STUDIES IN
INDIAN HISTORY

Based on I.A.S., State Services, M.A. & B.A. (Hons) Exams. of the Universities

HINDU INDIA 57 TOPICS
(with a Running Resume)

4th Edition (Revised & Enlarged)

By
RAU'S I.A.S. STUDY CIRCLE

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

This book lays no claim to original research. The material presented is from standard books in whose eternal debt it lives.

Its only justification for continuing existence is on two counts—the modern approach of presenting age-worn material, and the emphasis it lays on the theme of continuity in Indian history. In proof of the correctness of the former, the fastidious student will notice the changing nature of the very terminology of Indian history slowly emerging from its chrysalis—the strands being the xenophobia of some historians of India, the interpretation of Indian history by English writers as epitomized by V.A. Smith, and the Cleopatra-nose perspective of historiography. For the latter, no apology need be made for highlighting the continuity of Indian history in the face of the fact that for a hundred-mile stretch of railway track on the Multan-Lahore line the ballast was taken from the pre-historic brickbats unearthed (unknowingly) from the twin villages of Brahminabad and Harappa.

S. RAU, PRESIDENT
RAU’S I.A.S. STUDY CIRCLE

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

"We all agree with the view that it is very difficult to give a definite opinion on any controversial problem in the history of India. As a matter of fact, when one begins to discuss any issue, the very history shakes itself"—so wrote a brilliant student of Rau’s I.A.S. Study Circle. It is the shapeless nature of the subject-matter of Indian history that has made a Chinese scholar remark that the ‘history of India is like a Telephone Directory’. This is the major difficulty that a student of Indian history encounters, and this is the poignant experience of all candidates appearing at the various examinations.

Keeping in view this major difficulty of students, this book has been prepared. The topics in this book cover the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the history of India. In preparing these answers great care has been taken to give all the relevant material—mastery of relevant details is an essential characteristic of a good answer in Indian history. Candidates are quite often charitable
about Indian history as it is a history of their own country, but
they would do well to bear in mind that familiarity is the oplate of
imagination, and hence, a cursory evaluation of Indian history by a
student is neither proper nor helpful. However, what matters is the
presentation of the material, even though the material to be present-
ted in Indian history is more in comparison to the history of other
countries.

Every student is aware that Shakespeare exhibits enormous
historical erudition and the modern student of history is prone to
attribute this massive knowledge of Shakespeare to a voracious read-
ing of the documents in the National Archives, the Red Book Lists,
the Government Gazettes, and such other tomes. In reality, the
historical knowledge of Shakespeare was mainly based on two small
books Plutarch’s Lives, and Holinshed’s Chronicle. It was a case of
creative imagination at work, not a mere piling of inert information.
One of the most deplorable beliefs of the student-community is that
the more the books they read, the better their ability to answer.
This is true of very few candidates but never of all candidates. Most
of the candidates suffer from either anaemia of knowledge or haemor-
rhage of knowledge. The essentials are select reading and proper
presentation of facts. We earnestly hope that this book enables the
students acquire proper methods for writing an examination. We
hope that our next attempt would be far better than the present
one, and we are confident, even now, that this book would reach the
expectations of all intelligent candidates.
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A RESUME OF INDIAN HISTORY

The irony in the life of an educated Indian, and in particular, a student, is his blissful ignorance of our yester-years. Yet, yesterday is in today; as today will be in tomorrow. Yesterdays' other name is history—a systematized record of the facts of the past as per the principles of scientific enquiry.

Before guiding you through all the labyrinthine phases of Indian history, let me first acquaint you with a few general principles relating to the history of India, like the importance of geographical factors, the elements of fundamental unity, and the major sources for our history. As India is well protected by the seas and also by an almost impassable chain of mountains, geography enabled the country to evolve a civilization of its own. Indeed, many foreigners invaded or immigrated into India, but we were never as vulnerable as Europe was to the barbarians in the early Christian era. Bounded by the seas on two sides, India evinced interest in naval matters also. The most important thing to be remembered in this context is the presence of Hindu colonies and kingdoms in south-east Asia during the first twelve centuries of the Christian era.

Within, geographically, the country is divided into the Gangetic plain, the Deccan plateau, and the far south. The geographical differences among these regions were, in a way, responsible for the development of different languages and dialects and also the emergence of a great number of isolated kingdoms. Moreover, as the climate of India is a miniature version of the whole of climatology along with its flora and fauna, Indians from the very beginning acquired a sense of toleration or achieved what is known as unity in diversity. The last thing regarding geography is the importance of the rivers. The early history of India i.e. that of the Indus Valley people and the Aryans, was closely linked up with the courses of the rivers just like the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.

Incidentally, I may tell you of a sea-change in the geographical contours of India. What is known as India was not present when the area south of the Aravallis was a part of the land-mass called Gondwana, which probably included Mauritius in the west and the south-east Asia archipelago in the east. The whole of the Himalayas
and north India were under the Sea of Tethys. Then, there occurred a geological upheaval when the Himalayas rose out of the Sea of Tethys; and the consequent flow of rivers from it brought down silt and sand to constitute what is known as the Indo-Gangetic plain of northern India.

I mentioned above the unity in diversity of India, for which the other name is the Fundamental Unity of India. Besides the geographical factors, the mingling of various races like the Kushan and the Scythian, the Greek and the Bactrian with the population of India, which itself was composed of the Dravidians, the Indus-valley people and the Aryans, made the people of India claimants to a colourful racial stock and enabled them, quite early in the day, to take variety of every kind in their stride. Because of distances and racial differences, the languages and the dialects of India are as many as a few hundred. All the same, with the spread of Sanskrit and the dharmas, the themes in the literatures of all the languages became the same, and the social life came to be regulated by the precepts laid down in the dharmas. In this context too, we find unity in diversity. Hinduism is primarily the product of of the Aryans. Yet, because of this variety in geography and the presence of innumerable races that came to India, Hindu religion has come to believe in toleration. Hence, even though Muslims, Buddhists, Christians; Zoroastrians, Jews, Jains and Sikhs have been living in India, there is unity because the most important religion, Hinduism, has never been narrow in outlook.

Here, we many question why, politically, we were never united. This is superficial because every great king of India liked to honour himself by titles like Samrat and Ikarat to indicate his conception and control of the whole of India. It is true there was no political unity, but the ideal of unity was always there: the emotional integration was engendered by saints and seers, poets and philosophers.

Regarding the sources of Indian history, you may note that they are quite meagre. What is known as the writing of history or historiography was not known either to the Muslims or the Hindus or the Buddhists. Hence, our material is culled from various sources: epigraphy (inscriptions like those of Asoka and Kharavela), numismatics (the Roman coins found in Arikamedu near Pondicherry and Muziris on the west coast in Kerala which bear evidence of India’s relations with the Roman empire), literary panegyrics (Kalhana’s Rajatarangini throwing light on the history of Kashmir), treatises on subjects (Kautilya’s Arthasastra), the annalists in the courts of Muslims (Barni, Abul Fazl and others) and the pioneering work done by a great number of Englishmen (Wilkes on the history of Mysore, Tod on the story of Rajasthan, and so on). And historians
of India need both the erudition of a Toynbee and the imagination of a poet. After all, history is an art: and the Greeks had Clio as the presiding muse of history.

Section II

Now for the stages of Indian history proper. Long before the coming of the Aryans, the community of India was mostly composed of the Dravidians. The Dravidians had their own alphabet. Some historians are of the opinion that they were the descendants of the primitive inhabitants of India, and some opine that they were related to Sumerians. Maybe the Dravidian society was largely matriarchal, a strain of which is still to be noticed in modern Kerala. They worshipped the Mother Goddess and believed in human sacrifice. These Dravidians, in course of time, came to be soaked in the Aryan civilization. Even though all Hindus mostly follow the characteristics of Aryans, still some peculiar Dravidian characteristics remain in the south. It is still anybody’s guess how much of Dravidian influence was absorbed by the Aryans.

The next important thing for us is the famous Indus-velley civilization. The excavations at Mohenjodaro (Sindh) and Harappa (the Punjab) in 1922 by Sir John Marshall opened an entirely new chapter in the history of India. These people lived in towns, knew the art of pottery, cultivation and also the domestication of animals. Their artistic talent as evidenced from the pottery, the utensils and the ornaments that have come down to us, is of a very high order. They worshipped Phallus, the Mother Goddess or Adi Shakti and believed in the concept of metampsychiosis. All these three were later incorporated in Hinduism. Therefore, what is known as Hinduism is probably the combination of the Dravidian, Aryan, and Indus-valley civilizations. Recently, the excavations at Lothal in Gujerat and Rupar in the Punjab show how widely the Indus people spread themselves out.

At that time, the region north of the Narbada was occupied by the Nagas. Archaeologists have named the inhabitants of modern U.P. and Bihar as Copper-Heads from the copper weapons and tools they used. Scholars opine that the Nagas, the Nishadas, and Asuras of whom we hear in the epics, belonged to the stock of Nagas.

The data on the origin of the Aryans and their ‘immigration-invasion’ into India are controversial issues. Only one solid evidence we have, and that is the famous Bohgaz Kewi inscription. It reveals
that the Aryans sometime in 1,400 B.C. succeeded in imposing their religion on the people in Cappadocia. To begin with, these Aryans (dialect) settled somewhere in north-western India before 2,000 B.C. It appears that Aryans or the Indo-Iranians had a common religion. The sacred book of the Zoroastrians called Zend Avesta contains verses similar to those in the Rig-Veda and, perhaps, the Yama of the Vedas is the Vima of Zend Avesta. In the Rig-Veda, there is no mention of the Narbada and the Vindhyas. Slowly the Aryans advanced towards the Gangetic plain and settled down there by 1500 B.C. and historians normally opine that, by the end of the eighth century A.D., the whole of India came under the spell of Aryanism. It is worth noting here that a reference is made in the Rig-Veda that a few famous Aryan tribes were led by Indra into Madhyadesa from distant lands.

With regard to religion, we may note that, to start with, they worshipped natural phenomena. The number of gods mentioned in the Vedic literature is almost indefinite. In course of time the Trinity emerged. One point of importance is the river Saraswati which has been often praised in the Rig-Veda. This river probably flowed westward into the sea passing through modern Rajasthan, and what was left of it is now the dry bed of the Ghaggar. Politically, the Aryans lived in tribes. Since the tribes constantly fought amongst themselves, it resulted in the emergence of separate kingdoms. One such classic example is the Battle of Ten kings. Sudas, assisted by his master, the saint Vasishta, fought against ten tribes, most of whom were non-Aryans and they were led by the Aryan king Purukutsa and blessed by the saint, Vishwamitra. Read between the lines. In society, to begin with, there was no functional caste system. Caste system was first based on colour. The Aryans knew cultivation and gave great importance to pastoral life. A few crafts like tanning, wood-work and metal works were also known to them.

Substantial changes in the life of Aryans came in the period known as the later Vedic age. It was in this period that the Upanishads appeared and the four-fold caste system became hardened. Finally, the creation of large states led to the increase of royal power. The next stage in the evolution of Aryanism was the period of the epics and the dharma shastras. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata clearly bring out the importance of the kshatriya community, thereby indicating that political problems became more important. Some amount of actual history also can be gleaned from the epics. The reference to Dandakaranya and rakshasas below the Vindhyas shows that the Aryans during the days of the Ramayana had no sway over southern India. But in the Mahabharata the centre of activity shifted. This shows that, by the time the Mahabharata came to be composed, the Aryan influence in India had
spread to different parts. The stages and events relating to the fusion of the Aryan, the Dravidian, and the Indus-valley civilizations into what has come to be known as Hindu civilization are tantalizingly vague. This is Mute History. Who was the Dark Lady in the sonnets of Shakespeare? Where from did the original inhabitants of America arrive? How came man to discover mathematics? These silent zones of history are impenetrable; and a student would do well to watch his steps in all such contexts. There are innumerable silent zones in Indian history, though of lesser significance.

Coming back to the Aryan books of the period, the other important books are the dhârama shastras. In these writings we find that the caste system had become rigid. It is in these, for the first time, that we come across the four ashramas of life. These books also indicate the decline in the status of women and the privation of widows.

Section III

The sixth century B.C. is known as the wonderful century in the history of the world. In Greece it was the Age of Pythagoras and in China it was the Age of Confucius. For India the century is important because: (a) for the first time foreigners, as such, invaded India (Darius); (b) for the first time an empire was established (Magadha); (c) and, it was an age of religious ferment.

The mental agitation of the people of India in the sixth century resulted in the emergence of 61 different schools of thought, of which, Jainism and Buddhism alone survived. The religious dissatisfaction of this period was primarily because of the degenerate nature of Aryanism—domination of priests, incomprehensibility of the Aryan rituals and ceremonies, and the rigidity of the caste system.

The founder of Jainism was Vardhamana Mahâvîra (the Great Hero). He died sometime in 528 B.C. or 468 B.C. at Pava. The essentials of Jainism are: rejection of the Supreme Power, acceptance of karma and the belief that deliverance from karma is salvation. He also enjoined his followers to observe celibacy. This deliverance can be attained through the Triratna (three jewels): right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. In general, Jains laid much stress on asceticism. In the beginning, Jainism was successful, and Chandragupta Maurya is stated to have professed this faith. It even spread to southern India by the 4th century A.D. Very soon, it was split up into two sects, Digâmbar and Swetambar, and lost its lead in India.
The second school of thought was founded by Gautama who was the son of Suddhodhana, the ruler of Kapilavastu. He married Yashodhara and had a son named Rahula. Moved by the sorrows and sufferings of man, he left home, wandered for some years, and ultimately attained enlightenment under a pipal tree at Uruvela, south of Bodh Gaya. He first preached in the Deer Park at Sarnath near Benaras. At the age of 80 he died at Kusinagara in 483 B.C. or 486 B.C. The essentials of Buddhism are; \textit{trishna} or desire is the root cause of all suffering and suffering must be eradicated. For this he prescribed the Eight-Fold Path: right belief, right thought, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right recollection, and right meditation. This is also known as the middle path which leads to nirvana. The Buddha struck a via media between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture. And both Jainism and Buddhism, while contesting the authority of the \textit{Vedas}, accepted some of the basic implications of the Aryan faith—transmigration of souls (\textit{samsara}), theory of action (\textit{karma}) and salvation (\textit{moksha}). Another sect of this period was the Ajivikas as founded by Gosala Maskariputra.

In general, Buddhism had a greater success than Jainism because of the patronage extended to it by kings like Asoka, Kanishka and Harsha. When the Buddha was alive, King Bimbisara of Magadha joined the ranks of lay followers and patrons. Also, the Buddhist church and monks were responsible for the spread of education. As usual, in course of time, it was divided into sects. The discipline in monasteries grew lax and as Hinduism revived and incorporated the Buddha as one of the avatars in its mythology, it lost its importance in India.

Section IV

According to the available data, the 6th century B.C. in India is important for the reason that for the first time a foreign (as such) leader invaded India. After the Persians settled in western Asia, Darius, during the second half of the 6th century B.C., annexed Gandhara and the Indus valley. India constituted the twentieth \textit{satrapy} (province) of the Persian empire. It is difficult to say for how long the Persian influence lasted in north-western India. The Greek historian, Herodotus, wrote, “The population of India is by far the greatest of all the people that we know, and they paid a tribute larger than the rest of the Empire.” The Persian rule contributed to the development of Kharoshti; influenced the bell-shaped capital of the Asokan pillars; popularized the ceremony of washing the king’s hair, and the custom of exposing the dead,
By the 4th century B.C., the Indus valley knew no one political authority and at this juncture came Alexander. Alexander ascended the throne of Macedonia in 360 B.C. and conquered Persia in 334 B.C. Since he conquered the Persian empire which had a satrapy in India, Alexander’s motley soldiers entered India. In 327 B.C. he crossed the Hindukush; and after subjugating the tribes on the frontier, crossed the Indus in 326 B.C. Then, he fought the famous battle with Poros, who was captured but ultimately released. Even after this easy victory, the Macedonians refused to invade the Gangetic valley; and so, Alexander retraced his steps. At Babylon in 323 B.C. Alexander died. This invasion of Alexander led to many consequences: some of the cities which were established by him in north-western India survived for a long time; Asoka’s edicts refer to Greek settlers in the north-western part of the empire; the land routes opened by Alexander increased the commercial contact and thereby the cultural contact between India and the west; and, his victory over the kings in north-western India facilitated the establishment of the Mauryan empire by Chandragupta Maurya in 321 B.C.

Here, one should know something about Magadha. The city and the area surrounding it was the focus of political history from 600 B.C. to 200 A.D. Magadha was one of the four major states of northern India, the other three being Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti. It was during the time of Bimbisara (600 B.C.) that it expanded at the expense of Kasi and Anga. His son, Ajatasatru, annexed the Vriji republican confederacy in the north. The last of the Haranyakya dynasty was supplanted by Sisunaga. This new king conquered the kingdom of Avanti. Soon, this dynasty was superseded by that of the Nandas, who ruled for a hundred years. And it was the Nandas who first evolved an efficient administrative system. Then came the Mauryas.

Chandragupta’s rule extended as far as modern Mysore in the south, and in the west, as far as Kathiawar. He came into conflict with Seleukos, the king of western Asia. Seleukos was defeated and made to hand over Herat, Kandahar, Baluchistan and Kabul, as well as give his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta. And there is a certain amount of credence in the legend that, after having become a Jain monk, Chandragupta retired with Acharya Bhadrabahu to Sravana Belgola in Mysore where he fasted unto death.

The administration established by him was a consummation of that of the Nandas. It was the first bureaucratic administration of India. At the apex of the administration was the king, who was assisted by a council of ministers. The empire was divided into a number of provinces and some of them were entrusted to princes of
the royal blood. They had an effective espionage system. Criminal law was quite severe: often mutilation was awarded to criminals. The army was divided into six sections and its strength was quite great. The king received 1/6 of the produce of the soil. In general, the administration was quite harsh, but it was beneficial to the people. It was made humane by Asoka. The value of the Mauryan administration consists in the fact that it became the tradition of the administrative system of India—division of empire into provinces, districts constituting the basis of administration, and a well-tried class of officials—the basic structure of which has endured to this day.

Incidentally, a knowledge of the administration in the Mauryan period would be incomplete without a good word for the Vriji republic. The Vriji Sangha, admired by the Buddha, can be compared favourably with modern democracies.

The next ruler of the Mauryan dynasty was Bindusara. It is said that he requested Antiochos, the king of Syria, to send him grapes, figs and also a sophist! You can read between the lines here.

The next ruler was Asoka who ascended the throne in 273 B.C. It was in 261 B.C. that he attacked Kalinga, after which he renounced war. His empire extended as far as Mysore in the south, Assam in the east, and Kandahar in the north-west. After renouncing war, he came under the spell of Buddhism, and soon enough, propagated the doctrine called ‘Law of Piety or the dharma,’ by sending missions abroad and inscribing the law on monolithic pillars. Even though he came under the influence of Buddhism, he never ill-treated Hindus or Jains. He undertook a great number of welfare activities like planting of trees on the side of roads, and supplying of free medicines to men and beasts. The name Asoka occurs in the Maski inscription found near Mysore in 1915.

After his death, the empire disintegrated within no time. Immediately after his death, the empire was divided between Dasaratha and Samprati. The last of the Mauryas, Brihadratha, was killed by his general, Pushyamitra, in 187 B.C. who founded the Sunga dynasty. In general, the life of the people during the time of the Mauryas was quite happy and prosperous. A hall with 100 pillars has been found near Pataliputra. Surigangayes place? The rock-cut chaityas in the Barabar hills and the stupas at Barhut and Sanchi (completed later) speak for the greatness of the Mauryan architecture. The craftsmanship shown in the cut and polish given to stone is of a high order. Grousset pays great tribute to the carving of animals on the Sarnath pillar.
Before we end this section we have to take note of the great Kharavela of Kalinga, who rose to prominence in the first century, B.C. It is said that he overran the Deccan and even marched as far as the north-west frontier. For certain, he defeated the ruler of Magadha and he was a patron of Jainism. To him refers the Hathigumpha inscription.

Section V

After the Mauryas, the history of India is very complicated. The Sungas were quite often attacked by the Greeks. Pushyamitra Sunga performed an ashvamedha sacrifice; yet, he tolerated Buddhism. His successor, Agnimitra, is the hero of Kalidasa’s drama Malavikagnimitra. In the first century B.C., the Sunga power came to an end and then the Kanvas ruled from Magadha. Their rule came to an end in the first century B.C. itself. Meanwhile, in the south, the Satavahanas power was established. They are also known as Andhras. Their greatest king was Gautamiputra Satakarni who defeated the Sakas, Greeks and Parthians. Their rule came to an end by the second century A.D. One other interesting dynasty of central India during this period was that of the Vakatakas. They were overthrown by the Kalachuris and the Kadambas and earlier they were defeated by the Guptas also. In the south, the most important dynasty was that of the Pallavas, who ruled from the third century A.D. with their capital at Kanchi. Another important dynasty was the Cholas who ruled in modern Madras. One of their rulers conquered Ceylon. Information about the Cholas is gathered from the book Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and a geography of Ptolemy. Very soon their power declined, but it was revived later on. The other rulers of the south were the Pandyas and the Cheras.

Now, let us know something about the life of the people during the days of the Sungas and the Kanvas; for, laying too much stress on only the political history of any country results in a lop-sided view of the past. Both the dynasties patronized Brahmanism, Learning, too, received royal patronage. Pushyamitra Sunga patronized Patanjali. In this period Buddhism was divided. Within Hinduism, too, arose two new sects, the Bhagavatas and the Saivas. The former worshipped Vasudeva Krishna. Many foreigners joined this faith. Temples were built in adoration of Krishna and Siva and many rites came into vogue. Regarding Andhra Satavahanas, a few points of interest are worth knowing. At one time their empire extended upto Malwa in the north, and most of their kings patronized Aryanism. The king Gautamiputra Satakarni took steps to prevent the confusion caused to the caste system because many
foreigners were admitted into the fold of Aryanism; and, for this, he was called the preventer of varna samkara. Hence it is said that the Andhras deserve credit for initiating the historic mission of uniting the south with the north.

More important than these facts was the 'immigration-invasions' of foreigners before the establishment of the Gupta empire. Bactrian Greeks ruled over north-western India just after the decline of the Mauryas. As there was no unity between them, they were overthrown by the Sakas. By the mid of the second century B.C. the Sakas moved into India. They ruled even in Mathura. Their power spread to western and southern India. The most important Saka family ruled from Ujjain and its most powerful ruler was Rudradaman who ruled during the second century A.D. The Junagadh rock inscription relates to his rule. He was responsible for the repair of the famous Sudharshana lake, and he was also a great scholar, versed in grammar, and loved music and logic. The Sakas were destroyed ultimately by Chandra Gupta II. The second 'immigrant-foreigners' were the Parthians who ruled over Gandhara and Peshawar during the first century A.D. They were ousted by the Kushans. The history of the Kushans is of great importance for the students of history because the great ruler of this dynasty, Kanishka, introduced the Saka era in 78 A.D. on which our official national calendar is based. Probably his rule began about 125 A.D. and ended by the end of the century. He became a convert to Buddhism and summoned the Buddhist council at Peshawar to settle the differences among the Buddhists. He built a great stupa at Peshawar and his court was adorned by the Buddhist teacher, Vasumitra; the Buddhist poet and philosopher, Asvaghosha; the reputed philosopher, Nagarjuna; and the great authority on ayurveda, Charaka.

The rule of the Kushans is of great interest. It was during their time that the Gandhara school of art, which is a blend of Grecian and Indian traditions, came into existence. As the capital of the Kushans was Peshawar, and as they ruled over Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan, their empire became the clearing-house for ideas and goods between India on the one hand, and central Asia and China on the other. The fourth Buddhist council summoned by Kanishka systematized the Buddhist canon. Possibly it was under the patronage of Kanishka that Mahayana Buddhism became popular. The greatest exponent of this doctrine was Nagarjuna. The followers of this school started worshipping the Buddha in the form of images.

The Kushans were succeeded by the Nagas in Mathura. They ruled during the 3rd and 4th century A.D. and were ultimately crushed by the Guptas. Buddhism was introduced in China by Kumarajiva in 67 A.D.
Buddhist centre of learning, where Huien-Tsang studied for a number of years. It was in his court that Bānabhācā, the author of Harshacharita, lived. After the death of Harsha, the history of northern India once again became gloomy.

To occupy Kanauj became one of the chief objectives of political activity in northern India from the death of Harsha to the establishment of Muslim rule. It was under the Gurjara Pratiharas that Kanauj once again gained prominence. It is said that their ruler Naga Bhatta I defeated the Arabs of Sind. But the power of the Pratiharas declined because of the triangular conflict with the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of the south. Kanauj was ruled by the Gahadavalaas at the time Muhammad Ghori invaded India.

Meantime, the Palas ruled in Bengal. They were at war with the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas. Later on, they came into conflict with the Chandellas and the Cholas also. The rule of the Palas in Bengal is of great interest from the point of view of culture. Sanskrit literature was liberally encouraged. The great writer of this period was Bahavadeva Bhatta, the author of Jimutavahana. It was under their rule that the people of Bengal emerged as a distinct cultural entity and the Bengali language was evolved. They were mostly devotees of Buddhism. It was during their rule that Mahayana Buddhism spread to Tibet and south-east Asia. The famous university of Vikramasila came into existence during this period. The Pala style of sculpture was adopted in Nepal and Tibet and it influenced the art of Burma, Indo-China and Indonesia also. The Palas were succeeded by the Senas in Bengal. They too, patronized art and literature. Jayadeva, the author of Gita Govinda, lived in this period. By the close of the twelfth century, the Sena rule came to an end.

Section VIII

In this post-Gupta period, a few southern kingdoms came into prominence, like the Chalukya, the Rashtrakuta, and the Pallava. The most important king of the Chalukyas was Pulakesin II. He ruled between 609 and 642 A.D. He defeated Harsha and was killed later by a Pallava ruler. It was during his time that Huien-Tsang visited India. After his death, the Chalukyas ruled from Vatapi. They were ultimately supplanted by the Rashtrakutas. It is said that Jainism prospered during their rule, and the practice of hewing cave-temples came into existence. Perhaps, some of the Ajanta frescoes belong to this period.

The Rashtrakutas, who supplanted the Chalukyas in the Deccan plateau, were constantly at war with Kanauj and the Palas. Their greatest king was Amoghavarsha who ruled in the 9th century A.D.
He showed more interest in religion and literature than in martial exploits. He was attracted towards Jainism. One Krishnaraja of this dynasty built the famous Kailash temple at Ellora. Their rule came to an end by the end of the tenth century A.D. The other small dynasties of the south were the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the Kadambas of Halsi (Bombay) and the western Gangas of Mysore. Under the auspices of the latter two dynasties, Jainism flourished.

The last but the most important dynasty of the south in this period was that of the Pallavas who ruled from Kanchi, the centre of Sanskrit learning. Their greatest king was Narasimhavarman I who killed Pulakesin. Their rule came to an end when they were defeated by the Cholas at the end of the ninth century A.D. In religion, they were all brahminical Hindus, even though other religions flourished. They patronized art and literature. One ruler, Mahendravarman is credited to have introduced the practice of hewing temples out of rocks. It was he who founded the town of Mahabalipuram and constructed the Seven Pagodas. Each one of them was cut directly from a great rock and decorated with beautiful relief-sculptures. The Pallavas were also patrons of Sanskrit. Bharavi, the poet who wrote *Kiratarjuna*, was patronized by the Pallavas. Another poet, Dandin, also lived in this period.

The last phase in the period of empires is that of the Rajputs. What is known as the Rajput community came into existence in the 8th century A.D. The importance of the Rajputs consists in the fact that it was they who bore the brunt of Muslim invasion, as somehow the generality of people belonging to Hinduism played no significant role. Again, it was they who patronized Hindu religion, literature and arts till the end of the 12th century A.D. The Rajputs were never under one sceptre. The Chauhan community ruled at Sambhar and Ajmer. For some time they ruled over Delhi also. The greatest ruler of the dynasty was Prithviraj III. His career is described in the famous Hindu epic, *Prithviraja Raso* of Chand Bardai. It was he who defeated Muhammad of Ghur in the first battle of Tarain in 1191 A.D., but he was later defeated and killed at the same place in 1192 A.D. The victory of the Muslims in the second battle gave them Delhi, Ajmer and Meerut. The second important family was that of the Chandelas who ruled in Bundelkhand, at first from Khajuraho. Some of the finest temples in this capital were built during the reign of one Dhanga who ruled at the end of the 10th century A.D. This king too, was at constant war with others. In 1202, Qub-ud-din Aibek captured Kalinga, but some of the princes of royal blood continued to rule till the 16th century.

The third dynasty was that of the Kalachuris of Vindhya Pradesh. They too were engrossed in waging wars with the neighbouring kingdoms, Their dynasty came to a close by the 12th century
A.D. The next dynasty, the Gahadavalas, ruled from Kanauj for some time. The important king of this dynasty was Jaya Chandra who came in conflict with Prithvi Raj III because of his (the former's) daughter, Samyogita. Jaya Chandra was killed and defeated at Chandwar by Muhammad Ghuri in 1193 A.D. Meantime the Paramaras ruled from Malwa. Bhoja, who belonged to the first half of the 11th century A.D., was the greatest ruler of this dynasty. He waged a great number of wars, but his greatness primarily lies in the patronage that he extended to the arts and literature. Numerous works of philosophy, poetry, astronomy, architecture, medicine, grammar and lexicography are attributed to him. The rule of the Paramaras came to an end when Malwa was conquered by Ala-ud-din Khalji.

Now, let us have a look at western India. There were the Chalukyas of Gujarart who waged many wars with others. This dynasty came to an end by the middle of the 13th century. Another dynasty was that of the Guhilot of Mewar with their capital at Chitor. To this dynasty belong famous names like Rana Sangram Singh, Rana Pratap Singh and Rana Raj Singh. In 1303, Ala-ud-din Khalji captured Chitor. With that began the saga of Chitor.

One more dynasty of northern India in this period was that of the Senas of Bengal. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Vijaya Sena who ruled towards the end of the 12th century A.D. He was a writer and a scholar. He is reputed to have introduced great social reforms and is credited with the revival of Hindu rites. Very soon, the kingdom was weakened because of internal dissensions. Its last great ruler was Lakshmana Sena. He was driven away from Bengal by a general of Muhammad of Ghur. Jayadeva, reputed to be the greatest vaishnava poet of Bengal, lived in his court. Some Sanskrit works are attributed to him. His successor ruled for a little more time in east Bengal.

In the same period a few dynasties of the south also came into importance. One was the western Chalukyas of Kalyani. Vikrmaditya II who ruled in the last quarter of the 11th century A.D. was their greatest ruler. He was an ardent patron of learning. His court was adorned by Vignanesvara, the author of an authoritative work on Hindu Law. It was during the rule of the western Chalukyas that the Lingayat sect of Hinduism came into existence. Its followers are still found in Mysore and they lay stress on bhakti. The next important dynasty was the Yadavas of Devagiri. During their time, a Marathi saint wrote a commentary on the Gita. The dynasty came to an end in the beginning of the 14th century. Another dynasty of this period was the Hoysalas who ruled in Mysore. They were great builders of temples some of which still exist at places like Halebid. The next two small dynasties were the Kakatiyas of Warangal and
the Pandyas of Madura. The first kingdom was absorbed by the Bahamani kingdom. We have a considerable amount of knowledge about the Pandyas, thanks to the accounts left by the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo. It was Malik Kafur's invasion which put an end to this kingdom.

Among the southern kingdoms, the most important was that of the Great Cholas who came into prominence from the 9th century onwards. Raja Raja I, in the last quarter of the 10th century A.D., destroyed the Ceylonese naval power and occupied the northern part of Ceylon. He is also credited with the conquest of Kalinga. He possessed a great fleet. The next ruler was Rajendra Chola who directed his ambitions towards the north, as far as the Ganges. It was he who constructed Gangalikonda-Cholapuram in commemoration of his victory in the north. He even conquered Pegu and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Later on, because of Chola-Chalukya rivalry, the dynasty declined. The contribution of the Cholas is very significant. It was during their rule that popular assemblies played a very important part. The local assemblies even maintained educational institutions. Taxes were systematically collected and a careful survey of the whole land was made. Even though they were brahminical Hindus by faith, they made gifts to other religions too. Their temples are gorgeous, the best examples being those at Tanjore and Gangalikonda-Cholapuram.

Section IX

Before winding up this period, we have to make a passing reference to the Arabs of Sind, and give a few details relating to the expansion of Hindu civilization in south-east Asia. It is interesting to keep in view that 79 years after the death of Mohammed, the followers of Islam extended their rule from Outer Mongolia in the east to north Africa in the west. It was in 712 A.D. that Kasim was sent to India to penalize the ruler of Sind for plundering the ships bound to the Caliph. His mission was successful and he established Arab rule in Sind. The Arabs imposed poll tax and established an administration. Very soon, their power declined because of the opposition from the Pratiharas and also because of their internal weakness. The instructive thing about them is that the Muslim sway did not extend beyond Sind. This shows how powerful the Hindu kingdoms were in those days. The Arabs themselves were influenced by Hindu civilization. It was they who carried Indian music, painting, medicine and philosophy, including the *Panchatantra*, to the west.

The last aspect about this period is the influence of Hindu civilization on western Asia, central Asia, the far east, Tibet, Burma and south-east Asia.
Regarding western Asia, it is known that down from the 4th or 5th century B.C. India maintained close contact with it. Aristotle, the teacher of Alexander, asked his pupil to find out the condition of philosophy in the first century B.C., the Pandyas king sent a mission to Augustus, the Roman emperor. The coins found at Arikamedu and Muziris, show that there was extensive contact between Rome and India in ancient times. Indian women were inmates in the temples dedicated to Aphrodite in Alexandria. It is said that Christianity borrowed the idea of monastic life from Buddhism. In turn, India learnt from the west something in numismatic, something in Gandhara art, and also imported goods from the west.

Regarding central Asia also, the archaeological discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein revealed ruins of Buddhist stupas and images of brahminical gods, particularly, in Khotan and the Gobi desert. The manuscripts found in this region show the influence of Sanskrit. The extent of the influence of India is also borne out by the records of the Chinese traveller, Hiuen-Tsang.

In Tibet too, the influence was great. One Gampo in the seventh century became a convert to Buddhism. The Tibetan script is based on the script of Kashmir. The Palas and Senas had direct contact with Tibet. A monk from Bengal, Dipankara, helped the reorganization of Buddhism in Tibet during the 11th century.

In Burma, Hindu colonies were founded from the first century A.D. onwards. Evidence relating to them is primarily derived from the Khmer inscriptions. Both Buddhism and Hinduism influenced the country. Central Burma was ruled in the 11th century by a king, called Anarwaradha, which name sounds typically Indian. His successors followed Buddhism and subsequently the Hindu influence disappeared.

Indian influence in Ceylon is also quite apparent. It appears that Aryan immigrants went to this country also. Asoka's missionaries converted the king, Tissa, to Buddhism. As we already know, the Cholas waged constant war with this country and also occupied a part of it for some time.

The spread of Indian civilization in the far east is far more remarkable. It was in 67 A.D. that a few Buddhist priests left for China. During the second century A.D., China was converted to Buddhism, which led to a steady stream of scholars coming from that country to India. The rock-cut temples of China owe their inspiration to India. The Gandhara school of art also influenced them. It was from here that Buddhism spread to Korea and Japan. The influence on Thailand, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Bali, Annam and Cambodia was far
more. Thailand was first under Hindu influence; and later, the Buddhist. They used the Pali language, and much of the art of Siam or Thailand was inspired by India. The contact between India and Malaya became more evident from the eighth century onwards. The Sailendras who established themselves in Malaya, with control over Java and Sumatra, were at war with the Cholas. They practised the Mahayana Buddhism. The splendid monument of Chandi Kailasa Barabudur in Java came into existence under their auspices. The Sailendras were friendly with the Palas of Bengal and one of their kings built a monastery at Nalanda. In Java, the Hindu influence was first felt in the first century A.D.: but when it came under the rule of the Sailendras, this was lost. The contact with Sumatra came into prominence in the fourth century A.D. I'.tsang described Sri-Vijaya as a great centre of Buddhism. In Borneo, Hindu influence was first felt in the 4th century A.D.

Bali is the only one island where Hindu influence still survives. Another country to come under Hindu influence was Annam (Cochin China), in ancient times known as Champa. One king of Champa in the 10th century knew the six systems of Hindu philosophy, Buddhist literature and various other subjects. The kingdom collapsed in the 15th century. In this country Vaishnavism also played an important part. Cambodia, known as Kambuja, is roughly equal to modern Cambodia and Cochin China. From the first century A.D. onwards Kambuja felt the Hindu influence. A king in the 12th century A.D. built the famous Angkor Vat, dedicated to Vishnu. He is reputed to have invaded Annam and Champa and also extended his influence over the Malayan peninsula. This influence declined from the 14th century onwards because of pressure from Siam and Annam.
1. On The Evolution of Hinduism

The study of Indian history is undergoing a gradual transformation. To start with, historians of India had laid great stress on the concepts and tools of the western historiography. For example, the decline of the Roman empire was an event of tremendous significance because with its fall dark ages began in the history of Europe. The knowledge of Roman history made the historians of India treat the decline of empires as a mighty event in the history of India. Today we know that the rise and fall of the empires in the history of India was not of that great significance as it was imagined by the early historians of India.

The very fact that either politics or the state was never the architectonic factor in the story of India, shows that the rise and collapse of empires in India was not that significant as it was in the history of the west. All through the Hindu period the king was regarded as an upholder of the dharma. The king was the danda-dhara, that is, wielder of punishment. Generally no king in India was regarded as a representative of God; on the other hand, kings were expected to uphold the dharma of society, apart from maintaining rajya dharma, that is, political dharma. This approach to politics was continued in the Muslim and Mughal periods also because the state never attempted to interfere with the established social life (dharma) of the people. Whatever may be the factors that made the Muslim state in India to keep away from the life of the people, the fact that the state did not impose itself on the long established traditions governing the life of the people is a well-established fact. For example, it was with great reluctance that the Turko-Afghan rulers ventured to impose jizya on brahmins who constituted the priestly order of the dharma. This point bears out the deference that the Turko-Afghan state showed to the traditional dharma of people. As the role of the state was a part and parcel of the traditional dharma of the day, the political factor was only of peripheral significance. That is why an understanding of the evolution of Hinduism, or more correctly, dharma, is of crucial importance in the study of Indian history. It is this factor that holds the key for the understanding of the history of India. Hereafter we will be referring to Hinduism and dharma, and also brahmanism, as synonymous terms. Before tracing the evolution of Hinduism let us be clear on what considerations Hinduism can be regarded as a religion.
The very fact that the word Hindu is derived from the word Sindu, as given by the Greeks, is indicative of the truth that what is known as Hinduism eludes all definitions. That is why the well-known statement of today that Hinduism is a way of life; it is more easy to say what it is not, than what it is. "The more Hinduism is considered, the more difficult it becomes to define in a single phrase. It is a gargantuan, many bodied thing, gross and subtle at the same time, reaching to the skies and falling to the depths. In fact it is much easier to say what it is not than what it is." In two aspects Hinduism falls short of the qualifications that go to make normally a religion in the world: lack of a church to safeguard and interpret the essentials of the doctrine, and of far more importance is the absence of a corpus of belief because there is neither a Bible nor a Koran for Hinduism: one can be a Hindu without the knowledge of any one of the scriptures of Hinduism. Another feature of Hinduism is equally significant: both atheists and agnostics can be members of Hinduism. In brief, Hinduism is a way of life.

What is known as Hinduism or Hindu dharma of the ages was pioneered by the Aryans (not a race but a name derived from the dialect spoken by the branch of Indo-Europeans, who migrated into India). To start with, the Aryans settled down in the Indus region and then slowly spread into the Gangetic plains. Then onwards the Aryans spread their influence to the foothills of the Himalayas, Bengal, the Deccan and southern India. The slow spread of Aryanism was in a way completed by the 8th century A.D. To start with, the land beyond the Vindhyas or Dandakaryana was inhabited by rakshasas, sprinkled with a few friendly communities as represented by Vali and Sugriva in the Ramayana. The picture of India appears in a different form in the Mahabharata. A southern king was a participant in the battle of Kurukshetra and the polyandry in the epic ( Draupadi marrying five husbands) was a Mongoloid practice. Historically speaking, it was with the coming of the Andhra Satavahanas that systematic Aryanization of the south was undertaken. This movement reached its culmination in the time of the Pallavas because it was during their period that Kanchi was the centre of Sanskrit.

All through this period the Aryan way of life must have had received a new enrichment. To start with the Vedas speak of mostly one supreme god, Indra. Very often Indra was invoked by the Aryans to help them with his thunderbolt so that durgas (fortresses) could be destroyed. What were the fortresses referred to by the compilers of the Vedas? Probably they were the strong-holds of the Indus valley people. This view-point is not substantiated by historical evidence and it is only a probable conjecture in the study of Indian history. That is why it is stated by some scholars that one
has to take the horizontal coordinates (myth and mythology) into consideration in understanding the history of India. Whatever may be the historical facts, the Aryans appear to have had absorbed some of the features of the Indus valley people. The remains of the Indus valley civilization show that they had something to convey on the following: Adishakti, transmigration of soul, worship of Shiva, and the concept of bhakti. All these concepts, as we know now, constitute the important ingredients of what came to be known later as Hinduism. Whether and to what extent the Aryans owed a debt to the Indus valley people is a matter of historical dispute. Although there is no specific historical conclusion about the indebtedness of the Aryans to the Indus valley people, it is reasonable to state that the Aryans must have had absorbed some features of the Indus valley people because the Aryan mind showed this capacity for absorption, without losing its identity, in the coming centuries also.

By the middle of the sixth century B.C. the Aryan life had a definite structure and ethos of its own generally known as brahmanism. The life of the Aryans as governed and led by brahmanism was highly ritualistic leading to a disjunction of society into those a few who were close to the Aryan rituals and the rest of the community to whom the best of life (as they understand) was closed. It was this split in Aryan society that was at the root of the religious upsurge in this century. It is interesting to note that there were 61 different schools of religious thought in the century. The very number goes to prove that they were a response to the need of the day. Out of these 61 schools of thought only two survived. It is equally intriguing to know that the two chief systems that survived the period were led by kshatriyas. It is strange to note that although the kshatriyas are the brawn of Aryan society in the caste hierarchy, they do not figure prominently in the history of Hindu India. The legend of Parsurama conveys more than what it states. According to this legend, Parsurama, in his anger, destroyed all the kshatriyas and those who survived his anger branched off into blacksmiths and goldsmiths. If this legend is read in the context of history of Hindu India, we can come to a very interesting conclusion. Most of the dynasties founded in Hindu India were established by brahmins or were supported by brahmins (for example the famous Mauryan dynasty). Was the relegation of kshatriyas into background a resultant of they leading the revolt against brahmanism in the 6th century B.C.? No one has the answer so far.

The challenges posed by Buddhism and Jainism to Aryanism were primarily based on simplicity. In contrast to Aryanism both these new religious schools were simple in doctrine, and hence could appeal to the common man. As the ages rolled by, brahmanism was
quick enough to find weaknesses in both these rivals and in course of time absorbed Buddhism into its own fold (the Buddha as an avatar) and left great imprint on the Jains (as for example the caste system). Scholars opine that it was by the end of the Buddhist era, that is, somewhere around 4th century B.C., that attempts were begun by Aryanism to set its house in order. There efforts bore fruit in the Guptan era.

Thus, Hinduism, as we understand today, had its origin in the Guptan period. Mauryan empire, in a way, witnessed the last of teething troubles. As the Aryans migrated to India they had to cope up with the indigenous opposition as symbolized by the reference to the Battle of Ten Kings in the Rig-Veda. Buddhism and Jainism were the other challenges. And the probable adoption of Jainism by Bindusara and the accepted adoption of Buddhism by Asoka, aggravated the challenge. But to regard that Hinduism received a serious set-back during the Mauryan period is not a very correct approach. The Semetic exclusiveness of religious doctrines was not known in India. Hence, one can justifiably regard both Buddhism and Jainism as sects of Hinduism, just like Saivism and Vaishnavism. When Jainism and Buddhism are regarded from this angle, the challenge that was posed to Hinduism in the Mauryan period was not that grave as it is made out to be.

Yet, it would be incorrect to positively assert that Hinduism as we know today existed in the Mauryan period. In the Mauryan period Hinduism was dormant. But with the break-up of the Mauryan empire and the consequent inroads of foreigners into India, the leaders or savants of Hinduism started a reorientation. The reformation of Hinduism in the post-Mauryan era was as significant as the reform movements initiated by Shankaracharya, (the Socrates of India), culminating in the Bhakti movement, the revival of brahmanism and the redaction of the Puranas during the time of Guptas, and the renaissance of India in the second half of 19th century under the impact of the west, in particular as contributed by the Ramakrishna Mison and the Arya Samaj.

Moreover, in the pre-Mauryan era the two points to be borne in mind are the contributions of Manu, the progenitor of Dharma Shastras, and the grammarians, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali. If at all there is a single individual who moulded the Hindu society, it was Manu ; although the orientation given by him to Hinduism, has not much to do with mystical and metaphysical aspects. Some of the rules laid down by Manu are fantastic: under no circumstances can a brahmin be executed for any crime; on the other hand, “if a Sudra mentions the name and caste of the twice-born with insolence, he should be punished by thrusting a red-hot iron nail, ten fingers long, through his mouth ;” and “with whatever limb a man of the
lower caste injures a man of the three higher castes, even that limb should be cut off....” The very fact that Hindu law was governed to a great extent till very recent times by the Laws of Manu, bears testimony to the statement. However, it was the dharma as given by Manu, that constituted the cementing force in Hindu civilization in spite of the difficulties encountered by it all through the ages: the premium put on centrifugal forces by foreign invasions and inroads, the threats of parochial tendencies resulting out of the vastness of the country, and the lack of a continuous state enforcing one law and system.

Amongst the grammarians who contributed to the linguistic revolution of the fourth and third centuries B.C. equal credit goes to Panini on the one hand, and Katyayana and Patanjali on the other. Panini in his Astadhyayi bound Sanskrit by strict rules of grammar and syntax. These rules stabilized the language, the lack of which alone made Prakrit to get diffused into innumerable nondescript forms despite the patronage extended by kings like Asoka. Further, the rules laid down by Panini did not stultify the language because Katyayana and Patanjali made it clear that Sanskrit is capable of growth without prejudicing the grammar of Panini.

Besides, it is of significance to note that Sanskrit became the basis of all Indian vernaculars. The language and literature of a community embodies the collective consciousness and sensibility of a community, respectively. Here is the root for the fundamental unity of India. In short, both Manu and the three grammarians can be regarded as the founders of an integrated India, both emotionally and institutionally in the social sphere.

Incidentally, we should remember that it was this rejuvenated Hinduism that was carried to the south by the Andhra Satavahanas, the first couriers of the Aryan civilization. This unification (civilization and culture) was carried to its perfection in the 8th century under the aegis of the Pallavas. In between the Satavahana and the Pallava eras, the Chalukyan dynasty is of importance. In the history of Chalukyas geography gets the cake. The Chalukyas happened to establish themselves in the modern Maharashtra region which constituted the meeting ground for north and south Indias. Meantime, the southern dynasties contributed their own individual features to Indian civilization and culture: Cheras, Pandyas, Ikshvakus etc.

To pick up the broken thread, we have to once again look at the north after the end of political interregnum following the decline of the Mauryas. Once again things steadied themselves. Under the aegis of the Guptas, Hinduism was simplified—the Puranas containing the distilled wisdom of the Upanishads reached the masses
which acted as a counter challenge to the simplicity of Buddhism. Image worship and the cult of rivers came into prominence enabling Hinduism to reach the masses, and the Sanskrit literature as written in the Guptan period gave a new dimension to the Sanskrit language which made the language secular instead of remaining purely a medium of the sacred lore. Added to this, the Guptas were also responsible for the dialectical feat of carrying the best from the past because they took over bodily the Mauryan administration, and also revived the purely indigenous art as exemplified by the temples of Deogarh and Bhitargaon and the sculptures of Mathura. Most important of all, by the end of the sixth century the Gita came into vogue.

Sadly enough the political umbrella given by the great Guptas was blighted by the lightning inroads of the Hunas in the 6th and 7th centuries. The empire disappeared. Luckily, the other features of Hinduism continued on. Here is the reason for the continuity of Indian history in spite of the bewildering number of empires that rose and fell. Despite the political confusion, the Hindu intellectual development continued unabated. In particular logic and the mimamsa doctrine came to be developed apart from the existence of world famous Nalanda university.

From the 7th century onwards new developments occurred in the political field of India. The emergence of Rajputs was the one singular event of this period. From now onwards everything Hindu turned around the hub of the Rajput race. How the Rajputs came into existence is still a baffling problem for the historians. Nevertheless, the coming of the Rajputs meant the beginning of medieval ages. Medieval ages are always known for their contumacious tendencies and never for political integration, however romantic might be the chivalrous acts and desperate bravadoes of their martial heroes. Hence, India continued to be sadly divided even on the eve of Muslim invasion. And modern historians opine that all aspects of Hindu civilization showed signs of degeneration by the time the Muslims invaded India. By this time the mimamsika school, emphasizing on rituals, was formally established. As a matter of fact there were more aberrations in Hinduism. By then there were already the Kapalikas, who believed in human sacrifices. Even the Hindu intellect had gone to the seed. The Hindu intellectuals spent their time in gerund grinding and infinite splitting. The theological discussions of the day were as those of the medieval theologians in Europe. The former debated how many rivers that one should take the dip after touching an ass, while the latter discussed on what could be the sex of angels as, they are intangible.
With the coming of Islam, Hinduism was confronted with a new challenge because it was a mature religion and believed in equality between man and man. Added to this, as the Muslims dominated the political scene, Hinduism was put on the defensive. It was this fact that made it to shrink into its own shell and develop its own weapon of defence, passive resistance. The defence mechanism employed by Hinduism consisted of four principles—dharma (duty), karma (action), varna (caste) and varnashrma dharma (caste responsibility). The social structure was made more rigid but Hinduism as such became arrested.

Hinduism continued to be on the same plane till the establishment of British Raj by the mid of the 19th century. Now Hinduism encountered one more mature religion, which was superior to Islam in the sense that it has dynamism. Hence, Hinduism once again reacted to the challenge in the second half of the 19th century in the form of a crop of movements. The first among them was the Arya Samaj which was a militant and narrow answer to the challenge of the day. The Ramakrishna Mission carried the general tradition of Hinduism by giving a social slant to it, and incidentally questioning the age-old dharma of the country. The Brahmo Samaj directly attacked the dharma as sanctified from the days of Manu because it questioned mostly the social practices of the day like the position of widows and women, child marriages and such others. The Prarthana Samaj of Maharashtra, which in the beginning was inspired by the Brahmo Samaj, too, concentrated on the reform of social abuses. Ultimately, once again spiritual awareness guided the political destiny of the country as in the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Herein lies the secret of greatness of the Mahatma: just as in the old the political factor was only a species of the genius, dharma, the political emancipation of the country under the leadership of Mahathma Gandhi became a part of search for Truth, that is, God, according to him.

To round up the brief narrative we have to go back in time to glance at the south. The Maharashtrian region was occupied by the powerful Rashtrakutas. They gambled for power at Kanauj. The triangular conflict of the Palas of Bengal, the Pratiharas of Kanauj and the Rashtrakutas of Maharashtra was an instructive event of this period. Apart from the Rashtrakutas, the striking feature of this period was the rise of Cholas. The Cholas continued the traditions of the past and even added a new one, the naval tradition.

As an epilogue for this brief survey we have to touch upon the expansion of Hinduism and Buddhism in south-east Asia and central
Asia. The torch of Buddhism was carried to China by Kumarakiva during the time of Kanishka. In the 7th century the Tibetan king, Gampo, was converted to Buddhism. But we have no history worth speaking of relating to central Asia even though modern archaeologists have discovered the existence of evidence relating to both Hindu and Buddhist influences in central Asia. In the study of history silent zones are also of great importance. Let us ask, what was the last thought of Cleopatra before she committed suicide? What were the thoughts of Nero while Rome burnt? And what exactly made Asoka a convert to Buddhism? These are the silent zones and the art of history consists in reliving the past. A historian has to make the past eloquent. Such a mood is difficult to achieve even with regard to south-east Asia. True, we admire the presence of Angakor Vat, Barbodour and the Ramayana ballet in the Bali island, but much of it remains in the silent zone.

So let us make it a point of journeying through the history of Hindu India with a sense of wonder, not with the priggish urge that we should gather as many points as possible from the data gathered by scholars. What all that is said in this chapter is meant for the sake of rousing the interest of students while studying the history of India. Some of the facts mentioned here are historical and some are hypotheses.

2. A Critique on the Determining Nature of Indian History from 350 B.C. to 250 B.C.

A detailed history of any country makes a tedious reading, not because knowledge of the past is repulsive but the determining phases in the history of countries are but a few. The events of such periods are so seminal that they influence posterity for centuries to come. Some such remarkable periods are the Elizabethan Age in the history of England; the Age of Discovery in the history of Europe; the establishment of the Roman Empire in the third century B.C.; and, the history of India from 350 B.C. 250 B.C.

To have a clear comprehension of the significance of the determining century under consideration, we should do well by first analysing the importance of the Roman empire in the history of Europe. It was the Romans who gave us the law as we know it: Rome has perished but the law continues. Futher, it was a Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, who was the first great leader to be converted to Christianity. It was this conversion that gave the decisive momentum to Christianity to make it a great and spacious religion of
the world. We can also realize the importance of the Roman empire when we remember that the name Caesar had an extraordinary fascination: Kaiser is a rendering of the name Caesar into German, and the title Czar means the eastern Caesar.

Similarly, what happened in India from 350 B.C. to 250 B.C. is of extraordinary importance. The foremost was the concept of united India. The first empire of India was that of the Nandas, who pioneered the imperial tradition of India—an empire, an efficient civil service and a powerful standing army. The Nandas were supplanted by the Mauryas. It is the latter who appear to have conceived the idea of chakravarti patha—an empire extending from the Himalayas to the extreme south. Another version of this concept is bharata varsha. How deep this concept came to be etched in the minds of the people, is obvious from the reference to samrajya, in the Mahabharata (revised during the time of the Guptas) meaning, a kingdom extending over the whole of India. The concept of bharata varsha or chakravarti patha did not remain an airy concept. During the time of the Mauryas a systematic shape was given to it because the Mauryas organized the first bureaucratic administration in India. This administrative system of the Mauryas received a theoretical justification in the Arthashastra of Kautilya. Almost all the later writings till the time of Krishanadeva Raya of the 16th century, show the influence of the Arthashastra. In actual practice, the Nanda administration, as it reached its consummation during the Mauryas, influenced the future to a certain extent—trained bureaucracy, division of the country into provinces, and the district and village administrations.

More important was the appearance of dharma shastras and grihya sutras, and the glimmers of the forthcoming simplification of Hinduism in the Gupta age. These writings and the faint beginnings marked the first step in the great reorganization of the Hindu religion as we believe today. Is is a superficial veiw to regard the age of Asoka as an age of Buddhism. The two famous forms of worship in Hindustan (Vaishnavism and Saivism) gained almost national recognition and importance in the Maurya period. The grammarian, Panini, states that Vasudevaka is one whose object of bhakti is Vasudeva. We also know that the Greek ambassador, Heliodorus, dedicated the famous garudadwaja to Vasudeva in the middle of the second century B.C. Comparatively, on a lesser scale, Saivism too came into vogue. Lord Siva figures as Mahadeva in the Shvetasvatara Upanishad. There were a few more dimly perceivable changes. Along with the old Vedic deities, newer objects of worship like the yakshas became popular. The age-old deities, Siva, Vishnu and the Mother Goddess were popular. Image worship, for certain, was an established feature of Hinduism. Thus, the bureaucracy of gods, goddesses and godlets, as we know today, had its beginnings in this century.
More important than these two movements of a purely religious nature, was the emergence of the dharma shastras and the grihya sutras. The Manava Dharma Shastra of Manu is the par excellence of the dharma shastras, and it was written during this period. After Manu, innumerable writers of this genre have commented on texts, and wrote nibandhas. But, none of them is as important as Manu. The chief law-givers after Manu were Yajnavalkya, Nanda and Vishnu. Yet, Manu was the chief authority on Hindu law as late as the British period in Indian history. Apart from these dharma shastras, the grihya sutras, which primarily relate to the rituals to be followed by any pious house-holder, came into existence in this period. Hinduism is not a body of beliefs but a code of conduct; the grihya sutras provide the code of conduct. They lay down the rules for ceremonies like, anna prasana (the first taking of food), chaula karana (rite of shaving the crown) and upanayana (wearing of the sacred thread). It is these rituals that are being followed till today everywhere by all those who profess Hinduism. Truth to speak, the unity of India was never political. To talk of there being political consciousness before the advent of the British, is a travesty of facts. We never had the political consciousness as known in the west, because we never even heard of the Greek and Roman traditions that the west inherited. Political consciousness and the concept of individuality directly emanated from the heritages of Happy Hellas (Athens) and the Celestial Rome. Naturally, the unity of India or, more appropriately, the emotional integration of India, has been all through dharma-oriented. This standpoint suggests a new line of approach to the study of Indian history. A crucial part of the terminology that we are habituated to use in writing Indian history is highly debatable. Therefore, the emergence of grihya sutras in this determining period is a matter of phenomenal importance because it was these, in a way, which united India into one organic whole.

Another development of equal significance was the great linguistic revolution of Sanskrit. It was the tour de force of the three grammarians, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali. As we know, the Mauryas patronized Pali (Magadhan Prakrit), a language of no definite character. Prakrit had various dialects. Had there been no linguistic revolution as initiated by Panini, the Prakrit language would have contributed to the emotional Balkanization of India; for, the various dialects of Prakrit would have definitely evolved into many and distinct languages. But the Paninian revolution directly contributed to the growth and maturity of Sanskrit, a language which became the basis of all the vernaculars that developed from the medieval period onwards. Panini in his Astadhyayi evolved a refined Sanskrit language bound by clear-cut rules relating to grammar and syntax. Fortunately, these rules were not that rigid as to stylize the language and thereby making it a dead language. They simply enabled Sanskrit
to stabilize itself without being buffeted by the changing winds. That is why the next two important grammarians, Katayana and Patanjali, made it abundantly clear that there was no limit to the expansion of Sanskrit. And there is sufficient evidence to show that Sanskrit literature, too, made its appearance: the Mahabhasya alludes to a kavya, Kamsavadha; a drama by Ashvaghotha, Sariputra Prakarana, recovered from central Asia; and Patanjali mentions a poet of the kavya style, Vararuci. The language became so pure that the great Buddhist scholar, Ashvaghotha, in the first century A.D., preferred this language to Pali, which was originally patronized by Buddhism. The Buddha Charita and the Soundara Nanda of Ashvaghotha were written in such chaste Sanskrit that the language bloomed into the marvellous poetry of Kalidasa some time later. It might be also remarked here that the first Sanskrit inscription was that of Rudradaman, a Saka ruler. In other words, even foreigners were captivated by the elegance and perfection of Sanskrit language.

Finally, a little could be said regarding the art of this period. The stone monuments of Asoka and, in particular, the stone railing surrounding the Sanchi stupa, clearly prove that Mauryan India had a long tradition of art. And, possibly, the caves of Karle, Barabar Hills and a number of chaityas built during this period had their own influence on the future ages. The Buddhist vinaya-texts unequivocally state that the inner walls of the dwelling houses were profusely decorated with paintings and engravings. The paintings of the Ajanta caves are the mature version of a particular artistic style. Hence, the period under consideration could be taken as the formative period in the history of painting in India. Another interesting point known to us is that one, Udayana of Kausambi, a contemporary of the Buddha, was a master of veena.

Although no authentic evidence is available regarding the colonial and maritime expansion of Indians during the period under survey, we can venture to state the preliminary beginnings could have belonged to this period. We have evidence to show that a Pandya king sent a mission to Augustus, the Roman emperor, somewhere around 26 B.C. We know the existence of a bunch of stories, belonging to the Andhra Satavahana period, Kathasaritsagara, relating to sea-faring activities. These stories bear out the truth that there had been a close contact between south India, and Burma and south-east Asia. Thus the period under survey, to some extent, determined the later colonial and maritime activities of ancient India.

In this manner, the century was indeed a determining period because the streams of traditions that flowed from this watershed of Indian history continue to enrich and enliven the civilization of India, till even today.
3. Career and Achievements of Chandragupta Maurya

The career and achievements of Chandragupta Murya make an interesting story in the history of India. The early career of Chandragupta is shrouded in legend and romance. Whatever the evidence that we have on his achievements brings his striking personality into clear relief.

Regarding the family of Chandragupta differences of opinion exist. According to one tradition, the word ‘Maurya’ is derived from Mura, the mother or grandmother of Chandragupta, who was the wife of a Nanda king. Secondly, some maintain that he belonged to the tribe of Morieis. Thirdly, epigraphic evidence of the medieval ages indicates that the Mauryas were kshatriyas of the Solar race. This evidence is corroborated by the Buddhist writers, who regard the Mauryas as kshatriyas, who ruled over a small republic known as Pipphalivana. In this context it is contended that the term Vrishala applied to Chandragupta in the play Mudra-rakshasa, does not mean shudra caste and the term was used by kshatriyas also. However, Dr. Romila Thapar holds the view that Chandragupta belonged to the Moriya tribe. His caste was low and in all probability it was the vaishyas community.

Legend states that Chandragupta was picked up by Chanakya and then taken to Taxila. According to Buddhist texts and traditions, Chandragupta was discovered by Chanakya in a village as the adopted son of a cow-herd. On seeing that the boy had marks of greatness, Chanakya purchased the boy. From there Chandragupta was taken to Taxila where he was educated for seven or eight years in the humanities, practical arts, inclusive of military arts. This tradition is confirmed by Plutarch’s statement that Chandragupta as a boy had met Alexander. It appears that he had an exchange of views with Alexander the Great. It is also stated that Chandragupta had a grudge against the Greeks. Besides, the successors of Alexander were weaklings. There was a rising against the Greek rulers in the Indus region but it was crushed. According to tradition, it was Chanakya or Kautilya who had raised the banner of revolt against the outlanders. Most probably he was assisted by Chandragupta. According to Justin, he was a man of humble origin. It is also maintained by Plutarch and Justin that Chandragupta had a wordy encounter with Alexander the Great,
According to tradition, when Chandragupta had a brush with Alexander, the latter ordered his capture, but Chandragupta fled from the Punjab. And while he was hiding from the wrath of Alexander, he met Chanakya. The brahman, according to tradition, was insulted by the *shudra* king, Nanda. The story of the tradition further goes that it was in the Vindhyas that both persons gathered a large army.

It appears that Chandragupta did attempt to conquer Pataliputra, but he was frustrated in his attempt. The strategy that was followed by Chandragupta was from the moral drawn from an instance associated with Chandragupta—the future emperor saw a woman scolding her child for eating from the centre of a dish, as the centre, is bonud to be very hot. Whatever might be the veracity of the story, it is certain that Chandragupta fought first with the successors of Alexander and then with the Nandas. Just at that time, a general of Alexander, Seleukos, became the ruler of a part of Alexander's empire. It is a fact that Greek military power vanished by 321 B.C. Although the Greeks were trounced, Chandragupta had to fight a great battle with Seleukos. This Greek king hoping to recover Alexander's provinces crossed the Indus and faced the mighty army of Chandragupta Maurya. He was defeated somewhere in the Punjab and compelled to retire. Seleukos ceded some territories to Chandragupta (the provinces of Paropanisadai, Aria and Arachosia with the capitals Kabul, Herat and Kandhar respectively, and the modern Baluchistan. In exchange, Chandragupta gave some elephants. Moreover, a matrimonial alliance was also arranged, according to which, Seleukos' daughter was married to Chandragupta. No details are available regarding this marriage. The only known thing is that the marriage led to an exchange of emissaries. The ambassador of Seleukos, Megasthenes, lived for many years at Pataliputra. He also travelled extensively in India. During the time of Chandragupta there was a regular exchange of envoys accompanied by exchange of gifts, which included many potent aphrodisiacs.

It is not known clearly how Chandragupta acquired the Nanda empire. The only known fact is the defeat of the Nanda troops led by Bhadrasala, which led to the occupation of Patliputra. The reasons that made Chandragupta lead the revolt against the Nandas are to be found in the source material of the Mauryan history. The *Puranas* called Nandas as irreligious rulers. It appears that Alexander too heard of the unpopularity of the Nanda rulers. According to Plutarch, Chandragupta was reported to have told Alexander on how wicked was the Nanda ruler.

Although we do not have a clear picture of the course of his conquests, we are generally sure of the extent of the empire. His empire included Afghanistan (Ariana), the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh,
Bihar and the peninsula of Kathiawar. The inclusion of Kathiawar in the dominion of Chandragupta is borne out by the Girnar Rock Inscription. According to this inscription, the region was a province of the empire of Chandragupta and it was ruled by a governor with the name Pushyagupta. Probably, Bengal was also a part of the empire. Tradition holds the view that to start with Chandragupta strengthened his position by an alliance with the Himalayan chief, Parvataka. This is corroborated by Mudra-rakshasa and some Jaina texts.

Chandragupta ascended the throne in 321 B.C. and he died in 297 B.C. And the way in which he died is a matter of tradition. According to Jain tradition a great famine broke out in the Magadha region. Then the Jain saint Bhadrabahu left for the south. According to the Jain tradition, Chandragupta abdicated his throne and accompanied Bhadrabahu. Both the leader and the disciple reached Sravana Belgola in modern Mysore. The tradition further states that the Jain saint died earlier than Chandragupta. Even till today the hill near Sravana Belgola is known as Chandragiri Hill; and on it is a small temple known as Chandragupta basti which was probably erected by the Maurya.

The narration of his career clearly shows that Chandragupta Maurya was an empire-builder. More than this, it is also known that there was a powerful administration (for details see the topic on Mauryan Administration). In this administration what strikes us is the note of severity that pervaded through it. The Roman historian, Justin states that after ascending the throne Chandragupta "transformed nominal liberty into slavery, inasmuch as he oppressed with servitude the people whom he had rescued from foreign rule." Some of the facts go to prove this contention because the Mauryan administration was an organized autocracy and was supported by ruthless punishments. In all probability, Chanakya continued to guide the new ruler as maintained by the Tibetan author, Taranatha, of the 17th century.
4. Account of the Inscriptions of Asoka—Light on Kingship, Administration, Religion, Ethics and Character of Asoka

The personality and achievements of Asoka are shrouded in legends, fables and anecdotes that have come to be associated with him. In addition to this, the differences of opinion among historians also have made the delineation of his personality a difficult task. All the same, as remarked by a writer, the legends about his early life retreat before the searchlight of his edicts.

According to chronology, Asoka’s inscriptions (more than 30) are divided into 8 categories. The script is generally Brahmi, but in two rock edicts it is Kharoshthi. The language is the vernacular dialect, closely akin to literary Sanskrit and Pali. The first category of inscriptions is the two minor rock edicts. The first among them gives us valuable information about the personal history of Asoka. The second consists of a summary of the dharma. The second category is the Bhābru edict. This gives us an insight into Asoka’s relationship with Buddhism and proves that Asoka did embrace Buddhism. The third category comprises the fourteen rock edicts. These explain the principles of government and the ethical system. The fourth category is the two Kalinga edicts. These throw light on the new system of administration adopted by Asoka after the Kalinga war, and also his treatment of the border tribes. These two are regarded as a variation of the XIV rock edicts. The fifth category is the cave inscriptions in the Barabar hills. These testify to the toleration of Asoka. The sixth category is the two Terai pillar inscriptions. These confirm the respect that Asoka bore towards Buddhism. The seventh category comprises the seven pillar edicts. They are something like an appendix to the rock edicts. The last category is the four minor pillar edicts. These do not have any special significance.

The importance of these inscriptions consists in the fact that they enable us, among other things, to know the extent of Asoka’s empire. The style in which they are engraved is very distinctive and is alive with personal feeling; and so, they speak of the personality of Asoka. In addition to these things, their great architectural quality indicates that architecture had reached a formative stage of artistry. Smith remarks that they are monuments of engineering skill. Dr. Kosambi maintains that Asoka’s sculpture was definitely adopted from Indian wood-work. This is to say, the architectural
greatness of Asoka’s monuments is a culmination of the artistic traditions of India.

Regarding kingship and administration, the following points can be gathered: (1) He was not only interested in the welfare of his people but also in the welfare of peoples beyond his kingdom. In R.E. VI, he remarks: “The welfare of the whole world is an esteemed duty with me, and the root of that action is the exertion and despatch of business.” (2) Asoka also wanted that his approach should be continued by his successors. In one of the rock edicts he says that he got his principles engraved on the rocks because “my sons, grandsons and great-grandsons may singularly follow me for the welfare of the whole world.” (3) He had set before himself the loftiest ideal that ever inspired a king. In one of his edicts he says: “All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they may obtain every kind of welfare and happiness both in this world and the next world, so do I desire for all men.” (4) The welfare of the people was uppermost in his mind. The pillar edict claims many things: (a) the planting of banyan trees on road-sides; (b) “I have caused wells to be dug,” (c) “I have built resthouses”; and (d) “I have made many watering sheds”. The welfare of the people was specially entrusted to an officer called the vrajbhumika as mentioned in the R.E. VI and VII. The R.E.II mentions that the state maintained botanical gardens for the cultivation of medicinal plants, and hospitals were built for men and animals throughout the land. (5) According to the R.E. XIII, certain tribal areas within the empire were given some amount of autonomy. (6) He very well knew the difficulties of ruling and administering such a vast empire. In R.E. VI he says: “It is difficult to accomplish this (welfare of all men) without great zeal.” In the pillar edict IV he says, “Just as a man, having made over his child to a skilful nurse feels confident and says to himself ‘the skilful nurse is eager to care for the happiness of my child’, even so my governors have been created for the welfare and happiness of the country, with intent that fearlessly, confidently and quietly they may perform their duties.” (7) The R.E. V and the pillar edict VIII describe the functions of dharma mahamatras. They took note of injury to animals and violations of moral codes. They were to moderate the rigours of criminal law by taking into account, age, misfortunes and family burdens. (8) The R. E. II mentions quinquennial and triennial transfers of the officials of a mild and temperate disposition to lessen the harshness of criminal justice. (9) Apart from the precepts that he laid down for the better administration of people, he set up in himself a splendid personal example. In the R.E. VI he says, “in all places I attend to the affairs of the people. I never feel satisfaction in my exertions and dispatch of business. For, work I must for the welfare of all the folk (the
whole world), and of that again, the root is energy and the dispatch of business."

With regard to religion, the following points can be derived from his inscriptions: (1) The minor R.E. I maintains that he became an upasaka, and in Buddhism, an upasaka was expected to "take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha." The Bhabru edict gives us a definite account of his religious beliefs. This edict is addressed to the sangha and in this Asoka mentions his conviction in the Buddhist Tripitakas which enjoin the belief that whatever is said by bhagwan Buddha, is said truly and well. One can deduce from this that he must have implicitly endorsed the nirvana, the Eightfold Path etc. (2) His sense of toleration is known to us from the Barabar cave inscriptions. These caves were dedicated to Ajivikas, a sect of Jains. He directly enjoined his people not to indulge in empty religious squabbles. He also made the remark that when a person vilifies another sect he vilifies his own sect (R.E. XII). (3) The Sarnath pillar edict is addressed to the mahamatras. It says: "Sangha cannot be divided by any one; but indeed that monk or nun who shall break up the Sangha should be caused to put on white robes and to reside in non-residence." This meant expulsion from the community and from this we may surmise that the second and the third Buddhist councils were probably held during his time. (4) In one inscription he recommends the 7 sermons of the Buddha for constant recital and meditation by monks. (5) He spoke against ceremonies in R.E. IX which proves his faith in Buddhism rather than in Hinduism. Further, he forbade sacrificial slaughter in R.E. I.

Relating to the ethics of Asoka, the following are the main points: (1) The minor R.E. II gives us an account of his Law of Piety or dharma. This consists of "obedience to parents and elders, respect to teachers, proper treatment to the brahmins and monks, relatives, poor, non-violence to animals, toleration to all beliefs, mercy, gift, truthfulness, purity, self-examination etc." (2) In a pillar edict he says: "Happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience, and great fear of sin and great energy. (3) The R.E. XIII claims that he organized peace missions under his dutas for purposes of humanitarian work in foreign countries. (4) The R. E. IV mentions: "There was no longer any summons to war or call to the colours but only a call to moral life." (5) The edict also mentions that a new official called dharma mahamatra was appointed to propagate his Law of Piety. In addition to this, other officials like rajukas and pradeshikas were expected to carry out the same task. A rock edict mentions that three animals and one deer were killed and in further no other
should be killed. (6) The R.E. V contains a code of regulations against animal slaughter.

About his personal life and character, the following are the points: (1) In R.E. IV and V Asoka condemns unseemly behaviour toward relatives, and refers to his brothers, sisters and other relatives with great affection. So, these edicts give the lie direct to the tradition that he murdered his two brothers, and also refute the assertion of Buddhist tradition that he killed his ninety-nine brothers except for Tishya, before ascending the throne. His inscriptions tell of how several brothers were living in various towns during the thirteenth regnal year. They also tell us of his sisters being in Pataliputra and some towns. (2) R.E. XIII expresses the genuine remorse of Asoka at the suffering caused by the Kalinga war in the most touching language. R.K. Mukerji holds that this inscription was personally drafted by the emperor himself. (3) In addition to these things, Asoka's edicts throw light on various aspects of his character, like: (a) strict discipline (instructions to the monks); (b) compassion (regulations against slaughter of animals); (c) humanity (his statement that to work for the people is a noble task); (d) toleration (Barabar inscriptions) and so on.

In this manner, the inscriptions of Asoka are very valuable for arriving at definite conclusions about his character, administration, kingship and religion. Asoka is an epitome—the spirit of India at its best. It is curious to reflect that India waited for so long to discover Asoka through Prinsep's clue in 1834 for the deciphering of Asoka's edicts.

Additional Points on Inscriptions

1. Asokan pillars show remarkable similarity to those at Persepolis in the Persian empire. The idea of rock inscriptions could have come from the edicts of Darius in Persia. There is no historical proof whether it was influenced by the Persian counterpart or not. However, the similarity in the wording of the inscriptions shows that Asoka was probably aware of the Iranian edicts. Darius uses the phrase, "thus saith the king Darius..."; whereas Asoka uses the following phrase, "the king, the beloved of the gods, Piyadassi speaks thus..." The inscriptions of Darius primarily narrate his greatness and his achievements. On the other hand, Asokan inscriptions were more meant for the sake of preaching the dharma. Darius calls himself the great king, king of kings, king of countries containing all kinds of men and so on; but Asoka refers to himself as the beloved of the gods.
2. The inscriptions of Asoka are in the local script. Those inscriptions in the region around Peshawar are in the Kharoshti script, which was a derivation of the Aramic script in Persia. In the Kandhar region, they are both in Greek and Aramic. In the rest of India they are in the Brahmi script.

3. The inscriptions of Asoka are important from the point of view of art too. The polish that is given to the pillars is something commendable.

4. In course of time the people could not appreciate the inscriptions on the pillars. Moreover, Sanskrit became the lingua franca of India. The result was, as remarked by Dr. Romila Thapar, the pillars came to be regarded as the symbol of phallus or lingas.

5. **An Analysis of the Relations of Asoka with Buddhism**

In discussing the given topic, one is tempted to doubt whether Buddhism is something separate from Hinduism at all. One writer has rightly said that Asoka's Law of Piety or the dharma is nothing more than one of the concentric circles of Hinduism.* In spite of the controversy, whether Buddhism is separate from Hinduism or not, we can very safely argue that Asoka was a Buddhist in the accepted sense of those times (there were two forms) even though he continued to believe in certain precepts of Hinduism, like swarga.

To substantiate the claim that Asoka was a Buddhist, we must state that in one of the inscriptions Asoka made a clear confession of his belief in the Buddha, the dharma (Buddhist doctrines) and the

*"The distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism in India was purely sectarian and never more than the difference between Saivism and Vaishnavism. The exclusiveness of religious doctrines is a Semitic conception which was unknown to India for a long time. The Buddha himself was looked upon in his life-time and afterwards as a Hindu saint and avatar and his followers were but another sect in the great Aryan tradition. Asoka was a Buddhist in the same way as Harsha was a Buddhist or Kumarapala was a Jain." K.M. Panikkar.
**sangha** (Buddhist Order of Monks). In an edict he refers to the deadly sin of schism within the Buddhist church. He took precautions to maintain the integrity of the church. According to tradition, he summoned a Buddhist council at Pataliputra in the 17th year of his reign. This was summoned with a view to suppress heresy within the Buddhist church, and prepare a treatise on the two Buddhist doctrines. Tradition also says that he had entered the **sangha**. The Chinese traveller, I-tsing, saw an image of Asoka in the garb of Buddhist monks. He even earned the Buddhist title of 'Kinsman of the Faith'. In addition to this, Asoka spoke of the Buddha as a **bhagavat**. (This epithet is applied by Hindus to their object of loving devotion). It is also said that he went on a holy pilgrimage to the birth place of the Buddha, and also to the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Even today, there is an inscription of Asoka extolling the Buddha in the Lumbini gardens. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri says, "That Asoka entrusted himself to Buddhist scriptures as well as monastic discipline is amply attested by contemporary records." The Buddhist tradition also says that he thrice gave away and purchased the Jambudvipa. But one writer says: "This can hardly be believed. The emperor was conscious of the responsibilities of his unique position." As a matter of fact, the Buddhist records are not wholly trustworthy. Their tradition says that Asoka, before becoming a Buddhist, was a wicked ruler and even constructed an artificial hell, where pious Buddhists and others were scalded to death in boiling oil, and Asoka watched such tortures, vastly amused.

But to call him a Buddhist ruler in a very orthodox sense is not a fair assessment. Nor was he intolerant of other creeds. He never became an enemy of the **devas** and brahmins. He continued to style himself as a beloved of the **devas**. He vigorously criticized unseemly behaviour toward brahmins and gave bounties to them as well as to the Ajivikas. The **dharma mahamatras** were expressly asked to look after all sects including even the Nirgranthas of the Jainas. He never tried to impose his beliefs on his subjects. The ultimate goal he had set before himself was neither **sambodhi** nor nirvana, but **svarga**. **Svarga** is a Hindu concept and it can be attained only by following the ancient rules or **porana pokiti**. This view is also upheld by Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar. The **dharma** believed in and propagated by Asoka is the layman's Buddhism. The Buddhist **dharma** has always been of two kinds: one for the monks and nuns, for whom alone the Four Grand Truths, the Eightfold Path, and nirvana exist; and the other for householders, which Asoka, as a lay-follower of Buddhism, preached. The code of conduct popularized by Asoka was mostly taken from the **Sigallogada-sutta** which was meant for the Buddhist laity. Besides, the Buddha upheld **svarga** as the reward for the Buddhist laity who follow the **dharma**, while the goal of nirvana was reserved for the
bhikshu. And, it is also true that the dharma preached by Asoka was acceptable to the other religious sects like Jainas and Ajivikas.

To be more clear, let us exactly state the Law of Piety or the dharma as preached by Asoka: “Obedience must be rendered to mother and father, likewise to elders; firmness (of compassion) must be shown towards animals; truth must be spoken: these sane moral virtues must be practised. In the same way, the pupil must show reverence to the master, and one must behave in a suitable manner toward relatives.” Confirming this further, a declaration in a pillar edict runs thus: “Happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience, and great fear of sin and great energy.”

Therefore, the real object of Asoka was to inculcate certain ethical precepts which are conducive to the real inner growth, guiding one in the path of spiritual elevation. These do not belong to any particular religion as such, although he was, for certain, a convert to Buddhism.

This qualified Buddhism was propagated by Asoka, in many ways, both within and without the empire. First, the preachings were engraved on imperishable rocks and stone pillars. They were composed in the vernacular dialects. Secondly, he appointed new officers called the dharma mahamatras. Thirdly, he practised what he preached. He showed his compassion by prohibiting the slaughter and mutilation of animals, and made arrangements for the medical treatment of both men and beasts. He banned the sacrificial slaughter of animals and regulated festive gatherings. Special officers were appointed to check oppression in the outlying provinces. Queens and princes were asked to practise charity. He himself undertook royal tours of piety every 10-years in order to preach his dharma. Fourthly, he adopted the Buddhist ideal of the dharma vijaya. In Edict IV, he says: “The reverberation of the war drums has become the reverberation of dharma.” Fifthly, it is said that he sent missionaries outside the country. According to tradition, the mission to Ceylon was headed by Prince Mahindra, a son or brother of Asoka. He converted the king of Ceylon, Tissa, to Buddhism. Further, tradition says that missionaries were sent even to lower Burma, Sumatra and possibly to some other adjoining lands. In Rock Edict XIII, he claims that he had made conquests of dharma in the adjoining kingdoms of Antiochos the Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphys of Egypt, Megas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. To speak liberally about his claim, he definitely did make some headway in the Middle-East even though about Europe nothing can be said.
Regarding the results of his propagation and patronage of Buddhism, opinions differ. Some point out that his generous donations to the monasteries made them less self-reliant and more corrupt and, thus, contributed to their decline. Secondly, it is said that he emasculated the strength of the Maurya empire. But this is debatable. "Though he condemned aggressive conquests he kept his powder dry for defence. His resolve to avoid warfare as far as possible was not the offspring of defeat; he did not make a virtue of necessity. He did not degenerate into a carpet-knight by his conversion to the religion of the prince of peace (the Buddha)." Thirdly, it is said that he evoked the opposition of brahmins and this opposition brought about the downfall of the empire. But this too is an exaggeration*. Fourthly, according to Dr. Bhandarkar, Asoka himself, to some extent, aided the centrifugal forces. Had not Asoka took to his dharma the empire of Maghad would have extended to the whole of the country and thereby would have made Pataliputra, like Rome, the capital of a world power. Bhandarkar comments: "But in consequence of the foreign policy of dharma vijaya inaugurated by Asoka, India was lost to nationalism and political greatness. Nevertheless, she had doubtless gained in cosmopolitanism and humanitarianism which have now become the basic principles of Hindu society.

In this manner, there is no denying the fact that Asoka was to some extent, responsible for a local sect becoming a world religion; but to call him a staunch Buddhist who showed sufferance, not deference, toward other religions is not correct. That is why, R. K. Mukherjee says: "Asoka was attracted more by the ethical than the philosophical aspect of Buddhism and laid stress upon the practical, benevolent activities and pious thoughts inculcated by it."

*"No doubt, there must have been a flutter in the dovecots of Brahminical orthodoxy, and there are reasons for believing that the movement ultimately led by Pushymitra Sunga, must have started under the pressure of Asoka's religious policy. But Asoka's policy was not tyrannical, and his moderation in applying his principles and convictions, and his consideration for all classes of his subject should never be regarded as disastrous to his empire or to the welfare of his people. We have seen the character of his legislation against animal slaughter. There was room for discontent among the Brahmins, but no adequate cause for their revolt."
6. An Examination of the Meaning and Importance of Asoka’s Law of Piety

“Amidst the tens and thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their Majesties and Graciousnesses and Serenities and Royal Highnesses and the like, the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone as a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or Charlemagne.” These hyperboles of H.G. Wells have, to some extent, distorted our historical judgment. Somehow, too much has been made of Asoka, a name which has been totally forgotten in Indian history except for its inclusion as one among the long list of kings that the Puranas have handed down to us. Further, the name, Asoka, was deciphered by Prinsep’s clue as recently as 1834. That is why, in evaluating the importance of the Law of Piety of Asoka, we have to restrain ourselves from paying wild tributes.

The Law of Piety or the dharma of Asoka is a very simple concept. Its gist is provided by Asoka himself: “Obedience must be rendered to mother and father, likewise, to elders; firmness (of compassion) must be shown towards animals; truth must be spoken; these sane moral virtues must be practised. In the same way, the pupil must show reverence to the master, and one must behave in a suitable manner toward relatives.”

Asoka also enumerates the attributes that go with his dharma: much good, freedom from depravity, kindliness, charity, truthfulness, purity and gentleness. He also laid down the methods to achieve these virtues. Kindliness is achieved through non-slaughter of animate beings and non-injury to creatures; charity through liberality towards friends, acquaintance and relatives, and liberality to brahmins and sramananas (ascetics); gentleness through listening to father and mother, elders and seemly behaviour towards friends, brahmins and so on. All these constitute the positive aspect of his dharma. There is a negative aspect too. Asoka expects that one should be free from asinava, that is, falseness, cruelty, conceit, anger and envy. In brief, not only one should be true to the attributes mentioned above, but should also be free of asinava for a full realisation of the dharma.
There is nothing like Buddhism \textit{per se} in this doctrine of Asoka. And this is only an ‘epitome of the ancient rule or \textit{porana pakitti} of Hinduism.’ Radha Kumud Mookerji says, “But the Dharma or religion which he preaches in his edicts was not Buddhism or any particular creed. It was really the code of morals, the common foundation, the \textit{sara} or essence, of all religions.” Rhys Davids writes that Asoka’s \textit{dharma} never meant religion but what it behoves a man of right feeling to do; or, what a man of sense would do. Some opine that it was meant for the Buddhist laity. Hence, we should regard the Law of Piety as one of the concentric circles of religious awareness.

A different interpretation is given to this concept by Dr. Romila Thapar. According to this scholar, the \textit{dharma} of Asoka was his own invention. It could have been influenced by Buddhist and Hindu thoughts, but it was definitely an attempt on the part of Asoka to suggest a way of life, which should be both practical and convenient, apart from being highly moral. It is significant to note that Asoka was probably the first king in India to appreciate the importance of rural population.

To examine more, there was probably a compelling necessity for Asoka’s policy of \textit{dharma}. During his time the empire consisted of a medley of races, differing in attitudes and beliefs. This awareness, coupled with a sincere belief that force alone would not unite them into one whole, might have induced him to inculcate an imperial ethic to bind the people in allegiance to an impersonal law. That is why he did not promote the doctrinaire Buddhism to achieve his objective, but did what behoved the lay-follower of Buddhism in those days. Hence the comment of Percival Spear: “His efforts were in line with the solar cult of Akhnaton and the emperor worship of the Romans; it was more pactical than the former and more noble than the latter. It was also more effective than Akbar’s experiment, for it certainly promoted the spread of Buddhism in India.”

In order to propagate the \textit{dharma}, he undertook many measures. In Rock Edict VIII, he states that he gave up \textit{vihara-yatra} in preference to \textit{dharma-yatra}. This new \textit{yatra} made him visit various places and in the course of which, he gave gifts to the brahmins and \textit{saramanas} (ascetics). This made Asoka realise \textit{dharma} in himself. Secondly, during his travels he came across various people, and he delivered instructions on the \textit{dharma}, apart from holding discussions on it. In a way, he became its preacher.

These steps were followed by measures to propagate the concept. To start with as stated in Rock Edict III, he asked the district officials (\textit{yuktas}, \textit{rajkas} and \textit{pradesikas}) to impart the knowledge
of dharma to the people in course of their travels in their official capacity. Then, he also created a new class of officials known as dharma-mahamatras. They were expected to look after both the spiritual and temporal needs of the people. They were enjoined to bring about harmony between sect and sect by stressing on the points of agreement while putting an end to their animosities. Then, he had hit upon the novel practice of imparting his dharma and that was the sending of missionaries.

A few more measures. His teachings were engraved on imperishable rocks and pillars. Sites were carefully chosen and the law was inscribed in vernacular dialects. Special officers called dharma mahamatras were appointed to propagate the law. The emperor himself undertook royal tours of piety, instead of tours of pleasure and hunt. These tours were decennial and each was for 256 days. He sent missionaries to Ceylon, lower Burma, Sumatra and also to certain countries in the west. According to Dr. Tripathi, Asoka propagated his dharma by exhibiting spectacles of celestial chariots, luminous balls of fire and elephants to represent the kinds of bliss enjoyed by the virtuous in heaven. It appears that this method of propagation impressed the common people to a great extent. This technique was probably borrowed by Asoka from the Hindu scripture, Vimanabatta, wherein it is stated that pious men enjoy various kinds of heavenly bliss after their death. Asoka seems to have exhibited the models of heavenly places and celestial elephants in order to attract the people to the spiritual path. By propagating this doctrine he aimed at dharma vijaya. In Asoka's words, "The reverberation of the war drums (bheri ghosha) became the reverberation of the law (dharma ghosha)." Asoka's contention that his missions were a success is a disputable point. Rhys Davids says that it was a mere rodomontade. But modern historians disbelieve this criticism. Dr. Tripathi's remark on this problem is a balanced one.*

Within the empire, the law influenced Asoka and his government in many ways. First, he realized that happiness in this world is difficult to secure without great love and morality. Preference was given in the pillar edicts to spiritual insight. Secondly, Asoka practised what he preached. He abolished or restricted the slaughter of animals and made arrangements for the medical treatment of both

* "He never wanted the Greeks to give up their gods at the bidding of an alien as supposed by Dr. Rhys Davids, but Asoka certainly felt it his duty to send his message of peace and goodwill through envoys or dutas who were also instructed to undertake philanthropic work on his behalf, so that the emperor may obtain release from the debt he owed to creatures."
man and beast. He prohibited sacrificial slaughter of animals and regulated festive gatherings. He constructed reservoirs of water and planted trees by the side of roads for the comfort of travellers. Thirdly, certain officers were sent to distant provinces to check oppression of officials. Fourthly, he gave endowments to different religions. Fifthly, the members of the royal household were encouraged to give charity. But it appears that during his last years, the emphasis shifted to a different aspect. "Towards the end of his career, Asoka seems to have been convinced that reflection and meditation were of greater efficacy than moral regulations," writes Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri.

To discuss more the consequences of his conception and propagation of dharma, the first thing to be noted is that the propagation of this concept led to the incidental spread of Buddhism. "If Dharma or Buddhist doctrine was spread in those regions as Asoka claims to have spread it, the question arises whether Buddhism exercised any influence over the religions prevalent there." (A Comprehensive History of India). The missions that were sent by Asoka to Western Asia, Eastern Europe and Northern Africa probably influenced the thinking of other religions. It is interesting to note that there are some common features between Buddhism and Christianity such as fasting, rosaries, and confessions. More important out of these similarities is the tempter, Mara in Buddhism, and Satan in Christianity. It is also interesting to note that no Buddhist books mention that Buddhism was ever spread in these regions by the Buddhist monks. Contrary to this, we get evidence that Asoka did employ his official legations in the courts of contemporary Greek princes to propagate Buddha's dharma*. However, no definite conclusion can be arrived at. "...Questions of cultural origin seldom admit of simple answers and often we lack the confidence for supporting confident assertions".

Another consequence of his championship of dharma was his abandonment of political ambition. The empire of the Mauryas was almost complete by the end of Bindusara's reign. A few more kingdoms in India remained like Kalinga, the southern states and the Assam region. Asoka conquered only Kalinga, but he stopped waging war after this conquest. Had he pursued military conquests, probably Asoka could have made Pataliputra, like Rome, the capital of a world power. Hence the comment of the writer in the book, A Comprehensive History of India: "...In consequence of the foreign

*Authorities have not clearly stated whether the missions that he had sent abroad were only for the sake of the law or dharmas, or for the sake of the spread of Buddhism.
policy of Dharma-vijaya inaugurated by Asoka, India was lost to nationalism and political greatness.”

The third important consequence was the stimulus that he gave to art. When Asoka wanted his instructions to endure for ever, he availed of the stone-cutters art, which was already developed by that time. His message was inscribed on big rocks, monolithic pillars and in rock-cut dwellings. The artistic work that was involved in these attempts had a great impact on the development of art in future.

Writing on Asoka’s concept of dharma, Dr. Romila Thapar, opines that it led to certain unhappy consequences. The propagators of dharma in course of time degenerated into a kind of priesthood “with extensive powers of interference in the lives of the people, thus to some extent nullifying the very purpose.” She positively maintains that the policy of dharma did not succeed. The dharma did not provide any solution to the problems which it meant to solve. By this comment, she means that the concept of dharma was intended to serve a great moral purpose. “Dharma was aimed at building up an attitude of mind in which social responsibility, the behaviour of one person to another, was considered of great relevance. It is a plea for the recognition for the dignity of man, and for a humanistic spirit in the activities of society”.

There is no dearth of panegyrical tributes*. But, as already remarked, these glowing tributes have to be taken in due moderation. To quote Dr. Romila Thapar’s remarks over the B.B.C. : “His exposition of Dharma faltered in the later part of his reign, when he began to glorify his own achievements and emphasized the fact of having found the answer, more than the answer itself. His successors were weak and, in any case, they did not appear to have appreciated his idea of dharma. They probably mistook it for the personal creed of an eccentric ruler rather than an expression of national policy.”

* Commenting on his achievement, Radha Kamal Mukerji says, “Not only did emperor Asoka achieve the consolidation of a vast Indian empire based on a unified Indian culture, but he also spread the message of universal peace and concord to the independent Dravidian countries of the South and to the Greek rulers of Asia. Asoka was the first Indian monarch to place India on the map of civilized world and bring to bear contemporary western, i.e., Hellenic influences, upon Indian art and culture. Asoka was the first among India’s great internationalists.” The tribute of B.G. Gokhale is, “Asoka reigned in the third century before Christ but he lives with us today in the wheel of our national flag and the lions on our State seal—such is his influence on history. Across the hazy line on weather-beaten rocks and damaged pillars, comes the voice of one who began as a conqueror and lived as a practical moralist.”
7. **An Analysis of the Mauryan Administration**

The Mauryan administration was not an innovation but an improvement, or probably a re-orientation, of the system that was inherited by them from the Nandas. The administration clearly marks the triumph of monarchy, particularly over the republican systems which evoked the admiration of the Buddha. There is evidence to show that both Chandragupta and Kautilya had no sympathy for the non-monarchical states. True, some of the tribal republics continued to exist even during the Mauryan period, but they were under such strong influence of monarchy that they soon gave up elections in favour of hereditary officers.

The focal point of the Mauryan administration was the king or the monarch. Undoubtedly, the Mauryan king was an autocrat. To what extent it was tempered by the circumstances of the age and by the individual temperament of the monarchs, is of a secondary consideration. The enormous power of the king went along with the growth of the power of the chief priest, who, by then, became the chief minister. The religious calling of the chief priest was relegated into the background. The king personally led his troops and he was the sole dispenser of justice as remarked by Megasthenes. He personally appointed all the important officials. He often laid down the guidelines and issued rescripts and codes of regulations for the guidance of his officers and people. To some extent the autocracy of the ruler was under control. The *Arthasastra* of Kautilya states that "whatever pleases himself the king shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects, he shall consider as good." Even then, there are doubts about the liberality of kingship because some of the portions in *Arthasastra* were later-day revisions. Whatever the ministerial council that helped the king had no definite status. It was only during the days of Asoka that very frequent consultations with the council of ministers were held, and some of the suggestions made by them were incorporated in the legislation.

Next to king and ministers was the bureaucracy of the day. The most important officials of the administration were the treasurer and the chief collector. The first was held responsible for keeping the accounts and for storing the income. The second was assisted by a body of clerks, who kept records of the income. All the accounts of the various departments were scrutinized by the king.
Each department had its own officials. There was a large body of officials known as superintendents who looked after various functions like commerce, armoury, agriculture, liquor, prostitutes, passport, city etc.

A large number of names of the officials are to be found in the inscriptions of Asoka. *Mahamatra* and *yukta* were the two official designations mentioned in the *Arthasastra*. The Greek writers referred to three classes of officials, the district officials known as *agronomoi*, the city commissioners known as *astynomoi*, and a third category dealing with military affairs.

The work done by these hierarchy officials was too colossal. Functions of the officials covered the whole range of nation’s social and economic activities. The amount of information that the State had regarding each city and village was something remarkable—the number of inhabitants, occupations, resources and land, cattle etc.

The salaries that were paid to the officials and the money that was spent on public utility works probably absorbed one-quarter of the total revenue. The higher officials were very well paid. The chief minister (*purohita*) and the army commander received 48,000 *panas*. On the other hand, the salary of a clerk or an artisan was very meagre.

The next aspect to be taken up is the judiciary whose fount was the king. Special tribunals of justice existed both in the cities and the country and they were presided by *mahamatras* and *rajukas*. Greek evidence shows that judges listened to the cases of foreigners also. Petty cases were disposed of by the village headman and the elders. A great number of changes were introduced in the days of Asoka.

More important than all these was the organization of the army. According to Indian tradition, the army consisted of four departments—elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry. The elephants were most highly esteemed because they could destroy the arrayed army of an enemy and also his fortifications. The Nandas maintained a formidable army consisting of 8,000 horses, 200,000 foot-soldiers, 8,000 chariots and 6,000 fighting elephants. During the time of Mauryas, this was increased—infantry (600,000), elephants (9,000) and cavalry (30,000). Interestingly, the number of chariots is not known indicating that this wing could have fallen into disuse. Megasthenes clearly states that the soldiers were equipped and maintained by the state, i.e. the army was a standing army. The *Arthasastra* maintains that the army was organized in squads of 10
men, companies of a hundred, and battalions of a thousand each. The king was the commander-in-chief of the army. Megasthenes recorded that Chandragupta’s army was controlled and administered by a war office which was elaborately organized. The war office consisted of 30 members, which was divided into 6 boards. Each one of them looked after the following departments: the first board, admiralty; the second board, transport and commissariat; the third board, infantry; the fourth board, cavalry; the fifth board, chariots; and the sixth board, elephants.

This enormous standing army was well-equipped. Each fighting-elephant carried three archers along with the mahout. Each chariot carried two fighting men, besides the driver. Each cavalry man was armed with two lances and protected by a buckler. A foot-soldier carried a broad sword, which was his principal weapon. The additional arms of the infantry were bows and arrows and javelins. The transport of the army included horses, mules and oxen. The *Arthasastra* makes mention of an ambulance service.

Behind the might of army was the astute diplomacy of the Mauryas. The remark of *Arthasastra* that intrigues, spies, winning over enemies’ people, siege and assault are the five means to capture a forte, shows the importance given to diplomacy. The *Arthasastra* clearly prefers diplomacy to force. It was these cynical principles that were desired by Bana, the friend of king Harsha. It is generally accepted that Chandragupta broadly followed the principles as laid down by Chanakya.

This enormous organisation was backed by an efficient espionage system. The Mauryan system of administration had traits of autocracy. The *Arthasastra* mentions that even brahmins guilty of high treason should be drowned, whereas the other traitors should be burnt alive. The only royal check on the arbitrariness of the ruler was the fear of revolution and assassination. As Chandragupta won the throne after the extermination of the Nanda family, he led an uneasy life. Megasthenes mentions that the king dared not incur the risk of sleeping in the same bed-room for two nights in succession. The drama, *Mudra-rakshasa*, tells us of the various expediences adopted by champions of the ousted dynasty to destroy the young usurper and how all of them had failed. The drama itself refers to the overthrow of the Nandas by Chandragupta. The secret service of the day was the mainstay of the government, being next to the army. The king employed a large number of spies, disguised in so many ways. The men who were employed included snake-charmers, sanyasis, and prostitutes. Cipher writing was used. The *Arthasastra* mentions that there was an urgency for maintaining espionage in every branch of administration. What all that Chanakya writes is corroborated by Greek testimony.
Regarding the revenue system, the first point to be borne in mind is a remark of the Arthasastra that the king was the owner of both land and water. It is laid down in the book that some lands should be given to the tax-payer only for lifetime but they could be confiscated when they are not properly cultivated. In other words, the land belonged to the king. In practice, peasants retained the land as long as they paid all official demands. As the king was the owner of the land, the revenue of the land was not a tax-return, but rent. The Arthasastra maintains that the king should claim one-fourth of the produce. The other religious books of the day, mention the standard rate as one-sixth. The state took care of irrigation. Canals and sluices were maintained. Water rates were levied with necessary variations. For the welfare of the people, roads were kept in order by the appropriate department. The most famous road of the Mauryas was the one that connected Pataliputra with Taxila.

In the context of the revenue system a brief account of the state’s role in the economic activity of the day is desirable. Apart from the state possessing its own lands, it established its own factories, had the monopoly of mines, and maintained granaries for the purpose of storing the agricultural produce which was given as tax. Salt was the monopoly of the state. The state controlled the supply, price, purchase and sale of commodities through a superintendent of commerce. Licences were given to merchants. Sales were controlled through a centralized market. By fixing the whole-sale prices, prices were kept under control. Profiteering or charging of exorbitant prices was heavily fined. Milk and vegetables were sold in free market.

To talk of more details, some hold the view that the revenue from land was rent. According to the writer in A Comprehensive History of India, the traditional view clearly laid down that the king is not the lord of the land, but only of a sixth part of its produce for the protection that he gives to it. Laterday evidence shows that kings very often purchased lands from its owners. However, this writer also admits that certain other treatises like Manu’s and Kautilya’s Arthasastra support the contention that the king was the owner of both land and water. In other words, whether land revenue is a rent or a tax is a controversial point.

The importance that was given to the finance was considerable in the writings of Kautilya. The chief source of revenue was land revenue. The other sources were cesses imposed on land, water rate, and taxes on houses. The state also received income from crown lands, forests, mines, manufacture and from monopolies. Some part of the state’s income was in the from of profits on coinage, fees
for licences to artisans, craftsmen etc. and gains from trading operations carried on by the government. Some of the points clearly show that the state was rapacious enough. In emergencies the state resorted to benevolences i.e. forcing the rich to contribute money under one pretext or the other. It is also stated that some money was realised in the from of taxes from prostitutes.

There is one redeeming feature about this revenue system. Although the state spent a large sum of money on the maintenance of army, the state undertook a large number of public undertakings which benefited the artisan and the craftsman. Herdsman and hunters received allowances for clearing forests from wild beasts and fowls. The brahmans and sramanaras (ascetics) received royal bounties. While carrying out its administration, the country was divided into provinces, which were further sub-divided into aharas or pradeshas i.e. districts. Each province was under a viceroy who was very often a prince of the royal blood. Whenever governors were appointed to smaller units, they were chosen from the local people. The provincial ministers were very often powerful local men, who acted as a check on the viceroys. We know Asoka took special audit of the provincial administration every five-years. At the district level, the area was further divided into villages. The intermediary units had officials like accountants, tax-collectors etc. At the village level, there were officials such as the headman. These officials were paid either by remission on some taxes or by land grants. In the urban area, there was a hierarchy of officials. The superintendent of a city was expected to maintain law and order, apart from the upkeep of the city’s sanitation. He was assisted by an accountant and a tax collector. More details are available about the administration of Pataliputra. According to the Arthasastra, a kingdom should be divided into four provinces and the same number should apply to cities. The capital, Pataliputra, was divided into four wards each in charge of a special sub-prefect, who, in turn, was assisted by other officials. The city was under the prefect or nagaraka. The town authorities were expected to keep an eye on all the activities of the people in the city. The officials maintained census, and the gopa, one of the officials, kept records of the income and expenditure of the people in his own block. Precautions were taken against fire; and persons who were guilty of arson were thrown into fire. Sanitary regulations were also severe.

According to Megasthenes, a commission of thirty members, divided into six boards, looked after the municipal administration of Pataliputra. The departments looked after various activities like public welfare, maintenance of markets, temples and regulations of prices. The six departments of the city were: industrial arts, welfare of foreigners, registration of births and deaths, supervision
of trade and commerce, supervision of the manufacture of goods, and collection of taxes. Some of the civic affairs looked after by these boards are very admirable, as for example, the careful supervision of weights and measures, and affixing of the state seal or stamp on the goods that were produced.

Regarding liquor, too, the state pursued a well-laid-out policy. The whole activity was controlled by a superintendent, who was responsible for the police and licencing authorities as well as for the collection of revenues. Liquor shops should not be close to each other. Consumption of liquor in the shops was regulated. The shops should be made attractive by the provision of seats, couches, garlands and other comforts that were needed.

Coming to the limitations of the Mauryan administration, the first thing to be taken up is its autocratic nature. Some of the principles stated by Kautilya make us firmly believe that the government was ruthless in the fullest sense. This art of the government was called *dandaniti* meaning the science of punishment. Both the *Arthasastra* and the Greek sources speak of the severity in the enforcement of the fiscal regulations and the exemplary punishment given to the criminals. Whoever was accused of theft was subjected to torture to get his confession unless the accused could prove either an alibi or the malafides of the complaint. Indeed, the *Arthasastra* admits the danger of using torture and prefers eliciting of conclusive evidence. Besides, this book lays down that whose guilt is believed to be true shall be subject to torture. Moreover, this book of Chanakya mentions 18 kinds of torture and records that each day a fresh kind of torture may be employed. After a person was convicted, the punishment was equally severe like mutilation and death. Indeed, at times, fines were imposed in commutation of death sentence. A brahmin could not be tortured but might be drowned, or branded and sent for slave labour.

Apart from the severity of the administration, corrupt practices also continued. Here is an interesting excerpt from the *Arthasastra*: "...Just as it is impossible not to taste the honey or the poison that finds itself at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government servant not to eat up, at least, a bit of the King's revenue. Just as with fish moving under water it cannot possibly be discerned whether they are drinking water or not, so is impossible to detect government servants employed on official duties when helping themselves to money. It is possible to mark the movements of birds flying high up in the sky; but it is not possible to ascertain the secret movements of government servants." At another place, the same author mentions: “There are about forty ways of embezzle-ment; what is realized earlier is entered later on; what is realized
later, entered earlier; what ought to be realized is not realized”. There is nothing surprising about the Machiavellian traits as mentioned in the Arthasastra. Some of the precepts mentioned by Kautilya go back to the Atharva Veda. Kautilya was spoken approvingly by the later day commentators. One Kamandaka comments on Kautilya as a wise and brahma-like (god-like) person and Dandin called him a revered teacher.

There is another weakness pointed out by Dr. Romila Thapar. She maintains that the administration had an ingrained fundamental weakness. As the bureaucracy was highly centralised and as it depended on the strength of the ruler, it degenerated during the time of weak successors. Moreover, the recruitment of officials was confined to the privileged social groups. At times, the local cliques dominated local administration. It is unfortunate that the Mauryans did not develop something like the Chinese examination system.

In the end we have to state that the administrative system of the Mauryas was something remarkable. It had its own weaknesses, in particular, its autocratic nature. This view is not subscribed by some writers like those in the book, A Comprehensive History of India. It is maintained in this book that the Mauryan administration was a paternal government and, in general, it contributed for the welfare of the people. The same is the view held by H.C. Raychaudhuri. He contends that although there was little room for popular initiative or self-government, there were autonomous communities within Mauryan India apart from self-governing cities.

8. The Impact of Asoka on Mauryan Administration

In the history of ancient India when empires rose like mushrooms and fell like nine-pins, the re-construction of the happenings is almost an impossible venture. Fortunately, with the coming of the Maurya empire “began the historical continuity of India”. The Mauryan administration is something like a watershed in the history of India. The essentials of its administration have become the traditions of Indian administration. More than this, the significance of the administrative organization consists in the fact that, for the first time, a bureaucratic organization came into existence. Above all, its extraordinary significance lies in the fact that a new ethos was infused into it by the peerless monarch, Asoka. Thus, the administrative system of the Mauryas and its reorganization by Asoka is very interesting for a student of history.
At the apex of the administrative structure was the king. He led a very active life. One of the Greek accounts runs thus: "He remains, during all the days, thus occupied, not suffering himself to be interrupted even when the time arrives for attending to his person." The king was assisted by a council of two kinds, mantrins and amatyas. The first category of ministers are described by Asoka in his edicts as mahamatras. The second category occupied a lower pedestal in the hierarchy of officials. Though the king discharged all the responsibilities of the state, he was not a tyrant. Nilakanta Sastri remarks that the "general theory of Ancient Indian polity was that the King was only the guardian of the law and not its maker, and that his order should conform to the established principles of Dharma and social usage." The central government was completely re-oriented in the days of Asoka. The extraordinary energy displayed by Asoka in personally supervising the administration of the country is almost unbelievable. Diligence was the chief quality of the monarch. In addition to this, Asoka never thought in terms of divorcing himself from personal contact with the people of the realm. He was not only a conscientious worker but he was also readily accessible to every petitioner. The whole administration was impregnated with a new ethos. The reason for this was that he made his Law of Piety the loadstar of all his policies. He appointed a good number of new officials known as dharmamahamatras to propagate his dharma in all the nooks and corners of the country. In short, the very theory of kingship came to be reoriented at the hands of Asoka.

The significance of the re-orientation of the concept of the kingship lies in the fact that this became the basis for the administrative organization of every monarch in the future. Every successful monarch of ancient India had his own theory of kingship. It was only with the help of an animating theory of kingship, that the monarchs realized the ideal of the unification of India. At one place Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri says: "Both Samudra Gupta and Asoka set before their minds the ideal of world-conquest, by means of parakrama. Parakrama, in the case of the Maurya, was not warlike activity but vigorous and effective action to propagate the old Indian morality as well as the special teachings of the Buddha." The later ages bore testimony to the importance of the theory of kingship. The partial success of Ala-ud-din Khalji and the success of Akbar in ruling kingdoms are based on such theories. To put it differently the success of any empire in India depended on the eminence of the monarch and the ideal he had set before himself: herein lies the importance of the changes introduced by Asoka in the administrative system of the Mauryas.

The second important feature of the administrative system was the vast army of officials that manned the bureaucratic structure of
the state. There were magistrates known as *adhyakshas*. There were about 32 superintendents. In addition to them, a large number of officials in the provinces, in the villages and in the towns, managed the administrative system. Asoka did not introduce any revolutionary changes in this elaborate structure. He utilized some of the officers like *rajukas* for the purpose of propagating his new *dharma*. Moreover, Asoka did not permit the centrifugal forces to raise their ugly heads as long as he was alive. It is borne out by history that Asoka conducted decennial tours of his kingdom. On every such tour, he spent 256 days inspecting the administration. This is also of importance to us as it shows how he set himself as a model of righteousness in administration. Another advantage of these tours was that he was able to keep the subordinates in awe and reverence. A writer says, “For the best result Asoka relied on the personnel of government. His great example of unceasing activity as a moral duty reminds us of Harsha, Sher Shah and Aurangzeb.”

The third important aspect of the Mauryan administration was the revenue organization. Generally, the kings took one-sixth of the produce. Besides this revenue, the returns from tolls, fines, sale of liquor and such other articles swelled the revenue of the state. In the time of Asoka, the administration was not simply confined to the extraction of revenue from the people. His administration did something more. His state catered to a great number of humanitarian and welfare needs of the people. He provided herbs of medicinal value for both man and beast. Reservoirs were constructed for water, and trees planted on the roadside. He despatched special officers to check the tyranny of the provincial governors. Gifts were distributed to brahmins as well as *saramanas*. He tried his best to make the people cultivate the virtues of compassion, liberality and toleration. He restricted the slaughter and mutilation of animals. Meat was discarded in the imperial kitchen. He abolished sacrificial slaughter of animals. In general, the compassion of Asoka permeated the whole administrative system of the country.

The fourth important aspect of the Mauryan administration was the organization of the provinces into which the empire was divided. The provinces had their respective headquarters and their viceroys. The outlying provinces were ordinarily governed by princes of the royal blood. Even into these captains of the provincial administration, Asoka instilled a new philosophy. A number of times Asoka issued injunctions to them “to behave towards the people like an intelligent nurse would towards the child in her charge,” to use the language of the inscriptions. In addition to this, the king kept a close contact with them through his personal agents. But, as opined by Radha Kumud Mookerji: “It may be noted that Asoka himself left certain independent and disintegrating elements to operate within his empire. As a matter of principle, he stood for the equality
of all states and peoples, small or weak, in freedom and sovereignty, instead of subduing them to the yoke of his imperial authority... Thus, Asoka's principle was to respect local liberty and autonomy and this localism became stronger after his death and became a factor in the break-up of the Maurya Empire."

The fifth aspect to be taken up is the judicial administration of the country. Valuable light is thrown on this aspect of administration by the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya. There were two kinds of courts—village tribunals and the *dharmasthaliya* courts. There was a regular system of courts of appeals leading up to the king's court, as the king was the fountain of justice. Of course, cruel punishments like, mutilation, death and torture were awarded. Dr. Tripathi substantiates this view.* With regard to the harshness of punishments we may say that it might have been made more humane by Asoka, not altogether toned down. After all, Asoka was not an effeminate ruler even though he had renounced war after the battle of Kalinga.

The last important aspect to be taken up is the army that was maintained by the Mauryas. The important sources of information for this are the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya and the *Indica* of Megasthenes. Megasthenes computes the strength of Candragupta’s forces at six hundred thousand infantry, thirty thousand cavalry, and nine thousand elephants. There were different kinds of chariots. Megasthenes refers to a class of high military officials. This class consisted of six divisions. Each of these divisions was in charge of a particular department—Admiralty, Commissariat and Transport, Infantry, Cavalry, War Chariots, and Elephants. There was also a well-equipped ambulance service. We do not have much evidence about the changes introduced in this department of administration by Asoka. It appears that the strength of the army was in no way reduced in the time of Asoka. In any case, no part of the empire revolted from the central government and Asoka successfully suppressed some rebellions in the north-west region.

All told, what strikes the eye of a reader is the pruning of the harsh appurtenances, which, logically, any bureaucratic administration carries. For certain, we know that civil servants were recruited

* "Asoka granted to the Rajakas, set over many hundred thousands of people, independence in the award of honours and punishments in order that they might discharge their duties confidently and fearlessly. They were, however, expected to maintain uniformity in penalties as well as in judicial procedure (P.E.IV). Lastly, the Emperor released prisoners on the anniversary of his coronation (P.E.V), and gave three days respite to those sentenced to death (P.E.IV)."
in an arbitrary manner and the official cadre was selected from a narrow social group. We also know of the cruelty of the provincial viceroy in Taxila during the days of Bindusara. The theoretician of Indian politics, Kautilya, does suggest certain draconian methods to maintain the efficiency of the administration. In a way, it was the shadow of Machiavellian Kautilya that Asoka tried to exorcise. Besides, the greatness of Asoka can be highlighted if we keep in view the truth that the administrative system in India reached its consummation under the aegis of the Mauryas. Historically, a society became complex with the introduction of coinage and the development of trade and commerce during the Nanda period. In other words, society in northern India had passed through the nomadic and agricultural stages and reached the capitalist stages by the time the Mauryas established themselves. And in an age of capitalism, society becomes complex; thus making an administration inevitable. This was the urgency that was at the base of the Mauryan bureaucratic administration, as organized by Chandragupta Maurya. Any newly organized administration is bound to show certain angularities. Therefore, it was left for Asoka to streamline the administration and also to enthuse it with a humane touch.

In short, viewed on the canvas of the changing social order and accepting the short-comings of a freshly instituted administration, the contribution of Asoka was momentous. Probably, the refined principles for a king that appear in Kautilya ("in the happiness of subjects lies his happiness," "when in the court, he shall never cause petitioners to wait at the door" etc.) were later interpolations which were quite plausible in any country without the printing press.

6. Decline of the Maurya Empire and the Responsibility of Asoka

A student is ready to condemn Bismarcks and Napoleons as no diplomats, but he signally fails to wheedle two pence from the hands of a college porter, since he lacks even a little of diplomatic acumen. One should not venture to pass verdicts on epochal historical events. Any evaluation of significant events in history demands a knowledge of what Professor H. Butterfield calls 'the historical predicament'. Such predicaments alone are responsible for epochal events, say, the rise of an empire or the decline of an empire. Keeping in mind the importance of the historical predicaments, we can discuss the decline of the Maurya empire. At best what all we can do is to place before
ourselves the various arguments and try to arrive at a balanced conclusion.

The way in which the Maurya empire disintegrated is very difficult to portray.* It appears that soon after the death of Asoka, powerful foreign kingdoms were established in Gandhara (the north west frontier) and Sakala (north-central Punjab). The renewed incursion of the Bactrain Grecians also contributed for the quick disappearance of the Maurya empire. Demetrius conquered much of the Punjab. These facts show that, within a century, the whole of the empire beyond Magadha was lost. Secondly, immediately after the death of Asoka, Kalinga became independent. Rather, the famous Kharavela defied the authority of Magadha. Thirdly, the Andhra Satavahanas, too, established an independent kingdom. Some scholars opine that they were originally officials of the empire. This means the southern parts of the empire were lost within a few decades after the death of Asoka. Fourthly, Menander, who belonged to the house of Demetrius, ruled from Sialkot in the Punjab. Very soon, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushans poured into India. Thus, we can safely say that by the end of 100 A.D. the Mauryan rule completely disappeared.

Generally speaking, certain natural causes brought about the decline of most of the empires in India like, the spirit of local autonomy, difficulties in communication, rebellious attitude of provincial governors, and bold intrigues and treacheries of officials. Foreign intervention was another such factor which invariably accelerated the cumulative effect of all these causes. These are the causes enumerated by Radha Kumud Mukherji. Positively, we can say, that some, if not all, of these causes were at work in the case of the Maurya empire. A new point has been stated by Dr. Romila Thapar. To quote her: “By far the outstanding causes contributing to the decline of empires in India was one that has only recently been recognized.

* Paucity of historical material and also contradictory evidence disables us to give a chronological and consistent picture of the break-up of the Mauryan empire. According to the Puranic tradition, one of the sons, Kunala, succeeded Asoka. It is also said that Kunala was responsible for establishing the Kingdom of Kuchu. But according to Kashmir Chronicles one Jalauka ruled after Asoka. The Puranas also mention the sons of Kunala, and one Dasradha appears to be a historic figure who ruled in Magadha. Another name that is known to us, is Salisuka who was notorious for his cruelty. His name occurs in the astronomical work called Gargasamhita. The Puranas further say that Salisuka was succeeded by three sons viz., Davavarman, Satandhanus and Brahadratha. It was the last person that was overthrown by Pushyamitra Sunga, his own general, in the very presence of his army either in 183 B.C. or 187 B.C.
"The political concept of the state as something above and beyond the symbols of government, which received so much emphasis in China, for instance, was never stressed in India: loyalty was directed not towards the state but towards the social order, which was regarded as supreme." It is this absence of political consciousness and loyalty that greatly accounts for the unwept-unhonoured-and-unsung decline of empires in India. Besides, as the monarchical system of the day depended on religious orthodoxy, the loyalty of the people was diverted to the social order of the day instead of the state. The interdependence of caste and politics had its own deleterious influence on the state. The brahminical sources introduced the idea of contract, although divine qualities were attributed to the monarchy. There is contradiction in these two theories: the attribute of divinity makes the state, absolute; whereas the stress on contract brings out the limited nature of the state. The idea of contract was more close to dharma; and as dharma played an important role, the importance of kingship declined. The king was expected to maintain the social order as sanctified by dharma. Since dharma was given an important place, as the years rolled by, a great number of intermediaries came between the king and the subjects. And they were officials and land owners to whom the king delegated powers. Such a devolution of authority is at the root of the decline of Hindu empires in India. All these combind together constitute the 'predicaments' in the decline of empires in India.

Normally, it is said, Asoka was responsible for a considerable extent for the decline of the Maurya empire since he abandoned war after the famous war on Kalinga. "The ease with which Pushyamitra overthrew his king in the very sight of the troops shows that, unlike earlier kings of the dynasty who often took the field in person, the last of the Mauryas lost touch with his armed forces and ceased to command their affection." That is to say, absence of warfare during the time of Asoka emasculated the army. But this argument can be countered by the contention that Asoka kept his powder dry even though he did not wage any more wars after the Kalinga war. He was able to maintain the integrity of the empire as long as he lived. After all, although he had abandoned war after the war, he annexed Kalinga—a clear indication of his prudence and prowess.

In addition to this, it is said that Asoka’s patronage of Buddhism enraged the brahmins and, hence, the revolt of Pushyamitra Sunga in 187 B.C. This is not entirely true. Kalhana, the brahmin historian, praises Asoka for his piety and benefactions, and testifies to the Hindus. Another brahmin writer, Bana, applies the epithet ‘anarya’ to Pushyamitra Sunga. "The epithet 'asura', (demon) or survadvish, (enemy of the gods) was applied not only to the Mauryas but also to persons beguiled by the Buddha." Even then, B.G. Gokhale remarks, "The Buddhist accounts, when they speak of
Pushyamitra's persecution of Buddhism, may well be believed. The Laws of Manu are also believed to have been codified in this age, and they generally reflect an aggressive brahminical spirit. It is also probable that the great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, were brahmanized during this period all of which go to substantiate the view that this combination of feudalism and priesthood as represented in the person of Pushyamitra, the founder of the Sunga dynasty, had begun to put the clock of history back."

One more factor that contributed for the decline was the rebellious nature of the viceroy's. In the days of Bindusara, the viceroy of Taxila revolted. Then Asoka was sent to suppress the revolt. At that time, the people complained that they were not opposed to the prince but to the tyranny of the viceroy. Immediately after the death of Asoka, many provincial viceroy's became independent. The process was accelerated by the quarrels in the imperial family. "The crowd of princes and princesses and dominating beldames must have made the polygamous royal household an arena for intrigue and strife." One successor, Salisuka, is described as wicked, cruel and immoral.

Moreover, the disturbed conditions in the country emboldened the Geeks to renew their incursions. The final coup de grace was given by Pushyamitra. This is because the true causes of decline lie deeper. R.K. Mukherjee says, "It is not unlikely that this coup d'etat was helped, if not promoted, by foreign invasion."

 Probably the reasons were more deeper. The Mauryan economy was under heavy pressure. The need for vast revenue resources must have caused great strain. Although the archaeological evidence points out the growth of the economy, the debasement of the coinage points in a different direction. This alone was not the reason. There were other economic factors also. The variations in the economic pattern of life "may well have disturbed the economic equilibrium, with the revenue from agrarian areas not being sufficient to maintain the entire empire."

The last but one factor responsible for the decline of the Maurya empire was the nature of the Maurya bureaucracy. The success and stability of the empire depended largely on the calibre of the rulers; for, empires in ancient India were ideas rather than realities. As long as the magnificent ruler, Asoka, ruled, the empire remained intact. When once this capable ruler disappeared, the officials became slothful and corrupt. B.G. Gokhale says that the Maurya bureaucracy tended to become oppressive after Asoka and this was at the root of the decline. This is borne out by a story from Divyavadana, a Buddhist book, written in Sanskrit. More than
this, the edicts of Asoka hint at the prevalent maladministration. Radhakamal Mukherjee says, "In the Mauryan Empire there were oppressive taxes like kara, vishi or pranaya, forms of forced labour or benevolence which could be imposed by oppressive samahartas from villages or by kings facing a depleted treasury."

In this manner, various causes contributed for the decline of the Myurya empire. But to make a scapegoat of Asoka is not fair. Asoka was not an impractical visionary. He faced facts boldly. He exhorted his successors to follow him in the path of dharma-vijaya; but, as a rider, Asoka added that if conquest should be still attractive, they should be gentle and merciful in the pursuit of their conquests. In short, to make Asoka alone responsible for the decline, betrays the fetish of unwanted preciseness in history, as though a law of uniformity governs human beings analogous to the law of uniformity in positive sciences. To conclude, the cumulative effect of the various causes contributed for the decline of the Maurya empire.

**Note on Mauryas after Asoka**

On the death of Asoka in 232 B.C. the empire came to be divided into the western and the eastern halves. The first half was ruled by Kunala. After some time it was ruled by Samprati, only for a short while. Besides, the southern portion was probably governed by Bactrian-Greeks. Although the north-west region slipped away, the Gangetic valley remained with the Mauryas for fifty years, which they ruled from Pataliputra. The following are the rulers: Dasaratha, Samprati, Salisuka, Deva Varman, Satadhanvan, and Brhadratha. All these rulers ruled for 52 years, whereas the first three Mauryas for 85 years.

After the overthrow of the Mauryan dynasty at Pataliputra it is not known how the fortunes of the Mauryas shaped themselves. However, we hear of Mauryan kings in different parts of India and especially in western India. We know from inscriptions that one king Dhavala of the Mauryan lineage ruled in the Rajputana region in the 5th century A.D. It is also interesting to note that the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II the tells us how the Mauryans were defeated by this king. This means the Mauryas had some principalities in the Konkan in the 7th century A.D. Besides, inscriptions tell us how Mauryan chiefs ruled in the Maharashtra region till the 12th century A.D. and how they were subordinate to the Yadava rulers. Historians say that the Mauryas came to be merged in the end among the Rajputs as Moris and amongst the Marathas as Mores.
10. A Critical Survey of Life Under the Mauryas

A student is normally enamoured of the political melodrama of a country saturated with the din and dust of battle, bloody murders, court intrigues, viceregal rebellions and so on, while wading through the mass of historical material. But such data is only a minor part of what real history is. History is not simply the biographies of personalities, their failures and successes, but a movement which swathes all aspects of human life. Inevitably, a study of the life of people in India during the Mauryas is an eye-opener to any student.

Agriculturists constituted the major portion of the population. Megasthenes admires the peace enjoyed by them. According to him they were seen pursuing their activities within the sight of contending armies. These agriculturists lived in villages. The idea that the king was the owner of land was prevalent. The government undertook the responsibility of clearing new areas for agricultural purposes. In these undertakings the state deported Sudras from over-populated areas. Details pertaining to this activity are to be found in the Arthasastra. These Sudras were debarred from taking to arms. Their sole duty was to cultivate the land while the government took their surplus crops. In this context Dr. Romila Thapar puts forward a very important contention: “The Sudra helot had come into being under state control, to make large-scale slavery unnecessary for food production. But in fact there was little to choose between the status of the Sudra and that of the slave, though legally the Sudra was not a salve. Members of other castes and occupations moved into the settlement voluntarily, once it became economically worthwhile to do so.”

Maybe, because of this reason there were no slaves in India as commented by Megasthenes. Indeed, there were some slaves, in the court and prosperous households. Some were used in mines by guilds. Kautilya states that there are four explanations on the origin of the slaves: birth, voluntary sale of oneself, capture in war, and judicial punishment. Dr. Thapar contends that the institution was definitely recognized and the legal relationship between the master and salve was clearly defined. In all probability Megasthenes could not clearly define slavery because of the caste system confusing the situation. Indeed the slaves did not constitute a large part of the population.
In the industrial field, the Mauryan period witnessed rapid developments in industry and trade. Great attention was paid to the laying and maintenance of roads and waterways. Kautilya mentions a large variety of roads and pathways like king’s highway, the merchants’ road, the rural roads, the paths to forests etc. The villagers had some responsibility in the maintenance of roads. More important was the mention of major roads by Greek writers and Kautilya. This development of roads, along with the increase in production of industrial goods, contributed for trade. In the towns there were a large number of craftsmen, traders and officials. Trade was partly managed by the state and partly by shopkeepers and travelling merchants. The sreshthin or the rich merchant was an important social figure of the day. Greek commentators pay tributes to the skill of Indian people in exploiting the mineral resources. Amongst the industries, cotton-textile manufacture occupied the most important place. Early Buddhist texts speak of the superior cloth manufactured near Banaras. In the organization of the industries the srenis or guilds played an important role. The government respected the constitution and privileges of these guilds. Some writers state that the traders and artisans had the power to frame their own rules for their classes. The Jatakas mention eighteen guilds. Although the guilds occupied such an important place, the state exercised careful surveillance on the artisans and traders. At one place Kautilya calls artisans and merchants as thieves in fact, though not in name. That is why the state regulated prices, wages and profits. Severe penalties were imposed for adultrating goods, or cheating the consumers. Indeed, their interests were also protected. Strabo remarks that “whoever caused loss of a hand or an eye to a craftsman is put to death”.

Nilakant Sastri says, “The vastness of India’s agricultural and mineral resources and the extraordinary skill of our craftsmen were noted down with admiration by the compatriots of Alexander and Magasthenes.” The one striking quality of the age was the presence of innumerable guilds, or unions of craftsmen. The inscription on the Sanchi stupa states that the carving of it was done by a guild of ivory workers. The Junnar cave inscription was the work of a guild of corn-dealers. The organization of unions of craftsmen broke down the caste system of India.

Because of their services to the community, the craftsmen enjoyed a covetable place in society. “The rise of heterodox creeds, the influx of foreigners and many other causes have affected to a certain extent the rigidity of caste rules.” The smruti restrictions could not be imposed on the guilds as they enjoyed royal favour and exercised enormous power. Numerous seals belonging to such corporations have been found. Since the craftsmen were no longer
regarded as Sudras, the social stigma belonging to them was, instead, put on actors, jugglers, jesters, snake-charmers etc. The emergence of this economic class in society was a matter of tremendous importance.

We have already talked about the state of agriculture, and just now on trade and industry. Where lies the clue for understanding this activity is stated by Dr. Romila Thapar. According to this writer, the agricultural prosperity of the day enabled the building of a political empire. Once a political empire came into existence it fostered economic activity. The stability and peace guaranteed by the state acted as a stimulous to the craft guilds and trade. Efficient administration meant brisk trade transactions. Apart from this, a salutary influence was exercised by the state. It also employed some of the artisans, like armourers, and ship-builders. Otherwise the industrial community worked on their own. On the other hand, as the industries came to be carefully nurtured by the guilds, the state was able to collect the taxes better. Apart from this interaction between the political force and economic activity, we have already mentioned the ways in which the state controlled and guided the economic activity in the topic on Mauryan administration.

Indeed, capitalism became an established factor during the time of the Mauryas and it contributed for general prosperity. The merchant community played an important role in giving endowments for monasteries and temples. The general prosperity of the age was due to the development of maritime traffic and overseas trade. Chandragupta probably maintained a separate department of admiralty. With the conquest of Kalinga and the consequent control of great ports, the importance of travel by sea definitely increased. Trade within the country was well regulated. After all, the name of the book written by Kautilya is the *Arthasastra*, a name which speaks volumes. The textile industry improved. Kautilya mentions Mathura, Aparanta, Kashi and Vanga as sources of the finest cotton fabrics. The perfect joining of the massive wooden platfrom deck put up in the vicinity of Patna is a surviving testimony to the carpenters’ skill. The state itself employed a great number of merchants and artisans.

After discussing the economic life of the people, it is befitting to say something on the urban life. Vatsayana, who described the life of the *nagarika*, probably belonged to this period. The house of a townee was surrounded by a garden which was meant for recreation. Even terraces were recommended for the enjoyment of moonlit parties. Vatsayana’s description of a townee’s apartment is very colourful. Rooms were elegantly furnished. Musical instruments and toilet articles were common. Rooms were decorated with flowers, and
birds and animals were kept as pets. Ivory brackets were provided for keeping such articles as painting boxes, musical instruments and also a table for toilet articles—chairs were not in fashion, and the 
nagarika sat on carpets spread on the floor.

In the social life, the caste system was probably not very rigid. It is interesting to note that the four-caste system does not find a mention in the inscriptions of Asoka. The inscriptions speak of brahmins and sramanas (ascetics) but not of the other castes. This was probably the reason why Megasthenes speaks of seven castes which in reality were occupations—philosophers, farmers, soldiers, herdsman, artisans, magistrates and councillors. The Greek even says that no one is allowed to marry outside his own caste, or pursue any other occupation except his own. In the category of philosophers, he includes brahmins, Buddhist monks and the followers of other religious sects. It appears this class of people were exempt from taxation. The farming community was mostly composed of the Sudras. Not all the soldiers belonged to the kshatriya caste. The maintenance of the army was a burden on the state. Megasthenese states, "When they are not in service they spend their time in idleness and drinking bounts, being maintained at the expense of the royal treasury." As the burden of the army was great, the taxation was also heavy. The herdsman were either Sudras or outcastes. Some of the artisans like metal-workers were accorded a higher status. In all probability the wealthy were the higher class. The official community was primarily composed of brahmins or kshatriyas. Although there are a few exceptions according to the records only the first two castes (brahmins and kshatriyas) were regarded as the twice-born, and therefore, men of eminence. Dr. Thapar contends that conflict between the upper classes and the lower classes was inevitable. "Asoka's emphatic plea for social harmony would suggest the existence of social tensions. Guild leaders in urban centres had the factual control of urban institutions, yet the social code denied them the position of prestige to which they felt entitled. A partial expression of their resentment was their support for the heterodox sects, Buddhism in particular. This in turn probably caused further friction between the brahmans and the heterodox sects on a religious plane."

The social life, we have to say this too, was quite an envious one. Cotton was the chief wear. Bright colours were preferred, and the rich had flowered muslins and ear-rings of ivory. In the hot weather they had umbrellas to protect themselves from the heat; and umbrella was also a symbol of authority. Festivals and entertainments were common and people wildly enjoyed them. Dancing was universal. Gaming houses were taxed by the state. Hunting was common among the upper classes. Manly sports like swimming,
boating and archery were common. Panikkar writes, "Among the sixty-four arts which a well-educated man was supposed to know, dancing and music ranked high." Secondly, education was quite widespread. Teaching was organized by brahmans and Buddhist monks. The upper strata of society regarded literacy as an essential requisite. Universities like Taxila, Ujjain and Benaras were famous. Technical education was imparted through guilds. The curriculum mostly consisted of literary and religious subjects. Medicine was also studied because of Buddhism and Jainism. Thirdly, much is not known about the status of women in this period. Polygamy was common with the kshatriyas. The marriageable age showed a tendency to decline. It appears that considerable amount of freedom was enjoyed by some women. Some of them were highly learned, like Karuvaki, one of the wives of Asoka. But the seclusion of women is hinted at in one of the inscriptions of Asoka. Probably, sati was in vogue and it was referred to by the Greeks. Fourthly, slavery was prevalent in the kings' courts; but in society, it was not encouraged. The functions of the four castes were clearly laid down in the dharma shastras. But, inter-caste marriages were approved of by the smritis except for brahmans. The institution of family was well-established. Joint family system was prevalent although it could be dissolved by the members. Girls above 12 and boys above 16 were regarded as majors. There were 8 kinds of marriages and they could be dissolved by mutual consent or prolonged absence. Fifthly, with regard to manners, customs and habits, it is worth mentioning that people lived frugally and followed the strict ethics of life. Houses and property were generally left unguarded. Sixthly, the middle-class community was quite civilized and was materially advanced. They lived in comfortable houses and made good profit from the land. They followed an ethical code of life too.*

Incidentally, we need make mention of Pataliputra. It was founded by Ajatasatru and soon became very famous. The Sugangeya palace was regarded to be more splendid than the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana by Megasthenes. Recent excavations prove the greatness of the city. The Kathasaritsagara refers to Pataliputra as an abode of culture, learning and fine arts. Patanjali too, speaks of the Sugangeya palace. Also, the Hathigumpha inscription refers to this. Panikkar

*The following are the observations of Megasthenes: "Famine has never visited India and there has never been a general scarcity in the supply of the nourishing food"; "their houses and property, they leave generally unguarded"; and "about generation of the soul, their teachings show parallels to the Greek doctrines and on many other matters—like Plato too, they interweave fables about the immortality of the soul and the judgment inflicted in the other world" and so on,
maintains that this palace is as familiar in Indian literature as Versailles, Quirinal or Windsor is in European literature. What Rome was to the Mediterranean and Europe for eight centuries, so was Pataliputra to the early history of India.

In matters of amusement the rulers did not stint. Hunting was the favourite pastime of royalty. Apart from this pastime, courtesans and dancing girls were present in the court. They were employed as house-maids, garland-makers and shampooers and they had odd kind of jobs like holding the royal umbrella, attending the sovereign while he was seated on the throne, fanning the emperor and so on. The court etiquette was quite elaborate. According to the Arthasastra, the king while consulting physicians and ascetics, should sit in the room where the sacred fire has been kept. This was similar to the Magian ritual. The ceremony of washing the king’s hair also was a great occasion, when the courtiers offered presents to the king. This was similar to the Persian hair-washing ceremony as described by Herodotus.

The last but one aspect is their language and literature. Pali was the official language but Sanskrit was also in vogue. Sanskrit was the literary language, par excellence. During the time of Chandragupta and Bindusara, a brahmin minister dramatized the story of the celebrated princess, Vasavadatta of Ujjain and her lover Udayana. Dance and drama were quite popular. Dattaka is renowned to have written a book on the art of love. “During the period between 500 and 150 B.C. we have the great works of Katyayana and Patanjali who, between them, established the supremacy of Panini and gave Sanskrit the form and shape which it enjoys today”. Towering above all these achievements was the Arthasastra of Kautilya, the magnum opus of the period.

The Mauryan age witnessed the remarkable phenomenon of the maturity of Pali language. How exactly Pali grew into such a mature language is not known. Historical evidence shows that to start with Pali language, the court language of Magadha, was imposed on other regions. Very soon, the language matured into what was known as Monumental Prakrit. To start with this was only a provincial dialect and it virtually became “the Hindustani of ancient India from 200 B.C. to about 50 A.D.” Apart from being the official language, it was the language of the scriptures. The royal charters issued by Gautamiputra Satakarni, the Vaishnava inscription on the Besnagar pillar of Heliodorus and various other inscriptions, are written in Monumental Prakrit. Equally intriguing is the disappearance of this language within no time.
Regarding religion, it is interesting to note that Aryanism absorbed many non-Aryan tribes. Probably, it was from the 6th century B.C. to 200 B.C. that the Aryan sages were busy in incorporating tribes such as the Lichchhavis and the Mollas into the Aryan civilization. Along with this social integration a new pantheon of gods came into prominence, without discarding the old; that is, it was a period of ferment in the hierarchy of gods. Vasudeva was mentioned by Panini. Skanda was worshipped during the Maurya period according to Kane. And Siva continued to be worshipped. In brief, the Maurya period foreshadowed the Hinduism as it emerged in the Gupta period.

The last aspect to be taken up is the art and architecture of the Maurya age. The outstanding examples of them are the beautiful pillars of Asoka, the stupas of Barhut and Sanchi and the Ajivika caves near Bodh Gaya. These caves are regarded as the precursors of the Ajanta. Havell considers the sculptures and the stupas of Barhut and Sanchi as works which combine the non-Aryan and the Aryan elements. As a matter of fact, only a few monuments have come down to us and they are of great importance. In the time of Asoka, in place of wood, brick and stone came into vogue, both in sculpture and architecture. The representation of sentient figures in the Maurya art is of an advanced nature. One writer remarks, "It is improbable that it could have been executed (Sarnath) by any sculptor who had not been soaked in ancient Indian traditions, although his previous practical experience may have been gained by working in wood or ivory." V.A. Smith regards that the pillars of Asoka merit our attention and admiration as monuments of engineering ability.

Before concluding this topic, it is essential to discuss a few more salient aspects relating to the economic field of Mauryan India, a knowledge which, of late, is being given greater and greater importance. The Maurya state did not pursue a policy of laissez-faire towards the economic activities of the community. The administrative apparatus as provided by Kautilya makes provision for a large amount of nationalization of industries. There was something like the public sector-monopoly of mines, trading, monopoly of mineral wealth, and factories for utilizing raw-materials into finished products. The state even maintained stocks of food-grains since taxes were paid in kind also. The superintendent of commerce controlled the supply, price, purchase and sale of commodities. The sales of businessmen were controlled through a centralized market and their stocks were regulated by licences. Profiteering checked by fixing wholesale prices. Yet the state permitted free enterprise to prevail because the necessities of life such as milk and vegetables could be sold at any time and at any place. One more interesting feature of the economic activities of the state was the partial measure of prohibition of liquor—
enforced through an official who controlled the sale of liquor and fixed its time, place and quantity by granting licences to dealers. Only sealed liquor was sold, and that too, could be taken only at licensed taverns. Indeed exceptions were there like festival days when restrictions were relaxed, unlike our prohibition. Thus, the extensive control exercised by the Maurya state, the humane changes introduced by Asoka in the administration and the regulation relating to drinking of liquor, indicate that the Maurya state was the first Welfare State.

In this manner, the people of India under the aegis of the Mauryas lived a highly cultured life. The number of amenities enjoyed by them is commendable; and the strides made by them in the fields of art and literature are remarkable.

11. A Short Note on the Art and Architecture of the Mauryas

Our knowledge of art and architecture of the Mauryas is meagre, but its significance is profound. It was during the Mauryan period that the architecture of wood was made into lithic. Apart from this significance, the beginnings made in the Mauryan period influenced the later-day art and architecture.

Regarding pre-Mauryan art, very little is known. The only one that is known about the pre-Mauryan era was some walls and remains of dwellings of cyclopean masonry near the old city of Rajagriha. The stone-railing around the Sanchi stupa throws some light on the buildings that could have prevailed before the Maurya era.

In the Maurya period, the most important specimen were the pillars of Asoka. They are free-standing pillars. Some of them have sculptured capitals on them. The lean shaft and the capital are impressive in their size and finish. The inscriptions that are written on the pillars speak of the art of engraving, the most important being the Rummindi pillar. As already remarked, the polished surface of the monolithic columns is a tribute to the masons and stone-cutters' art of the day.

Some writers argue these stone columns were inspired by Graeco-Persian influence. There could be some truth in the remark. Yet, there are certain differences between the pillars of Persepolis in Persia and these monolithic columns. These are more enormous in
size. The stone for these columns was taken from the sandstone quarry at Chunar in Bihar.

The Lion Capital at Sarnath has been very highly praised. According to Grousset the animal sculptures on this column are masterpieces. The treatment of muscles, the face and paws of the lions of Sarnath remind us of Persepolis. But they do have a tenderness and a poetry of their own, which are not to be found in the lions of Persepolis. "They have quieted the Assyrian violence as they have restored to the dryness of the Achaemenid forms of plenitude of life and a new freshness". In the same manner Grousset pays an eloquent tribute to the elephants in the Sarnath capital: "Look at the elephant of the Sarnath capital, the easy gait of this enormous mass, the life which circulates in this quivering trunk. All the art of Ellora and Mahabalipuram is already contained in the short relief".

Apart from these specimens of art and architecture, a few more belong to the Maurya period. The statue found at Parkham in Bihar and the shrines at Nagari in Rajputana, in all probability, belong to Asoka’s time. Secondly, the seven rock-cut sanctuaries near Gaya, four in the Barabar hill and the three on the Nagarjuna hill belong to the same period. Some of these sanctuaries are modelled on the wood and the thatch sanctuaries of the time, for example, the facade and the door-way of the Lomas Rishi cave in Barabar resembles the wooden structures of the day.

The last thing to be mentioned is the architecture of Pataliputra. The capital was surrounded by a wooden rampart. Some of them have been unearthed at Bulandibagh near Patna. Further details regarding the capital are to be gathered from the writings of the contemporaries.

The capital, Pataliputra, lay along the northern bank of the Sone. It was built in the land that lies between the Sone and the Ganges. The city was defended by a massive palisade made out of timber and it had 64 gates and 570 towers. The palisade itself was protected by a moat filled with water. The palace of the emperor was close to the modern village of Kumrahar. It, too, was built out of timber. The pillars were gilded and were adorned with golden vines and silver birds. It had a fine ornamental park with many fish ponds. Modern excavations show that the buildings were similar to the palace at Persepolis. One of the Greek authors of the time remarked that Chandragupta’s palace excelled the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana. The ostentation of the court was dazzling. It is said that golden vessels measured six-feet
long. The king was robed in fine muslin embroidered with purple and gold. Within the palace the emperor was protected by an Amazanian bodyguard of armed women. The harem of the emperor was built on an extensive scale and it was carefully guarded.

Thus, the art and architecture of the Mauryan period was of a good standard. Some scholars remark that human figures were also carved out in that period like the Yāksha statues found near Patna, and the mutilated stone images of Tirthankaras from Lohanipur. If this contention is true, one can say that human form also began to figure from the Maurya period onwards.

12. **Foreign Invasions Between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D. and their Importance**

Periods of glory alternating with periods of darkness—this is the ultra-violet and the infra-red of the spectrum of Indian history. To the infra-red belong the foreign invasions that occurred between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D. When we try to assess their importance, we cannot be certain about our conclusions. Yet, they are important.

The Greek rule over Bactria was probably destroyed by the Sakas and then by the Yue-chi tribe. The Sakas in turn were forced to quit the Bactrian area by the Yue-chis. The sources for this history are the Greek and the Graeco-Roman annals as well as early Chinese accounts. The references to these invaders in the literature of India are confusing because they equate Sakas, Greek and Pahlavas as one and the same. Unfortunately, the Chinese accounts mostly deal with the early history of the people but not after they had occupied parts of India. That is why we rely mostly on archaeological sources for the Saka-Pahlava history.

Among the foreigners who invaded India, the Graeco-Bactrians are very important. The ancient city of Bactria (the later Balkh) played an important role because of its geographical position, just as Byzantium and Alexandria in the west. It was the nerve-centre of Asian trade—Indian, Chinese and Levant. Strategically too, it was important. On its integrity depended not only the safety of Persia but also of India, from the incursions of the nomadic hordes of central Asia. It was Darius who conquered the city. The area
called, Bactria, lay between the Hindukush and the Oxus. Some of
the Bactrians were employed by the Persians in their wars against
Greece. After the Persian empire collapsed, Bactria became virtually
independent. It was at this time that Alexander beat the Persians in
331 B.C. in the great battle of Gaugamela. And, after the death of
Alexander, rebellions sprang up everywhere. At last, in 209 B.C.,
the independence of Bactria was recognized by Antiochus the Great
of the Syrian empire which comprised of Syria and Bactria. Once
Diodotus revolted against Antiochus, the Seleucid king, the revolt
could not be suppressed. Ultimately, one great grandson of Diodo-
tus was given a Seleucid bride around 200 B.C. During the struggle
between Bactria and the Seleucid kings, the latter defeated Subhaga-
sena after crossing the Indus. This defeat in 206 B.C. revealed the
weakness of north-west India. Soon, Demetrius conquered Arachosia
and eastern Gedrosia (southern Afghanistan and the Makran
region). His successor Demetrius II crossed into the Panjab and
came up to Kutch. It was, thus, that Greek power was established
in India.

When the attention of the Bactrians turned toward India, it was
facilitated by four factors: the natural impulse of the central Asians
to thrust themselves southwards; the comparative poverty of the
Bactrian territory; the anarchy that prevailed in India in the post-
Maurya era; and the weaknesses of the Syrian empire.

In the first instance, India felt the impact of the rise of the
Bactrian kings towards its north-west. In the wake of Alexander’s
death, many of his provinces like Parthia and Bactria assumed
independence. The third independent Greek ruler of Bactria,
Euthydemos, subjugated a large part of Afghanistan. He was succeed-
ed by Demetrios in the second century B.C. who was responsible for
the conquest of a portion of the Panjab. According to some schol-
ars, he is to be identified with the Yavana ruler who invaded upper
India during the reign of Pushyamitra Sunga. His capital was Sakala
or modern Sialkot.

The next important king among the Bactrians who is supposed
to have invaded India was Menander; for, accounts about him are to
be found in Kabul, Mathura and even in Bundelkhand. According
to Strabo he conquered more nations than Alexander. Some scholars
have identified him with King Milinda who is mentioned in a
Buddhist work, Milinda-Pannha. In all probability Milinda was
a convert to Buddhism. His coins are found as far as Kabul
in the north, and Mathura in the south. His capital too, was
Sakala; and it was during his time that this city became a flourish-
ing one.
Menander was probably the last Greek monarch in history. His conversion to Buddhism is vividly described by the author of the book *Milinda-Panha* or 'the Questions of Menander'. Rawlinson writes, "It is a strange picture—the conversion of the great monarch of West, the last heir to the conquests of Alexander, to a creed so impregnated with the mystic spirit of the East." Perhaps, it was in the cause of his new faith that he attacked Magadha. It is said that he even reached the banks of the Sone. But further he could not go, because, just then, a terrible war broke out in his homeland. And after his death, the Greek power in the Punjab disappeared rapidly.

Intercine quarrels among the Bactrians were common. One of the kings, Antialkidas, who ruled over Taxila, sent an envoy to the court of the Sunga king. The last of the Greeks we hear of was in the time of Kadphises I, in the first century A.D. The Bactrian rule was supplanted by that of the Kushans.

The history of Graeco-Bactrians is primarily constructed from the coins. Very often the evidence is confusing. After Menander, there ruled one Strabo probably. In Bactria itself another branch of Greeks ruled. In the later period, the one important ruler was Heliodorus. He was the envoy of king Antialkidas of Taxila to the king of Besnagar, who was probably a Sunga ruler. This inscription shows that Heliodorus was a follower of Vasudeva, thereby showing that he was a convert to Hinduism. The Bactrians disappeared because of the movement of nomadic tribes in central Asia—Scythians. The movement of this tribe was because of the Chinese emperor, Shi Huang Ti, who built the Great Wall during the third century B.C. The Hans who ruled over China took particular care to preserve the wall. Prior to the building of the wall the nomads inroaded into China whenever their economic condition was not good. Once the wall became impregnable, the tribes were forced to migrate either south or west.

At this time, there were three tribes involved. The first was Yue-chi. It was of two bands. The Little Yue-chi which settled in northern Tibet, and the Great Yue-chi which came to the shore of the Aral Sea. It was here that they displaced the Scythians, or Sakas as they were known in India.

The second important race that invaded India in this period was the Sakas. Owing to the internal quarrels of the Bactrians and the pressure from central Asia, the Sakas succeeded in pushing their way through the ranks of the Bactrians into India. By the time the Sakas reached the lower Indus valley and western India, the Parthians were already there. The first known Saka-Parthian king of India was Moga, whose chronology can be fixed either in the second
century B.C. or in the second century A.D. Numismatic evidence shows that he ruled from Gandhara. His successor, Azes I, conquered the whole of the Panjab. A branch of his dynasty ruled over Mathura. Among all the Saka rulers, the most important was Rudradaman (belonged to another branch of the Saka-Parthians) who lived in the second century A.D. and ruled from Ujjain. An account of his career is to be found in the Junagadh rock inscription. His authority was recognized in the east and west of Malwa, northern Gujarat, Kathiawar, Kutch, Marwar and the lower Indus valley. He was not only a great conqueror, but also an able ruler. It was under his auspices that repairs were undertaken to the famous Sudarsana lake. It appears that the rule of these western Satraps came to an end somewhere in the fifth century A.D.

The Sakas divided the kingdom into provinces. Each was under a military governor called the great satrap. Each province was further divided into units which were under the control of lesser satraps. These lower officials were so independent that they maintained their coins and issued their own instructions. The kings of this dynasty took high-sounding titles. One interesting feature of the Sakas is the high sounding titles adopted by them. Apart from this when they became Hinduized they claimed the kshatriya rank.

Both the Sakas and Pahlavas are not culturally mature and so they were more influenced by Indian culture than the Greeks. The Saka coins are mostly adaptations of the Indo-Greeks. In one respect the Sakas have contributed to India. The Hellenistic art of Gandhara was continued by the Sakas, and attained perfection under the Kushans. Excavations at Taxila and other places in Gandhara have shown a large number of sculptural and architectural remains, in particular at Sirkap.

But among all the foreigners who poured into India in this period of interregnum, the most important were the Kushans. Some time in the second century, the Kushans started migrating from their homeland, and began to press on the north-western frontier of India. The first of the well-known kings, Kadphises I, supplanted the Bactrian Greeks in the Kabul valley, and also defeated the Parthians. He was succeeded by his son Kadphises II, and it is quite likely that a part of India was included in his empire. The third most important king was Kanishka whose reign began somewhere in the last quarter of the second century A.D. Kanishka belongs to Indian history. He annexed Kashmir, and then acquired Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand from the Chinese. Outside India, his empire consisted of Afghanistan, Bactria, Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand. In India, the Punjab, Kashmir, Sind and the territory as far as Benares
were included in his empire. His capital was Peshawar and his coins have been found in Bihar and Bengal.

The importance of Kanishka consists in the fact that he was converted to Buddhism. It was under his auspices that the fourth Buddhist council was held, whose deliberations were guided by Vasumitra and Asvaghosha. Though a zealous follower of Buddhism, Kanishka was loyal to the Indian tradition of eclecticism. On his coins are to be found many figures of Hindu, Greek, Zoroastrian and Elamite gods. He was instrumental for the construction of the mighty stupa (not traceable) at Peshawar and a town near Taxila. Kanishka’s court was adorned by the Buddhist philosopher, Asvaghosha; the versatile scholar, Nagarjuna; and the pioneer of ayurveda, Charaka. Kanishka was succeeded by a great number of weaklings; and by the end of the third century A.D., the Kushans disappeared from India.

The influence of all these foreign ‘immigrant-invasions’ was stupendous*. To a great extent, these invasions were responsible for the radical changes that came in the government, the society, the literature, the religion and the art of ancient India. The extensive influence of these foreign invasions is not a matter of disgrace, but one of pride to India. The very fact that India absorbed the striking characteristics of the various civilizations that came into contact with her, shows that Indian civilization was in its youthful days. It was only from the time that Indian civilization retreated into its own shell and lost all contact with foreign civilizations, that is, after Toramana, that it became sterile. This capacity to absorb is known as the assimilating power or the absorbing power. The lack of challenges from foreigners was the one reason that made Indian society decadent by the time the Muslims came to India. That is to say, however unpleasant might have been the foreign invasions and inroads on India in the period between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D., they contributed to the revitalization of Indian civilization. This is the chief significance of foreign invasions and this is one of the concepts discussed with astonishing erudition by Toynbee.

*"The influx of new peoples and with them of new institutions and new ideas created a new social milieu. For the first time a new style in dress, that of stitched clothes, was introduced, gold coinage became common, and the Buddha figure, a symbol, beautifully expressed all the inner urge and spiritual striving of the Indian people. The nomads came as foreign barbarians but soon became great patrons of Indian learning and art, and helped to relax the dead hand of tradition. The rhythm of this history has, therefore, new notes, violent at first, as expressed in foreign invasions, which eventually enrich the saga of ancient Indian life." — B.G. Gokhale.
The first substantive influence left by these waves of foreigners was on the administration of the country. The Greeks introduced titles like 'the Divine Kings', 'God-like Queens' etc. The influence is clearly noticeable in the title 'Devaputra', which means 'son of God'. In other words, the theory of kingship implied power both in the spiritual and temporal sense, however vaguely understood. They influenced the provincial administration also whose governors were given the Persian title of 'satrap'. And it is said that Asoka appointed a Greek as the viceroy of a province; and Kanishka, another for executing an engineering work. The other political consequences were: to some extent caused the decline of the Mauryan empire; paved the way for more invasions, being the Saka, the Parthian, and the Kushan; and as the Greeks were dreaded (evidenced by the Malavikaagnimitra), the post-Maurya dynasties showed a predilection for brahminism.

They influenced the social life of India too, to a considerable extent. A number of Yavanas or Greeks figure as donors in the inscriptions of the Karle caves. The Greek mode of wearing hair and the Greek habit of eating in a lying posture, came into vogue. A great number of foreigners embraced Hinduism and they were all made kshatriyas of various kinds. The reference to the kshatriyas as a conceited class by certain authorities in this period, definitely shows that the ranks of the kshatriyas must have been swelled by all these foreigners. It was the entry of the foreigners that accounts to a great extent the brahminical revival and the liberalization of Aryan principles in the period of the Guptas. The penetration of some of these foreigners into southern India is at the root of Sankaracharya's militant Hinduism. Contemporary writers admit the proficiency of Greeks in sciences. And the Gargi Samhita states that the Greeks penetrated into India as far as Pataliputra. Hence, to what extent, Varahamihira, Charaka and others were indebted to the scientific knowledge of the Greeks, is a matter of conjecture.

The third important influence relates to the remarkable increase in foreign trade, both by land and sea. This brought wealth for the merchant community and this prosperity is to be clearly noticed in the Gupta period, as testified by the writers of the age. As early as the first century B.C. commercial contact existed between India and the Roman empire. The discovery of innumerable number of Roman coins at Arikamedu and Muziris shows that brisk trade and commerce existed between India and the west. More important was the Graeco-Bactrian contribution to the die-cutter's art relating to coins. They showed remarkable skill in making the portraits of rulers on the coins. To start with, the Greek coins were of very high order and later on they degenerated. The coins of Kunindas and the Audumbaras were greatly influenced by their coins. They also introduced
great experiments in copper coins. Later, the Greek kings adopted some of the indigenous methods in minting the coins. In this context, we may mention the great significance of the Kushan empire in the history of India. The Kushan empire threw open the flood-gates of cultural and commercial contact between central Asia and India. The excavations of Sir Aurel Stein have proved that both Buddhist and Hindu influences were at work in central Asia.

These foreign rulers of India also gave an impetus to the immense literary activity of this period. This is a pointer to the efflorescence of culture in the time of the Guptas. Sanskrit grammar was written in this period. *Panchatantra* was composed in this period. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* received their finishing touches in this period. Nilakanta Sastri opines that the *Manu Smriti* and the philosophical *sutras* of the six systems of Indian philosophy almost certainly belong to this age. The great Asvaghosha wrote the famous *Buddha Charita*. The curious open-air theatre which came into being in this period was directly a Greek legacy. The term ‘Yavanika’ for ‘curtain’ definitely indicates that the Indian drama was, at least on one score, influenced by the Greek model.

In the religion of the country too, the influence of the foreign invasions is discernible. Some of the Graeco-Bactrians adopted the religious ideals of India as evidenced by *Milinda-Panha* and the Besnagar inscription. More were the Greek converts to there ligions of India. One Greek officer, Theodorus, got enshrined the relics of the Buddha in the Swat valley or Udyana in the 2nd century B.C. In the welter of confusion that was created by foreigners, Buddhism came to be divided into two sects, known as the Hinayana and the Mahayana. Buddhism came to elaborate its mythological lore as the foreigners who embraced this sect found it more enjoyable in this garb. The *bhakti* school of thought had its beginnings in this period. Heliodorus constructed the *garudadwaja* at Besnagar, indicating his devotion to Vaishnavism. Hindu iconography was greatly transformed. A great number of Babylonian and Indian gods were worshipped. How many of the former came to be absorbed in the Hindu religion, is anybody’s guess. All these things indicate that the convulsions in the Indian civilization and as caused by the foreign invasions, contributed to the ferment of ideas in the period which, in itself, was the prelude to the Gupta age.

In the field of art, the influence of the foreigner is more noticeable. It was through the Kushans that the Greek form of sculpture was introduced in India and the combination of Greek and Indian traditions is known as the Gandhara school of art. The school began in the Kabul valley, where the Greek influence was deep-seated and attained its highest perfection in the first century A.D. Its influence is to be found in the monuments of Sanchi, Amaravati and even
beyond the seas. The Gandhara school of art is Greek in form; but, in spirit, Indian. The Greek art of coins also left its imprint: the art of coinage influenced the art of gem-cutting. Nilakanta Sastri points out that its influence is much wider.*

One minor point. Some Greeks left their account of India. Such accounts constitute important source material for the history of India as *Milinda-Pannha*. Indeed some of the Greek writers had very many queer ideas about India. For example, a Roman writer quoting from a Greek source states that many rivers of India rise from the Caucasus and the two rivers, the Ganges and the Indus fall in the Red Sea.

If these have been the enduring influences of the foreign invasions on India, the impact of India on these foreigners could have been no less. Unfortunately, Indian history is yet to benefit from the discovery of this aspect of her glory. It was definitely not a one-way, but a two-way traffic. Greek authors speak with admiration of the sages of India. A Greek ambassador erected a Garuda column in honour of Vasudeva. The Indian cultural influence on the Greek has begun to be traced of late. Dr. Tripathi opines that the claim of certain scholars that the poetry of Homer was sung in India is baseless as there is only a superficial similarity between the *Ramayana* and the *Iliad*. But he admits “In the realm of astronomy Indians certainly were indebted to the Greeks. Thus says the *Gargi-Samhitaa*, ‘The Yavanas are barbarians; yet, the science of astronomy originated with them, and for this they must be reverenced like gods.’”

In this manner, this outwardly dark period in the history of India is not really so. It is pregnant with significance both to the east and the west. Both the east and the west gained mutually as a result of historic contact in their youthful days. The extent of the traffic of ideas is difficult to assess, and it is the task of future scholars. Yet, the very fact that Hinduism preserved its integrity is a point good enough to serve as food for thought.**

*“The terracottas of the time are often very well turned out by designs stamped on them from dyes, and include, figurines and toys for the use of children and plaques depicting various scenes.” Nilakanta Sastri.

**“Such instances as the conversion of Heliodorus to Vaishnavism, and of Menander or of Theodoros of the Swat Vase inscription to Buddhism, show that the Greeks were succumbing to the subtle influence of Indian faiths. Thus, when ‘the legions had thundered past, ‘India’ plunged in thought again’ in a manner which slowly converted her military conquerors into her moral and spiritual captives.” Dr. Tripathi
13. History of Andhra Satavahanas and their Importance

The history of the Satavahanas (460 years) is not known to us in its totality but its place in Indian history is sui generis. What it proves significantly is the continuity of Indian history. They played a vital role in the Aryanization of India. In the gradual spread of Aryanism to the south, the Satavahanas constitute the drawbridge between northern India and the south.*

The first source of information for the Satavahanas is the Puranas. In them it is stated that the Satavahanas put an end to the rule of Sungas and Kanvas. The Puranic account, however, is contradictory. It is said that they ruled for four and a half centuries; that Simuka was the founder-emperor of the dynasty in the first century B.C.; and, that it was he who uprooted the Sungas. But it is now believed that they ruled for roughly three hundred years. The second source for their origin or early history is inscriptions like the Nasik inscriptions of Gautami Balasri, the mother of Gautamiputra Satakarni. There is a reference to the Satavahanas in Asoka’s inscriptions. The third source is of importance. Numismatics contribute more to the history of Satavahanas. Sackful of coins have been found in western Deccan and Madhya Pradesh. From these coins we get to know the branch lines and also the feudatories of the Satavahanas. The last one, literary sources, is not up to the mark. The chronology given in the Puranas is not trustworthy. Gunadhya’s Brihatkatha is available in the form of excerpts in the later day works. Lilavati deals with the military exploits of king Hala but the evidence is not trustworthy.

The location of the Satavahana district in the Bellary region of modern Mysore state is of interest. Even though the district belongs to the extreme south, it is commonly agreed to by historians that they first ruled in Western India and then spread toward the east. But it is not definitely known how they came to be known as Andhra

*"Placed strategically in the large area which geographically was the laboratory of relations between the Aryan civilisation of the north and the historic Dravidian civilisation of the south, the Pratastan Empire during the 300 years of its existence can claim to have fulfilled its historical mission of establishing the cultural unity of India." K.M. Panikkar
Satavahanas. The Andhras are mentioned in the Aitareya Brahmana as people beyond the pale of Aryanism. Later, Pliny, quoting from Megasthenes, speaks of them as people possessing large armies and fortified towns. The Puranas call them as Andhras and Andhra-Jatiyah. Some scholars fix the homeland of the Andhras as the Circar regions. Smith located their capital at Sriakakulam; whereas Bhandarkar preferred Dhanyakataka. Epigraphic numismatic, and literary evidence, however, definitely points at the western origin of the Satavahanas. The rilievo figure of the founder of the dynasty is found near Paithan. The Amaravati stupa inscriptions do not talk of any early Satavahana kings. While inscriptions of the 2nd century A.D. talk of two later Satavahanas, Kharavela's inscription talks of a later day Satakani. There is indeed a lot of controversy about the origin of the Satavahanas; but the evidence as it stands today points at the following conclusion: "Andhra is the tribal name. Satavahana, the dynastic name, and the Satakani, the surname." It is often the practice to omit tribal names on inscriptions and coins in Indian history. Hence, we need not doubt the Puranic version that they came from the Andhra country. Asoka's edicts clearly show that the Andhra country was included in his empire. It is very likely to presume that important Andhra families might have joined the "service of the Maurya kings, moved up to western Deccan and got the Puranic appellation of Andhra Bhritya." And during the days of the Mauryas, these people could have found a separate state.

Regarding their caste too there is some controversy. Brahmins, says Raychoudhury: a treatise regards them of mixed Brahmins of Naga origin: and Bhandarkar regards them as the protectors of Brahmins.

Regarding the details of their history, 30 kings are mentioned in the Matsya Purana, but we are interested only in a few because of lack of sufficient historical material about the others. Historians agree with the view that the founder was one Simuka (c.235-213 B.C.). It was during the time of his son, Satakarni I (c. 194-185 B.C.), that the kingdom rose to prominence. He was aligned with the Marathi chieftains of the western Deccan. He performed an ashvamedha. He conquered eastern Malwa and probably was defeated by Kharavela, the king of Kalinga. Satakarni issued a large number of coins which indicate that his kingdom enjoyed material prosperity. His capital was at Pratistan. Earlier, the capital was at Sriakakula on the Krishna and later at Dhanyakataka.

After him, there was some confusion, probably because of a Scythian invasion. The one ruler of importance during this period was Hala. He was seventeenth in the list of rulers. He was a ruler
with literary talent and is accredited with the authorship of the Prakrit poetic work, *Saptasataka*, which is an anthology of 700 erotic verses. Some of them convey philosophical truths and some describe love episodes of all sorts. Probably, Gunadhya’s *Brihat Katha* (significantly the story relates to the rivalry between Sanskrit and Paisachi, the language of the barbarians) belongs to the same period.

After Hala, the Satavahana appears to have had encountered foul weather. Beginning from the second quarter of the first century A.D., there was a period of crisis for 50 years. The crisis was mostly caused by the advance of the Sakas, who themselves were pushed southward by the rising Kushan power in the north.

The next, rather the most important, ruler of the dynasty, was Gautamiputra Satakarni (twenty-third in the line), who is reputed to have ruled from c.72 A.D. to 95 A.D. The Nasik inscription of his mother mentioned above throws important light on his reign. In that inscription, the mother was referred to as the mother of a maharaja and grandmother of another maharaja. The king himself was described as the destroyer of Sakas, Yavanas and the extirpator of the Kshaharata race (a branch of the Sakas), the restorer of the glory of the Satavahana family, the elevator of his family to high fortune, the unique brahmin who crushed the pride and conceit of the kshatriyas.

Generally, it is agreed that his dominion extended not only over Maharashatra and the districts around Pratisthan, but also over northern Konkan, Saurashtra, Berar and Malwa. He was known by the epithet, *Thri-Samudra-Toya-Pita-Vahana* (one whose charges drank the waters of the three seas). This definitely throws some light on the extent of his empire. Regarding his military conquests, the one outstanding fact was the defeat of the Ksharata dynasty to which Nahapana belonged. Here it is proper to note that the constant warfare with the Ksharatas had two consequences: it eclipsed, for some time, the Satavahana power; and prevented the Ksharatas, the Lord Marchers of the Kushans, from extending their power into the south.

It is stated that a matrimonial alliance was concluded between the Saka and the Satavahana rulers. The daughter of Rudradaman was married to the Satavahana king. This effort was not successful because it is stated that Rudradaman twice defeated the Satavahana king in battle but refrained from killing him because of family relations. After Rudradaman, the Satavahanas were successful against the Sakas. By the end of the 2nd century, the Satavahanas held Kathiawar in the west coast, and the Krishna delta in the south-east. In the next century, the Satavahana power started collapsing.
He was described as handsome ruler with a charming and radiant face. One writer remarks, "As a king he was not only a unique controller who was obeyed by the circle of all kings, but evinced interest in the weal of his subjects and sympathised with their woes, always levied taxes in conformity with justice; helped the higher as well as the lower castes; and, stopped the social evil called 'Varna Sankara.'" Some scholars say that he is the celebrated Vikramaditya of Indian tradition and folklore. In matters of philanthropy Gotamiputra Satakarni was very great. He renewed the land grants to the Buddhist monks. It appears that he favoured a few sects of the Buddhists. However, he was a patron of vedie religion is revealed by the epithet Eka-Brahmana as applied to him in the Nasik prasasti. Finally, regarding administration, the Satavahana administration was based on brahminical injunctions as well as on considerations of humanism. The Aryan dharma was maintained. The rapid formation of sub-castes could not be checked. Taxes were in conformity with justice. As new territories came to be acquired, it was divided into aharas, each under an amatyta.

The next ruler was Pulumayi II (c.96 to 119 A.D.) and probably he was the first to rule the Andhra country as well as some portions of Madhya Pradesh. He assumed the title of maharaja. Two cities, Vaijayanti and Amaravati attained eminence. His reign marks the zenith of Satavahana power. His coins testify to the attention paid by the Satavahanas to naval power, maritime trade, and overseas colonization. His name occurs in the largest number of inscriptions and he is the first to be mentioned in an inscription from eastern Deccan.

The next capable ruler was Vasishthi Putra Satakarni who married the daughter of Rudradaman I. In spite of this matrimonial alliance, he was defeated by the Saka chief. He might have lost a part of his empire, that is, Malwa, Kathiawar and north Konkan.

The last known ruler of the dynasty was Yagna Sri Satakarni (c.160-189 A.D.). The epigraphical records belonging to his reign are found in north Konkan and the Krishna district. His coins are found in these regions, and also in Gujarat and Kathiawar. As his coins show ships, they speak for his naval power. Hence, it is conjectured that his reign probably witnessed the beginning of the colonization of the Malayan peninsula. He appears to have defeated the Satrapas also.

After him the empire collapsed. The inheritors of the Satavahana empire were the Abhiras and the Trikutakas in Maharashtra; the Ikshvakus, the Brihatphalayanas and the Salankayanas in the Andhra country; and the Pallavas in the extreme south.
The legacy of the Satavahanas is a matter of great importance. The Rashtrakutas, the Chalukyas and the Pallavas, who played an important role in the succeeding ages, were originally the viceroyals of the Satavahanas. The Vakatakas to the north of the Vindhya were also their subordinates. This shows that a number of later kingdoms claimed the tradition of the Satavahana empire. Hence the comment of a writer, "The basic tradition of Middle India is of the Satavahana empire; as in the north, it is of the Mauryan."

Regarding religion, even though the rulers were staunch brahmins and tried their best to maintain the purity of Hinduism, religious toleration prevailed. Both Buddhism and brahminism flourished. This is attested to by the benefactions recorded in various inscriptions. The Nayanikar's inscription, or the cave inscription of Nanaghat, records the performance of an asvamedha and various other sacrifices by Satakarni. The popular deities of the people were: Indra, Vasudeva, and Siva. Amaravati came into prominence during their time as a famous centre of Buddhism. Buddhism witnessed its golden era in the Deccan during the days of the Satavahanas. Buddhist settlements at Nasik, Bhaja, Bedsa and the stupas at Bhatti Prolu, Amaravati, Goli and Ghantasala are famous. The Karla caves belong to the last century B.C.

The commercial prosperity of the country was great. The empire had a vast coast line. The Periplus refers to the port of Broach. India exported many commodities. Pratisthan shipped onyx stones; and Tagora, cottons, drugs and other textiles. Industry was organized under guilds, like those of the weavers, druggists, corn-dealers etc. Some of the merchants were fabulously rich. The chaitya at Karle and the cave of Kanheri were the charitable contributions of a merchant from Vaijayanti. As the country was rich commercially, communications, too, were well organized. This is deduced from facts like the merchants of Nasik contributing to caves at Vidisa; a merchant of Vaijayanti, to those at Karle; and merchants of Nasik, to caves at Bharhut.

In the field of art, too, their contribution is remarkable. Amaravati, Goli and Nagarjunakonda were covered with stupas. Temples, monasteries and dharmasalas were built all over the country. Two caves in Ajanta (IX & X), possibly, were a result of Satavahana patronage. Panikkar says, "The Satavahanas were great excavators of cave temples and the magnificent temples of Ellora and Ajanta
were the continuation of the Satavahana tradition to which all India dynasties in succeeding ages claimed historic relations.”

In this manner, the significance of the history of Andhras is of tremendous value even though only a little is known about them. Taking into account their contribution to Hinduism, art, and commerce, we have to state that they accelerated the Aryanization of southern India. This is vouchsafed even in literature (vide Brihadkatha) although all the inscriptions are in Prakrit. To conclude, in the words of Dr. K. Gopalachari, “In short, the spirit of the Satavahana period was not static, but dynamic. We should not conceive it as a motionless picture in a Morris tapestry but a series of shifting scenes, some brilliant, some terrible, some common and all full of life and passion. No wonder the faint memories of these great achievements were in later times enshrined in tradition and legend (brahmanical, Buddhistic and Jaina) and led to the rechristening of the Saka era as the Salivahana era.”

14. Notes on Satavahana Administration

The administration of the Satavahanas was very simple and it followed the precepts as laid down in the dharma shastras. Monarchy was hereditary. The metronymics adopted by them were only for the regulation of marriages. The kings did not assume any high-sounding titles. Their power was checked in practice by custom and the shastras. The king was the commander-in-chief.

As the administration was not highly centralized, feudatories played an important part. Even the petty princes struck their own coins. Below the petty princes were the maharathis and mahabhojas. The latter were feudatories of the Satavahanas. They were related by blood to the maharathis. Later, these two feudatories founded independent principalities.

Leaving aside the areas of feudatories, the empire was divided into janapadas and aharas. The first was the bigger entity, whereas the latter was a part of the former. Below the avara was the village.

*"In the first centuries of our era when northern India was being subjected in art as well as in politics to the domination of foreign peoples—Greeks and Scythians—Andhras have preserved inviolate as well as its political independence, the tradition of Indian aesthetics.” Grousset
The officials incharge of the aharas were subject to periodical transfers. The villages were under the village officials. The bigger entity, janapada, was under officials of the status of rajukas. Power was distributed throughout the hierarchy of officials. Over the small provinces into which the empire was divided, there were two officials: a civil governor called amatya and the military governor, mahase-napati. It is indeed the latter that was permitted to establish matrimonial relationship. They were even allowed to mint their own coins.

The resources of the empire were not very many: royal domain, salt monopoly, taxes on land, income from court fees and fines. It appears that many taxes were paid in kind. Here it is of interest to note that from the time of Pulumayi-II the overseas contacts increased, along with the colonization of the south-east. The entire eastern coast took part in the overseas expansion. Some of the ports of the Satavahanas were Kanta Kosasyla, Moddura, and Chinna Ganjam.

15. Notes on Ksharatas

The western Kshatrapas of the Ksharata line were probably Pahlavas, who established themselves in western Rajputana, Gujarat and Kathiawar. They conquered the eastern and western Malwa from the Satavahana empire to start with; and soon occupied northern Konkan and northern Maharashtra. Prior to them came the Greeks here; and they all became Buddhists as known from the inscriptions at Karla in the Poona district. Maybe, these Greeks colluded with the Ksharatas. This could be the reason why Gotamiputra Satakarni defeated them both. Apart from this advance the commercial, cultural and racial antipathy worsened the struggle. The earliest known leader of the Ksharatas was Bhumaka, who probably ruled over Gujarat, Kathiawar and Malwa. His successor was Nahapana as known from numerous coins and the few inscriptions. His inscriptions in Nasik, Karla and Junnar show the Ksharata empire was quite extensive.

It was this ruler who was attacked by Gotamiputra Satakarni. Nahapana was defeated and killed and the dynasty was erased. Along with them Saka, Yavana and Pahlava settlers were driven out. The feudatories of the Ksharatas were humbled. The name Gotamiputra Satakarni is embossed over that of Nahapana in some of the coins. It is interesting to note that Vasishtaputra Satakarni states that Gotamiputra defeated the Sakas and humbled the pride of the
kshatriyas while furthering the interests of the twice-born. The inscriptions of Gotamputra’s mother refer to the defeat of the Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas.

However, by the end of Pulumayi’s reign the Kshatrapas under Ghasmotika revived their power. This was probably supported by the Kushans. This new ruler established himself in Kutch and Sindh which were not overrun by Gotamiputra Satakarni. Slowly he recovered the lost territories, after which he assumed titles. According to Ptolemy his capital was Ujjain.

16. History of the Kushans and an Examination of the State of Trade, Religion and Art

In the period of interregnum between the fall of the Maurya empire and the rise of the Gupta empire, India was virtually in a state of chaos. Kingdoms appeared all of a sudden and disappeared equally suddenly. In this hectic historic drama, the one event of significance was the rise of the Kusan empire. This empire ousted the Scytho-Parthians of the north-western region; and thereby, rendered a monumental service to the civilization of India. The unique geographical position of the Kushan empire made it a colos-sus astride on the back of Asia uniting the Graeco-Roman civilization in the west and the Chinese civilization in the east.

With regard to the origin of the Kushan, the first point to be noted is that the Yue-chi nomads of central Asia were driven from their ancestral homes on the Chinese frontiers roughly about 165 B.C. Some of these tribes settled in the Oxus valley and were united together by Kadphises I, the head of the Kushans. He attacked the Parthians and took possession of Kepin, Kabul and the border-land of India. It was his successor, Kadphises II, who is accredited with the conquest of Indian territories by Chinese writers. He was converted to Saivism and proclaimed himself as Maheshwara on his coins. His ambassadors presented their credentials to the Roman emperor sometime between 98 A.D. and 117 A.D.

The next important ruler was Kanishka, and he was undoub-tedly the greatest. Some scholars opine that he was the founder of the Vikrama Era commencing in 58 B.C. But it is generally held that Kanishka ruled in the 1st century A.D. and founded the Saka Era commencing in 78 A.D. He was a great conqueror. He annexed Kashmir and defeated the king of the Parthians. He also wrenched
Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand from the Chinese. Outside India his empire included Afghanistan, Bactria, Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand; in India, the Punjab, Kashmir, Sind and Uttar Pradesh as far as Benaras. His capital was Peshawar or Purushapura. Buddhist traditions show that he became a convert to Buddhism at the beginning of his reign. This is corroborated by the other usual sources of history. He summoned the great Buddhist council whose deliberations were guided by Vasumitra and Asvaghosha. He was also a patron of the arts and literature. The celebrated Buddhist teachers, Parsva and Vasumitra; the philosopher, Nagarjuna; and, the authority on medicine, Charka, flourished during his time.

Soon the Kushan power declined. Within the kingdom harm was done to the Kushan empire by the Nagas and Yaudheyas. A Naga ruler probably performed ten *ashvamedha* sacrifices. Apart from these two communities a few other tribes also, like the Malavas and the Kunindas, probably regained their importance and thus did harm to the Kushan empire.

Apart from the weaknesses of the successors of Kanishka, the happenings in Persia influenced the history of north-western India. The Parthians were overthrown by Ardashin in 226 A.D. who established the Sessanian dynasty. His successor annexed Peshawar and Taxila during the middle of the 3rd century. And Kushan kings in the north-west became the vassals of the Sessanians. The successors of Kanishka, as established today, are the following: Vashiska (102-106), Huvishka (106-138) and Vasudeva (c. 152-176). The history after this period is extremely vague. We have already stated above that in the 3rd century the Kushans were humbled by the Sessanian rulers. Surprisingly, for a short while, during the second half of the 4th century one Kidara claimed Kushan origin. According to Armenian sources he defeated the Sessanians and took Bactria from them. It appears he ruled over all the territories that belonged to Kadphises I. However, the successors of Kidara were overrun by the White Huns and the Kushan history came to an end by the close of the 4th century. Over the ruins of the empire, in central Asia and the west, rose the Sessanian empire of Persia; and in India, the Gupta empire.

With regard to trade, we have to state that gold coins of great complexity were issued by the Kushans. These coins speak for the prosperity of the people. Moreover, the very area covered by the Kushan empire must have had contributed for the flow of trade between the east and the west. Some trade routes which came into existence in this period continued to serve the future also. The prosperity of the Kushan empire was borne out by the beautiful gold coins issued by Kanishka. The coins of Kanishka usually show the figure of Kanishka standing and sacrificing at altar, and on the obverse deities belonging to various religions. The coins of the
Kushans also show that the Kushans were in contact with the Romans—the weight of the Kushan coins has certain similarities with the Roman coins. According to the author of the *Periplus*, gold and silver specie were imported at Barygaza (Broach).

As regards the arts and literature, we have to state that their greatest contribution was the Gandhara art. It was in this period that the stone images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas were carved out. The chief quality of this art is blending of Buddhist subjects with Greek forms. Images of the Buddha appear in the likeness of Apollo, and the Yakshakubera is posed in the fashion of Zeus. The imprint of this school of art is still to be found in Mathura and Amaravati. Dr. Tripathi critically argues that "the Gandhara sculptures do not, of course, possess the grace and vigour of the work of the Gupta period, but they are surely not devoid of interest and charm. It is a moot point how far the art of Mathura and Amaravati derived its inspiration from Gandhara." Indeed, the carving of images and the building of temples was not neglected in earlier days, but under the Kushans they attained a refinement. The *chaitya* built at Peshawar was reputed to have been as high as four hundred storeys. Fa-Hien, passing through Gandhara during the fifth century, praised the images of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and numerous other deities. The early rulers fostered the Hellenistic art of Gandhara and also the indigenous art of Mathura. At Mathura resided the famous sculptor, Bhikshu Bala; and from this place, artistic products were sent to Sravasti and Sarnath. Further, the die-engravers employed by the Kushans were far from negligible. A special note is to be taken of coinage. The Kushan coins became the prototypes for many varieties of coins of Yaudheyas, the imperial Guptas, some kings of Nepal, and several kings of Chedi. About the literary eminences more need not be said than what has been already said in the topic on Kanishka. In the field of medicine, maturity was attained—Charaka was a royal protege.

The next thing to be noted about the Kushans is their religion. In all likelihood, missionaries propagated Buddhism in central Asia and China in this period. Possibly, it was during the time of Kanishka that Mahayana Buddhism was sanctified. The fourth Buddhist council that was held by Kanishka canonized the doctrines of Mahayanism. The deliberations of the conference were engraved on sheets of copper and were sealed and deposited in a *stupa*, but they have not been found so far. But to regard Kanishka as the founder-patron of the Mahayana sect, which came into existence under the Kushans, is a disputable point. Dr. Tripathi says, "Although definite proof is lacking, there are reasons to believe that the former was nascent (Mahayana), much earlier than the time of Kanishka. It may have owed its origin to the ‘penetration of Buddhism by Bhakti, or to the spread of Buddhism among the
masses, for they required a more catholic religion in place of the icy idealism of the Hinayana, which could hardly kindle the flame of their devotion." Even though many scholars regard Kanishka as the second Asoka, some writers do not agree with this view.* In addition to these things, we must mention that the Kushan kings patronized all kinds of religions, including Hindusim. Kanishka was definitely an eclectic monarch as he honoured a medley of gods belonging to the Greek, Zoroastrian and Hindu faiths. Not only Buddhism flourished under the Kushans but there were definitely stirrings of Hinduism. Many brahminical sects started emerging. Along with religion, Sanskrit language received an impetus. In a way the Kushan age constituted the prelude to the Gupta age.

In this manner, the services rendered by the Kushans are commendable. A mere evaluation of the personality of Kanishka alone would not help us to estimate the importance of the Kushans as the empire lasted for three centuries. To a certain extent, the prosperous time of peace during the Gupta period was directly due to the Kushans undertaking the unconscious role of the shield and buckler of Indian civilization and culture. The Kushan state was a buffer between the Aryan civilization and the nomadic hordes in central Asia, who, from time to time, had overrun the civilized worlds with the terrific sweep of avalanches. It was also responsible for the exchange of ideas and goods between different civilizations because of the peculiar geographical position occupied by the Kushans—a clearing-house for the ideas and goods of different civilizations. Thus there appears to be much profundity in the remark that a proper understanding of the history of India requires an understanding of the history of central Asia.

*Sathanathaier says: "Though Buddhist literature brackets Kanishka and Asoka as great benefactors of Buddhism, there is no real connection between the two; as Buddhists they were poles asunder. Superficially, both were converts who cooperated with the church by interesting themselves in her matters like convocation of a council of theologians, the building of edifices, and the adoption of measures for proselytism. Even as a patron of Buddhism, Kanishka cannot stand by the side of Asoka: at any rate, our knowledge of the latter is much more extensive and definite. No doubt, Mahayanaism found its leading patron in Kanishka, who may be regarded as the Constantine of Buddhism rather than as its second Asoka."
17. "Kanishka accepted and championed Buddhism but he hardly comes into Indian history". Comment

Interregnums are quite common in the history of India. Yet, each one of them is significant in the sense that it constitutes a link in the history of India. The interlude between 1414 and 1526 is rich because of the Vijayanagar empire. The dull period between 647 and 1206 is made alive because of the history of Kanauj. The same is true of the dark period between 183 B.C. and 320 A.D. because of its association with the Kushans.

The extraordinary significance of the Kushan history lies in two things: (a) it was a link between central Asia and India; and, (b) also a link between India and eastern Asia. The Kushans were our cultural disciples. Such being the importance of the Kushan history and, in particular, of Kanishka (the greatest of Kushans), the contention that Kanishka is strictly beyond the pale of Indian history is not tenable.

To begin with, his coins bear the figures of the Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and Greek gods. This speaks for the catholicity of the king, Kanishka, a temper common to all successful monarchs in India, both Hindu and Muslim—Samudra Gupta, Harsha, Shivaji, Krishnadeva Raya, and Akbar. This definitely puts Kanishka in the long line of illustrious rulers of Indian history. In addition to this, the catholicity of Kanishka is a reflection on the youthful vigour of Aryan civilization, a vigour which blossomed into the creative upsurge of the Gupta period.

Secondly, it was during his time that the Mahayana sect of Buddhism received an impetus. Buddhist literary tradition asserts the view that Kanishka became a Buddhist at the beginning of his reign and this is supported by numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological evidence. It was under his aegis that the fourth Buddhist council met. According to D.C. Sarkar, the Buddhist theologains met possibly for the purpose of collecting the Buddhist manuscripts and preparing commentaries on them. The discussions of the council were guided by Vasumitra and Asvaghosha. The council compiled comprehensive commentaries on Buddhist canons which were engraved on copper sheets and then deposited in a stupa. Kanishka was also instrumental in erecting a monastery and a huge wooden tower in Peshawar wherein he placed the relics of the Buddha. Commenting on his conversion to Buddhism Radhakmal Mukherjee writes:
"The conversion of Maharaja Rajadhiraja Devaputra Kanishka to Buddhism was more momentous for the history of Buddhism and Asian culture than the conversion of Dharmasoka." This is because Buddhism spread to central Asia and survived till 1,000 A.D. And Buddhism remained only as a sect in India, even though it was a religion outside India. Consequently, we have to regard him as a typical Indian monarch and not a central Asian monarch.

Thirdly, in his patronage of arts and culture also, he belongs to the tradition of the eminent monarchs of India. The monastery built by him at Peshawar evoked the admiration of the Chinese and Muslim travellers. The stupa was constructed under the supervision of a Greek. Not only the Buddhist philosophers, Asvaghosha, Parsva and Vasumitra enjoyed his favour, but also a learned man by name Sangharaksha who was his chaplain. Nagarjuna, the earliest exponent of the Mahayana doctrine, and Charaka, the authority on medicine, probably flourished in his court. Patronage of culture has been a tradition with all the great rulers in India—Samudra Gupta, Harsha, Krishnadeva Raya, Ala-ud-din Khalji, Mohammad-bin-Tughluq, Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Thus, being true to Indian traditions, Kanishka cannot be rationally regarded as a central Asian monarch. In the words of an eminent writer, "The Kushan period was a period of great literary activity as proved by the works of Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna and others. It was also a period of religious ferment and missionary activity. It witnessed the development of Saivism and the allied cult of Kartikeya, of the Mahayana form of Buddhism and the cult of Mihira and Vasudeva Krishna, and saw the introduction of Buddhism into China by Kashyapa Mhataga (Circa 61 or 67 A.D.). The dynasty of Kanishka opened the way for Indian civilization in Central and Eastern Asia."

The only reason for which we may call Kanishka a central Asian monarch is the nature of his conquests. He annexed Kashmir. Tradition says that he came into conflict with the rulers of Saketa and Pataliputra, a version confirmed by the Chinese and Tibetan literatures. Yet, in the beginning, he annexed Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand. A little later, the Chinese emperor made an attempt to re-establish the Chinese influence in central Asia and his general, Pan-chao, defeated Kanishka. A few years later, Kanishka defeated Pan-chao's son; and on this occasion, he captured a Chinese prince as hostage. In India, the Punjab, Kashmir, Sind and U.P. as far as Benares came under his rule. It is true that his success in India depended on his success in central Asia, but it cannot be denied that strategically and logistically central Asia remained crucial down to the time of the Mughuls. Kanishka was a statesman as he portrayed Hindu gods on his coins: such an attempt definitely indicates his intention to win over the people of India. Incidentally, it might
be noted that it was after Kanishka and the later Kushans that names like Devaputra became popular in India. The last of the Kushan ruler Vasudeva I, was a worshipper of Siva. And it was Kanishka who started the Saka era commencing from 78 A.D. and this is being followed to-day in independent India.

The art that came into existence in this period is known as the Gandhara school of art. The establishment of the Kushan rule in Gandhara gave stability; and this political stability released the creative energies of the composite races that settled down—an important component being the Greeks; and the others, Scythians and Parthians. The Gandhara art is a blend of Greek form and Indian thought. This art left an imprint on the art of Mathura and Amaravati, the two great centres of Indian art in the post-Maurya period.

Therefore, to call Kanishka an alien ruler is unwarranted. Kanishka was the architect of the Kushan empire, and the Kushan empire was an indisputable drawbridge between India and central Asia as brone out by the excavations of Sir Aurel Stein. The writer in the 'Age of Imperial Unity' remarks: "The Kushan period marks an important epoch in Indian history. For the first time after the fall of the Mauryas there was a vast empire which not only embraced nearly the whole of Northern India but also considerable territories outside it as far as Central Asia. India was thus brought into close contact with the outside world."

18. Critical Notes on Trade and Commerce from 200 B.C. to 300 A.D.

The period from c.200 B.C. to 300 A.D. is one of the most remarkable periods in the history of India. Apart from the country being prosperous, the period left an important legacy in the form of remarkable artistic monuments. Furthermore, it was the triumph of trade and commerce that gave the first momentum to the spread of Indian culture to central Asia as well as south-east Asia. Culture and flag followed trade.

In the Mauryan period, because of political stability and because of the network of roads that were laid, economic activity increased. The trading community, which came into prominence, under the auspices of the Mauryan empire, soon, found new outlets. Central Asia was brought into the vision of the Indian merchants by the Sakas, Parthians and Kushans. From central Asia, it is a short
journey to China. Meantime, trade across the seas with Rome gained momentum.

The organization of economic activity from the time of the Mauryas centred around the guild or *sreni*. Most of the artisans were members of guilds. The guilds were recognised by the local authorities. Some of the prominent guilds were those of the potters, metal-workers and carpenters. Some of the guilds were of gargantuan size. One potter Saddalaputta owned 500 potters’ workshops.

The organisation of the guilds was quite exhaustive. They fixed their own rules of work and also the quality governing their products. They fixed the prices of manufactured articles. The members of a guild were subject to the control of guild-courts. Members were judged according to *shreni-dharma*, which was equal to the law of land. An interesting rule was that “if a married woman wished to join the Buddhist Order as a nun, she had to obtain not only permission from her husband but also from the guild to which he belonged.”

Apart from the guilds, there were workers’ cooperatives also. They undertook activities like building cities and temples. A good amount of evidence is available relating to the activities of guilds and corporations, which were many in number. It was the ivory-workers guild at Vidisa that undertook the commission of doing the stone sculpture around the stupa at Sanchi. One of the cave inscriptions at Nasik was inscribed by a guild of goldsmiths. More interesting is the fact that members of royalty invested their money in commercial activities. In this context, a very important inscription is the one at Nasik which was executed on the orders of a Saka ruler. According to this inscription, a guild could act as a banker, financier and trustee. That is why the *shrestin* or financier was an important social figure in this period. In financing transactions, usury was an accepted part of banking. According to one of the treatises of the day, higher interest should be taken from the lower castes and the obverse for the twice-born. Although coins were in extensive circulation, in some areas like the Chola kingdom, paddy remained the unit of exchange for many centuries.

The industry that was organised in this period centred around the availability of the raw materials. This factor was very true of the spinning and weaving of cotton textiles. Apart from cloth, Magadha supplied large quantities of iron; and Rajputana and Deccan supplied copper. From the Himalayan slopes musk and saffron were procured. The salt range in the Punjab was the major source of salt. Spices, gold and precious stones and sandal wood were procured from the south.
As industries developed and as the trade grew brisk, maritime contacts were also developed. The literature of the day mentions a large number of harbours, custom offices, light-houses and docks. The Cholas built a variety of ships. According to the Roman geographer, Pliny, the largest Indian ship weighed 75 tons. In the maritime trade the Roman trade was the most profitable. The Greeks had a large number of trading stations in the Satavahana kingdom and also in those of the far south. Early Tamil literature throws light on the yavana or Greek ships which reached Kaveripattinam. The Periplus, a maritime geography of the day, gives details regarding the commodities that were sent from India. Goods were sent to the Persian gulf and African coast, and from there to various places. Barygaza or Broach was the oldest and largest entrepot on the west coast of India. The brisk trade that India carried with Rome is borne out by the Roman coins found in India. It is interesting to note that most of the urban centres in southern India were ports. Equally important was the expansion of trade with south-east Asia. As the trade grew, Indian settlements also came into existence.

Although the period looks to be one dominated by trade and commerce, a great many changes came in the history of India. As trade connexions came to be maintained with the West, the Greek and Roman ideas had their impact on Indian civilization. Some maintain that Greek drama influenced the classical drama in India. The Greek coinage influenced Indian coinage. On the other hand, Indian fables and folk-tales spread to the West. In the realm of art, the Greek influence emerged as the famous Gandharva school of art. In the religious field, it is speculated that Indian ideas could have influenced the Gnostics and the neo-Platonics. There are certain similarities between Christianity and Buddhism. It is also claimed that relic-worship, the use of rosary and asceticism in the west were influenced by the Indian impact. While trade was carried with the western world, very curious articles were sent. At one time, a mission that was sent to Rome in 25 B.C. included strange gifts like tigers, snakes, a monk, and an armless boy, who could shoot the arrows with his toes.

Equally important was the growth of Sino-Indian relations and the introduction of Indian cultures in south-east Asia. Chinese goods were in use in India. What was known as chinnapatta was nothing more than Chinese cloth. The relationship between India and China was started from the time a Buddhist mission was sent in 65 A.D. This mission established itself at the White House Monastery at Lo-Yang. Apart from religion, very many ideas pertaining to painting and ritual objects were spread in China. In south-east Asia, the induction of Indian culture was more deep because the region was not sufficiently civilized.
Trade and commerce influenced the social life of India in certain respects. The growth of industries meant a large number of people joining the ranks of the artisans. Apart from this, as a large number of foreigners settled in India, it became a problem to give them a social status. The superior castes of India could not ignore the Greeks and Sakas as they were politically powerful. Therefore, they were known as fallen kshatriyas. However, some amount of rigidity was maintained in the Satavahana region. This was probably because of the fact that this region was a new-born convert to Aryanism. More important than this was the direct impact of trade and commerce on education. As the guilds were rich, they looked after education also. The guilds themselves were centres of technical education. When the engineering skill grew, geometry automatically developed. Engineering skill grew because of prosperity which itself was contributed by trade and commerce. The maritime trade of the day influenced astronomy and medicine. Navigation needed study of stars and this made the development of astronomy possible. Indian knowledge of the herbs was transmitted to the Greeks. The education of the day laid special stress on the utilitarian aspect of the education. Even then education was not within the reach of all classes in the sense that spiritual knowledge came to be monopolised by the brahmins whereas technical knowledge came to the lower classes.

As the society grew more complex because of growing economic activity, legal writings also came into vogue. The writing of dharma sastras was because of the fluidity that had come to the social life. That is why the upholders of dharma started compiling legal books, specifying social usage and custom.

Although this sort of writing did owe something to trade and commerce, we cannot say the same to purely literary activities of the day. In Tamil literature, Shilappadigaram relates to the story of a merchant who fell in love with a royal courtesan, and thus, neglecting his wife. The story ends as a tragedy, death of all the three important persons. In the later centuries, another poem was written known as Manimegalai which is a continuation of the above story. In Sanskrit literature, plays were written by Ashvaghosha and Bhasa. Some of the plays were written in the first century A.D. and they are found in the Turfan monastery of central Asia. Bhasa wrote some two centuries later. Besides, this period witnessed the building of important architectural buildings. The construction of some of the buildings became feasible because of the patronage extended by the guilds. The railing around Sanchi stupa was the work of a guild.

Sculpture, too, received encouragement in this period. By the end of the second century, human sculptures came into existence,
particularly those at Amaravati. Earlier to it was the Mathura school, which received the patronage of the Kushan kings. It was at Mathura that the images of the Buddha, for the first time, were carved. Probably Jaina images came first. While these schools of sculpture flourished within India, the Gandhara school of sculpture reached its maturity in the north-west. Apart from stone, terracotta sculptures were also in vogue. All these activities cannot be directly attributed to the trade and commerce of the day, except in an indirect fashion—prosperity enabled the people to spend money on the artistic works.

In the field of religion, quite a number of changes came. As wealth came to the Buddhist monasteries, weaknesses also appeared among the Buddhists. The followers of Buddhism came to be divided into different sects. At the Fourth Buddhist Council held in Kashmir, 18 sects of Buddhism were represented. It was the Mahayana school of Buddhism which became popular. It was this school that encouraged the worship of the Buddha in the form of images. Amongst the Jains differences came in the form of the two schools, digambaras and shvetambaras. In Hinduism, too, changes started appearing. The Vedic gods started disappearing and in their place a new pantheon made its appearance. (The word ‘Hinduism’ was given by the Arabs in the eighth century A.D.) In this period, the worship of Shiva and Vishnu came into vogue. In all probability “Shiva evolved from the Vedic God Rudra, and the Tamil God, Murugan”. The worship of lingas, the bull, and such others, originally belonged to ancient fertility cults. It is also interesting to note that the cow became sacred. The Ganges came to be given religious importance. In general, the worship by the Hindus witnessed a shift from the ritual to the personal relationship of the devotee to god. This age also witnessed the mono-theistic concept of god.

In general, brahmans were close to the Vedas and the Upanishads; whereas the common people were close to the epics, the dharma sastras and the Puranas. The last change that came in the religious field was the vogue that the Gita attained.

In this manner, this age of trade and commerce witnessed a large number of changes, most of them in the form of beginnings, which later on culminated in the form of movements and traditions. The beginnings themselves, to a great extent, were contributed by the changes that came in the social life, which, in turn, were influenced by the changes in the economic activity of the people.
19. **Short Note on the Vakatakas**

Amongst the innumerable dynasties that came to be established in the history of India, the Vakatakas of the trans-Vindhyan region were one among them and they were second rankers in the political history of India. The history of this dynasty throws the history in the post-Mauryan era and also the post-Guptan era into greater relief.

This region first came into prominence under the Vakatakas. The chronology of the Vakatakas is primarily derived from the known date of the marriage of Prabhavati Gupta, a daughter of Chandra Gupta II, with the Vakataka king, Rudrasena II. As per the evidence, the Vakatakas ruled over the region from c.268 onwards. The founder of the dynasty was Vindhya Sakti. It was his son, Pravarasena I, who assumed the imperial title. Inscriptions show that he was succeeded by his grandson but not by his son. The religion of the Vakatakas was brahminism. Their original home is not yet known. The supposition is that there could be a village by the name of Vakataka.

We have already referred to Vindhya Sakti and Pravarasena in the context of the chronology of the Vakatakas. It was Pravarasena who ruled over an empeire consisting of northern Maharashtra, Berar, Central Provinces and a considerable part of Hyderabad. Definitely a large part of the Deccan was included in his empire. As some coins were found in Mathura some scholars regard that probably parts of U.P. were also under his control. Indeed, there is no evidence to show that he had to do anything with the Punjab.

The grandson, who succeeded Pravarasena, was Rudrasena who ruled from c. 335 to 360. The events pertaining to his reign are not clearly known. Samudra Gupta appears to have afflicted a severe defeat on Rudrasena in a battle fought at Kausambi around 345. It appears that after this battle, the Vakatakas remained as the feudatories of the empire. But some contend that Rudradaeva, who was overthrown by Samudra Gupta was not Rudrasena. Further, it is argued that had he died at the hands of Samudra Gupta, his son, Prithvisena, could not have selected the daughter of Chandra Gupta II for his son, and thus, the view that Samudra Gupta did not overthrow Rudrasena. Most probably one of the feudatories of Rudrasena transferred his allegiance to the Gupta empire.
The next ruler was Prithvisena who ruled from c.360 to 385. The Vakataka records show that their treasury, army and prestige continued to grow for 100 years. This also goes to prove that Samudra Gupta did not defeat the Vakataka ruler. It is evident from the records that there was a branch of the Vakatakas known as the Basim branch. The Vakatakas under Prithvisena conquered Kuntla. It was at this time probably that Chandra Gupta II thought that it would be wise to have friendly relations with the Vakatakas while the Gupta army operated in Malwa and Gujarat against the western Kshatrapas.

The marriage between Prithvisena's son, Rudrasena, and Prabhavati was celebrated with great pomp at Pataliputra in c.380. Soon the king died and there was a regency in the Vakataka kingdom. The queen was the regent. It appears from evidence that Chandra Gupta II helped his daughter in the regency by sending experts and also training his young grandsons. It is also suggested that Chandra Gupta II could have employed Kalidasa to train these princes.

After the regency ended, Pravarasena II ascended the throne in c.410. A large number of copper-plate inscriptions have been found and they relate to this king. They do not say anything about his military conquests. The available evidence points out that he was a man of literary tastes and composed a Prakrit poem describing the exploits of Rama. This king decided to shift the capital and named the new site as Pravarapura which is probably the modern Pavanar in Wardha district. Earlier the capital was at Purika for some time, and later at Nandivardhana.

The next two important rulers of the dynasty were Narendrasena and Prithvisena II, who ruled from c.440 to 480. The records show that Narendrasena had to recover the fortunes of his family; but what befell the family earlier is not known. Definitely there was no war of succession. Probably the temporary collapse was caused by the invasion of the dominion by the Nala king, as indicated by a grant. Further, it is also supposed that Narendrasena later humbled the pride of Nalas and conquered parts of their territory. Prithvisena II too did not have an undisputed reign. The Balaghat plates show that he had to rescue the fortunes of the dynasty twice. Probably he was defeated by the Nalas and Trikutakas. Historical evidence shows that the Trikutakas rapidly rose to power. After the death of this king, leadership passed to King Harisena of the Basim branch. It appears this branch ruler had Hyderabad, Maharashtra, Berar and most of Central Provinces under his rule. The Vakataka kingdom reached its maximum extent,
This Vakataka empire as revived by Harisena disappeared within 40 years by c.550. The Chalukyas occupied a greater part of it. Some scholars argue that the decline was due to the rapid rise of Rashtrakutas in the 6th century. Thus, the real causes of the decline of the Vakataka empire are not known. Most probably it disappeared because of the Kadambas, the Kalachuris and the Nalas absorbing large tracts of the empire; but none of these families succeeded in establishing a kingdom. Then suddenly the Chalukyas rose to prominence and ruled over a large territory of the Vakatakas.

20. Notes on Gupta Origin and Sources

The origin of the Guptas is not an established fact. The one thing that is certain about them is their antiquity. Officials with the name endings of Gupta are to be found in the records of the Satavahanas. The Bharhut pillar inscriptions of the Sunga period make mention of the son of Rajan Visadeva as gotiputra showing that his queen was a gaupati, that is, one who belonged to the Gupta clan. Many other records mention the surname gotiputra. All this evidence points to the fact that the Gupta family or clan was of a very ancient origin.

The second point to be kept in view is the possibility that the Guptas were a family of wealthy landowners and they gradually gained control of the region around Magdha. It was Chandra Gupta I who made the family into a dynasty: otherwise, the Allahabad pillar inscription states that the founder was one Sri Gupta. The son of the first ruler was Ghatotkacha. And Chandra Gupta I was his son. The fact that Chandra Gupta married a Lichchhavi princess goes to prove that the Guptas gained importance after marrying a princess from an ancient royal family. This meant much for Chandra Gupta. The very fact that he made much out of this alliance in his coins shows that the Guptas were not of royal origin. He ruled over Magdha and probably over some parts of Uttar Pradesh. He took the title of Maharajaadiraja and his reign began in 319 A.D.

With regard to sources they are of four kinds: literary works, inscriptions, coins and monuments. In the literary works come a large number of books. The Puranas throw light on the chronology of the kings. Chandra Gupta II figures as the hero in the play Devi-Chandraguptan composed by Visakhadatta. The Mahayana Buddhist chronicle of the age is also of some value, apart from Bana's
Harashachritra. Finally, the records of Fa-hien and Hiuen-tsang are also of considerable importance.

More important than the literary works were the inscriptions as found on stone and metal. Most of the metal inscriptions were copper-plates. Some scholars opine that the Mehrauli iron-pillar inscription belongs to Chandra Gupta I. Some of the inscriptions record endowments and secular grants.

The coins of the Guptas not only speak of the history of numismatics but they also throw some light on the trade and commerce of the day because these two activities are the mistresses of coinage. Also the coins give us some knowledge of the administration.

The monuments of Guptas, like the temples, speak of the architectural excellence of the day.

21. Critical Notes on the Allahabad Pillar Inscription

Allahabad Pillar Inscription is a literary composition of thirty-three lines engraved on the Asoka Pillar at Allahabad, that is, the pillar at Kosambi. It is not dated. Some writers have argued that it was a posthumous record. However, the modern view is that it was composed and inscribed when Samudra Gupta was alive. First it does not mention ashvamedha, which was performed later by the king on the completion of his conquests. Secondly, line 31 refers to the fame (kirti) of Samudra Gupta after his world conquest. It states that his fame even went up to heaven. “The fame of a man of earth may go up to heaven without the man himself going up to heaven.” The inscription is a poetic composition of Harisena, who combined a large number of offices in himself. It is stated that the inscription was executed by another mahadandanayaka while Harisena himself was one such official.

The first part of the inscription relates to the succession of Samudra Gupta. He was selected by his father as he was fully worthy of it as an aryan. This decision was publicly announced before his father’s council. The inscription also hints that the decision was not well received by his kinsmen. From this, historians have come to the conclusion that there could have been a revolt by his elder brother, who is supposed to be the Kacha of some coins issued in this period. Further the incomplete sentence “conquered some by his arms in battle” in the inscription is interpreted as the battle
among the brothers for the throne. It is also interesting to note that below this expression occurs another expression, "Pride had changed into repentance", which is interpreted as reference to the discomfiture of his brothers. In all probability, there is some truth in these interpretations because coins in the name of Kacha are found but his name itself is not mentioned in the inscription because he was an usurper.

The inscription primarily deals with the conquests of Samudra Gupta and how he had organised the conquered territories. Also some light is thrown on the personality of the emperor.

To start with, according to the inscription, four northern kings were defeated, who ruled around Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh. Then, kings of the south and the east were forced to pay homage. From the inscription it appears that Samudra Gupta advanced on the east coast as far as Kanchipuram. Nine kings of Aryavarta were uprooted. The forest kings of central India and the Deccan were compelled to pay tribute. The same fate befell the kings of eastern India i.e. Assam and Bengal as well as Nepal and the Punjab. In Rajasthan, the ancient Malavas and Yaudhayas were forced to accept Gupta suzerainty. Finally, a couple of foreign kings were also made to accept the Gupta's suzerainty like a Kushan king, a Saka king and the king of Ceylon.

After, all these territories had been conquered and the rulers humbled, the following picture emerges from the inscription: his empire consisted of the whole of the northern India excluding Kashmir, western Punjab, western Rajputana, Sind and Gujarat, and in the eastern coast Orissa and a long stretch of territory southwards. Out of the territory that was under the Gupta rule, a considerable portion of northern India was directly administered by the emperor through his officials. Surrounding this territory, except on the south, were tributary states, five kingdoms on the north and east and nine tribal states in the west. The twelve kingdoms conquered by him in the south also were probably tributary states. Beyond the tributary states lay the Saka and Kushan kingdoms in the west and the north-west, and Ceylon and other islands, whose rulers, too, were probably under the sphere of Gupta influence. They must have maintained a respectful attitude towards this powerful emperor.

Further, details regarding the relationship between Samudra Gupta's empire and the other territories are to be gathered from the inscription. The inscription clearly states that Samudra Gupta was inspired by the vision of an all-India empire. Although he did not bring the whole land under his control, he established a strong central authority. He retained the frontier states and the tribal territories as faithful tributaries, so that they could provide an added
defence to the empire. The rulers of the south were conciliated by a wise and liberal policy, although they felt the might of his armour.

Apart from these broad outlines, some of the minor details of the inscription are the following. His first campaign in Aryavarta, was devoted for the sake of overthowing immediate neighbours. The inscription claims that they were completely uprooted, as for example, the kingdoms of Achyuta and Nagasena. He defeated the king of the Kota dynasty who ruled at Pushpa or Patalipurta. Along with these three rulers several other princes of northern India were violently exterminated—Rudradeva, Matila, Nagadatta, Chandravarman, Ganapati Naga, Nandin and Balavarman. The identity of all these rulers is not yet established. The second stage of his campaign began in the south. This had three phases: capture of the enemy; his liberation; and favouring him by re-installation. Historical evidence shows that, in all probability, Samudra Gupta marched through the former Rewa state and Jabulpur district and first attacked the kingdom of Kosala. Thus he defeated the kings of the Vindhya region. The rulers named in this region are Mahendra of Kosala, Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara, Mantaraja of Kurala, Mahendragiri of Pishtapura, Swamidatta of Kottura, Damana of Erandapalli, Vishnugopa of Kanchi, Nilaraja of Avamukta, Hastivarman of Vengi, Uggarsena of Palakka, Kubera of Devarashtra, and Dananjaya of Kusthalapura. Then he proceeded southwards till the time he reached Kanchi. The last kingdom conquered by Samudra Gupta in the south was Kusthalapura. After the southern conquests there was a second campaign in Aryavarta. It was during this campaign that he defeated Rudradeva (probably a Vakataka king). Soon he turned his attention against the frontier states who paid tribute to him. Among the vassals are mentioned the following: Samatata (eastern Bengal), Davaka (near Nowgong in Assam), Kamarupa (western Assam), Nepal, Kantipura (Garhwal area) and several tribal states in the Punjab, Malaya and western India (Malavas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhirs and Sanakinikas). It is stated that the descendants of the Kushans, many Saka chieftains, the Ceylonese and the other insular people, hastened to pay tributes to the emperor.

Coming to the comments on the conquest of Samudra Gupta as contained on the Asoka Pillar inscription, it is to be stated that it is generally agreed to by the historians that the prasasti is genuine. However, it was only the Gangetic valley that was under the direct control of Samudra Gupta. Scholars opine that the Punjab was definitely outside his control. Secondly, as his campaigns denigrated the importance of the tribal republics, it had adverse effects on the later Gupta history when the Huns invaded India—neither the Punjab nor Rajasthan could serve as an effective first line of defence against the invaders. Moreover, the defeat of the republican regions
meant the decline of democratic tradition in India. Finally, some of the claims made in the inscription are not authenticated. Samudra Gupta’s relationship with the Kushans has no evidence, although they were very weak by that time. The Ceylonese king did send presents and sought the permission of the Gupta king to build a Buddhist monastery at Gaya; but “such a request can hardly be termed tribute as it is probable that the relationship with the other foreign kings has a similar basis”. The reference to the inhabitants of the islands in the inscription is very vague. All told, although certain reservations are to be made in attributing great military might to Samudra Gupta, we cannot dispute the fact that he had a greater justification to perform an *ashvamedha* than many other kings who also performed the same ceremony.

Regarding Samudra Gupta’s personality the following points are gathered from this inscription. First, it is stated that he was compassionate to those who deserved it by their humility, and also for the poor, destitute and the afflicted. Secondly, he is described as a man fit for the company of the sages as he had a complete mastery of the *sastras*. Thirdly, his court was adorned by a large number of literary masters with whose help he was able to check the writings which were against the spirit of true poetry. He himself was a composer of poems.

In this manner, the Allahabad inscription is of enormous value in re-constructing the history of Samudra Gupta. Except for a few minor exaggerations the inscription is an authentic version of Samudra Gupta’s achievements.

22. Short Note on Gupta Coins

The coins of Samundra Gupta are of six kinds. Three out of them represent his military qualities. In one of them he is fully dressed in armour with the following legend: “having conquered the earth, the invincible one wins heaven by good deeds”. In the second variety where he holds a battle-axe the following is the legend: “wielding the axe of Kritanta (the god of death), the unconquered conqueror of unconquered kings is victorious”. In the third variety, he is shown trampling on a tiger, while he hits the animal with an arrow and below it is written: “having the prowess of a tiger”. In the fourth type, the king is shown as wearing waist-cloth and seated on a couch, playing on a *veena*. There is no legend on these coins except his name. In the fifth variety of coins, reference
is made to *ashvamedha* sacrifice. The legend here is: "The king of kings, having conquered the earth, wins heaven, being the performer of *Asvamedha*". The last category of coins do not convey very much. All the five categories of coins go to show his martial qualities along with his peaceful pursuits.

23. An Estimate of Samudra Gupta’s Life and Achievements

Samudra Gupta was the epitome of the Gupta empire. His reign is illuminating as it was in this period that the foreign tormentors were finally ‘liquidated’ and the effect of the cultural efflorescence was felt in the southern peninsula also. This does not mean that Samudra Gupta was personally responsible for this, but his reign was an abridged edition of the Gupta period. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, drawing a comparison between Asoka and Samudra Gupta, says: "In the case of the Guptas, it was an intense military and intellectual activity intended to bring about the political unification of *Aryavarta*, the discomfiture of the foreign tormentors of the holyland and an efflorescence of the old Indian culture in all its varied aspects—religious, poetic, artistic." But Tripathi puts it very bluntly when he says, "With his ideal of war and grandisement, Samudra Gupta is the very antithesis of Asoka, who stood for peace and piety."

The first aspect to be noted about Samudra Gupta is the extent of his empire. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, the biographic evidence, and the numismatic evidence of his age, give us an account of his military achievements. By the end of his reign, his empire included almost the whole of northern India (except the western Punjab), Kashmir, Sind, western Rajputana and Gujarat. Several tributary kingdoms lay around this directly administered area. He was also recognized as the sovereign of southern India. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription says that he conquered Rudradeva (probably the Vakataka ruler), Matila (probably a ruler in U.P.), Nagadatta (a Naga ruler), Chandravarman (a ruler in west Bengal) and others in northern India. His *dakshina digvijaya* is of enormous importance. The southern rulers defeated by him were Mahendra of Kosala, Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara, Swamidatta of Kottura (Ganjam district,) Mahendragiri of Pishtapura (Godavari district), Damana of Erandapalli (Vizagapatam district), Vishnugopa of Kanchi, Ugrasena of Palakka (Nellore district) and others.
The tremendous significance of his Deccan campaign consists in the fact that it speaks of his greatness as a military conqueror. And it is significant to note that he liberated the rulers after defeating them. This liberation indicates that what he wanted was recognition as the supreme ruler of India and nothing more. Professor Radhakumud Mukerjee says: "This was at once a Digvijaya and Dharamvijaya in accordance with the circumstances." He consecrated his military power to the supreme mission of unifying the country, as the little "person who has ruled the earth" shows. Dr. B.G. Gokhale says that 'kingdom-taking' was not his aim. "Prof. Jouveau-Dubreuil thinks that the alleged liberation of South Indian potentates means, in plain language, the defeat of Samudra Gupta, probably by a confederacy of rulers in south India: it was simply the unfortunate attempt of a king from the north who wanted to annex the coast of Orissa but completely failed. The French scholar imagines that Samudra Gupta was no boy catching butterflies and setting them free. But the re-instatement of conquered kings was not all that novel in history. Even Alexander treated Porus generously in the end. The Pillar Inscription distinguishes clearly between "extirpations" and "liberation"—two different policies pursued by Samudra Gupta with regard to northern and southern India respectively, and refers to the activities of his officers in connexion with the restoration of the wealth of the vanquished princes," comments Sathianathaier. Therefore, the idea of a southern confederacy is purely imaginary.

The second aspect to be discussed is his character and his literary achievements. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription speaks about his versatile knowledge and his love of music and says that Samudra Gupta lived up to his title of Kaviraja by various poetical compositions. His musical accomplishments are borne out by certain accounts which depict him as playing on the veena. It is said that the famous Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu was his minister. He was attached to Hinduism but he gave liberal donations to all religious sects. Dr. B.G. Gokhale says thus: "On the coins we see a tall figure, strong built with muscular arms and mighty chest, sharp features, the embodiment of intellectual accomplishments and finally, the harbinger of the Golden Age of Ancient India."

Thus, we find that Samudra Gupta was both a great man and a great king. Even if we allow some amount of margin to the eulogy of Harisena, it can never be doubted that he was an accomplished ruler. His conquest and liberation of the southern potentates illustrates the Hindu ideal of empire, his foresight and statesmanship. In short, "He was at once generous and ruthless, warlike and philosophical, typifying the ancient concept of Hindu monarchs." R. C. Majumdar remarks thus: "Samudra Gupta, as far as we can
judge of him from the materials at our disposal, was the visible embodiment of the physical and intellectual vigour of the coming age which was largely his own creation. His coins and inscriptions hold up before our mind's eye a king of robust and powerful build, whose physical strength and prowess, matched by his cultural attainments heralded a new era in Aryavarta. After five centuries of political disintegration and foreign domination, she again reaches the high-water mark of moral, intellectual and material progress. It was the Golden Age which inspired the succeeding generations of Indians and became alike their ideal and despair."

24. History of the Guptas from Skanda Gupta and an Account of their Failure

To pick up a bone with any historian is very easy while discussing the history of Hindu India. The genealogy of the Guptas after Sakanda Gupta is extremely vague. The section called the last phase of the Gupta empire includes interesting names like Kumar Gupta, Buddha Gupta, Vainya Gupta, Bhanu Gupta and Narasimha Gupta Baladitya, (son of Puru Gupta) and others. This confusion makes it very difficult to narrate the history of later Guptas, but in delineating the causes of the decline of the Guptas, we are more sure about the traditional causes and the Hun inroads.

Coming to the history of Skanda Gupta, we have to note that the history of India is not one illumined horizon but one with many dark spots. But these dark spots are not confounding; for, they too, bear out the continuity of the history of India. Such is the significance of the sketchy history from Skanda Gupta onwards, even though the history of the Guptas became apparently obscure after Chandra Gupta II.

Skanda Gupta is called the last great ruler of the Gupta dynasty (c. 455-467 A. D.). He suppressed the rebellions of Pushya-mitras near the Vindhyas. The most remarkable event of his reign was the defeat that he inflicted on the Hunas, which had enormous consequences for the world. For, at the height of their power, the Huns were defeated and diverted from the east to the west resulting
in the destruction of Rome.* A contemporary record states that the fame of Skanda Gupta was sung by both young and old.

Regarding other points, it has to be noted that although he was a *vaishnava* he was tolerant towards other religions. Secondly, his coinage reflects the strained resources of the Gupta empire. Thirdly, he had great works of public utility constructed in his time, even in the remote parts of the empire. Finally, he assumed the title of Vikramaditya II in imitation of his grandfather.

Then, Puru Gupta, a brother of Skanda Gupta, is supposed to have ruled either before or after Skanda Gupta. After him, the reign of Buddha Gupta covered 20 years and he was on the throne in 477 A.D. He was succeeded by his brother, Narasimha Gupta Baladitya. But epigraphic and numismatic evidences do not confirm his accession. The confusion from this time onwards was worsened by Hun inroads under Toramana and Mihiragula. We should note here that these Hun inroad were a mere ghost of what Skanda Gupta had faced. The reigns of Narasimha Gupta and his two successors, Kumara Gupta and Vishnu Gupta, may be placed between 500 and 570 A.D. The Guptas ceased to exist in Magadha after the middle of the 6th century A.D.

Relating to the causes of the Gupta decline, the following are the points. Firstly, an empire in India was never a reality but an ideal. As there were no rapid means of communications in the vast expanse of the country, the unity of India depended on the magnificence of monarchs like Asoka, Samudra Gupta, or Akbar, who held unity or empire as an ideal. The moment august personalities of this kind made their exit, the disintegrating forces gathered momentum.

Secondly, foreign invasions did not simply give the *coup d' grace* to the Gupta empire as it normally happened in Indian history. Even Skanda Gupta was made to strain himself to the utmost to drive back the Hun intrusions. The debased coinage of his period bears ample testimony to the crippled state of the Gupta resources due to these intrusions. The Hun inroads during the time of Baladitya accelerated this process. Indeed, it is true that the Hun

*"Skanda Gupta's victory over the Huns which he celebrated in the Bhitari inscription may, in its results, be compared to the failure of the Huns earlier to subdue the Chinese Empire. 'After three hundred years of fighting' says McCown in his *Early Empires of Central Asia*, 'the Huns and their Turanian allies were driven off the west with the eventual result that the Huns and their successors were destined to destroy not the Chinese but Roman Empire."
imperial power was battered by Yasodharman of Mandasor in Malwa, but he made use of this victory to establish his own supremacy. So, R.C. Majumdar argues, "In spite of temporary success, first of Toramana and then of Mihiragula, the Hunas never counted as a permanent factor in Indian politics, save in Kashmir and Afghanistan which lay far beyond the frontiers of the Gupta empire. So far as the evidence goes, the death-blow to the Gupta empire was dealt not by the Hunas but by ambitious chiefs like Yasodharman. The Hunas caused depredations on large scale, but ere long the force of their sweeping success spent itself. The rift caused by Yasodharman, however, gradually widened till the mighty imperial structure was engulfed in the chasm."

Thirdly, the traditional insubordination of the provincial viceroys was also one of the causes of the decline. During the time of Kumara Gupta and Skanda Gupta, the Pushyamitras of the Vindhya reign gave trouble. Baladitya's victory over the Huns was of no avail in preserving the integrity of the empire. After his victory the Maitrekas of Vallabhi, the Maukharis in the Gangetic valley and the Gaudas of Bengal, assumed independence.

Fourthly, there were dissensions within the imperial family and there was internecine warfare too. One writer says, "The Gupta monarchs sometimes modified the law of primogeniture into that of ultimogeniture, but such a change in succession at the reigning ruler's discretion would not work well except under strong rulers of shrewd judgement. Coupled with royal polygamy, such a system of succession to the throne would convert the palace into a bear-garden in times of enthroned imbecility."

Fifthly, according to some scholars, the Buddhist leanings of some of the later Guptas probably weakened their military vigour.

Finally, according to Gokhale, the administrative system itself was a contributory cause to the disintegration of the Gupta empire which, "like all other empires of antiquity, rested on a parallelism of power with the highest concentration as well as extensive decentralization of power at the central and lower levels. This type of governance required a large standing army and a complicated system of checks and counter-checks, and if the balance of power in this pyramidal structure was ever so slightly disturbed it produced far-reaching repercussions all over. In these circumstances came the Hun invasions, and these exacted a heavy toll from the Gupta victors. After Skanda Gupta most of the Gupta kings were either engaged in disputes of successions, or curbing the growing power of the feudatories. How this feudatory power grew is very well illustrated by the rise of the Maitrekas of Vallabhi."
25. Hunas and their Significance in the History of India

Hunas were nomadic hordes. They swamped through north-western passes just as the other nomadic tribes of central Asia of the past. Sometime in the 5th century A.D., a section of Hunas occupied the Oxus Valley. They were known as the White Huns or Ephthalites. Soon they occupied Persia and Kabul after killing the Sassanian king, Firoz in 484. The presence of the Hunas was felt in India even during the days of Kumara Gupta (c. 415-54), although the Huns did not invade India.

From the time the Hunas established themselves in Persia and Kabul, the Huna’s threat and invasions influenced the history of northern India for a hundred years. As a matter of fact, Hunas attacked India for the first time in 455 but the attack was repulsed. But with the collapse of the Persian resistance, the Hunas were emboldened to attack India with greater impunity. Skanda Gupta fought against them valiantly although he had a great number of domestic problems to deal with as borne out by the breaking loose of his feudatories and the debasement of the coinage. It appears that he had managed to rally his forces somewhere around 460 but he died in 467. After his death, the Guptas had no strength to resist the invasions of the Hunas. There is evidence to show that the Hunas ultimately broke through northern India by the turn of the 5th century.

As the Hunas succeeded in defeating the Indian princes, they established their rule over some parts of India. Their first king of importance to India was Toramana who occupied Malwa in 500. He ruled as far as Eran in Central India. His son and successor was Mihiragula (sun-flower), a terror contrary to his name. He had his Indian capital at Sialkot in the Punjab. Both Hiuen-tsang and Kalhana bear evidence to his tyranny. He was the same Gollas, the White Hun, mentioned in other records, and also the Yetha ruler mentioned by a Chinese pilgrim. The Jaina stories have referred his name as Kalkiraja. Historical evidence shows that Mihiragula was finally driven out from the plains of India. Mihiragula was defeated by Yashodharman in 528. It is said that this king was in alliance with Baladitya Narasimha, the Gupta kingdom of Magadha. When Mihiragula retired to Kashmir he died there. From then onwards the Huna influence declined. Added to this, efforts made by the loyal feudatories of the Guptas checked the Huna inroads. More important was the shattering blow that was inflicted on the Hunas by
Yasodharman of Mandašar. To start with when the Hunas attacked India, their empire extended from Persia to Khotan covering some 40 provinces, and their headquarters were at Bamiyan near Herat. But after the death of Mihiragula the Huna pressure declined and within India their petty chieftains continued to rule in north-west India and Malwa. These principalities waged perpetual warfare with indigenous princes.

In course of time the Hunas came to be absorbed in the Rajput population. The very fact that Yashodharman, the Maukharis, the house of Pushyabhuti and the Palas set large store on their success against the Hunas goes to prove that Huna power was gradually whittled down by all these upcoming dynasties. Beyond the Hindukush during the second half of the 6th century, the Huna territories were occupied by the Turks.

In this manner, the Huna power disappeared; but from the point of view of Europe and India also, its rise and disappearance were of great significance. First, when the Hunas found it difficult to penetrate into India and China, their wrath fell on Europe. In this process they did irreparable damage to the Roman empire. Secondly, within India whatever the chances that existed for the building up of an imperial structure were damaged by them. The blows that they had struck on the Gupta empire were grave. Thirdly, the Huna inroads into India led to the movement of new ethnic populations into India. Apart from the Hunas, a great number of central Asian tribes entered India, the most important of them being the Gujars. Finally, as the Hunas, who settled down in India, came to be merged with the Rajput families, the history of India took a new turn in the coming centuries. In brief, the Hunas played a catalytic role both in India and also in Europe.

26. Gupta Art and Critical Notes

It is normal to refer the age of the Guptas as a classical age, meaning that the standards that were set up in literature and art held good for the rest of the centuries. As there is considerable amount of truth in this remark, a study of Gupta art is of considerable importance.

To start with, the artistic achievement of the Guptas is obvious from the large number of coins left by them. A Gupta coin has two aspects about it. The obverse side of it has a portrait of the king concerned; whereas the reverse side of it has the appropriate goddess
along with symbols. The kings of the dynasty are shown in various postures: shooting a tiger or lion, playing on veena, seated on a couch, riding a horse or an elephant, holding a bow and arrow or battle-axe, and feeding a peacock. On the other side of it mostly the figure of Lakshmi. At times Shakti, Saraswati and veena appeared on the obverse. The quility of line drawn on the coins and metallurgical skill evidenced by these coins are of a great standard.

Coming to the sculptures of the period, we find three varieties. The carved brick work and the terracotta panels in the Bhitargaon temple located in the Kanpur district illustrate the Shiva theme. The second variety is to be found at the Deogarh temple in the Jhansi district. There is a panel representing Vishnu reclining on the serpent, Ananta, the symbol of eternity. As a matter of fact, Shiva figures also appear in this temple. The representation of Shiva as a yogi in this temple is regarded as masterpiece of Indian art. The incarnations of Vishnu, appear in all their forms. The cave temple in the Udayagiri hills has fine sculptures representing Vishnu. The temple of Pathari has a massive relief on the nativity of Krishna. The third variety is the Buddhist sculpture. One stone image of the Buddha represents the Kushan art. But the images that have been found at Sarnath are typically Indian. The Buddha statues convey an expression of calm repose and mild serenity. The Indian quality is obvious from the abandonment of drapery from these statues. The monastic robes are indicated in bare outlines. Apart from this, the hollow of the Gandhara art has become a floral decoration showing the triumph of indigenous tradition. One of the special qualities of the sculptures is the beauty of the carved physical figure along with gracious dignity and refined restraint. The seated image of the Buddha at Sarnath is a great work of art because the act of preaching is conveyed in great delicacy. Apart from the stone and brick images, the Guptas excelled in the use of metal. A metal image of the Buddha found at Nalanda is a good example.

In the field of architecture, the Gupta age witnessed a remarkable development. In constructing temples the Guptas introduced new principles. To start with the Hindu temple was in the form of a leafy bower, then a hut of reeds, and then a cella of wood and bricks. In the Gupta period emerged the garbha griha having a small door as entrance. Within this is enshrined the deity. The walls of the interior are bare; whereas, the exterior is richly carved out. These principles introduced by the Guptas were continued in the later period. The temples which exhibit these characteristics are the following: Tigawa temple in Jabulpur district, Narasimha temple at Eran, and the Udayagiri sanctuary near Sanchi.

Besides coinage, sculpture and architecture, the Gupta period is famous for paintings too. The frescoes with Nos, 16 and 17, some of
the few finest in the Ajanta caves, were executed in the Gupta period. Some regard that these two paintings constitute the culmination of classical Indian painting. These two bear resemblance to the famous Sigiriya frescoes in Ceylon.

In literature too, the Gupta age witnessed a high water-mark of literature. Sanskrit became the language of the elite. The Buddhists also used this language to write their masterpieces. From the point of view of secular literature, Kalidasa, the supreme exponent of kavya style belonged to this age. Scholars assign his poems Ritusamhara and Meghaduta to the reign of Chandragupta II. Out of his books, Sakuntala is his greatest work. A few more works of importance written in this period are Mudra Rakshasa (a political drama) and the interesting play, Mirchchhakatika (The Little Clay Cart). In prose writing, Panchatantra was probably elaborated upon. Apart from Sanskrit, Prakrit was patronised outside the court circles. This language was patronised by the Jains. Literary evidence goes to prove that Sanskrit belonged to the upper strata of society, whereas Prakrit belonged to the lower strata.

To what extent all these achievements constitute standards in the succeeding ages, however, is a debatable point. After all, what is known as art and literature cannot reach perfection in any age. It is a continuous exploration. At the most we can call the achievements of the age as classical in the sense that in the coming centuries Indian development in literature and art did not pursue new perspectives, apart from those thrown open by the Guptas.
27. Notes on Religion in the Gupta Period

Of late the term "classical age" is being applied to the Gupta age. Classic means standard. And if we take into account the whole gamut of Indian civilization and culture, instead of confining to literature and art, the Gupta age has enough justification for being called the classical age of India. In the field of religion this term is very true of Hinduism. This cannot be applied to the other two religions of the day, Jainism and Buddhism. The first soon enough disappeared from India. Maybe, there is some element of truth regarding Jainism.

Coming to the Hindu religion we notice that what is now known as Hinduism took its shape in the Gupta period. The first among the features acquired by Hinduism was the worship of images. Although image-making originated from the post-Mauryan era, worship of the images of Hindu gods became an established practice in the Gupta period. The moment images became the centre of worship the sacrificial part of Hindu religion receded into the background. The sacrificial offering that is made to the deity is far different from what was known as the sacrificial part of the brahminism. Further, as image-worship captivated the imagination of the people, the concept of devotion or bhakti gained added importance. This too began in the post-Mauryan era but it gained wider acceptance in the Gupta period. The moment worship of the images became the cardinal principle of Hinduism, there emerged the basic concept of equation between the individual and eternity. The question of the individual establishing an equation with god became the sole concern of the individual while the social behaviour of the individual came under the surveillance of brahmins who claimed the custody of all the scriptures.

This governance of the social life of Hindus came to be known as varna-ashrama-dharma. Varna is the four-fold caste system. Ashrama is the four ends of man. As sanctified by the religion the ends of man are dharma (social law), artha (material well-being), kama (pleasure and sex) and moksha (salvation).

In addition to these two features, Hindu religion in practice appeared as two sects, namely, Vaishnavism and Shaivism, former being more popular in the north and the latter in south. Far more important than this broad division of religious practice was the
development of the *tantric* belief, that is, woman is the supreme embodiment of the mystery. Close to this belief was the Shakti cult. It is believed that the male can be activated only when the male is united with the female. Because of the development of these new beliefs, the gods in the pantheon of Hinduism were attributed wives. That is how the Hindu pantheon of gods grew enormous and this holds good even today.

Apart from the developments that have occurred in the practice of religion, this age also witnessed the concept of *yugas*. This is the religious theory of time. Each time-cycle is known as *kalpa*. Each is divided into 14 periods. And at the end of each *yuga* the universe is recreated. At the moment we are in the *kaliyuga* which is associated with the coming of Kalkin, the would-be incarnation of Vishnu.

In the realm of philosophy this age witnessed the emergence of the six systems of philosophy which hold good even till today. The first is *nyaya* which lays stress on logic. The second is *vaisheshika*, according to which matter and soul are separate universes. The third is *sankhya* which maintains the existence of 25 principles as the causes of creation. This philosophy is essentially atheistic and it recognizes the dualism of matter and soul. Normality means balancing of the three qualities of virtue, passion and dullness. The fourth is *yoga* which is based on the proper control of the body and senses. Such a control leads to the realization of eternity. As the practice of this philosophy needs knowledge of human anatomy, it helped the development of medical knowledge. The fifth is *meemamsa* which emphasises on the ultimate law of the *Vedas* and their rituals. This was primarily supported by the brahmins. The last one is *vedanta*, which is a metaphysical interpretation of the *Vedas*. It lays stress on the Brahman which should be reached by the *atman* of each individual for salvation.

Out of these six systems of philosophy the last two alone are abstruse and metaphysical, and surprisingly, the last two dominated the succeeding ages.

The last feature of Hinduism in this period was the popularity of the *Puranas*. They were originally composed by bards. They related to popular memories of the past; but when they came to be re-written in the Gupta period they were rendered in classical Sanskrit and the stories came to be interspersed with information on Hindu values, rites and customs. In other words, the traditional stories were converted into religious stories for the edification of the common man.
All these features mentioned above do constitute the essentials of Hinduism even as it is today. Herein lies classical nature of the Gupta age in the context of Hindu religion.

Although Buddhism was widely supported in the Gupta age, it soon degenerated. Within India, the Mahayana doctrine was the vogue of the day. In the fifth century a cult was developed wherein the worship of female deities was emphasized. Soon these practices degenerated into magical rites or tantrics. The development of tantric school of thought caused irreparable damage to Buddhism because between Buddhist tantrics and Hindu tantrics there is very little to choose. Moreover, in the 7th century a new sect of Buddhism was developed known as the Thunderbolt School. This school added female counterparts to Buddhist pantheon, known as Taras. This feature of Buddhism is to be found till today both in Nepal and Tibet.

With regard to Jainism nothing much remarkable occurred. The merchant communities continued to patronize it in western India. Some small chiefs in the south and the Deccan extended their patronage. Otherwise, in the sixth century a Jaina council was held at Valabhi. At this council the Jaina canon came to be finalized as it exists today. In matters of sculpture, too, Jainism witnessed certain changes. The pattern for Jaina sculptures was laid down in the period and this was continued in the later ages too.

Thus, to a very great extent, Hinduism and to some extent Jainism, and to a very small extent, Buddhism, witnessed certain developments which even till today constitute the essential features of the three religions.

28. The Gupta Age—Efflorescence or Renaissance?

"The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night."

So goes a popular poem of the school-days: and it contains wisdom. The moral of the poem is true of not only individuals but also of nations. The trite idea that there was a renaissance in the Gupta times is no longer tenable. The glory of the Guptas was a
culmination of the movements that began much earlier in the history of India. “The recrudescence of Brahaminism in the Ganges Valley is as old as the time of Pushyamitra, while in the south, we have a long procession of dynasties that counted it as their proud boast to have repeatedly performed Vedic rites like the Vajapeya and the Asvamedha,” says Dr. R.C. Raychaudhuri. In a general sense, the Gupta period is famous for the creative upsurge that swept the country.*

The first argument is that the administrative system of the Guptas was a consummation of the earlier trends. In the administrative system, the institutions of mahamatras and the provincial viceroy were taken from the Mauryan system. Panikkar says, “The Gupta inherited the administrative system of the earlier empires. The Mauryan bureaucracy, already converted into a caste, had functioned with impartial loyalty under the succeeding empires.” The central government consisted of the emperor assisted by a council of ministers. This is again an idea expounded in Kautilya’s Arthashastra. What all happened in the Gupta period was that the administrative system of the Mauryas became mellowed.

*Let us also examine why it is called a golden age. In a literal sense there is no golden age because no golden age is really glorious. Every golden age has its dark shadows. It is a psychological truth that only a civilization which is at its lowest ebb regards some periods of its past as golden. (Toynbee)

Even when compared to the life of India in the 18th century when, for the first time, efforts at recovery of the lost spirit were tentatively organized, life under the Guptas was undoubtedly backward, as remarked by a modern writer. Secondly, life was not all that brilliant in the time of the Guptas as generally supposed. “It is not that the oppression was less, the economic life more secure and the inequalities less glaring, but the people of those times were engaged in high endeavours with a conscious feeling of their destiny.” B. G. Gokhale also argues in a beautiful manner when he says, “All the age (the ancient) was not ‘golden’, for there were periods of cruelty and suppression, invasion and vandalism. There were also times when the unity of the country was merely cultural, being almost submerged by a multiplicity of states of varying sizes, conflicting ambitions, and doubtful claims to suzerainty. Nor was it all primitive, for, behind the quaintness of many of its textual exhortations there is surprisingly modern spirit. ‘History is neither a prosecuting angel nor an apologist.’ ” In brief, Indian society pulsed with new life and dynamism and, hence, the age can be called a period of Spacious Times, but not a Golden Age.
The second reason for regarding it as an age of blossoms was the economic prosperity of the nation. In the days of the Guptas, trade with the west was on a grand scale and this brought unprecedented prosperity. This increased material prosperity was reflected in the art and architecture of the period. The famous dasavatara temple at Deogarh can also be ascribed to the Gupta period. The use of silk became general. The use of intoxicants by the rich was popular, not ostracized. The allusions to intoxicants in Kathasaritsagara is sufficient proof of the wide prevalence of this habit among the leisureed classes. Women seemed to have enjoyed considerable freedom. This general prosperity in the Gupta period was not the direct outcome of the achievements of the Gupta kings. Even in the preceding centuries much had been done in the form of opening of trade routes during the times of the Sakas and the Kushans. Nay, they go back to the time of Alexander the Great. Therefore, what all happened in the Gupta period was that a bumper harvest was reaped from the seedlings that were planted in the earlier period.*

The third aspect is the achievement in the field of art and architecture. Nilakanta Sastri says "that in the realm of sculpture and painting, the Gupta art marks one of the highest peaks reached by Indian genius, and its influence radiated all over Asia. Its keynote is balance and freedom from convention. It is thoroughly Indian in spirit and strikes the mean between the right of naturalism of the earlier schools and the bizarre symbolism of the medieval art." The artistic tradition of India is very old. Udayana of Kausambi, a contemporary of the Buddha, was a master of veena. Buddhist books allude to gardens, palaces and chaityas. And the true artistic tradition began from the days of the Mauryas—the stupas of Sanchi and Barhut, the chaityas of Ajanta, Nasik and Karle, the rock-cut caves of Barabar, and the vihara caves of Udaigiri, Khandagiri and Ajanta. And from the first century A.D. the Mathura school of art became active. The dominant characteristic of Indian art in this period is reflected in the celebrated Ajanta caves, in the stone temple at Deogarh, and the brick temple of Bhitargaon.

*Here are the thought-provoking lines from Rawlinson: "While Nearchus was feeling his way up the Persian Gulf, Alexander with the bulk of the Macedonian army tried to find a land route through the Mekran desert. The result of the latter experiment was disastrous, but the main objects of the expedition were successfully achieved. Modern readers smile at the accounts of these old Greek seamen, at the frights they sustained from the tidal bore of the Indus, and at the schools of whales 'blowing' in the waters of the Indian Ocean; but the world owes almost as much to these intrepid navigators as to their later successors, Columbus and Vasco de Gama."
Yet, these achievements in art and architecture cannot be called revivals. The sculptural works of the Gupta period were different from those of the Gandhara art. The Gupta statues show close fitting garments and have decorated haloes unlike the Gandhara sculptures.* Even in the heydays of the Kushan art—the Gandhara school of art—the traditions of Hindu art and architecture were continued. Under the Sungas and the Andhras, the artistic evolution, which began under Asoka, continued. Moreover, no plastic art can all of a sudden revive itself. It is only the deep-seated traditions that can contribute to great phases in the artistic realms. In the oft-quoted words of Bosanquet, “Art reflects art.”

In a similar fashion, the Gupta age is a classical period in Sanskrit literature. Here too, we cannot say that it was a renaissance. “Classical Sanskrit after 500 years of evolution from the time of Panini reached its transcendental glory in the times of Kalidasa.” The Vakatakas and Bharasivases (Nagas) who lived before the Guptas, patronized Sanskrit. The Mahabhashya of Patanjali (who lived in the court of Pushyamitra Sunga) is an exposition on Sanskrit grammar, and this grammar was the basis of the literary activities in the time of the Guptas. Pushyamitra Sunga himself encouraged Sanskrit literature. Patanjali refers to dramatic recitals of Kamsavadha in earlier writings. He also makes mention of a poet of the second century B.C., Vararuci, who wrote in kavya style. Celebrities of the post-Mauryan era like Susruta and Nagarjuna were also well-versed in Sanskrit. Even Buddhist scholars wrote in Sanskrit. Asvagosha wrote his two masterpieces, Buddha Charitra and Soudara Nanda, in pure Paninian Sanskrit. And Panini’s Astadhyayi hints at the existence of dramatic literature. Finally, even Kalidasa alluded to Sanskrit writers like Saumilla. Naturally, we have to admit that the Sanskrit language reached its perfection in the time of the Guptas, and that it was not simply revived. Kalidasa was probably (one school of thought believes) a contemporary of Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya or Kumara Gupta I. His Meghduta is an exquisite lyric of delicate beauty. His Shakuntala was much extolled by Goethe. Visakhadatta is the author of the political drama called Mudra-Rakshasa.

The chief glory of the period consists in the redaction of the major puranas and the Mahabharatha. The object of the redactions

*"The outstanding characteristic of the art of India in this period is its classical quality. In the Kushan period the cult of image is still a new and important conception, and there we find quite naturally magnificent primitives or clumsy and unwieldy figures, according to our choice of terms. In the Gupta period the image has taken its place in architecture; becoming necessary, it loses its importance and enters into the general decorative scheme, and in this integration acquires delicacy and repose."
was to revive the appeal of Aryanism and eliminate all the foreign and exotic elements which the Kushans, the Greeks, and the Parthians had almost imperceptibly introduced into Indian life. Writing on the legacy of the previous dynasties, Panikkar says: "The Bharasivas and the Vakatakas cannot be looked upon merely as the bridgeheads to the imperial Guptas....Even more, it is these dynasties, more than the Guptas, that contributed to the re-establishment of Hindu society and Sanskrit culture over Hindustan, as may be seen not merely from the numerous Asvamedhas performed by the kings of these dynasties but the very orthodoxy which they claim for themselves."

Yet, what all happened was that it was in this period that the old brahminical faith was transformed into what is known as modern Hinduism. The Puranas as they were edited during the Gupta period, created the necessary mythology and sculpture, and brought the deities to the homes of the common man. This redaction of the Puranas was of enormous importance to the history of India. For a long time, Hinduism had been relegated into the background because of the popularity of Buddhism. When the principles of Hinduism were restated in a simple fashion in the Puranas, Hinduism regained its lost ground. This is an event of signal glory for Hindu religion. Idol-worship became popular. Pujas gained in importance as compared to yajnas.*

In the field of science too, the Gupta age reached the summit of its glory. The formulation of the theory of zero is a contribution of this age. Aryabhata is reputed to have discovered that the earth rotates round its own axis. Varahamihira was a polymath and there was hardly any branch of natural science to which he did not make a contribution. These achievements too, cannot be regarded as a renaissance in the Gupta period. They were only culminations. And these would not have been possible without some scientific activity in the preceding ages.

*"Besides, the worship of the images of the Buddha and Boddhisattvas, the growth of its pantheon, the introduction of ceremonial solemnities and religious processions, carried Buddhism so far from its pristine purity that to the ordinary man it became almost indistinguishable from the popular phase of Hinduism. Thus, the stage was set for its eventual absorption by the latter. Even in modern times, we see a striking illustration of this process of assimilation in Nepal, where, as Dr. Vincent Smith points out, 'the octopus of Hinduism is slowly strangling its Buddhist victim.' ” Dr. Tripathi.
The last important fact about the Gupta period is the so-called revival of Hinduism. This was not simply a revival, but the blossoming of Hindu religion in its thousand petals and its myriad scents. The worship of Vasudeva was prevalent as early as the fourth century B.C. In the middle of the second century B.C. Heliodoros, the Greek ambassador, erected a garuda dwaja. Moreover, Hinduism primarily consists of various dharma shastras and grihya sutras. All these developed during the third and second centuries B.C. The Laws of Manu belong to this period.

But this glory of Hinduism cannot be regarded as a renaissance as it was something more. The word renaissance may also imply that there was tension among the various religions of the day. As a matter of fact, toleration was the key-note in the religious sphere during the reign of the Guptas. Fa-Hien testifies to the amity and concord which united different sects in a common brotherhood in those times.

Before winding-up the essay, the final point to be stressed is about the bare meaning of the word ‘renaissance’. Renaissance means revival. Truly speaking, there was no revival in the times of the Guptas. After centuries of travail, all aspects of the Aryan civilization became mature during the four hundred and odd years of the Guptas. Therefore, to call the Gupta age a period of renaissance or a golden age is not proper. It is more a period of aufklärung or, rather, a period of Yang, to use the term of Toynbee.

29. An Analysis of Gupta Administration

Apparently, the history of India is fragmentary; but in reality, there are certain underlying currents which give it a unity and a continuity of its own. The one factor for such a subtle continuity is administration. A delineation of the administrative system of the Guptas substantiates this view.

Similar to the Mauryan administration, the king was the head of the government. Kingship was hereditary. Rarely, kingdom was divided among royal brothers. One such division occurred during the closing decades of Gupta history. The kings took high-sounding titles like the ‘Great King of Kings’ and the ‘Supreme Lord’. King was at the apex and was helped by crown prince. The other princes were appointed as viceroys of provinces. Although the queens were
learned they do not appear to have participated in the administration. The wife of Chandra Gupta I, Kumara Devi, appears on her husband's coins. The same is true of Dhruvadevi of Chandra Gupta II.

The king was assisted by a council of ministers of mantrins who were often hereditary. Soldierly qualities appear to be one of the qualifications for ministers. Harisena was a military general. The foreign minister of Chandra Gupta II too, Saba, was a military general. A chief minister headed the group of ministers, a precept laid down in the Arthashastra. Some ministers accompanied the sovereign to the battlefield. A few of them combined many offices and they were responsible for different offices at different times. The names of a few leading ministers have come down to us—Virasena was foreign minister and Sandhi. Vigrahika was the minister of war and peace.

There is no direct and detailed evidence about the machinery of central government. Each of the departments at the centre had its own seal. There were a large number of mahasenapati under the king. Probably they were posted in different provinces to keep neighbouring powers under watch. As there were a large number of feudatory states, the foreign ministers must have supervised the policy toward them.

Now for the provincial administration. The empire was divided into a number of provinces designated either as bhuktis or desas. The governors were appointed by the sovereign. Often, they were princes of the royal blood. They were responsible for protecting the provinces against external aggression and for maintaining internal order. They had to also keep an eye on the feudatory rulers. In internal matters, they were expected to look after public utility works for inspiring public confidence.

Further, each of the provinces was sub-divided into pradesas. A pradesa was equal to the modern district. The office of the head of the district (vishayapatya) was held by various officials, like kumargamatyas and feudatory maharajas. Normally these officials were recruited and acted under the mahamatras or the provincial viceroys. The Damodarpur plates throw much light on the nature of the district administration. These plates mention a number of functionaries as helping the district officials—the chief banker or the president of the city guild, the chief merchant of the city or the president of merchants' guild, the chief artisan or the president of the artisans' guild, the chief of the writer class, a keeper of records and others. The record-keeper was primarily entrusted with the task of determining the title to the land and submitting the report to the government before any sale of it could be sanctioned.
The bhuktis were under uparikas who were responsible to the governors. vishayas were governed by officials who were controlled by the uparikas. Beyond these facts nothing much is known about the district officials. It appears that there was no administrative division between the vishaya and the towns and villages comprising the district.

A few more details of the district administration are known. The vishayapati of the district was assisted by a non-official district council. Apart from members taken from the commonalty the important members of the council were the chief banker, the chief trader, the chief artisan and the writer. This is not known how these members were elected. Secondly, there must have been a large staff assisting the district officials but their names are not known. Ultimately, the districts were sub-divided into a number of villages, the village being the last unit of administration.

The village authorities looked after houses, streets, temples, tanks, lands, etc. The land was carefully measured by officers known as simakaras. Apart from the agriculturists each village had its own weavers, potters, carpenters and goldsmiths.

The village headman was known as ramaika. He was assisted by a council known as panchamandali in Central India and grama janapad.i in Bihar. The council discharged all the functions of the village—village defence, settlement of disputes, organization of public utility works, trustee of minors and collection of central revenue. In village administration local talent was introduced—but not a system based on official inspiration. Each village had its own seal.

The towns were looked after by purapalas. He enjoyed the status of the kumaramatya. There were town councils. Most of the towns were protected by walls and moats. There is no direct evidence about the source of revenue from villages and towns.

Salaries were sometimes paid in cash but mostly in grants of land, as evident from the land grant inscriptions found in stone and metal. Indeed they were not very common. But cash salaries were paid to military personnel.

In matters of taxation also there is no evidence on the Gupta administration. The only thing that is known is that villagers and citizens paid additional sums when the officials of the central government inspected them—provide gratis, boiled rice, curd, milk, vegetables, fuels, flowers and transport. This practice still continues on in India. Apart from this, the expenses of the police officials visiting the country for apprehending criminals were met by the local residents.
Land was of three categories. First was the fallow or waste land belonging to the state. It was this land that was donated by way of grants. The second was the crown, which was cultivated and was rarely donated. The third was privately owned land. When land was given as grant the donor could not evict the tenants. The crops cultivated in this period were the same as today.

Land revenue for the state was derived from a variety of taxes—from the land and from various categories of produce at various stages of production. It is opined that the maintenance of the administration was burdensome in economic terms and this must have resulted in pressure on the economy. This is borne out by the latter debasement of coinage.

All told, the Gupta administration was highly decentralized and was manned by a large number of officials. We know of seals relating to officials like police officials, controller of military stores, chief justice and others. In other words, the whole organization of the Guptas was bureaucratic as it was in the days of the Mauryas. Probably, the recruitment of officials was made on the basis of merit. For example, Chandra Gupta was a devout vaishnava but his trusted general was a Buddhist, and his minister of peace was a saiva.

In the end, we can venture to say that some of the harsh aspects of the Mauryan administration might have been toned down during the time of the Guptas.* It is very likely that, as this administrative system continued on for a number of centuries, it had mellowed down. We do have some evidence for stating that the administration continued to pursue welfare activities as in the days of the Mauryas. According to Fa-Hien, the rich instituted in their capitals free hospitals, and supplied food and medicine according to the needs. In short, the administration of the Guptas was a continuation of the Mauryas. To conclude, in the language of Panikkar, “The Guptas inherited the administrative system of the earlier empires. The Mauryan bureaucracy, already converted into a caste, had functioned with impartial loyalty under succeeding empires.”

*“The administration, as Fa-Hien describes it, was milder than the Mauryan age. The police regulations were less severe. Capital punishment was rare, punishment usually taking the form of fines or mutilation. The land revenue collections, the backbone of Indian administration until the nineteenth century, were moderate. One-sixth was the government’s share of the gross produce, as compared with a quarter in the Mauryan period and a third in the time of Akbar.” Percival Spear
30. The Maurya and Gupta Ages—Twin Peaks of Indian Civilization

Either a Greek or an Egyptian of today can trace his descent or his heritage to ancient Athens or Egypt. The position in India is quite the contrary. All through the centuries the Indian civilization retained its dynamism and hence it witnessed reformation or revivals quite a number of times—assimilation by the Vedic-Aryanism, of the Indus Valley and the Dravidian elements, the age of dharma shastras and grihya sutras, the efflorescence of Hinduism under the Guptas, the reformist movement of Sankaracharya, the bhakti movement of medieval India, and the religious awakening in the age of recovery during the 19th century. Indian civilization has been a continuum. Therefore, there is nothing sweeping about the remark that the Maurya age and the Gupta age constitute the twin peaks of Indian civilization.

The Maurya age had witnessed the emergence of the dharma shastras and the grihya sutras. These gave an ethical base to the social life of the people of India by orienting the precepts of Aryanism. Till today, he who follows the precepts as laid down in the grihya sutras is regarded as a Hindu, even if he believes in the world as maya or professes atheism.

This period also witnessed the purification of Sanskrit language. The trinity of Sanskrit grammar, Panini (probably earlier), Katyayana, and Patanjali (during Pushyamitra Sunga), enabled the language to develop into one of the greatest languages of the world. Even Buddhist writers took to Sanskrit. Probably, Sanskrit literature also came into existence in this period. A play written by Asvaghosa has been recently found. Even Kalidasa refers to an earlier dramatist by name, Saumilla. And we must remember that it was the Sanskrit language and its literature that gave the necessary discipline to the vernaculars which developed in India later. The beauty and sweetness of Sanskrit language enabled the Aryan ideas to percolate into every region of India. All over India and in all languages the classics written in Sanskrit had been translated.

In political field too, the Maurya age was a peak because the idea embodied in bharata varsha, for the first time, was concretized in the Maurya empire. And the idea of spiritual conquest that was
pioneered by Asoka influenced the theory of kingship in the coming ages. The *Arthashastra* of Chanakya was commented upon as late as the sixteenth century. Besides, the essential ingredients of the Mauryan administration became the traditions of the history of administration in India.

Thus, spiritually, socially, culturally and politically, India became, for the first time, a unique entity. It was this unity that is being perpetuated till today.

These contours of the Mauryas came to be filled during the times of the Guptas. The spiritual revival as evidenced by the writing of the *dharma shastras* during the Mauryas, was carried to its logical culmination. Thus, these writings of the earlier period, in a way, constituted a response to the challenge posed by Buddhism, that is, the forte of Buddhism was its direct bearing on the day-to-day life of an average man. In the Gupta period, Aryanism instilled a simplicity also into its faith. Buddhism was, thus, beat with its own stick of simplicity. The incorporation of the Buddha as one of the avatars during this period is very significant. Moreover, it was during this period that the images of brahminical gods came to be carved out and temples came to be built in their honour. In brief, Hinduism, as we know today (mature Aryanism), came into existence in this period.

In the field of culture too, the Gupta age witnessed a maturity. In the post-Maurya period, foreign elements influenced the arts and the literature of the day. The Gandhara sculptures and the probable Greek influence on Indian drama, are the two examples. But under the Guptas, the native tradition witnessed a resurgence as evidenced in the temples built by the Guptas: the sculptures that were carved out in this period were typically indigenous. The Guptan temples are a logical continuation of the *chaityas*, *viharas* and the cave-temples that came into existence in the Maurya, and possibly pre-Maurya and post-Maurya periods. The sculptors of the Gupta period derived their inspiration from the Mathura school which represented the indigenous school of art during the time of the Kushans.

In other fields too, like social and political, the Gupta age was a period of maturity or perfection. The administrative system of the Mauryas was continued by the Guptas. In all likelihood, the administration of the Mauryas became a tradition, or took firm roots during the Gupta period. In the social field, the Indian civilization absorbed the foreigners who earlier settled down in India, by taking them into the Hindu fold.
In this manner, to regard the Maurya and the Gupta periods as the twin peaks of Indian civilization is justifiable. Indeed, doubts may be expressed on the expression “the twin peaks” because some might regard the reform movements that occurred in the later ages as of equal, if not, of more, importance.

31. A Bird’s-Eye View of History from 646 A.D. to 1206 A.D.

The fortunes of India in this period, apparently, were not influenced by foreign invasions or incursions, except for the Arab conquest of Sind. Otherwise, this period is significant for the absence of foreign invasions. Rather, its significance lies in the cultural penetration of India into Tibet and the commercial and colonial relations with south-east Asia. Herein lay the snag—the absence of challenge, either cultural or militaristic, favoured the stagnation of Indian civilization.

The second important characteristic of this period was the absence of any empire rivalling either the Maurya or Gupta empires in cultural importance and political prestige. The endless catalogue of wars, that one comes across while studying this period, was symptomatic of the general and internal decay that had set in. Hindu civilization, within the country, began to ebb away in this period, and this left its imprint in all walks of life. The sublime themes in ancient Sanskrit literature gave place to themes of maudlin sentimentalism and cloying sensuality. Even Buddhist literature did not escape this predicament. Vishakadatta and Rajasekhara are inferior names compared to Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. Indeed, the period saw the highest development in the theory of poetics, a branch of literature; but such writings belong to the realm of literary criticism than creativity. And it was also the age of great rhetoricians like Yamana, Rudrata, Anandvardhana, Kuntola etc. Secondly, the traditions of education declined. A story goes that a monk was found with a bottle of wine in the Vikramasila University and, when questioned, came out with the reply that he got it from a nun! And the pursuit of science was little known. Of course, a masterly work on pathology was written by Madhavakara but it is entirely different from the contributions of Arthrya and Charaka. Thirdly, in the field of architecture, except for the south, no great monuments came up in the north. The temples of Khajuraho are in a sense, a degenerate version of Hindu traditions. Fourthly,
in the field of religion, the reformist zeal of Sankaracharya was a spent force by the tenth century A.D. For that matter, this era with its movements like Saivism and Vaishnavism, could compare in no way to the era that witnessed the writing of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*; or, the religious ferment of the sixth century B.C. which witnessed 61 different schools of thought or, the Hindu reformation during the time of the Guptas which facilitated the absorption of the innumerable foreigners who intruded into Indian society. The *smritis* declined in importance but the commentaries on them came into prominence. Sankaracharya wrote commentaries on existing works although his interpretations entitle him as one of the greatest philosophers of the world. Medhatithi was a great legal luminary but he too is a commentator of the *Manu-Samhita*.

While the history of India from 606 to 1192 differs in these respects with the history of India in the earlier period, there are yet, certain special characteristics of this period. The first among them was the rise of a new community called the Rajputs. Somehow, the political and cultural aspects of Indian history of this period, converged round this community. Of course, the south was an exception. The Cholas and the Pallavas continued the traditions of Hindu India. But the exceptions within this exception were the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas who show greater affinity with the northern and Rajput histories, rather than with the southern. The second important characteristic was the political interest taken by the southern India, particularly the Cholas, in the affairs of south-east Asia. The third characteristic was the penetration of a new community of foreigners into India, Muslims. This penetration was different from that of the earlier foreign penetrations from a great number of angles; (a) Muslims had a religion to boast of unlike the Kushans, the Huns, the Scythians, the Parthians etc; (b) the very nature of their religion made them lead a closed life; and (c) as the new-born converts to Islam came to India (Afghans and Turks) it had its own consequences: new-born converts show greater zeal.

From the death of Harsha onwards, Kanauj attracted the attention of all the upspringing dynasties of the north. The first known ruler of it was Yasovarman. After him, the Pratiharas established their authority. This dynasty fought with the Arabs of Sind as well as with the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. After the Pratihara power declined in the 10th century, the Gahadavalas ruled over it. Their representative was overthrown by Muhammad of Ghur.

The other important Rajput dynasties of this period were the Chauhans of Sambar and Ajmer, the Chandelas of Bundelkhand, the
Kalachuris of Madhya Pradesh, the Paramaras of Malwa, and the Guhilots of Mewar. Apart from these Rajput kingdoms, the Chalukyas of Maharashtra and the Palas of Bengal had something to do with them.

The history of the Chauhans acquired significance in the first half of the 10th century A.D. Vigraharaaja, who ruled in the second half of this century, was the first important ruler. He won many battles and founded Ajmer. Vigraharaaja IV in the second half of the 12th century fought with the Muslims. He even captured Delhi. The last great ruler of this family was the well-known Prithvi Raj III, who was defeated and killed in the second battle of Tarain in 1192.

The Chandelas also came into prominence in the first half of the 10th century. Their first great king was Dhanga who ruled in the second half of the 10th century. The temples of Khajuraho were built during these times. The second important ruler was his son, Ganda or Nanda. He defeated the last representative of the Pratiharas. The last important ruler was Madanavarman. Kalinjar was attacked by Muslims a number of times and the dynasty disappeared by the end of the 16th century.

The Kalachuris rose into prominence in the first half of the 9th century. Their first known king was Lakshmana Raja. After him, for some time, the fortunes of the Kalachuris declined till they were revived by one Vikramaditya in the first half of the 11th century A.D. His son, Lakshmi Karn, was a great conqueror. These kings fought wars with the Palas of Bengal but very soon the Gahadavalas occupied much of the territory. Hence, it was only over a fragment of the kingdom that they ruled at the beginning of the 15th century.

Regarding Gahadavalas, we know that towards the close of the 11th century, one Chandra occupied Kanauj. The greatest ruler of the dynasty was Govinda Chandra who ruled in the first half of the 12th century. The next king was Jaya Chandra, the ruler who had some trouble with Prithvi Raj III. Muhammad of Ghur defeated and killed him in the battle of Chandwar in 1193 A.D.

The Paramaras appeared on the scene about the middle of the 10th century. The first independent ruler was one Harsha or Siyak II. The most known ruler of the dynasty was Bhoja, famous both in legend and history, who ruled during the first half of the 11th century. Probably, he wrote a great number of works on philosophy, architecture, drama and medicine. The Paramaras were
at constant war with the Chalukyas and the Kalachuris. By the middle of the 13th century, Malwa was conquered by the Muslims.

The Guhilots were minor rulers. They were probably feudatories of the Chalukyas. They resisted the Muslims in 1303. It was they who initiated the saga of revolt against Islam. Mewar was captured by Ala-ud-din Khalji.

The significance of these Rajput kingdoms consists in the fact that they continued the Hindu traditions. It was the Rajputs who acted as the paladins of the Hindu faith and the bulwarks of the Hindu culture. The court of Bhoja was adorned by the famous poet Rajasekhara. The Chauhan rulers popularised the Sanskrit poem called Prithviraj Vijaya. Added to this, it was Prithvi Raj III who organized the Hindu confederacy which fought Muhammad of Ghur. The name of the Chandelas is still remembered in Khajuraho, an example of Hindu erotic art. The Kalachuris too, fought with Muslims even though the resistance was not so great. Bhoja Paramara of Malwa is reputed both in legend and history. He patronized art and literature. Epigraphic evidence shows that he built a great number of temples, but unfortunately they are not traced so far.

Apart from these Rajputs, the one important dynasty of the north after Harsha was that of the Palas of Bengal. They came into prominence during the first half of the 7th century A.D. Their founder is referred to as a descendant from the Solar race and, by caste, a kshatriya. Most of the time the Palas were waging wars against the Rashtrakutas, the Cholas, and the Pratiharas. The Pala rule ended by the end of the 11th century A.D. Their place in the cultural history of India is very great. During the 7th and 8th centuries a distinctive Sanskrit culture came to be developed. In the 10th and 11th centuries, apart from Sanskrit literature, Buddhistic literature too, flourished. One great writer of this period was Bhavadeva Bhatta, the author of Jimutavahana. It was under their aegis that the people of Bengal emerged as a distinct cultural group. The later Palas were devotees of Buddhism and under their guidance Buddhism spread to Tibet and south-east Asia. Finally, it was the Pala style of culture that came to be adopted in Tibet.

Among the minor dynasties of the north during this period, the first was Kashmir. The well-known ruler was Lalitaditya, during the first half of the eighth century A.D. It was he who defeated Yasovarman. Lalitaditya built Buddhist monasteries and temples. His dynasty is known as the Karkota dynasty. This was ousted in the beginning of the 9th century. Then the Utpala dynasty ruled till 1339,
The third minor dynasty was that of the Senas of Bengal who succeeded the Palas. One king, Vijaya Sena, conquered both Assam and Kalinga. His successor, Ballala Sena, was a learned scholar. He was reputed to have introduced far reaching social reforms and revived orthodox Hindu rites. Very soon the kingdom declined and Lakashmana Sena was defeated by a general of Muhammad of Ghur. This defeat is of tremendous significance in the history of India because Bhaktiyar Khalji razed to the ground the famous Buddhist universities. In general, the rule of the Senas in Bengal witnessed the rise of Vaishnavism. The great vaishnava poet of Bengal, Jayadeva, lived in his court, Lakashmana Sena himself was a great author.

With regard to the history of the south in this period, it can be divided into two parts, the early and the later.

In the post-Harsha period, the Chalukyas of Vatapi played an important part. By the middle of the 6th century, Pulakesin I carved out a small kingdom; and during the time of Pulakesin II (609-642), the empire reached its zenith. The last ruler, Kirtivarman II was defeated by the Rashtrakutas sometime around 753 A.D.

The next important dynasty was that of the Rashtrakutas founded by Dantidurga. This dynasty came to rule the erstwhile territory of the Chalukyas. The important rulers were Dhruya, Govinda III and Krishna I. Amoghavarsha IV was defeated by the western Chalukya ruler, Taila II in 973 A.D.

The third dynasty was that of the Pallavas as founded by Simha Vishnu towards the close of the 6th century A.D. They were great builders and also patrons of religion. The Pallava rule was overthrown by the Chola king, Aditya I, towards the end of the 9th century.

The minor dynasties in the early period were the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the Kadambas and the Gangas. The first dynasty was founded by Jayasimha I towards the close of the 8th century. Owing to matrimonial alliances, it was absorbed into the Chola kingdom in the 11th century. The Kadambas, who ruled over Karanataka from the middle of the 4th century, are important for their patronage of Saivism and Jainism. The third dynasty ruled over the former Mysore State. It came into existence in the 4th century A.D. and disappeared by 1000 A.D.

Before we proceed to the later age, we have to refer to the Chalukyas and the Vaghelas of Gujarat who neither belonged to the north nor to the south. They roughly ruled for three-and-a-half
centuries from 950 to 1300 A.D. They fought against the Arabs of Sind and also with the Kalachuris and the Chalukyas. It was during the reign of Bhima II that Muhammad of Ghur invaded Gujarat. Towards the close of his reign, the Vaghelas came into prominence. In 1296 Gujarat was annexed by the Muslim Sultanate.

Of the later period, the first dynasty was that of the western Chalukyas of Kalyani. Tailapa was its founder. They ruled till the end of the 12th century.

The next dynasty, i.e., the Yadavas, began as the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and the western Chalukyas. They were overthrown by Ala-ud-din Khalji in 1309 A.D.

Then came the Hoysalas of Halebid or Dorasamudra. Their first great ruler was Vishnudevadhana who defeated the Cholas and the Pandyas. He was in close contact with the famous saint, Ramanuja. They were weakened by constant war with the Cholas and the Pandyas. They were great builders of temples of which a few survive at Halebid. The kingdom was destroyed by Ala-ud-din Khalji.

The next dynasty was that of the Pandyas who ruled from the close of the 6th century. From the 8th century onwards they expanded. For three centuries, they were kept in check by the Cholas. The zenith of their history was reached in the reign of Sundara Pandya (second half of the 13th century) who crushed the authority of the Cholas. Marco Polo visited the Pandya kingdom.

The last but the most important kingdom of the south was that of the Cholas. The decline of the Pallavas enabled them to rebuild their fortunes. The period of Chola greatness began from 985 A.D. onwards. Renjendrapala Chola I (1016—1044) was the greatest ruler. He defeated the Pala king and even entered the Gangetic region. To commemorate this victory, he built Gangaikonda-Choaupalpuram. He even attacked the Sailendras. Very soon, because of the Chola-Chalukya rivalry, their power declined and they were supplanted by the Pandyas. The Cholas were famous for their administrative system and also for their temples.
32. A Commentary on the Sixth Century A.D.

The old is often replaced by the new. In Indian history it has been a fashion to regard certain periods as dark ages, and the sixth century A.D. has been regarded as one such. Truly speaking, the sixth century A.D. is a germinal period. Moreover, the concept of 'dark age' in Indian history is primarily based on the consideration of the absence of an imperial authority. This is a concept of European history. After the decline of the Roman empire there was utter confusion in Europe and historians call the post-Roman period as the dark ages. But this concept cannot be applied everywhere. Modern research shows that it was not empires that gave unity to our country but the social dharma. Thus, the very basis of the concept of dark age (the fall of the Roman empire and the consequent dark ages) cannot be even a reasonably acceptable criterion; and so, it is inappropriate to call the sixth century A.D. a 'dark age' in the history of India.

It is true that no imperial Gupta ruled after 544 A.D. But the Gupta-Vakataka system continued the traditions of the Gupta empire. The later Guptas ruled from Magadha till the 7th century A.D. It was they who nurtured the famous seat of learning, Nalanda, which was founded by the Guptas. Famous men like Shramati, Dharmapala, Vasubandhu and Silabhadra were revered and patronized by the later Guptas. In the Indo-Gangetic valley, the Maukharis of Kanauj continued to uphold the traditions of the Guptas. And, around the Vindhyas and the Aravali, the Vakatakas continued the tradition.

Further, we know that it was Baladitya Gupta, who, perhaps with the help of a confederacy, defeated the Hunas in 528 A.D. The historians who regard this period as a 'dark age' presume that the Hunas troubled India in this century. This is far from the truth. The Maukharis and the Kalachuris waged continual wars against the Hunas. Indeed the Hunas led by Toramana sacked Malwa in 495 A.D. and established themselves in the Punjab; but this was of no avail, as they were constantly harassed by the feudatories of the Guptas. Further, Yasodharman of Malwa was the deadly foe of the Hunas.

In the field of literature too, the sixth century A.D. cannot be regarded as a 'dark age'. Classical Sanskrit reached its perfection in
this period. The famous poets were Bharavi, Kumara Deva and Dandin. The noted dramatist of the sixth century was Vishakadatta. Besides, special attention was paid to philosophy, logic, mimamsa and exegetics. Moreover, this period is regarded as the golden age of the Buddhist and Hindu systems of logic. Mathematics and astronomy, too, developed greatly. Varahamihira died in 587 A.D. and Aryabhata was born in 476 A.D. It was in this period that the mathematical knowledge of the Hindus spread to Baghdad, which happened to become the centre of medieval learning for the whole of the west after the dismemberment of the Roman empire. Finally, we may mention that the vernacular literatures too, grew in this period. Prakrit became a literary language. Perhaps this accounts for Rajasekhara making use of it in the next century.

Thus, the sixth century A.D. in India cannot be regarded as a 'dark age,' and it is indeed high time that we emancipated ourselves from the intellectual allegiance we continue to pay to the west, although we have been politically free since 1947.

33. Critical Note on Western (Vatapi) or Early Chalukyas

Telephone Directory. This is the epithet used by a Chinese scholar to summarize the nature of the history of India. To any superficial observer this striking epithet betrays the weaknesses of Indian historical material and, particularly, the meagre data relating to dynasties like the western Chalukyas. But truly speaking, the variegated nature of Indian history is more occasioned by the vastness of the country than anything else. Besides, the essential harmony and the subtle continuity of Indian history are overlooked because of 'non-appreciation' of its underlying currents. True to the ancient Indian traditions, the western Chalukya kings were tolerant in religious outlook and continued the architectural traditions of the Deccan.

Their origin is controversial. Bilhana, the author of Vikramanka-charita and the court poet of Vikramaditya VI, and the later Chalukya inscriptions, lay claim to Ayodhya as their ancestral home. Some regard them as related to the Gurjaras. Whatever might be their origin, about the middle of the 6th century A.D., Pulakesin I carved out a small area around Vatapi or Badami. He then performed an ashvamedha ceremony. His successor was Kirtivarman who ruled from 566 to 597 A.D. He conquered both Konkan and north Kerala.
Many other conquests are attributed to him but the claim cannot be substantiated. His successor was Mangalesa (597-608 A.D.), and he conquered the Kadambas and the Gangas. He was killed by his nephew, Pulakesin, who ruled from 609 to 642 A.D. The Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II deals with the history of this dynasty till his own time.

The Chalukya power reached its zenith under the king, Pulakesin II. His early years were spent in subjugating his rebellious feudatories and neighbours. He captured the capital of the Kadambas, overawed the Gangas of Mysore, and subdued the Mauryas of north Konkan. The Latas of Gujarat, the Malavas, and the Gurjaras also submitted to him. Also King Harsha was defeated by him. Another victim was the Pallava king, Mahendra Varman. The Cholas, the Keralas and the Pandyas submitted to him. He occupied Pista pura and installed his brother Kubja Vishnuvardhana as his representative. But, in 642 A.D. the Pallava king, Narasimha Varman, stormed Vatapi and probably killed Pulakesin himself. This was followed by a period of confusion from 642 to 655 A.D.

Pulakesin maintained friendly relations with Khusru II, the king of Persia. The reception given to the Persian missionary is depicted in one of the Ajanta cave-paintings. Hiuen-Tsang visited his kingdom. He describes it as rich and fertile. According to him, "The inhabitants were proud-spirited and war-like, grateful for favour and revengeful for wrongs, self-sacrificing towards suppliants in distress and sanguinary death to any who treated them insultingly." About Pulakesin II, the traveller observes, "His plans and undertakings are widespread and his beneficent actions are felt over a great distance."

After his death, the kingdom declined for a temporary period. His son Vikramaditya I (655 to 680 A.D.) plundered the Pallava capital, Kanchi Vikramaditya's successors, Vinayaditya and Vijayaditya, were powerful rulers. During the reign of Vikramaditya II the Pallavas were once more defeated. This ruler is credited to have driven back an invasion of Arabs against southern Gujarat. His son, Kirtivarman II, was defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler, Dantidurga, in 753 A.D. and with him, the history of the dynasty came to an end.

Regarding their achievements, we have to say that they were a great maritime power. It is said that Pulakesin, with a hundred ships, attacked and captured the capital of a hostile state. The central government of Chalukyas exercised a paternalistic control over the village administration. This is unlike the administrative practice of south India. The Chalukyas received a limited income from land.
Added to this, the earnings from trading activities were not considerable. Much of whatever the state earned went to the maintenance of an army. There was a standing army although feudal levies were also there. The army primarily consisted of foot-soldiers and cavalry. Often, army officers were used in civil administration, whenever emergency arose. The Chalukya kings were brahminical Hindus but they respected other faiths too. Buddhism was on the decline although Huen-Tsang opines that it was popular. The Chinese traveller noticed more than one hundreded Buddhist monasteries. Jainism too, prospered in this period and enjoyed royal patronage. Buddhism gradually gave way to Jainism and brahminism. Sacrifices were given great importance. Many treatises were composed on this form of brahminical worship. The king himself performed a number of sacrifices including ashvamedha and Vajpeya. Apart from this stress on the orthodox form of Hindu religion, the Puranic version grew popular. It was this popularity that gave momentum to the building of temples in honour of Vishnu, Shiva and other gods.

Regarding architecture, it was the Chalukyas who perfected the art of stone-building—stone finely joined without mortar. Under the auspices of the Chalukyas the Buddhists and the brahmns competed with each other in building cave-temples. The cave frescoes began earlier but the finest specimens of them belonged to the Chalukya era of the 5th and 6th centuries. The murals that were executed on the walls not only dealt with the religious themes but also with secular. In the first monastic hall at the Ajanta, we notice a painting depicting the reception given to a Persian embassy by Pulakesin II. Dr. Tripathi says, “It has further been conjectured that some of the famous Ajanta cave-frescoes probably belong to the time of these early Chalukyas.” In the field of temples the Chalukyas developed the Deccan style. This tradition began earlier in the rock-cut temples of Elephanta. The Aihole and Badami temples of the Chalukyas are indicative of the developed Deccani style. This reached culmination later on under the Rashtrakuta with the execution of the Kailsha temple at Ellora.

The cave temples of the Chalukyas were the counterparts of the Buddhist cave temples. The temple that was executed at Badami in honour of Vishnu by Mangalesa by the close of the 6th century A.D. bears out the above relationship. Apart from this feature, the Chalukyan temples had one more quality. They built buildings of stone, finely joined without mortar, as, for example, the stone temple of Shiva at Meguti erected in the 7th century. This temple has a prosasti on Pulakesin as composed by Ravikriti. Amongst the Chalukyan temples, the best preserved is the Vishnu temple at Aihole. It bears an inscription of Vikramaditya II and is built on the lines of the Buddhist-chaitiya hall. The temple is famous for its
fine sculptures of the flying devas. One more temple is the famous Virupaksha temple at Pattadkal. Havell states that it "combines the stateliness of the classic design of Europe with the fervid imagination of the Gothic art." This was built by Vikramaditya of the 8th century. This temple has a pillared mandapam or meeting-place for the people. The roof is supported by sixteen monolithic pillars with sculptured bracket capitals.

Sanskrit was the language of the day. Vernaculars also came to be developed. An inscription of the Chalukyan king in the 7th century mentions Kannada as the local language, and Sanskrit the language of the elite.

Thus, even though the delineation of the political history of the Chalukyas is quite dull, their importance consists in their having continued the traditions of India. Hence, even though the history of India appears to be a jig-saw puzzle, there is a pattern underlying it.

34. Note on Chalukya-Pallava Conflict

The conflict between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas began from the time of Pulakesin II. The series of Chalukya-Pallava wars ended almost with the termination of both the dynasties. And significantly a new power that rose in their place, Rashtrakutas and Cholas, continued to struggle. In other words, the struggle with the Chalukyas and the Pallavas is, to a great extent, determined by the geographical position of the Chalukya and Pallava dynasties.

After the first bout was over, the Pallavas avenged the defeat during the days of Narsimhavarman I. He reoccupied the territories that were snatched during the days of Mahendravarman. In this success he was assisted by the king of Ceylon. The Pallava ruler entered the capital of Badami in 642 and assumed the title of Vatapikonda, that is, the conqueror of Vatapi.

The third phase was started by the Chalukyas. Before the war was begun by the Chalukyas, the Pallavas were involved in naval wars in support of the Ceylonese king. All told, for twelve years there was a respite. The Chalukyas were occupied with the trouble of feudatories. After the Chalukyan house was set in order in 655, they re-occupied the territories lost to the Chalukyas.

Soon the tables were reversed. There was a rift in the Chalukyan royal family. The territories to the north of Narmada
came to be ruled by the prince of the main family later known as the Lata Chalukya. There was a long war. The Pallavas once again entered Badami. Details relating to this campaign are to be found in the Pallava grant found near Kanchi.

Once again, trouble broke out between the two powers when the Chalukyas and the Gangas united in 731 to attack the Pallavas. The reigning Pallava king was killed. Later, the council of ministers chose Nandivarman II. The Chalukyas occupied Kanchi.

This meant the ball was in the court of the Pallavas. At this time, the neighbours of the Pallavas in the south joined the conflict. The Pandyas of Madura were not well disposed towards the Pallavas. There is also one power in the south at this time, the Cheras in modern Kerala. Meantime, the Chalukyas were threatened by the Arabs, who were already in occupation of Sind. While the Chalukyas were engrossed in a threat from the north, one of their feudatories Dantidurga, broke away from the Chalukyan ruler. The Pallavas survived the Chalukyas by a century; but they, too, within a century met their end: the last of the Pallavas was assassinated by the son of a feudatory.

35. Exaggerations of Bana and Hiuen-Tsang on Harsha

Harsha, who ruled between 600 and 647 A.D. was viewed till recently as the last great Hindu ruler. With the advance of research in Indian history, this assessment is no longer tenable; and modern historians refuse to attribute any longer an artificial glow to his achievements. The contention that his achievements have been exaggerated both by his literary and religious friends is indeed true, but only in a limited sense. As Dr. R.C. Majumdar puts it: “The grandson of a Gupta princess, Harsha attempted to revive the imperial memories of Samudra Gupta and sought to unite the north and south of India under one sceptre—in vain as the sequel proved.”

The chief source for judging Harsha’s achievements is the Harsha Charitra of Bana. His expression in the book is poetic, allusive, and full of punning references. For example, at one place a sunset stands for bloody wars; the buzzing bees, for arrows; and the blooded moon, for the rising power of the Gauda king. The romantic nature of his account has invited the remark: “It is as much based on real events as Scott’s Quentin Durward or Waverley.”
This book has eight chapters. The first is about the family of its author; the second, about Bana's introduction to Harsha; the third, a description of Thaneshwar; the fourth, the ancestors of Harsha; the fifth, the death of Harsha's mother and his grief; and the sixth, the reactions of the king on the death of Rajyavardhana and the other unhappy events. The last but one chapter vividly but poetically portrays the military achievements of Harsha, the deputation from Bhaskar Varman of Assam, Bhandi's report to Harsha on Rajasri's flight to the Vindhyas, Bhandi's march against the Gauda ruler, and Harsha's agonizing search for his sister. The last chapter describes the religious and philosophical sects centred around the Buddhist sage Divakara Mitra, the frustration of Rajyasri, the pledge of Harsha to avenge the death of his brother-in-law and also the murder of his brother, and his return to the imperial camp.

The points in dispute relating to Bana's version of Harsha are the following. In the first place, Bana claims that Harsha actually installed Bhaskar Varman on the throne. Secondly, the rulers of the different regions owed their appointments to him. Thirdly, the ruler of Kashmir surrendered the tooth relic of the Buddha to Harsha. Fourthly, the ruler of Sind was stripped of his royal fortune. Fifthly, Bana does not mention anything about the defeat suffered by Harsha at the hands of Pulakesin. Sixthly, Bana states that the elephants and horses were not unharnessed for six years and that Harsha conquered the 'Five Indies'. Seventhly, his evaluation of the internal administration is full of panegyrics—no forged documents, no mutilation of offenders, no quarrels about the recovery of debts, and no occasion to resort to the courts of justice. All these remarks of Bana should be taken with a pinch of salt in view of the fact that they differ materially with available information.

The account of Hiuen-Tsang, Harsha's friend and protege, is very sketchy compared to the detailed description of Bana. Neither was he less blind in his admiration of Harsha.

The controversial points in Hiuen-Tsang's accounts are the following. First, his praise of his patron is an eulogy. At one place he writes, "He was indefatigable and the day was too short for him." At another place he writes, "His qualifications moved heaven and earth, his sense of justice was admired by the gods and men. His renown spread out everywhere. To describe all his conduct would be to tell again the deeds of Sudhama. He forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works." Secondly, his statement that Harsha had 60,000 elephants appears to be an exaggeration. His other statement that after six years of struggle and fighting against the 'Five Indies', Harsha enjoyed peace for 30 years without resorting to arms, is definitely false. Thirdly, his fulsome praise for the character of the
people was disproved by his own entourage being attacked by robbers.

Fourthly, his remark that 1/4th of the revenue from the crown-lands was earmarked for rewarding scholars or literary men is definitely an exaggeration. Fifthly, his praise of Harsha on account of his predilection for Buddhism is uncalled for because Harsha’s affinity to Buddhism is in no way contrary to the eclectic tradition of ancient India. At one place he states: “At the royal lodges every day viands were provided for 1000 Buddhist monks and also 500 Brahmans. The King’s day was divided into three periods, of which one was given to the affairs of government, and two were devoted to religious work.” Dr. R.C. Majumdar states that his account of the Prayag quinquennial conference is very likely a perversion of truth. Of course, the information as given by him about the quinquennial assembly, on the condition of Kanauj, on the declining nature of Buddhism in the different parts of India, are quite valuable.

Regarding the exaggerations of Bana and Hiuen-Tsang incidental reference has already been made. Apart from this, the praise of these two friends is not reliable because of the following reasons also. The unity maintained by Harsha was superficial. In northern India the Maukharis ruled independently over the eastern portion of their hereditary dominions. Madhava Gupta of Magadha was a powerful ruler. The Maitrekas of Vallabhi and Bhaskar Varman were hardly vassals of the empire. The administrative system was not too good either. Even the Gauda ruler, against whom Harsha took an oath of vengeance, remained powerful till his death in 637 A.D. And this Gauda ruler was subdued by Bhaskar Varman of Kamarupa, not by Harsha. The Chinese chroniclers record serious disturbances from 618 to 627 A.D. Harsha was defeated by Pulakesin in 634 A.D. A. record of the Gurjaras of Broach refers to the defeat of Harsha by a prince of Vallabhi. After his death, one of his ministers usurped the throne. All this goes to show that the picture was not as rosy as presented by Bana and Hiuen-Tsang.

In spite of these unfavourable facts, Harsha was undoubtedly a great monarch. At one time the ruler of Kamarupa was constrained not to detain a Chinese pilgrim against the will of this mighty ally. The rulers of Kashmir, Sind, Vallabhi and Kamarupa feared and also respected him. Sasanka was forced to withdraw, leaving Kanauj alone. Even after his defeat in the south, he was the only one ruler entitled to use music-page drums. Added to this, his sense of duty, literary merits, patronage of scholars and unheard of philanthropy are remarkable.

That is why the comment of a writer, “Harsha himself was a dazzling personality and that alone gave a semblance of unity to the empire which extended from the Indus to the Brahmaputra.” After
all, Harsha ruled from Kanauj, a capital around which swirled all the centrifugal forces that were let loose because of the Huna inroads and the decline of the Gupta empire. The very fact that Kanauj became the cynosure of all the neighbours from 647 to 1206 speaks volumes. Thus, without denying to Harsha what undoubtedly is his, we have to beware of the presence of his two Boswells with their bloated versions of Harsha.

36. **Note on the Administration of Harsha**

What is known as the administration of Harsha is a name-sake. True, information on the administration of Harsha is meagre; and it does not indicate anything like an integrated system of administration. However, the only relieving feature of this meagre picture is the striking personality of Harsha.

The first point that strikes us is Harsha's belief in travel as a necessity for the success of administration. The Chinese pilgrim writes that "If there was any irregularity in the manners of the people in the cities, he went amongst them." From the inscriptions also we gather the names of two places that he had stayed during his travels. From the material it is also known that Harsha travelled in great state. His camps looked very impressive because he was surrounded by a large number of guests. This fact indicates that the king was also one of the most hard working officials. The Chinese pilgrim writes, "The king's day was divided into three periods, of which one was given to affairs of government, and two were devoted to religious work. He was indefatigable, and the day was too short for him." The way in which the sovereign worked was recorded by Bana also.

In actual system of administration, the chief minister of the state was next to the sovereign. Probably a *mantri parisad* existed. According to the version of Bhandi, a cousin of Rajayavardhana, Harsa's accession to the throne was approved by the council of ministers. This account is corroborated by the Chinese pilgrim. Further, it is known that Avanti was the supreme minister of war and peace, according to Bana. A few other names also are known: Simhanada was Harsa's *senapati*. Harsha treated him with great respect as he was a scholarly man. Apart from these names, we hear of a handful of officials who themselves were chiefs. This shows that in all probability Harsha's sovereignty was of a confederate nature.
According to the Chinese traveller, both ministers and officials received their salaries in grants of lands. One-fourth of the crown land was set apart for the endowment of great public servants and another one-fourth for the expenses of government and state worship. It is maintained by Radha Kumud Mookerji that the military service was paid in cash.

The army of Harsha composed of the four traditional elements. Harsha’s army probably had 60,000 elephants and 100,000 horses. Although the emperor maintained such a vast army, some of the regions were not free from brigands as the Chinese pilgrim was waylaid. However, it is generally agreed that lawlessness was not the order of the day. There were plots against kings including one against Harsha. The offender was punished by imprisonment for life, but for offences against social morality the punishment was either mutilation of limbs or deportation of the offender. Trial by ordeal was in force. In this manner, justice probably was really harsh while the Chinese pilgrim maintains that the government was very generous and did not make any large demands either upon the liberties or pockets of the people. Even taxation was very light. It is said that the revenue derived from the crown lands amounted to only one-sixth of the crop, according to the traditional standard.

Regarding the administration in the provinces and the villages, very meagre information is available. The territory of the empire was called Rajya or Desa. The administrative divisions are not always the same as in the inscriptions. Normally, they were in descending order of bhukti, visaya and grama. The governor of the province was, at times, a member of the royal family. The governor in his turn appointed his subordinate officials. Probably, the officials mentioned in the Gupta period continued to work in the time of Harsha. Besides the officials of the state, the non-official element was also associated with local administration. The Madhuban Plate of King Harsha announces the grant of an agrahara to some persons in the presence of all his chief officers and the resident people who were all summoned as witnesses to this transaction. This fact shows the democratic quality of Harsha’s administration. Some such orders of the king were at times signed by himself. For example, the Banskhera Plate of Harsha was signed by him and described as one given under his own hand and seal. Very often the king’s orders were delivered through messengers to the local officers, who, in turn, drew up the necessary charter and handed over the grant to the grantees. Moreover, the maintenance of law and order also involved great number of military and executive officers. At times some of the high offices were combined in one and the same person.
Finally, regarding fiscal administration we gather some information from the inscriptions regarding the grants of land to the people. In all probability land was surveyed, measured and divided into holdings with well-defined boundaries. The holdings were of different sizes. At times these were served by common land, which in certain cases had irrigation wells. The names of the owners of the land were entered in the village records. It also appears that the record of the village census was also kept. Although we do not clearly know how much was taken in the form of revenue, it is certain that it was only a modest percentage of the total yield. An additional source of revenue was from trade, and duties at ferries and barrier stations.

In this manner, we have a very sketchy knowledge of what is known as the administration of Harsha. In general we have to state that his administration was conducted on the same lines as was done during the days of Guptas. Indeed the administration was not well integrated because Harsha’s domain itself was so shaky. However, the fact that the king devoted himself to the welfare of the people by travelling in the country, and the generosity with which he gave grants, go to prove that he was one in the line of illustrious rulers of India like Asoka and Shivaji.

37. An Analytical Portrayal of Life During the Age of Harsha

The age of Harsha was a turbulent one from the standpoint of politics; neither was the administrative system of a high order. Yet, the general life of the people was a prosperous one.

In estimating the social life of the people during the time of Harsha, we have to keep in view the administration of Harsha, because, the social life of a people anywhere in olden days was, to some extent, influenced by the administrative system. Regarding the administration, we can gather valuable information from Hiuen-Tsang’s writings. This writer attributes commendable administrative vigilance to Harsha, who made tours of inspection throughout his kingdom. Harsha undertook certain benevolent activities like the construction of roads, sarais, hospitals etc. The Chinese traveller states: “As the government is generous, official requirements are few. Families are not registered and individuals are not subject to forced labour contributions...The king’s tenants pay 1/6th of the produce as the rent.”
But, in the field of justice, cruel punishments continued on. Trial by ordeal was employed. But the traveller maintains that as the government was honestly administered and the people lived on good terms, the criminal class was small. Yet, at another place, he remarks: "For offences against social morality and disloyal and inferior conduct the punishment is to cut off the nose or an ear or a hand or a foot or to banish the offender to another country or into the wilderness."

Apart from the judicial administration of Harsha, a few more points relating to the political life of the country should be taken account of. In most cases kingship was hereditary. Although at times a king was nominated by his predecessor; and sometimes, elected by the people or the nobles. The southern king, Nandivarman, was raised to the throne by the mula prakritis. At Thaneswar the crown was offered to Harsha by a council of nobles headed by Bhandi. Secondly, the divinity of kingship was widely recognized. Thirdly, the tradition that the welfare of the king depends on the welfare of the people was still acted upon. Fa-Hien, Hiuen-Tsang and Suleiman record that rulers did their best to live up to this ancient maxim. Fourthly, quite a number of important rulers showed a love of learning and patronized the arts. Harsha, Mahendravarman, Amoghavarsha I, Bhoja of Dhara, Someswara III of Kalyan and Ballala Sena of Bengal were writers of no mean repute. Fifthly, the king was all important even though he was assisted by ministers. Manu's recommendation of a council of 7 or 8 ministers was normally followed. Sixthly, the chief source of revenue was one-sixth of the produce of land. A few other taxes were imposed on ports, ferries etc. Apart from taxation, the royal treasury secured income from royal lands, mines etc., and tributes from vassals. Finally, the kingdoms were divided into units for the convenience of administration and the royal armies mostly relied on elephants, infantry and cavalry. From the features delineated above, one can safely deduce that the political structure did impinge upon the lives of the people.

Relating to social life, Hiuen-Tsang mentions four chief castes and also innumerable sub-castes. But, Bana mentions that castes mixed freely. Bana even makes mention of his two brothers born of Sudras. The Chinese traveller, Hiuen-Tsang, refers to the prohibition on the marriage of widows and the custom of sati. Yet, women were not regarded as inferior to men. Some of the royal ladies in India were skilled in music and dancing. Rajyasri sat along with Harsha and listened to the discourses on Buddhism. Interestingly Hiuen-Tsang notes the absence of tailors and shoe-makers; the simplicity of brahmmins and kshatriyas; the luxuries of king's nobles and rich men; the honesty and the morality of the people because of the fear of retribution in lives to come; and, the suicide of very
old men or people afflicted with incurable diseases in the Ganges. Another interesting point mentioned by him is the etiquette of lifting the turban as a mark of greeting in social gatherings. Regarding the people, the traveller notes that they were hasty and indecisive, but moral. The people were not deceitful by nature and valued their pledges and promises. The country was prosperous. Vegetables and minerals were abundant. Fish and mutton were consumed occasionally. Onions and garlic were not much used.

Coming to the cultural life of the people, we cannot ignore the contribution of Harsha to it. Harsha is reputed to have written three dramas called, the Ratnavali, Priadarsika and Nagananda in Sanskrit. The Chinese traveller, I-tsing says that Harsha versified the story of Jimutavahana in Nagananda and was extremely fond of literature. It is even said that the Banskhera and Madhuban copper-plate inscriptions were probably composed by Harsha himself. The other works attributed to him are the two Sanskrit stotras in praise of the Buddha and a work on grammar. Regarding Harsha’s patronage of literature, there is no iota of doubt. I-tsing testifies to this. Bana was the chief poet who wrote Kadambari and is also supposed to have written the Parvati Parinay and the Chandisakata. Another writer, Mayura, was a master of erotic poetry. Another literary figure was Matanga Divakara.

Apart from the royal court, intellectual activity in sylvan ashramas was prolific. Bana gives a detailed account of the ashramas of the Buddhist sage Divakara Mitra in the Vindhayas. In a general manner, Hiuen-Tsang credits the people of the middle country with clearness and correctness of speech. According to him, children were taught the five subjects of grammar, mechanical arts, medicine, logic and philosophy from the seventh year onwards. He was all praise for the great scholars of the day. Among the educational centres, the most famous was the Nalanda university. It attained international repute. It was patronized by Kumara Gupta I, and also by Harsha. The famous teachers of the university were Dignaga, Dharmapala and Silabhadra. The second one, Dharmapala, originally belonged to the city of Kanchi and wrote books on Buddhist logic and metaphysics. It was during the time of Silabhadra that Hiuen-Tsang visited Nalanda. Even though the university was a Mahayana institution, brahminical subjects like the Veda were included in the curricula. Those who sought admission in the university were first examined by the keepers of the gate. Perhaps, there was no corrupt one among them. It is said that not more than 30% of the candidates could pass this examination of the gate-keepers! There was no fee for education, and even boarding, lodging and clothing were free. The university derived its revenues from the villages granted to it by the king. During the time of Hiuen-Tsang there were
about 10,000 students and women were also included in it. I-tsing says that the discipline was strict at Nalanda. Sanskrit was the medium of instruction. The method of teaching was primarily tutorial even though there were some lectures. Time was regulated by a water-clock. I-tsing says that there were 8 halls and 300 rooms in this university. It possessed an observatory and a laboratory also.

With regard to art we have to state that there was not much of an improvement on that of the Guptan style. The accounts of Hiuen-Tsang refer to a copper statue of the Buddha. The brick temple of Laxmana at Sirpur is one of the most beautiful in India, unsurpassed in the richness and refinement of its ornaments.

Coming to the field of religion, we have to state that it was a remarkable era. In the Gupta period brahminism re-asserted itself. In this period the reading of the Gita was extensively done by the intelligentsia. The leader of the Hindu reformation, Sankara, in the 8th century, commented upon it. By the time of Alberuni it was so popular that Alberuni quotes that text at many places.

The reorganization of Hinduism in the Gupta age witnessed a reversal. Some developed the great doctrines of mimamsa. This doctrine was earlier to the Gupta age but it became popular with Prabhakara at the end of the sixth century. Another great exponent of it was Kumarila in the 7th century. This doctrine is primarily concerned with the technique of thought; and so, it is only concerned with rituals. "The Mimamsa lives in a world of self-revealed Vedas and is concerned only with a correct performance of the rites as laid down." As a matter of fact, this doctrine was supposed to counteract the Puranic religion of the people which became popular from the Gupta period onwards. It is in contradiction to the idea of a popular personal deity which is to be realized either through bhakti or yoga. Luckily, this barren ritualism was attacked by Sankara in the 8th century. Here we must also note that Buddhism was steadily on the decline. Hiuen-Tsang noted the decay of Buddhism even though he was not conscious of it. Finally, we have to state that Jainism gained popularity in Kanara, in certain parts of U.P. and in Bengal.

Thus, there is nothing unique about the life of people during the age of Harsha. The life of the past was continued—the creative urge witnessed in the Gupta period, probably, continued on. Yet, as the future was to prove, the quiet greatness of this age was only an afterglow. 
38. **Accounts of the Chinese Travellers—Comments**

Insufficient, controversial, questionable and prejudicial—such being the nature of the sources of ancient Indian history, a study of the period is like skating on thin ice, both to the student and the historian. Fortunately, the accounts left by the Chinese travellers like, Fa-Hien, Hiuen-Tsang, and I-ting throw a searchlight on some obscure aspects of the history of India. In particular, the interest of their accounts consists in their graphic descriptions of the life of Indian people. After all, as Macaulay says, "Real history is not achieved by armies or conquests made by statesmen; it is not sanctioned by treaties, or recorded in archives; and so, the upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which you can judge the direction in which the under current of history flows." Hence, the accounts of these foreigners are of immense value to a student of Indian history.

Fa-Hien started for India in 396 A.D. to collect authentic texts regarding Buddhism. He travelled through the Gobi desert, the mountainous region of Khotan, the Pamir plateau, Swat, and Gandhara, and then passed through Taxila. In India proper, he visited places like Peshawar, Mathura, Kanauj, Sravasti, Benares, Kapilavastu, Vaisali, Pataliputra and many other places. He was in India till the year 414 A.D. It was in this year that he took a ship from the port of Tamralipti (in Bengal) for Ceylon and Java on his homeward voyage. Fa-Hien returned home passing along the coast of the Ganges. He first touched Champa after arossing the sea. He stayed in Ceylon for two years and obtained copies of some sacred scripts. From there he left by a ship to his homeland. On his way he visited Java and found brahminism there while Buddhism was in an unsatisfactory condition.

Strangely enough, in his description of India Fa-Hien does not mention the name of the reigning monarch, Chandra Gupta II (Vikramaditya). But he speaks about the conditions in the country in that period. He stayed in Pataliputra for three years and studied Sanskrit. He noticed two Buddhist monasteries in the city, which served as the centres of the Hinayana and Mahayana learning. On his way from the frontier to the capital, he witnessed Buddhism flourishing along the banks of the Jumna, and at Mathura alone he counted twenty monasteries. He was much enthralled by the ruins of Ashoka's magnificent palace. He remarked
that the structure was made by 'spirits', all built by spirits who piled up stone.

Writing about the people, Fa-Hien remarks that the government was lenient. The Guptan taxation system was varied, but not indiscriminate. Regular salaries were paid to soldiers and officials. The morality of the people was very high, since he was never waylaid on his journeys. Fa-Hien speaks in eulogistic terms of the government in Madhyadesha and the benevolence of the people, especially, of the monied classes. In general, the people of the country were rich and prosperous. There were rest-houses in large towns as well as along the highways. He also pays brilliant tribute to the habits of the people. The people were numerous and happy; they were not to register their households. Nor did they attend to any magistrates or their rulers. Talking on the tenants of crown lands Fa-Hien writes "If they want to go, they go. If they want to stay, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishment." Further, he notes that the people of Madhyadesha (upper Gangetic valley) were vegetarians and devoted to ahimsa. No living beings were killed and no drinks were taken—nor onions. Chandelas (untouchables) were segregated.

The significance of his account is three-fold. First, his remarks show how successful was the administration of Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya. Secondly, he also hints that Buddhism was popular in the Punjab and Bengal, but not in Madhyadesha. This shows that Buddhism started declining in the land of its birth. Fa-Hien visited the sacred places of Buddhism like Sarvasti and others. Talking of this region Fa-Hien writes there were a large number of heretics, that is, non-Buddhists. He found Kapilavastu in a dilapidated condition and the surrounding area infested by wild beasts. Thirdly, the prevalence of law and order in the country, as evidenced by his safe journey, testifies that the country was better administered than in the ensuing period when Hiuen-Tsang visited it; but no other source throws light on this matter.

The second important traveller, Hiuen-Tsang, came to India overland sometime in the 30's of the seventh century A.D. He left India in 643 A.D. and returned to China overland through Kashgar, Yarkhand and Khotan. He was the son of a learned Chinese gentleman. He started his travels at the age of 29. From 629 to 645 he was on his feet. Out of this period he spent eight years in the empire of Harsha. His interest in coming to India was to procure authentic scriptures and to acquire first-hand knowledge of the Buddha. His narrative is highly interesting. He travelled on land and passed through various countries. From 630 onwards, he was in India. By the end of 643, he visited almost every province in India and recorded his impressions on the monuments, people
and religion. On his way back, he chose the land route. This time he went by the southern route and reached home in 645. From then onwards, he spent his time studying the valuable collection of manuscripts, images and relics that he had brought from India. He was assisted by a staff of scholars. He died in 664 at the age of 64. For his scholarlyness he was conferred the title of the Master of Law by the Chinese emperor. In the words of V.A. Smith, "It is impossible to over-estimate the debt which the history of India owes to Hiuen-Tsang."

Hiuen-Tsang records important information about the cruelties of the Huns, Toramana and Mihiragula. He throws an interesting side-light on the difficulties of Harsha, as seen from his statement that Harsha reluctantly ascended the throne. He gives a praiseworthy account of the capital, Kanauj. The capital was strongly defended with mighty structures. The city was beautified by many gardens and rare flowers, which were collected from different countries of the world. Hiuen-Tsang writes that Harsha never showed strong predilections toward Hinduism, but his remark is to be taken with a pinch of salt.*

He attended the famous conference at Prayag on the invitation of Harsha. At this conference, Harsha distributed to the poor and the needy all the treasures that he had accumulated in the preceding five years. Presents were given to Buddhists, brahmins and other sectarians, who were dubbed significantly as heretics by Hiuen-Tsang. He praises Harsha unreservedly. "His qualifications moved heaven and earth; his sense of justice was admired. To describe all his conduct would be to tell again the deeds of Sudama (the hero of a Buddhist Jataka story). He forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works." In addition to these points, Hiuen-Tsang also sings the glories of the administration. Taxes were light and the people were not subject to arbitrary tyranny.

The accounts of Hiuen-Tsang throw valuable light on the education of the day. Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhist

*"Even making due allowance for the pompous rhetoric of Bana bhatta and the enthusiastic exaggeration of Hiuen-Tsang, the narratives leave no doubt that Harsha was a ruler of versatile ability and wonderful personality. Naturally Hiuen-Tsang has given more details of the religious beliefs and activities of Harsha. Any one who goes through the pilgrim's bulky volumes is struck by his enthusiasm, bordering almost on fanaticism, in matters concerning Buddhist religion. He was so much blinded by faith and devotion that he even describes supernatural phenomena as happening before his very eyes." R.C. Majumdar
learning. The pilgrim records interesting details about the Nalanda university. Scholars to this university came from as far as Mongolia. It accommodated 10,000 scholars. Its endowments were the gift of six kings. Harsha's gift to the university was a vihara of bronze or brass which was one-hundred feet high. Not only instructions were given gratis but the scholars were provided free boarding, lodging, clothes and medical aid. The university derived its revenues from the rich estates conferred by the six kings. The method of learning was dialectical. Interestingly, only two or three out of every ten succeeded in gaining admission to the university, the majority being forced to withdraw after an unsuccessful exchange of views with the gatekeeper (probably the warden). Still more interesting is the fact that the scholars and teachers of the university belonged to different sects or schools of thought. The distinguished scholars and teachers of the day were Dharmapala, Chandrapala, Jinamitra, and Silabhadrā. The subjects that were taught at the university were not confined to Buddhism alone. The Vedas, logic, grammar, medicine, yoga and other philosophies, were discussed.

Another seat of famous learning was the one run by Divakaramitra in the Vindhya forests. In this sylvan retreat, situated in the Vindhya forests, students, differing in beliefs, gathered in quest of truth which was the primary object of the university.

Hiuen-Tsang records the material progress of the country. The older places of importance like Pataliputra were on the ware, but there were a large number of cities; and Kanauj was impressive with its lofty structures, beautiful gardens and a museum of rareties. The citizens wore costly garments.

The building of residential houses received particular attention by the artists. Most of the cities were surrounded by tall walls and they were built with brick. The walls of houses were built, either out of bamboo, or wood. The richmen's houses had so many amenities like halls and terraces. White-washing was known. In brief, private houses were sumptuous inside, while being simple outside. The pilgrim also mentions about the furniture of the houses. He particularly mentions seats which were corded benches, while the frames of the seats were framed in so many different ways.

Hiuen-Tsang also mentions some facts about town planning. According to him, the major highways were narrow; otherwise towns were built according to certain principles. Shops were located along the roads. Persons pursuing menial occupations were made to live outside the precincts of the city, like butchers, scavengers, fishermen etc. Also their houses were marked with distinguishing signs,
Writing on the industrial life, Hiuen-Tsang mentions that caste determined the industrial organisation of society. The brahmans had no share in it, as they confined themselves to spiritual matters of life. Administration was the concern of kshatriyas; trade that of Vaishyas; and agriculture that of Sudras. Speaking in general on the prosperity of the nation the traveller mentions that gold, silver and crystal lenses were in great abundance.

Apart from these compliments that he bestows on the administration, he makes certain interesting observations on the people of India. The people’s inner clothing and outer attire had no tailoring. Women wore a long robe which covered both the shoulders and fell down loose. Garlands were worn. About character, he says, the people were hasty and irresolute in temperament. He mentions the efforts made by the people to maintain cleanliness. Apart from physical cleanliness, the life of the people was governed by ethical principles. However, in course of time the upper classes were not so pure and puritanical. Talking of marriage system, he says that there were no second marriages. Household utensils were mostly earthenware. Gold and silver were abundant but were primarily used for coinage.

Apart from this account, he also gives us some information about the regions beyond the dominion of Harsha. In the north, Kashmir was a powerful kingdom. The Punjab, between the Indus and River Beas, was one kingdom with Sakala or Sialkot as the capital. Sind was ruled by a Buddhist monarch. There were about ten thousand Buddhist monks in the country, but most of them were idle or self-indulgent. He also visited the kingdom of the Chalukyas. He remarks about them that the king was much feared and the people were of stern character.

Hiuen-Tsang also gives valuable data on certain southern kingdoms. He visited Kanchi when the Pallava king Narasinhaavarman was ruling. The pilgrim states that there were 100 Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 monks in Kanchi alone. He says, “The people esteemed great learning....not far from the south of the capital was a large monastery which was the rendezvous for the most eminent men of the country.” He also visited the territory of the western Chalukyas when the ruling monarch was Pulakesin. He records, “The inhabitants were proud-spirited and war-like, grateful of favours and revengeful for wrongs, self-sacrificing towards suppliants in distress and sanguinary death to any who treated them insultingly.” The next country visited by him was Andhradesa. He pays tribute to the Vengi kingdom. There were 20 monasteries and 3,000 monks in Vengi.
The importance of the pilgrimage of Hiuen-Tsang lies in the fact that he gives us some authentic information about the reign of Harsha even though it is coloured. Regarding religion, Hiuen-Tsang records that Shiva worship was the most important in Benaras. There were more than 100 temples and some of the devotees cut off their hair, some went about naked, and some smeared ashes. There were Hindu temples in Bodh Gaya also. At Mathura, the pilgrim noticed the images of Sariputra, Upali, Ananda and Rahula. Hiuen-Tsang says that special attention was paid by Harsha to Buddhism. According to him, Harsha built a large number of chapels and liberally adorned them along the banks of the Ganges.

The narration of Hiuen-Tsang shows that brahminism was on the ascendancy. According to this traveller, India, at that time, was known as the country of brahmins. The traveller noticed that Sanskrit was the language of the cultured classes and it was imitated by Buddhist preachers. Added to this, he also records the existence of a large number of Brahmanical sects like the followers of Kapila, Kanada and so on. With regard to Buddhism the Chinese traveller confirms the earlier belief that there were 18 different schools of thought. His reference to the idleness of the Buddhist monks is ominous. This shows how Buddhism had declined more than what it had when Fa-Hien visited the country.

The third important traveller was I-tsing who left China for India in 761 A.D. He stayed in Sumatra for six months to learn Sanskrit. He visited Nalanda, Rajagraha, Bodh Gaya, Vaisali, Kusinagara, Sravasti and Benares. He studied at Nalanda for ten years and after collecting the scriptures, left by sea. He records the Buddhist practices of the day. He notes down that the monasteries had degenerated and discipline had become lax. Of all things noted down by him, the most important one is the account of Nalanda university. He talks in laudatory language about great religious thinkers and literary men like, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Asvaghosha, Dharmapala etc.

Whatever might be the shortcomings of their records; we must stress the fact that the accounts of the two Chinese travellers, Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang are of immense value to the student of ancient history. The material for the construction of ancient Indian history is meagre and controversial, and it would have been much worse but for the accounts left by travellers like Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang.*

*Gokhale says "Comparing the three accounts we see how social and economic conditions in the country were in the process of gradual but decisive change, and how the caste system as well as Contd. on Page 152
Therefore, we must regard their accounts as valuable treasure-troves for the construction of the history of ancient India. And here is a tribute to the thousands of Chinese pilgrims apart from the famous three, by Rawlinson: "Nothing could exceed the devotion of these old travellers, who spent years in crossing the burning deserts and snowy mountains in fulfilment of their self-imposed tasks. Some perished of cold or thirst; others were killed by brigands; others again were drowned in attempting to return to China by sea."

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its corollary, untouchability, had begun to compartmentalize Indian society. The disturbed conditions after the downfall of the Guptas were reflected in the conditions of travel, and generally life was becoming more insecure and there was all round anxiety. These accounts also reflect something of the passion for learning and wisdom which inspired people in ancient India."

39. A Resume of the Four Buddhist Councils and the History of Buddhism

The history of India is rarely the history of institutions, it is more a history of great personalities, both political and religious. An exception to this generalization in Indian history is the history of the Buddhist sangha. This is in appearance only; for, the sangha could not evolve itself into an institution moulding the lives of its followers as papacy did in Europe. Yet, Buddhism too, carried out its periodic house-cleaning just as papacy.

During the life of the Buddha, the sangha or the order of ascetics, came into existence. In general, the sangha undertook the responsibility of maintaining the purity of Buddhism. The first council of the sangha was convened at Rajagriha immediately after the parinirvana of the Buddha. It is said that Mahakassapa presided over the deliberation of the assembly of monks and that he was assisted by two important disciples of the Buddha, Upali and Ananda. The council met primarily with the object of maintaining the purity of the Master’s teachings as known to them.

According to the evidence available, the following points relating to the first council are known. Subhadda, a disciple, exhorted the assembly of monks to stop grieving for the Buddha and even
enjoined them to consider the Buddha's death as a good riddance. He argued that their Master too often treated them as school boys; and therefore, they should now feel themselves free. The moment Subhadda spoke in the above manner, Mahakassapa was enraged and expressed his concern for the future safety of the dharma as preached by the Master. This anxiety was justifiable because Mahakassapa had had received the garment of the Master as a symbol of authority. Emboldened by this heirloom, Mahakassapa took upon himself the responsibility of preserving the purity of the Master's teachings.

He took the initiative to choose 499 bhikshus to form the council. A simple procedure was followed. Mahakassapa asked questions on the Vinaya of the venerable Upali. Based on the answers of Upali, the Vinaya text was agreed upon by the council. The dharma was compiled under the guidance of Ananda. Further, it is said, that the other texts of Buddhism were also compiled by the bhikshus.

In general, the first council achieved the following results: the settlement of the Vinaya under the guidance of Upali; the settlement of the text of the dharma under the guidance of Ananda; and the punishment of one Channa. The foreign scholar, Oldenberg, is sceptical about the authenticity of the first council. But the traditions of all the schools of Buddhism mention this council. Even though they differ on minor details; all the traditions do agree on the convocation of the first council.

The second council was held a century after the maha parinirvana of the Master. It was convened at Vaisali. And the occasion for the summoning of a council arose in the following manner. At one time the monks of the Vajji country got into the habit of practising some principles which were regarded as unorthodox by others. The controversy between the Vajji monks and their opponents grew very serious. The other school was led by one Yasa. Yasa won over the laity by his eloquence. This made the monks of Vajji furious and they expelled Yasa. Then, Yasa sent messengers to the bhikshus of the western country of Avanti and also to the southern country, inviting them all to decide on the purity of the Vinaya. Meantime, the Vajji monks, too, had enlisted support. They requested a venerable monk called Rebata to take up their cause. He refused and suggested an assemblage of monks to settle the dispute. Both the camps sent their representatives to Vaisali. Thus met the second Buddhist council consisting of 700 monks.

In the beginning, the assembly indulged in fruitless discussion. A little later, the matter was referred to a committee consisting of
four monks both from the east and the west, which unanimously decided that the conduct of the Vajji monks was sacrilegious. Once again, some scholars doubt the genuineness of this council too. But one cannot dispute the summoning of this council, because this council led to a split in the Buddhist church, which is confirmed by later evidence.

The third council was convened at Pataliputra under the aegis of Asoka. The occasion for summoning the council arose because of different sects putting forward their rival claims to authority. It is said that Tissa Moggaliputra converted Asoka to Buddhism. After the conversion of Asoka, the monasteries grew in riches; and this prosperity of the monasteries attracted a larger number of heretics to join the ranks of the Buddhist order. Even after joining the sangha, they adhered to their old faiths and even preached them as though they were those of the Buddha. Because of this confusion, for seven years no pavarana ceremony was held in any of the monasteries; for, the faithful monks refused to observe this festival in the presence of heretics. This worried Tissa Moggaliputra.

At this juncture, Asoka sent a message to the sangha stating that the festival should be observed. The minister, who was entrusted with the delivery of the message, misunderstanding its purport, beheaded several monks for refusing to abide by the instructions of the message. Asoka was conscience-stricken; and he asked the brotherhood to judge whether he was guilty, or not, of these murders. In the end Tissa was prevailed upon to come down to Pataliputra. He was then asked to perform a miracle, which was instantly performed. Then Tissa gave judgment saying that there was no guilt without evil intent.

After the judgement had been pronounced, the king assembled the whole of the bhikshu community and asked it to expound on the teachings of the Blessed One, the Buddha. The heretical monks who numbered 60,000 were expelled by Asoka. The assembly then came to the conclusion that the true doctrine was the vibhajjavada, that is, the religion of analytical reasoning. This conclusion was confirmed by the Thera. Then Asoka requested the monks to perform the ceremony of pavarana, so that the whole community might be purified of the evil elements. And after the ceremony was over, Thera Tissa elected a thousand bhikshus who were well-versed in the Tripitakas. In the three books compiled by the first council after deliberations spread over nine months, the first, Sutta Pitaka, dealt with the actual sayings of the Buddha; the second, Vinaya Pitaka, with the rules governing the conduct of monks and nuns; and the third, Abhudharma Pitaka, with the philosophic doctrine.

One of the chief consequences of this council was the sending of missionaries to different parts of the world. We all know how
only one of these missions bore fruit: the one headed by Mahendra, brother of Asoka, and his daughter, Sangamitra, to Ceylon.

Finally, the fourth council was convened under the aegis of Kanishka. It is almost established that the council was held about 100 A.D. but there is no unanimity regarding the place where it was held: some scholars opine it was at Jullundur; and others, Kashmir. Apart from this, the southern Buddhists did not recognize the council because no mention of it is made in the chronicles of Ceylon.

As far as the information available to us goes, one important consequence of the council was the settlement of the differences in the brotherhood. Surprisingly, all the eighteen sects of Buddhism were regarded as the repositories of the genuine doctrine. It was the summoning of the fourth council that prompted the king to build a monastery for the accommodation of 500 monks. Further, these 500 monks were called upon to write commentaries on the Tripitaka. And it is significant to note that the deliberations of the council were primarily concerned with the composition of the commentaries. Another interesting point to be noted is that the Mahayana school of Buddhism was not represented at this council. According to Kalhana’s Rajatarangini, this doctrine came into existence only after Nagarjuna, who was born after the council was held. The last but one point to be noted is the inscribing of the treatises on copper plates, which were later deposited in a stupa built for that purpose. The last point is that the deliberations of the council were conducted in Sanskrit. In other words, Sanskrit was henceforth confirmed as the vehicle for Buddhist scriptures. This was a pointer to the future because Buddhism lost its identity from the moment it too, used the Sanskrit language just like Hinduism.

All told, a resume of the four Buddhist councils shows that things did not go all that well with Buddhism down from the parinirvana of the Blessed One. Buddhism held its head high primarily because of patrons like Ajatasatru, Asoka, Menander and Kanishka. But the moment royal patronage was not forthcoming, Buddhism declined fast.

With regard to the history of Buddhism, we know only a few points. This paucity of material in Indian history is because we never had any kind of historiography in the past. The Buddhist Jatakas, too, are of very little use because they are full of the miracles and the marvels of Buddhism. From the material that is available to us, we can narrate the history of Buddhism in the following manner.

The Buddha attained enlightenment when he was thirty-one years old. His first sermon was preached in the Deer Park at Sarnath
near Benaras. He attracted a great number of disciples and he lived into his eighties. The first king to be converted to Buddhism was Ajatasatru of Magadha. Then, the conversion of Asoka to Buddhism was momentous.

Buddhism entered its second phase with the conversion of Asoka to Buddhism. He was instrumental for summoning the third council. He also issued instructions for the maintenance of discipline in the Buddhist monasteries. We also know that Asoka sent missions abroad to propagate the doctrine. The success or failure of these missions is shrouded in obscurity, except for the mission sent to Ceylon.

The Sunga-Kanvas period constitutes the third phase in the history of Buddhism. With the coming of Pushyamitra Sunga, Buddhism lost royal patronage and was even subjected to persecution; but this was of no significance because Buddhism became a popular religion in this period. This popular support was at the root of the great progress made by Buddhism, according to P. C. Bagchi. This period also witnessed a large number of private donations to Buddhist establishments like the Bharhut stupa, the Karle caves, and the Sanchi stupa. It was during this period that Buddhism was adopted by the Greeks, in the north: the Greek king, Menander, who ruled from Sialkot, was a staunch patron of this creed. A great number of his successors patronized Buddhism. These Greek Buddhists were responsible for the new style of Buddhist art known as Gandhara art. From the time the Gandhara art came into existence the Buddha came to be worshipped in the form of images, making Buddhism a popular creed. Again, it was in this period that Buddhism spread to the south. The Buddhist school established at Vaisali was responsible for this propagation. The followers of the Vaisali school of Buddhism traced their lineage to Mahakassappa who was responsible for convening the first council. In the region of Dhanyakataka Buddhism was powerful; and the Satavahanas, although patrons of Brahminism, were tolerant of Buddhists. Their successors too, were of the same temperament. Naturally, Buddhism flourished in the south. It is to this period belong the three famous centres of Buddhist faith in the south, Amaravati, Goli and Nagarjunakonda. Above all, it was in this period that Buddhism came to be divided into eighteen sects. The emergence of these sects was more due to the geographical factors (distance) than because of doctrinal differences. The Buddhist sangha could not bring unity amongst all the sects and could not organize them into one brotherhood. And the emergence of the 18 sects shows that Buddhism was destined to suffer in the future.

Buddhism entered its next phase (the fourth) with the conversion of Kanishka. Under his aegis, the fourth council was summoned
It was during his time that Buddhist monks from India started propa-
gating Buddhism to central Asia and China. Again, it was during this
period that the Mahayana school of thought came into prominence.

With the advent of the Gupta dynasty (the fifth phase), Bud-
dhism once again received a new impetus. The Gupta emperors were
staunch Hindu monarchs but they were sympathetic toward the
cause of Buddhism: a number of inscriptions of this period show
that gifts were given by private donors to Buddhist establishments
in Kausambi, Sanchi, Bodh-Gaya and Mathura. The Chinese travel-
er, Fa-Hien, mentions the popularity of Buddhism in this period.
Fa-Hien found Buddhism flourishing especially in Gandhara,
Mathura, Kanauj and Tamralipti. Even the founding of the Nalanda
university was due to the patronage of the Gupta kings.

Yet, from the middle of the seventh century A.D. (the sixth
phase), Buddhism began to gradually decline. Indeed, Harsha was
a patron of Buddhism but Huen-Tsang records that the famous
centres of Buddhism were in ruins in Harsha’s time. Apart from
the patronage of Harsha, the Maitreka dynasty at Vallabhi was a
patron of Buddhism. Still Buddhism declined because it suffered a
lot from the Huna irruptions. After the death of Harsha, there was
almost anarchy in northern India.

However, Buddhism continued to be popular in eastern India
(the seventh phase), particularly because of the patronage of the
Pala dynasty. The kings of this dynasty gave endowments to the
Nalanda university and also founded new universities at Vikrama-
sila, Odantapuri and Somapuri. The Vikramasila replaced the
Nalanda in importance as a centre of learning after the first millen-
nium. But Buddhism continued to decline and the destruction of
the Buddhist universities by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1198 was the last
great event in the history of Buddhism in India.

In this manner, Buddhism had quite a chequered history. The
sangha failed to maintain unity and discipline. The emergence of
18 sects during the Sunga-Kanva period was a serious set-back. Even
royal patronage was of no avail. Asoka did propagate Buddhism,
but he also introduced a Trojan horse into Buddhism when he put
forward before his people svarga, a brahminical ideal, as the ultimate
goal. This compromising attitude of Asoka was ruinous because
ultimately Buddhism lost its hold mostly because of its inability to
keep itself distinct from Hinduism. When Sankaracharya and
Kumarilabhatta in the 8th century defeated the Buddhist scholars
in intellectual discussions the gist of their contention was that
Buddhism had nothing special to offer more than what Hinduism
could. In short, Buddhism, in a way, all through these centuries largely
remained a sect of Hinduism, and never could establish itself as a
separate religion with its own church, philosophy and metaphysics.
40. Origin of The Rajputs and Their Achievements—The History of The Pratiharas

The history of India is a veritable kaleidoscope. Periods of brightness and periods of darkness succeed each other as though Destiny had had willed them. One dark period is from the death of Harsha till the establishment of Muslim rule in India. In this dark period the one bright spot is the emergence of the Rajputs. The importance of the Rajputs consists in the fact that when the Hindu civilization became senile, it was this section of Hindu community that gave some dynamism to it.

Coming to the origin of the Rajputs, we have to admit that there is no unanimity of opinion among historians. Their tradition says that they were descendants of ksatriyas belonging to the Solar and Lunar dynasties. The theses of the writers, who champion the traditional view, is not corroborated by epigraphical evidence. For example, according to a Mewar tradition, the Ranas of Udaipur were the descendants of Rama (God), but in the oldest inscription it is said that the founder of the family was a brahmin.

The second version about their origin is that they were Scythians. There is some historical proof to show that the Sakas or the Scythians married Hindus. For instance, a Satavahana prince married Rudradaman’s daughter. Further, this thesis is inspired by the story of a Hindi poet called Chand in the twelfth century. According to the story the Agnikula Rajputs rose from a sacred fire-pit (agnikunda) after a ceremony performed at Mount Abu. It was the Paramars or Pawars who made the claim of emerging from the sacrificial pit near Mount Abu. Some contend that the theme suggests the purification of the foreigners before their recognition as Rajputs and ksatriyas.

This version of foreign origin is gaining more and more of credence. The available evidence goes to prove that most Rajputs are definitely of a foreign origin. Brahmins made vigorous efforts to give them an ancient royal leinage and gave them the status of ksatriyas. The brahmins also took elaborate pains to compile their genealogy so that their ancestry could be traced back from either the Solar or Lunar races. All this effort was keeping with the traditions of the Puranas. The word Rajput literally means not a race
or tribe, but a king of royalty or son of a king. Probably the brahmins, realizing that their own kings were not in a position to resist the incursions of the barbarians, admitted the martial section of these barbarians into the militant caste of Hindu social structure, that is, kshatriyas. The followers of the barbarians were probably classed as Sudras. The priestly section of the barbarians was probably given a sub-caste in the brahmin caste. For example, the Nagar brahmins are regarded as the descendants of foreign priests, while the Maga brahmins trace their ancestry to the Iranian magi. Thus, the tribes might have broken up into groups and then re-formed into castes. This view is substantiated by some of the alien habits of the Rajputs. For example, Rajputs eat all meat except beef. Again, the ceremony of jauhar by women and children after the fall of a fortress came form outside India. (Percival Spear)

A third school maintains that the Rajputs were of indigenous origin. This school maintains that those of the people who resided on the fringes of Hindustan, came to be Hinduized during the high tide of Harsha. For example the Chandelas are thought to be of Gond descent.

Historical material does not substantiate completely any one of these schools. The only thing that can be safely said about them is that they showed all the zeal of new-born converts. It is very likely that the Rajputs came from different sources. Maybe they were new converts to Hinduism as they came to develop a fraternity of their own.

About the achievements of the Rajput community, the one thing that can be safely asserted is that they were the political spearhead of Hindu civilization from the time the Muslims began to pour into India. Most of the epochal battles won by the Muslims and the Mughuls were fought against the Rajputs. The establishment of the Muslim kingdom in India became feasible only after the second battle to Thaneswar. In this battle, Prithviraj gathered a Hindu confederacy to defeat the Muslim invader. And the utter humiliation that befell the Hindus in this war directly contributed to the establishment of the Muslim kingdom by Qutab-ud-din. Again, in the Mughul period too, the decisive battles in the earlier periods were fought against the Rajputs. All of us are familiar with the victory of Babur at the battle of Khanua. Assessing the value of this battle, Rushbrook Williams says that from this time onwards, Babur did not fight for an empire, but for the extension of an empire. Later, even during the time of Akbar, the determined opposition of the day came from the Rajputs. Why, even Sher Shah thought it wise not to disturb the Rajputs. At one time Sher Shah remarked that for
a handful of *bajra* he almost came to lose his kingdom.* Chronologically, Hamir Deva of Mewar retook Chitor in 1326 and the Sultan of Delhi was forced to purchase his freedom by ceding the territories of Ajmer, Ranthambhor and Nagore together with 50 lakhs of rupees and a hundred elephants. From this time onwards, the rulers of Mewar used titles like Hindu Suraj and Hindupati. This claim was maintained later by Rana Kumbha and Rana Pratap in the Mughul period and ultimately by Shivaji.

Their importance was not primarily political. They left their mark on the administration of India also. From the time of Akbar onwards they shouldered the responsibility of the administration with enthusiasm equalling that of the Mughuls. Todar Mall, the architect of the Mughul revenue system, was a Rajput. We are also aware of the services rendered by persons like Man Singh and Jai Singh. When once the cooperation of the Rajputs was withdrawn, the decline of the Mughul empire was accelerated.

They also rendered momentous service to Hindu civilization in the form of patronizing Hindu religion and encouraging Hindu arts. In the gloomy days when Islamic hordes carried fire and sword into India, the Rajputs were able to afford shelter to Hindu religion. It was under their auspices that the cult of rivers came into vogue. Their patronage of art led to important developments later, the Kangra and Basholi schools of art.

To start with, four families dominated Rajput history. Among them the first was the Pratihara family. The Pratiharas, as we know, first began their history as a feudatory of the original Pratiharas. Later, they broke away and took imperial titles such as *Maharajasadhraja*. Branches of the main family ruled in the neighbouring regions as the feudatories of the newly emerged Pratihara family.

*"It is the undying glory of the Rajputs and their main claim to India's gratitude that the resistance to foreign invasion during the days of conquest was organised by them and kept up with continuous heroism for a period of four hundred years. When the Chauhan army met with disaster in the battle against Mohammed Ghori, the Rajput states lay disorganised and helpless for a short time. But a new family claimed the leadership and this was the Guhilot dynasty of Mewar. The area between Abu and Ranthambor was organised into a military confederacy and even Allahuddin at the height of his power found it hard, as Akbar was to find at a later time, to humiliate the pride or break the spirit of the Mewar rulers. The great Hammira whose glory is sung in *Hammiravijaya* was able for a long time to stand up to the might of Delhi."

K.M. Panikkar
According to epigraphic evidence, the Pratiharas were descendents of Lakshmana (of the Solar race) of the great epic, the Ramayana. And some scholars opine that they were a branch of the Gurjara race. They are mentioned in the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II, the records of Hiuen-Tsang and the Harsha Charita of Bana. And it is also known that some Gurjara chiefs served as the door-keepers (pratiharas probably) of a Rashtrakuta monarch in the middle of the 8th century A.D.

Whatever might be their origin, the following is the chronology of the Pratiharas. Some scholars opine that Vatsaraja, an important ruler of the dynasty, ruled from Avanti. Other scholars opine that the founder of Vatsaraja’s family was Nagabhatta, who ruled in the middle of the 8th century A.D. He was responsible for holding the power of the Gurjaras against the threat of the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas and the Arabs of Sind. Then, it was during the time of Vatsaraja (a grand-nephew of Nagabhatta) that the Pratiharas won the position of samraj. He conquered the territory as far as Bengal, but he was defeated by Dhruva, the Rashtrakuta king.

His successor was Nagabhatta II. He ruled over an extensive kingdom. He defeated Dharmapala of Bengal and ousted the latter’s protege, Chakravudha, from Kanauj. In the end, he suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakutas.

Ultimately it was his grandson, Bhoja, who was firmly enthroned at Kanauj in 836 A.D. He encountered stiff resistance from the ruler of Kashmir and from a Rashtrakuta chieftain of Broach. In the east he was more fortunate. He defeated the Gauda ruler of Bengal. It was during his time that the merchant, Sulaiman, visited the Pratihara empire and spoke of the strength of the Pratihara cavalry and the peace that reigned in the empire.

His son and successor was Mahendrapala I. He maintained the integrity of the empire and patronized the famous poet, Rajasekhara. After Mahendrapala I came Mahipala, Bhoja II and Vinayakapala. About the conquests of Mahipala not much is known from the writings of Rajasekhara. It appears that he was unseated from his throne by the Rashtrakuta king, Indra III. And possibly, he was restored by a Chandela king after this mortal blow.

And the Pratihara power started declining perceptibly after Mahipala. The Chandelas grew powerful at the expense of the Pratiharas. Added to this, the Chalukyas became independent in Gujarat and the Paramaras carved out a kingdom for themselves in Malwa. Finally, we hear of Rajyapala ruling over Kanauj in 1018 when the city was taken by Mahmud of Ghazni.
In the end, we have to note that it was they who kept the Arabs at bay although the latter received the support of the Rashtrakutas. Besides this, by the end of the tenth century the task of defending the northwest frontiers fell to the lot of their feudatories, the Shahiyas of Udabhandapura. "...its chief credit lies in its successful resistance to the foreign invasions from the West. From the days of Junaid (725 A.D.) to those of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Pratiharas stood as the bulwark of India’s defence against the aggression of Muslims.... In the light of later events, this must be regarded as the chief contribution of Pratiharas in the history of India."

The history of the Pratiharas indicates that the glory of the Rajputs was not obscured by the unending wars they waged with a great number of powers. But the Rajputs came to regard battle as a tournament where they could exhibit the skill of their swords, but not a situation in which they should come out victorious. This weakness, along with many others, contributed to the decline of the Rajputs. Tod at one place says, "Rajasthan exhibits the stirring example in the history of mankind of a people withstandng every outrage barbarity can inflict or human nature sustain, and bent to the earth, yet rising buoyant from the pressure and making calamity, a whetstone of courage." This is an exaggeration, but the services rendered by the Rajputs to protect Hinduism, however unsuccessful they were, are of considerable value in the history of India.

41. Kanauj—Cynosure From 647 to 1205 A.D.? 

The death of Harsha in 647 A.D. sounded the death-knell of the Hindu empires in India, and the history of India from then onwards was one of great vicissitudes. All the same, Mahodya-Sri or Kanauj, the capital of Harsha, continued to remain the cynosure of all the neighbouring rulers. One writer says, "What Bobylon was to the martial races of Western Asia, what Rome was to the Teutonic barbarians and Byzantium to the medieval world of Eastern and Southern Europe, that was Mahodya-Sri to the upspringing dynasties of the eighth and ninth centuries A.D." In a way, we can say that the focal point of the bewildering history of India from the death of Harsha onwards was the fate of Kanauj.

Now to the details of the history of Kanauj. Nothing is known about it for 76 years after the death of Harsha. Then a military adventurer, Yasovarman, took possession of it sometime between 725
and 752 A.D. No detailed information is available about his origin. According to Chinese evidence, he sent his minister to China in 731 A.D. He is credited with victories over the king of Gauda and also over some rulers of the south and the west of India. His exploits are described in the Prakrit work, Gaudavaho, written by his court-poet, Vakpatiraja. This king was also the patron of the great dramatist Bhavabhuti, whose Uttararamacharitam is one of the finest specimens of Indian dramatic literature. This great king was defeated and killed by the Kashmir ruler, Lalitaditya.

After his death, Kanauj once again became a bone of contention among the many claimants for imperial prestige. It is said that during the last quarter of the 8th century it was occupied by a family of minor rulers whose names end with the suffix 'ayudha'. The contemporary ruler of Kanauj, when Dharmapala ruled over Bengal, was Indrayudha. He was defeated by Dharmapala who later placed his own protege Chakrayudha, on the throne. Again Dharmapala defeated the Gurjara king, Naga Bhatta, who is reputed to have transferred his capital to Kanauj.

The history of the Gurjaras reached its climax during the days of Bhoja and Mahipala II. The defeat of the Pala king enabled Bhoja to establish his suzerainty in northern India (836 A.D.). He subjugated Bundelkhand and Uttar Pradesh up to Magadha. In the west, the kingdom extended as far as Kathiawar and Karnal. It was during his time that Sulaiman, the Arab traveller, came to India in 851 A.D. This traveller, describes Bhoja as unfriendly towards Arabs and as a king who possessed a very powerful army. During the time of Mahendrapala (885-910 A.D.) the kingdom reached its zenith. He defeated Narayanpal and occupied north Bengal for some time. In the west, his kingdom extended up to Kathiawar. His court was adorned by the famous poet, Rajasekhara. In the time of Mahipala, nothing much of importance occurred. Then came Bhoja II. He was overthrown by his brother Mahipala II, who ruled from 912 to 944 A.D. circa. The last ruler of the dynasty, Rajyapala, fled before the onslaught of Mahmud of Ghazni and was killed by a Chandela prince.

When the Pratihara authority weakened in the tenth century, history repeated itself. A period of commotion followed the disappearance of the Pratiharas; and ultimately, Kanauj was consolidated under the aegis of the Gahadavalas. The origin of this dynasty is shrouded in obscurity. Its founder was Chandra and it was he who occupied Kanauj towards the close of the 11th century. He extended his power over modern Uttar Pradesh. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Govinda Chandra (1114 to 1154 A.D. circa). And it appears that he waged incessant wars against the
Yamini Sultans of the Punjab, the Pala kings of Bihar, the Sena kings of Bengal and the Kalachuri kings of Dahala. He maintained friendly relations with only the Chandelas in northern India and the Cholas in the Deccan. The next king, Jaichandra (1170 to 1193 A.D.), was quite a prominent personality. It is quite likely that Lakshmana Sena of Bengal defeated him. He was the same person who quarrelled with Prithvi Raj III about his daughter, Samyogita. After the second battle of Thaneswar, he was defeated and killed in the battle of Chandwar in 1193. Thus ended the history of Kanauj.

In this manner, even though there was no one powerful king to establish a firm empire like that of the Gupta or the Maurya after the death of Harsha, Kanauj continued to be the hub of political history in northern India in the succeeding centuries. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri concludes the history of Kanauj thus: “When the Pratihara authority weakened in the tenth century, history repeated itself. Another period of commotion ensued followed by the rise of a new imperial family—Gahadavalas. Meanwhile, a deluge was preparing in the wilds of Afghanistan which soon spread over the whole of northern India. The power of the Gahadavalas was shattered on the plains of Chandwar in 1194 A.D. and the agony of Imperial Kanauj was soon hushed in the stillness of death.”

42. History of the Rashtrakutas and the Struggle Among the Palas, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas

“The period of Rashtrakuta ascendance in the Deccan from about 753 A.D. to 975 A.D. constitutes, perhaps, the most brilliant chapter in its history. No other ruling dynasty in the Deccan played such a dominant part till the rise of the Marathas as an imperial power in the eighteenth century.” The significance of the Rashtrakutas consists in the fact that they too, like a few other southern dynasties, tried to expand toward the north. Whenever any kingdom came into existence in the region now known as Maharashtra it played a key role because the region is so situated that it is a bridge between the north and the south. Besides, the kingdoms of this region were confronted with the problem of maintaining relations with kingdoms of the north and the south. Satavahanas did not face any problem from the north or the south because their period of existence coincides with a period of interregnum in the history. The Vakatakas chose to confine themselves to the north. Chalukyas fairly succeeded in maintaining their independence. The history of the Rashtrakutas was different. They tried to exploit the strategic region over
which they ruled when they tried to have a finger in the pie of Kanauj as well as in the south, they had to face enormous difficulties, which ultimately went against the interests of the Rashtrakutas. In addition to this, they followed the traditional principles of imperial dynasties in India: patronage of letters, toleration towards other religions, and the establishment of a benevolent administration.

The origin of the Rashtrakutas is controversial. The different versions about their origin are: descendants of an epic hero; the Rathikas mentioned in Asoka’s edicts; the Reddys of Andhra country (according to Chalukya records); related to the tribes belonging to the Kannada country, etc.

The founder of the dynasty was one Dantidurga. He was reputed to have defeated the Chalukya king, Kirtivarman II, in the middle of the eighth century. Many other conquests like Kanchi, and Lata are attributed to him.

The first important ruler of the dynasty was Krishna I who ruled between 768 and 772 A.D. He completely defeated the Chalukyas and subdued Konkan and Mysore. His most important achievement was the building of the famous Siva temple at Ellora.

After him, his son, Govinda II, ruled the country, but he was a king given to pleasures. So his brother overthrew him and ruled from 779 to 793 A.D. Dhruva defeated the Ganga king and annexed his kingdom to his territory. He waged a mighty war against the Pratiharas and the Palas of the north.

After his death, there was a war of succession. And with the coming of Govinda III (793-814 A.D.) things became once again stable. He suppressed a rebellion in the Ganga territory and defeated the Pallava ruler. He also attempted to expand toward the north. While he was so engrossed in this task, a coalition of the Cholas, the Pandyas, the ruler of Kanchi and the Gangas of Mysore was formed. He succeeded in crushing this opposition.

His successor was the famous king Amoghavarsha I, who ruled from 814 to 877 A.D. It was from his time that the capital of Rashtrakutas came to be Manyakheta or Malkhed. During the early part of his reign the affairs of state were managed by a guardian, as he was a minor. And when he grew up, he won great victories against the Chalukya rulers. He extended his influence over Bihar and Bengal. In spite of these victories, he was not a very powerful king; and so, his northern enemies were free to fight among themselves and also against him. His greatness consists in his attitude
toward religion and his patronage of literature. Dr. Tripathi says, "Further, he has been compared to the renowned Vikramaditya in liberality and patronage of men of letters. Amoghavarsha I himself was the author of the Kavirajamarga, a Kanarese work on poetics and of the Prasnotiaralamalika, a catechism on moral principles, which, however, is sometimes attributed to Sankaracharya or to one Vimola." He showed partiality toward Jainism even though he did not abandon Hinduism. He patronized writers, and he himself was a writer.* But the opinion of these Arab writers is an exaggerated one because they praised the Rashtrakutas simply for their pro-Muslim policy.

After Amoghavarsha I a few more ruled who were not very important. Immediately after him, Krishna II ruled the country from 877 to 913 A.D. Then came Indra III (915-917 A.D.) who revived the glories of Dhruva and Govinda III. The last great ruler was Krishna III who ruled from 939 to 968 A.D. It is quite likely that he wrenched Kalanjara and Chitrakuta from the Pratiharas of Kanauj. In the south he occupied Kanchi and Tanjore. He defeated the Cholas in the famous battle of Takkolam in 949 A.D. He was also reported to have humbled the pride of the Pandyas and the Keralas and the king of Ceylon. After him, the Rashtrakutas rapidly disappeared. The last ruler, Amoghavarsha IV, was crushed by the western Chalukya king, Taila, in 973 A.D.

The triangular conflict of the Palas, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas makes a tedious reading. What all this illustrates is the importance of geo-political factors in history. The important rulers in this contest were: (a) Dharmapala of the Pala kingdom; (b) Vatsaraja and Nagabhatta II of the Pratiharas and (c) Dhruva and Govinda III of the Rashtrakutas. The struggle started when Vatsaraja attempted to expand toward the east. In the beginning he was victorious. This victory led to nothing because Vatsaraja was defeated by Dhruva. Dhruva then invaded the Gangetic Doab and also defeated Dharmapala. This victory of Dhruva was temporary because it was not possible for any southern king to establish a lasting empire in the north. On the contrary, Dharmapala was emboldened to attack the Pratiharas again.

*"By the literary accomplishments and religious temperament he occupied a unique position among contemporary sovereigns. According to the Arab travellers who came during this period he was recognised as the greatest king in India and homage was paid to him by all the other princes. An Arab merchant acknowledges him as one of the four greatest rulers of the world, the other three being the Caliph of Baghdad, the Emperor of China and the Emperor of Constantinople."
It is said that Dharmapala defeated Indrayudha of Kanauj and placed his own nominee, Chakrayudha, on the throne. There is sufficient evidence to prove this. In addition, a large number of principalities of the Punjab, eastern Rajputana and Malwa, Berar and also some in Nepal, acknowledged his suzerainty.

The tables were reversed with the coming of Nagabhata II. In the beginning, he concluded alliances with the rulers of Sind, Andhra, Vidarbha and Telingana. After this, he attacked Kanauj and took possession of it. Inevitably, he marched toward the east and inflicted a severe defeat on Dharmapala in a battle near Monghyr. At this juncture, the Pala kingdom was saved, as in the past, by the invasion of the Rashtrakutas. Govinda III inflicted a severe defeat on Nagabhata II. The Rashtrakuta records state that both Dharmapala and Chakrayudha surrendered to Govinda III. Some historians say that this was the price paid by the Pala king as he invited the Rashtrakutas to come to his aid. After this event, northern India enjoyed respite from the attack of the Rashtrakutas for half a century. Thus arose and opportunity for the Palas of Bengal to show their martial power.

Very soon, Dharmapala died and was succeeded by Devapala who ruled from 810 to 850. Devapala, who was a very powerful ruler, conquered Orissa and a small principality near the Himalayas called Uttarapath to start with. It is said that he even crushed the Gurjaras and then occupied Kanauj. But, with the coming of Mihirabhoja at Kanauj in 836 A.D., things were once again reversed. He reoccupied Kanauj and reasserted his authority in Bundelkhand and Marwar. This was a challenge to the Palas. So, he was defeated by Devapala. Even after this defeat, Mihirabhoja overran the south and attacked the Rashtrakutas. There he was defeated by Dhruva II. Thus, Mihirabhoja suffered severe reverses, but his greatness consists in his determination to revive the glories of the Pratiharas. A little later, Devapala was defeated by Amoghavarsha I and from the mid of the ninth century onwards the Palas rapidly declined and the Pratiharas gained ascendency in the north.

With the coming of Mahendrapala I who ruled from 885 to 910 A.D., the Pratihara empire reached its zenith. He occupied the Pala territory for some time, and also some portions of the Punjab. His court was adorned by the famous poet Rajasekhara. But his successors were not free from the Rashtrakuta threat. It is said that the Rashtrakuta king Indra III defeated Mahipala, a successor of Bhoja II, who himself succeeded Mahendrapala I.

Thus, the triangular conflict shows that none of the powers ultimately came out victorious but, the struggle sapped the resources
of all the three empires. This internecine quarrel is a reflection on
the sad plight of north India and also of south India just on the eve
of the Muslim invasion. Further, the consequences of the three-
power contest were: rise of independent Rajput kingdoms (the Chan-
delas in Bundelkhand, the Kalachuris to the south of Bundelkhand,
and the Paramaras in Malwa); the rise of the Shahiya kingdom con-
sisting of Gandhara and a part of Afghanistan; and in the south
rise of new powers like the eastern Chalukyas and the eastern Gangas
in the Deccan and the Cholas further south.

In conclusion let us enumerate the achievements of the Rashtrakutas:
three of the rulers, (Dhruva, Govinda III and Indra III) carried their arms into the heart of northern India just as Kharavela,
Gotamiputra Satakarni, Rajendra Chola I, and Balaji Rao; Krishna
III went as far as Rameswaram just as some of the great southern
dynasties like the Vijayanagar and Kharavela did; they defeated all
the important contemporary powers (the Pratiharas, the Palas, the
Cholas, and the eastern Chalukyas); the important rulers were builders
and patrons of letters just as all the important rulers of India;
they put up commendable resistance against the Arabs of Sind; and
continued the tradition of imperial glory as the expression Maharaja-
dhiraja of Aryavarta used by Rajasekhara, the last Indian poet, for
his royal patron. And the real importance of the Rashtrakutas con-
sists in their being a link in the continuity of the history of Mahar-
ashtra.*

*As put by Panikkar: "The history of the Maharashtra country
like that of the states of the south is continuous and the fall of a
dynasty, however glorious in its achievements, does not break the
continuity of its annals. The Rastrakutas, whom the Chalukyas had
displaced two centuries before, stepped into the vacant imperial
authority....they were again ousted by the Chalukyas whose restor-
ed line assumes a glory which continues down centuries to the end
of the Vijayanagar Empire, while the fame of the Rastrakutas is still
upheld by the great Rathod families of Rajputana and Central India."
43. **Origin and Political History of the Pallavas—An Analysis**

The history of the Pallavas illustrates three characteristics—the L.C. Ms.—of the history of India till the 17th century: warfare with the neighbouring states, controversial nature of historical material, and royal patronage of literature and arts.

Very little reliable information on the origin of the Pallavas is available. They appear to have intruded into the south. Katyayana (fourth century B.C.) mentions the Pandyas and the Cholas, not the Pallavas. Asoka (third century B.C.) refers to the Cholas, the Pandyas and Keralas, not the Pallavas.

They were a branch of the Pahlavas or Parthians in the opinion of some scholars. One of the champions of this thesis is Father Heras but there is no positive evidence for the migration of the Pahlavas into the south.

The second thesis is that they were an indigenous dynasty which rose to power after the dismemberment of the Andhra empire. Probably, their leaders gathered around themselves the Kurumbas, the Morahas, the Kallas and other feudatory tribes in order to form one great community ruled by one dynasty. According to Srinivas Aiyangar, the Pallavas belonged to the ancient Naga people, who themselves were composed of a primitive Negrito element of Australasian and the later mixed race. To start with, they lived in the Tondamandalam districts around Madras. Later, they conquered Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts. The Pallavas recruited their troops from the marshal tribe of Pallis or Kurumbas. The Pallavas were the hereditary enemies of the Tamil kings. Even now the term ‘palava’ means a rogue in Tamil language; and a section of the Pallava subjects who settled in the Chola and Pandya countries came to be known as Kallar or thieves. All these people doubtless belong to Naga race.

The third thesis is that the Pallava dynasty emerged out of the union of a Chola prince and the Naga princess of Manipallavam, an island near Ceylon. According to this theory, the son born out of the wedlock was made the king of Tondamandalam by his father, and the dynasty was so named after his mother’s homeland. This school of thought receives some amount of support from Dr. Krishnaswamy Aiyanger. He argues that the Pallavas are mentioned as Tondiyar in the literature of the Sangam era and that they were
descended from the Naga chieftains but owed allegiance to the Sata-
vahana kings. But this theory too, is doubted because of their contin-
nual hostility with the Cholas and their striking northern character
as compared to the Cholas.

But Dr. K.P. Jayaswal (the fourth thesis) argues that the Pallava-
vas were a branch of the brahmin royal dynasty of the Vakatakas of
the north who carved out a principality in the south. But the Talag-
gunda inscription states that the Pallavas were kshatriyas. Further,
Hiuen-Tsang says, among other things, that their language and litera-
ture differed very slightly from that of northern India. This statement
further substantiates the theory which claims that they came from
the north. We should note here that, except for their early copper-
plate charters which are in Prakrit, all the other epigraphic records
are in Sanskrit.

The first important ruler was Siva Skandavarman who is reput-
ed to have performed an asvamedha and other Vedic sacrifices. His
capital was Kanchi. Samudra Gupta forced the Pallava king, Vishnu-
gopa, to his knees and made him acknowledge the Gupta suzerainty.
Unfortunately the history of the Pallavas is obscure in the fifth and
sixth centuries A.D., although the charters written in Sanskrit men-
tion a few kings.

The Pallavas once again appeared on the scene towards the close
of the sixth century A.D. The founder of this new greatness was
Simhavishnu (575 to 600 A.D.). He is credited with having captur-
ed the territory of the Cholas and humbled the pride of his southern
neighbours including Ceylon. He followed the vaishnava faith as we
know from the magnificent reliefs representing Simhavishnu and two
of his consorts in the Varaha cave at Mamallapuram.

With Mahendravarman I, the son and successor of Simha-
vishnu, began the titanic tripartite struggle with the Chalukyas of
Vatapi and the Pallavas. It is said that the Chalukya king, Pulakesin
II, deserted Kanchi. Pulakesin II won the pitched battle fought at
Pullalur, fifteen miles north of Kanchi.

Narsimhavarman I, the son and successor of Mahendravarman
I, is reputed to have defeated Pulakesin II in many battles and pro-
bably killed Pulakesin himself. He defeated the Cholas, and the
Cheras, as well as the Pandyas. In all probability it was this victory
of 642 A.D. that made the Pallavas the supreme power in southern
India. He even sent two naval expeditions to Ceylon and placed
one of his own nominees on the throne of Ceylon. He was a great
builder too, and Mamallapuram was embellished in his time. It was
during his time that Hiuen-Tsang visited Kanchi. The Chinese travel-
ler states that the soil was fertile and produced abundance of grain;
flowers and fruits were many; precious gems and other articles were available; and the people were courageous and greatly attached to
learning, honesty and truth.

His son and successor was Mahendravarman II, who again came into conflict with the Chalukyas. Mahendravarman II was succeeded by Paramesvaravarman in whose reign Vikramaditya I of the Chalukyas, in alliance with the Pandays, renewed the hostilities. After this phase, there was a lull for some time in the conflict as the Chalukyas evinced interest in the affairs of northern India and engaged themselves in architectural activities.

The struggle with the Chalukyas was once again renewed by Vikramaditya I, the son of Pulakesin II, who probably captured the city of Kanchi. But Paramesvaravarman I defeated Vikramaditya II. The Pallava records claim that the Chalukya attack was hurled back. Yet, as we know, the Chalukyas once again swept through the Pallava dominions under the captainship of Vikramaditya II in the 8th century A.D. The ruling king of the Pallavas, Nandivarman, was defeated and Kanchi was captured. By this time, the threat to the Pallavas from the rising dynasties of the south became serious. The Pandyas advanced along the banks of Kanchi. The last nail in the coffin was driven by Aditiya Chola by defeating Aparajita Pallava and taking possession of his kingdom towards the end of the 9th century A.D.

The Chalukya victory over the Pallavas in 740 A.D. was the beginning of the end of the Pallavas supremacy. Soon enough the Chalukyas collapsed; and the Cholas, in alliance with Pandyas, defeated the Pallavas at the close of the 9th century. However, the Pallavas' chiefs continued to exist till the end of the 13th century. After the 17th century, all traces of the Pallavas as a distinct community or clan disappeared; but blood is now merged in the Kallar, Palli and Vellala castes. Thus, ended the Pallava political history.
44. A Discussion on The Pallava Administration and Culture

The Pallava history covering four centuries is extremely tortuous and complex, but the Pallava contribution to administration and culture is significant in two ways—symbolized the spread of Aryanization to almost the tip of southern India, and the consummation of traditional or indigenous art as reflected in the Seven Pagodas at Mahabalipuram and the temples at Kanchi. The whole period is seminal because it was probably under the Pallava aegis that the Aryanization of Southern India was completed. More than this the continuity and stability of the social and cultural life under the auspices of the four Pallava dynasties and for four centuries, illustrates the character of southern India, that is, continuity of traditions which is sui generis in Indian history.

Politics. At the apex of the Pallava administration was the king. At the same time administration was decentralized. Most of the kings were accomplished scholars. Mahendravarman I wrote the famous burlesque, Mattavilasa Prahasana. (Many of the vaishnava alvars and the saiva nayanars flourished during their rule). The king was assisted by a council of ministers and a large body of officials. Further, as Sathianathaier points out, “The inscriptions of the great Pallavas supply additional details regarding the tax system, and throw some light on the village assemblies and their committees which in some measure functioned as in the subsequent Chola period.”

Religion. Pallavas were orthodox Hindus, and their patronage was responsible for the great reformation of the medieval ages. Most of the kings were brahminical Hindus devoted to the worship of Siva. Mahendravarman was the first, who, about the middle of his reign, adopted the worship of Siva influenced by the famous saints of the age. He showed reverence to the other Hindu gods also. But in his later life, he became intolerant toward Jainism and destroyed some Jain monasteries. Some vaishnava and saiva saints lived during his time. In general, the Pallavas were tolerant toward the other sects though Huien-Tsang observed that Buddhism and Jainism lost their ground. But Buddhism did not totally disappear. The testimony of Huien-Tsang is that Buddhism did not totally disappear from the Pallava kingdom. At Kanchi, he saw one hundred Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 priests belonging to the Mahayana school.
In general, the Vedic tradition bossed over the local traditions. As the brahmans were the custodians of the Vedic tradition, they automatically enjoyed greater prominence. The Vedic tradition received a stimulus because of Shankracharya. The temples were the focal points. The out-castes were not permitted to enter the precincts of the temple. Even then, the Tamil saints in the 6th and 7th centuries were the progenitors of the bhakti movement. The hymns and sermons of the nayanars (Shaivisms) and the alvars (Vaishnavism) continued the tradition. Amongst the Shaiva saints the important were Appar (supposed to have converted Mahendravarman) Sambandar, Manikkavasagar, and Sundarar. The majority of the saints belonged to the lower caste, being artisans and cultivators. The most remarkable thing about them was the presence of women saints, such as Andal. This bhakti cult was derived from the ideas in the Upanishads and also from the heterodox doctrines. Dr. Thapar opines that the concept of compassionate God was a resultant of the impact of Buddhist ideas particularly bodhisattva concept although the Christians in Malabar might have made a contribution. What the bhakti movement contributed was great. The religious hymns and music were popularized by the Tamil saints and were sung during temple rituals. Dancing was also included. From the Pallava period onwards dancers were maintained by the prosperous temples.

Architecture. Four distinct stages of architecture can be gleaned from the Pallava temples. The first is the Mahendra style. The influence of the cave style of architecture is to be seen in an ancient pillar engraved in the Ekambarnath temple. The second is the Mamalla style. The Seven Pagodas are small temples, each of which is hewn out of a single rock-boulder. They lie near Mahabalipuram, founded by Narsimhavarman. These monolithic temples wrought out of massive stones are complete with all the details of an ordinary temple and stand as an undying testimony to the superb quality of the Pallava art. The third is the Rajasimha style. The most famous temple of this style is the Kailasha temple at Kanchi. It has a pyramidal tower, a flat-roofed mandapam and a series of cells surrounding it, resembling rathas. This style is a very elaborate one foreshadowing the ornate Chola architecture. The fourth is the Aparajita style. This is more ornate resembling the Chola architecture. A few temples built by them are found at Dalavanur. All told, they are unique in the history of temple architecture.*

*Dr. Tripathi says, “One noteworthy feature of some shrines is that they are adorned by beautiful life-like images of Pallava kings and their queens. The evolution and development of Pallava architecture continued until the rise of a new style after the Great Cholas.”
In social life, in the early days, education was controlled by Jains and Buddhists. The Jaina institutions were located at Madurai and Kanchi. Soon brahminical institutions superseded them. Ghatikas or Hindu colleges were attached to the temples. They were primarily brahmin institutions and mostly confined themselves to advanced study. And in the 8th century the *matha* also became popular, which was an omnibus institution because of its being a rest house, a feeding centre and then an education centre.

In all these colleges Sanskrit was the medium of instruction because it was also the official language. Bharavi’s *Kiratanjuniyam* and Dandin’s *Dashakumaracharita* were the two masterpieces. One of Dandin’s poems was written with such skill that when it is read normally it gives the story of the *Ramayana*; and when it is read in reverse, that of the *Mahabharatha*.

Pallava sculpture owed more to the Buddhist tradition. On the whole it is more monumental and linear in form, thus avoiding the typical ornamentation of the Deccan sculpture.

Now for literature. It has been recently proved that Bharavi and Dandin lived in the Pallava court. Bharavi was a famous poet and he wrote the *Kiratanjuniyam*. Dandin, the author of a standard work on poetics, also lived in this period. Kanchi, the capital, was a great centre of Sanskrit learning. The scientific works of Varahamihira and the poetry of Kalidasa and Bharavi were well-known in the Pallava country. And Paramesvaravarman I granted the Kurram copper-plate that was made for the recitation of the *Mahabharata* in a *mandapa* at the village of Kurram, near Conjeevaram.

Till the eighth century Pallava influence was predominant in Cambodia. Saivism was the official form of worship, and the Pallava type of *sikhara* is to be found in the temples of Java, Cambodia and Annam. This dissemination of Hindu culture proves that it was dynamic till 1,000 A.D. in southern India.

Thus, the Pallavas rendered invaluable service to the country both within and without as they were the torch bearers of Hindu civilization to south-east Asia. More than this, their singular contribution consists in transforming the medium of architecture and sculpture, from wood to stone. Smith opines that this great disparity between the northern and southern Indian cultures illustrates the immense length of the course of Indian history, and the extreme slowness with which changes have been affected.
45. Notes on Pallava Administration

1. Kingship was attributed to divine origin. It was hereditary. Yet, at one time, when there was no direct heir, a king was elected. The kings adopted high-sounding titles like: maharajadhiraja, dharma-maharajadhiraja (great king of kings ruling in accordance with the dharma), agnitoma-vajapeya-ashvamedha-yaji (he who has performed the agnishtoma, vajapeya, and ashvamedha sacrifices). The king was aided by a group of ministers. History shows that the ministerial council played a great part in the state policy in the later period.

2. A hierarchy of officials in provincial administration: the governor of a province was assisted by district officers who in turn worked in collaboration with autonomous local bodies. In local administration the meetings of assemblies were frequent; and the assemblies were of many varieties and of very many levels. Added to this, there were assemblies of villages and also representatives of districts. Annual assemblies was the principle; but often special meetings were held. At the village level the assembly was the sabha which looked after almost all the matters of the village, along with endowments, irrigation, crime, maintaining census and other necessary records. Courts at village level dealt with minor criminal cases. The judicial courts of the towns and districts were presided over by government officials. It should be also noted here that the sabha worked in close association with the vrat, an informal gathering of the entire village. Above this unit was a district, council which worked in coordination with the Nadu or district administration. Finally, the headman of the village acted as a go-between the village assembly and the official administration.

3. Theoretically the king owned the land. The status of a village depended on the prevalent tenure. The first variety was the village with an inter-caste population wherein the people paid taxes to the king. The second was the brahmadeya village where the entire land was donated to a single brahmin or a group of brahmins. A variation of this village was the agrahara grant which was an entire village settlement of brahmins and the land of which was received as grant. Both these forms were exempt from royal taxes. Thirdly, in the devadana village the revenue was donated to a temple and the temple authorities in turn provided employment for the villagers in the temple whenever possible. In the Pallava period the first two categories of villages were in vogue.
Apart from these major points relating to land, there was a special category of land, the eripatti, or tank land. The revenue from such a land was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank. Very many inscriptions of the Pallavas referred to the up-keep of tanks.

4. There are two points about land taxes. The land revenue varied from 1/6th to 1/10th of the produce of the land. This was paid to the state. The local taxes that were collected in the village were spent for the purpose of village. As land revenue was necessarily small, the state revenue was supplemented by additional taxes on draught cattle, marriage-parties, potters, makers of clarified butter, textile manufacturers, washermen and weavers. Thus, the major source of revenue was the land; and revenue from mercantile activity was not fully exploited.

5. Regarding expenditure, much of the revenue went for the maintenance of army. The king preferred a standing army instead of feudal levies. The army primarily consisted of foot soldiers and cavalry along with a sprinkling of elephants. Indeed the Pallavas developed a navy although the mercantile activity was not great. Two dockyards were built at Mahabalipuram and Negapatnam. The navy served a double purpose. It was meant for defence and also assisted in maritime trade with south-east Asia, particularly with three kingdoms: Kambuja (Cambodia). Champa (Annam), and Shrivijaya (Malayan peninsula and Sumatra).

46. A Survey of the History and Importance of the Palas

The history of India is one of internecine warfare, and yet, this has not destroyed the cultural integrity of the country. The same is true of the Pala history. There is no dearth of prasasthis which sing about the vanquishing of enemies and the defeat of enemy forces; but the wars sound more legendary than actual. Yet, according to historical evidence, the Palas were engaged in a dreadful conflict with the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas. Even then, the Palas were true to the cultural traditions of India. Their friendly relations with the Sailendra kingdom of Malaya and the claim that they ousted the Hunas living in Uttarpatha in the Himalayas, suggest that the Palas had something to do with the dissemination of Indian culture, both in-central Asia and south-east Asia.

About their origin, it is said that one Gopala was made king by the people in order to avoid the dangers resulting from matsya nyaya,
Inscriptions do not claim any kind of mythological origin for the Palas, nor any relationship with any other ancient dynasty. Of course, later inscriptions mention their relation to the Solar race. But by caste they were kayasthas. Thus, their origin is quite controversial.

The first known king was Gopala (750 to 770 A.D. circa.) He was probably a devotee of the Buddha and apparently he ruled over the twin kingdoms of eastern and western Bengal.

The second ruler, Dharmapala (770 to 810 A.D. circa), was an important ruler. He was one of the greatest kings that ever ruled in Bengal. He raised Bengal to the position of the premier state in northern India, and it appears that he once did defeat the great Pratihara ruler. He defeated Indraraja of Kanauj and other enemies, conquered Kanauj, with the assent of large number of rulers (Bhoja, Kuru, Avanti, Gandhara etc.), placed on the throne of Kanauj his protege, Chakrayudha. Some inscriptions say that he conquered the whole area from the Himalayas in the north to Gokarna in the south. He was the contemporary of Vatsa Raja and Naga Bhatta II of the Pratihara dynasty and Dhruba and Govinda III of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. In the beginning, Vatsa Raja defeated Dharmapala but did not annex any territory. Fortunately, at this time, the Pratiharas were defeated by Dhruba, the Rashtrakuta ruler. Dhruba then defeated the Palas but as he was a southern king, this victory did not mean much. At the beginning of the ninth century, Naga Bhatta II attacked Kanauj. He defeated Dharmapala at Monghyr in Bihar. But, once again, fortune helped the Palas, for Govinda III defeated the Pratiharas.

The next ruler, Devapala, ruled between 810 and 850 A.D. (Circa). As he was an ambitious ruler, he renewed the struggle with the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. Epigraphy testifies that his arms reached the Kamboja territory in the north and the Vindhya hills in the south. The same evidence shows that he led a campaign against Pragjyotishas (Kamarupa, i.e. modern Assam), Utkalas, Hunas (near Himalayas), Gurjaras and Dravidas. There is some evidence to show that he defeated Mihira Bhoja about 850 A.D. It is also likely that he defeated Amoghavarsha I of the Rashtrakutas. The Arab traveller, Sulaiman, says that Devapala’s troops were more numerous than those of both his adversaries. It was during his time that an ambassador from Balaputtradeva, ruler of Suvarnadwipa of the Sailendra dynasty, was received at the court. The ambassador requested Devapala to premit his king to build a monastery at Nalanda.

After him ruled Vigrahapal I and Narayanpal. During this period Bhoja became very strong; and his inscriptions state that he
humbled the Palas. The Rashtrakuta king, Krishna II, defeated Narayanpal.

After Narayanpal came Rajyapal and Gopala II, (908 to 910 A.D. circa). Rajyapal married a Rashtrakuta princess. In this period the old enemies disappeared and new enemies like the Chandelas and the Kalachuris came into existence.

Then came Mahipal I (988 to 1038 A.D. circa). He restored the fallen fortunes of the Palas. Mahipal I consolidated his authority in northern and eastern Bengal. During 1021-1023 a Chola general, sent by Rajendra Chola, swept through the country. Probably, he was also defeated by the Kalachuri king, Gangeya.

The last rulers of this dynasty were Nayapal, Vighrahapal III and Mahipal II (1038 to 1075 A.D. circa). During this period the power of the Palas declined rapidly. Independent kingdoms were established by ambitious strong men with the support of military aristocracy recruited from other provinces. A confederacy of local chieftains revolted against the kings. By the middle of the twelfth century A.D., the Senas were established in Bengal.

Now for the estimate of the Pala history. In the 7th and 8th centuries, they developed a distinct culture of their own. In the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. Sanskrit literature of both brahminical and Buddhist religions flourished. Bhavadeva Bhatta was a politician, scholar and author. Jimutavahana was an authority of the Bengal school of dharmashastra.

During the Pala period, the Bengali language as such came to be developed. The most well-known composition of this period is Charya-padas, a collection of mystical songs, and it was written in the earliest form of Bengali language. That is why a writer says: “The foundation of the Pala Empire synchronized with the birth of the Bengali people as a distinct and important group in the comity of the peoples of mediaeval and modern India.

It was because of the Pala patronage that Mahayana Buddhism spread to Tibet as well as to distant south-east Asia. Monasteries were founded at Vikramasila, Odantapuri and Somapura. They were not only devout worshippers of the Buddha, but also were catholic enough to tolerate other sects. The kings showed toleration to the disciples of Narayana and Mahadeva. All the kings sought the assistance of brahmin ministers. In this period, the Buddhist philosophy developed the tantrics, which later degenerated into magic.
This epoch was rendered memorable by the activities of artists like Dhimana and Vitapala; missionaries like Pandit Dharampala and Atisa Dipankara; scholars like Chakrapani and Sandhyakara; and writers like Vajradatta. The Pala palm-leaf manuscripts are decorated with paintings in the Hindu tradition. One writer says: "In the realm of art the Pala style of sculpture was adopted in Nepal and Tibet ... and influenced the art of Burma, of Indo-China and Indonesia."

To sum up, "The Pala dynasty produced the last great Hindu emperors whose commands were issued from the historic city of Pataliputra. Like the Mauryas and the Guptas, the Pala sovereigns raised a kingdom in eastern India to a position of pre-eminence in Aryavarta. Like their illustrious predecessors, they maintained relations with the distant potentates of the world as known to them, and not only did much to foster religion and culture in India but encouraged its spread to foreign lands." (Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri)

47. A Critical History of the Senas

According to the available epigraphic evidence, the Senas belonged to the well-known Brahma-Kshatriya caste which probably came from Karnataka. The founder was Sumanta Sena. Very little is known about him.

The second known ruler, Hemanta Sena, appears to have carved out a principality of considerable importance along the river Ganges in Bengal. The next ruler, Vijaya Sena (c. 1095-1158), positively annexed eastern Bengal from the Palas. It is also said that he founded the cities of Vijayapur in western Bengal, and of Vikramapur in eastern Bengal.

The next important ruler was one Ballala Sena (c. 1158 to 1179 A.D.), who probably ruled over the whole of modern West and East Bengals and also some portions of northern Bihar. His is a name famous in the legends of Bengal as a reputed founder of the Kulinism, a system of nobility. He is credited with the authorship of the two works, the Danasagara and the Abhutasagara. He completed the defeat of the Palas. According to tradition, he sent an expedition against Magadha, but inscriptions do not corroborate this. It is also said that he introduced social reforms and revived orthodox Hindu rites,
The last important ruler was Laxmana Sena (c. 1199 to 1205 A.D.). On coming to the throne he distinguished himself as a great conqueror and also as a patron of learning. It is said that he reduced Kamarupa to subjection, vanquished the king of Banaras, and was victorious over Kalinga and Kashi. According to epigraphy, he is said to have erected pillars of victory at Puri, Banaras and Allahabad. He was a devout vaishnava even though his predecessors were worshippers of Siva. Among the poets who graced his court were Jayadeva, the author of Gita Govinda, and Dhoyi, the author of Pavanaduta. Other great poets in his court were Sarana and Govardhana. The scholar, Ha!ayudha, was his chief minister and chief justice. The king is also credited to have completed his father’s work Adhutasagara. During his time Bakhtiyar Khalji attacked Bengal. The king fled to eastern Bengal and continued to live there for the four or five years preceding his death.

The last two rulers were Visvarupa Sena and Kesava Sena. They ruled till 1245. They kept up the struggle against the Muslims but without success.

To conclude, culture continued to progress under the Senas. A writer says, “The Sena period also saw the high-water mark of development of Sanskrit literature in Bengal... That Hindu society, religion and culture in Bengal even partially succeeded in surviving the onslaught of Islam is mainly due to the new vigour and life infused into them by the sturdy Hindu ruling family of Karnata.”

48. A Survey of the Political History of the Cholas

The Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras were indigenous to the far south. The traditional Chola country lies between the two rivers, Pennar and Vellar, roughly including the modern districts of Tanjore and Trichinopoly and a portion of the former Pudukottai state. The earliest historical reference to the Cholas as a ruling power occurs in the edicts of Asoka.

About the middle of the second century B.C. a Chola prince named Elara, conquered Ceylon and ruled over it for a considerable period. Another ruler, Karikala Chola (circa 190 A.D.) defeated the Pandyas and the Cheras. He was a benevolent ruler as evidenced by the reclamation of land and construction of irrigation tanks.

And it was during the early centuries of the Christian era that Tamil literature reached great heights. It is said that the first
sangam or literary academy flourished during this period. Some of the greatest classics, including the famous epic *Silappadigaram*, were written in this period.

During the third (or fourth) century A.D. the power of the Cholas declined because of the rise of the Pallavas and the aggressions of the Pandyas and the Cheras. Towards the middle of the seventh century A.D. the famous Chinese pilgrim, Huien-Tsang, visited southern India. He found the Chola country "deserted and wild: a succession of marshes and jungles." He does not mention the ruler but says, "the population is very small, and troops and brigands go through the country openly." Their real history begins from the middle of the ninth century. The decline of the Pallavas in the ninth century provided an excellent opportunity for the Cholas to stage a come back. This re-emergence of the Cholas was Phoenix-like.

To start with, the fallen fortunes of the Cholas were restored by Vijayalaya (c. 846-871 A.D.), who probably began his reign in the neighbourhood of Uralivur as a vassal of the Pallavas. Later, he captured Tanjore from some subordinate allies of the Pandyas and made it the capital of the Cholas.

His son, Aditya I (circa 871-907 A.D.) was a very powerful monarch. He defeated the Pallava king, Aparajitavarman and annexed Tondamandalam. It is also said that he occupied Talkad, the capital of the western Gangas. During the reign of Parantaka I (c. 907-953), the Pandyan territories were annexed, and the Pandyan king, Rajasimha, had to take refuge in Ceylon. The victorious Chola monarch invaded Ceylon, but the expedition was unsuccessful. Then he vanquished the Pallavas and extended his authority as far as Nellore in the north. The Rashtrakutas were alarmed at the rapid expansion of the Chola power. Krishna III assisted by a Ganga king, defeated the Cholas, and killed Parantaka's eldest son, Raja-ditya, in the battle of Takkolam (North Arcot district) in 949 A.D., and probably occupied Tanjore and Kanchi as well. Thus the Cholas were temporarily crushed by this terrible blow, and for about three decades they could not recover.

It was Rajaraja I (c. 985-1016 A.D.) who once more placed the Chola authority at the top and almost earned for it the proud suzerainty of the south. With him began the history of the Great Cholas. He destroyed the naval power of the Cheras and brought the Chera kingdom under his own suzerainty. Madura was occupied, and the Pandya king was made captive. An invasion of Ceylon resulted in the occupation of the northern part of the island, which became a Chola province. A large portion of Mysore was also conquered.
Rajaraja’s victories brought him into conflict with the western Chalukyas. The Chola king overran the Chalukya territory, but he was eventually repulsed by Satyasaraya. But soon Rajaraja invaded the eastern Chalukya kingdom of Vengi. His overlordship was acknowledged by Vimaladitya (1011-1018 A.D.) of Vengi, who gave his daughter in marriage to the conqueror. Further, Rajaraja is credited with the conquest of Kalinga, and the occupation of ‘the old islands of the sea’, numbering 12,000 which are usually identified as the Laccadive and Maldive islands. His dominions included almost the whole of the modern Madras and Andhra states, parts of the erstwhile states of Mysore and Coorg, the northern part of Ceylon, and other ‘islands of the sea’. He possessed a powerful fleet and with its help he laid the foundations for the maritime empire of the Cholas.

The Chola power was raised to the summit of its glory by Rajendra Chola I (c. 1016-1044 A.D.), Rajaraja’s able son and successor. He had proved his worth as a conqueror during the closing years of his father’s reign when he successfully raided the territory across the Tungabhadra. Soon after his accession, he conquered the whole of Ceylon. He entrusted to his son the vice-royalty of the Pandya and Kerala territories, thereby bringing the regions under effective subjugation. The result of his struggle with the western Chalukya king, Jayasimha II, cannot be precisely determined; for, the territory to the north of the Tungabhadra remained under the control of the latter.

It was after Rajendra I that the attention of the Chola rulers was drawn toward the Chalukyas for the possession of the province of Vengi. “The ghost of the old Pallava-Chalukya conflict over the rich province of Vengi reappeared in wars between the Cholas and the Later Chalukyas over the same area.” This conflict followed the same old pattern—raids into each other’s territories. Once the Cholas snatched the capital of the Later Chalukya, Kalyani. The Chalukyas, in return, avenged this defeat in 1015. The conflict was less serious during the reign of Kulottunga I (1070-1118), probably because of the fact that his mother was a Chalukya. As comparative peace prevailed during his time, there is a sprut in the commerce of the Chola empire including the overseas trade. That is why Kulottunga sent a mission of merchants in 1077 to China.

Rejendra Chola’s ambition was not confined within the narrow limits of southern India. Like the Rashtrakutas, he too, directed his armies toward the north and won one of the most remarkable campaigns in Indian history. His army marched as far as the Ganges and overran the dominions of Mahipal, the Pala king of Bengal and Bihar. This expedition probably took place sometime between 1021 and 1025 A.D. A Chola inscription tells us that Rajendra subjugated
Orissa, southern Kosala (in modern Madhya Pradesh), some portions of western Bengal (Balasore, Midnapur, Birbhum and Burdwan), and eastern Bengal. His troops probably raided these regions, but he definitely did not annex them. The tangible results of his grand expedition were the settlement of some Carnatic chieftains in western Bengal, and possibly, the importation of some saivas from the north to the south. In commemoration of his victories in the Gangetic delta, Rajendra assumed the proud title of Gangaikond and founded a new capital, Gangaikonda-Cholapuram. A large tank was constructed near the city; it was filled with water by channels from the Kolerun and Vellar rivers. The proud city is now a heap of ruins; and the bed of the magnificent tank, a thick forest. Just like his father, Rajendra possessed a powerful fleet, which crossed the Bay of Bengal and conquered Pegu as well as the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The naval enterprises of the Cholas in the east were probably intended to promote commercial intercourse between south India, on the one hand, and Burma and the Malayan peninsula, on the other. In the west, Rajendra maintained his hold on the ‘old islands of the sea’ conquered by his father.

Rajendra I attacked the Shrivijaya kingdom in south-east Asia because of his desire for an overseas empire. On the other hand, Dr. Romila Thapar holds the view that the conflict was caused by considerations of trade. The Shrivijaya kingdom lay between China and South India. Indian merchants in Shrivijaya territory were threatened by the rulers—something like the threat of nationalisation today. As the interests of the Indian merchants were involved, the Chola king decided to attack the Shrivijaya kingdom. The naval expedition of Rajendra I was a success. It led to the occupation of a number of strategic places along the straits of Molucca.

Rajadhiraja I (c. 1044-1055 A.D.), Rajendra Chola’s son and successor, was also an able ruler. He suppressed rebellions in the Pandyan and Kerala territories as well as in Ceylon, and celebrated his victory by performing an ashwamedha ceremony. But his hostility toward the western Chalukya monarch, Someswara I Ahavamalla, ended in disaster: he lost his life in the battle of Koppam (1052 A.D.). His brother, Rajendra II (c. 1052-1064 A.D.) was crowned on the battlefield. He continued the struggle against Somesvara. The same story was repeated in the reign of Vira Rajendra (c. 1064-1070 A.D.) who is said to have severely defeated Somesvara in the battle of Kudal-Sangaman. He also defeated Vikramaditya II, Somesvara’s younger son, and restored his obedient allay Vijayaditya II to the throne of Vengi. Then he subdued a few rebellions in the Pandyan and Kerala territories. Finally, the Chola monarch sent a naval expedition to the East Indies.
After Vira Rajendra’s death, there was confusion in the Chola kingdom, resulting in the death of his son, Adhirajendra, and usurpation of the throne by Kulottunga I (c. 1070-1122 A.D.), who was a descendant of two great southern dynasties, the Cholas and the Chalukyas. He united the Chola and eastern Chalukya kingdoms under one sceptre. Vengi became a province of the Chola kingdom, and it was henceforth usually governed by princes of the royal blood. Like his Chola predecessors, Kulottunga suppressed rebellions in the Pandya and Kerala territories. He fought against the Paramaras of Malwa and twice overran Kalinga. But he failed to maintain his hold on Gangavadi (southern Mysore) where the Hoysalas gradually attained prominence. It is probable that he lost the overseas possessions of the Cholas. Kulottunga is still remembered as an administrative reformer. One of his most remarkable achievements was the excellent arrangement made by him for conducting a survey of the land for taxation and revenue purposes.

Kulottunga was followed by a succession of weak rulers who failed to keep intact the extensive Chola empire. Ceylon, Kerala and the Pandya kingdom gradually shook off the authority of the Cholas. In the reign of Rajaraja III (circa 1266 A.D.) Tanjore itself was sacked by the Pandya king. As the power of the Cholas began declining, the Hoysalas, the Kakatiyas and the Pandyas divided the territories among themselves. During the reign of Rajendra IV (1246-1279 A.D.), Jatavarma Sundara Pandya overran the Chola territory and occupied Kanchi.

Thus, it was during the third quarter of the 12th century, Chola power was on the decline. The neighbouring powers grew at the expense of the Chola empire. When the Cholas destroyed the Chalukya power, it recoiled on them because the feudatories of the Chalukyas soon attacked the Chola kingdom—the Yadavas, the Hoyasalas and the Kakatiyas. The Yadavas did not figure in Chola history as their interest was confined to the north. On the other hand, the two other powers took away chunks of Chola territory. Out of these two, the Hoyasalas delivered deadly blows. Meantime, the Pandyas of Madurai rose in the south. That is how the Chola power came to an end.
49. A Critique on the Administrative, Cultural and Colonial Achievements of the Cholas

The four hundred years of Chola authority in southern India constitutes an extraordinary period in the political, literary, artistic and cultural history of India. And at one place, Nilakanta Sastri says, "The age of the Imperial Cholas (850 to 1200 A.D.) was the golden age of the Tamil literature." Moreover, the Cholas were the first Indian rulers to appreciate the value of naval power and also undertake an oceanic policy which was both political and commercial.*

The first aspect to be taken up is the achievement of the Cholas in the field of colonization. The authority of the Sailendras was disputed by the Cholas in the eleventh century. Rajendra Chola began a hundred-years war with the Sailendras. The Chola empire was extended even to the Malayan peninsula. At one time they established bases in Nicobar and acquired territory on the coast of Malaya. In the 13th century, the Sailendras even invaded Ceylon. Much cannot be said about the colonizing activities of the Cholas, but it is a matter of singular credit to have controlled the territories which are separated by not less than a thousand miles.

True, their warfare with the Sailendras, which drained the resources of the empire, was no doubt, in part, responsible for the final breakdown of the Chola power; but it is interesting to note that the empire successfully carried on an oceanic policy and carried a war across the seas stretching over thousands of miles (not a mere twenty-three miles of water between Dover and Calais), and that too, for a considerable period, apart from extending its rule over Ceylon.

The second aspect to be considered is the administrative system of the Cholas. The inscriptions of the Cholas furnish valuable information about their administration. The emperor was the pivot on which the whole administration revolved. The emperor discharged his onerous responsibilities with the advice and help of

*Panikkar says: "They not only controlled the Bay of Bengal effectively, but for nearly a hundred years maintained their imperial authority in Malaya, thus making the Bay of Bengal a Chola lake."

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his ministers. As the central government was powerful, the kings took pompous titles like Chakravartigal or emperor. The statues of the deceased rulers were worshipped. The building of temples were regarded as tributes to dead kings. The running of the royal household was very elaborate. Equally lavish was the royal patronage. The counterpart of the purohit of the north in the Chola empire was the rajguru. He was both the confident and confessor of the royal family. Nilakanta Sastri says, "The Chola kingship reached its gorgeousness equal to the Byzantine monarchs."

The empire, for the sake of convenience, was divided into provinces. The most important of them were presided over by viceroyos. To check the disintegrating forces within the empire, some of the provinces were entrusted to princes of the royal blood. There were principalities under vassal chiefs who paid tribute and rendered military service in time of war, just like the feudal subordinates in Europe. The province was designated mandalam. The province was split into divisions known as kottam or valanadu. They were further sub-divided and were known as districts or nadus, each district composed of a group of villages called, kurram. At the base of the administrative system was the village. In this administrative system, the most remarkable feature was the popular assembly known as sabha. Different types of assemblies existed in the various units of nadu, kurram and grama. There are references to the assembly of the people of a whole province.

Districts and towns (nagaram) had their own assemblies. A little information is, however, available about the constitution and functions of the assemblies. But the assemblies of the villages were of various types. In the Ur variety the local people assembled to discuss important matters without any formal rules or procedures to be adhered to. The sabha or the mahasabha was an assembly of the brahmin villagers. It was assisted by a number of committees. Under the supervision and general control of the royal officials the sabha enjoyed full powers in all the departments of local administration. They owned the village lands; collected taxes; disposed of petty criminal cases; and looked after primary education. All members were elected by lot, and held office for only one year. The meetings of the assembly were held in a temple or in a public hall.

The Chola villages enjoyed considerable autonomy. Although the Chola officials participated in the affairs of the village, they were more like observers and counsellors rather than administrators. Generally speaking, each village was administered by an assembly of the villagers. In larger villages there was more than one assembly, while a villager could be a member of more than one
assembly. At times, villages were divided into wards and each ward had its own assembly. Some of the assemblies had representatives. Although the villages were self-sufficient entities both in economic and administrative matters, quite an amount of territory was under the feudatories. The feudatories collected the revenue and paid a part of it to the king as share. These feudatories worked through the assemblies.

Large townships had their own autonomous administration and they are designated as *tar-kurrams*. One such town was Uttaramerur. It was inscribed on the orders of one Raja-Malla-Mangala-Priyan. It throws immense light on the working of the *sabha*. This particular village had 30 wards. Each ward elected one person who was known for his knowledge of *mantras* and *brahamanas*, owned a house, aged above 35 and paid land taxes. The inscription enumerates more number of qualifications for the selection of these persons. While laying down prohibitions, the inscription states that a person who was guilty of killing brahmins, drinking alcohol, theft, adultery and associated with the criminals, should not be chosen. Regarding the regular process of election, the inscription states that the name should be written on tickets. After the tickets were dropped, they should be put in a pot. After the tickets were drawn, a full meeting of the great assembly should be summoned including the young and the old. The temple priests should be present. The tickets should be taken out by an arbitrator and it should be read by all the priests present. Then each ticket should be accepted. Thus, the thirty men should be chosen for the 30 wards. Out of these men, the learned and more aged should be chosen for the annual committees. Twelve of them should constitute the garden committees and the remaining six form the tank committee. All these men shall hold office for full one year. While holding the office of membership, they could be removed from office if found guilty of any offence. Accounts were maintained by an arbitrator. Ultimately the inscription states that all these arrangements are made for the prosperity of the village in order that wicked men might perish and the rest may prosper. Some other inscriptions found in the Chola region are almost the same except for small variations in matters of qualifications and spending of money.

With regard to the Chola taxation system, the method was the traditional one. The major source of revenue was the land-tax which consisted of one-sixth of the produce. Periodical surveys of the land were carried out. The other sources of revenue were the various duties, taxes on animals, tanks, oil-mills, etc. “The cultivated lands were carefully surveyed and all holdings were properly registered at least a century before the famous Doomsday record of William the Conqueror.” Land revenue was one-sixth but petty
imposts were great many. According to K.N. Sastri the levy could be as high as one-third in reality. Payments could be made in gold currency called *kasu*, or in kind. The latter was preferred.

Tenancy was of two kinds. In some villages land was collectively owned by all the people. Such villages paid revenue as corporate entities. Whenever land was held private property, the owner paid his tax to the king's officers or the assembly. The assessment was pre-fixed. It was mostly paid in kind. In addition to the land-owners, there was a large number of working men. These working men had no say in the village assembly and the administration. These people were as good as serfs. As they belonged to the low castes, they were not permitted to enter the temples. They were often employed for the reclamation of waste land, clearing of forests and the building of temples. The state's major source of revenue was the land-tax. Apart from this, the state secured some revenues from mines, forests, custom duties, judicial fines and the equivalent in forced labour. As the land-tax was pre-fixed, a survey of the land was carried out. The average holding was not very large.

With regard to the Chola achievements in the field of arts, much can be said. The Chola bronzes are well-reputed. The Nataraja bronzes are masterpieces of this medium of art. Temple architecture also reached great heights. The best example is furnished by the Siva temple at Tanjore, built by Rajaraja the Great. The great *sikhara* (dome) consisting of fourteen storeys, rises to a height of 190 feet, and is crowned by a massive dome consisting of a single block of stone weighing eighty tons. The best examples of Chola architecture are the huge temples of Tanjore, Chidambaram (famous for its massive *gopuram*) and Gangaikonda-Cholapuram (the new capital built by Rajendra Chola). The figure-sculptures in some of the temples are excellent. The chief features of the temples are the *vimanas* or towers, which were later eclipsed by the richly ornamented *gopurams* or gateways. It is well said that the Cholas perfected the Dravidian style of architecture pioneered by the Pallavas. Fergusson says, "The Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewellers."

They were also great builders of works of public utility. They undertook extensive and fruitful irrigation works, built excellent roads and cities. The artificial lake by Rajendra Chola near Gangaikonda-Cholapuram was sixteen miles in length, and with stone sluices and channels. In the construction of dams the Cholas used huge blocks of dressed stone, which were thrown across the river, Kaveri, and others. In all the cities built by them the temple
was the focal point. Writing on these achievements, Panikkar says: "The great works of irrigation were undertaken by successive kings which made the Cauvery delta a granary of the empire."*

In the educational and literary fields also, the Chola achievements are commendable. In addition to colleges, mass education based on the epics and the Puranas was imparted through discourses in temples. Many inscriptions testify to the existence of institutions catering to higher education inclusive of medical science. Sibakasindamani, a great Tamil classic, was composed in this period. More than the growth of Tamil classics, the age witnessed the Ramayana of Kambar. Besides these, two books were written on versification and grammar. Books in Sanskrit were very few.

With regard to religion, the Cholas were brahminical Hindus and mostly devoted to the worship of Siva. Some of them, like Rajaraja, built temples dedicated to Vishnu; but Kulottunga I's hostility toward Vaishnavism compelled the celebrated vaishnava reformer, Ramanuja, to seek shelter in the Hoysala territories. Jainism and Buddhism were on the decline, but some Buddhist monasteries received gifts from the Chola kings. However, the royal gifts were normally monopolized by brahmins. Finally, there appears to be a peculiar slant in the Hinduism as professed and patronized by the Cholas. Dr. Tripathi opines, "It is noteworthy that there are scanty references (except in the poems of the Samgam period) to the performance of Vedic sacrifices by Chola kings. Indeed, the solitary allusion to the Asvamedha occurs in the records of Rajadhiraja. Perhaps greater stress was laid on Dana (gift) than on yajna or sacrifices."

In this manner, the Chola history is of extraordinary importance in the history of southern India. Their history brings out the truth that Indian civilization was not confined to the Indian continent alone, but it spread to south-east Asia also. Their architectural achievements are still a matter of wonder. Taking all these things into account, we can say that the Chola history constitutes the last of the chapters in the history of Hindu India.

**"Madras can claim," states a modern authority, "to have introduced, if not originated, a style of construction which has been widely adopted, within and without the (British) empire, and to have established a plan of dealing with the deltaic lands which has not been improved upon. A portion of the credit for these achievements belongs to the native engineers preceding the British advent. This, in fact, was the work of the Cholas who conceived the idea of controlling a river at the head of its delta, and thus securing the regular watering of the land."**
50. Life During the Time of the Cholas

The territory that was under Chola rule (heartland being Tamilnad) experienced such a state of civilization and culture that their standards continued to govern the succeeding generations. In other words, the Chola history constitutes the classical age of south India.

The life led by the people was simple. Although economic activity was brisk, the amenities of life were few. The brisk economic activity was felt in the overseas trade also. Apart from this, the requirements of the people were also few. This view of life (simple living) persisted through the coming ages as the standard or norm by which the thinking and conduct of an individual is to be judged.

During the Chola period the village was the focal point of both economy and political organization. The villagers were self-sufficient in food and clothing. They had their own craftsmen to cater to their daily needs. It was only by the end of the 11th century that towns grew because of developments in industry, and thereby trade and commerce. Some of the towns that came to be founded in this period like Mahabalipuram, Kaveripatnam, Shaliyur, and on the east coast, Quilon, continued to play an important role in future ages.

Trade reached an unprecedented volume with regard to China. As the state became such an important element in the relationship between India and China, in the latter country it became a state monopoly. It is also stated that an Indian settlement came into existence in the mainland opposite to Formosa. The exports from south India were textiles, spices, drugs, jewels, ivory and ebony. Almost the same commodities were exported to the west. An interesting feature in the imports of India was the horse. Apart from it, trade played an important part in the Chola economy. In all probability the kings and merchants invested money in it.

The brisk increase in trade was facilitated by the developments in the economic organization of the Chola kingdom. Merchant guilds controlled the trade, which were known by the name of manigraman and the valanjiyar. These were associations formed by merchants to look after their own interests. The guilds of local merchants were known by the name of nagaram. Some of the merchant guilds were
so rich as to purchase entire villages and donate them to temples. Although there is no recorded evidence that the kings were responsible for looking after the interest of the merchant guilds, it is almost certain that the kings looked after the interests of them as borne out by the war that was waged by Rajendra I against the Sialendras of the Srivijya kingdom.

As the economic activity was very brisk, the institution of promissory notes came into vogue. The use of coins also was very extensive and brisk. There was unrestricted circulation of gold coins. From the 11th century onward these coins were debased. By the end of the Chola period, copper coins had greater circulation. Nevertheless, in the rural areas it was barter that prevailed for acquiring articles, and the unit of exchange was a measure of rice.

Apart from this brisk economic activity, the temple was the centre of life. In spirit the temple still constitutes the focal point of Tamil culture and life. The temple was either built by the king, or by the guilds of merchantmen, or by the villagers. The way in which the temples were maintained is worth noting. In all probability, the temple at Tanjore was the richest because it had an income of 500 pounds of gold, 250 pounds of precious stones and 600 pounds of silver. The rich wealth of this Tanjore temple was acquired through donations. The temple also had a large staff. It maintained 400 devadasis, (women meant for entertaining), 57 musicians and readers of scriptures and 212 attendants, apart from hundreds of priests. The devadasi system was prevalent in most of the temples of the Chola period. The talented amongst them were trained as the performers of Bharatanatyam dance. Soon the system was abused as the devadasis were treated as prostitutes and their earnings were collected by the temple authorities. On the other hand, the courtesans of the town had a more respectable position. They could defy the social conventions. However, the vast majority of women were nothing but chattels.

The next important feature in the life of the people was the caste system. The brahmans stood apart from the rest of the community, while occupying a vantage position both in economic and political field. The southern brahmin was the religious leader. He was very often exempt from taxes. In early southern history brahmans represented an alien culture; but in the Chola period they constituted the most privileged part of the community. Some of them invested their money in trade and commerce of the day; and some even journeyed to south-east Asia.

As the brahmans constituted the most powerful section of the community, the rest of the community (non-brahmins) occupied a
lower status in society. It is interesting to note that the mention of kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras is very negligible in the available records of Cholas. Amongst Sudras there was a further sub-division, those whose touch was not polluting and those whose touch was polluting.

Apart from the caste degradation, slavery was also present. It appears that both men and women were sold as slaves. Some of them were sold to the temples. Fortunately, this practice was not institutionalized.

Coming to education, we notice that the temple once again figures as an important aspect of Chola life. It was common to be taught by the temple priests. The scholars assembled in the precincts of the temple to decide the points of controversy. To some extent the Buddhist and Jaina monasteries also provided education career. Apart from these three important centres, colleges were also there in the days of the Cholas. In the education of the day Sanskrit occupied the pride of place. The vernaculars were neglected. The knowledge of various professions was imparted through the guilds. However, the language of the land, Tamil, had its own development without any royal patronage. Some of the writings in Tamil language like Kamba's Ramayana and the writings of the Pugaleendi and Jayangondur are of considerable standing.

In matters of religion, brahminism was the chief belief of the people to start with. This religion came to be firmly established during the Pallava period and it reached its climax during the Chola period. As expected the climax of brahminism led to the developments of various other sects during the later half of the Chola period. The mystical sects like the tantric and the shakta cults appeared in the Chola territory. There were a few more other cults like Kapalikas, Kalamukhas and Pashupatas. Some of them performed sacrifices involving blood and sexual orgies. For example, the Kalamukhas carried the skull of human beings from which they ate their food and along with it they carried a pot of wine and a club. Some of the people who joined the ranks of these religious sects did so as a mark of protest against the domination of brahmins.

Apart from these developments, the later Chola period experienced the emergence of the Lingayats the or Virashaivas. They became prominent in the 12th century. Their founder was one Basavaraya. The followers of this sect attacked religious hypocrisy; and they worshipped Shiva in the from of lingam or phallic emblem. They encouraged some social practices which were disapproved of by brahmins, such as post-puberty marriages and widow remarriages,
The later Chola period also witnessed the Vaishnava philosopher, Ramanuja. He disagreed with Sankara in so many ways. According to Sankara, *jnana marga* was only one of the ways of attaining salvation. However, Ramanuja attributed love to God. A devotee can reach Him. In emphasising on the individual's relationship with God through love he struck an entirely different note. In later ages the preachings of Ramanuja became the starting point for the *bhakti* movement.

In the field of architecture, too, the Chola period witnessed a new development and perfection. The Chalukyas laid stress on hewing temples out of rocks but the Cholas concentrated on freestanding stone structures. The size of the temples grew under their auspices. The gateways or *gopurams* of temples replaced the *shikharas* in ornamentation. As for example, the Meenakashi temple at Madurai and the Shrirangam temple.

More important than architecture was the development of bronze sculpture. These are regarded as masterpieces in the field of sculpture. These sculptural pieces are mostly kept in the inner shrine of the temple if they are those of donors and saints.

In this manner, life during the time of the Cholas was a watershed in the history of southern culture. True, classical age means the age that witnessed standards in literature and art; but when we give a liberal interpretation to the term, we should include the whole way of life because culture is nowadays described as the worthy part of the life of a people: from this stand-point (liberal interpretation) the Chola period definitely constitutes the classical age of southern India because the standards set up in the social field (temple as the focus of attention and the superiority of brahmans), the developments in architecture and sculpture, the literary traditions (the developments in Tamil language), the importance of the village autonomy and the importance of the tanks, constitute the warp and woof of the culture and civilization of Tamilnad till today.
5.1 An Examination of the Colonial and Cultural Expansion of India in South-East Asia

The mind of a student which is adept at sweeping centuries and continents while passing verdicts on Shakespeares and Aristotles, Napoleons and Rommels, Solons and Benthams, is very likely to feel flabbergasted in handling the given theme; for, the material on this aspect is fragmentary and very complex. All the same, in the otherwise dull and controversial panorama of ancient Indian history, a discussion on this theme lets in a fresh breeze. It bears evidence to the creative energies of the ancient Hindu civilization. The pioneering and enterprising activities of Indians in the swamps and the jungles of the east, a region considered the El Dorado in those times, is of supreme significance.* Trusting their destinies to the frail barks, the Hindus and the Buddhists carried their religious institutions and cultural heritage to lands separated by thousands of miles. It proves the colonizing, adventurous, commercial and missionary zeal of the ancient Indians: "in their wind-filled ships a burgeoning culture rode away to Further India."

The Jataka stories often talk of a golden land and islands of gold. Ptolemy of the second century states that there was an active trade between India and south-east Asia. The Jatakas refer to Suwarnadvipa and Suwarnabhumi, all Sanskrit names. The Ramayana makes mention of Java and Sumatra. And Ptolemy, too, mentions Yavanadwipa. He also refers to a direct route from Palura (near Ganjam) across the sea to Malaya. The stories in the Kathasaritsagara show that ships sailed to the port of Kataha (modern Kedah) from

*R.C. Majumdar remarks: "The most important remains of the Hindu colonialists are the Sanskrit inscriptions written in Indian script, pure or slightly modified. They have been found all over the region in Burma, Siam, the Malayan peninsula, Annam, Cambodia Sumatra, Java and Borneo. A perusal of these inscriptions shows that language, literature, region and political and social inscriptions of India made a thorough conquest of these far-off lands, to a large extent, eliminated or absorbed the native elements in these respects. The local people mostly belonged to a very primitive type of civilization, and it was the glorious mission of the Indian colonialists to introduce the highest culture among them. In this task, they achieved a large measure of success."

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the eastern coast of India. In one of its stories, the hero, Guhasena, after the death of his father, was asked to go to the country of Kataha (Malaya). The recent investigations of Mr. Wales fully prove the tradition that the route followed by the Indians was across the peninsula. The earliest material evidence regarding its contact is in the form of Buddhist images from the school of Amaravati. These images are found in Thailand, Cambodia, Annam, Sumatra, Java and Celebes. The Sanskrit inscriptions date from the early fifth century A.D. They are found in Java, Boreno, Malaya and Cambodia. These show that the region was already ruled by kings with Indian names and they performed Vedic sacrifices. According to Chinese chronicles the kingdom of Funan (Cambodia) was founded in the first century A.D. by Kaundinya. Javanese tradition speaks of the coming of a prince from India who had set up the first Javanese kingdom by the end of the 1st century A.D.

Some of the accepted reasons for this zeal are the following. It was perhaps for acquiring wealth from these fabulous lands that the Hindus emigrated to south-east Asia. Secondly, it was probably the missionary zeal of the brahmins and the Buddhists that inspired them to reach these distant lands. "The spirit of adventure and the youthful vigour of Hinduism was responsible for the colonisation", says Panikkar. Thirdly, Panikkar opines that this momentous adventure is probably embodied in the Agasthya legend. Agasthya is still worshipped as the patron saint of navigators in Japan. The puranic evidence along with the legend of Agasthya proves that the earliest Indian voyages were probably undertaken to chastize the pirates who ravaged the coasts of India. *The Periplus* of the first century A.D. mentions a few ports of the many that studded the eastern seaboard from the mouth of the Ganges to Cape Comorin.

Now for a narration of this remarkable movement. From the first century onwards, systematic colonization of Annam, Cochin China, the Malayan peninsula and the islands in the Indian Ocean was undertaken. Ptolemy's mention of *Yavanaadwipa* proves that the Hindu influence existed in the first century A.D. At the beginning of the first century flourishing Hindu communities existed in Funan (Comodobia). The establishment of an Aryan colonization in Funan occurred in 191 A.D., according to the Chinese records. An inscription of the king Srimara confirms the Chinese evidence. One of the kings, Ashvavarman, performed various orthodox Aryan sacrifices. If the Aryan influence in Funan is genuine, it follows that the colonization of intervening territories like Java, Sumatra and Malaya must have been completed earlier. Moreover, the history of southern That refers to one Kaundinya, a brahmin, as the founder of an Aryan dynasty. The Champâ inscription of 658 A.D. states thus: 'It was here that Kaundinya, the greatest of the Brahmans, planted the javelin which he had received from Asvattthama, the son of Drona.'
A history of southern Thai compiled in 6th century A.D. corroborates this version. The kingdom established by Kaundinya flourished for a few centuries because the Chinese annals refer to some of the vassals of Funan in the next century. Finally, we also know, with some amount of certainty, that a second Kaundinya ruled over Funan in the 4th century A.D. He appears to have reorganized the state and the society. A successor of Kaundinya II, Gunavarman, built a temple in honour of Vishnu. Soon there was a war between Funan and the newly emerging Champa in the 5th century A.D. It was this threat, that made one Jayavarman send an embassy to China in 484 A.D. seeking its help.

Thus, by the beginning of the 5th century A.D. Indian influence in south-east Asia was quite firmly established. The history of this chapter in Indian history minus politics is very significant. First, Kaundinya’s inscription, quoted above, also states that Kaundinya married a naked Naga princess, Soma, who, earlier, had had resisted his landing in Funan. What does the nakedness imply? Probably, the inhabitants of Funan were primitive people and the marriage could have definitely ushered in the Hinduization of Funan. Secondly, the Chinese records state that the image of deities worshipped by them were made of bronze. This shows the spread of every facet of Hindu civilization. Thirdly, the Hindu caste system was introduced in Funan and many brahmins who followed Kaundinya married the native women. What does this indicate? Not kshatriyas but brahmins had taken to martial deeds. Finally, we can safely say that this maritime activity increased the prosperity of southern India—munificent endowments given to the Satavahana temples by contemporary merchants, reference to such prosperity in the Tamil classics, Silappadikaram and Manimekalai, the Iliad and the Odyssey of Tamil literature.

The script of the oldest inscriptions resembles that of the early Pallavas, while Amaravati provided the earliest Buddhist images. Indian influence did not destroy the local customs and religion. This local influence was felt more in Indonesia and Malaya than on the mainland. The Buddhism and the Hinduism as practised in Indonesia carried their own local features. In the same manner, the cults of Cambodia and Champa (South Vietnam) were even more different. In the south-east Asian kingdoms the ruling kings were deified, being associated with Shiva. The worship was directed to the royal linga in which the spiritual potency of the divine king was believed to be concentrated. Probably only after the coming of the Hinayana Buddhism to Ceylon that Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism were ousted—from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Simultaneously Indian religions collapsed in Indonesia, and Malaya with the coming of Islam.
The kingdoms referred to above suddenly disappeared owing to some unknown reasons and re-emerged in the 6th century A.D. as evidenced by the rise of the Sailendra empire in the Malayan peninsula. By the end of the 6th century A.D., the caste system, the brahminical faith, its rituals and the language, were introduced there. The Sailendra empire attained the zenith of its glory in the 7th century A.D. It consisted of the Malayan peninsula and the whole of the nearby archipelago which included the islands of Sumatra, Java and Borneo. At the height of their glory the Sailendras attacked Champa and Kambuja. This empire was also engaged in a mighty struggle with the Cholas. Rajendra Chola occupied a large part of the empire which was retained for a century. The Chinese travellers described this empire as the centre of Buddhist learning. The kings followed Mahayana Buddhism. Kumaraghosha, a Buddhist monk of Bengal, became the guru of Sailendra emperor and at his bidding built the Beautiful temple of the Tara. It was under their auspices that the splendid Buddhist monument as Barabudur was built.

Soon the internal instability of the Sailendra empire enabled Java to assert its independence in the 9th century A.D. Towards the end of the 13th century a new dynasty came into existence with its capital at Majapahit. In the second half of the 16th century the empire included nearly the whole of the Malayan peninsula and the archipelago. And in the 16th century it was occupied by Islam.

Besides, it is said that Kambuja, a former vassal state of Funan, gained in importance and its kings ruled for nine hundred years—the important being Jayavarman I and II, Yasovarman, and Suryavarman II. Probably the founder of the dynasty was Sitavaran. All the early inscriptions are full of allusions to ancient India. It grew more powerful than Champa, and included modern Cambodia, Laos, the two Vietnams, Thailand and parts of Burma and the Malayan peninsula. The kings followed mostly Saivism. And Sanskrit was the language of the country. The prasasti of one Bhavavarman is written in kavya style and is an imitation of the style of Kalidasa in Raghuvamsa. And in all likelihood Buddhism too, came to prevail in the seventh century A.D. although Hinduism retained its predominance till the very end. The famous temple of Angkor Vat and the ruins of Angkor Thom tell us of the glory that was Kambuja. Angkor Thom is a walled city, the capital of Kambuja, as rebuilt by king Jayavarman VII (end of 12th century). It is in the form of a perfect square. In the centre is the fantastic temple known as the Bayon. Angkor Vat is equally imposing as a temple. After the reign of Jayavarman VII the kingdom of Cambodia declined. Ultimately,
the empire was reduced into a principality by the end of the 15th century, because of the Annamite invasions from the east, and from the erosion of the Thais (moved down from the province of Yunnan) from the north who conquered Siam.

A third kingdom which came into prominence was Champa or modern Thailand. The first known important king was Rudravarman. Many dynasties ruled over this kingdom. Mostly the Thai kings were worshippers of Siva, and some of them favoured Vishnu. And one of the kings, Indravarman III, mastered the six systems of Hindu philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, the Sanskrit grammar of Panini and the sacred texts of Saivism. In the end, Champa disappeared after many centuries of struggle with the kingdom of Annam, the vanguard of Chinese culture.

In this manner, the fragments of information that we possess on the south-eastern expansion prove that the Hindu civilization was not restrained within by any built-in complexes of parochialism but extended in different directions, however unsurmountable were the obstacles. The history of the colonies proves that Hinduism could be adopted by foreigners, and also the great vigour with which it could absorb and vitalise, foreign cultures. In short, the expansion of Hindu civilization speaks for its once dynamic vigour, which traversed oceans, cleared swamps and jungles on its own, and established its own culture and civilization.*

*"If the ever expanding Empire of China did not extend its authority to Singapore and if the Indian Ocean remains today what its name indicates, it is due to the resistance which Kambuja and Champa put up against the continuous pressure of China....if the land route of Chinese expansion was barred for a thousand years by the kingdoms in Further India the glory of guarding the sea route fell to the great dynasty of the Sailendras whose empire included the kingdom of Srivijaya." K. M. Panikkar
52. The Spread of Indian Civilization in the West, Central Asia, Tibet and Far-East

"From Persia to the Chinese sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the island of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has a right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time, and to hold her place among the nations summarising and symbolising the spirit of Humanity," observes Sylvian Levi. This tribute is a deserving one. It is indeed true that India, time and again, was humiliated by foreign hordes, some of whom carried a veritable holocaust through the regions that they passed through but she preserved her integrity: her soul remained intact. It was this youthfulness of Hindu civilization that was responsible for the spread of our ideas in the different parts of the world. This is aptly conveyed in the following stanza of Matthew Arnold:

The East bowed low before the blast,
In patient deep disdain,
She let legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

It appears from the available data that from time immemorial, India had enjoyed intimate contact with the outside world. Dr. R.C. Majumdar remarks that of the two important races which mingled together to constitute Indian civilization, the Aryan definitely and the Dravadian possibly, came to India from outside. Rawlinson argues that cultural interactions of India and the west go back to the remote past, and it is wellnigh impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Greek thought, from Pythagoras to Plato, was influenced by parallel developments among the Hindus. Probably the link was the Persian empire because as early as 517 B.C. the emperor, Darius I, engaged a Greek mercenary, Scylax, to explore the Indus. Tradition says that the unaccountable period in the life of Plato was spent in visiting different countries including India. After Alexander's invasion the contact between India and the west increased. The Mauryas maintained friendly terms with the Greek ruler Antioch of Syria and Egypt. The Greek ambassador, Megasthenes, sent by Seleukos Nikator, resided for some years at Pataliputra. The contribution of the Kushans in this respect is immense. Some of the Indian rulers
maintained contacts with the Roman emperors. One of the kings of the Pandya dynasty sent a mission to Augustus in or about 26 B.C. Brisk trade was carried on with the Roman empire as evidenced by innumerable Roman coins found in India.

The discovery of regular currents of the monsoon winds in the Indian ocean in the first century A.D. brought Alexandria nearer to India. It was in Alexandria that Indian and Greek merchants rubbed shoulders with each other, and in its porticos the Buddhist monks exchanged ideas with neo-Platonic philosophers. The contact between India and the west is corroborated by the book *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, written by a Greek sailor of the first century A.D. The book vouchsafes for the brisk trade between India and the west, and the settlement of Indians in some islands of the Arabian Sea and the presence of a colony of Indian merchants in Socotra. A little later, Pliny recorded that Rome paid every year a million sesterces to India for the purchase of luxury articles. After the overthrow of Alexandria in the 7th century A.D., Persia became the clearing-house of ideas. Hindu treatises on astronomy, mathematics and medicine found their way to medieval Europe via Persia. Two remarkable things that were transmitted to the west are the concept of zero in mathematics and the *Panchatantra*. In the 9th century A.D. a king of Persia had a translation of the *Panchatantra* made into Pehlevi. From this, a version was made into Arabic and at this stage it was transmitted to Europe. We find a close resemblance between the story of Cinderella and Suvarnadevi in the *Panchatantra*, the Hindu princess, who dropped her slipper into a lake.

However meagre may be our knowledge, it is indisputable that the west was considerably influenced by India. Possibly Aristotle enjoined his pupil, Alexander, to enquire about the progress of philosophy in India. On the other hand, King Bindusara requested a western king to send him figs, wine and a sophist! The second instance clearly illustrates that India too must have been influenced by western ideas. But to what extent we cannot say. There appears to be a close similarity between the early childhood story of Lord Krishna and that of Moses. One writer has claimed that Homeric poetry was sung in India also.

The next important point to be noted is the cultural penetration of India into central Asia. This spread of Hinduism is known to us because of the discoveries of the archaeologist, Sir Aurel Stein. He found manuscripts at Khotan belonging to the 2nd century A.D. They are written in Prakrit version of Kharoshti script. Another script was found at Kuchu belonging to the fourth century A.D. This includes quotations from Charaka and Susruta. Russian archaeologists discovered 182 frescoed caves in Tun-Huang. These are popularly known as the Caves of the Thousand Poets. In 1908 Sir Aurel
Stein visited a monastery of the fourth century A.D., wherein he found 20,000 manuscripts and 554 paintings, a few hundreds of the former being in Sanskrit.

Normally, it is believed that the Buddhist missionaries first came to central Asia. Fa-Hien and Huien-Tsang recorded that thousands of Hinayana Buddhists lived in this area. It was from this region that Buddhism spread to China. It is said that Kashyapa Matanga and Goparana visited the Chinese empire in the 2nd century B.C. and converted its emperor to Buddhism. According to tradition, Kunala, one of the sons of Asoka, established himself in Kuchu. Historical evidence proves that Kumarajiva of the 4th century A.D. converted the people of Kuchu to Buddhism. From China, Buddhism spread to Korea and Japan. The influence of Buddhism on China is very cardinal: the Chinese civilization is an amalgam of three influences, Taoism (mystical vein), Confucianism (stabilization of the traditional society) and Buddhism (tenderness and compassion, and delicacy of feeling and philosophic serenity in face of trials and tribulations).

Regarding Tibet, we have to say that their king, Gampo, of the seventh century A.D., had two wives; and, as both of them professed Buddhism, they built their own temples there. When the Tibetans felt the necessity for a script they sent their minister to Kashmir. This minister evolved a new Tibetan alphabet from the Sanskrit script which was originally derived from the Sanskrit of the Guptas. As in the case of China, Tibetan Buddhists came to India in large numbers, and the proximity of India enabled them to come into closer contact with the home of Buddhism. The Pala emperors carried out the reform of Buddhism in Tibet, and there was a lively intercourse between Tibet and the Pala kingdom. Tibetan monks studied at the monasteries of Nalanda and Vikramasila, and many Indian Buddhist monks visited Tibet.

Even the paintings of this era also bear evidence to the influence of Indian civilization. The early paintings in central Asia indicate a strong influence of the Gandhara school. The later paintings bear the influence of the Gupta school. The figures became more thin, the pose more meditative and serene, and the drapery more transparent, says N.C. Chakravarti. The temples and buildings in Tibet show the influence derived from both the schools.

In this manner, however meagre may be the evidence regarding the expansion of Hindu civilization in different parts of the world, the topic makes an exhilarating reading. To conclude the story in the language of Radhakamal Mukherjee: "In future era of co-operation
among the Asian races and people,... the twenty-century-old Indian ideal and policy of cultural ascendancy, as epitomised and symbolised by the pregnant ancient phrases of Brahamadesa and Dwipantara Bharata, and the Mahayana conception of Trilokya Vijaya, may again shape the course of Asian development and culture and weave a new pattern of brotherhood among the resurgent peoples of the East”.

53. A Brief History of the Shahiya Dynasty of Kabul and the Punjab

Setting aside the rich and variegated panorama of India, our attention is focussed on a minor kingdom, the Shahiya dynasty of Udabhanda. Is there a justification? Yes. The importance of this kingdom consists in the fact that it illustrates the ancient glory of Hindu India and also the patent weakness of Hinduism on the eve of Muslim invasion. Because of this factor S.R. Sharma says, “The defeat of the national coalition at Peshawar in 1008 A.D. opened up a new chapter in the Odyssey of Mahmud.” In short, its importance consists in the fact that the kingdom protected the Hindu interests at the geographical door-steps of India; and its failure before the Muslims, throws light on the futility of Hindu resistance then.

The Shahiya dynasty of Udabhanda was founded in the seventh century by a kshatriya prince. For a long time they were devout Buddhists. There are sixty rulers in the dynasty. Kalhana gives an account of them. About 950 A.D. their ruler was one Bhima. And his successor was Jaipal.

The kingdom of Jaipal extended from Kashmir to Multan and from Sirhind to Lamghan. At one time, realizing the growing strength of Sabuktigin, the ruler of Ghazni, Jaipal, sued for peace. Sabuktigin, encouraged by Prince Mahmud, refused it. Then Jaipal wrote a letter that the Hindus would not keep anything worth possessing if his offer were turned down. Sabuktigin sent an envoy. Jaipal changed his mind and put the envoy in prison. Jaipal gathered a confederacy of Ajmer, Delhi, Kalinjar and Kanauj. But he was defeated. The vanquished accepted the suzerainty of the Muslim ruler. Also, the victor appointed his officers to the government of Peshawar and got the territory around Lamghan.

In 997, after the death of Sabuktigin, Mahmud ascended the throne. For a second time in 1001 A.D. Jajpal was defeated, and
this humiliation made him perish in flames. Anandpal succeeded him in 1002. Events moved on. The sixth expedition of Mahmud was directed against the successor of Jaipal, Anandpal, on the pretext that the latter helped Daud of Multan in his treacherous design. A Hindu confederacy of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalinjar, Kanauj, Delhi and Ajmer was formed in 1008 A.D. Ferishta says that Hindu women even sold their jewels and sent money from distant parts to be used against the Mussalmans. The battle was vigorously fought. The Khokars so frightened the Muslim soldiers that Mahmud came to the point of retreating. At this juncture Anandpal’s elephants took fright and fled from the field. So, Mahmud came out victorious and the Shahiya dynasty was paralysed.

The reasons for this discomfiture were many. Those of the kingdoms which joined the confederacy had really no sense of unity. This is for the reason they never obeyed any one single commander. The Hindus mostly relied on leadership. When the leaders disappeared, the whole army melted away like camphor. On the other hand, every Muslim soldier was inspired by the design of cleansing the heathen land. Again, the Hindu method of warfare was outdated, e.g. the fright of Anandpal’s elephants. Finally, Hinduism, by then, had entered a stage of attrition.

After the death of Anandpal, his successor, Trilochananapal, carried on the struggle. Time and again he was frustrated and he was assassinated in 1021. And with the death of his successor Bhima, in 1026, the dynasty came to an end.

In this manner, the Shahiya dynasty did indeed put up a resistance to hurl back the Muslim invasions but it signally failed to succeed. After all, when every facet of Hindu civilization like social, cultural, religious and artistic activities was stagnant, no good results could be expected from mere good intentions, or endeavour in the political field alone. In short, the failure of the dynasty was only a manifestation of the canker that had entered the vitals of Hindu civilization.
54. An Analysis of the Decline of Buddhism and its Influence on Indian Civilization

The haziness of ancient Indian history is a platitude. The discovery of our past is a recent achievement—pioneered by amateur historians like Wilkes, Tod, Grant Duff and others. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was believed that Indian history began only from the time of the Muslims! It was under the aegis of the British Raj that inscriptions were deciphered; ancient classics were translated; and ancient cities were excavated. Even then, our knowledge about matters like the causes of the decline of Buddhism and the imprint left by it on India is quite vague. Perhaps, Buddhism declined in a quite imperceptible manner because there was no substantial difference between Buddhism and Hinduism in those times. And hence the consequent paucity of references to it in the available historical material. And the best explanation for the decline of Buddhism is that of Barth’s—‘sheer exhaustion’.

The one debatable point is how far Hinduism was responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism. Buddhism suffered a set-back because of the antipathy from Pushyamitra Sunga, Mihiragula, and Sasanka, and the destructive genius of Bakhtiyar Khalji and the Hunas; and so, laying the whole blame for its disappearance at the doors of Hinduism is unfair. Normally, the rulers of India were tolerant in religious matters; and some of them were even eclectic in their religious professions. Therefore, the expulsion of Buddhism from India by Hinduism, as maintained by some, is a cock-and-bull story.

In a different way, Hinduism gave a mortal blow to Buddhism. The weapon that it used was neither persecution, nor a religious war. Down from the time of the Aryans, Hinduism showed a remarkable capacity to absorb different religions and cultures. The phrase coined by O’Malley for this unique quality of Hinduism is: omnivorous capacity. V.A. Smith, at one place, observes that the octopus of Hinduism is still spreading its tentacles, as can be seen in Nepal. This Hindu power of absorption or assimilation is normally recognized by all historians. Hence, it was this capacity of Hinduism to regenerate itself that enabled it to win the battle that was lost in the sixth century B.C. Buddhism came as a challenge to Aryanism in the sixth century B.C. because the latter was caught in its own coils of superstitions, sacraments and abstractions. On the
contrary, as Buddhism was simple, and comprehensible enough to an average individual, it stole a lead over Aryanism amongst the people. But by the time the Gupta rule was established the tables were reversed. Buddhism was beaten with its own stick because the redaction of the Puranas and idol-worship, to a great extent, took the wind out of the sails of Buddhism—Aryanism became simple and Buddhism lost its raison d'etre as a separate religious movement. This was the way in which the revised Aryanism, that is, Hinduism, emerged victorious over Buddhism, not by employing means like excommunication, an Inquisition or a Jesuit order—all foreign to the grain of Hinduism and other eastern religion.

In addition to this, the lack of kingly patronage went against the popularity of Buddhism in India. There is an ancient saying in Sanskrit, yatha raja tatha praja, which beautifully brings home to us the reason for the disappearance of Buddhism. After Kanishka, no ruler of importance patronized Buddhism. Indeed, the favours extended by Harsha caused much commotion, as evidenced by the brahminical conspiracy to murder Hiuen-Tsang. As a matter of fact, the kingly patronage that Buddhism received was of a dubious value. No doubt Asoka propagated it, but we should not forget the fact that he put before his people an Aryan concept as the goal, that is, svarga. Kanishka was a convert to Buddhism but his coins show Hindu and Greek gods along with the Buddha. Further, at the fourth Buddhist council held during his period, eighteen different schools of thought in Buddhism were accepted as the repositories of Buddhism—indicating how the Buddhist house was already divided.

In a way, no system of philosophy, no empire, and no civilization collapses because of external reasons alone. The trouble always starts from within. The internal schism that was responsible for the decline of Buddhism was the rise of innumerable factions, and later, a distinct school of thought Mahayanism. Mahayanism, in a way, was diametrically opposed to the original teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha recommended a short-cut to salvation and looked to nirvana as an approachable goal. On the other hand, Mahayanism treated it as a distant utopia. The Buddha emphasised on self-effort and discouraged all speculations and metaphysics, whereas Mahayanism gloried in metaphysics, and theology apart from sanctifying vain ceremonies. Hence, the striking comment of Radhakamal Mukherjee, “The rise of Mahayana Buddhism represents the conquest of the simple creed of Gautama by Hinduism.” The Buddha came to preside over a pantheon of Hindu gods. The distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism became so thin that in south-east Asia temples were dedicated to Shiv-Buddha. Mahayanism, to a
great extent, resembled Saivism and Vaishnavism.* And we must also bear in mind that Buddhism never developed into a distinct religion. The Buddhist philosophy, which is agnostic in its main tenets, is similar to the Sankhya philosophy of Hinduism which was developed by Kapila and Kanada, who were much earlier to the Buddha. The Buddha’s belief in the vicious cycle of birth and death is not much different from the concept of karma in Hinduism. In his lifetime, the Buddha found fault with the caste system, not with Hinduism as such, although he criticized the domination by the brahmins.

The last but one reason for the disappearance of Buddhism was the corruption that gradually worsened in the monasteries. The modest and pious wandering monks of the early days became opulent and corrupt as more and more donations were given to them. The monks of the later period frittered away their time in ‘gerund-grinding’ and ‘logic-chopping’ and in debasing Buddhist tantrism. As the monasteries accumulated a large amount of wealth, they invited the wrath of Muslim traders. Besides, the corrosive influence of money and loose morals started soon after the death of Asoka. Radhakamal Mukerjee says, “There was also widespread corruption in the monasteries into which wealth and

*The same is the opinion held by K.M. Panikkar. In his words, “The reason is that gradually Buddhism and Hinduism became indistinguishable. Those who accused Sankara of being a Prachanna Buddha or a concealed Buddhist were in a measure right. Not only did the philosophical concepts of the Madhyamika school find echoes in Advaita, but Sankara by his fight against the Mimamsakas broke down the barrier between the Buddhist laity and Hinduism. Buddhist temples like the famous Jagannath temple of Puri became Hindu temples and with the laity accepting Hinduism recruitment to the monasteries became more and more difficult. As Eliot, the historian of Buddhism, says: ‘The line dividing Buddhist layman from ordinary Hindus became less and less marked, distinctive teaching was found only in the monasteries: these became poorly recruited....Even in the monasteries the doctrine taught bore a closer resemblance to Hinduism than the preaching of Gautama and it is the absence of the protestant spirit, this pliant adaptability to the ideas of each age which caused Indian Buddhism to lose its individuality and separate existence.’” One more authority that holds the same view is B.G. Gokhale. In his words, “As Mahayana developed, the line dividing it from the Puranic form of Hinduism, on the one hand, and the Bhakti and Saiva cults on the other, tended to become very thin; and after the destruction of the centres of learning like Nalanda and the flight of the Buddhist monks, Buddhism became assimilated into Hinduism in course of time.”
honour flowed like the five rivers, undermining ascetic purity and austerity of living. Monks maintained slaves and servants who begged alms on their behalf and began to live a life of comfort and luxury. In the fraternity there was also a large number of imposters, rogues and criminals who took to monkhood as a way of living."

It cannot be denied, however, that a certain amount of brahminical religious pressure was also responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism from the time of Harsha, because Hinduism was represented by two men of remarkable vitality and ability, Kumarila and Sankara. These two preachers in the 8th and 9th centuries extolled brahminism at the cost of Buddhism. It was Sankara who played the role of Socratic gadfly and refuted the philosophy of Buddhism in a series of disquisitions with Buddhist teachers all over India during his travels. In the words of H.R. Ghosal, "With the edged axe of his logical rhetoric he cut at the root the Buddhist doctrine of *sanyāsā* propounding his own doctrine of *mayāvāda*, that Brahman alone is real and all else is illusion. Really he effected a synthesis between the rival doctrines and thereby made Buddhism’s absorption easier."

In the end, let us enumerate a few other points which could have harmed Buddhism: recognition of the eighteen schools as the repositories of Buddhism by the fourth Buddhist council; adoption of Sanskrit as the medium of Buddhist sacred books by the fourth Buddhist council; the evolution of the order of *sanyāsī* (peripatetic teachers) who acted as a counterpoise to Buddhist *Bikkhus*: the teaching of Hindu philosophical systems in Buddhist universities; the Mañyana bias towards the images of the Buddha leading to a pantheon of Bodhisattvas similar to that of Hindu gods: the *mutts* of Sankara charyas being analogous to Buddhist monasteries; and destruction caused to Buddhist institutions by the Hunas and then the Muslims.

To delineate the influence of Buddhism on India point-wise, is a difficult venture because the best of Buddhism is a part and parcel of Indian life and there is no unscrambling of eggs. It is said that Asoka’s Buddhism, that is, his Law of Piety, is one of the concentric circles of religious awareness. All the same, we have to admit that it contributed much to the social, spiritual and intellectual life of India. Its cosmopolitan outlook brought India into contact with different countries like central Asia, Tibet and even China, Japan, Korea and the Middle-East.

Its chief contribution to social life is the concept of *ahimsa*. In the realm of education the very name Nalanda speaks for itself. This university attracted scholars from different parts of the world,
Altekar remarks, "The cultural sympathy which the countries in Eastern Asia feel for India even today is entirely due to the work of the famous Buddhist colleges of ancient India. Buddhism, in a way, propagated a more egalitarian social ideal because it gave equal importance to women and emphasised more on morality or ethics of life." In the field of art and architecture its influence was phenomenal. The animal relief on the railing of the Sanchi stupa is the first of its kind. And it was at Amaravati and—a Buddhist centre—that the human form first appeared in sculpture. Some of the caves in Ajanta belong to Buddhism. And innumerable stupas, chaityas, and caves were dedicated to Buddhism. Why, the echoes of the Buddhist artistic traditions are heard till today. B. Sangharakshita writes, "Both Abanindranath Tagore, and Nandalal Bose, the two great masters of this school (Bengal school of art), exhibited a marked fondness for subjects drawn not only from the life of the Buddha but also from Buddhist history and legend."

The extent to which Buddhism could have influenced Indian civilization can be known from the assessment of Dr. D. T. Suzuki on the impact of Buddhism on Japan. Buddhism, to the people of the Nara period in Japan, was a new philosophy, a new culture and an inexhaustible mine of artistic impulses. The Buddhist monks were poets, painters, sculptors, metallurgists, teachers, and doctors often all rolled into one. Moved by this assessment of Suzuki, T. N. Ramachandran writes, "Buddhism was, in fact, a spring wind blowing from one end of the garden of Asia to the other and causing to bloom not only the lotus of India, but the rose of Persia, the temple flower of Ceylon, the zebina of Tibet, the chrysanthemum of China and the cherry of Japan."

In the religious field, as remarked by Radhakamal Mukerjee, "The reformed Hinduism was not slow to adopt some of the spectacular rituals and ceremonies of Buddhism such as the car procession of the idols and elaborate gorgeous ritual in the temples that had their powerful appeal to the masses." There appears to be more.*

*In the language of Percival Spear, "It can also claim to have introduced a moral content into the concept of dharma or religious duty; and in particular the addition of compassion to the list of the Hindu virtues. What may be called the higher Hinduism with its spiritual and moral discipline and its doctrine of the absorption of the self in the One owes much to early Buddhism. It was the Buddhist influence which ended the Vedic and post-Vedic phases of Hinduism, a religion of nature worship and sacrifice, of spells and power propitiation. The brahmins triumphed but only at the price of taking Buddhist ideas into partnership. The recognition of the

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But there is something on the debit side of the column also. Buddhism discouraged surgery and negativism in philosophy and encouraged hair-splitting arguments. "But it never pushed Ahimsa too far as did Jainism. The charge that Buddhism was arch-emasculator of India is unconvincing, as Buddhists during their periods were not cowards." Perhaps, it gave the inspiration for the order of sanyasis or sadhus and its accretion, beggary.

In this manner, the impact of Buddhism on Indian civilization was quite momentous and, as a matter fact, the echoes of Buddhism can be heard still. The famous stupas of Sanchi and Nagurjunakonda still inspire the sculptors of modern India and the inspiration derived by modern painters from the Buddhist frescoes at Ajanta is a well known fact. In short, we are not to view Buddhism as something separate but one of the colours in the spectrum of our history.

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Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu the Hindu preserver-god had in it a deep symbolism. Rising from Hinduism’s jungle of popular cults of crude beliefs and practices there grew a nobler tree of enlightenment and self-realization through spiritual discipline."

55. The Scope and Nature of Imperialism in Hindu India

Ancient India with its inimitable concept of dharma, famous universities like Vikramashila and Taxila, and versatile genuses like Arya Bhatta and Nagarjuna, is impossible to be thrown up against the skyline of imperialism, a word which has gathered moss in the activities of Julius Caesers, Napoleons, Hitlers and the like of the west. Imperialism in the Indian atmosphere is a square peg in a round hole. Yet, appearances are always deceptive. In ancient India also ‘imperialism’ (sui generis) had its own place. The concept was to a large extent coloured and moulded by the fundamental precept of Hindu polity, ‘dharma’. Goshal opines that the unique quality of Hindu imperialism was also governed by the Buddhist canonists.

Hence, imperialism means, in the Indian sence, the expansionist ambitions of the Hindu monarchs as oriented by the dharma. Of course, such an imperialism did not shun the mundane concept of conquering territories. From very hoary times India was regarded as a land of thousand yojanas or leagues and the king was often referred to as the ruler of the whole Bharatavarsha. The unification of India was always the ideal; it became a political reality only in the
days of Pax-Britannica in India. Moreover, the idea of expansion is clearly recognized in the Hindu and the Buddhist treatises as shown by Louis Renour.* The Mahabharata says: “The king who does not offer the horse sacrifice (symbol of conquest, of which this sacrifice marks the culmination) incurs all the sins of kingdom.” The meaning of the world chakravartin is the conquest of the whole earth: war is the means for achieving this object.

Yet, when the ancient Hindu kings tried to expand their territories, it was not for property or new dominions, but only to exhibit parakrama because the idea of imperialism was impregnated in the essence of dharma; they were never obsessed with fantastic dreams of world conquest by trampling down upon kingdoms and civilizations. This truth is brilliantly symbolized in the performance of the ancient Hindu sacrifice called, ashvamedha. In this ceremony an unbridled horse was let loose to wander all over the country by a king, who wanted to claim the suzerainty of India. As long as the horse wandered as free as the chartered libertine, the wind, the monarch claiming ‘parakrama’ never waged war on other kingdoms. In other words, a Hindu monarch who aspired for political eminence never let loose his conquering hordes to murder or maul the neighbouring kingdoms, but sought the tacit recognition of primacy.

Besides this, the concept of ‘parakarma’ was differently interpreted by different monarchs. “Parakarma in the case of Asoka was not war-like activity but vigorous and effective action to propagate the old Indian morality as well as the special teachings of the Buddha.” After his victory over Kalinga bheri ghosha gave place to dharma ghosha. The din and dust of battle, the wailing and woes of people, and the clatter and clash of arms gave place to the mild and meek preachings of the saffron-robed monks, officials, and even the king himself. This great monarch himself issued a proclamation, as enshrined in one of his edicts, promising to respect the integrity and independence of the neighbouring kingdoms. In one of his edicts he abjures his descendants to shun all new conquests, enjoins them to practise forbearance, and meet out light punishment in conquest, if at all necessary. Asoka concludes that dharma is productive of good in this world and also the next.

*In his language, “These authors not only agree in condemning politics as a dismal science based upon a creed of absolute selfishness and ruthless cruelty, but plead most impressively for the application of the standard of righteousness to the affairs of government. The influence of their elevated teaching upon practical politics is reflected in the celebrated statements of the Maurya Emperor Asoka furnishing the key to his internal and foreign policy, namely, that all men are his children and that the ‘chiefest conquest’ is the conquest by righteousness.”
Nextly, "the concept of parakrama with Samudra Gupta was an intense military and intellectual activity intended to bring about the political unification of Aryavarta, the discomfiture of foreign tormentors of the holy land, and an efflorescence of the old Indian culture in all its varied aspects, namely, religious poetic and artistic", says Dr. H.C. Raychaudhri. To concretize, Samudra Gupta, after conquering many kingdoms in the south, liberated them. He was not motivated by a mania for conquest as in the case of Napoleon. In the language of Sathianathier, "It is mainly on the strength of his South India achievement that Dr. Smith hails Samudra Gupta as the Indian Napoleon. The Arthasastra of Kautilya mentions three types of conquerors: dharmavijayi, lobhavijayi and asuravijayi (righteous, covetous and devilish conquerors), and on the ground that he reinstalled the South Indian princes, some would regard Samudra Gupta as a righteous conqueror, but in northern India his policy was clean different. Only a speculative answer is possible to the question why he did not incorporate the conquered southern territory in his empire. Perhaps his ambition was only to secure recognition of his imperial position in South India." What all happened in this case was that the floodgates of the northern culture, which were thrown open in the wake of this campaign, swept and swelled the Deccan plains.

Coming to one of the last great Hindu monarchs, Harsha, whose reign, in a way, was the epilogue to the Hindu drama of Indian history, we have to state that the policy was repeated by him. He encountered rough weather in northern India itself; for, with the disappearance of the Gupta empire, the picture of a congeries of Indian states had once again appeared in India. Besides this, his attempt to carry his arms into southern India was checked by Pulakesin II.

Incidentally, it may be remarked here that the imperialism of the Indian monarchs is quite striking in one respect. As pointed out by Panikkar the expansion of Hinduism in central Asia was only cultural but toward south-east Asia it was both political and cultural. The great Cholas waged a hundred-years war with the Sailendra kings. We have to admit there is nothing like dharma in this war.

In this manner, it can be argued that there was nothing obnoxious in ancient Hindu imperialism. After all, even speaking from the standpoint of geographical dynamics, the attempts of Hindu monarchs to expand are quite justifiable. Accumulation of superabundant energies needs a safety-valve or an outlet. So was the case with the Hindu monarchs: whenever their strength reached an optimum in northern India, they tried to expand southwards or, vice versa, as proved by Rashtrakutas, Kharavela of Kalinga, the great Cholas and the Marathas.
Thus, the concept of 'imperialism' was indeed present in Hindu India, although it was of a kind all its own. To conclude in the delightful language of B.G. Gokhale, "The Buddha said, in his very first discourse, that one must eschew the two extremes of self-indulgence and rigorous asceticism. We may as well take this injunction of the Enlightened One to heart and exclude from our evaluation of ancient India the two extreme views of looking at it as an era of saintliness on the one hand and an age of "primitive barbarism" on the other. In ancient India are to be found both saintliness and barbarism, for wherever men are it will always take all sorts to make the world."

56. A Critique on the Theory of Kingship in Ancient India

The study of Indian history is burdened with a good deal of flotsam and jetsam, a resultant of our tutelage to the method and the perspectives of European historiography. The journey through the pages of early Indian history becomes a heavy going because the transition from dynasty to dynasty or from age to age makes a rough sailing. It is an irony that our history is being written in the terminology of the west and also interpreted according to the perspectives of the west. The moment we discard this unwanted lumber, our sailing could become at once smooth and illuminating.

Regarding the theory of kingship we never had any Filmer or a Stuart James expounding a divine right theory of kingship, nor Hegels and Burkes attributing divine characteristic to the state. For that matter, even the political term State is a misnomer in the context of Indian history. In the early Indian history a ruler was expected to uphold the existing social order by protecting it from troubles arising from both within and without, for he was the dandadhara. For this, he was to receive as his return the taxes paid by the people. Besides, the social order that he was expected to uphold had its roots elsewhere and in very ancient times—sruti, (revelation), smriti (tradition), and acara (the practice of the elite).

A second limitation on absolutism. The ruler had normally very little control over the innumerable social, economic and religious interests of the people, except when he had to dispense justice on conflicts that arose due to the said variegated interests. The daily life of the people was looked after by many autonomous groups and associations governed by ties of locality, caste, occupation and religious predilections. These interests followed ancient customs and precepts. Each one of them had its own constitutions, though not written,
People were associated with each one of them, provided their interests were involved. They rarely assembled at the general assembly, except perhaps on some definite important occasions. Each one of them had also an executive body looking after the daily practice.

Even in matters relating to material activities the theory of kingship was limited. The duty of protecting society was the burden of the kshatriyas according to legists, customs and tradition. Naturally any one who felt up to the task of undertaking the ruling of a particular area was ordinarily accepted of the ruler. The moment anyone gained such an acceptance as the king, he gained respectability by maintaining a liberal court, patronizing learning and art, and showing tolerance to all sects irrespective of the faith followed by himself.

More than the above factors, the very organization of administration emptied the state or the theory of kingship of its panoply of authority. All through the ages and all through the turmoils, both political and social, the villages remained autonomous and self-sufficient. The village constituted the primary cell of society. Hundreds of inscriptions confirming this truth are found all over the country. The very fact that a Pallava grant records that a particular piece of land belonged to the king, belies the contention that all land belonged to state or the king in India. Each one of the villages maintained its own records; and the villages met periodically to deliberate upon matters of common concern, for the settlement of disputes and the administration of justice. Generally, the village had a headman, who was differently designated—mutuda, kilan, gramabhojaka, and so on. Whether they were appointed to, or held the office as hereditary right, cannot be definitely said. We have evidence that the village in India played an important role along with its headmen and assembly.

Finally, warfare as practised by rulers was recognized as a duty of kingship down from ancient times. According to Kautiliya the king should be one who wishes to conquer vijigishu. It was the acceptance of this ideal that led to frequent wars and skirmishes. Therefore, the conclusion of Professor Nilakanta Sastri, "...political changes did not have in India such profound effects on the structure of society and civilization as elsewhere although the establishment of the continued prosperity of an empire often, indeed, meant an era of high endeavour and achievement in literature and the arts,"
57. Fundamental Principles in the Central and Local Administration of Hindu India

To give an assured account of the fundamental principles governing the central and local administration of Hindu India is a hazardous task. All the same, we may venture to say that the chief factor which influenced the administrative organization at all levels was the spirit of Hindu religion. Not that Hinduism was ever a religion in the conventional rigid sense.* Hinduism has been ‘a way of life’: and as administration is always very much a part of civil life, it has all along been ethicized.

Regarding the nature of the government, we have to say that it was not at all theocratic. This is not to deny the importance of religion but to emphasize the fact that religious and secular ideas were remarkably blended. The state was regarded as an institution, not merely to ensure a happy life, but a pious life as well. Altekar writes: “The king was no doubt regarded as the protector and enforcer of Dhram, but this did not make the state a bureaucracy. His duty was to provide piety and religiousness by extending patronage to all sects and religions and enforce customary laws approved by the social consciousness; he was not to be an agent of any particular religion or sect working to promote its influence or seeking to carry out its commands.” Thus, there was no chance for a king to become despotic. **

*“Religion in India is not dogmatic. It is a rational synthesis which goes on gathering into itself new conceptions as philosophy progresses. It is experimental and provisional in its nature, attempting to keep pace with the progress of thought. The common criticism that Indian thought, by its emphasis on intellect, puts philosophy in the place of religion brings out the rational character of religion in India.” Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

**To quote at length from the book of Louis Renour: “Quite a literature on this subject grew up after the epic period, oscillating between the themes of paternalism and autocracy. Kautilya puts in the first place among the virtues of royalty, self-control—the source of all the others. The bad king is he who plunders and robs, who breaks his agreements with his servants, whom his courtiers (Contd. on Page 214)
This truth is vouchsafed by the history of all the kings from the time of Asoka onwards. Even though Asoka leaned more towards Buddhism, he was a patron of brahmins, Ajivakas and Nirgranthas. The alien ruler, Kanishka, too, followed an eclectic spirit of kingship. And even in the hey-day of brahminism, toleration was the key-note.

The second fundamental factor that governed Indian polity can be seen from the nature of international law. This too, was democratic. The status and prestige of different kings differed as indicated by the names Syarat, Ekarat, Samarat, Adhirat. War was known and also acknowledged. But the king, after a dhramavijaya, was to remain content with a formal recognition of his suzerainty and payment of tributes by the defeated. Samudra Gupta’s defeat of southern Indian kings and their final liberation illustrates this point. If the defeated king died in war, a suitable successor was installed. If an accession became inevitable, the established laws and customs were respected. Even the so-called Machiavelli of Indian polity, Kautilya, says: “If a state has immense superiority, it should follow a chivalrous giant; otherwise, it should have recourse to all methods of warfare.”

The third important factor was the association of the king with a council of ministers. All kings, down from the time of Asoka, were assisted by a mantri parishad. This shows that the king was not conceited to think in terms of ruling a vast country by his own personal will. The validity of this factor is borne out by the remark of Kautilya: “In the happiness of his subjects lies his (king’s) happiness: in their welfare, his welfare. Whatever pleases him, he shall not consider as a good.”

Finally, about kingship, we may say that there was no lack of colour and warmth in it. Most of the great kings were patrons of letter and arts. The Gupta kings bear out this contention. Even minor kings like Bihira Bhoja and Yasovarman were patrons of literary men. It has been said by Nilakanta Sastri that kingship reached its Byzantine gorgeousness in the days of the Cholas.

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exploit (“we are those to whose tune he must dance,” says a passage in the Mahabharata). The subjects of such a king may rise against him and kill him without mercy (Mahabharata). The Mahavamsa shows that many kings were deposed by popular assemblies. Kautilya recommends a thorough political training, which consists first of all in severe, indeed ferocious, precautions against the king’s own family: ‘King’s sons are crabs, who destroy their own father’. This passage illustrates the dangers always present in Oriental courts.”
With regard to local government, it goes without saying that it was prevalent all through the sub-continent of one thousand yojanas. It was impossible for any central government to directly administer the length and breadth of the country. The relation of the centre to the local bodies was one of guidance and supervision, not imposition of direct rule. They were treated as efficient auxiliaries to the centre, rather than its parts. R.K. Mukherji says: “The policy of non-interference was recognised as the ideal policy of the state.” The activity of the Centre was ordinarily restricted to the irreducible minimum like protection of life and property, and realization of revenue for the proper execution of the kingly duties.

Before we examine the administrative mean in local government, let us take note of a few more points. As far as our knowledge goes, north India too, possessed full-fledged local government but in course of time it changed greatly as compared to the south. In the beginning all over India, as far as our limited evidence goes, rulers were expected to abide by the decision of popular local groups like pugas and srenis, and Yajnavalkya described that local courts in 800 B.C. were sanctioned by the king indicating that the central government of the day enforced the decisions of local courts. The Artha-shastra mentions gramavriddas or village elders. And when alien minorities set their rule the central government of the north lapped at the independence of the village bodies. The centre also took away revenue and judicial functions from them. But in the south, because of immunity from foreign invasions, institutional growth was organic. The devolution of authority was so great that in the Vijayanagar kingdom, the power to collect revenue and to remit it, if circumstances should so require, lay with the local bodies.

Coming to its organizational aspect, it must be said that the local institutions were constituted by the community for fulfilling various local functions pertaining to interests affecting a village or a city. All castes were represented in the local bodies. The villages enjoyed considerable autonomy and assisted the state in revenue collection and criminal administration. “Government was multi-centred; local government, and not over-government, was the rule.”

The administration of towns and cities was conducted on the same efficient lines as that of the village. Kautilya informs us of a systematic method of municipal administration. In addition to the direct control, or participation of state officials in the town administration, there were also officials exclusively devoted to its administration. The town official called the nagaraka, was entrusted with all the municipal functions of the day. In the language of Prof. Vidyarthi, “The municipal government of ancient India anticipates tendencies which would satisfy even an expert commune of modern city corporation.”
More evidence about the democratic nature of the local governing bodies can be gathered from the Chola administration. It is said that some of the villages maintained their own educational institutions and constructed their own irrigation canals and dams. In general, we must admit that the local government in ancient times was highly democratic and efficient.

In this manner, the principles of central and local governments in ancient times are in conformity with the basic principles of democracy. This clearly shows that democracy as introduced by the English in India, is not basically a new venture but a particular form of democracy implanted in the little known traditions of ancient India—traditions which had lain obscure for more than a millennium.
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