BHĀRATVARSHA

(An Account of Early India with Special Emphasis on Social and Economic Aspects)
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To
The Memory of
Professor D.C. Sircar
Preface

It is only during the last four decades that attempts have been made to give a true picture of the history of India since the earliest times. Before that it was a usual practice for the British historians to ignore the pre-British era of Indian history. Since they were the first to interpret the history of India to the modern world, it was but natural for modern Europe to conceive India as a land where independent ruling chiefs had been fighting perpetually among themselves until the British arrived and conquered the land and ultimately established peace and order and put the country under one administration. This type of interpretation undoubtedly denigrates the discipline of history as a whole. There can be no two opinions with regard to the fact that India was one of the earliest seats of ancient civilisations of the world.

The present work after touching the broad political and religious outlines of early India at once goes to make an in-depth study of the socio-economic aspects of the time since the modern trend is to lay emphasis on these issues. The readers are aware that the world of today is qualitatively different in many ways from all that went before. Thus, the readers will find enough material in the present work on topics like "Slavery in Early India", "Caste System in Early India" and "Chemistry and Metallurgy in Early India" and many other topics of like nature. It is our misfortune that these subjects have received scant attention in a book of this kind. It is admitted in all hands that these topics constitute the bedrock of early India which was known as Bhāratvarsha which is the befitting title for our study.

Arun Bhattacharjee
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"Tomorrow's India will be what we make it by today's labours."
—Jawaharlal Nehru

"Our actions today mould our tomorrows"
—Indira Gandhi

Scope and Concept of History

There is always a need for presenting to our country not only a connected and correct account of events as they have happened of wars and conquests, the heroic deeds of kings and emperors but also how our life has been lived and shaped. We also cannot ignore the political upheavals or how great religious and cultural and literary movements have arisen and influenced hundreds of people. We also must not lose sight of how art and science, industry and commerce have developed and fructified. Thus, the scope of history is an effort to meet this urge. It is in this context that Dr Rajendra Prasad said: "If history teaches by examples, it will also provide guidance for the future."

This naturally gives rise to the question as to what a good history should be. From time immemorial history has been looked upon in different ways by different people. The most common view of history is, however, that it is a record of the past and that its main concern is to disinter facts and figures from the graveyard of time. Apparently this is a most inadequate appreciation of history. If history is a teaching by precedent or a mere record of the past it would not be able to be our pole star for the simple reason that the man of the present could find his problems more complex than those of the past. But such a concept of history must derogate its value to
man. This aspect was recognised as early as the period of Polybius, the great Greek historian of the second century B.C. He wrote: "If you take from history all explanations of cause, principal and motive and of the adaptation of the means to the end, what is left is a panorama without being instructive and though it may please for the moment, it has no abiding value."

History is a highly individualist study and no two historians share an identical outlook. Even when scholars adopt a broadly similar position and have in common a set of general philosophical ideas, the differences between them are usually so acute that sharp controversy rages.¹

The scope of history cannot be adequate only as a mere chronicle of events. It will be even less adequate if it is a mere account of kings and nobles—their follies and their foibles, their wars and their conquests—totally ignoring the account of the common men and of the great religious, linguistic, cultural and artistic movements which convulsed humanity from time to time. The Roman view of history was, however, different from that of the Greeks. Thus, Cicero, for one, has well stated the principle of historiography in the following words: "The first law in writing history is that the historian must not dare to say anything that is false, and the next that he must dare to tell the truth. Also that there must be no suspicion of partiality and animosity. The superstructure depends on facts and style."

Thus, history has been looked upon not only as a mere life-less chronicle but as giving us an insight into the genesis and development of human societies and their institutions. So Kautilya in his Arthasastra has mentioned as sources of history the Puranas (myths and legends), Itivritta (events), Akhayika (tales), Udaharanas (biographical quotations), Dharmasastra (cultural life) and Arthasastra (material life). According to Kautilya, these were the ingredients of history. In this way Kautilya has introduced the cultural and material factors as the essential constituents of the historical concept. This view is not only comprehensive, but extremely original also in the sense that it defines a concept of history which is ultra-modern and

¹ M.G.S. Narayanan, Presidential address, Ancient India Section Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Hyderabad Session, 1978.
is comparable with the latest views and theories of history propounded by western scholars. His singular merit is that he thought of a synthesis of what later on came to be two rival philosophies of history, namely, the idealist and metaphysical which have been at conflict to establish their exclusive claims during a century or more. In writing history, particularly of our country, namely India we must recognise that the influence of material factors on man’s destiny which was ignored earlier is at least as important a factor as human personality and its superphysical motives. A synthesis of both the factors is necessary for the progress of history and for a correct interpretation of its laws.

Utility of the Study of History

It is widely believed by many that from the study of history men might derive guidance in the day-to-day problems of government and indeed in the problems of their private lives. It is seen that in every ancient and medieval civilisation stories of the great men of the past were used to point morals for the present. It is also a truism that political and social life was largely guided by the precedents of the ancients that are handed down through chronicles and legendary history. In early India where the writing of history in the modern sense hardly existed was nevertheless supplied with stories of shadowy ancient kings such as Yudhisthira, Raghu and Rama who were held up as models to the princes, while the traditions of the fate of evil kings such as Ravana served them as a cautionary story.

It is a very old doctrine that history has a practical and moral purpose. It is hoped that when a much greater body of historical data is available than at present and when the electronic brains of the complexity capable of digesting this material have been devised, then only more significant universal laws of history will be forthcoming and will receive universal acceptance. In the absence of it, theories of history of our generation can be little more than matters of opinion. From the practical point of view they may provide valuable spurs to action like the conviction that the “Last Judgment” which was bound to take place gave strength and direction to many Christian communities of earlier times but is not the final truth.
Dr A.L. Basham was of the view that the real purpose of the study of history is nothing but satisfying intellectual curiosity. To say in his words: "In my view the major purpose of the historian is simply to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of himself and his readers, either by producing an interpretation of the past as such or by explaining how a given contemporary situation came about. He may also sometimes succeed in writing a book of wide scope and brilliant perception which appeals to the aesthetic sense of his public, and thus his work has affinities with that of the poet or the artist. I have reason to believe that there are some people who derive from good historical writing of certain kinds experiences almost religious in character, rather like those obtained from listening to great music. Thus, the historian is both a scientist, intent on discovering what happened and why it happened, and an artist, relating bare historical data into a complex pattern which will in some sense please and inspire his readers."

The observation of Dr Basham laid him open to a good deal of friendly criticism from his colleagues who alleged that by claiming only such a humble place for history in the scheme of man's values he had denigrated and rather devalued the discipline which he served. In reply to this criticism he again said: "I am still, however, unrepentant. I have yet to be convinced that the study of history is of any great value in giving guidance for the future. The historian is never really in touch with the thought and life of the past. The best he can is to build within himself by a disciplined use of the imagination a structure of concepts and ideas which he believes bear some resemblance to that of the period which he studies."

**Lack of Historicity of the Indians**

According to Dr A.K. Muzumdar: "We Hindus often boast of our glorious past, but we possess no regular history. We cannot reasonably blame or abuse a foreigner if he occasionally expresses a good-natured contempt for this want of our national history."2 This is also the view of Elphinstone:

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“It is a natural subject of surprise that the Hindus should have attained to a high pitch of civilisation without any work that at all approaches to the character of a history.”

The Indians had Sound Historical Sense: “There is no gainsaying the fact that our ancestors have not bequeathed to us any rich and reliable historical work for any early period. We cannot so readily admit the charge often brought against them of their entire incapacity for writing history.”

Col. Tod wrote: “Who could believe that the Hindus who carried so many sciences to perfection, knew not the simple art of writing history?” In the same vein R.C. Dutt observed: “Who would believe in the absence of a true historical sense in the ancient Hindus whose earliest works are the Vedas?” According to Dr Fleet: “Though genuine materials once abounded in India, yet we find no national history of the Hindus.” According to Dr. Fleet: “The historical chapters of the Puranas do certainly indicate a desire on the part of the ancient Hindus not to ignore general history altogether and are clearly based on ancient archives which had survived in a more or less complete shape and were somehow or other accessible to the composers of those works or upon some prototype which had been so based.” Dr Fleet thinks: “An attempt on the part of the Hindus to put together anything in the shape of a general history is the Rajatarangini written in 1148-1149 A.D.” We may conclude in the words of Dr A.K. Mazumdar: “To the same twelfth century perhaps belongs Chand’s Prithviraj Rasa which is history in every inch.”

Sources of Early Indian History

It is often said that our ancestors and forebears have not left for us any authentic history of our country or material from which such history can be reconstructed. Fortunately, we are getting an unending stream of material from archaeological excavations and discoveries in the form of inscriptions, coins, sculptures, pottery, beads, etc. found in India, Central Asia,

4. Ibid., p. 7.
Indonesia, Central America and the Northern part of South America. Apart from such material evidence, there is a vast amount of literature which can throw a flood of light on our past. Not only works of art, but also works of medicine, mathematics, grammar, law, music and sciences can yield, if properly studied, matter of great value regarding our life and culture. In archaeological field epigraphy plays a very vital role. An interesting feature of epigraphy is that every now and then new inscriptions are discovered providing new material for study.⁵

Of historical documents, there is a considerable number and more are being discovered from time to time. History books often contain references to a number of works from which the author drew his material, most of which are no longer available.

Among the great collection of texts are the Jatakas, a lengthy series of folk tales, rather artificially invested with an air of sanctity by their being related to the previous births of the Buddha—that give a very vivid picture of the life in India at a rather uncertain period during the first five centuries before Christ.

The poetical accounts of the kings by the court poets constitute historical literature of useful importance. According to J. Kennedy: "The true history of India is hidden under a thick veil of Brahmanical or bardic fiction."⁶ Here we shall discuss three such bardic accounts—the Milandapanho, the Harshacharita and the Rajatarangini. The Milandapanho or the question of Milanda (who was the famous Greek ruler Menandar) is in the form of questions and answers that he had with the Buddhist teacher Nagasena (also called Nagarjuna). According to Dr R.S. Sharma, this book constitutes "a good source for the cultural history of the post-Maurya period." The Harshacharita is a semi-biographical work written in ornate style. About its historical import Dr R.S. Sharma wrote: "Although full of exaggerations, it gives an excellent idea of the court life under Harsha and the social and religious

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⁵ Shrinivas Ritti, Presidential Address (Section V: Archaeology Epigraphy and Numismatics, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Bombay Session, 1980, p. 890.
life in his age.” Our third book is the Rajatarangini. Its historical assessment in the words of Dr R.S. Sharma is worth quoting: “But the best example of the earliest historical writing is provided by the Rajatarangini or ‘the stream of kings’ written by Kalhana in the eleventh century A.D. It is a string of biographies of the kings of Kashmir and can be considered to be the best work which possesses several traits of history as it is understood in our times.”

Coming to more recent times, we may mention the Buranjis of Assam, the Kulapanjikas of Bengal, the Vamsavali of Mithila, the Khyats of Rajasthan and the Dafters of Maharashtra and a host of other literary works. The memoirs of the Muslim kings and their courtiers, the histories of their wars and conquests, the descriptions and accounts of their administration and also the accounts of the travels in this country left by foreign travellers are a storehouse of information. There is a plethora of material in many European languages, particularly in English of the period when we had trade and political relations with Europe for the first time. Modern Indian languages also can give us information and throw a flood of light on many an unexplained incident of our history.

Another field which is equally important as a source material is art and architecture. The forms of art help us to understand the concepts held by the people about divinity, dress, ornaments, types of buildings, decorative arts, etc. which have much bearing on the life-style of the people.

Another trend in recent researches is the study of temples, especially in South India where more recorded evidence survive than in the North. The role of a temple in the life of the people around is really kaleidoscopic in its coverage giving an opportunity for the researcher to delve deep into the socio-economic aspects through the medium of religion. The huge endowments of gold, silver, etc. in the early periods, the increasing assignment of produce from the lands for services in the temple mainly the food offerings, the later development of investments of the donated money in lakes and channels leading to a boost in the production of grains reveal an interesting story of how the production and distribution cycle worked through the medium of the “house of gods”. The many-sided activities that make up the social behaviour at a central place
cannot be ignored. Some new fields of study that have
developed of late also contribute source material for history.
They are Anthropology and Linguistics. The results of the
analysis made by the workers in these fields have to be taken
into account in the process of writing the history of any
country. The numerous tribes before long they are completely
affected by modern environments offer vast scopes for study in
areas which cannot be undertaken by other disciplines.

Changing Outlook of Historical Writing

The outlook of the historians and their approach to the
historical narration underwent vital changes from the early
nineteenth century to the late twentieth century A.D. The
openers in this field were the European scholars, a vast majority
of whom belonged to the stock of the British administrators. It
was, therefore, but natural that their history was what may be
called "administrator's history". Another attendant bias with
their treatment was to glorify the Greek culture and consider
everything in India with the measure-rod of Greek culture.
That every civilisation has its own merit or miracle did not
occur to them. It will not be, however, fair to minimise the
value of their services, let alone denigrating the importance of
their scholarship. Their history evolved round the king and the
rise and downfall of the empires with an accent on the
genealogy of the dynasties. Their sole concern was political
history and dynastic studies. As Dr Romila Thapar rightly
observed: "The inadequacies of their interpretation were often
the inadequacies of their times, for a historian is frequently
far more representative of his age than he is aware. Despite
their shortcomings these studies laid the foundations of the
history of India and gave a firm chronological framework,
around which fresh interpretations can be constructed which
will place the ideas and institutions of Indian civilisation in
their correct perspective."

7. K.G. Krishman, Presidential Address in Section : Historical Archaeo-
ology, Numismatics, Epigraphy, Proceedings of Indian History
Congress, Waltair Session, 1979, p. 1069.
8. Ibid.
In the sixties of the twentieth century A.D. the emphasis was shifted by the Indian historians on the cultural sectors. To say in the words of Dr Thapar: "In the contemporary world history is being increasingly regarded as part of the social sciences. This is now replaced by shifting the emphasis on the social and economic field." About the changing outlook Dr Thapar wrote: "In recent years the early history of India has been enriched by the incorporation of evidence provided by two new technique of the systematic study of society in its various facets, and the extensive use of contemporary evidence from archaeology. Its importance lies in the fact that it indicates the possibilities of new ways of approaching the Indian past; and of posing questions, in the answers to which may lie a more real comprehension of the history of India. Such an approach has already been used effectively in certain types of research. The study of society has also stimulated an interest in comparative studies, not along the old lines of declaring one culture to be the norm and judging others by its standard, but rather in terms of a comparative analysis of many cultures."

This newly developing interest seeks to ask a different set of questions from the Indian past—different from those asked by earlier historians. This difference is mainly one of changing historical emphasis. Political histories and dynastic studies are not completely lost sight of. But these are viewed in the light of other considerations. Thus, the changes in the political pattern are inextricably entwined in changes in the economic structure and these in turn have a bearing on social relationships.

Social and Economic Interpretation of History: The most significant development in historical studies since independence is the growing interest in social and economic development. It is encouraging to note that the concept of social change in its broader aspect has not been ignored by our historians. The result is that the social or economic history are no longer looked upon as parallel in nature but as integral parts of the study of society as a whole—its material activity, mode of production, social organisation, political life, ideological trends and religious institutions. All these sectors are basically entwined and constitute the bedrock of the social organisation. It is equally inspiring that our scholars have been devoting a good deal of attention to the study of the dynamics of society and
the process of social changes. Thus, Professor Narul Hasan rightly said: "Today we know much more about the factors that accelerated or retarded the process of social transformation, the stages through which society passed and the direction that it took. Our country has, because of its large size and variety of environment, seen the emergence of local cultural traditions. It has also been subjected to influences from abroad. The interaction of these varied cultures and social institutions led to the emergence of a synthesis, to its richness, and to its characteristic unity in diversity. But this culture-interaction has, on the one hand, been influenced by social process and conflicts, on the other, it has given to social conflicts, the appearances of cultural conflicts. This particular feature which is attracting the attention of our historians has, at the same time, created difficulties and pitfalls. Many of the social and political tensions of today are sought to be reflected backwards in the interpretation of history. Many writers on Indian history abroad are equally carried away by their political prejudices. I have confidence that the muse of history will guide our scholars to retain their objectivity and scientific outlook so that the value of their work is not vitiated by extraneous considerations of passion and prejudices."
CHAPTER 2

Geo-physical Foundations and Unity in Diversity

"India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but indivisible threads."

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

"Whatever the political vicissitudes, be they internecine wars or foreign invasion, ours sages, seers and poets went on undisturbed in their quest for unity—social, cultural and spiritual."

—K.M. MUNSHI

India is the seventh largest country in the world. It is well marked off from the rest of Asia by mountains and the sea, which gives the country a distinct geographical unity. Bounded by the great Himalayas in the north, it stretches southwards and at the Tropic of Cancer tapers off into the Indian Ocean between the Bay of Bengal on the East and the Arabian Sea on the West. It covers an area of 32,87,782 sq. km.

Lying entirely in the northern hemisphere, the mainland extends between latitudes $8^\circ4'$ and $37^\circ6'$ North and longitude $68^\circ7'$ and $97^\circ25'$ East and measures about 3,214 km. from East to West between the extreme longitudes. It has a land frontier of about 15,200 km. and coastline of about 6,100 km.

The Physical Background

The Himalayas and the other lofty mountains—Muztagh Ata, Aghil and Kunlun mountains to the North of Kashmir
and Zaskar mountains to the East of Himachal Pradesh and the North of Uttar Pradesh—form India’s northern boundary except in the Nepal region. India is adjoined in the North by China, Nepal and Bhutan. A series of mountain ranges in the East separate India from Bhutan. Also in the East lies Bangladesh bounded by the Indian States of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. In the North-West, Afghanistan and Pakistan border on India. South of the Tropic of Cancer, the country tapers off into the Indian Ocean between the Arabian Sea on the West and the Bay of Bengal in the East. The Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait separate India from Sri Lanka. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea are parts of the territory of India.

The Physical Features

The mainland of India comprises four well-defined regions, namely the great mountain zones, the Indo-Gangetic plains, the desert region and the southern peninsula.

The Great Mountain Zones: The Himalayas comprise three almost parallel ranges interspersed with large plateaux and valleys, some of which like the Kashmir and the Kulu valleys are fertile and extensive of great scenic beauty. Some of the highest peaks in the world are found in these regions. The highest altitude limits travel only to a few passes, notably the Jalep La and Nathu La on the main Indo-Tibet trade route through the Chumbi Valley North-East of Darjeeling and Shipki La in the Sutlej Valley North-East of Kalpa (Kinnaur). The mountain wall extends over a distance of about 2,400 kilometres with a varying depth of 240 to 320 kilometres. In the east, between India and Burma and India and Bangladesh, the hill ranges are much lower. The Garo, Khasi, Jaintia and Naga Hills running almost East-West join the chain of the Lushai and Arakan hills, running North-South.

The Indo-Gangetic Plains: The Indo-Gangetic plains, about 2,400 kilometres long and 320 kilometres broad, are formed by the basins of three distinct river systems—the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. They are one of the world’s greatest stretches of flat alluvium and also one of the most densely
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populated areas on the earth. There is practically no variation in relief. Between the Yamuna river at Delhi and the Bay of Bengal, nearly 1,600 kilometres away, there is a drop of only 200 metres in elevation.

**The Desert Region**: The desert region can be divided into two parts—the “great desert” and the “little desert”. The “great desert” extends from the edge of the Rann of Kutch beyond the Luni river northward. The whole of Rajasthan-Sind frontier runs through the “great desert”. The “little desert” extends from the Luni river between Jaisalmer and Jodhpur up to the northern wastes. Between the great and little desert lies a zone of less absolutely sterile country, consisting of rocky land cut up by limestone ridges. Due to absence of surface water and very scanty rainfall, the region is almost absolutely sterile.

**The Southern Peninsula**: The Peninsular Plateau is marked off from the Indo-Gangetic plains by a mass of mountain and hill ranges varying from 460 to 1,220 metres in height. Prominent among these are the Aravalli, Vindhya, Satpura, Maikal and Ajanta. The peninsula is flanked on the one side by the Eastern Ghats, where the average elevation is about 610 metres and the other by the Western Ghats where it is generally from 915 to 1,220 metres rising in places to over 2,440 metres. Between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea lies a narrow coastal strip, while between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal there is a broader coastal area. The southern point of the plateau is formed by the Nilgiri hills where the Eastern and the Western Ghats meet. The Cardamon hills lying beyond may be regarded as a continuation of the Western Ghats.

**Unity in Diversity**

Like a vast canvas, India is painted with pigments of varying hues, while retaining a remarkable compositional unity. A multitude of geo-political differences, ethnic and linguistic variations, heterogeneous cultural patterns submerges in the tidal wave of her history. To say in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: “India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but indivisible threads. Overwhelmed again and
again, her spirit was never conquered and she remains unsubdued and unconquered."

India has a peculiarity of her own which she has preserved for ages. We have an immense variety of things—moral, spiritual and physical. Anyone can see the great variety in the physical features of the country, extending from the highest Himalayas to the distant seas. On the one side, we have got the perpetual snow-line and the mountains clad with white snow throughout the year. On the other side, we have barren deserts exuding heat and fire most of the time. While we have some regions which enjoy a rainfall of more than four hundred inches, we have other regions in which the rainfall is less than even four inches.

We have at least twelve or thirteen principal spoken languages. In addition, there are a very large number of dialects which are prevalent in large tracts of the country. There is no faith in the world which is not followed by millions in this country. Our culture is, therefore, a composite culture which has been influenced by all with whom this country came into contact. This country has never shut her doors against foreigners. In our entire history we have never carried out any progressive war. We have suffered from invasions, but never ourselves invaded any other country. Our culture is like a beautiful garland with divergent hues and different kinds of jewels studded therein.

The Fundamental Unity: In a fundamental manner India is different from other countries. If we take the four most populous countries in the world we notice one startling difference between the three of them—the USA, the USSR and China and India. The USA took the pride of being the melting-pot nation, a country where people of diverse languages, cultures and beliefs came together, and over a period are transformed into a homogeneous community, speaking a single language, namely English and adapting to a common culture. As for the USSR during the years of socialist construction there has emerged in the country a new historical community of people—"the Soviet people". Thus, what was once "the Soviet Peoples" now becomes "the Soviet People". Plural yielded place to singular. While different languages remain and flourish, overarching importance resides with the Russian language. So it
is no accident that 1970 Census figures show 13,000,000 persons of non-Russian ethnic minorities naming Russian as their mother tongue. The switchover to the main language proceeded apace. In China, notwithstanding her enormous population the ethnic minorities account for less than eight per cent of the people. It has been pulling together the homogeneous aspects of the nation's life and culture. Her minorities are being squeezed. We have in India, in contrast, a multitude of languages, religions and cultural traits. Hardly any group constitutes the majority. India is thus the classical land of teeming minorities.

India has many languages, many religions and many cultures—one has merely to contrast the way of life of the Assamese with that of the next-door Khasis to understand the cultural gamut of India. This variety bursts forth in dress, food habits and festivals. Thus, this type of heterogeneity provides the substance of India. That basic fact inescapably makes India’s politics pluralist and accordingly shapes its political structure. Again, India cannot be transformed into a homogeneous nation because there is no single element in it that is so dominant that in its image the rest can be transfixed. Equally stubborn is also the will of different entities, cultural groups, to retain their distinctive identities. To seek homogeneity for India is to count disaster. India’s unity has, however, some form of harmony. It is, therefore, obvious that democracy becomes the natural way of life for India with her multifold diversity that cannot be beaten into any uniformity. Transcending the many differences, there are of course, ties stretching over centuries that bind us together into the Indian nation. These ties are strengthened through a democratic policy because therein the purposes of power are served through constant adjustments. In the same way it can be said that the separationist pulls have been checked by the operation of democratic forces. Thus, heterogeneity is woven into the texture of India and this constitutes an integral part of Indian culture and heritage.¹ According to Dr K.M. Munshi: “Whatever the political vicissitudes, be they internecine wars or

foreign invasions, our sages, seers and poets went on undisturbed in their quest for unity—social, cultural and spiritual. Even in the present century when political thought and scientific approach dominate the destiny of man, the great names of Indian history are Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Dayananda Saraswati, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.” We may conclude in the words of Subhas Chandra Bose: "Though politically and historically India presents an endless diversity to any observer, there is nonetheless a fundamental unity underlying this diversity."

CHAPTER 3

The Two River Valley Civilisations in the North

"The Indus Valley Civilisation presents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture."

—GORDON CHILDE

"The Ganga has been a symbol of India's age-long civilisation, ever-changing, ever flowing and yet ever the same Ganga. She remind me of the snow-covered peak and the deep-valleys of the Himalayan which I have loved so much and of the rich and vast plains below where my life and work have been cast... as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance."

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

In this chapter we shall study the Indus Valley Civilisation and the Ganga Valley Civilisation i.e., the Vedic Aryan Civilisation. Before we take up the Indus Valley Civilisation it may be profitable to have a glimpse of the Stone Age, particularly the New Stone Age which is known as the Neolithic Culture.

The Neolithic Culture: In the evolution of human civilisation the Neolithic is a stage when man became a food-producer by outgrowing the phase of a food-gatherer. Prior to that there was the Palaeolithic culture; and in between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic stood the Mesolithic which started in C. 10,000 B.C. The chief characteristic feature of the Neolithic
The word "Neolithic" was coined by Sir John Lubbock in his book *Pre-historic Times* which was first published in 1865. According to Lubbock, Neolithic stood for an "age in which the stone implements are more skilfully made, more varied in form and often polished." M. Murkitt was of the view that the following four are the basic characteristics of the Neolithic culture: (a) the practice of agriculture, (b) the domestication...
of animals, (c) the manufacture of pottery and (d) the grinding and polishing of stone tools. But recent researches suggest that manufacture of pottery which made its appearance at least two millennium later than domestication of plants and animals is not the hall-mark of the neolithic culture. Similarly, the technique of making stone cell is not considered an essential attribute of the Neolithic culture. On the other hand, recent writings suggest that the classic criterion by which the Neolithic stage can be ascertained is food production. Thus, Professor Gordon Childe rightly observed that the process of transition from the hunting and food-gathering to a food-producing economy is the real "Neolithic Revolution."  

The Indus Valley Civilisation

The events that shook the entire archaeologist world began in 1922 with the emergence of the first phase of human civilisation in the Indus Valley that centred round Mohenjodaro and Harappa which fall in present Pakistan. The discovery of this highly developed civilisation added a new chapter in the history of the civilisation of mankind. We shall study it topic-wise.

Extent of the Civilisation: According to Dr R.S. Sharma, the culture of the Indus Valley "covered parts of the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the fringes of Western Uttar Pradesh. It extended from the district of Rupar in the Punjab in the North to the Narmada estuary in the South and from the Makran coast of Baluchistan in the west of Meerut in the North-East. The area formed a triangle and accounted for about 1,299,600 square kilometres which is larger than Pakistan and certainly bigger than ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. No other cultural zone in the third and second millenium B.C. in the world was as large as the Indus Valley zone." Recent investigations reveal that the remains of Harappa culture have been discovered in a mound at the Panchkula urban estates of Haryana. The discovery has been made by the Haryana Archaeological and Museum Depart-

ment. The site is located over an old Siva temple and is spread over an area of seven acres.2

The Great Bath: The most remarkable of all the public places at Mohenjo-daro was a big public bath. It is 11.88 metres long, 7.01 metres wide and 2.43 metres deep. There are flights of steps at all ends and these lead to the surface. Side rooms are also there and these were probably for the purpose of changing clothes after taking bath. Water was to be carried from a large well in a near room. The water of the bath would end in a drain. The floor of the bath was made of burnt bricks. The bath stands out as a superb brickwork. The bath was meant for taking bath for the purpose of a public religious ceremony. Since every private house had a bath of its own with water facilities, the only justification for such a Great Bath is that there were some religious occasions when the people in great number went there for a bath. Religious baths are common even today and their existence in those distant days shows that the authors of the Indus Valley Civilisation were very careful about the privacy of the bathers. So Dr R.S. Sharma rightly observed: "The Great Bath served ritual bathing, which was so vital to any religious ceremony in India." The Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro has, however, a parallel with the sister civilisation of the Turkish bath system. It is very probable that there was an arrangement for supply of hot water also.

Building Material: Walls which were erected to protect the cities from the floor were all made of burnt bricks. About the use of the burnt bricks as the building material Dr R.S. Sharma wrote: "The use of burnt bricks in the Harappan cities is remarkable, because in the contemporary buildings of Egypt dried bricks were mainly used. We find the use of baked bricks in contemporary Mesopotamia, but they were used to a large extent in the Harappan cities."

Use of Metal: The Indus Valley Civilisation belongs to the chalcolithic and bronze age. The people had full knowledge of the use of bronze. Bronze was manufactured by mixing tin with copper. As neither copper nor tin could be easily available in the Indus region, we find not too much bronze there.

2. The Indian Express, Delhi, 16 January 1985.
They got copper from the copper mines at Khetri in Rajasthan. Some copper was also obtained from Baluchistan. Tin was by and large obtained from Afghanistan and also from Iran. A lesser quantity of copper was brought from Rajasthan. It has been noticed that the tin portion was less than the copper portion in the Harappan bronze. Thus, images, utensils and various weapons and tools such as axes, saws, knives and spears of large number were made of bronze. According to Dr R.S. Sharma: “Although the Harappan culture was a Bronze Age culture, they used bronze on a very limited scale and largely continued to use stone implements.” Thus, we may conclude that the bronze works constituted an important craft and technology in the Indus society. Other metals used by the people were silver and gold, which were obtained from Afghanistan. Silver and gold were used in making jewellery.

Weights and Measures: The urban people used weights and measures for trade and other transactions. Weights were done by weighing stones which were called Pathar, a name which is still in use among us. The weighing stones were in sixteen or in its multiple. As for measurement, sticks inscribed with measure marks have been discovered.

Agriculture and Granaries: Although the Indus region is today comparatively rainless and less fertile, it was very much rainy and fertile in ancient period. We learn from a fourth century B.C. record left by a historian of Alexander the Great that Sind had been a fertile region. Moreover, the annual floods in the Indus speak for fertility of the soil. According to Dr R.S. Sharma: “The Indus carried for more alluvial soil than the Nile in Egypt and deposited it on the flood plains. Just as the Nile created Egypt and supplied its people so also the Indus created Sind and fed its people.” It is surmised by Dr Sharma that the Indus people sowed seeds in the month of November when the flood water receded and reaped their harvests of wheat and barley in the month of April before the advent of the next flood.

We have not been able to discover any hoe or ploughshare. But furrows have been found at Kalibangan in Rajasthan. It is probable that the Indus people used the wooden ploughshare. It is not clear whether men or oxen drew the plough. It is suggested that stone sickles were used for harvesting the crop.
The channel or canal irrigation was not in use. The Indus villages were situated in the proximity of the flood plains. These villages produced foodgrains not only to feed themselves but also to support the town population.

_Agriculture Implements, Irrigation System and Agricultural Produce_: No remnants of agricultural tools and implements were found in any Harappan settlement. But it is possible that wooden plough and wooden sickles set with chert blades were in use. Another important tool in vogue in agricultural operations was a seed drill of the type in agricultural operations. In addition to the utilisation of the rain water and the flooded plains of the river beds at the end of annual inundation in the same way as done today, the Harappans seem to have developed some artificial means of irrigation. Large number of wells on and around their settlements as we find at “Gabarbands” in Baluchistan, the traces of a canal as we find around Lothal and the dam constructions as seen near Amri and the Las Bela region are sufficient indications of the means used by the Harappans to obtain water for their field of cultivation.

The crop was mainly wheat, barley, _rai_, peas, etc. At Banwali a good quantity of barley has been discovered. The villages also produced sesameum and mustard. But at Lothal we find a different position. It is possible that the people of Lothal produced rice as early as 1800 B.C. Remains of rice have been discovered at Lothal. Other important agricultural produce in the Indus was cotton.

_Commercial Agricultural Produce_: Cotton was by far the most important commercial crop cultivated by the Harappans. At Mohenjo-daro we find the fragment of a woven cloth adhering to a silver vase. The fibre used in the cloth was a domesticated Indian variety known as _Gossypium arboreum_. It is significant that the fibre therein was dyed with madder which is also a natives colour agent in India. There is also evidence of cultivation and use of cotton at Lothal and Rupar as well.

On the basis of recent evidence from the digging at Mehrgarh it is inferred that sudden spurt in the form of Mohenjo-daro civilisation was the result of what may be said a kind of “cotton rush” in the Indus valley. The argument advanced is that from the sixth millennium B.C. to the beginning of the mature Harappan civilisation in 2500 B.C. there was a
continuous social and cultural evolution. But the mature phase is marked by a sudden boom with the introduction of cotton. Our conclusion is that cotton plant was indigenous to the Indus basin and was domesticated in the early millennium of Harappan civilisation for its fibre. The discovery of the cotton fibre and its resultant market in Iran and Mesopotamia culminated in its radical extension in the outer world. Thus, we find that in the Harappan civilisation agriculture achieved a truly mature form, with plough-cultivation, irrigation techniques and the raising of a number of crops including wheat, barley and cotton as well as rice, peas and eil. We shall for the present study how the agricultural produce was stored by the Indus people.

Granaries: The Indus people stored the foodgrains in huge granaries. It is possible that the city administration received the cereals as taxes from the peasants. These were stored in granaries for the purpose of distribution as wages. Such an inference is made on the analogy of the recorded evidence that in the Mesopotamian cities wages were paid in barley. Dr R.S. Sharma rightly said that “the granaries constituted an important part of the Harappan cities.”

It is no wonder that the largest building in Mohenjo-daro was a granary. It measured 45.71 metres in length and 15.23 metres in width. Not less than six granaries have been found at Harappa. Each of them measured 15.23 metres in length and 6.09 metres in width. These were located very close to the river’s bank. These granaries were raised on the brick platforms that served as their foundations. In the Harappa granaries we notice working floors that consisted of rows of circular brick platforms. It is possible that these were meant for thrashing grain since remains of wheat and barley have been noticed in the crevices of the floors. The existence of brick platforms in the southern fringes of Kalibangan also suggests that these were used for granaries.

Trade and Commerce: The trade of the Indus Valley Civilisation has been capsuled in the following words of Dr R.S. Sharma: “The Harappans had commercial links with Rajasthan, Afghanistan and Iran. Their cities also carried on commerce with those in the land of the Tigris and Euphrates. Many Harappan seals have been discovered in Mesopotamia,
and it seems that the Harappans imitated some cosmetics used by the urban people of Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian records from about 2350 B.C. refer to trade relations with Meluha which was the ancient name given to the Indus region. The Mesopotamian texts speak of two intermediate trading stations called Dilmun and Makan which lay between Mesopotamia and Meluha. Dilmun can probably be identified with Bahrain on the Persian Gulf.

**Economic Life:** According to Mr Pranab Mukherjee: "The excavations by archaeologists and the studies of anthropologists and sociologists reveal dimensions of economic civilisation in Indus valley." Some of these aspects are described below:

(a) The studies clearly indicate the use of tools which show that there were advanced means of production as well as commodity production and exchange systems.

(b) Articles like cotton, clothes, pottery, metal tools and implements were produced in large quantities. Obviously there was an internal demand as well as some kind of export to outside markets. This also shows the existence of a class of craftsmen who were working in an organised manner to learn these skills and to produce these commodities.

(c) The existence of a class of rich and those who earned a moderately living is clearly indicated by the production of jewellery and items used for luxury. The cities were planned.

(d) The masonry, brick-work, timber-cutting, metal-casting and forging, fabrication and bronze-copper, glazed pottery and articles of clothing clearly indicate the existence of advanced economic activity.

(e) It also shows that an organisation was at work to maintain and construct cities and to regulate big granaries. Perhaps there was a natural flood irrigation system and the land was fertilised to yield good crops.

(f) Although there is no evidence of a currency, it is clear that the exchange under the barter system was current in the society.

**Planning by a Central Authority:** There was a strong central authority to supervise the city administration of Harappa and
Mohenjo-daro. According to Mr Pranab Mukherjee, there could be no doubt about the existence of well-established authority. To say in his words: "I would, therefore, conclude from these that a central economic and planning authority did exist in those days." But according to Dr Piggot in addition to a central political authority there must have been a strong commercial code. To quote Dr Piggot: "The absolute uniformity in the products of the Harappa culture cannot wholly be explained by a rigidly enforced set of laws. There must have been a strongly established commercial code and a standardised technique of production which would control the sizes of bricks, the capacity and types of pots and a system of weights and measures." Aparajita Chakraborty summarises the basic features of the economic formation in the Indus Valley Civilisation in the following words:

(a) Central authority's monopoly over the entire surplus of the economy;
(b) Extraction of surplus mainly in the form of tribute, but partly in the form of surplus labour of the temple slaves;
(c) Centrally planned cities as the centres of specialised crafts and external trade;
(d) Centrally organised public works including an irrigation system;
(e) The negligible importance of the use of force; and
(f) Stagnation of the productive forces and absence of any dynamism in the relation of production.

Religion of the Indus Valley Civilisation: Of the many buildings excavated at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa not a single can be identified with any certainty as a temple or shrine. No doubt, many inscriptions have been found which might well have been of great value as giving the names of gods and goddesses if these inscriptions could be deciphered. But since these inscriptions are still undeciphered these cannot give us any clue to the nature of the religion of the people. So our sources of information regarding the religious ideas of the Indus valley people are limited to a few small stone figures which may represent gods. There are clay figurines, some of
which are merely toys, some votive but some certainly religious icons. Some religious motifs of figures of deities are portrayed in the numerous seals and amulets. Again, there are baetylic stones and phallic symbols.

If we rely on these evidences our natural conclusion will be that in the Indus valley there was a religion that recognised gods in human form. Again, a large number of terracotta figurines has been discovered in Harappa. We notice in one of such a female image a plant growing out of the embryo. It is suggested that the figurine represents the goddess of earth. From this it may be inferred that it had intimate connection with the origin and growth of plants. On the basis of this particular terracotta sculpture Dr R.S. Sharma observed: "The Harappans, therefore, looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess and worshipped her in the same manner as the Egyptians worshipped the Nile goddess Isis."

The Indus valley people venerated and worshipped various animals. The cult of the phallus represented the productive powers of the nature. This religion was uniformly characteristic of any primitive agricultural society as to have no particular interest. Fortunately, our evidence is not altogether scanty or isolated.

The religion of Harappa did not die out but was handed down by successive generations of servile peasants. It is, therefore, possible to link it up with the known beliefs of later ages and thereby better to estimate not only its intrinsic character but also its historical importance. The outstanding evidence is a seal on which is carved the figure of a three-faced god with knees bent double beneath him heel to heel and toes turned down. His arms are outstretched. His hands with the thumbs to the front rest on his knees which is a typical attitude of yoga. He is flanked by animals—an elephant and a tiger on his right, a rhinocero and buffalo on his left and, two deer at his feet. This Mohenjo-daro figure can be recognised at once as the prototype of Siva. Siva is represented with three, four or five faces. He is the mahayogi, the great yogi. He is at the same time the lord of beasts. Deer is sacred to him. The two deer are in exactly the same pose that we have on the seal and are portrayed on many medieval images of Siva. In another seal the god is in the same posture—with the only difference that
there is only one face upon a faience seal flanked by Nagas kneeling with hands uplifted in prayer.

Continuity of the Indus Valley Civilisation in Later on Hindu Culture: According to the Finish Indologist Dr Asko Parpola, the origin of the Siva linga cult is traceable to the Harappan culture. His view is that when north India became Aryanised in language, the Harappan cult was assimilated by the Hindu religion. In this connection Dr R.S. Sharma rightly said: “The phallus worship which started in the days of Harappa came to be recognised as a respectable form of worship in the later Hindu society.” According to Subhas Chandra Bose: “The undisturbed continuity is the most significant feature of Indian history and it incidentally explains the vitality of the people and of their culture and civilisation.”

About the continuity of reverence to the animals and particularly the cow or bull Dr R.S. Sharma wrote: “Animals were worshipped in Harappan times, and many of them are represented on the seals. The most important of them is the humped bull. Even today, when such a bull passes in the market streets, the pious Indians give way to it.”

Decadance of the Indus Valley Civilisation: In c. 1750 B.C. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa disappeared, but the Indus Valley Culture at other sites lingered on in its decadant phase in the outlying regions of Gujarat, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh.

The Indus Valley Civilisation’s Link With the Later Aryan Culture: There is no sufficient archaeological evidence to construct a clear link between the Indus Valley Civilisation and the later Aryan civilisation. It is difficult to say whether these two civilisations met each other. But in the later phase of the Indus Valley Civilisation we notice some exotic tools and pottery that are clear indications of the slow penetration of the new people in the Indus valley.

In the last phase of the Mohenjo-daro culture there are few signs of insecurity and violence. A new feature is the hoards of jewellery buried at places and human skulls clubbed together in a single place. The other new aspect associated with the later

phase is new types of axes. Now daggers and knives are found to contain mid-ribs and flat tangs. About the cultural change and the responsibility of the Aryan hands for the new phase Dr R.S. Sharma observed: “Although basically they seem to be Indian, they may betray some foreign influence. Trace of new peoples appears in a cemetery belonging to the late phase of Harappa where new kinds of pottery occur in the lastest levels. New types of pottery also occur in some Harappan sites in Baluchistan. All these can be attributed to the barbarian horse-riding people who may have come from Iran through the hills. But the new peoples did not come in such numbers as to completely overwhelm the Harappan cities in the Punjab and Sind. Although the Rigvedic Aryans settled down mostly in the land of the Seven Rivers, in which the Harappan culture once flourished, we have no evidence of any mass-scale confrontation between the Harappans and the Aryans.”

The Ganga Valley Civilisation

The ethnologists believed that the Aryans were a fair, tall race, with aquiline nose, strong muscular frame and very high brain power. The Aryans arrived in India in different batches. The earliest batch came in 1500 B.C. And they had a natural conflict with the indigenous inhabitants called the Dasas and the Dasyus. The Dasyus as mentioned in the Rigveda represents the original inhabitants of the country. The Aryan chief who had overpowered the Dasyus was called Trasadasya.

The Economic Organisation of the Aryans

Pride Place held by Cow: The Aryans entered India as semi-nomadic pastoralists and they lived mainly on the produce of cattle. It is, therefore, but natural that cattle rearing was their prime occupation for some time. Cow was considered a very precious commodity and cow continued to be the unit of the value in the trade circle. As a matter of fact, the Aryans came to India in search of cow. It is, therefore, but natural that the word “gavishti”

5. According to Dr R.S. Sharma since the Dasas are also mentioned in the ancient Indian literature, they seem to have been a branch of the early Aryans.
literally meant to "search for cow" and this was later used to mean only "fight". As a matter of fact, many fights and feuds among the Aryans evolved round the disputes over the cows. It is likely that cow was considered as a totem animal and an object of veneration. Beef eating was forbidden except on some specific occasions when it was considered auspicious to eat beef. With the increase in the price of the cow, its veneration also soared high. This was the beginning of the later concept of regarding the cows as sacred. Next in importance was horse—that was used in war and for drawing the chariots. As for the wild animals, lion was known earlier than the tiger. Elephant was looked with curiosity and was referred to as the beast with a hand mrigahastin.

Agriculture and Other Occupations: With the emergence of permanence in settlement of the Aryans, the Aryans gradually gave up cattle rearing and took to agriculture. As iron was used in clearing the land, the work was now more smooth. Land was held in common ownership of a village. With the decline of the tribal unit, land was now divided between the families in the village and in this way private property came into being. The emergence of private ownership gave rise to related problems of ownership, land disputes and inheritance. Now the people took to various occupations like carpenters, metal-workers, potters, tanners, weavers and reed-workers. Of them the carpenters held the pride of place, because he was the maker of the chariot and also the plough. The increasing availability of wood from the forests made carpentry a lucrative profession.

Trade and Commerce: Agriculture as a necessary concomitant gave rise to trade. And the river became a natural highway of trade and the numerous settlements on its banks became the flourishing markets. The richer sections of the landowners gave up agriculture and took to trades, because they had ample leisure and funds. In the beginning trade was confined to local areas. Although it is probable that the Aryans did not venture very far afield, sea-voyages could not be ruled out. Cow was the measure of the value in the trade market and this was followed by gold coin called nishka. To say in the words of Dr Romila Thapar: "Barter was the common practice in trade, the cow being the unit of value in large-
scale transactions, which further limited the geographical reach of a particular trade. The nishka is also mentioned as a measure of value. Later, it came to be the name of a gold coin, but at this stage it may have been merely a measure of gold."

The Political Organisation of the Aryans

Emergence of Institutions of the State and the King: According to a legend of the Aryans, the political organisation of the Aryans was originated out of a constant war between the gods and the demons. As the Aryans were on the losing side, they felt the necessity of an organisation under one leader and this impulse prompted them to elect their king who won for them victory. As the people needed security in life and property, they naturally elected their king only that person among them who would be able to give them protection. Such leader became the king of the State. As Dr Romila Thapar rightly observed: "The Vedic king was primarily a military leader, whose skill in war and the defence of the tribe were essential to his remaining king. He received voluntary gifts in kind; there was no regular tax which he could claim, nor had he any right over the land. He was entitled to a portion of the booty from successful cattle-raids or battles. In the religious sphere his role was at first negligible, the functions of the priest being quite distinct, but gradually there was change in the position of the king due mainly to the emergence of the idea of divinity in kingship. A later legend tells us that, not only did the gods elect a king to lead them to victory, but that this king was endowed with certain distinctive attributes. Similarly, mortal kings were invested with attributes of divinity. Special sacrifices were evolved to bestow divinity on the king through the intermediaries between men and gods, the priests. The priest had come into his own with the acceptance of the idea of the divine king, and this was the beginning of the mutual interdependence of the king and the priest. Now surprisingly there was a tendency for kingship to became hereditary."

The King and the Sabha and the Samiti: The quick development of the monarchical powers was checkmated by the two tribal assemblies—the Sabha and the Samiti. It is not possible
to specifically define the power and strength of these two institutions. The *Samiti* was probably the general assembly of the entire tribe, while the *Sabha* might have been the council of the tribal elders. Where there was monarchical form of government, the king had a vast say in the government. But in the republican States these two bodies exercised the real political power. With the passing of time even in the monarchy the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* grew in more power and acted as a brake on the king. Yet the king had the final say in the government. According to Narayan Chandra Bandyopadhyaya: "The *Sabha* has been interpreted to mean the advisory council of the selected few, while the *Samiti* has been interpreted as a gathering of the entire community. The *Samiti* met on important occasions like royal coronations, times of war or national calamity."

*The Entourage of the King*: The Aryans introduced a rudimentary administrative system with the king as centre-piece. The kingdom was called the *Rashtra*, each tribal unit was called the *visa* and the village was called the *Gramana*. The king was aided and advised by a court of the elders of the tribe and by the village headmen. His more close associates were the *Purohita* or the chief priest and the *Senani* or the military commander. The other officials were the spies and the messengers. Later on the king had a more elaborate entourage. The new entrants were the charioteer, the treasurer, the steward and the superintendent of dicing.

**Legal Institutions of the Aryans**: About the legal organisation of the Aryans Dr Romila Thapar wrote, "There were no regular legal institutions at this stage. Custom was law and the arbiters were the king and his chief priest, perhaps advised by certain elders of the community. Varieties of theft, particularly cattle-stealing were the commonest crimes. Punishment for homicide was based on *wergeld*, and the usual payment for killing a man was a hundred cows. The capital punishment was a later idea. Trial by ordeal was practised, the culprit having to prove his innocence by placing his tongue on a heated axe-head. In later Vedic sources there are references to

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problems relating to land disputes and inheritance. A tendency towards primogeniture can be noticed, but it did not survive. It was also at this stage that caste consideration entered into legal practice, the higher castes being more lightly punished.”

The Social Organisation of the Aryans

Division on the Basis of Occupation and Growth of Caste System: In the beginning the Aryans were divided into three social classes—the warriors or aristocracy, the priests and the common people. This division had nothing to do with the caste system of the later period as evidenced from the remark that goes like “a bard am I, my father is a leech and my mother grinds corn.” There was no hereditary profession or any taboo in marrying outside their own castes or any restriction on eating with people of other castes. The division into three occupational classes was a necessity to facilitate the social and economic organisation of the Aryans. The division on the basis of castes began when the Aryans treated the Dasas as beyond the social pale actuated by a fear that the intermingling with the Dasas may result in the loss of the Aryan identity. Apparently, the distinction between the Aryans and the Dasas was one of colour, the Dasas being of dark colour. That the colour was an important factor in determining the caste of a person is also confirmed from the fact that the Sanskrit word Varna actually means the caste. Thus, in the beginning there were only two castes—the Aryans and the non-Aryans. The Aryans then got three castes—the Brahmanas (priests), the Kshatriyas (warriors and aristocracy) and the Vaisyas (cultivators). The Sudras were the Dasas and those of mixed Aryan—Dasa origin.

Mechanism of the Caste System: About the organisation of the caste system Dr Romila Thapar wrote: “The actual mechanism of caste was not a formal division of society into four broad groups. The first three castes were probably a theoretical framework evolved by the Brahmanas into which they systematically arranged various professions. Combinations and permutations within the latter were inevitable and were explained as originating in the intermixing of castes. The fourth caste, however, appears to have been
based both on race as well as occupations. Gradually the Aryan Vaisyas became traders and landowners and the Sudras moved up to the scale to become the cultivators. The Aryan ascendancy over the Dasa was now complete.” In this mechanism of the caste system the Brahmanas held the first and a special position since they alone could grant divinity to the king and grant religious sanctions to a caste division. Another reason of the pre-eminence of the Brahmanas in the society was the increasing emergence of the institution of sacrifice which became an indispensable institution in the Aryan social life. Thus, the sacrificial rites tended to increase the power of the priest, without whom the sacrifice itself could not take place.

The Social Set-up: The Aryans had a patriarchal family which was the unit of the social set-up. It is probable that the settlement of the Aryans was on the basis of family relationship. The offsprings of three generations constituted a family under the control of male elders. Very early marriages were not recommended. The marrying party could make a selection of their own spouse. The acceptance of dowry and bride-price was an acknowledged custom. Although the common practice was monogamy, polygamy was also known. In later writings we find the practice of polyandry. A male child was specially welcomed since the son’s presence was essential in important ceremonies. A widow was under the obligation of performing a symbolic self-immolation on the death of her husband.

Dwelling Houses, Food and Dress: About the dwelling houses, food and dress of the Aryans Dr Romila Thapar writes: “The house was a large all-inclusive structure with family and animals living under the same roof. The family hearth was particularly venerated and the fire was kept burning continuously. Houses were built round a wooden framework. The room was held by a pillar at each of the four corners and by cross beams around which were constructed walls of reed stuffed with straw. The roof was made of bamboo ribs supporting thatch. This continued to be the method of construction in villages until the change to mud-walls in later centuries, when the climate became dry. The staple diet was milk and ghi, vegetables, fruit and barley in various forms.
On ceremonial occasions—as a religious feast or the arrival of a guest—a more elaborate meal was customary, including the flesh of ox, goat and sheep, washed down with *sura* or *madhu*. Clothes were simple, most people wearing only a lower garment or a cloak, but ornaments were more elaborate and clearly a source of pleasure to their owners."

**The Religious Organisation of the Aryans**

*Main Gods and Institution of Sacrifice*: Primitive animism was the prop of the earliest religious belief of the Aryans. Those forces surrounding them that could not be controlled or understood were invested with divinity and were given the status of male or female gods. Thus Indra was the god of rain and thunder. He was foremost in battle, always ready to smite dragons and demons and to destroy cities. He was the victor over the forces which the Aryans could not vanquish. *Agni* was the god of fire and so he dominated the domestic hearth and marriage where fire was a must. The other gods were Surya (Sun), Savitri (Solar deity), Soma (god of the intoxicating juice *soma*) and Varuna, the god of justice. According to Dr Romila Thapar, the central feature of Aryan religious life was sacrifice. While small oblations were confined to the domestic sacrifice, from time to time larger sacrifices were organised in which the entire tribe participated. The sacrifices were performed in order to propitiate the gods to win in war. In the words of Dr Thapar: "The gods were believed to participate, unseen by the humans. The sacrifice was certainly a solemn institution, it also served the purpose of releasing energies and inhibitions, through the general conviviality which followed at the end of the sacrifice and particularly after the liberal drinking of *soma*. The ritual of the Aryan sacrifice evolved from early primitive procedures involved in ceremonies of sacrifice.

*Disposal of the Dead Body*: As for the disposal of the dead body, the earlier custom was burial. Then cremation was practised alongside the burial. Later on cremation was considered purer because of its association with fire. The result was that finally burial was completely superseded by cremation.
CHAPTER 4

The Neo-Religious Tempos in the North

In fair Lumbini’s Garden
The royal babe was born,
The Bringer of Salvation
Unto a world forlorn.
(A song usually sung by the Japanese children in California in the United States of America on Wesak day at the full moon of April-May.)

Rise of Buddhism and Jainism

Hinduism which had earlier gained momentum was losing its vibrations as a creed of the people and was receding to the caverns of philosophical plethora or an academic subject for scholastic dispute.

Life of Gautama the Buddha

Early Life: The Buddha was of the Sakya tribe and the Gautama clan that flourished some miles North to the present Banaras (Varanasi). So he is sometimes called Sakyamuni or the sage of the Sakya or more frequently Gautama in Sanskrit or Gotama in Pali. After his enlightenment he came to be called Gautama the Buddha, the meaning of Buddha being enlightened. His original name was Siddhartha which means “he whose aim is accomplished.” But it is more likely that this personal name was also given to him later on by his disciples. He was given in marriage at the age of sixteen or nineteen to a princess named
Yasodha and lived with her for ten years before their son Rahul was born.

Four Sights and Renunciation

Siddhartha's father had kept away from him all knowledge of sorrow and trouble and confined him to the palace without knowing poverty, misery and death outside the walls. Even when the young prince had a ride outside, his father arranged to remove from the wayside all except the happy and the contented. But the plan miscarried and Siddhartha saw four sights—an old man, a very sick man, a corpse and a religious ascetic. These sights moved him so deeply that he wondered why suffering existed and these were the immediate causes of his determining to leave home at the age of thirty. It was exactly the age when Mahavira also renounced the world. Siddhartha left home just the very week that his wife, after ten years of happy married life, presented him with their first child—the little son Rahul. It is, however, common with all the deserters to desert the wife on the birth of a child. Thus, silently through the palace Siddhartha fled past the rows of female musicians, mounted his horse and went away.

The Prince Became a Pauper: The young prince rode on until dawn and then dismounted, cut off his hair with his sword, removed his royal garments and sent these and the horse back. He took to the yellow robe which later on became the badge of all his followers. He became a travelling monk with a begging bowl, razor, needle, girdle and water stainer. He travelled through three kingdoms and found two teachers who, however, failed to help him in his search for truth. For six years he fasted frequently and inflicted self-tortures. Five disciples accompanied him and he was looked upon as very holy because of his austerities. But all sorts of mortifications did not bring for him the "superhuman truly noble knowledge and insight." He began to ponder if there was any other way of enlightenment. He made the wise decision that he would find the truth if he kept a sound mind in a sound body avoiding both sensual indulgence and superasceticism which he called the middle way of temperance. He now wanted to give his body proper nourishment by rice and sour milk. When his disciples deserted
him, a fresh determination came to his mind for enlightenment. The devil Mara came to tempt him for seven years but failed. For four or seven weeks the prince remained under a tree and then one night came the enlightenment.

The Enlightenment: The great revelation was rather simple—namely that all pain is caused by desire and in order to attain peace there must be an end to desire. This knowledge now came not only to him but to the whole world. This revelation struck him with a great force and exalted him for the rest of life. He admitted this in the words: “In me arose the knowledge of my emancipation. Ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose.” In this way Gautama attained emancipation or Enlightenment in the “last watch of the night.” With the brightening of the dawn his soul was illumined by the effulgence of the newly discovered truth.

Two merchants fed him rice and honey and they became the first lay disciples of the Buddha. The Buddha’s first sermon at Sarnath which was the doctrine of “turning the wheel” may be a collection of several sermons reminiscent of the Sermon of Jesus on the Mount. Be that as it may, the sermon at Sarnath contains the pith and substance of Buddhism. These were the famous Four Noble Truths:

(a) All living is painful.
(b) Suffering is due to craving or desire.
(c) Release from suffering comes when desire ceases.
(d) The way of cessation of suffering is by the Eight-fold path of right views, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.”

It is admitted in all hands that for as many as twenty five centuries millions have found this teaching of Buddha as an acceptable path to peace.

Personality of the Buddha: The personality of the Buddha had just those contradictions which are found in every world figure and leader of men. At one time he was a dreamy mystic and at another time a hard relentless mechanism. The Buddha was a winsome figure of pathetic appeal in his simplicity and yet a man of mighty intellect and indomitable will.
The Buddha is said to be almost feminine in some of his characteristics such as an uncanny intuitive perception. Yet his system of philosophy is relentlessly logical. His human sufferings are often unpleasantly prominent, only to be followed by periods of godlike calmness when he showed great intellectual insight and farsight.

The Death of the Buddha: The Buddha died at the age of eighty at Kusinagar with five hundred disciples around him. His last words were: "Now then, monks, I address you; Subject to decay are compound things; strive with earnestness." His body was cremated and the bones were preserved for sacred relics. Around each little bit of bone a holy place of worship grew up later on.

Did the Buddha Ever Live? As the historical existence of Moses and Zoroaster has been disputed, it is small wonder that some critics considered the Buddha only as a legendary figure having no real historical character. But all disputes have been set at rest with the archaeological discovery in 1806 of a stone pillar erected in 250 B.C. by Asoka at the birthplace of the Buddha that reads as follows:

"When Devanampriya Priyadarsin [i.e., Asoka] had been Annotated twenty years, he came himself and worshipped [this spot], because the Buddha Sakyamuni was born here. He both caused to be made a stone bearing a horse [?]; and caused a stone pillar to be set up [in order to show] that the Blessed One was born here. [He] made the village of Lummini free of taxes, and paying [only] an eighth part [of the produce]" 1

There are other corroborative evidences like the testimony of the Chinese travellers Fa Hien (between 399 and 414 A.D.) and Hiuen Tsang (between 629 and 645 A.D.). Hiuen Tsang saw a horse figure on the pillar of Lummini (which is otherwise known as Lumbini).

In this way we have actual historical evidence i.e., archaeological with an inscription made by a disciple within 230 years after the death of the Buddha which may not be too big a time for a myth to replace the rigour of historical foundation. In

1. This is Dr Hultsch’s translation.
view of such rocky evidence the burden of proof is shifted on those who deny the historical existence of the Buddha.

**Origin and Eclipse of Buddhism:** The controversy with regard to the origin of Buddhism is a complicated problem. The religion is said to be derived from an independent and indigenous tradition called the Sramanas which antedated even the Vedic and the Brahmanic period. The Sramana remained dormant and subdued for over a thousand years after its political and economic bases were challenged by the Veda-carrying Aryans. Even in Saivism, the *yoga* and the concept of *karma* and sufferings were attributed to this pre-Aryan thought. Thus, what the prince Gautama did was just to revive it in a new situation with timely modifications. Thus, the theories like Buddhism were revolts or reform movements against Brahmanism by the *Kshatriyas* may be disputed by citing the large participation of the *Brahmanas* in the first list of leading Buddhist converts. No doubt, this needs deeper study and research especially in the light of a large number of new archaeological finds in the past few years.

The origin and eclipse of Buddhism in India has always been a big puzzle for the historians. Equally mysterious is the way in which it spread to the various Asian countries to become their dominant religion without force or armed occupation. Its ups and downs, ostracism and the tremendous social patronage leave the Buddhist riddle as fascinating as its philosophy. No doubt, deeper studies and wider analysis might lead to more finality on such controversies.

In fact, the Buddhist riddle is not confined to India alone. Even in a country like Mongolia with its loose traditional religion, Buddhism scored several victories and suffered setbacks due to various factors, including external invasions and the changing patterns of princely patronage. In India neither of these factors could have succeeded in decimating such a powerful movement as Buddhism. Even Jainism, its own contemporary survived all onslaughts from within and without. Therefore, the inherent weakness that ultimately wiped out Buddhism from its own homeland can be attributed to other reasons.

Buddhism’s biggest weakness has been its neglect of the masses. The Indian Buddhists, right from Gautama, put the
sole stress on individual attainments, monastery and wandering monks. Unlike Jainism, it did not try to bring the common people or their families into a well-knit religion by prescribing duties and obligations for them. Even the sprawling monasteries and the high centres of learning functioned away from the populous areas. Therefore, when the powerful Bhakti movement gripped most of India, Mahavira's Jainism with its deep roots among the urban people through a network of temples, monks and nuns not only survived it but successfully challenged it. Obviously, Buddhism could not stand this, especially when it began to gradually lose royal patronage.

Again, the Jainists' response to the Bhakti onslaughts has been remarkably superb. While the Buddhist monks ignored the Hindu suggestions as expounded in Jayadeva's Gitagovinda, that the Buddha was another Avatara of Vishnu, the Jains countered it by depicting Rama and Krishna as Jaina heroes. The Hindu interpretation soon extended this theory and established that the Buddha was nothing but a minor deviation from the immortal Hinduism. And when the monasteries began to fade due to neglect and lack of enthusiasm, the Hindu nobles and the Brahmanas gradually took over most of them under some "reformed" names. Thus, the Siva-Linga and Bodhisattva became identical so much so that several ancient Hindu temples began to have both the deities.

Further, Buddhism also had to face assault from the Hindu adversaries on economic grounds. Thus, Kautilya in his Arthasastra advised the king not to allow the ascetics frequently in the villages as it interrupted the production work there. Later on Manu also sought to check monasterism and mass scale sanyasa on the same ground.

It is wrong to assume that Buddhism was destroyed in India. As a matter of fact, it was absorbed by Hinduism. It had not only emerged out of Hinduism but got merged also into Hinduism in course of time. Its richest heritage is not the heritage of the Buddhists alone, but of the Hindus as well. We can all claim today the Buddha in the truest sense as an Avatara so far as the Hindus are concerned. After all, the Sila which the Buddha preached was nothing but the Niyama of the Hindus. The same importance and emphasis are attached to life, to the control of the senses, to the principle of renunciation in
Hinduism as Buddhism and these are the fundamental teachings of the Buddha as much as of the Upanishada. We may, therefore, claim all the Buddhists as our own and at the same time hope that they will treat us as their own.

**Teachings and Preachings of the Buddha:** According to Dr S. Radhakrishnan: “Early Buddhism believed only in a moral and virtuous life unfettered by rituals. It proclaimed man’s freedom from Sastric injunctions. It was really a protest against tradition and it sought to provide a rational scheme for the ritual-stricken, caste-ridden man to discover himself.” The Buddha never preached from a high pedestal. His teachings were essentially practical, meant for common men in all walks of life. His principle of providing extremes and preferring the golden mean is a valuable contribution to the world thought. The Madhyam Marga or the middle path essentially makes for peace and paves the way for a practical solution of all complicated problems with which the path of mankind has been beset in all ages and all climes. With the progress of science and all-round advance in man’s faculties, the present day problems between man and man and between nation and nation have assumed a proportion altogether unthought of in ancient or medieval ages.

According to Dr Rajendra Prasad: “The birth of prince Siddhartha, who lived like any other mortal being and who attained Nirvana or the state of highest bliss through conscious endeavour and persistent effort, is perhaps the biggest single event in the history of our country, if not of the world. Though India is a haloed land where the Buddha trod, lived and preached, as a matter of fact Gautama like other prophets, belongs to the whole world and his message is truly universal.”

**The Panchsila as the Cardinal Principle of his Teachings:** The Buddha’s teachings are characterised by elements which we have learnt to ascribe to the modern age or the present-day thought. In the truest sense of the word Gautama was a rationalist and in his scheme of things reason occupied a high place so much so that the system which he evolved may well be ascribed as the path of reason. The Buddha enjoined on everyone to purify himself in the light of his reason. To achieve this high ideal, he propounded the noble Eight-fold Path which embodied eight principles or rules of conduct. In these there
are five prohibitions, namely, kill not, steal not, commit no adultery, lie not and drink no strong drink. These five rules came to be known later on as Panchsila. According to the Buddha, one who remains steadfast in these principles or norms of conduct and follows constantly the call of his reason can attain Nirvana. In actual fact, these principles of conduct have universal application and no civilised society in any part of the world can have anything to say against them.

Practicality was the basis of his Teachings: Another special feature of the Buddha’s teachings is that whatever he taught was acquired through personal experience and tested by actual practice. Thus, practicality is the main characteristic of his teachings. He laid before mankind the path of Nirvana or highest bliss, but at the same time he insisted that every individual had to strive himself for achieving this goal. The Buddha said in the clearest possible words that he was no more than a guide or a teacher and that the duty to act or to follow the specified path necessarily devolved upon every individual. He also enjoined that every one should be a lamp unto himself so that in the midst of enveloping darkness one has to find one’s own way with the help of the lamp of reason. That is exactly what is meant by the path of reason.

Man as the Focal Point of His Teachings: The Buddha looked upon man as the focal point of his teachings. Reason has been assigned such an important place only because it is man’s principal attribute which distinguishes him from all other things. By his own example, the Buddha proved how man could attain the highest state by following the path of truth and Ahimsa. Thus, in his teachings and his conversations with the Bhikshus, Gautama never claimed to be anything higher than man. In fact, he categorically denied being super-human or an incarnation. He ascribed his spiritual development leading to enlightenment to constant endeavour, that is, his ability to follow the Eight-fold Path.

Karma and Nirvana Played a Great Role in His Teachings: Karma or action has been assigned a very high place in Buddhism. The Buddha believed in the inevitability of Karma and the immutability of the chain of cause and effect, but he also believed that man was entirely free to do good actions and avoid bad ones by following the call of reason and the Eight-
fold Path. According to him, life does not begin with birth nor does it end with death. Every individual has to pass through innumerable lives and this chain of death and rebirth ends only with the attainment of Nirvana. The question of good and evil, virtue and vice has ever posed a problem before mankind. It is necessary for man to understand what is evil and then avoid it just as he should know what is good or Dhamma and seek refuge in it. In this way after producing Dhamma and the Eight-fold Path the Buddha invited mankind to follow them with a view to evolving themselves into highest beings and not for the sake of entering heaven after death. This seems to be a modern conception. If the Buddha has equated worldly existence with misery, he has also taught the way of getting the better of that misery and achieving Nirvana by controlling the cause of misery.

The life of Lord Buddha and his feeling of love for all beings would ever remain a high ideal before the world. It was his belief that violence cannot end violence but peace and charity alone can end it. The best known illustration of the truth of this dictum is provided by Asoka’s life. Inspired by that ideal free India adopted the Asoka Chakra as her state emblem.

At the age of thirty six the Buddha started preaching this message until his death at the age of eighty. The five disciples became his ardent followers and the band soon swelled into sixty. He despatched them to spread his message with this great commission: “Go ye now, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the doctrine which is glorious. Proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness.”

Some Fundamental Aspects of Buddhism

The Buddhist Bible : The three testaments called three baskets or the Pitakas which are combinedly called the Tripitaka constituted the Bible of Buddhism. The first was the Sermon Basket, the second the Discipline Basket that contained rules for the higher order of the Buddhists and the third is a dreary maze of metaphysics called the Doctrinal Basket.
Although the third basket was as dry as the desert of Sahara, they are yet to be respected for their very immensity.

*The Doctrine of Transmigration*: The Buddha believed in the doctrine of transmigration of the soul. The doctrine says that men have lived before and will live again in an almost infinite series of rebirths. If a man adopts the Eight-fold Path, he will make a gradual improvement until in some final life he will extinguish all desires and in this way he will attain *Nirvana*. A good man may be visited with evil consequences in the present life because of his sins in some previous life. Similarly, if a bad man is not punished in his life, he will get the punishment in the next life.

*Salvation by Psychology*: In the teachings of the Buddha there is no mention of prayer or ceremony of God or the devil or any supernatural beings. According to C.F. Potter: “It is a philosophical psychology or a philosophy. The Buddha was the first man on the planet to assert that man’s salvation and peace come not from outside gods but from the control of his own mind.”

**Spread of Buddhism**

Buddhism transcended the boundaries of India and became a world religion. Its spreading spree had both domestic and external stories. Thus, twenty four centuries after the death of the Buddha the followers of the Buddha today number five hundred millions, nearly a fourth of the human race.

*Buddhism Inside India*: The Buddha’s message made a profound appeal to the people of the East. It was the Buddha who resolutely attacked and exposed the falsities of Hinduism which was largely ritualistic and was not very much distant from animism or spirit worship. He proved to be a great preacher and an effective missionary. His habit of illustrating his sermons with stories and parables made his teachings popular and effective.

When a woman came to him for medicine for her dead son, the Buddha’s reply was: “You have done well to come here for medicine. Go into the city and get a mustard seed from a house where no one has ever died.” By visiting several houses she understood the point that there was no one house where nobody
died and came to realise that death did not happen to her son alone but is common to all men. Then she came back to the Buddha and became his disciple.

What was magnetic in the Buddha to attract people was his democratic appreciation of the common people. Although he came of noble family and wealthy parentage, he took to the life of the poor as his own and denounced the rich who oppressed them. It was, therefore, but natural that the lowly would flock to him as they did later to Jesus Christ. But he did not hesitate to rebuke the poor who were not living rightly. He placed character above wealth, position or even rituals in religion. Thus, the Buddha’s message was far ahead of his time. He added strength to his teachings by spiritualising many current practices and giving moral meaning to the customs that had been already recognised.

_Buddhism Outside India_: The Buddha succeeded in raising a band of monks who spread the new gospel outside the geographical frontier of India. It was Asoka the Great whose patronage went a long way to spread the religion far and wide. Asoka is called the Constantine of the new faith. He reigned two centuries after the Buddha and founded as many as eighty thousand monasteries. His son Mahendra was the torch-bearer of this new religion to Ceylon, where it soon got a sound footing. It made quick progress in Burma, Siam and even Tibet. Subsequently, it made remarkable progress in China and Japan. It is at present extant almost exclusively in the Mongolian countries. It died almost completely in India. To the West Buddhism is developing new interest, because his message has a scientific approach. As C.F. Potter rightly observed: “There is a peculiar resemblance of the Buddha’s philosophy of life to that of the modern scientists. Not only do recurring cycles of life remind one of evolution, but his emphasis on Dharma, which can hardly be translated into English language save roughly by ‘natural and social law’ is very similar to the recognition of universal inevitable law in nature and human life which characterises much philosophy today. Many scientists would agree with the Buddha that man is but a drop in the river of life.”

The Buddhists were divided mainly into two groups—_Hinayana_ or Lesser Vehicle and _Mahayana_ or Greater Vehicle.
The main difference is that the former did not believe the Buddha as a god, far less worshipped his image. But according to the latter, the Buddha was a divinity and he was to be worshipped in idol. The latter outnumbered and outweighed the former. To say in the words of C.F. Potter: "It is the tragedy of Buddhism that the greater group in numbers as well as name consisted of those who have so far departed from the teachings of the gentle monk as to worship him as god. Gautama—the good has become an image, a blooming idol made of mud. Theologically he has developed into a divine saviour and a number of a Buddhist trinity! This larger section of Buddhism is the northern one, in China and Japan. The South Asian section, the Lesser Vehicle, regards the Buddha as a teacher of a way of living and avoids theological discussion."  

_Criticism of Buddhism_: The critics point out that Buddhism is negative and pessimistic. It places a low view on human life and despises human body. Buddhism blights on the individual initiative upon which progress depends. But C.F. Potter defends Buddhism in the following words: "But we must recognise that many of the faults of Buddha's outlook were due to his time and environment and contribution of human thinking has been almost incalculable. He taught men to seek peace by controlling their minds and he gave cosmic sweep to man's consciousness of his relation to the universe."

**Impact of Buddhism**

_In India and the World_: According to Dr Rajendra Prasad: "Numberless men and women have achieved peace and true happiness by following the Buddha's teachings. These teachings and the Buddhist way of life have greatly influenced the Indian thought. Even today we look upon these traditions as an integral part of and a sublime contribution to Indian heritage. It is our cherished desire even today to act upto those principles of conduct."

The history of India bears testimony to the great development which followed the teachings of Lord Buddha in the

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realm of culture, art, philosophy, literature and social organisation. His ideal inspired the people of this country to great constructive endeavour. The vast Buddhist literature extant upto this day in Pali and Sanskrit forms undoubtedly a part of our cultural treasure. Not only that, this literature found a fertile soil in other countries of Asia also and it proved to be of inestimable value in the cultural development of those countries. In the golden age of our history there was a time when the great universities of Takshasila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Vikramshila, etc. were busy developing Asian literature and philosophy.

Countries like China, Korea, Tibet, Turkistan, Mongolia, Java, Sumatra, Burma, etc. were also connected with those universities. Many thousand books on Buddhism are still in existence in the languages of those countries, while the originals in many cases have been lost in India. For about eight centuries from the days of Asoka upto the time of the imperial Guptas, Buddhism was our chief source of inspiration in the field of fine arts. The Buddhist art also inspired other Asian countries like Afghanistan, East Asia, Central Asia, Ceylon, etc. and largely influenced the local trends in art and culture. A large section of the world’s human population derived inspiration from the Buddhist art and culture. The present day development of Indian art has also been greatly inspired by the art of Ajanta.

Again, the important conclusions at which the Buddha arrived as a result of his relentless efforts and experience occupy a very high place in the history of world-thought, and their importance from the point of view of the edification of man is of extra-ordinary import. There is hardly a parallel in world history to the originality and freedom of thought which Lord Buddha displayed, although naturally enough, he was not a little influenced by the traditional thought of India. Assigning a high place to the theory of Karma and rebirth in his system may be cited as examples of that influence.

In order to appreciate the Buddha’s reaction to the traditional Indian beliefs and thought and to know why he laid so much emphasis on the people thinking independently of those beliefs and searching the right path for themselves, it is essential to understand the history of those times and the condition
then prevailing in India. It was imperative for any reformer or religious leader to remedy the laxity and clear the prevailing confusion of thought. Although the Buddha flourished at that particular time in our history and had before him a set of specific conditions to which he inevitably reacted, his greatness lies in the fact that the remedies which he evolved as a result of his search for truth and spiritual perfection hold good even after a lapse of two thousand five hundred years and his teachings are acknowledgedly a source of inspiration and right thinking even today. Dr Rajendra Prasad paid his eloquent tribute to the Buddha and his message in the following words: "The teachings of Lord Buddha, the trends developed by the Buddhist faith and the consequent renaissance in the realm of culture, art and literature, became in course of time a part of the Indian life, tradition and culture, and are so even today. Not only India but the whole world needs today the sublimating and edifying message of the Buddha. Just as human welfare and service of mankind were the ideals of Bodhisattva and the alleviation of human suffering was looked upon as a goal to be preferred even to Moksha or Nirvana itself, even so also it is essential that the present-day world should place itself the welfare of man and the removal of want and misery as the foremost ideals to work for."

In China in Particular: Buddhism has left an indelible imprint on Chinese life. Many works of Buddhist origin form part of the language of the common people in China. The popular idea of Karma and after-life, many features of folk-religion and festivals and numerous motifs in art, literature and architecture are replete with Buddhist influence. Even higher thought and ideologies reveal Buddhist notions as when Liu Schao-ch'i, the theorictician of Chinese communism, says that the ideal Communist Party member "grieves before all the rest of the world grieves and is happy only after all the rest of the world is happy" and thus restates Fan Chun-Yen's ideal of the Confucian school, which has been adopted and appropriated from Buddhism about a millenium ago.3

Jainism

Jainism like Buddhism was a protest on the part of the Kshatriyas against the exclusiveness of the priests who desired to limit the entry into the Sannyasa Ashram to persons of the Brahmana caste alone. Mahavira revolted against the supremacy of the Brahmanas and the exaggerated importance of rituals sponsored by the priestly class.

Mahavira and His Teachings: Forty years before the advent of the Buddha there branched off from Hinduism a sect known as Jainism. The founder of this new religion was Mahavira. Like the Buddha, he was brought up in luxury but became an ascetic at the age of thirty. He wandered about naked, meditating and seeming to court suffering. He neither prayed nor worshipped and told his disciples: "Man, thou art thine with friend!"

Mahavira's religion was a kind of humanism which included pacifism, nudism and vegetarianism. He was especially against killing any form of life and his present day followers go so far as to frown on the sex act, holding that in sexual intercourse nearly a minute beings of human shape (but without brain) are generated and destroyed.

Jainism teaches self-reliance and urges the conquest of anger, greed, pride and deceit—the four deadly sins. One of the great teachings of Jainism is: "Difficult to conquer is oneself. But when that is conquered, everything is conquered."

Concept of the Tirthankara in Jainism: The Tirthankara is the prophet in Jainism as the Buddha is in Buddhism. According to Jainism, a Tirthankara is one who provides the ship to cross the world or Samsara. The ship stands for Dharma of the universe. By destroying the four Karmas he reaches the four eminent qualities of Ananta-jnana (or infinite knowledge), Ananta-virya or infinite power and Ananta-sukha or infinite bliss. Endowed with such qualities, the Tirthankara becomes an omniscient being who spends the rest of his life in this world for the attainment of the good of mankind. When the self of the Tirthankara realises its true nature, it is freed from rebirth. Then he becomes Siddha Parameshti or the perfect being. The Siddha is to be worshipped because he represents the final spiritual perfection.
CHAPTER 5

The Greek Conquest of India

"The voyages and expeditions played by Alexander widened the geographical horizon of his contemporaries and opened up new lines of communications and new routes for trade and maritime enterprise."

—R.C. Majumdar

A man of unsated ambition, Alexander, the Macedonian hero, mediated conquests all around that would make him master of the world from the shores of the Atlantic to the Eastern Ocean. In a single year he made himself a more powerful monarch than his father had ever been. After that he directed all his energies to complete the arrangements for the Persian expedition. The whole force which he collected for this purpose amounted to little more than the thirty thousand foot and four thousand five hundred horse. After conquest of Persia Alexander found himself the master of a more spacious empire than any the world had yet seen. No king or conqueror ever before stood on such a giddy pinnacle of power. He now made his way to a more supreme height by crossing sword into India.

It was early in the year 326 B.C. that Alexander, fresh from the conquests of the northern Afghanistan, led his arms over into the plains of India by a bridge of boats with which he had spanned the Indus.

Condition of India at the time of Alexander’s Invasion: Alexander found the political condition of the country evidently favourable to his designs. The regions of the Indus and its great tributary streams were then divided into separate States—some under kingly and others under republican governments, but all alike prevented by their mutual jealousies and
feuds from acting in concerts against a common enemy and therefore, all the more easy to overcome.¹

**Rapid Success of Alexander**: Although Alexander remained in India only for twenty months, yet in that brief span he reduced the Punjab as far as the Sutlej and the whole of the spacious valley of the lower Indus downwards to the ocean itself. He would even have penetrated to the Ganga had his army consented to follow him and would have succeeded in adding to his empire the vast region through which that river flows. The rapidity with which he achieved his actual conquests in the country appears all the more surprising when we take into account that at every stage of his advance he encountered a most determined resistance.²

**Causes of the Success of Alexander**: The success of Alexander was due to the lack of unity among the Indians. If the Indians were united under a capable commander like Poros, the army of Alexander was doomed to failure. Despite his matchless strategy the Macedonian prince could not have averted such a catastrophe if he would have found the Indians united in arms to withstand his aggression. That this did not happen was a fortune for Alexander and misfortune for India.

**Results of Alexander's Invasion**: The invasion of Alexander was not without good results. It opened up the veil that had shrouded India from the rest of the world and thus widened up the vista of Europe's knowledge of Asia across the Indus. The people who came with Alexander composed memoirs on India and her people, which proved of inestimable values to scholars to carry on further researches on the subcontinent.

Again, Alexander unconsciously paved the path for the unification of India. Thus, like Napolean Bonaparte who was the unconscious unifier of Germany, Alexander also unknowingly contributed to the formation of the first empire in India. The petty States of India were mutually jealous of each other and preferred to remain independent and separate. But their pride was crushed by Alexander's conquest and they felt the need for a bigger State to offset any future aggression like

¹ J.W. M'crindle (Ed.) *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 4.
Alexander's. So it is doubtful whether Chandragupta Maurya could have been able to unite all of India, if Alexander had not crushed the military pride of the petty States. As Dr R.S. Sharma rightly observed: "By destroying the power of the petty States in North-West India Alexander's invasion paved the way for the expansion of the Maurya empire in that area. According to tradition, Chandragupta Maurya who founded the Maurya empire had seen something of the working of the military machine of Alexander and had acquired some knowledge which helped him in destroying the power of the Nandas."
Disintegration of Alexander's Empire after his Departure from India: After Alexander's exit from the stage dissensions speedily broke out between his great captains who were fired by the ambition to rule with independent authority that shattered his empire and embroiled it in wars which lasted for nearly half a century.

Nature of Alexander's Indian Campaign: The people of India did not consider Alexander as a great soldier. The toughest of all his battles was that which he fought on the banks of the Jhelum against Poros. He had a trying time to overcome the resistance at Kathaians before the walls of Sangala. And he was wounded even near to death in his assault upon the Mallian stronghold. It is, therefore, small wonder that after a few years of Alexander's departure from India the Indian succeeded in completely freeing themselves from the Greek yoke. So Alexander's campaign had little effect in shaping the future course of the national destination. Thus, after Alexander's death the Indians fell back into their former isolation from the outer world.

Nature of Alexander's Indian Administration: Unlike most other conquerors, Alexander did not after victory plunder the surrounding country. He rather treated the inhabitants as his own subjects, whose interest he was bound to protect and promote. Thus, in pursuance of this avowed policy he sought to secure the permanence of his Indian conquests by foundining cities, which he strongly fortified and garrisoned with large bodies of troops to overawe and hold in subjection the tribes in their neighbourhood. The system of government which he established was the same as that which he had provided for his other subject provinces, the civil administration being entrusted to the native chiefs, while the executive and military posts were given to the Macedonian officers. The Indians ungrudgingly accepted the new order which had superseded the native system. As a matter of fact, under their Greek masters the Indians enjoyed a greater amount of freedom. Alexander took measures to promote the cause of commerce, increase the wealth and improve the administration of justice. Thus, under the new system introduced by Alexander the Indians reached a higher level of culture, both intellectual and moral which was denied to them under the Persian rule.
Death of Alexander: The army of Alexander grew tired of India and the emperor was compelled to wind up the Indian campaign and leave for the motherland. On the way was Babylon, the climate of which was malarious. Alexander was less able to withstand its malignant influences. He caught fever and his life was cut off in June 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-three and at the end of his reign for only thirteen years.

An Estimate of Alexander: Alexander was dignified both in his appearance and in his demeanour. According to historian Arrian: “He was very handsome in person, devoted to exertion, of an active mind and a most heroic courage, tenacious of honour, ever ready to meet dangers, indifferent to the pleasures of the body, and strictly observant of his religious duties.” J.W. McCrindle paid his tribute to the Macedonian hero in these words: “Alexander was so prematurely cut off, and was besides so much occupied before his death with organising fresh expeditions, both maritime and military, that he had no time to improve or complete the measures which he had initiated for promoting the fusion and securing the permanent unification of the multifarious races comprised in his empire. Had he been vouchsafed a longer term of life, it seems probable that he would have succeeded in wielding so firmly together all the parts of his dominions that centuries might have elapsed before they became again disintegrated.” We may conclude our study of Alexander with the tribute of Bishop Thirlwall: “So passed from the earth one of the greatest of her sons: great above most for what he was in himself, and not, as many who have borne the title Great, not merely in the vast compass and the preserving ardour of his ambition but in the course which his ambition took, in the collateral aims which ennobled and purified it so that it almost grew into one with the highest of which man is capable, the desire of knowledge and the love of good. It may be truly asserted that his was the first of the great monarchies founded in Asia that opened a prospect of progressive improvement, and not of continual degradation: it was the first that contained any element of moral and intellectual progress.”
CHAPTER 6

The Buddhist Stupas and the Chaitya Halls

"Although there is no direct resemblance to the many examples of such architectural sculpture in Egypt, Asia Minor or Iran, there can be little doubt of the influence of such prototypes as the tombs of the Achaemenid emperors at Naqush-i-Rustam, in which the carved facade represented the elevation of a palace at Persepolis in much the same way, we shall see, as the facades of Indian Chaitya-halls reproduced those of actual buildings."

—BENJAMIN ROWLAND

The Buddhist Stupa

The genesis of the Stupas: The Stupa was originally a simple burial-mound. After the death of the Buddha his ashes were enshrined under some artificial hills of earth and brick. Originally there were Eight Great Stupas mentioned in the Buddhist texts. But we do not find any Stupa of pre-Asoka period. Asoka was probably responsible for the institution of the Stupa-worship as a part of his imperial policy for using Buddhism as an instrument of imperial unity in the country.

It is reasonable to think that the Stupas have something of the mathematical perfection of sheer architectural form as we find in the pyramids. The completely strict character of Stupa architecture is thoroughly expressive of its functions of enclosing and guarding the relic and its symbolism of the fixed cosmic structure. Apart from its purely funerary function, the Stupa and its accessories were invested with an elaborate symbolism. Akin to the Mesopotamian ziggurat, the basic concept of the Stupa was an architectural diagram of the
cosmos. The solid hemispherical dome or Anda rose above the square or circular base. The dome was an architectural replica of the dome of the heaven, enclosing the world-mountain rising from earth to heaven. A Harmika or balcony-like member of the summit of the mound typifying the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods located at the summit of the cosmic peak enclosed within the dome of the sky symbolised the presence of the world-mountain. Rising from the crown of the dome the mast or Yasti completed the symbolism. Above the dome proper, this mast served as a support for tiers of circular umbrellas or Chatras symbolising the Devalokas or heavens of the gods culminating in the heaven of Brahma. It appears that the Stupa was in a sense also a sort of architectural body representing the cosmic diagram and its animation by the enshrining of the relics and had its origin in the altar of the Vedic times.

In the same way in which these concepts of Mesopotamian and Vedic origin determined the form and working of the Stupa mound, so the architecture of the surrounding railing and actual ritual of veneration may be traced to the pre-Buddhist solar cults. The ground-plan of the railing with gateway at the four points of the compass describing the revolving claws of Swastika is no accident but a purposeful incorporation of one of the most ancient sun symbols. The reminiscence of the solar cults may definitely be gleaned in the prescribed ritual of circumambulation in which the worshipper who enters the precincts by the eastern gateway and walks round the mound in a clockwise direction indicating thereby the course of the sun through the heavens.

**The Stupa at Bharut**: The Stupa at Bharut in central India is one of the main Stupas surviving from the Sunga time. The fragments of its railings and gateways are preserved in the Indian Museum at Calcutta. The gateways or the Toranas are imitations in stone of the wooden portals of the early Indian towns and in the same way the construction of the railing is an imitation in stone of a post-and-rail fence. At Bharut there are three rails surmounted by a heavy coping stone. The most prominent in the decoration of the railing are the carvings of Yakshas and Yakshis on the uprights.
These divinities are the wild and blood-thirsty nature-spirits of the earlier Dravidian religion subdued and taken into the fold of Buddhism. Apart from the Yakshas and the Yakshis we find medallions filled with floral motifs, busts of turbaned Rajas, the Jataka tales and scenes from the life of the Buddha.

One of the repeated motifs of the Bharut railing is a Yakshi embracing a tree usually the flowering Sal tree. This indicates an old practice when tree was an object of worship. The embrace of the Yakshi and the tree that yearns for her quickening touch is a memory of some ancient fertility rite and may be interpreted as symbolical of the soul’s union with the divinity, typified in India by the metaphor of sexual union. The figure sculpture at Bharut must be described as completely archaic. The treatment of the drapery of the Yakshi shows the intention of the sculptor to give a cumulative account of the subject and to hide his inability to present the art as an organic whole. Although the garment itself is completely flat, there is an emphatic definition of the border so that the whole can be described as an entirely legible presentation of the idea of drapery, without in any way, suggesting its volume or separateness of the body enclosed. The conventionalisation of the drapery folds in long parallel pleats with borders in the shape of the letter “omega”, which reminds us of the treatment of the drapery in such archaic Greek figures as the Acropolis maidens. The descriptive character of the style extends to the very precise definition of every detail of the multiple necklaces and anklets worn by the figure. The exquisite precision of carving, the delight in surface decoration, and the essentially shallow character of the relief suggest that the sculpture as well as the architecture of Bharut is a translation into stone of the wood-carver’s or ivory-carver’s technique.

As for the composition and technique of the railing medallions, these are in every way similar to the figures carved on the uprights. An illustration may be given by way of a single medallion from the railing of Bharut that illustrates the story of the birth of Ruvu and Mriga Jataka, when the Buddha led a life of golden deer in the forest of the Ganga valley. In one occasion he saved the lives of some
nobleman from drowning in the river. But when they came to know of a reward proclaimed by the king to give information about the golden stag dreamt by his wife, they informed the king of the location of the deer. But when the king came to hunt the deer he had to give up his bow at the eloquence of the deer. The story is depicted in three consecutive episodes isolated from each other so that the observer is persuaded to regard them as separate happenings.

The portrayal of the *Jataka* stories and scenes from the life of the Buddha could again be described as conceptual, since the figures of men and animals are invariably represented from that point of view which the memory recognises as most typical of a thing or a species. The method of continuous narration, the employment of vertical projection and conceptual form should be regarded as partly naive and due to the inability to resolve the representational problems. In the archaic art of India the artist represents what his mind knows to be true, rather than what his eyes report. The artist's problem in *Stupa* railing was to present the most direct and easily readable symbols of the Buddhist legends, a problem in which the extreme simplification of the theme was conditioned in part, at least, by the shape of the dimensions of medallions. The necessity for simplification imposed the isolation of the individual elements of the composition like so many parts of a pattern against the plain background. It appears that this kind of carving is the result of artists' unfamiliarity with the medium of stone.

**The Stupa at Sanchi:** The relic mound at Sanchi in Bhopal was founded by the Sunga rulers of Malwa in the last quarter of the second century B.C. The *Stupa* proper is of the simplest type, consisting of a circular base supporting the actual hemispherical cupola around which was constructed a sandstone railing with its gateway disposed like the claws of a *Swastika* attached to the circular plan of the enclosure. The decoration of the sculpture consists of medallions carved on the uprights of the interior and more complicated rectangular panels emphasising the posts of the actual entrances. The subjects of the medallions are invariably restricted to a single figure such as the Wheel and the Tree. The repertory of motifs
is not large and is probably copied in stone from ready-
prototype in wood or ivory.

In the upper middle panel are represented a man
and a woman who may perhaps be identified as donors
or as the early instance of the Mithuna, the auspicious pair
of fruitful union. In the lower panel is a turbaned
personage with shield and dagger confronted by a rampant
lion. In both these reliefs the figures and the floral acces-
sories that fill every available space are carved in only
two planes. The contours of every element in the composition
are cut directly at right angles to the flat background, as
though the sculptor were too unfamiliar to venture any subleties
of transition. The treatment of the entire architecture and
sculpture is entirely conceptual. And in the ground of the
lower panel we see the first instance of the block-like, almost
cubistic stylisation of rock-forms that survives as a regular
convention of Indian painting and sculpture of later centuries.
A very curious detail in the upper panel is to be found in the
plinths or pedestals on which the figures are standing. This
might be taken as a convention to indicate that they are
placed on some solid mound or eminence. Another explanation
which cannot be proved is that these are representations not
of personages real or mythical, but of cult-images or statues,
since even in the Maurya period the Yaksha figures were
fashioned with attached bases or plinths.

**Buddhist Chaitya Halls**

**Genesis of the Chaitya Halls:** It was sometimes open air
and sometimes forest clearings where the Buddha would hold
the gatherings of his disciples. Some buildings of thatch and
wood became necessary to enclose some cult objects, such as a
memorial Stupa. Although such earliest buildings of Buddhism
have totally disappeared, we can have a clear impression of
their appearance from the sculptural replicas of the carving
of the living rock dated back to the Maurya period. The so-called
cave temples or rock-cut sanctuaries are the earliest models of
the Chaitya hall, the word “Chaitya” being referred to any holy
place. There is much resemblance between these Chaitya halls
and the sculptural architecture in Egypt, Asia Minor or Iran
and in both these cases there was an appeal to make permanent
the works on the earth. As religion changed from the isolated
practice of asceticism to monastic organization, so also a single
rock-cut cell into monumental rock-cut assembly, as can be
seen today in western India.

The Chaitya Hall of Bhaja: The Chaitya-hall of Bhaja of
as early as the first century B.C. consists of a nave separated by
rows of columns from smaller isles terminating in a semi-circular
apse, where the principal symbol of worship was a rock-cut
Stupa. The plan of carving such Chaitya-halls at Bhaja and many
other places were properly speaking half-timbered, and even
the entire facade was constructed of wood. A kind of rose-
window that divided the window into a number of lumulare
openings was the most attractive feature of it. The wooden
screen of the lower part of the facade is properly decorated
with the balcony and morion motifs in stone above
the entrance to the Chaitya proper; the whole structure of
which has some similarity with the reliefs of Sanchi of contempo-
rary period. But this replica of wooden originals has
disappeared in the latest of the Buddhist Basilicas such as the
Chaityas hall at Karli about 100-125 A.D.

The Chaitya Hall at Karli: The Chaitya hall at Karli is
by far the most massive and most impressive of all the cave
temples of the Hinayana period. The facade of the hall still
contains one of the two massive free standing columns or
Stambhas which are just continuation of the “Lats” of the
Maurya period. The difference of the Karli Chaitya halls from
other Chaityas lies in the fact that there the facade screen is
of carved stone with the exception of the lotus-windows which
is made of teak-wood. It seems that the whole structure rests
on the back of elephants, originally decorated with metal
ornaments and ivory tusks. According to Professor Walter
Spink the earliest and the latest Chaitya-halls at Bhaja and
Karli should be properly dated at C. 50 B.C. and 120 A.D.
respectively. The scale of the Karli Chaitya-hall is like the
Gothic church, its interior is one hundred twenty-four ft. long
and forty-six and half ft. wide, and the vault is forty ft. above
the floor. Each and every column of the interior like the
Stambhas of the exterior rests on water jars. The lotiform bell
capitals are supported by the sixteen-sided shafts, above which
rise inverted pyramids supporting the elephants with riders of both sex. The “staggering” system which is practised at Bhaja is not seen at Karli. The rich decoration of the Karli Chaitya halls stands unique among the other contemporary Buddhist monuments.
CHAPTER 7

A New Spirit from Central Asia

"The Kushanas controlled the silk route which started from China and passed through their empire in central Asia and Afghanistan to Iran and western Asia which formed part of the Roman empire in the western Mediterranean zone. This route was a source of great income to the Kushanas and they built a large prosperous empire because of the tolls received from the traders. It is significant that the Kushanas were the first rulers in India to issue gold coins on a wide scale."

—R.S. SHARMA

The Kushana Empire

Close on the heels of the Sakas, the Kushanas came to India from central Asia. The Kushanas had a unique place in Indian history in the sense that they ruled over India as a part of their central Asian empire. Like the Aryans and the Sakas they were also Indianised and played a great role in the cultural and artistic life of India. In our present study we shall confine ourselves to five important issues only. These are the Kushana chronology, science and technology during the Kushana period, aims of the administrative system of the Kushanas, who overthrew the Kushanas? and the Kushana art.

The Kushana Chronology: In determining the chronology of the Kushanas we are to take help of the date of Kanishka, the greatest king of the Kushana dynasty. Scholars have suggested the following epochs of the Kanishka era—58 B.C., 78 A.D., 120-130 A.D., 248 A.D. and 278 A.D. Of these the first date viz., 58 B.C. was suggested by Dr J.F. Fleet who believed that Kanishka ruled earlier than Kadphises I and
Kadphises II, who ruled by the middle of the first century A.D. as established from the Chinese evidence. The scholars have now given up the theory after Sir John Marshall had shown that during the excavation at Taxila coins of the Kanishka group of kings were found in upper i.e., later layers of the earth than those of Kadphises I and Kadphises II. Moreover, epigraphic and numismatic evidence stands in the way of attributing the Kadphises group of Kushana kings in the first and at least parts of the second centuries of the Kanishka era. As to the dates 248 A.D. and 278 A.D. it may be said that the Chinese Tripitaka, according to which An-Shi-Kao (148-178 A.D.) Sangharaksha translated who was Kanishka's chapalain, proves the Margabhusumi Sutra the existence of Kanishka earlier than the middle of the second century A.D.

Without going into the details of the arguments in favour of the dates, it is possible to suggest that the existence of a king named Kanishka in the first, second and third century A.D. does not necessarily prove his identity with the founder of the Kanishka era. There is evidence to prove the existence of several kings of this name of the Kushana dynasty. The fact that no era of the epoch 120-130 A.D. was known to Al Biruni in the land associated with the name Kanishka stands in the way of assigning the founder of the Kanishka era to that epoch. There seems nothing against the identification of the Kanishka era with the Saka era. In that case we find the name Kanishka in the first, second and third centuries A.D. to suit the other theories. If Kanishka was the originator of the Saka era, the epigraphic evidence would place Kanishka I in c. 78-102 A.D. Kanishka II of the Era inscription in c. 119 A.D., and Kanishka III of the Mathura Inscription of 94 in c. 172 A.D. Numismatists like Dr V.A. Smith and R.D. Banerji, however, definitely assign coins of some Kanishka to a period long after Vasudeva i.e., to the third century A.D.

Science and Technology during the Kushana Period

About the development of science and technology during the Kushana period Dr B.N. Mukherjee wrote: "Indian treatises on different branches of science indicate a fairly advanced knowledge of medicine, surgery, botany, mineralogy, mathematics,
astronomy and astrology attained by the scientists, living in the Indian provinces of the Kushana empire and in other parts of the Indian sub-continent. There are indications of contacts, perhaps through scientific treatises and participants in Indo-Roman trade, between scientists of the Kushana as well as non-Kushana provinces of India on the one hand and those of the Roman empire on the other. Archaeological materials, substantiated and supplemented by literary references, betray availability in different parts of the Kushana empire a remarkable technological knowledge relating to town-planning, erection of house (and shrine), sculpting, transport-making, irrigation, construction of dam, mining, metallurgy and various other chemical practices (like production and colouring of glass, manufacturing of ceramic wares, binding materials, pigments, etc.) and making of weapons, agricultural implements, domestic utensils, furniture, dress (made of textile goods like silk etc.) and ornaments.

At the root of the productivity of the Kushana age were unrestricted cultural acculturation, intercourse between scientific ideas and technological expertise and phenomenal growth of trade and industry, encouraged by a sort of laissez-faire policy of the rulers. However, the unplanned and uncontrolled development of industry and trade in a climate favourable to their growth at the national and international levels, could have naturally tended to concentrate the wealth, acquired through these channels of activities, in the hands of a comparatively small number of people of the society, including big industrialists, traders and rich landlords (engaged in agricultural production).”

Economic Life : According to Dr B.N. Mukherjee : “Apart from natural imperial hunger for territories, economic consideration played a key-role in the building up of the Kushana empire and its extension to the Indian subcontinent, several ports and inland emporia of which participated in thriving Indo-Roman commerce. The Kushanas who were aware of the economic potentiality of and were actually benefited

from revenue yielding trade, particularly international trade, encouraged commercial activities.”

*Foreign Trade*: About the foreign trade of the Kushanas, Dr B.N. Mukherjee wrote: “The imperial Kushanas allowed freedom of movement of men and ideas over a vast territory, inhabited by peoples of various religious affiliations and ethnic origins, in an age which favoured growth of international commerce. In consequence, not only revenue yielding internal commerce as well as Indo-Roman trade flourished, much to the satisfaction of the imperial Kushanas, but also cultural acculturation took place over a large region on a wide scale.”

**Aims of the Administrative System of the Kushanas**

The aims of the administrative system of the Kushanas have been beautifully delineated by Dr B.N. Mukherjee: “The imperial Kushanas’ lust for political and economic gain is clearly indicated by a survey of relationship between the rulers and the ruled in their empire. Such a survey suggests that their attitude or policy towards their subject were determined basically on the suitability of realising their three or four objectives. These were *(a)* inculcation in the minds of the subjects the imperial Kushanas’ right as well as might to rule over a vast empire inhabited by peoples of different ethnic, religious and social affiliations; *(b)* augmentation of sources of revenue (which implied _inter alia_ promotions of revenue yielding trade); *(c)* non-interference (or at least non-indulgence in violent coercion to effect changes) in social, religious and cultural life of the subjects; and *(d)* upholding, at least during a certain phase of their rule, the special status of Bactria, where was the seat of the power.”

**Who Overthrew the Kushanas?**

*Attacks of the Bharasivas and the Sasanians*: The Yaudheyas and Bharasivas might have been originally subordinate to the

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3. *Ibid*.
4. *Ibid*. 
Kushanas and might have partially contributed to the decline of the Kushana power in India. But we have as yet no evidence regarding their hostilities with the Kushanas. The relation of the Bharasivas with the Naga house of Mathura is also unknown. Some of the Sasanian emperors of the third and fourth centuries A.D., no doubt, extended their influence over considerable portions of western and north-western India with the result that the Indian powers including the Kushanas, the Sakas and possibly also the Yaudheyas had to submit to them. But the Kushana power in India was already on the wane before the establishment of the Sasanian monarchy in 256 A.D., probably as a result of internal dissensions. It should be noted that our view regarding the Kushana chronology is based on the identification of the Saka and the Kanishka eras and on the belief that Nahapana's records are dated in the Saka reckoning.

Epigraphic Evidence: Epigraphic evidence points to the Kushana occupation of Western Malwa. Ptolemy in his Geography appears to represent the western Saka Satrap Chastana as Lord of Ujjain in western Malwa. It is, therefore, not improbable that the earlier western Saka Satrap Chastana was the lord of Ujjain in western Malwa. It is, therefore, not improbable that the earlier western Sakas owed allegiance to the Kushana king Kanishka I. The fact that Nahapana and Chastana retained the title of "Satrap" (provincial governor) but did not mention the name of their overlord in their records suggests that they were semi-independent. Chastana's successor Rudradamana became practically an independent king. The success of the Sakas appears to have been due to the fact that after the death of Kanishka, the Kushana imperial power was divided among Vasishka and Kanishka II on the one part and Huvishka on the other part. There is epigraphic and traditional evidence that proves that both Vasishka and Kanishka II ruled at the time covered by the reign of Huvishka. Kanishka III whose Mathura record is dated probably in 172 A.D. seems to have ruled conjointly with Vasudeva.

The Magha Kings of Allahabad and the Lichchhavis: The Magha kings of Allahabad region who appear to have used the Kanishka era and were probably feudatories of the Kushanas
during the vigorous rule of Kanishka possibly became independent or semi-independent about the same time as the Sakas. The Chinese and the Tibetan traditions point to Kanishka’s political influence over Magadha. It may be possibly suggested that the eastern district of Kanishka’s empire passed to the Lichchhavis soon after the death of Kanishka.

The Nagas: A substantial number of Indian families owing allegiance to Kanishka may have thrown off the Kushana yoke in different parts of Uttar Pradesh during the weak rule of the successors of Kanishka. The Puranas that place seven generations of the Naga king at Mathura before the Guptas appear to indicate the extirpation of the later Kushan rule from western Uttar Pradesh by the Nagas.

According to Dr B.N. Mukherjee, economic factor was basically responsible for the downfall of the Kushanas. To use the words of Dr Mukherjee “Their (Kushanas’) dependence on trade is betrayed by the fact that the gradual emergence of south India as the main Indian area of the Indo-Roman commerce spelt doom for the economic prosperity of the Kushana empire. And a vital alteration in its economic structure forced the pace of change in its political area.”

The Kushana art

The artistic activities of the Kushana period can be broadly divided into two phases—non-Indian and Indian. The non-Indian phase is the Gandhara art, while the Indian phase is the Mathura art.

Religious and Artistic Life: According to Dr B.N. Mukherjee, “The direct patronage given by the imperial Kushanas to some men of distinction and to certain faiths added fillip to the cultural and religious movement. Religious toleration and state patronage of certain religions led to the prosperity of different religious movements including Buddhism, Jainism and a few Brahmanical and Iranian cults, and to the growth of religious and iconographic syncretism. Archaeological remains suggest development of different forms of art and architecture for

serving religious and secular purposes. Mathura, Gandhara and Bactrian schools of art were in flourishing state."

The Gandhara Art

*Genesis of the Gandhara Art*: The Gandhara art is not in any way a continuation of the indigenous tradition. The geographical position of Gandhara enabled it to combine the Greek and Indian elements—the subject matter is Indian and the technique is Greek. Thus, the Gandhara art went in a direction different from that of the Indian art. Properly speaking the Gandhara art is the official art of the Kushana king Kanishka. The term “Gandhara art” is applied to the school of architecture, sculpture and painting that flourished in north-western India from the first to the fifth centuries A.D. As a matter of fact, the Gandhara art has little nexus with the classical art of Greece. More appropriately, it is more germane to Roman art. So it is said that the Gandhara art is the easternmost phase of the art of the Roman empire. In the Gandhara sculpture the Roman workmanship is writ large. As a matter of fact, the first image of the Buddha which is datable to the second and third centuries A.D. is a work of this school of art. The drapery is a sure proof of the Roman workmanship. The Buddha is produced in anthropomorphic form for the first time by the Gandhara artists. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Sakyamuni is given the head of Greek Apollo and carved in deep ridged folds suggesting the Roman statues of the period of Augustus.

*The Buddha Imago of Hoti Mardan*: We may now describe some of the images of the Gandhara school. The statue of Buddha of Hoti Mardan with wavy hairs and adolescent features remind us of the image of Apollo. The *ushnisha* is in the fashion of the top-knot of Apollo. Even the over-garment is done in the fashion of imperial robe of Rome of the first century A.D. This image represents the most classic phase of Gandhara sculpture and may be assigned to the first century A.D.

*Buddha of the Great Miracle*: The intermediate stage between the Classical style of Hoti Mardan and the technique of Late Antique art in the twilight of the Roman West is represented

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by the head of Buddha of the Great Miracle. The entire composition is in a sense more in conformity with the truly Indian ideals of the image making. The Apollo-like head of the earlier image is now replaced by mask-like character of the head of Indian image of earlier schools. The voluminous drapery of the Hoti Mardan image is now replaced by a system of strings of ridges.

_Standing Bodhisattvas_: The images of Bodhisattva is another invention of the Gandhara school. It is reminiscent of the Yaksha images of the Maurya and Sunga period. The Bodhisattva image in the Boston Museum is our typical illustration. Bodhisattva wears turbans, jewellery and muslin skirts, the last of which is an adaptation of the nobles of the Kushana period. The carving of the faces is an imitation of the Roman model. The stiff swallow-tail folds of the _dhoti_ are undoubtedly an adaptation of the neo-Attic style of Rome.

**The Mathura Art**

The Mathura art went on the traditional Indian line. The great period of the Mathura art coincided with the great political activities of the Kushanas under Kanishka. We may take a few typical illustrations.

_The Headless Image of Kanishka_: The headless image of Kanishka from Mathura shows the majestic standing pose of the monarch with his hands resting on the sword and the mace. The massive majesty of the image surpasses any statue of Assyrian king or Roman emperor. The Indian element is suggestive of the _makara_ head of the mace of the emperor. This shows the unfamiliarity of the artist with this form of portrait.

_Bodhisattva at Sarnath_: The Mathura school has the unique achievement in making the earliest entirely Indian image of Buddha. A life-size standing Bodhisattva at Sarnath is our illustration. The god stands erect with his firmly planted feet. While the right hand is raised in the gesture of assurance, the left hand is placed on the waist. The statue appears to be more of Bodhisattva than of the Buddha proper as the image is nude upto the waist and wears the characteristic Indian _dhoti_. The massiveness links the image with the colossal Yaksha image of
the Maurya and Sunga period. The carving of both flesh and drapery in the image is much more subtle than that of the Bodhisattva image of Gandhara discussed by us earlier.

*Seated Buddha from Katra* : The seated image of Buddha from Katra is our next illustration. The carving is vigorous and crude. The face is marked by a warm friendly expression. The artist is very particular with the distinctive magic marks on the hands and the feet. Here also the body is covered by a *dhoti* as in the standing figure of Bodhisattva. The drapery conceived as a series of string-like ridges or in overlapping single-like pleats is evidently an imitation of the classical drapery of the Gandhara school.
Chapter 8

Magadha as the Centre of Politico-Cultural Regeneration

"Magadha played the same role in the History of India as Prussia in the History of Germany."
—H.C. Raychaudhuri

In the sixth century B.C. there were sixteen states in India of which Magadha was one. In course of time Magadha emerged as the most prominent of all of them by eclipsing all the other fifteen states. The emergence of Magadha as the greatest political and cultural power is an epoch-making event in the history of early India. In our present study we have to deal in length the rise of Magadha in the sixth century B.C.

Causes of the Success of Magadha

There were various factors that accelerated the imperial rise of Magadha. We may study these factors under the following heads:

Geographical Setting of Magadha: Under Bimbisara, Magadha stood well above other countries because of peculiar geographical setting, protected by rivers and mountains. The mountains and rivers were natural frontiers that rendered the country impregnable from any outside aggression. Moreover, the navigability of the river Ganga made it possible for the swift movement of the army and garrison, because Magadh lay at the centre of the middle Ganga plain.

Strategical Position of the Two Capital Cities of Magadha: Rajagriha, the first capital city of Magadha was surrounded by a group of hills that stood like sentinels to protect the entire
land. In the fifth century B.C. the capital was shifted to Pataliputra which occupied a pivotal position having commands of communications all around. In this connection Dr R.S. Sharma wrote: “Pataliputra was situated at the confluence of the Ganga, Gandak and the Son, and a fourth river called Sarayu joined the Ganga not far from Pataliputra. In pre-industrial days when communications were difficult, the army could move North, West, south and east by following the courses of the rivers... Pataliputra, therefore, was a true water-fort (Jaladurga) and it was not easy to capture this town in those days.”

Fertility and Productivity of the Soil: The soil of Magadha being alluvial was fertile and productive. The result was a big harvest of food crops and plants. Heavy rainfall in that basin obviated the difficult task of irrigation. According to Dr R.S. Sharma: “The country produced varieties of paddy which are mentioned in the early Buddhist texts. This area was far more productive than the areas to the west of Allahabad. This naturally enabled the peasants to produce considerable surplus, which could be mopped up by the rulers in the form of taxes.”

Availability of the Huge Iron Deposits in Magadha: The rise of Magadha was largely due to ready availability of iron-ores which were used both as ploughs and weapons. So Dr R.S. Sharma rightly observed: “The formation of the first empire of Magadha in the sixth to the fourth century B.C. owed much to the availability of iron just south of this region. The ready availability of iron enabled the princes of Magadha to equip themselves with effective weapons which were not easily available to their rivals.”

Wealth and Riches of the Government of Magadha: We have already noticed the overflow of food produce in Magadha because of the fertility of the soil and the improved method of cultivation with the new iron ploughshare. The result was the growth of new towns and minting of new coins by the kings and rulers of Magadha. Trade and commerce also thrived. The kings could levy taxes and the people could pay. The money raised was utilised in building a strong army to conquer the neighbouring countries.

Unorthodox Character of the Society of Magadha: Unlike other contemporary states in India the social condition of
Magadha was rather unorthodox. Since Magadha was inhabited by the Kiratas who were held in low esteem by the orthodox Brahmanas, the society of Magadha received a racial admixture with the advent of the Vedic culture. The impact profoundly affected the social life of Magadha. As Dr R.S. Sharma rightly observed: "Since it was recently Aryanised, it showed more enthusiasm for expansion than the kingdoms which had been brought under the Vedic influence earlier."

Military Organisation of Magadha: In the military point of view, Magadha had the unique position since it used elephants in warfare. According to the Greek sources, the Nandas had six thousand elephants. The advantage in the use of elephants lay in the fact that the elephants could storm fortresses and march over marshy areas not covered by any communication system. To say in the words of Dr R.S. Sharma: "Although the Indian states were well acquainted with the use of horses and chariots, it was Magadha which first used elephants on a large scale in its wars against its neighbours."

Personal Ability of the Kings of Magadha: Like Prussia producing a band of excellent warriors like Frederick William the Great Elector and Frederick the Great, Magadha also is credited with producing some illustrious soldiers and captains of history like Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, Mahapadma Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya, who piloted the ship and attained the desired success. We may conclude with the words of Dr R.S. Sharma, "The formation of the largest state in India during this period was the work of several enterprising and ambitious rulers... They employed all means fair and foul at their disposal to enlarge their kingdoms and to strengthen their states."

The Maurya Empire

Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka

Chandragupta Maurya: When the Kshatriya Gautama and Mahavira in supercession of the Brahmanas founded new religions, the Sudras in replacement of the Kshatriyas captured political power in Magadha. Thus, Chandragupta Maurya who was of Sudra origin by effecting a coup d'etat terminated the rule of the Nandas and
established for himself a new line of rulers who brought laurels not only for Magadha but for the whole of India. About the rise of Chandragupta Maurya Dr Romila Thapar wrote: “On the withdrawal of Alexander and certainly on his death in 323 B.C. the Greek control over the area along the Indus weakened considerably. This kept the interest of the northern kings confined to local politics, while Chandragupta consolidated his position farther east. The continuing disintegration of the northern kingdoms must have provided the opportunity for him to conquer them and annex their territories. From there it is likely that he moved southwards into central India and by 313 B.C. occupied the area around Avanti. 303 B.C. saw him
moving to the north again in the campaign against Seleucus with the treaty of 303 B.C. concluding the war. The actual process of acquiring Magadha began with small-scale attack on the villages of the outlying areas.”

Asoka—his Personality and the Nature of his Dharma: Asoka is painted in different hues in the hands of different historians. About this Dr. Romila Thapar rightly maintained that Asoka appears to many people in many guises, a conqueror who forsook conquest when he saw the suffering it caused, a saint, a combination of monk and monarch, a political genius, a kind of rare understanding of human beings. So we find that Dr V.A. Smith described Asoka as a monk and monarch, while Fritz Kern depicted the supposed conflict in the mind of the king as one wishing to free himself of earthly ties and was yet conscious of his responsibility as a king to the society and to his subjects.

Asoka adopted the title Devanampiya and Piyadassi.2 This title like the real nature of his religion is a subject of controversy. According to Dr Romila Thapar; “In the past, historians have generally interpreted Asoka’s Dhamma almost as synonymous for Buddhism, suggesting thereby that Asoka was concerned with making Buddhism the state religion. This was not his intention, although he himself as a firm believer in Buddhism was convinced that it was the only way to salvation. The policy of Dhamma was a policy rather of social responsibility than merely of demanding that the entire population should favour Buddhism. It was the building up of an attitude of mind in which social behaviour, the behaviour of one person towards another, was considered of great importance. It

1. Romila Thapar, Asoka and the Downfall of the Mauryas, p. 16.
2. The complete title of Asoka was “Devanampiya Piyadassi Raja Asoka.” The usual practice was to use only a part of it viz., Devanampiya or Piyadassi Raja. While “Devanampiya” stands for “deer to the gods”, “Piyadassi” means “he who regards amiably” or “of gracious mien.” According to Dr V.A. Smith, while Piyadassi was the title of Asoka and his personal name was Asokavardhana, Dr Romila Thapar seems to be more correct in holding that “Asoka was his personal name and Piyadassi was, as it were, an official name which he probably began to use after his coronation. Devanampiya was a generally known royal title of the time.”
was a plea for the recognition of the dignity of man and for a
humanistic spirit in the activities of society.” According to
Pranab Mukherjee: “Asoka was the emperor who laid down
the philosophy and principles of Dharma which indicated
tolerance and harmony in the interest of society irrespective of
religious beliefs. The humanism of Indian society dates back
to Asoka’s concern for his people whom he considered to be his
children.” We may conclude with the words of Dr Romila
Thapar: “For Asoka, Dharma was a way of life, the essence of
which he had culled from the moral teachings of the various
thinkers known to him, and probably his own experience in
life. It was based on a high degree of social ethics and civic
responsibility.”

Asoka’s Work as the spreader of Buddhism and his Impact on
History: King Asoka who lived two centuries after the death of
the Buddha was the Constantine of the new religion. He is said
to have founded eighty thousand monasteries and to have
driven out many heretics. His son Mahendra carried Buddhism
to Ceylon, where it soon flourished. It was rapidly spreading
Burma, Siam and even Tibet. Later it attained its largest growth
in China and Japan. It is at present found almost exclusively
in Mongolian countries, having practically died out in India, the
land of its origin.

Asoka is remembered as the greatest king India had ever
produced. Modern India is wedded to the ideology of Asoka.
In this connection Dr Romila Thapar rightly observed: “In
contemporary India, the image of Asoka has gathered about it
its own cult about the popular mind. Concepts such as Ahimsa
and the Panchsila policy are associated with his ideas. It is felt
that a long political tradition beginning with Asoka, of consci-
nous non-violence and a toleration of all beliefs political and
religious, continued unbroken through the centuries culminating
in the philosophy of Gandhi.”

The Political and Economic Life of the Maurya Period:
Commenting on the economic life of the Maurya period Dr
Romila Thapar wrote: “The economic condition of the time and
its requirements gave to the Mauryan government the form of a

3. Pranab Mukherjee, Beyond Survival, p. 33.
centralised supremacy. The nucleus of the Mauryan system was
the king, whose powers had by now increased tremendously.
Asoka interpreted these powers as a paternal despotism whose
rallying call was: 'All men are my children.' He travelled ex-
tensively throughout the empire to be in touch with public opinion.
The increasing power of the king was accompanied by a
similar increase in the power of the chief priest (Purhiota), who
by now had begun to assume the functions of the chief
minister, his religious calling being decidedly in the back-
ground. Legislation was largely a matter of confirming social
usage and in this the king had a fairly free hand, but was
expected to consult with his ministers. The ministerial council
had no well-defined political status, its power depending on
the personality of the king. Asoka's edicts indicate that there
were frequent consultations between him and his ministers; the
latter suggesting amendments to his regulations even in his
absence. However, the final decision lay with the monarch.''

Expansion of the Knowledge of Iron in the Outlying States:
We have already noticed that the growth and development of
Magadha was possible because of her unique possession of the
metal of iron. But when Magadha expanded along with her
expansion also spread the knowledge of iron among the outlying
provinces. Thus, Dr R.S. Sharma rightly observed: "Once the
knowledge of the use of these elements of culture spread to
central India, the Deccan and Kalinga as a result of the
expansion of the Magadhan empire, the Ganga basin which
formed the heart of the empire lost its special advantage. The
regular use of iron tools and weapons in the peripheral
provinces coincided with the decline and fall of the Maurya
empire... This explains the rise of the Sungas and the Kanvas
in central India, of the Chetas in Kalinga and that of the
Satavahanas in the Deccan."

Causes of the Downfall of the Maurya Empire: The
downfall of the Maurya empire was strikingly sudden and most
dramatic. This is said by Dr Romila Thapar in these words:
"There is something almost dramatic in the way in which the
dynasty petered out after the death of Asoka. In most other ex-
amples of imperial decline, the downward movement sets in well
before the political decline. This was not so with the Mauryas
where the descent was completed within half a century."
About the causes of the downfall of the Mauryan empire Dr Romila Thapar wrote: "The decline of the Mauryan empire cannot be satisfactorily explained by quoting the military inactivity, the Brahmana resentment, the popular uprisings or economic pressure. The causes were far more fundamental and included a much wider perspective of Mauryan life than any of those mentioned above. Furthermore, the decline of other empires and periods of political expansion, may also be explained in part by these same reasons. The organisation of administration and the conception of the state or the nation were of great significance in the causes of the decline of the Mauryas. The Mauryan bureaucracy, had it been of a different
nature, might still have saved the situation and prevented such a complete disintegration of the empire. The administration as we have seen was an extremely centralised character with the higher functions as far as possible under the direct control of the ruler. This in itself necessitated a king of considerable personal ability. In such a situation the weakening of the central control leads automatically to weakening of the administration. With the death of Asoka and the uneven quality of his successors there was a weakening at the centre, particularly after the division of the empire. The breaking way of the provinces was at this point almost inevitable."

Another major factor in the downfall of the Mauryas was Asoka's neglect of the north-west frontier. Since Asoka was obsessed in his missionary activities in India and abroad, he unconsciously neglected the north-west frontier through which foreign stocks from central Asia were marching into India in the third century B.C. Thus, the Scythians, a nomadic people mainly relying on the use of horse became a constant danger to the settled political life both in India and China. But the Chinese emperor Shi Huang Ti (247-210 B.C.) safeguarded his empire against foreign attacks by erecting the Great Wall of China in c. 220 B.C. But the Maurya emperor miserably failed to take any similar step to shield his empire against the inroads of the Scythians. In this context Dr R.S. Sharma wrote: "Naturally when the Scythians made a push towards India they forced the Parthians, the Sakas and the Greeks to move towards India. The Greeks had set up a kingdom in north Afghanistan which was known as Bactria. They were the first to invade India in 206 B.C. This was followed by a series of invasion which continued till the beginning of the Christian era."

Art and Architecture of the Maurya Period

*Ruins of Pataliputra City*: For the purpose of understanding the real character of the Maurya civilisation an examination of the ruins of the fabulous city of Pataliputra, near modern Patna is extremely important. Megasthenes tells of five hundred sixty towers and sixty-four gateways in the circuit of the city walls. Apart from the evidence of actual excavations at
Pataliputra we can get an idea of the appearance of the city in the elevation of towns that form the backgrounds for Buddhist subjects in the relief of the Sunga period at Sanchi. A city surrounded by massive walls, topped by battlements and picturesque balconies enclosed by railings and surmounted by barrel-vaulted structures terminating in the Chaitya windows is depicted in the panel on the eastern gateway representing Buddha’s return to Kapilavastu and a similar panel of king Prasenjit in the northern portal. It is assumed that the material employed in the structure was wood. Fa-hien who visited Pataliputra shortly after 400 A.D. mentions of the royal palace of Asoka.

The Royal Palace: The great audience hall in the actual palace area was preceded by a number of huge platforms built of solid wood in log-cabin fashion. They were a kind of artificial eminence like the paltforms of ancient Meso-potamia and Iran. There can be no doubt that these wooden structures were intended as foundations for the support of some kind of pavilions or stairways in front of the palace itself. The ruins of the building—an audience hall or to give it its Iranian name—Apadana was made up of row upon row of colossal sandstone columns, eighty in number, that once supported a timber roof. Although the structures have been largely damaged, yet even the fragments tell us the plan of this hall that very much resembled the great pillared rooms of state that are among the most striking remains of the Achaemenid palace ruins at Persopolis in Iran. This establishes the tremendous influence the art of the Achaemenid Empire exerted upon the Mauryan empire.

Cave Architecture in the Barbar Hills: Another memorable achievement of the Maurya architecture was the Lomas Rishi Cave in the Barbar Hills near Gaya. This was a donation of Asoka to the Ajivikas and this stands to signify his tolerance and generosity in religious approaches. It is an imitation in relief sculpture in stone of the entrance of a free-standing structure in wood and thatch. The sloping jambs of the doorway support a tympanum of repeated crescent shapes under an ogee arch that presumably represents the profile of the thatched roof. This is the first illustration of the type of buildings in wooden form in Vedic period. The main
decorative element of the so-called Chaitya windows is a procession of elephants approaching a Stupa. The natural gait of the elephants is reminiscent of the style of the seals of Indus Valley Civilisation. This miniature facade is repeated very often in the Chaitya Halls of the Sunga and later periods. It is significant to note that the later Buddhist architecture came to a final stage in the Maurya period.

The Free-standing Pillars: The true character of the Maurya civilisation is reflected through the architectural works. Although we do not find any architectural works patronised by Asoka, we find monuments of another kind erected as a part of Asoka’s imperialist programme of spreading Buddhism throughout his empire and using the law as a unifying force of government. These were great pillars or ‘lats’. some more than fifty feet in height and originally crowned by capitals of sculptured animals of both Buddhist and ancient Indian metaphysical significance. This kind of memorial columns is not originally Indian but a derivation of the civilisation of ancient Mesopotamia.

The column set up at Lauriya Nandangarh is typical of the original appearance of all of them. The completely smooth shaft is a monolithic piece of Chunar sandstone. A lotiform bell capital is at the top of the pillar and the shape of the capital is one of many forms borrowed from the art of the ancient Near East. It reminds us of the bell-shaped bases of the Achaemenid pillars. This member in turn supports the seated figure of lion probably intended as a symbol of the Buddha as the lion of Sakya clan. It is to be noted that this type of column with a single animal at the top is the simplest form of Maurya pillar. Others are stylistically most complicated. The other type of pillars of more baroque variety may be illustrated by the remains of a famous memorial that once stood in the Deer Park at Sarnath, the scene of Buddha’s first preaching. The remains of the memorial consisting of the capital and bits of gigantic stone wheel that surmounted the top are preserved in the Archaeological museum at Sarnath. The extremely lustrous finish of the stone is again a borrowing from the technique of the palaces of Darius and Xerxes. The carving of animals placed back to back as a supporting member has its obvious
precedent in the Persepolitan form and so, too, has the essential shape of the stylised lotus. The stiff and heraldic lions bear remarkable resemblance to the carvings of Achaemenid Iran. The mask-like features of the lion-head have equal similarity to the Iranian lion-forms. The workmanship suggests that these were carved by foreign artists. The main objects of these columns were magical and auspicious and not decorative or even architectural.

Foreign Elements in Maurya Art: While studying the art of the Maurya period we find a phenomenon repeated many times in the history of India; namely the temporary intrusion and adoption of completely foreign forms and techniques and, what is more important, the development and transcendence over these borrowings of a wholly Indian manner of representing the world of the gods in stone.

The Gupta Empire

Extent of the Gupta Empire: The Gupta empire reached the highest geographical expansion under the reigns of Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta II. Samudragupta’s direct rule extended over the whole of the Gangetic valley and parts of central India. In this sense the western frontier of the Guptas was the Yamuna, while Mathura was its western outpost. In the words of Dr R.C. Majumdar: “the empire of Samudra Gupta comprised nearly the whole of northern India with the exclusion of Kashmir, western Punjab, western Rajputana, Sind and Gujarat.” Beyond this the tribal states and the Saka-Kushana princes acknowledged his suzerainty, either as a consequence of conquest or as politic gesture to the most powerful state of north India. This was the position in c. 375 A.D.

The son and successor of Samudragupta—Chandragupta II is generally credited with the westward expansion of the empire, adding the rich provinces of the Punjab, Malwa, Rajputana, Saurashtra and Gujarat. He put an end to the long supremacy of the Scythians in these regions. It is probable that he terminated the independence of the tribal republics as well. The result was that the Gupta empire now extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. As for the western limits
of the Gupta empire, according to Dr R.C. Majumdar, the sole evidence for the Gupta conquest upto the Indus and beyond is the Mehruli Pillar Inscription which made references to extensive conquests. But this evidence is rather tenuous and this was, as Dr A.S. Altekar says, a mere raid. The Guptas did not annex the Punjab nor could garrison the Khyber Pass. To say in the words of Dr Altekar: “We have very little evidence of Gupta influence in the Punjab, apart from the Shorkot inscription no monuments of the Gupta rule have been found in Rajputana or beyond Mathura.”

The Gupta Age as the Golden Age of Indian History:
About the justifiability of the golden age ascribed to the Guptas Mr Pranab Mukherjee wrote: “In spite of the fact that many historians do not consider the Gupta dynasty an imperial power as it did not have a central control which existed in Mauryan reign. I think geographically, politically and socially the rule of the Gupta dynasty symbolised the classical age of imperial government in ancient India. It was during this period that some of the finest specimens of literature, astronomy, science and economics were created. While we inherited in the Arthasasstra, a precursors of Machiavelli’s The Prince, the science of astronomy was penned down in two major works called Jyotishavedanga and Surya-Prajnapati. The first astronomer, Aryabhata posed fundamental problems of astronomy and calculated the length of a solar year which is remarkably close to modern estimates. He believed that the earth was a sphere and rotated on its axis. The finest literary figure of the age Kalidasa wrote the Sākuntalam and the Meghadutam. The fables of the Panchatantra were elaborated. The cyclic theory of time was revolved and six systems of Indian philosophy, namely, Nyaya, Vaishesikha, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta were extensively debated. The Puranas recording the historical tradition of the Brahmanas were composed. The spread of Buddhism to South-East Asia brought trade relations and Indian ships sailed in many seas. This was the period of glory and high economic achievement in terms of trade, commerce and agriculture.”
Art and Architecture of the Guptas

*The Gupta Architecture*: It was during the time of the Guptas that purely Indian ideals were fully expressed in art and architecture. Hardly do we find in the history of men a period in which the national genius is so fully and typically expressed in art, architecture, sculpture and painting as in the Gupta India. It is culmination rather than rebirth that can be properly applied to the Gupta art. Thus, in the field of architecture we see the culmination of many types already in existence throughout earlier periods. The rock-cut *chaitya* hall, for example, is nothing new, but something of the past. Cave No. XIX at Ajanata essentially a *Mahayana* Buddhist sanctuary which is a work of the Gupta period may serve to show the changes that have taken place by the touch of the Guptas. The whole structure is extremely rich and "baroque" and complemented by the character of the *stupa* in the ambulatory. This work is highly massive and elaborate in comparison with the un-ornamented interior of the early *chaitya*-hall. This richly carved monolithic reaches almost to the summit of the vault. In order to make room for the image of standing Buddha the hemispherical dome has been transformed into a canopy. The decoration of the nave as well as the elaboration of the *stupa* is the direct result of the developed *Mahayana* Buddhism. The decorated facade of the cave is no less imposing. The statues of the Buddha and Buddhisattvas of different sizes on the cave-front on both sides of the *chaitya* windows are two figures of Yaksha which are iconographically descendants of the railing figures of Bharut or Sanchi. The whole effect of the figures and the Buddha images decorating the entire wall surface have a similarity with the rock-cut sanctuaries of China of the Tang period and six dynasties.

It is the *Chaitya* halls that appeared in the Gupta period as a free standing temple of permanent materials. Mention may be made of one shrine situated in Chezarla in Guntur District. The most impressive aspect is the vaulted roof of complete brick. A similar shrine at Ter seems to be for the use of both the Hindus and Buddhists. A more striking structure at Sanchi which is designated as temple No. 17 with *garbha griha* and *mandapa* in the front forms the model of all later Indian temple
buildings, both Hindu and Buddhist. It is an entirely appropriate use of stone medium rather a translation into stone of wooden prototypes. The architectural flat roof with spout to drain away rain water is the architectural character of the Gupta period. The columns of the portico are a modification of the Asokan order. It will not be proper to say that the Chaitya hall type is a characteristic of the Buddhist temple and cella and porch type a Hindu device. What is true is that both are used with modifications for ritual by both sects throughout the Gupta period.

At Aihole we have varieties of as many as seventy old temples only few of which have been reclaimed by the archaeologists. The Brahmanical Durga temple at Aihole is a good example of modified Chaitya-hall type and familiar basilican plan of nave, aisles and apse. Another interesting new element is the sikhara rising above the end of the structure and this became more and more prominent in the architecture of the Gupta and later periods. The Ladkhkan temple at Aihole is a rectangular building with a flat roof of stone slab. According to P. Brown, this type of building derives not from any ancient religious shrine but from the arrangement of the Indian village meeting hall or "Santhagara". Anyway, the massive bracket-like capital that continued to be in use throughout the Hindu Renaissance period is the contribution of Ladkhkan temple. Still another example of Gupta architecture is the temple of Vishnu at Deogarh. The structure which itself occupies the innermost enclosure of a mandapa of nine squares, probably dates from the fifth century A.D. One of the few surviving examples of Indian architecture in brick is the temple at Bhitargaon near Kanpur. In shape the temple seems to bear some relation to the original lower sanctuary at Bodh Gaya and it had its impress upon the later shrines in Java and Indo-China. The Siva temple at Bhumara is closely related to the temple of Bhitargaon. This consists of a garbhagriha continued in a large walled chamber forming an indoor processional path around the holy of the holies. This enclosure was in turn preceded by a mandapa. This arrangement is taken by some as the origin of the typical late Indian temple plan. The Hindu and Buddhist forms of building of the Gupta period were com-
pletely evolved by linking the porch direct to the holy of holies.

In Gupta architecture, both Hindu and Buddhist the doorways, windows and panels are studded with ornamentation like the platersque architectural ornament in Spain. A single door jamb from the shrine of Bhumara, installed in Indian Museum, Calcutta is a good illustration of the exuberance of the Gupta architecture. This creative invention and freshness is a marked improvement over the later Hindu arts.

*The Gupta Sculpture*: The traditions out of which the Gupta sculpture evolved is entirely Mathura school and the Greeco-Roman art of north-west frontier. A finished mastery in execution and a majestic serenity which are seldom seen in any other school of art are the highlights of the Gupta sculpture.

The image of the standing Buddha from Mathura, installed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta is a typical of Gupta sculpture. The fifth century Gupta Buddha differs from the Kushana counterpart inasmuch as the Buddha is no longer covered with monastic garments. In the Mathura Gupta Buddha the conventionalisation of the late Gandhara drapery has been reoriented into a new pattern, distinct from its descriptive function so much so that the repetition of the loops of the string-like drapery supplies a kind of relief to the static columnar mass of the body. This is the culmination of a process already witnessed in the Buddhas of Later Andhra period. Although there are sure marks of the perpetuation of the massiveness of the early Kushana Buddhas, the conception of the actual form of the Buddha is entirely Indian. As for the head of the image, it has the embodiment of Gandhara and Indian traditions. The sharp definition of the planes is akin to the hard precision of the Gandhara Buddhas with the only difference that the Mathura Gupta types avoid the mask-like coldness of the Gandhara Buddha head and gives instead in the face a feeling of warmth and fullness.

The image of Jain Tirthankara, installed in the Curzon Museum, Mathura at the first sight could be mistaken for a Buddha in *Dhyani Mudra*. Hiuen Tsang rightly said: “It differs only in the point of clothing, the points of beauty are absolutely same.” This Jaina image of Buddhist prototype is identical
with the Buddha image of Gupta period. Compared to the Harappa torso, the muscular structure has been suppressed to connote the perfection of a great man in yogic trance.

Another important flourishing centre of Buddhist sculpture in the Gupta period was at Sarnath. The standing Buddha in the Archaeological Museum, Sarnath reveals further departure from any adherence to the style of Gandhara than the Mathura Buddha in the complete disappearance of the carving of drapery. The high-relief statue of Buddha preaching the first sermon installed in the Archaeological Museum, Sarnath is one of the masterpieces not only of Gupta sculpture, but Indian art of all periods. The representation of the teacher in yoga posture and his hands in dharmachakramudra is the final development that transformed the events from the life of the Buddha into hieratic symbols. The image carved in triangle with the head as apex and the legs as the base is a typical representative of the Mahayana point of view.

The Gupta Paintings: If architecture and sculpture of the Guptas were culmination of earlier traditions, painting was no exception. The main source for the study of the Indian painting is the Vishnudharmottaram, which divides the types of paintings appropriate to temples, palaces and private residence and brings out the difference between the “true”, “lyrical” and “secular” paintings. Vishnudharmottaram emphasises on the necessity of following the canons of proportion and makes out the expression through appropriate movement. It is interesting that Vishnudharmottaram mentions the impossibility of making a proper expression of emotion without a knowledge of the art of dancing. This remark suffices to explain the postures and gestures of wonderful vibrance that characterise the great paintings of Ajanta and it enlivens them with a kind of swaying, flower-like grace and movement. Painting in the Gupta period was a social activity practised by both amateurs and professional artists, rather than being confined to ecclesiastical usages.

The flourishing centres of Gupta paintings are Ajanta, Bagh and the Gupta caves at Badami. But what is known in the west as sacred and secular art sprang exclusively at Ajanta. According to A.K. Coomaraswamy psycho-physical indivisibility of the inner and outer life which is so splendidly
exhibited in the setting of the Ajanta wall paintings are the characteristic of the Gupta paintings. Every aspect of life has a spiritual beauty; and a sensuous physical beauty is depicted with an emblem of spiritual beauty. The Ajanta paintings of rare skill are in Cave I. Originally the entire interior even the pillars were covered with paintings. The two massive painted figures of Bodhisattvas on each side may be regarded as parts of a Trinity with the sculptured image of the Buddha as the central figure. One can only gradually apprehend the whole arrangement by following the directions suggested by the gestures and postures, which cannot be viewed and grasped at a single glance. The figure of Bodhisattva requires careful and detailed study. Larger than the attendant figures, this is rather like an axis around which the whole arrangement moves. Just like the Buddhist sculpture of this period, this structure was in accordance with some canonical proportion, probably nine thalams to the total of the figure. As an example of metaphorical rather than organic structure of human form the figure has rare parallels. The face has the perfect ovalness like an egg, the brows are bent like Indian bows and the eyes are lotiform. It is significant that the flesh parts of Bodhisattva and his attendants are modelled in light and shade. This abstract shading in Ajanta as in all Indian paintings has a much softer "sfumato" effect than in the provincial Indian painting at Bamiyan. The half-closed eyes in reverie, the physically unreal proportions of the face speak of a beauty beyond reality—a beauty so refined away from transitory human appearance that it becomes a symbol of celestial beauty and purity. On the right side among the companions of Bodhisattva we see a female figure beautifully painted in dusk complexion with a towering head dress that looks like almost the same mukuta that crowned Bodhisattva's head even. This representation of female energy or Sakti of Bodhisattva is an evidence of Hindu concepts entered into Buddhism. The ceiling painting of Cave I at Ajanta is more flat and executed in more decorative style than the wall paintings of the vihara. The same composition of a bearded person dressed in a peak cap, mantle and boots attended by musicians and cup bearers is seen repeated with slight change as many as four times. Although this composition was for a time identified as the
representation of Khusrau II of Iran who actually sent an embassy to the Deccan, Coomaraswamy’s suggestion that it is representation of Kuvera, the god of riches seems to be more tenable. The floral and vegetable forms that fill the panels surrounding the figure composition and the textile-like character of the panel are the finest illustrations of the ability of Gupta art to abstract the essential of the natural forms and invest them to the decorative arrangement without losing any sense of growth and articulation of the plants.

The fragments of the wall-paintings surviving in the porch of cave XVII represents Indra and the celestial musicians flying to welcome the Buddha at the time of his visit to the Tushita Heaven. It has some resemblance with the sculpture of flying Gandharvas at Gwalior. Apart from the rare beauty of the god one cannot miss the particular beauty of the animated figure of a flute player half turning to glance at Indra at the right. Against a white background are curving lines of ultramarine blue suggestive of towering clouds which are some proof of the sureness and great breadth with which the figures are painted. More wonderful is to find how by the single sweep of the brush, the painter has made prominent the individual features of the body, like the nose and eyes. The Visvantara Jataka wall painting in porch in Cave XVII shows the princely hero announcing to his wife the news of his banishment from his father’s kingdom. The wife’s drooping pose is accented by the bend of her head and the relaxation of every limb emphasises her distress. In accordance with the six limbs of paintings, this composition is an example to show that the states of mind are precisely exhibited by pose, gestures and glance. It is a process of continuous narration like a translation of the techniques of the Amaravati reliefs into terms of paintings.

Still other surviving examples of Gupta wall paintings are the damaged fragments of those in the Verandah of Cave IV at Bagh. The present condition of the fragments indicate its identical nature with the work at Ajanta. The representation of an elephant procession and a seemingly dancing scene of rhythmic beauty of dancing girls circling round a person of Kushana or Iranian dress are the highlights from Bagh.
With regard to the Buddhist art of all of south-eastern and eastern Asia, the Gupta art occupies the topmost position. From the iconographic and stylistic point of view, the painting and sculpture of the Gupta period formed a pattern that was modified in the hands of all those who followed Buddhism. There is no denying the fact that the sculptures and paintings of the Guptas are something more than the prototypes for the religious art of Asia. Their position is unquestionably analogous with those of Rome and Greece in the west. The perfection which was achieved in India by the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. stands as the final solution about the problems of form and content in religious art. This, however, could not be improved because of the persistance of the so-called perfect authority of classic art in Europe. Be that as it may, it was the Gupta art that provided a firm basis for the evolution of original artistic expression. The art in Cambodia and Siam developed on the models of the school of Sarnath and the greatest works in "Greater India" were the imitation and assimilation of the plastic art of Indian origin. The Singhalese art is an embodiment of the aesthetic combination of the serenity of expression and plastic majesty of Gupta period. It was the Gupta ideal that expressed itself in the carvings of the Great Stupa at Barbudur which is an eloquent example of Mahayana sculpture of Java. Thus, the Gupta period had tremendous contribution to the later development of art all over Asia.
CHAPTER 9

**Literary Fountains in the South**

"The popularity of the Kural is so great that it is possible even now to collect from oral tradition practically the whole work. Indeed it has sometimes been called the Bible of Tamil land."

—K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar

The Sangam Literature

_The Venue of the Sangams:_ Tradition has it that there were three Sangams, all of which flourished under the patronage of the Pandya or the Pallava kings. The first Sangam was said to be held in old Madura. The sage Agastya was its founder president. The first Sangam lasted for four thousand four hundred years under the auspices of eighty nine Pandya kings. When the city of Madura went under the sea, Agastya established another Sangam at Kapatapuram or Alaivai. This was also presided over by Agastya. This second Sangam which was patronised by fifty nine Pandya kings lasted for three thousand seven hundred years. Since this city too went under the sea, a third Sangam was founded at present Madura and it existed for one thousand eight hundred fifty years. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: "The underlying historical fact seems to be that the venue of the Sangam changed with the capital, which is known to have shifted from old Madura to Kapatapuram and from there to north Madura."

_Works of the First Two Sangams:_ One of the achievements of the first Sangam was approving the works of four thousand four hundred ninety nine scholars whose works like *Akattivam*,...
Paripaddal, Madunarai are most important. The greatest work of the second Sangam was Tolkappiyam, a Tamil grammar. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: “It is essentially a grammatical work like Bhattikavya, but not exactly a grammar. Its essential purpose was to present a detailed analysis of the means of expression in literature including the study of words and letters. Thus, Tolkappiyam deals in details with orthography, etymology, rhetoric, prosody, the expressions of love and war as instances of subjective and objective experiences, the language of flowers and contemporary manners and customs. It is a storehouse of information and has been regarded as a manual of study both for worldly life and for salvation.”

Works of the Third Sangam: The third Sangam has handed down to us a large number of literary products. The most famous among them are the Ten Idylls (Pattuppattu), the Eight Collections (Ettuthokai) and the Eighteen Minor Didactic poems (Padinekilkkanakkku). The Ten Idylls which are in the nature of descriptive poems were composed by eight different authors. They had different subject matters. Nakkirar, the author of one idyll was called the Johnson of Tamil literature. The work is an eulogy of god Meruga and his temples, The subject matter of the other Idyll by the same poet is the condition of king Nedun-Jeliyan in the battle field and of his lovely queen in the palace. The second theme is also the burden of another Idyll, namely Mullaiappat who whose author is Napputhanar. One finds little difference in the subject matter of Pattanappalai written by Rudran Kannanar in which the call of love is more seductive for the hero than the sounds of battle drums with the result that the hero stays with his beloved indoors. The subject matter of other Idylls range from social customs and manners, and city life to the glory of the Pandya kingdoms. About the importance of the Ten Idylls K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: “The literary value of these poems, particularly of the Ten Idylls can hardly be overestimated. Concise and elegant, lively, pulsating with human sentiments, sometimes poignantly, these poems may be called, in the plentitude of term, classic. More sober and less rhetorical than Pindar, who is the best term of comparison, they are perhaps the only products of Indian literature.”
The second branch of the literary works of the third Sangam was the Eight Collections (Ettuthokai). Consisting of more than two thousand verses, some of which have great historical import, they portray the contemporary social custom. It may be pointed out that one of the authors was a lady whose name was Kakkai Padinjari. She may be regarded as the earliest poetesses of India. About the importance of the Eight Collections K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observed: “Concrete, alive with the play of thought, these poems present a vivid picture of a vigorous material civilisation. Apart from their intrinsic material merit, they are an inexhaustible source-book of the early social history of the Tamil land.”

Now we come to the Eighteen Minor Didactic Poems. Of them the most well-known is the world-famous classic the Kural whose author was Tiruvalluvar. It is divided into one hundred thirteen chapters, each containing ten couplets of Kural. These deal with virtue, morals, love happiness, prosperity and wealth. The verses have the brevity, beauty and finality like Haikku of Japan. These poems may be called “Veda in miniature” and also “a mustard seed in which it is comprehended the riches of the seven seas.” About the importance of the Kural, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: “The popularity of the Kural is so great that it is possible even now to collect from oral tradition practically the whole work. Indeed it has sometimes been called the Bible of Tamil land.” The other important branch of the Eighteen Minor Poems is Naladiyar which is an anthology of four hundred Venbas or quatrains composed by various Jain authors. We may conclude with the words of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: “Unlike the Kural, Naladiyar is an unequal work, but it includes a great deal that is first-rate, justifying the saying in the Tamil country: ‘Just as the banyan and neem are good for one’s teeth, Naladiyar and Kural are good for one’s speeches!”

Early Tamil Literature (other than the Sangam Literature)

We have already discussed the Sangam literature earlier. Now we propose to study in outlines the other Tamil litera-
ture. The study can be divided into two parts—the epics and the devotional poems.

The Epics: In this period five major and five minor epics were written, though two major and one minor epics have not survived. We shall, however, study only two epics, namely the Silappadikaram and the Manimekhalai, both of which belong to the group of major epics. These two epics are called the Iliad and the Odyssey of the Tamil literature.

The Silappadikaram (or the Story of the Two Anklets): The tradition is that Ilango-Adigal, the younger brother of the Chera king Senguttuvan who had become a monk met in the course of his wandering the Buddhist poet Sittalai Sattanar. The latter read out to the former the Manimekhalai. Thereafter Ilango composed the Silappadikaram on the basis of Sattanar’s story one generation ahead. Although the tradition is fanciful, the truth is that the two poets were contemporary. The theme of the epic is the tragic episode of two lovers, namely Kannaki and Kovalan. Kovalan, the hero was a rich merchant and was seduced for a time by the courtesan Madhavi. He was under the charms of Madhavi and so he deserted his loving wife Kannaki and at last became penniless and began to repent for having deserted Konnaki. But Konnaki had remained faithful to him and assisted him with her remaining ornaments, namely a pair of anklets.

With the two anklets as their capital they set out for Madura to start a new life. One day Kovalan went to the market to sell one of the anklets to a goldsmith. The queen had just that moment been robbed of one of a similar ornament. The goldsmith whom Kovalan had offered to sell the anklet reported it to the authorities and Kovalan was arrested and on the order of the king was executed. Konnaki fainted to know of the fate of her husband and produced before the populace of Madura the other anklet with her to disprove the allegation of theft imputed on her husband and she pronounced the doom of Madura. She plucked out her left breast and threw it on the street of Madura, whereupon the city was reduced to a heap of charred remains. Both the lovers were, however, reunited in heaven. About this epic K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: “Besides describing a moving and poignant story, the Silappadikaram owes its pre-eminence in Tamil litera-
ture to its perfect sense of form, the harmonised blending of poetry, music and drama, its gorgeous and picturesque descriptions, its epic dignity and sublimity.”

The Manimekhalai: The Manimekhalai is a sequel to the Silappadikaram, though the former is an earlier work than the latter from the chronological point of view. The heroine of this epic was Manimekhalai who was a daughter of Kovalan through Madhavi. Madhavi had become a Buddhist nun and took the monastic life along with her daughter Manimekhalai. The daughter became a paragon of beauty and fell in the eyes of the prince. In order to escape the attention of the prince she took to a wanderer's life. At last she like her mother became a Buddhist nun and became known for her knowledge and piety. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar made a comparison between the two epics in the following words: “Though not lacking in incident and human sentiments, the Manimekhalai lacks the tumultuous intensity of the Silappadikaram. The Silappadikaram admittedly contains many religious and moral lessons—there is also included in it a very learned dissertation on music—but it was essentially meant to relate a story, while in the Manimekhalai the story seems to have been used as a convenient framework for philosophical discussions and Buddhist propaganda.”

Devotional Poems: The next phase of the Tamil literature began in the sixth or the seventh century A.D. It was a time when the forces of Hindu regeneration started successfully overcoming the Buddhist and Jaina influences both in the social and literary fields. Among the Hindu devotional poets two names figured prominent. They were Nayanmars of the Saiva sect and Alvars of the Vaishnava sect. The devotional poems handed down by these two illustrious poets were compiled by two religious leaders, namely Nambi-Andar-Nambi and Sri Nathamuni. Nami-Andar-Nambi is credited with collecting and systematising the Saiva hymns into Tirumulars, of which the first seven were collectively known as Tevarvam which contained the works of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar. While the eight Tirumular known as Tiruvachakam is the work of the famous Manikkavachakar, the ninth is an anthology and the tenth book is a collection of the verses of Tirumular. The eleventh work is a collection of verses of poets
Nakkarar and Nambi-Andar-Nambi. Besides the Tirumulars there is also a work called Periyapuranam that comprises the biographical accounts of the sixty-three Saiva saints who are held in high esteem even today. These saints came from various castes and occupation—the kings, the Brahmanas, merchants, farmers, shepherds, potters, weavers, hunters, fishermen and untouchables. Some of the saints were also women. In this connection K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly observed: "The Periyapuranam is a reminder to the Tamil people that God's love and salvation are quite independent of caste, profession or sex."
CHAPTER 10

The Republics in Early India

"The republican or oligarchical clans formed a distinctive feature of the Indian political system since the days of the Buddha, if not much earlier still."

—R.C. Majumdar

Origin and Antiquities of the Republic: Democratic and popular communities are found in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Thus, we find the will of the people expressed in elected assemblies and democratically governed institutions. We also find references to elected kings and the power of banishing kings and also recalling the banished kings. With the rise and consolidation of empires, the power of the popular assemblies was curtailed. The survival of Panchayats and their exercise of wide powers prove that the democratic tradition has never wholly died. That there were republican forms of government in ancient India is undisputed. Not only do the accounts of the Greek historians who accompanied Alexander the Great confirm their existence but the works of Panini and Kautilya testify to their widespread and continued existence. Even in the Buddhist work called Avadanasataka which was not earlier than 100 A.D., there is a reference to gana or republican government. A ruler of the Deccan asked a company of merchants from the Madhyadesa as to who were the kings in their own land. They replied: "Sir, some countries are under the Ganas and some others are under the Rajas." The existence of the ganas in the early centuries of the Christian era is further proved by a legend on one of the coins of Yaudheyas which reads thus: "Victory to the Gana of the Yaudheyas." Since the Yaudheyas were one of the clans subjugated by Samudra Gupta in the fourth century A.D., it may safely be
concluded that the Ganas as self-governing communities continued to exist from the seventh century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.

Location of the Republics: While the monarchies were concentrated in the Ganges plain, the republics were around the northern periphery of these kingdoms—in the foothills of the Himalayas and just south of these and in the north-western India in modern Punjab. With the exception of those in Punjab, the other republican states tended to occupy the less fertile, hilly areas, which may suggest that the establishment of the republics pre-dated the monarchies, because the wood in the low-lying hills would probably have been easier to clear than the marshy jungles of the plain. What is equally plausible, however, is that the more independent-minded Aryan settlers of the plains, rebelling against the increasing strength of the orthodoxy in the monarchies, moved up towards the hills and established communities which were more in keeping with the tribal traditions, such as the early settlements in the Punjab. The nature of the republican reaction of Vedic orthodoxy indicates that the people of the republics were maintaining an older and continuous tradition.

Tribes and the Republics: The republican states consisted of either a single tribe such as the Sakayas, Kokiyas and Mallas or a confederacy of tribes such as the Vrijis and Yadavas. It appears that the republics had originated from the Vedic tribes and retained much more tribal traditions than the monarchies did. In the transition from tribe to republic they lost the essential democratic pattern of the tribe but retained the idea of government through an assembly representing the tribe. The legends that veer round their origin refer to two curious elements—that they were frequently founded by persons of royal lineage who, for several reasons had left their homeland, and that often the founding family resulted from an incestuous union between brother and sister. This would indicate that either the legends went back to a very early period of Aryan life when there was no conscious taboo on incest or as is more likely, the republics were parting company with Vedic orthodoxy. This suggestion is apparent from at least one Brahmana source which describes certain republican tribes as degenerate Kshatriyas and even Sudras, because they have
ceased to honour the *Brahmanas* and to observe the Vedic ritual. This is also evident from the worship of popular cult objects—the *Chaityas* and sacred enclosures round trees etc. which were usual in the republics.

Here we shall study three republican countries of ancient India—the Sakyas, the Vrijis and the Lichchhavis. Our main sources of information are the Buddhist and Jaina records of the time of the Buddha and Mahavira.

**The Sakyas**

*Geographical Position of the Sakya country:* Since the Buddha was born in the Sakya clan, the Buddhist records naturally give special importance to the Sakyas. Their territory was located in the lower slopes of the Himalayas. River Rohini was their eastern boundary and Rapti was their western boundary. Kapilavastu was the capital. Apart from Kapilavastu there were not less than nine other towns in the Sakya country. There were as many as eighty thousand families. According to Rhys Davids, the population of the Sakya country was not less than half a million.

*Origin of the Sakyas:* According to the Sakyas, they belonged to the solar race and their forefathers were the Ikshavakus of the epic fame. The political history of the Sakyas tells that they were a peaceful people and they did not hanker after great power.

*The Sakya-Kosala War:* The kingdom of Kosala exerted suzerainty over the Sakyas in the later half of the sixth century B.C. We can have glimpse on the circumstances which led to the final extinction of Sakya liberty by the onslaughts of the Kosalas. The Kosala king Prasenjit was a great admirer of the Buddha of the Sakya clan and wanted to marry a Sakya princess. But the pride of the Sakyas did not allow such matrimonial alliance. What the Sakyas did instead was most deplorable. They fraudulently gave a slave girl in marriage with Prasenjit. The ire that followed on the discovery of the fraud led to a declaration of war by Kosala against Sakya in which the Sakyas including even the women and the children did not escape. This war practically rung down the curtain over the independence of Sakya country.
CLASSIFICATION OF REPUBLICS

A. Jayaswal’s Classification
   Republics (Samgha and Gana)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democracies (Pure Ganas)</th>
<th>Aristocracies (Pure Kulas)</th>
<th>Mixed aristocracies and democracies (mixed of Kulas and Ganas)</th>
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B. Bhandarkar’s Classification
   Republics (Samghas)

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<th>Kshatriya aristocracies with a tribal character (Gana)</th>
<th>Democracies</th>
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<td>Town-wide (Nigama)</td>
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<td>Federal</td>
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THE REPUBLICS IN EARLY INDIA
Economic Life of the Sakyas: Agriculture was the life-line of the Sakyas. They lived on the produce of the rice-field. Their other source of income was the cattle that would graze in the village pasture and in the forests. The government would levy some kind of taxation on the people.

The Vrijis

Origin of the Vrijis: Another important republican state was the Vrijis which was a confederation of eight republican clans. Of them the most prominent were the Videhans, the Lichchhavis, the Jantrikas and the Vriji proper. As a matter of fact, the history of the Vrijis is the history of these important clans taken together. Mithila was the capital of the Videhans; Vaisali was the capital of the Lichchhavis and Kundapura was the capital of the Jantrikas.

Evolution of Videha from Monarchy to Republic: Although the Vrijis had originally a monarchical constitution, subsequently the royal house declined and it was replaced by a Republican constitution. Videhans were subsequent entrant into the confederation. It is in this connection that Dr H.C. Raychaudhuri rightly observed: “Political evolution in India thus resembles closely the political in ancient cities of Greece where also the monarchies of the Heroic Age were succeeded by aristocratic republics.” The incipient Magadha imperialism under Ajatasatru laid its hand on the Vrijis and brought about its downfall.

Origin of the Lichchhavis: Scholars are divided in their opinion with regard to the question as to whether the Lichchhavis were of Indian origin or of foreign origin. According to Dr V.A. Smith the Lichchhavis were of Tibetan origin. Dr S.C. Vidyabhusan believed that they were of Persian origin. But the early Indian traditions consider the Lichchhavis as the Kshatriyas. Dr H.C. Raychaudhuri believed in the Indian Kshatriya origin of the Lichchhavis.

Political History of the Lichchhavis: It is not possible to say with definiteness as to when the Lichchhavis began to grow in power. This much is, however, clear that in the sixth century B.C. during the days of the Buddha and Mahavira they had firmly
established their political power with Vaisali as their capital. The capital was ten or twelve miles in circuit and had many notable edifices. The Lichchhavis had an aristocratic republican form of government in which every noble had an equal part. They occupied an important social position at the time of Gautama the Buddha who is believed to have drawn up the constitution of the Buddhist Samgha on the model of the republican constitution of the Lichchhavis. The Lichchhavis continued to enjoy a position of power and prestige from the sixth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. when the marriage of the Lichchhavi princess Kumara Devei with Chandra Gupta I of Magadha enabled the latter to lay the foundation of the Gupta empire. The second Gupta emperor Samudra Gupta took pride in declaring himself as the son of the daughter of the Lichchhavis. The Lichchhavis flagged out after the expansion of the Guptas in the fourth century A.D.

Other Republican States

With the disappearance of the Kushanas from Rajputana and the Punjab, several tribal republics grew up. They were the Yaudheyas, the Arjunayanas and the Malavas.

The Yaudheyas

*Republic Government in the Yaudheyas*: The Yaudheyas lived in eastern Punjab, northern Rajputana and some adjoining tracts of Uttar Pradesh. They had a republican form of government. As their names suggest, they had lust for war and blood. According to them, their ancestor was Yudhishthira, the first Pandava and they were worshippers of Brahmanyaadeva or Karttikeya. Although they were defeated by Mahakshatrapa Rudradamanaya under the direction of the Kushanas, they succeeded in liberating themselves from the Kushanas in or about 175 A.D. in token of which they struck some commemorative coins. The president of the republic was designated as Maharaja.
The Arjunayanas

_Republic of Government in the Arjunayanas_: The republican tribe of the Arjunayanas had their centre of activities in Bharatpur and Alwar states in Rajputana. As the name suggests, they claimed their ancestry from Arjuna, the second Pandava brother. They suffered defeat in the hands of the Sakas and the Kushanas. But with the decline of the Kushana authority, they established their independence. Their independence was too short-lived. By the middle of the fourth century A.D. they were subjugated by the Guptas.

The Malavas

_Republic of Government in the Malavas_: The republican tribe lived in the Punjab during Alexander's invasion. But in the fourth century A.D. they lived in Rajputana where they might have migrated under the pressure of the Sakas. Their capital was Malavanagara in the Jaipur state. When the Kushanas declined in power, they extended their authority in different directions and issued coins to their victory. They faced the enmity of the Kardamaka Sakas and were finally defeated by the Guptas.

Constitution of the Republican States: While we are sure of the prolonged existence of the republics in ancient India, at the present state of our knowledge we have no information about their internal organisation excepting some vague references to some kind of council among the oligarchical governments and some positive references to the presidents among the republican states.

_The Assembly_: In the Buddhist literature we find some information about the pattern of the constitution of the Sakyas and the Lichchhavis which were identical. There was a supreme assembly consisting of the young and the old where the business of the clan was carried out. The name of the hall where the meeting used to take place was Samthagara. Such meetings were frequent and the members took their seat in the specified places.

_The Proceedings of Assembly_: The rules of business were followed in conducting the proceedings of the meeting. According to
Dr Beni Prasad, a resolution was repeated thrice and if no objection was raised it was deemed to have been passed. When any objection was raised, majority vote would decide the issue. If a question was of any complicated nature, it was referred to a special committee.

The Executive: The entire government was split into several administrative units. The local affairs were decided by local assemblies. The supreme Assembly of the Lichchhavis consisted of 7,707 Rajas who were probably heads of local units. The chief executive of the state was called Raja who was probably a president elected for a term of years.

Organ of Judiciary: The same democratic spirit influenced the judicial system of the Lichchhavis. There were as many as eight tribunals. And if all of them found a person guilty, only then the accused was to be punished. The Buddha, highly praised the democratic constitution of the Lichchhavis.

Republics in India Distinguished from those of Athens: It is, however, a truism that there was no self-governing republics ancient India of the type of Athens. It is also true that there was no conscious endeavour made by the legislators in ancient India to uplift the lower social orders with a view to pitting them against the privileged ones and that the former were given constitutional powers with which they could curtail or annul the privileges of the latter. Nor can it be established that in any age of ancient Indian history the individuals ever identified themselves with the state, as the Athenians did with their own state. The criterion of appreciating the republics in ancient India should not be in terms of Greek history. The proper standard of judging the ancient Indian republican states, like all other Indian political institutions should be to study them in the context of the ancient Indian political theories and of the environment amidst which they originated and into which after centuries of existence they finally disappeared.

Causes of the Fall of the Republics: The Republics existed in India for one thousand years but could not withstand the onslaught from imperial Magadha. The causes of the decline of the Republics are as follows:

First, the Buddha himself found out two main dangers for the Republics—lack of unity among the members and the tendency
to break away from the old customs and usages by the young generations.

Secondly, the *Mahabharata* pointed out that internal quarrel among the members and lack of secrecy of public policy led to the downfall of the republics.

Thirdly, the aggressive policy of the Mauryas subjugated the small republican states for some time. Although they could raise their head after the downfall of the Mauryas, they were totally annihilated by the Imperial Guptas.

In the disappearance of the republican states the greatest factor was the invasion of Samudra Gupta, the greatest king of the Gupta dynasty. His campaigns broke the power of the tribal republics in the Punjab and Rajasthan. The relationship between the Guptas and the tribal republics was a curious one. The Guptas were proud of their connections with the Lichchhavis, but they attacked the western republics. It is interesting that the republican tradition should have survived for so many centuries in the west, despite the repeated invasions of this area. Thus, Samudra Gupta drove the final nail at the coffin of the republics in India. Dr R.C. Majumdar summed up the growth, importance and disappearance of the republics in early India in the following words: "The republican or oligarchical clans formed a distinctive feature of the Indian political system since the days of the Buddha, if not much earlier still. Some of them like the Lichchhavis, Sakyas and the Malavas played an important role in the political and cultural history of India. The republican tradition of freedom was looked as a thorn by the imperial states. The Maurya empire swept them away. But they appeared again, and there are ample evidences that many of them took a leading part in repulsing the foreign aggressions. But the Gupta empire made a clean sweep of them all. Some of them submitted to Samudra Gupta and continued for some time as vassal states. With the growth of the Gupta empire they faded out of existence never to appear again. For more than one thousand years the republican clans recorded activity in Indian politics. But we cannot trace the stages of their decay. It is, however, a truism that the Gupta imperialism was the main cause of its final extinction."
CHAPTER 11

The Caste System in Early India

"The common notion that there were four original castes is false"
—V.A. Smith

The Genesis of the Caste System: According to the Vedic scriptures, the caste system originated with Brahma, the Creator. The Brahmanas, the highest caste sprang from his mouth; the Kshatriyas who were warriors and rulers from his biceps; the Vaisyas who were the artisans and craftsmen from his feet. Below them all were the outcastes and untouchables who had not sprung from the divine soil.

But the historical interpretation of the origin of the caste system was less divine than those suggested by Vedas. It was rather a scheme employed by Hinduism’s Aryan founders to perpetuate the enslavement of India’s dark Dravidian population. It is significant to note that the word for caste which is Varna stands for colour. And centuries later the dark skins of India’s untouchables gave graphic proof of the system’s real origin.

In the Mahabharata we find that in the Swayamvara ceremony of Draupadi when none of the Kshatriya princes could hit the target which was a condition to get the hands of the bride, then the son of king Draupada rose up in the midst of the court and said: "The Kshatriya, the king caste has failed; now the contest is open to the other castes. Let a Brahmana, even a Sudra take part in it; whosoever hits the mark, marries
Draupadi." This goes to prove that a princess of a Kshatriya caste could be given in marriage to a person of any caste.¹

It is worthwhile to note that although the castes were originally four in number it has like cancer-cells multiplied into almost five thousand sub-castes, one thousand eight hundred eighty six sub-castes for the Brahmanas alone. Again, every occupation got its own castes, splitting the society into a myriad of closed guilds into which a man was condemned by his birth to work, live, marry and die. So precise was the definition that an iron-smelter and an iron-smith constituted two distinct castes.

**Historical Necessity of the Caste System:** The unique feature of Indian society—the caste system—integrated as it was to both politics and professional activity, localised many of the functions which would normally be associated with a truly "oriental despotism". The understanding of the functioning of power in India lies in analysis of the caste and sub-caste relationship and of institutions such as the guilds and village councils and not merely in the survey of dynastic power. Unfortunately, the significance of such studies has only recently been recognised, and it will probably take another decade or two of intensive scholarship before historically valid generalisations can be made. The Sanskrit works like Dharmasastras (Law books) of which the Brahmanas were the authors and the commentators gave naturally a biased view about the institution of caste and thus overlooked the historical validity of the institution. Thus, these sources describe the caste system as a rigid stratification of society apparently imposed from an early period and thereafter preserved almost intact for many centuries. Yet the actual working of castes in Indian society permitted of much variation, which naturally the authors of the Law Books did not wish to admit.

**The Caste System is a Unique Institution of Hindu Social Life:** It is difficult to tell with certainty how old is that institution. While the orthodox Hindus consider it to be of divine origin and trace it to the Rigveda, the modern opinion is that it was a man-made institution.

which was not created by any single person but was a development consequent upon the conditions prevailing at different divided times. The orthodox texts consider that the people are divided into four castes viz., the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudras and each caste is separated from the others by its own dharma or obligatory rules; and inter-dining and inter-marriages are prohibited. In reality, however, there are several thousands of castes and sub-castes and the prohibitions regarding inter-dining and inter-marriages have differed in different ages and in different parts of India.

Four Castes and Their Corresponding Profession: The civilian elites were the brahmanas, the members of the defence forces were the Kshatriyas, the business magnates were the Vaisyas and finally the peasants, labourers and workers were called the Sudras. All had the iron code of ethics appropriate to their own stations in life. Cultivation of tranquility, restrains of the senses, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness as well as knowledge, experience and belief in a future world is the natural duty of the Brahmanas. The cultivation of valour, glory, courage, dexterity, not linking away from battle and exercise of lordly power is the natural duty of the Kshatriyas. Agriculture, tending cattle and trade constitute the natural duty of the Vaisyas. And the natural duty of the Sudras consist in service.

Import of the Word "Caste": With regard to the meaning of the word "caste" there is a good deal of controversy among the scholars. The word "caste" is of comparatively late origin. It was first used by the Portuguese to imply a social arrangement designed to preserve purity of blood. Its connotation has now become so complex that it cannot be defined correctly. H.G. Rawlinson defines caste as a Portuguese word meaning purity of race. The original idea of caste was that of colour or Varna. And that distinguished the fair skinned Aryans from the dark-skinned Dasyus. The original meaning of the term was professional class rather than a heredity of family. But later on it applied to a family bearing certain surname. As Sir H. Risley observed: "A caste is a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous
community.” In the same tone Dr V.A. Smith defined a caste as “a group of families internally united by peculiar rules for the observance of ceremonial purity, especially in the matter of diet and marriage.”

**Rigveda and the Caste System**: With regard to the growth of the caste system, the system in its mature form did not originate in the *Rigveda*. It had its development in three stages—the Rigvedic Age, the later Vedic Age and the Age of the Sutras or Upanishads. Now what kind of caste system obtained during the *Rigveda* or whether there was any caste system at all or not in that period is a subject of controversy. Those who believe that there was caste system sanctified by the *Rigveda* rely on a verse in the *Purusha Sukta* which reads as follows:

“When (the gods) divided *purusha* into how many parts did they cut him up? What was his mouth? What arms (had he) what (two objects) are said to have been his thighs and feet? The *Brahmana* was his mouth; the *Rajanya* was made his arms; those being called the *Vaisya*, he was his thighs, the *Sudras* sprang from his feet.”

This has been taken literally by some writers to mean that there was a caste system based on the division of the various organs of the human body by the divine powers. The Brahmana was supposed to be the arms of the gods which would protect the people under the particular *rajan* or the king. The rest of the body up to the thighs including the stomach or belly (the place of the consumption of food) was supposed to be the *Vaisya* who was responsible for agriculture, industry and other odd jobs that would keep the people alive. The *Sudras* sprang from the feet, the lowest portion of the body and was, therefore, the lowest of the society to be down-trodden by all the three upper portions of the body. But this theory can be subjected to the following criticisms. First, the *Purusha Sukta* is a late hymn and this cannot be applied to the whole Rigvedic period. Secondly, so long as the Aryans lived in the Punjab, caste system was unknown. When they migrated to the eastern part of India, the caste system developed in a nebulous form. Thirdly, in the *Rigveda* the term *Varna* means colour rather than caste. Fourthly, in the *Rigveda* the term
Brahmana is scarcely used. And when it was used, it did not mean Brahmana as a caste but as a men of learning. Fifthly, the term “Kshatriya” is seldom used in the Rigveda, though that should have been a prominent caste. Lastly, according to Professor Keith caste system as a hereditary institution was unknown in the Rigvedic period. From all these we can come to the conclusion that there was only class system and not caste system in the Rigveda. The Aryans being few in number wanted to purify their blood and did not take the non-Aryans in their stride. We may now turn to the transition of the Rigvedic classes.

Transition of the Rigvedic Classes: The Aryans migrated from the Punjab to the east. It was a time when they were in ceaseless wars with the aborigines. This constant war affected the old political and social organisation of the Aryans. The result was the merger of petty principalities of the Aryans into a big whole. The rulers in the old kingdoms became a warring class and a nobility called the Kshatriyas. Now as the civilisation developed, the Kshatriyas were required to fight for the king. The mode of worship also became complicated, as a result of which the sacrifices which could be performed by the individuals were now to be discharged by the professional priests. They came to be called the Brahmanas. The large majority of the Aryans gave up the task of defending the country or to do religious sacrifices. They took to agriculture and industrial works. They came to be known as Vaisyas. The non-Aryans who were not accepted in the fold of the Aryans were called the Sudras.

Absence of Rigidity in the Caste System: The caste system was not cast into particular moulds and there was perfect elasticity with regard to change of occupation. Even then the caste distinction was not based on birth but on one’s ability for the occupation, except in the case of the Sudras. Professor V.M. Apte is of the opinion that the prohibition on intermarriage and inter-dining among different castes was completely unknown.

Development of Semi-rigidity: In this way, we come to the middle of the later Vedic period when various sub-castes in addition to the well-known castes came to the surface. The difference between the Aryans and the non-Aryans was predominantly emphasised. The term Varna also lost its
Rigvedic meaning of colour and now definitely meant caste. The Vaisyas fell in social status much below the two other higher castes. As a natural corollary, the position of the two higher castes rose very high. Although the Brahmans had had privileges, it is not known whether they enjoyed a position higher than the Kshatriyas. Moreover, in this period there was a kind of semi-rigidity in the caste system. Dr R.S. Tripathi held that it was a time when change of occupation was discouraged. But the prohibitions on inter-dining, inter-marriage and hereditary caste were not yet well founded.

**Caste System in the Sutra Period** : In the period of the Sutras the division was hardened. The Brahmans increased their power and established a well-ordered class which had access to special privileges and immunities. The Kshatriyas did not lag behind. These two castes were the main props of the society. It was undoubtedly in a state of crystallisation and could not be exclusive. The fangs of untouchability began to raise head. Soon trade and commerce developed and led to division of labour which finally ossified into the institution of castes.

**Gradual Growth of Rigidity in the Caste System** :
With the evils of the rigidity of the caste system and the growing distinctions of birth and untouchability etc. the above virtues and duties of the members of the old Hindu society, once a healthy and living organism, have long disappeared. The continuance of caste was secured by its being made hereditary, the primitive taboo on commensality (eating together) became a caste law, and this in turn made it necessary to define marriage limits, leading to elaborate rules of endogamy and exogamy. The basis and continuance of the caste system depended not on the four-fold divisions but on the vast network of sub-castes, which was intimately connected with occupation. Eventually, the sub-caste (Jati, literally "birth") came to have more relevance for the day-to-day working of the Hindu society than the main caste (Varna). Since the functioning of society was dependent on sub-caste relationships and adjustments, the Varna remaining an over-all theoretical framework. Sub-caste relationships were based on specialisation of work and economic interdependence. With caste becoming hereditary, and the close connection between occupation and sub-caste, there was an automatic check on
individual moving up in the hierarchy of castes. This was the evolutionary process from the sixth century B.C. onward. As life became more settled, social forms became more rigid. The occupational division of earlier times slowly ossified into caste.

**Caste System in the Historical Period**: In the historical period the Mauryas were believed to be the Sudras. The Greek traveller Megasthenes who came to India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya noticed that the people were divided into seven castes which were really occupational groups rather than hereditary groups or castes. At that time inter-marriage or change of occupation was prohibited except for the philosophers who occupied the highest rung of the ladder. In still later times foreigners who had come either as conquerors or immigrants were taken in the stride and were placed in castes as their occupations suited. Among them who showed martial ardour were placed in the caste of the Kshatriyas. Thus, the caste system continued to be a dynamic force till the conquest of the country by the Muslims. This event tightened the compartmentalisation and sharpened their respective edges.

**Caste System in the Kushana Period**

About the caste system during the Kushana period we are fortunate to have a text called the Angavijja which not only

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2. According to Megasthenes, the population of India was divided into seven castes, namely, the philosophers, farmers, soldiers, herdsmen, artisans, Magistrates and the Councillors. Another classical writer—Diodorus observed: “No one was allowed to marry outside his own caste or exercise any calling of art except his own”. Megasthenes’ seven castes theory based on occupation is flagrantly foreign to the traditional fourfold hereditary caste system of India. For this reason some suggests that Megasthenes made an occupational division without any relevance to Indian caste system based on birth. This suggestion is untenable in view of the fact that Megasthenes not only mentioned seven castes but also pointed out its hereditary character by mentioning the restrictions on inter-marriage and change of occupations. What is, therefore, probable is that Megasthenes was not aware of the four-caste theory or being influenced by the Egyptian system of seven castes, he divided the Indian population on similar manner.
belongs to the Kushana period but provides us a fairly detailed account of the caste system of that period also. In this context Dr B.N. Mukherjee wrote: "In a part of this (the Angavijja) there are references not only to the usual four castes (Varnas), (Bambhana, Khatiika, Vessa and Suddha), but also to several mixed castes created by people of one caste taking up vocations traditionally associated with some other castes. In another section of the Angavijja the people are divided into two classes (Jatis)—Ajja and Milajati, while the Milakkhu (Mlechcha)-jati included the Sudras. It appears from some earlier Buddhist texts that among the Milakkhus (Mlechchas) were people living outside the pale of the caste-bound society. They included the so-called 'low-tribes', some of whom, according to another section of the Angavijja, belonged to Ajja (Arya) class, which also included the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas. The other class, called the Pessa, included Dasas (slaves). The section concerned, which divides the human beings into these two classes, seems to indicate that the Ajjas occupied the super and the Pessas the lower strata of the society.  

The Angavijja contains both the traditional and the changing concepts of the caste system. This is emphasised by Dr Mukherjee: "The above statements of the Angavijja, datable to about the Kushana age, probably indicate the traditional and changing concepts of the society in a period when a great part of it could have been within the Kushana empire. The latest of them was that which divided the society into the Ajjas and the Pessas and yet regarded the Sudras or, at least some of them, as the Ajjas, though the Sudras had been traditionally known as the Pessas (Preshyas), i.e., 'servants'. The term Ajja (or Arya) used in this concept of the society as a contrast to the term Pessa (Preshya), denoting 'servant', should mean 'master'. Thus, the society concerned was considered to have been consisting of masters and servants or privileged and unprivileged classes. The obvious criterion for attaining the privileged status was acquisition or inheritance of power—

military administrative and monetary. Interestingly enough, the Angavijja especially refers to professions relating to trade, arms and agriculture and considers that the Gottas (or Gotras i.e., family names) were mainly of two kinds, once called Dijatigotta (relating to twice-born castes or only the Brahmana caste) and the other Gahapatika Gotta (concerning the rich householders). These references lay stress on the material power and wealth as sources of strength of the important constituents of the society.

These concepts would cut or loosen the barrier of caste system and would allow all, irrespective of their castes, to become members of the privileged class of society through acquisition or inheritance of military, administrative and monetary power. Thus, the rich and consequently powerful among the Sudras could have attained the status of ‘master’, while the poor and the powerless, even if theoretically free, Kshatriya or Vaisyas could have been reduced to the status of ‘servant’.

The social mobility and inter-provincial commercial transactions must have facilitated settlements of the rich outside traders in and near the areas familiar with the cast system. These merchants would have passed is Vaisyas in Indian provinces and also perhaps rich Indian Vaisyas could have been materially more powerful than the Brahmanas and the ordinary Kshatriyas. Again, such areas must have witnessed the advent of martial races in the wake of the invasions of the Kushanas as well as of the earlier invaders. Even if there were attempts to accommodate these martial races within the system of caste by considering them as the Vrishalas (or the Sudras, or the Kshatriyas degraded to the position of the Sudras), the fact remained that many of the so-called Sudras were, on the whole, more powerful than numerous people of “genuine” Kshatriya descent.”

The concluding remarks of Dr Mukherjee on the mobility of the caste system during the Kushana period are:

Thus the socio-economic structure of the Kushana empire was not strictly dependent on the traditional caste-system, though it had great relevance to contemporary Indian society and religion. The above-noted conditions, created (knowingly or rather unknowingly) by the authorities of the makers of the empire, divided its population from the socio-economic points of view into two main classes, one bossing over the other.\(^5\)

Later on, the more strenuous had been the fight with the Muslims, the more became the rigidity in the caste system. According to Dr K.M. Munshi: "During the period following 1000 A.D., the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas were now separate castes to which were denied the dynamic fluidity throughout the country which it had under the earlier social order.

Demerits of the Caste System: The caste system has survived in India for two thousand years despite frequent efforts to break its grip. Its role in determining the political institution, for instance, has been considerable. At the basic level of everyday life interrelationships between the subcastes within the community were the most influential factor in village life, and this tended to divert attention from political relationships and loyalties to local caste relationships and caste loyalties. This kept away the central political authority more and more distant from the villages. This and many other criticisms against caste are obvious. It has broken up the unity of Indian life. It has prevented the growth of democracy. Among the higher castes, it has engendered snobbishness and pride. Among the lower castes, it has induced a spirit of inferiority and servility. Among all sections of the people, it hindered the development of a common humanity. In spite of these and other valid criticisms against castes, it must nevertheless be conceded that the institution owed its origin to a spirit of toleration and accommodation.

Merits of the Caste System: But the institution of caste had the good expression of toleration. This at the first sight may seem paradoxical. The paradox, however, disappears when we

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remember that India has been the arena where races appeared as conquerors and were in turn conquered by a succeeding invader. In such a context of heterogeneity of blood, colour and language, of diverse customs and beliefs, the achievements of a single social and political entity seemed almost impossible. The European colonisers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were faced with similar problems in America, Australia and Africa. The contrast between the European and the indigenous population was great, but it was no greater than which faced the Aryan invaders of India. In fact, the problem of adjustment was more complex in India. The Europeans faced local tribes as a fairly homogeneous group. These tribes also represented more or less homogeneous stage of development. In India, the tribes and races which faced one another were not only many, but they represented the widest possible variety in the level of civilisation and culture. The European colonisers had to resolve the clash of duality. The Aryan settlers were confronted with the resolution of multiplicity into a working unity. The Europeans solved the problem of racial diversity by almost extermination of the native populations in America and Australia or enslaving them in Africa. The Aryan settlers found the answer in the institution of caste. Judged by the standard of abstract justice, there is no defence for a system which condemns the perpetual inferiority of millions of human beings for no crime other than the accident of their birth. From the standpoint of actual history, there are, however, points in favour of a system which at any rate permitted the weaker sections to survive. It may thus be said in partial defence of caste system that it sought to integrate many different stages of civilisation within one cultural unity.

**Origin and Object of the Caste System:** In origin and intention, if not in actual operation, the institution of caste was, therefore, a device for enabling different races and individuals to live together in harmony. This device worked only through its elasticity which reconciled men to this institution. Originally, caste was based on function and not heredity. Individuals as well as families could pass from caste to caste. The fact that along with the inclusion of Dravidian gods in the Aryan pantheon, Dravidian priests were accepted as *Brahmanas*
is evidence of the fluidity of the system. This possibility of movement from caste to caste not only developed a sense of solidarity and helped to minimise the enmity between the Aryans and the Dravidians caste but also helped to mitigate the economic conflicts which are at the root of most of the ills of modern Europe. The pre-dominantly agricultural economy of the country was one reason why such class conflicts never came to a head in ancient India. The absence of control over the forces of nature was another reason. But perhaps the chief cause is to be found in the original flexibility of the institution of caste. Men are often content to suffer present evil for the hope of future gain and the institution of caste held out such hopes both here and hereafter. So it is said that the strength and weakness of Indian culture in its social aspects can be best studied in the institution of caste. With the disappearance of its elasticity the institution of caste lost whatever justification it once possessed.

The Position of Caste System in Today’s Society: In modern times the rigidity of the caste system has been relaxed with the spread of western education. One of the Directive Principles of the State Policy as embodied in the present Constitution of India is to do away with untouchability. As a matter of fact, today the prohibitions about inter-dining have practically ceased particularly in urban areas. The restrictions with regard to intermarriages are also fading out. Nevertheless, the caste system continues to be a live institution even amongst the educated Indians and is still the one basic facet that distinguishes the Hindu social life from that of the followers of other religions. It is reassuring that the present government is doing away with the evils of the caste system and untouchability and has also changed the marriage and divorce laws affecting the rights of women. It is indeed welcome that the existing order is changing and fast yielding place to the new. But it is very much to be hoped that with the birth of a new social order the wine of the eternal human virtues will also be poured into new glasses.
CHAPTER 12

Slavery in Early India

"The greatest curse for a man is to remain a slave."
—Subhas Chandra Bose

The institution of slavery was there in the Vedic socio-economic life. This is rightly pointed out by Dr R.S. Sharma: "We repeatedly hear of slaves who were given as gifts to the priests. They were mainly women slaves employed for domestic purposes. It is clear that in the Rigvedic times slaves were not used directly in agriculture or other producing activities."

Sources for the Study of Slavery in Early India: The first reference to slavery is made in the Rigveda and the first reference to the slave trade occurs in the Jatakas. Both foreign and Indian sources speak volumes about the existence of the slave trade between c. fourth century B.C. and c. second century A.D. According to Strabo (second century B.C.) the king was waited upon by women purchased from their parents. He is of the opinion that by 150 B.C. trade in slaves became a profitable vocation in India. The accounts of Eudoxos (second century B.C.), the Periplus (first century A.D.) and Athenaeus (first century A.D.) tell us of an active sea-borne trade between India and Egypt. According to the Periplus beautiful girls for Royal harems and also slaves were imported to Barygaza. He opined that women slaves were exported from India to Socotra. The Justinian Law Digest (sixth century A.D.) mentions of Indian eunuchs as one of the trade commodities that had to pay duty at Alexandria. According to Dr R.S. Sharma, some black male slaves were imported to India in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. When trade with Rome declined, the slave trade also suffered reverses to be recouped by the Arabs. There were fifteen categories of slaves as mentioned by Narada; and
the krita-dasa (purchased slaves) constituted one of the said fifteen categories.

**Captive in War and Raid Became Slaves**: When trade with the west was revived by the Arabs there was a corresponding spurt in slave trade. The growth of feudal complex in the social life of India gave an impetus to the trade in slaves. As the period was marked by frequent wars and raids, the prisoners in such wars or raids became slaves. According to the Lekhanaddhati, the girls captured in raids by the feudal chiefs and soldiers were sold as slaves. Kalhana informs us that king Vajraditya who ruled in 762 A.D. sold many men as slaves to the Arabs of Sindh. The robbers and forest tribes would sell their captives as slaves. In the Upamitihavapraponchakatha we find robbers feeding a man so that he might be sold for a handsome price. The Kathakosha refers to Mitrananda as falling in the hands of robbers and his sale as slave to the merchants of Persia. That there was similar trade in slaves with Persia is also confirmed by the Kathasaritasagara.

**Different Categories of Slaves**: Slaves can be divided into two categories on the basis of sex and functions. They are male, female or eunuchs if the basis or division is sex. The male slaves are referred to in the Kuvalayamala, the Kathakosa, the Kathasaritasagara and also in some Muslim accounts. Reference to the female slaves is to be found in the Ganitasarasangraha, the Upamitiabhavaprapanachakatha, the Lilavati, the Lekhapathti and some Muslim records. The eunuchs abound in the Upamitihavaprapanachakatha. The Muslim accounts testify the import of the eunuchs for royal harems.

**Slave Girls used for Household Works**: In earlier times the slaves were engaged in productive works or domestic services like agriculture. The slave girls were required to do outside works such as cultivation, field works, thrashing, bringing grass, along with other domestic works. The women slaves were used both for domestic and luxury purposes. The household works given to a female slave included cutting of vegetables, pulverizing spices, smearing the floor with cow dung, sweeping, bringing water and fuel, throwing away human excreta of her master's family, milking the cow, buffalo, goat, churning curd, bringing grass for fodder, weeding and cutting grass and other household works known as Grihakarma. But
the *Arthasastra* stipulated that causing a slave girl to remove dead bodies, urine, the remains of food, hurting or abusing her or asking her to attend on the master while he was bathing naked would lead to the forfeiture of the price paid for her.

**Slave Girls for Pleasures**: Using the slave girls for pleasure was very common. The high price given to a girl of younger age as mentioned in the *Ganitasarasangraha* are indications that they were slave girls bought for the purpose of luxury. The slave girls described as of white complexion, sixteen years old and with pleasing limbs or a slave girl with black eyes, a sharp nose, long hair with all her limbs in proper forms were purchased for sexual pleasure.

**Place and Price of Slaves**: There was no regular slave market but the crossings of the four roads (*Chatuspatha*) were the places where the slaves were sold. Evidently the place was chosen to attract the attention of all people in the city. In some of the inscriptions of south India we find that slaves were sold in the open market side by side with other commodities. With regard to the price of a slave, the *Ganitasarasangraha* tells that a ten years old girl was sold for 33.33 gold coins, while a sixteen years old woman could be purchased by 20.83 gold coins.

**Procedure for Sale of the Slaves**: The procedure for the sale of the slaves included the specification of the day, *tithi* and year when the sale of a slave was effected. In the sale deed the names of the buyers, the sellers and the persons who purchased with the witnesses were to be mentioned. In the *Panchamukhanagara* the duties of the slave girls in the house of their masters were set forth in detail. The master in return had to provide her food, clothes, etc., according to his capacity and the customary conventions. The punishment which was to be meted out for violation of their terms of sale was proclaimed in public. If she was found committing theft or misbehaving with her master or of dereliction of her duty or disobeying her master, the master was free to tie her and molest her or beat her cruelly. If after such torture she committed suicide, the master was not liable.
Slavery in the Kushana Period

About the position of the slaves vis-a-vis that of the free men during the Kushana period Dr B.N. Mukherjee wrote: "We have no clear idea of the position of ordinary freemen (including the Brahmanas, poor Kshatriyas, poor Vaisyas, etc.) in the socio-economic system. But as they apparently had to depend on their employers or benefactors for their subsistence, they should be broadly assigned to the class of 'servants'. This class should have included not only slaves, but also free hired labourers, ordinary employees, members of hina-jatis doing menial works and all persons depending on the upper class for their subsistence. A large section of the class consisted of slaves, whose number apparently gradually increased through traditional means. Thus, the prisoners of war could have been condemned to slavery. Hard-pressed members of the 'servant' class should have resorted to slavery for food.

Slaves were also probably regularly imported into the Kushana empire and were employed in royal service. The statement of Bardesanes on the Kushanas indicates employment of slaves for domestic purposes. These aspects of slavery might have been known to the Indian provinces of the empire from an earlier age."¹

About the position of the slaves in the Kushana period vis-a-vis that in the Roman empire Dr B.N. Mukherjee wrote: "There is, however, no evidence to prove that as in the Roman empire, the labour employed in industry was chiefly slave labour. On the other hand, Indian texts, a few of which may have some relevance to the Kushana age, speak of engaging free hired labourer as well as (or rather including) members of the so-called 'low (i.e., despised) castes' (hina-jatis) in manufacturing jobs and other types of work. Interestingly enough, these datas also refer to instances of pursuance by members of the upper castes of vocations not traditionally assigned to them. Several of such vocations involved dependence on the

¹ B.N. Mukherjee, Presidential Address, Section I—Ancient India, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Bodh Gaya Session, 1981, p. 16f.
employers for subsistence. The dependence of the hired workers on their masters would have been really pronounced in the large agricultural, industrial or trading establishments, existence of which in the Kushana empire have already been suggested. In such enterprises the masters, who were apparently not required to pay taxes on their net personal income, would at least get opportunities for augmenting their wealth, while the lowly placed employees, economically unprotected or inadequately protected by laws, would not be able to acquire enough means to be economically independent. Thus, ordinary ploughmen, engaged in cultivating land of owners of large agricultural farms, would have been heavily dependent on their masters for bare subsistence, even if they were not theoretically tied to their lands.

Even if the relevance of the above inferences about the economic and social position of hired labourers to the Kushana empire is questioned, there need not be any doubt about the probability of prevalence, at least in its Indian provinces, of the system of imposing 'forced labour' on theoretically freemen. The Junagadh Inscription of Rudradama I of c. 149-150 A.D. gave him the credit of repairing a dam 'without oppressing the inhabitants of the towns and country' with certain forms of taxes including vishti or 'forced labour'. It appears that though the system of imposing 'forced labour' was considered 'oppressive' in a document of the ruling class, it was in vogue and ordinarily practised with official approval in the territory under Rudradama I. And since the family of Rudradama I probably held that territory on behalf of the Kushanas for a period ending not much earlier than c. 149-150 A.D. the system of compelling the people to do 'forced labour' might have been in vogue in the Kushana empire, or at least in its Indian provinces. Since this inhumane mode of plundering people's muscle power was resorted to officially by the rulers, they cannot be given the credit of having any intention of looking after the economic welfare of the ordinary people."

Export and Import of Slaves: The slaves of India were

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2. B.N. Mukherjee, Presidential Address, [Section I—Ancient India, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Bodh Gaya Session, 1981, p. 16f.]
exported to Arabia, Iraq and Persia which is confirmed by the accounts of the Muslim writers. The *Upamitibhavaprapanchakatha* refers to the export of the female slaves and eunuchs to the foreign countries. The *Kathakosha* and the *Kathasaritsagara* also refer to the Indian slaves taken to Persia and Arabia. According to the *Lekhapaddhati*, the female slaves were sold overseas and sometimes exchanged for other commodities. The Muslim historian Mir Ma’sum is of the opinion that in the eighth century A.D. the Sultan of Iran, Iraq and Makran sent people to purchase female slaves from India. The slave trade was not a one-way traffic. The slaves were also imported from Turkistan, Khurasan and China to India.
CHAPTER 13

Education in Early India

"Education is the instrument for social, economic and cultural change. If we are to work for social and national integration, if we are to foster moral and spiritual values, and increase productivity, agricultural and industrial, we have to use education in the proper way."

—S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Success in Education Made India Pre-eminent in the World: The pre-eminent position, which India once occupied in the contemporary world was mainly due to the success of her educational system. How that system enabled ancient India to make remarkable progress in the different spheres of human knowledge and activities and how her philosophers and doctors were enthusiastically invited to Tibet, China and Arabia, is one of the most romantic and inspiring chapters of ancient Indian history. All these were possible because of the education that ancient India had provided and so it is in the fitness of things that we should make a study of the system of education that obtained in ancient India. The evolution of the system of education in ancient India may be studied under four phases.

System of Education from c. 2000 to 1000 B.C.

This period marked the beginning of Indian culture, literature and science. The Aryans of India had a keen interest in the different branches of knowledge and they realised the need of education in human progress. It is education that distinguishes one man from another who are physically alike. It is stated that God makes friendship only with those who are
wise and learned. It was also a belief of the Vedic Aryans that proper education was essential to become a great scholar, a successful administrator, a prosperous merchant or a skilful artisan. It is, therefore, essential for everybody to undergo a period of training and discipline called Brahmacharya during childhood and adolescence. In this stage he was initiated in the sacred literature and training in family profession.

Women and Education: The women had equal rights as men’s for education. The authors of some of the Vedic hymns were women. The wife assisted her husband in the ritual with recitation of Vedic verses when her husband performed Vedic sacrifices. The women also got training in the arts and crafts. The training began with a ritual called the upanayana which means “going near (a teacher)”. This ritual was considered as the spiritual birth of the student.

Education was not Imparted by any School: There was no school. Education was imparted by the father or some other male members of the patriarchal family. Family profession, intellectual life, Vedic hymns and heroic ballads were the subjects of teachings. As the art of writing was probably unknown, great importance was attached to memorisation. Goddess of learning, it was believed, favoured only those who could interpret what they recited. Much stress was given on the oratory power of the students.

Results of Such Education: Thus the educational system of the Vedic period produced a people well grounded in their religious and literary lore as well as in their family profession. The students were of free, open and enquiring mind, always willing to explore the unknown. The mystery of the creation of the world was a subject of engaging interest. Some progress was noticed in astronomy and several planets were distinguished from ordinary stars.

The System of Education from c. 1000 B.C. to 300 B.C.

Education was Considered as the Most Important Factor in the Society: Like the previous period in this period too education continued to be regarded as the most important factor of well being of society. The upanayana ritual now became obligatory for all the Aryans. Grammar, philology, prosody and philosophy
were now subjects for learning. Professional teachers now came to impart teaching. A teacher was a man of integrity and scholarship and was highly respected in the society. He did not take fees but would receive gifts at the end of the course. Students would at the same time assist the teacher in his household works. Schooling was in two sessions—one in the morning and the other at the afternoon. There was provision for night classes for the poor students who worked all the day. Each teacher had ten to fifteen students who lived in his house.

*Method of Writing*: By 800 B.C. writing was known but it could not be used in general instruction, because the costs of books which were made of birch leaves and written in hand were too high. The Vedic literature was now known as "revealed"; and great emphasis was placed on the accent and intonation of the words. As the Vedic idioms did not differ from the language then spoken, students in general could understand the meaning of the hymns. As many as twelve years were necessary to acquire a complete knowledge of Vedic literature and the rituals connected with it.

*Specialised Study*: The students who specialised in the new branches of learning like grammar, philology, etc. were required to spend only two or three years to learn only those Vedic hymns which were necessary for the satisfactory performance of their daily duties. They spent the rest of the twelve years in their specialised subjects. Likewise, students going for the profession of warrior, trader and farmer studied a few hymns after the *Upanayana* and they only devoted all their time to their own professions. As these tended to be hereditary, training was usually given within the family. Taxila was at that time one of the centres for specialised training in humanities, medicine, military science, astronomy, music, dancing, etc. Taxila drew students from all over the country.

*Monsoon Lessons*: As persons would forget what they were taught in schools, this was encountered by laying down that every householder should spend the monsoon period (July to October) for recapitulation of what they had learnt at schools. As this did not have any effective result, a refresher course at the house of the teachers was necessary. But the latter measure was not popularly accepted.
Women Education of this Period: Women kept on getting education during the first half of this period. After undergoing Upanayana they took to Vedic education at home. There are examples of women who actively engaged in great activities. Thus, Kausalya performed Vedic sacrifice. Vachakvnavi and Maitreyi took keen interest in Sanskrit. The lady scholars like Sulabha, Vadava, Prathiteyi, Maitreyi and Gargi were distinguished scholars of this age. The lady teachers would generally teach the girls but at times they would teach the boys too. In large majority of cases girls got education within the family. Women's education began to decline in c. 500 B.C. Now marriage age was lowered to 14 or 15 years. And as the Upanayana took place at the age of 10 or 11, they had no adequate time for education. Later on Upanayana became a formality—rather a preliminary ritual before marriage.

Other Creative Activities: This period was a most creative epoch in arts, science, medicine, surgery, mining, metallurgy, mathematics, astronomy, jurisprudence, philosophy and grammar. There was remarkable progress in metaphysics, from which almost all later systems of philosophy can be traced. As a matter of fact, the foundations of Hindu culture and achievement were laid down in this age.

The System of Education from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D.

Growing Importance of Education: Now education came to be regarded as essentially a process of enlightenment. Knowledge came to be regarded as the third eye of man which would give him an inwardly insight of the world. It is education that enabled a person to live a fuller and more socially responsible life. It enriched not only religious and philosophical value but also became a source of livelihood and discharge of his duties as a citizen.

Primary Education: What we call primary education grew in that age. Previously writing materials were not in vogue. Primary education in the Vedic school was to train the ear to distinguish the short and long vowels and to learn the different accounts for accurate pronouciation of Vedic hymns. Now the 3 R's and elementary Sanskrit phonetics and grammar came to be taught. The primary education began at the age of
5 or 6 years after a ritual called Vidyarambha (beginning of education). Teachers would write on the board and the students would copy with pointed sticks on the sand or dust-covered ground. After this stage, a palm leaf with letters written on it with an iron was used. Every student would trace them with charcoal ink which was rubbed off before a leaf was passed on to the next student. In the next stage students themselves wrote first on plain paper and then on palm leaves. In the same manner the multiplication tables were taught.

Moral Character: Great emphasis was placed on routine and imitation in moulding a student’s character. To encourage piety they were asked to recite prayers in the morning and evening. Elaborate rules of etiquette and courtesy to teachers and seniors were cultivated. They were forbidden to lie or abuse. Celibacy was necessary for physical and moral strength. There were restrictions imposed on delicious foods and gaudy dresses. To control over natural predilections for these things was necessary to develop strength of will and character. Students were to live by begging. Although this rule was relaxed in the case of the students of rich family, even then they had to beg at least once a week. This developed humility and sympathy among the students.

Individual Attention to Each Student: Individual attention of the teacher for his students played an important role. A new lesson was not allowed unless the student had mastered the old one. There was no periodical or annual examination. The course was complete when the student could recite and explain the precious lesson. The intelligent and industrious student could complete the course earlier. There was no diploma or degree. These evolved only at a later stage and at few centres like Vikramasila university. Advanced students were given the opportunity to teach the junior students. This would help making future teachers from among the students. Sometimes a student was kept in charge of a class during the absence of the teacher.

Non-Vedic Studies: The study of non-Vedic branches of knowledge became popular in this period. Discussion was also done as a characteristic feature of non-Vedic instructions. Thus, the Upanishads and the Buddhist Sutras are often in the form of a continuous argument between the teachers and the
students. The use of parable and fable was often made in expounding obscure principles to younger students. The Hitopodesa and the Panchatantra written to educate young princes in the art of statecraft were written in these forms.

Women Education of This Period: The marriage age of girls was lowered to 12 years and women were considered eligible for Vedic studies. Girls of rich families would get education from private tutors, though their numbers were very few. Members of non-Brahmana class had only a formal learning of Vedic education, since they were more interested in hereditary arts and crafts. Apart from family training in professional field, an apprentice system of training now evolved. An apprentice agreed to work for his master during a fixed period of years in return for free board, lodging and training. The apprentices were given the training to make their own tools.

Medical Education: Medical education was open to all classes and it began with a special ritual of initiation. But mere memory without understanding the subject was compared with a donkey conscious of the weight but not of the quality of its burden. There was specialisation in medical training under experts. Students of surgery dissected corpses and learned puncturing on the veins of dead animals. Medical students attended cases that were being treated by their teachers in private practice. The medical course was of eight years.

Specialised Studies: In this period emphasis was placed on specialisation in different branches like the Puranas, law, mathematics instead of imparting general instruction in a number of subjects. There were also contacts with other countries. In astronomy, for instance, the Hindu investigators made great advances through their study of Greek works. The remarkable achievement of this age is its national outlook which combined a respect for tradition with an appreciation of the value of new discoveries.

The System of Education from c. 500 A.D. to 800 A.D.

Corporate Education: The most important development of this period is the growth of corporate institutions. The Buddhist monasteries had become the centres of learning towards the close of the fifth century A.D. There ten years of indoctrination
was provided in sacred literature. It provided education for the laity as well. About ten per cent of the Buddhist monasteries between 500 and 1000 A.D. were educational institutions of undergraduate college standard.

_Hindu Temple Colleges_: The Hindu temple college came into being in the eighth century A.D. There were a dozen of such colleges in south India. It may be assumed that well-endowed temples elsewhere maintained colleges for higher Sanskrit studies. As in the monasteries, in temples also free board and lodging were provided. The result was that it largely changed the way of life of the students. Formerly he had contacts with only one dozen students studying the same subject under the same teacher. Now he is a member of a community comprising many teachers and hundreds of students engaged in the learning of various disciplines or faculties. He had now access to a library beyond the means of an individual teacher. There was a real university atmosphere in these new centres of education. The Nalanda and Vikramasila university became educational institutions of international fame, producing great scholars and authors and attracting students from most Buddhist countries in eastern and central Asia.

_Lack of Coordination in Different Branches of Knowledge_: Another feature of this period was that the study of different subjects for developing the mind was not appreciated. Logicians, rhetoricians and mathematicians knew their subjects thoroughly but were ignorant of the problems and achievements of others. The Indian scholars were no longer in touch with the progress of knowledge elsewhere. Since the age of marriage was further slashed to 8 or 10 years for girls, there was a setback for the female education. Only girls of wealthy and cultured family received education. The Hindu mind which had once been creative now became passive and imitative. Sanskrit was no longer understood by the lower class; and by 1000 A.D. owing to the emergence of different provincial vernaculars Sanskrit became a dead language. Sanskrit was known to the few and they were the classical scholars. A wide diffusion of knowledge became impossible. The majority of people were denied enlightenment. And as in the west this period became a “Dark Age” in the history of India.
Outstanding Results in Human Knowledge: The above survey shows that the period from c. 1000 B.C. to c. 500 A.D. accomplished outstanding results in art and human knowledge. Indeed, it is a great achievement for a civilisation to make rich art and diverse contributions to culture continuously for over 1500 years. But no period of this survey can be regarded as unenlightened. The enormous amount of ancient knowledge has descended to us from the past and it is noticeable in different parts of Indian sub-continent. Many of the features of ancient education like plain living, high thinking, intellectual freedom, individual attention to students, the use of monitors, the hostel organisations are the legacies of the education of ancient India.
Chapter 14

Position of Women in Early India

"Men are animals. They are controlled by women."
—S. Radhakrishan

Position of Women From c. 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.

High Position of Women in Early India: The women of India occupied such a high position which was unrivalled in any country of the ancient world. Ordinarily, daughters were less welcome than sons. But there were parents who performed special religious ritual for the good luck of getting learned and capable daughters also. The daughters got equal opportunities like the boys in education and had to undergo Brahmacarya. Many women became distinguished poetesses and the poems of some of them had been honoured by their inclusion in the canonical literature. The girls would marry at the age of 16 or 17. Educated girls had a say in the selection of her spouse. Love marriages subsequently blessed by their parents were very common. Women would move freely in the society and some time with their boy friends. In the eye of religion women had equality with men. The wife had a honoured position in the family. In rich and royal families polygamy was in practice. But monogamy was the order of the day. The Sati system was known. A widow could contract a second marriage. The only disability of a woman was that she could not hold or inherit any property. The patriarch was the sole owner and guardian of the property. There was no queen ruling or acting as regent during the entire Vedic period. Even then, the position of women on the whole was satisfactory. The society as a whole was showing proper concern and respect for women and granted
them considerable freedom in different activities of the socio-political life.

**Position of Women from c. 1500 to 500 B.C.**

*Decline in Female Education*: In this period only gradual changes took place. Although women had no right to hold property, they had the right to movable property which they got as marriage gifts. In the field of philosophy and theology some women earned distinction. A large number of women took teaching profession. A gradual decline in female education was noticed as the period advanced. Sending girls to the houses of teacher was discouraged and it became a rule that only near relations like the father, brother or uncle would teach the girls at home. Thus, secular and religious education was possible only for the girls of rich families. From this it followed that there was a curtailment in the privileges and rights of average woman. Some rituals which were formerly exclusively meant for women were now given to the menfolk. In cultured families women used to recite the Vedic prayers in the mornings and evenings. The marriage age of the girls was 16 as before. The marriage by choosing the husband called *Svayamvara* was fairly common in the Kshatriya circles. Divorce was also permissible. The custom of *sati* was totally unknown. A widow could marry her brother-in-law or any outsider. But women ceased to attend public meetings.

**Position of Women from c. 500 B.C. to 500 A.D.**

*Decline in the Position of Women*: There was a marked deterioration in the position of women in this period. There were various reasons for it. The Aryans were now a settled people and had practically no need for war to establish their authority. As a result, the non-Aryans gradually mingled into the Aryan people and constituted the *Sudra* class which had a semi-servile status. The Aryans came to realise that the civilisation of the non-Aryans was too deep-rooted to be wiped away. The result was that the Aryan chief began to marry non-Aryan. We do not find a single instance of such marriage in the *Rigveda*. But we know in the epic that Arjuna married a
Naga princess of the name of Udapi and Bhima married Hidimba. It is the introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryan household that provided the key to the general deterioration of the position of women that gradually and imperceptibly started at about 1000 B.C. But the kings very often preferred their non-Aryan queens and allowed them to participate in the rituals. The might have led to mistakes and anomalies in the ritual. The remedy suggested was that a non-Aryan wife was unfit for rituals. But a powerful king would not abide by it. The only purpose for the Sastras was to disable the entire women community from participating in rituals. Thus, women were relegated to the background. Again, as the age of marriage was lowered, the women had to marry at a time which previously was allotted for the Upanayana ceremony before entering into the life of a student. Again, the rituals became increasingly complex and beyond the capacity of women who had no proper education which was denied to them. Thus, the lowering of the marriage age, neglect of education and discontinuance of Upanayana produced disastrous effects upon the position of women. The widow marriage was discouraged and sati custom was revived. A class of childless widows sprang up. The widows were, however, granted a proprietary right in her husband’s estate. The tendency to regard women as fragile and of weak moral fibre was getting stronger in this period. It was the duty of the father and husband to maintain his daughter or wife as the case may be. There was, however, nobody to look after the childless widows.

**Position of Women from c. 500 A.D. to 1800 A.D.**

*Proprietary Right of Woman was Revived:* In this age in one aspect at least the position of women improved a lot. That was one of proprietary rights. Except this woman lost everything. Women got it as a matter of right to inherit the property of her husband by 1200 A.D. The position of woman improved widely in Bengal since she was given the right to property even when husband had not separated from the joint family at the time of his death. In the Mitakshara school the women acquired property right even by inheritance and partition.
Decline in Other Aspects of Education: Save and except the property right, the position of women further deteriorated. The institution of *Upanayana* was completely taken away from the woman. Thus, the women were accorded the status of the *Sudras* in the Hindu society. The marriage age was slashed down to 10 years. But in the *Kshatriya* families the girls continued to be given in marriage at the age of 14 or 15. Widow marriages became prohibited and *Sati* custom was common in the fighting classes.

Decline in Female Education: In the case of non-*Kshatriya* girls who were given in marriage at the age of 10 or 11, they were naturally denied any kind of education. Down to 1200 A.D. daughters in rich families continued to receive some literary education through the special teachers. Down to the tenth century A.D. a few of them distinguished themselves as poetesses. But this tradition died down when the old aristocracy declined in importance after the establishment of the Muslim rule.

Widows not Allowed to Marry Again: After 500 A.D. permission for widows to remarry came to be gradually withdrawn. Thus, from 1000 A.D. a widow of a respectable family was prohibited from remarrying irrespective of her age at the time of her husband’s death. Subsequently the widows of the lower classes were also prohibited from remarrying. Similarly, the *Sati* began to make a wider appeal. Formerly it was confined to the *Kshatriyas* castes but by the eleventh century A.D. it spread among other castes too. Many widows preferred *Sati* to the tiresome life of a widow.

*The Puranas Came to Meet the Literary Need of the Women*: We have already observed that the women were given the status of the *Sudras* in the Hindu society. But women by nature were more religious than their menfolk. Thus, a new type of religious literature was created to meet their pursuits. This new literature was the *Puranas* which enunciated the principles of Hinduism in a homely easy and attractive manner. Blind faith devoid of nationalism developed in women.
CHAPTER 15

Seafaring in Early India

"The Chola emperors were the first to recognise the value of the naval power. Their navy controlled the Bay of Bengal, which became a 'Chola lake' and won a colonial empire which embraced Ceylon, the Nicobar Islands, the Malaya Peninsula and Sumatra."

—K.M. Munshi

Seafaring in Pre-Aryan Period

The maritime traditions of India have been traced to the pre-Aryan Harappa and Mohenjo-daro times. It is suggested that Mohenjo-daro was probably an important Indus port having sea-trade with Ur Kish (in the vicinity of which the river Tigris falls into the Persian Gulf.)

Seafaring in Vedic Period

Yet, nowhere in the classical Sanskrit or Pali literature we find a passage praising the seaman’s life. Ancient Indian literature has no Ulysses or Sindabad the sailor who are the representatives of the hardy voyager, who despite the sea’s hardships and dangers, is compelled by his wander-lust to put to sea again and again in search of new adventures. As a matter of fact, the Indian general attitude to the sea is one of fear and distaste. Despite this broad generalisation there are traces of seafaring activities as early as the Rigveda where the seer Vasishtha sang in the praise of god Varuna as:

When Varuna and I embark together and urge
Our boat into the midst of the ocean,
"We, when we ride on the ridges of the waters,
Will swing with their swing and will be contended,
Varuna placed Vasishtha in a vessel, and deftly
With his might made him a rishi.
When days shone bright the sage made him singer,
While the heavens broadened and the dawn were lengthened."
(The Rigveda, VII 88,vs 3-4)

Another passage from the Rigveda reads like:

"You wrought that heroic exploit in the ocean
Which gives no support, nor hold nor station,
When you carried Bhujyu to his dwelling
Born in a ship with hundred oars, O Asvins."

These hymns, even allowing for some exaggeration, suggest that Vedic Indians knew of quite large ships. Seven hundred years after the composition of the above verses most probably in the Punjab a tribe called Xathroi supplied Alexander the Greek invader thirty-oared galleys to convey his troops down the Indus.

Maritime Activities in the Pali Texts

The Pali texts particularly the Jatakas give a very vivid picture of the life in India during the first five centuries B.C. These Buddhist texts contain tales of merchant, seamen and their maritime adventurers. The Bavera Jataka tells about the merchants from Banaras who went to Babylon in order to sell Indian goods. In the Jataka literature we find a formidable seafaring community sailing on voyages often of as long as six months duration. We are told that the sailors took trained birds with them to give them guidance for the approaching land. This practice is confirmed by Pliny and Cosmas Indicopleustes, a geographer of the sixth century A.D. The stars and the watching birds in flight were their guidance. They had large vessels, some

1. A seer sent his son Bhujyu against his enemies. Bhujyu was defeated, but rescued by the divine twins—the Asvins apparently from the sea.
of which had even three masts. According to one story of the Jatakas as many as one thousand people—the entire population of a village sailed down the Ganga in a single vessel and got settled on an island in the sea. Another tale is that seven hundred merchants who sailed from Broach were guided by a blind pilot. There is another reference to a trading voyage between Broach and Babylon.

That the semi-canonical Milandapanha had wide geographical knowledge will be evidenced from the following verse: “A ship-owner who has become wealthy by constantly levying freight in some seaport town will be able to traverse the high seas and go to Vanga (Bengal), Takkola, China Sovira (the Indus delta of Kathiawad), Suratha (Gujarat), Alasanda (Alexandria), Colapattanam (Coromandel) or Suvarnabhumī (Burma).”

Maritime Activities in the Arthasastra

According to the Arthasastra there were superintendents of shipping whose designation was the Navadhyaksha, who had to supervise over the incoming and outgoing ships, to suppress the pirates and to prevent the ships from reaching the enemy ports. He was also concerned with the cares of shipwrecked mariners and of the ships damaged by the tempest. The Arthasastra also mentions of the state-owned vessels which conveyed passangers and carried merchandise. The accounts of Megasthenes, the Greek traveller also confirms that the Indian ship-builders were salaried public servants and the government-owned ships were hired by the voyagers and merchants. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller tells us that king Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa owned thirty thousand ships. According to Dr A.L. Basham, it is probable that Hiuen Tsang took into account all the ships in the land.

Manu tells that “whatever may be damaged in a ship by the fault of the sailors shall be made good by the sailors collectively.” According to Yajnavalka, the sea-voyages were costly affairs and the moneylanders would demand twenty per cent interest per month for advance made for trading voyage. While the river traffic was as per the customary law,
for seavoyages the seamaster would charge any amount he could obtain.

Maritime Activities in Tamil Literature

In the Tamil literature we find numerous maritime references like the young sailors going on long expedition for shark-fishing. Large ships entered the harbour of Kaveripattanam which was in the mouth of the river Kaveri. The activities of Musiri, a port in Keral is described as “the large and beautiful ships of the Yavanas (which stood for the westerners in general and the Greeks in particular) disturbed the white foam, bringing gold and taking pepper.” That a vigorous commercial relation between south India and the west existed in the early years of the Christian era has been made doubly clear by the excavation of what seemed to have been a Roman trading station at Arikamedu, near Pondicherry. In the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* there are references to the Indian vessels sailing as far as the Red Sea. Dion Chrysostom testified the presence of the Indian merchants in Alexandria. Their presence in Egypt is further confirmed by a remarkable epigraphic record that has been discovered in the temple of Redesie on the trade route from the Red Sea port of Bernice to Edfu on the Nile.

Maritime Activities in the Historical Period

There was also a widening of horizon towards China. We came to know that the Indian embassies went to China by the sea route during the reign of Huang Ti (147-167 A.D.). Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, the two Chinese travellers also testified to the maritime activities of early Indians. Fa Hien spoke of a vessel carrying two hundred persons and equipped with life-boats.

Dandin in his *Dasakumaracharita* tells of several shipwrecks and of exiled princes who went abroad to make their fortunes. Several stories of shipwrecks, sea-magic and sea-monsters are to be found in the *Katha-sarita-sagara* that was compiled in the eleventh century A.D.

It is probable that the Hindus knew the mariner’s compass. The evidence adduced for such a suggestion is (a) the Maratha
word for compass is *Machchh Yantra* (meaning "fish machine") is a borrowing from Sanskrit; (b) a statement in an Arabic manual of minerology dated 1252 A.D. suggests that the Indian seamen steered by an iron fish floating in a bowl of oil; and (c) there is a reference in Jacques de Vitry's *History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (c.1218 A.D.), according to which compass was in use in India.

In addition, there is a mass of material on the seafaring activities of the Indians in the Malaya Peninsula and the Archipelago, where the Indian way of life was developed by the Indians coming by the sea.

Coming to the historical age, we find that the early kings of India did not neglect the navy. Thus, the great Chalukya king Pulakesin II is said to have besieged Puri by sea and "his ships in their hundreds were like elephants mad with passion." But the most positive evidence of maritime activities comes from the Cholas which we shall take up in a bit details.

**The Chola Navy and Maritime Activities**: It was the Cholas who were the first to have the farsight to have a strong navy so much so that the Bay of Bengal was transformed into a "Chola lake". It was by dint of a formidable navy that the Cholas established a vast colonial empire stretching from Ceylon to Sumatra including the Nicobar Islands and the Malaya Peninsula.

The Cholas were fortunate to have two illustrious kings in the person of Rajaraja and his son Rajendra I. The father is credited with undertaking a deliberate policy of naval conquests. His navy crossed into Ceylon and stormed the city of Anuradhapura. He is said to have conquered as many as twelve thousand island of the sea. Following the footsteps of his famous father, his famous son Rajendra I despatched a Chola mission to China in 1015 A.D. This policy of sending mission to China became a major plans of the foreign policy of the Cholas since then because this policy was continued by his successors. On the successful completion of his campaign in Ceylon he carried his naval troops into Malaya. His navy captured Kadaram (Kedah), Srivijaya (Palembang), Manakavaram (the Nicobar Islands), Malayur (south Sumatra), Nappappala (south Burma) and even beyond. The reason for such a grand expedition is attributed to the fact that he wanted
to keep open the trade route to China that was threatened by the Indonesian kingdom of Srivijaya. But the Chola kings did not want to perpetuate the naval programme and were rather satisfied with the periodic tributes paid by the vanquished enemies.

The unique display of the Chola navy is summarised by Dr R.C. Majumdar in these words: "They fitted out a naval expedition that crossed the Bay of Bengal and laid low the mighty empire of the Sailendras in Malaya Peninsula and Indonesia. Such an oversea campaign by an Indian ruler against a powerful foe is an achievement of outstanding importance." According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Cholas were a "sea-power and had a big navy with which it swept the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea . . . The Cholas were long famous for their sea trade. Their fine cotton goods were much sought after and their port Kaveripattanam was a busy place with ships carrying merchandise coming from and going to distant places." We may conclude in the words of Dr A.L. Basham: "With the possible exception of the Chola king mentioned above, no Indian monarch of the Hindu period seems to have appreciated the value of the sea-power as an aid to conquest and expansion. There is no reliable evidence that any Indian kingdom, except perhaps that of the Cholas maintained a permanent war fleet."
Chapter 16

Chemistry and Metallurgy in Early India

"In the Post-Vedic and Classic Ages (600 B.C. to 800 A.D.) chemistry in India reached its zenith. The crafts became highly developed and abundant literature provided chemical recipes. In addition, theories on the nature of matter were formulated. Among the significant developments that occurred were steel, glass (500 B.C.) and ink (400 B.C.). The Samhitas written by Charaka and Susruta contain descriptions of how to produce alkalis, acids and salts, as well as a number of experiments using chemicals."

—J.E. Fergusson

Science of Chemistry

Early India was ahead of other countries of the world in science particularly in chemistry and metallurgy. As a matter of fact, iron, steel, cosmetics and perfumes made in India were rated as the finest in the world. This continued in full swing until the Middle Ages when the Indian science became rather stagnant and chemistry receded into the blind alley of alchemy from which it never recovered.

In early India chemistry was at par with and often ahead of Europe until the sixteenth century A.D. when decline was set in and finally in the eighteenth and nineteenth century A.D. it was based on the concept modelled on the west. The triumphant journey and the failing record of Indian chemistry can be studied in two phases, namely the Pre-Vedic Phase and the Post-Vedic Phase.
Chemistry in Pre-Vedic India: We cannot have a very clear position of chemistry in the Pre-Vedic period for want of literary evidence. So our only evidence is from a study and analysis of the artefacts, especially from the Indus Valley Civilisation. The four major fields of chemical technology in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were pottery, brickwork, plaster and mortar, metallurgy and the use of naturally occurring chemicals.

It is apparent from the finds of the Indus Valley Civilisation that the Pre-Vedic craftsmen had skill of manipulating by way of both reducing and oxidising conditions in the firing of their pottery. In producing black pottery the craftsmen used certain chemicals to keep the content in the clay in the bivalent state, while trivalent form was produced by fire under oxidising conditions by which white blotches were obtained on some bangles. Although the craftsmen had full knowledge of glazing the pottery, they had, however, no knowledge of glass-making.

The metallurgists of Harappa were familiar with copper, bronze, lead, silver and gold. There was plenty of copper which was used either in the pure state or in alloys e.g., bronze which was a mixture of copper and tin. The proportion of tin in bronze was from four to thirteen per cent. Obviously the metallurgists knew how to control it to produce the best quality of bronze which was achieved by having thirteen per cent bronze portion. Thus, we find that most of the bronzes ranged from eleven to thirteen per cent tin proportion. It is probable that tin was imported from outside, while the erratic supply was due to low concentration of tin in some samples.

Chemistry in Post-Vedic India: The perfection in chemical technology was reached at its height in the Post-Vedic period particularly in the period between 600 B.C. and 800 A.D. To say in the words of J.E. Fergusson: "In the Post-Vedic and Classic Ages (600 B.C. to 800 A.D.) chemistry in India reached its zenith. The crafts became highly developed and an abundant literature provided chemical recipes. In addition, theories on the nature of matter were formulated. Among the significant developments that occurred were steel, glass (500 B.C.) and ink (400 B.C.). The Samhitas written by Charaka and Susruta
contain descriptions of how to produce alkalis, acids and salts, as well as a number of experiments using chemicals.”

Science of Metallurgy

The peak development in practical chemistry took place in the branch of metallurgy. Thus, we find a highly skilled industry producing steel and iron flourishing as early as 100 B.C. Thus, J.E. Fergusson rightly remarked: “Indian iron and steel were considered by the Romans and early Christians to be the finest in the world. A classic example of excellence is the iron pillar in Delhi, weighing six tons and nearly twenty-five feet high, the pillar is thought to have been made in the fourth century A.D. It was probably transported to Delhi in the ninth century A.D. Rather than being forged in one piece, it was probably made from 80-lb blocks forged together. It is a remarkable piece of work which would tax the best of iron smiths and technologists even today. The carbon content of the pillar indicates that it was made from high-quality wrought iron. The sulphur and carbon content indicates that the fuel used was charcoal, as the temperature would not be high enough to melt the iron and therefore, reduced the chances of sulphur and carbon entering the metal (as they do in molten iron). This in fact is the critical factor in the production of such high-quality wrought iron. The sponge metal produced was finally shaped by hammering. The most remarkable feature of the pillar is that even after sixteen centuries, there is no evidence of corrosion in it.

High-quality wrought iron was produced on a small scale by heating alternate layers of iron ore and charcoal, enclosed in clay or in a pit. The method survives to this day in remote tribal areas of India.”

The Steel Industry

India is credited with manufacturing the best steel in the world. Its origin can be traced to an ingenious process of as early

2. Ibid.
as two thousand years back. According to J.E. Fergusson: "Wrought iron and dry wood-chips or stems of leaves were heated in a crucible over a charcoal fire. The carbon from the organic material entered the iron to make steel; a second firing removed the excess. Indians also knew how to temper steel; quick cooling of the crucible with water would give, when required, hardened steel that was used for weapons and tools. This process was not developed in Europe until much later."

Alchemy Takes the Place of Chemistry Since the Ninth Century A.D.

Chemistry in early India was replaced by alchemy since 800 A.D. Since then the science of alchemy held the field for about seven hundred years. The position has been nicely delineated by J.E. Fergusson: "The alchemists were mainly concerned with gold and immortality: to transmute base metals into gold and to find an elixir of life were their main objects. In India most effort was put in the latter. A voluminous literature such as the Tantras associated with the alchemist Nagarjuna (eighth century A.D.) exists. Both the Chinese and Arabic alchemy probably influenced India. To the alchemists, mercury and sulphur were the principal elements of the universe. Mercury was said to bestow long life and high intellect as well as invisibility. Some of the interesting recipes recorded are:

'Mercury with an equal weight of gold plus sulphur with borax gives a product which makes the body imperishable;
Mercury converts base metals into one thousand times its mass of gold.
Smear copper toll with a potent paste of mercury to yield gold;
Throw mercury into molten copper to make gold."

In early India the craft of metallurgy was carried by a variety of people, the priest class not excluded. It was a practice with the craftsmen to mix and converse freely with the artists and the intellectuals. But when alchemy and speculative thought

occupied the field since the ninth century A.D. the privileged few and the higher castes exclusively carried the manufacture when the chemical crafts got confined to the lower castes alone.

The decay in chemistry is recorded by J.E. Fergusson in these words: "This led to a decline of vigour and innovation. The spirit of inquiry, experimentation and inductive science died out. While there may have been craft labour mobility, this probably did not extend the contact between the craftsmen and the elite. It is also said that the craftsmen could not read the Sanskrit texts and the valuable information contained in them was not available. This may have been so, but one should remember that in Europe too the texts were written in a classical language, namely Latin. In medieval India, the absence of a distinct middle class was also a significant factor leading to the decline of the sciences. There was little incentive to spend money on education and science. In Europe, the growing middle class gave a considerable impetus to the growth of science. European science was also pragmatic; it led to a mechanistic view of the world which fitted admirably with the pursuit of chemical technology. It is as if India and Europe were faced with two routes in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries—one route to modern chemistry, the other to the blind alley of alchemy." We may conclude with the words of Professor N.R. Dhar: "The dark age in medieval Europe lasted three hundred years while in India it persisted for one thousand two hundred years from 700 to 1800 A.D."

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Cultural Expansion in South-East Asia

"It needs no emphasis that a country of the size of India with a sizeable population and vast natural resources and occupying a vast strategic position in the continent of Asia with sea lines criss-crossing the Indian Ocean, should inevitably concern itself with an understanding in depth of the historical, poetical, cultural and socio-economic life not only of its immediate neighbours but also of those people and government close to it with whom it has cultural, diplomatic and commercial relations."

—V.M. Reddi

Origin and Nature of India's Contact with Outside World

The spiree of the outburst of Indian cultural and intellectual activities transcended the political boundaries of India and travelled in South-East Asia. This sphere of Indian cultural impact outside India is called Greater India. It is clear that India did not live the life of a hermit. On the other side, she kept free and intimate intercourse with her neighbours. The visit of the Indian messengers of culture gave rise to planting of Indian civilisation in distant South-East Asia. In the third century B.C. Asoka deputed Sona and Uttara as Buddhist missionaries to South-East Asia to spread the message of the Buddha. This cultural contact was responsible for stretching the umbrella of India's political hegemony in that region. In this connection Dr V.M. Reddi wrote: "It needs no emphasis that a country of the size of India with a sizeable population and vast natural resources and occupying a very strategic position.
in the continent of Asia with sea lines criss-crossing the Indian Ocean, should inevitably concern itself with an understanding in depth of the historical, political, cultural and socio-economic life not only of its immediate neighbours but also of those people and government close to it with whom it has cultural, diplomatic and commercial relations.”

The term South-East Asia comprising the area of the east of India and to the south of China including the Indo-China, the Malaya-Archipelago and the Philippines roughly form a circle from Burma through Indonesia to Vietnam. These countries were known to the early Indian as Suvarnadvipa (the island of gold) or Suvárna-bhumi (the land of gold).

Causes of the Colonial Movement: It is not an easy matter to give specific reasons that led to the colonisation in South-East Asia. But some tentative reasons may be guessed on the basis of the existing material on the subject. In the first place, there were a large number of rich ports in the eastern coast of India from the mouth of the Ganga to the Cape Comorin. These ports were the springboards for India’s maritime adventures in South-East Asia. In the second place, the Malaya Archipelago and Indo-China that lay across the Bay of Bengal were inviting for their primitive stage of civilisation and fertility of the soil. The Indian sailors naturally lost no time in establishing trade centres in those lands. Thus, we find Ptolemy in the second century B.C. referring to some trading marts in Malaya, Java and Sumatra. In the third place, in the wake of trades many Indians migrated to these lands and established colonies. The main swarmers were the adventurers and other fortune-seekers of the Ksatriya caste.

The cultural expansion of India in South-East Asia is confirmed by the Buddhist texts of the second century A.D. In the Jatakas and the Katha-sarita-sagara we find frequent reference to the perilous voyage in South-East Asia. From the second century A.D. we find some kings of South-East Asia bearing Indian names and imbibing Indian religion and culture.

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1. V.M. Reddi, Presidential Address in Section V: Countries other than India, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979, p. 926.
Nascent Cultural Activities: From the second to the fifth century A.D. we find the establishment of various flourishing kingdom of Indian origin like Malaya, Kambuja and Champa and the island kingdoms of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. There are various Sanskrit inscriptions and Chinese accounts that testify the Indian cultural expansion in that direction. The local or native population of this region gradually embraced the culture and religion of the Indian migrants. Although Saivism was the predominant cult, Buddhism also flourished side by side. These petty kingdoms vanished from the scene yielding place to big and long-standing kingdoms founded by the Indian colonists and these large states lasted for several centuries. Of them the most prominent were Suvarnadvipa, Champa, Kambuja and Burma. We shall now make a brief survey of these kingdoms.

Suvarnadvipa

The Malaya Peninsula was the first to feel the cultural impulse of India due to the proximity to the Eastern Coast. So Dr R.C. Majumdar rightly said: “Malaya peninsula served as the main gate of Indian colonial expansion.” Thus, the great Sailendra dynasty founded a powerful empire comprising Malaya and the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo and other islands of the East Indies in the eighth century A.D. This Malaya peninsula was known as Suvarnadvipa. The Arab traders spoke highly of the powers and wealth of the Sailendras. The king was called Maharaja and he was the master of a powerful navy that put in subjugation the neighbouring kingdoms of Champa and Kambuja. In addition, he exercised sway over a large number of adjoining territories. The kings of the Sailendra dynasty were ardent followers of Mahayana Buddhism and they cultivated diplomatic relations with India and China. Balaputradeva, a king of the Sailendra dynasty sent an embassy to the Pala king Devapala of Bengal praying for his grant of five villages for construction of a monastery at Nalanda. It is probable that the Sailendra kings derived their inspiration of Mahayana Buddhism from the Pala kings of Bengal which was the nerve-centre of that creed in India at that time. This is confirmed by the fact that Kumaraghosha, a
Buddhist Bhikshu of Bengal became the preceptor of a Sailendra king and a temple of Tara was built at his instance. The Sailendras were also given the permission by the Chola kings to build monasteries at Negapatam. The Sailendras were great patrons of art and architecture and their greatest artistic achievement was the famous Barabudur Stupa in Java that stands to this day as a living monument of their grandeur and magnificence. The monumental work is rightly called the "eighth wonder of the world."

This monument was constructed by a king of the Sailendra dynasty of Java. We, however, do not know the name of the royal builder or the dates of its construction. The shrine is undoubtedly what is called in Buddhist architecture a Stupa. It is the living monument of the grandeur and magnificence of the Sailendra kings. The temple bears the unmistakable stamp of Indian influence both on its architectural scheme and in its sculptures. It stands on the top of a hill consisting of a series of nine successive terraces, each smaller than the one below it. The topmost terrace is crowned with a bell-shaped Stupa which is a large dimension. There is a large number of images of the Buddha and the galleries are covered with sculptures that illustrate the scenes of the Buddha's life. This Buddhist shrine is a living monument that holds out the architectural conception and skill of the kings of Indian origin who ruled over Java.²

The Chola-Sailendra Rivalry: The Sailendras ruled upto the ninth century A.D. in full royal vigour until they were attacked by the Chola king Rajendra I, whose navy conquered a part of the Sailendra empire. The Chola-Sailendra struggle lingered for a century and ultimately the Sailendras came with colours flying. But the protracted war sapped the vitality of the Sailendras and they vanished from the stage of history towards the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D.

The Rise and fall of Majapahit Kingdom: The kingdom of Majapahit was one of the residuary states of the Sailendras. By the thirteenth century Eastern Java that had been formerly a part of the Sailendras emerged prominent under a dynasty

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 12, p. 231.
founded by Vijaya with Majapahit as the capital. The greatest king of this dynasty was Rajasanaagarama who ascended the throne in 1350 A.D. He was a conqueror of high repute and we find a list of his conquests in a book *Nagara-Kritagama*. His kingdom roughly consisted of the whole of East Indies islands and the Malaya peninsula excepting the Philippines. India and China had trade relations with Majapahit.

The decline of the Majapahit kingdom was set in under the impact of Islam in the fifteenth century A.D. With the conversion of a Hindu chief of Malacca into Islam and due to his influence Islam spread into Java. Because of the aggressions of the followers of the new faith the Hindu king of Majapahit was forced to leave Java in the sixteenth century A.D. and to take shelter in Bali. In this way the Hindu kingdom of Java was brought under the impact of Islam.

**Champa**

Champa is identifiable with Annam of Indo-China. A Hindu kingdom was established there in the second century A.D. Champa which was initially the capital of the kingdom later on became the name of the entire kingdom.

It was Sri Mara who was the first Hindu king of this region. He flourished in the third century A.D. The next important king was Bhadravarman. From 1050 to 1081 A.D. we find as kings of Champa—Isvaramurti, Rudravarman and Harivarman.

The country was bordered in the north by the Chinese empire that wrested a part of Indo-China inhabited by the Annamites. The Hindu kingdom of Champa came into direct collusion with China and won defeat in the hands of China. Champa had also sour relation with her neighbour in the west, namely Kambuja so much so that king Jayavarman of Kambuja imprisoned Indravarman of Champa and even held the country under occupation for a time. Champa needed a protracted war for thirty years to regain her independence.

Champa became weak and feeble because of the onslaughts of Kambuja. The long-drawn war ate out the vitals of the kingdom. Before she could recoup her lost energy the Mongol chief Kublai Khan carried there sword and fire in 1282 A.D.
This was quickly followed by the invasion on Champa by Tonkin. This rung down the curtain on the Hindu kingdom of Champa.

Kambuja

Kambuja was the early name of Cambodia. Like Champa it was another Hindu kingdom in Indo-China. Very little is known about the origin of this kingdom. The Chinese called it Fu-nan, and the Chinese legend says that the Hindu kingdom of Kambuja was founded by a Brähmana whose name was Kaundinya. When Kaundinya came from India to Kambuja, he found the people there in a primitive stages so much so that the people were stark naked. He married a princess of the country and founded the new kingdom in Kambuja.

We find the earliest reference to the kingdom of Kambuja in the second century A.D. The Kambuja dynasty established its supremacy over the whole of Cambodia, Cochin-China and Siam. They nurtured diplomatic relations with India and China. Jayavarman and his son Rudravarman were the most important of the early kings of this dynasty. The Chinese sources also confirm the Brahmanical culture of Kambuja.

In the seventh century A.D. Kambuja emerged as the greatest and undisputed overlord over the whole of Cambodia; and the Kambuja kings ruled with splendour and glamour for nine hundred years. It was Jayavarman II who wielded tremendous power and influence in the history of Kambuja. He built a new capital at Angkor that became the focal point of the Kambuja culture. Beautiful structures of lasting fame studded the city. He introduced Tantric cult as the state religion. His period is 802 to 854 A.D. The next remarkable ruler was Yasovarman who extended his authority over Siam and Laos. He was an erudite scholar and had mastery over various Sastras and Kavyas. He is credited with writing a commentary on the Mahabhāṣya of Patanjali. He shifted his capital to Yasodharapura which is known as Angkor Thom which stands as an imperishable memorial to the great hero of this dynasty. Its shape was square and it was surrounded by a ditch of 330 feet in width and walled by a stone rampart. A magnificent temple of pyramidal shape adorned with forty high towers dedicated
Siva was in the centre of the city. Angkor Thom bore the stamp of the Pallava architectural style.

In c. 1113 A.D. a new dynasty was founded in Kambuja by Suryavarman II, who annexed northern Siam and a part of lower Burma and also a part of Malaya. He ruled from 1113 to 1145 A.D. His greatest work was the creation of the world famous Vishnu temple of Angkor Vat.

Angkor Vat: It is a huge and magnificent monument that stands in the city of Angkor Thom. While Angkor Thom is one of the greatest cities in the world of that time, Angkor Vat is the greatest of the monuments in that city. This monument which was originally dedicated to god Vishnu was built by king Suryavarman II (1049-1066 A.D.) of Kambuja. The monument stands on the crest of a terraced structure. There are three terraces, each adorned with beautiful sculptures and each leading to the next higher one by means of a staircase. Each terrace has the look of a covered gallery which has several spires and towers. The third and the last gallery has at the four angles eight towers, each of which is 180 feet high. The central temple is situated on the third terrace, the tower of which is 213 feet high dominating the entire region. There is a stone enclosure measuring two-thirds of a mile east to west and a half mile north to south that surrounds the whole structure. The enclosure is surrounded by a ditch 700 feet wide which is spanned over in one place by a 36 feet wide stone causeway which runs as a wide paved road from the gate of the enclosure to the gate of the first terrace. The entire edifice has a few equals in the world in grandeur and is an imperishable record of the development of art, architecture and sculpture in Kambujua in particular and South-East Asia in general as a fruit of contact from India.

Fall of Kambuja: The last great king of Kambuja was Jayavarman VII who made an invasion of Champa and took its king Indravarman as prisoner and reduced Champa into a vassal state. A part of lower Burma also fell into his hands. He added to the further beautification of Angkor Thom. On the death of Jayavarman VII the great Kambuja kingdom began to web. The finishing touch was given by the invasion of the Thais and the Annamites.
Borneo

Borneo is a great island in Malaya-Archipelago. Very little is known of the early history of Borneo. Several Sanskrit inscriptions that have been found at Muara Kaman, an important sea-port in the olden days on the Malakan river testifies to the Hindu colonisation in Eastern Borneo. These inscriptions refer to the kings of the name of Mulavarman, Asvavarman and Kundunga. Mulavarman is said to have performed a sacrifice which is known as Bahuvarsvaraka which literally means large quantity of gold. He also made a gift of 20,000 cows to the Brahmanas in the holy field of Vaprakesvara. These inscriptions are of 400 A.D. From this we may come to the conclusion that the Hindu colonists had established 10 kingdoms in Borneo by the end of the fourth century A.D. The inscriptions bear the predominance of the Brahmanas and the Hindu culture in that island.

Mulavarman’s grandfather was Kundunga which is a form of Kaundinya. In the fourth century A.D, a king of the name of Kaundinya was the king of Fu-nan. We cannot say with certainty whether Kundunga of Borneo was the same as Kaundinya of Fu-nan. There is, however, preponderence of possibility for it.

Taking the Mahakam river as the route the Hindu colonists advanced into the interior of Eastern Borneo. A large number of Buddhist and Brahmanical images have been found at Kombeng. These images probably belonged to some temples in the higher valleys of the Mahakam river. Since archaeological ruins of Buddhist and Brahmanical religion have been found on the bank of the Kapuas river, it shows that the Hindu colonists were on the western Borneo also.

Tibet

It is said in the Tibetan chronology that the kings of Tibet exerted political influence over parts of India during 750-850 A.D. The Tibetan king Khri-sron-Ide-bstan who is assigned the period between 750 to 797 A.D. is credited with the conquests of the frontier provinces including “China in the east and India in the south.” His son Mu-khrig-btsan-po (or
Mu-tig-Btsan-po) who ruled from 798 to 804 A.D. is said to have subdued two or three parts of Jambudvipa and compelled the Pala king of Bengal Dharmapala and another Indian king to pay tribute. The next remarkable king Ral-Pa-Can who ruled from 817 to 836 A.D. is said to have conquered India as far as Ganga-sagara which may be identified with the mouth of the Ganga.

It is difficult to say how much historical truth is there in the Tibetan claims of conquest and supremacy in the Indian plains. There is no contemporary Indian source to corroborate the Tibetan version. There are, however, Chinese sources that tell of the great military strength and aggressive military design of the Tibetans against India and China. According to a Chinese authority, some times about 787 A.D. the emperor of China made an alliance with the Caliph of Baghdad as a measure of security against the Tibetans. It is also to be noted that both Istakhri and Ibn Haukal called the Bay of Bengal as Tibetan Sea and thereby indicated the advance of the Tibetans to the heart of Bengal.

It may be interesting that in the period of hegemony in Indian fronts (750-850 A.D.) Tibet witnessed the preponderance of Buddhism in the country. Khri-sron-btsan, the Tibetan king mentioned above was a great patron of Buddhism and was considered to be an incarnation of Bodhisattva Manjusri. He invited Santarakshita who was the high priest of the University of Nalanda and offered him the post of high priest of Tibet. During his time Buddhism became the State religion of Tibet replacing a kind of demon-worship called Bon. It was Santarakshita who introduced the system of Buddhist monarchism which is now called Lamaism in Tibet. In this difficult work of reorganising the religion he was helped by another Indian monk-king of the name of Padmasambhava. To defeat the doctrine preached by the Chinese Buddhist missionary, the king invited a great Buddhist philosopher of Magadha named Kamalasila, who actually defeated the Chinese missionary in the court of the king. The king made Kamalasila head of the Buddhist church. Although at the beginning there was some objection to it, all objections gradually died away. King Khri-sron-ide-btsan constructed the famous temple of Bsam-yas in imitation of the temple of Odantapuri in Magadha and this
temple exists even today and is situated about 35 miles from Lhasa. The great Indian scholars who taught Buddhism in Tibet included Dharmakirti, Vimalamitra, Buddhaghuvya and Santigarbha who introduced Tantric ritual and taught mysticism based on Buddhist Tantrism. But above them all stand out the names of Santarakhita and Padmasambhava. To the former the latter owes the observance of “ten virtues” and the latter became the greatest teacher of Tantric doctrines which spread all over Tibet.

Thus the reign of Khri-sron-ide-btsan marks the final triumph of Buddhism in Tibet. According to the Tibetan chronicle, “the Bon religion was suppressed and the holy religion was made to spread and flourish” during the reign of this king. Santarakhita, Padmasambhava, Ramalasila and Khri-sron-ide-btsan are recognised in Tibet as the four persons through whom “like sunrise in the dark country of Tibet, the light of the Holy religion spread as far as the frontiers.” The verse further says that “All Tibetans will for ever reverently salute these holy men.”

Khri-sron-ide-btsan’s successors followed the policy of translating the sacred books, constructing temples and inviting the scholars from India. The Indian Pandits like Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, Silendrabodhi, Bodhimitra and Dhanasila were invited to Tibet by Ral-pa-can who was a great patron of Indian culture and who introduced the system of Indian weights and measures in Tibet. But all these gave rise to a kind of reaction during the reign of his successor Glandar-ma who persecuted Buddhism. He was done to death perhaps at the instigation of the Buddhist monks and his son who reigned from 842 to 870 A.D. and restored the supremacy of Buddhism and invited Buddhist scholars from India, erected temples and got the sacred books translated into Tibetan language. Tibetan scholars of great eminence visited India to learn the Buddhist doctrines.

Tibet acknowledged the great part played by the Indian scholar Dipankara Srijnana also known as Atisa. The Tibetan account, no doubt, has exaggeration. But making allowance for such exaggeration, it shows the great role played in the spiritual life of Tibet by Dipankara who is called the spiritual progenitor of Tibet. The story is given below in brief:
Dipankara was born in Bengal in 980 A.D. He attained proficiency in both Buddhist and Brahmancial philosophy and went to Suvarnadvipa and studied at the feet of Chandrakirti, the high priest of Suvarnadvipa for twelve years. When he returned to India he was offered the post of the priest of Vikramasila. At this time Lha Lama Ye-ses-hod, king of Tibet wanted to purify Buddhism which had been debased by the mixture of Tantric and Bon mysticism. So the king sent twenty one Tibetan monks to study in India the Buddhist scripture and to invite Dipankara to Tibet. Of them only two Tibetan monks survived to return to Tibet and told that any invitation to Dipankara to come to Tibet at that time would be premature. But the king sent to Dipankara a large envoy with huge gold as a present from the king of Tibet. Dipankara came to Tibet and was given an ovation of a royal prince and everywhere he was hailed by all people of all classes. Dipankara spent the last thirteen years of his life preaching Buddhism and writing sacred books. He died in 1053 A.D. and is even now remembered with respect all over upper Asia or wherever the Buddhism of Tibetan type spread.

During the Pala rule in Bengal Tibet kept close contact with India and particularly with the University of Nalanda and Vikramasila. The mystic school of Vajrayana and Sahajayana found great favour in Tibet. It is to be remembered that the vast literature of Buddhist religion which is lost in India is preserved in Tibetan language in two big collections known as Bstan-bgyur and HHah-hgyur. As no detailed study of the valuable collection has been made, our knowledge of that voluminous collections is very little. They at least bear the positive proof of the intimate connection between India and Tibet, the former exerting tremendous religious impact upon the latter.

**Burma**

*Early Indian Settlements in Burma*: Burma also came under the pale of Indian colonisation. It was in the lower Burma that the Telegu speaking Indians first got settlement and then spread to the Dvaravati or Menam valley of Siam in the seventeenth
century A.D. These Indian people were called Mons and they were great patrons of Hinayana Buddhism.

Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Pyus: In the third century A.D. in the north of lower Burma the Hinduised Pyus established a Hindu kingdom known as Srikshetra in the region of the Prome. Towards the seventh century A.D. it emerged as a powerful kingdom including central and part of upper Burma. But the kingdom of Pyus could not withstand the onslaught of the Thais and the Mons of lower Burma, and as a result the Hinduised kingdom fell into pieces.

Kingdom of Arimardanpura: In the ninth century A.D. after the fall of the Pyus kingdom a new race called the Mrammas belonging to the Tibeto-Dravidian origin swarmed into Burma from the north and founded a new kingdom with Arimardanpura as capital. The new people adopted the Hindu way of life under the influence of the Hindu colonists of that region. King Aniruddha was the early great king of this dynasty. He came to the throne in 1044 A.D. He embraced the Hinayana creed at the instance of a monk called Dharmadarshi. Aniruddha inflicted defeat on the Mon king of lower Burma and constructed many pagodas there. He also put under subjugation the king of Arakan and Shan states. In this way, he brought under his authority a major part of Burma. His reign is considered to be a turning point in the history of Burma. He galvanised the entire kingdom into a united mould and gave it a new cultural face-lift. Aniruddha’s son and successor was Tribhuvanaditya Dharmaraja who ascended the throne in 1084 A.D. There are various poems and dramas that testify his love for and eagerness to marry a princess of Eastern Bengal. Many Buddhists and Vaishnavas from India got settled in Burma during his reign. His greatest artistic achievement was the famous Ananada temple, which stands out pre-eminent as a masterpiece of Burmese architecture. In his hands was completed the Shewzigon pagoda that had been left incomplete by his father. He also repaired the temple of Bodh Gaya. He reigned from 1084 A.D. to 1122 A.D. Alaungsithu who succeeded Tribhuvanaditya was a weakling and during his reign the decline of the kingdom was set in. The end of the Hinduised dynasty of Burma came when the
last king of this dynasty—Narasimhapat was done to death by his subjects.

**Cultural Impact on Burma**

*Nearness of Burma to India Facilitated the Spread of Indian Culture in Burma*: It may be presumed that Burma being the nearest kingdom to India, the earliest colonial activities would naturally abound in Burma and Arakan. The facility of reaching Burma from eastern India by well-known routes over the Patkoi hills and Arakan Yoma were other inviting factors. Again, Burma's vast coastal region was easily accessible by sea from the whole of eastern sea-board of India. The Burmese traditions and the archaeological evidence are the source of information about the Indian cultural contact with Burma. The Chinese and Ceylonese Buddhist traditions are also an additional evidence for that purpose.

*Evidences of Early Impact of Indian Culture on Burma*: From the Ceylonese Buddhist traditions we learn that the missionaries of Asoka visited Suvarnabhumi which is identifiable with Lower Burma. The testimony of Buddhaghosha, the famous commentator of the Pali canon is a confirmation of the Ceylonese tradition. Buddhaghosha who lived in the fifth century A.D. not only locates the scenes of the activities of the missionaries sent by Asoka in Burma but also mentions of two natives of Burma who adopted Buddhism shortly after the Buddha's attainment of Bodhi at Gaya. The writings of Buddhagosha shed light on the establishment of Hindu colonies in Burma as far back as the time of Gautama the Buddha.

*Beginning of Indian Colonies in Burma*: Again, Sanskrit place—names mentioned by Ptolemy which have been undoubtedly located in Burma with definiteness prove the introduction of Indian culture in Burma before the second century A.D. The discovery of Indian Brahmi alphabets on stone in Burma is another indication towards that direction. According to the Chinese chronicles of third century A.D. there was a kingdom called Lin-yang that has been definitely in central Burma. There were over one lakh ardent devotees of the Buddha in that region. All these evidences give us a safe assumption to
consider that the Indian colonisation in Burma began before the beginning of the Christian era.

Archaeological Findings: The excavations that have been conducted in a few of the old sites have unearthed interesting evidence of Indian culture. These finds may be divided into written records, images, votive tablets (mostly terra-cottas) and religious structures. The writings on stones, terra-cotta tablets, gold plates and funeral urns are in Sanskrit, Pali, Mon and Pyu languages. And the alphabets used there are also Indian. From the use of both north and south Indian alphabets one can easily surmise that the colonists from all over India went to Burma. On the basis of the alphabets we can say with a good amount of certainty that these finds belong to the early centuries of the Christian era.

Impact on the Religion in Burma: The two important Brahmanical sects namely Saivism and Vaishnavism were prevalent in Burma. Vaishnavism was more dominant than Saivism. Both Hinayana and Mahayana sects and some Tantric worships in debased forms were also there. Early religious architectures like the Stupas of the fifth to the seventh centuries A.D., icons of gods and goddesses, both Brahmanical and Buddhist of the Gupta style have been discovered. The other important finds are extracts from Buddhist scriptures engraved on gold plates in Indian character of the fifth century A.D. and a large number of terra-cotta votive tablets with bas-reliefs representing scenes from the life of the Buddha containing the inscription—Ye dharma hetuprabhava in the late Gupta alphabets. These speak volumes for the spread of Indian culture in Burma during the first millennium of the Christian era. The archaeological yields also prove the existence of Indian culture in different centres like Prome, Pegu, Thaton and Pagan.

Siam

The Hindu colonisation in Siam began in the first two centuries of the Christian era. As in the other places of Indo-China, the Hindu culture and civilisation were firmly established in Siam and here also the Hindu spirit entirely transformed the character of the people. But we have little knowledge about the political history of Siam. The northern Siam
came under the influence of the Mons. One of such kingdoms in the north was Dvaravati that flourished in the seventh century A.D. The southern part of Siam formed a part of the kingdom of Kambuja. As a matter of fact, during the palmy days of Kambuja it included the whole of Siam. It is only after the decline of Kambuja that Siam became an independent country in the thirteenth century A.D. But this independence was achieved not by the native people of Siam, but by a foreign stock called the Thais who came from China. It is after the Thais that Siam is now called Thailand. These Thais dominated for five centuries the history of Indo-China and overthrew the Hindu kingdom of Kambuja and Champa.

Factors Behind the Coming of the Thais in Siam: The Thais are a Mongolian people. They originally lived in the southern and south-western part of China. Their migration from their original habitat in China began in the beginning of the Christian era. They spread over the whole of the uplands of Indo-China to Burma, north of Siam, Kambuja and Champa. They were thus spread over in different groups. Of these, two groups were more formidable than the rest. They settled in Yunnan and Tonkin. Those who lived in Tonkin were the Annamites who frequently waged war with Champa and even occupied it. Those who lived in Yunnan came under the influence of Hindu culture and civilisation. Their settlement was modern Yunnan in south China. This kingdom was called Nan-chao by the Chinese. But in Indo-China this country was known as Gandhara. The people there would use alphabets of Hindu origin. According to local traditions Avalokitesvara went there from India and converted the people into Buddhism. This Gandhara country in Annam was a seat of Buddhism.

According to one tradition the Buddha obtained Bodhi in this country. The acceptance of the title of Maharaja, the Sanskrit inscriptions and remnants of Buddhism in the shape of two bells all suggest that the Thais of Yunnan deeply imbibed the Indian culture and religion. About the middle of the seventh century A.D. they threw off the yoke of China and soon became very powerful. After one century this state, no wonder, invaded China and assumed imperial pretensions. Now the Tang emperor of China could not
silently tolerate the growth of the Thais of Yunnan. So a war began and in all encounters China was defeated. In 884 A.D. peace was established when the king of Gandhara married a daughter of the Chinese emperor. In 1253 A.D. the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan crushed the independence and glory of this Gandhara state. It was then that a general movement took place of the Thais towards the south and the west. One branch of them, the Ahoms, proceeded north and conquered Assam. Another branch of the Shans came to possess upper Burma. A third branch moved south and slowly conquered the whole of Laos and Siam.
"James Prinsep's place is very superior in the field of Indian research. His first decipherment of the Asokan inscriptions illuminated a considerable portion of the Buddhist history of India. His discovery of many new truths from his collection of coins of western India cleared the history of post-Buddhist dynasties. His proposal for an epigraphic arrangement was not carried out owing to his early death at the age of forty."

—A.K. Mazumdar

It may be of interest to note that Indology became a popular subject of studies in countries other than India. As a matter of fact, India owes a deep debt to the patient research of the foreign scholars for the gradual recovery of her lost forgotten history. Here we propose to make a brief study of this subject country-wise.

In England

Warren Hastings and Charles Wilkins: It was Warren Hastings who initiated the study of Indology by the Europeans. The first Englishman who inspired by Warren Hastings acquired knowledge of Sanskrit was Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) A.D.

A founding member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Wilkins acquired a considerable knowledge in Sanskrit at Benares. His contemporaries called him the first European who really understood Sanskrit. Through him Europe got the earliest acquaintance with actual Sanskrit learning. According to H.T.
Colebrooke, a pioneer of Sanskrit scholarship in Europe, Wilkins possessed more knowledge about the Hindus than any other foreigner since the days of Pythagoras. In 1785 A.D. he published an English translation of the *Bhagavat Gita*—the first Sanskrit work rendered directly into a European language. In 1787 A.D. he published the *Hitopadesa* and in 1795 A.D. the Sakuntala episode from the *Mahabharata*. These English rendering of Sanskrit works was primarily to familiarise European intellectuals with the Indian ideas. The literary import was rather secondary. In 1808 A.D. Wilkins’ Sanskrit grammar with Devanagri type appeared which was first of its kind in Europe. To him also goes the credit of studying Indian inscription and translation thereof into English.

*Sir William Jones*: The field was next held by Sir William Jones (1746-1794 A.D.), the celebrated Indologist who is credited with pioneering Sanskrit studies. He had a deep appreciation of Indian culture even before coming to India. He came to India to “give the finishing stroke to his Oriental knowledge.” According to him, although he was not happy in England, he was never really content until he was settled in India. He was always in praises of the Indian culture. In his words: “It gave me inexpressible pleasure to find myself in the midst of so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled by the vast regions of Asia, which has even been the esteemed nurse of sciences, the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the production of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely in the forms of religion and governments, in the laws, manners, customs and languages as well as in the features and complexion of men.” Although a Christian, he was attracted to the Hindu concept of non-duality of God, as interpreted by Sankaracharya and the transmigration of the human soul. After a stay of three years in India he wrote: “I am not a Hindu, but I hold the doctrine of the Hindus concerning a future state to be incomparably more rational, more pious and more likely to deter men from vice.” He studied Sanskrit with the assistance and encouragement of Sir Charles Wilkins. Within few months of his arrival in India, he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta, of which he was life-long the President. The aim of the Society was to enquire into the history, culture, literature and science of Asia. Indeed the
society succeeded in advancing the knowledge of Asian civilisation both in India and abroad. The initial attempts to unearth the glorious past of India was done through the journal of the society—Asiatick Researches. Within a span of three years Jones became so proficient in Sanskrit that he could converse familiarly with the Indian scholars. He got the publication of the English rendering of Kalidasa’s Sanskrit drama—Abhijñana Sakuntalām. The translation of Jayadeva’s Gītā Govinda and Kalidasa’s Ritusamhara were published in 1792. His more important contribution was the translation of the legal text of ancient India—Manusmriti. Jones was not a mere translator. He was a composer of original hymns to Indian deities.

Jones’ eminence was as a Sanskrit scholar. According to him, the Sanskrit language was of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than both. The greatest influence of his work was on the study of oriental learning itself. The interest that Jones awakened led scholars search for Sanskrit manuscripts that stands comparison with the avidity of explorers seeking Australian goldfields.

Dr A.K. Mazumdar paid his tribute to Jones in these words: “No living lips can describe even a part of the great services done to India by the first great English scholar, Sir William Jones. Sir William was a great master of Latin and Greek. In India, he soon became proficient in sanskrit. He soon discovered that the Hindu Chandragupta was no other than the Sandra Coptos of Alexander’s historians. This discovery of synchronism proved as a sheet-anchor in the obscured Hindu chronology. His English translation of Sakuntalām produced a thrill in England and elsewhere. His monumental work was, perhaps the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta in 1784 A.D. and a journal connected therewith. Jones aimed at a reconstruction of the Hindu history, but being busy with modern Sanskrit literature he could not recover facts.”

H.T. Colebrook: Henry Thomas Colebrook (1756-1837) was one of such scholars who followed the footprints of Sir William Jones. It was he who put the study of Sanskrit on a scientific
footing. About him Max Muller wrote: "Had he lived in Germany, we should long ago have seen his statue in his native place, his name written in letters of gold on the walls of academies." He is acknowledged as the "founder and father of true Sanskrit scholarship in Europe." A man of extraordinary industry and clear intellect, his translations and essays covered all aspects of Sanskrit literature. He wrote on the Indian law, philosophy, religion, grammar, astronomy and arithmetic. His four-volume translation—A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession published in 1797-1798 A.D. earned for him the immediate recognition as the best Sanskrit scholar of his day. His Essay on the Vedas and Sanskrit Grammar published in 1805 A.D. for the first time gave a reliable information on the sacred Hindu texts. Three years later came out his critical edition of the Amarakosha, a Sanskrit lexicon.

Unlike Jones, Colebrook had a pre-eminent aptitude for Sanskrit literature. His interest in mathematics and astronomy was employed to investigate the Indian works in these disciplines. It was he through whose works the scientists of Europe were able to form a clear idea of the Indian achievements in mathematics. But his real achievement was in philological researches and services to Indian jurisprudence.

Dr A.K. Mazumdar paid his eloquent tribute to Colebrook in these words: "Sir William Jones was followed by Colebrook, a gigantic figure whose genius illumined every branch of Hindu learning."

H.H. Wilson: The other English scholars of Colebrook's time who was equally interested in Sanskrit studies was Horace Hayman Wilson. He pursued his interest with vigour and industry and brought out his elegant translation of Kalidasa's Meghadutam in 1813 A.D. which had an immediate and yet lasting impact on the European readers. His Sanskrit dictionary and Vishnupurana were published in 1819 A.D. He was the first to occupy the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford in 1832 A.D. which gave him fuller opportunity to earnestly engage in the study of Indology. He subscribed to the view that Sanskrit language was "capable of giving a soul to the objects of sense, and a body to the abstractions of metaphysics." The
estimate of Wilson from Dr A.K. Mazumdar is worth quoting: “Colebrook was followed by H.H. Wilson. He translated the Vishnu Purana, and from the ancient kings and other materials wrote a history of the Hindus; but it was rejected by the scholars.”

Wilford, Pargiter and Princep: Col. Wilford was another great scholar. His learned papers are preserved in the Vol. X of Asiatick Researches. His wonderful array of facts indeed overwhelms all readers with a deep sense of his vast erudition; and the accuracy of his references and the correctness of his data cannot be doubted. Another English Indologist of eminence was Justice Pargiter whose Dynasties of the Kaliyuga gave meaningful solutions to many knotty problems. The last prince among the English Indologists was James Princep who was the first to decipher the Asokan inscriptions and thereby he threw new lights on the Buddhist history of India. His collection of coins of western India cleared many obscurities in the post-Buddhist dynasties in India. His scheme to go ahead with a master plan in epigraphic studies could not materialise as death overtook him at the age of forty.

In France

Indology in France in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Scholars in France did not lose their interests in Indian life and culture during the gradual decline of the French power and eventual dissolution in 1770 A.D. of the Compagnie Des Indes Orientales, the company for carrying on trade in the East which had been set up during the reign of Louis XIV. In fact, contact between the two countries at the intellectual level became more intimate towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century A.D.

India had figured prominently in the seventh century A.D. French literature particularly in Racine’s Alexandre. A picture of contemporary India could be available from the account left

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 39.
5. Ibid., p. 39.
by the travellers. Notable among them were Saint Amant, Pyrard, Alexandra David-Neel, Thevenot, Tavernier and Bernier. The stories of the Panchatantra were known to be the main source for many fables of La Fontaine.

Desideri translated Kanglar of Zoubaka in one hundred and eight volumes after he spent more than ten years in Tibet and Nepal. Lettres Edifiantes (1700-1750 A.D.) provided the French philosophers with an insight into Indian spiritualism. Contributions of a few French missionary scholars helped them to understand some aspects of the Brahmanical doctrines, Buddhism and Jainism.

A complete volume of the Rigveda reached Paris in 1731, A.D. and the Upanishads two years later. Pierre Sonnerat, a naturalist narrated his experience of a sea voyage to India for about seven years. Le Gentil translated the Bhagavatam in 1788 A.D. and Bailly wrote a history of Indian astronomy in 1778 A.D. Abbe Rayanal published his masterpiece on the philosophical and political history of the settlement and the history of trade of the Europeans in India in 1770 A.D.

A number of books dealing with Indian thought, religion, language and contemporary socio-economic life were published in France between 1776 and 1795 A.D. Reference about India could be found in the writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire and the Count de Lalli and in the Encyclopedie of Diderot and other eminent authors. Anquetil's famous book L' Indi en rapport avec L'Europe written in 1790 A.D. was the product of more than forty years' study of Indian life in its various aspects.

Bignan and Pereponts: By the beginning of the eighteenth century France began to take interest in Sanskrit. It was Bignan who was the librarian of the king of France who asked all travellers in 1718 A.D. to purchase all texts or copy of notes, grammars and dictionary bearing on India. In response to this call the French missionary in India acquired copies of all the Vedas except the Atharvaveda. A copy of the Rigveda along with its Aitareya Brahmana reached Paris in 1731 A.D. The other books that went to France included Gangesa's Tattvachintamani and some Tamil works. In the collection of such works the name that

stood pre-eminent was Pere Pons at Chandannagar. His catalogue that contained hundred and sixty eight entries was astonishingly accurate at that time. He himself knew Sanskrit. His collection included a Sanskrit grammar which he had written in Latin in the line of Samkshiptasara and Amarakosha. It was in 1739 A.D. that the first printed catalogue of Sanskrit literature was published from Paris.

Joseph Deguignes and Anquetil du Perron: As the French scholars found it difficult to read the Sanskrit manuscripts, they began their study of Indian history and thought through Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Greek and Latin works. Joseph Deguignes was the principal collector of Indian material. It was Anquetil du Perron (1731-1805 A.D.) who translated the Upanishads into Latin. He came to India to learn the Sanskrit language. He discovered Avesta and published his Zend-Avesta in three volumes in 1771. He recovered a Persian manuscript of the Upanishads in 1775 A.D. and translated it into French. The book was printed from Paris in 1802 A.D. This Oupenekhat exercised a profound influence upon the European thought and was acclaimed as "a product of the highest human wisdom."

Leonard de Chezy: Leonard de Chezy was a determined French Indologist. He began learning Sanskrit and after reading the original Sakuntalam of Kalidasa he got it published. Following this there developed in France an influential body of opinion advocating for the study of India. In 1814 A.D. a Chair of Sanskrit was created in the name of Chezy.

Jean-Louis Burnouf: The foremost French Indologist that next held the field was Jean-Louis Burnouf. He learnt Sanskrit to go into the roots of Indian culture and to better understand Pali. His work—An Essay on Pali published in 1826 A.D. recognised the relationship between Pali and Sanskrit. In 1840 A.D. his French version of the Bhagavata Purana was published. He took special interest in the study of Indian Buddhism and he also realised its importance in the expansion of Indian culture abroad. His most famous works are Indoduction à L'Historie du Bouddhisme and Lotus de la Bonne Loi, the latter being an annotated translation of the Sadharma-Pundarika, the most important Mahayana text. His work is thus a high
watermark in the study of Indian literature and culture in Europe.

*Barthelmy de Saint-Hilaire and Ariel*: With the foundation of Societe Asiatique in Paris in 1822 A.D.—the first of its kind in Europe many other French scholars now came to take a deep interest in Indian thought. Barthelmy de Saint-Hilaire published valuable studies on the Nyaya and Samkhya systems of Indian philosophy. Another scholar—Ariel took interest in Tamil literature and collected many Tamil manuscripts and also translated part of the Tirukkural. Gaspere Gorresio published in Paris a monumental edition of the Ramayana in five volumes.

Then came Fauche who translated the Ravanavada Mahakarya of Bharthrihari, the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, the Dasa Kumararacharita of Dandin, the Sisupalabada of Magha, the Mrichchhakatika of Sudraka, all the works of Kalidasa, the entire Ramayana and the Mahabharata into Sanskrit.

*Foucaus and Leon Feer*: In 1868 A.D. a centre for the study of Indology was founded at Paris and this gave a new incentive to the Indian study by the French scholars who had the bias of studying Indian civilisation in its broader perspective which included the expansion of Indian culture through non-Indian regions. Foucaus, the Sanskrit Professor at the College de France and Leon Feer worked on Buddhism from the Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. Foucause published the Lalitavistara in Tibetan and French, while Leon Feer translated many texts from Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan.

*Langles*: Interest was also diverted to archaeological remains and art of India. Langles’ compilation namely The Monuments of Hindustan came out at the beginning of the nineteenth century A.D. Subsequently Emile Guimet founded Musee Guimet—a special museum of history of religion in Lyons and Paris. This came to be the most important museum of Indian and East Asian art and archaeology in the world.

*Sylvain Levi*: With the beginning of the twentieth century a number of competent French scholars of Asian history and culture undertook historical explorations. Four scholars—Sylvain Levi, Alfred Foucher, Edouard Chavannes and Louis Finot stood pre-eminent. In 1894 A.D. Sylvain Levi, a former student of Bergaigne succeeded Foucaus to the Chair of
Sanskrit at the College of France, at the age of thirty one. He had to his credit field-works in Nepal in search of inscriptions and manuscripts. He was a devoted scholar in Hindu-Buddhist literature and texts. His earlier works were *The Indian Theatre and Doctrines of Sacrifice of the Brahmanas*. His findings in Nepal drew him to Buddhist studies which he did in collaboration with Chavannes. His knowledge in Tibetan and Chinese gave him the key to correct the Sanskrit texts such as *Mahayana-Sutralankara* of Asanga, *Trimsika* and *Vimsatika* of Vasubandhu. In collaboration with Antoine Meillet, a linguist of distinction he succeeded in reading the Kuchi language.

*Albert Foucher:* Albert Foucher came to India to quench his thirst for Sanskrit literature, its grammar, system of philosophy and archaeology. To him goes the credit of connecting the Gandhara art of Buddhist India with that of Graeco-Roman world. He succeeded in editing the French translation of the *Bhagavata Purana*.

*Jules Bloch:* Jules Bloch came to India as a member of the Ecole Francaise d’ Extreme-orient to learn modern Indian linguistics. There he worked with the great Indian orientalist of all times—Dr R.G. Bhandarkar. He devoted himself in the grammatical structure of Dravidian languages and edicts of Asoka.

*Louis Renou:* Even after their political withdrawal from India the French retained their interest in Indian studies. In collaboration with the government of India they founded a research centre at Pondicherry to carry on research in the Indian way of life. Louis Renou who died in 1966 A.D. was not only the leading French Indologist of his generation but the most distinguished in the west. He was mainly a Vedic scholar. His works include a Vedic bibliography, a Vedic index, a study of Indo-Irano-Iranian mythology, a Sanskrit-French Dictionary and a study of Panini, the Sanskrit grammarian.

**In Germany**

*Two Schlegels:* Unlike England or France, Germany had no political tie with India. But the German scholars occupied the top position in the study of Sanskrit language and literature and they produced exceptional works in Indian culture and
thought. A Sanskrit Chair was instituted at the University of Bonn in 1818 A.D. held by August Schlegel. Frederich Von Schlegel (1772-1829 A.D.) began learning Sanskrit. He published *Uber die Sprache und Weisheit der* (on the language and wisdom of the Indians). In this way he became the founder of Indian philology in Germany. This work gives an account of Indian mythology and of the theories of incarnations and the transmigration of soul. His brother August Wilhelm Von Schlegel (1767-1845 A.D.) became even a more active Sanskrit scholar and took the lead in the extensive development of Indology in Germany. He edited the original *Bhagavad Gita*. He paid glowing tributes to the authors of the *Gita* in the words: “I shall always adore the imprints of their feet.” He set up a Sanskrit press at Bonn and with his own hands composed the text of the *Gita*.

*Franz Bopp*: Franz Bopp (1791-1867 A.D.), unlike the two Schlegels, was more interested in language than in literature. He was Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Berlin. He laid the foundation of the new science of comparative philology by publishing his work—*On the Conjugational System of the Sanskrit Language in Comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic Languages* in 1816 A.D. He picked up some chosen episodes from the *Mahabharata* and published their German and Latin translations in 1819 A.D.

*Paul Deussen and Rodolph Roth*: Paul Deussen (1845-1919 A.D.) gave his attention to the study of the *Upanishads*. He also collected some selections from the *Mahabharata*. The other scholars of Vedic studies was Friedrich Rossen who published eight parts of the *Rigveda* in 1838 A.D. The other important player in this field was Rodolph Roth (1821-1895 A.D.) who published his work on the history and literature of the Vedas in 1846 A.D.

*Rodolph Roth*: Rodolph Roth (1821-1895 A.D.) brought out his work on the history and literature of the Vedas in 1846 A.D. In collaboration with another German scholar Otto Bontlingk (1815-1909 A.D.) he published the stupendous Sanskrit-German Dictionary known as St. Petersburg Sanskrit Dictionary which is the most outstanding work in German Indology.
Max Muller: Frederich Max Muller (1823-1900 A.D.), the ever-to-be-remembered German Indologist produced six volume edition of the Rigveda between 1849 A.D. and 1874 A.D. His Sacred Books of the East in fifty one volumes began publishing from 1875 A.D. onward. This marked the beginning of the study of comparative religion. These works of Max Muller made Indian history and religion better known everywhere. He guided considerable research in Indology, comparative religion and mythology. His admiration for India earned for him the Sankskritised name "Mokshamula", meaning the root of salvation. He was the first European to announce that India had a spiritual message for Europe. Muller's influence on Indian studies has been extensive, deep and lasting. While Muller was engaged in bringing out his series of volumes of the Rigveda, another German scholar—Theodor Aufrech (1822-1907 A.D.), Professor of Sanskrit at Edinburgh published an edition of the complete text of the Rigveda in Roman characters in 1861-1863 A.D.

Today almost every library in Germany has a collection of Indian studies and every university has a departmental library of Indology. In addition, six universities namely Bonn, Tubingen, Munich, Gottingen, Msrburg and Hamburg have chairs of Sanskrit. Practically every university of Germany provides for the teaching of Sanskrit in the department of comparative linguistics. What is more important is that three universities have their own magazines on Indology.

In Holland

Dutch Indologists: Holland had commercial and political interest in East Indies and as such her interest in India was but natural. But the Indian studies did not really began in Holland until the nineteenth century A.D., though during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a number of Dutchmen learnt modern Indian languages. Foremost of such Dutch scholars was Herbert de Jager of the University of Leyden. Hamaker was the first Professor to teach Sanskrit in the University of Leyden. He was known for his encouragement for the study of comparative linguistics. It was his eminent pupil Hendrik Kern who is acknowledged as the real founder of Sanskrit in Holland.
He was the occupant of the Chair of Sanskrit established at the University of Leyden in 1865 A.D. Through his publications and through his pupils Indology made considerable progress in Holland. The later Dutch Indologists of eminence were Speyer, Vogel, Gonda, Th. P. Gabestios, Bosch and Faddegon. Today Chairs of Sanskrit are to be found in the universities of Leyden, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Groningen.

In Italy

*Italian Indologists*: Italy did not lag behind in Indian studies. She took keen interest in systematic study of Indology. The early scholar of Italy was Filippo Sassetti of Florence who was the first to point out the link between Italy and Sanskrit in the sixteenth century A.D. But the study was rather unscientific till the middle of the nineteenth century A.D. Gaspare Gorresio is acclaimed as the father of Italian Indology. The first Chair of Oriental Studies was set up in 1870 A.D. when Italy got her political independence and unification. Since then Italy has produced famous Indologists from Graziadio to Giuseppe Tucci of the present day.

In Russia

*Russian Indologists*: In is not possible to trace the beginning of Indological interest in Russia. In 1787 A.D. N.I. Noviskov published the first translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Gerasim Lebedev (1749-1817 A.D.) produced his *Grammar of Pure and Mixed East Indian Dialects with Dialogues* in 1801 A.D. and *An Impartial Survey of the Systems of Brahmanical East India* in 1805 A.D. An Asian Academy was founded in 1810 A.D. at St. Petersburg. Robert Lenz (1808-1836 A.D.) was the first Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology. Death overtook this promising Russian Indologist at the age of twenty-eight. Pave Yakvlevich translated into Russian the “Sitaharana” episode of the *Ramayana*. Sergei Fedorovich Oldenburg (1863-1934 A.D.) began in 1897 A.D. the *Bibliotheca Buddhica*, a series on Buddhist studies. Fedor Ippolitovich Stcherbatsky (1886-1941 A.D.) published important works on Buddhist thought and edited numerous Tibetan and Sanskrit
texts. In the present century Russian interest and work in Indology have been more and more comprehensive.

In Czechoslovakia

The Czech Indologists: Czechoslovakia had a long tradition of learning. And Indology was destined to occupy a place of prominence there. It was through Karel Prikryl (1718-1795 A.D.), a Jesuit missionary that Czechoslovakia was introduced to Indology. The first Czech to be inspired by Prikryl was Josef Dobrovski who was a philologist and a historian. He learnt Sanskrit in the last part of the eighteenth century A.D. and drew the attention of the scholars to the similarities between many Indian and Slav words and forms. In 1812 A.D. another Indologist of Czechoslovakia—Joseph Jungmann wrote on Indian prosody and metre and nine years hence his brother—Antonín Jungmann produced the first Sanskrit grammar in Czech. A great Czech philologist—Joseph Zubaty made notable contribution to Sanskrit philology and to the history of Vedic literature and classical Indian epic and dramatic literature. He had two famous works—Qualitative Changes in the Final Syllable in the Vedic and The Construction of Tristubha and Jagati Verses in the Mahabharata.

The field was then held by Alfred Ludwig (1837-1912 A.D.) and Moriz Winternitz (1836-1937 A.D.) who were the first to transfer the shift from comparative philology to Indology proper. Ludwig is known for his German translation of the Rigveda in six volumes. He was also the first Czech scholar to study Dravidian languages. After Ludwig the Chair of Indology in the university of Prague was filled by Winternitz. He wrote three volume History of Indian Literature in German language.

After the First World War a new Chair of Indology was set up in the Charles University at Prague. Its first occupant was Wincerc Lesny (1882-1953 A.D.). His chosen field was Indian and Iranian language. He translated many works of Rabindranath Tagore from the Bengali original. In his book Buddhismus he analysed the Buddhism of Pali canon and its development in India and abroad. He was also the founder of The New East
and the Indian Society—a journal that started publishing before the Second World War.

In Hungary

The Hungarian Indologists: Alexander Csoma de Koros (1784-1842 A.D.) was the first Indologist in Hungary. At the invitation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal he visited India in 1830 A.D. The second Hungarian Indologist was Tivadar Duka (1825-1908 A.D.). They introduced Indian studies in Hungary. Other eminent Hungarian scholars who contributed to Indology were Karoly Fiolk (1857-1915 A.D.), who translated several Sanskrit classical texts; Sandor Kegh (1862-1920 A.D.) and Josef Schmidt (1868-1933 A.D.), who made Indian philosophy accessible to the Hungarians. The other Indologists in Hungary were Charles Louis Fabri who is known for his interests in Indian art and aesthetics. The names of Ervin Baktay and Ferenc Hope are commemorated by the Museum of East Asiatic Art in Budapest founded by them.

In Roumania

G. Coschbuc: Some scholars and poets of Roumania also were seized with the fascination for Indian culture. G. Coschbuc (1866-1918 A.D.) translated the Sakuntalam from the German version into Roumanian in 1897 A.D. B.P. Hashdeu studied the problems of Sanskrit literature. His disciple Lazar Saineau went to Paris to study Sanskrit.

Constantin Georgian: Constantin Georgian (1850-1904 A.D.) was the first Roumanian Indologist, who made a real introduction of Sanskrit for his country. It was not earlier than 1930 A.D. that translation into Roumanian language was done from the original Sanskrit. The other Roumanian scholars who made Sanskrit and Indian culture as their intellectual pursuit included Vasile Pogor, Vasile Burl and Teohari Antonescu, the last of whom made a deep-in study in the Upanishads.
In the USA

The USA had a vague, fragmentary and indirect knowledge of India. America evinced a keen interest in India with Swami Vivekananda’s visit in the Chicago religious conference.

Elbridge Salisbury: Indian studies began in the Yale University in 1841 A.D. Edward Elbridge Salisbury (1814-1901 A.D.) was the first Professor of Sanskrit in that University. William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894 A.D.) succeeded Salisbury to the Professorship of Sanskrit. It was he who made the first important American contributions to Sanskrit studies. His important works included editing the Vishnu Purana and the Atharvaveda.

Charles Rockwell Lanman: The next Chair in Sanskrit was set up in Johns Hopkins University in 1878 A.D. Charles Rockwell Lanman is known for his Sanskrit Reader and Harvard Oriental Series. He was the founder of the Department of Sanskrit in the Harvard University. Later on many universities of America such as Columbia, California and Pennsylvania instituted Chairs of Sanskrit. And America produced many renowned Sanskrit scholars such as Washburn Hopkins, Maurice Bloomfield, Franklia Edgerton, Arthur Ryder, A.U. William Jackson and W. Norman Brown. All said and done, the fact remains that Indian thought made its impact on the American mind mainly through European Indology.
CHAPTER 19

Progress of Archaeology in India

“Surveying the field of ancient Indian studies, the most striking feature is the progress of the comparatively new science of archaeology which has taken giant strides in India in recent years. Growing out of the old bureaucratic structure of the Archaeological Survey of India, it has been able to penetrate the university system as an academic discipline. The status of archaeology has changed from that of an ancillary subject in the service of history into that of an almost full-fledged science.”

—M.G.S. Narayanan

Origin of Archaeology in India

Archaeology in India in its early days started as an antiquarian pursuit, following the interests taken in the country’s past by a group of enthusiasts who established the Asiatic Society at Calcutta in 1784 A.D. Sir William Jones, an outstanding scholar and founder of the Asiatic Society was the first to establish in any systematic way the similarities between Sanskrit and Persian on the one hand; and Greek, Latin, Celt and German languages on the other. This marked the beginning of a series of studies that continued throughout the nineteenth century A.D. and thereby constituted one of the great adventures of the human spirit. At that time the Asiatic Society was mainly interested in the study of language and literature.
Fifty Years Since the Establishment of the Asiatic Society

It was through the study of the inscriptions and particularly through the works of H.T. Colebrooke and H.H. Wilson that the Indian antiquarian studies developed a character which can be called "archaeological." It was Wilson's best known work *Ariana Antiqua* (on the antiquities of Afghanistan) that marks the beginning of Indian archaeological studies in the proper sense of the term. The half century following the foundation of the Asiatic Society was a period of intense activities mainly on the reports of the monuments and inscriptions which filled the pages of the journal * Asiatic Researches*. This was the period which saw the discovery and recording of the most important of the Indian caves—Elora, Ajanta, Kanheri and the first *Stupas*—Sanchi Manikyala. All these were, however, achieved individually. The British Government, however, came to show only a general interest in India's past. In 1800 the Governor-General Lord Wellesley sent Francis Buchanan to carry out a survey of Mysore.

Although this was mainly topographical and statistical, it none-the-less gave some attention to archaeological matters. It was, therefore, the first sign of practical interest shown by the government in Indian archaeology. Following Buchanan many like-minded scholars realised the need of planned and methodical study of the subject. But for want of effective legislation the remains of the past could not be properly safeguarded. Thus, when Lord Minto was taking steps for the preservation of the *Taj Mahal* and when Lord Moira was carrying out restoration work at Sikandara, at the same time various monuments were demolished by the government orders. Captain J.B. Seely accused the government for its apathy to take steps in preserving Elora: "Affecting to venerate antiquities, and the monuments of a passed age and mighty people, it is our duty to endeavour to maintain, as far as we can see, their original beauty and design; for while we esteem and admire these venerable and singular works, it becomes imperatively to preserve them". The department of Indian art in the British Museum reflects the credit of the British officials
and also the Indians for the ability of protecting the evidences of the heritage of India.

Princeps’ Works: It was James Prinsep who acting as the Secretary of the Asiatic Society from 1833 to 1840 A.D. radiated an aura of such intense humanity whose loss the Indians felt in almost a personal way. It was he who deciphered the Brahmi and Kharoshthi scripts. This was an achievement of outstanding importance. This led to the creation of a whole generation of scholars with a properly systematic approach. This prepared the way for later conquests of archaeology. In the new generation of scholars the most pre-eminent place is occupied by James Fergusson whose work on Indian architecture is the most pioneering one. Next comes Col. Meadows Taylor who was the first to investigate megaliths of southern India. He was also the first to realise the importance of stratigraphy.

Establishment of the Indian Museum and the Archaeological Survey of India

When the British government took over the affairs of India from the hands of the East India Company in 1858 A.D., the government realised the urgency of embarking on a systematic cultural policy. Thus, the Asiatic Society of Bengal received from the government an annual grant of £50 for its zoological collections and another £50 for its publications in the field of oriental studies. The government also came out with a plan to establish imperial museum “for the collection and exhibition of specimens of natural history in its branches and of other objects of interest, physical, economical and historical. The Indian Museum was founded at Calcutta. In a brief period between 1861 A.D. and 1866 A.D. the first Archaeological Survey of India so closely identified with the name of Alexander Cunningham was born; and after a period of intense activities it was suddenly closed down. Confusion prevailed for some years until 1871 A.D. when Cunningham returned to the post of Director-General of a reconstituted Archaeological Survey of India. Again, the Archaeological Survey was abolished on the recommendation of its own Director-General—this time James Burgess (who had succeeded
Cunningham). The Archaeological Survey was re-established with a permanent form in 1902 A.D. Now it carried out an astonishing amount of work. The intense works of this period are recorded in *Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India*, the *New Imperial Series* and *Epigraphia Indica*. These are reports mainly on the survey of topography and monuments.

**Works of Smith, Marshal, Wheeler and Dikshit**

The administrators and politicians considered it in line with "imperial" principles to take an interest in the monuments of the past. It was not merely fortuitous that the appointment of Sir John Marshall as head of the new Archaeological Survey in 1902 A.D. almost coincided with the publication of V.A. Smith's *Early History of India*. The year 1904 A.D. saw the passing of the *Ancient Monuments Preservation Act*. Marshall organised the excavation works which included the large scale exploration of Taxila. He also introduced new standards and techniques, scientific methods of restoration and the use of chemistry as an auxiliary technique. A complete reorganisation of the department and the introduction of the most rigorous stratigraphic techniques were the most remarkable achievements of Sir Mortimer Wheeler who was the Director-General from 1944 to 1948 A.D. His predecessor K.N. Dikshit had shown a similar insistence on certain fundamental principles. But it was Wheeler to whom the Indians owe the outstanding efficiency of the Archaeological Department, its high standard and the thorough training of its staff.

Before Wheeler the archaeological works were confined to a limited range of sites mainly of Buddhist centres. Today both in India and Pakistan the earlier period is properly receiving the attention which was denied in the past. There remains to be done still more works in Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim archaeology.

**Opinion of M. Taddei**

A word of caution may be made about one of the most important aspects of the administration of India's heritage of art and archaeology. The strenuous efforts that
are being made to stop the export of ancient objects from India offer the best hope of limiting the ravages caused by clandestine excavations. These efforts should be continued with increasing vigilence. The universities and other private bodies are doing excellent work in harmony with the official body, namely the Archaeological Survey of India. To say in the words of Professor Maurizie Taddei: “It is fair to say that among countries with a rich heritage from the past—not excluding the countries of Europe—India is the only one to achieve complete harmony between the aims pursued by the government agency responsible for antiquities and by the institutes of scientific research, particularly the universities.”

What does Archaeology Need Today for the Study of Indian History?

Archaeology Should have a Multi-disciplined Approach: The methodology of the archaeological study should be re-oriented. It needs a multi-disciplinary approach to the problems facing archaeology. As for the pre-historic archaeology, practically nothing has been done except some collection of tools and that too mostly from the surface. The context in which these human artefacts occur has to be studied in great detail. It is generally understood that the sea-level fluctuated many times during the Pleistocene period. Thus, if the river-terraces yielding Stone Age artefacts can be correlated with Pleistocene sea-levels, it may be possible to place the Indian Stone Age industries in an international time-scale and thus assess their evolution in the world context. The soil-covers and the flora and fauna of this period would help us in reconstructing the environment in which the pre-historic man lived. That being so, the archaeologist being the main investigator must be assisted by the geologists, the botanists and the zoologists. Not to speak of such finding of environment, even the skeletal remains of the pre-historic man is yet to be discovered. Sustained expeditions both to open-air places and cave-sites with the help of physical anthropologists may produce results. This is all about pre-historic period.
What Should be the Approach for Proto-History

Coming to the proto-historic period, first thing should be to change the emphasis. Emphasis should be placed on the creators rather than to the objects themselves. In other words, our approach should be socio-economic. Since the existing data is not sufficient, it will be necessary to get more datas and new types of datas. For this purpose, co-operation of persons skilled in geography, statistics, metallography etc. should be obtained. In this process the archaeologists will be the central investigator and he will have to be assisted by experts in the sister disciplines.

Need for Archaeological Works Outside India

It is universally accepted that right from the pre-historic time India had cultural contact and even exchange of ideas and materials with her neighbouring countries. It is well known that the Old Stone Age of South India is a borrowing from Africa and the Neolithic culture of eastern India is derived from South-East Asia. The picture has other side. The entire Buddhist art of Afganistan, central Asia, China, Japan and South-East Asia is the product of Indian spirit and inspiration. There was a great deal of contact of India with Iran and Iraq. The discovery of ivory image of Lakshmi in the lava of Pompeii goes a long way to prove the contact of India with Rome. Thus, to understand the culture and history of India we need understand what happened in the neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, we do not have even a single archaeologist who can claim to have specialist in the archaeology of even a single of the neighbouring countries. Opportunites should be available for Indian archaeologist to study in detail the archaeology of the neighbouring countries and it may be necessary to launch a joint effort of different countries working together and at places even the international collaborations may be necessary to find solutions of the problems like the movements of the Indo-Europeans.
Under-water Archaeology

Archaeology plays an equally effective role in the historic period. South-Western coast of India was a station of Indo-Roman trade but none has so far satisfactorily identified that place. It is reassuring that excavation on the south-eastern coast of India has clear indication that parts of Indo-Roman sites like Arikamedu and Kaveripumattinam are now below sea-level. It is, therefore, not unlikely that those ancient sites are now under water. Only answer to the problem is under-water archaeology which, if properly conducted, is bound to bring to light not only the Roman remains but also wreckages of the Arab ships. No wonder, a search in the Gulf of Cambay will bring to light the cargo that would sail between Lothal and Ur (in Mesopotamia) during the Indus Valley Civilisation. In the task of underwater archaeology a great deal of assistance will have to come from National Institute of Oceanography and even the Indian navy. It may be guessed that such a co-operation will be forthcoming and the authorities concerned may take this as a labour of love.

Assessment of Archaeological Progress

About the progress of archaeology in India Professor M.G.S. Narayanan observed: "Surveying the field of ancient Indian studies, the most striking feature is the progress of the comparatively new science of archaeology which has taken giant strides in India in recent years. Growing out of the old bureaucratic structure of the Archaeological Survey of India, it has been able to penetrate the university system as an academic discipline. The status of archaeology has changed from that of an ancillary subject in the service of history into that of an almost full-fledged science." Several Universities and academic bodies like Aligarh University, Allahabad University, Calcutta University, Deccan College, Poona, Karnataka University, Kuruksheta University, Madras University, M.S. University of

Baroda, Vikram University of Ujjain, etc. have been undertaking excavations on a large scale. They have established the case for non-official bodies working in this field. They have also trained a set of competent people to collect, interpret and assess archaeological data.

A promising sign of new life in archaeology is the founding of Epigraphical Society in 1974. The great wealth of our epigraphic records will run literally into lakhs of inscriptions. Their pre-occupation with territorial conquests and property transactions removes effectively the indological illusion about ancient India’s other worldliness. While intensive study of inscriptions could yield more insight into the earlier phases of institutions and ideas, the epigraphists, in general, have been devoting all their attentions to the problems of chronology and dynastic history.

*Progress in Epigraphy*: Researches in Indian epigraphy commenced as early as the thirties of the nineteenth century. Within a few decades thereafter the vital role of epigraphy in reconstructing the basic ancient period of India was proved. By the beginning of the present century, thanks to the devoted labours and scientific approach of the scholars, there evolved two new disciplines in the epigraphical field—epigraphy proper and its concomitant offshoot palaeography, the twin branches from the same tree. About the progress of epigraphy in the recent times Dr P.B. Desai rightly observes: “During the past seventy years or so, Indian epigraphy is firmly founded and has made considerable advance. In spirit of inherent hurdles, studies in this subject are pursued in many centres of education and research, not only in this country but also abroad. In any universities it has been introduced in the curricula of the post-graduate courses in History and Indology.”

Mr S.R. Rao has quite succeeded in deciphering the writing on nine hundred seals of the Indus Valley Civilisation. He has shown that by 1500 B.C. the Indus people have emerged from their earlier syllabic stage right into an alphabetic system of writing. They spoke an Indo-European language having close affinity to Indo-Aryan in vocabulary, semantics and phonology. Dr P.B. Desai hailed this as “an epoch-making discovery of the century in the field of epigraphy.” According to him: “It
sets at rest many speculative theories and controversial views advanced by various scholars on the subject. Though it may not be the last word on the subject, we have to accept it as the nearest last word.”

Opinion of M.G.S. Narayanan

According to M.G.S. Narayanan, although this type of epigraphy is an essential pre-requisite of reconstructing the past, this form of study alone does not exhaust the tremendous possibilities of epigraphical study. Dr Narayanan suggests that the distribution and characteristics of Asokan edicts not only indicate the boundaries of the Maurya empire but also the forms of inter-penetration between the classical Indian society, Graeco-Bactrian society and tribal society. A phenomenal social dimension can be discerned in the famous Allahabad Prasasti of Samudra Gupta and also hundreds of other inscriptions from other parts of India. Likewise, the Kalinga edicts of Asoka enable us to have a glimpse into the military behaviour in terms of the forced resettlement of the whole populations following defeat in the war. The fact that the evidence of such large-scale depopulation is absent in later inscriptions may provide a useful clue regarding the changing forms of political authority and social necessity. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta refers to the annexation of territories and the collection of tribute from the vanquished rulers, but not to the compulsory transfer of people. The Karhad Plates of Krishna III, the Rashtrakuta king mentions that after his conquest over the south he not only extracted tribute from several rulers but also uprooted the Chola dynasty and parcellled out their land among his own servants, which is a clear indication of feudal practice. In order to understand the difference in stages of social development we are to read the lines of the text against the background of the entire archaeological-historical context. It may be hoped that the epigraphists in India would expand the scope and

character of their investigation and thereby render all these varied forms of service.

Again, the epigraphists should analyse the character of land grants that began with the Satavahanas. Such grants tell us of the geographical extension of Brahanical and other settlements. They also record the minute regional variations in the process of developing culture. Every new land grant stands for a new settlement and every such settlement signifies a mutation of the original culture under frontier conditions. Both the eastward movement and the southward movement over a timespan of centuries warrants a detailed scrutiny.

**Opinion of Narul Hasan**: Professor Narul Hasan in his Presidential address in the Indian History Congress in 1972 makes a summary of the progress of archaeology in India. The achievement in the field of proto-history is substantial. The numerous excavations that have been carried out in recent years, particularly by the university departments, have enabled us to understand more clearly the sequence of social development during the proto-historic period. If we take the Harappan culture as the base, we are today in a better position to know more about the cultures that preceded it and those that followed it. The culture of ochre colour pottery appears to have links with the pre-Harappan culture even though it seems to have evolved in the upper Ganga Yamuna doab almost independently and contemporaneously with the Harappan culture. The black and red ware culture of the central India seems to be independently developed by the tribes who still survive in these regions. If anthropological evidence is taken into account and studied alongside the archaeological finds and geological data, it would appear possible that these tribal people of central India extended their “booleys” over vast areas of the Gangetic plain going as far east as Bihar, possibly even Bengal. Its spread in Rajasthan, Gujarat and the South Narmada areas is, of course, well established. Thanks to the keen interest taken by our archaeologists, our knowledge of the chalcolithic culture of this period is today much more accurate.

The coming of the painted grey ware culture towards the end of the second millenium B.C. and its spread in the upper Ganga, Yamuna valley extending further eastwards upto Banaras has been carefully studied. There seems a great deal of
agreement among archaeologists that this culture can be associated with the Aryans. Of special significance is the fact that people of painted grey ware culture not merely brought with them tamed horses but also introduced iron and iron technology, that brought in major social changes. As iron and iron technology began to spread eastwards, and as richer deposits of iron were discovered, we find the emergence of settled agriculture, of towns and settled villages and consequently of new social institutions as well as ideological and religious trends.

The work done on the social origins of Buddhism and on the growth of society from about the sixth to the seventh century B.C. is most significant. One may not subscribe to the view that it marks the beginning of slavery, but there is no denying the fact that by this time class divisions appear unmistakably. It is encouraging that the significance of early empires and money economy has been noticed by the archaeologists.

Recent years have noticed the significant discoveries belonging to the first three centuries of the Christian era. A large number of urban sites have been unearthed not only in central Asia but also in India. It is surprising that the Kushana levels are in a flourishing condition both in and outside India. This will have to be accounted for. Since the Kushana empire extended over India, Pakistan, Iran and Soviet central Asia, co-ordinated and sustained efforts will have to be made by the archaeologists and historians of all these countries to study the cultural heritage of the period.

Excavations during the last twenty-five years have certainly established the cultural sequence in chronological order, and made possible the periodwise identification of the main traits of material culture. But since almost all of them have been vertical they do not give us much idea about communal life, about the organisation of society and economy. It is now time for the archaeologists to take up horizontal digging at least at a few selected sites with a view to understanding the nature of rural or urban settlement as the case may be.

About the deficiency in the archaeological study the following observations of Professor Narul Hasan's is a nice reminder: "These studies are inadequate in two important prospects; firstly the process of social change which seems to be
clearer for North India, is not so clear for south India. I hope that the archaeologists will devote special attention to the archaeological studies of South India for the proto-historic period. The second deficiency is that our archaeologists have not been given adequate facilities to study the inter-relationship between the growth of cultures in northern India with those of the neighbouring countries. I am glad that the Government of India have initiated a programme of bilateral archaeological agreements with neighbouring countries. I fervently hope that the universities will develop expertise in the study of archaeology of neighbouring countries. I would also urge the archaeologists and historians of ancient India to devote greater attention to researches in the historical geography of the period.  

Opinion of G.H. Khare

Dr G.H. Khare's estimate of the progress of archaeology is worth quoting: "Now-a-days a number of scholars are devoting their time and energy for the study of pre-history and proto-history. For this study they have neither inscriptions nor coins nor any writing to help them. Therefore, these scholars have to make a very detailed and intensive comparative study of the remains of houses, earthenware and potsherds, several types of beads, seals, terracotta statues, etc. not only found in the excavations carried in India but articles found in the excavations in the Middle East including Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Greece, Italy, Germany, etc. Then and then only the excavators can correctly interpret the finds. The scholars have to go a step further. If they do not find any similar objects which have been correctly dated, the finds are required to be subjected to carbon 14 and other tests to decide the age of those finds. This is a very laborious task requiring the help of physical sciences."  

Opinion of K.G. Krishnan

We may conclude this topic with the opinion of Dr K.G. Krishnan on the achievements and importance of archaeology.

The following are some of the recent archaeological yields. The occurrence of neolithic celt is reported from numerous sites of Dharmapuri and Salem districts of Tamil Nadu, and at Mallapadi, a neolithic dwelling pit with paintings of horse riders and humped bull in the caves nearby was noticed. Black and red ware sherds have been sighted in some parts of the same district. The discovery of a sherd with some inscriptions has been reported without any detail.

The discovery of sites in Rajasthan associated with advanced technology in the use of copper with O.C.P. ware has provided a link with the Indus valley culture. Numerous copper arrow heads, fish hooks, celts, etc. were dug up from the sites which are not far from the Ganeshwar-Khetri copper belt. Carbon dating (2500-2000 B.C.) has confirmed this fact. The importance of these finds cannot be underestimated especially when we are in dire need of more light on the riddle of the Indus culture.

We find that the attempt of Mr S.R. Rao to prove conclusively that the language of the Indus script as Brahmi is going ahead, while the other group is yet to substantiate the claim in favour of the Dravidian language.

Material remains including coins assignable to the time of the Satavahanas during their occupation in areas of Madhya Pradesh and northern part of Maharashtra have been exposed throwing light on the conditions obtained there in the third century A.D. One of the sites has yielded evidence of its occupation from the Megalithic period (c. 1000 B.C.). Some coins assignable probably to the Mitras and the Bhadras immediately before the period of the Satavahanas have been traced in Madhya Pradesh.5

After making a brief record on the progress of archaeology in recent years, Dr Krishnan goes to give some guidelines for what the archaeologists should do:

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The need for the steady exploration of the vast areas in our country to discover new inscriptions cannot be overemphasised both from the point of view of their value and the risk of their being lost with the passage of time. The recent legislation on antiquities has focused the attention of the workers concerned only on such stray items, inscribed or uninscribed, lying with the connoisseurs of art or with the innocent descendants sitting tight over their family heirlooms. These workers, namely the Registering Officers are bringing to light many inscriptions and also publishing them mostly in journals or publications in the regional languages. It is necessary that some co-ordination is effected between these items of work and similar work done by the regular and established departments of epigraphy, both in the centre and the states.

The field of historical archaeology deserves better attention than ever. The material remains recovered from the excavations form an invaluable source of information on contemporary life. An organised effort should be made to conduct more excavations in all parts of the country including the neglected south. We find a big gap between the actual works and the publication of the results. As a result, the researchers and the historians are handicapped for want of systematically analysed reports on excavations. What is needed is that proper training should be arranged for selected persons both in excavations and preservations of scientific reports on them.

No less important is the field of art and architecture. It is felt that early steps should be taken to study the subject in relation to the life of the people contemporaneous with the art in question. Sufficient training must be given to the qualified aspirants in analysing the features of art and architecture keeping in mind the religious background and the contemporary trend of thought.
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