in the human form and through the phallic symbol. Just as the Vaiśṇava emblems were used for personal and official seals in the days of the Guptas, the Śaiva emblems, such as the trident and the bull, are also seen to have been used.

From among the other deities belonging to the Śaiva pantheon, Kārttikeya, a son of Śiva and the Commander-in-chief of the gods, seems to have been particularly popular with the Guptas. Kumāra and Skanda, which are two other names of this god, were proudly borne by two great Gupta emperors. The famous poet Kālidāsa has likewise devoted an entire epic poem to the subject of the birth of Kārttikeya. The martial ambitions and achievements of the Gupta emperors would seem to explain their special affiliation to the Divine General. Even the construction of a temple of Kārttikeya, which is a very rare phenomenon in the Hindu religious history, is recorded in one of the inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta I. The Bilsad pillar inscription, dated 415 A.D., speaks of the construction of a temple of Kārttikeya and the establishment of a sattra at that place. Curiously enough, the other son of Śiva, namely Gaṇeśa, who is usually worshipped in order to secure an auspicious beginning of any undertaking, is not mentioned in any of the Gupta records. However, images of Gaṇapati ascribable to the sixth century A.D. are to be seen in the Gupta temples at Bhumra (District Panna, Madhya Pradesh) and Udayagiri hills near Vidiśā. This clearly points to the existence of the worship of Gaṇapati in the Gupta period. This is further confirmed by the fact that Varāhamihira (sixth century)

25. EII I, 18.
26. CII III, 80.
27. It is interesting to note that the late Kuṭāṇa coins show the human form of Śiva.
28. CII III, 10.
has prescribed in his Brhaśāvhitā detailed instructions in connection with the fashioning of the images of Gaṇeśa. The Dvādaśabhūjā Devī, represented in the sculptures at Udayagiri, is presumably the consort of Siva in her aspect of Mahiṣāsura-mardini.

Several sub-sects of Saivism have been known from very early times. The most prominent among them was undoubtedly the Pāṣupata sect, which is traditionally regarded to have been founded by Lakulīśa, a native of Gujarati, who must have lived in the early part of the first century of the Christian era. The main teachings of Lakulīśa were, in course of time, consolidated into four distinct schools known as Śaiva, Pāṣupata, Kāruka, and Kāpālika. Mathurā seems to have been the centre of the philosophical Saivism taught by Lakulīśa, and there is a long unbroken tradition of Pāṣupata teachers maintained at that place. Epigraphic evidence would show that among the Pāṣupata teachers, who flourished during the Gupta age, were Parāśara, Upamita, Kapila, and Udita. It may also be pointed out in this connection that, as recently as in 1945, an image of Lakulīśa, obviously belonging to the Gupta period, was discovered at Mathurā. The Śaiva sculptures at Mathurā give us some indications about the type of the Pāṣupata Śaivism which prevailed there. Extreme practices, such as self-immolation at the feet of the God, appear to have been not uncommon. The works of Kālidāsa clearly show that he was a Śaiva by religious profession, but it cannot be definitely avouched that he was the follower of any particular

28a. [For Gaṇeśa-worship, see: Dandekar, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 315–317.]

29. [For the sects of Saivism, see: Dandekar, "Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism", Insights into Hinduism, 1979.]

30. EI XXII, 8.

31. A terracotta panel, now deposited in the Mathurā Museum, seems to depict a devotee offering his own head to god; but there is no clear trace of the god. Cf. V. S. Agrawala, Handbook of Archaeology, Muttra, 1939, p. 51, fig. 39.

32. Śākuntala VII. 35; Kumāragaṇḍhara II. 58, etc.
sect of Śaivism. It has been suggested that he was born in Kashmir, and that he was an adherent of the Kashmir Śaivism. The Kashmir Śaivism had developed two principal schools — the spanda and the pratyabhijñā. The first of these, namely, spanda, is traditionally believed to have been founded by Vasugupta, who lived in the beginning of the ninth century A.D., and his pupil, Kallatā, and the second, namely, pratyabhijñā, by Somānanda in the tenth century A.D. A critical study of the works of Kālidāsa would show that they did not in any way adumbrate the teachings of any of these two schools. The similarities between the teachings of the pratyabhijñā school and the views expressed by Kālidāsa in his works, which have been sometimes referred to, are clearly superficial.

Sun-Worship: Other Minor Sects

A remarkable feature of the Hindu religious practices current in the age of the Guptas was the worship of the Sun, which seems to have been fairly common in those days. Generally speaking, temples of the Sun-god are a rare phenomenon in India. It is, therefore, interesting to note that the Indor inscription of Skanda Gupta records the donation of a gift, by one Devaviṣṇu, for perpetually lighting a lamp in the temple of the Sun. The famous Mandasor inscription, dated 437 A.D. and 473 A.D., reports that a guild of silk-weavers, who had migrated to Daśapura, built a temple of the Sun-god at that place in 437 A.D. It further reports that, "under several kings", a part of the temple fell into disrepair, and that the temple was again repaired by the same guild in 473 A.D. Another temple of the Sun-god is mentioned in the Gwalior inscription of Mihiρakula. Therein we have been told that a temple of the Sun was built by one Māṭrceṭa on

33. Lachhmidhar KALLA, The Birth-place of Kālidāsa, 1926.
34. Ibid.
35. [For sun-worship, see: DAndekar, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 317–19.]
36. CH II, 16.
37. CH II, 18.
38. CH II, 37.
the mountain called Gopa. There is also evidence to show that the orb of the Sun was employed by some people as a symbol on their personal seals. The Sun-worship must have thus been a significant feature of Hinduism in the days of the Guptas.

Among the other minor sects of Hinduism, which were prevalent in the days of the Guptas, may be mentioned the Yakṣapūjā and the Nāgapūjā. The temple of Yakṣa at Padmāvatī and the Maṇinīga-shrine at Rajgir are the architectural remnants of those sects. There are also to be seen, in the popular religion of the period, traces of Śāktism and Tāntricism. These were perhaps due to the assimilation into the Hindu religion, on a vast scale, of non-Brahmanic cults and beliefs of the earlier ages. If the Purāṇas represented the theology of those sects, the Tantras contained their magic and mystic practices. Altogether, the Hinduism under the Guptas must be said to have been a synthetic religion—a religion which brought about a popular synthesis of the Vedic faith and the tribal cults, and of the Aryan mode of worship and the non-Aryan religious practices.

Popular Religious Beliefs and Practices

A few general observations may be made here regarding the popular religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus in the Gupta period. Frequent epigraphic references to temples show that worship in public temples must have been quite in common vogue in those days. The Purāṇas, which are appropriately called the ‘Vedas of the people’, were then being composed and revised; and the public recital, in temples, of the Purāṇas must have formed an important feature of the Hindu religion in those days. As a matter of fact, it can be said with full justification that the Purāṇas constituted one of the principal sources of the real strength of Hinduism in the Gupta period. They helped, to a considerable extent, to popularise the resurgent Hinduism by simplifying its message and carrying it even to the lowest strata

40. [DANDEKAR, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 315, 364-69.]
of the society. This new popular religion also simplified the ancient religious practices. The performance of elaborate Vedic sacrifices was not possible for all. The new Hinduism, therefore, substituted in their place simpler practices like saṅdhyā, pūjā, japa, śrāddha, etc. The large number of vrataś, mentioned in the Purāṇas and the Smṛtis, are also indicative of this new reform. The difficult śrauta-mārga (the path of the Śrutis) of old may thus be said to have been replaced by the popular and easily accessible smārta-vartman (the path of the Smṛtis). But of all the religious practices current in that period the most popular seems to have been dāna. A large number of inscriptions record grants of land and of entire villages to the Brāhmaṇas. It cannot be denied that such patronage was generally the privilege of the Brāhmaṇas only. The five Damodarpur plates and the four Faridpura plates, for instance, refer to the grants of land made either to the Brāhmaṇas or to some Hindu gods. The establishment of free boarding houses, such as the ones in the Kārttikeya temple at Bilsad and in the Piśṭapūrī temple at Manpur, was not uncommon. These and other similar charities were freely endowed by royal personages and common people alike. Apart from its religious significance, the practice of dāna was important also from the point of view of the spread of Hindu religion and culture. Yājñāvalkya, the eminent law-giver of the Gupta period, seems to have fully realised the importance of this aspect of dāna, and has specially dealt with it in his Smṛti.

Pilgrimage to holy places, as a religious practice, is referred to both in the Gupta inscriptions and in the contemporary literature. The sacredness of the Gaṅgā must have then been popularly recognised, and cases of religious suicide at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā near Prayāga and at other

41. *CIH* III, 14.
42. *EI* XV, 7; *EI* XVII, 193; *IA*, 1910; *JASB*, 1911.
43. *CI* III, 10.
44. *EI* XVI, 19.
45. *TS* I, 6, 198-216.
places also were not altogether unheard of. It may, however, be incidentally pointed out that the holy city of Kāši is conspicuous by its not being mentioned in any of the Gupta epigraphic records. The belief that the world has been steadily deteriorating in the course of the four successive yugas, the recognition of the sacred character of the uttarāyāna, and the celebration of popular religious festivals on fixed days every year are some of the other minor items of religious significance that can be gleaned from the inscriptions and the literature of the Gupta period.

*Characteristic Features of Hinduism in the Age of the Guptas*

This statement regarding the resurgence of Hinduism, which distinguished the age of the Guptas, would, however, not be complete without a reference to some striking features of that remarkable cultural movement. Firstly, it becomes clear from the study of the Gupta inscriptions that the Gupta monarchs were imbued with the true spirit of Hinduism, namely, tolerance for other religions. This aspect of the religious policy of the Guptas was to be seen particularly in their attitude towards the Buddhists and the Jainas. Secondly, the new vigorous Hinduism of the Guptas gave an unprecedented impetus to Sanskrit language and literature. In this connection, it is noteworthy that classical Sanskrit was then deliberately and widely used even for popular and secular purposes, as is clearly evidenced by the royal and private lithic and other records of that period. Moreover, in those days, even the Jainas and the Buddhists thought it necessary to write their sacred texts in Sanskrit. Thirdly, thanks to the activities of the wandering minstrels, who visited distant parts of the country, under the pretext of the several pilgrimages recommended by the popular scriptures, and who thus carried the message of Hinduism, through the Purāṇas, directly to the masses, Hinduism proved, in that period, a significant force which unified the heterogeneous elements in the country by the common bond of religion. Fourthly, Hinduism had then assumed a positive and an assertive role in the sense that the movements of the Hinduisation of foreign tribes and the spread of Hinduism in
foreign lands, which were started in the preceding period of Indian history, were actively promoted also in the Gupta period. And, finally, Hinduism of the Gupta period was not only characterised by the new popular forms of religious practices mentioned above, but it was also marked by profound philosophical speculations.

Hindu Philosophical Systems

In the age of the Guptas, a very significant advance was made in every system of orthodox philosophical thought. The founder of the Sāmkhya-darśana is traditionally believed to have been Kapila, but nothing definite is known about the Sāmkhya-Sūtras which were presumably written by him. A brief but exceedingly lucid exposition of the theoretical teachings of the Sāmkhya system is found in the Sāmkhya-Kārikās of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, which is perhaps the earliest available text-book of the classical Sāmkhya. Without going into the details of the several views that have been put forth in connection with the date of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, we may generally assume that he lived in the early years of the Gupta regime. His work consists of seventy kārikās, and, on account of its excellent and almost complete treatment of the Sāmkhya metaphysics within such a limited compass, it is described, not quite unjustifiably, as the ‘pearl of the whole scholastic literature of India’. A comparison of the Sāmkhya-Kārikās with the account of the Sāmkhya given by the earlier writers, like Caraka (78 A.D.), would show that Īśvarakṛṣṇa had made substantial modifications in the original Sāmkhya doctrine. Since the beginning of the fourth century, however, Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s teachings have been regarded as representing the proper classical Sāmkhya.

As in the Sāmkhya system, very significant work seems to have been done, in the age of the Guptas, also in the other systems of orthodox Indian philosophy. For instance, Praśasta-

46a. See infra “Post-Vedic literature”.

pāda, who belonged to the fourth-fifth century A.D., wrote a commentary on the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras* attributed to Kaṇāda. In his commentary, Praśastapāda has not followed the order of the *sūtras*, which latter he has, as a matter of fact, employed merely as a slender basis for his own exposition of the categories generally accepted by the Vaiśeṣikas. Indeed, he himself does not claim that his work is a *bhāṣya* on the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras* in the strict sense of the term; he calls it *Padārtha-dharmasaṅgraha*. Several important doctrines relating to atomic pluralism, about which the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras* are, strangely enough, silent, have been treated in a masterly manner, for the first time, by Praśastapāda. In this connection a mention must be made also of the remarkable contribution made to Indian logic by Vātsyāyana through his commentary on the *Nyāya-Sūtras* of Gautama. Vātsyāyana, who lived about 400 A.D., mentions in his work the views of several earlier Naiyāyikas from whom he differs substantially. A significant point regarding Vātsyāyana's *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* is that it seems to have been subjected to a severe criticism by the eminent Buddhist logician Diṁnāga who must have been more or less contemporaneous with him. The views of Vātsyāyana were, however, strongly defended by Udyotakara (6th century A.D.) in his famous *Vṛttika*. An important work in the field of the Yoga system, belonging to the Gupta period, is the *bhāṣya* on the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali attributed to Vyāsa. In his *bhāṣya* on the *Nyāya-Sūtras*, Vātsyāyana quotes a passage from the *Vyāsabhāṣya* (III. 13) and criticizes it for being self-contradictory. It is, therefore, certain that Vyāsa lived before Vātsyāyana, and may accordingly be assigned to the fourth century A.D. It is suggested by some scholars that even the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali belonged to the Gupta period.48

An outstanding figure in the history of Indian philosophy, who belonged to the age of the Guptas, was Śabara, the renowned

commentator of the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras* of Jaimini. A critical study of all available evidence relating to the date of Śabara would indicate that he lived at the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Not much credence may be attached to the popular tradition that the great king Vikramāditya was the son of Śabara by a Kṣatriya wife. The *Sūtras* of Jaimini are perhaps the oldest and certainly the most voluminous of the philosophical *sūtras*. They deal exhaustively with the ancient system of Vedic ritual and the correct method of the interpretation of Vedic texts. Several commentaries seem to have been written on these *Sūtras* but the real system of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā must be said to have been consolidated for the first time through the Śābarabhāṣya. It is well known that the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā doctrine elaborated by Śabara was later explained in two ways, differing from each other in certain essential respects, by Prabhākara (c. 600–650 A.D.) in his *Brhatī*, and by Kumārilabhaṭṭa (circa 700 A.D.) in his *Ślokavārttika*. It is likely that Upavarṣa, who was one of the eminent predecessors of Śabara, himself belonged to the Gupta period. It is more than likely that Baudhāyana, who is credited with having written the first commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa, was a contemporary of Upavarṣa. It will be thus seen that work of first-rate importance, relating to every orthodox system of philosophy, was produced during the days of the Guptas. Though the actual beginnings of these systems, in the form of the *sūtras*, have to be traced back to the period between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., their proper elaboration and consolidation must be assigned to the age of the Guptas. It was during this period that the exposition of the teachings of at least some of the *darśanas* reached its high-water mark.

*Buddhism : Evidence of the Gupta Inscriptions*

The fate of any religion is not unoften seen to depend, in large measure, among other factors, on the royal patronage that it receives. Most of the Gupta monarchs were devout Vaiṣṇavas. The teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* perhaps suited their imperial
ambitions very well. The idea underlying the synthesis of several religious and philosophical systems which was accomplished by that oracle of the Bhāgavatas was, in a sense, transplanted by the Guptas into the political sphere, where they brought about a synthesis of several political units under their own imperial suzerainty. As indicated above, the Guptas actively promoted the cause of the new assertive Hinduism which had then arisen. But they also saw to it that Hinduism, though generally dominant, did not assume the form of fanaticism. Religious persecution of the non-Hindus was entirely unknown in those days. Non-interference, on the part of the state, in matters pertaining to religion as well as complete absence of exploitation of the community by any particular religion or its hierarchy seem to have been the outstanding features of the Gupta period. *Dharma* was the business of the state only in the Aristotelian political sense. In the age of the Guptas, one sees the happy spectacle of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism flourishing side by side without any trace of mutual conflict or tension. References such as the one which we find in Mahānāman's inscription of Bodhgaya⁴⁹ that heretics opposing the view of the great Buddha were completely overthrown are very rare.

The Gupta sovereigns always showed laudable impartiality in the matter of their patronage to religions. We know, for instance, that, in response to the appeal made by Meghavarman of Ceylon, Samudra Gupta had allowed a magnificent *vihāra* to be built at Gayā for the convenience of the Buddhist pilgrims from that island. The Sanchi inscription⁵⁰ of Candra Gupta II records a grant, made by a military officer, for feeding ten Buddhist mendicants and for lighting two lamps in the 'jewel-house'. The Mankuwar inscription⁵¹ of Kumāra Gupta I speaks of the installation of an image of the Buddha by one Bhikṣu Buddhahmitra. There is another inscription at Sanchi, dated 449 A.D., of Harisvāminī, the wife of Sanasiddha, which records the grant of twelve

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⁴⁹. *CHI* III, 71.
⁵⁰. *CHI* III, 5.
⁵¹. *CHI* III, 11.
dinars as a fixed capital, out of the interest on which a mendicant belonging to the Ārya-saṅgha was to be fed daily. There is a mention, in that inscription, also of a grant, to the 'jewel-house', of three dinars, the interest on which was to be spent on three lamps to be lighted daily before the Blessed Buddha, and of one more grant, to the seats of the four Buddhas, of one dinar, the interest on which was to be spent on the lighting of a lamp daily at those seats. Further, references are found in the inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta II\(^{52}\) and Buddha Gupta\(^{53}\) to the images of the Buddha set up at Sarnath. More images are said to have been set up, two at Mathurā, in 453 A.D. and 548 A.D., and one each at Deoriya in the Allahabad district, Kasia in the Gorakhpur district, Bodh Gaya, and Sarnath. Vainya Gupta, who was a Saiva, is known to have given a donation to a Saṅgha of the Mahāyāna Buddhists.\(^{54}\) It further becomes clear from the Gupta records that persons professing Buddhism were unhesitatingly employed as officers in the Gupta administration. The liberal patronage given by the Gupta emperors to the Buddhist university at Nalanda is also very significant in this connection.\(^{55}\) Samudra Gupta, who was avowedly a devout Vaiśṇava, felt no compunction in entrusting the education of his son to the great Buddhist teacher, Vasubandhu. Nor does Narasimha Gupta seem to have felt any compunction, when, as tradition records, he openly embraced Buddhism as soon as he was convinced of the superiority of Buddha's teachings.\(^{56}\)

**Mahāyāanism**

It should, however, be remembered that it was the Mahāyāna Buddhism, rather than the Hinayāna, which had become particularly prominent in the days of the Guptas. The immediately preceding period of Indian history had already seen the rise of

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52. ASR 1914–15, p. 124.
54. IHQ VI, pp. 53 ff.
55. See supra pp. 59 and 62.
56. See supra p. 59.
Mahāyānism. As a matter of fact, this new vigorous school of Buddhism was symbolic of the general trend of religious thought during the three hundred years before the rise of the Guptas. Popularisation of religion among the masses had been the watchword of those times. In a sense, Hinduism and Buddhism may be said to have had parallel developments. Just as the older Brahmanism with its elaborate practices and abstruse speculations was transformed into popular Hinduism, so too the Hinayāna Buddhism, which demanded very austere spiritual discipline, was simplified and popularised through the Mahāyāna with its large number of godheads and legends. The Mahāyāna Buddhism may, indeed, be said to represent the result of the 'Hinduisation' of the Hinayāna or 'the socialisation of the rigorous ideal of Buddhist sainthood'. We have further the Tāntric Buddhism to correspond with the Tāntric Hinduism. If Buddhism could give a good account of itself against the growing strength of the newly arisen popular Hinduism, during the Gupta period and also during the earlier periods, it was certainly by virtue of the changes effected by Mahāyānism in the teachings and practices of earlier Buddhism. Indeed, in several respects, Hinduism and Mahāyānism had actually come quite close to each other. The Mahāyāna writers employed the Sanskrit language for their writings, and the Mahāyāna Buddhists worshipped images and indulged in the legends of their Bodhisattvas. Where, however, there was no confrontation between Hinduism and Buddhism, the older school persisted. Ceylon, for instance, still remained the stronghold of Hinayānism.

Buddhist Thinkers and Authors: Mahāyāna and Hinayāna

Apart from the fact that Mahāyānism sustained Buddhism in its hard times in India, it also made remarkably rich contributions to Indian philosophical thought as a whole. Among the lumi-

57. The fact that Buddhism was not free from Tāntric practices is proved by the oldest extant Chinese translations of the Dhāraṇīs which may be ascribed to 307-342 A.D.

57a. See infra "Post-Vedic literature".
naries of Mahāyānism who exercised the most profound influence, the first place must be necessarily conceded to Nāgārjuna. He is universally regarded as the great master of the Mahāyāna Buddhism and is also sometimes credited with having been its founder. As a matter of fact, however, he is the founder of one school of Mahāyānism, namely, the Mādhyamika school. Nāgārjuna lived about the end of the second century A.D., and cannot, therefore, be, strictly speaking, assigned to the age of the Guptas. From the biography of Nāgārjuna, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (circa 405 A.D.), it would appear that Nāgārjuna had originally been a Brāhmaṇa well versed in the four Vedas and the Brahmanical Śāstras. After he had become a Buddhist monk, he studied and mastered the Tripitaka in ninety days. He was, however, not spiritually satisfied and, therefore, sought enlightenment elsewhere. In the course of his wanderings, as his biography records, he met a highly gifted monk in the Himalayas and received from him some Sūtra of Mahāyānism. Out of it, he later evolved the Mādhyamika doctrine. The Mūla-Madhyamaka-Kārikās or the Mādhyamika-Sūtras of Nāgārjuna is a systematic philosophical work exactly of the type of the Brahmanical scientific treatises, in the form of kārikās, on which the author himself has written a commentary. The commentary, called Akutobhayā, is, however, unfortunately not available in Sanskrit but is known only through its Tibetan translation. Nāgārjuna’s biography tells us that for 300 years he worked with great vigour and enthusiasm for the spread of Buddhism in South India.

Side by side with Nāgārjuna must also be mentioned Asaṅga or Āryāsaṅga. What Nāgārjuna was in respect of the Mādhyamika school of Mahāyānism, Asaṅga was in respect of the Yogā-

58. An attempt at a reconstruction of the Sanskrit original of the text of the Akutobhayā from the Tibetan translation is made by I. Datar in her doctorate thesis submitted to the Bombay University in 1949.

59. Nāgārjuna is said to have been a great expert in chemistry (rasastra) and magic. This tradition is, however, unacceptable, for it is based on a wrong identification of the Buddhist philosopher, Nāgārjuna, with the alchemist Nāgārjuna, who was evidently a different person and lived in the seventh or the eighth century A.D.
çāra school. Asaṅga has systematically assimilated into Mahā-
yānism the teachings of Yoga and mysticism which were already
well known to Hinayānism. A principal work of the Yogācāra
school is the Yogācāra-Bhūmiśāstra, which is traditionally believed
to have been 'revealed' by Maitreya. Another work, which also
is believed to have been 'revealed' by Maitreya, is the Mahāyāna-
Sūtrālaṁkāra. But Sylvain Lévi, who discovered that work, has
proved that its author was Asaṅga. 60 Asaṅga was the eldest
among three gifted brothers, the sons of a Brāhmaṇa of the
Kauśika gotra living in Puruṣapura. These three brothers seem
to have belonged to the fourth century A.D. When they were
first converted to Buddhism, they accepted the doctrines of the
Sarvāstivāda school, but, later on, they became eminent teachers
of Mahāyānism. The youngest brother, Vasubandhu Viriṇciyavatsa,
is not very well known in the literary field. The most outstanding
of the three brothers was undoubtedly the middle one, popularly
known as Vasubandhu. A profound scholar and an independent
thinker, Vasubandhu was a renowned figure not only in the
history of Buddhism but of Indian philosophical thought as a
whole. Until very recently the Sanskrit original of his principal
work, the Abhidharma-Kośa, was not available. It was known,
on the one hand, through the Sanskrit commentary on it, by
Yaśomitra, called Sphuṭārthā: Abhidharma-Kośa-Vyākhyā, 61 and,
on the other, through its Chinese and Tibetan versions. 62 Mention
must also be made of Vasubandhu's Paramārthasaptati, a work
in seventy stanzas, which contains a refutation of the Sāṅkhya
doctrines as embodied in the Kanakasaptati of Vindhyavāsin,

60. Asaṅga: Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṁkāra, edited and translated into French
by Sylvain Lévi, Paris, 1907–11.

61. Edited by U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932–36.

62. The Sanskrit original of the Kārikā portion of the Abhidharma-Kośa,
discovered in Tibet by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāvana, is edited by V. V. Gokhale
and published in JBBrAS 22, 1946, pp. 73–102. [The Sanskrit original of
the Bhāṣya portion, also discovered by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāvana in Tibet, is
directed by P. Pradhan and is published by the K. P. Jayaswal Research
Institute, Patna, 1967.]
who was one of his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{63} Vasubandhu was the founder of the \textit{vijñaptimātratā} doctrine, which he has elaborated in his works called \textit{Vināśikā} and \textit{Trimśikā}.\textsuperscript{64} He also wrote commentaries on a number of Buddhist works, such as the \textit{Saddharma-puṇḍarika}\textsuperscript{65} and the \textit{Prajñāpāramitā},\textsuperscript{66} but they are known only through their Chinese and Tibetan translations.\textsuperscript{67}

Dīnāga, who was a Sautrāntika, is reputed to have been a pupil of Vasubandhu, and to have lived about 400 A.D. He was a celebrated logician, and, in his well-known work, the \textit{Pramāṇa-Samuccaya}, he is said to have ably established the tenets of Buddhist logic and to have refuted several views of Vātsyāyana, the well-known commentator of the \textit{Nyāya-Sūtras}. This work of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{63} It is suggested by some scholars that the name of Vindhyavāsin’s work was \textit{Sāṃkhya-saptati}. According to another view, however, the \textit{Sāṃkhya-saptati} was the same work as the \textit{Sāṃkhya-Kārikā} of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. It is curious to note, in this context, that one tradition ascribes to Vasubandhu (obviously wrongly) a commentary on the \textit{Sāṃkhya-Kārikā}. A work called \textit{Swarga-saptati} or \textit{Sāṃkhya-Kārikā-Bhāṣya} was translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (557–560 A.D.), but its author is not known. In any case, he could not have been Vasubandhu. N. Aiavswami Sastri, in his edition of the \textit{Swarga-saptati} (Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Series No. 7, Tirupati, 1944), declares that the original of Paramārtha’s Chinese translation was the \textit{Maṭhara-bhāṣya} (mentioned in the Jaina works) which, however, was not to be confounded with the \textit{Maṭhara-yāttī} (also known as \textit{Maṭhara-pratītī} in Guāratīna’s commentary). S. K. Belvarkin (R. G. Bhandarkar Comm. Vol., 1917, pp. 171–84; \textit{ABORI} \textbf{5}, pp. 133–168), comparing the Chinese commentary with the \textit{Maṭhara-yāttī}, says that the latter is the original of the former. Presumably the \textit{Swarga-saptati} and the \textit{Kanaka-saptati} are one and the same work. Incidentally it may be pointed out that the \textit{Śnyata-saptati} of Nāgārjuna must have been the prototype of Vindhyavāsin’s \textit{Kanaka-saptati} (\textit{Swarga-saptati}?) and Vasubandhu’s \textit{Paramārtha-saptati}.

\textsuperscript{64} The Sanskrit originals of these texts, based on a Nepal manuscript, are published by Sylvain Lévi.

\textsuperscript{65} Vasubandhu’s \textit{Saddharma-puṇḍarikasūtra-sāstra} was translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci and others (508–535 A.D.).

\textsuperscript{66} Vasubandhu is traditionally said to have written the \textit{Vajracchedikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sāstra} in collaboration with Asaṅga.

\textsuperscript{67} The question of Vasubandhu’s date is discussed at great length by Frauwallner in \textit{On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu}, Serie Orientale Roma, Vol. 3, 1951. He there speaks of two Vasubandhus—one the author of the \textit{Abhidharma-Kośa} and the other that of the \textit{Vināśikā} and the \textit{Trimśikā}.}
Dīnāga also is not available in Sanskrit original, but is known only through its Tibetan translation. Dharmakirti (7th cent. A.D.) was another Buddhist logician who lived in the age of the Guptas. He was a great master of Buddhist epistemology, and his works, the Pramāṇavārttika (with his own commentary) and the Ālambanaparīkṣā, are ranked high in Buddhist philosophical literature. Mention may also be made, at this stage, of the three great commentators of Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamikaśāstra, namely, Buddhapalita, Bhavya or Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti. A special reference deserves to be made to Bhāvaviveka’s Madhyamakāḥṣāstra (together with the auto-commentary called Tarkajvalā), which is a kind of history of Indian philosophy from the Buddhist point of view. In it the author (6th century A.D.), has stated and critically examined several systems of Indian philosophy, such as Vedānta, Śāṅkhyā, and Mīmāṃsā. Candra-gomin (circa 673 A.D.), well-known as a grammarian, philosopher, and poet, and the author of the Śīyalekhadharmakāvya, and Śāntideva (7th century A.D.), the renowned author of the Śīkṣā-Saṃuccaya, were other important teachers of Mahāyānism, who belonged to the age of the Guptas.

The Dīpavamsa and the Mahāvamsa, the two famous Pāli chronicles from Ceylon, which belong to the Gupta period, are not important from the philosophical point of view. Though not regular histories, they may be aptly described as historical poems. The author of the Dīpavamsa is not known, but he seems to have lived some time between the beginning of the fourth century and the first quarter of the fifth century A.D. The main source of his work is the Aṭṭhakathā preserved in the great cloister of Anurādhapura. As a matter of fact, the Dīpavamsa may be said to

68. An attempt to restore the Sanskrit text of a small portion of this work is made by H. R. Ramaswamy Iyengar (Mysore University Publication, 1930). Incidentally it may be pointed out that it is difficult to accept the suggestion that, in Meghadūta 14, Kālidāsa is referring to Dīnāga, the eminent Buddhist logician. No pun on the word, dīnāga, seems to have been intended in that passage.

69. [Gf. V. V. Gokhale, “The Vedānta-philosophy described by Bhavya in his Madhyamakāḥṣāstra”, IJF 2, 165-180.]
be the first, though certainly an imperfect, attempt to present, in
the form of an epic, the historical traditions stored in the Sim-
halese Aṭṭhakathā. The Mahāvaśīsa is ascribed to the authorship
of a poet called Mahānāman, who lived in the last quarter of the
fifth century A.D. Compared with the Dīpavaśīsa, the Mahāvaśīsa
is undoubtedly a more thoroughly accomplished epic; and, as the
author has himself pointed out, he has specially exerted to make
it a great work of literary art. He claims, with full justification,
to have scrupulously avoided the pitfalls of the ancient historical
writings.

But by far the most outstanding Ceylonese figure in Buddhist
philosophy and literature, belonging to the age of the Guptas, is
Buddhaghoṣa. Buddhaghoṣa, who flourished in the first half of
the fifth century A.D., is traditionally believed to have been a
Brāhmaṇa converted to Buddhism. In his first great work, the
Visuddhimagga, he deals, in a learned manner, with the Arhat
ideal of the Hinayāna, and the doctrines of the Theravāda. He
has written excellent commentaries on several Buddhist texts, such
as the four Nikāyas, the Vibhaṅga, and the Dhammasaṅgani. Out
of these writings, Buddhaghoṣa’s commentary on the Dhammasaṅgani, called Aṭṭhasālini, is very valuable. The Dhammasaṅgani
is the first systematic treatise on the Abhidhammadapiṭaka, and
Buddhaghoṣa’s commentary on it contains some important
historical and geographical information besides a learned exposi-
tion of the technical terms of Buddhist psychology. The fact
that Buddhaghoṣa was born in India and brought up in Brahmanic
tradition was mainly responsible for his entirely new and
refreshingly original approach to Buddhist philosophy. He must,
indeed, be said to have considerably enriched Buddhist philosophy
on account of his Brahmanic scholarship and training. Buddhaghoṣa
was perhaps the last protagonist of the Theravāda, and his
name will continue to be cherished as long as Buddhism remains
a living faith on the face of this earth.

Fa Hien’s Testimony

Since the special mission of the Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hien,
who visited India in the heyday of the Gupta imperial power,
was to acquaint himself with the activities of the Buddhist Order; the evidence of his travel-diary may be accepted as more or less authoritative in the matter of the extent to which Buddhism prevailed in those days. Fa Hien found Buddhism 'very flourishing' in Panjab and 'becoming very popular' in the region round Mathura. 'All the kings of the countries in northern India to the west of the desert are firm believers. When they make offerings to the priests, they take off their caps of State, and together with their families and officials of the court, wait personally upon the priests at table. At the end of the meal they spread carpets on the ground, and sit down facing the president, not venturing to sit on couches in the presence of priests'. In Bengal, too, in the region near Tamralipti, the Buddhist faith was 'very flourishing'. It would appear from such descriptions that Buddhism prevailed more in the east and in the west, while, in the centre of the Gupta empire, Hinduism was definitely predominant. Fa Hien writes but little of the relations between the Hindus and the Buddhists. He says that 'the Brahmans come to invite the Buddhas', indicating thereby that, at several places, Hinduism and Buddhism existed side by side in the spirit of exemplary tolerance. It is further reported that the Brähmaṇas of Pataliputra took part in the annual festival of the Baudhās in the capital. The occasional bickerings with 'the heretic Brahmans, growing jealous', which seem to have once prevailed in Kosala and elsewhere, had become things of the past, and religious persecution of any kind was unknown under Candragupta II.

Hinduism and Buddhism

It cannot, therefore, be said that the age of the Guptas in any way marked the decline and downfall of Buddhism. True to their tolerant and eclectic spirit, the Guptas even promoted, to a certain extent, the expansion of Buddhism. The contribution, made by the Buddhists to literature, philosophy, art, and sciences, during the Gupta regime, was, indeed, remarkable, and it was not a little responsible for making that period the golden age of Indian culture. It was an epoch of a universal cultural awakening in India—an awakening, which was made possible by the best that was in Hinduism as well as in Buddhism. The monuments of Buddhist art of that period are as representative of that great awakening as the poetry of Kālidāsa. It has been already pointed out that, in religious practices and beliefs, Hinduism and Buddhism had come very close to each other. So far as philosophical speculations were concerned, Buddhist thinkers and their Hindu compatriots were tackling more or less the same problems, but from different points of view. Though, in course of time, the Buddhist religion as such gradually declined in India, the Buddhist civilisation, which it had created, continued to prevail as a significant element in her cultural make-up.

Jainism under the Guptas

The Gupta monarchs seem to have extended their patronage to the Jainas as impartially as to the Bauddhas. The Udayagiri inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, dated 424 A.D., and the Kahaum pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta, dated 459 A.D., record the installation of the images of the Jaina Tīrthanākaras. Another inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, dated 431 A.D., also

77a. It may, however, be pointed out that property-rights occasionally led to serious disputes regarding endowments to different religions.
78. CII III, 61.
79. CII III, 15.
80. EI II, 210,
records the setting up of a similar image at Mathurā. The Jaina inscriptions pay a frank tribute to the efficient and impartial administration of the Guptas, most of whom were avowedly Hindus. There is epigraphic evidence also to show that the Jainas generally respected the Hindus and their teachers. It would appear from the Jaina inscriptions and literature that Mathurā and Valabhi were the centres of the Śvetāmbara Jainas, while the Digambara Jainas had mustered round Puṇḍravardhana. Generally speaking, however, during the Gupta period, the influence of Jainism had been gradually waning in the north, though, in the south, that religion still continued to be actively promoted and patronised.

Jaina Philosophical Literature

In accordance with the general trend in religion and philosophy, which characterised the Gupta period, the Jainas also re-organised their religious practices and philosophical teachings in those days. Evidence is available from the Jaina tradition itself to show that two councils were convened by the Śvetāmbara Jainas in the second decade of the fourth century A.D., one at Valabhi under the leadership of Nāgārjuna, and the other at Mathurā under the presidency of Skandila. The ancient Jaina texts, which had become obscure and disorganised, were properly regularised by those councils. They were finally consolidated by another, and more important, council held at Valabhi, by the middle of the fifth century A.D., under the leadership of Devardhiṇa Kṣamāśramaṇa. Like the Mahāyāna Buddhists; the Jainas also felt the necessity of writing Sanskrit commentaries on their original Prakrit scriptures. Some Jaina authors even wrote independent religious and philosophical treatises in Sanskrit. It must, however, be said that no significant changes were made in the original tenets of Jainism.

80a. Three stone Jaina images have been recently discovered at Vidiśā. The inscriptions on their pedestals, in characters belonging to the 4th century A.D., mention Mahārājādhirāja Ṣrī Rāma Gupta. Does this indicate that monarch's special leanings towards Jainism?

81. Cf. CH III, 15; 61. 814. See infra "Post-Vedic Literature", 
 Among the Jaina writers, who were responsible for this new epoch in the history of Jainism, mention must first be made of Umāsvāti. The Tattvārthādhyāgama-Sūtra of Umāsvāti, who flourished a little before the beginning of the Gupta period, is one of the earliest treatises containing systematic exposition of the religion and the philosophy of the Jainas. It consists of ten chapters, and has been commented upon by Umāsvāti himself and several other writers. It becomes clear from the Tattvārthādhyāgama-Sūtra that, though there is apparent similarity between the Sāmkhyya dualism and the Jaina dualism, while the Sāmkhyyas derive the evolution of the material world and the living beings from Prakṛti and Puruṣa, the Jainas trace them all to primeval nature. Umāsvāti’s exposition of the Jaina notion of being, which involves permanence through change, appears like an attempt to bring about a reconciliation of the two extremes of Vedānta and Buddhism. Side by side with their pluralistic and realistic metaphysics, the Jainas had also developed, even at an early date, a remarkable system of logic. The most eminent expounder of this logic was Siddhasena Divākara, who lived in the fifth century A.D. Logic was mixed up with metaphysics and religion in earlier Jaina works, as in those of the other sects; but Siddhasena seems to have been the first Jaina author to write on pure logic. His Nyāyāvatāra is a small metrical work consisting of thirty-two stanzas in Sanskrit, and deals in a lucid manner with the essential principles of Jaina logic. Siddhasena is the author also of the Sammati-tarkasūtra, which is a Prakrit work on Jaina philosophy and logic. According to a tradition, Siddhasena was a contemporary of Vikramāditya, and, under the name Kṣapaṇaka, he was celebrated as one of the ‘Nine Jewels’ who adorned the court of that sovereign.

[First published: Recz. Or. (Schayer Volume), 1957, 85-107.]

82. Cf. utpāda-uyaya-dharmya-yuktam sat.
83. The ‘Nine Jewels’ are enumerated as follows: Dhanvantari—Kṣapaṇaka—marasiṁha—Śāntu—Vetālinī—Ghaṭakharpara—Kālidāsaḥ / Khyāto Vardhamānīkholo nippateḥ sabhyath ratanai vai Vararuciś nava Vikramasya //
LITERATURE AND SCIENCES

Introduction

The political supremacy of the Guptas may be said to have begun to dwindle after the death of Skanda Gupta (467 A.D.), until at last it became more or less completely extinct in about 550 A.D.¹ With the end of the political power also disappeared—quite naturally—the other outward signs of the pomp and prosperity of the Gupta epoch. It should, however, be remembered that the true monuments of that golden age of Indian history are not to be found in such external appurtenances of the Gupta regime. They are, indeed, to be found in the magnificent achievements of that age in the realms of literature, arts, and sciences. Even from among these latter, if anything can be said to have truly immortalised the glory of the age of the Guptas, it is the literature that was produced during that period.

In India literature has been generally regarded as the supreme art. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the creative genius of the Indians has found its best expression in literature. So far as the literature of the age of the Guptas is concerned, all the characteristic features of the civilisation of that period will be found to have been reflected in it in a remarkable manner. The literature of the Gupta age may, indeed, be said to be the verbal embodiment of the Gupta culture. An adequate estimate of that literature will accordingly prove to be of paramount importance from the historical point of view. In order to be able to do this in the proper perspective, we must first briefly trace the beginnings and the early growth of Sanskrit classical literature. This is by

¹ Among the causes of the gradual crumbling of the Gupta imperial edifice may be mentioned the invasion of the Huns which disrupted certain aspects of the economic life and encouraged political anarchy, the growth of feudatories, the surrender of administrative authority to the grantees of land, the weakening of the organized bureaucracy, and the absence of a centralised military power.
no means an easy task. It presents several difficulties. Chronology, for instance, has always been a weak point in the history of ancient Indian literature. Moreover, most of the literature belonging to the beginning of the classical period seems to have been lost. All the same, it may not be altogether impossible to refer to certain distinct landmarks in connection with the origin and growth of Sanskrit classical literature.\(^1\)  

_Sanskrit Classical Literature: Origin and Growth_  

_MAX MÜLLER_ propounded the theory that, after the completion of the two epics, the _Rāmāyaṇa_ and the _Mahābhārata_, round about the first centuries before and after Christ, there followed an interregnum which had been characterised by a kind of standstill in the production of Sanskrit literature. According to _MAX MÜLLER_, this state of standstill continued up to about the 6th century A. D., when Kālidāsa inaugurated what that scholar calls the ‘Renaissance of Sanskrit Literature.’\(^2\) This theory has, however, been discountenanced since long. We now know, for instance, of the epic poems and the dramas written by the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa who belonged to the second century A. D. In language and style, the literary works of Aśvaghoṣa clearly exhibit all the characteristics of Sanskrit _kāvyā_. Kālidāsa himself has referred, in his drama _Mālavikāgnimitra_, to some eminent predecessors of his—Bhāsa being one of them—in such a manner as would indicate that the latter had flourished in a period considerably earlier than his own.\(^3\) A critical and comparative study of the works of Bhāsa, Aśvaghoṣa, and Kālidāsa would make it abundantly clear that Kālidāsa had consciously avoided, in his dramas, certain pedestrian traits of Bhāsa’s style as much as he had avoided, in his epic poems, certain pedestrian traits of Aśvaghoṣa’s style. The production of a work like the

\(^1\) Also see _infra_ “Post-Vedic literature”.  
\(^3\) _Act I: pratihitayatāsadbhāsakaviptasautamillakādintaprabandhānātikranya variamānakaveḥ Kālidāsāya khyau kathāṃ parisado bahumānaḥ_.

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1. Also see _infra_ “Post-Vedic literature”.  
3. _Act I: pratihitayatāsadbhāsakaviptasautamillakādintaprabandhānātikranya variamānakaveḥ Kālidāsāya khyau kathāṃ parisado bahumānaḥ_.
Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana (c. 250 A.D.), during the period which MAX MÜLLER describes as one of dormancy so far as Sanskrit kāvya was concerned, also goes against his theory, for, the Kāmasūtra clearly reflects conditions which must have been exceedingly favourable for poetic activity. Both Bhāsa and Kālidāsa knew the Nātyasāstra of Bharata, and Aśvaghoṣa seems to have been familiar with some theory of alarikāra. It is hardly likely that theoretical texts on dramaturgy and rhetoric could have been produced in the absence of actual dramatic and poetic compositions. We further have the evidence of Prakrit works, like Häla’s Sattasāl and Guṇāḍhya’s Brhatkathā (the latter being unfortunately not available in its original form) as also of the songs and poems in the Therigāthās belonging to the Buddhist canon, to support the assumption that literary works of true kāvya type were actually being produced during the so-called interregnum. A convincing refutation of MAX MÜLLER’s theory is further to be found in BÜHLER’s brilliant monograph, Die indischen Inschriften und das Alter der indischen Kunstpoesie, wherein he has shown that inscriptions dating from as early as the 1st century A.D. have been discovered, which exhibit all the characteristic features of Sanskrit kāvya. For instance, Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman’s inscription on the Girnar rock, which belongs to the 2nd century A.D., can be regarded as a fine example of Sanskrit kāvya in prose. It is written in what Daṇḍin later calls the Vaidarbhi style. Such insessional poetry bearing all the marks of Sanskrit classical kāvya continued to be produced up to the time of Kālidāsa and even afterwards. It will be thus seen that, ever since the time when the epics assumed their final form, Sanskrit classical literature has a more or less unbroken tradition. The age of the Guptas must, therefore, be said

4. It has been suggested by some scholars (e.g. F. LACOTE, Essai sur Guṇāḍhya et la Brhatkathā, Paris 1908) that a period of Prakrit kāvya had preceded the period of proper Sanskrit kāvya.

5. Wien 1890.

5a. A reference may be made in this context also to the two Sanskrit inscriptions, recently discovered at Nāgarjunī Konḍa, which belong to the reign of the Ikṣvāku king Ehavala Chāntamāla (3rd cent. A.D.).
to represent the acme of Sanskrit classical literature, and not its revival or renaissance. The apparent paucity of the pre-Gupta Sanskrit literature seems to have been due to the fact that the great literary luminaries of the Gupta period, like Kālidāsa, almost eclipsed the lesser luminaries of the earlier period.

It is customary to classify Sanskrit classical literature into four categories, namely, kāvya or poetic literature, literature relating to religion, philosophy, and dharmaśāstra, literature relating to sciences and arts, and Buddhist Sanskrit literature. So far as the literature of the age of the Guptas is concerned, we shall have to deal mainly with the first three categories. To begin with the kāvya literature, that literature itself may be classified under three main heads, namely, epic and lyrical poetry, dramatic poetry, and narrative, historical, and ethico-didactic poetry. Epic poetry can be further subdivided into two classes—the ancient epics and the classical epic poems or the mahākāvyas.

The Purāṇas

Even in the earliest period of the literary history of ancient India, a critical student would discover two distinct literary traditions—both oral-existing and developing side by side. Broadly speaking, one of these two traditions concerned itself mainly with what may be called the religio-philosophical life and thought of the classes and the masses of the Indian people—their cosmic religion, hero-religion, and Agni-Soma-cults, their magical rites and witchcraft, their sacrificial ritual, and their philosophical speculations. On account of the essentially sacred character of this literary tradition, which may be called the mantra-tradition, it came to be crystallised into a fixed and definite literary form at a very early date. The texts of the literary compositions belonging to this tradition, namely, the Vedic Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Upaniṣads, have accordingly preserved their form more or less unaltered throughout the many centuries of their transmission. As indicated above, this was by no means the only literary tradition then in existence. Side by side with the mantra-tradition, there also developed another literary tradition, which
concerned itself not so much with gods and superhuman beings and the other world, but mainly with human kings and heroes and their doings in this world. Of course, it by no means lacked in the so-called religious orientation which, by and large, had been the hallmark of almost every activity in ancient India. This literary tradition, which may be fittingly called the sūta-tradition, chiefly comprised ancient ballads and popular folk-songs, and historical narratives and traditional legends. For obvious reasons this vast mass of literature—bardic, legendary, and historical—had not been reduced to a fixed and stereotyped literary form for a long time. Modifications on a huge scale continued to be made in the form and contents of the literary compositions belonging to this tradition by generation after generation of bardic poets. In course of time, however, efforts began to be made to consolidate this floating and dynamic literary tradition of the sūtas. This process of consolidation had naturally been a long and continuous process. As is well known, one of the earliest outcomes of this process of the fixation of the texts belonging to the sūta-tradition was the great epic Mahābhārata. On the basis of the evidence now available, the Mahābhārata and also the other epic, the Rāmāyaṇa, may be said to have assumed their final forms about the second century before Christ. These two epics, however, had by no means exhausted the vast mass of bardic material. Quite a considerable amount of ancient legends, which had already been collected under the name of Purāṇas, still remained in a floating condition without having been given a fixed literary form. These legends continued to be added to and revised and re-revised under the influence of Brahmanism and other religious cults, as also, to a certain extent, of the changing political conditions.

One of the foremost literary activities of the age of the Guptas was the final consolidation of the Purāṇas. As indicated above, Purāṇas, as legends of antiquity, existed, in a sense, per-

haps even prior to the so-called revelation of the Veda. But Purāṇas, as literary works, did not then exist. The term, itihāsapurāṇa, which occurs in the Vedic literature, in different contexts, must be understood to denote the floating and dynamic literary tradition of Purāṇas and not any definite literary works. Different legendary accounts are given, by different Purāṇas, of the origin of this literature. From the available epigraphic and literary evidence, however, it would appear that what may be called the first draft of the Purāṇas must have become ready in the early centuries of the Christian era. This first draft itself must have been the result of a long process of revision. The Purāṇas themselves define a Purāṇa as comprising five main topics, namely, sarga (creation), pratisarga (dissolution and recreation), vanā (divine genealogies), manvantara (ages of Manu), and vanīśānucarita (genealogies of kings). None of the existing Purāṇas can be said to conform strictly to this definition. It may, therefore, be assumed that the pañcalakṣaṇa Purāṇas belonged to an early stage in the development of this literature. Many subjects, not covered by the pañcalakṣaṇa (or for the matter of that, daśalakṣaṇa) definition, came to be incorporated in the Purāṇas, during the course of their growth, with a view to making that literature more and more encyclopaedic and up-to-date in character. A critical study of these additions clearly shows that this process of revision and addition must have come to an end during the Gupta period, since, generally speaking, the Purāṇas—at least most of the major ones—do not show any traces of the post-Gupta political and religious influences.

The Purāṇas can, however, be hardly regarded as reflecting the creative side of the literary genius of the Gupta age. They only represent the great literary movement for the final revision

7. Cf. Brahmāśastra P. I. 1.37. In some Purāṇas (e.g. Brahmacariya and Bhāgavata), however, it is stated that the five topics mentioned above belong to the Upapurāṇas, while the Mahāpurāṇas comprise ten topics, namely, the five topics mentioned above plus sytti (means of livelihood), rakṣā (incarnation of gods), mukti (final emancipation), ātma (jīva unmanifest), and apāraya (brahman).
and editing of ancient Brahmanic-Hindu texts, which was vigorously sponsored by the Guptas and which formed a significant aspect of the general efflorescence of Hinduism and of Sanskrit language and literature in that age.

Kālidāsa: His Date

But in order to be able to realise the true beauty, grandeur, and splendour of the literary efflorescence in the age of the Guptas we have to turn to the epic poems and dramas produced in that period. The age of the Guptas was essentially the age of dramatic, lyrical, and epic poetry. And by far the most outstanding name, which is inalienably associated with that age, is that of Kālidāsa. The unimpeachable supremacy enjoyed by Kālidāsa in the realm of Sanskrit literature is made evident by two facts: firstly, most of the earlier classical writers, however great by themselves, were, more or less, relegated to oblivion by this great luminary; and, secondly, the literary vogue started by Kālidāsa in the matter of form and content were assiduously imitated by most of the later writers who may be said to have thereby paid him a well-deserved tribute. That Kālidāsa lived in the fourth century A.D. and was a contemporary of Candra Gupta II, Vikramāditya, is now generally accepted by scholars. The two limits—terminus a quo and terminus ad quem—of Kālidāsa's date are supplied respectively by the mention of Agnimitra of the Śuniga dynasty (c. 150 A.D.) in the Mālavikāgnimitra, and by references to Kālidāsa's name in the Aihole inscription (634 A.D.) and in the introduction of the Harṣacarita of Bāṇa (7th century A.D.). An ancient tradition assigns Kālidāsa to the court of Vikramāditya. In his Vikramorvaśīya, Kālidāsa himself seems to have made a special effort to refer to his patron, Vikramāditya, in an indirect manner. It has been popularly believed that this Vikramāditya was the founder of the vikrama era, whose epoch corresponds to 57 B.C. Kālidāsa was accordingly regarded as having lived in the first century B.C. Attempts have been made to con-

8. Act 1: đīśyā mohendrapakapraparyāptena vikramamahimna vardhate bhavaṇ. Also anutekaḥ khalu vikramādityakāraḥ.
firm this date by means of several other arguments as well. It is, however, not necessary to undertake a detailed refutation of this theory. Suffice it to point out that the very historicity of Vikramaditya as the founder of the *vikrama* era is highly questionable. To assume, on the basis of the evidence of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, that Kālidāsa must have been familiar with even the minor details of the history of the Śuṅga dynasty⁹ and must have, therefore, lived contemporaneously with or only slightly posterior to Agnimitra Śuṅga, is also farfetched. There is no reason why, even as late as in the Gupta period, Kālidāsa should not have known the detailed history of the Śuṅga dynasty. Moreover, what evidence do we possess to assume that the details referred to by Kālidāsa are historically authentic? As regards the supposed debt of Āśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa, a comparison of the literary works of the latter with those of the former, whose date is known to be the 2nd century A. D., will, as a matter of fact, show that, both in diction and poetic imagery, Kālidāsa has successfully improved upon the pedestrian traits of Āśvaghoṣa’s writings. He must have therefore lived, at any rate, later than the 2nd century A. D. The evidence of the terra-cotta seal discovered at Bhita¹⁰ brought in support of Kālidāsa’s date being the first century B. C. is, again, too flimsy to possess any probative value. It will thus be seen that it has not been possible to produce any positive evidence in support of the traditional view that Kālidāsa lived in the first century B. C.

The reference to the defeat of the Hūnas by Raghu in the *Raghuvaṃśa*¹¹ led K. B. PATHAK to suggest that Kālidāsa could

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9. Some of these details are: Mention of Dhārīṇī and Irāvatī as the two senior queens; reference to the low caste of Dhārīṇī’s brother, Vīrāsenā; ill will of Agnimitra and Puṣyāmitra towards each other; etc.

10. See: *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, Plate XXIX, 81. The seal was discovered in the excavations at Bhita near Allahabad in 1909–10. It shows a chariot drawn by four horses and occupied by two persons. In front of the chariot is depicted an emaciated old man, and at the back of it are seen a cottage and a damsel standing by the side of a tree. It is presumed (RAY, *Kālidāsa’s Sākuntala*, 1920, Introd. p. 9) that the seal belongs to the Śuṅga period and that the scene represented on it is from the first act of the *Sākuntala*.

not have lived before Skanda Gupta’s time when the Hūṇas first became known to the Indians. History, however, tells us—and Kālidāsa must have known that history very well—that the Hūṇas had been in possession of the region to the north of the river Oxus ever since c. 140 B.C., and that they used to make frequent incursions into the south. MAX MÜLLER’s theory about the renaissance of Sanskrit literature in the sixth century A.D. was based on the assumption that Kālidāsa lived at that time. Though not in favour of MAX MÜLLER’s renaissance theory, some scholars seem to have accepted the date assigned by him to Kāli-
dāsa. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang mentions that a king by name Śīlāditya ruled gloriously in Molapo, that is, Malwa, between circa 530 and 580 A.D. According to the Rājata-
raṅgini of Kalhana, king Vikramāditya of Ujjain had gifted the kingdom of Kashmir to his poet-friend Mātrgupta. After Vikra-
māditya’s death, Mātrgupta is said to have relinquished the throne of Kashmir, and Pravarasena, the rightful claimant to that throne, became king. It would appear that this Pravarasena founded, in the sixth century A.D., a city called Pravarapura. Two inscrip-
tions belonging to about the same time have been discovered at Mandasor, which proclaim the glory of one Yaśodharman who had defeated Mihirakula, the powerful Hūṇa. It is assumed that Vikramāditya of Ujjain mentioned by Kalhana, Śīlāditya of Molapo referred to by Hiuen Tsang, and Yaśodharman glorified by the Mandasor inscriptions, are one and the same person. It is further assumed that that monarch’s poet-friend Mātrgupta, who was put on the throne of Kashmir, must have been Kālidāsa him-
self, for, the Prakrit poem, Setubandha, which is ascribed to Pravarasena, is traditionally believed to have been written by Kāli-
dāsa under Vikramāditya’s orders. All this, however, is uncon-

12. K. B. Pathak, Maghadāta, 1916, Introd. X.
14. CII III, 33, 35; IA XVIII, 219; XX, 188. One of these two inscriptions is dated 589 V. S. (≈ 532-33 A.D.).
vincing. According to Hiu-en Tsang himself, Molapo and Ujjain were two different and independent kingdoms. Further it can be proved that Śilāditya referred to by the Chinese pilgrim was Śilāditya I of Valabhi and not Yaśodharman of the Mandasor inscriptions. Moreover, had Mātrgupta been identical with Kālidāsa, Kalhaṇa would have certainly spoken of the former’s literary talents at least once in the course of nearly two hundred stanzas which he has devoted to him. Kalhaṇa does not say that Mātrgupta wrote the Setubandha for Pravarasena.

The consensus of traditional, literary, and epigraphic evidence would seem clearly to point to Kālidāsa’s contemporaneity with Candra Gupta II. To begin with, it should be remembered that Candra Gupta II had assumed the glorious title of Vikramāditya and had made Ujjain his second capital. The traditionally well-known connections of Kālidāsa with Vikramāditya and Ujjain can thus be satisfactorily upheld on the assumption that Kālidāsa was patronised by Candra Gupta II. Attention may further be drawn to the unmistakable imitation of Kālidāsa’s poetic style and imagery attempted by Vatsabhaṭṭi in the Mandasor inscription of 437 A. D. and 473 A. D. Vatsabhaṭṭi was, by any standards, just an ordinary poet, and it is clear that he was consciously imitating Kālidāsa who must have already become so famous, prior to the second half of the fifth century A. D., as to have been regarded as the model for future Sanskrit poets. Kālidāsa’s obvious familiarity with the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana (c. 250 A. D.) may help us further to define the earlier limit of his date. Between 250 A. D. and 450 A. D., only two kings are known to have assumed the title of Vikramāditya, and only


15. CII III, 18. St. 10 of this inscription may be compared with Megha-

16. Attention may be drawn in this connection also to the clear influence of Kālidāsa’s Rāgaharṣaṇa on the Māliya copperplate inscription of Dharasena II belonging to 571–72 A. D. (CII III, 38). The Nāgārjunī hill-cave inscriptions of Maukhari Anantavarman (CII III, 49 and 50) also furnish strong evidence regarding the lower limit of Kālidāsa’s date,
one of them, namely, Candra Gupta II, can be properly called the Śakārī. It is a well-known tradition that Kālidāsa’s patron Vikramāditya had defeated the Sakas.\textsuperscript{17} Considerable evidence is available to prove the literary inclinations of Candra Gupta II. As a matter of fact he must have himself been an eminent man of letters.\textsuperscript{17a} From a passage quoted in Rājaśekhara’s Kāvyamīmāṃsā, it would appear that Candra Gupta, like other poets, had appeared before an assembly of learned judges for a literary test.\textsuperscript{18} It is also not without significance that, in the Udayagiri inscription,\textsuperscript{19} Candra Gupta II’s minister of peace and war, Kautsa Śāba, refers to himself as šabdārthanyāyalokajñā and kavi. It would show that Candra Gupta II was an active sponsor of men of letters.

Further, it is a well-known historical fact that Candra Gupta II wielded considerable political influence in the Vākāṭaka territory during the reign of his son-in-law, Rudrasena II, the regency of Prabhāvatīguptā, and the earlier part of the reign of Pravarasena II. The Prakrit kāvyya, Setubandha, is traditionally attributed to the authorship of Kuntalesa Pravarasena. A 16th century commentator of that poem refers to another tradition according to which the poem was originally composed – or, at any rate, revised – by Kālidāsa for Pravarasena at the instance of Vikramāditya. Kuntala had been annexed to the Vākāṭaka dominions by Pṛthviśeṇa I, and ever since then the Vākāṭaka monarchs seem to have been popularly known as Kuntaleśas. All this would, therefore, show that Pravarasena II Vākāṭaka, Candra Gupta II Vikramāditya, and Kālidāsa were contemporaries. This conclusion receives confirmation from two independent literary sources. In the Aucityavicāracarca of Kṣemendra,

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. khyātiḥ kām api kālidāsakṣītaye nītāḥ sakāratinā (from the Rāma-carita by Abhinanda).

\textsuperscript{17a} According to a tradition, Candra Gupta II is believed to have borne the appellation Rūpakṛt.

\textsuperscript{18} Kāvyamīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara, Ch. X (GOS No. 1, Baroda, 3rd Ed., 1934, p. 55).

\textsuperscript{19} CH III, 6.
a stanza is quoted from Kālidāsa’s *Kuntaleśvaradautya* as an example of *adhikaraṇaucitya*. The stanza in question contains a clever repartee through which the imperial ambassador is said to have replied to the derision of the courtiers, when, in the court of the Kuntaleśvara, he was not given a place of honour and was consequently compelled to sit on the floor.\(^{20}\) The *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* of Bhōja quotes a stanza which purports to be the report made to Candragupta II Vikramāditya by Kālidāsa about the luxurious court-life of Pravaraśena II Vākāṭaka.\(^{21}\) It may be presumed that Kālidāsa, who seems to have been prevailed upon by Vikramāditya to serve as an ambassador (or as an imperial observer) at the court of young Pravaraśena, bitterly complained to the emperor that the young ruler, being steeped in the numerous pleasures of the court-life and ever depending on the solicitude and support of his imperial grand-father, almost entirely neglected his royal duties.\(^{22}\)

Several indications are found in the work of Kālidāsa himself which seem to confirm his contemporaneity with Candragupta II. It has been assumed, for instance, that, through the descriptions of the exploits of the Raghu kings in the *Raghuvarṇaśa*, Kālidāsa really wanted to glorify certain achievements of his own patrons, the Guptas. In canto I of that epic poem, Kālidāsa characterises the kings of the Raghu race as *āsamudrakṣitiśas*, that is, as rulers of the earth bounded by the seas.\(^{23}\) This is also regarded as a punning reference to the line of the Gupta kings *up to Samudra*, that is, up to the regime of Samudra Gupta. It is accordingly suggested that Kālidāsa lived at a time when Samudra Gupta could be regarded as the *last* sovereign, that is, during the reign

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21. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* VIII.
22. *anakalabhadatātāt* etc.: *Saravatiśkapadhārakaṇa* of Bhōja II. 57, illustrative st. on *praksiṭāḥ padāṇyaṭhākaraṇa* (*Kāvyamālā* Ed., p. 160); also *Kavyamālā* XI (*supra*), pp. 60–61.
of his son and successor, Candra Gupta II.\(^{23a}\) The veiled references to Vikrama in the Vikramorvasiya have already been commented upon. The poet produced his Madavikagnimitra presumably to commemorate the marriage of his patron’s daughter, Prabhavatigupta, with the Vakataka king Rudrasena II. Similarly the epic poem, Kumrasavanibhava, must have been written to commemorate the birth of Kumara Gupta.\(^{24}\) It is not unlikely nor unnatural that Kālidāsa had based many of his descriptions on the events which were within his direct knowledge. A reference may be made in this connection to the surprising similarity, both from the point of view of language and of thought, between the legends on the Gupta coins and certain passages in Kālidāsa’s works.\(^{25}\) It can, therefore, be reasonably assumed that Kālidāsa lived about the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century A.D.\(^{26}\)

\(^{23a}\) Also see: DandeKar, A History of the Guptas, f.n. 1 on pp. 89-90.

\(^{24}\) Otherwise, it does not become clear why Kālidāsa should have chosen the not very common name, Kumāra, instead of Kārttikeya or Skanda.

\(^{25}\) For instance, a coin-type issued by Kumāra Gupta I shows a rhino’s life being spared during a royal hunt, exactly as described by Kālidāsa (Raghu 9.62). Another coin-type, also issued by Kumāra Gupta I, depicts a lion-hunt as described by Kālidāsa (Raghu 9.65). Also see: V. S. Aorawala, “Samudra Gupta aur Candra Gupta ki mudra ke jayodhara” (Hindi), NPP (Vikramāśaka), pp. 260 ff.; C. Sivaramamurti Epigraphical Echoes of Kālidāsa, Madras 1944.

\(^{26}\) For a discussion of the various views about Kālidāsa’s date, see also: G. Hirth, Die Zeit des Kālidāsa, Berlin 1890; B. Liebich, IF XXXI, pp, 198 ff.; V. V. Mirashi, Kālidāsa (Marathi), Nagpur 1934; T. G. Mainkar, Kālidāsa, his Art and Thought, Bombay 1962. [Recently it has been pointed out that Parakramabahu VI (15th century A.D.) of Sri Lanka collected the various traditional accounts about Kālidāsa’s life which had been current in Sri Vijaya (Sumatra), prepared on the basis of those accounts a Kālidāsa-vyttānta, and got it engraved between the lines of other inscriptions in small letters, at five places in his kingdom. According to that vyttānta, Kālidāsa was a court-poet of Kumāra Gupta I who was a descendant of Ikṣvāku of the solar-race. (But the Gupta inscriptions describe the Guptas as having belonged to the lunar race.) On a critical examination of the Kālidāsa-vyttānta, Mirashi concludes (SVUOF 19, 23-34) that it is a fake perpetrated by Paranavitana.]
Kalidasa's Epic and Lyrical Poetry

Kalidasa's literary genius was essentially versatile, and the question whether he could be regarded as a dramatist first and a lyrical and epic poet afterwards, or vice versa, has often been posed only to be ultimately left unanswered. Among Kalidasa's poems, the Rtusamhara is always mentioned—and rightly so—as his earliest production. The poet describes in that poem in a very picturesque manner the beauties of the six seasons and their reaction on the human mind. However, owing to the utter lack in it of the ethical quality which characterises Kalidasa's other literary works, some critics have altogether rejected his authorship of the Rtusamhara. On the other hand, the Rtusamhara exhibits certain aesthetic and poetical features which unmistakably show the author of the Meghaduta in the making. The delicate observation of and the loving sympathy with nature are truly Kalidasiian in character. Only, the strong passion seen in this youthful production has substantially mellowed in his later works. It is often suggested that most Indian writers have produced 'man-poetry', for, the Indian mind is too metaphysical to heed the call of objective beauty. Through his Rtusamhara and Meghaduta, however, Kalidasa has successfully demonstrated that the 'man-poet' and the 'nature-poet' have combined in him with the greatest effectiveness.

Kalidasa's Meghaduta is the pioneer dutakavya in Sanskrit literature, and the fact that a large number of imitations of this kavya have been produced in later times is a clear testimony to its eternal enchantment. Every one of the stanzas in the Meghaduta reveals a feature and a fascination entirely its own. While a youthful Yaksa, torn away from his spouse as the result of a sentence of lonely banishment, wanders about disconsolately lamenting his hard fate, his attention is diverted by the sudden appearance of a cloud. This suggests to him the idea that the cloud could be employed as a messenger to carry his message to

27. Apropos of this and subsequent sections on literature and sciences, see infra "Post-Vedic Literature".
his distant beloved. On this touching background, Kālidāsa presents the outpouring of the pining human heart through stanzas written in Mandākrāntā — a metre distinguished by a slow and halting rhythmic movement. But it is not only the Mandākrāntā metre, but also the condition of nature in the rainy season, which harmonises with the deep pathos of the human heart. The Meghadūta is a sort of idyll of fairy land, and, in spite of its essentially elegiac character, it gives the hopeful message of reunion. For its lofty imagery, its unique metaphors, and its heroic hyperboles, it will indeed be difficult to find an equal of the Meghadūta — not only in Sanskrit but, perhaps, in any language of the world.

To turn from the Ṛtusaṁhāra and the Meghadūta to the Kumārasambhava and the Raghuvamśa is to turn from lyrical beauty to epic grandeur. The great demon, Tāraka, feeling invulnerable on account of the boon which he had secured from Brahmā, was ruthlessly harassing the gods. At the suggestion of Brahmā himself, the gods brought about the marriage between Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. Kārttikeya, who was born of this divine union and who was subsequently appointed by the gods as their commander-in-chief, slew Tāraka and thus relieved the gods of their anxiety. This is the story of the epic poem Kumārasambhava. Most of the available editions of this mahākāvyya consist of seventeen cantos, though, according to one tradition, it originally contained twenty-two. A critical study of the poem would, however, seem to show that only the first eight cantos were from the pen of Kālidāsa and that the poem must, therefore, be regarded as having remained incomplete. In the Kumārasambhava, Kālidāsa exhibits great richness and brilliance of fancy. The three main characters, namely, Śiva, Pārvatī, and Madana, are delineated with an extraordinary power of suggestion, and the grand background of the Himalayas adds sublimity to the whole theme. The poet’s power of description makes every scene appear to move before our very eyes. It becomes clear from the Kumārasambhava that, according to Kālidāsa, true love transcends mere sensuousness or passion. His creative faculty transports
every experience of life to the realm of ideality. The wedlock of Śiva and Pārvatī is not represented as just an episode of personal romance; it has been made to serve a higher social—and cosmic—purpose.

The *Raghuvaṃśa* is universally recognised as the finest specimen of Sanskrit *mahākāvya*. It is a true court-epic, and all of its nineteen cantos are at once dignified and entertaining. The poet describes in this *kāvya* the careers of twenty-eight kings belonging to the race of Raghu. He has successfully tried to sustain the interest throughout this long poem by introducing in it quite a large number of fascinating episodes and by enlivening them with a rich variety of attractive characters. Considering the uniform propriety of sentiment and style exhibited in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, that *mahākāvya* must be considered to have been the fruit of Kālidāsa’s mature literary genius.

According to one literary tradition, Kālidāsa is believed to have written for king Pravarasena—or at least to have revised for him—the Prakrit poem *Setubandha*. However, Kālidāsa’s part in connection with that poem, if any, seems to have been not very substantial.

*Other Epic Poems*

Besides the two epic poems of Kālidāsa, which are by far the most eminent representatives of real court-poetry, only two other poems belonging to this class may be mentioned as having been produced during the age of the Guptas. The epic poem *Jānakī-harapa*, which deals with the life of Rāma up to the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa, is traditionally ascribed to Kumāradāsa, who is said to have been the king of Ceylon between 517 A.D. and 526 A.D. Both in style and general treatment of the subject, Kumāradāsa imitates Kālidāsa, of course without being able to approach the latter’s height and grandeur. The Aihole inscription of 634 A.D. mentions the name of Bhāravi by the side of

27a. [A manuscript of the *Raghuvaṃśa* with 25 cantos is said to exist in a library in Sri Vijaya. Cf. Mirashi’s paper referred to in foot-note 26 above.]
that of Kālidāsa. It can be reasonably assumed on the basis of literary and epigraphic evidence that Bhāravi, whose epic poem Kirātārjunīya Indian literary tradition includes among the five famous mahākāvyas, lived about 550 A.D. The poet presents in eighteen cantos the story of the fight between Arjuna and Lord Śiva who had disguised himself as Kirāta. This is, indeed, a grand epic theme, and Bhāravi has expanded it with considerable artistry. But it is not so much the narration of the story that strikes us in the Kirātārjunīya as Bhāravi’s power of description and dignity of style. It must, however, be confessed that the many instances of what may be called literary gymnastics, which we come across frequently in this poem, instead of in any way enhancing the poetic effect, evidently spoil it. Bhāravi’s art was, no doubt, influenced by Kālidāsa, while his own Kirātārjunīya served as a model for the Śīṇpālavadha of Māgha (later than 700 A.D.). It is possible to assign to the Gupta period also the poem Rāvaṇavadha of Bhaṭṭi. This poem, which is more popularly known as the Bhāṭṭikāvyā, describes in twenty-two cantos the history of Rāma, illustrating at the same time the rules of Sanskrit grammar and rhetoric. Bhaṭṭi was known to the rhetorician Bhāmaha and must have lived long before 641 A.D.\textsuperscript{27b}

\textit{Inscriptional Poetry}

While speaking of the epic and lyrical poetry it would be proper also to refer to the inscriptional poetry of the Gupta period. For, the latter also exhibits in some degree most of the characteristic features of Sanskrit kāvyā. As a matter of fact, it was the inscriptional poetry which helped to confirm the unbroken continuity of Sanskrit kāvyā-tradition. Among the important specimens of inscriptional poetry belonging to the Gupta period the first place from the point of view of literary art must necessarily be conceded to the panegyric of Samudra Gupta in the

\textsuperscript{27b}. A poem entitled \textit{Kṛpaśārīta} is believed to have been composed by Samudra Gupta himself. It is pointed out that only one manuscript of this work is at present available.
Allahabad pillar inscription. 28 This entire kāvya consists of but one long sentence, having relative clauses, adjectives, and appositions heaped upon one another, preceded by eight stanzas and followed by one. The author of the inscription, Hariṣena, has handled both prose and verse with considerable mastery, and thus shows himself to be a worthy predecessor of Kālidāsa. He has adopted the vaidarbhi style, uses few sabdālaṅkāras, and employs a variety of metres. Particularly in the fourth stanza of the inscription, 29 Hariṣena has given a highly poetic and compact expression to the mixed feelings of the assembly in whose presence Candra Gupta I is said to have made the announcement of Samudra Gupta’s selection as his successor. Compared to Hariṣena, Vatsabhaṭṭi, the author of the Mandasor inscription, 30 is certainly an inferior poet. He must have been an humble local poet employed by the silk-weavers for the purpose of composing the epigraph, which appears to have been made to order. Unfortunately, Vatsabhaṭṭi placed before himself an inimitable model, and his conscious effort to create poetic effect in the manner of Kālidāsa has in fact marred the poem. There is, however, no doubt that Vatsabhaṭṭi was sufficiently conversant with the poetic conventions which were then in vogue. The havoc wrought by excessive rains, as the result of which the famous Sudarśana lake burst out of its enclosures and the waters almost flooded the city of Girinagara, was indeed a fine theme for a high-class poetic composition. Though the unnamed author of the Junagadh rock inscription 31 cannot be said to have done full justice to the theme, he has nevertheless given us some very beautiful pen-pictures. In a simple and vivid style, he has described the anxiety felt by Skanda Gupta in the matter of appointing a suitable governor for the rich but vulnerable province of Surāśṭra, the excitement caused among the people by the floods, and Cakrapālita’s solicitude for identifying himself with

28. CH III, 1.
29. dṛṣṭe hi 'ty upaghyey, etc.
30. CH III, 18.
31. CH III, 14.
his subjects. He has used the usual alāmkāras, like rūpaka (st. 2), drṣṭānta (st. 25), and upreksā (st. 29), but his metres are not infrequently defective. Mention must be made in this context also of the Meharauli iron pillar inscription32 and the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman.33 Particularly the author of the latter inscription, Vāsula, shows considerable literary merit.

A literary study of the inscriptions of the Gupta period makes three things quite clear. Firstly, though no text on Sanskrit rhetoric belonging to that period is now available, there is no doubt that the authors of these inscriptions were acquainted with some sort of regular sāhityaśāstra.34 Secondly, though these inscriptions were mainly intended for the people at large, their style was essentially dissimilar to that of the popular epics. Their authors have adopted the artificial style of the contemporary court-poetry. And lastly, the authors of most of these inscriptions unmistakably seem to have come under the more or less immediate influence of the greatest literary figure of that period, namely, Kālidāsa.

Sanskrit Drama

While in the field of Sanskrit epic and lyrical poetry we do not come across any outstanding figure before Kālidāsa (except, perhaps, to a certain extent, Aśvaghoṣa), in the field of dramatic literature we have to reckon with at least two very illustrious predecessors of his, namely, Bhāsa and Śūdraka.35 In spite of several pedestrian traits of his art and style, Bhāsa must be regarded, in a sense, as perhaps the most versatile dramatist in Sanskrit. No other Sanskrit dramatist is known to have written so many plays as are traditionally ascribed to Bhāsa.

32. CII III, 32.
33. CII III, 33.
34. The reference, sphiṭamadhurstakantandabdasameyodāralāmkāra, occurring in the Girnar-Prafasti of Rudradāman (150–52 A.D.) is quite significant in this connection.
35. It is not possible to make an adequate estimate of the dramatic art of Aśvaghoṣa, only a few fragments of whose dramas have been brought to light.
Secondly, Bhāsa has tried his pen in different forms of dramatic composition, such as, nāṭaka, prakāraṇa, vyāyoga, etc. Further, though the themes of his dramas are borrowed from well-known works like the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, and the popular legends, his treatment of them is not altogether conventional or hackneyed. Bhāsa’s greatness as a dramatist seems to have been well established since very early times. It is not necessary here to go into the details of the question of Bhāsa’s date and the authenticity of his works. From the way in which his name has been referred to in the Mālavikāgnimitra, it would become clear that he could not have been quite an immediate predecessor of Kālidāsa’s. At any rate, under no circumstances can Bhāsa be regarded as having belonged to the age of the Guptas.

The Mrčchakatika

The Mrčchakatika of Śūdraka is, in many respects, a unique work in Sanskrit dramatic literature. Though the play is ascribed to a king named Śūdraka, the remarks in its prastāvanā about Śūdraka himself would imply that it must have been the creation not of Śūdraka but of some other poet, presumably of a court poet of Śūdraka. There seems to be no doubt that the author of the Mrčchakatika has revised and enlarged Bhāsa’s romantic play, Daridra-Cārudatta, by adding to it the sub-plot relating to the political revolution of Āryaka which may have been a minor historically authentic event. Such a political revolution, initiated and carried out on the strength of popular support, could not have been rare in the troubled times immediately preceding the establishment of the Gupta imperial power. Though there is no direct positive evidence to determine the date of this

35a See infra “The svapna-episode in the Svāpnavasavadatta” and “The authorship of the Tajñaphala”.

36. There is much to commend in Sten Konow’s view that Bhāsa was a contemporary of Kṣatrapa Rudrāśīṁha who ruled between 181 and 196 A.D.

37. In st. 4, there is a reference to the death of Śūdraka.

38. It is not unlikely that the event refers to one of the smaller pre-Gupta states.
drama, there is enough circumstantial evidence to support the assumption that its author lived in the earlier part of the fourth century A.D.

The author of the Mṛcchakaṭīka can be reasonably assumed to have lived after Bhaṭṭa but before Kālidāsa. For, in the prologue to his Tapatilsanīvaraṇa, Kulaśekhara refers to some illustrious ancient dramatists with the words, Śūdraka-Kālidāsa...... prabhūtinām. The order in which the names of the two dramatists are mentioned here would clearly suggest that Śūdraka was prior in date to Kālidāsa. But Śūdraka does not seem to have lived very much earlier than Kālidāsa. His fame could not have been well established in Kālidāsa's times. Otherwise Kālidāsa would have certainly referred to Śūdraka as one of his eminent predecessors along with Bhaṭṭa and Saumila (cf. Mālavikāgnimitra I). Another more plausible hypothesis may, however, be put forth in this connection. As suggested above, the Mṛcchakaṭīka was not written by Śūdraka at all, but by some court-poet. Rājaśekhara refers to king Śūdraka whose exploits were described by his court-poets Rāmila and Saumila. This Saumila seems to have been the same as the one who is mentioned by Kālidāsa along with Bhaṭṭa. It may be presumed that the original author of the Mṛcchakaṭīka was Saumila, who was a court-poet of king Śūdraka, and that it was only later that the authorship of the drama came to be ascribed to his patron, Śūdraka. Kālidāsa must have lived soon after—or perhaps as a junior contemporary of—Saumila. In Kālidāsa's times, therefore, Saumila himself must have been recognised as the author of the Mṛcchakaṭīka. This would explain why, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, Kālidāsa mentioned his name along with that of Bhaṭṭa as one of the eminent dramatists preceding him. It may be further presumed that the real hero of the sub-plot, namely, the political revolution of Āryaka, which Saumila introduced into his drama while enlarging

40. tāṇ śūdrakākāthākārau ramvau rāmilaśaumilau
kāyaḥ yojor dvayer aśid ardhāravinārohaṃmaḥ
This stanza is quoted in Jalhaṇa's Sūkṣimuktadvati (cf. JBRRAS 17, p. 59).
the Daridra-Cārudatta of Bhāsa, was his patron Śūdraka himself. The name Śūdraka would indicate that the leader of the revolution had originally belonged to a low class; but later on he became a king as the result of the popular political revolution. While depicting this event through his drama, Saumila perhaps thought it desirable to conceal the real name of his patron, and represent him under another euphemistic—but transparent—name. That is how a Śūdraka must have become an Āryaka. Once Śūdraka was firmly established on the throne there could not have been any objection to reverting to his original name. But the author of the Mrčchakatika took care to emphasise that Śūdraka was a dvijamukhyatama well-versed in the Veda and other branches of learning. The chronological order of the three dramatists, as indicated by literary tradition, would accordingly be: Bhāsa : Saumila (or Śūdraka) : Kālidāsa.

The Mrčchakatika may thus be regraded as one of the earliest literary productions of the Gupta period. The great importance of this play as a source of information about the social conditions obtaining on the eve of the foundation of the Gupta empire and during its early years is quite patent. The Mrčchakatika essentially belongs to the class of realistic dramas in Sanskrit. Unlike the majority of Sanskrit dramatists, the author has exhibited in this play a surprising sense of fact which completely dominates reason or imagination. Particularly in the sub-plot, for which alone he is really responsible, there is no attempt made unduly to invest the characters with sublimity or grandeur. Action and characters are portrayed directly from life.

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42. Besides the literary tradition, the other evidence in connection with the date of the Mrčchakatika comprises the astrological references in the sixth act of the play, the Prakrit dialects, the political background, the administration of justice as represented in the ninth act, the traditionally indicated proximity of Śūdraka and Vikramāditya, the reference ruddro rāja (VIII. 34), etc. Salewicz identifies Śūdraka with the Gaṅga king Śivamāra I, 625–725 A.D. (J. Bom U., July 1947, 1–21: Jan. 1948, 1–19). On the basis of its mythological data, R. G. Tiwari assigns Mrčchakatika to the period of the decline of the Gupta empire (SVUOJ 4, 12–20).
without any special consideration being given to their emotional possibilities. The author himself seems to be perfectly conscious of his unconventional treatment of the plot. To glorify a political revolution was in itself a novel thing, and the brilliant and dramatically effective manner in which the active politics of Āryaka is combined with the romantic tale of Cārudatta and Vasantasenā must have immediately caught the imagination of contemporary audiences. For variety of incidents and characters, which latter are taken from different strata of society, and the genuine humour with which they are presented in the drama, there is hardly anything in Sanskrit dramatic literature to compare with the Mrčchakarṣṭika.

Visākhadatta's Historical Plays

In the prologue of the Mudrārākṣasa, we are told that that drama was written by Viśākhadatta, the son of Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta and the grandson of Sāmanta Vaṭeśvaradatta. From the bharatavākyya of the same drama we know that Viśākhadatta was a contemporary of a king named Candragupta. The recent discovery of the play Devīcandragupta, which is generally ascribed to Viśākhadatta, tends to suggest that the Candragupta referred to in the bharatavākyya of Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasa must have been Candra Gupta II of the Gupta dynasty. For, the hero of the Devīcandragupta is undoubtedly Candra Gupta II Vikramāditya, and there is every reason to believe that, in that play, Viśākhadatta has tried to dramatise a contemporary event.

43. Cf. anyad iva satvādīhanakath varate and namam iva satvādīhanakam in Act i.
44. Different readings of the name have been proposed, but, on the basis of a critical study of a number of manuscripts of the play, Hillebrandt (Mudrārākṣasa, Breslau 1912) has confirmed the correctness of the reading candraguptaḥ.
46. It is pointed out (Mudrārākṣasa or The Signet Ring, edited by R. S. Pandit, Bombay 1944) that Viśākhadatta belonged to the family of the Dattas, who were originally śāmantas but who rose to the position of Mahārājas in the very next generation. The marriage of a lady from this family, namely,

(Continued on the next page)
Viṣṇukhadatta’s obvious debt to Bhāsa’s Pratijñāyaugandharāyana, Śudraka’s Mṛchakaṭika, and the Tantrākhyāyika may also be mentioned in support of his date being the fourth century A.D.

The Mudrārākṣasa deals with the events immediately following the extermination of the Nandas and relating to the foundation of an empire by Candragupta Maurya under the guidance and with the help of Cāṇakya. The actual dramatic interest is created and sustained through the portrayal of the clash between the political strategies and counterstrategies employed by Rākṣasa on behalf of the Nandas and by Cāṇakya on behalf of Candragupta Maurya. Unlike most of the Sanskrit dramas, Mudrārākṣasa concerns itself with interests other than love. But, though the sentiment of love, in the ordinary sense, is not represented in this drama, we do have here a fine portrayal of strong passion in the form of loyalty and patriotism. The drama presents a true and surprisingly living picture of an ancient Indian court with all its political suspicions and intrigues and the play and counterplay of its emissaries, retainers, and couriers. In the Mṛchakaṭika, we have a little of politics by way of a sub-plot; in Bhāsa’s Pratijñāyaugandharāyana, we have more of it; but in the Mudrārākṣasa, we have nothing except politics. Like the author of the Mṛchakaṭika, Viṣṇukhadatta is a robust realist. His characters are admirably drawn, and the action in the play never flags. It is, indeed, a brilliant stroke of characterisation that the two principal rival characters should have been represented as entertaining admiration for each other. Rākṣasa cannot help admiring his vanquisher; and Cāṇakya is always profuse in his admiration for Rākṣasa’s talents and dignity of character. And as the result of this the audience also feels genuine admiration and sympathy for both the rival stalwarts—an experience which is not very common in a drama. Though not conforming to the conventional model,

(Continued from the last page)

Dattadevi, with Samudra Gupta is presumed to have been the cause of this sudden rise in the position of the family. Viṣṇukhadatta was accordingly not only a contemporary but also a relative of Candra Gupta II. See also; Dandekar, A History of the Guptas, pp. 64, 80,
the Mudrārākṣasa must nevertheless be said to be a great play in its own way.

The second drama by Viśākhadatta, namely, Devicandragupta, was first noticed by Sylvain LÉVI,47 who published a few fragments of it quoted in the Nātyadarpana of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra. Some fragments of this historical drama are also preserved in the Śrīgāraprakāśa of Bhoja. A proper literary estimate of this drama is not possible on account of the inadequate material at hand, but its importance for the history of the Gupta period can be easily realised even from its few fragments that are available. A critical study of this play, augmented by other relevant literary and epigraphic evidence,48 has been made to reveal the following facts: (1) Samudra Gupta was succeeded by his eldest son, Rāma Gupta. (2) A contemporary Saka king vanquished Rāma Gupta and imposed upon him a humiliating treaty whereby he was compelled to surrender his wife, Dhruvadevi, to his conquerer. (3) Rāma Gupta's younger brother, Candra Gupta, went to the Sakapati in the disguise of Dhruvadevi and killed him. (4) Later, Candra Gupta murdered his brother, Rāma Gupta, and married Dhruvadevi. The Devicandragupta must, indeed, be regarded as a welcome addition to the generally meagre historical literature in Sanskrit. This play and the Mudrārākṣasa—which, incidentally, are the only works attributed to him—have qualified Viśākhadatta to be designated as a writer exclusively of historical dramas.

Dramas of Kālidāsa

As in epic and lyrical poetry, so too in drama, Kālidāsa must be said to represent the high-water mark of ancient India's creative genius. As poet and dramatist he has to be regarded as being superior both to the author of the Mrčchakatika and

47. JA 203, pp 201 ff.
48. e. g. Harṣacarita of Bāṇa; Kāgyanśīmāntaka of Rājaśekhara: Majmūl-un-tauwari by Abdul Hasan Ali; Sanjan Copperplates of Amoghavarṣa I; and Cambay Copperplates of Govinda IV.
Viṣākhadatta. Among Kālidāsa’s three plays, the *Mālavikāgni-
mitra* is clearly an immature piece of work. The drama seems
to have been produced to order, presumably on the occasion of
Prabhāvatīgupta’s marriage with the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena
II: It dramatises a simple love-story with a vague political back-
ground. Though the usual vulgar love-intrigues employed by the
Vidūṣaka on behalf of his friend, Agnimitra, create a number
of purely humorous situations, the general level of the drama
is distinctly low. It is difficult to sympathise with a fairly old
but highly passionate king, who, in spite of his two earlier
marriages, falls in love with a youthful maiden, more suited to be
his daughter, or with a queen, who appears on the stage in a state
of intoxication. It would appear that, through this drama,
Kālidāsa wanted to expose and make fun of a loose and flippant
court-life.

The *Vikramorvasīya* shows some advance in Kālidāsa’s poetic
and dramatic art. The drama depicts, in five acts, the romantic
story of the love of a mortal for a nymph. Just a casual hint
from a Vedic hymn was enough for Kālidāsa’s imaginative power
to weave an entire dramatic plot round it. In the portrayal of
Purūravas’ ardent but hopeless distraction caused by Urvāšī’s
disappearance and his mad search for his beloved, the poet has
reached a lyrical height unknown to the conventional erotic plays
in Sanskrit.

The theme of love continues to be developed also in Kāli-
dāsa’s third play, the *Abhijnāna-Śākuntala*. From the love, which
is depicted as a flippant and sensuous passion in the *Mālavikāgni-
mitra*, and as an ardent and lyrical—and, therefore, explosive—
emotion ending in distraction in the *Vikramorvasīya*, Kālidāsa now
turns to love as a whole psychological experience, starting as a
heedless, headlong, instinctive attraction of two youthful persons
for each other, passing through the intermediate process of puri-
faction through suffering and tribulations of the two souls, and
finally culminating into an abiding spiritual sentiment. In the *Śāku-
ntala*, Kālidāsa treats of love as an essential factor in the scheme
of larger life and not merely as an isolated individual passion.
It is also interesting to note that the course of events in the Śākuntala is governed not by normal laws of nature or of human psychology, but by destiny. Duṣyanta, for instance, though guilty in fact is morally innocent, while, Śakuntalā seems to suffer for no real fault of hers. But it is not only this philosophy of love and destiny which makes this drama a masterpiece. Every reader of the Śākuntala is bound to come under the spell of Kālidāsa’s genius which manifests itself in the well-organized development of the plot, the just proportions of the cast, the happy choice of incidents, and the majesty and charm of the stage-effects, as also in his rich poetic imagery and fine appreciation of nature, his grace, his elegance, and, above all, his noble rhythm. The ‘earth’ and the ‘heaven’ are, indeed, combined in this drama in more senses than one.

The Gupta Dramatic Literature

It will have been seen that, among the dramatists of the Gupta period, we have representatives both of the romantic and the realistic schools of drama. In Kālidāsa’s dramas imagination dominates over sense of fact and reason, while, in the Mṛcchakaṭṭa and the plays of Viśākhadatta, sense of fact dominates over reason and imagination. If classicism means the predominance of reason over imagination and sense of fact, it must be said that, barring the versatile Bhāsa, the first true representative of classicism in Sanskrit drama was Śrīharṣa. Sanskrit dramatists very rarely invent their plots; but their creative faculty is exquisitely displayed in their original treatment of the plot, only the bare outlines of which they borrow from earlier literature or history. This is particularly true of the Gupta dramatists. Even in the matter of the technique of Sanskrit drama, the dramatists of the Gupta period are often seen making a departure from the accepted conventions. It is, however, equally true that they never attempted any new experiment or innovation in that regard. Writing of historical dramas seems to have been a special feature of the Gupta period. The sub-plot of the Mṛcchakaṭṭa, the Mudrārākṣasa, the Devicandragupta, and the background of the Māḷa-
vikāgnimitra are typical examples of this general trend. Another interesting characteristic of the dramatic literature produced in this period is the peculiar way in which the dramas have been named after certain objects which play a significant role in the development of the plots of those dramas, such as śakata or cart in the Mrčchakaṭikā, mudrā or seal in the Mudrārākṣasa, and abhijñāna or ring in the Abhijñāna-Śākuntala. Drama, it is said, is essentially a literature of the people and for the people. However, with the solitary exception of the Mrčchakaṭikā, the dramas of the Gupta period are distinctly dramas of kings and court-life. Further, most of these dramas cannot claim to suggest, treat, or solve any very profound problems of life. Attention may, however, be drawn to one aspect of this dramatic literature, which is very significant from the point of view of the cultural history of India. The Sanskrit dramas clearly show that the Indians were as much interested in secular matters as in spiritual matters. Like any other normal civilised people in the world, the Indians were responsive to the joys and sorrows, the loves and disappointments, the ambitions and passions of ordinary men and women.

49. This fact is particularly important in so far as it gives a lie to the general belief that ancient Indians did not possess any historical sense. There may not have been regular histories written in Sanskrit, but of historical literature we do have quite a few specimens. Not much of historical kāya was, however, produced in the Gupta period. Of course, some Gupta inscriptions can, in a sense, be regarded as historical kāya. [A reference to the Dīpavali and the Mahāvamsa, which are Buddhist historical works, has been made in another context (See supra pp. 96-97)]. A mention may be made here also of the drama, Kaumudīmahotsava, which is supposed to have been written by a poetess, named Kiśorikā or Vijjikā. According to Jayaswal (ABORI 12, 50 ff.; JBORS 19, 113 ff.), the acquisition of the throne of Magadha by Candraw Gupta I from an orthodox Kṣatriya king forms the plot of the play. Jayaswal further suggests that the drama was written and produced by the authors during the reign of that Kṣatriya king himself. This historical drama is thus presumed to belong to the early Gupta period. It may, however, be pointed out that Jayaswal's views in connection with the Kaumudīmahotsava are not generally accepted (cf. DandeKar, A History of the Guptas, 30-36).

49a. As has been pointed out elsewhere (p. 56, f. n. 25a), the two Bhūgas produced in the age of the Guptas, viz., Pudatūditaka and Padmaprābhātaka, throw much interesting light on the social life in Ujjain.

...
These dramas, indeed, serve as a necessary corrective to the one-sided description of Indian culture as a culture of magic, austerity, and the begging bowl.

*General Estimate*

The foregoing survey of Sanskrit *kavya* and dramatic literature produced in the age of the Guptas would clearly show that it was considerably influenced by the conditions under which it was produced and by the environments in which it grew. The royal courts in the Gupta period afforded the most favourable conditions for the production of such literature. The Gupta monarchs, as is evidenced by epigraphic and numismatic sources, were not only patrons of learning and art but were themselves learned men and artists. Not a few among them possessed remarkable creative genius. One type of the coins of Samudra Gupta, for instance, clearly indicates that he must have been a master in the art of *vīṇā*. In the Allahabad pillar inscription⁵⁰ he is referred to as *kavirāja*, which fact amply testifies to his poetic attainments. Candra Gupta II is believed to have been called *rūpakṛtin* suggesting that he was an eminent composer of dramatic works. It is, indeed, unfortunate that the literary works of the Gupta sovereigns are not now available.⁵⁰a Several ministers of the Guptas also, besides being shrewd and able administrators, seem to have been gifted authors and patrons of literature. Under such conditions there is no need for assuming that foreign contact was responsible for the vigorous and highly creative literary and artistic activity during the age of the Guptas. The background for the exuberant growth of the epic, lyrical, and dramatic literature must be said to have been already prepared by the treatises on *Kāmaśāstra*, *Alamkāraśāstra*, and *Nāṭyaśāstra*, whose prior existence can be reasonably presumed. But far more significant than all this was the revival, and more particularly the glorification, of the Hindu ideal so energetically sponsored by the Guptas. One of the salient features of this cultural movement in the Gupta

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⁵⁰. *CII* III, 1.

⁵⁰a. See foot-note 27b above.
period was what may be fittingly called the apotheosis of the Sanskrit language. This may have been a reaction against the patronage given to the Prakrits by the Āndhras, the Ikṣvākus, the early Pallavas, and the Vākātakas. There can be no doubt that, in the Gupta period, Sanskrit was generally understood not only by the cultured people but also by the populace. The evidence of the popular epics and the Purāṇas, of the Sanskrit dramas, and of the many inscriptions and grants which were essentially intended for the common people would amply support such an assumption. The merits of Sanskrit as a kind of lingua franca could not have been overlooked. Sanskrit had already assumed a fixed and an unalterable form—a circumstance which distinctly favoured its being used and understood without much difficulty in different parts of the country. The Prakrits, on the other hand, varied according to local conditions, and could, therefore, be used only as local dialects. Sanskrit, accordingly, came to be looked upon as the real national language. Even the Baudhāyas and the Jainas adopted it as the most suitable vehicle for their religious and philosophical discourses. It may be claimed that, like the centralised political power of the Guptas, Sanskrit language also helped in unifying together their widely spread-out dominions into a homogeneous whole. Literary activity in Sanskrit had, indeed, become so common under the Guptas that even the silk-weavers of Daśapura are said to have practised poetry as one of the professions. No more propitious circumstances than those afforded by the Gupta regime can be imagined for the proper blossoming of the creative genius of a poet like Kālidāsa.

But the peculiar conditions in the age of the Guptas had their own disadvantages so far as the literature produced during

51. According to Rājaśekhara's Kāvyamānakā X (p. 50), Śatavāhana had issued an order that only Prakrit should be spoken in his astraḥāma.

52. The Kāvyamānakā X (p. 50) also says that Śāhasāṅka of Ujjain insisted on Sanskrit alone being employed in his court and household.

53. We hardly come across any copperplates or lithic inscriptions in Prakrit, belonging to the age of the Guptas.

54. CH III, 18.
that period was concerned. Under the influence of the royal court, Sanskrit poetry tended to become more and more aristocratic in character. It reflected the graces as well as the artificialities of court-life. Being overburdened with conventions, Sanskrit literature of the period grew more or less like a hot-house plant, losing much of its natural vitality. Sentimentality came to be mistaken for genuine sentiment, fancy for real passion, and ingenuity for true human feelings. It was only once in a while that one came across a Kālidāsa who spurned the conventions and displayed a refreshing originality in thought and diction. Generally speaking the court-literature sought to cater to the tastes only of certain classes in society and so remained to that extent isolated from the life of the common people. A comparison of the popular epics with the epic kāvyas of the classical period would make this point abundantly clear. The classical poets were inclined to become more pedantic than popular; and their appeal was always subtle and round-about rather than simple and direct.

_Ethico-didactic Poetry: The Tantrākyāyika_

Even the ethico-didactic poetry of that period can hardly be regarded as having been intended primarily as the literature of the people and for the people. The famous _Tantrākyāyika_, for instance, is of the nature of a story-book, but it must have been originally composed with a view to imparting to young princes instruction in political science and conduct. The _kathāmukha_ (introduction) of that work leaves no doubt in this regard. The _Tantrākyāyika_, popularly known as the _Pañcatantra_, has had a long and eventful history. There is no doubt that its original text, which must have been made up of a large number of independent and unconnected stories, has undergone severe

55. The _Tantrākyāyika_ would accordingly fall under the category of narrative poetry as well as ethico-didactic poetry.

modifications in the course of its transmission. And it was through such frequent modifications that the original work on Nītiśāstra and Arthaśāstra was gradually transformed into a story-book meant for the instruction and edification of the young in general. The original text of the Tantrākhyāyika is now not extant; but it is possible to form some idea about it from the five oldest versions of the work which are available. These versions are: (1) the Tantrākhyāyika which is available from Kashmir in an old and a new recension; (2) the text from which a Pehlavi translation was prepared circa 570 A.D.; (3) a portion out of the Pañcatantra which was inserted into the Bṛhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya and which is now to be found, in a modified form, in the Bṛhatkathāmañjarī of Kṣemendra and the Kathāsarit-śāgara of Somadeva; (4) a text, which may very well be called a children’s edition of the Pañcatantra and is specially current in South India;57 and (5) a Nepalese text in verse, which is closer to the South Indian version than to any other. It has been shown by HERTEL,58 on the basis of textual criticism, that all these versions can be traced back to a common ancestor.59

In the introduction of the Tantrākhyāyika as well as in all the versions of the Pañcatantra, Viṣṇuśarman is mentioned as the author of the work.60

The Tantrākhyāyika consists of five books out of which, broadly speaking, the first three contain instruction in politics, while the last two, which give the impression of having remained incomplete, contain general teachings related to worldly wisdom. It has, however, to be pointed out that, in ancient times, no very marked distinction was made between politics and worldly wis-

57. This has to be dated after the 7th century A.D.
59. It is, however, not possible to determine whether this ur-text was called Tantrākhyāyika or Pañcatantra.
60. BERNFELD (Op. cit.) suggests that the real author of the Tantrākhyāyika was Cāṇakya and that the name Viṣṇuśarman was a clever invention which would remind one of Cāṇakya’s other name, Viṣṇugupta. HERTEL (Op. cit.) also agrees with this view. Chronologically, however, Cāṇakya Viṣṇugupta’s authorship of the work is out of the question.
dom. The work, as we have it now, seems to address itself to an average man and aims at inculcating in him simple virtues of a good householder. A normally successful day-to-day life is set forth as the ideal, and the ways taught by it to achieve that ideal can by no means be characterised as immoral. So far as its language and style are concerned, the Tantrākhyāyika must be said to belong to the Sanskrit kāvyā-type. Its prose is often marked by long compounds and its verses exhibit several classical alaṅkāras. On the whole, the work reveals the penmanship of a man of taste, simple but full of wit and irony. The artist in the author shows himself particularly in his having created an impression of unity and originality, when he has actually worked upon old and miscellaneous material. Elegant prose interspersed with gnomic stanzas and a complex ‘box within box’ style of story-telling are the two features which the Tantrākhyāyika has in common with the narrative literature in classical Sanskrit.

We do not have in the Tantrākhyāyika itself any positive indications regarding the date of the work. The religious and social background of the various stories offers no aid in formulating any definite chronological conclusions. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that, already in the sixth century A.D., the Tantrākhyāyika had become a very popular work, so much so that, at the instance of Khosru Anōshirwan (531–579 A.D.), it was translated into Pehlavi. On the basis of this Pehlavi translation there were, soon after, prepared also the Syrian and the Arabic translations of the work. It may, therefore, be reasonably assumed that the latest limit for the date of the Tantrākhyāyika is 500 A.D.\(^1\) As for the earliest limit we have the evidence of the large number of quotations from the Kauṭiliya

\(^{61}\). In the introduction to his translation of the Pañcatantra, BENFEY (Op. cit.) has traced the history of a large number of stories and popular motifs and has shown that most of them have originated in India. The story of the migration of these fairy tales from India towards the West is perhaps more absorbing than the tales themselves. BENFEY has further shown how tremendously the Pañcatantra has influenced the literatures of the three continents.
Arthasastra which the Tantrakhyayika contains. Consequently, Heretel has assigned the original text of the work to the second century B.C. But, in the Tantrakhyayika, we also frequently come across certain later technical terms relating to the Nitisstra. It is, therefore, more probable that the original text became ready only after 250 A.D. The use of Sanskrit for such popular secular literature, the general kavya-style of the work, the use in it of the words dinara and rupaka, the fact that the Mahabharaata had already assumed traditional authority in the eyes of its author, and its essentially Hindu character would further point to the Tantrakhyayika being the production of the early Gupta period.

The Satakatrayi of Bhartrhari

Mention may be made at this stage also of the three Satakas of Bhartrhari—the Sripragastrataka, the Nitisatakta, and the Vairagyasatakta. Literary tradition in India is almost unanimous in affirming that the Satakas are the work of a single poet and not anthologies. This tradition is further confirmed by the remarkable imprint which the three Satakas bear of a unitary personality. Unlike the Amaratataka, the Sripragastrataka contains general observations on love and woman. To this Sataka dealing with sensuous life the poet seems to have deliberately added two more Satakas—one dealing with life of virtue and wisdom, and the other with life of renunciation. It is usually suggested, though not conclusively proved, that Bhartrhari, the author of the

62. It is not necessary to presuppose the existence of any Prakrit fable-literature as the precursor of this type of literature. The history of Sanskrit narrative literature shows that that literature constitutes an independent development.

63. The use of the word dinara shows that the work belongs to a period posterior to the second century A.D. The word rupaka, in the sense of a coin, was first used by Aryabhata.

64. To the Gupta period probably belongs also the original of the Vetalopasadavimshatika. There is a tradition that Candra Gupta II Vikramaditya was an adept in some kind of witchcraft. This may have given rise to the association of Vetala and Vikrama. Also see: Dandekar, A History of the Guptas, p. 75.
Satakratrayī, is the same as Bharṭṛhari, the author of the famous grammatical work Vākyapadīya. The Chinese pilgrim, I-ting, reported in 691 A. D. that Bharṭṛhari, who was a true Buddhist and was renowned throughout India, had died forty years before. It may, therefore, be assumed that Bharṭṛhari died in circa 651 A. D. His literary activity may, therefore, be ascribed to the very last days of the Gupta period.

Dharmaśāstra : Smṛtis

Reference has already been made elsewhere to the literature pertaining to religion and philosophy which was produced in the age of the Guptas. It has also been pointed out in another context that, so far as the Dharmaśāstra literature of the Gupta period is concerned, the Yājñavalkya-Smṛti can, with full justification,
be regarded as the official law-book of the Guptas. Another important Dharmaśāstra-work which belongs to the Gupta period is the Nārada-smṛti. Even a casual perusal of the Nārada-smṛti, which seems to be a slightly earlier production than the Yajñavalkya-smṛti, would make it clear that it depended primarily on the Bhṛgusaṁhitā, thus confirming the Purāṇa-tradition about Bhṛgu, Nārada, Brhaspati, and Aṅgiras being the successive redactors of Manu’s Dharmaśāstra. At the same time, it should be noted that the Nārada-smṛti shows considerable advance over the Bhṛgusaṁhitā in that it speaks of 132 sub-sections of Manu’s 18 titles of law, of 15 kinds of slavery, of 21 kinds of acquisition, of 11 kinds of witnesses, etc. This fact together with the fact that the word dīnāra (in the sense of a specific coin) occurs in it would prove that the Nārada-smṛti belonged to the early fourth century A.D. A little posterior in date to the Nārada-smṛti is the Brhaspati-smṛti which represents, in certain respects, an advance over the former. On the whole, however, the Brhaspati-smṛti follows the Manusmṛti very closely, and may, therefore, be regarded, in a sense, as a vṛttika on the Mānava-dharmaśāstra.

A critical and comparative study of the various Dharmaśāstra-works produced during the Gupta period would show that the Guptas had actively sponsored a movement for the reorientation of the legal thought and procedure in the light of the changing conditions. This was, indeed, in keeping with what they had done in respect of several other aspects of Hindu life and culture. As regards the literature relating to Arthaśāstra and Kāmaśāstra it is perhaps necessary to point out that no independent treatises on these subjects are known to have been produced in the Gupta period.

67. See pp. 30-35 above.

68. The word dīnāra is commonly used first in the Gupta inscriptions. The Nārada-Smṛti is definitely earlier than the 7th century A.D., for, in Bṛha’s Kādambari, there is a reference to a Dharmaśāstra of Nārada.

69. This fact may not be altogether without significance. As shrewd judges of the psychology of the people at large, and in view of their constant avowal of the Hindu ideal, the Guptas seem to have thought it proper to encourage the

(Continued on the next page)
The Age of the Guptas

Sciences

Among the large number of subjects taught in the educational establishments of the age of the Guptas, grammar, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, and different mechanical arts were some of the most popular ones. Specialisation in one or more of these branches of knowledge was particularly encouraged in those days. It can, therefore, be reasonably assumed that suitable text-books relating to these sciences and arts had been specially prepared during the Gupta period.

Grammar

The science of language has had a tremendous fascination for Indians ever since early times. Works on grammar of a fundamental character, like those of Pāṇini and Patañjali, had been produced already before the beginning of the Christian era. Further work in that field had, therefore, necessarily to be in the direction of abridgement, simplification, and elucidation. Among the grammatical works produced in the age of the Guptas, perhaps the earliest is the Kātantra of Śravavarman. This elementary and more or less simplified text-book on grammar seems to have been written on the eve of the foundation of the Gupta empire. Though Śravavarman is not altogether independent of Pāṇini, he claims to have inaugurated through his work a new system of grammar. In the field of linguistics, as in several other fields, the name of Vararuci is definitely one to conjure with. He is reputed to have been the author of the Vārttika on Pāṇini’s Sūtras, of the Prākṛṭapraṅgāra which is a work on Prakrit grammar, of the Vararuci-samgraha which is a collection of twenty-five kārikās briefly

(Continued from the last page)

Dharmasastra literature as against the Arthasastra literature. (For the difference between Dharmasastra and Arthasastra, see Dandekar, Exercises in Indology pp. 348-349.) However, this should not be understood to imply that they were themselves not adept in the theory and practice of Arthasastra. The same observations would seem to hold good also as regards the Kāmaśāstra literature. The Kāmaśāstra of Vatsyayana must have been ready already circa 250 A.D.

69a. See pp. 60-61 above,
dealing with the formation of words, compounds, verbs, etc., and
of the Lingaviṣeṣavidhi which is partly lexicographical and partly
grammatical in character. According to a popular literary tradi-
tion, Vararuci was one of the nine jewels which adorned the court
of Vikramāditya. The historicity of this tradition is, however,
highly doubtful. It has to be confessed that, in the history of
Sanskrit literature, Vararuci's personality has unfortunately
remained, till now, an unsolved mystery.

The grammatical work, which had been very popular in the
Buddhist provinces, like Kashmir, Nepal, and Tibet, and which
had even reached Ceylon, was the Cāndravyākaraṇa by Candragomy.
According to the evidence from the Chinese sources
produced by PERI,\textsuperscript{70} Candragomin must be supposed to have
lived in the beginning or in the first half of the seventh century
A.D. The fact that his grammar was used by the Kāśikā and
that he was complimented by Bhartṛhari ( circa 600–650 A.D.) on
having been the true reviver of the study of the Mahābhāṣya
would, however, indicate that Candragomin had lived in the last
decades of the sixth century A.D.\textsuperscript{71} Though essentially dependent
on Pāṇini and Patañjali, Candragomin has made some original
contributions to Sanskrit grammar and has introduced in his
work a terminology which is distinct from that of Pāṇini.
LIEBICH has suggested\textsuperscript{72} that Candragomin himself wrote the
Candrayāttī which is a commentary on his Vyākaraṇa-sūtras. The
name of Bhartṛhari has already been mentioned in another
context.\textsuperscript{72a} Bhartṛhari who, according to I-tsing's testimony,
must have lived in the very last days of the Gupta imperial
power,\textsuperscript{72b} is reputed to have written a commentary on the Mahā-
bhāṣya of Patañjali, only a few fragments of which are now

\textsuperscript{70} PERI, A propos de la date de Vasubandhu, Extrait p. 50, No. 2.
\textsuperscript{71} D. D. Kosambi suggests ( "On the authorship of the Śatakarsayī", FORM 15, 64–77) that Bhartṛhari, the author of the Vāyaṣṭiyo, may have been the son of Candragomin.
\textsuperscript{72} B. LIEBICH, Candrayāttī, Leipzig 1918.
\textsuperscript{72a} See pp. 135–136 above.
\textsuperscript{72b} See footnote 64 above.
available.⁷²c His other work, the *Vākyapadiya*, which is available in its entirety, is divided into three books, and is therefore also known as the *Trikāṇḍā*. The first book deals with the philosophy of language in general, the second with ‘sentence’, and the third with ‘word’. To about the same time belongs also the *Kāśikā-vṛtti* of Jayāditya and Vāmana.⁷³ According to I-tsing, Jayāditya died not later than 661–62 A.D.⁷³a The Chinese pilgrim reports that, in those days, students commenced the study of this excellent commentary on Pāṇini’s *Sūtras* at the age of fifteen and had to continue it for a period of five years in order to be able to acquire a thorough grasp of the subject. He further reports that the Chinese pilgrims, who desired to make a trip to India, made their first acquaintance with Sanskrit through the *Kāśikā*.⁷³b The *Liṅgānuśāsana* of Harṣadeva, which is a grammatical-cum-lexicographical work, is also generally ascribed to the middle of the seventh century A.D.

**Lexicography : Metrics : Music**

Perhaps the most famous lexicographical work in Sanskrit is the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* of Amarasiṁha, better known as the *Amarakoṣa*. Amarasiṁha was a Mahāyāna Buddhist, but his *Kośa* is in no special way influenced by his religious proclivity. According to the well-known—but historically unreliable—literary tradition, Amarasiṁha also is included among the nine jewels of Vikramāditya’s court. BHANDARKAR has suggested that, since Amarasiṁha was a Mahāyāna Buddhist, he cannot be placed later than the sixth century A.D.⁷⁴ Whatever the exact date of

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⁷²c. [An edition of this commentary called *Mahābhāṣyadīpikā*, based on the solitary manuscript of it which was available in the Berlin Library, has been published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, in 1970. In 1980, the Institute also published a photostat copy of the manuscript itself.]

⁷³. Most probably Jayāditya was the author of the first five books of the *Kāśikā*, while Vāmana, who is certainly not to be identified with the rhetorician Vāmana, wrote the last three.


this famous lexicographer, there is no doubt that the Amarakośa is the oldest among the extant Sanskrit lexicons.\(^4\) It is a lexicon of synonyms and is divided into three books—each book containing synonyms relating to certain specific categories. A similar method of division and arrangement is followed in later dictionaries of synonyms.

As for the treatises on classical metres, about 150 of them are known. But none of these can be positively said to have belonged to the Gupta period. The attribution of the Śrutabodha, which is a handy manual on metres, to Kālidāsa is obviously untenable. It may, however, be pointed out that some of the Purāṇas, whose final redaction must be ascribed to the age of the Guptas, contain much material relating to metres.\(^5\) What is true of the literature on metrics is also true of the literature on music. No independent musical treatise is known to have belonged to the Gupta period, though the Purāṇas contain some portions which casually deal with various aspects of Saṅgīta.

**Mathematics**

In ancient India, mathematics and astronomy originated and developed primarily as auxiliaries of the Vedic ritual. From the times of the Vedaṅga-Jyotisha and the Kalpasūtras up to the enlightened age of the Guptas, there has been practically a gap in mathematical and astronomical literature. The Bakshali Manuscript\(^6\) and the Purānic portions dealing with these branches of

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\(^4\) The three lexicons mentioned in the colophon of Puruṣottamadeva's Harakīlī, namely, the Sabdāryasa of Vācaspati, the Utpalini of Vyādi, and the Samsāravarta of Vikramādiya, are believed to be earlier than the Amarakośa. They have become known only through fragments, big or small.

\(^5\) Agni P. 328-34; Guruṭa P. I, 205-12; Viṣṇudharmottara P. II. 3; Nārada P. 57.

\(^6\) This manuscript was discovered in 1880 near Bakshali in the Mardan Tehsil, Peshawar District. It is written in Śaradī script on birch bark and consists of 70 leaves. L. V. Gurjar, *Ancient Indian Mathematics and Vedha,* Bombay 1947, suggests that the present manuscript is clearly a copy of some old manuscript, the text in which must have been composed between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century A.D., and that this copy seems to have been made in about 8th century A.D.
learning would, however, seem to indicate that the tradition of the knowledge and practice of these sciences had not been seriously interrupted during the intervening period. Varāhamihira, who wrote in the middle of the sixth century A.D., has utilised, in his *Pañcasiddhāntikā*, five earlier important astronomical texts, and has mentioned the names of a number of predecessors who had presumably lived between the second century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. This fact also confirms the assumption regarding the continuity of this study.

In ancient India, mathematics was invariably treated as a handmaid of astronomy. But Āryabhaṭa was the first writer to deal with it more or less as an independent science. As a matter of fact, Āryabhaṭa must be said to have been the real pioneer of the revival of mathematical science in India. According to his own testimony, he wrote his work, the *Āryabhaṭiya*, in Kusumapura (that is, Pāṭaliputra), in the year 3600 of the Kaliyuga, when he himself was 23 years old. This means that he was born in 476 A.D. and wrote the work in 499 A.D.\footnote{77} The *Āryabhaṭiya* is divided into four parts, out of which the last three are sometimes erroneously regarded as forming an independent work under the name *Ārāṣṭarāṣṭa*. The first part, called the *Daśagītikāsūtra*, which, as a matter of fact, consists of 13 stanzas in the āryā metre, describes the numerical notation which is special to Āryabhaṭa. Āryabhaṭa had invented an alphabetic system of notation which he used for setting forth the numerical data of his descriptive astronomy.\footnote{78} When, later on, the idea of place-value was developed, the denominations (number-names) were used to denote the places which unity would occupy in order to represent them in writing a number on the decimal scale. According to

\footnote{77. There are two Āryabhājas well known in the field of mathematics and astronomy. We are here concerned with the Āryabhaṭa who wrote the *Āryabhaṭiya* and who may be conveniently called Āryabhaṭa I. Āryabhaṭa II, who lived at a later date, wrote the *Ārya-Siddhānta*.}

\footnote{78. The rule is given in the *Daśagītikāsūtra* as follows:}

\begin{quote}
\textit{vargākṣaraṇī varge 'vargā 'vargākṣaraṇī katuśau yathā / khādvesvaka svārā nava varge 'vargē nava 'nīvargē vā}}
\end{quote}
Āryabhaṭa, the denominations are the names of ‘places’. He says: “Eka, dāsa, šata, sahasra, ayuta, niyuta, prayuta, koṭi, arbuda, and vṛnda are respectively from place to place each ten times the preceding.” 79 This must, indeed, be regarded as an outstanding phase in the development of Indian mathematics. The second part of the Āryabhaṭīya, called the Gaṇitapāda, consists of 33 stanzas, and is the only part which really represents Āryabhaṭa’s contribution to mathematical science. The third part, Kālakriyā (25 stanzas), contains calculations relating to time, and the last, called the Golapāda, deals, in 50 stanzas, with spherics. The Gaṇitapāda in the Āryabhaṭīya is a monument of compactness as well as elegance of composition. Āryabhaṭa has given all his results in the form of finished formulas. As regards geometry, Āryabhaṭa considers, among other topics, the area of a triangles, the theorem on similarity of triangles, the area of a circle, and the theorem relating to rectangles contained by the segments of the chords of a circle. The value of $\pi$ given by him is correct to four places of decimals (3.1416). In algebra and arithmetic, he has given the rule of three, which is a definite improvement over the Bakshall rule, and a rule for solving examples concerning interest. He has also enunciated the method of inversion and has stated a formula giving the sum of an arithmetical progression and its middle term, a formula for the solution of simple intermediate equations, a formula giving the value of the number of terms when the sum of the series, the first term, and the common difference are given, and a formula for the sum of the squares and the cubes of natural numbers. 80

About a century after Āryabhaṭa, that is, during the last days of the Gupta sovereignty, we come to Brahmagupta, who, besides elaborating the results obtained by his illustrious predecessor Āryabhaṭa, has made some distinct contribution to mathematical science. At the age of 30, that is, in 628 A.D., Brahmagupta wrote his Brāhmaṇasphutasiddhānta. His other works are the

80. Cf. GURJAR, Op. cit., pp. 79–90,
Khaṇḍakādyaka and the Dhyānagrahopadesādhyāya. Among the special mathematical topics discussed by Brahmagupta may be mentioned the further extension of the application of the theory of arithmetical progression, the theorem relating to a right-angled triangle, the values of the diagonals of a cyclic quadrilateral, the volume of a cone or a pyramid, and the volume of the frustrum of a pyramid.\textsuperscript{81}

Astronomy

As in mathematics, so too in astronomy, Āryabhaṭa was an outstanding figure of the Gupta age. Through his work, he has presented, in a compact form, the astronomical system which had already been developed in the Siddhāntas. Though he has evidently made an attempt to improve certain features of the Siddhāntas, he cannot, on the whole, be credited with having made any significant advance over the Sūrya-siddhānta. His most original contribution, however, is his definite assertion that the earth rotates round its axis. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that two of his immediate successors, Varāhamihira and Brahmagupta, have stoutly opposed this assertion. Among Āryabhaṭa’s other achievements in the field of astronomy, the following may be mentioned: he discovered an accurate formula to measure the increase or decrease in the duration of two consecutive days; he enunciated his own epicyclic theory to explain the variations in planetary motions; he stated accurately the angular diameter of the earth’s shadow at the moon’s orbit and suggested a method of finding the duration of an eclipse; and he made a more correct calculation than before of the length of a year.

One of the most significant features of the astronomical works produced in the so-called scientific period is the obvious acquaintance of their writers with Greek astronomy. This fact becomes all the more clear from the work of Varāhamihira, who was another outstanding astronomer in the age of the Guptas. The time-calculation in Varāhamihira’s Pañcasiddhāntikā begin from

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. Ibid., pp. 91–99.
505 A.D. There is a tradition which is frequently referred to, namely, that Varāhamihira died in 587 A.D. It is, therefore, assumed by Kern that 505 A.D. was the date of Varāhamihira's birth. The tradition about the date of Varāhamihira's death is, however, not reliable. Moreover, the Pañcasiddhāntikā is a work of the nature of a Karaṇa, and, usually, the time-calculation in a Karaṇa-grantha are made from the date in which it is written. It is, therefore, more likely that 505 A.D. was the year in which Varāhamihira wrote his Pañcasiddhāntikā. It is needless to add that the other literary tradition, namely, that Varāhamihira was one of the nine jewels in the court of Vikramāditya is merely a fiction. In the Pañcasiddhāntikā, Varāhamihira reproduces, in the Karaṇa-form, the astronomical teachings of the five Siddhāntas, which had come to be recognised in his time as the most authoritative works on astronomy. These five Siddhāntas are, in their probable chronological order, the Paitāmaha-Siddhānta, the Vāsiṣṭha-Siddhānta, the Pauliśa-Siddhānta, the Romaka-Siddhānta, and the Śūrya-Siddhānta. Out of these, the Paitāmaha evidently belongs to the pre-scientific period, while the remaining four belong to the early Gupta period. The Vāsiṣṭha (circa 300 A.D.) shows a definite advance in its knowledge about the movements of the heavenly bodies. It also introduces rāśis in the place of nakṣatra, and the concept of lagna. The Pauliśa-Siddhānta (circa 380 A.D.), which enunciates a rule for calculating lunar and solar eclipses and which also gives a table of sines and two trigonometrical rules, reminds one of Paulus Alexandrinus. Thibaut is, however, of the opinion that, since the latter is known to be the author only of an astrological hand-book, there cannot have been any connection between him and the Pauliśa-Siddhānta. Both in name and contents, the Romaka-Siddhānta (circa 400 A.D.) clearly betrays Western influence. This may

82. Kern, Byāhatsa, Preface, pp. 2 ff.
83. There are four kinds of scientific astronomical works, namely, (1) Siddhāntas, (2) Karaṇas, (3) astronomical tables, and (4) commentaries.
84. G. Thibaut, Astronomie, Astrologie und Mathematik, Grundriss III, 9, Strassburg 1899.
have been possible on account of the active contact between the Roman empire and the Gupta empire. The Sūrya-Siddhānta (circa 400 A.D.) represents the standard type of Siddhānta work. It is also the most important and complete astronomical work of the period, and consists of fourteen chapters in verse. Albērūnī mentions Lāṭa as its author. According to its opening stanzas, Sūrya revealed this Siddhānta to Asura Maya in the city of Romaka. Herein we may see the evidence of Greek-Roman astronomy having served as the basis of the Sūrya-Siddhānta. At the same time, the peculiarly Indian character of its teachings is indicated by its acceptance of the idea of kalpa and the mahāyuga, and of the mount Meru lying at the North pole. It is difficult to determine accurately, on the basis of the available evidence, the authorship, the dates, and the nature of the original texts of these Siddhāntas. Great credit is, therefore, certainly due to Varūhamihira for having preserved their essential teachings in his Pañcasiddhāntikā.

Brahmagupta, who, as mentioned above, belonged to the last days of the Gupta imperial power, has not made any significant contribution to the astronomical science. He generally follows his predecessors, and his system as presented in the Brāhmaśphuṭasiddhānta differs only slightly from that of the Sūrya-Siddhānta. All the same it must be pointed out that his treatment is more detailed and methodical. Special reference must be made to the eleventh chapter of his Siddhānta wherein he criticises the views of his predecessors, particularly of Āryabhaṭa. But, after all, from Brahmagupta’s work one gets the impression that he was essentially a mathematician rather than an astronomer.

Astrology

In India, astronomy and astrology have normally gone hand in hand. Ever since very ancient times, astrologers have played not an insignificant part in the various departments of the indi-
vidual and the communal life of the Indian people. It would not, therefore, be too much to presume that works on astrology had been produced in India since very early times. Unfortunately most of the older literature on the subject is now lost to us. However, whatever information we possess regarding the early astrological texts, their contents, and their authors, we owe to Varāhamihira. As in astronomy, so too in astrology, Varāhamihira has preserved, in his encyclopaedic work, quite a considerable amount of the ancient knowledge on the subject. His Brhad-samhitā, besides being the most important text-book on natural astrology, is a veritable compendium of ancient Indian learning and sciences. Varāhamihira refers to many predecessors and their writings; but only one astrological work belonging to the earlier times, namely, the Vṛddha-Garga-Samhitā, is available to us. A reference may be specially made here to Varāhamihira’s insistence on a true student of science being readily receptive to all knowledge irrespective of the source from which it came. About Greek astronomy and astrology, for instance, he says: “The Yavanas (= the Greeks) are, verily, Mlecchas; but this science is well established among them. Therefore, they too deserve our respect even as our own sages.” This attitude may, indeed, be regarded as being indicative of the general absence of any kind of bigotry on the part of ancient Indians in the matter of scientific knowledge. Jyotishāstra, according to Varāhamihira, comprises three branches: the Tantra or astronomical-mathematical branch; the Hora which concerns itself with horoscope; and the third which deals with natural astrology. The last is perhaps the most important, for, Varāhamihira glorifies an astrologer in the following flattering terms: “Like night without lamp and sky without the sun is a king without an astrologer. Just like a blind man he flounders on his way.” Among Varāhamihira’s

85. However, this work cannot be assigned to the age of the Guptas.
86. Brhad-samhitā II. 14:

mleccha hi yavanas teso samyak śāstram idam sthitam /
pravat te 'pi bājyāḥ syuḥ kīṁ puṇar dīnasiddhiḥ ||
88. Ibid. II. 9.
other astrological works may be mentioned the Brhad vivahapata\text{\textita}la and the Svalpavivahapata\text{\textita}la, which principally deal with the favourable muhurtas for marriage; the Yogay\text{\textita}tra, which describes the auspicious portents for the expeditions of kings; and the Brhajji\text{\textita}taka and the Laghujji\text{\textita}taka, which concern themselves with the time of a man's birth and its influence on his future. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the writings of Var\text{\texta}hamihira, which include more or less basic texts on astronomy, astrology, and several other technical sciences, are no less remarkable as poetic compositions. Var\text{\texta}hamihira's son, Pr\text{\textth}uyas\text{\texta}s, also was an ardent student of astrology, and wrote, in about 600 A.D., a work called Hor\text{\texta}sa\text{\textsth}a\text{\textap}en\text{\texta}sa\text{\texti}i\text{\texta}a.

**Medicine**

The earliest Indian work on medicine, which can be more or less definitely dated, belongs to the early Gupta period. In 1890, Lt. H. Bower discovered, in a Buddhist stupa in Kashgar, a group of seven ancient texts (now popularly known as the "Bower manuscript"), three out of which deal with medicine. It has been shown, on palaeographical grounds, that the Bower manuscript belongs to the second half of the fourth century A.D. Though, on account of the fact that the available tracts are obviously not complete, it is not possible to determine the name of their author (or authors), it seems almost certain, from the place of their find, that he was a Buddhist. One of these three medical tracts concerns itself with the study of garlic, the use of

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89. This last 'science' is said to be of Babylonian origin. It is further suggested that it was adopted from the Greeks by other people. Jacobi believes that the Indians borrowed it about the middle of the 4th century A.D. Against this, however, there is the evidence of presumably earlier Indian texts on the subject.

90. A. F. R. Hornle, *The Bower Manuscript Facsimile Leaves*, ASI, Vol. 22, Calcutta 1893–1912. Texts 1–3 are medical; texts 4 and 5, called the Pataca-kwauli, deal with abomancy; and texts 6 and 7, called the Mahana\text{\texta}tr\text{\texti}dya-r\text{\texti}j\text{\texta}i\text{\texta}, contain charms against snake-bite.

91. Besides the Atharva\text{\textv}ada and its ancillary literature, the ancient Buddhist literature also contains several indications regarding the antiquity of medical science and practice in India.
which is said to cure various illnesses and to ensure a life of 100 years. It also deals with topics like digestion and eye-diseases and their cure, and gives a prescription for an elixir to secure a 1000 years of life. Another tract contains formulas for the preparation of fourteen kinds of specifics for external and internal application. The most important tract, however, is the second one, which is called the Nāvanītaka or the cream of the earlier texts on the subject. In sixteen sections, the Nāvanītaka deals, among other things, with different kinds of powders, decoctions, oils, elixirs, etc., while a considerable portion of the tract is devoted to children's diseases. These medical tracts, which are metrical and which often employ the metres familiar to Sanskrit kāvyā, are written in popular Sanskrit, not seldom overlaid with Prakritisms. The Nāvanītaka mentions several earlier authorities like Agniveśa, Bheśa, Hārīta, Jātukarna, Kṣārapāṇi, and Parāśara—all of them being pupils of Punarvasu Ātreya. The only familiar name of a medical authority referred to in it is that of Suśruta.

Caraka, Suśruta, and Vāgbhaṭa are the 'Three Great' of ancient Indian medicine. Out of these, Caraka and Suśruta presumably lived in the second century A.D. and the third century A.D. respectively. Traditionally, two medical treatises pass under Vāgbhaṭa's authorship—the Aṣṭāṅgaśāmgraha and the Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasamhitā. A critical study of the style and the contents of the two works, however, indicates that the Aṣṭāṅgaśāmgraha is older than the Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasamhitā and that, in this connection, we have to assume the activity of two Vāgbhaṭas. The author of the Aṣṭāṅgaśāmgraha, known as Vṛddha-Vāgbhaṭa, was probably the man about whom I-tsing reported that he had, only a short while before (that is, in the first half of the seventh century A.D.), prepared a compendium consisting of the eight sections of medical science.\[1a\] It seems likely that Vṛddha-

91a. Takakusu, Op. cit., p. 128. However, in Additional Notes (p. 222), Takakusu says that 'this epitomiser may be Suśruta, who calls himself a disciple of Dhanvantari, one of the Nine Gems in the court of Vikramśītīya'. But this suggestion is not tenable.
Vāgbhaṭa—as also the younger Vāgbhaṭa (8th century A.D.)—was a Buddhist.

While speaking of the medical treatises belonging to the age of the Guptas, one must also refer to the Dhanvantari-Nighantu. It is a medico-botanical glossary which seems to have been older than the Amarakośa. The preparation of such practical and handy aid-books clearly points to the systematic development of the medical science, in ancient India generally and in the Gupta period particularly. Apart from this glossary and one chapter (85) in Varūhamihira's encyclopaedic Brhat samhitā, there is no other botanical text which may be ascribed to the Gupta period. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that botany in India continued to be 'vitalistic' rather than 'mechanistic', even after the impact from the West.

Chemistry: Metallurgy: Physics

Another science, which must have developed along with medicine, is chemistry. Without adequate knowledge of chemistry, any advance in medical science would have been almost impossible. Unfortunately no work on chemistry belonging to the Gupta period has come down to us. Nāgārjuna, the great Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher, is reputed to have distinguished himself also in chemistry. As a matter of fact, he is believed to have been the real father of 'scientific' chemistry. It was, accordingly, assumed that Nāgārjuna had founded an independent school of chemistry, perhaps with its centre at Nāgārjunikonda, and that his pupils continued to develop that science further31b. Though we have no literary evidence for such development of chemistry, we do have evidence in support of the actual application of that science. Chemistry must have substantially helped the development of metallurgy in the same way as that of medicine. Suffice it to point out, in this connection, that the Meharauli iron pillar will for ever remain a living monument to the progress in metallurgy achieved in the age of the Guptas. According to

31b. However, see in this connection foot-note 59 on p. 93.
Murray THOMSON, the Meharauli iron pillar, which is 23 feet and 8 inches in height, and 16.4 inches in diameter at the base and 12.05 inches in diameter at the top, is made of pure malleable iron of 7.66 specific gravity. Apart from its importance to the historian of ancient India, on account of the absence of rust on it in spite of exposure to the open air for over 1500 years, this iron pillar has become an object of research by such eminent metallurgists as Sir Robert HADFIELD. It has been rightly said that, till very recent years, the production of such a pillar would have been an impossibility even in the largest foundries of the world. A reference must be made, in this very context, also to the colossal copper statue of the Buddha, found at Sultanganj near Bhagalpur, which is about 7½ feet in height and nearly one ton in weight.

Unlike chemistry, physics does not seem to have become an applied science in ancient India. Its scope too was very much restricted. Very little indeed—if at all anything—of mathematical physics was known in ancient times. As a matter of fact, physics developed as an aspect of cosmogony. The doctrine of guṇas (according to the Sāṁkhya system), of atomism (according to the Jainas, the Buddhists, and the Vaiśeṣikas), and of padārthas or categories would amply substantiate this assumption. Ancient Indian physics may, therefore, be said to have belonged to the realm of ‘philosophy’ rather than of ‘science’.

Technical Sciences and Mechanical Arts

Several minor technical sciences and mechanical arts can be assumed to have developed in the glorious days of the Guptas. In many cases, the literature pertaining to these sciences and arts may not be available but the currency of their knowledge during the Gupta period must be regarded as an indisputable fact. In his Brhatsamhitā, Varāhamihira has tackled, more or less superficially, several of these sciences and arts. This may speak for Varāhamihira’s versatility; but his treatment of the various sub-

jects can in no wise be said to be either systematic or scientific. It is suggested that the *Mānasāra*, which is one of the most important works on architecture, belongs to the Gupta period. One would not be wrong in assuming that similar manuals relating to sculpture and painting had also been prepared in that period which witnessed such a tremendous activity in those fields. It would further appear not improbable that Samudra Gupta and his valiant successors had made remarkable advance in military theory and practice. Minting of coins, forging of weapons, ship-building, construction of dams and irrigation-systems, engineering, *āsvāvidyā*, *hastīvidyā*, etc.—these too must have received adequate attention in the age of the Guptas, both officially and privately. Do we not frequently hear the echoes of the knowledge of many of these technical sciences and arts in the poetic and the dramatic literature of the Gupta period?

*Positive Sciences in the Gupta period*

The importance and the outstanding character of the contribution of ancient India to spiritual sciences, social sciences, and the humanities have been duly recognised. But the ancient Indians are often charged with having utterly neglected positive or natural sciences. Their magnificent achievements in metaphysical speculations and psycho-physiological researches have often tended to blind a student of ancient Indian culture to their achievements in the field of the so-called positive sciences. The comparatively meagre literature relating to these branches of learning would further seem to strengthen such misconception. The fact of the case, however, is not that the Indians have not made any substantial contribution to positive or natural sciences. The highly developed character of ancient Indian civilisation itself would soon give a lie to such an assumption. As will have been seen from the foregoing survey of the scientific literature of the age of the Guptas, what has actually happened is that the ancient Indians have, since long, 'practised' these sciences without caring to 'theorise' about them systematically. It cannot

be denied that, at least in the early stages of the development of these sciences, whenever theoretical explanations are attempted to be given about scientific phenomena, those explanations have been, more often than not, 'mythical' rather than 'scientific'. Nevertheless it must be conceded that the actual 'experience' of the Indians in the matter of these sciences has been—if not as ample as in 'philosophy'—quite considerable. The Indians may be said to have been concerned themselves more with 'applied' science than with 'pure' science. This is certainly not unnatural in the case of a people to whom even philosophy, in the ultimate analysis, meant 'applied' philosophy. It will have been further seen that, in the matter of the development of sciences, the ancient Indians, particularly in the Gupta period, were not at all conservative. They were ever ready to accept new knowledge—from whatever quarter it came—and to assimilate it in their own systems. The attitude of Indian astronomers, who readily responded to Greek influence, is a remarkable instance in point. The foregoing survey would also indicate that the range of technical sciences and mechanical arts with which the Indians concerned themselves, during the Gupta and the early post-Gupta periods, was surprisingly wide. They are seen to have evinced lively interest in almost every conceivable aspect of civilised life. The charge, usually levelled against ancient Indian writers on scientific subjects, namely, that they blindly accepted as 'valid' whatever had been traditionally handed down cannot be said to be quite tenable at least so far as the writers in the Gupta period are concerned. For instance, we have seen how Brahmagupta, like many others, was inspired, not by the spirit of blind acceptance but by the spirit of critical inquiry. Ancient Indian writings on 'science' have, however, suffered from one serious defect. It is what may be called 'theological' bias in the treatment of exclusively 'material' subjects. This necessarily hampered the growth of a strictly scientific outlook. It has also to be re-

95. See supra pp. 145-147.
membered that the Indians have always made a 'synthetic' approach to knowledge, while science requires, for its growth, an essentially 'analytic' approach. Again, the use of verse for scientific literature in those days—though an advantage from a certain point of view—must have seriously hindered efficient exposition of the subject. The same must have been the case—for obvious reasons—with the use of drṣṭāntas of which the Indian writers are so very fond. A reference may finally be made, in this connection, also to the restricted scope of the application of these sciences to life. No activity of any kind, which is not properly correlated to the life of the people at large, can ever be expected to thrive!

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ART IN THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS

Gupta art: general observations

The monuments of the Gupta art, which have been fortuately preserved to this day, reflect to a considerable extent, though perhaps not with as much fullness, richness, and variety as the Gupta literature, the glory and the advanced state of civilization in that golden age of ancient Indian history. As may be easily imagined, the age of the Guptas offered the most favourable conditions for a vigorous and exuberant growth of art and literature. As the result of their victorious campaigns and efficient and benevolent administration, the Guptas successfully created conditions of peace and prosperity throughout their dominions and thus secured for their subjects freedom from fear and freedom from want. What more propitious environments can one think of for the adequate fruition of the creative genius of the people? A reference must also be made, in this connection, to another factor, which significantly promoted the activity in the field of architecture, sculpture, and painting during the Gupta period. That factor was religion. Art under the Guptas, as in almost any other period of ancient Indian history, was regarded preeminently as a handmaid of religion. It is no wonder, therefore, that, with the efflorescence of religious culture in the age of the Guptas, art also should have blossomed in all its richness and beauty. Added to all this was the personal solicitude shown by the Gupta sovereigns in this respect. The fact that the treasures of the Gupta art are found to have been

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1. [It is nowadays contended that to speak of a Golden Age of Indian history in general has now been rendered an anachronism and that the characterisation of the Gupta period in particular as the Golden Age is a palpable historiographical error. For, the advantages of the so-called progress are believed to have never reached the lower classes. All this, however, smacks of prudery.]

1a. [Another factor in this connection is said to be the craze of the patrons for flaunting their opulence.]
distributed far and wide—from Mirpur-Khas in Sind to Dah Parbatia on the banks of the Brahmaputra in Assam, and from Murti near Choa Saidan Shah in the Salt Range to Sittannavasal in Pudukottai and Sigiriya in Ceylon—speaks as much for the extent of the political sovereignty of the Guptas as for the active encouragement given by them to local artists everywhere. But the influence of the Gupta art and literature was not restricted to the Gupta period alone. It may be said, with the fullest justification, that the effect of the Gupta culture survived the political power of the Guptas by over a century. Indian art and literature of the periods following the enlightened age of the Guptas betray, in an unmistakable manner, the imprint of the Gupta art and literature.

It will, however, not be proper to approach Gupta art as if it were an isolated phenomenon. For, Gupta art is after all but a link—though perhaps a very important link—in the long chain of the history of Indian art. A study of Indian art in its proper perspective would clearly show that, in spite of its many and varied aspects, Indian art represents a continuity, and, to a certain extent, even a unity. All Indian art, for instance, is essentially expressive art, though it does not on that account altogether neglect the formal and the imitative aspects of art. It is the extent to which the impulse merely to create beautiful forms, or to imitate nature, has influenced the artist’s main impulse to express what he feels, that distinguishes one school of art from another. It has further to be remembered that, in India, the principal function of art has always been considered to be to give one as near a glimpse into reality as possible. In other words, it was essentially the spiritual motive which inspired art. Basically, therefore, there did not exist any sharp distinction between, for instance, the Hindu art and the Buddhist art. The subjects of their art-creations may have varied, but not their fundamental driving force.

The history of ancient Indian art reveals the fact that, in its earlier phases, Indian art borrowed several of its elements from
foreign sources.\textsuperscript{16} The first expression of what may be called the national art of ancient India, representing a happy fusion of Aryan and non-Aryan elements, is to be found in the Maurya and the Śunga art. The art created during the period of nearly five hundred years, intervening between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Guptas, may be said to represent the age of youth of Indian art. The emphasis during that period was mainly on the formal aspect of art. The art of Bharhut, Sanchi, and Mathura, for instance, indicates that the artists were particularly keen on creating forms of beauty. Their approach was primarily aesthetic. Inspired by their love of direct and lively naturalism, they created art which was realistic and, to a certain extent, sensuous. This should not, of course, be understood to mean that the Buddhist artists of the period between the 3rd century B. C. and the 3rd century A. D. did not at all employ art for religious purposes. There was another school of art which had developed in the southern provinces of India during the period immediately preceding the age of the Guptas. The art of Amaravati, which is a typical representative of this school, and which is mainly personal in character, seems to have influenced the Gupta art as much as the post-Mauryan Buddhist art of Northern India. The Gupta art may, indeed, be said to have derived its inspiration from both these schools. However, the most original contribution and the most remarkable achievement of the Gupta art is the idealisation of beauty, which truly represents the maturity of Indian art.

\textit{Architecture}

Turning first to architecture, one would be surprised at the very few survivals of Gupta architectural monuments which one came across. The reasons for this unfortunate state of things are,

\textsuperscript{16} It is, for instance, suggested that the pre-Aryan art of India is at base connected with the Sumerian art; it also shows some Aryan elements. Some rudimentary art was borrowed from Assyria and Babylonia and brought in by the Aryans. There was, further, Indian art closely resembling the art of Aryan Persia. Cf. S. K. Chatterji, "Some problems in the origin of art and culture in India", \textit{VBQ} 8.
however, not far to seek. The climate of India must have been not a little responsible in this respect. Again, many an architectural monument belonging to that period must have fallen prey to the vandalism of foreign invaders. Moreover no special efforts seem to have been made, in former times, to preserve the original structures or to restore the ruined ones. Another thing which would strike a student of the Gupta architecture is that, among the few architectural remains of that period, those of royal palaces or of private buildings are conspicuously absent. This may perhaps be due to the fact that generally stone was used only for sacred structures and wood for secular structures.

*Hindu temple-architecture*

The Gupta period marks the beginning of two main styles of temple-architecture in India, namely, the Nāgara style and the Drāviḍa style. These two styles are later seen to have developed into the magnificent Indo-Aryan *śikharas* of the north and the *vimānas* of the south. Originally, however, they are seen to have been employed side by side in the temples both in the south and in the north. It is, for instance, found that the *śikha* of the Gupta temples at Deogarh and Bhitargaon occurs together with the flat roof of the contemporary Sanchi, Tigawa, Nachna Kuthara, and other temples in Northern India.² The structural pattern of a Gupta temple would show that it had evolved out of the earlier ideas of shrine and monastery. Among the principal monuments of Hindu temple-architecture belonging to the Gupta period may be mentioned the Viṣṇu temple at Tigawa in Jubbulpore district, the Śiva temples at Khoh and Bhumra in the former Nagod state, the temple of Bhitargaon in Cawnpore district, the Pārvatī temple at Nachna Kuthara in the former Ajayagarh state, the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh, the Udayagiri cave temple, and the temple at Dah Parbatia in Darrang district of Assam. The cave temple at Udayagiri is perhaps the oldest dated Hindu temple known so far. It bears an inscription dated 401 A.D.,

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² It was only later in the mediaeval period that these two styles became distinctive of the north and the south.
which refers to the reign of Chandra Gupta II. Architecturally its structure is quite peculiar in that it is partly rock-cut and partly stone-built.

The Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh, which belongs to the beginning of the sixth century A.D., may be regarded as the most typical representative of the temple-architecture of the Gupta period. It is indeed the only extant specimen of the early stone-temple with a śikhara. This temple appears² to have been a straight-edged pyramid built in receding tiers, the large projection in the centre of each side, which accommodated a broad but deeply recessed niche endorsed by pilasters, being carried up the spine on which the principal decorative element was the cātya-window motif. The profile of the śikhara on the door jamb also showed āmalakas at the corners and the top. The sanctum occupied the centre of the nine squares into which the terrace over the basement was divided. At each corner of the plinth there was a small square shrine so that together with the central cella the Daśāvatāra temple might be regarded as having belonged to the pañcaratna style of temples. As a matter of fact, it constituted the earliest example of that type in Northern India. The basement was decorated by at least two series of sculptural panels, of which the smaller one was superposed over the larger one. The plinth, to which access was gained by a flight of steps rising from the centre of each side, measured 55 feet 6 inches square. The cella or the garbhagṛha was a plain square (18' 6" × 18' 6") facing west relieved by an exquisitely carved doorway on the east and a broad and deep panelled niche enclosed by projecting pilasters in the centre of each side. The entablature above the level of the doorway and niches showed a simple frieze of arched window pattern over which projected, all round on cantilever beams, four on each side, a deep chajja, which effectively shaded the reliefs on the doorway and panels on the remaining sides.

3. The following description of the temple is taken from the presidential address delivered by M. S. Vats, in the Ancient Period Section, Indian History Congress, Seventh Session, Madras 1944. Also see: M. S. Vats, The Gupta temple at Deogarh, Mem. A. S. I., No. 70, Delhi 1952.
without causing any obstruction to the view. The door-frame consisted of four facets running all round, each facet showing, at the bottom, a standing figure.

The Bhitargaon temple deserves a special mention as representing yet another type of temple-architecture. It was constructed entirely out of bricks, the designs on some of which are varied and beautiful. It also shows perhaps the earliest specimen of true arch found in India.

_Buddhist architecture: caitya and vihāra_

Besides the Hindu architectural monuments referred to above, there are several important Buddhist structures belonging to the Gupta period, such as the shrines at Sanchi and Bodh Gaya and the stūpas, chapels, and monasteries at Jaulian, Charsadda, and other ancient sites near Puṣkalāvati. A special mention must be made of the magnificent temple of the Buddha, which is said to have been constructed at Nalanda at the instance of Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya. In the heyday of the University, that temple seems to have been a great centre of attraction for Chinese pilgrims and tourists. Today it is impossible to make any statement about the plan and structure of the temple, since it is completely demolished.4 As typical characteristics of the Buddhist temple in the age of the Guptas may, however, be mentioned the pillars with capitals ornamented with two lions back to back, and the peculiar _kirtimukha_ masks or skulls holding hanging garlands.

The Gupta period is noted also for the hectic activity in cave-architecture.5 The Ajanta caves, which chronologically range over a period from the 2nd century B. C. to the 7th century A. D., have become an important subject of study as much for their architectural style as for their paintings. These caves, which

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4. Only its massive basement has been recovered in the recent excavations at Nalanda. For Nalanda, see pp. 59, 62, and 91 above.

include both the caitya and the vihāra types, are excavated in
the face of an almost perpendicular scarp of rock about 250 feet
in height. The caitya caves of Ajanta follow the usual pattern of
the older Buddhist caves, though the builders of the Gupta period
have introduced in them some innovations. They have entirely
discarded the use of wood for the facade; they have also dropped
the rail ornament on the facade and have substituted a double
row of cornice decorated with caitya-window motifs. The
entrance is made flat-roofed and is supported by four pillars
with a huge caitya-window above it separated by the cornice.
By far the most striking innovation in the Gupta caves, however,
is the frequent use, in different parts of the caitya cave, of the
figure of the Buddha which is represented in different forms of art
such as image and frieze. A reference may be made here also to
a group of Buddhist caves dating from the Gupta period, mostly
monasteries, which have been hewn out of the rocky slope of a
hill-side near the village of Bagh in Malwa. It will be thus seen
that the Gupta artist-masons generally tried their hand at several
architectural styles, often with a remarkable degree of success.
In many cases, their achievements represent the culmination of
the architectural experiments begun in the earlier periods.

The Mānasāra

Though, as indicated above, no remains of any secular
buildings of the Gupta period are found at present, some idea
regarding the theory and technique followed at that time in
respect of that type of architecture can be had from the Mānasāra,
the famous work on Indian vāstu-śāstra, which belongs to
about 500 A. D.⁶ A glance at the contents of that treatise shows

⁶ Mānasāra, ed. P. K. Acharya, Oxford Univ. Press, 1934. Also see
that, among the many subjects dealt with in it, are to be found detailed calculations and instructions for the planning and construction of residential houses, offices, roads, and villages. A keen architectural sense seems to have guided all the building activity of that period. The frequent references to palaces and other architectural structures, which we come across in the literature of that period, also throw much light on this aspect of the Gupta civilization.

Sculpture

Far more important, from the point of view of the study of the Gupta art, than the few stray and scattered architectural remains, are the sculptures of that period. As a matter of fact, one of the most outstanding features of the Gupta art in general is the wide prevalence of images and statues. These latter are also more representative of the refinement, richness, and restrained grandeur which characterize the Gupta civilization. The figure of the Buddha may be said to be the centre of all sculptural activity in the days of the Gaptas. Indeed the image of the Buddha is so thoroughly identified with Indian art as a whole that the different aspects of his figure in plastic represent the main landmarks in the history of Indian art. The earliest figure of the Buddha in India belongs to the Graeco-Buddhist school which depicts Indian religious themes in Greek style. The Buddha of the Graeco-Buddhist art is usually represented with both shoulders covered. In course of time, this type became hieratic and stylised in the form of an upright figure with the clothing held up by lowered fore-arms and falling in regular lines on each side of the body so as to frame it. In the early Gupta period, the close-fitting robe of the Buddha is indicated almost wholly by the carving of the margins of the cloth, while, in the later Gupta period, the folds in the drapery disappear altogether and the robes

7. Cf. the description of Vasantasena’s palace in the Mṛcchakatika.
7a. See also DandeKar, Exercises in Indology, pp. 66–67.
appear to be so close-fitting and transparent that they follow every contour of the figure. Under the chisel of the Gupta sculptors, who were perceptibly influenced by the earlier schools of art, but who, at the same time, tried to translate their own original ideas into stone, the figure of the Buddha represented a happy combination of sentiment and beauty, and of vigour and serenity. The most outstanding contribution of the Gupta period to Indian sculpture is the image of the Buddha in meditation. One of the grandest of such seated figures of the Buddha has been discovered in the Sarnath excavations. Mention must be made in this connection also of the ingenious adaptation of the idea of the colossus in the Gupta sculpture. The gigantic copper statue of the Buddha found at Sultanganj near Bhagalpur is a striking example of this wonderful experiment tried by the Gupta artists. Equally impressive in size and powerful execution is the huge image of the Varāha in the temple at Udayagiri.

The Buddhist sculpture of the period immediately preceding the age of the Guptas is remarkable for its striking formal beauty. The Gupta artists have successfully idealised that formal beauty and have employed their sculptural art for effectively rousing religious emotions. The sculptures are often used as media for conveying to the observer the spiritual impulses which inspired the artist's creation. This is, indeed, true of all the fine arts which developed in the age of the Guptas. Of course the Gupta artists realised that the more beautiful and attractive the media, the deeper and more appealing would be the intended effect. They, therefore, never neglected the beauty of form. Though, in the preceding period, the art of making images had still been more or less a new art, we do come across quite a number of images of the Buddha belonging to that period. But these Buddha images, magnificent as they are by themselves, convey the impression of being isolated productions. They do not appear to have been fitted into suitable artistic patterns or schemes. The images of the Buddha belonging to the Gupta period, on the other hand, formed an organic part of a larger artistic pattern, which necessarily transcended them. Those
images could not be taken out of that artistic whole without the general effect being substantially damaged. Compared with the Buddhist sculptures of the earlier periods, which derived their inspiration, at least to some extent, from foreign sources, those of the Guptan period are essentially Indian, both in form and in spirit. The sculptures in the Garhwa temple, for instance, seem to continue the tradition of Bharhut and Sanchi without any trace of influence from the Gāndhāra school. Unlike the Gāndhāra Bodhisattvas, who are short and overladen with bracelets, armlets, necklaces, and garlands, and who have a large circular halo behind the head and shoulders, the Bodhisattvas in the early Guptan art are clothed like the Buddha without any jewels and have a plain halo. Later on, the Guptan Bodhisattvas began to be ornamented with light jewellery growing more and more profuse, and, in the place of a plain halo, an elaborately decorated halo came to be introduced.

With the grand resurgence of Hinduism under the Guptas, the gods of the Hindu pantheon began to appear more profusely in Indian sculpture. A large number of Hindu gods and goddesses, such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, Indra, Kārttikeya, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Durgā, and Saptamātrikā had no doubt been already portrayed in the Kuśāna period. Certain iconographic conventions had also been established in respect of their portrayal, which were naturally inherited by the Guptan artists. In the days of the Guptas, Viṣṇu was glorified in his various avatāras. The Guptan artists have produced magnificently executed plastic representations of Varāha and Nṛsimha, and of Anantaśayana and Viśvarūpa. Particular attention may, however, be drawn to the spirit of religious tolerance indicated by the parallel development, in the Guptan period, of the images of Viṣṇu and Śiva, and to the spiritual synthesis symbolised through the exquisite plastic representation of Ardhanārīśvara. A minute examination of the Hindu

images of this period will make it at once clear that, in the representation of the Hindu gods, the Gupta artists are markedly influenced by the contemporary figure of the Buddha. Like the Buddha, the Hindu gods also are clad in the typically close-fitting robes, and they generally possess the gentleness and harmony which characterise the Buddhist sculpture. The sculptural representation of the Sun-god, however, shows strong Persian influence.10

Apart from the images of Hindu gods, the Gupta artists employed a variety of sculptures to decorate the temples. For instance, at the outer ends of the door-frame in the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh,11 there is a standing pot-bellied dwarf—Kīcaka—holding up with both hands a squat pot of typical Gupta design from which emerges a graceful band covered with foliage and flowers. At the level of the lintel this band sweeps back ten inches in order to accommodate the figures of Gaṅgā on the proper right and of Yamunā on the left, each canopied by an umbrella, and both standing on their respective vehicles. This position for the river-goddesses at the sides of the lintel is also found in other early Gupta temples. Set out in the centre of the lintel is Viṣṇu lying on Ananta. Circumambulating from left to right, we come to the panelled niches the subjects of which rank among the masterpieces of Indian sculpture. The panel on the north depicts the episode of Gajendra-Mokṣa, that on the east the great penance of Nāra and Nārāyaṇa, and on the south Ananta-śayana Viṣṇu. The two series of carved panels, adorning the plinth of the temple, depict scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, such as the Ahalyoddhāra, the visit to Agastya’s hermitage, the cutting off of Śūrpaṇakhā’s nose, the birth of Kṛṣṇa,

10. Active cultural give-and-take was going on between India and Persia from the time of Shahpur II, Ardeshir II, and Shahpur III (between 309 and 385 A.D.) up to the time of Khusrū II (590-628 A.D.). One of the results of this cultural contact during the Gupta age is to be seen in the Ajanta painting (Cave No. 1), which is supposed to depict the ceremonial reception of a Persian embassy by an Indian prince, as well as in the Ajanta portraits of the Persian king Khusrū Parwiz and his beautiful consort Shirin.

11. See supra pp. 159-160.
the śakṣa-śilā, etc. Besides these, the Gupta artists used several common decorative motifs in temples—and, presumably, also in private buildings—the most popular among them being the foliated scroll. On the whole, the Gupta sculptures, whether Hindu or Buddhist, show great perfection of technique and boldness of execution, though it must be pointed out that, compared with the Mathura school, the Gupta images appear to be more sophisticated and idealised, and that they lack the strength and vigour of the former.

_Influence of the Gupta sculpture outside India_

Like several other aspects of the Gupta culture, the Gupta art also seems to have travelled outside India. Its influence is particularly noticeable in the countries of South-East Asia and China. It is rightly observed\(^\text{12}\) that 'almost all that belongs to the common spiritual consciousness of Asia, the ambient in which its diversities are reconcilable, is of Indian origin in the Gupta period.' The figure of the Buddha, for instance, has been represented in Siam, since the 6th century A.D., in standing posture and clad, like the Gupta figures of the Buddha, in transparent material which frames his body. Similar influence of the Gupta art seems to have been conveyed to China, but in a more emphatic manner. It was generally believed that the earliest Buddhist sculpture in China, that of the northern Wei, dating from the middle of the 5th century A.D., was inspired by the Gāṇḍhāra sculpture. It was further believed that this inspiration travelled there across Central Asia. A study of the Bodhisattva figures at the Yün-kang caves, which represent the earliest specimen of this sculpture, however, reveals some strong contrasts between them and the Gāṇḍhāra Bodhisattva figures.\(^\text{13}\) Unlike the Gāṇḍhāra figures, the Yün-kang figures, which date from 460 A.D., are tall and dignified, without a trace of jewellery, and with a curious leaf-shaped halo. Only after nearly a century, the Bodhisattva figures in the west of China, at Hua-Yin and Ch'ang-an, appear

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13. J. H. LINDSAY, _Man_ 46, 34.
to have been fashioned on the Gândhâra model, with profusion of jewels, large circular halo, and short body. The source of inspiration for the Yün-kâng figures has thus necessarily to be sought in the early Gupta Bodhisattvas. In fact the Buddhist sculpture in eastern China closely follows the changes in the Gupta sculpture. For instance, the later Gupta Bodhisattvas with the growing profusion of light jewellery and the elaborately decorated halo appeared in the east of China at the beginning of the 6th century A.D. Lions like those which decorate the capitals of the Gupta pillars also were found at Yün-kâng at the tops of the pillars framing the Buddha niches. The makara, which represented a curious hybrid of elephant and fish and which was common in Central and Southern India, was found at the side of the Buddha in the caves at Yün-kâng and Lung-mên. At the latter place were found also the peculiar kîrtimukha masks of the Gupta temples. What, however, is most suggestive in this context is the fact that the close-fitting robe of the Gupta statues was imitated by the Chinese artists. At Yün-kâng were found representations of Śiva and Viṣṇu clad in this typical Gupta fashion. All this would, therefore, seem to show that, while, to the west of China Buddhist figures had come from Gândhâra across Central Asia, the Gupta sculptures had reached the east of China in an earlier period from South India by the sea-route.

**Numismatic art**

While speaking of the Gupta sculpture a reference may be made also to the highly developed numismatic art of that period. The artistic excellence of the Gupta coins may be summarised in the words of BROWN, who says: 14 "The excellent modelling of the king's figure, the skilful delineation of the features, the careful attention to details, and the general ornateness of the design in the best specimens constitute this type as the highest expression of Gupta numismatic art." Comparable to the coins in their artistic finish are also the personal seals or

nāmamudrās belonging to that period. Several curious motifs—
often symbolical—such as that of an eagle carrying off a woman¹⁵
are represented on these seals. This aspect of the plastic art
seems to have been particularly popular in the days of the
Guptas, and only the artists who specialised in it executed such
works.

Terracottas

But the art-specimens, which may properly claim to have
been created ‘by the people’ and ‘for the people’, were the
terracottas. The modellers of such clay figurines, which were
used both for religious as well as secular purposes, seem to have
been as active as—if not more so than—the sculptors of the
Gupta period. The credit for popularising art, for not allowing
art to become isolated from the life of the common man, for
rousing the aesthetic sense in the common man, for making him
art-conscious, must be said really to belong to these humble
artists.¹⁶ The demand for such clay figurines must, indeed, have
been very great, for, their use as decorative devices for households
and temples seems to have been wide-spread. Once the model
was prepared by the artist, it was an easy affair to make copies of
it, mechanically and on a mass scale. It was, therefore, quite
possible to meet the demands of the people in this respect, which
must have been particularly heavy on festive occasions. Among
the terracotta figurines of the Gupta period are found those of
gods and goddesses, of common men and women, of animals,
and of several miscellaneous objects. The figurines of common
men and women are particularly interesting because they include

¹⁵. Cf. the Gupta seal described by Ananda K. Goomaraswamy in Bull.
MFA, Boston, 35, p. 30.

¹⁶. V. S. Agrawala makes an ingenious suggestion (JUnPrHS 18, p. 111)
that the words used by Bāga in the Kādambarī to describe love-amitten
Vaiṣampāyana seated in a motionless condition, namely, stambhita iva, likhitā
iva, nikīra ḍa iva, and paritamaya iva, denote respectively the four branches of art,
namely, architecture, painting, sculpture, and clay-modelling. It is, however,
not clear why Agrawala should regard this reference as being indicative also
of the equal status of the four kinds of artists.
the representations of foreigners like the Sakas, the Pahlavas, and the Kuṣāṇas, depicting their special racial and other characteristics. These figurines also throw considerable light on the dress and coiffure, and on sports and amusements, etc. of that period. Many terracottas of the Gupta period were painted, and those recently discovered in the excavations at Rajgarh and Ahicchatra still preserve the paintings in lines and colours on them.

**Painting: Ajanta frescoes**

But perhaps the most outstanding creations of the Gupta art, which have fortunately come down to us, are the paintings on the walls of the rock-cut caves at Ajanta. As a matter of fact the Ajanta frescoes occupy the same exalted position in the Gupta art as do the works of Kālidāsa in the literature of that period. Both Kālidāsa’s works and the Ajanta paintings—give expression to the courtly religious culture of the age of the Guptas in an equally magnificent and impressive manner. The same deep understanding of nature, of man, and of the spirit behind them, which has immortalised Kālidāsa’s Śākuntala also permeates the beautiful art of Ajanta. Indeed the Ajanta frescoes possess an undeniable significance from the point of view not only of Indian art but also of the art of the whole of Asia. For, art in Asia is mainly bound up with Buddhism, and the Ajanta paintings are

17. A terracotta plaque depicts a lady on a swing; and another depicts a scene of some palace amusement. It would be interesting to compare the styles of dress and coiffure etc. seen in these figurines with the relevant descriptions in the contemporary literature. See J. Marshall’s remarks on the Śhita terracottas (ASR, 1911-12, p. 72.)

18. Painting must have been quite a popular hobby among the refined classes of the Gupta society. Constant references to it in the contemporary literature would amply support this assumption. Kālidāsa and Bāna derive many of their beautiful similes from this branch of art. Special treatises on the technique of painting and other arts must have been composed in the Gupta period. The Vīpudharmottara-Purāṇa, for instance, which belongs to that period, devotes a whole section to painting.

19. Cf. Lawrence Binyon. “The frescoes of Ajanta have for Asia and the history of Asian art the same outstanding significance that the frescoes of Assisi, Siena, and Florence have for Europe and the history of European art.”
perhaps the most important surviving monuments of art inspired by Buddhism. At the same time, it must be remembered that the art of Ajanta is essentially Indian in character. It may be presumed that the artists of Ajanta were guided by the canons of Indian painting, which laid great stress on knowledge of form, balance of composition, impression of charm, and artistic use of colour. On closer examination it would appear that the Ajanta art had combined into a harmonious whole two traditions of art – the youthful naturalism of Bharhut and Sanchi in Northern India and the personal charm of Amarāvatī in Southern India. In a sense, however, the Ajanta art is a new creative art, its main characteristics being spiritual realism, love of nature, and adequate appreciation of the beauty of the human form. Nature is realistically portrayed, but without the sense of her overpowering movement being in any way conveyed; beautiful human forms are represented, not with any motive of sensuality, but only as parts of a process leading to a spiritual calm; and religious themes are dealt with not with any hieratic bias, but with all the freedom which characterizes divine elevation. An idealised expression of a happy combination of sentiment and beauty may be said to be the very keynote of the art of Ajanta. We thus find in the figures of Ajanta harmony, serenity, and balance artistically combined with suppleness, grace, and flexibility.

Originally most of the twenty-nine caves at Ajanta must have been adorned with paintings; but now paintings only in six caves, namely, No. 1, 2, 9, 10, 16, and 27, have survived. Chronologically these paintings may be said to range from 100 B. C. to 500 A. D. 19a The Ajanta frescoes seem to have been intended principally to serve three purposes. Some of them are purely decorative designs consisting of manifold patterns based on figures of animals, flowers, and trees. Intermittently, attractive figures of mythological beings, like the Garuḍas, Yakṣas, Nāgas, Gan-

19a. [The artistic activity of Ajanta is believed to synchronise roughly with the supremacy of the two powerful dynasties which ruled over the Deccan, namely, the Sātavāhanas (c. 235 B. C. to 225 A. D.) and the Vākā- 

takas (c. 250 A. D. to 519 A. D.).]
dharvas, and Apsarasas have also been employed in this class of painting. The second class of Ajanta paintings consists of portraits of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. But the most beautiful among the paintings are those which depict, in a very impressive and effective manner, several incidents from the life of the Buddha and the legends relating to the various earthly lives of the Enlightened. These latter are taken mainly from the Jātakas.

One of the many striking features of the Ajanta frescoes is the use made by the artists of woman as a principal motif in their decorations. Woman has been introduced in every possible place in these paintings— but always in her aspect of beauty and grace. For instance, she has been woven by the artist in decorative designs like flowers in garlands. But everywhere the artist has succeeded in depicting her inherent beauty and attractive charm. We see reproduced in the frescoes all her graceful gestures—every turn of her head, every curve of her form, and every expression on her face. We see her busy at her toilet, in repose, gosipping, sitting, praying—always emotional but shy. And what a variety of fashions is shown in her hair-dressing! The Ajanta artist's chivalrous homage to this epitome of all the beauty in the world is almost unique. But he shows judicious restraint in composition: the marks of female beauty are never over-emphasised, and the figures generally appear easy and relaxed.19a

Another characteristic of the Ajanta paintings is the great care and skill shown by the artist in distinguishing the various classes of beings like the Nāgas, Gandharvas, and Apsarasas. He has devised ingenious methods in this respect. The Nāgas who are personages of some importance in the Buddhist legends are, for instance, shown with a canopy or crest of hooded cobras—males having five or seven-headed hoods and females only one-headed hood. The angelic hosts of the Gandharvas and the

19a. [Incidentally we know only one artist of Ajanta by name. See M. K. Dhaivalikar, "Śrī Yugandhara—a master-artist of Ajanta," Artibus Asiae 31, 301–308.]
Apsarases are wingless, but are so depicted as to suggest their air-borne movements. They seem to float across the porches. The jungle-women appear wearing rolls and bands with peacock-feather tips. No significant detail seems to have been overlooked in respect of the special costumes of the different figures. The paintings beautifully convey the fairy-tale atmosphere, at once refined and idealised.

And what real connoisseur of art would fail to appreciate the remarkable sense of dramatic contrast exhibited by the Ajanta artists? The eternal calm of the Buddha is effectively delineated on the background of the alluring charm of Māra’s daughters. And the transitoriness of the world of senses is so represented as to lead an observer ultimately to the realisation of the beautiful nirvāṇa.19e

**Paintings at Bagh and Sigiriyā**

The Bagh cave paintings, which are quite numerous and which thus indicate an exuberant artistic activity, are chronologically earlier than most of the Ajanta frescoes20 and are more religious in character. They represent an essentially expressionist art and are the outcome of devotion and reverence inspired by religion. Though these paintings seem to have been intended mainly as handmaids to Buddhist missionary activity, the artists of Bagh have not been blind to their technical perfection. To the tradition of Bagh and Ajanta also belong the paintings in the Sittannavasal temple and the friezes in the rock-cut caves at Sigiriyā in Ceylon. As is well known, the Gupta culture had already reached these distant parts in several streams.


20. Vincent Smith (*A History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 295) and M. B. Garde (*The Bagh Caves*, p. 22) assign these paintings to the end of the 6th or to the 7th century A.D. But V. V. Mirashi (*IHQ*, 21, 79–85) has shown that the Bagh caves with their paintings have to be assigned to about the end of the 4th century A.D. at the latest.
OTHER ESSAYS
THE SVAPNA-EPILOGUE IN THE SVAPNAVASAVADATTA

AN ESSAY IN APPRECIATION

Among Sanskrit dramas the Svapnavasavadatta, generally ascribed to Bhāsa, occupies a fairly high place. The central theme of the drama has a universal appeal, and, the story of Udayana and Vāsavadattā, through which that theme is presented, has all along proved to be a perennial source of delight to Indian audiences. Its plot is not very complicated, and is unfolded through a few dramatically effective situations. The author has made ample and clever use of various sources of dramatic interest, such as conflict, both external and psychological, suspense, and surprise. He has nowhere lost sight of the unity of purpose in the drama. Naturalness, realism, suggestiveness, and dramatic irony are some of the conspicuous features of the dramatist's art as exhibited in this drama. The author has scrupulously eschewed petty court-intrigues and vulgar adventures, which are commonly associated with the Udayana-legends, and has uniformly maintained the high level of the plot. Though, in the other plays attributed to Bhāsa, greater attention is usually paid to plot than to characterisation, in the Svapnavasavadatta the case is reverse. Here situations are for characters and not characters for situations. And the one character round which the main dramatic situations in the Svapnavasavadatta are presented, namely, Vāsavadattā, is one of the grandest female characters in Sanskrit dramatic literature. It is, therefore, thoroughly understandable that this drama should have become so popular and that ancient rhetoricians should have referred to it with approval as exemplifying some item or the other of dramatic technique.²

1. The Svapnavasavadatta is perhaps the only play about Bhāsa's authorship of which there is a near unanimity among scholars.

2. E. g. Rājāsekhara (9th cent.) pays the following tribute: bhāsanātēka-cakre 'pi ecēkath kśipte parikṣitum, svapnośasavadattaye dākko 'bhūn na pāvakaḥ

(Continued on the next page)
Out of the several episodes in the Svapnavāśavadatta the most important is of course the Svapna-episode in the fifth act. The very title of the drama clearly shows this. It is also indicated by the special efforts which the poet seems to have made for the presentation of that episode. Among the dramatic motifs commonly employed in Sanskrit plays, such as, a play within a play, restoration of the dead to life, intoxication on the stage as a humorous device or for developing the plot, the use of letters and epistles, etc., the dream-motif must be considered, for obvious reasons, to be the most difficult of portrayal. But a critical analysis of the Svapna-episode in the Svapnavāśavadatta will clearly show that the author of this drama has succeeded remarkably well in his task.

The kārya of the Svapnavāśavadatta is twofold: firstly and primarily, the portrayal of Vāsavadattā's noble sacrifice for the sake of her husband; and secondly and subsidiarily, the recovery, by Udayana, of the Vatsa country, which he had lost to Āruṇi, the king of Pāṇcāla. We are here concerned mainly with the central theme. In the first three acts of the Svapnavāśavadatta, the self-abnegation of noble Vāsavadattā has been represented with all its sublime pathos. It seems to be the view of the author that Vāsavadattā should personally enjoy the reward for her sacrifice. For, according to him, it is almost a law of nature that no real sacrifice goes unrewarded. Vāsavadattā also must get the reward for herself, though, in her magnanimity, she herself might feel that, in the happiness of Udayana and the people of Vatsa, she was more than fully rewarded. The personal reward for Vāsavadattā would be twofold: psychological and material. In the bifocal scene in the fourth act of the Svapnavāśavadatta, the King proclaims to Vidūṣaka his undying love for Vāsavadattā.

(Continued from the last page)

Vāmana (9th cent.) in his Kavyānādakārakādhyāyitā, Abhinavagupta (10th cent.) in his Nāṭyasedhavītarīti, Bhoja (11th cent.) in his Śrīgūḍaprakāśa, Sarvānanda (12th cent.) in his Amaranāhitakā, Śāradātanaya (12th cent.) in his Bhāsaprakāśa, Śāgaranandin (13th cent.) in his Nāṭakalaksāparatnakośa refer to the Svapnavāśavadatta.
Padmāvatī, he says, commands his respect and esteem, but she has not been able to wean his heart from Vāsavadattā on whom it is firmly set.3 Vāsavadattā, disguised as Āvantikā, overhears this and exclaims in contentment: dattāṁ vetanam asya parikhe-dasya. What greater reward can a wife expect than to know that, even after his second marriage, her husband continues to love her with the same old sincerity? Vāsavadattā is happy to know that she has been made immortal by Udayana's love for her.4 This may be regarded as the psychological reward of Vāsavadattā's sacrifice. But the author of the drama does not want to stop only here. He wants that Vāsavadattā's sacrifice should be crowned with an actual physical reward as well, namely, in the form of her reunion with Udayana Vatsarāja. Acts 5 and 6 in the Svapnavāsavadatta are, therefore, devoted to this second kind of reward. The construction of the plot of the drama, from the point of view of the central theme, may then be broadly set forth as follows: Acts 1 to 3:—Vāsavadattā's noble sacrifice; act 4:—psychological reward for the sacrifice; acts 5 and 6:—actual physical reward for the sacrifice. The Svapna-episode in the fifth act may be said to be preparing the ground for the final reunion between Vāsavadattā and Udayana.

Before we proceed to a critical analysis of the Svapna-episode, we have to note that this whole episode is the original creation of the poet himself. There is not the faintest trace of it in the Kathāsaritsāgara, which is the principal source of most Udayana-legends. The credit for the success of the episode, therefore, entirely belongs to the poet. We shall consider this episode under three main heads: the background of the episode; the actual episode; and the dramatic consequences of the episode. To begin with, the first thing which strikes us is the fact that the author seems to have fully realised that the preparation of adequate background is very essential for the effective portrayal of a dramatic episode. As a matter of fact, he has perhaps paid

3. IV. 4.
...23
greater attention to the background than to the episode itself. The whole praveṣaka at the beginning of the fifth act and a major portion of the act itself have been devoted by him to the preparation of the background. This background is prepared in two directions: psychological and external. The dream, as contemplated by the author, is a natural, logical, and almost inevitable result of the mental condition of Udayana, the dreamer, and the surroundings of the place, which have been here indicated in great detail.

One of the essential pre-conditions of the Svapna-episode is that Udayana and Vāsavadattā should be physically brought together. It was not possible that they would come together of their own accord. Udayana for his part is convinced that Vāsavadattā is burnt in the fire of Lāvānaka.⁵ And though Vāsavadattā knows about Udayana's presence in the palace of Darśaka where she too is living as companion to Padmāvatī, she, in her disguise as Āvantikā, avoids, for obvious reasons, the sight of strangers.⁶ How then could they be brought together? The poet has employed a very ingenious device for this purpose. Padmāvatī's illness was the only way to bring these two together. Both Udayana and Vāsavadattā were greatly attached to Padmāvatī. When, therefore, the news of Padmāvatī's illness was communicated to each of them separately, both of them were bound to hasten to the side of Padmāvatī's sick-bed. We have to notice further the significance of the place where Padmāvatī's bed was reported to have been arranged, namely, the Samudragrāhaka.

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5. In this respect the author of the Svapnaśavadatta has effected a change in the original story in the Kathāsaritsagāra, wherein Udayana is represented to have gone to Darśaka's capital and married Padmāvatī, knowing full well, all the time, that Vāsavadattā was still living. The dramatic significance of this change, particularly for the characterisation of Udayana, is quite obvious.


7. Is the illness of Padmāvatī due to her discomfiture? In the bifocal scene in the fourth act, Udayana had announced, in Padmāvatī's hearing, that she had not been able to wean his heart from Vāsavadattā. Cf. IV. 4.
The Samudragrhaaka must have been a quiet and an out-of-the-way part of the royal palace where there was no likelihood of any outside disturbance. There would not be many people over there coming in and going out. Such a secluded place was best suited for a patient. It also suited very well the dream-episode as contemplated by the dramatist. The privacy which was necessary for the purpose would be easily available there.

The two facts mentioned above, namely, Padmāvatī’s illness and the selection of the Samudragrhaaka, are the two important aspects of the external or factual background. The author then turns to indicate, through a few casual remarks, the mental condition of Udayana. The mood of Udayana as represented in the fourth act is one of desolation and sorrow.⁸ We know from the speech of Vidūṣaka in the praveśaka of the fifth act⁹ that Udayana’s marriage with Padmāvatī and the general atmosphere of gaiety associated with the ceremony have fanned the fire of love in his heart and made it blaze all the more fiercely. When the King enters on the stage at the beginning of the fifth act we find him brooding over Vāsavadattā and her fate. It is thus made clear that Udayana’s marriage with Padmāvatī, instead of taking him farther away from the thought of Vāsavadattā, has produced, in his heart, strong passion for her. The stanza¹⁰ wherein this fact is indicated clearly presupposes a long period of such brooding. It is hardly necessary to dilate upon the significance of this mood of the King for the dream-episode. We further see that, under the constant weight of sorrow, Udayana has grown exceedingly sensitive. This is suggested in a very natural way. When told about Padmāvatī’s illness, Udayana gets almost panicky and expresses the fear that Padmāvatī, his new consort, also might go the same way as Vāsavadattā.¹¹ This extreme sensitiveness, which

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8. IV. 6.

9. adya khalu deoloṣaṇagudhurbhukdayasya tatrābhavato natsarājasya padmāvatī-śāṅgigaṇḥaṇasamitṛyamade | tyantasukhiḥvahā nāgamalottave madanāgniñdāho dhikitarah vardhate.

10. V. 1.

11. V. 2.
is quite natural in a man who suffers as Udayana has suffered, and which is brought out by the poet in a very natural manner, is a very favourable background for dream. For, men, under such circumstances, become easy victims of dream.

The dramatist now again turns to the external surroundings. When Udayana and Vidūṣaka are about to enter the Samudragrhaṅka, Vidūṣaka suddenly steps back because he sees a serpent creeping sinuously on the floor. On a careful observation, however, the King discovers that what Vidūṣaka takes to be a serpent is nothing other than the wreath of the frontal arch that has fallen on the ground and is being tossed by the gentle breeze at night. A very ingenious suggestion is hereby made regarding the poor visibility of the Samudragrhaṅka where Padmāvatī is reported to be lying ill. And the beauty of it all is that it has been made in a very casual manner — without any trace of artificiality or far-fetchedness about it. We can easily understand that the sick-room should be only dimly lighted. As will be seen later, this detail about the Samudragrhaṅka, though indicated very casually, is of great significance for the main episode. We have also to note, in this connection, the dramatic suggestiveness of this incident. The illusion of the serpent on the part of Vidūṣaka is dramatically suggestive of the greater illusion that is to come, namely, Udayana’s dream. On entering the Samudragrhaṅka, the King finds to his dismay that Padmāvatī had not come there at all. The bed was undisturbed, and the sheet was unruffled, and the spotless pillow did not bear any stains of the medicament which must have been applied to Padmāvatī’s head. Vidūṣaka, therefore, suggests to the King that he should rest, for a while, on the bed prepared for Padmāvatī and await her arrival. Udayana agrees to do so.

12. V. 3.
13. V. 4.
14. It is strange that, having known that Padmāvatī was ill and not having found her in the Samudragrhaṅka, Udayana, instead of trying to find out where she was lying ill, agrees to wait for her in the Samudragrhaṅka,
As we know, Udayana was already very much worried on account of his own sorry plight. Even then, perhaps against his will, he must have been required to attend a round of formal functions in the palace of Darśaka whose esteemed guest he was. Naturally enough he must have been feeling quite exhausted, physically and mentally. When, therefore, on that evening, in that quiet dimly-lighted place like the Samudragrọhaka, he lay on the comfortable bed, it is quite understandable that sleep should begin to overcome him. Everything unmistakably tended to induce sleep. This sleepiness on Udayana’s part is, as may be easily realised, a necessary preliminary for dream. In order, however, to ward off sleep and to keep awake, the King asks Vidūṣaka to tell him some story. It is the normal duty of Vidūṣaka to amuse the King. Vidūṣaka begins his story with the mention of the city of Ujjayinī and the beautiful bathing pools in that city. As soon as the word, Ujjayinī, was uttered, the reminiscences of his youthful adventures with Vāsavadattā, in that city, instantly flashed before Udayana’s mind’s eye. He remembered Vāsavadattā’s mixed feelings at the time of their elopement—her love for her own people was keeping her back, while her infatuation for Udayana was compelling her to take the headlong step. He also remembered how, in the course of her music lessons, Vāsavadattā fixed her gaze on him, and how, with the bow having slipped off from her hand, she used to play in the air. These memories of the happy times in the past made Udayana very uneasy. Vidūṣaka therefore left his first story unfinished and started another. He began to tell of the city, Brahmadatta, and its king, Kāmpilya. This funny interchange of names was quite in keeping with the character of Vidūṣaka. The King corrects him by pointing out to him that the king’s name was Brahmadatta and his capital was Kāmpilya. Before proceeding, Vidūṣaka wants to get this correction of names fixed in his mind. And so, in order to learn it by heart, he repeats, in a deep humm-

15. Cf. Act IV: satkarovihannamastakareṇaprabhupriśteśuṣpadaya,
16. V. 5.
17. V. 6.
ing voice, the phrase – rājā Brahmadattāḥ nagaram Kāmpilyam – over and over again. This monotonous drone only helps to increase the sleepiness of Udayana and ultimately induces in him complete sleep. Apart from the humour created by Vidūṣaka’s funny interchange of names, two facts are worth noting in this simple incident. Firstly, the mention of the city of Ujjayinī and its swimming pools aroused in Udayana’s mind the memories of his romantic adventures with Vāsavadattā. They were thus the last predominant impressions on Udayana’s sensitive mind before he actually fell into slumber. And it was the thought of these romantic escapades, which had entered his half-sleepy mind, that was later revived in the form of a dream. The dramatist hereby shows his expert knowledge of dream-psychology. Secondly, this simple incident of story-telling is introduced in the natural course of things. It does not have, even remotely, the appearance of being artificially thrust into the context. Further the fact that what was actually intended to ward off sleep should, instead of doing so, enhance the King’s sleepiness is also a great source of dramatic interest. Here too we see the casualness of the whole incident.

The background is thus very cleverly prepared for the actual dream-episode. No single detail in this connection has been overlooked by the poet. Given the mental condition of Udayana and the external surroundings of the Samudragrhaka, as described by the dramatist so minutely in this scene, the dream, which is to be presented hereafter, was but a natural and logical next step. When Vidūṣaka finds that the King has fallen asleep, he goes out to fetch his quilt as the night was rather cold.18 This casual reference serves two purposes. The exit of Vidūṣaka leaves the sleeping King alone on the stage. And this was necessary for bringing Udayana and Vāsavadattā together in privacy. The reference to the cold night also seems to suggest that Udayana must have, in the meanwhile, covered himself with the bed sheet completely – even over his face.

In the pravešaka of this act we have seen the Ceṭi going to Vāsavadattā to convey to her the news of Padmāvatī's illness. Both of them now hasten to the Samudraghrika. The Ceṭi, however, soon goes away to fetch the medicine for Padmāvatī. The exit of the Ceṭi, like that of Vidūṣaka a little earlier, is quite natural and dramatically significant. The very first remark, which Vāsavadattā makes when she is alone, amply testifies to the nobility of her character. She is not thinking of her own pitiable plight. She is more concerned with the health of Padmāvatī and the happiness of Udayana. She feels greatly worried at this sudden illness of Padmāvatī, for, Padmāvatī, instead of being a source of consolation to Udayana in his desolate condition, would now cause him great anxiety.

In a state of uneasy excitement Vāsavadattā approached the bed of the patient. She found that only a dim light kept company with the ailing Padmāvatī.19 There was no occasion for her to suspect that the person lying on the bed was any other than Padmāvatī. Further, on account of her own mental agony and excitement, the poor visibility of the room, and the fact, which is suggested above, namely, that the king had covered himself with the sheet over the face, it would indeed not have been possible for her to know the truth. The patient was sleeping; therefore, in order not to disturb her, Vāsavadattā sat down on a seat away from the bed. But on second thought she felt that such aloofness on her part would imply that she regarded Padmāvatī as a stranger. Therefore she went nearer and sat down on the bed itself. Every thought which Vāsavadattā expresses in this context and the corresponding action which she goes through are perfectly natural and clearly indicate the ingenuity of the poet. When Vāsavadattā sat down on the bed she experienced some unusual thrill.20 The suggestiveness of this her feeling is quite patent. She observed that the patient was breathing evenly

(and there was no reason why the King's breathing should have been otherwise!) and therefore felt assured that Padmāvatī was feeling better. We have to imagine that, in his sleep, Udayana had turned on one side—quite a natural movement—and was now occupying only a part of the bed. Vāsavadattā, however, thought that Padmāvatī had deliberately left that part of the bed free for her to lie upon. She interpreted that circumstance as an invitation to her from her beloved Padmāvatī to sleep by her side in a close friendly embrace. In view of the very cordial and almost sisterly relations that had developed between Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā, one is not at all surprised at the fact that Vāsavadattā eagerly responded to that invitation. Indeed one hardly expects Vāsavadattā to have felt and acted otherwise. This delightful homely touch given by the author to this episode is quite remarkable, and, on account of the element of surprise in it, proves to be a great source of dramatic interest. Vāsavadattā lies down by the side of Padmāvatī and is about to put her hand round her, when, lo! she suddenly hears the words: hā Vāsava-datte. Udayana was dreaming and was addressing the Vāsavadattā in his dream—the Svapnavāsavadattā!

It will now be clearly seen how very skilfully the dramatist has prepared the background for the main dream-episode. The short interval of time that elapses between Udayana's actually dropping into sleep and the dream itself is quite compatible with the dreamer's mental condition and is very usefully employed by the poet. The author's knowledge of human psychology, his realisation of the importance of suitable external surroundings for the effectiveness of the scene, and his mastery over stage-technique are demonstrated in a striking manner in this scene.

Proceeding now to the dream itself, the first thing that strikes us is the exceedingly dramatic beginning of the episode. Vāsavadattā is naturally, though wrongly, under the impression that the person lying on the bed is Padmāvatī. In order to comfort her in her ailment she is about to embrace her. And, just at that moment, Udayana calls out her name, as if he was awake and actually saw Vāsavadattā there. Vāsavadattā suddenly gets up
and is overcome by great consternation. Has she been recognised? She immediately realised that the person, whom she was about to embrace, was Udayana, and not Pādmāvatī, and she feared that, if Udayana had really seen her, he would not leave her alone. That would mean the end of the whole strategy of Yaugandharāyaṇa! This whole thought flashed through Vāsavadattā’s mind within just a fleeting moment. She was so much excited by all this that she did not even suspect that Udayana could be dreaming. But the next utterance of Udayana comforted her. She felt relieved to find that Udayana was only dreaming. There was no one in that room except Udayana and herself. She could not, therefore, resist the temptation of remaining in Udayana’s company for a longer while. This is what I call the essential humanness of Vāsavadattā’s character.

It must be mentioned in this connection that the author has shown great dramatic acumen in the characterisation of Vāsavadattā, which is of a very high order throughout this play. She has been given great prominence — indeed she may be said to be the ‘real hero’ of the drama. She appears in every act and dominates almost every scene. As a matter of fact, she is the central figure round whom the whole plot revolves. Vāsavadattā is an exceedingly noble queen. She has undertaken to sacrifice her whole life and happiness for the sake of her lord — and that too with cheerful resignation. She bravely faces all the indignities and sufferings consequent upon her idealism. But, in spite of all this, she is represented to be an essentially human character. Her various human ‘weaknesses’, which have been suggested in several places, make it abundantly clear that the author has not over-idealised her. She does betray the ‘shortcomings’ of a normal human being (if at all they could be called ‘shortcomings’!), but, owing to her strong personality, she ultimately succeeds in overcoming them. It is this humanness that makes her a real and a living character! Vāsavadattā was a woman of strong

21. Cf. Act I: ahāṁ api nāmo 'udayitavād bhavāmi; Act II: drṣṭrapakṣapātām 'tikṛtenā samvedāciraḥ; Act II: ayūthītam; Act II: yathā yathā tvaratā tathā tathā 'ndhikaroti me hydayam; Act III: na śakrṇen anye cintāyitum; etc.

...24
passions and dared to take the necessary courageous initiative, as can be clearly seen from the fact that she undauntedly eloped with Udayana. But when the occasion demanded, she almost excelled herself by readily falling in with Yaugandharāyanā’s plot. A princess and a queen, she bravely prepared herself to bear any sufferings – physical and mental – for the good of Udayana and of the Vatsa country. As indicated above, there have been some minor ‘lapses’ on her part from the strictly idealistic point of view, but they only help to emphasise her humanness. And it is this fully developed aspect of her character that make it possible for the author to keep Vāsavadattā and Udayana together for the duration of the dream.

The dream itself does not last long. As a matter of fact, normally no dream is said to last long. As one may reasonably assume, Udayana sees Vāsavadattā in his dream. But she was standing away from him. She was not wearing any ornaments and seemed to refuse to speak to him. Some features of this dream-episode deserve to be specially noticed. We have to note that three characters take part in this episode, though only two are actually seen on the stage. They are the dreaming King, the real Vāsavadattā, and the Svaśa-Vāsavadattā. When Udayana sees Svapna-Vāsavadattā, he calls her by her name – hā Vāsavadatte. There is no answer. He again calls out – hā Avantirāja-patā. Again no answer. He further entreats her: O darling! O dear pupil!! answer me!!! And still there is no response. Udayana begins to wonder – of course in his dream – why Vāsavadattā should refuse to speak to him. She must be angry, though she does not say so. Why otherwise has she abandoned her ornaments? Has she by any chance again remembered the old Viracikā-affair? It has been already pointed out that the

22. It should be noted that Vāsavadattā’s character becomes all the more striking in contrast with Padmāvatī’s character. Padmāvatī is a passive character possessing no initiative whatsoever. She is often over-idealised, and one feels that she is too good to be true! If Padmāvatī’s illness was really due to her jealousy for her departed co-wife (as suggested in foot-note 7), then that incident might be regarded as indicating her humanness. Otherwise Padmāvatī is a harmless and good-natured little doll!
material for Udayana's dream would naturally be supplied by the final impressions which he received in his half-sleepy condition. These impressions centred round his youthful adventures. One of the incidents of those carefree days of old, the impression of which must have once been very deep in Udayana's mind, but which was, in course of time, relegated to his subconscious, is now revived. Udayana was by nature a very romantic person. During the early days of his married life with Vāsavadattā, he had, in his youthful enthusiasm, made some overtures to Viracīkā, a dainty maid in their service. Perhaps he did this only to tease his dear young wife. But Vāsavadattā took it very seriously. She abandoned all her ornaments in protest and declared a no-speech campaign against her lover. When, therefore, Udayana, in his dream, sees Vāsavadattā in a similar condition, he wonders whether she is not reminded of that sorry affair. Apart from the naturalness of its occurrence, from the psychological point of view, the Viracīkā-affair has helped the dramatist to bring about a clever correspondence between the dream-world and the real world. In the dreamland, Vāsavadattā, perhaps being reminded of the Viracīkā-affair, refuses to have anything to do with Udayana. She even refuses to go near him. In actual life also Vāsavadattā, for obvious reasons, keeps herself away from Udayana. The Svapna-Vāsavadattā is without ornaments because she has abandoned them in protest against the misbehaviour of Udayana. The real Vāsavadattā also is unadorned because she is disguised as Āvantikā - a woman whose husband has gone away on a journey. Ladies who are prosītabhartikā are forbidden to wear ornaments. The Svapna-Vāsavadattā refuses to speak to Udayana. In actual life also, though Vāsavadattā is responding to Udayana's remarks, the dreaming Udayana cannot hear her.

We have also to note, in this connection, the very clever arrangement of speeches in this scene. Udayana is addressing Svapna-Vāsavadattā. The real Vāsavadattā fully realises this, 23. Cf. Vīdīśaka's mention of the city of Ujjayini and its charming bathing places.
but, in those peculiar circumstances, she forgets it almost entirely. She, therefore, responds to Udayana’s words as if they were actually addressed to her. Vāsavadattā's replies cannot naturally be heard by Udayana but he continues to speak to Svapna-Vāsavadattā in such a manner as would suggest that he had actually heard the real Vāsavadattā’s words. When the King asks Svapna-Vāsavadattā whether she is reminded of the Viracikā-affair, the real Vāsavadattā, being a very human character, feels greatly annoyed. The real Vāsavadattā is thus angry at the mention of the Viracikā-affair by Udayana even in his dream. The Svapna-Vāsavadattā is angry because, as Udayana believes, in his dream, she is reminded of the Viracikā-affair. Here the correspondence between the dream and the actual life becomes complete.24 Like a gallant lover, Udayana, in his dream, stretches out his arms in a gesture of apologising to Svapna-Vāsavadattā. But we see that, in the actual situation too, the sleeping Udayana’s hands are stretched out and are dropping out of the bed. The dream-action has produced a corresponding reflex action in real life. This is a clever stroke of the author’s ingenuity. It indicates that Udayana is now passing through the transition from the dream-condition to the waking-condition. By this time the real Vāsavadattā becomes aware of the fact that she has tarried perhaps too long and is afraid that she may be seen in Udayana’s company. So she prepares to go away. But before she actually goes away – and here again the dramatist gives a homely touch to the whole episode – she staidly approaches the bed and gently replaces on it Udayana’s hand which was hanging down. Then she quickly hastens out. This is again one of the many instances

24. Some critics may object to the introduction, by the author, of the Viracikā-affair in this otherwise pathetic scene. They may argue that it ill suits the prevailing sentiment and definitely lowers Udayana in our estimation. This objection can no doubt be partly justified. But has the mention of this affair not helped to bring about the dramatically effective correspondence between the dream-world and the actual life? Is it not natural from the psychological point of view? And was not Udayana inherently a romantic adventurer? His present pathetic condition is only incidental. In a dream, the real character of a person subconsciously comes to the forefront.
of the naturalness of the dramatic action in the Svapna-vāsavadatta and of the humanness of Vāsavadattā’s character.

The touch of Vāsavadattā’s hand thrills the King. He takes it to be an assurance from the angry Svapna-Vāsavadattā that she has pardoned him. But that touch also half awakens him from his sleep almost unknowingly. Indeed, in Udayana’s mind there was no clear distinction between sleep and wakefulness – between dream and reality. He was taking his entire experience to be real and a uniform whole. Was the touch of Vāsavadattā’s hand not real? And was he not still actually experiencing the thrill of it? In his half-sleepy half-wakeful condition he sees Vāsavadattā (from our point of view the real Vāsavadattā, but, from the King’s point of view, the Vāsavadattā, whom he had been addressing so long) hurriedly going out of the chamber. Thoroughly excited he follows her crying out: Vāsavadattaye tiṣṭha tiṣṭha. He is struck by the panel of the door while rushing out after Vāsavadattā and is completely awakened. But there was now no Vāsavadattā to be seen. Was it all then a dream? It could not be, for, he still felt on his body the thrill of Vāsavadattā’s touch. And did he not see Vāsavadattā going out of the chamber? But after all it must have been a dream! He was rudely awakened on account of his impact against the door-panel. Did it not indicate that he was not quite wakeful till then? The illusion is thus perfectly maintained.

When the King later narrates the episode to Vidūṣaka, the latter argues that the King’s experience must have been a dream, and offers a rational explanation for it by pointing out that the thought of Vāsavadattā and the bathing pools must have occasioned the dream. How can he see Vāsavadattā, who was burnt to death, long ago, in the fire at Lāvaṇaka? Or perhaps the King has seen the fairy called Avantisundari who was reported to be haunting the capital of Darśaka. But Udayana is not satisfied by any of these explanations. Granting that the earlier part of his experience was a dream, Udayana still felt sure that, in his half-awakened condition, he had actually seen Vāsavadattā’s face with its long loose tresses of hair and
collyriumless eyes. And he asked Vidūṣaka how Vāsavadattā’s touch in a dream could have produced a thrill of joy in real life – a thrill which he still experienced. The dramatic beauty of the Svaṇa-episode lies in the fact that Udayana is left undecided as to whether what he saw was a dream or a reality!

One of the dramatic consequences of this episode was that new hope was now created in Udayana’s mind that Vāsavadattā might still be living. Till now he had fully believed in the rumours about the death of Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa. This episode may, therefore, be said to be preparing the King, psychologically, for the final reunion. Additional weight is given to his hope by the discovery of the ghoṣavati viṇā, which was invariably associated with the romance of Vāsavadattā and Udayana. The Svaṇa-episode has also to be regarded as a symbolic indication of things to come. It represents a reunion between Udayana and Vāsavadattā – a reunion which is but temporary and illusory. What the drama ultimately aims at is a permanent and real reunion!


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25. V. 10.
26. V. 11.
27. Cf. the Misra Viṣṇukambhaka at the beginning of the sixth act: tato mohapratyāgatena bṛṣuparyukte mukhena bhātra bhapitam āsī ghoṣavati, sa khalu na āsītā iti.
THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE YAJṆAPHALA

In July 1941, Rajvaidya Jivaram Kalidas Sastri of the Rasaśālā Series. But the publication of the YajṆaphala must be said to have proved rather eventful from various points of view. In his Sanskrit foreword (prāgvaṭ̄tya) to the YajṆaphala, the Rājavaidya has given the following information about the discovery of that drama. About 1924, the Rājavaidya secured large collections of manuscripts from Banaras, Surat, and some places in Panjab. In these collections he came across two manuscripts of the YajṆaphala. Owing to his many preoccupations, however, this unique work did not see the light of the day until after 17 years.

The work is indeed unique. For, as the editor has pointed out in his foreword, though the name of its author is nowhere mentioned in the text, the YajṆaphala exhibits all the special features which characterize the thirteen plays of Bhāsa discovered, in 1912, by MM. Pandit Ganapati Sastri of Trivandrum. The editor, therefore, expressed it as his firm view that the YajṆaphala also must be ascribed to the authorship of Bhāsa. Both the manuscripts, which became available to the Rājavaidya, are dated. The date of the manuscript, which has formed the main basis of the printed text, is mentioned in the colophon as follows:

yajñanāṭakam samāptam / śrīvikramārka-saṁvata 1727 āśvina-κṛṣṇapakṣe dvitiyāyāṁ bhaume ca li. svāmi suddhānandatīrthe-ṇedam.²


2. The date corresponds to Tuesday, September 20, 1670.
The second manuscript, which, too, has been occasionally used in the preparation of the printed text, is said to be dated in Vikrama Samvat 1859. Its colophon reads:

\textit{iti yajñaphalam saṃpūrṇam vikramīya saṃvatsara 1859 māsanām uttame pāṣaṃśe sita pakṣe pūrṇām āṃ guruварāre likhitam devapraśadaśarmanā hastināpuraṇivāsi.}

In 1942, A. D. Pusalker, who had already established himself as a keen and critical student of the Bhāsa-problem, wrote a paper dealing with the authenticity of the \textit{Yajñaphala}.\textsuperscript{3} According to Pusalker, the peculiarities pertaining to the language, ideas, and dramatic technique, which were to be met with in the \textit{Yajñaphala}, were extremely similar to those which characterize the thirteen plays of Bhāsa. He, therefore, concluded that there was a \textit{prima facie} case in favour of the \textit{Yajñaphala}, published at Gondal, being attributed to Bhāsa. In his paper, Pusalker has drawn pointed attention of scholars to some salient features of this eventful discovery of a new drama by Bhāsa. For instance, the manuscripts of the plays of Bhāsa, which had been known till then, were all written on palm-leaf in Grantha character and their currency was limited only to the South of India; the manuscripts of the \textit{Yajñaphala}, on the other hand, are written on paper in Devanāgarī script and are found in Northern India. This fact would thus necessitate the revision of many hypotheses about the personality of Bhāsa and his authorship.

It is not proposed to discuss, in this brief note, the question whether Bhāsa could have actually been the author of the \textit{Yajñaphala}. There is no doubt about the close similarity of this play to the thirteen plays generally ascribed to Bhāsa. But, as is well known, scholars are still acutely divided on the question of the authorship of those thirteen plays themselves. However, apart from this general Bhāsa-problem, which would automatically cover the \textit{Yajñaphala} also, there has arisen another very interesting point regarding the authorship of the latter.

About the end of 1942, one Pandit Gopala Datta Sastri of Jaipur happened to visit the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute at Poona. On that occasion, in the course of his talk with Dr. V. S. Sukthankar and Prof. P. K. Gode, the Sastri made an astounding revelation. He told those two scholars that the Sanskrit drama, Yajñaphala, which was published by the Rājavaidya of Gondal, some time ago, was not the work of Bhāsa, as maintained in the foreword, but that he (Gopala Datta Sastri) himself had composed that drama. By cleverly imitating the language, style, and dramatic technique of Bhāsa, he had misled some critics into believing that the Yajñaphala was a genuine work of that ancient Sanskrit dramatist. The Sastri further pointed out that he had introduced into the play some "keys", which would convincingly prove his authorship.  

On 27th October 1942, a publisher from Jaipur addressed a letter to Pusalker, in which he claimed that the Yajñaphala, published at Gondal, was not the work of Bhāsa but that it was composed by Pandit Gopala Datta Sastri, who was mentioned on page 6 of the Sanskrit foreword to the drama. That publisher further spoke, in his letter, of some "keys" purposefully introduced in the drama by Gopala Datta Sastri in order to substantiate his authorship of the drama. In a note, which accompanied that letter, three such "keys" were mentioned. The correspondent from Jaipur added in his letter that Gopala Datta Shastri had lodged a strong protest with the Rājavaidya of Gondal for having published the Yajñaphala under the name of Bhāsa and that the Rājavaidya had thereupon assured the Sastri that he would set the matter right by publicly announcing that the Yajñaphala was

4. As the workers of the Institute were then fully occupied with the preparations in connection with the Silver Jubilee of the Institute, which was subsequently celebrated in January 1943, they could not just then pursue this matter any further. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Pandit Gopala Datta Sastri attended the Silver Jubilee celebrations and recited some Sanskrit stanzas specially composed by him for the occasion. These stanzas clearly showed his remarkable mastery over Sanskrit language and classical diction.

5. asya rāmakāya āmin sarvaskaraiti svādhādhiś adho yās śītānīḥ sānti ta asmanmitrayavaiḥ Śrī-Gopaladatta-tāstribhir evaśuvasatibhir vihitāḥ.
Gopala Datta Sastri's work and not Bhāsa's. This letter from the Rājavidya giving the assurance was, the correspondent continued, still in the possession of the Sastri. On receipt of this rather curious and unexpected letter, PUSALKER wrote back to the Jaipur publisher asking him—naturally enough—why, if the Sastri had in his possession the Rājavidya's letter, he did not take any legal action against the latter. But more particularly PUSALKER suggested to his Jaipur correspondent that he should place the whole matter, in all its details, before the Sanskrit scholars who would be soon gathering at Jaipur for the Session of the All-India Oriental Conference. This letter of PUSALKER's was not replied to; nor did the Jaipur publisher take any further action in the matter.

The three "keys", as supplied by the Jaipur publisher with his letter to PUSALKER, are:

1. If the eight letters from the first nineteen sentences in the Sanskrit foreword to the Yajñopahala are put together in a consecutive order, they make up the following Hindi sentence: balāt grantha lekara upodghāta bhi merese hī likhāyā.

2. In stanza 28 in Act I, the fifth letter from the beginning in the third pāda, the fifth letter from the beginning in the fourth pāda, the fifth letter from the end in the fourth pāda, and the fifth letter from the end in the third pāda make up the word gopālasya.

3. The eight letters in the first pādas of the first five stanzas in Act II, when put together consecutively, make up the word bhāsānukāri.

6. If the Yajñopahala was actually written by Gopala Datta Sastri (which, as will be shown in the sequel, does not seem to have been the case) and if, as suggested by the Jaipur publisher, the Sastri did not want it to pass under Bhāsa's name, one fails to understand why he was required to introduce into the drama any "keys" to prove his authorship. He could have as well made his authorship public.

7. [Incidentally, the 12th All-India Oriental Conference, which was to have been held at Jaipur, could not be held there.]
The Jaipur correspondent asserted that, besides these three "keys", there were many more giving the name of the author, the year, month, and day of the composition, etc.

With a view to verifying the claim of Gopala Datta Sastri I have been wanting, since long, to investigate this whole matter rather thoroughly. I thought that, if it were possible to examine the manuscripts on which the printed text of the Yajñaphala is alleged to have been based, the whole question would be settled immediately. I, therefore, soon got into communication with Rājavaidya Jivaram Kalidas Sastri (now Śrī Caraṇatīrtha). I gave him some details regarding the claim made by Gopala Datta Sastri and requested him to supply me with all possible information relating to the publication of the Yajñaphala. I further requested him to lend me the manuscripts of the drama, which were used for the preparation of the published text. The Rājavaidya sent me a more or less detailed letter on the 30th of May 1951, relevant extracts from which are reproduced below:

"It is a fact that Rasashala has published a play entitled Yajñaphala in 1941. I do believe that the author of the play is none but Bhāsa. I owned two Mss. of the play, one of which was given to Pandit Gopaldatta Shastri which he never returned. Today we have got only one manuscript .... Pandit Gopaldatta Shastri belonged to Almora and mostly used to reside at different places like Jaipur, Bombay, Virpur, Gondal, etc. He was a good scholar of Sanskrit; hence whenever he used to turn up at Gondal I would employ him in the research work of the manuscripts in Rasashala. He was duly paid for carrying on this research work. In 1941 when he was here he was entrusted with two Mss. of Yajñaphala from which he prepared a press copy and the same

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8. During my recent visit to Saurashtra in connection with the Somanātha celebrations, I spent a couple of days at Songarh, a few miles away from Gondal. This proximity of Gondal perhaps helped to consolidate my idea of getting the issue of the eventful Gondal publication fully clarified.

9. I would fail in my duty if I did not mention here that, throughout our correspondence, the Rājavaidya had been very helpful. I am, indeed, thankful to him for his uniform courtesy and kindness.
has been printed. Out of the two original Mss. he took away one with him to Jaipur saying that he wished to show the same to scholars there and to the last he never returned the same to me. After that he expired at Lucknow ....... So now we own only one Ms. If any institution is ready to undergo the expenses of getting the photograph of the manuscript, making the blocks and publishing it I may willingly allow that ....... When he stayed at Gondal Pandit Gopaldatta Shastri as a friend and scholar was entrusted with the research work of Mss. at Rasashala. Hence if he has cleverly introduced his authorship in one of the stanzas of the play after deforming the stanza, I am not in the knowledge of it ....... We have printed this play on the basis of the manuscripts we possess ....... ".

On the receipt of this letter, I requested the Rājavaidya to supply me, by way of sample, with a photo-copy of that folio of the manuscript of the Yajñaphala, which contained stanza 28 in Act I. His response to this request of mine, indeed, overwhelmed me. For, he sent me the first, the second, and the last folios of the original manuscript itself. Some time later, on my request, the Rājavaidya was good enough to send all the folios of the manuscript for my examination. 10

A close study of the manuscript leaves no doubt in my mind that it is quite genuine and that it must have been written in V. S. 1727, which is the date mentioned in the colophon. The quality of the paper, the style of writing, the use of the prṣṭhamātrās—all this is indicative of the antiquity of the manuscript. 11 In order that scholars should have an opportunity to judge for them-

10. It is this manuscript which, as the Sanskrit foreword mentions, has mainly formed the basis of the printed text of the Yajñaphala. The variant readings from the other manuscript, which, according to the Rājavaidya, Gopala Datta Sastri took away and never returned, do not seem to have been many and are indicated in the foot-notes in the printed edition.

11. Prof. P. K. Goñi, who has perhaps handled, in his research work, a larger number of ancient manuscripts than any other scholar, holds the same view. Some of my other colleagues, who have seen the manuscript, also confirm this view,
selves, the photographs of two folios of the manuscript are published here.\textsuperscript{12} If Gopala Datta Sastri’s claim regarding the authorship of the play were to be accepted as valid, we would also have to assume that he (or one of his associates) had forged the entire manuscript of the \textit{Yajñaphala}. That, however, is certainly not the case. Whether Bhāsa is the author of this play or not is a matter of opinion. But the study of the manuscript, now in the possession of the Rājavaidya, would lead one to the irresistible conclusion that, whoever be the author of the \textit{Yajñaphala}, he was most definitely not Gopala Datta Sastri, who is mentioned in the Sanskrit foreword to the drama.

What, then, about the three “keys” supplied by the Jaipur publisher? Let us briefly examine them. The first “key” does not possess any probative force whatsoever. It seems that Gopala Datta Sastri himself wrote the Sanskrit foreword to this drama. It was, therefore, quite possible for him so to manipulate the first nineteen sentences as to derive, from the eighth letters in them, the Hindi sentence referred to above.\textsuperscript{13}

The second “key” is more interesting—and, in a sense, perhaps more serious. The last two pādas in stanza 28 in Act I, as they appear in the original manuscript now in the possession of the Rājavaidya, read\textsuperscript{14}:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
शृणुनां संदृशी बल दिनमणे: सुंक्षयमगात्।
प्रकाशो दीपयनां रजनीवदनवाद्युपासभिष।
\end{center}
\end{quote}

It will be seen that the “key”, supplied by the Jaipur publisher, does not fit in here. In the copy of the printed text of the \textit{Yajñaphala}, which I possess, these pādas read:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
शृणुनां संदृशी बल दिनमणे: सुंक्षयमगात्।
प्रकाशो दीपयानां रजनीवदनवाद्युपासभिष।
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} The first photograph includes stanza 28 in Act I, which is alleged to contain one of the “keys”. The second photograph clearly shows the date mentioned in the colophon.

\textsuperscript{13} It thus becomes clear that, even before the publication of the drama, the learned Sastri had intended to set afoot the canard about his authorship of the drama and was preparing the ground for it.

\textsuperscript{14} See photograph No. 1.

\textsuperscript{15} The long \textit{nī} in \textit{rājanī}- renders the verse-quartermetrically defective. Presumably it is copyist’s error.
 пу́णीतं पुरो́धयं बल दिनकरस्थाल्लत्मगातः।
प्रकाशो श्रीपान्तं रञ्जनिवदनाउळ्टक्तिरिव॥

So, here too, the “key” does not fit in. But in another copy of the printed text,\(^\text{17}\) which I casually happened to see, the reading of the पādās is:

 пу́णीतं पुरो́धयं बल दिनकरस्थ् क्षयमगातः।
प्रकाशो दैवपान्तं रञ्जनिवदनाउळ्टक्तिरिव॥

Thus the “key” seems to refer to this reading. There is now no means to ascertain as to what the reading of these पādās was in the other manuscript of the Yajñaphala. Presumably it was the same as in the manuscript now in the Rājavaidya’s possession. For, wherever the readings in that manuscript differ from those in the manuscript which mainly forms the basis of the printed text, the variants are said to have been indicated in the footnotes.\(^\text{18}\) The mystifying discrepancy regarding the reading of these two crucial पādās, therefore, clearly points to only one conclusion, namely, that, irrespective of the authority of the manuscripts, the text in this passage is purposefully so modified as to manufacture a “key”.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\) No variant readings are noted in the foot-notes.

\(^{17}\) On the cover-page of the printed text, which I possess, the date of the publication of the drama is given as सन् १९४१ मार्च। Curiously enough, however, the date mentioned at the end of the Sanskrit foreword in that very copy is 19–7–1941. This latter date is mentioned also in the second copy of the printed text, which I happened to see, though the date, March 1941 is nowhere to be seen in it. On the cover-page of the drama in the Bhandarkar Institute Library, a slip bearing the words सन् १९४१ नवेंबर is pasted quite perceptibly for the purpose of covering some different date (which may have been सन् १९४१ मार्च।). All this is quite mystifying.

\(^{18}\) Cf. the following remark on p. 4 of the Sanskrit introduction: (Kha)

 \begin{quote}
 \begin{center}
 pustabam etat (i.e. the ms. dated V. S. 1859) pūrvasmād aruvaktanam / asya pāthā yatra yatre 'parivarṇitāt pustakāt (i.e. the ms. dated V. S. 1727) bhīdyante tatra 'dham sipparamāsna pāthakhade 'smābhīr nyāśi.
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\(^{19}\) How, otherwise, can one account for three different variants, namely, saśeho, puñjo 'yath, and pāgo 'yath, having been derived from only two manuscripts?
In respect of the third "key", however, it must be conceded that there is no such tampering with the original text. Even according to the manuscript, now in the Rājāvaidya's possession, the eighth letters in the first pādas of the first five stanzas in Act II make up the word bhāsānukāri. But in view of the evidence set forth above, this must be regarded as a mere coincidence shrewdly observed by the learned Sastri and then made to serve his purpose.21


20. As also according to the printed text.
21. Or can it be that the author of the Tajñaphāla was not Bhāsa, but some other poet, who must have, at any rate, lived before V. S. 1727, and that the latter introduced this device to suggest that he had imitated Bhāsa? Incidentally it may be pointed out that the word bhūṣānukāri ends in short ī, and cannot, therefore, be made to refer to the poet (Kāvi). It must be connected, if at all, with Nāṭakam,
POST-VEDIC LITERATURE

For the purpose of this chapter, the term ‘post-Vedic literature’ is understood to include post-Vedic Sanskrit literature and literature in Pali and other Prakrit languages. To begin with the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature, it must be, first of all, pointed out that, though the Vedic literature and the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature are, many times, regarded as together constituting what is generally known as Sanskrit literature, these two are different from each other in certain essential features. The Veda is, for instance, traditionally regarded as being apauruseya. It is claimed that it is not produced by any human agency, that it is god-given and not man-made. Naturally enough, we cannot consider the Vedic literature in terms of its authorship; we have to consider it mostly from the point of view of the tendencies and attitudes represented in its different chronological strata. As against this, in the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature we have to deal mainly with individual authors and their literary works. Again, in spite of the vastness of extent and the diversity of form, the Vedic literature represents a kind of unity in the sense that a thread of logical development of thought runs through the texts produced in the successive periods of the Vedic age. Further, whether it be the mythology and magic of the Sarhitas or the ritualism of the Brahmanas or the spiritualism of the Upanisads, the Veda may be

1. This survey was originally published as a chapter in An Outline of the Cultural History of India, Hyderabad, 1958, pp. 64–114. As, however, it was not easily available to students, it was reprinted in JUPHS 23, 1-37, in a slightly modified form. This survey may be usefully supplemented by: Dandekar, “Literature and Sciences”, supra pp. 102–154; and “Literature of Brahmanism in Sanskrit”, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 320–372.

said to relate mainly to one single aspect of the cultural life of the
people, namely, religion. In this limited sphere it reflects the
contemporary life quite faithfully and thereby possesses great
historical value. The post-Vedic Sanskrit literature, on the other
hand, is essentially diverse both in form and contents. Also,
unlike the Vedic literature, much of it is characterised by a large
element of poetic imagination. To that extent, therefore, it has
to be studied primarily from the literary rather than the socio-
historical point of view.

Post-Vedic Sanskrit Literature

The post-Vedic Sanskrit literature must not, however, be
regarded—as it is sometimes regarded—as being coextensive with
poetical literature or Kāvya. The term 'post-Vedic Sanskrit
literature', indeed, has a very wide connotation. For the present
purpose, we may consider that literature under three main heads,
namely, poetry or Kāvya, literature relating to the humanities
and social sciences, and literature relating to natural and technical
sciences. The term 'Kāvya' is here used mainly to include the
ancient epics like the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, the
Purāṇas, epic-poems and lyrical poems, dramatic works, narrative
and historical literature, and anthologies and other minor com-
positions in prose and verse. The literature relating to the
humanities and social sciences comprises works pertaining to the
four traditionally recognised ends of human life, namely, dharma
or ethical conduct, artha or material well-being, kāma or aesthetic
pleasure, and mokṣa or spiritual emancipation. Under the last
head are to be included works on various sciences and arts, like
mathematics and astronomy, chemistry and alchemy, medicine,
and architecture. The post-Vedic Sanskrit literature is, thus,
distinguished for its richness and variety. In a sense, Sanskrit
literature has not ceased to be produced even now. It is, indeed,
well and wisely said that the Vedic literature has no beginning
but has an end, while Sanskrit literature has a beginning but
no end.
I. Kāvya
(a) Epics

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata, which may be regarded as perhaps the earliest monument of the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature, is unique in several respects. For one thing, it is the biggest epic known to the world. In its present form it is believed to contain 1,00,000 stanzas. It is, thus, eight times as big as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey put together. It is, however, not merely its enormous size that distinguishes the Mahābhārata. In point of contents also it is unique. It is rightly claimed that, in the matter of dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa, whatever is embodied in this epic may be found elsewhere, but what is not found here it will be impossible to find elsewhere.³ The Mahābhārata is a veritable encyclopaedia of ancient Indian thought and life. Indeed, it may even be said to possess a kind of universality. For, there is hardly any human thought or feeling which has not found expression in it; and there is hardly any situation in human life which has not been conceived by its authors.

Obviously, this enormous literary work could not have been the creation of a single author or even of a single generation of authors.⁴ Before it attained its present form, the epic must have undergone several revisions and redactions. Its historical kernel is presumably derived from a cycle of ballads relating to the feud between the five Pāṇḍavas and the hundred Kauravas—both of them scions of the family of the Bharatas which had been well-known since the Vedic age. This feud ended with the apparent victory of the former over the latter. On account of the political importance and influence of the family, the bardic poem centring upon that vague historical event, which was called Jaya, seems to have become extremely popular. It, therefore, occurred to the promotors of the newly arisen Kṛṣṇaite religion that they

³ MBh. I. 56. 33.
could utilise that bardic poem as an efficient vehicle for the propagation, among the people at large, of their own religious ideology. Accordingly they revised and enlarged the original poem by introducing into it their god Kṛṣṇa as the central figure and representing the victorious Pāṇḍava brothers as his special protégés. And all this was accomplished with such great ingenuity and resourcefulness that hardly any traces were left in the revised version of the fact that the personality of Kṛṣṇa was superimposed on the bardic kernel. The corner-stone of this Kṛṣṇaite revision was the famous Bhagavadgītā ("The Lord’s Song"), which epitomised the religious, ethical, and metaphysical teachings of the Kṛṣṇaism. In course of time, the Kṛṣṇaite epic also underwent further revision and enlargement. It was now transformed into a repository of the entire traditional Brahmanic knowledge and learning. Even after this, the epic continued to be subjected to poetic embellishments and sectarian and other kinds of revision and enlargement until it assumed its present form.

The Rāmāyaṇa

The Rāmāyaṇa is a different kind of epic. Unlike the Mahābhārata, it is largely the work of a single poet, named Vālmiki. The first part of this epic deals with the usual kind of court-intrigue, which, perhaps, has some historical basis. King Daśaratha of Ayodhya had decided formally to proclaim his eldest queen’s son, Rāma, as the crown-prince. But at the very last moment, on the strength of some boons given by the king to his youngest and dearest wife, he was prevailed upon by her to banish Rāma to the forest for fourteen years and appoint her son, Bharata, as the successor to the throne. With the exile of Rāma, in which he was accompanied by his charming wife, Sītā, and his devoted brother, Lakṣmaṇa, the epic narrative enters quite a new phase. The poet now transforms the banished prince of Ayodhya into the hero of one of the most important events in ancient Indian history, namely, the Aryan expansion to the south. This expansion is represented as being the result of the colonising
and civilising activities of Aryan missionaries, like Agastya, aided by military power which is symbolised by Rāma. The heroic Rāma is shown to have rendered the hermitages of sages safe against the assaults by demons and to have thus ensured the uninterrupted continuance of their religious and cultural activities. However, in course of time, Rāvana, the demon king of Laṅkā in the farthest south, kidnapped Sītā. Thereupon, Rāma, who had come to be recognised as the incarnation of the highest god, rallied round himself the various tribes of the south, like the Vānaras (vana-naras), and invaded Laṅkā. In the battle that followed, Rāma was victorious. Sītā was rescued and, after the stipulated period of fourteen years, Rāma triumphantly returned to Ayodhyā.

Deftly interwoven with these two strands of history is a third strand, namely, that of an agricultural myth. The names of some of the principal characters in the epic, such as Sītā (ploughed land), Lava (corn), Kuśa (grass), Māruti (son of wind), etc., are very suggestive in this connection. It must, indeed, be said to the credit of Vālmiki that he has succeeded, to a very large extent, in producing a unified pattern out of these mutually unrelated strands. The Rāmāyaṇa also possesses many characteristics of the conventional classical poetry and is, therefore, aptly described as the ādikāvyā (first poetical composition) in Sanskrit.

It may be interesting to attempt a comparative estimate of the two epics. While the Mahābhārata portrays a full-blooded and vigorous national life, the Rāmāyaṇa seems to glorify the quaint virtues of family relationships. It would also seem that the Rāmāyaṇa generally represents a later and perhaps more sophisticated period of cultural history than the Mahābhārata. So far, however, as the composition of the two epics is concerned, it may be presumed that, though the Mahābhārata began much earlier than the Rāmāyaṇa, the latter attained its final form while the former had still been passing through the process of revision and enlargement.
The *Purāṇas*

The *Purāṇas* were given their final literary form at a much later date than the two epics. But it would be proper to mention them in the present context, for, they claim to be the real repositories of all ancient legends and are thus closely akin—though conceptually anterior—to the epics, particularly the *Mahābhārata*. The term *Purāṇa* is generally explained as 'that which lives from ancient times'. The *Purāṇas* are traditionally said to deal with five subjects, namely, *sarga* (creation), *pratisarga* (dissolution and re-creation), *vamśa* (divine genealogies), *manvantara* (ages of Manu), and *vamśānucarita* (genealogies of human kings). Actually, however, they contain quite a large number of other topics pertaining to the ideologies and practices of popular Hinduism. The *Purāṇas* are, therefore, very appropriately characterised as 'the Vedas of the people'. There are eighteen major *Purāṇas* and eighteen minor *Purāṇas*, and the names of most of them indicate their essentially sectarian character.

(b) Epic-Poems

It was once assumed that from the time when the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, attained their final literary form (2nd-1st century B.C.) up to the time when Kālidāsa produced his immortal poems and dramas, there had been a more or less complete break in the production of Sanskrit Kāvyā. MAX MÜLLER, for instance, spoke of a Sanskrit renaissance, which, according to him, occurred in the 6th century A.D. Such an assumption has, however, now been shown to be wholly unwarranted. For, some literary works of great merit, which can be definitely assigned to this intervening period, have now come to light. Similarly, many of the epigraphic records belonging to that period possess several characteristic features of classical Sanskrit Kāvyā and thus testify to the tradition of Sanskrit Kāvyā.

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5. See supra pp. 105-108.

5g. See foot-note 2 on p. 103 above.
having remained unbroken. Kālidāsa must, accordingly, be said
to symbolise not the resurrection of an extinct tradition but the
culmination of a continuing one.

Aśvaghoṣa

One of the most remarkable Sanskrit authors of the post-
epic and pre-Kālidāsian period, the entire literary output of which
has, perhaps, not yet come to light, was Aśvaghoṣa. Indeed,
Aśvaghoṣa may be regarded, in a sense, as having been a pioneer
in the field of Sanskrit Kāvya and drama. The consensus of
Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit sources seems to indicate that
this Buddhist monk and teacher, who was also a poet of great
merit, lived in the 1st century A.D. His Buddhacarita has the
distinction of being the earliest mahākāvya (epic-poem) in
Sanskrit, which has become known till now. Its available four-
ten cantos portray the life of the Buddha from his birth up to
his victory over Māra, the evil genius of temptations. Here
is, verily, an example of a noble theme nobly treated. The poet
bears in his heart intense devotion for the Buddha, but he shows
admirable restraint in the presentation of the Buddha’s miracles.
Indeed, restraint may be said to be a characteristic feature of all
Aśvaghoṣa’s writings. In point of sheer poetic beauty, however,
Aśvaghoṣa’s other poem, the Saundarananda, perhaps excels the
Buddhacarita. In its eighteen cantos, the Saundarananda narrates
the story of Buddha’s half-brother Nanda, who was ordained as
monk against his will, and his charming wife Sundarī. As may
be easily imagined, this theme afforded ample scope for convincing
characterisation and for the presentation of poetic situations. And
Aśvaghoṣa has certainly taken the fullest advantage of it. But
the theme also affords scope for the propagation of the teachings
of the Buddha. Indeed, at the end of the Saundarananda the
poet claims that his poem essentially deals with the subject of
salvation and that he has adopted the Kāvya-style not to give
pleasure but just to attract people towards religion. He very
significantly compares his poem with sweetened medicine. In
spite of such protestations, however, a discerning reader of the
two poems becomes convinced that Aśvaghōsa was a greater poet
than religious teacher.\textsuperscript{56}

Kālidāsa

The high-water mark of Sanskrit mahākāvyya, of which
Aśvaghōsa has given us two remarkable exemplars, was reached
by Kālidāsa (4th century A.D.), who is universally regarded as
the brightest star in the firmament of Sanskrit poetry. Kālidāsa
is reputed to be the author of two mahākāvyas (the Kumāra-
saṁbhava and the Raghuvansha), one long lyrical poem (the
Meghadūta), and three dramas (the Mālavikāgnimitra, the
Vikramorvaśīya, and the Śākuntala). Another poetic composi-
tion (the Rūtusamhāra) describing the six seasons and the differing
aspects of love which characterise those seasons is also attributed
to him.

Though most of the available versions of the epic-poem,
Kumāraśaṁbhava, contain seventeen cantos, there are valid
reasons to suppose that only the first eight are genuinely from
the pen of Kālidāsa. The epic-poem narrates the story of how
gods brought about the marriage between Śiva and Pārvatī, whose
son, Kumāra or Kārttikeya, was to become their commander-in-
chief and thus lead them to victory in their battle against the
demon, Tāraka. In this poem—as, indeed, in most of his literary
works—the poet’s forte is his superb delineation of love and
nature. Pārvatī is represented to have failed in her earlier efforts
to win over Śiva, because she had then depended mainly on her
physical charms. Later she succeeded because of her penance. It
is a favourite theme of Kālidāsa’s that physical love has to be
sublimated through suffering and penance before it is transfromed
into spiritual love, which latter alone conduces to true and ever-
lasting union of souls. The symbolism of Śiva’s having first
burnt Madana, the god of love, and then revived and reinstated
him is unmistakable. As for nature, Kālidāsa does not employ
it merely as a material or physical background for human action,

\textsuperscript{56} See infra “Great Buddhists: Aśvaghōsa”.
Nor does he exploit it merely to show off his powers of keen observation and description. For him, nature is a living entity, a soulful character, which has feelings and emotions, and which, therefore, is as sensitive as any other character in the poem or the drama.

The Raghuvamśa is a more mature and sustained literary piece. In this poem, consisting of nineteen cantos, Kālidāsa has used a very broad canvas to portray the history of thirty kings of the race of Raghu, in which the highest god had chosen to incarnate himself as Rāma in order to put an end to the atrocities of the demon king Rāvana as also to lay down the standard of public and domestic virtues. Though each of these kings is treated as a separate individual, the poet seems to have brought about a kind of unity of construction by depicting the fortunes of the family in the form of an arch - rising upwards with the victorious Raghu, reaching the apex with the noble Rāma, and again falling down with the dissipated Agnivarna. It is also noteworthy that Kālidāsa has treated all these kings, including Rāma, as human characters, never trying to represent them either as superhuman or sub-human. And who can fail to be struck by the beauty and appropriateness of the poetic imageries and wise and appealing epigrams which the poet has liberally interspersed throughout the poem?

Most of the characteristic features of Kālidāsa’s poetic genius may be said to have been revealed, in a concentrated form, in the lyrical poem, Meghadūta. A Yakṣa, separated from his beloved as the result of a curse, commissions a cloud to bear a message of hope and reunion to his beloved pining away in the city of Alakā. The central theme may not be quite original but its treatment by Kālidāsa certainly is. Indeed, every one of the nearly 120 stanzas of the Meghadūta contains a remarkable pen-picture and thus constitutes a lyrical gem. The unique success achieved by this poem may be very well gauged by the fact that it has set the pattern for quite a spate of poems written in imitation of it.
Other Epic-Poems

Rhetoricians often speak of five mahākāśyas having been pre-eminent in Sanskrit literature. The first two places in that list obviously belong to Kālidāsa’s two epic-poems mentioned above. Among the remaining three, the Kirātārjunīya of Bhāravi (early 7th century A.D.), which narrates the story of the Pāṇḍava hero Arjuna’s penance to secure from Śiva the miraculous missile with which to overpower the Kauravas, can boast neither of the artistic portrayals of the Raṅguvanāśa nor of the sustained sublimity of the Kumārasambhava; but it is distinguished for its vigorous style and powerful descriptions. With Māgha (cir. 700 A.D.), the author of the Śīśupālavādha, Sanskrit mahākāśya tended to become more and more artificial and pedantic, until at last the last well-known work belonging to this literary genre, the Naiṣadha-carīta of Śrīharṣa (second half of the 12th century) came to exemplify, to a certain extent, what the poet himself has implicitly characterised as poison of speech, namely, much verbiage with little meaning.6

(c) Sanskrit Drama

Sanskrit drama is essentially indigenous in origin and growth. There is sufficient evidence to show that dramatic art in ancient India evolved in conjunction with the Vedic ritual.7 References to dramatists, dramatic compositions, actors, dramaturgical works, etc., found in several early texts,8 would also testify to the antiquity of Sanskrit drama. Unfortunately, none of the ancient dramatic works is now available. As in the field of mahākāśya so too in that of drama, we have to begin with the

6. See, for instance, Naiṣadha-carīta 22, 150-152.
7. [See: F. B. J. Kühner, Varuṇa and Vidyāśaka, 1979; Indu Shekhar, Sanskrit Drama: Its Origin and Decline, Lieden, 1960, seeks to spotlight the non-Aryan elements which must have helped in the birth of Sanskrit drama. Elsewhere (Cultural Forum 6, 65-68) he says that born of pre-Aryan parentage, nurtured by epic-tradition, adopted by Śūdras and other lower ranks, Sanskrit drama met with disapproval of the priestly class and therefore had stunted growth.]
8. For instance, in the works of Pāṇini and Patañjali.
Buddhist author, Aśvaghoṣa. The very fact that a Buddhist monk and teacher should have employed drama as a vehicle for the propagation of his religious ideology would speak for the popularity of drama in ancient times. Among the palm-leaf manuscripts discovered in Central Asia, in 1910, were found fragments of three dramas. In the colophon of one of them, namely, Śāriputra-Prakaraṇa, Aśvaghoṣa is clearly mentioned as its author. The Śāriputra-Prakaraṇa belongs to the prakaraṇa type of Sanskrit drama and is written in full conformity with the conventional rules laid down in the Nāṭyaśāstra. It presents in nine acts the story of the conversion to Buddhism of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.8a

Bhāsa and Śudraka

Two years after the discovery of the Turfan manuscripts mentioned above, Pandit Ganapati Sastri of Trivandrum published a group of thirteen plays, discovered in Malbar, and thereby brought to light the dramatic compositions of another ancient Sanskrit dramatist, namely, Bhāsa (2nd or 3rd century A. D.). Till then, students of Sanskrit had been familiar only with the name of this author, which was referred to in the works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Vākpatriṣa, Rājaśekhara, and Abhinavapuṣṭa. It may be pointed out that, though doubts are still expressed by some scholars about the authenticity of Bhāsa’s authorship of the thirteen plays, a strong prima facie case can be certainly made out in favour of it. Out of the thirteen plays, which, incidentally, endow Bhāsa with the distinction of having been a Sanskrit author with the largest number of dramas to his credit, two have drawn their themes from the Rāmāyaṇa, six from the Mahābhārata, one from the Purānic Kṛṣṇa-legend, and two from the Udayana-legends in the Brāhatkathā, while the plots of the remaining two are presumably invented by the poet.8b But it has to be emphasised that, even in the case of the borrowed themes,

8a. See foot-note 55 above.
8b. For another play attributed to Bhāsa, namely, Tajāphala, see supra pp. 191-199.
the borrowing is often limited mostly to the names of the principal characters, the actual treatment of the themes being entirely Bhāsa’s own. From the point of view of dramatic construction also these thirteen plays are noteworthy, for, they produce the impression of having been intended essentially as experiments in stage-craft. As indicative of the dramatic skill of Bhāsa may be pointed out the dream-episode in the Svapnavāsavadatta, the touching scene between Duryodhana and his son in the Urubhanaga, the element of dramatic surprise in the Madhyamavāyāyogā, and the striking originality of the plot of the Cārudatta.

The last-mentioned play of Bhāsa seems to have achieved great popularity, so much so that another dramatist, Śūdraka (cir. 3rd century A. D.), took up its central theme and enlarged it into one of the most successful dramas in Sanskrit, namely, the Mṛcchakaṭika. The Mṛcchakaṭika of Śūdraka, the Śākuntala of Kālidāsa, and the Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti—each of them revealing dramatic quality of a different kind—are regarded as the three most precious jewels in Sanskrit dramatic literature. The plot of the Mṛcchakaṭika is made up by skilfully blending together two strands of story—the romantic affair between the noble merchant Cārudatta and the charming and devoted courtezan Vasantasena and the political revolution against the autocratic king Pālaka which was successfully brought about under the leadership of Āryaka. The success of the drama is largely due to the many-sided interest which this plot evokes. Again, in perhaps no other Sanskrit drama do we have such an exciting variety of characters. Attention may also be drawn to the remarkable stage-worthiness of this drama. These three factors may be said to be mainly responsible for the great popular appeal which this drama has always possessed.

Kālidāsa

But it is again Kālidāsa who bears the palm in the field of Sanskrit drama. It is said about classical Sanskrit literature that

8c. For a detailed appreciation of this episode, see supra pp. 175–190.
9. About the authorship of the Mṛcchakaṭika, see supra pp. 121–123.
among its poetical works dramas are most charming and among
these dramas the Šākuntala of Kālidāsa is easily the best. The main
theme of all the three dramas of Kālidāsa may be said to be love.
Indeed, it is possible to determine, by means of a comparative
study of the treatment of love in these dramas, the chronological
order in which they must have been written. In the Mālavikāgnī-
mitra, love is represented as a more or less vulgar passion; in
the Vikramorvaśīya, it becomes a lyrical but an explosive and
infatuating emotion; while, in the Šākuntala, which is obviously
the product of the poet’s maturity, love is shown to be an
ennobling and abiding sentiment, which is sublimated and
spiritualised through suffering and penance. The plot of the
Šākuntala shows three main phases—the initial union between
Duḥṣantā and Šakuntalā which is the result of heedless and
headlong love originating essentially from physical attraction and
earthly romance; the long period of separation and suffering
through which the two lovers are required to pass; and the final
reunion of souls brought about in the sacred heaven through their
son. As GOETHE has suggested in his matchless appreciation
of the drama, its theme is to portray the history of a develop-
ment—the development of a flower into fruit, of earth into
heaven, of matter into spirit.

The plays of Kālidāsa show him to be a great master of
dramatic technique. He seems to have fully realised that conflict
is the soul of drama. Generally, it is the inner conflict which
he has chosen to depict. But there is also another type of
conflict often presented in his dramas—conflict, which may,
indeed, be said to be a common feature of many Sanskrit
dramas—namely, that between man and omnipotent destiny.
One can point to several dramatically interesting situations in
Kālidāsa’s plays, such as, for instance, the trifocal scene in the
third act of the Mālavikāgnimitra, the opening scene in the
Vikramorvaśīya, and the scene of the first meeting of Duḥṣantā
and Šakuntalā. As for Kālidāsa’s characters, they never degene-
rate into types. Each one of them—even the minor one—
possesses his or her own individuality. Then there is, of course,
nature, which the poet enlivens and introduces as a character in his plays. In the hermitage of Kaṇva, for instance, Śakuntalā actually has three bosom companions - Anasūyā, Priyamvadā, and nature. It must also be remembered that the dramatic effect produced by Kālidāsa's skilful plot-construction and convincing characterisation is considerably heightened by his superb literary style. Indeed, one sometimes wonders whether Kālidāsa was not a greater lyricist than dramatist!

Post-Kālidāsian Dramatists

As in the field of mahākāvya so too in that of drama, the authors who followed Kālidāsa have suffered by comparison with him. The dramatic works of some of them, however, do possess certain distinctive features. For instance, the Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākhadatta, who must have been a junior contemporary of Kālidāsa, deals exclusively with a political theme. Exploiting the similarity and contrast in the characters of the two rival ministers, Rākṣasa and Cāṇakya, and presenting a variety of incidents, Viśākhadatta has demonstrated that a drama can become successful even without a single female character in it. Similarly, one of the three plays written by Śrīharṣa (604-648 A.D.), namely, the Ratnāvalī, has all along been regarded as a model of conventional dramatic theory brought into practice. But the dramatist, who could perhaps be reckoned as a compeer of Kālidāsa, was Bhavabhūti (cir. 700 A.D.). It is suggested that in his three dramas - the Mahāvīracarita, the Mālatīmādhava, and the Uttararāmacarita - Bhavabhūti has delineated respectively the three main sentiments (rasas), namely, valour (vīra), love (śṛṅgāra), and pathos (karuṇa). He must, however, be said to have been essentially a poet of karuṇa rasa. The plots of Bhavabhūti's first two plays are unoriginal and often loosely knit together, and the characterisation is not very impressive. His literary style also is rather too heavy. But in the Uttararāmacarita he distinguishes himself in all these respects. For sheer tragic pathos it would, indeed, be difficult to find anything

10. About Viśākhadatta's other play, Devīcandragupta, see supra p. 126.
to equal the third act of that play. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, who followed Bhavabhūti, must be regarded as perhaps the last great classical dramatist. His Veṇīsaṁhāra, like the Ratnāvalī of Śrīharṣa, typically exemplifies the dramatic theory of the five sandhis. Of course, creative activity in the field of Sanskrit drama can by no means be said to have ceased after Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa’s times. We do come across versatile dramatists like Murāri and Rājaśekhara (both in the latter half of the 9th century A.D.) and distinctive dramatic works like the allegorical Prabodhacandrodaya of Krṣṇamiśra (second half of the 11th century A.D.) and the humorous Bhagavadajjukīya of an unknown author.10a. But the touch of a master, like Kālidāsa or Sūdraka or Bhavabhūti, becomes no longer evident.

(d) Narrative Literature

Two Types: The Pañcatantra

The beginnings of Sanskrit narrative literature may be traced back to the arthavāda portions of the Brahmaṇas, which contain several ancient legends, like those of Purūravas and Urvaśī, Manu and the flood, and Harīcandra and Śunahṣepa. The Buddhist counterpart of this Brahmanic tradition of story-telling may be said to have been represented in the anecdotes preserved in the Avadānas and the Jātakas. Apart from these early legends, which possessed some kind of religious significance, there must have been in currency also stories with a distinctly secular purport and background. These latter naturally fell into two types. Some of the secular stories, which were generally of the nature of popular tales or beast-fables, aimed at teaching man how to live successfully, by inculcating in him practical lessons of worldly wisdom. The other type of stories was intended mainly to appeal to the romantic side of man’s mind. Man often hankers after a kind of life which is remote from the humdrum everyday-life in which he is buried. These romantic tales transport him into a magic world full of mystery and unexpectedness. A well-known

10a. A late commentary mentions Bodhāyana Kavi as the author.
collection of the first type of tales is the Pañcatantra. The Pañcatantra, as the name itself indicates, consists of five parts which deal respectively with the five topics of a didactic character, namely, separation of friends, winning of friends, war and peace, loss of what has been acquired, and indiscreet and impatient action. Nothing definite can be said about the date and authorship of this work, which, incidentally, is perhaps the only collection of beast-fables available in Sanskrit. It would, however, appear that the central ideas of many of the stories had been transmitted through oral tradition, from generation to generation, in the form of floating literature pertaining to worldly wisdom and that this floating literature was given a fixed and homogeneous literary form by some ingenious author. In the Pañcatantra, the author has employed a simple and direct style which suits the contents most admirably. The prose of the narration is interspersed with stanzas, which often epitomize the didactic teachings of the story.\textsuperscript{11} The great popularity, which the original Pañcatantra must have achieved, might account for the various recensions in which its text has come down. It was one of these recensions out of which arose the Hitopadeśa, which must be reckoned as the only other popular collection of didactic tales. The Hitopadeśa is ascribed to one Nārāyaṇa who must be said to have succeeded in producing a more or less independent work out of the materials derived from the Pañcatantra and the Kāmādakīya Nītisāra (which latter is a digest on Hindu polity).

Romantic tales

The other type of narrative literature in Sanskrit is preserved either in the form of cycles of romantic stories or of full-length romances. To the first category belong works like the Kathāsaritsāgara, the Vetalapāṇcavinīśati, and the Simhāsanadvātrīnśikā. The fountain-head of most of such cycles of romantic tales was presumably the Brhatkathā which is traditionally attributed to Guṇāḍhya. This work, which is believed to have been originally

\textsuperscript{11}. For further details see supra pp. 132–135.
written in the Paisāci Prakrit, is unfortunately lost, but some
idea about its extent and contents may be had from its two
metrical adaptations in Sanskrit, namely, the Bṛhatkathāmaṇjari
of Kṣemendra and the Kathāsaritsāgarā of Somadeva (both of
the 11th century A. D.). While these two works present mainly
the legends connected with Udayana and his son, Naravāhana-
datta, the Vetalapaṇcavimsatī and the Sinhāsanadvātrimśikā have
Vikrama as their central figure. These collections of romantic
tales amply testify to the high standard of the art of story-telling
which had been developed in Sanskrit. Their authors have fully
exploited the elements of suspense and surprise, which, indeed,
constitute the real source of narrative interest. They have also
succeeded, in a large measure, in creating the necessary atmos-
phere of mystery and magic.

But far more significant from the literary point of view than
these collections are the full-length prose romances. As in the
case of Sanskrit drama, so too in the case of Sanskrit romance,
scholars had once propounded the theory of Greek influence.
However, taking into consideration the spirit and the style of
these romances as also their literary history, one may character-
rise such a hypothesis as being wholly unwarranted. Perhaps
equally unwarranted is the emphatic postulation by some
rhetoricians of two kinds of romances showing certain essential
differences, namely, the Kathā and the Ākhyāyikā. Actually,
as Daṇḍin has said, Kathā and Ākhyāyikā were originally two
names given to one and the same literary form. It was
presumably at some later stage that a distinction between the two
came to be made, it having been suggested that the central theme
of the Kathā was imaginary while that of the Ākhyāyikā was histo-

12. For instance, Kātyāyana (3rd century B. C.) in Vār. IV. 3. 87 mentions Ākhyāyikā. Patañjali refers in that context to two works, the Vanaudatta and the Sumanottara. He mentions Ākhyāyikā (as also Ākhyāna) and these two works also while commenting on Pāṇ. IV. 2. 60.

13. The names Tantrākhyāyika, individual tales in which are called Kathā, and Bṛhatkathā would seem to support this.

14. Cf. Kātyāadarśa I. 28,
rical. Though romance, as a literary form, has been referred to by as early an author as Kātyāyana (3rd century B.C.), its earliest available exemplar is the Daśakumāraracita of Daṇḍin who is believed to have lived in the last half of the 6th century A.D. The Daśakumāraracita has obviously been left unfinished by the author, for, instead of presenting the adventures of ten princes, as the title of the work demands, it presents the adventures of only eight. Though Rājavāhana is intended to be the hero of the romance, it is the story of Apahāravarma, one of the seven princely companions of the hero, which particularly holds the interest of the reader. It is full of incidents and intrigues in which are involved quite an assortment of characters. In this respect, it reminds one of Śūdraka’s Mrçchkaññika. The Daśakumāraracita is often—and rightly—described as a romance of roguery. It is, however, noteworthy that Daṇḍin shows remarkable restraint in the handling of his rogues.

Though the prose romance written by Subandhu, who was presumably a junior contemporary of Daṇḍin, is called Vāsavadattā, it is in no way connected with queen Vāsavadatta of the famous Udayana-legends. Its entire plot seems to have been invented by Subandhu, who, however, does not show much ingenuity or originality in this respect. We have here the usual motifs of a romantic story, namely, dream-damsel, magic steed, speaking birds, human beings turned into stones, etc. Scholars sometimes characterise Sanskrit romances as prose Kāvyas, thereby emphasising the poetic excellence rather than the narrative skill exhibited in them. In Subandhu’s Vāsavadattā, at any rate, it is the poet’s melodious diction which appeals to us most.

15. The works mentioned as Ākhyāyikā by Patañjali were presumably not historical in character. Bāṇa, however, seems to have definitely accepted this distinction. His Kādambari is a Kathā, while his Harṣacarita is an Ākhyāyikā. But rhetoricians are not unanimous in respect of the definition of these two kinds of romance.
16. See foot-note 12 above.
16a. Also see infra “Professor Meyer on Daṇḍin”.
17. Obviously Subandhu’s Vāsavadattā is different from the work of that name mentioned by Patañjali (see f.n. 12 above).
Bāṇa

The second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th seem to have been particularly prolific so far as prose romances were concerned. For, Bāṇa, who must be regarded as the greatest master in this field, followed immediately after Subandhu. If a list were made of the typical works in Sanskrit, the Kādambarī of Bāṇa would certainly find a place in it. The story of the Kādambarī is highly complicated. For one thing, the author here aims at portraying the lives of two heroes and that too in their two or three incarnations. In addition to this there is considerable subsidiary material which is presented in the form of tale emboxed within tale. But, in the Kādambarī, the element of story is only subservient to poetry and delineation of sentiments. It may be that Bāṇa's style is often laboured from the point of view of vocabulary, syntax, and rhetoric, and reading his prose is like wading through a thick jungle, but the overall impression that the Kādambarī produces is one of rich exuberance and dignified flamboyance. Bāṇa's work may be characterised by lack of proportion, but it should be remembered that there is a peculiar kind of beauty in deliberate overdoing. As against the Kādambarī, which he designates as Kathā, Bāṇa characterises his other romance, the Harṣacarita, as Ākhyāyikā, for, the Harṣacarita, which, like the Kādambarī, has remained unfinished, is a romance written on a historical theme.17a It is intended to be a biography of the author's patron, Harṣa, who ruled between 606 and 648 A.D. But, in it, fact is freely mixed with fiction and history with legend.

Historical Kāvyā

It is often suggested that ancient Indians did not possess a true historical sense. Being perhaps more concerned with spirit than with its material manifestations, they are said to have cared but little for the objective process of historical events. In spite of the fact that such a judgement is only partially true, there is,

17a. See foot-note 15 above.
undoubtedly, a tragic dearth of genuine historical works in Sanskrit. What we actually have in this class—of course, leaving out of consideration the Sanskrit inscriptions, some of which possess great literary merit—comprises a historical romance like the Harṣacarīta and historical poems (with an accent on the word 'poems') like the Navasāhasāṅkacarīta of Padmagupta (first half of the 11th century), which celebrates the Paramāra king Sindurāja of Dhārā, and the Vikramāṅkadevacakarīta of Bilhaṇa (second half of the 11th century), which describes the career of the Cālukya king Tribhuvanamalla. There are, however, a few works which are more 'historical' in character like, for instance, the Rājatarangini of Kalhaṇa (12th century), which constitutes a chronicle of Kashmir kings beginning with the legendary Gonanda, who is supposed to have been a contemporary of Yudhiṣṭhira of the Mahābhārata, and coming down to Harṣa, who was assassinated in 1101 A.D. It must be pointed out that, while, in the earlier part of his work, Kalhaṇa seems to depend mostly on tradition and hearsay, in the latter part, as he comes nearer to his own times, his accounts become more authentic. Mention may be made, in this context, also of the Kumārapālacarīta of the Jaina Ācārya Hemacandra (1089–1172 A.D.), the first twenty of whose twenty-eight chapters are in Sanskrit and throw much light on the history of the Cālukyas of Gujarat, and the Prthvirājavijaya of unknown authorship and date, which describes the exploits of Prthvirāja Cāhumāna of Delhi (12th century A.D.).

Campū

A special form of narrative literature, which may be referred to in passing, is the Campū. A Campū is made up of a mixture of verse and prose and thus claims some affinity both with the epic poem and the prose romance. But none of the available

176. Belvalkar, who has edited the work (Bibl. Ind., Calcutta, 1914–22) thinks that its author is poet Jayānaka who is himself one of the characters in it. The date of the composition of the poem may be between 1178 and 1193 A.D.
Campūs can be said to approach even remotely the works of Kālidāsa or Bāṇa. The Yaśāśtilaka-campū of the Jaina author, Somadeva Sūri (10th century A.D.), is frankly religious in purport, while Campūs, like Ananta’s Bhārata-campū, are of the nature of epitomes of earlier epic works.

(e) Miscellaneous Sanskrit Kāvyā

Miscellaneous works in the field of Sanskrit Kāvyā, that is to say, works which cannot be described as belonging to any specific literary form, are, indeed, numerous. A common feature of most of these may be said to be that they are metrical compositions. They are normally of the nature of collections of stanzas—each stanza often being independent in form and thought, but all the stanzas being bound together by a common theme. There are, for instance, stotras or collections of devotional stanzas addressed to some personal god or some other object of worship. These stotras are infused with the various characteristics of bhakti, such as, exclusive glorification of a particular god, a sense of complete self-surrender on the part of the devotee, and his earnest longing for a personal communion with the divinity. In them, religious fervour is beautifully matched by poetic imagery and musical rhythm. To this class belong, for instance, the Buddhist Lokeśvaraśataka (9th century A.D.), the Jaina Bhaktāmarastotra (7th century A.D.), and the Hindu Gaṅgālaharī of Jagannātha Paṇḍita (17th century A.D.). There is another type of poems, like the Krṣṇakarṇāmṛta of Līlāśuka and the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva (12th century A.D.), wherein the sentiment of devotion is manifested in erotic terms and on an amorous background. The latter work is, indeed, unique in several respects. Its songs have been rendered in appropriate rāgas (melodies), and the sentiments in it are intended to be brought to life by means of suitable dances. Apart from such erotic-devotional songs, there are also available collections of purely erotic stanzas, like the Amaruśataka, which is wrongly ascribed by tradition to the philosopher Śaṅkara. Of more or less similar nature is the Śrīṅgāraśataka of Bhartṛhari, though the
emphasis in this latter work is rather on the ultimate futility of love than on the sensuous pleasures derived from it. Nothing can be definitely asserted about the date and personality of Bhartṛhari, but it is not improbable that he was identical with the Buddhist grammarian Bhartṛhari, the author of the Vākyapadīya, who is believed to have died about 651 A. D. The three śatakas ("Centuries" of Bhartṛhari, namely, the Śrīṅgāraśataka (Century of Love), the Vairāgyaśataka (Century of Renunciation), and the Nitisatka (Century of Worldly Wisdom) must, indeed, be regarded as quite remarkable in the field of miscellaneous Sanskrit Kāvya. Bhartṛhari's style is simple but piquant, and the sentiments which he expresses have a sort of universality about them and, therefore, make a direct appeal to the popular mind.  

Finally, mention may be made of the several anthologies in Sanskrit, in which are collected single stanzas of known and unknown authors on miscellaneous subjects. These anthologies truly reflect the vast extent, the surprising richness and variety, and the inherent charm of Sanskrit Kāvya.

Sanskrit Kāvya by Jaina authors

A survey of Sanskrit Kāvya would be incomplete without a special reference to the fairly rich contributions made to it by Jaina authors. The Padmacarita of Raviśeṇa (676 A. D.) is, like Vimalasūri's Paumacariyam, based on Rāmakathā. A similar epic is the Harivamśa-Purāṇa of Jinasena (783 A. D.). The encyclopaedic Mahāpurāṇa, consisting of two parts, namely, the Ādipurāṇa and the Uttarapurāṇa, is the work of Jinasena and his pupil Guṇabhadra (8th–9th cent. A. D.). It mainly gives the biographies of the 63 outstanding personalities of Jainism. A common theme of many of the stories included in the Mahāpurāṇa is that Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism represent but a degenerated...
form of the pure religion, namely, Jainism. The Triṣaṭṭiśālākā-
puruṣacarīta of Hemacandra (12th cent. A. D.) may also be
mentioned in this very context. A reference has already been
made to Somadeva Sūri’s Yakṣastilaka-campū. Among Sanskrit
prose Ākhyānas, the Tilakamaśājarī of Dhanapāla (10th cent.
A. D.) is rated fairly high. Hariśena’s Kathākoṣa (10th cent.
A. D.) is a collection of 157 stories in verse and is perhaps the
earliest known work of this kind. It may be incidentally noted
that the contribution of the Jainas to Sanskrit dramatic literature
is comparatively meagre.

II. Literature relating to the Humanities and Social Sciences

The concept of the four ends of human life (puruṣārthas)
may be said to have been the result of the realisation by ancient
Indian thinkers of the complex nature of man’s personality.
Man has his instincts and natural desires, his craving for power
and property, his social connections and obligations, and his
spiritual urge. To these four are respectively related the four
puruṣārthas, namely, kāma, artha, dharma, and mokṣa. In view
of the fact that a truly integrated personality implies a pattern of
life in which these four puruṣārthas are properly coordinated and
mutually regulated, Sanskrit authors have given a serious thought
to this whole problem and have, as a result, produced con-
siderable literature pertaining to it. Broadly speaking this liter-
ture may be classified under four heads: literature pertaining to
the science and art of love (Kāmaśāstra), literature pertaining to
religious and civil law (Dharmaśāstra), literature pertaining to
polity and material welfare and progress (Arthaśāstra), and philo-
sophical literature (Mokṣaśāstra or Darṣānas). All this literature
relating to the humanities and social sciences, though perhaps
not quite as extensive as Sanskrit poetry, is fairly voluminous.
Only a very brief indication of some typical works belonging
to these four branches of knowledge is, therefore, possible
here.

195. See supra p. 220.
Dharmaśāstra

It will be seen that, though the term dharma has to be interpreted differently in different contexts, there is a certain common essential idea suggested by it. Generally, Dharma may be said to aim at prescribing a way of life, which would resolve, as effectively as possible, the inevitable conflict between the individual good and the social good, between what is spiritual and what is temporal. Indications of such precepts are not wanting even in the Vedic literature, but the earliest literary works, which deal with the subject of religious and civil law more or less systematically, are the Dharmasūtras. The Sūtras represent a unique literary form developed in Sanskrit. They are of the nature of aphorisms – at once brief, unequivocal, and embodying just the essentials of the subject. Presumably, they were originally intended as points for lectures, which the teacher used to expound orally and which the pupils could easily learn by heart. Many of the Dharmasūtras are an off-shoot of a larger movement of Brahmanic revival and consolidation, which was started in order to counteract the influence of heterodox ways of life and thought. Though like the Śrutasūtras (which dealt with the Vedic ritual) and the Gṛhyasūtras (which dealt with domestic life), the Dharmasūtras also originated in specific Vedic schools, it seems that, in course of time, their authority came to be recognised by all schools.196

The Dharmasūtra of Gautama, which probably belongs to a period between 600 B. C. and 400 B. C., is the oldest available Dharmasūtra. It deals, in its twenty-eight chapters, with the usual topics of Dharmaśāstra, such as, sources of Dharma, rite of initiation, duties of the four social orders in the four stages of

196. Nothing has been said in this paper about the Śrutasūtras because from the point of view of the subject-matter they have to be regarded as being part of the Vedic literature. The Gṛhyasūtras also are not treated here separately because most of their topics are covered by the Dharmasūtras and more particularly by the Smṛtis. Indeed, the Gṛhyasūtras and the Dharmasūtras together constitute the earliest attempts to codify Brahmanic Dharma. For details regarding the Śrutasūtras and the Gṛhyasūtras (and also the Dharmaśāstras) see: DANDEKAR, Insights into Hinduism, pp. 340–356.
life, sacraments, duties of kings, civil and criminal law, personal conduct, and expiatory rites. Among other Dharmasūtras may be mentioned those of Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, and Vasiṣṭha. The general ideological pattern of these various Dharmasūtras was more or less the same – a pattern which may be characterised as the Brahmanic pattern\(^{20}\) – though certain differences in details, arising on account of the provenance and age of the particular Sūtras, were inevitable.

The second stage in the evolution of the literature relating to Dharmaśāstra is represented by the metrical works called Smṛtis. As against the Śrutis (from the root śru = to hear), which implied the direct ‘hearing’ of the revealed word, the Smṛtis (from the root smṛ = to recollect) comprised traditional knowledge which had been preserved in memory by generations after generations. The most important work of this type is the Manusmṛti. It would seem that, on account of their peculiar literary form, the Sūtras gradually tended to become more and more ununderstandable and that, therefore, many Brahmanic schools, which had produced Dharmasūtras, elaborated and amplified those Sūtras in the form of metrical Smṛtis. Presumably the Manusmṛti also was thus based on a Dharmasūtra belonging to the Mānava school.\(^{20a}\) It is necessary to remember in this connection that Dharma was never regarded as being static and that, accordingly, the changing social conditions did inevitably influence the precepts of Dharma in different periods.\(^{21}\)

The Manusmṛti, which is also known as Bhṛgusamhitā, consists of twelve chapters and 2694 stanzas. It begins with a statement regarding the process of creation and then proceeds to lay down, in the next five chapters, rules of conduct of persons belonging to different social orders (varṇa) and different stages of life (āśrama). It then goes on to discuss the duties of kings


\(^{20a}\) However, no Mānava-Dharmasūtra is available today. The Mānava school belongs to the Maitrāyaṇī Śākhā of the Kyāra-Yajurveda.

\(^{21}\) Cf., for instance, Manusmṛti I. 85.
(rājadharmā) where, in connection with the administration of justice, it deals at some length with the 18 titles of law. It ends with the mention of some expiatory rites (prāyaścittās) and a desultory discussion of a few philosophical topics like karma, guṇas, etc. The author of the Manusmṛti seems to put special emphasis on the sanctity and efficacy of the scheme of four social orders and exhibits a distinct bias in favour of the Brāhmaṇas. By and large, this work may be said to have been the outcome of the Brahmanic revival, which was brought about during the regime of the Brāhmaṇa dynasty of the Śuṅgas (2nd century B.C.), after a fairly long interregnum dominated by heterodox currents of thought like Buddhism. If the Manusmṛti was the law-book of the Śuṅgas, the Yājñavalkyasmṛti was the law-book of the Guptas (4th-5th centuries A.D.). It reflects the more liberal Hinduism which was sponsored by the Gupta monarchs. This may be seen from its attitude concerning the legal rights of women and the lower social orders. Though the Yājñavalkyasmṛti may not possess the traditional sanctity and authority of the Manusmṛti, it is perhaps superior to the latter from the practical point of view. It shows a distinct improvement in the arrangement of the various topics of ancient Hindu law which is usually presented as a queer mixture of religious and secular law. The Yājñavalkyasmṛti is divided into three clear-cut sections, namely, ācāra (religious law), vyavahāra (civil law), and prāyaścitta (expiation). It is further noteworthy that, in vyavahāra, this Smṛti pays greater attention to private law than to criminal law.²² Several other Smṛti texts—big and small—were produced in course of time, but it may be generally stated that they did not register any significant advance in the theory and practice of Hindu law.

We now come to the third stage of the Dharmasastra literature, namely, that represented by commentaries on the Sūtras and the Smṛtis and independent treatises. Haradatta (12th

²² Also see supra pp. 30-35 and the relevant portions from “Society in the age of the Guptas”, pp. 46-68 above,
century A.D.) has written an excellent commentary on the Dharmasūtras of Gautama and Āpastamba. Many commentaries on the Manussmṛti are available, perhaps the earliest and the most extensive being that of Medhātithi (9th century A.D.). It may be observed that the commentators often interpret the original Dharmaśāstra texts in the light of the conditions obtaining in their own times. Certainly the most important work belonging to this class is Vijñāneśvara’s commentary on the Yājñavalkya-smṛti, called Mitākṣarā (11th century A.D.). Indeed, this commentary has been given the status of an independent authority in Hindu law, particularly in Maharashtra. A similar status has been given in Bengal to Jīmūtavāhana’s Dāyabhāga (11th century A.D.), which mainly deals with such topics as inheritance, partition, strīdhana, reunion, etc. The authority generally recognised in Madras courts is that of the Smṛticandrikā of Devaṇṇa-bhaṭṭa (12th century A.D.). This work is an exhaustive digest of Hindu law, which takes into account a large number of earlier texts. It is interesting to note that, though Devaṇṇa generally follows Vijñāneśvara, he differs from him in the interpretation of certain crucial passages in the Yājñavalkya-smṛti. Among the treatises on Hindu law belonging to the later period the more well-known are the Vyavahāramayūkha of Nilakaṇṭha (first half of the 17th century A.D.), whose authority is recognised in Gujarat, the Vīrāmitrodaya of Mitramiśra (17th century A.D.), which is highly respected in Varanasi, and Kāśinātha Bhaṭṭa’s Dharmaśindhusāra (end of the 18th century A.D.), which deals mainly with religious observances and which is generally followed in the Deccan.

Arthaśāstra

As has been indicated above, the ancient Indian concept of Dharma comprehends all aspects of man’s relation with society. The political aspect of this relation — that is to say, the relation between the state and the subject — is covered by rājadharma, which may be generally regarded as representing ancient Indian polity and a section on which is incorporated in many Dharma-
śastra works. Information regarding certain items of ancient Indian polity like, for instance, the origin and nature of kingship, may be gleaned even from the Vedic texts, particularly the *Atharvaveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. However, with the growing complexity of political affairs and practices, the need must have been felt, at a fairly early date, to develop and systematise polity as an independent science. This science is variously known as *Arthaśāstra* or *Nitiśāstra* or *Daṇḍaniti*. Apart from the fact that *Arthaśāstra* deals with polity in a much more detailed and comprehensive manner than *Dharmaśāstra*, there is also an essential difference in the attitudes of the two. While *Dharmaśāstra* emphasises the more or less spiritual character of both the means and the ends, *Arthaśāstra* ordains that one should steadfastly strive to achieve his only end, namely, material power and prosperity, by whatever means are serviceable to him. *Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* thus represent two distinct disciplines in ancient Indian social philosophy.\(^\text{23}\)

In 1909, SHAMASASTRI of Mysore discovered and published the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and thereby gave almost a new orientation to the study of the cultural history of ancient India. Though literature pertaining to *Arthaśāstra* must have presumably begun to be produced – perhaps in the *Sūtra*-form – at a much earlier date, Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* is the earliest treatise on the subject which has become available so far. This work, which consists of fifteen sections and which is mostly written in prose, deals with such topics as discipline of the king, duties of departmental heads, administration of justice, security measures, civil service, city administration, interstatal relations, constituents of sovereignty, foreign policy, and secret means. So far as the arrangement of these topics is concerned, Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* shows a remarkable unity of plan and execution. This would imply that it was produced by a single author or, at least, under the direction of a single person. Again, this author or director must

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have himself been a practical statesman and administrator, for, the *Arthaśāstra* deals more with governmental administration than with political theory and that too from an essentially practical point of view. There has been a lot of controversy regarding the date and authorship of the *Kauṭiliya Arthaśāstra*. But no satisfactory case has been made against the traditional view, which is supported by considerable internal and external evidence, namely, that its author was Kauṭiliya or Cāṇakya or Viṣṇugupta, the chancellor of Candragupta Maurya (320 B. C.). Therefore, the *Arthaśāstra* may as well be regarded as the authorised political guide and law-book of the Mauryas.

Unlike Dharmaśāstra, Arthaśāstra suffers from a lamentable lack of continuity of literary tradition. For, from the 4th century B. C. we have to come down to the 4th century A. D. for a work treating exclusively of political theory and state administration. The *Kāmandaṇa Nītisāra* (400 A. D.) is but a metrical conspectus of Kauṭiliya’s *Arthaśāstra* and its author shows no traces of originality in political thought or of experience in administrative practice. The same is the case with the *Śukranīti* (cir. 800 A. D.) with this difference that its treatment of government machinery and military organisation is fairly detailed.  

**Kāmaśāstra**

One of the noteworthy features of ancient Indian thought may be said to be the polarity of mental attitudes exhibited in it. While, on the one hand, renunciation is glorified as the supreme way of life, on the other, mere sensual pleasures are regarded as being a fit subject for a serious treatise. A certain kind of sexuality does have a place in some ancient Indian religious cults, but that does not constitute Kāmaśāstra. It is purely the

24. Of late the opinion has been gaining ground among scholars that the *Śukranīti* was forged by a Pandit in the 19th century (V. RAGHAVAN, Presidential Address, 21st AIOC, 1961, 15–16). On the basis of a detailed examination of the text of the *Śukranīti*, Lalani Gopal sets forth the view that the work belongs to the 19th century A. D. and suggests that most probably it originated in the former Baroda State (*BSOAS* 25, 524–556).
sensuous aspect of love which forms the main subject-matter of Kāmasūtra. The beginnings of Kāmasūtra may be traced back to those hymns of the Atharvaveda which are generally classified as Strīkarmāṇī. But the first regular full-length treatise on the subject, which has become available, is the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana (cir. 400 A. D.). Of course, the Kāmasūtra itself speaks of a long literary tradition beginning with the Vedic teacher, Śvetaketu. The Kāmasūtra, which is divided into seven parts, begins with a general discussion of the paruṣārthas and then proceeds to deal with its special topics, such as enjoyment of love, romantic affairs with maidens and married women, courtesans and their art, and secret potions to win love. Even a cursory perusal of Vātsyāyana’s work would show that, both in its ethics as well as treatment of subject-matter, it was clearly influenced by Kauṭūlya’s Arthaśāstra. Like Kauṭūlya, Vātsyāyana also seems to teach that what really matters is the attainment of the end, namely, winning of the love of the desired man or woman, and not the kind of means employed for that purpose. The importance of the Kāmasūtra may be said to be twofold: firstly, the classical poets have depended on it, to a large extent, for the portrayal of their love-scenes; secondly, the work provides the modern historian with quite an amount of material of sociological significance.

Philosophical Literature

Ancient Indians are said to have been essentially spiritually-minded. In the ideal scheme of the four puruṣārthas, for instance, kāma and artha were meant to be achieved without violating dharma, and all these three were to be regarded as being sub-servient to the fourth, namely, mokṣa. It was, therefore, but natural that ancient Indians should have produced extensive philosophical literature. Indian philosophical systems are usually divided into two categories, namely, the āstika or orthodox systems which claim to have been derived from the Veda and

25. For more details regarding Philosophical Literature, also see: “Religion and Philosophy,” supta pp. 69-101.
which recognise the absolute validity of the Veda and the nāstika or heterodox systems which have originated independently of the Veda and which do not recognise its validity. To the first category belong the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, the Uttara-Mīmāṁsā, the Sāmkhya, the Yoga, the Vaiśeṣika, and the Nyāya, while the prominent among the heterodox systems are Buddhism, Jainism, and Lokāyata or Cārvāka’s materialism. A critical examination of the six orthodox systems would, however, show that some of their teachings, such as atomism or yoga, could not have been derived from the Veda. Besides, it is possible to discover a distinctive ideological substratum which is common to some orthodox and heterodox systems. It may, therefore, be presumed that Indian philosophy as a whole owes its origin to two currents of thought—the Vedic Aryan and the indigenous Indian. As for the six orthodox systems it may also be pointed out that, though all of them claim allegiance to the Veda, only two of them, namely, the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and the Uttara-Mīmāṁsā, are more or less directly connected with the Veda, while the relation with the Veda of the remaining four is only superficial and in many cases forced. Further, not every one of these systems can boast of a distinct metaphysical content of its own. The Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, for instance, pertains to Vedic ritual and mainly concerns itself with the methodology of interpreting ritualistic texts. The Yoga teaches the discipline of the body and the mind, while the Nyāya enunciates a system of logic. The other three systems, however, do possess a well-conceived metaphysical ideology. The literature belonging to these systems normally falls into three stages: the Sūtras, most of which may be assigned to the period of Brahmanic consolidation and subsequent rise of Hinduism (600–200 B.C.); the expository work bearing on the Sūtras; and independent treatises. The expository works are mainly of two kinds, namely, vārttika which undertakes a critical examination of ‘what is said, what is not said, and what is wrongly said’ in the Sūtras, and bhāṣya which claims to

interpret the Sūtras following their words and intention as closely as possible. While expounding the Sūtras, the bhāṣya arranges them in suitable topics (adhikaranaṇas), which are then discussed under the following five heads: statement of the point at issue; doubt raised about it; the view of the opponent; its rebuttal; and the establishment of the conclusion.

Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā

The Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras, which are traditionally ascribed to Jaimini, maintain that the Veda is primarily ritualistic in character and that Dharma mainly consists of injunctions relating to the performance of sacrifice. With a view to expounding this Dharma, the Sūtras discuss the various details of sacrifice and lay down, in the course of such discussion, certain rules and principles of Vedic interpretation. It may be incidentally mentioned that these principles and rules are made applicable also to other texts, particularly legal texts. Sabara has written an elaborate commentary on the Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras. Two distinct schools of Mīmāṃsā have emerged out of that commentary—one represented in the Bṛhatī of Prabhākara (6th century A. D.) and the other in the works of Kumārila (7th century A. D.). Two rather handy manuals on the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, belonging to a later date, are the Mīmāṃsā-Nyāyaprakāśa of Āpadeva (17th century) and the Arthasaṭṭhīgra of Laugākṣi Bhāskara (17th century).

Vedānta

The Uttara-Mīmāṃsā, which is more popularly known as the Vedānta, is by far the most widely known and the most generally accepted system of Indian philosophy. Indeed, Indian philo-

27. Jaimini cannot be placed earlier than the 4th century B. C.
28. Sabara is believed to have belonged to the period between 200 A. D. and 500 A. D. There is also the view that he lived about the 1st century B. C.
29. There is, however, a tradition according to which Prabhākara and Maṇḍana were the pupils of Kumārila.
30. Laugākṣi Bhāskara also wrote a good prakaraṇa work on Nyāya called Tarkakṣamādi, but it is not as popular as the Arthasaṭṭhīgra.
sophy, as a whole, is often identified with the Vedānta. Traditionally the edifice of the Vedānta is believed to have been raised on the three pillars, namely, the Upaniṣads, the Brahmāsūtras, and the Bhagavadgītā. It is sometimes suggested that the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā and the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā originally formed one single system. The frankly anti-ritualistic attitude of the Vedānta would, however, point to the patent untenability of such a view. The relationship of the two systems implied by the terms, pūrva (prior) and uttara (posterior), seems to have been the result of some later attempt to bring about an adjustment between ritualism and spiritualism. The Brahmasūtras or the Vedānta-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa aim at evolving a harmonious and unified system of philosophy out of the apparently inconsistent and self-contradictory teachings of the Upaniṣads.

It is, indeed, remarkable that, from the same three basic texts of the Vedānta, different commentators have derived different metaphysical doctrines, thereby giving rise to different schools of the Vedānta. Certainly the most prominent among these schools is that of absolute monism propounded by Śāmkara (788–820 A.D.). Śāmkara resolves the apparent conflict in the teachings of the Upaniṣads by assuming two points of view, the absolute and the relative. From the absolute point of view, the only reality is the one impersonal Brahman, the manifold phenomenal world being just a figment produced under the influence of avidyā (nescience). The philosophical ideology of Śāmkara, which is best represented in his bhāṣya on the Brahmasūtras, called the Śārīrakabhāṣya, seems to have been influenced, on the one hand, by Buddhist nihilism through the Gauḍapāda-Kārikā (7th century),31 which is perhaps the earliest Vedāntic work to emphasize the illusory character of the world and whose author is said to have been the teacher of Śāmkara’s teacher, and, on the other, by the Upaniṣadic monism. The literature dealing with Śāmkara’s

31. According to Jacobi (JAOS, April 1913), Gauḍapāda must have lived about 550 A.D. Presumably, this Gauḍapāda who wrote the Kārikā on the Kārikā is different from the Gauḍapāda who wrote a commentary on the Sāṁkhya-Kārikā,
Vedānta is literally endless. Quite a large number of works are ascribed to Śaṅkara himself. Mention may, however, be here made of the works of two of Śaṅkara’s immediate followers, Padmapāda and Sureśvara, and of the Pañcadaśī of Mādhava (14th century) and the Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda (cir. 1500 A.D.).

Another important commentator on the Brahmasūtras or the Vedāntasūtras was Rāmānuja (11th century), who, in his Śrībhāṣya, has sponsored the doctrine of qualified monism. According to him, the relation between the highest reality on the one hand and the individual souls and matter on the other is similar to that between fire and sparks. Rāmānuja further emphasises that the highest reality is not something abstract and impersonal. It is a personal being, the Supreme God. Rāmānuja’s philosophy may, accordingly, be characterised as theistic. His monism implies not that the world as such is unreal and impermanent but that it has no existence separate from and independent of God. Two commentators on the Brahmasūtras, Bhāskara (circa 900 A.D.) and Nimbārka (11th century A.D.), are responsible for what may be called dualistic non-dualism, which recognises monism so far as the independent reality is concerned and multiplicity so far as the dependent realities, like individual souls and matter, are concerned. A reference may be made also to two other commentaries on the Brahmasūtras, namely, that of Madhva (13th century A.D.) who derived a dualistic philosophy from that work, and of Vallabha (1376-1430), who accepted both monism and reality of the world. A popular epic-Vedāntic work is the Yogavāsiṣṭha (12th century A.D.), which attempts a synthesis of the various Vedāntic schools.

32. Padmapāda’s Pañcapadikā is a gloss on the Catuḥṣūtra, and is, in its turn, commented upon by Prakūśātman (cir. 1200 A.D.) in his Pañcāpadikāsūvaraga.

33. Among Sureśvara’s works may be specially mentioned the Naiṣkarmya-riddhi. Vācaspati’s Bhāmasū also may be mentioned in this context.
Sāṃkhya: Yoga

Kapila is traditionally believed to have been the original propounder of the Sāṃkhya system, which teaches a metaphysical dualism. However, no work, which can be definitely assigned to him, has become available so far. Therefore, so far as the literature pertaining to the Sāṃkhya is concerned, we have to begin with the Sāṃkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa (3rd century A. D.), which may be regarded as one of the basic texts of the system.34 This is a small work consisting of seventy Kārikās (stanzas), but, on account of its excellent and almost complete treatment of the Sāṃkhya metaphysics within such limited compass, it is often described as the 'pearl of the whole scholastic literature of India.' Another significant work on the Sāṃkhya philosophy is the Sāṃkhya-pravacana-sūtra, which is traditionally ascribed to Kapila but which is obviously a late production belonging to a period not earlier than the 14th century A. D. In the first three of its six chapters, the Sāṃkhya-pravacana-sūtra expounds the main doctrines of the Sāṃkhya, while the remaining three chapters are devoted respectively to illustrations, refutation of rival views, and recapitulation. Perhaps as important as this work is Vijñānabhikṣu's commentary on it, called Sāṃkhya-pravacana-bhāṣya (16th century A. D.). This commentary is, however, a tendentious work and seems to aim at bringing about a kind of rapprochement between the Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta rather than at strictly adhering to the Pravacanasūtra. The fundamental text of the Yoga system is the Yogasūtra, which is attributed to Patañjali.35 This work is divided into four parts, which deal respectively with the nature of samādhi (perfect absorption into the Supreme Spirit), the means of attaining samādhi, the Yogic practices and their fruits, and the nature of mokṣa. The Yogasūtra is commented upon by Vyāsa (4th century A. D.), and this Yogabhāṣya by Vyāsa is further expounded by Vācaspati (9th century A. D.).

34. Also see footnote 63 on p. 95 above.
35. Patañjali's Yogasūtra is assigned variously to 300 B. C., the 2nd century B. C., and the 4th century A. D.
POST-VEDIC LITERATURE

Vaiśeṣika : Nyāya

Though, from the point of view of basic metaphysical ideology, the Vaiśeṣika system is older than many other systems, its Śūtra, attributed to Kaṇḍaṭa, cannot be dated earlier than the 4th century B.C. The Vaiśeṣikasūtra, which is divided into ten books, deals with such topics as categories (padārtha), evolution of the world out of atoms (which alone represent the ultimate reality), and logic. The Padārthadharmanasamgraha of Praśastapāda (4th century A.D.) cannot be, strictly speaking, regarded as a commentary on the Vaiśeṣikasūtra. It is rather an independent treatise mostly based on the Śūtra but not infrequently adding to or modifying the original doctrine. Four commentaries are known to have been written on Praśastapāda's work (10th-12th centuries A.D.), but Śivāditya's handy manual based on it, called Saptapadārthī (10th century A.D.), is perhaps more widely known. The Nyāya system is remarkable for the almost unbroken continuity of its literary tradition. The original Śūtra of Gautama (3rd century B.C.) was commented upon by Vātsyāyana (400 A.D.) in his Nyāyabhāṣya, which, in its turn, was expounded and defended against the attacks of critics like Diṇṇāga by Udyotakara (6th century A.D.) in his Nyāyavārttika. The next link in this chain of expository works is Vācaspati's Nyāyavārttika-tātparya-ṭīkā (9th century A.D.), which is based on Udyotakara's Nyāyavārttika and is commented upon by Vardhamāna (1225 A.D.) in his Nyāya-nibandha-prakāśa. Several independent treatises on ancient Indian logic are available, the more popular among them being Keśavamisra's Tarkabhāṣā (end of the 13th century A.D.) and Annambhaṭṭa's Tarkasamgraha (17th century A.D.).

Heterodox Systems

It may be generally assumed that Sanskrit literature on Buddhism began to be produced with the rise of Mahāyānism. One of the most basic texts of the Mādhyamika school of Mahāyāna is the Mūla-Mādhyamaka-Kārikā of Nāgārjuna, who is believed to have lived about the end of the second century A.D,
The *Mūla-Madhyamaka-Kārikā* is a systematic philosophical treatise in the form of Kārikās, on which the author himself has written a commentary. This commentary, called *Akhutobhayā*, is unfortunately not available in Sanskrit, but is known only through its Tibetan translation.36 What Nāgarjuna was to the Mādhya-mika school, Asaṅga (4th century A.D.), the author of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, was to the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna. But Asaṅga’s younger brother, Vasubandhu, was perhaps the most prolific Buddhist writer. Until recently, the Sanskrit original of Vasubandhu’s principal work, the *Abhidharma-kośa*, was not available. However, in 1946, its Kārikā portion was published, and the *bhāṣya* portion also has now been taken up for publication.37 Vasubandhu’s pupil, Diṅnāga (400 A.D.), who was a reputed logician, is known to have written a work on Buddhistic logic, called *Pramāṇasaṃuccaya*, but the text of that work is unfortunately not available.38 Mention must also be made of the renowned epistemologist, Dharmakīrti (7th century A.D.), whose works, the *Pramāṇa-vārttika* and the *Ālambana-parīkṣā*, are rated high in Buddhist philosophical literature.

Like the Buddhists, the Jainas also had realised the necessity and desirability of writing in Sanskrit. We, accordingly, have from Jaina authors Sanskrit commentaries on the original Prakrit canon38a as well as independent religious and philosophical treatises in Sanskrit. The most prominent work belonging to the latter type is the *Tattvārthādhigama-sūtra* of Umāsvāti (2nd century A.D.). This work contains a systematic exposition of Jaina philosophy and religion.38b Side by side with their

36. See foot-note 58 on p. 93 above. Two German translations of the *Akhutobhayā* by M. Walliser – one of the Tibetan version and the other of the Chinese version – are available.
37. See foot-note 62 on p. 94 above.
38. See foot-note 68 on p. 96 above.
38a. Among such Sanskrit commentators may be mentioned Jinabhadra (7th cent. A.D.), Haribhadrasūri (8th cent. A.D.), Śāṅkara (9th cent. A.D.), Sāntisūri (11th cent. A.D.), and Abhayadevasūri (12th cent. A.D.).
38b. This work has a *bhāṣya* by Umāsvāti himself and a *ṭikā* by Siddhasenagaṇi. One may mention in this context also the *Jñvaśīla* of Sāntisūri, the (Continued on the next page)
pluralistic-realistic metaphysics, the Jainas had developed a remarkable system of logic. The most popular expounder of that system was Siddhasena Divākara (5th century A.D.), whose Nyāyāvatāra, though a small work consisting of only thirty-two stanzas, is lucid and fairly comprehensive.39

No regular texts pertaining to materialism or the Lokāyata system have come down to us. Tradition, however, attributes the origin of this system to Bṛhaspati, and attempts have been made to reconstruct some of its texts on the basis of the sayings of teachers like Cārvāka, which are quoted in other works. The main doctrines of Lokāyata, such as that direct perception is the only means of knowledge, that there is nothing like soul as distinct from body, that there is no rebirth after death, etc., can be gleaned from the references occurring in the works belonging to other philosophical systems.

Grammar

A reference may be made, at this stage, to Sanskrit literature pertaining to the science of language and the art of literature. If there is any one branch of knowledge to which ancient Indian thinkers have made the most outstanding contribution, it is grammar. The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini (6th century B.C.), which is the most fundamental work on the subject, may, indeed, be regarded as one of the few marvellous productions in the field of scientific literature of the world. In about 4000 short sūtras, this

(Continued from the last page)

Pramanarāodddhāra of Nemicandraśāri, and the Tatvārthdsara of Amṛtacandraśāri. The writings on Yoga by Yaśovijaya and Haribhadraśāri also deserve mention.

39. Among other Sanskrit works on the Jaina Nyāya may be mentioned the Āptamādhya and the Yuktinamāsan of Samantabhadra (5th–6th cent. A.D.), the Devadattanavakaka of Mallavādīn (6th cent. A.D.), the Nyāyasvinīsteya and the Siddhavinīsteya of Akalanakka (6th cent. A.D.), the Ayogavāsanadhikā and the Ayogavāsanadhika of Hemacandra, and the Sphodanamāṇijari of Mallīśeṇa (13th cent. A.D.). For details regarding the Jaina philosophical literature, see: Dandekar, "Jaina Sāhītya" (Marathi), Śādhanā, Nov., 1974, pp. 15–22,
work, which, incidentally, must be assumed to mark the culmina-
tion of a long tradition of grammatical speculation, comprehends
all aspects of such a complex and fully developed language as
Sanskrit. Pāṇini’s insistence on brevity and non-equivocation has
made him employ in his work various remarkable devises, like
anubandha or indicatory syllable or letter denoting some peculiari-
ity in inflection, accent, etc., special and distinctive technical
terms, and algebraic formulas replacing actual words. His
morphological, phonological, and syntactical rules have given to
Sanskrit so fixed and thoroughly unalterable a form that he has
to be looked upon as the most influential regulator of that
language, if not its actual creator. The Vārttika of Kātyāyana
(4th-3rd century B. C.) and the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali (2nd
century B. C.), which undertake to expound, amend, and supple-
ment the Śūtras of Pāṇini, came to share, in course of time, the
authority of Pāṇini’s work itself. Though these three works may
be said to have exhausted almost everything that needed to be
said about Sanskrit grammar, the tradition of grammatical litera-
ture did not by any means come to an end with them. Some
excellent treatises have been produced also by later writers. There
were, for instance, the Cāndra-Vyākaraṇa of the Buddhist
Candragomin (6th century A. D.), 40 which took into account the
linguistic changes which had occurred after Patañjali’s time, the
Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari (cir. 600 A. D.), which dealt mostly
with the philosophy of grammar, and the Kāśikā of Vāmana and
Jayāditya (7th century A. D.), which is perhaps the earliest
available commentary on the entire text of the Aṣṭādhyāyī. 40a
However, the most popular work on Pāṇinian grammar, which is
largely used even today, is the Siddhānta-Kaumudi of Bhaṭṭoji
Dikṣita (17th century A. D.).

Side by side with Sanskrit grammar, some significant work
has been done also in connection with the grammar of the Prakrit
languages. There is, for instance, the Prākrta-Prakāśa of Vara-

40. See supra p. 139.
40a. A reference may be made in this context also to the Jainaendra-
Vyākāraṇa (5th–6th cent. A. D.).
ruci (circa 3rd century A.D.), which deals with Pāścāī, Māgadhī, and Śauraseni, but more particularly with Māhārāṣṭrī. Hemacandra (11th–12th centuries A.D.) also treats of Prakrits in the eighth book of his voluminous grammar. Unlike the Prakrit grammarians, who write in Sanskrit and regard the Prakrit languages as having been derived from Sanskrit, the grammarians of Pali write in Pali and do not recognise Sanskrit as the source of that language. However, the most famous of these grammarians, Kāccāyana (11th century A.D.), is greatly influenced by Pāṇini.

Another branch of linguistic study, in which considerable work has been done, is lexicography, the most popular text in this field being the Amarakośa (6th century A.D.). It is an excellent dictionary of synonyms arranged according to different subjects. A mention may be made in this connection also of the Anekārthanānāmaḷā of Dhanaṃjaya (8th–9th centuries A.D.), the Abhidhānaratanāmaḷā of Halāyudha (10th century A.D.), and the Abhidhānaçintāmaṇī of Hemacandra (11th–12th centuries).

Dramaturgy

We now turn to what may be generally described as literature on rhetoric and literary criticism. It was but natural that when poetry, written in various forms, was so extensively produced in Sanskrit, there should have been developed also a well-thought-out theory of poetry. One of the earliest and the most comprehensive attempts in this direction is represented in the Nāṭya-śāstra of Bharata. The Nāṭya-śāstra is, as the name clearly indicates, a treatise on dramatic composition and representation, and deals, in its 36 chapters, with such diverse subjects as origin of drama, different kinds of stage, preliminaries of a dramatic performance, eight sentiments (rasas) portrayed in drama, fourfold dramatic action (abhinaya), stage-accessories, dramatic speeches and delivery, types of drama, plot-construction, dramatic styles, make-up, and music. Though no direct and conclusive

40b. Also see pp. 140–141 above.
evidence is available for determining the date of Bharata, it would not be very wrong to place him, on the strength of a lot of indirect evidence, somewhere in the first centuries before or after Christ. His work evidently presupposes quite an advanced state of dramatic art. From the purely literary point of view, however, perhaps the most important contribution of Bharata is his theory of rasa. The essence of drama is the portrayal of rasa or sentiment. Bharata has, therefore, thoroughly discussed the basic concept of rasa, dilating, at some length, upon the nature, source, and manifestation of rasa. It may be incidentally pointed out that, though Bharata speaks of only eight rasas, namely, love, laughter, heroism, pathos, terror, fear, wonder, and loathsomeness, some more rasas, like tranquillity, came to be added to the list in course of time. One of the most important commentaries on the Nāṭyaśāstra is Abhinavagupta’s Abhinavabhāratī (end of the 10th century A. D.), which marks a distinct advance in the interpretation of the theory of rasa. The dramatic theory of the Nāṭyaśāstra is presented in a compact and popular form by Dhanamājaya in his Daśarūpakā (10th century A. D.). As the name of the book suggests, it deals mainly with the distinctive features of the ten types of drama, which are already mentioned by Bharata. It also elaborates the Sandhi-theory regarding the construction of the dramatic plot.

Poetics

Incidental references to different topics of dramaturgy are found also in most of the important texts on poetics. But the main purpose of these texts seems to have been to answer the fundamental question: What is the 'soul' of poetry? Bhāmaha (early 6th century A. D.), who is one of the earliest writers on the subject, says in his Kāvyālaṅkāra that it is some striking turn of expression which really produces beauty of sound and sense. The Kāvyādārśa of Daṇḍin (late 6th century A. D.) also attaches great importance to alaṅkāras or figures of speech. This line of

41. A mention deserves to be made in this context also of the Nāṭakā-lakṣaṇaparāmakāśa of Sāgaranandin (13th cent. A. D.).
thought is further developed in Vāmana’s Kāvyālaiṅkāra-Sūtra (8th century A. D.), where style (rāti) is said to be the soul of poetry.\textsuperscript{41a} In his masterly work, Dhvanyāloka, Ānandavardhana (9th century A. D.) propounds the theory that dhvani or suggestion is the most essential element in poetry.\textsuperscript{41b} Ānandavardhana’s lead is followed by Mammaṭa (1100 A. D.) in his Kāvyaprakāśa and by Viśvanātha (14th century A. D.), who, however, seems to combine in his Sāhitya-Darpana, the theories of rasa, dhvani, and alamkāra. In his Aucityavicāracarcā, Kṣemendra (11th century A. D.) maintains that poetry would lose all its charm unless poets showed a keen sense of propriety. Perhaps the last among these theorists, but by no means the least, is the erudite Jagannātha Paṇḍita (17th century A. D.), who, in his Rasa-Gaṅgādhara, has expounded and elaborated the rasa-theory of Bharata. There are, of course, quite a number of other authors who have written on the subject but they cannot be said to have had anything original to add to the already-existing thought.\textsuperscript{42} Mention may, however, be made of Rājaśekhara’s Kāvyamāṁśa (900 A. D.) and Kṣemendra’s Kaviṅkṛīṭhābharanā (11th century A. D.), which deal with the training of poets rather than with poetic theory. A reference is due in this section, which relates to poetical and dramatic technique, also to works on music like the Saṅgīta-Ratnākara of Śrāvadaṅga (13th century A. D.) and on metrical like the Suvṛttatilaka of Kṣemendra (11th century A. D.) and the Chanda-nūsāsana of Hemacandra (11th–12th centuries A. D.).

III. Natural and Technical Sciences

Medicine

The greatest significance from the culture-historical point of view of Sanskrit literature relating to natural and technical

\textsuperscript{41a} Also see infra “Professor Meyer on Daṇḍin”.

\textsuperscript{41b} Actually three different persons are involved in this work: the Dhvanikāra as the author of the Dhvanikārikas; Ānandavardhana as the author of the Dhvanyāloka which is a commentary on the Dhvanikārikas; and Abhinavagupta as the author of the Lokaṇa which is a commentary on the Dhvanyālōka.

\textsuperscript{42} The Śṛṅgāraprakāśa of Bhoja is an encyclopaedic work on rhetoric and dramaturgy (11th cent. A. D.).
sciences perhaps lies in the fact that it effectively neutralises the popular misconception that ancient Indian thought was either entirely dominated by pessimism and otherworldliness or that it often tended to indulge in mere abstraction and schematic theorisation. That literature would clearly show that ancient Indians could think both analytically as well as synthetically. Let us begin with medicine. The early Indian medicine as represented in the medical charms of the *Athravaveda*, which, incidentally, constitute the most complete record of primitive medicine preserved in any language, is no doubt largely magical in character. But there too, one hardly fails to be struck by the keen observation on the part of the ancient Indians of the symptoms of various diseases like *takman* (= malarial fever), by their bold hypothesis that most diseases were due to the presence of worms, and by their empirical knowledge of the medicinal properties of certain herbs. Unfortunately, after the *Athravaveda*, the tradition of medical literature seems to have been interrupted until, about the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., Caraka produced a comprehensive work on medicine. This work, known as the *Caraka-Saṁhitā*, which, in its present form, obviously represents a revision of the original text made in the 8th century A.D., deals with such topics as duties of a physician, eight principal diseases, remedies against them, pathology, anatomy, diagnosis, general and special therapy, and diet. The *Saṁhitā* of Suśruta, which deals mostly with the same topics and which cannot be certainly dated later than the 3rd or the 4th century A.D., is another basic text on ancient Indian medicine. It is interesting to note that while Caraka's work was translated first into Persian and then (circa 800 A.D.) from Persian into Arabic, the *Suśruta-Saṁhitā* had become popular in the South-East Asian countries.

In 1890, Lt. H. BOWER brought to light an important birchbark manuscript, which he had discovered at Kashgar, and thereby helped to forge a link between the early and the later periods of Indian medical literature. The Bower manuscript, which may be safely assigned to the second half of the 4th century A.D., contains some metrical tracts on medicine. The first tract begins
by mentioning the many medicinal properties of garlic and then proceeds to give various recipes, particularly for eye-diseases. The remaining tracts constitute a veritable pharmacopoeia of ancient Indian medicine. The Bower manuscript is important also on account of the fact that it cites several earlier writers on medicine.

With Caraka and Suśrūta, Vāgbhaṭa forms the traditional trinity of ancient Indian medical writers. It is suggested that there were two Vāgbhaṭas—one, the author of the Aṣṭāṅga-saṁgraha (7th century A. D.) and the other, perhaps the grandson of the first, who wrote the Aṣṭāṅghadṛdayasaṁhitā (8th century A. D.). The latter work, which is certainly better known, deals with various aspects of medical science with special emphasis on surgery.42a The Mādhava-Nidāna (8th century A. D.) is mainly a treatise on pathology, while Cakradatta's Cikitsāsāra-saṁgraha (1060 A. D.) gives an exhaustive description of various diseases and their treatment. This tradition of medical literature in Sanskrit, may, indeed be said to have continued almost uninterruptedly up to very recent times.

Chemistry

Though the science of chemistry was developed mainly in conjunction with medicine, in its original form it had essentially been of the nature of alchemy. Patañjali, whom tradition identifies with the grammarian Patañjali of the 2nd century B. C., is known to have been an eminent alchemist and an authority on Loha-śāstra. Similarly, Nāgārjuna (7th century A. D.), has been referred to by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang (629–645 A. D.), as a great master of alchemy.43 It was Nāgārjuna who

42a. Also see pp. 148–150 above.
43. See foot-note 59 on p. 93 above. However, Hiuen Tsang's account seems to suggest that Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyaśa school of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, was himself an adept in the science of alchemy and the arts of the magician and exorcist, a herbalist, a physician, and an eye-doctor, whose fame had reached China. I now think that this is quite likely. This Nāgārjuna may, with some probability, be assigned to the 3rd century A. D. (Cf. T. Watters, On Tsan Chwang's Travels in India, Vol. II, pp. 200–206).
had first used black sulphide of mercury for medical preparations. He is also credited with the discovery of the processes of distillation and calcination. Unfortunately, however, no independent text on chemistry, belonging to the early period, has become available so far. Some Tāntric works, like the Rasaratnākara, the Rasārṇava, and the Rasahṛdaya (1100–1300 A.D.), can, on the other hand, be regarded as important compendia on the subject. In most of these works mercury is highly glorified.

Astronomy and Mathematics

Several positive sciences had been developed in connection with the Vedic ritual. Astronomy was one of them. Naturally enough, therefore, works on the subject, called Vedāṅga-Jyotiṣa, were produced as ancillary Vedic texts (600–400 B.C.). However, astronomy as a more or less fully developed science must be said to have been first represented in the work of Āryabhaṭa I (499 A.D.), called Āryabhaṭīya. Āryabhaṭa is perfectly original in his treatment of the subject. The ardharātrika system of astronomy may be regarded as his special contribution. As against Āryabhaṭa, Varāhamihira (505 A.D.) is mainly a collator. In his Pañcasiddhāntikā, he has summarised the teachings of the four earlier systems, namely, Pauliṣa, Romaka, Vāsiṣṭha, and Paitāmaha, and has brought the fifth, namely, the Sūrya-Siddhānta, up-to-date with the help of the Āryabhaṭīya. Some years later, Brahmagupta (628 A.D.) wrote his Brahma-sphuṭa-siddhānta and the Khaṇḍakhādyaka. In the latter work, Brahmagupta has taught easier methods of computation of the longitude of planets.

As for mathematics, some notions of that science—particularly of arithmetic and geometry—are incorporated in the Śulba-sūtras, which are regarded as supplements to the Kalpa-sūtras (600–200 B.C.). Coming to the premedieval period, one has, first of all, to refer to a birch-bark manuscript, discovered in 1880 near Bakshali in Peshawar district. It can be shown that this manuscript, which belongs to about 8th century A.D., is really a copy of a much earlier work, which
has to be assigned at least to the 2nd century A.D. It may, therefore, be presumed to have taken note of the developments in the mathematical science from the Vedic age up to the early centuries of the Christian era. The Bakshali manuscript contains information on a variety of topics, such as, computation of gold, quadratic equations, square-root approximations, etc. The astronomical works by Āryabhaṭa and Brahmagupta, which have been mentioned above, naturally include much material of mathematical interest. A special mention must be made also of the Gaṇita-sāra-saṅgraha of Mahāvīra (9th century A.D.) and the Lilāvati of Bhāskara (12th century A.D.). This latter work gives various solutions of a right-angled triangle, the area of the surface of a sphere, the volume of a sphere, sines and cosines of compound angles, and the theory of surds.

Technical Sciences

Several technical sciences seem to have been developed in ancient and medieval India presumably as ancillaries to Arthasastras. There is, for instance, architecture, an encyclopaedic work on which subject, called Mānasāra, was produced round about 500 A.D. There are also available texts like the Hastyāyurveda and the Matangalā, which deal with elephants, and the Aśvavaidyaka and the Aśvāyurveda, which deal with horses. It is indeed, not possible, within the limits of this brief survey, even to enumerate many such minor technical subjects which Sanskrit writers have tackled, much less to make any observations on the literature produced by them on those subjects. Suffice it to say that, for Sanskrit authors, no subject was too trivial or too fantastic to write about.

Pali Literature

Pali

Linguistically Pali represents a composite of several Prakrit dialects. It would seem that the Buddha, who wanted to propagate his teachings even among the common people, preached originally in the dialect of his own region (Kosala) and then in
Māgadhā. But he had expressly permitted his followers 'to learn the word of the Buddha each in his own dialect.' The original sermons and sayings of the Buddha had, accordingly, been made current by his immediate disciples through the dialects of their respective regions. When, however, the Buddhist canon was being compiled and finalised, the monks, instead of adopting any one of these dialects, seem to have used a literary language which had been evolved out of those dialects. That literary language was Pali. Pali may, indeed, be said to have been used almost exclusively by the Buddhists and to have, accordingly, come to be recognised as the official language of early Buddhism, which was represented by the sect of the Theravādins. Even at a very early date, this sect had spread out in India's cultural outposts, like Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, where, consequently, considerable literature in Pali was produced in course of time.

The Tipiṭaka

The Buddhist canon constitutes the major part of Pali literature. This canon, which is popularly known as the Tipiṭaka ("Three Baskets"), is believed to have been given its final form and shape in three stages: firstly, at the assembly of Buddhist monks convened at Rājagṛha (modern Rajgir), just a few weeks after the death of the Buddha in 544 B. C.; secondly, at a Buddhist Council organised at Vesāli about a hundred years after Buddha's nirvāṇa; and, lastly, at the third Council, which was held during the reign of the great Aśoka and which was presided over by Tissa Moggaliputta. Though the earliest reference to the Tipiṭaka is to be found in the Milindapañha (1st century A. D.), there is definite epigraphic evidence to show that it must have existed, in some form, even in the 3rd century B. C. It is interesting to note that many edicts of Aśoka are similar to the Pali canon both verbally and in point of contents. The three Piṭakas are of the nature of the collections of sermons, sayings, legends, rules of the order of monks, philosophical dis-

44. Cf. angāsana, bhikkhave, sakāya niruttiyā buddhavaconam pariṣṭhitum (Vinaya Cullavagga V. 33.).
courses, historical narratives, etc., all of which had presumably been transmitted through oral tradition. Naturally, therefore, we find in the Piṭakas materials which belong to various chronological strata and which are characterised by considerable repetition and internal contradiction.

Out of the three Piṭakas, the Vinaya-Piṭaka is generally regarded as the earliest collection. It comprises mainly of the rules of discipline of the Buddhist order (saṅgha). By far the most important text included in the Vinaya-Piṭaka is the Pātimokkha, which deals with the possible violations of the rules of discipline and their atonement. In some portions of the Mahāvagga, which is another work included in the Vinaya-Piṭaka, stories are narrated which show how the Buddha used to be solicitous about the general well-being of the monks, who had joined the saṅgha, and who, therefore, 'had no mothers and no fathers to take care of them.'

The second canonical collection, called the Sutta-Piṭaka, relates more directly to the religious doctrine of the Buddha and his early disciples, and is believed to contain many discourses and speeches of the Master himself. The Sutta-Piṭaka is made up of five nikāyas (or sub-collections). Special mention deserves to be made of some of the striking sections in these nikāyas, such as, for instance, the Mahā-Parinibbāna-Sutta (which records the last sayings and sermons of the Buddha) and the Sakka-Pañha-Sutta (which symbolically represents the superiority of the religion of the Buddha over the Vedic religion) from the Dighanikāya and the Assalāyana-Sutta (which seeks to establish the utter irrationality of the Brahmanic caste-system) from the Majjhimanikāya. The Khuddakanikāya is, however, far richer in contents than the other four nikāyas. Its most important text is the Dhammapada, which is with reference to Buddhism what the Bhagavadgītā is with reference to Hinduism. The Dhammapada embodies, in its 423 verses, the ethical teachings of the Buddha and generally constitutes one of the best examples of religious poetry. Some

45. Mahāvagga VIII. 26.
other significant works included in the Khuddakanikāya are the Theragāthā and the Therigāthā ("Songs of the Male and Female Elders in the Buddhist Order"), the Cariyāpiṭaka (dealing with the 'perfection' of the Bodhisattva in his different existences), and the famous Jātakas ("Stories of the Former Births of the Buddha"). These last-named contain a large number of fables, fairy tales, anecdotes, romantic stories, didactic narratives, legends, etc., which, originally, did not have anything specifically Buddhistic about them but were actually derived from the common stock of India's floating narrative literature. A definite Buddhistic bias, however, came to be given to those tales and legends by turning one of the characters in them into a Bodhisattva. To a culture-historian, the importance of the Jātakas is three-fold: first, they throw quite an amount of light on the traffic of narrative 'motifs' between various lands and cultures; secondly, they have considerably enriched India's art; and, thirdly, they constitute valuable sources for the history of Indian civilisation from the 3rd century B.C. to the 5th century A.D.

The third Piṭaka, called the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka, claims to deal, as its name indicates, with the 'higher subtleties of religion.' Actually, however, this Piṭaka, indulging in definitions and schematic classifications, presents, in a more scholastic garb, the same topics as are treated in the Sutta-Piṭaka. Two texts included in the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka have become particularly famous. They are the Dhammasaṅgīti and the Kathāvatthu. The subject-matter of the first is the classification and definition of dhammas or physical conditions and phenomena, while that of the second — which, incidentally, is the only work in the canon to be ascribed to any definite author (it is ascribed to Tissa Moggali-putta, who had presided over the third Buddhist council) — is the refutation of heretical doctrines.

While on the subject of the Pali canon, it may be pointed out that the followers of the Sarvāstivāda of Hīnayāna Buddhism, who had spread towards the North-West — in Kashmir and Afghanistan — and thence had proceeded to Central Asia, Tibet, and China, had their canonical texts in Sanskrit. They are, however,
available only in fragments, but have otherwise become known either through Chinese and Tibetan translations and transcriptions or through quotations in Buddhist Sanskrit works like the Mahāvastu and the Lalitavistara.

The Milindapañha

Coming to the non-canonical literature, it must be, first of all, pointed out that, though this literature is traditionally regarded as non-canonical, it can by no means be characterised as secular. Indeed, in the whole range of Pali literature, we hardly come across any texts which are not related to Buddhism either directly or indirectly. The best-known non-canonical work is the Milindapañha. This remarkable compendium of Buddhist ethics and metaphysics is presented in the form of a dialogue between Milinda (who is to be identified with Menandros, the Graeco-Indian king who ruled at Sagal in the 1st century B.C.) and the eminent Buddhist teacher Nāgasena. So far as its teachings are concerned, the Milindapañha is traditionally invested with the same authority as the canonical texts; but it is certainly superior to the latter in point of literary merits. The Nettippakarana ascribed to Mahākaccāna, a direct disciple of the Buddha, was perhaps the first attempt to present the teachings of the Master in a connected form. To Mahākaccāna is also ascribed the Pètakopadesa, which comprises instructions regarding the textual and exegetical study of the Piṭakas.

Buddhaghosa and His Contemporaries

A major part of the non-canonical literature has been produced by Buddhist monks in Ceylon, and perhaps the most prominent name in the galaxy of Ceylonese authors is that of Buddhaghosa (5th century A.D.). Buddhaghosa has written learned commentaries on several texts included in the Piṭakas, such as the Samantapāśādikā on the Vinaya-Piṭaka, the Sunanaga-lavilāsini on the Dīghanikāya, the Papañcasūdani on the Majjhima-
nikāya, and the Aṭṭhasālinī on the Dhammasaṅgani. Apart from these exegetical works he has to his credit an independent manual on the Buddhist doctrine, called Visuddhimagga. This work, which testifies to the great erudition of the author, may be said to embody the quintessence of all Buddhistic knowledge of the preceding centuries. Mention must also be made of Dhammapāla who lived a little after Buddhaghosa. He has written a commentary, called Paramattha-Dīpanī, on those texts in the Khuddakamakāya which Buddhaghosa had not tackled, such as, for instance, the Vimanavatthu, the Petavatthu, and the Theragāthā. About the same time, Buddhacatta, who is said to have been a junior contemporary of Buddhaghosa, wrote the Vinaya-Vinicchaya, which is more or less of the nature of a summary of the Vinayapiṭaka. If Ceylon was the centre of the study of the Vinaya and the Sutta, Burma may be said to have been a centre of Abhidhamma studies. The authoritativeness of the Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha, a work on Buddhist ‘psychological ethics’ written by Bhikkhu Anuruddha (12th century A.D.), is recognised in Buddhistic countries even today.

The Dīpavarīsa: the Mahāvaṃsa

Side by side with the exegetical literature mentioned above, there were produced in Ceylon two rather remarkable historical works. The Dīpavarīsa (4th–5th centuries A.D.) presents, mostly-on the basis of legendary tradition and in a pseudo-epic style, the history (vaṃsa) of the island (dīpa), that is, Ceylon. Even from the literary point of view this work is not quite satisfactory. On the other hand, the Mahāvaṃsa, which is ascribed to Mahānāma (last quarter of the 5th century A.D.), is far better conceived and executed. Indeed, as a literary piece, it can stand comparison with some of the well-known court-epics in Sanskrit. However, even in the Mahāvaṃsa fables and myths are freely mixed with authentic political and religious history. The Dīpavarīsa and the Mahāvaṃsa set the pattern for a number of other Vaṃsa works (chronicles) produced in Ceylon and other Buddhist countries— one of them, the Sūsanavaṃsa, having been written by a Burmese monk as late as 1861.
Pali literature cannot boast of a regular Mahākāvyya; but there are, in Pali, some fine examples of religious poetry, such as the Jinālāmākāra of Buddhakakkha (12th century A. D.), the Telākaṭāha-Gāthā (cir. 12th century A. D.), and the Paṭjamadhu of Buddhappiya (13th century A. D.). In this very context may be mentioned the grammatical works of Kāccāyana and Moggallāna, the Abhidhānapadipikā, a lexicographical work by Moggallāna, the Vuttodaya, a work on prosody, and the Subodhālamākāra, a work on rhetoric. The two last-mentioned works are, however, but poor imitations of similar Sanskrit texts.

**Prakrit Literature**

**The Prakrits**

It is generally believed that the Prakrit languages are derived from Sanskrit. It would, however, be perhaps more correct to assume that the Prakrits had existed even when Sanskrit was being developed by the higher intellectual classes as a literary language to be used mainly for religious and learned purposes. As against Sanskrit, which means a ‘refined’ or ‘polished’ language, the Prakrits were, as the name itself indicates, ‘natural’ or ‘common’ dialects used by the masses among different tribes and in different regions. It is, indeed, not improbable that the language actually spoken in workaday life by the classes who used Sanskrit for literary purposes was more akin to the Prakrits than to Sanskrit. Besides, it is certain that Sanskrit and the Prakrits had been influencing each other in the course of their respective developments. That some popular dialects existed side by side even with the Vedic language is clearly indicated by certain linguistic peculiarities found in the latter. However, in view of the fact that no literature written in those dialects has become available to us, not much can be posited about their actual character. Historically speaking, a kind of recognition seems to have been given to the Prakrits first in the 6th century B.C. It has been already pointed out that the Buddha had said that his word might be learnt by the monks ‘each in his
own dialect. Another religious leader, Mahāvira (599–527 B. C.), also preached his doctrines in the dialect of his own region in Eastern India. It is also significant that the earliest written records in any Indian language, which have become available, are the Prakrit inscriptions of Aśoka (3rd century B. C.) and of Khāravela (2nd century B. C.). Grammarians speak of many Prakrits, such as, Māgadhī, Śauraseni, Māhārāṣṭrī, Paisācī, Ardhamāgadhī, and Apabhraṃśa. It would seem that, like Pali, Ardhamāgadhī also had been specially developed as a literary language and was used more or less exclusively for the religious literature of the Jainas. Other Prakrits, on the other hand, must have been actually spoken in different regions (as the names, Māgadhī, Māhārāṣṭrī, and Śauraseni, would imply) and, in course of time, began to be employed for literary purposes also.

The Jaina Āgama

Though, unlike Pali, Prakrit may boast of copious literature of a secular character, its most significant contribution is certainly the literature relating to the religion and the philosophy of the Jainas. Indeed, Prakrit, particularly Ardhamāgadhī, was as much the official language of early Jainism as Pali was of early Buddhism. The basic religio-philosophical ideology of Jainism certainly belongs to great antiquity and is presumably older than the Vedic Aryan ideology. Jainism recognises the tradition of twenty-four Tirthaṅkaras (‘Makers of Sacred Paths’), though it is the preachings of only the last Tirthaṅkara, namely, Mahāvīra, which are, in the main, at the base of the religion of the Jainas, as we know it today, and which, together with the teachings of his early disciples, constitute the Jaina canonical literature or Āgama. The first attempt at a systematisation of the Jaina canon was made by the Council convened at Pāṭaliputra in the 4th

455. See foot-note 44 above.

46. For more details, see Dandekar’s paper mentioned in foot-note 39 above.
century B. C., but a more or less fixed literary form came to be given to it only in the 5th century A. D. at the council held at Valabhi under the leadership of Devardhī. Naturally enough, therefore, the texts belonging to various chronological strata have been included in the canon. These texts are as varied in their contents as in their literary forms. It is reported that, owing to a severe famine during the reign of Candragupta Maurya (4th century B. C.), Bhadrabāhu, the leader of the Jaina community, migrated to Karnaṭaka with some of his followers and that Sthūlabhadra became the leader of the Jains who had stayed back in Magadha. This was the beginning of a religious schism among the Jains, for, while Bhadrabāhu had been away, several significant changes had occurred in the doctrines and practices of the Magadha Jains. The followers of Bhadrabāhu, who had adhered to the original vow of nakedness, came to be known as the Digambaras, while the followers of Sthūlabhadra, who had taken to white garments, came to be known as the Śvetāmbaras. The Jaina canon, which was finalised at Valabhi, was mainly the canon of the Śvetāmbaras.

The Jaina Āgama is traditionally believed to consist of 14 Purvas (Pūrvas), 12 Āṅgas, 12 Uvaṅgas (Upāṅgas), 4 Mūlasuttas (Mūla-Sūtras), 6 Cheya-Suttas (Cheda-Sūtras), 2 Čulika-Suttas (Čulikā-Sūtras), and 10 Paññas (Prakīrṇas). The 14 Purvas, which, according to the tradition, comprised the direct teachings of Mahāvīra, were, however, originally included in one of the 12 Āṅgas, namely, Drṣṭivāda. But the Drṣṭivāda is lost, and with it are lost also the Purvas. From among the other

47. This was organized by Sthūlabhadra.

48. This was the fourth and last council, two other councils having been convened between 300 and 313 A. D. — one at Mathura under the leadership of Skandila and the other at Valabhi at the instance of Nāgārjunaśīri.

49. The number of the Āgama-texts was thus forty-six.

50. The number of the Āgama-texts, which are available today, is, therefore, forty-five. According to the Digambara tradition, the entire original Āgama-literature is lost, and only a few fragments of the Drṣṭivāda have survived.
Ayargas\textsuperscript{51} may be mentioned the Āyurāṅga, which deals with Jaina monachism, the Sūyogāḍāṅga, which seeks to refute the heretical views and to establish the Jaina metaphysical and ethical doctrine, the Bhagavati (also known as Vīyāhapaṇṇatti), which presents, in the form of a dialogue between Mahāvira and Indrabhūti and in an encyclopedic manner, the dogmatics of Jainism, the Nāyādhammakahāna, which consists mainly of holy-didactic legends, the Uvāṣagadasāna and the Pañhavāgaranāṁ, which treat of the householder’s life, and the Vīvāgasuyam, whose subject-matter is the redemption of good and bad deeds.

The Rāyapaseṇiya, which is one of the 12 Upāṅgas\textsuperscript{52} and which attempts a Purāṇa-like elaboration of a philosophical kernel, teaches that the soul is independent of the body. It is also important from the literary point of view. Another Upāṅga, the Kappiyā, is a collection of didactic legends, while the Jīvābhigama and the Sūryapaṇṇatti, which are also regarded as Upāṅgas, deal respectively with living beings and cosmology. Two of the four Mūla-Sūtras are particularly important—the Dasaveyālīya,\textsuperscript{53} which deals with Jaina monastic life, and the Uttarajjhayaṇa,\textsuperscript{54} which deals, in a fine literary style, with Jaina ethics and metaphysics. Among the Cheda-Sūtras, perhaps the

\textsuperscript{51} Though called Āṅgas, these texts (unlike the Vedāṅgas) are not ancillary to any principal basic text. They are the āṅgas of the Śrītapuruṣa. The order of the compilation of the Āṅgas seems to have been: 14 Pūrvar, then the four sections of the Dṛṣṭiśāda (beginning with Parīśrama), and then the remaining eleven Āṅgas (beginning with Ācāra and ending with Vipaścītī). It is surmised that the language of the Pūrvar was Sanskrit. Some idea of the contents of the Pūrvar can be had from such works as the Saikhaṇḍaṇgam of Puṣpadanta-Bhūtatabali and the Ṛṣayaprābhita of Guṇadhara, which claim to have been based on the Pūrvar.

\textsuperscript{52} The Āṅga-texts are divided into two classes: āṅgopraṇīta and āṅgabāhya. All texts other than the Āṅgas are regarded as āṅgabāhya. The Upāṅgas are not mentioned in any of the Āṅgas. Nor can any Upāṅga be shown to be specifically related to any Āṅga. The date of the Upāṅgas seems to have been the 2nd century B.C.

\textsuperscript{53} Ācārya Śayyāṁbhava (452–429 B.C.) is believed to be the author of the Dasaveyālīya.

\textsuperscript{54} The Uttarajjhayaṇa is of the nature of a compilation. These two Mūla-Sūtras are comparable with the Buddhist Suttanipāta and Dhammapada.
best-known is the Ācāradasā, which is ascribed to Bhadrabāhu (4th cent. B. C.). Its eighth section, which is popularly known as the Kalpa-sūtra of Bhadrabāhu, gives a biography of Mahāvīra besides considerable information about the Monk-Elders and their rules. The Nandī, which is one of the two Cūlikā-Sūtras, is believed to have been written by Devavācaka (6th–7th cent. A. D.), and, in addition to the treatment of Jaina epistemology, it gives an encyclopedic survey of Jaina canonical literature. It is interesting to note that it refers to various heretical schools (micchāsua) and secular sciences (loia). The Taṇḍulaveyāliya, which is a Prakṛṭa, has for its subject-matter such topics as human physiology, anatomy, embryology, etc.

Besides the Āgama of the Śvetāmbaras, it is necessary to mention also the special canon of the Digambaras. This pro-canon consists mainly of the works based on the teachings of Bhadrabāhu, which were recollected in some later periods. From among these, the Saṅkhānḍāgama (also known as Karma-prābhṛta) and the Kasāya-pāhuḍa (Kaśāya-prābhṛta) deal with the important doctrine of Karman, and the Mūlācāra of Vaṭṭakera (1st century A. D.) and the Bhagavatī Ārādhana of Śivārya with Jaina monachism. A special feature of the religious literature of the Digambaras is the devotional songs in Prakrit, such as those written by Bhadrabāhu and Dhanapāla (10th century A. D.).

Philosophy and Religion
Considerable exegetical literature relating to the Jaina canon has been produced in Prakrit. The earliest texts belonging to

54a. See foot-note 50 above.
54b. This work in Śauraseni was composed in the 2nd cent. A. D. by Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali. The Tilka (in mixed Sanskrit and Prakrit) on this work by Viṣṇasena (9th cent. A. D.), called Dīśakalā, is well known.
54c. The author of this work is believed to have been Guptadhara (2nd cent. A. D.). On it Viṣṇasena and Jīnasena have written a commentary called Jayadīnavādas.
55. This literature is mainly of four types: Niṇyakti, Bhāṣya, Cūpī, and Tilka,
this class are the Nījuttis on the ten canonical texts ascribed to Bhadradāhu the second (5th cent. A. D.). These are brief commentaries, in gāthās, written mostly in Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī. From among the commentaries on these commentaries a special reference deserves to be made to Jinabhadra Kṣamāśrāmanā's erudite Prakrit commentary on the Āvassaya-Nījuttī (609 A. D.). To this same class belong the later bhāṣyas and cūrtis, which latter are often written in a peculiar mixture of Sanskrit and Prakrit.56

Besides these exegetical works, there are available quite a number of independent treatises in Prakrit which deal with different aspects of Jainism. The most famous and the most prolific author in this field was Kundakunda who presumably lived in the 1st century A.D. His Pañcatīthiyasāra and Pavayaṇa-sāra deal respectively with Jaina ontology and epistemology, while his Samayasāra, which treats of jīva and other eight tattvas, is pregnant with spiritual fervour.57 The Tiloyapaṇṇatti of Yātivṛṣabha, which belongs to the 5th century A.D., is an encyclopedic work treating of Jaina religion. One of the most significant contributions of Jainism to Indian thought as a whole is its doctrine of Karman. Naturally enough, therefore, several Prakrit works have been written on the subject. The original texts, which had dealt with this doctrine at some length, were presumably the lost Puvvas. Some idea of their view-point may, however, be had from the Dhavalā and the Jayadhavalā.57a The same ideological tradition is preserved also in some independent treatises like the Pañcasamgraha of Caṇḍarṣi (6th century A. D.), the Kammapaṇḍi of Śivasarman, and the Gommaṭasāra of Nemicandra (11th century A. D.). Side by side with their doctrine of Karman, the Jainas had also developed quite a

56. Cūrtis on at least 18 Āgama-texts are available today. Jinadhāsaṅgī (6th cent. A.D.) is traditionally believed to be the author of most of the Cūrtis.

57. Kundakunda’s works are mostly in the form of Śaurasenī stanzas in Āryā metre.

57a. See foot-notes 54b and 54c above.
unique system of logic. A mention has already been made of Siddhasena Divākara’s small Sanskrit text on the subject, called Nyāyāvatāra (5th century A.D.). His Sammāi-Sutta (Sammatt-Tarka), written in Prakrit, also deals, among other things, with the nayas and the anekāntavāda. Other typical Prakrit works on Jaina ethics and metaphysics are the Sāvayaṇapāṇṇatti of Umāsvāti (2nd century A.D.),57b the Paramappapayāsu and the Yogasāra of Joṅdu (circa 6th century A.D.),58 and the Dhammasaṃgahāni of Haribhadra (705–775 A.D.).

Narrative Literature

However, far more extensive than the literature relating to Jaina religion and dogmatics is, perhaps, the narrative literature in Prakrit. Even in the canonical and the later religious texts of the Jainas we come across many legends, parables, and historical and popular narratives. A conscious attempt was evidently made by the Jaina authors to carry their teachings to the masses, firstly, by adopting the popular dialects for their writings, and, secondly, by making abundant use of popular narrative themes. Apart from this kind of narrative literature, Prakrit is very rich in what may be called Purānic and secular narrative literature. To begin with, there are the Prakrit versions of Hindu epics. The Paśmacariya of Vimalasūri (3rd–4th century A.D.), for instance, re-tells the story of Rāma in 118 cantos, though its agreement with Vālmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa is only partial. Svayambhū (early 8th cent. A.D.) also wrote a work dealing with Rāmakathā, in Apabhramśa, called Paśmacariu. Another work of Svayambhū in Apabhramśa, is Rīṭṭhanemi-cariu also known as Harivaṃśa-purāṇa. A reference may be incidentally made, in this very context, to the Dhūrtākhyāna of Haribhadra (8th cent. A.D.), which constitutes a marvellous satire on some legends contained in the Hindu Purāṇas. The Mahāpurāṇa written in Apabhramśa by Puṣpadanta (10th century A.D.) describes the exploits of

57b. According to some scholars, the author of this work was Haribhadra.
58. These two works are written in Apabhramśa. The Paramāṭka prakāśa deals with the bahirātman, antarātman, and paramātman.
the 63 Mahâpuruṣas (Titaṭhi-Mahâpuris-Guṇālaṁkāru).

The well-known Karakaṇḍacariu of Kanakāmara (11th century A.D.), which narrates in a lucid style, the life of Karakaṇḍa, one of the Pratyeka Buddhas, may also be mentioned here.

Among works which may be compared with the historical Kāvyas in Sanskrit may be mentioned the Gaṇḍavaho of Vākpatirāja (8th century A.D.), in which the story-element is very meagre but which possesses great literary merit, the Kālakācārya-kathā-naka (12th century A.D.), which tells of Kālaka’s victory over King Gardabhilla of Ujjain with the help of the Śaka Satrapas, the Kumārapālacarita of Hemacandra (1089–1172 A.D.), which, under the pretext of presenting Kumārapāla’s biography, illustrates the rules of Prakrit grammar, and the Kumārapālapratibodha of Somaprabha (1185 A.D.), which describes Kumārapāla’s conversion to Jainism through Hemacandra and some portions of which are written in elegant Sanskrit.

The lost Bṛhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya, which has already been referred to elsewhere, must, indeed, be regarded as a veritable fountain-head of many a romantic story in Sanskrit and Prakrit. As an interesting fairy-tale may be mentioned Dhanapāla’s Bhavissatta-kahā written in Apabhraṃśa. The Setubandha of Pravarasena (4th century A.D.) is a fine example of an ornate court-epic in Prakrit. It derives its theme of the construction of the bridge across the sea by the monkeys from the Rāmāyaṇa, and the poet makes a felicitous use of different metres, figures of speech, and other poetic embellishments. The voluminous Vasudevahinḍī in prose, which must have been written before 600 A.D., describes the peregrinations of Vasudeva the youngest son of Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi. Its first volume is the work of Saṅghadāsagāṇi and the second that of Dharmasenaṇaṇi. The Samarāṭ-ccakahā of Haribhadra (8th century A.D.), which is a religious novel (dharma-kathā) written in Jaina Māhāraṣṭrī, has the literary form of a Campū and portrays the antagonism of two souls through their nine successive births. Comparable with the

59. See suṣṭa pp. 215–16,
Samarāliccakahā from the point of view of ideology and style is the Kuvalayamālā of Udyotana (778 A.D.). Several other smaller Kāvyas have been written in the different Prakrit dialects—two fine specimens belonging to a comparatively late period being the Karnasavahā and the Uśāniruddham of Rāma Pāṇivāda (18th century A.D.).

The Sattasai

No statement about the representative literature in Prakrit would, however, be complete without the mention of the Sattasai—that unique anthology of 700 gāthās compiled by Hāla (1st–2nd century A.D.). The gāthā-form of literature, which is characterised by a remarkable melodiousness, a clever portrayal of human sentiments, and a great popular appeal, may, indeed, be regarded as a special feature of the Prakrits. It is well known that several Prakrit gāthās have been included in Sanskrit works. The gāthās in the Sattasai relate mainly to the love-life of a rural community and are highly realistic; but they rarely offend against the cultured taste of sophisticated readers. The appeal of the striking poetic imageries and the charming suggestiveness of many of these gāthās is, verily, quite irresistible. The Vajjālagga by Jayavallabha, of unknown date, is an anthology, again consisting of about 700 gāthās, which treat of a variety of topics relating to Dharma, Artha, and Kāma. It is noteworthy that this anthology is non-sectarian in character, though its compiler was a Jaina Muni.

As regards dramatic literature it may be pointed out that Sanskrit dramaturgy has enjoined the use of certain specific Prakrits by specific characters in Sanskrit dramas. The observance of this rule, many times, results in the Prakrit portion in a Sanskrit drama being actually larger than the Sanskrit portion. Apart from this, one type of drama, namely, Saṭṭaka, is composed entirely in Prakrit. Two representative examples of this type are the Kappūramamjarī of Rājaśekhara (circa 900 A.D.) and the Candalehā of Rudradāsa (17th century A.D.). Lexicographical works (such as the Pāiyalacakchināmamālā of the 10th
century A.D.), works on rhetoric and metrics (such as the \textit{Alankāradappāṇa} and the \textit{Svayambhūcchanda}), and works on sciences like medicine and astronomy (such as the \textit{Haramekhalā} of Māhuka and the \textit{Jambūdīvapāṇṇaatti-sarīgaha} of Paúmanandī), written in Prakrit, though but a few, are not altogether wanting. It may, indeed, be said that Prakrit authors have tried their hand at every literary form used by Sanskrit authors and have written on almost every subject which has been tackled by them.\footnote{\textit{First published}: \textit{An Outline of the Cultural History of India}, Hyderabad, 1958, 64–114; \textit{also published}: \textit{JUPHS} No. 23, 1966, 1–37.}

\footnote{60. Much additional information on the subject of this paper may be derived from: \textsc{Dandekar}, "Vedic, Sanskrit, and Prakrit Studies," and \textsc{Raghavan} and \textsc{Dandekar}, "Philosophy and Religion," \textit{Oriental Studies in India}, New Delhi, 1964.}
GREAT BUDDHISTS: ASVAGHOŠA

It would not be correct to imagine—as one might, perhaps, feel inclined to imagine—that Buddhist literature was mostly canonical or religio-philosophical in character and that it was embodied mainly in the Pali language. There is no doubt that Gautama Buddha, who wanted to propagate his teachings even among the common people, adopted the dialect of his own region as the medium of his sermons and religious conversations. The early disciples of Buddha, following the example of the Master, also spoke and wrote in their respective dialects.¹ When, in course of time, the Buddhist canon came to be given its final literary form, the Buddhist monks used, for that purpose, Pali, which was a language more or less artificially derived from these various dialects. Indeed, Pali came to be recognised almost as the official language of early Buddhism. The literature in Pali relating to Buddhism, which has been produced in India as well as in her cultural outposts across the mountains and beyond the seas, is certainly very rich and extensive. But it necessarily represents the result of the literary activity of just one sect of Buddhism, namely, the Theravādins. According to this sect, Nirvāṇa or individual liberation was the *sumnum bonum* of spiritual life and the state of Arhat, which could be attained only through a rigorous monastic life and which gave the seeker a foretaste of Nirvāṇa even during his mortal life, was the goal to strive for. Naturally enough, this way of spiritual life, which came to be known as the Hinayāna, was restricted but to a select few. In course of time, therefore, there evolved other schools and sects of Buddhism, which regarded not only a monk but even the commonest of individuals as being destined for enlightenment and salvation and which, accordingly, opened up a new way of life for leading larger number of people to the end of suffering.

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¹ See *infra* pp. 245–246.
This was the Mahāyāna. Broadly speaking, the teachers and authors of the Hinayāna adopted Pali as the language for their literature while those of the Mahāyāna wrote mostly in Sanskrit. This Buddhist Sanskrit literature must, indeed, be regarded as having a special place for itself in the history of Sanskrit classical literature. Not all of this Sanskrit literature, produced by the Buddhist writers, can be characterised as canonical or philosophical. There were Buddhist literary works in Sanskrit which might be appropriately classed as belles-lettres. And, perhaps, the most outstanding name in this field of literary activity is that of Aśvaghoṣa.

It was once believed that, after the two great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, had assumed their final literary form in the first centuries before Christ, there had been almost a complete break in the continuity of Sanskrit literary tradition until, in the age of the Guptas, the great Kālidāsa inaugurated what might be called the renaissance of Sanskrit literature. Such a supposition is, however, now shown to be entirely unwarranted. Sufficient evidence has been made available which indicates that the post-epic and pre-Kālidāsian period had seen not an inconsiderable amount of poetic activity. And the earliest known literary works belonging to this period, which, incidentally, may be regarded as marking the beginnings of Sanskrit classical literature, are those of the Buddhist monk, Aśvaghoṣa.

Until about seventy-five years ago, nothing was known of Aśvaghoṣa in India beyond his name. In 1883, Samuel BEAL published an English translation of Aśvaghoṣa’s Buddhacarita from the Chinese version, while, ten years later, E. B. COWELL published, for the first time, the Sanskrit text of that work and thereby introduced students of Sanskrit to the literary accom-

2. See supra p. 205.

plishments of this remarkable poet. Like many other eminent Sanskrit poets, very little is known about the personal life of Aśvaghōṣa. One comes across quite a variety of traditions regarding his parentage, country, date, and works. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to determine, with any degree of certainty, even the identity of this poet. For, the Tibetan historian, Taranath, speaks of three Aśvaghōṣas, while, according to another tradition, there lived six Aśvaghōṣas in different periods to fulfil the prophecy of Buddha. As for his works, the Chinese Tripiṭaka contains translation of eight different works which are believed to have been written by him, while the Tibetan tradition ascribes to him the authorship of eleven works. Whatever the comparative veracity and credibility of these conflicting traditions, we shall be justified in assuming that Aśvaghōṣa was definitely the author of at least the three works in whose colophons he is expressly mentioned as such, namely, the Buddhacarita, the Saundarananda, and the Śāriputra-Prakaraṇa.

The consensus of Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit sources seems to indicate that poet Aśvaghōṣa, who is to be distinguished, on the one hand, from the Aśvaghōṣa of the first century B.C. who is believed to have been the author of the Mahāsūtrālaṅkāraśāstra and, on the other, from the Aśvaghōṣa of the second or the third century A.D. to whom is ascribed the Mahāyānaśraddhāpādaśāstra, flourished in the first century A.D. and was a senior contemporary and perhaps a spiritual counsellor of Kaniṣka, king of Gāndhāra. In the colophon of the Saundarananda, that poem is described as a composition of Reverend Aśvaghōṣa, noble son of Suvarṇākṣi, citizen of Sāketa, mendicant and teacher, and great poet and distinguished dialectician. It may be safely assumed that Aśvaghōṣa was born and bred in Brahmanic traditions. His works show an unmistakable imprint

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5. The colophon at the end of canto 18 of the Saundarananda reads: Aśrayasurārāṇipratraya sāketakasya bhikṣu cāsyaśraddhādantavaghoṣaya mahākaver mahāpadināḥ kriṣṣāya.
of his mastery over the various branches of Brahmanic lore. As a matter of fact, such may be said to have been the case with many an eminent Buddhist author and thinker. But perhaps no other Buddhist writer has succeeded as much as Aśvaghōsa in bringing his Brahmanic learning to bear upon his interpretation of Buddhism. After he was converted to Buddhism, presumably under the stewardship of Sthavira Pārtha or his disciple, Puṇya-yaśas, Aśvaghōsa became a staunch follower of the Hinayāna and an enthusiastic protagonist of the Arhat-ideal. Later on, however, he began to glorify the doctrine of Buddha-Bhakti and thus helped, in a sense, the emergence and growth of the Mahāyāna.

The Buddhacarita is easily the best known work of Aśvaghōsa. The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, who visited India between 671 and 695 A.D., reports that, in his time, this extensive poem, which dealt with the life of the Buddhā from the time when the Tathā-gata was still living in the royal palace up to his last days in the grove of the Śāla trees, was ‘widely read and sung throughout the five divisions of India and the countries of the Southern Sea.’ Evidently, I-tsing knew the poem in its original form, extending over 28 cantos, from which it was translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa between 414 and 421 A.D. and into Tibetan in the 7th century A.D. The Sanskrit text of the poem which is available at present, however, contains only the first 14 cantos and, even there, the first and the fourteenth cantos are incomplete.


7. E.B. Cowell, in his edition of the Buddhacarita gives the text of 17 cantos of the poem (the last canto being called Labhiniyāstika), but he says in the Preface (p. ix) that ‘we can only claim Aśvaghōsa’s authorship for the first thirteen sargas and part of the fourteenth.’ Indeed, on the last page of the Cambridge University Library manuscript used by Cowell it is expressly stated that Amṛtānanda ‘created’ the last four (three ?) cantos not having found them even after a careful search everywhere. E.H. Johnston in

(Continued on the next page)
Even a cursory reading of Aśvaghoṣa's works would suffice to show that the poet was inspired by a passionate devotion for the Buddha and an unswerving faith in his teachings. It is, therefore, indeed most creditable that while presenting the life of the Buddha, in the Buddhacarita, Aśvaghoṣa should have shown such admirable restraint. Undoubtedly, Aśvaghoṣa has derived his material from the traditional sources, to which he has generally remained quite faithful, but out of that heterogeneous material he has produced a compact, well-organized, and artistic pattern. He has studiously tempered the marvellous and the miraculous in the Buddha's life which is so much exaggerated in a work like the Lalitavistara. Moderation or restraint may, indeed, be said to be the very key-note of Aśvaghoṣa's writings. It is noteworthy that, though Aśvaghoṣa was an ardent Buddhist teacher and monk and though one of his favourite themes seems to have been conversion to Buddhism, he never allowed his compositions to turn into tendentious religious tracts or dogmatic philosophical treatises. The artist in him always preponderates, and his literary works never lose their essential character as kāvyā or poetry. At the same time, it must be pointed out that, though Aśvaghoṣa's style is consciously artistic, it rarely degenerates into being artificial like that of many a later Sanskrit poet. Aśvaghoṣa scrupulously avoids over-ornateness and pedantry. It would certainly be wrong to suggest, on that account, that his poetry is crude and primitive. Rather, it is simple and breathes a peculiar kind of freshness.

One often wonders whether this simplicity – comparative simplicity – of style and presentation was not due to Vālmiki's unmistakable influence on Aśvaghoṣa. If Aśvaghoṣa was indebted to Vālmiki in the matter both of incident and idiom, many of Aśvaghoṣa's scenes and imageries were reproduced by Kālidāsa –

(Continued from the last page)

Panjab University Oriental Publications No. 31 (1935) gives the text of the Buddhacarita up to XIV. 31, while in PUOP No. 32 (1936) he gives the English translation of the poem ending with XIV. 108 ( . . the sage . . desired to go to the land of Kāśi, in order to convert the world . . ).
of course, in a far more artistic garb. In a sense, this may be regarded as a well-deserved compliment paid to Āśvaghōṣa’s literary genius by the greatest of the Sanskrit poets.

A significant feature of the life of the Buddha, as described in the Buddhacarita, is represented by the peculiar circumstances which had attended his birth. They at once established the extraordinary character of the newly-born child. And was it, indeed, not prophetic that Siddhārtha, the future Buddha, should have been born not in the luxurious palace of his royal father but in the ‘sin-free’ forest called Lumbini? And, soon after his birth, the Bodhisattva, with the bearing of a lion, looking to the four quarters, uttered these words of lofty import:

*bodhāya jāto ’smi jagaddhitārtham*
*antyā bhavotpattir iyam mama ... /*

*(BC I. 15ab)*

“I am born for Enlightenment – for the good of the world: this is, certainly, my last birth in the phenomenal world.”

These words were subsequently confirmed by the prophecy made by the sage Asita about the baby prince. He told Śuddhodana:

*vihāya rājyam viṣayeṣv anāsthas*
*śrīrañj prayānaṁ adhigumya tattvam /
*jagatya ayaṁ mohatamo nihanturṁ*
*jvaliṣyati jñānamayo hi sūryaḥ //*

*(BC I. 69)*

“Siddhārtha will give up the kingdom in his indifference to worldly pleasures, and, through bitter struggles grasping the final truth, he will shine forth as a sun of knowledge in the world to dispel the darkness of delusion.”

The birth of Siddhārtha brought great prosperity to Śuddhodana and happiness to the people of Kapilavastu. The child soon grew up into a stately young man. And the king, having

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8. The text and the translation (with slight modifications) of this and the following passages are from Johnston’s two volumes referred to above.
known from Asita the predestined spiritual inclinations of the prince, sought to counteract them by creating in him strong attachment for sensual pleasures. He got him married to charming Yasodharā. He also took care that the young prince was kept away from every sign of worldly misery. As Aśvaghōṣa has described, Suddhodana, reflecting that the prince must see nothing untoward that might agitate his mind, assigned to him a dwelling in the upper storeys of the palace and did not allow him access to the ground. In that isolated place, the prince was, as it were, made a captive to beautiful women who were skilled in the accessories of love:

\[
\text{vāgbhiḥ kalabhīr lalitāś ca hāvair madaiḥ sakhelair madhuraiś ca hāsaiḥ/}
\text{tanḥ tatra nāryo ramayainabhāvur bhūvāṃcitair ardhanirikṣitaś ca/}
\text{tataḥ sa kāmāśrayaṇaṇḍitaḥ bhīḥ/}
\text{stribhīr gṛhito ratikarkaśābhīḥ/}
\text{vimānapṛṣṭhān na mahīṃ jagāma}
\text{vimānapṛṣṭhād iva puṇyakarmā/}
\]

(BC II. 31-32)

In course of time, however, the prince became tired of this oppressive monotony of idle ease and satiated enjoyment. He, therefore, longed for an outing. His father readily arranged for a pleasure-excursion, but not before he had cleared the route, along which the prince was to have passed, of all signs of ugliness and sorrow.

The prince mounted the golden chariot and slowly entered the royal highway. But as he proceeded, a discordant note was struck in the general atmosphere charged with youth, beauty, and happiness, which Suddhodana had taken such pains to create. Quite unexpectedly, there came across the prince’s way a man such as he had never seen before. In great excitement and with his gaze fixed upon that man, Siddhartha asked his charioteer:

\[
\text{kā.ēṣa bhōh sūta naro ṃhupetah/}
\text{kesaiḥ sitair yaśṭivisaktahastah/}
\]
"Who is this man with white hair, supporting himself on the staff in his hand, with his eyes veiled by the brows, and limbs relaxed and bent? Is this some transformation in him, or his original state, or mere chance?"

And the charioteer replied:

*rūpasya hantrī vyasanam balasya
sokasya yonir nidhanam ratiṇām /
nāśaḥ smṛtinām ripur indriyāṇām
eśā jarā nāma yayai 'ṣa bhagnaḥ //
piṭāṁ hy anena 'pi payaḥ śīṣate vṛt
kālena bhūyaḥ parisṛptam urvyām /
krameṇa bhūtvā ca yuvā vapuṣmān
krameṇa tenai 'va jarāṁ upetaḥ //*

(BC III. 30-31)

"Old age it is called, that which has broken this man down—the murderer of beauty, the ruin of vigour, the birth-place of sorrow, the grave of pleasure, the destroyer of memory, the enemy of the senses.... He too was once a handsome young man but in the natural order he has now reached this pathetic old age."

At this, the prince was taken aback. In great dismay, he again asked: "Will this evil come upon me also?" "Inevitably you will also become old", replied the charioteer, "men are aware that old age destroys beauty and yet they seek it." Fixing his eye on the old man, the prince sighed deeply and thought: "The world does not seem to be perturbed even at this sight of old age, which strikes down indiscriminately memory and beauty and valour. But how can I indulge in pleasure when the fear of old age rules in my mind?"

On his next excursion, the prince saw another apparition—this time of disease; and he reacted to it in the same way as
before. On the third occasion, he saw the apparition of death. He then fully realised that the law of old age, disease, and death applied equally to all creatures. He also realised that true happiness was not possible in a life which was conditioned by these three evils. He, therefore, resolved to renounce this worldly life in order to secure spiritual peace. When his father, Suddho-dana, tried to dissuade him from his resolve, Siddhārtha calmly told him:

\[
yadi me pratibhūṣ caturṣu rājaṇ/
bhavasi tvam na tapovanaṁ śrayiṣye \|\|\|\|\|
na bhaven maraṇāya jīvitaṁ me
viharet svāsthyam idaṁ ca me na rogaḥ /
na ca yauvanam ākṣipej jaraṁ me
na ca saṃpattim imāṁ hared vipattiḥ \|\|\|\|\|\|
\]

\(BC V. 34cd-35\)

"I will refrain from entering the penance grove, O King, if you guarantee that my life will not be subject to death, that disease will not injure my health, and that old age will not impair my youth."

And one night, the prince of the Śākyas escaped from the palace, determined not to enter Kapilavastu again till he had seen the further shore of life and death.

\[
atha sa vimalapaṅkaṇḍaṅdākapā ṭākṣaṅ/ 
puram avalokya nanāda simhanādam /
jananamaranāyor adṛṣṭapāro
na puram aham kapilaḥvayam prevaṣṭā \|\|\|\|\|\|
\]

\(BC V. 84\)

This abhinirvāṇa is another significant landmark in the life of the Buddha.

Siddhārtha then entered into the penance grove and sought guidance from the various sages on the path to spiritual beatitude. He, however, found their teachings and practices deficient in one way or another. The future Buddha, therefore, decided to seek
enlightenment on his own initiative. He, accordingly, proceeded to the root of a pipal tree and there took up the supreme, immovable, cross-legged posture:

\[ \text{tatoḥ sa paryāṅkam akampyam uttamam babandha supitoragabhogapiṅḍitam /} \\
\text{bhinadmi tāvad bhuvī nai 'tad āsanāṁ na yāmi yāvat krtaṛtyatāṁ iti //} \\
\text{tato yayur mudam atulāṁ divaukaso vāvāśire na mr̥gaṇā na paṅśiṇāh /} \\
\text{na sasvanur vanataravo 'nilāhataḥ krťasane bhagavati niścitātmāni //} \\
\]

(BC XII. 120-121)

He solemnly vowed: “I will not rise from this position on the ground till I achieve the completion of my task.”

The whole world rejoiced at this event; but not Māra, the enemy of dharma. He was afraid that this young sage would conquer his realm. He, therefore, attacked him with his five world-deluding arrows shot from the flower-made bow. But the Śākya prince paid no heed to them nor did he falter in his firmness. On seeing this, Māra directed his fiendish followers to make another concerted attack—a whole violent army against a non-violent seeker after truth. But the sage remained unshaken and all Māra’s efforts were frustrated.

The conquest of Māra was the signal for the final enlightenment. Passing from one stage to another on the path of Buddhahood, one day, “when the dawn came up and all that moves and moves not was stilled, the great seer reached the stage which knows no alteration, the state of omniscience.” Siddhārtha became the Buddha.

The available text of the Buddhacarita abruptly ends here. It is, indeed, unfortunate that we have been deprived of Aśvaghōsa’s elegant portrayal of the two remaining landmarks in the

9. BC XIV. 86 : Johnston’s translation.
Buddha's life – the dharmacakrapravartana or the propagation of dharma and the mahāparinirvāṇa.\footnote{10}

It has, however, to be conceded that, so far as sheer poetic beauty is concerned, Aśvaghōsa's other poem, Saundarananda, perhaps excels the Buddhacarita. The Saundarananda, which consists of eighteen cantos, narrates the story of Nanda, Buddha's half-brother, who was ordained as monk against his will, and his exceedingly charming wife, Sundarī. As may be easily imagined, this theme affords ample scope for the delineation of some convincing characters and the presentation of some poetic situations. And Aśvaghōsa has certainly risen to the occasion. But the theme also affords scope for the propagation of the teachings of the Buddha. Indeed, at the end of the poem, the poet claims that the Saundarananda essentially deals with the subject of salvation and that he has adopted the kāvyā style not to give pleasure but to further the attainment of tranquillity and with a view to capturing hearers who are devoted to other things. He very significantly compares his poem to sweetened medicine.\footnote{11} Both in the Buddhacarita and the Saundarananda, Aśvaghōsa has preached Buddhist doctrines, mostly of the Hinayāna, which, incidentally, do not fail to betray his strong leanings towards the Mahāyāna. But to a discerning reader of the two poems the conclusion becomes irresistible that Aśvaghōsa is a greater poet than monk. Attention is often drawn to the striking similarities of situation, imagery, and expression in the works of Aśvaghōsa and Kālidāsa, who is universally regarded as the brightest star in the firmament of Sanskrit poetry. And if it was remembered that Aśvaghōsa lived more than two centuries before Kālidāsa, no more convincing evidence would be needed to establish his highly accomplished literary workmanship.

The Śāriputra-Prakarana, fragments of which were discovered in 1910 among the palm-leaf manuscripts from Turfan, is a dramatic piece, of the type of Prakarana, written in full confor-
mity with the conventional rules laid down in the Nāṭyaśāstra. It presents in nine acts the story of the conversion to Buddhism of Śāriputra and Maudgalāyana. Is it, indeed, not remarkable that, like the earliest available Sanskrit epic poem, one of the earliest available Sanskrit dramas also should have been written by a Buddhist author and a monk to boot?

The Chinese tradition glorifies Aśvaghoṣa as an eminent Buddhist patriarch and a founder of the Mahāyāna; the Tibetan tradition represents him as an outstanding dialectician 'who overcame his opponents as frequently as a strong wind breaks rotten trees.' But in India he will be ever remembered and celebrated rather as a pioneer in the field of Sanskrit kāvya and Sanskrit drama.

[‘Tribute to Great Buddhists in the year of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha’s mahāparinirvāṇa : External Services Division, All India Radio,]
PROFESSOR MEYER ON DAṆḌIN

Date of DaṆḍin

We may start with the assumption that Somadeva has substantially reproduced in the Kathāsaritsāgara (KSS) the old Brhatkatha of Guṇaḍhya. To whatever period scholars may assign Guṇaḍhya, one thing is certain, namely, that he lived before DaṆḍin’s time since DaṆḍin himself refers to this fact in Kavyadarśa I. 38. It would be interesting to imagine how DaṆḍin would have handled the stories borrowed from the Brhatkatha. But it is not possible to prove any such borrowing. At the same time it is not enough to say, by way of evidence in this connection, that we do not find any close relationship between Guṇaḍhya and DaṆḍin from the point of view of expression and style. The whole question may, therefore, be left in abeyance for the present. For, even the soundest hypothesis, which we put forth today with an inner paternal pride and which none may doubt, appears to us, the very next day, as stupid or monstrous. Fresh material renders it untenable. And very often it may be truly said of such cases: Ignoramus et semper ignorabimus.

Fortunately, DaṆḍin’s date can be determined well-nigh definitely on the basis of other evidence. The consensus of scholarly opinion places him in the 6th or the 7th century A. D. MEYER, however, feels that no useful purpose will be served

1. Adapted from J. J. Meyer’s introduction to his German translation of the Dalakumātrcaritam, Lotus-Verlag, Leipzig, 1902.

2. Cf. Peterson, Introduction to the ed. of the Kādambarī, p. 69: “HALL and BÖHLER have shown that implicit confidence is due to Somadeva’s and Kṣemendra’s statements to the effect that their books are translations into Sanskrit and abridgements of an older work.”

by going through the whole literature dealing with this question particularly because he is not in a position to make any new contribution. He, therefore, prefers to make only a few observations which may be found worthwhile.

In his introduction to the Daṇḍin’s work on poetics⁴ and in his edition of Vāmana’s work on poetics⁵: “It appears to me distinctly doubtful whether Daṇḍin really lived at such an early date as WEBER assumes; I even doubt whether Daṇḍin could have at all been older than Vāmana.” CAPELLER, however, gives no reasons for his statements. On the other hand, according to MEYER, Vāmana’s work produces quite a different impression. That excellent work, he opines, represents the culmination of a thought-process which had evidently not advanced much in Daṇḍin’s time. Such subjective evidence is of course not very convincing.⁶ PETERSON puts forth certain definite arguments in support of his view that Daṇḍin belonged to a period later than that of Vāmana. He writes: “At Kāvyādāraṇī II. 358, 359

anavayasaṣaṇḍehāv upamāsv eva darśitau /
upamārūpakaṁ cā ’pi rūpakeṣv eva darśitam //
uptreksābheda evā ’sāv upreksāvayavo ’pi ca /

I see a clear reference to Vāmana’s teaching with regard to the figures of speech which he calls anavaya, sasāṇḍeha, upamārūpaka, and upreksāvayava. For Vāmana these are four separate alabhāras requiring separate treatment. Daṇḍin has made the first three fall under his general definition of upamā and rūpaka respectively. But he deems it necessary to note that he

5. Jena, 1875, p. IX.
6. If one would place Vāmana in the 12th century A.D., as CAPELLER does, one might possibly place Daṇḍin, the author of a work on poetics, later than the 12th century A. D. only on the assumption that the authors of the Kāvyādāraṇī and the DKC were two different persons. For, it is most improbable that the DKC was written so late as the 12th or the 13th century A. D.
has done so. He mentions it at all, it is clear, only out of respect to some predecessor. In the present state of our knowledge we must, I submit, take it that the predecessor is Vāmana, and that the asau utprekṣāvayavah of Kāvyādarśa II. 359 is a challenge of Vāmana’s dictum Kāvyālāṁkāravṛtti IV. 3. 33: utprekṣāhetuḥ utprekṣāvayavah.’’

But, MEYER asks, why must it be necessarily Vāmana whom Daṇḍin has in his mind here? Even before the 6th or the 7th century A. D. there have lived several writers on alaṁkāras. It is, indeed, not rare that a later writer classifies, in a different manner, the topics dealt with by the earlier writers and that a still later writer goes back and accepts the earlier classification. Though Daṇḍin expressly claims to have epitomised the earlier works on the subject, it is also quite possible that he has given his independent view in this particular matter while Vāmana adhered to the generally accepted classification.

PETERSON continues: ‘‘Daṇḍin’s contraction of the styles of poetry to two only, the Vaidarbha and the Gauḍa varieties, appears also to me to be a reflection on Vāmana who recognises three, the Vaidarbha, Gauḍa, and Pañcāla (Kāvyād. I. 40–43; Kāvyāl. I. 2. 9–13).’’ Had PETERSON gone a little deeper into the Kāvyādarśa passage cited by him, he would certainly have not put forth this argument. Daṇḍin says in Kāvyādarśa I. 40:

asty aneko girām mārgaḥ sūkṣmabhedaḥ parasparam/
tatra vaidarbhagauḍīyaḥ varṇyete prasphuṭāntarau

BÖHTLINGK translates this passage rightly as follows: ‘‘There are a number of styles of poetry which are but slightly distinguishable from one another; out of these, only the Vaidarbha and the Gauḍa styles will be described here since the distinction between the two is quite obvious.’’ This large number of styles of poetry came into existence as the result of ‘‘nice distinction’’ (sūkṣmabheda), which is also true about many other aspects of Hindu life. Daṇḍin cannot thus possibly have had Vāmana before his eyes. Even WEBER would infer from the Kāvyādarśa – of course, wrongly – that there were only two styles recognised
in about the 6th century A. D.; to these, according to him, there
must have come to be added four more styles by the time of
Daṇḍin’s successors. One would, indeed, counter this suggestion
of WEBER’s by asking how it was a priori possible that the
Hindus had remained content with two – and only two – styles
down to the 6th or the 7th century A. D.

PETERTON, as also Maheshchandra NYAYARATNA whom
he cites, brings forth further evidence in support of a late date
for Daṇḍin. In Daṇḍin’s Kāvyādarśa II. 197 we come across the
following stanza:

\[ \text{arattīlokaśasanāḥhāryaṁ avāryaṁ sūryaśaśmiribhiḥ} \\
\text{dṛṣṭīrodhakaraṁ yūnāṁ yauvanaprabhavaṁ tamaḥ} \]

We also find in the Kādambarī of Bāna the following passage:
kevalāṁ eka nisargata eva bhānubhedyaṁ arattīloko
ccheyyaṁ apradīpaprabhāpaneyam atigahanaṁ tamaḥ yauvanaprabhavaṁ.

On the strength of the obvious similarity of expression in these
two passages, the two learned scholars conclude that Daṇḍin must
have adapted this stanza from the passage in the Kādambarī.
But MEYER raises a few questions in this connection. He asks:

(1) How should one know that it was not Bāna who
borrowed from Daṇḍin?

(2) Is it not likely that both of them had found the
passage in a third book and that each of them had reproduced
it in his own way either from memory or directly from the source
itself?

(3) How can one be sure that the stanza quoted in the
Kāvyādarśa is the composition of Daṇḍin himself and not that of
some earlier poet?

MEYER does not acquiesce in the usual tendency to regard
the more perfect, more refined, and more thoroughly executed

7. \text{Ind. Streiff. III, 48.}
work as necessarily resulting from a revision of a less artistic and less mature production. If, however, in the present case, one of the two passages were really to be traced back to the other, it would hardly occur to a man without prejudice that the prototype was to be sought for in Bāṇa. Daṇḍin was a writer with an excellent sense of art — naturally with certain limitations. How was it possible that he would have thought of inserting that wholly superfluous — and from the artistic point of view more or less offensive — yūnām which had not existed in his alleged source, Bāṇa? Are we to believe that he was so blind as not to have realized that the word had been deliberately left out there? Again, no one, who knew the excellence of the Kāvyādarśa from the point of view of versification, would seriously suggest that metrical urgency was the cause of this apparent lapse on Daṇḍin's part. If, on the other hand, we assume that Bāṇa is the borrower, everything becomes quite clear. Moreover all other things point to the same fact. For one thing, Bāṇa's expression is more refined and more precise. One may, for instance, compare with advantage the very general and vague words, samhārya and avārya, used by Daṇḍin, with Bāṇa's keenly and precisely chosen words, bhedyam, ucchedyam, and apaneyam. The word abhānubhedya is also very instructive, for, on the one hand, it is more 'direct', more 'individual', more 'personal' than sūryaraśmibhiḥ avāryam, and, on the other, it seems to have been expressly chosen with the purpose of improving upon Daṇḍin. Why should we otherwise have āloka and prabhā but not raśmi or its synonym? In the case of aratnālokočchedya Bāṇa seems to have been unable to effect any change. 9

WEBER has long ago indicated the true relation between the Kādambari, the Vāsavadattā, and the DKC: "Since the diction and the style of Bāṇa, when compared with those of Daṇḍin, appear to be representing merely a secondary phase of literature, we shall be justified in placing the latter in the 6th century

9. Meyer adds that, according to his sense of Sanskrit language at any rate, aratnālokočchedya would be impossible.
A.D., and, on the same grounds, we shall have to place Subandhu in between the two." In the Harṣacarita we find Bāṇa’s own testimony in favour of Subandhu being placed earlier than him. The third member in the sequence proposed by Weber accordingly occupies, more definitely and convincingly, the place assigned to him by that excellent scholar. Pischel, on the other hand, asserts that such conclusion about the chronology of the three authors is not at all warranted. His assertion appeared all the more well-founded since the publication of Bühlcr’s article on the inscriptions and the Indian artistic poetry. We find in Kāvyādārā I. 80: ojah samāsabhūyatavam etad gadyasya jīvitam. The inscriptions throw a good deal of light on the question of the antiquity of this literary canon. Already in the Girmar Praśasti (150 A. D.) the writer of the inscription uses a compound consisting of forty syllables. Even the author of the DKC rarely outdoes this performance. Incidentally, if one were to compare the list, prepared by Bühlcr, of rhyming words and other similar Śabdālāṅkāras from the Girmar inscription with the DKC, one would indeed say: Daṇḍin may have, after all, lived at a much earlier date. It should, however, be remembered that we do not find the other features of the DKC in the inscription. For, several centuries must be presumed to have elapsed between the two.

In view of what has been said above, even a literary product so intricate and complex from the stylistic point of view as the Kādambarī could have originated by and of itself, irrespective of the sequence – the DKC, the Vāsavadattā, and the Kādambarī proposed by Weber. Similarly, even before Daṇḍin’s time, there might have existed romances, which, in comparison with the Kādambarī, had not been, to any appreciable extent, lacking in literary intricacies and perverseness. But no other author before Subandhu and Bāṇa seems to have so spiritedly devoted himself to this type of literature. Also the earlier romances, if any,

10. Ind. Streif. I, 335, 373.
12. CLI III, 14.
might have been distinguished only on account of their bizarre form. But, as becomes quite clear from a number of passages from the Kāvyādārśa, and still more from the DKČ, Daṇḍin definitely considered such affected style to be far inferior to natural expression. Verily, on account of his special gifts, Daṇḍin could very well venture to follow his own literary inclinations even when he had no great predecessors to serve as models. At the same time, Daṇḍin would not have written his romance in the manner in which he has actually written it, after the Kādambarī of Bāna which must have instantaneously proved a tremendous success in this branch of literature. For, he could not have then hoped to receive any approbation for his work. Besides, in spite of his independence and originality, Daṇḍin can by no means be expected to have been free from the failings of his times and his people. Indeed, many times, one feels inclined to doubt whether it was one and the same person who wrote the Kāvyādārśa, particularly its third book, and the DKČ. As MEYER points out, Daṇḍin has, through his dizzy affected passages, which often remind us of a lunatic asylum — but some of which are really superb in their own way —, clearly shown that he could tread over such slippery ground as comfortably and confidently as — or, even more so than — his compeers. If he has demonstrated this urbi et orbi ad oculos, he has also been able to follow, in other respects, the dictates of his own genius quite complacently. But after a composition like the Kādambarī, which belongs to the type of literature which we must acknowledge to be Daṇḍin’s special forte, he would have certainly given quite a different garb to his romance.

PISCHEL, who does not, at any rate, place Daṇḍin after Vāmana, has put forth the hypothesis that Daṇḍin also wrote the Mrčchakatika.\(^\text{13}\) Even before PISCHEL's time it was noticed that the social conditions and moral conventions represented in the DKČ and the Mrčchakatika were quite similar.\(^\text{14}\) PISCHEL too

\(^{13}\) Rudraṭa, pp. 13 ff.

\(^{14}\) Weher, Ind. Streif. I, 315-16; Bühler on the DKČ (as mentioned by Pischel, Rudraṭa, p. 19).
puts forth this argument though he does not emphasize it very strongly. The vital point in his argumentation is the oft-discussed stanza, limpatī 'va tamo 'ṅānī ... , which occurs in the Mṛcchakatika (I. 34) and also at two places in the Kavyādarśa (II. 362 and 226). In the second Kavyādarśa passage, Dāṇḍin discusses this stanza in a rather lengthy exposition, which, however, is not his usual practice. PISCHEL concludes from this that it must be his own stanza. MEYER, on the other hand, concludes from the same fact that it cannot be Dāṇḍin’s own stanza. He thinks of Dāṇḍin too highly to believe that he belonged to that type of lesser poets who derive plebeian pleasure from laying bare before the ‘blind’ public, in a hair-splitting manner, the excellence of the products of their velleity. Indeed, one has to be very cautious with regard to this stanza. PISCHEL himself admits the fact that this stanza has been attributed by the Indians to several writers and rightly concludes therefrom that its real author must have been already forgotten. He does not, however, extend this rather general conclusion to the more precise one, namely, that the author of the Mṛcchakatika is not the author of this stanza. At any rate, already in the time of the author of the Mṛcchakatika, it was an old and widely-known stanza, the author of which was possibly even then unknown to the people for whatever reason. According to MEYER, it appears to be a case where a poet merely cites. Had this stanza been composed by the author of the drama, how in the world could people have forgotten it? They must have known that the stanza did not belong to him and therefore ascribed it to this writer and that.

As one will have seen from the foregoing discussion, the stanza in question will not suffer such an edifice of theorising built upon it. PISCHEL himself admits that a conclusion regarding the identity of authors, based upon one single stanza, which occurs in two different works, is likely to be very often precipitate. A careful comparison of the Mṛcchakatika and the DKC

15. For an interesting illustration of how the same idea is expressed by two different authors in almost the same words, MEYER points to Bhrṣṭḥari ed. GOPI NATH, II, 75 (p. 189), with notes.
may perhaps lead us further. But, even at the end of such detailed investigation, we may not probably be in a position to say anything more than something like this: "Two spirits, related to each other so far as their literary gifts and way of thinking are concerned, express themselves through these two works. It is not unlikely that the author of this romance, which derives from every-day life and which is full of humour and living human interest, is identical with the author of the drama which is also characterised by similar features. It cannot, however, be proved."

Similarly, on account of the varying statements made by writers in this connection, it would be difficult to determine whether the author of the Kāvyādārṣa could have been the originator of this stanza. It cannot be proved that Daṇḍin himself composed all the illustrative stanzas given by him. At the same time it can be safely assumed that most of them are to be attributed to him. One feels very much inclined to think that exactly the same thing must have happened in the case of Daṇḍin as happened, according to PISCHEL, in the case of Jayadeva who too quotes this stanza, līmpatī 'va tamo ..., by way of illustration, though usually he employs his own stanzas for that purpose.16

In his Rudraṭa, PISCHEL has already discussed in detail the question regarding a number of other books which are wrongly attributed to Daṇḍin. The Chandoviciti referred to in Kāvyādārṣa I. 12 can denote the theory of metre in general. If that word is at all to be understood as indicating any particular book, it cannot be ascertained from Daṇḍin’s words as to who its real author may have been. Were it possible to prove that the Chandoviciti was a work written by Daṇḍin himself, the whole question about his date would be solved at one stroke, since the

16. These observations on PISCHEL's theory, says MEYER, will suffice for the present purpose. Further reference in this connection may be made to BÖNTLINGK's introduction to his edition of the Kāvyādārṣa; to the views of Pandit Maheshachandra Nyavaratna cited there; to JACOB, Litteraturblatt III, part III, 1887; and to the Revue Critique of 6, 6, 1887.
Chandovicīti is mentioned two times in Subandhu’s Vāsadattā.17 Of course even in those passages in the Vāsadattā we may understand the word in its general sense of metrical science.18

Dasakumāracarita

"It must be remembered," asserts Peterson, "that Dāṇḍin took his stories from older sources."19 He has, however, not produced any substantial evidence to prove this. Meyer, on the other hand, is inclined to agree with Weber who says: "With the exception of the four narratives of Mitragupta, which may have been borrowed from apparently older stories, the whole work appears to be the creation of Dāṇḍin’s own fantasy – of course granting that certain details such as the story of Pramāti are borrowed from elsewhere."20 It has to be conceded that everything that is significant in the DKC is absolutely original. Certain features like the following are after all quite common in the story-literature of ancient India, from the Jātakas downwards: an ascetic being seduced by a prostitute; under-earth passage; love at first sight, etc. Moreover, every country has a definite machinery of novel-making, and the selfsame patterns are therefore repeated from time to time.

Apahāravarmān’s story is not only the longest in this romance but, as Meyer puts it, it is, indeed, a genuine pearl. It is also quite original. The wish-fulfilling satchel plays a prominent role in that story. In the oldest Indian form of this narrative ‘motif’ – in Jātaka II (No. 291) – we find a pitcher in the place of a satchel. So too, for the wish-fulfilling satchel a magic table is introduced in the story of the Kathārṇava which was first brought to light by Aufrechtt;21 the other important features of that story also are almost similar to those of Apahāra-

17. The Vāsadattā, ed. by J. Vidyasagar, pp. 63 and 122.
18. Meyer accepts only the DKC and the Kāvyādarśa as the genuine works of Dāṇḍin.
varman's story. A much better version of the wish-fulfilling satchel is to be met with in the Puruṣaparīkṣā. Other stories such as No. 7 in the Śukasaptati ("The wonderful red lead") also belong to the same type, but are of a later period. A similar 'motif' is found in the Kathāsaritsāgara also.

The 'noble thief' who is represented in Apahāravarman's adventure in the DKC as having dealt so well with the maiden going through the streets by night, and the story of Kulpālikā have partial parallels in the Vēṭālapaṇcaviṃśatī (No. 10). The adventure of Pramati again presents another popular 'motif' in ancient Indian narrative literature. His being transplanted every night on the bed of Princess Navamālikā and his artful removal from there before he could embrace her remind us of a similar narrative in the KSS (taraṇīga 73). The story of Pramati being brought over to the king as a daughter of an old Brāhmaṇa and his being given over to the princess for a companion, etc., has many parallels in Indian literature, such as the KSS (taraṇīga 7), the Viśvakaritam (ch. 8), the Vēṭālapaṇcaviṃśatī (No. 15), and the Śukasaptati (No. 62).

The four stories narrated by Mitragupta, even on the first reading, create the impression that they must have been borrowed. Dhūminī's story, for instance, is found first in Jātaka No. 193, and then in the Pañcatantra and the KSS (taraṇīga 65). The last one is more closely related to the Jātaka story than to the DKC version. The story of Dhūminī in the DKC seems to be a combination of a story such as the one occurring in the Pañcatantra (IV) and a form of Jātaka No. 193. Daṇḍin has, however, introduced in it certain original features. According to MEYER, the second story narrated to the Rākṣasa by Mitragupta is found only in one other Indian version, namely, the Mahāummagga jātakā. The third one is found nowhere else, while the fourth one - that of Nitambavatī - is found in several versions. The

central idea in this last story, namely, falling in love through a picture, is quite common. The *Kathākośa* story is particularly close to the story as given in the *DKC*.

The last story, Viṣruta's adventure, has not been traced elsewhere. We do find certain of its features in other stories, but Daṇḍin seems to have taken the main theme from real life. Whimsical kings, as they are represented here, are to be met with everywhere in ancient Indian narrative literature. Among the circles of these kings there developed a 'philosophy of the prostitute's boudoir', which was later on systematized into a type of crude materialism. There is no reward for virtue nor reprisal for vice; father, mother, etc. are false notions; man is born alone, lives alone, and dies alone. The only reality is enjoyment of earthly pleasures; the talk of the other world is absurd and misleading. The heroes of the *DKC* are practical materialists of this type, though they do not completely flout the ancient religious conventions.

It will be thus seen that a number of the *DKC* stories have their parallels elsewhere in Indian literature. Even the framework of this rogue-romance is not unique. A similar background may be seen in the story of Prince Mṛgāṅkadatta and his ten ministers in the *KSS* (*taranīga* 70).

There has been a lot of controversy regarding the authorship of the *Pūrvapiṭhikā* (PP) of the *DKC*. WILSON remarks in his edition of the *DKC*: "As it (the PP) is somewhat less ambitiously written, and as the incidents related are, in one or two cases, briefly repeated in the body of the work, and with some contradictions, doubts have been started as to the accuracy of its attribution (to Daṇḍin)". One cannot, however, agree with WILSON when he says that PP is 'less ambitiously written.' It

25. According to MEYER, there are some common features in this story of the *DKC* and the first narrative of the *Vetṭilapāṭicasūrabhati* though the motif of falling in love through a picture is absent in the latter.
is conspicuously more pretentious than the rest of the work. It
is certainly not as good as most of the remaining romance, but
its author has evidently taken great pains over it. As a matter
of fact the whole work is generally characterised by fluctuations
from the literary point of view; in some passages both form and
contents rise to a high level, while in others they fall flat.
Considering this feature of its literary style, therefore, one is
inclined to ascribe the DKC, from the beginning to the end,
unhesitatingly to Daṇḍin. Even the apparent contradictions do
not create any difficulty for this hypothesis. It is no wonder if,
with such intricate intertwining of so many threads of the story,
the writer has not noticed, through oversight, a couple of
contradictions here and there. Quandoquidem dormitat et bonus
Homerus.

The manner in which this romance must have been written
may, according to MEYER, be presumed to have been as follows:
Daṇḍin began to write it rather early in his career. The PP often
betrays signs of slightness and infantile character; it lacks that
clever contrivance of the plot and is characterised by greater
bombast than the rest of the work. It is quite understandable
that in his immature age Daṇḍin could not free himself from that
peculiar kind of style. Throughout the first part there is a wild
and conjuring play of antitheses and affected witticisms, of
rhyming words and artificial sābdālaṁkāras. After this more or
less imbecile phantasmagoria, the air begins to clear up by the
end of the PP, and, in the work proper, it is quite free, fresh, and
open. It is probable that, after the completion of the PP, Daṇḍin
allowed the work to remain as it was for a long time, and then
took it up again in his best years when, after having become
conscious of his literary talents, he had emancipated himself from
the atrocities of style. In the second chapter of the main work,
namely, the adventures of Apabhārvarman, Daṇḍin may be said
to have attained the height of his genius. The work then
proceeded steadily—some parts of it being remarkably good
while others being less striking—until death surprised Daṇḍin
while he had still been working on the last chapter, which thus
remained incomplete. In comparison with a major part of the romance this last chapter shows signs of senility and weakness.

This hypothesis would explain away most of the difficulties about the composition of the DKC. It is also supported by a considerable amount of evidence which can be derived from the work itself. But it is certainly not necessary to go into details. Attention may, however, be drawn only to one remarkable feature. With respect to a person who speaks while suffering either from anguish or from pain, the author usually employs, in the main body of his work, the phrase, sagadgadam agadat, which is certainly not a bad play upon words. The word sagadgadam occurs in similar circumstances quite often also in the PP, but there is some difference, namely, that in the latter cases a verb other than agadat is used. If the PP was really the work of a writer different from Daṇḍin, that writer would have presumably made conscious efforts to imitate Daṇḍin as closely as possible — sometimes even in the spirit of 'out-Heroding Herod.' Such being the case, how and why should the imitator have left out sagadgadam agadat which was certainly a good śabdālanākāra? This supposed imitator seems to have usually copied even the smallest details of Daṇḍin's style. If, on the other hand, we accept that Daṇḍin himself wrote the PP, we can explain away this apparent discrepancy on the assumption — which, by the way, is supported by actual facts — that a writer employs different expressions in different periods of his career.

The only circumstance, which, according to Meyer, seems to go against Daṇḍin's authorship of the PP, is that, out of the

28. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not this last chapter comes from Daṇḍin's pen. The name Bhojasura is quite common in India. It is not likely that the famous Bhoja is thereby intended. If it is really a reference to that Bhoja, then it must surely be a case of an early interpolation, for, Daṇḍin, like Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Bāṇa, etc., is traditionally believed to have lived at the court of Bhoja.


30. According to Meyer, the last unfinished story represents Daṇḍin's style most authentically.
three commentaries – the Padacandrikā, the Laghudīpikā, and the Bhūṣaṇā – included in the edition of the DāKa by GODBOLE and PARAB, only the Padacandrikā comments on it. 31 The Laghudīpikā is obviously compiled from the borrowings from the other two; and even the Bhūṣaṇā appears to be later than the Padacandrikā since it usually controverts the interpretations given by the latter. The Bhūṣaṇā takes up in certain matters quite a queer attitude. Its author does not appear to have been free from a certain kind of foppishness (cf. the introductory verses) and perhaps therefore seems to have prided himself upon not having commented upon the PP, though, even in his time, tradition must have ascribed it to Daṇḍin. At any rate there is sufficient evidence to show that either the PP was before him in a divergent form or – and this is more likely – he has cited from memory and has thereby confounded that narrative with stories in other works. Considering and weighing all these facts one is inclined to take the PP to be a genuine composition of Daṇḍin. But even in this case one may not be too sure.

31. Here there seems to be some misunderstanding on the part of MEYER. He says that, for his German translation, he has taken as the basis “The DāKa of Daṇḍin, with three commentaries – the Padacandrikā of Kavindra Sarasvatī, the Bhūṣaṇā of Śivarāma, and the Laghudīpikā – edited with various readings by N. B. GODBOLE and K. B. PARAB; third revised edition, Nirmisasagar Press, Bombay, 1899.” Unfortunately I was not able to get hold of this edition. But already in the second edition of the DāKa, edited by GODBOLE and PARAB and published by the Nirmisasagar Press, Bombay, in 1889 (which edition I have seen), four commentaries have been included, namely, the Padadīpikā, the Padacandrikā, the Bhūṣaṇā, and the Laghudīpikā (in the first edition published in 1883, only the first three of these four commentaries have been included). Out of these four commentaries only the Padadīpikā comments on the PP. It does not comment on any other part of the DāKa. So too none of the remaining three commentaries comments on the PP. According to the editors, the Padadīpikā is written by some fairly late author imitating the style of Padacandrikā. Also in the fifth edition, published in 1905, which I have seen, these same four commentaries are given with the same observation by the editors. It has, therefore, to be presumed that even in the third edition (used by MEYER) these four commentaries must have been given out of which only the Padadīpikā (and not the Padacandrikā as mentioned by MEYER) must have commented on the PP.
In Meyer's opinion, in comparison with the picaresque romances of the Latin peoples, this ancient Indian romance, apart from its stylistic unpleasantnesses from the Westerner's point of view, conspicuously falls short in one respect. The vast material throwing light upon the life of the time and the subtle characterisation are absent here. Still not rarely does one find magnificent character-sketches, such, for instance, as those portrayed in the story of Apahāravarman. In other cases there are introduced at least some features which make it possible for the reader to have, either through perception or through sufficient imagination on his part, the whole personality represented 'living' before him. Particularly great mastery, however, has been exhibited by Daṇḍin in the presentation of situations which help the development and the complication of the plot. Another feature of the DKC, which does not seem to have been sufficiently highlighted, is the absence in it of the so-called "poetic justice". The rogues triumph; stupidity and simplicity are exploited; and death and privation first visit the simpleton. Of course the victims of the daring and crafty pranks of these wondrous princes are usually represented to have been bad characters who fully deserve their lot. 'The end justifies the means'—this seems to be the watchword. The swindler worthies in this romance have, however, some good points in them; and this fact is indicative of Daṇḍin's literary insight and certainly reflects credit on him. They are loyal friends; they do not shy at the adventures which they undertake for the sake of those to whom they are attached; they remain true to their own code of honour; they are courageous and spirited, clever and not without certain noble inclinations; they do not allow more blood to spill than what is absolutely necessary.

In the first chapter of Freytag's lost manuscript one Professor Felix Werner is represented as complaining that he does not find Sanskrit language and ancient India genuine. He pronounces the judgement that ancient Indian literature rarely shows any real men. One who reads the DKC will, however, find that there are enough men—proper and real human beings—in ancient Indian narrative literature. The Hindu has a double
personality which is so aptly described by Bhartṛhari in the following stanza:

äväsah kriyatāṁ gāṅge pāpavārini vārini /
stanadvaye tarunyā vā manohārinkā hariṇi ///

Faust’s reference to ‘two souls in one breast’ would be particularly applicable to the Hindu. One aspect of the Hindu’s personality – namely, strong and intensive urge for philosophical mysticism – is fairly widely known to the outside world. It is the other side of his personality that is reflected in the Daśa-kumāracarita.

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ŚAṆΚARĀCĀRYA

When we begin to think of classical Hindu philosophy in general, one book and one philosopher stand out prominently before us. The book is the Bhagavadgītā and the philosopher is Śaṅkarācārya. So far as the latter is concerned, we may indeed say that the philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya is usually regarded, even to this day, as being the most representative of ancient Indian philosophical thought as a whole. It is a characteristic feature of the history of ancient Indian philosophy that it attaches greater importance to the thought than to the thinker. We, therefore, know very little, if at all anything, about the personal lives of ancient Indian philosophers. Śaṅkarācārya is no exception to this general rule. But Śaṅkarācārya's principal writings, which are pretty voluminous, are available to us almost intact, and it is, therefore, possible to form a sufficiently clear and comprehensive idea about his Weltanschauung. The philosophical writings of Śaṅkara are mainly of the nature of commentaries or Bhāṣyas on ancient texts. The Upaniṣads, the Brahmasūtras, and the Bhagavadgītā have been traditionally regarded as constituting the threefold foundation on which the magnificent edifice of Brahmanic philosophy is erected. And it was a well-established convention that a scholar who undertook to elucidate the philosophical thought of these three Prasthānas through his commentaries, so as to present it as a homogeneous philosophical system, would be called an Ācārya. Śaṅkarācārya also is known to have written commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads, the Brahmasūtras, and the Bhagavadgītā; but by far the most important of his works must be said to be his Bhāṣya on the Brahmasūtras.

In the history of ancient Indian philosophy the Upaniṣads must, properly speaking, be said to mark the beginnings of systematic philosophical thought. I have purposely said 'systematic philosophical thought.' For, philosophical speculations in India are indeed as old as the Veda, or even older. But it was
in the Upaniṣads that the Indian thinkers first posed and sought to solve, in their own peculiar manner, the various problems of philosophy as such. It should, however, be remembered that the Upaniṣads, though they deal more or less exclusively with such problems, are but the songs before sunrise. The Upaniṣadic thinkers, no doubt, raised the banner of free-thinking and courageously led a revolt against the intellectual and social hegemony established by the ritualists. They encouraged, among the people, an attitude of inquiry as against the attitude of unquestioning acceptance which had dominated the earlier period. They boldly asserted that philosophy and religion were not the monopoly of any single class in the society. They may thus be said to have truly laid the foundations of a new age in the cultural history of India. But, so far as philosophy as such was concerned, the approach of the Upaniṣadic thinkers to the various problems posed by them—some of them profound, but others quite naive—was essentially mystical and poetical. They usually presented the results rather than the processes of their thinking; they put an emphasis on the conclusions rather than on the methodology by means of which those conclusions were arrived at. The Upaniṣads are thus characterized by an almost total absence of abstruse logical argumentation. They consist mainly of the inspired articulations of what may be called the inner voice of the philosophers. The Upaniṣadic speculations are indeed comparable with the sporadic flashes of lightning. The Upaniṣads cannot, therefore, claim to have enunciated any regular philosophical 'system' as such. They suffered from some other handicaps as well. Their philosophy, for instance, was far too individualistic to command a popular appeal. Moreover, the Upaniṣads paid little heed to the practical side of spiritual life. In other words, they gave to the people a philosophy without a religion. And, as is well known, it is religion which has a stronger hold on the popular mind. Further, on account of the peculiar other-worldliness of the Upaniṣadic speculations, people at large were generally inclined to flog shy of them. But what was more serious was that the Upaniṣads, when considered together, appeared to teach philosophical doctrines which were mutually inconsistent, or
sometimes even self-contradictory. They thus tended to make the already existing philosophical skein more entangled. The result of all this can be easily imagined: with all the freshness of their outlook and the boldness of their speculations the Upaniṣads did not sway the popular mind as much and as long as they could have otherwise done.

As against this, taking advantage of the background of the social and intellectual revolt championed by the Upaniṣads, but, at the same time, scrupulously avoiding the drawbacks of the Upaniṣadic thought and of the Upaniṣadic ways of propagating that thought, some non-Vedic or heterodox religio-philosophical movements, whose beginnings, incidentally, might be traced back to a pre-Vedic non-Aryan thought-complex, — Buddhism being perhaps the foremost among them — pushed forward, and, thanks to their missionary zeal, began to assert themselves, so much so that, in course of time, it appeared as if they, especially Buddhism, would dominate the entire field of Indian philosophy and religion, thereby relegating the Vedic way of life and thought almost to oblivion. This state of things continued for some time, but not very long. There had still remained appreciable groups of staunch champions of the ancient Vedic culture. They saw that the Vedic way of life and thought was in the danger of complete extinction. They also came to realize why all that was happening. They, therefore, set out to reorganize all aspects of Vedic life and thought in the light of what they had learnt through experience. One aspect of this comprehensive movement of reorganization, through consolidation, systematization, and popularization, was to present the speculations of the Upaniṣads as a homogeneous philosophical system. As may be imagined, this was indeed a difficult task. But all credit is due to Bādarāyaṇa who, through his Brahmasūtras, accomplished this task more or less successfully. It is on these Brahmasūtras, which are of the nature of philosophical aphorisms, that Saṅkarācārya wrote his monumental Bhāṣya. The traditional definition of a Bhāṣya does not permit a Bhāṣyakāra or a commentator to go beyond not only the spirit but also the words of the Sūtras. But,
fortunately for us, the restrictions implied by this definition are
honoured more in their breach. For, it appears as if a Bhāṣyā-
kāra, like Śaṅkara, used these Sūtras merely as a peg on which to
hang his own philosophy. It must, however, be remembered that,
even while doing so, Śaṅkara never lost his moorings in the
Upaniṣads which ever served as the main spring of his world-view.

But Śaṅkarācārya seems to have received philosophical inspira-
tion from another significant source also. From the little
evidence that is available to us it can be gathered that Śaṅkara
completed his studies at a very early age. Soon after that he is
said to have renounced this worldly life and entered the Saṁnyā-
sāstra. This young Saṁnyāsī, who was already well-versed in
the knowledge derived from the usual books, then set out on a
long journey in search of knowledge that might be derived from
the book of life. In the course of his wanderings, on the banks
of the river Narmadā, Śaṅkara came across Govindācārya—a
thinker of high spiritual attainments. As was to be expected, the
young Śaṅkara was immediately drawn towards this man of
colossal learning and austere spiritual discipline, and eventually
he became Govindācārya’s disciple. And this was indeed quite a
necessary step. Śaṅkara had, through the deep study of the Veda
and other ancillary works, already known what the ultimate
philosophical reality was. But that was only mediate knowledge
of reality. What an Indian seeker aims at is not mediate know-
ledge but immediate vision of the ultimate reality—not merely
the intellectual comprehension but the spiritual experience of
it. And this was possible only through the guidance of a com-
petent teacher. Govindācārya, it may be pointed out, was him-
sell a pupil of Gauḍapādācārya. This Gauḍapāda must be said
to have indeed been an outstanding figure in the history of Indian
philosophy. He it was who laid the foundation, as it were, of a
new philosophical school—the school which sought to revive the
Upaniṣadic studies on Buddhist lines. The enormous debt which
Gauḍapāda owed to Buddhist metaphysics and methodology
would become evident to even a casual student of the only work
from his pen that is available, namely, his Kārikās on the
Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad. It will thus be seen that Śaṅkara derived his
philosophical inspiration, on the one hand, from the orthodox Upaniṣads, through Bādarāyaṇa, and, on the other hand, from the heterodox Buddhism, through Gauḍapāda. If once this significant fact was fully realized, together with all its implications, it would become easy for us properly to understand and evaluate Śaṅkara’s philosophy.

Broadly speaking, ancient Indian philosophy poses and seeks to answer four basic questions. An Indian philosopher looks outward and asks himself: What is the nature of the world in which I live? He looks inward and asks: Who, after all, am I? Further, realizing that the phenomenal world of his experience is transitory and ever-changing, he asks: What is the ultimate reality behind this world? And finally he asks: What is the mutual relationship between the ultimate reality on the one hand, and the world and the self on the other?

Following the lead of the Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara starts from the known to the unknown. He takes the illustration of a lump of clay and the various utensils, like pot, pitcher, and plate, made out of clay. In the ultimate analysis, it would be found that the essential ultimate basis of these various utensils was clay, while pot, pitcher, plate, etc., were but so many names given to the different forms of that clay. Pot, pitcher, plate, etc., when broken, perish as pot, pitcher, and plate; but clay, as their essential ultimate basis, still persists. The same is the case with gold and the various ornaments made of gold, or steel and the various instruments made of steel. These ornaments and instruments, which are really speaking but names and forms, go out of existence, in course of time, as such and such ornaments or such and such instruments; but gold and steel as such do persist. From these particular instances we are logically led to the generalization that effects, such as pot, pitcher, and plate, are mere names and forms, while their cause, such as clay, is the persisting reality. There is also another generalization that can be established on the basis of the illustrations given above. Pot, pitcher, plate, etc., which may be ‘many’, are the outcome of clay, which is ‘one’. In other words, the effects may be many
but their ultimate cause is always one. Now applying these two generalizations to the world as a whole, we would be justified in assuming that the manifold objects in the world, which were indeed comparable with pot, pitcher, and plate, must have been derived from one single cause. And, further, the one single cause— which, it must be presumed, in order to avoid the otherwise contingent regressus ad infinitum, is itself uncaused—must be the essential ultimate reality; while the manifold objects in the world, which are merely different names given to the different forms of that reality, are liable to change and destruction. The answer to the first question, namely, ‘What is the nature of this world?’ would thus be that the manifold world was merely a bundle of names and forms, and, therefore, must be regarded as really unreal. Shakespeare, the poet, asked: ‘What is there in a name?’ Śaṅkarācārya, the philosopher, would retort: ‘The whole world is nothing but names.’ The ultimate reality behind this manifold world is its one uncaused cause, which Śaṅkara, following the Upaniṣads, calls Brahman. As the Upaniṣads put it, ‘That from which these things are born, that in which when born they live, and that into which they enter at their death, that is Brahman.’ If we were to try to define the nature of Brahman with reference to the various phenomenal beings, the only answer which would recur over and over again would be: Neti, Neti—Brahman is not like this, Brahman is not like that. For, Brahman, being the only reality, is comparable with no other entity than itself. Brahman is sat, cit, and ānanda, that is, it is of the nature of ultimate existence, infinite consciousness, and pure bliss.

Speaking of the individual being, Śaṅkara has elaborated the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the five sheaths. The individual being, according to that doctrine, is made up of five sheaths—namely, the physical (annamaya), the vital (prāṇamaya), the mental (manomaya), the intellectual (vijñānamaya), and the blissful (ānandamaya) — each succeeding sheath lying within the preceding one, and being more subtle, more real, and more ultimate than it. The ‘blissful’ thus forms the ultimate essence of the individual being.
We may consider the individual being from another point of view also. The individual being passes through different modes of experience. In the waking state, all the three constituents of the individual being, namely, body, mind, and consciousness, are normally active. But all these three are not ultimate. For, in another state, namely, the dreaming state, body becomes inactive, and only mind and consciousness remain active. In still another state, namely, that of dreamless sleep, even mind becomes inactive and only consciousness persists. But this consciousness is finite. The ultimate nature of the individual being, however, is infinite consciousness, which becomes evident in the fourth and final mode of experience, namely, the spiritual realization of the reality. The ultimate reality behind the individual being, which is called Ātman, is thus again of the nature of pure bliss and infinite consciousness, which latter are, as we have already seen, also the characteristics of Brahma. The natural next step in this process of reasoning would, therefore, be to identify Ātman with Brahma. This, then, is the philosophical doctrine of Advaita or monism. The phenomenal world is a bundle of names and forms, and is, therefore, ultimately unreal. Brahma is the only ultimate reality behind the world and this Brahma is identical with Ātman, which is the ultimate reality behind the individual being. Gauḍapāda had, in his Kārikās, incidentally suggested that the great Buddhist truth of Vijñāna would hold good of the highest Ātman-Brahman of the Upaniṣads. It was left to Śaṅkara, his pupil’s pupil, to show that the Upaniṣads guaranteed the truth of his master’s views.

The illustrations given above to prove the extreme nominalism of the world would imply that, though the effects like pot, pitcher, and plate were not ultimately real, they must be regarded as real as long as they existed as pot, pitcher, etc. On the same analogy, the manifold world also must be regarded as real to some extent. In other words, the monism sought to be established on the basis of these illustrations would be a sort of ‘qualified’ monism. Śaṅkara stoutly discountenances any such implication. And herein, indeed, do we find the real contribution of Śaṅkara-cārya
to Indian philosophical thought. Śaṅkara points out that causal relation is of two types. The utensils, which are the effects, are made out of clay, which is the cause; that is to say, as long as there is the cognition of the utensils as utensils, clay loses its essential nature of clayness. But now consider another type of causal relation. A rope, lying in darkness, appears as a snake. In this illustration, snake is the effect of rope, which is the cause. But even when the rope is cognized as snake, it does not lose its essential nature of ropeness. Śaṅkara asserts that the causal relation subsisting between the world and Brahma is of this second type. As a matter of fact, Brahma alone exists as the reality; but, through ignorance, this Brahma appears as the world. But as soon as the light of knowledge illumines the real rope of Brahma, the illusion of the serpent of the world vanishes altogether. The monism of Śaṅkara is thus not ‘qualified’ but ‘absolute’. It is Kevala-Advaita.

It will be seen that the doctrines of absolute monism, qualified monism, and, sometimes, even dualism are implied in the Upaniṣads. For the Bhāṣyakāras who, while elucidating the Brahmasūtras, were required to present the Upaniṣadic speculations as a homogeneous philosophical whole, this fact indeed proved a great stumbling-block. It can, however, be said without any fear of contradiction that Śaṅkara got over this stumbling-block in a more convincing and satisfactory manner than any other Bhāṣyakāra. That he could do so, he again owes to his Buddhist inspiration. Śaṅkara pointed out that the Upaniṣads approached the main philosophical problems from two points of view – the absolute (pāramārthika) point of view and the relative or phenomenal (vyāvahārīka) point of view. Corresponding to these two points of view, we come across in the Upaniṣads two philosophical doctrines – absolute monism, on the one hand, and qualified monism or dualism, on the other.

The ideal of spiritual life, which seems to emerge out of Śaṅkara’s writings viewed in their totality, is that of Jīvanmukta – that is, of a person who, after having fully realized and experienced the highest truth of Brahma-Ātman, still does not
altogether abhor the *vyāhārīka* life, but continues to make his own contribution towards the attainment of the highest truth by his fellow-men. That an absolute monist and an astute Śaṁnyāśī like Śaṅkara should have, in a true missionary spirit, founded in the four corners of this country four Maṭhas for the propagation of the highest truth, is itself perhaps the best illustration of that ideal of spiritual life.

Śaṅkara’s philosophy has imbibed in itself the strong points of the two principal currents of philosophical thought in ancient India – the Upaniṣadic and the Buddhist. It is, therefore, no wonder that his philosophy should be regarded as being the most representative of ancient Indian philosophical thought, and that it should still claim the largest number of adherents who proudly pronounce their faith: *ācāryāḥ śaṅkarācāryāḥ, matam advaitam eva ca* – Śaṅkarācārya is our preceptor, *Advaita* our philosophy!

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THE BRAHMI SCRIPT

The two most important features of human behaviour are said to be expression and communication. It is suggested that the first of these two features pertains to the personal behaviour of man, while the second to his social behaviour. It will, however, be seen that, man being essentially a social being, the aims of expression and communication are so closely interrelated to each other, in all forms of human behaviour, that normally when we speak about the one we are forced to consider also the other. In order to communicate thoughts and feelings, there must be a conventional system of signs and symbols which, when used by some persons, are understood by other persons receiving them. This reception of communicated thoughts and feelings is normally achieved by our senses, among which sight, hearing, and touch play the most prominent role. Visual communication, for instance, is possible through gesture and mimicry and other optic signals, such as fire, smoke, light, etc. For auditory communication, man employs such simple means as whistling, hissing, and applauding. He also uses other acoustic signals like drums and trumpets. But the most important form of auditory communication is the spoken language. Language is, indeed, a universal phenomenon, for, so far as we know, in the whole history of mankind, there has never existed a community which had not developed some kind of language for itself. Then there is what may be called tactual communication, that is communication of one's feelings through the sense of touch, such as, for instance, by means of hand-shake, back-slap, love-stroke, etc. All these means of communication—visual, auditory, and tactual—which have been mentioned so far possess two common characteristics: firstly, they are all of a short duration; and, secondly, they necessarily presuppose some degree of proximity between the communicator and the receiver. The need was, therefore, felt for evolving means of conveying thoughts and feelings, which were not thus restricted in respect of time and space. This led to
the development of two comparatively more stable methods of communication, namely, (1) communication by means of objects and (2) communication by means of certain markings on objects. Phonograph records for auditory communication and Braille system for tactual communication belong to the category of stable methods of communication. But long before these were even thought of, man had invented certain stable methods of visual communication. There was, for instance, a pile of stones set up on a grave to give expression to one's feelings for the deceased, or the cross to symbolise faith and the anchor to symbolise hope. Systems of mnemonic signs to keep accounts by means of objects are known throughout the world. But such methods of visual communication by means of objects themselves were soon found to be clumsy and impracticable. It was then that man thought of the more convenient method of communication by means of markings on objects or any solid material. This is the genesis of the art of writing. The evolution of writing from the earliest stages of pictographs to a full alphabet must, indeed, be said to constitute a significant chapter in the history of human civilisation.

The art of writing being so intrinsically linked up with the culture of a people, the question is often—and quite naturally—asked: When did the art of writing first come to be practised in India? On account of the scarcity of material and the consequent gaps in the historical reconstruction, like many other questions relating to Indian history, the question about the antiquity of writing in India also has still remained more or less undecided. Until a few decades ago, before the stupendous discovery of the Indus valley civilisation, the inscriptions of Aśoka, belonging to the third century B. C., were considered to be the earliest specimens of writing known in India. The reign of Aśoka has become memorable for several happenings of far-reaching importance—and one of them must be said to have been the wide use made of writing, particularly for the purpose of popular edification. A couple of Aśoka's inscriptions are in the Aramaic script, while the others are either in the Kharoshti or in the Brahmi script.
The Aramaic script is obviously a foreign script; and the Kharo-
shtri, which is essentially derived from the Aramaic, must also be looked upon as being, in a sense, more or less non-Indian. The Brahmi script is, thus, the earliest Indian alphabet definitely known and clearly deciphered so far. Consequently, as was but to be expected, the question of the antiquity of writing in India came to be linked up with the question of the antiquity of the Brahmi-script. This has resulted in the introduction of the art of writing in India being assigned to a rather late date. MAX MÜLLER, for instance, suggests that the Brahmi script cannot have been developed very much earlier than the days of Aśoka. He tries to get confirmation for his view from the grammar of Pāṇini, which he places in the 4th century B.C. He maintains that there is not a single word in Pāṇini’s terminology, which presupposes the existence of writing.¹ According to BÜHLER, whose views on the subject had been, till recently, generally accepted, the Brahmi script, as employed in Aśoka’s inscriptions, must have been the result of a long evolutionary development.² The very striking characteristics of the Aśokan Brahmi, such as its many local varieties and the varied cursive and advanced forms of its letters, prove that it had a long history before Aśoka’s time. The Brahmi characters are akin to the North Semitic-Phoenician – characters, belonging to the ninth century B.C., That Semitic script, it is suggested, was borrowed by Indian traders from Mesopotamia and introduced into India about 800 B.C. Out of it was then evolved, in course of time, an Indian script which was later on called Brahmi. The knowledge of writing must, accordingly, be said to have flourished in India from the ninth or the eighth century B.C. onwards.

Two points, however, need to be made clear in connection with the question of the antiquity of writing in India. Firstly, it should be remembered that the views mentioned above were

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2. BÜHLER, Indian Paleography, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 47 ff.
expressed in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Quite a lot of material of great historical value has been brought to light since then, which has put an altogether new complexion on the whole subject. Secondly, it is erroneous and misleading to link up the question of the antiquity of writing with the question of the origin and antiquity of the Brahmi script. The Brahmi inscriptions of Asoka may be the earliest specimens of decipherable writing, which have actually become available so far; but this fact must not, by any means, be understood to indicate that writing was unknown in India before the age of the Mauryas. There is, indeed, considerable evidence of a circumstantial and inferential character, which enables us to presume the existence of writing even in the very early periods of India’s cultural history. To begin with, there is the indigenous Indian tradition, which attributes the invention of writing to god Brahmā himself. The Nārada-Smṛti, for instance, says: “Had Brahmā not created writing, the world could never have attained to its present happy condition.”3 Brhaspati is more specific. He says: “Since memory regarding a particular thing becomes confused within a period of six months, Brahmā, in very early times, created letters to be depicted on leaves.”4 A sculptural representation of this tradition is found at Badami, where Brahmā is shown with a bundle of palm-leaves in one of his hands. One may not accept this tradition quite literally, but one need have no hesitation in vouchsafing what is implied by it, namely, the great antiquity of writing. It is true that the Veda has been handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. It must not, however, be supposed on that account, as is often erroneously done, that the art of writing was unknown in the early Vedic age. The practice of oral transmission of Vedic texts was adopted, not because written copies of those texts were not available, but presumably because it was believed that oral transmission alone was most conducive to the preservation of the magico-religious potency and the formal perfection of those texts. On the contrary, it

3. Nārada-Smṛti, Brādāna, st. 70.
may, indeed, be argued that it is almost unimaginable that such an extensive and highly complex literature as the Veda and its ancillary texts dealing with subjects like phonetics, prosody, and astronomy — much of which, again, is in prose form — was produced and propagated without the knowledge of writing. Besides, it is suggested that, in the Veda itself, there are more or less clear indications that writing was known to the Vedic people. *Rgveda* X. 71. 4, for instance, is believed to be referring to 'speech which can be seen', while *Rgveda* X. 62. 7 is understood to refer to cows on whose ears number 8 was marked and *Atharvaveda* VII. 50. 5 to a written document.\(^5\) References to writing are found in several subsequent literary works — Brahmanic, Buddhist, and Jaina. In addition to this traditional and literary evidence for the high antiquity of writing in India, one can also point to more positive archaeological evidence. One can, for instance, refer to alphabetic signs on the prehistoric potteries dug out of the Hyderabad cairns. And then there are the clay-seals of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa with their pictographic writings of the 3rd millennium B.C., which have revolutionized the entire historical pattern. Thus, with the help of archaeological and literary evidence, it is possible to establish the continuity of the use of writing in India from at least 3000 B.C. onwards.

Notwithstanding all this, it must be said that palaeography began in India with the discovery and decipherment of Asoka's inscriptions. The story of the various efforts made to decipher the Brahmi script reads almost like a romantic adventure. Strange as it may seem, the Indians had long ago become ignorant of the ancient scripts of their own land. The records in Brahmi and Gupta characters had already become a sealed book to them. In the 14th century A.D., Firoz Shah Tughlaq transferred the Asoka pillars from Topra and Meerut to Delhi, and invited a number of Sanskrit Pandits to read the writings on them, which, however, they were unable to do. A couple of centuries later,

\(^5\) The word *sahlikhta* in this last context is, however, obscure. Indeed the interpretation of all these passages is doubtful.
Akbar also tried to get those pillar-inscriptions deciphered but without success. As in several other fields, so to in the decipherment of the Brahmi script, it was the European scholars of the 19th century, who proved to be the real pioneers. The Brahmi inscriptions in the Ellora caves were the first to attract the attention of scholars. In 1795, MELLET sent estampages of those inscriptions to William JONES for decipherment. The latter forwarded them to WILFORD, who, under the misguidance of a Sanskrit Pandit, gave their rendering, which was eventually found to be entirely imaginary.

LASSEN was the first scholar to have made a correct approach to this problem of decipherment. The Greek rulers of Bactria had struck coins with legends in Greek on the obverse and their transliteration in Brahmi on the reverse. These bilingual coins, LASSEN rightly concluded, were the real keys to unravel the secret of the Brahmi script. In 1836, he actually read the Brahmi legends on the coins of the Indo-Bactrian king, Agathocles. But these legends were after all very small, and, therefore, beyond deciphering certain Brahmi characters, LASSEN could not make any further progress. Then came in the field James PRINSEP, to whom, indeed, belongs the credit of the full decipherment of the Brahmi script. PRINSEP collected and compared the estampages of the small inscriptions on the railing and the gate pillars at Sanchi. At the end of all those inscriptions he found two common letters. These two common letters were uniformly preceded by a Brahmi character which had already been deciphered as sa. This sa, PRINSEP conjectured, must be the prakritisation of the Sanskrit genitive termination sva; and the word preceding this sa must be a proper name. The following word of two letters must then mean 'gift' or 'dedication'. The first of these two letters was marked with a medial sign for ā and the second was marked with the sign for anusvāra. PRINSEP, therefore, ventured to read that word as dānam, and this eventually proved correct. Encouraged by this lucky chance, he then tackled larger inscriptions and, by means of patient and scientific study, succeeded in deciphering...
majority of early Brahmi characters. The results achieved by him were later confirmed and supplemented by GRIERSON and BÜHLER.

As suggested above, it was originally believed that the Brahmi script was derived from some Semitic alphabet. Recent discoveries and researches, however, tend to suggest that the Brahmi alphabet has rather developed out of the pictographic script of the Indus Valley. Scholars have tried to demonstrate, though not always convincingly, how this development must have taken place. They have further tried to demonstrate how, out of the early Brahmi, the later Gupta, Devanāgarī, and other Indian scripts – and, presumably, even Simhalese, Siamese, and Burmese scripts, among others, – have grown. As for the Brahmi script itself, it is a phonetic script, is mostly written from left to right, is full of cursive letters, and is characterised by a certain pedantic formalism. The letters are set up as straight as possible, the majority consisting of vertical lines with appendages attached mostly at the foot, or at the foot and at the top, rarely in the middle, but never at the top alone. There are clearly evident a desire to frame signs suited for the formation of regular lines and an aversion to top-heavy characters. It may be further pointed out that Brahmi was used, both for Sanskrit and Prakrits, from about 350 B. C. to about 350 A. D. – not only in India but even outside, in what may be called India’s cultural outposts. The culture-historical significance of Brahmi is thus very great. Even today one is thrilled to know that Brahmi has served as a vehicle for the inspiring and ennobling message, which the great Aśoka proclaimed to his subjects through his edicts and which is still proving to be the guiding star to the state and people of India.

INDIA'S CULTURAL OUTPOSTS

A notable feature of Indological researches of recent times is the new orientation which they have given to historical studies. It was once believed that, in the early periods of her history, India lived in a sort of political and cultural isolation. It was also the fashion to present Indian history as having been made up mainly of a series of foreign invasions, such as those by the Aryans, the Greeks, the Hūnas, the Muslims, and the British. Modern researches in ancient Indian history have, however, convincingly shown that neither of these views is wholly correct. Even in one of the earliest phases of her cultural history, namely, the one represented by the Indus valley civilisation, belonging to the 3rd millennium B.C., India is distinctly known to have had cultural contacts with Western Asia. Indeed, sufficient evidence has now been made available which enables us to presume such contacts with the outside world through almost all the succeeding historical periods. It has been further proved that in this cultural give-and-take India's role was certainly not merely of a passive and receptive character. There are clear indications that waves after waves of adventurous Indians silently drifted towards the West, the North, the East, and the South, over the mountains and across the seas, and brought to the peoples of those regions new thought, new gods, new customs, indeed, a new way of life. There is no doubt that the original motivation for the Indian adventures stemmed from trade and commerce, but it was inevitable that a breath of Indian spirit should have blown over the various lands to which these Indian traders made their way.

The course of events in most of such cases followed a more or less fixed pattern. Indians went out to those lands primarily as traders. But while they traded in the special merchandise of India and those lands, they also left behind conspicuous traces of their own culture. In course of time some of them even settled down there permanently. The next step, naturally, was the seizing
of political power in those lands. In this activity of colonisation and cultural expansion one can hardly fail to see the hand also of ambitious Hindu princes who followed in the wake of the traders and founded their own kingdoms in different lands, as well as of the bands of selfless missionaries who conveyed to those lands the noble message of the sage of Kapilavastu. It was in this manner that India’s cultural outposts came to be gradually brought into being in different regions round about the mainland.

Though the ancient Indians pursued this activity of cultural colonisation in all directions, that activity has left its traces in a particularly indelible and lasting form in the countries of South-East Asia. Literary evidence shows that, since early times, Indians had known the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and the East Indies by the general name of Suvarṇabhūmi or Suvarṇa-Dvīpa (= the land of gold). This name itself suggests that Indians must have been attracted to the lands in that region mainly on account of the rich largesses which they offered in the form of various tradeable commodities like spices, minerals, gold, and other precious metals. As a matter of fact, Indian literature actually names the various tiny islands in the South-East Asian waters, after their respective special commodities, as Rūpyaka-Dvīpa, Tāmra-Dvīpa, Yava-Dvīpa, Śaṅkha-Dvīpa, Karpūra-Dvīpa, Nārikela-Dvīpa, etc.

Many stories have been preserved in the Jātakas, the Bhāvat-kathā, the Kathākośa, and similar other literary works of adventurous traders who undertook perilous sea-voyages to Suvarṇabhūmi in search of fortune. India’s contacts with the South-East Asian countries, indeed, go back to even earlier times. There is, for instance, a tradition, which cannot, however, be historically confirmed, that two Buddhist missionaries, named Śoṇa and Uttara, went to Suvarṇabhūmi during the reign of Aśoka. Another tradition ascribes the founding of Ligor in Malay Peninsula to a descendant of Aśoka. Similarly, Javanese legends connect the original colonists and their leader Āji Śaka with the Mahābhārata heroes. Coming to more positiv...
evidences, we find the unknown author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* in the 1st century A.D. and Ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D. referring in unmistakable terms to India's intercourse with the countries in that region. Ptolemy's mention of Yavadvipa is particularly significant in so far as it shows that some of those countries already bore Indian names. It is equally significant that the Purāṇas, in their enumeration of the geographical divisions of the world, speak of certain *dvīpas* or *varṣas*, which can now be definitely identified with specific localities in South-East Asia.

Though the cumulative evidence of all these legends and traditions enables us to presume the spread of India's cultural influence in this region at a fairly early date, the actual beginnings of that process cannot be chronologically determined. It is, however, definitely known that several Hindu kingdoms had been founded all over Indochina and Indonesia as early as the 2nd century A.D. In this connection it is necessary to remember that those kingdoms, though essentially Indian in character, had no political connections whatsoever with the mother-country. Accordingly, they must not be characterised as colonies set up by any imperial power in India. They were rather constituted of the indigenous communities themselves which were only culturally Indianised. Those kingdoms must, indeed, be regarded as miniature Indias which had newly arisen in the South-Eastern seas.

It is, of course, not possible, in this brief note, to trace in detail the history of these Indian kingdoms in South-East Asia. Only some general indications can be given with a view to bringing out their true character as the cultural outposts of India in that region. To begin with the Malay Peninsula, it must be, first of all, pointed out that, on account of its geographical position, that locality had become the main centre of all trade which was carried on between India and the Far East. From Takkola, which is identified with modern Takua Pa, merchants went overland to Siam, Kambuja, and Campā, or proceeded by sea to the East Indies. It was, indeed, the first major landing
stage on the sea-routes. Takkola (which really means the market of cardamom) has preserved, even to this day, many vestiges of Indian culture in the form of Sanskrit inscriptions, ruins of Hindu shrines and images, and a number of minor religious beliefs and practices. There is evidence to show that all over the Malayan Archipelago Hindu kingdoms had existed in the 4th and the 5th centuries A.D. One of the inscriptions in South Indian characters, discovered in the present Province Wellesley, mentions one Buddhagupta, who calls himself mahānāvika or great sea-captain and who prays for success in his ventures. Buddhagupta is said to have belonged to a place called Rakta-mṛttikā, which is now identified by some scholars with Rāṅgāmaṭi in the Murshidabad district of Bengal. According to a Chinese account relating to Lang-Kia-Su in Malaya, a prince from that place fled to India, married an Indian princess there, and was recalled to the state after his father's death. He is said to have ruled for 20 years and to have been then succeeded by one Bhagadato, who sent an envoy, named Āditya, to the Emperor of China in 515 A.D. The Chinese account adds that the kingdom over which Bhagadato ruled had been founded more than 400 years before that event, that is to say in the 2nd century A.D. It is further recorded that Pan-pan (or modern Bandon) sent to China, some time between 424 A.D. and 453 A.D., a delegation which consisted of many learned Brāhmaṇas hailing from India. Chinese records have preserved the names of some states in Malaya, such as Kalaśapura and Karmaraṅga, and of kings, such as Gautama, Subhadra, Vijayavarman, etc., which fact clearly indicates the existence of a large number of Hindu states situated in the remote parts of the Peninsula. By far the most important of these states seems to have been that of Nakhon Sri Dhammarat. This state was essentially Buddhistic in character, as is indicated by the great stūpa of that place.

Sumatra, which is referred to in some Indian texts as Vāruṣaka island, was always regarded, in the period of early colonisation, as a great centre of Indian learning. The Chinese pilgrims, who were on their way to India, often made it a point
to halt in this island for about six months and learn Sanskrit. They thus acquired in advance the necessary background for their further studies in India. The earliest Indian kingdom in Sumatra was Śrī-Vijaya (Palembang), which was founded in the 4th century A.D. and which attained great eminence by the close of the 7th century A.D. The famous Chinese pilgrim I--tsing records that Śrī-Vijaya was a great centre of Buddhist learning among the islands of the South-Eastern seas. A Buddhist king of Śrī-Vijaya, named Śrī-Jayanāsa, is known to have led an expedition against Java in 684 A.D. and to have annexed it to his own kingdom. According to an inscription, dated 775 A.D. and found at Ligor, another Buddhist king of Śrī-Vijaya had established his political suzerainty over Malaya.

It is well known that Java has derived most of her culture from India. Indian culture has, indeed, penetrated so deep in that island that its traces have remained perfectly indelible even in spite of the successive layers of later cultures, like the Muslim and the Dutch. The old literary language of Java is called—and, indeed, quite significantly—the Kavi language and contains quite a large number of purely Sanskrit or Sanskrit-derived words. Scholars have shown that Javanese poets have not only drawn very extensively upon the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Purāṇas for their own literary compositions but that they have also scrupulously adhered to most of the conventions of Sanskrit poetry. It may be incidentally pointed out that the Javanese versions of the various parvans of the Mahābhārata have proved of inestimable value for the text-critical study of the epic which is now being carried out at the Bhandarkar Institute. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien describes his thrilling voyage to Java, which, as he records, was then a Hindu kingdom. It would thus seem that Hindu colonisation had started in that region already in the 3rd or the 4th century A.D. Another Chinese Buddhist refers to the prevalence in Java, in the 5th century A.D., of “Brahmanism and other mistaken religious cults.” It is, however, worth noting that, as in the Indian mainland so too in these miniature Indias across the seas, Buddhism and Hinduism
flourished side by side and actively contributed to the evolution of what may rightly be called a synthetic Indian culture. While the Viṣṇu-worship was being adapted to their dance-drama, Java also produced remarkable monuments of Buddhist sculpture and architecture. Between the 5th and the 9th centuries A.D., for instance, Java was under the political domination of the Śailendra dynasty, which was responsible for the construction of the mighty stūpa of Borobudur. A reference may be made, in this connection, also to the magnificent Amaravati Buddha image which was discovered in the eastern part of Java.

Seven Sanskrit inscriptions, found at Muara Kaman and belonging to about 400 A.D., bear eloquent testimony to the Hindu colonisation of East Borneo. They refer to king Mūlavaranman, son of Āśvavarman and grandson of Kuṇḍuṅga. This Mūlavaranman is said to have performed a Brahmanical sacrifice called Bahusuvarṇaka and to have given away 20,000 cows as dakṣinā to Brāhmaṇas. Kuṇḍuṅga, the name of Mūlavaranman’s grand-father, is perhaps a prakritisation of the Sanskrit name, Kauṇḍinya, and one is, accordingly, tempted to identify that king with the Indian Brāhmaṇa Kauṇḍinya, who is traditionally believed to have been elected king of Fu-nan towards the close of the 4th century A.D. Archaeological remains discovered in the valley of the Kapuas river, among them two standing Buddha images of the Gupta style, point to the Indian colonisation in West Borneo about the same time. It is, indeed, not unlikely that the Barhiṇa-Dvīpa, mentioned in the Vāyu-Purāṇa, is the same as Borneo.

Like Agastya, the name Kauṇḍinya, seems to have had some special significance so far as Indian colonisation in South-East Asia is concerned. For, according to a Chinese historian, the name of the family of the king of Bali was also Kauṇḍinya. The detailed descriptions of the manners and customs, law and religious practices, and literature and art-forms of Bali given by the same historian leave no doubt that Bali was a great centre of Indian culture in the 6th century A.D.

Most of the countries mentioned above, except perhaps Bali, have, in the mean time, gone through various vicissitudes and
have, during that process, come under the influence of different alien cultures. Most of them have also now developed their own national individualities. But, deep in their languages, literatures, social organisations, art-creations, and religious beliefs and practices we still see unmistakable indications of India's colonisation in those regions - a colonisation, which certainly did not spell military conquest or economic exploitation but which rather represented the victory of the spirit and of ideas.

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RELIGION

Of all the forces, which have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of the human race, none, certainly, is more potent than religion. Almost in every sphere of human activity, personal or social, the influence of religion has proved to be of a very vital character. In our country, particularly, we cannot think of any aspect of individual or social life which is not dominated by religion. So much so, that an eminent European Indologist, after a visit to this country, expressed the view that in India everything was religion. In the history of other countries also we find that the bonds of religion have often proved stronger than the bonds of race, or of nation, or even of descent.

Though — or, perhaps, because — religion has permeated human life so thoroughly, it has ever been found difficult adequately to define the concept of religion. As a modern thinker has put it, religion is indeed protein, and, therefore, like life, it eludes precise or detailed definition. The importance of having a definition of religion has, however, long been recognised, and wise men in all cultures have, throughout the last three millennia, been attempting to supply the want.

Numerous definitions have been proposed but none has enjoyed universal — or even any wide — acceptance. As a matter of fact, the very number of definitions is a proof of the difficulty of the task. It will be seen that many of those who have proposed such definitions had a particular religion in view, and not religion as an abstract concept. That is why they stress, in their definitions, one or the other element of religion. Religion, for instance, is defined as the ‘belief in spiritual beings.’ Such a definition raises several difficulties. While taking into account the belief-factor in religion, this definition has entirely ignored its equally vital — or perhaps more vital — practice- or ritual-factor. It may also be asked: why belief exclusively in spiritual beings?
According to a more comprehensive view, religion is man's faith in a power beyond himself whereby he seeks to satisfy his emotional needs and gain stability of life, and which he expresses in acts of worship and service. Religion, according to a third view, consists of propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.

In all such definitions, the emphasis is wrongly put on an independent Being or beings believed to be higher than man, in other words, on God, rather than on man himself. It must be remembered that god is a product of religion, while religious impulse, that is to say, man, is the very mainspring of religion. We can think of a religion without a god, but we can never imagine a religion without man. The proper approach to religion must, therefore, be the humanistic approach. In other words, in any consideration of religion, man must be the starting point.

Religion is essentially a function of human organism—a natural product of human nature. Considered from this point of view, religion would seem to consist of, firstly, a reaction of the human spirit to the facts of human destiny and the forces by which it is influenced, and, secondly, of a reaction into which there enters a feeling of sacredness. It must be made clear, at this stage, that there is no such thing as religious instinct in man. What actually exists is only a capacity for feeling a religious emotion in a variety of circumstances. The manifestations of that capacity are conditioned by different natural environments, historical and cultural traditions, and individual capabilities. That is why the conceptions of religion vary not only among different human communities or among individual members of the same human community, but even at different stages during the life-time of a single individual. And this is indeed as it should be. Now that science has demonstrated that God, as an independent being active in the affairs of the universe, need not be assumed to exist, true religion must have for its basis the religious emotions which are a genuine product of man's nature.
Such a view has this advantage that, though there may not be a God, there can still be a religion. For, man's imagination will ever continue to react to the world as he conceives it in the light of truth and of the ideal. Of course, human history shows that given the human mind such as it is, given also its environment such as it is, the concept of God and a belief in God become inevitable. There is much truth in Voltaire's dictum that if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one. And, according to another of that great rationalist's dicta, man made god in his own image.

Broadly speaking, in every religion there are two main factors - faith and ritual. Faith may be regarded as the personal factor and ritual as the social factor in religion. Religious faith has to be distinguished from knowledge on the one hand and superstition on the other. To put it briefly, superstitions are unfounded, unapproved, rejected beliefs - beliefs, that is to say, which are regarded as not being founded on reasonable conceptions of the world and of human life, necessities, and obligations. A true belief is knowledge, and a false item of knowledge is superstition. Religious faith transcends phenomenal knowledge. Realising that human senses are limited in scope and power and that human intellect is not infallible, man, in his eternal search after the ultimate, transcends not only the limitations of the senses but also of the power of reasoning. This brings him to faith which gives him confidence and spiritual sustenance. It must, however, be remembered that faith receives its light from intellect. The discipline of religion becomes the more arduous and its insight the more profound, the more candidly religious faith accepts and builds upon all that the intellect has to communicate.

The ritual-factor in religion is perhaps more basic. For, faith arises as interpretation of ritual more often than ritual is devised as an attempt to express faith. Rituals often persist as faiths associated with them fade, and new interpretations of the persisting rituals constitute new forms of faith.
When we think of religion in abstract, four aspects appear to be essentially blended in it—namely, immediate emotional experience, ritual expression, a connection with morality, and an intellectual scaffolding of ideas and beliefs. And the character of a religion is determined according to the emphasis that is put on any one or the other of these aspects.

In the history of human thought pertaining to religion, we can mark out three distinct phases, which are believed to be occurring consecutively but which, not unoften, are seen to coexist. The first is the phase of magic. Magic is often misunderstood as a primitive form of religion. Really speaking, however, it is a method for increasing man’s practical control over the world and thus has a greater affinity to science. Magic is not mistaken religion; it is mistaken science. The second phase is marked by the belief in a personal God who controls the affairs of man and the world. Man has transcended that stage. We are now in the third stage, namely, of modern scientific belief in the uniformity of Nature and the impersonal working of natural laws.

What, one may ask, is the future of religion? The role played by religion in human history has indeed been paradoxical. The purest and the noblest type of love that humanity has ever known has come from religion; at the same time, the most diabolical kind of hatred, which man has ever seen ruthlessly manifested, has also come from religion. But religion has not been and cannot be, on that account, condemned or entirely given up. Man can ill afford to live and progress without religion. A particular form of religion may have proved a pernicious phenomenon in human history, and may, therefore, be censured; but it must be admitted that religion, in abstract, is an eternal need of the human mind and an essential factor contributing to human progress. In future, we must break away from any rigid or fixed authority in religion and must start with a willingness to accept change. We have to recognise that we can and must develop a religion without that peculiar disease of the human mind which accompanies it, namely, fanaticism. Paradoxical as it may seem,
religions have suffered far more at the hands of their defenders than of their assailants. But once we realise that true religion is not a matter of race or of nation, but a matter of man – of humanity –, we can still make it an effective and benevolent force in moulding the destinies of mankind. We must learn to regard the imperfect or the less perfect as a necessary preparation for the more perfect.

But do we at all want a religion? Yes, we do; but on certain conditions. First, the intellectual outlook of this new religion should be such as can be validated by modern scientific knowledge. The dispute between science and religion is old, and the proper adjustment of the two has engaged the intellect of several thinkers of recent times. Some of them, like BERGSON and EDDINGTON, have tried to cut the Gordian knot by themselves accepting a sort of philosophical mysticism in science. Such an attitude is premature and is tinged with a sense of defeatism. Others, the representatives of the rationalist thought, are still busy flogging the dead horses of the orthodoxy of the last generation, forgetting that the false claims of authority and inspirationism have already been destroyed. We must now adopt a constructive attitude in this respect. Science gives us the most accurate picture of phenomena which we can obtain. As scientific knowledge progresses, the accuracy of that picture also continually increases. It should, therefore, be regarded as the proper function of science to provide the cosmic side of the intellectual scaffolding of religion. Scientific knowledge should serve as a background against which man’s religious feelings are to play their part. It must be remembered that upon science depends, though not the existence of religion, certainly the content of religion. Religion is concerned with the place of man’s ideals in the structure of the universe. And that place religion cannot by itself determine.

Another requisite of religion would be that it should satisfy to the fullest possible extent the psychological needs of the individual man and woman. The immediate emotional experience which one gains through religion is of a very great value. It is in
the light of such emotional experience that we must regard prayer as an essential factor in religion. Prayer in the sense of petition for benefits has to be disdained; but prayer, in the sense of meditation guided by religious feeling, of a release of our deepest aspirations, of an attempt to disentangle our desires and relate them to each other and to the impersonal and superpersonal forces of the world and the human community we live in, is both psychologically wholesome and spiritually efficacious.

What would such a religion offer to man? Not, certainly, the false or dubious assurances on certain matters. But it would help people to rid themselves of their sense of helplessness and isolation by showing them that they have a place in the enduring community of thought and purpose, joy and suffering, which mankind constitutes. It would also help to kill fear in man. Psychologically, it would make man feel, that he is greater than he knows. Such a religion is not a religion of negation, of death, of asceticism, of resignation. It is a religion of life! Its first and greatest aim is the enrichment of life!!

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SOLACE FOR MANKIND

It has been very aptly observed by a great modern thinker that the 19th century marked the end of an epoch and that we, it is becoming increasingly evident, are at the beginning of another. The truth of this observation is nowhere more strikingly realised than in respect of the changing attitude of the people towards science and religion. It seems to have been the view of the 19th century that, through the aid of science, we had come within reasonable distance of attaining a complete understanding of man and the universe. In all ages, men and women have been asking the self-same questions about universe, life, humanity, freedom, mind, etc. Is this world, it is, for instance, asked, an accidental conglomeration of atoms, or is it the result of some definite design and plan on the part of an intelligent creator? What is the place of human life in the scheme of things? Is humanity destined to more glorious and permanent achievements in the future than in the past, or is it doomed to failure and extinction? What is the motive force behind man's actions - his free will or the laws of an iron determinism? Is mind real or is it merely an insignificant emanation of matter?

From very early times, religion has claimed to have tackled these and similar other questions in an efficacious manner and to have supplied decisive answers to them. But the application of the methods of science, particularly those which were so marvellously developed in the last century, to the teachings of religion may be said to have resulted in completely exposing the fallacies, contradictions, absurdities, and imbecilities of most of those teachings. The effect of the impact of natural sciences on theological beliefs became perfectly evident in the open attempts made by science in that century to dislodge religion from its high pedestal of long-enjoyed authority. Not only was religion shown to be wholly inadequate as a means to the discovery of truth, but its influence was averred to be positively harmful to the progress of human civiliza-
tion. It was charged with having smothered the spirit of inquiry in man and having thus made him intellectually a slave. Karl Marx called religion the opium of the people. It promoted ideas, superstitions, and practices of a crude and unrefined character. Contrary to its avowed aims, it became a tool in the hands of spiritual monopolists and was made to serve as a means to make the poor poorer, the rich richer, and the slaves more servile. Not only this. History bears witness to the most alarming ways in which religious enthusiasm often displayed itself. Religion was made an affair of the state and thus became instrumental in engendering an abominable spirit of hatred and injustice. This led some of the crusaders against religion, like Morris Cohen, to assert that there is not a single revolting feature of human life that has not, at one time or another, been an intimate part of religion. Believers in religion were openly challenged to prove that any religion has ever been of any service to mankind.

Such vehement outbursts against religion, which generally characterise the 19th century, cannot be said to have been wholly unjustified. For one thing, they represent the inevitable reaction against the tyranny which, in the earlier ages, science had to suffer at the hands of religion. Do we, for instance, not know that Copernicus, the father of modern astronomy, who discovered that the earth was not stationary but made a daily revolution round the sun, had to delay the publication of this momentous discovery, until almost the moment of his death, because he feared violent opposition from the ecclesiastics and the theologians? Was not Darwin's *The Origin of Species* characterised by the world of religion as an escape of mephitic gas, as a bundle of infamous doctrines coming from hell and representing the fruit of the most abject passions? The development of even one of the most beneficent branches of science, namely, medicine, was consistently opposed by the intensely conservative spirit engendered by the teachings of religion.

We can understand the historical inevitability of the war which rationalists and free-thinkers waged against religion. But
in the exuberance of their enthusiasm for the dazzling discoveries
made by science, these crusaders went to the other extreme.
They claimed that science was bound to succeed where religion
had so miserably failed. Scientific knowledge was advancing at
a prodigious rate. Researches in physics, biology, and psychol-
ogy were producing results of so fundamental a character that it
appeared as though all the problems concerning man and the
universe would vanish before science as mist before the morning
sun. The eve of our century witnessed the passing of the gods.
As a matter of fact, the rationalists of the 19th century denied the
reality not only of gods, but of all concepts which did not fall in
line with mechanistic causation, such as value, beauty, or the
feeling of moral obligation.

But a new era dawned with the beginning of this century.
If the 19th century claimed that scientific progress was the
panacea for all the ills of humanity, that it provided the only
answer to all problems of man and the universe, we have realised,
during the last fifty years, and that too, in an increasingly decisive
manner, that all that science has taught us so far is nothing more
than the extent of our own ignorance. Our experience has been
that truth, like the horizon, recedes farther away from man as he
appears to go nearer to it through the aid of science. The
present century, therefore, has inevitably produced, in thinking
men and women, a sense of humility before the unknown and the
unknowable – a sense which is indeed the mainspring of all true
religion.

But perhaps more significant than this knowledge of our own
ignorance and the consequent sense of humility was the funda-
mental change in the view regarding the tall claims made on
behalf of the so-called scientific method and approach. It came
to be recognized very distinctly that there were avenues for the
exploration of the universe other than that of science. The
imaginative conception of reality was no longer regarded as being
limited by the likeness to the things we can see or touch. This
necessarily afforded room for wider views. Value, for instance,
might be real, and so might be the objects of ethical, aesthetic,
and religious consciousness. The promptings of the moral and religious nature of man were no longer stigmatised as mere subjective illusions. As a matter of fact, some physicists began seriously to speak of another world behind the world which they studied. Paradoxical as it may sound, a deeper and more thorough study of natural sciences, particularly of physics and biology, led more and more to an idealistic view of things. Material phenomena were, according to Jeans and Eddington, but the effects of the way in which spiritual reality appeared to us. The early decades of our century thus witnessed the noble efforts made effectively to bridge the 19th century gulf between science and religion. Not only this; but eminent scientists now began to appreciate the proper function of religion in man’s eternal search after truth, as is evidenced by the immortal words of perhaps the greatest among them, Einstein, who said that our religious insight was the source and guide of our scientific insight.

The present century provided yet another occasion – indeed, two occasions, and very tragic to boot – which helped to revive the innate religious consciousness in man, which the rapid scientific progress in the last century had temporarily suppressed. These were the two world-wars. They, particularly the more recent one, opened the eyes of humanity to the atrocities which science could be made to perpetrate. Science, it was convincingly proved, could be as brutal and barbarous as religion is accused of having once been. The atomic power, for instance, which is perhaps the most outstanding invention of man in recent times, now threatens, like the mythical Bhasmāsura, to annihilate its own creator, man. Science has given us the means either to exalt or degrade humanity; but it is only the religious spirit of man which can adequately determine to what ends those means should be used. The present generation, therefore, fully convinced as it is of the efficacy of scientific methods and the beneficent potentialities of scientific discoveries, is anxiously looking back to the basic law of humanity, and is trying to devise a new science and a new religion – perhaps, a dynamic synthesis of science and religion – which will teach us the true art of living. It does not care for religion which
remains blind to—nay, which even abhors—scientific progress, nor for science which despises the still small voice in man.

The present age is unstable and unsafe. We seem to be destined to witness great changes, great wars, and widespread social upheavals. Old-fashioned religious faiths can no longer provide the much-needed solace to mankind. Religion with a dogma and an external ceremonial cannot now be expected to give proper direction to man's beliefs and actions. But let it be remembered that religion without a dogma is certainly a workable proposition; and we do need such a religion. It is, indeed, an urgent psychological need. For, the recent investigations, made by Jung and others, have proved that, with the decline of religious consciousness, the neuroses grow noticeably more frequent. Religion secures for man spiritual certainty, which lifts life above meaningless existence or dull despair. Without it man is constantly at war with himself.

But, in a sense, true religion must be regarded as a social need also. For, religion attempts to establish harmony between the ego and the group. Other means also have been tried, in recent times, to achieve this end. Efforts are, for instance, made to socialize the individual either by standardizing all men and women and submerging their individuality in the deified state, or by treating them as mere wheels in a huge economic machine. Such experiments are doomed to ultimate failure. For, they destroy the soul of man and transform society into a prison. It is only religion, which, while preserving the dignity and freedom both of the individual and the society, yet establishes a working harmony between the two.

To speak of religion, in these days, will be regarded as an absurd anachronism. Men and women have now long since grown weary of all established religions. But the present trends in human thought and action have again directed our attention to religion and have taught us to put our faith in its efficacy to offer courage and comfort to our ailing world which is torn by stress and strife. It should, however, be remembered that, to be so
Serviceable, that religion must be a religion, which is neither a creed nor a code; which does not spurn science; which is truly spiritual and universal in character; which has the capacity effectively to counteract the bane of the modern times, namely, despair and frivolity, fanaticism and apostacy; and which, above all, is a religion of humanity. For us, Indians, at least, such a religion of humanity is not anything new. For, this "holy mystery", which the wise sage of the Mahābhārata declared several centuries ago, has come down to us through the reverberating corridors of time: na mānuṣōt īreṣṭhataram hi kiṁcit—"there is nothing more exalted than humanity."

THE INDIAN WAY: PHILOSOPHY

The soul of India is essentially philosophical. Philosophy pervades, as it were, every tiny detail of even the normal activity of the average man and woman in this land. It is, therefore, often difficult to isolate the philosophy of the Indians from their way of life as a whole. It is, indeed, in this very respect that the Indian stands distinguished from other people. For the Indian, philosophy is not merely an intellectual discipline, but it is a kind of direct spiritual experience. It is not a system of thought but is a system of life, not an idea but a power, not an abstruse theory evolved by a pedant or a Pandit but an attitude of mind attained by a Siddha or Yogin. It has been truly said that, for the Indian, philosophy is not meant merely to be learnt and taught in a classroom but it is meant actually to be lived. This emphasis on the vital connection between philosophy and living is the motive force of all Indian speculation. As a matter of fact, therefore, the word 'philosophy' itself, which etymologically means love of human reason, of judgement and discrimination, cannot be said be particularly apposite with reference to the Indian outlook. Similarly, we cannot properly speak of a 'system' of Indian philosophy. The word 'system' smacks of a kind of vanity. It presupposes an effort to order or to regulate the facts of Nature. What the Indian aims at is not a systematization based on a mediate knowledge of the facts of Nature. He aims at an immediate vision—darśana—of the ultimate reality underlying those facts of Nature.

This view of philosophy would adequately account for some very significant characteristics of Indian philosophical thought. Firstly, in India, it often becomes difficult to define the borderline between religion and philosophy. Abstract philosophical speculation, unaccompanied by some kind of religious belief and practice, is almost unthinkable. Secondly, Indian philosophy, because it is a life conviction rather than an intellectual proposition, is
averse to every kind of inflexible dogmatism. It never attempts to subject a person to a course of tendentious indoctrination. On the contrary, it leaves him free to find things out for himself in his own individual way. For, true philosophy, according to the Indian concept, is essentially experimental and empirical. Indian philosophy indeed possesses, to a high degree, the will and ability to allow heterogeneous ways of life and thought to subsist side by side. This attitude of toleration—or, as it is very happily put, this hospitality of the Indian mind—must not, however, be misunderstood as a matter of policy or expediency. It is a principle of spiritual life—a duty, not a mere concession. Thirdly, Indian philosophers have not elaborated for themselves any rigid and systematic framework of thought. In their search after the ultimate reality they do, no doubt, go through the stages of śravaṇa and manana, during which the study of the scriptures and ratiocination respectively play significant roles. But the final criterion of validity is neither scriptural authority nor logic, it is sākṣātkāra, that is, direct vision or immediate experience of the ultimate reality.

Protagoras, in the 6th century B.C., may be said to have pronounced the central motif of the philosophy of the West when he uttered the momentous words, namely, “Man is the measure of all things”. He thus started what may be called the anthropocentric tendency which dominates most of the Western philosophical thought. As against this, Indian philosophy is characterized by its distinctive cosmic outlook. Man, in the eyes of the Indian thinker, is no more than a part and parcel of this mighty cosmic whole. He does not enjoy any outstanding predominance in the cosmos. As the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (I. 3. 22) puts it: This Ātman or the vital essence in man is the same as that in the ant, the same as that in the gnat, the same as that in the elephant, the same as that in the three worlds, indeed, the same as that in the whole universe. According to the cosmic vision of the Indian, which must be clearly distinguished from the anthropocentric speculation of the West, man does not stand ‘apart’ from Nature—he is essentially ‘a part’ of Nature. Cosmos or
Nature, and not man, is therefore, the starting point of the Indian philosophical thought.

And the underlying unity of this vast and variegated universe is the first cardinal doctrine of Indian philosophy. Indian philosophy, in other words, is essentially monistic. It is reiterated again and again that the ultimate reality behind the diverse forms of the material world is an undivided unity, a single sentient being, which is the very essence of the created existence. The faiths of India differ widely—at some points being the very poles asunder. But most of the important Indian thinkers, from the earliest period onwards, have taught—albeit in different modes of phraseology and through different parables—but the self-same truth of the ultimate unitary entity which forms the basis of our entire material universe. It may be incidentally pointed out that this monistic view of Nature, which was the result of the insight achieved by keenly perceptive and concentrated minds, is now corroborated by actual experiments in a modern laboratory. It is now accepted as a well-proven scientific truth that the inner structure of matter is reducible to a single fundamental substance, an essential and immortal energy, which is the life of the myriad forms that make up our universe.

But Indian philosophy has gone a step further. It makes its second grand assertion, namely, that the tangible objects and tangible creatures in this phenomenal world of ours are but the product of the constructive imagination of man. In a sense, man himself and his doings among his material environments are the finite dreams passing through the mind of an Infinite Dreamer. Nothing can exist independently of the mind of the perceiver, who, on his part, is essentially identical with the Universal Consciousness. The great Buddha said to Mahāmati: “My teaching is based on the recognition that the objective world, like a vision, is a manifestation of the mind itself”. And Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara’s teacher’s teacher, declared: “This perceived world of duality, characterized by the subject-object relationship, is verily an act of the mind. For, duality is never experienced when the mind ceases to act.”
Monistic idealism may, thus, be said generally to represent the quintessence of the Indian philosophical thought. This teaching necessarily has certain important repercussions. For instance, so far as theology is concerned, it makes it unnecessary to posit the existence of any personal creator-god as distinct from the created universe. The Highest Being of Indian philosophers does not say: "I shall create". It rather says: "I shall become". The manifold physical world is not possessed of any essential reality. It is a mere bundle of ephemeral names and forms, a fiction, a distorted appearance of the underlying unitary reality caused by nescience. Man too is really not what he appears to be, namely, a physical form endowed with mind. The body-mind complex is mutable and perishable. The only immutable reality—the vital essence—in man is the inner soul, the Ātman. And Indian philosophers have attained to an absolute kind of monism by declaring that the Ātman is identical with the Brahman, the World-Soul, which is the Infinite Unity underlying the universe. Man is thus not created by any god. In a sense he is God, for, he is identical with the Brahman and the Brahman is regarded as God under certain circumstances. Godhead (or, more precisely, Brahmanhood) is, indeed, his real nature. It is only through the accident of ignorance that man feels divested of his real nature. This is, however, but a temporary phase. The constant quest of an Indian Śādhaka or aspirant is to realize his essential identity with the Supreme Soul.

This brings us to one of the most significant characteristics of Indian philosophy, namely, its mysticism. The world-view of the Indian is monistic and mystical as contrasted with the world-view of the West, which, broadly speaking, is pluralistic and doctrinaire. The Indian Śādhaka is interested in the universe only to the extent that he wants to discover whether and how he can apprehend and become one with the mysterious will which underlies it. It must be remembered that it is only in mysticism that man realizes spiritual union with the Infinite Being and that it is only in the spiritual union with the Infinite Being that man can give meaning to his life and find strength to suffer and to act.
Mysticism, if rightly understood, is indeed the most perfected form of Weltanschauung.

But, as indicated above, Indian philosophy does not stop at merely enunciating a theoretical doctrine. The uniqueness of Indian thought consists in its will and ability to augment such theoretical enunciation by prescribing some practical method, which would enable the aspirant actually to realize the truth of that doctrine. It is, indeed, in such a context that the Indian has developed his most remarkable religio-philosophical discipline—the way of Yoga. Yoga presupposes a special kind of askesis of body, mind, and soul, which secures for man a re-integrated personality and which thereby enables him to arrive at the much sought-after spiritual relationship with the Infinite Being. In Yoga, philosophy and living are inextricably interwoven.

A usual charge against Indian philosophy centres upon the slightness and sketchiness of Indian ethics. Indian thinkers, it is suggested, regard ethics just as an ‘aside’ from the serious business of philosophy—a concession, as it were, to the contingency of man’s contact with the phenomenal world. In view of the fact that the ideal of Indian philosophy is as much to transcend the merely ethical level as to transcend the merely intellectual level, such a charge cannot be said to be altogether unjustified. The holy man in India is very aptly compared to the fair lotus unsullied by the mire on which it grows. In spite of this, however, the Indian does have something peculiarly his own to contribute to the ethical thought. There is, for instance, that wonderful teaching about the three debts with which every man is said to be born—debt to God, debt to the seers, and debt to his ancestors. Of the first debt man can redeem himself by completely dedicating his life to the service of God and to the proper promotion of the scheme of things as laid down by Him; of the second, by preserving and enriching the cultural heritage handed down to him by the sages of all climes and of all times; and of the third, by procreating good progeny and thereby ensuring the blissful continuity of the human race. Then there is the doctrine of Karma and rebirth, which teaches that
man is the architect of his own destiny and thus discountenances the interference of an overriding providence. The ethical ideals of Anāśakti-yoga, that is, renunciation in action and not of action, and of Ahimsā or non-violence, which latter is based on the principle of reverence for life, have dominated the entire national life of modern India. But the Indian has realized that, as in metaphysics so in ethics, what man needs is not the postulation of any elaborate theories, but the inculcation of a proper attitude of mind. It is an inward radiance, and not an external code, which naturally leads to right conduct. Has not Poet Tagore said: “He who wants to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds it open”?

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HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Mythology is very aptly described as a special kind of language of the primitive. What the early man failed to express satisfactorily through the medium of words, he tried to express through the medium of mythological concepts. In their primary form, therefore, myths cannot be said to be the result of poetic fancy in the sense in which these words are now understood. If philosophy attempts to discover the ultimate truth, mythology must be said to represent the human effort to attain at least to the penultimate truth of which all experience is but temporal reflection. It is, indeed, possible to "psychoanalyze", so to say, a people by means of a critical study of its mythology. Through their numerous legends of cosmogony, of gods, and of heroes, the Indians have given expression—perhaps fuller and finer than any other people in the world—to their beliefs, ideals, and traditions. Obviously it is not possible either to epitomize this exceedingly rich treasure of mythology in this brief article or to present a detailed picture of the Indian mind which has been ever active at the back of it. All that one can do is to attempt a historical survey—and that too in broad outlines—of the main trends of ancient Indian mythological thought and to emphasize some of its peculiar and typical concepts.

We do know something of the pre-Vedic Indian religion. But, in the absence of any literature belonging to that period, we cannot make any statement regarding the mythological concepts which were then prevalent, though it is not altogether impossible to discover, in some cases, the influence of certain pre-Vedic concepts on the later Indian mythology. We have, therefore, to begin with the Vedic literature. Even on a casual perusal, one will realize that the Veda presents the picture of a

1. Such an attempt is made by H. Zimmer in his Maya: Der indische Mythos (1936).
religion of a highly complex character. It seems almost impossible to characterize the religion of the Veda as belonging to any specific category, such as polytheism, pantheism, or animism. Considering that the Vedic religion is the growth of many centuries and that it has been developed and elaborated by the fertile and often subtle brains of a number of generations of active people, it becomes quite understandable that it should defy any attempt to define it sweepingly in one word. What is true of the Vedic religion is equally true of the Vedic mythology, for, in the conception of Indian religion—particularly of the Vedic religion—the elements of theology, mythology, ritual, and magic are inextricably interlaced.

It has been suggested that the early Vedic religion is 'Naturalism' pure and simple. A school of mythologists has accordingly tried to derive the complex personality of a Vedic god from a single physical concept. A Vedic myth, according to them, is nothing but a phenomenon of nature presented not as a result of physical laws but as an act of divine or superhuman persons. Such one-sided views are, however, now generally discredited, and the attempts, for instance, like that of MAX MÜLLER to discover in the Vedic mythology various aspects of the solar phenomenon, are regarded as examples of misapplied ingenuity. Such views and attempts are the outcome of a tendency to view and interpret the Vedic mythology as if it were an isolated static event. It must be remembered that, only on the background of the history of the development of human thought as a whole, can the Vedic mythology be studied in its proper perspective. The personality of a Vedic god consists of diverse—and, in many cases, mutually inconsistent or even contradictory—elements. To explain this mythological fact on the basis of 'Naturalism' or mere syncretism, as has been done by some early schools of Vedists, is to take a static view of things. It must be emphasized that the Vedic mythology is essentially an evolutionary mythology.\textsuperscript{12} It has reacted and responded to the

\textsuperscript{12} For details, see: DANDEKAR, "Some aspects of Vedic mythology: evolutionary mythology", \textit{UCR} 12, 1–23.
many vicissitudes in the life of the Vedic people; and, with each vicissitude, new elements have been introduced into the personality of a Vedic god. It is this dynamic process that has been responsible for the complex character of the Vedic gods. It is, however, not altogether impossible, through a critical study of the Vedic literature with the aid, wherever necessary, of comparative philology, comparative mythology, and anthropology, on the one hand, to explain why particular gods have, in particular periods, dominated the Vedic mythology, and, on the other, to fix the plausible order in which the various elements must have come to be introduced into the personality of an individual god and thereby to present, as it were, a picture of his ‘becoming’. The Vedic mythology, as we know it from the Rgveda, is clearly dominated by the personality of Indra. But, taking into account the facts of anthropology and the cultural history of the Vedic people, one may safely conclude that this could not have been the original state of things. We also see that, in the post-Vedic mythology, Indra has not retained his position as the supreme god in the pantheon. It is, indeed, possible to discover, in the Vedic literature itself, the beginnings of this significant mythological event.

In one of the earliest stages in the development of his religious thought, the Vedic Aryan, or rather his ancestor the proto-Aryan, like his other Indo-European cousins, was profoundly struck by the vastness, brilliance, and bounty of nature. He translated this feeling of his into the mythological concept of Father Dyaus, the anthropomorphised representation of the shining sky, which latter was rightly regarded as the symbol of that vastness, brilliance, and bounty. It may be observed, in passing, that, compared with the concept of the goddess of earth, the concept of Dyaus is more primary in character. The Vedic Prthivi hardly ever assumed the character of the ‘Great Mother’. It is quite understandable that the Vedic Aryans, being a patriarchal people, should have worshipped mainly the male gods and that their goddesses should have remained rather vague and shadowy. The concept of Dyaus, however, had its growth
arrested in the Aryan/Vedic mythology. Dyaus did not attain to the supreme position of his counterparts like Zeus or Jupiter. This was evidently due to the fact that the proto-Aryan laid special stress on a characteristic of nature other than mere vastness, brilliance, and bounty. He seems to have more intensely realized that this nature, vast as it was, was not chaotic or unplanned. Her various phenomena were strictly regulated and nicely controlled even to the minutest detail. In short, they together constituted a ‘cosmos’. Consequently an attempt was made to solve the mystery of this cosmos. And the mythological outcome of this attempt was the concept of Ṛta, the cosmic law, and Asura Varuṇa, the administrator of that law. It was imagined that the secret of the regular and planned working of the various phenomena of nature, big and small, lay in the fact that everything in this cosmos was ‘bound’ down and thus controlled by a great sovereign lord. The word varuṇa is derived from the root yṛ meaning ‘to bind’. Varuṇa was believed to have been enabled to accomplish this mighty feat of binding down and thereby regulating the universe so that it might constitute a cosmos, because, as the Vedic Aryan explained in the light of his own primitive thinking, Varuṇa possessed, in the largest possible measure, the universal magic potency, the asu. Varuṇa was, verily, Asura, the possessor of asu par excellence. He was thus the universal sovereign, the Samrāt, who enforced and upheld the cosmic law, Ṛta. The emergence of the mythological concept of Varuṇa and his cosmic law, Ṛta, certainly represents an event of great significance in the history of Vedic thought as a whole. In course of time an entire, distinct, and almost independent mythology came to be built up on the foundation of this magic-cosmic concept of bondage. The Vedic ideas and allusions relating to Ṛta, Varuṇa, Mitra, Ādityas, and Aditi can be best understood only on such an assumption. Anthropologically, the mythical concepts of Dyaus and Varuṇa fit in very well into the general thought-pattern of a people in whose life nature was still a force majeure. The early Vedic Aryans inevitably emphasized the cos-

2. For further details, see DANDEKAR, Vedic Mythological Tracts, 28-67.
mic view of life—as against the anthropocentric view—with all its implications. From the historical point of view, the mythological concept of ‘cosmos’ and its magician ruler, the great Asura, seems to have been evolved by the ancestors of the Vedic Indians and their Iranian cousins—that is to say, by the people who may be specifically called Aryans—when they lived together, most probably, in their secondary ‘Urheimat’ in the region of Balkh.\(^3\) The very process of the evolution of what may be called the Varuṇa-religion, as indicated above, will explain why not many mythological legends have been contrived with respect to the Vedic divinities, Varuṇa, Mitra, Ādityas, and Aditi.

From among the common stock of the Aryans, who had been living in the region of Balkh and who were responsible for the evolution of the concept of Asura Varuṇa (and Ahura Mazda), some ambitious warlike tribes, presumably impelled both by physical compulsions and inner urge, pushed forward towards the Indian plains, while the others, of a more peace-loving temperament, moved towards Iran. On their onward march, the former had to encounter several natural impediments and antagonistic tribes (vrtrāṇi), whom they eventually overpowered. Thus, in the end, they victoriously fought their way to the land of the seven rivers. This warlike enterprise of theirs made it inevitable that they did not any longer remain content merely with the cosmic religion of Varuṇa and Ṛta. The character of the religion of a people is often determined by the kind of life which that people lives. The Vedic Aryans were accordingly in need of a new religion which would suit their new life and activities. Their adoration was, therefore, gradually transferred from the more or less distant and abstract magician-ruler of the cosmos to the more tangible and intimate hero, who led them in their victorious battles, namely, Indra. It was then but the natural next step that this ‘hero’ should have been transformed into a ‘god’. The major portion of the Ṛgveda evidently concerns itself with this stage of conquest and colonisation in the

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cultural history of the Vedic people. Naturally, therefore, Indra, who symbolised the glorious leadership of this heroic enterprise and who accordingly came to be recognised by the Vedic people as their principal god, is seen to be dominating the entire Ṛgvedic mythology. Incidentally it may be pointed out that, on such an assumption, the so-called schism between the Vedic and the ancient Iranian religions becomes historically explicable. Even in the mythological ideology of the Ṛgveda, the Indra-religion of the Vedic Indians—and there is hardly any doubt about the essentially Indo-Aryan character of Indra—easily superseded the Varuṇa-religion, which they had inherited from their Aryan ancestors.

The characterisation of Indra as the national war-god necessarily resulted in the growth of a large number of legends pertaining to him. The basic form of these legends was represented by Indra’s successful encounter with the demon, Vṛtra, and his releasing of the imprisoned cows, waters, or light. In course of time, every warlike deed and every conceivable superhuman exploit came to be attributed to Indra. In other words, though the concept of Indra had its origin in an individual leader of the victorious Vedic Aryans, it soon developed into the concept of a divine personality—or institution—representing the sum-total of all heroic deeds and achievements. In course of time, two more currents of mythological thought were assimilated into this basic concept of the heroic Indra, and this fact, again, resulted in still further growth of myths and legends concerning that god. After the Vedic Aryans had, under the inspiring leadership of their war-god Indra, emerged as victorious colonisers in the plains of Saptasindhu, the mythological imagination of their poets saw in Indra, the conqueror of human foes, also the conqueror of the malevolent powers of nature, such as drought and darkness. Indra was consequently regarded as the rain-god, who, by means of his thunderbolt, shattered the cloud-demon, Vṛtra, and thus caused the rain to shower. He thus superseded the original Aryan rain-god, Trita Āptya. Incidentally, attempts are also made to see in Indra the sun-god overpowering the winter-demon or the
demon of darkness. It may, however, be pointed out, in this connection, that the fact that the nature-myths associated with Vedic Indra are the result of a conscious superimposition of naturalism on the original heroic character of that god becomes evident to any critical student of the Rgveda. Indeed, such superimposition of naturalism is a common mythological phenomenon and is clearly seen in respect of several Vedic gods.

The other mythological motif which is assimilated into the concept of the Vedic Indra comes from the common stock of legends upon which, as a matter of fact, the mythologies of several peoples in the world have freely drawn. It is the legend of the mythical hero and the dragon. Vṛtra, the original representative leader of the foes of the Vedic Aryans—and later regarded as the cloud-demon, or the winter-demon, or the demon of darkness—thus often figures as a terrible dragon, ahi, lurching dangerously among the waters.

In their common abode in the region of Balkh, the Aryans had developed a set of religious rites—peculiarly their own—in which Soma, an intoxicating drink prepared from a plant traditionally believed to have been derived from the neighbouring Majavat mountain, played the central role. In their original character, the Soma-rites, which incidentally fitted in well into the magic-dominated thought-pattern of the Aryans, seem to have been quite an independent growth. Even some distinctive myths regarding Soma must have been then evolved. But, with the rise of the Indra-religion, it was but natural that the Vedic poets should have thought of associating the drinking of Soma, in one way or another, with the exploits of Indra. This was also in keeping with the common mythological idea of a kindly but impulsive war-god, who accomplished superhuman feats under the influence of an intoxicating drink. Does Indra, in this respect, not remind us of Thor, the hard-drinking Teutonic god of few words and mighty deeds? This, then, was how the mythology connected with Indra tended to become richer and richer. It may indeed be said, with the fullest justification, that with reference to no other

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early Indian god has such a great mass of legendary themes been produced.  

Among Indra’s personal escorts are chiefly mentioned the Maruts. The original character of the Maruts, as it may be gathered from the early Vedic references, is vague and shadowy. It would, however, appear, from the name Marut derived from the root mar meaning ‘to die’, and from their association with the original Vedic god of death Rudra – which association is undoubtedly of a more primary character than that with Indra –, that the Maruts were originally the emissaries of death. They are frequently alluded to as having formed a well-organised troupe or gana. And it was this characteristic of theirs, which must have been responsible for their having been brought in contact with the war-god Indra. For, what could have been more natural for the fancy of the Vedic poets than to connect the well-organised soldier-like group of the Maruts, whose original nature was becoming increasingly obscure, with Indra, the war-god? And when Indra came to be regarded as the rain-god, the Maruts correspondingly became the storm-gods.  

A mention may properly be made, in this context, also of the divine twins, Aśvinau, who are frequently celebrated in the Veda as the miracle-working helpers of humanity. They belong to what may be called the hero-religion – as against the cosmic religion – of the Rgveda, for, as in the case of Indra, the origin of the mythological concept of Aśvinau also is to be sought in real human heroes and their humanatariad deeds whereby they brought timely succour to the needy. A significant trait of the growth of Indian mythology is that such historical ‘individuals’ often tend to be transformed, in course of time, into ‘institutions’ and thus become mythical in character. This is what must have happened in the case of Aśvinau. Accordingly every miraculous act of helpfulness came to be assigned to the mythical Aśvinau. The basic idea underlying the concept of Aśvinau, indeed, proved

4. For further details, see DandeKaar, Vedic Mythological Tracts, 141-198.
5. See: Vedic Mythological Tracts, 192 ff; 236 ff.
a very rich source of mythological legends. Aśvinau are said, for instance, to have rescued the sage Atri from the fiery pit, rejuvenated the decrepit Cyavana, saved Bhujyu from drowning in the mid-ocean, made Śayu’s barren cow yield milk, and supplied an iron leg to the crippled Vīśpalā. Legends of a more or less similar character were also evolved round the personality of the three divine artisans, the Rbhus.

In the pantheon of Vedic gods, next in importance to Indra stands Agni. By the side of the cosmic religion of Rta-Varuṇa and the elementary ritual centering round Soma, the Aryans seem to have developed, even while living in their common home in the region of Balkh, a sort of simple cult of fire which was peculiar to them. It is not unlikely that this last had been the result of their contact with a tribe of specialised fire-worshippers. Agni, the Vedic fire-god, is essentially a domestic divinity—a divinity which brings the world of man closer to the world of gods. He is variously described as the priest, the mouth, or the messenger of gods and the carrier of oblations offered to them. Out of this simple cult of fire, partly by combining it with the

6. Aśvins are believed to provide the most striking justification for comparative IE mythology. The Divine Twins of the Vedic, Greek, and Baltic traditions (Aśvinau-Divo napāt; Dios Kouroi; Dievo Dēli-Dievo Sunelias) are related not only mythologically but also etymologically. However, it will be seen that the character of Aśvins as represented in the Veda is, in many respects, conspicuously different from that of their so-called IE counterparts. Parzynski sees (HJAS 1, 129–35) in the special kind of association of Aśvins with Aditi the reflection of the Central Asian myth of the two cavaliers attending upon the Mother-Goddess. V. Macheck asserts (Arch. Or. 15, 413–19) that Aśvins are native IE deities and not two Indian princes. They are the young sons of the mighty highest ruler (imagined by the ancient IEs in accordance with the ideal of aristocratic class). Of course, Aśvins are also identified with various natural phenomena, particularly with morning twilight.

7. The connection of the word agni with Latin igaīrs, Slavonic ognis, and Lithuanian aigis is uncertain. At any rate, these latter words never became appellations of any divinities. Nor did they ever suggest any specific religious cults.

8. It is primarily this character as messenger, and not the natural element of fire, which constitutes the basis of the Agni-mythology.
various Soma-rites and partly by complicating it with the addition of several elements of what OLDENBERG very aptly calls 'pre-scientific science', the Vedic priests later on developed a very complex and elaborate system of ritual. The early Vedic myths, however, relate mainly to the production, disappearance, and rediscovery of Agni. The Vedic poets often speak of the three forms of Agni—namely, as fire on the earth, as lightning in the mid-region, and as the sun in the sky.

And this brings us to the 'so-called' solar divinities in the Veda—'so-called', because many of them can be shown to have originated out of the concepts which were essentially unrelated to the solar phenomena. Mitra, for instance, who is generally regarded as a sun-god, belongs originally to the mythological ideology dominated by Rta-Varuṇa. The idea underlying the concept of Mitra is, again, that of bondage. Mitra promotes a sense of moral obligation and comradeship among men, and thus holds them together (yātayati). He is yatayajjana. Broadly speaking, he may be said to be, in respect of human life, what Varuṇa is in respect of cosmic life. To the same spiritual world also belongs Savitṛ, who stretches out his majestic hands—a gesture most befitting in a cosmic magician-ruler—and sets in motion the orderly functioning of the various aspects of life. The Vedic allusions to Pūṣan make him out to be a pastoral god, who preserves cattle from injury, brings them home unhurt, drives back the lost ones, and generally guards them against the notorious cattle-lifters—the Panis. A critical study of the Vedic passages pertaining to Mitra, Savitṛ, and Pūṣan produces a clear impression of certain solar characteristics having been super-

10. The two fire-divinities, Greek Hestia and Roman Vesta, were never associated with any developed cult of sacrifice.
11. For further details, see DANDEKAR, Vedic Mythological Tracts, 278–311.
imposed—and that too in a vague and distant manner—on the original individualities of those gods.

In the evolution of the Vedic mythology, there was a distinct stage when several of its concepts were, so to say, artificially "solarised". In some cases, such "solarisation" would seem to have been particularly tendentious. Consider, for instance, the Viṣṇu-mythology. Viṣṇu is generally assumed to be a solar divinity. But with such an assumption it would be wellnigh impossible to account for the sudden elevation of Viṣṇu—an ordinary solar divinity—to the position of the supreme god in the classical Hindu mythology. In the post-Vedic period the Viṣṇu-mythology is seen to have completely superseded the Indra-dominated Vedic mythology. The roots of this important mythological event can be found in the Vedic literature and ritual themselves. The Vedic religion, as generally known from the Rgveda, seems to have been already consolidated into a hieratic religion, dominated by Indra and characterised by the Soma-ritual and the Agni-cult. The sponsors of this "official" religion were naturally averse to the formal adoption and acceptance of the religious ideologies of the common people—ideologies which must have been gradually pressing their claims in an unmistakable manner. Such is, indeed, the case in respect of almost all religions. When, however, the pressure of the popular religious ideologies makes it inevitable for the official religion to adopt them, the priests and poets of the hieratic religion attempt to suppress such elements of the popular religion as are abhorrent to their sophisticated sentiments, and to transform its original character by ingeniously superimposing upon it quite alien features. That Viṣṇu appears in the Veda as a solar divinity is the result of some such mythological process. It can be shown, on the strength of a fair amount of evidence drawn from the Vedic literature and ritual, that Viṣṇu must have originally been a god of fertility and productivity—in other words, a highly prominent god intrinsically connected with the life of the agricultural and pastoral communities among the Vedic Indians. The name Viṣṇu, derived from the root vi 'to fly', means 'bird'; and it may be noted that, in
several primitive religions, a bird is the symbol of fertility and productivity. When the poets and priests of the hieratic Vedic religion found it necessary to admit this important god of the common people in the official pantheon, they tried to set aside the various concepts and rites suggestive of sex and fertility, which were originally associated with his worship. These rites were naturally repulsive to the keepers of the hieratic religious conscience. They, therefore, interpreted the bird-form of Viṣṇu in quite a different sense. A bird, besides being a symbol of fertility and productivity, is the symbol also of the solar divinity, particularly of that solar divinity which traverses wide regions in the shortest possible time. This suited the temperament of the sponsors of the hieratic Vedic religion very well, and Viṣṇu, the popular god of fertility, thus became a sun-god.

In this connection, a reference may be made to another significant tendency of the Vedic poets. The elevation of a popular god to a place in the hieratic Vedic mythology is usually brought about by that god's being artificially associated with Indra.¹⁵ Viṣṇu's vague and pointless connection with Indra, as his subordinate ally, would adequately illustrate this peculiar mythological device often employed by the Vedic poets. At a later stage in the history of the Hindu religion, however, when the peculiar hieratic mentality of the Vedic poets and priests was overwhelmed by the upsurge of really popular religious sentiment — this fact having eventually resulted in the prominent Vedic gods being shunted to the background — Viṣṇu was restored to his original position of importance, in his own right and without any inhibition.¹⁶

It would be thus seen that Sūrya was perhaps the only god in the Veda who could be regarded as a genuine solar divinity. Some of the important solar myths in the Veda have their origin in the exuberant fancy and imagination, which the Vedic poets bring to bear in the descriptions of Uṣas or the phenomenon

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¹⁵. Or, less frequently, with Soma or Agni.

of dawn. The marriage of the sun’s daughter, Sūryā, at which several gods are said to have participated in a race with a view to qualifying themselves for the bride’s hand, is also graphically described.

The Vedic god Yama may be said to represent the Vedic mythological concepts pertaining both to cosmology and eschatology. For, Yama was essentially the first man to be born, who later became the king of the dead. As a matter of fact, the original mythological concept underlying the personality of Yama seems to have been that of a hermaphrodite being—a being which was neither a full-fledged god nor yet merely an ordinary human being, but a sort of God-Man—who subjected himself to self-immolation for the sake of the creation of the universe and the procreation of mankind. At a later stage of this cosmogonic myth, the hermaphrodite being was bifurcated into a male and a female, Yama and Yami, who came to be regarded as the first parents of humanity. Yama, as the first man to be born, naturally was also the first to die. Therefore, significantly enough, it was he who pointed out the path for the departed souls to follow. He founded, so to say, a colony of the dead and ruled over it as its lord. Vedic poets speak of Yama as a legendary king, who, by his holiness, is enabled to establish a realm of immortal life and bliss for the righteous of the olden times, to which good men of all generations have a right of entry. There, under a beautiful tree, he revels in the company of gods, entertaining kindly thoughts about the Pitars.17 Incidentally, though the later mythological concept of svarga seems to have been adumbrated in such Vedic references, it is interesting to note that there is, in the early Vedic literature, hardly any specific allusion to hell.18

The cosmological myth relating to the self-immolation of a primeval being, vaguely indicated by certain Vedic references to Yama, is elaborated in detail in the famous Puruṣa-sūkta (RV X. 90). Another version of the same myth is to be found in the

Brāhmaṇa-literature, wherein Prajāpati is said to have practised penance and thus started the process of creation. Besides this myth, there are two other principal cosmogonic concepts in the early Vedic literature. According to one of them, which is indicated in the mystic Nāsadiya-sūkta (RV X. 129), at the beginning of the world, there was a certain unapparent condition, which, on account of the absence of distinctions, could not be designated as sat or ‘entity’, and yet which, on account of its being the instrument of the creation of the world, was not asat or ‘non-entity’. It is, however, the cosmogonic myth, elaborated in the Hiranyagarbha-sūkta of the Rgveda (X. 121), which forms the basis of most of the Purānic cosmogonic legends. According to it, originally there were everywhere waters, and, among these primeval waters, there arose a golden egg, which eventually broke itself up into two hemispheres.

Though, as has been pointed out above, Yama was the first man to be born who later became the king of the dead, he was never specifically represented as the god of death. The god of death, according to the early popular mythology, was Rudra, the ‘red’ one. Basically, Rudra was but the Vedic version of the pre-Vedic non-Aryan Śiva. He was often represented as the god of the wild communities, living among mountains and forests, who were generally given to what were considered to be uncivil activities. When, therefore, such a god, owing to the pressure of the popular religion centering round him, had to be admitted into the hieratic pantheon, an attempt was made, as in the case of Viṣṇu, to suppress his original character and superimpose upon him the character of some normal hieratic god, such as the god of death. In both these cases, however, in spite of such tendentious attempts on the part of the Vedic poets and priests, there do exist, in the Vedic literature and ritual, clear indications which unmistakably betray the original personalities of these two gods. Like Viṣṇu, Rudra-Śiva also emerges, in the later Hindu mythology, as a god of great prominence and popularity.

In the Vedic literature, the mythology relating to semi-divine beings, like the Gandharvas and the Apsarases, is not very much developed. The only striking legend in this connection is that of Urvaśī, the divine nymph, and Purūravas, the human king. From a rather obscure dialogue-hymn in the Rgveda (X. 95), we know how Urvaśī, having been united with Purūravas, lived with him for four autumns, how she then suddenly left him presumably because one of the conditions, on which the permanence of their union depended, was inadvertently violated by Purūravas, and how Purūravas thereupon entreated her to return to him but to no avail. Several versions of this legend occur in the later Vedic and Purānic literature, and the great Kālidāsa also has exploited its lyrical and romantic possibilities in his drama, Vikramorvaśīya. It is usual to see in the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī some aspect of the solar phenomenon. It is also suggested that its underlying concept is related to a ritualistic function, namely, the production of the sacrificial fire by means of the two fire-sticks, the uttara-arāṇī and the adhara-arāṇī.

In connection with the exploits of the Vedic gods, or, sometimes, even independently, there are mentioned, in the Vedic literature, several mythical sages like Manu, Aṅgiras, and Bhrgu. Some of the traditionally recognised authors of Vedic hymns also figure in many legends - partly mythical and partly historical. In the hymns called the dānastutis, for instance, Vedic poets have eulogised the charities of several kings and patrons of the Vedic age. However, by far the most important historical event which has been responsible for the growth of a number of legends is the famous battle of the ten kings. This was a battle largely fought by the Aryan tribes among themselves. The earlier Aryan colonisers supported by some non-Aryan kings, who are said to have together formed a confederacy of ten kings, resisted—though unsuccessfully—the ambitious onward march of the fresh tribes of Aryan immigrants, the Bharatas and the Trutsus, led by Sudāśa.

20. ŚPB XI. 5. 1; Kāthaka 8. 10; MBh. I. 75. 15 ff.; Harivamśa 1363 ff.; Vīgrāha P. IV. 6. 19 ff.; Maitsya P. 24.
More prominently, however, than the warlike activities of Sudās and the Bharatas, the Ṛgveda glorifies the superior priestcraft of their Purohita, Vasiṣṭha, which is believed to have proved the deciding factor in the battle.  

If any label is at all to be attached to the Vedic religion, it may be generally described as polytheistic. This polytheism affords ample scope for an exuberant growth of myths and legends. Further, like every polytheistic religion, it is conspicuously tolerant in attitude. This fact has resulted in the assimilation by it of varied mythological trends. There are, in the Vedic religion, also clear traces of animism, which, however, has not proved very fruitful from the mythological point of view. It only indicates that the Vedic religion was tending towards a sort of pantheism, and was thus gradually becoming spiritual in character. Incidentally it may be pointed out that the Vedic religion shows hardly any traces of idolatry.

The more or less comprehensive statement about the early Vedic mythology, attempted above, would now help us to understand the later Brahmanic and Hindu mythological concepts in their proper perspective. For, the latter represent either a reaction against, or an embellished growth out of, the former. Of course this development presupposes several factors in the cultural history of ancient India, such as the clash of cultures, the fusion of races, and the consequent process of assimilation, modification, and rejection.

The principal source of the mythological legends, which grew in the period of the Brāhmaṇas, was undoubtedly the Vedic ritual. Indeed, all mythological concepts in that period were subservient to the concept of sacrifice which was then regarded not only as a means to an end but as the end in itself. The vidhi-part of a Brāhmaṇa-text normally comprises the various details pertaining to the theory and practice of a particular sacrifice, while the arthavāda-part of it is essentially devoted to the glorification of

that sacrifice as a whole or to the establishment of the peculiar significance and appropriateness (samṛddhi) of its several constituent elements. The ārthavāda achieves this object mainly through three devices—etymology, bandhutā or mystic bonds, and illustrative legends. A large number of these illustrative legends have for their background the mythical wars between the gods and the demons. Incidentally it may be pointed out that, in the early Vedic literature, not much of demonology had been evolved. Even in the Brāhmaṇa-literature, the Devas and the Asuras are both said to have been originally the children of Prajāpati and therefore very much alike in character and strength. It was only through their superior knowledge of the technique of sacrifice that the Devas are said to have ultimately overpowered the Asuras. In other words, gods are represented to have attained to and preserved their godhead only through the efficacy of sacrifice. Sacrifice was, indeed, raised to the position of the omnipotent world-principle, and, to illustrate their cosmogonical, ethical, eschatological, and other teachings, the authors of the Brāhmaṇas often employed mythical legends with sacrifice as the central theme. Cosmogonically, for instance, it is the continuous process of sacrificial ritual and penance, which Prajāpati goes through, that is said to be responsible for the creation and sustenance of the universe. Even the legend of Manu and the deluge, which is palpably cosmogonic in character, has been employed in a Brāhmaṇa-text mainly to glorify the sacrificial oblation called ĭdā.  

22. ŚPB I. 8.1.

23. AB VII. 13–18.
As in the Brāhmaṇas, so too in the Upaniṣads, the main teachings are generally presented on the background of some narratives. These narratives tell us about the doings of gods amongst themselves, or about their relation to the human worshippers, or about the actual incidents in the lives of different sages, thinkers, and teachers. The Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, for instance, narrates how Indra, on behalf of the gods, and Virocanā, on behalf of the demons, lived a student’s life under Prajāpati with a view to obtaining from him the true knowledge of the self, for, the possessor of such knowledge was to become all-victorious; how Virocanā was satisfied just by the first instalment of Prajāpati’s teaching; and how Indra persisted and was progressively instructed by Prajāpati until he realised the true nature of Ātman and so became all-victorious.24 The Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad tells us of the various incidents in the life of the great Yājñavalkya—of his philosophical bouts in the assembly of king Janaka25 and of his intention to divide his property, spiritual as well as material, between his two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyani.26 The Upaniṣadic teachers were very fond of parables and myths by means of which they tried to represent allegorically the various philosophical truths. Such myths are often employed to convey a moral lesson, or to illustrate aetiological or transcendental concepts. On the whole, the mythological element in the Upaniṣads is thus made entirely subservient to philosophical teaching.

The early Vedic religion afforded to the people a good deal of freedom in the matter of the choice of gods and the manner of their worship. In the Brāhmaṇa-period, on the other hand, a very rigid system of ritual was developed by the priestly class. Not only this, but the Brahmanic priests were ever inclined to make the already complex Vedic ritual, increasingly complicated. The result of all this was that this representative religion of the

Brāhmaṇa-period remained restricted to a specialised class of professional priests and their rich patrons. By the very nature of things, it became impossible for an ordinary individual either to master the complex technique of the Vedic sacrifice or to make the elaborate preparations necessary for its performance. The common man was, therefore, gradually estranged from this religion of the favoured few. Similar to this was the reaction to Vedic ritual also of the truly intellectual class—but for other reasons. It deprecated the attitude of blind acceptance encouraged by the priests, as also the exaggerated emphasis laid by them on the form rather than on the spirit of religion. Thus there became evident a growing discontent with the Brahmanic ritual with its various implications. The idealistic-absolute speculations of the Upaniṣads, which, to a certain extent, arose out of that discontent, satisfied the spiritual urge of the intellectuals in some measure. But, owing to their peculiar characteristics, such as the high intellectual level and rigorous spiritual discipline demanded by them, their essentially individualistic orientation, the lack of any uniform and consistent doctrine in them, their mysticism, and their preaching about the futility of the worldly existence, the Upaniṣads also failed to appeal to the common man. Unlike the early Vedic religion, which was characterised by assimilative tendencies and mythological richness, neither the Brahmanic ritualism nor the Upaniṣadic spiritualism could, therefore, become a popular religion in the true sense of the term. A religion, in order that it should become popular, needs a simple and uniform spiritual and ethical doctrine, a good deal of mythology, certain easy practices of worship, and a sort of generally elastic attitude. The failure of the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, in this respect, naturally resulted in an indirect encouragement to the non-Vedic religious thought, which had presumably originated in the pre-Vedic non-Aryan period and which, after having suffered temporary suppression on account of the exotic flush of Vedism, was again being gradually but surely revived in several ways. Taking advantage of the favourable conditions, already created by the Upaniṣads through their non-acceptance of the
absolute validity of the Veda, the sponsors of the non-Vedic religious systems consolidated themselves and soon began to extend their influence. They were shrewd enough to adopt, from Vedic mythology, Brahmanic ritualism, and Upaniṣadic spirituality—though in a different form—; whatever was beneficial to them. At the same time, they scrupulously steered clear of the pitfalls which the Vedic way of life and thought had encountered.

By the side of the openly non-Vedic religious movements, which claimed considerable popular following, there had arisen other popular religious movements, which still affirmed allegiance to the Veda—though in a rather halting way. It is not necessary, in the present context, to go into the historical causes of the failure of the non-Vedic religious movements to achieve what, in the initial stages, they had shown great promise to achieve. Attention may only be drawn to the fact that a powerful upsurge of popular religious sentiment arose also among the masses who had not altogether alienated themselves from the Vedic heritage. This popular religious upsurge, which later consolidated itself in the form of Hinduism, also represented a revolt, but not so much against Vedism as such as against its hieratic form as well as its phase known as Brahmanism. 26a

One current of this popular religious movement, which, it may be incidentally pointed out, proved to be, in course of time, a very fertile source of mythology, originated among the various communities of Western and Central India, such as the Vṛṣṇis, the Sātvatas, the Yādavas, and the Ābhūrās. Considerable literary and historical evidence is available which would justify the presumption that a truly popular religion had developed round the figure of Vāsudeva, who was a leader of the Vṛṣṇis, with Bhakti for him as its principal tenet. This Vāsudeva-religion soon amalgamated with the Kṛṣṇa-religion of the Yādavas and the Gopāla-religion of the Ābhūrās, thereby giving rise to what may be called Kṛṣṇaism. The main features of this new popular religion may

26a. For details see Dānḍekar, Some Aspects of the History of Hinduism, 85-90.
be briefly stated as follows: the principal gods of the Vedic pantheon, like Indra and Īrauṇā, were superseded by new popular gods; the simple way of bhakti took the place of the complicated Vedic ritual; a greater emphasis was put on ethical teachings than on mystic metaphysical speculations; a life of activism was specifically recommended as against renunciation; loka-saṁgraha or social solidarity and sustenance rather than individual emancipation was recognised as the goal of life; and synthesis rather than scholastic dogmatism was made the watchword in the religio-philosophical field. In the personality of Vāṣudeva-Kṛṣṇa, this religious movement secured the advantage of a very potent focal point. Several mythological legends came to be woven round this god of composite character. The pastoral aspect of the Kṛṣṇa-religion was celebrated in the charming tales of Kṛṣṇa's boyhood spent in the company of the gopālas, while the erotic-devotional aspect was represented through the fascinating legends of his association with Rādhā and other gopis. According to one legend, by lifting up the govardhana mountain, Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa vouchsafed to the entire community of cowherds protective shelter against the wrath of Indra who wanted to flood their settlements and thus ruin their communal festival. This legend clearly indicates that the new popular god Kṛṣṇa was now gaining ascendancy over Indra who had dominated the hieratic Vedic mythology. It is further interesting to note how, by means of an ingenious mythological device, Vāṣudeva-Kṛṣṇa, born in the family of the Vṛṣṇis, was brought into close contact with the pastoral communities and thereby identified with Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. Vasudeva of the Vṛṣṇis, who with his wife, Devakī, was a prisoner of Kaṁśa, the ruler of Mathurā, and whose children were being killed by the latter, one after another, for, Fate had decreed that one of them would one day overpower him, is represented to have stealthily carried his eighth child, Kṛṣṇa, immediately after birth, to his friend, Nanda, the cowherd-king, and entrusted him to his care and protection. There, in the house of Nanda, Kṛṣṇa was brought up as a cowherd-boy until, later, he was called upon to put down the atrocities of Kaṁśa.
The rise of the Kṛṣṇa-religion synchronized with that period in the literary history of ancient India, in which the floating literary tradition of the Sūtras was being given a fixed literary form with the historical poem about the Bhārata war as the nucleus. The sponsors of the Kṛṣṇa-religion took advantage of this early form of the great epic Mahābhārata, and employed it as an effective vehicle for the propagation of their teachings. A revision of the original epic poem Jaya was consequently carried out by introducing in it the character of Kṛṣṇa, who was represented as a relative, guide, friend, and philosopher of the Pāṇḍavas in general and of Arjuna in particular. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa eventually became almost the central figure in the epic, and the Bhagavadgītā, the epitome of the teachings of the Kṛṣṇa-religion, came to be regarded as its very quintessence. This combination of a religious movement and an epic tradition resulted in an exuberant growth of mythological legends, which are spread all over the Mahābhārata.

Two other important forms of popular religion had made their appearance in the mean time. The presiding deities of these two religions, namely, Viṣṇu and Śiva, bear direct relationship respectively with the two Vedic gods, Viṣṇu and Rudra, who are represented as minor gods in the hierarchy of the early Vedic mythology but the various Vedic allusions in respect of whom, as indicated earlier, betray their intrinsically important position in the religious ideologies of the masses. In course of time, these two popular religions, namely, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, almost completely superseded whatever had remained of the ancient Vedic religion and eventually established themselves as the most representative forms of Hinduism. Nonetheless, while doing so, they took care to feign a semblance of allegiance to the Veda.

Out of the two religions mentioned above, the religion of Viṣṇu was soon alligned with Kṛṣṇaism, so that the two together formed a single religious complex. It is a well-established fact that, in its final stages, the Mahābhārata underwent what may be
called a Brahmanic redaction. These redactors could not interfere with Kṛṣṇa's essential role in the epic. But they began to regard Kṛṣṇa as just an avatāra of Viṣṇu, who had, by that time, come to be regarded as All-god and as the most important member of the Hindu Triad. In a sense, this identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu also served to relate Kṛṣṇaism to the Vedic tradition—albeit in an obviously tenuous manner. The mention of Kṛṣṇa Devakīpratara, in one of the Upaniṣads, as a pupil of the Brahmanic teacher, Ghora Āṅgirasa (which fact may have had a historical basis) also seems to have been an attempt in the above direction.

Two very important concepts of Hindu mythology have been alluded to in the foregoing discussion, namely, the Hindu Triad and the avatāra-theory. The beginnings of the concept of the Triple Divinity may be traced back to the concept of Dual Divinity in the Vedic mythology. As a matter of fact, in the Vedic mythology, the three gods, Agni, Vāyu, and Sūrya, were actually so very closely associated with one another as to form almost one single divine personality. The Trimūrti of the later Hinduism consisted of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The last two gods were the presiding divinities of the two prominent forms of popular Hinduism, namely, Vaiśṇavism and Śaivism, while the concept of Brahmā seems to have been evolved out of the concept of Prajāpati of the earlier Brahmanic literature. The Hindu Triad thus represents an attempt to bring about a religious synthesis between Vaiśṇavism and Śaivism on the one hand, and between these two popular religious movements and Brahmanism on the other. In conformity with the usual Hindu tendency towards schematizing, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva came to be regarded as the representations of the creative, preservative, and destructive

268. It is, however, more likely that Vaiśṇavism did not evolve as an independent religion. It was but an extension of Kṛṣṇaism resulting from the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu who had in the mean time come to be recognized as All-god. The three principal stages in the development of Vaiśṇavism were Vāsudevism, Kṛṣṇaism, and Vaiśṇavism. See DANDERAR, *Insights into Hinduism*, 229–319; *Exercises in Indology*, 262–291.

27. Ch. Up. III. 17. 6,

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principles and as the embodiments of rajoguna, sattvaguna, and tamoguna respectively. The Purāṇas have given various legends pertaining to the Trimūrti. Though they generally assert that the three gods are to be comprehended within but one Supreme Being, and, therefore, adjure the pious to make no difference between them, it may be pointed out that Viṣṇu often carries off the palm of supremacy. Whenever the world was overwhelmed with evil, Viṣṇu is represented to have rescued it from utter extinction in his different incarnations or avatāras.

Faint traces of the concept of avatāra may be discovered in the Vedic idea of Viṣṇu, as a solar divinity, coming down to the earth from his highest abode, as also in the frequent allusions, in the Vedic literature, to the fact that gods assumed different forms in order to accomplish their various exploits. In the Vedic literature we actually come across the early indications of the later dwarf-incarnation, the boar-incarnation, the tortoise-incarnation, and the fish-incarnation.28 The concept of avatāra has indeed proved to be one of the most fruitful sources of Hindu mythology. The Purāṇas and the Upa-purāṇas give various myths and legends relating to the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu. The circumstances which necessitated these avatāras and the mighty deeds accomplished by Viṣṇu on those occasions are most graphically and exhaustively described. Attempts have been made to rationalize the different forms assumed by Viṣṇu in his different incarnations. It is, for instance, suggested that, in the beginning, there were waters everywhere, and, to suit this condition of the world, the first incarnation of Viṣṇu was, appropriately enough, in the form of a fish. Then the earth began gradually to take shape among those waters, and, therefore, in his second incarnation, Viṣṇu appeared as a tortoise which can move with ease both in water and on land. The later stages of evolution — namely, the animal life in the forests, the life of wild humanity, the meagerly developed condition of human civilization, the condition of warring

28. See Dandekar, Vedic Mythological Tracts, 80–81. Traces of the tortoise-incarnation and the fish-incarnation are to be seen also in ŚPB.
cave-man, the development of family-life and domestic virtues, and the growth of complex social and political relations—are said to have been symbolically represented respectively by Varāha (boar), Narasimha (man-lion), Vāmana (dwarf), Parāśurāma (axe-man), Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa. It appears that certain Purāṇas are specifically devoted to the descriptions of certain avatāras of Viṣṇu. The seventh avatāra has indeed become the central theme of Vālmiki's beautiful epic-poem, the Rāmāyaṇa. As in the case of Kṛṣṇa, here too, Rāma, who seems to have been a historical prince of a petty state in Eastern India, and, perhaps, also a tribal ‘hero’, has been elevated to the position of a god and an incarnation of Viṣṇu. It may be presumed that Vālmiki has derived the material for his epic-poem from three main sources—namely, the seemingly historical court-intrigue affecting Rāma, the prince of Ayodhyā; the history of the Aryan expansion to the South symbolically represented through the exploits of the exiled Rāma whose personality was now enlarged into that of an epic hero; and an ancient agricultural myth.

A mythological concept, which is closely related to the avatāra-theory, is that of the yugas or the ages of the world. The yugas are four in number. In the first yuga, called Kṛṭa, whose duration is computed to be 4800 years of gods (each year of gods being equal to 360 years of men), there is perfect and enduring righteousness, and the dharma is said to be standing on all its four feet. In each of the next three yugas, namely, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali, which respectively extend over 3600, 2400, and 1200 years of gods, the dharma gradually decreases by one-fourth so that it survives only to the extent of one-fourth in Kali. These four yugas together make a mahāyuga or a manvantara, and 2000 such mahāyugas make a kalpa. The cycle of the creation, destruction, and re-creation of the world goes on eternally. This concept is indeed given a very prominent place among the

29. For further details see DANDEKAR, Insights into Hinduism, 135–139.
30. Cf. the names Matsya P., Varāha P., Kūrma P., Vāmana P., Nṛsiṁha P., etc.
five distinguishing topics dealt with by the Purāṇas, namely, (1) sarga, the creation of the universe; (2) pratisarga, its destruction and renovation; (3) vanīśa, genealogies of gods and patriarchs; (4) manvantaras, the reigns of the Manus; and (5) vanīśopacarita, the history of the principal races (solar and lunar) of kings.

A significant feature of the popular Hindu mythology, which distinguishes it from the early Vedic and Brahmanic mythologies, is the rise to prominence of female divinities. This may have been partly due to the influence of the Dravidian folk-religion. The word lakṣmi occurs in the early Vedic literature in the general sense of good fortune, and, even when the idea becomes personified in the Atharvaveda, it betokens females both of a lucky and unlucky character. It was presumably during the obscure period prior to the ostensible resurrection of Vedism through Hinduism, that Lakṣmi came to be regarded as the goddess of fortune and the wife of Viśṇu. As was to be expected, she became Sītā and Rukmiṇī during Viśṇu's incarnations as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively. Similarly Sarasvatī, who is celebrated in the Vedic hymns as a river-divinity, is later elevated to the position of the goddess of speech and learning and is schematically associated with Brahmā as his wife. But it is mainly the consort of Śiva, who, in her several forms, plays the most prominent role in popular mythology. She is often glorified as Śakti or the female energy of Śiva, and, as such, has two characters, one mild and the other fierce. In her milder form, she is celebrated as Umā (bright), who, incidentally, can be traced back to the later Vedic literature, and Gaurī. But it is her terrible form that is more distinctive. It may be presumed that the worship of Śakti, the fierce goddess, existed as an independent religious cult among certain wild tribes, and that it was only at a later stage that it was brought into close contact with the Śiva-worship. As a matter of fact, by the side of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, Śaṅtism also commanded a large following. Bloody sacrifices and sexual

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31. Kēda Up. 3. 12,
orgies of the Tāntrikas are some of the distinctive features of the Sakti-worship. As a destroyer of many Asuras and an accomplisher of mighty deeds, Sakti, in the form of Kāli or Cāmuṇḍā, plays almost the same role as the Vedic Indra. Appropriately enough, an entire Purāṇa, the Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, which one tradition includes among the eighteen Purāṇas, is devoted to the celebration of the various exploits of the great goddess. Similarly, the poem Devimāhātmya, consisting of 700 stanzas, enumerates her victories over the various demons.32

It has been said above that the gods, who were prominent in the Vedic mythology, were superseded, in Hinduism, by the popular divinities like Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, and Śakti. But, in accordance with the assimilative and synthesizing tendencies of that religious movement, the Vedic gods were not altogether banished from the pantheon. Indra continued to be recognised as the king of gods, though only in name, for, he was now entirely dependent on Viṣṇu, the All-god. Other Vedic gods, like Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, and Soma, were relegated to the position of the Lokapālas or the guardians of the different quarters of the world. Indra reigned over the svarga, which was the abode of the minor gods and of the beatified mortals, and which contained many forms of enjoyment, such as the draughts of amṛta (nectar), the music of the Gandharvas, and the dalliance with the Apsaras. This conception of svarga would appear to be just a very much elaborated and vulgarized version of the Vedic Yama’s abode of bliss. Apart from the svarga, Viṣṇu has his special abode in Vaikuṇṭha and Śiva in Kailāsa. As a counterpart of the svarga, the idea of naraka or hell came to be specifically developed in the popular Hindu mythology. It was generally a place of torture to which the wicked were sent after death. The Purāṇas enumerate as many as twenty-one hells and indulge in their graphic but gruesome descriptions.

The mythology of popular Hinduism has always tended to become richer and richer, as time passed, on account of the

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32. Also see Dandekar, Insights into Hinduism, 133–135; 315.
addition of legends pertaining, on the one hand, to the victories of the numerous gods, goddesses, and godlings over the various Rākṣasas or Titans of the Hindu mythology, and, on the other, to their acts of grace in respect of their devotees and worshippers. There is further added to Hinduism an ever-increasing mass of mythological details, whose origin can be traced to the various minor cults, such as the serpent-worship and the worship of graha-devatās and grāma-devatās. Again, we must not forget the large number of legends occasioned by the remarkably ingenious manner in which the characters of certain ancient sages, like Nārada, have been developed by the fertile mythological imagination of Hindu poets, bards, and minstrels. Philosophy is often described as the foundation of religion, ritual as its superstructure, and mythology as its detailed decoration. In the case of Hinduism, however, mythology is not merely its decoration; it is its essential constituent factor. Mythology is at once the strength and weakness of Hinduism—strength, because mythology represents some of the distinctive features of Hinduism, such as, tolerance, broad sympathy, liberal outlook, and dynamically assimilative, and at the same time, elevating power; and weakness, because there is the danger of the true spirit of Hinduism being undermined by the weight of its mythological richness.

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