

ANCIENT INDIA.

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PREFACE

The main purpose of this book is to present to the undergraduates of Indian Universities a brief but connected narrative of the ancient history of India, but it can also be read with advantage by a general reader who is interested in the subject and is not in a position to devote sufficient time to the study of advanced books. An attempt has therefore been made to make the subject simple and interesting. It is obvious that in some respects, this is the most complicated period of Indian history. History was not studied and developed as a separate and regular science in Pre-Muslim India, and therefore "Ancient India", as Prof. Rapson remarks "has no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or Tacitus." We have to depend almost entirely on indirect sources for reconstructing the connected story of the growth of civilization in those days. This makes the task of the writer difficult, particularly when the book is intended for beginners and he has to keep in view the very important fact that the students' mind should not be burdened with unnecessary details. For this reason minor details have been avoided except where they become indispensable.

It may be added that every care has been taken to make the narrative simple so that the students may understand thoroughly the main currents of political, social, religious and cultural movements and all those factors which have played a vital role in the evolution of ancient Indian civilization. Some references and quotations have been incorporated with the object of acquainting the students with standard works on the subject as well as the methods of presenting and developing an argument.

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S. M. H.

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INTRODUCTION

The Sub-Continent of India covers a vast area and has a large population of nearly 400 millions. To-day, as in the past, her population is comprised of peoples of diverse races, speaking different languages and living under different social conditions. From Pre-Historic times down to the early centuries of the Modern Period, India has been attacked by invaders and accommodated immigrants from various countries of Asia and Europe. As most of these foreigners preferred to stay on and build their homes in this charming land her population kept on growing in numbers as well as in diversity. The frequent repetition of this process of fresh conquests and migrations into India and the peculiar conditions of a caste-ridden society have made her 'an ethnological museum', and rendered the achievement of her political or cultural unity impossible. They also created stupendous difficulties in the path of those who were anxious to give her a uniform system of administration. We know that in spite of their noble efforts in this direction neither Asoka nor the Emperors of Delhi succeeded in achieving this goal. And there is no doubt that it was this aspect of Indian political life which had made great rulers like Sultan Mohd bin Tughlaq and Akbar take the almost revolutionary steps of unifying the heterogeneous elements among their subjects by creating bonds of a common culture. That they failed miserably does not affect either the grandeur of their ideas or the sincerity of their efforts. But their failure proved beyond doubt that although their ideal was sublime it could not be materialized because the forces of disintegration were too formidable to be crushed. It was

therefore in the face of considerable difficulties that some of the strongest of Indian rulers could manage to keep the whole or a major portion of the Indian sub-continent under one administrative system; with the disappearance of their strong personalities this artificial 'union', being a creation of their individual labours rather than natural and evolutionary forces, crashed to pieces like a house of cards. This explains to a great extent the frequent changes in the ruling dynasties of India and the phenomenal growth and abrupt decline of their power.

India which is separated from the rest of the world by a range of mountains in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south may be divided into three regions: (1) The Northern or Indo-Gangetic plain covering almost the whole of Northern India. (2) The Deccan plateau or the table-land between the Narbada in the north and the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers in the south. (3) The Far South or Tamil Land lying to the south of these rivers.

The northern plains covering almost the whole of the area known as *Arjavarta* in ancient literature and called by the name of Hindustan in later ages is the most important of the three regions from our point of view. Besides the noteworthy fact that it has been "the seat of the principal empires and the scene of the events most interesting to the outer world," we have fuller sources for studying and reconstructing its history than for any other part of the country. The fertile soil and easy accessibility of these wide plains have always attracted immigrants and invaders from the comparatively

rough and inhospitable lands lying beyond the mountains which contain several passes, particularly in the north-west. In the centre the Vindhya and the Satpura hills with the Narbada flowing between them form a barrier between the Indo-Gangetic Valley and the Deccan plateau. This is an important factor, for it has deeply affected the course of Indian history and encouraged the growth of independent states in the South.

The Indo-Gangetic Basin is a vast and almost flat plain stretching from the mouth of the Ganges to the delta of the Indus. The Ganges with its many tributaries fertilizes the area covered, roughly speaking, by U.P., Bihar and Bengal. The fact that the river is sacred in the eyes of the Hindus and has been associated from the earliest times with their religious rites and gatherings is responsible for the growth of a series of flourishing towns on its banks. Hardwar, Prayaga and Kashi are some of the greatest centres of Hindu pilgrimage in Northern India. In ancient and medieval times these rivers acted as great highways, providing considerable transport facilities. This again helped the growth of towns and cities which were useful either for political and strategic or for industrial and commercial purposes. Delhi and Agra may be quoted as examples of places which had a unique strategic importance and Cawnpore and Calcutta represent the towns which have risen into prominence for industrial and commercial reasons. Before rushing to the sea the Ganges receives the water of the mighty Brahmaputra which joins her in lower Bengal after having fertilized a considerable area in the province of Assam.

The Indus and its tributaries fertilize the plains of the Punjab and Sindh and have played a vital role in the ancient and medieval history of India. The earliest stages of the Indo-Aryan civilization which are reflected in the stanzas of the *Rig-Veda* were attained in this area. Similarly, it was in this region that the first conquests of Islam were achieved. The Sultans of Delhi had to keep a watchful eye over the "Land of the Five Rivers" with a view to check the waves of Mongol invasions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Again, under the Mughals the territories of Lahore and Multan formed one of the most important parts of their Empire. On the decline of the Mughal Power the Sikhs established their state in this region, and thus its significance was never lost in spite of radical changes in political life and administrative organization. It is to be noted that the two great civilizations—Aryan and Islamic—which have affected the life of the Indian peoples so deeply entered the country by the North-west passes and built their first homes in the basin of the Indus and her tributaries. In our own days the development of the irrigation system of the Punjab and the growth of Karachi, the nearest Indian port to Europe, have considerably increased the importance of this region.

The wide plateau of the Deccan is a vast triangle with its apex southwards. It is not so uniformly fertile as the northern plains and is bounded in the north by hills and rivers. In ancient times the Vindhya hills were considered to be an impenetrable barrier, dividing India, so to say, in two separate parts. This fact has played an important part in shaping the course of India's history. It encouraged the growth of independent

The Deccan
Plateau.

States and the evolution of a separate culture in the south. Many attempts were made by powerful rulers of the north to hold sway over this part of the country, but few of them succeeded in achieving this object.

The Far South or the region lying between the Tungabhadra and the southern-most extremity of India, is also known as the Tamil land. It has had a history and culture of its own, which was rarely affected by the course of events in other parts of the Indian Sub Continent. There is no doubt that from time to time war like princes rose to power and carried their victorious arms even beyond these natural barriers, but, normally speaking, the states of Southern India remained independent and developed their own traditions and a separate culture. No student can ignore the important fact that climatic conditions have played a large part in shaping the growth of civilization in India.

CHAPTER I.

Sources of the History of Ancient India.

Professor Rapson is right when he remarks that "Ancient India has no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or Tacitus". The ancient people of this country never studied History as a separate branch of knowledge, and this is why we do not find a single good book which may be called a work on history in the true sense of the word. Kalhana's *Rajtarangini*, "the only professedly historical work", which deals with the history of the kings of Kashmir, was composed in the twelfth century. For the earlier period we have therefore to rely almost entirely on sources which are generally utilized for confirming and enriching the information supplied by contemporary writers. After a careful and laborious study of ancient literature, inscriptions, coins and monuments, scholars have been able to reconstruct the history of ancient India. But in spite of their creditable achievements in this field we possess very meagre and absolutely inadequate information on certain portions of that period.

A detailed discussion of the utility and significance of these sources is not possible here. It is beyond doubt, however, that the most important of these sources of our information is the evidence supplied by inscriptions and coins. The former carry us as early as the third century B. C. Asoka's edicts engraved on stone pillars or rocks have provided the student of Indian history with ample material for contemporary times. Of these

Inscriptions
and Coins.

official inscriptions some are commemorative as, for instance, the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Besides these, we have a large number of inscriptions recorded on metal, most of which are grants of land or dedications and give us some idea of the administration of the reigning monarch. In some cases stone tablets have been found containing parts of books on different subjects. These inscriptions have added considerably to our knowledge of ancient chronology and geography.

The legends on coins have also proved to be a useful source of historical information. Like inscriptions they help us in determining and also correcting dates given by contemporary writers. In the case of coins having no dates we form our opinions and conclusions by comparing the types and styles of the various groups. The numismatic evidence has sometimes brought to light many new facts and figures and is consequently receiving careful attention of many scholars. The study of coins has played a very vital part in the reconstruction of the history of the Indo-Greek Kingdoms.

The archaeological evidence obtained through a scientific study of ancient monuments and works of art is another important source of information, not only for the ancient period but also for the medieval and modern ages. The labours of the Archaeological Department of the Government of India have been crowned with great success, and the recent excavations at Taxila and Mohenjo daro have opened entirely new chapters of the culture and history of ancient India. Similarly, the conservation and maintenance of Muslim monuments have enabled us

to form a fairly correct idea of the advanced stage of civilization which India had attained in those times.

Tradition and literature are also an important factor in the study of ancient Indian History. From the advent of the Aryans to the fourth century B. C. our main source of information is the religious or semi-religious literature produced at various stages of the development of their civilization and the traditions of the different faiths that rose into prominence. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* give us a fairly good picture of the religious and social conditions of the Aryans after their settlement in the land of the Punjab. Their gradual movement eastward as well as the conspicuous changes in the various activities of their life can be studied in other works. The *Brahmanas*, and the *Upanishads*, the epics and the *Puranas* as well as the Buddhist and Jain texts help us in reconstructing the history of this period.*

In addition to the religious works mentioned above we have other compositions which are equally useful for our purposes. Bana's *Harshacharita*, for instance, is a literary rather than historical work, but it gives much valuable information about the author's patron. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* has been discovered only recently and throws abundant light on the reign and administrative organization of the early Mauryans. Col. Tod's '*Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*' is full of a number of interesting but not always

*Dr. Raychaudhuri has divided this literature into five classes *Veda* Political History of Ancient India. pp. 26.

authentic stories and facts about Rajput families. There are besides these many other works on different branches of knowledge from which laborious scholars have been able to pick up scanty but valuable historical information *

Last but not the least important of these sources is the testimony of those foreigners who visited this country either in their official capacity or as curious travellers. Of the varied accounts left by these foreigners some are held in great esteem. In the ancient period we had had some distinguished visitors who have recorded their impressions of Indian life and culture. "The earliest foreign notice of India is that in the inscriptions of the Persian King, Darius, son of Hystaspes, at Persepolis, and Naksh-i-Rustam, the latter of which may be referred to the year 486 B. C." † The Greek writers also give scanty information based on hear-say, for it was the invasion of Alexander the Great that 'lifted the veil' and removed Europe's ignorance of India. In the fourth century B. C. we have in our country Megasthenes, who came as an ambassador to the Mauryan court and left a valuable account of what he saw in this country. Unfortunately we have but only a portion of his work preserved in fragments. Arrian and Curtius have left valuable accounts of Alexander's campaigns.

* The date and authorship of *Arthashastra* have been the subject of controversial articles by several writers. Kautilya has sometimes been called the 'Indian Machiavelli' for the similarity of his political ideas with the Italian writer.

† 'The Early History of India' by V. A. Smith, 2nd edition, 1938 p. 10.

We also find references to India in the early histories of China. But for more valuable is the testimony of those Chinese travellers who started coming to this country after the introduction of Buddhism in China; Fahien and Hiuen Tsang are the most remarkable of these pilgrims. In the beginning of the eleventh century came the well-known Muslim scholar, Alberuni, who outshines them all because he was not satisfied with what he heard or saw but stayed here, learnt the Sanskrit language, studied the philosophy and the literature of the Hindus and then wrote his monumental and scientific account of India, which has rightly been called "a marvel of well digested erudition".

Thus, it is on the basis of these varied sources that scholars have been able to reconstruct the history of Ancient India. It is evident that in spite of the tremendous amount of labour put in by patient researchers there still remain dark periods of Indian History, about which we know almost nothing. This is indeed unfortunate. But we need not despair of newer discoveries and richer information which is bound to come as a result of ceaseless research work which is being done in this field.

Indus Valley Civilization.

The settlement and civilization of the Aryans in the Indo Gangetic plains used to form the earliest chapters of Indian History and the hymns of the *Rig Veda* were the main source of our knowledge for this age. But recently the Archaeological Department of the Government of India has made valuable excavations and discoveries in Harappa (Punjab) and Mohenjo daro (Sindh) which have revealed the existence of an older civilization. The study of the Indus

Valley Culture takes us to an age five thousand years old and thus expands the scope of our historical studies by about two milleniums. The most striking feature which distinguishes it from the Aryan life is that it was essentially urban.

The excavations at Mohenjo-daro (city of the dead) have led to the discovery of a town which seems to have been well laid out. It was built of bricks and many of the houses were provided with wells and bath-rooms. Besides the comparatively large number of private houses the city contained several public buildings the most prominent of which were a pillared hall and a great public bath.

A careful examination of the remains of this city and the various articles that have been discovered there has enabled the archaeologists to form an idea of the stage of civilization which had been attained by the people living in that region. They were not unacquainted with agricultural pursuits and seem to have cultivated wheat and barley and bred cattle, sheep and pigs for their food. There is evidence to show that the other animals they knew included elephants, camels, tigers, monkeys and buffaloes besides horses and dogs. Of the metals known to them copper was utilized for weapons and utensils while gold and silver were used for ornaments. It is to be noted that the Aryans of the early Vedic period were not acquainted with silver and called it white gold when they first saw it. Precious stones and ivory were also used for ornamental purposes, and cotton and wool were woven into cloth. As weapons of war they used spears, bows and axes but do not seem to have been acquainted with the use of swords. The pictographic style of inscriptions and the figures of animals which appear on the seals

bear witness to the progress that they had made in the arts of engraving and sculpture. Of their religion little is known, but the Mother Goddess was their principal deity and seems to have played a vital role in their religious life. The dead bodies were cremated or buried.

There are strong reasons to believe that the Indus Valley culture was linked up with the cultures of ancient Iran and Mesopotamia rather than with that of Vedic India. This view is supported not only by the existence of numerous common features in the life of the people living in the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia but also by the fact that the Aryan life of the Vedic period was different from it in many respects. The life in the Indus Valley was urban, while the Aryans were essentially a pastoral people. In the Aryan settlements we find no references to big and well-planned towns like Mohenjo-daro, and most of their activities were closely connected with village life.

CHAPTER II.

The Aryans.

(Vedic Age).

It is almost impossible to guess correctly the age of humanity in this or in any other country. Recent discoveries have, however, proved that man has been living on this globe for a very long period. In the earliest times men lived in a very elementary stage of civilization, seeking shelter in caves and huts or under the rocks and trees. Chase and wild produce were the main source of their supply of food. This period is known as the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age because people generally prepared their implements and weapons from stone, some of which have been discovered in different parts of India. They were rough and simple but satisfied the limited requirements of those times. The next stage in the growth of civilization is called the Neolithic or New Stone Age, because man still depended mostly on stone for his implements although he had now made considerable improvement in their construction and finish. The Neolithic men knew gold, used pottery, domesticated animals and cultivated land. They buried their dead while in the palaeolithic age they were left to be devoured by animals; cremation was probably introduced by the Indo-Aryans.

Iron and
Copper Ages.

Gradually hard metals were discovered and replaced stone in the preparation of tools and weapons. In Northern India iron was preceded by the use of copper; but in the South stone gave

place to iron directly without the intervention of any other metal. The periods during which these metals were generally used by the people for their ordinary requirements are known after them. In Europe the Bronze Age intervened between the Stone and the Iron Ages; but it appears bronze was never popular in ancient India, and consequently we had no Bronze Age here. Some scholars have ventured to suggest that copper was generally used in the second and iron in the first millenium B.C.

India is a sub-continent as extensive as the whole of Europe without Russia and is populated by a number of peoples of different types with different languages. The process of the mixing of diverse races has been going on for such a long time that it is impossible to determine the lines of demarkation distinguishing the descendants of one people from the other. It is clear however, that we have two main types in the Indian population. The tall and fair-skinned people of the upper castes in Northern India and the Brahmans in the South may be regarded as the descendants of the Indo-Aryans; while the short-statured and dark-skinned people found mostly among the lower castes and the jungle tribes are descended from the Pre-Aryan inhabitants of the country. This division should not be considered either exhaustive or accurate, because a number of factors have been acting and counter-acting on the growth of the Indian population. The most conspicuous feature of the history of India has been the ceaseless migration of foreigners through the north-western and north eastern passes in the mountains. The immigrants from the north west have been more frequent and numerous

and have consequently left deeper and more obvious marks on the civilization of the country. But it is not difficult to trace the influence of the immigrants of the Mongolian race in the neighbourhood of the Himalayan range*.

Another feature that strikes us is the difference between the people of the north and the south. Its reasons are obvious. The geographical situation of the peninsula has kept it comparatively safe from the effects of invasions, and conquest and consequently the civilization of the north has penetrated but slowly through the hills and jungles of Central India. Intelligent eyes can read even today the results of this isolation of the southerners in their physical features, their social customs, their religious ideas and their languages.

The ethnology and the languages of India have been constantly subjected to drastic modifications on account of foreign invasions. The changes thus effected have been vital and extensive and have made it difficult for us to distinguish the descendants of one race from the other or the aborigines from the foreigners. Some writers have held that the Dravidians were the original inhabitants of India. This hypothesis has

* 'The evidence of ancient sculptures, as seen at Barhut (Bharhut) and Sanchi, combined with that of certain institutions, indicates clearly that eighteen hundred or two thousand years ago the Tibetan type was much more prominent in the plains of Northern India than it is at the present day. In the *Mahabharata*, for instance, we find Draupadi married to five brothers at once. That kind of marriage, technically called polyandry, still is a Tibetan and Himalayan custom, and is absolutely opposed to Aryan principles'. (The Oxford History of India, p. 7).

been disproved by recent researches* and we have to seek the descendants of the aborigines of India among the numerous primitive tribes which still inhabit mountainous districts and other regions difficult of access. Such, for example, are the Gonds, found in many different parts of the country, who remain even to the present day in the primitive stage of civilization, using flint implements, hunting with bows and arrows and holding the most rudimentary forms of religious belief.

The view that the Dravidians came into India from the north-west in pre historic times is supported by the fact that the Brahui language which is spoken in certain districts of Baluchistan belongs to the family of the Dravidian languages of Southern India. Some scholars have questioned the above theory on the ground that the Brahui type of tribe is ethnically Iranian rather than Dravidian. But this ethnographical change has been due to the fact that the tribe lives in the neighbourhood of the Turco-Iranian peoples and the absence of social exclusiveness has facilitated recruitment from other tribes. There are strong reasons, therefore, to suppose that the Dravidians like the Aryans were also immigrants in India; but it is not possible, with our limited sources of information, to say anything definitely about their

* "It is the Pre-Dravidian aborigines," says Mr. Thurston "and not the later and more cultured Dravidians, who must be regarded as the primitive existing race..... There is strong ground for the belief that the Pre Dravidians are ethnically related to the ceddas of Ceylon, the Toalas of the Celebes, the Batins of Sumatra, and possibly the Australians". (*The Madras Presidency*, pp. 124-25 as quoted in Cambridge History, Vol. 1, p. 41).

origin or the place from which they came here. On account of their similarity with the Sumerians they have been assigned a Western-Asian origin.

However, on their migration into India the Aryans found a strong Dravidian civilization, and traces of their languages can be found in ancient Sanskrit as well as minor dialects. They had a short stature, dark colour and broad noses. Their religion mainly consisted of demon-worship, and after their contact with the Aryans the latter adopted some of these demons, giving them new names and identifying them with their own gods and goddesses. In the south the Dravidians had greater opportunities of developing their civilization the strongest proof of which is found in the Dravidian family of languages, comprising Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese, in addition to some less important ones.

That the people of the *Rig-Veda*, who called themselves Aryans (*i.e.* noble of birth and race in contrast to the native Dasas (*i.e.* of dark colour), were from the same stock of human race as the Iranians and Europeans has been established by a comparative study of the Indo-European languages. The original home of their common ancestors, popularly believed to have been somewhere in the southern steppes of Russia, is a subject of controversy. The eastern or Asiatic branch of these migratory people, however, broke up into two sections, one crossing the Hindu Kush and settling in southern Afghanistan and the other occupying Bactria (Balkh) and Iran (Persia). It is impossible to determine the date of their separation accurately, but a careful study of

their ancient literatures shows that a very long interval of time did not intervene between the composition of the earliest hymns of the *Rig-Veda* and the migration of the Aryans into India. Here, as elsewhere, their movement into the interior of the country and the progress of their civilization were controlled and guided by geographical and economic conditions. To distinguish them from the other branches of the Aryan race we call them by the name of 'Indo Aryans'.

The earliest literary source of our knowledge about ancient India is the *Rig-Veda*. It contains more than a thousand hymns collected in ten books. These hymns, most of which are addressed to various gods, were not composed at the same time* or by the same author. Nevertheless they provide us with plenty of useful information about the life and activities of the Aryans. The geographical references in the hymns of the *Rig Veda* have made it possible to determine the region where they were composed. The mention of Kabul, Swat, Kurram and Gomul as well as the names of the important rivers of the Punjab indicate the occupation of southern Afghanistan and the Punjab. The fact that the Jumna is mentioned thrice and the Ganges referred to only once shows that they had not as yet con-

*There is a difference of opinion amongst scholars about the date of the composition of the early Vedic hymns. Prof. Macdonell's suggestion of 1,500 B.C. as the earliest limit is not accepted by some Indian scholars who put it much earlier. The well-known scholar, R.C. Dutt has fixed "the period between 2,000 and 1,400 B.C. as the approximate age of these ancient hymns". (Ancient India, p. 6). B. G. Tilak goes still further and places "the earliest period in the Aryan civilization roughly between 6,000 and 4,000 B.C.

quered the Gangetic valley. These conclusions based on geographical references find further support in other available evidence as, for instance, the references to wild animals, crops and plants.

The most remarkable event mentioned in the *Rig-Veda* is the Battle of the Ten Kings in which Sudas (King of the Tritsus) defeated a confederation of his enemies on the banks of the Parushni (the modern Ravi). This victory was soon followed by another battle on the Jumna in which he routed the combined forces of three tribes under the leadership of King Bheda. Of the ten tribes who had fought against Sudas, five are occasionally mentioned together and seem to have formed a kind of loose alliance. Their names are Purus, Turvasas, Yadus, Anus, and Druhyus. The Purus who lived on the banks of the Sarasvati amalgamated, at a later period, with the Bharatas and formed a new combination known as Kurus who come into prominence in the Brahmanic period.

Besides these inter-tribal battles the Aryans had to wage wars of extermination against the aborigines. The *Vedas* do not give us a connected story or even the main incidents of this war which must have continued for centuries, but we meet with hymns invoking the help and the blessing of gods against the darkskinned aborigines, "who fought with all the obstinacy and skill of barbarians". They are condemned chiefly because they do not worship the Aryan gods.

Aryan tribes were ruled by a king whose most important function lay in protecting the lives and interests of his subjects. In war he led the armies, but we know very little of his activities in the days of peace. The *purohita* (priest)

played a highly important role and was undoubtedly the most influential figure in the Court. "The Vedic Purohita", says A. B. Keith, "was the forerunner of the Brahman statesmen who from time to time in India have shown conspicuous ability in the management of affairs and there is no reason to doubt that a Vicvamitra or a Vasishta was a most important element of the Government of the early Vedic realm".* The numerous references to the families of the *purohitas* show that they commanded a wide influence in the early Aryan society, although it had not become priest-ridden as yet. The kings were usually hereditary but did not enjoy very extensive powers which were limited by the tribal assembly called Samiti or Sabha.†

War was the main occupation of the early Aryans and probably all the men of the tribe had to fight under the leadership of their ruler. The king and his nobles used chariots while the masses fought as foot soldiers; cavalry did not exist although horse-riding was not unknown. For weapons they had spears, swords and axes besides bows and arrows.

The Vedic Aryans were essentially a pastoral people living in small villages protected by hedges or earthworks against wild animals and human foes. Bulls and oxen were used for ploughing the land, dogs for hunting the animals and horses for drawing the chariots; sheep, goats and asses were also domesticated, but the main source of wealth was

*Cambridge History, Vol 1, p. 95.

†Some scholars have suggested that they were two different bodies, Samiti being the tribal and Sabha the village assembly. Ibid, p. 96.

the possession of cattle. Agriculture was their chief industry, *Yava* (barley) being the chief crop. Wheat was cultivated, but rice is not mentioned. Spinning, weaving, dyeing, tanning, carpentry and metal work were some of the other industries that they had developed. The early Aryans were not good navigators and did not go beyond constructing boats of a very simple type which could take them across the rivers but were of no use in the ocean. Fishing is not mentioned as a regular industry.

The Vedic Indians were meat eaters and the slaughtering of oxen accompanied sacrificial rites and ceremonies. Sheep and goats were also slaughtered for food, but the flesh of the horse was probably taken at the time of horse sacrifices only. Milk, Ghee, fruits and vegetables were other important articles of food. It is to be noted, however, that the cow bore a sanctity and has been given the epithet *aghnya* (not to be killed, in the *Rig-Veda*).

Their dress consisted of garments prepared from the wool of the sheep as well as skins. Ornaments were used both by men and women. Similarly, both the sexes wore and combed their hair, although in different manners. Beards were not unusual.

The Vedic Aryans worshipped the various phenomena of Nature, from sky-Father (Dyaus) to the beautiful river goddess Sarasvati. Varuna was 'the sky god *par excellence*' and some of the best hymns in the *Rig-Veda* are addressed to him. But in the course of time Indra, the god of rain, became the most

prominent deity. He was conceived as "the ideal warrior, who rides in his war-chariot, armed with the thunder bolt, helping his worshippers in their battles against their foes the Dasyu, and quaffing huge cups of the exhilarating Soma-juice which they offer to him. His chief exploit was the slaying of the dragon Vrita, who had shut up the kine, the storm-clouds which bring rain to the fields, in the mountain-caverns".* Indra, therefore, held his exalted position because he was believed to shower victories in war and rain in peace. The importance of the sun-worship is shown by the fact that there are no less than five names of the Sun-god, Surya being the most popular. Vishnu, another of the names of the Sun-god in the Vedic Age, became the Supreme Preserver of all beings at a later time. Agni (fire) and Soma came next and were important for the performance of religious rites. Soma was an intoxicating drink extracted from a plant which the Aryans knew even before they entered India. Later on it grew in significance and was identified with Moon. Of the goddesses the most prominent were Ushas (Dawn) and Sarasvati (river goddess). Some of the most beautiful hymns are in praise of Ushas who is sometimes represented as a 'careful mistress of the house', sending people to their work, and sometimes as a handsome and decorated bride.

These are some of the large number of Vedic gods and goddesses who play a very significant part in the life of the Aryans. They protect them from their enemies and pro-

*India, A short cultural History, by H G. Rawlinson, edited by Prof. G. G. Seligman, pp. 27-29.

vide them with all the necessities of material and spiritual life. In the later portion of the *Vedas* we find a marked improvement in their religious conceptions. The monotheistic tendencies become more apparent. "The True is One, although the wise call him by many names". This lofty conception of a Supreme Deity along with the discussion of other complicated problems as, for instance, the Creation of the Universe, provide us with the earliest specimens of Indo-Aryan Philosophy and enable us to see "the journey of the human mind in the Rig-Veda... from the simple, child-like admiration of the ruddy dawn or the breaking storm, to the sublime effort to grasp the mysteries of creation and its great Creator" (Dutt). These philosophical speculations were confined to the "advanced spirits of the age" only, while the simple and ignorant masses still "poured libations and offered cakes" to their old gods.

The *Rig-Veda* does not say much about the life after death. Burial was the earlier method of disposing of the dead, but it gave place to cremation. Yama was the King of the dead; all men went to him after death; he took the virtuous to the realm of happiness. The practice of *sati*, belief in the doctrine of transmigration and the worship of idols did not exist, and temples were not constructed although priests had grown in influence.

The social organization of the early Indo Aryans was patriarchal, family being the centre of the Society. The father was the head of the family and his children and grand-children lived with him in the same house. Woman was held in respect and played an important part in domestic life,

Social
Conditions.

Monogamy was the usual practice, but polygamy was not unknown. Child marriage did not exist, and widows were permitted to remarry but in very rare cases. The authority of the head of the family was extensive, and the ownership of the family property was probably invested in him alone, but individual ownership in movable articles was certainly recognized. The daughters did not inherit the father's property and were regarded less important than the sons who alone could perform the funeral rites. The property of a man having no son passed on to the son of his daughter.

The life of the Vedic Aryans was much too simple to admit of the complicated system of caste distinctions. There is no doubt that they emphatically asserted their superiority over the aborigines whom they conquered and dispossessed of their lands, but no such distinctions were made among the conquerors themselves. But as they settled down in the country their life became more complicated and society more elaborately organized. We have definite evidence in the *Purusha-Sukha* hymn of the *Rig-Veda* of the division of the people into four classes, Brahmans, Rajanyas, Vaishyas and Sudras, which undoubtedly became the foundation of the future caste system of India. This early organization of the Society on a functional basis was, however, fundamentally different from the later caste system because professions were not hereditary in the former case.

The most popular amusement of the warlike Aryan was chariot-racing. Gambling and drinking were his common vices and the former often led him to incur debts. Dancing and music had made considerable progress.

Amusements.

It should be borne in mind that inspite of the persistent researches and precious work done by the scholars our picture of the Vedic life is only dim. Besides "the difficulties of the language of the poems, the strange modes of expression, and the remoteness of the ideas", we find very scanty information which is useful for reconstructing the story of the history and civilization of that period.

—C—

CHAPTER III.

The Aryans.

(Epic Age).

The next stage in the history of the Indo Aryans has often been called 'the Epic Age', although the literature on which we rely for our information is far more varied than is contained in the well known Epic Poems—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Besides the *Samhita** of the *Rig Veda* we have three other Vedas—*Sama-Veda*, *Yajura-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*. Of these collections the first two are comparatively unimportant because they borrow abundantly from the *Rig Veda*: the *Sama-Veda* consists of selected hymns "arranged solely with reference to their place in the Soma sacrifice", and the *Yajura-Veda*, has sacrificial formulas for the presiding priest. The *Atharva-Veda* "represents the old-world beliefs of the common people about evil spirits and the efficacy of spells and incantations rather than the more advanced views of the priests". Although later in date it gives us much useful information about the history of early civilization.

In addition to the *Samhitas* of the *Vedas* we have supplementary works in prose—*Brahmanas*, *Aryanakas* and *Upanishads*—which are regarded by the Hindus as parts of the *Vedas* revealed like the *Samhitas* proper. The

* * "The essential fundamental part of each of the four Vedas is a *Samhita* or collection of metrical hymns, prayers, spells, or charms mixed in some cases with prose passages." (The Oxford History of India by V. A. Smith, p. 17).

Brahmanas are voluminous explanations of the Vedic texts and deal with ceremonial aspect of religion. "They are generally uninteresting and vapid" (Dutt's *Ancient India*, p. 49). The *Aryanakas* or Forest Books, supposed to be "imparted or studied in the solitude of the forest", are included in the *Brahmanas*. The *Upanishads*, literally meaning "sitting under" are philosophical treatises dealing with mystic and secret knowledge and "belong to the latest stage of Brahmana literature". Some of them are the foundation of the *Vedanta* philosophy and teach the doctrine of Pantheism.*

The religious or semi religious literature produced at a comparatively later period has been classified under four headings—*Sutras*, *Epics*, *Law Books* and *Puranas*† and

* It is to be noted that the entire Vedic literature was styled *Sruti* (or 'revelation') and was to be distinguished from the mass of later "traditional learning" known as *Smriti*.

† Max Muller has "divided the Vedic period into four, that of the Sutra literature, 600-200 B.C., the *Brahmanas*, 800-600 B.C., the *Mantra* period, including the later portions of the Rig-Veda, 1000-800 B.C., and the *Chhandas*, covering the older and more primitive hymns, 1200-1000 B.C.," Cambridge History, Vol I, p. 112.

Evidently, this demarkation of the four periods cannot be exact, but it certainly gives us the order of the stages through which Vedic civilization had to pass.

It may be added that by this time some scholars had been able to clarify the technique of the Vedic literature in treatises known as *Vedangas* and *Upavedas*. The six *Vedangas* deal with phonetics (*siksha*), metre (*chhandas*, etymology *Nirukta*), grammar (*Vyakarana*), religious practice (*Kalpa*), and astrology (*Jyotisha*); while the *Upavedas* deal with medicine (*Ayurveda*), war or archery (*Dhanurveda*), music (*Gandharvaveda*), and art and architecture (*Arthashastra* or *Silpa-Veda*).

has served as a valuable source of information about conditions prevailing at that time. The *Sutras* from the word *Sutr*, meaning "a thread", deal with Vedic ritual as well as customary law and were composed with the object of affording "a clue through the mazes of Brahmanical learning contained in the *Brahmanas*". The *Brahmanas* were verbose and complicated in style and, therefore, unsuited for purposes of learning which was done by rote. It was considered necessary to replace them by condensed manuals of ritual and law which could satisfy the requirements of the system of oral instruction. In their enthusiasm for brevity, however, these writers went to such an extreme that sometimes they could not be understood without the help of commentaries. The well-known saying that a Sutra writer would feel as happy on economising a short vowel as on the birth of a son gives us an idea of the exaggerated value attached by him to brevity of expression. The three classes of *Sutras* were the *Srauta Sutras*, dealing with the ceremonies of Vedic sacrifices, the *Grihya Sutras*, explaining the rules of house-hold worship and domestic life, and the *Dharma Sutras*, containing civil, criminal and social laws.

The two well-known sister epics of Hindu India—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—will ever be regarded as a precious source of information for the civilization of the Aryans in this period. They have always exercised a unique influence on Hindu mind and as such have played a vital part in the shaping of Hindu culture. The time of their composition and the authenticity of their contents have been questioned, but this does not diminish their value in the eyes of scholars.

There is a difference of opinion as to which of them is earlier, and in spite of the popular belief to the contrary, some great scholars hold that *Mahabharata* was composed about a century before the *Ramayana*.

The *Mahabharata*, in its present form, consists of about 100,000 couplets and is undoubtedly "a mass of compositions by diverse authors of various dates" O H I., p 28). The main story—the conflict between the Kurus and Pandus—covers only a fraction of the work and is too well-known to be narrated here in details. The hundred Kuru brothers, led by Duryodhana, were the sons of Dhritarashtra, and their cousins, the five Pandu brothers, led by Yudhishtira, were the sons of Pandu. On account of the blindness of his elder brother Pandu succeeds to the ancestral throne at Hastanapur; but his premature death compels the blind Dhritarashtra to take up the work of government. The cousins develop feelings of rivalry and jealousy as they grow into manhood, and the Pandu brothers slip away from the capital. In their exile they succeed in securing alliances of other tribes, the most remarkable being with the Panchalas whose beautiful princess, Draupadi, becomes the beloved wife of all the five brothers. On their return the Pandus succeed in establishing a small but prosperous principality for themselves. This excites Duryodhana's jealousy, who prepares a scheme of overthrowing his rivals by enticing them to a gambling bout in spite of the protests of his old and helpless father. The Pandus lose their state, freedom and wife and are ultimately compelled to go again into a long exile. The fact that they had been made the victims of cheating and their common but beloved wife insulted

and "dragged into the assembly of men and made a slave dishonoured" keeps their anger and spirit of revenge alive and "causes Bhima to vow that he will drink the blood of the Kuru prince, a threat which he fulfils on the field thereafter". Both parties secure allies and meet at the battlefield of Kurukshetra where they fight for eighteen days. All heroes and warriors of note including the Kuru princes are killed and "Yudhishtira waded through blood to the ancient throne of Kuru-land". But ultimately the Pandu brothers retire into the mountains and are "admitted into Indra's heaven". Considerable additions have been made to this epical and original portion of the *Mahabharata* in the form of stories and episodes and philosophical discussions, the most notable being the famous poem '*The Bhagwad-Gita*' or the Lord's Song'.

Unlike the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* is one long poem having about 24,000 couplets and composed by one author (Valmiki). Although it is not entirely free from later additions it deserves being called an epic far more than the *Mahabharata* because it deals with the life and achievements of Prince Rama of Ayodhya.

That the scene of Aryan activities has now shifted towards the east has been taken to indicate that the *Mahabharata* was composed earlier than the *Ramayana*. Rama has to go into exile on account of the machinations of his step-mother, Kaikeyi, who succeeds in securing the throne of her husband, Dasaratha, for her own son, Bharata. Rama's wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana, share the exile with him. The story of Sita's abduction by Ravana, the King of Ceylon, and her recovery by Rama who defeated him with the help

of Hanumana, the king of the 'Monkeys', is well known and is staged by the Hindus like a drama all over the country even to this day. On the expiry of his exile Rama comes back to Ayodhya and occupies his father's throne. But the domestic happiness of the royal couple is marred by the suspicions of the people who believed that Sita had not returned untainted. Rama yielded to the popular demand and sent away her beloved but unfortunate wife Sita who was pregnant was received by Valmiki, the reputed author of the *Ramayana*. In the hermitage of this saint she gave birth to her twin sons who grew into brave and sturdy boys and learnt the epic poem under the guidance of the author himself. Their father met them by accident. He had decided to perform the horse sacrifice and permitted the selected animal to roam at large. It managed to reach the hermitage of Valmiki and was detained by his youthful wards. Rama's servants having failed to recover the animal, he went there in person and embraced the twins "in a passion of grief and repentance" when he learnt that they were his own sons. But the unfortunate Sita ended her life in grief, the earth having "yawned and received its long-suffering child". The *Ramayana*, again unlike the *Mahabharata*, is a didactic poem: its hero, Rama, an incarnation of the deity, is "the ideal man", and his wife, Sita, "a model of womanhood".

The Hindu Codes of law are *Dharma-Sutras*, which have been mentioned above, and *Dharma-Shastras*, the most important of which, *Manu Smriti* has exercised a considerable influence on Hindu society. The word *Dharma*, generally translated as Law, has a wider significance than its modern equivalent. In the

Sutras, for instance, it embraces domestic duties also, especially of a religious and ethical nature. "The *Dharma Sutras* treat of private and associated life together. They mention domestic ritual and stress its importance, but they pass on quickly to speak of social custom, law and government".* In the *Dharma-Shastras*, on the other hand, law is the principal subject discussed, and Manu's Code, one of the oldest of them, is the main source of modern Hindu Law. It is difficult to fix up even approximately the periods during which these works were compiled, but modern scholars generally agree in assigning the *Sutras* to a period before the Christian era and the *Shastras* to the early centuries of its first millenium. It is needless to add that these treatises serve as very useful sources of historical information for this period and throw abundant light on the structure and working of Society in those days.

The *Puranas* are eighteen long poems containing traditional geneologies of gods, rishis and patriarchs as well as philosophic discussions on primary and secondary creation and the accounts of the reigns of some kings and dynasties. Like other works of the ancient period they were composed at different times and constantly subjected to alterations and interpolations by later writers. On the one hand we find that "works of this description and bearing the same title are mentioned in the *Atharva-Veda* and in the *Brahmanas*", while, on the other we can detect "traces of sixteenth century influence" in some

*"The Theory of Government in Ancient India", by Beni Prashad, p. 158.

of them*. It is almost certain, however, that they were "brought up-to-date" and that most of their contents were settled in the centuries following the disintegration of the Gupta Empire. The main obstacle in utilizing these voluminous works is that it is well nigh impossible to distinguish the older portions from later additions, and one has to take ample precautions before arriving at conclusions on the basis of information supplied by them. A striking feature of the *Puranas* which strengthens the view that extensive portions of their contents belong to the latter half of the first millenium of the Christian era is the presence of sectarian disputes,† "each sect upholding the supremacy of its own special deity, chosen from the copious store-house of the modern Hindu pantheon". (Ancient India by R. C. Dutt, p 156).

Evidently, this extensive and varied literature spreads itself over a long period of time during which Aryan Society must have undergone numerous changes. But it is impossible to give here a detailed and chronological account of these changes as reflected in contemporary literature. We can

*Cf. Beni Prashad's *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, Chapter VII, and E. J. Rapson's '*Ancient India*', Chapter V.

Mr. V. A. Smith has attempted to prove that it is incorrect to say that the *Puranas* refer to the Mussalmans. Vide "*The Early History of India*, 2nd edition, pp. 19 and 20.

†The well known Sanskrit scholar, Buhler, describes them as "popular sectarian compilations of mythology, philosophy, history and the sacred law; intended, as they are now used, for the instruction of the unlettered classes, including the upper division of the Sudra Varna". ('*Laws of Manu*' as quoted by V. A. Smith in '*The Oxford History of India*', p. 33).

attempt only a brief and general survey of the main features of political, social and religious life of the people during these centuries. Never-the-less, it will give us a fairly correct idea of the progress made by the Aryans as well as their deterioration in some phases of life and thus enable us to compare these conditions of life with those of their ancestors of the early Vedic Age.

From the Punjab the Aryans moved east-ward and the scene of their activities in these later centuries is the Middle Country or *Madhya-desh* which, according to Manu, extended from Vinasana where the Sarasvati loses itself to Prayaga where the Ganges and the Jumna meet. A change in geographical conditions had naturally brought about a regrouping of the tribes. The position of eminence occupied by the Bharatas in the Vedic Age is now held by the Kurus and their allies, the Panchalas. Kurukshetra, the land of the Kurus, becomes the centre of Brahmanical culture, and the leading tribes of the Rig-Vedic days recede into obscurity. The Bharatas and the Purus seem to have mingled with the Kurus and lost their identity, while the name of the Panchalas clearly suggests that they were composed of five tribes. Asandivat, better known as Hastanapur, was the capital of the Kurus and Kampila and Ahichchatra were the leading towns of the Panchalas. It is impossible to have a connected account of the history of India for this period on the basis of incidental references to kings and dynasties in the contemporary religious literature. The dynastic lists of the *Puranas* as well as the traditional accounts that have come down to us are not entirely reliable, and it is extremely difficult to separate history from myth.

Of the Kuru kings Parikshit was a successful ruler, as, according to a hymn of the *Atharva-Veda*, "his reign was a kind of golden age". He was succeeded by Janamejaya, the eldest and the ablest of his several sons. He was a great warrior and made extensive conquests which included the famous city of Taxila, where Vaisampayana is said to have related to him the story of the *Mahabharata*. He performed the snake as well as the horse-sacrifice; but the fact that his brothers also performed the horse-sacrifice suggests that the kingdom was divided among them. The later Kurus had to face a number of misfortunes, and one of them, Nichakshu, was ultimately compelled to remove his capital to Kausambi. The Vasas and Usinaras were the neighbours of the Kuru — Panchalas, while the Srinjayas were closely connected with the Kurus; but we know very little about them.

After the fall of the Parikshitas the kingdom of Videha comes into prominence. It corresponded to a part of northern Bihar and was separated from Kosala Oudh by the Gandak and from Magadha (South Bihar) by the Ganges. Mithila was the capital of Videha, and its greatest ruler was the well known King Janaka. Unfortunately we do not possess any account of his wars and conquests, but the fact that he is called a Samraj is enough to prove that he was a powerful king.* His fame, however, rests on his patronage of learning which attracted Brahmans from distant places and

*".....by offering the Rajasuya he becomes king and by the Vajapeya he becomes Samraj; and the office of king is the lower, and that of Samraj; the higher" (Satapatha Brahmana as quoted by H. Raychaudhry in 'Political History of Ancient India', p. 32).

made it possible for him to listen to and enjoy their philosophic discussions at the Court. The most celebrated of these scholars was Yajnavalkya Vajasaneya.

To the west of Videha lay the Kosala Kingdom whose rajas traced their descent from Ikshvaku and had their capital at Ayodhya. Prasenajit of Kosala was a contemporary of Buddha and was interested in his teachings, but he did not become a regular convert to the Buddhist faith. The kings of Kosala had to fight frequent wars with the neighbouring states of Kasi and Magadha. They were successful against the former but could not check the growth of Magadha which ultimately absorbed their state.

The ruling family of Kasi (Benares) was descended, according to the *Puranas*, from the well-known tribe of the Bharatas. But it appears that it was later on supplanted by another line of kings known as Brahamadattas who were of Videhan origin. Ajatasatru of Kasi who is reputed like his distinguished contemporary, Janaka, for his patronage of learning belonged to this latter dynasty. Kasi carried on a war with Kosala, which, in spite of some early successes, ended in her total defeat and absorption by the latter.

Besides these tribes of the Madhyadesha there were some important states in the north-west. Gandhara, with Taxila and Pushkalavati as its chief towns, included territories now covered by the Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts. Taxila had already become famous as a seat of learning, and it retained this fame in the period of Buddhist ascendancy. To the south of Gandhara lay the lands of the Kaikeyas and Madras. One of the Kaikeya kings, Asvapati, was a

celebrated teacher and is said to have imparted instruction to a number of well-known Brahmans.

Buddhist and Jain records mention sixteen big States (Mahajanapadas) which existed in India in the period preceding their rise. Their is a slight difference in their lists, but most of the States are common. Some of the important ones not mentioned above deserve a brief notice. *Anga* lay to the east of Magadha. Its capital Champa was situated on the river of the same name and was one of the six great cities in the time of Buddha. There was a war of supremacy between Anga and Magadha, which ended with the destruction of the former at the hands of Bimbisara. The *Vajjis* had formed a confederacy of several tribes which included besides others, the Lichchavis and the Videhans. They were strong enough to be regarded as a 'formidable obstacle to the ambitions of Ajatasatru of Magadha', whose 'envoy saw that the *Vajjis* could be overcome by the King of Magadha not in open battle, but only by diplomacy and breaking up the alliance'. The Lichchavis were perhaps the most influential of the confederated tribes, and eight centuries later Samudragupta speaks with pride that his mother belonged to this ancient line. The *Mallas* were the neighbours of the Lichchavis. Their capital, Kusinara (Kusinagara), was at one time a prosperous and big city, but ultimately their territory was conquered and annexed by Magadha. The *Chedis* were one of the several tribes that surrounded the Kurus. They were an ancient people and are mentioned in the *Rig-Veda*, but we know very little of their early history. The *Vatsa* Kings, with Kausambhi as their capital, trace their

descent from the Bharatas. Their king, Udayana, is an important figure in Sanskrit literature. The *Surasenas* had the important city of Mathura as their capital. They were a noteworthy tribe even in the time of Megasthenes although their territory must by then have long been a part of the Mauryan empire. The Kingdom of *Avanti*, with Ujjain as its capital and roughly corresponding with Malwa, was ruled by Haihaya dynasty. But it was overthrown by a usurper Pradyota under whose descendants the kingdom of Avanti rose to power and became a rival of Magadha. In the end, however, it was defeated and annexed by Magadha.

Magadha, which occupies a very prominent place in the states of northern India had a long history. The earliest of its recorded dynasties was founded by Brihadratha, and all we know of it is that it came to an end in the sixth century B. C. When we enter the realm of history proper as recorded in Buddhist and Jain works we find Bimbisara on the throne of Magadha, who seems to have seized the throne in circumstances more or less similar to those which brought Chandragupta Maurya into power at a later date. He was the son of Bhattiya and distinguished himself by conquering and annexing to his father's dominion the neighbouring state of Anga. Under Bimbisara Magadha rose to greatness, which is indicated by his matrimonial alliances, for among his wives he had princesses of Kosala and Vaisali. He is credited with having founded the city of Rajagriha and having met Buddha several times. His son and successor Ajatasatru was, according to Buddhist tradition, an enemy of that faith and is said to have thrown his father, Bimbisara, into prison where he was left to die of starvation,

On becoming a convert to Buddhism he expressed his contrition for these crimes before Buddha himself. It is difficult to say how far these details of the story represent true facts. Ajatasatru was a great warrior and succeeded in annexing Vaisali after a long war. The dynasty of Bimbisara ended on account of a popular rising which brought a minister named Sisunaga to power. In his time Magadha was powerful enough to have defeated the kingdom of Avanti. About the beginning of the fourth century B. C. the throne of Magadha was seized by Mahapadama, the founder of the Nanda dynasty, which continued to rule until its overthrow by Chandragupta Maurya.

The religion and society of the Aryans, like other phases of their life, had undergone a change under the new environments of the Gangetic valley.

A settled and more or less isolated life with comparatively easy means of obtaining wealth had created a taste for pomp and show which is exhibited in the elaborate arrangement of sacrifices. The priests had begun to attach a unique importance to the minutest details in the performance of sacrificial rites, which naturally diverted the attention of the worshippers from the objects to the form of worship. The voluminous *Brahmanas* which signally lack "the fervency and the earnestness of the Vedic hymns" give us a true idea of the complexities of these ceremonies and the growing ascendancy of the priests and contain mythological stories developed on the simple and elementary ideas expressed in the Vedic hymns. "The simile of the sun pursuing the Dawn-goddess", for instance, "lent itself easily to a tale of Prajapati seducing his daughter, and thus creating and

peopling this universe". But in the *Upanishadas* we can find the philosophic ideas of the nobler thinkers of the age. The monotheistic conception of one Supreme God is further developed into the pantheistic idea of a Universal Soul, which is the basic principle of the *Upanishad* philosophy. The Universal Soul "permeates the human body, as a lump of salt, to use the favourite simile of the authors of the *Upanishads*, permeates a bowl of water". We have in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* the story of the sage who asks his son to put some salt in water. After sometime when they become inseparable, the father says, "Even so That Reality is here in this body, though thou dost not perceive it. That atom which forms the essence of the Universe That is the Truth, That is the Soul. That art Thou". Another doctrine which is expounded for the first time is that of metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul from body to body according to the deeds of the person until its re-absorption in the Universal Soul.

These are few of the many problems connected with life and death which are discussed in the works that have been mentioned above. It was a period of mental activity and religious stir, and naturally these conditions brought into existence different schools of thought. The process must have continued for centuries, and there is no doubt that the Buddhist and Jain systems were links of the same series.

Along with these developments in the formal and meta-physical aspects of religion the Aryan Society had also changed its basic structure. The

Caste.

* *Chhandogya Upanishad* (VI. 13) as quoted by Rawlinson (India, p. 40) from "Sacred Books of the East".

most striking feature of their social life in this period is the growth and development of the caste system which has ever been 'the most vital principle of Hinduism', and has dominated the life and manners of the Hindus for three thousand years. A caste has been defined as "a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name which usually denotes or is 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"*.

Some writers have traced the origin of the caste-system to the Vedic period and argue that "in the Purusha sukta or 'Hymn of Purusha', which belongs to the latest stratum of the Rig-Veda, and which in mystic terms describes the creation of the four castes from a primeval giant, occurs for the first time the term Cudra, which includes the slaves as a fourth class in the Aryan State". The view has been questioned by some scholars of note, who regard the above hymn as nothing more than 'a highly figurative, imaginative theory of creation'. Never-the-less, even if we accept this latter interpretation of the hymn we cannot deny that "much of the ground-work upon which the later elaborate structure was based was already in existence" in the Vedic period.†

*Imperial Gazetteer of India (1908), I 311.

Dr. V. A. Smith, however, does not agree with this view. "The families composing a caste may or may not have traditions of descent from a common ancestor, and, as a matter of fact, may or may not belong to one stock" The Oxford History of India, p. 34.

†For a discussion of these different views see Prof. A. B. Keith's article in Cambridge History, Vol. I, pp. 86, 92, 93, and V. A. Smith's

(Continued on next page).

The Aryan history in India begins with a war against the aborigines for whom they soon began to entertain hatred and contempt which are well indicated by epithets like *Dasyus* (demons) or *anasah* (nose-less) used for them. The defeat and subjugation of the aborigines did not change effectively the attitude of the conquerors who insisted on maintaining the purity of their race and the superiority of their culture. It is, therefore, to this instinct of race preservation that the earliest and most elementary stages of caste-system may be traced, although, as later history shows, purity of blood became in the course of time a myth and the dark-skinned aborigines were admitted into the society of the fair-coloured Aryans.

Moreover, the functional organization of society which became the most vital factor in the development and elaboration of the caste-system was also present in the Vedic period in the superiority of the Brahmans over others. With the growth of civilization their life became more systematic and religious ceremonies more complicated and technical. There is no doubt that the priests must have attached undue importance to the minutest details of these rites, as this added to their own position and dignity. By the time that the Aryans had been able to establish powerful States in the Gangetic valley the ascendancy of the

Oxford History of India, pp. 35-37. Both have quoted original authorities to support their views. Dr. Smith is of opinion that much confusion has been caused by a "mistranslation of Manu's term *Varana* as 'caste', whereas it should be rendered 'class' or 'order', or by some equivalent term".

Brahmans was a recognised fact. In the days of the *Rig-Veda* the same person could lead the people to war and preside over the religious ceremonies; but now they needed trained experts to act as priests and experienced men to conquer and administer the States. Thus we have their society broken into separate classes on the basis of the duties which they were expected to perform. In the course of time their exclusiveness and rigidity as well as numbers kept on increasing until we had "about three thousand hereditary groups, each internally separated by the same rules from all other groups". Of the original four classes the Brahmans became the brain of the Society, studied and taught the *Vedas* and performed sacrifices; they were held in great respect and it was one of the greatest sins to kill a Brahman. Next to the Brahmans were the Kshatriyas whose duty was to protect the life and property of the people. The Vaishyas were the cultivators, tradesmen and industrialists. The Sudras who included the non-Aryans were to live as serfs and slaves and performed menial duties.

Many causes have helped the growth and the multiplicity of castes. Inter-marriages among the Aryans and the non-Aryans resulted in new groups who commanded greater respect than the Sudras in accordance to the proportion of Aryan blood in them. Another reason was the expansion and development of arts and crafts, for particular professions were becoming hereditary in different families. The foreigners who came from time to time also added new castes and sub-castes. Besides these factors local conditions also must have played an important role in this process of multiplication. It has been suggested by some scholars that the

victories of the Muslims indirectly encouraged the growth and rigidity of the caste system, as "the Hindus, unable on the whole to resist the Muslims in the field, defended themselves passively by the increased rigidity of caste association".

The caste system has been the most prominent feature of Hindu society for about three thousand years, and the fact that it has found its way to the remotest corner of the country and survived the shocks of political and religious revolutions is enough to prove that it must have had some merits. The institution of caste is to be understood as an integral part of the social, economic and religious life of the Hindus. On the one hand it is inseparably connected with religious doctrines like that of Karma and rebirth, while on the other it is the cause as well as the result of the growth and expansion of craft and industry. It promotes the spirit of self-sacrifice, teaches an individual to subordinate himself to an organized body and facilitates the prevention of pauperism.

The demerits of the system are obvious. It has militated against the evolution of a nation in India. The members of the various castes could never conceive of a thing like national solidarity and never felt a concern for interests other than those of their own castes. The duty of defending the country, for example, was entrusted to a particular class and the rest of the people remained indifferent. To them political and dynastic revolutions meant but little, for they hardly effected a change in their life and profession. Similarly it has barred the way to social progress. The Hindus could not associate themselves with the foreigners. Even today

a believer in the caste-system would not eat anything touched by a follower of any other religion or creed or a member of the depressed classes. Attempts have been made in all ages by far-sighted and broad minded reformers to eliminate these rigours of caste distinction. From Buddha to Mr Gandhi one could count a large number of such reformers, but despite their enthusiasm and sacrifices for this cause their success has been only partial and even today caste system is the most prominent feature of Hindu society. Indeed it is almost impossible to conceive of a Hindu but as a member of some caste. Evidently, therefore, the Indian social reformers shall have to fight a stiff and slow battle to release their countrymen from the grip of "the most disastrous and blighting of human institutions", to use the words of Sir Henry Maine.

Besides the growth and evolution of castes we find other vital changes in the social and economic life of the Aryans. Under the pressure of new factors there was a decline in the status and position of women. She had no proprietary rights and polygamy, specially to ensure the birth of a son, was permitted. The birth of a daughter was "a source of misery" and a son was regarded as "a light in the highest heaven".

In agriculture they had made a marked improvement in implements as well as the quality and species of grains produced. Wheat, rice, beans, and some vegetables are mentioned. In industry their progress was even more striking, and we hear of fishers, jewellers, workers in gold, carvers, potters, cooks, smiths, merchants and usurers besides many other classes of skilled labourers.

Every profession had become more elaborate in organization with a systematic division of labour. Tin, lead and silver are added to their metals and elephants to the list of animals that were tamed. Few changes of importance are to be noticed in amusement, dress and food except that the doctrine of *Ahimsa* was gaining ground and meat-eating was discouraged.

CHAPTER IV.

Rise of Jainism and Buddhism.

The sixth century B. C. is "unusually fertile in giving rise to religious movements in India", and although it is impossible to accept the Buddhist and Jain traditions which count several scores of such schools of 'heretical doctrines', we can safely "believe that there was an extraordinary impulse shown in the rise and development of new theological and philosophical ideas at that time". Another striking feature of the period is that we now have a more definite and chronological data and can speak with some certainty of the important events of the period. For this we are indebted to a number of brilliant scholars whose labours have been rewarded with considerable success in the domain of oriental scholarship. Of these different schools of religious thought we are specially concerned with the Jain and Buddhist systems because they have deeply affected the life and history of the Indian people, and even to-day are counted among the leading religions of the world. Buddhism, now almost extinct in India, is still popular in China, Japan, Burma, Siam and Ceylon; while Jainism claims many adherents in Rajputana and Western India. Jainism is older than Buddhism; but it could never command as much popularity and influence as the latter had done.

Mahavira is generally regarded as the founder of Jainism. But the Jains claim a great antiquity for the origin of their religion and say that there were 23 *Thirthankaras* (or Prophets)

Jinas or Early Reformers.

before Mahavira. They are believed to have appeared and preached the only true religion at different periods. we know almost nothing about these early reformers and the Jain traditions give them incredibly long lives and tall statures. The first of them is said to have lived for several billions of years and possessed a height of two miles. But Parsvanath the last of them and, therefore, the predecessor of Mahavira is supposed to have died 250 years before him. He is stated to have been the son of a king of Benaras and passed the first thirty years of his life in comfort and luxury. Then he became an ascetic and attained perfect knowledge after a meditation of 84 days. This attainment of knowledge was followed by 70 years of perfection and sainthood until he "reached his final liberation, *Nirvana*, on the top of mount Sammeta surrounded by his followers".

He was born in 540 B. C. at Vaisali, the capital of Videha. His father Siddhartha, was the Mahavira. chief of a warrior-clan and had married a princess of the distinguished family of the Lichchavis. Through his mother Mahavira was, therefore, related to the kings of Magadha. At the age of thirty Vardhamana (for that was his original name) joined the order of Parsvanath and led the life of an ascetic for the next twelve years during which he laid aside every kind of garment, practised meditation and suffered painful treatment at the hands of the barbarous people in the course of his wanderings until "he reached supreme knowledge and final deliverance from the bonds of pleasure and pain". Now he was a *Jina* (the conqueror), *Mahavira* (the great hero) and *Kevalin* (the all-knowing) and entered upon the final stage of his life, that of

a religious reformer. His followers were called 'Nir-granthas' (free from fetters) which was later supplanted by the modern name, 'Jainas'. The remaining three decades of his life were spent in preaching the new doctrines. In this connection he visited a number of places in the states of Anga, Videha and Magadha and frequently met the well-known rulers of Magadha, Bimbisara and his son Ajatasatru, whom the Jains as well as the Buddhists treat as converts to their respective faiths. The Buddhist sources mention some discussions between the followers of the two religions, which show that their relations were by no means friendly.

The main problem of the religious reformers at this time was the liberation of soul from miseries for which they discovered, practised and taught different ways. The Jains do not believe in a Supreme Deity as the Creator of the Universe and to them God is "only the highest, the noblest, and the fullest manifestation of all the powers which lie latent in the soul of man". The Vedantist doctrine of Universal Soul is rejected and the dual personality of man—material and spiritual—is emphasized. In practical morality the Jains have always laid great stress on non-hurting of any kind of life and have carried the doctrine of *Ahimsa* much farther than the Buddhists and the Brahmans by attributing life and consciousness even to inanimate objects. Extreme asceticism is another prominent feature of the system, because it alone can lead one to the road of deliverance: self-torture and death by starvation are highly recommended. The outsiders find it difficult to reconcile the doctrine of *Ahimsa* with the practice of suicide through starvation, but the Jains have

given their own explanation* for this. In theory Mahavira has rejected the distinctions of caste, but "the modern Jain is as fast bound as his Hindu brother in the iron fetters of caste".

Mahavira died at Pawa near Rajagriha in 468 B.C. when he was 72 years old after having won a pretty large number of converts to his teachings. Besides the rivalry of the Buddhists and the followers of another contemporary religious leader, Gosala, the founder of Jainism had to face the opposition of some heretics among his adherents. His own nephew and son-in-law, Jamali, maintained heretical opinions until his death. We possess but little authentic information about the progress of Jainism until the rise of the Mauryan dynasty but there is some evidence to show that the Nanda Kings of Magadha were favourably inclined towards it. In the reign of Chandragupta Maurya Bengal was faced with a severe famine which lasted for about twelve years. At this time the Jains had two high-priests, Sambhutavijaya and Bhadrabahu. The latter collected his followers and migrated to southern India. On his return after several years he found that corruption had set in amongst his co-religionists who had started wearing white clothes. The followers of Bhadrabahu refused to accept such innovations which led to the great schism of the Jain community which now broke up in two sects. The Digambaras or sky-clad believe in complete nudity while the Svetambaras wear white clothes.

*See Mrs. Stevenson's 'The Heart of Jainism'.

The Jains, however, soon began to lose ground in eastern provinces of the Magadha empire, and we have definite evidence to prove that they had begun to move westward. By the time of Asoka's death they had almost lost contact with eastern India but had gained influence elsewhere, and we hear of their strong position in Ujjain and later on of the existence of a prosperous Jain community in Mathura. Jainism never went beyond the frontiers of this country, but here it proved stronger than Buddhism in surviving the reactions of the revival of Brahmanism as well as the shocks of numerous political, social and religious revolutions which India has witnessed during these two milleniums and a half.

The illustrious founder of Buddhism, Gautama*, was born in 567 B. C. at Kapila-vastu, the capital of the Sakyas, a comparatively unimportant tribe. His father, Suddhodana, who had taken as his wives two daughters of a neighbouring chief† was the leader of his own tribe. The elder of the two sisters gave birth to her celebrated son in a pleasant grove, called Lumbini, when she was on her way to the home of her parents. A week later the mother died leaving the baby to be nursed by her younger sister. We know very little of his boyhood, but it is beyond doubt that he was married early and that his wife, Yasodhara, was the daughter of the Raja of Koli. Some

*Gautama was his family name and Siddhartha was the name given to him as a child. Later on he became Buddha, the Enlightened. Besides these names we have a number of epithets used for him by his followers, such as Sakya Muni (or the Sakya Sage).
† 'Buddhism' by Rhys Davids, p. 26.

writers have narrated a story to the effect that he had to win the hand of the princess through competition. He was an adept in manly exercises and hunting was one of his hobbies, but no amount of comfort and luxuries could change the thoughtful prince into a care-free and pleasure-loving youth. His father tried in vain to keep him away from the miseries of his fellow-creatures. The world was full of evils and had enough of pitiable sights of human misery to leave lasting impressions on his mind. In the meantime his wife had given birth to a son who was named, Rahula. "This is a new and strong tie I shall have to break", he is said to have remarked when the news was brought to him.

It was not long after this incident that he left his home in search of a solution for the problem of man's miseries. Before leaving his home he quietly entered the chamber of his sleeping wife and wanted to kiss the baby but could not do so for fear of awaking his mother. Thus, accompanied by his faithful charioteer, Channa, he left the palace in silence. When the dawn was about to break he came down from his horse and asked his attendant to go back to the palace. With his long hair cut and the clothes of a beggar on his body he started for Rajagriha, the capital of Bimbisara. He now attached himself to two Brahman teachers of note, one after the other, and studied their philosophy which, however, failed to satisfy him. Then he withdrew to the jungles of Uruvela and spent there six long years in self-torture and penance with five disciples. His fame as an ascetic had spread over the country "like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies". During this period of self mortification he nearly killed himself by starvation, but it

proved as in-effective as the philosophy of the Brahmins, and he had to abandon it in sheer disappointment. His companions had now left him, but he continued his pursuit of truth single-handed until one night it dawned upon him when he was sitting under a *Pipal* tree*. He was now Buddha (the enlightened) who had found an answer to his perplexing problem—the mystery of sorrow. He now decided to go out and proclaim the truth to the whole world. Saved himself, he must save others. He wanted to go to his Brahman teachers, but they were dead by now. Hence he proceeded towards Benaras in order to preach the new doctrine to his five comrades who had left him in despair. His first reception was not warm, but the fire of his enthusiasm soon gained a wide popularity among all classes of people, and converts began to flock round him in large numbers. The conversion of Bimbisara, the raja of Magadha, added considerably to the prestige of the new faith. From Rajagriha he went to Kapilavastu where he met his father. He is said to have advised his little son not to seek “the wealth that perishes” but to get the far nobler wealth of the truth which had dawned upon him under the Bodhi tree. For the remaining forty-five years of his life Buddha wandered up

“This tree came to occupy much the same position among Buddhists as the Cross among Christians. Worship was actually paid to it, and an offshoot from it is still growing on the spot where the Buddhist pilgrims found it, and where they believed the original tree had grown in the ancient temple at Bodhi Gaya, near Rajgir, built about 506 A.D., by the celebrated Amara Sinha. A branch of it planted at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, in the middle of the third century B. C., is still growing there the oldest historical tree in the world”, (‘Buddhism’*, T. W. Rhys Davids, note 1, p. 39).

and down the country in the neighbourhood of Gaya, preaching to the people the doctrines of his religion and making new converts. He died in 487 B. C. when he was eighty years old.

Buddha's teachings were extremely simple. According to him the life of man is full of suffering. Its root-cause is a desire for worldly pleasures. Hence to remove unhappiness it was necessary to annihilate ‘desire’. Without this annihilation of desire which is the right path one cannot attain *Nirvana* or final salvation which meant a happy death without fear of rebirth. He preached self denial and laid down strict laws to regulate the life of laymen as well as the monks. The five commandments common to both the laity and the clergy were:—

**Buddha's
Teachings.**

- “Let not one kill any living being;
- Let not one take what is not given to one;
- Let not one speak falsely;
- Let not one drink intoxicating drinks;
- Let not one be unchaste”.

The doctrine of *Karma* according to which “the merits and demerits of a being in past existences determine his condition in the present”, was accepted by Buddha like most of the Indian philosophers. It was the good *Karma* which could deliver a man from the chain of re-births and that can be acquired by a strictly moral life.

“He held that men should follow what he called the ‘Noble Eightfold Path’, practising right belief, right thought, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right remembrance and right meditation. That path was also described as the Middle Path, lying midway between

sensuality and asceticism. Men and women of the laity could attain much success in travelling the way of holiness, but full satisfaction could be obtained only by joining the *Sangha* or Order of ordained monks, or rather friars. Women were permitted to become nuns, but nuns never occupied an important place in Buddhism. The *Sangha* of monks developed into a highly organized, wealthy, and powerful fraternity, which became the efficient instrument for the wide diffusion of Buddhism in Asia".*

The rapid progress made by Buddhism was greatly due to the stainless character of its founder and the simplicity of its doctrines. The monastic organization was also responsible for its wide popularity. From the very beginning it began to receive the patronage of princes as well as the support of the people. Its message of universal hope was sure to make an appeal to the masses whose lot had been most unenviable under the Brahmanical system. Under Asoka, Buddhism received the fullest support of the State machinery and rose to the position of a world-wide religion. Even to-day it holds a prominent place in the great religions of the world, although in India, the land of its birth, the number of its followers is almost negligible.

*The Oxford History of India, p. 54.

CHAPTER V.

The Persian and Greek Invasions of India.

The origin of Indo-Persian relations may be traced to their common ancestor. Scholars have found numerous similarities in the religious rites and languages of the two peoples, which establish their common origin. In the cuneiform tablets recently discovered by the well-known German professor Hugo Winckler at Boghaz-Koi in Asia Minor there are inscriptions which mention Indian gods like Mitra, Varuna and Indra. Similarly we find in the *Vedas* as well as the *Avesta* references which prove beyond doubt the early contact of the two countries, which must have later been strengthened considerably by commerce and trade.

In the sixth century B. C. the Persian Empire rose to power under Cyrus the Great (558-530 B. C.) who is said to have conquered the territories corresponding with the present Afghanistan and Baluchistan and "subjugated the Indian tribes of the Paropanisus (Hindu Kush) and in the Kabul Valley, especially the Gandharians". His successor, Cambyses (530-522 B. C.) added Egypt to his vast dominions but seems to have made no progress on the eastern frontier, for it was in the time of Darius (522-486 B. C.) that "the country of the Indus" became a part of the Persian Empire. For the reign of this illustrious monarch we find valuable information in his own inscriptions and the works

of Greek writers, especially Herodotus. The latter is supported by epigraphic evidence in his view that the Indus Valley was annexed after the Skylax expedition which visited India "at some date later than 516 B. C. to prove the feasibility of a passage by sea from the mouth of the Indus to Persia".* The Indian Satrapy was the richest province of the Persian Empire and paid an enormous tribute which was about one-third of the entire revenue of its Asiatic dominions. In the reign of Xerxes (486-465 B. C.), the son and successor of Darius, the Indians formed a valuable element of the Persian army which fought against Greece, and we have no reason to doubt that the Indian provinces formed part of the Persian Empire till its end. Moreover it acted as a connecting link between the civilizations of India and Greece, affording favourable opportunities for contact between the East and the West.

Alexander's Campaign—327-325 B. C.

Alexander was born in October 356 B. C. and was not quite twenty years old when the assassination of Phillip brought him to the throne of Macedonia. Soon after his accession to power he started on his brilliant career of conquest compressing "into thirteen years.....the energies of many life-times". By 330 B. C. he had conquered Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, defeated the Persian.

*In the Bahistan inscription of Darius (the probable date of which is 516 B. C.) the Indians are not mentioned, while they "are included with the Gandharians in the lists of subject peoples given by the inscriptions on the palace of Darius at Persepolis and on his tomb at Naksh-i-Rustam". (Ancient India' by E. J. Rapson, p. 84).

Emperor, Darius III, in a decisive battle and occupied his capital, Persepolis. In the following year he began his march in the direction of Kandhar where he built the city of Alexandria in Arachosia. Then, turning northward he entered the Kabul Valley and built near the modern Charikhar another Alexandria which was used as a base for his strenuous campaign in Bactria and Sogdiana (Balkh and Bukhara). In 327 B. C. he returned from this campaign and recrossing the Hindu Kush mountains he guarded his communications by establishing a fortified post at Nicaea (near modern Jalalabad). Here he divided his forces into two sections, sending one of them under the command of his favourite general Hyphaestion who was to proceed by way of the Kabul river and leading the other through the Swat Valley. It is difficult to trace the course of the Greek army with precision, but we possess interesting accounts of some episodes during the course of this expedition. In the valley of the Kunar river Alexander was wounded by an arrow. This made his troops so furious that they razed the town to the ground and massacred the prisoners. In the hill state of Nysa the Greeks failed to capture the capital, but the inhabitants of the town not only offered their submission but also claimed kinship with the invaders. Alexander found it to his advantage to accept this claim and allowed his home-sick troops to enjoy a short holiday in the country of their "kinsmen". Perhaps the strongest opposition was offered by the Assakenos whose capital, Massaga, was one of the most fortified towns in these hills. The garrison showed great bravery and perseverance but ultimately had to surrender on account of the death of their chief. His widow was captured along with her son and, according to

some writers, subsequently bore a son to Alexander. The garrison of Massaga had 7000 mercenary troops from the plains, who had purchased security for a promise to join the Greek army. But they changed their mind and decided to prefer a glorious death to "a life with dishonour", for they were soon attacked and overpowered by the Greeks. Alexander has been censured by some writers for the massacre of these brave soldiers, but we should not forget that they had been certainly guilty of a breach of faith. The next important action was the siege and capture of Aornos which was perhaps the greatest exploit of this campaign. The strong hill fortress of Aornos was accessible only by a single path and presented almost insurmountable obstacles to its assailants. Alexander's desire to conquer this place had been considerably intensified by the legend that even Heracles had failed in his attempt to capture it. He, therefore, made elaborate preparations for the siege and is said to have worked like ordinary soldiers in filling a ravine which had made direct approach impossible. Ultimately the Greeks succeeded in capturing a commanding position which disheartened the defenders so much that they opened negotiations for surrender. But before any settlement could be made they attempted an escape in the darkness of the night. Their movement was, however, detected by the vigilant Greeks who attacked and slew them in large numbers. Alexander was so proud of his success that he ordered sacrifices and worship to be offered and altars to be dedicated to the gods. The charge of this important post was given to a trustworthy Indian chief—Sisikottos (Sasigupta).

In the meanwhile the other army under Hephaestion and Perdikkas had reached the Indus and was busy with the construction of a bridge to cross the river. At Ohind, the site of this bridge, Alexander gave a month's rest to his followers and received the homage and presents of Raja Ambhi who had recently succeeded to the throne of Taxila.* Thus early in 326 B. C. the Greek army crossed the Indus and entered the dominion of Ambhi who gave them a magnificent reception and placed his entire forces at his disposal. His capital, Taxila (Takshasila), one of the biggest of Indian cities, was famous as a seat of learning and attracted scholars from different parts of the country. The Greeks have left a number of interesting anecdotes about the strange customs and practices of the great city, in which we can discover unmistakable signs of Babylonian and Iranian as well as Vedic life. Besides Ambhi's voluntary offer of 3000 oxen for beef they speak of marriage markets where young girls were offered for sale by their parents and mention the practice of *satee* as well as the throwing away of the dead bodies to be devoured by the vultures. The Greeks also seem to have been impressed by the naked ascetics, one of whom, Kalanos, remained with Alexander till his departure from India.

Alexander stayed at this hospitable and interesting city for a sufficiently long period to give rest to his troops and exchange presents and gifts with its ruler before starting on his arduous march of about a hundred miles to reach the

Battle of the
Jhelum. 326
B.C.

*Ambhi's presents included "a contingent of 700 horses and the gift of valuable supplies comprising thirty elephants, 3,000 fat oxen, more than 10,000 sheep, and 200 talents of silver," (E. H. I., p. 56).

frontier of the Kingdom of Porus. This proud Indian chief whose sway extended over the territory between the Jhelum and the Chenab had boldly refused to submit to Alexander's authority and was ready to resist his advance. Accordingly, he brought his forces with those of his allies and encamped on the western bank of the Jhelum. Alexander who had also arrived on the other side of the flooded river was confronted with the problem of crossing it in the face of the superior numbers of the enemy forces. He decided, therefore, "to steal a passage", by giving out that the crossing of the river would be postponed until the following autumn and "gave a colour of truth" to this declaration by collecting a vast store of provisions. At last he discovered a suitable bend in the river, sixteen miles above his camp, and crossed it on a dark and stormy night with the help of an island which hid his movements. Porus sent a small force of cavalry and chariots to check the enemy's landing; but it was too late now. They were routed and carried the bad news to their master.

Porus now moved with his main army and came face to face with the Greeks in the plain of Karri. He placed his 200 elephants in the centre in front of the infantry while the 300 chariots and 4000 cavalry formed the two wings. The mounted archers of Alexander began the battle by attacking the left wing of the Indian army. The Indians bravely resisted the attack but were soon overpowered, and rushed towards the centre to take shelter behind the elephants. These huge animals took fright after a momentary success and did "no less damage to their friends than to their foes, trampling them under their feet as they wheeled

and pushed about". The Indian foot soldiers also could not make an effective use of their formidable bows on account of wet and slippery soil, because they used to pull their strings by resting them on the ground. Thus in spite of their courage and bravery and numerical superiority the forces of Porus were routed and slain in large numbers. The Greek lost 1,000 men against 15,000 killed and 9,000 captured of their enemy. Porus fought to the last moment but was ultimately taken prisoner and brought before the victor who, it is stated, had the magnanimity of accepting his request 'to be treated as King', and restored him to his kingdom as a vassal chief. Alexander commemorated his victory by founding two new cities, namely Bucephala, near modern Jhelum after his favourite horse, Bucephalus, which had died here, and Nicaea which was raised at the site of the battle and by striking a beautiful medal having his own figure on one side and that of a combat between a Macedonian horseman and an Indian elephant-rider on the other. Before resuming his march the Greek invader spent sometime in offering sacrifices, arranging games and giving his army a brief interval of relaxation and rest.

Alexander next proceeded towards the country of a people known as the Glausai who were the neighbours of Porus, and capturing a number of their towns and villages added them to his territory. The Chenab and the Ravi were crossed without much opposition, but to the east of the Ravi several powerful tribes formed a league against the invader and offered a stiff resistance at Sangala. Fortunately Porus arrived at the scene with 5,000 troops and helped the Greeks to capture the place. The Indians were routed and killed

Subjugation of
the tribes-men.

in large numbers and Sangala was razed to the ground. The Macedonians resumed their progress soon after this brilliant victory and reached the Beas. Here Alexander is said to have addressed his soldiers on the necessity and advantages of extending their conquests over the rich and fertile kingdoms of the Gangetic valley. But his words fell on unwilling ears. Koinos, one of his most trusted generals, who acted as the spokesman of the army concluded his protest thus:—

“Moderation in the midst of success, O King! is the noblest of virtues, for, although, being at the head of so brave an army, you have naught to dread from mortal foes, yet the visitations of the Deity cannot be foreseen or guarded against by man”.

The loud applause that followed the speech of Koinos convinced Alexander that his soldiers were determined to go back. He had to yield and issue orders for retreat in September 326. The farthest point of his advance was marked by the construction of twelve stone altars, dedicated to the Greek gods, which are said to have “long remained to excite the wonder and veneration of both natives and foreigners”.

On his way back Alexander encamped near the site of his battle with Porus on the Jhelum and made preparations for a voyage down the river. Here he received reinforcements from Babylon and submission of some local chiefs. He had to redistribute the conquered lands among his vassals and allies before his final departure. Porus was to hold the country between the Jhelum and the Beas, and Ambhi's dominion was to include the territory between the

Indus and the Jhelum. To the west of the Indus he created a new satrapy which was entrusted to a Greek officer named Phillip.

The enormous fleet consisting of eight ‘galleys of thirty oars each’ and numerous boats of various sizes began to move late in October. It was protected by two sections of the army under Hephaestion and Krateros marching along the banks of the river and a third one commanded by Phillip acting as a rear-guard; the latter was subsequently converted into an advance-guard. They reached the junction of the Jhelum and the Chenab without meeting any opposition on the way, but two big ships had been lost in the whirlpools. Alexander's anxiety to conquer this part of the country drove the local tribes to opposition and resistance. The first of the tribes men to be subjugated and punished were the Agalassois, many of whom were slain and enslaved for their obstinacy. He now entered the territory of other tribes who had forgotten their old jealousies and formed an alliance against the common foe. The most powerful of these were the Malloi (or Malavas) who occupied the fertile valley of the Ravi and their immediate neighbours, the Oxydrakai (or Kshudrakas). But before they could conclude their discussions about the claims of the rival generals for the supreme command Alexander made a dashing charge, overwhelmed the forces of the Malavas and prevented their allies to join them. They were slain in large numbers, pursued for a long distance and ultimately driven to fortified towns from where they offered resistance. At one of these places Alexander needlessly exposed himself by climbing the wall and jumping into the citadel with only three followers. He slew the Indian chief but was himself seriously wounded by an

arrow which was extracted with great difficulty and led to profuse bleeding and would have caused his death if his constitution had not been strong enough to stand it. The wounded monarch was taken back to his camp, while the infuriated troops brutally massacred the unfortunate inhabitants, showing no consideration to age or sex. The Malloi and the Oxydrakai now made their submission and purchased the victor's favours by sending him valuable presents.

Early in 325 B.C. Alexander entered the region of the lower Indus where also he had to fight against several princes and tribes. One of these chiefs called Mousikanos by the Greeks had tried to defy the invader's authority but was compelled to yield. Soon after he changed his mind and was persuaded by the Brahmans to withdraw his submission and rise in open rebellion. Alexander sent Peithon, the new governor of the place, against the rebellious chief and had him captured and executed along with his Brahman advisers. Alexander is said to have treated his enemies with ruthless severity and, according to the Greek writers, 80,000 Indians were killed and many thousands taken as slaves in these operations alone. Indeed, the young conqueror from Macedonia was as capable of ordering general massacres of those unfortunate people who fought against him for their independence as he was of extending his mercy and protection to those who readily submitted to his authority.

Alexander now sent back a portion of his army under Krateros who was to march through the hills of Arachosia (Kandhar) and Drangina (Sistan). The main army continued its

Departure from
India,

progress until it arrived at Patala which was situated somewhere near the modern city of Hyderabad. From here he went to the sea in order to offer sacrifices to the gods before making preparations for his final departure from India. The route selected for the main army commanded by the King himself lay through Kerman and Gedrosia while the fleet which was placed in the charge of Nearchos was ordered to sail along the coast and remain in touch with him. Notwithstanding these elaborate precautions the Macedonian army and fleet had to face terrible hardships on the way. Their ignorance of physical conditions of the country compelled the soldiers to penetrate into the interior of the desert where they were subjected to unbearable privations by excessive heat and scarcity of water. Men as well as animals perished in large numbers and the rich spoils "for the sake of which they had marched to the utmost extremities of the East" had to be burnt and abandoned. Alexander lost in this desert more men than he had lost in all the actions in India. Ultimately the survivors of his splendid army came to a place where they could take rest for sometime before resuming their march towards Susa which was reached in May 324 B.C. Thus his Indian campaign had lasted nearly three years, 327-324 B.C.

Within a few months of Alexander's departure from India the troops of one of the provinces rose in rebellion and slew the Greek governor. He received this news while he was still in Karmania and could do nothing beyond sending instructions to Ambhi to take charge of the province till the appointment of a new Satrap. But before he could take effective measures to recover it he died at Babylon in June 323 B.C.

Significance of
Alexander's
Campaign.

Alexander occupies a more prominent position in the world of romance than in the domain of history, and this fact is perhaps to a very large extent responsible for the exaggerated views of his achievements in India. It has been suggested by some European scholars that the "subsequent development of India was dependent upon Alexander's institutions", and that he may be regarded as "one of the chief forerunners of Christianity". But a careful analysis of his activities and the effects of his campaign in India does not lend any support to such conclusions. On the contrary we find that soon after his death all traces of Greek dominion in this country were lost and that his campaign "left upon India no mark save the horrid scars of bloody war". He was fortunate like many subsequent invaders in finding a disorganized and disunited India, which facilitated his task. If he had visited this country a quarter of a century later his successes would not have been achieved with such ease and rapidity. In spite of her political disunity and military weakness Alexander could not establish and consolidate his rule in north-western India as he had done in Persia.

Nevertheless, his conquests opened up immense possibilities of political, commercial and cultural contact between Europe and India through at least four different routes, three by land and one by sea, which were used by him. The land routes passed through Kabul, the Mulla Pass and Gedrosia, while the sea route, adopted by Nearchos was not far from the coast of Makran. These lines of communication made it possible for the peoples of the East and the West to exchange their ideas and the formation of Greek

kingdoms in Western Asia, and the establishment of Graeco-Bactrian monarchy strengthened this mutual contact. Its results are noticeable in the Hellenistic influence in the Gandhara sculptures as well as some aspects of Buddhism, particularly in the use of images by the Buddhists. But the Greek influence was superficial and insignificant. It never touched the vital foundations of Indian society or religion. Nor were the Indians inclined to learn much in the art of fighting. They continued to trust their elephants and chariots as they had done in the past and would make no change in their attitude of indifference towards cavalry charges. The sanctity of the caste system and the majesty of the elephant were still to hold sway over the mind of the Indians for many centuries to come. On the other hand Indian philosophy and religion did not fail to influence the ideas of the Westerners, to some extent at least. We find, for instance, clear traces of Buddhist influence in the Gnostic forms of Christianity.

Thus the direct effects of Alexander's invasion on Indian history and culture were almost negligible, but none can deny that indirectly it was a vital factor in bringing India into contact with Europe.

CHAPTER VI.

The Mauryan Empire.

At the time of Alexander's invasion Magadha was ruled by the Nanda dynasty. Its founder Mahapadama, was a man of obscure origin, and according to the Greek writers "a barber, scarcely shaving off hunger by his daily earnings, but who, from his being not uncomely in person, had gained the affections of the queen, and was by her influence advanced to too near a place in the confidence of the reigning monarch. Afterwards, however, he treacherously murdered his sovereign and then, under the pretence of a guardian to the royal children, usurped the supreme authority, and having put the young princes to death begot the present king"*.

The last of the eight sons of Mahapadama, who succeeded him on the throne of Pataliputra is called Agrammes or Xandramas by the classical writers. He was wicked and unpopular with his subjects, being "more worthy of his father's condition than his own".

Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, has been described as "an illegitimate scion" of the ruling family of the Nandas and held an important office under them. But he incurred the displeasure of the reigning monarch and was obliged to leave Magadha. In his exile he is said to have met Alexander and suggested to him the idea of leading a campaign against Magadha, which could not be materialized because of the

refusal of the Macedonian troops to proceed further eastward. Chandragupta was not discouraged by this failure. With the help of a Brahman adviser, Vishnugupta, better known as Kautilya or Chanakya, he collected an army and usurped the throne long after deposing and murdering the last of the Nanda Kings. He then proceeded towards the Punjab and overthrowing the Macedonian garrisons annexed that territory to his dominions.

Chandragupta had inherited a strong army and a large empire which he extended considerably by conquest and annexation. It is beyond doubt that he had brought under his sway most of the states of Northern India as far as the Narbada and that the dominion of the first historical sovereign of India extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea.

Alexander's death was followed by an internecine struggle between his generals. Two of them—Antigonos and Seleukos—contested for their master's Asiatic dominions. In the beginning Seleukos was obliged to go into exile, but ultimately he succeeded in taking Babylon (312 B.C.), and six years later he assumed the title of king. Now that his eastern frontier touched the border of India, Seleukos naturally thought of re-covering the lost Macedonian provinces to the east of the Indus.

Consequently in 305 B.C. having decided 'to resume Alexander's campaign, he crossed the Indus. But Chandragupta's formidable army was too strong for him. We do not know the details of the war, but it is certain that he was compelled to retire after concluding a rather hu-

*Mc Crindle. The Invasion of India by Alexander, p 222.

miliating peace. He ceded to Chandragupta the satrapies of Parapanisadae, Aria and Arachosia (whose capital cities were Kabul, Herat and Kandhar respectively) and the eastern part of Gedrosia. In return Chandragupta gave him a comparatively trifling present of 500 elephants. The treaty which was probably concluded in 303 B.C. was strengthened by a matrimonial alliance between the Indian monarch and his rival's daughter. The cession of these territories carried the Mauryan dominion to its "scientific frontier", the Hindukush mountains.

In the course of about two decades all the states of Northern India were conquered and Chandragupta's supremacy was recognized from the Himalayas to the Narbada and from the Hindukush to the Brahmaputra. This is no mean achievement and certainly entitles him to a distinguished position among the prominent rulers of ancient India. He has rightly been regarded as the first historical paramount sovereign of this country, for it is during his reign that the whole of Northern India comes under one monarch for the first time.

Chandragupta's end has been the subject of controversial discussions. According to Jain tradition the Emperor was a follower of that religion and committed suicide by slow starvation. It is said that Bhadrabahu, a Jain saint, had predicted a twelve years' famine in Northern India and that when his prophecy began to be fulfilled he decided to lead twelve thousand Jains to the South. The King also abdicated and accompanied him to Mysore. Here the saint died while Chandragupta who survived him for several

years ended his life by starvation. In the absence of stronger evidence to the contrary this traditional account has been generally accepted by the scholars.

In 298 B.C. Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara. Bindusara who occupied the throne for about a quarter of a century and whose title Amitraghata (meaning slayer of the foes) suggests that he was a warrior like his father. Some scholars hold the view that he annexed the Deccan to the Mauryan Empire, because it is definitely known that Asoka ruled over a considerable portion of the Deccan and that the only annexation made by him was the kingdom of Kalinga. It has been concluded therefore that the Deccan was conquered and annexed by Asoka's father. Bindusara is also known to have had friendly relations and correspondence with Seleukos Nikator who sent an ambassador, Deimachos, to his court. The Indian King wrote to his friend asking him to send figs, wine and a philosopher. Seleukos sent the figs and wine but regretfully informed him that it would be a violation of the Greek laws to sell a professor.

The most important outcome of the conclusion of a treaty between Chandragupta and Seleukos was that the latter sent Megasthenes as his ambassador to the court of Pataliputra. He spent a number of years in this country and wrote an account of its political institutions and social life. Unfortunately his work is extinct except for those fragments which have been preserved by later writers, yet no foreigner gives us better information about India than Megasthenes before the time of Al-Beruni. He is generally reliable on matters

Mauryan
Government.

which came under his observation or for which he could get trustworthy informants; but we should not lose sight of the fact that he has also included some traveller's tales in his book and consequently sometimes makes absurd statements. However, his detailed account of the Mauryan government gives us a fairly correct idea of the working of the administrative machinery and the extent of the authority exercised by the founder of that dynasty.

The imperial city of Pataliputra was founded in the fifth century B.C. and stood at the confluence of the Son and the Ganges. Like its modern successor, Patna, it was a parallelogram, more than nine miles in length and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in breadth. It was protected by a wooden palisade which had 64 gates and 570 towers and a broad and deep moat. Chandragupta's palace, mainly constructed of timber, was more splendid than the royal palaces of Persia. The buildings stood in a park whose beauty was considerably enhanced by charming trees and domesticated birds, such as peacocks and parrots. Within the palace grounds there were artificial fish ponds.

The king generally remained inside his palace under the protection of his Amazonian body-guard and came out either for business or when going on a military or hunting expedition. He was fond of massage and indulged in it when hearing cases. He maintained his court with 'barbaric' splendour and ostentation. On state occasions he was taken in a golden palanquin and used horses or elephants on short and long journeys respectively. Combats of

The King and his Court.

animals, such as bulls, rams, elephants and rhinoceroses, were a striking feature of the royal amusements; ox-racing was also a favourite diversion. But the principal amusement of the King was the chase, for which elaborate arrangements were made. The game was driven up to a place from where he could shoot the animals with arrows.

The government of ancient Indian states was normally a despotism with very few real checks, and, generally speaking, the respect shown to the Brahmans could not stand in the way of a powerful ruler. **Autocracy.** A Brahman offender, according to Kautilya, was exempt from torture and even for high treason he was punished by being drowned, whereas men of other castes were burnt alive. But even a despot has to depend upon the co-operation of others. "Sovereignty", says Kautilya "is possible only with assistance. A single wheel can never move. Hence he (the king) shall employ ministers and hear their opinion". The number of these advisers and the extent to which their opinion was to be accepted rested with the king. Perhaps the most effective check on this otherwise unlimited despotism of the monarch was the fear of revolution or assassination. An unpopular king was never safe even in the four walls of his palace. Chandragupta who had female attendants as his personal guards dared not sleep in the day time or use the same bed-room for two successive nights. This indicates that he depended for the security of his life and throne on his military strength rather than the confidence of his subjects.

The extensive conquests and annexations of the early Mauryan rulers clearly indicate that they must have possessed a formidable army and that the figures given by Megasthenes and the classical writers are not far from correct. Indeed Chandragupta seems to have inherited a powerful army which he strengthened in numbers as well as equipment. This colossal standing army was comprised of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 horse, 9,000 elephants and a number of chariots. The elephants were regarded by the Indians as the most valuable section of the army, because it is on them, as Chanakya observes, "that the destruction of an enemy's army depends." It is surprising to note that the Indian warriors did not change their conservative tactics of depending mostly upon elephants in the battlefield in spite of bitter experience on many occasions. The Mussalmans brought with them newer tactics emphasizing the advantages of cavalry charges and thus introduced vital and far reaching changes in Indian warfare and strategy.

The horsemen were provided with two lances and a buckler, while the footsoldiers had a broad sword as their chief weapon and bows and arrows as additional ones. Each chariot had two soldiers besides the driver and an elephant carried three archers in addition to the *Mahawat*.

Chandragupta had made elaborate and systematic arrangements for the administration of his formidable army. There were six Boards, each with five members to look after these arrangements. Of these six Boards four were assigned the four traditional arms, cavalry, infantry, elephants and chariots; the remaining two had the charge of the Admiralty and the Transport departments.

It is possible for us to form a fairly correct idea of the Mauryan government on the basis of the information that has reached us, although it is not as copious and detailed as we would like it to be. The municipal administration of Pataliputra was in the hands of a Commission of thirty persons divided into six Boards or Committees of five members each, which had the charge of separate departments. The first Board was to control and direct the progress of industries and arts by regulating the rates of wages and maintaining the standard of efficiency. The second Board was to look after the foreigners and visitors and to make necessary arrangements for them. Evidently the Mauryan Government had inter-course and friendly relations with foreign powers because the number of visitors from these countries was large enough to have necessitated the creation of a separate department. The third Board maintained a register of births and deaths, probably for purposes of taxation. The fourth Board regulated trade and commerce, and maintained the standards of weights and measures. The fifth Board supervised the manufactured articles, and the sixth one levied taxes on the sales. The evasion of these taxes on sales was punishable by death. It is to be noted that four out of six Boards were directly or indirectly entrusted with the control, regulation and development of commerce and industry while no reference is made to the arrangements about hygienic and sanitary conditions of the cities. But these commissioners were required to supervise, besides their departmental works, other affairs and institutions of the city, such as markets, temples and other public works.

Civil Adminis-
tration.

In India all agricultural land belonged to the State.

Revenue. According to Kautilya "the King is the owner of both land and water, and that the people can exercise their right of ownership over all other things except these two". The revenue which has always been the mainstay of Indian finance was the first charge on the soil. We do not possess detailed information about the revenue administration, and it is difficult to say whether the settlement was undertaken annually or at longer intervals. The normal share of the State was one fourth of the gross produce.

The Mauryan government like its medieval and modern successors took great pains to provide the cultivators with possible facilities for irrigation. There are references in contemporary works which imply the existence of canals and the levying of a water-tax. In Kathiawar Chandragupta's viceroy, Pushyagupta, had started the construction of a reservoir by damming up a small river with the object of irrigating the neighbouring fields. It was completed in the time of Asoka and rebuilt "three times stronger," by Satrap Rudradaman in the second century of the Christian era.

Justice. The Arthashastra gives some details of the judicial administration. There were civil and criminal courts besides the Royal Court which was the highest court of appeal. Each had three judges who were advised by learned Brahmans. Many cases were tried by the *Panchayats* (Boards of arbitrators), religious cases were heard by *Parishads*. Megasthenes informs us that criminal law was severe, although the number of cases was

not very large because the people were generally honest. In Chandragupta's camp "the total of the thefts reported in any one day did not exceed two hundred drachmai, or about eight pounds sterling". The basic principle of punishment was "an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth". Torture and trial by ordeal were used in order to ascertain the truth. That capital punishment was awarded for a number of crimes such as injury to an artisan, evasion of taxes and intrusion on royal processions proves that the criminal code was very strict.

Provinces. The administration of the provinces was entrusted to viceroys (*Uparajas* who were in most cases members of the royal family. Asoka, for instance, was the Viceroy of Ujjain in the time of his father. According to Kautilya there were four provinces in the Mauryan Empire. The provincial governors were assisted by the *Mahanatras* who were probably district officers, although in some cases they received direct orders from the King. The royal control over the officers of distant provinces was maintained by means of special agents or "*reporters*", who were expected to send their reports to the central government about all important occurrences.

Religion and Society. Megasthenes says that the Hindus worshipped Heracles, Dionysus and Zeus Ombrios, who may be identified with Krishna, Siva and Indra respectively. He found much resemblance in the teachings of the Brahmans and Greek philosophy and has given definite instances to prove it. He speaks of mendicant ascetics living in the jungles, begging their food and wearing clothes made of bark. The Buddhists and Jains are not men-

tioned. The caste system was in full vigour, and intermarriages between different castes or change of profession were not permitted. He divides the Hindu society into seven classes the Brahmans and philosophers; the agriculturists; the herdsmen; shepherds and hunters; the artisans; the military class; the inspectors whose duty was to submit confidential reports about the work of the State officials; the Royal councillors, who held the highest posts and were Brahmans by caste.

The staple food of the Indians was rice boiled like porridge and served with meat. Wine was used. Women were held in respect and husbands could be punished for ill treating their wives; widows were allowed to re-marry. The practice of *Satee* was confined to the warrior caste only, and the consent of the widow was necessary; but those who refused to burn themselves were looked upon with contempt. The people were fond of amusements, and dancing and acting were popular. Megasthenes was wrong in saying that slavery was unknown in India.

The information supplied by Megasthenes can now be supplemented by the study of the *Arthashastra* which deals with the principles of government and policy and is said to have been written by Chanakya Vishnugupta or Kautilya, the Brahman minister of Chandragupta. It was discovered at the beginning of this century and has, since then, been studied and utilized by scholars. It is not possible here to discuss in details the contents or even the main features of Kautilya's work, and we shall have to confine ourselves to briefly reproducing a few of the principles laid down by him.

Autocracy seems to be the only form of government contemplated by the author. State-craft was not to be influenced by any kind of moral considerations. Might was right. Suspicion and hostility were at the root of political relations between States. The king who had to work hard was assisted by a Council. He mentions eighteen departments of administration with a number of officials but does not speak of the Boards described by Megasthenes. The Government took one fourth of the gross produce as land revenue besides a number of other dues. The penal code was extremely severe. It permitted judicial torture for extorting confessions, made petty offences like theft of a certain value punishable by death and prescribed mutilation in many cases. On the whole Kautilya's ideas are Machiavellian in spirit rather than Brahmanical and present "a plain and unvarnished statement of the immoral practice of kings and Brahman ministers in the fourth century before Christ".

CHAPTER VII.

Asoka (273 – 231 B. C.).

Bindusara's son and successor Asoka who has achieved an immortal fame for his missionary activities succeeded to the throne of his father in 273 B. C. The fact that his coronation took place four years after this date lends support to the view that his succession was disputed. But the Ceylonese tradition that he killed ninety-nine brothers to win his throne is incredible and seems to have been concocted by the Buddhist monks who wanted to create a dark background of his wicked deeds in the early years of his life against a brilliant career of piety and goodness after his conversion to Buddhism. He had acted as governor of the provinces of Taxila and Ujjain in the reign of his father and was therefore not a stranger to the art of administration at the time of his accession.

It is beyond doubt that the new monarch was as anxious to extend his dominions as his grandfather had been. In the 13th year of his reign he attacked the neighbouring kingdom of Kalinga which covered the coastal region between the Godavari and the Mahanadi. Asoka's victory was complete, and Kalinga was annexed to the Magadha Empire. It is recorded that 150,000 persons were taken captive and 100,000 were slain, while many more died of famine and pestilence. But the miseries of war created feelings of remorse and regret in the mind of the victorious king who knew that he alone was responsible for that tremendous loss of human life. The

Accession, 273
B.C.

Kalinga War,
261 B.C.

effect of these feelings was deep enough to bring about radical change in the entire outlook of his life. He made up his mind therefore not to indulge in aggressive wars and publicly declared that "the loss of even the hundredth or the thousandth part of the persons who were then slain, carried away captive, or done to death in Kalinga would now be a matter of deep regret to His Majesty". It was also about this time that he came under the influence of a Buddhist teacher, Upagupta of Mathura, and accepted Buddhism. His ideals were now changed and his government was to be based on the *Dharma*, or the Law of Piety which alone could bring the "true conquest". The rest of his life was spent in enforcing and propagating this 'Law'. It should be noted, however, that his zeal for the new creed did not make him an intolerant bigot. He respected those who differed with him on religious and other questions. In one of his edicts we read, "The King does reverence to men of all sects".

Within five years of the Kalinga War Asoka decided upon his new line of action and took definite measures to convey the principles of his moral code and government to his subjects. There was a complete change in his policy towards the neighbouring states as well as in his dealings with his own people. His neighbours were now safe against aggression as he was now determined not to indulge in offensive wars or make annexations.

His instructions were inscribed on rocks and pillars in different parts of the Empire, where they could be read and explained by the State officials as well as the common people. The first series of these edicts included fourteen Rock-Edicts

Moral and
Missionary
Activities of
the State.

and a Minor Rock Edict; they were soon followed by the Kaling Edicts. Then, after an interval of some years, appeared the Seven Pillar Edicts in which the former teachings were re-iterated and supplemented by a retrospect of the measures which had been taken to introduce these reforms. Besides these important documents there were others, such as cave inscriptions and pillar edicts, which have been discovered and deciphered. They are incised in the local dialects of the region in which they were to be set up and not only throw a considerable light on the life and conduct of the king but also indicate that the art of writing was not unknown in the country.

Asoka's moral code as read in his edicts lays great emphasis, like the teachings of the Jains, on the sanctity of animal life. It is surprising that in practice "the sanctity of animal was placed above that of human life; and the absurd spectacle was sometimes witnessed of a man being put to death for killing an animal or even for eating meat"*. The King's faith in *Ahimsa* had become so strong that he reduced the daily slaughter of animals for his kitchen to "only three living creatures at the most, namely two peacocks and one deer.....; and in 257 B. C. even this limited butchery was put an end to".† In the course of time Asoka's

*Early History of India, p. 185.

† Ibid. Dr. R. K. Mookerji holds a slightly different view. "It may be noted that he did not become an absolute vegetarian even after his conversion. His meat diet was limited to the flesh of antelopes and peacocks even in 258 B. C., some six years after his conversion, and, though the antelope was discarded later, it is not definitely known if the peacock was given up finally as an article of his food". Asoka, p. 62.

devotion to *Ahimsa* or the doctrine of the sanctity of animal life became more intense, and he issued regulations which forbade the slaughter of animals by all classes of his subjects.

The other two doctrines on which he laid great stress were those of respect to parents, elders and teachers, and truthfulness. These principles are thus summarized in one of his Minor Edicts:—

‘Thus saith His Majesty:—

‘Father and mother must be obeyed; similarly respect for living creatures must be enforced; truth must be spoken. These are the virtues of Piety which must be practised. Similarly, the teachers must be revered by the pupil, and proper courtesy must be shown to relations.

This is the ancient standard of piety—this leads to length of days, and according to this men must act.”

Toleration was to be practised, but it came next to the above virtues. There is no doubt that Asoka acted upon these principles and showed consideration to the followers of the Hindu faith, who enjoyed under him religious freedom to a large extent*. To see that the above regulations were enforced and the king's commands were obeyed he appointed a number of censors who were authorized "to concern

*Dr. Smith has rightly pointed out that in studying the tolerant policy of Asoka's Government we should not forget that he had to deal with Indian religious systems only, which "were all alike, merely variant expressions of Hindu modes of thought and feeling". Moreover, his toleration had limitations and was not extended to all religious practices. Severe restrictions, for instance, had been placed on the performance of animal sacrifices throughout the Empire. (Early History of India p. 188).

themselves with all sects, and with every class of society, not excluding the royal family" Liberality (or *Danam*) was to be extended to the poor and aged people as well as friends, comrades and relations.

Asoka's sympathy with his people and his anxiety to protect animal life are also indicated by his many charitable deeds. He is said to have opened a Royal Almoner's department which supervised the distribution of charitable grants and provided comforts for the travellers. He speaks in his edicts of having planted shady and fruit trees, constructed rest-houses and dug wells for the use of the way farers.

In this connection it would be interesting to note that the above code of morality which Asoka had enacted for his subjects is distinguishable from his personal religion. There are numerous facts which show that he was a true and strict follower of Buddhism and believed in its various doctrines. His pilgrimage to the holy places of Buddhism, the abolition of meat diet for the royal household and other measures taken to protect animal life as well as his attachment to a definite Buddhist symbol, namely that of the white Elephant, leave no doubt as to his adhesion to that faith. The distinctive features of Buddhism, however, do not appear in the Law of Piety as conveyed to the people as a whole. "We hear from him nothing concerning the deeper ideas or fundamental tenets of that faith; there is no mention of the Four Grand Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Chain of Causation, the supernatural quality of Buddha: the word and the idea of *Nirvana* fail to occur; and the innumerable points of difference which occupied the several

sects are likewise ignored".* He was fully conscious of the fact that his subjects included diverse peoples with different religious ideas, and therefore it was essential that he should introduce a system of laws which could be imposed upon them irrespective of their personal faith and beliefs. It has been suggested by some modern writers that "he laid the basis of a universal religion, and was probably the first to do so in history".† But there is no doubt that he laid this foundation of a 'universal religion' only unconsciously, because his personal faith was Buddhism, and there is abundant evidence to show that he was a genuine and zealous follower of that creed and would not change it for any other system, not even a "universal religion". Asoka's code of morality aimed at purifying the morals of the people rather than providing them with a new faith, and in this respect he was more of a social than a religious reformer.

Asoka's zeal for his ethical system as well as the Buddhist faith was so intense that in addition to missionary activities within the precincts of his own empire he devised a vast and elaborate scheme of sending missions to the states which lay at his frontiers and to those foreign countries with which he was in touch. This comprehensive scheme included distant places like the Hellenistic monarchies of Syria, Egypt and Macedonia besides Burma and Ceylon, the Dravidian kingdoms of Southern India, and the border states in the north and the west. According to the Ceylonese chroniclers the

Foreign Missions

* Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, p. 505

† Dr. R. K. Mookerji, Asoka, p. 76.

scheme "embraced seven Indian countries lying between the Himalayas and Peshawar in the north and a region called Mahishamandala in the south, usually identified with the southern portion of the Mysore State".

The Ceylonese mission which proved to be the most successful of foreign missions and has left a permanent mark in the history of that island was led by the Emperor's son. He worked with a band of enthusiastic colleagues including his own sister, Sanghamitra, and received full co-operation and help from King Tissa who soon became a zealous worker in the cause of his new faith and did much to popularize it among his people. The prince spent the remaining years of his life in that island and died there about 204 B C. Sanghamitra was as successful among women as her brother was among the men.*

Tradition credits the Emperor with having organized the third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra in the 19th year from his coronation. It was occasioned by sectarian differences among the followers of Buddhism and was presided over by Moggaliputta Tissa who is called Upagupta in the northern texts. Although Asoka does not mention this Council it has been accepted as a fact. On the conclusion of its deliberations missionary activities were organized more elaborately, and tradition has recorded the names of the leading preachers who were despatched to different parts of India and neighbouring countries.

* According to the northern traditions Mahendra and Sanghamitra were respectively the brother and sister of Asoka,

By his personal example and the comprehensive scheme of missionary activities which have been described above Asoka succeeded in raising Buddhism to the position of a world religion.

Gautam's ministry had remained confined to a limited area in Northern India where it was kept alive by its monastic system after his death. But under Asoka Buddhism was raised from the position of an Indian creed to that of an international religion and began to be counted among the greatest religions of the world. For several centuries it occupied a unique position in the East; and even to day, although it has nearly disappeared in the land of its birth, Buddhism claims the devotion of millions of human beings.

Asoka has been compared to Constantine; but we should not lose sight of the fact that Christianity had established its position when it was accepted by Constantine, while Buddhism was one of the many sects struggling for mere existence and survival when Asoka adopted it. Before his conversion to that faith Asoka was an ambitious and warlike prince and was anxious to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors and keep the dynastic traditions alive by conquering territories and extending his dominions. But the adoption of the new faith changed the character and outlook of the young emperor and diverted his energies to an entirely new channel. Asoka was not a mere preceptor, for, throughout the remaining years of his life, he endeavoured 'to combine the piety of the monk with the wisdom of the King'. That he was not only a theorist is amply proved by his inscriptions'. His devotion to religion did not make him indifferent to his duties as the ruler of a

vast empire. The following passage from one of his edicts will show how anxious he was to dispose of business: -

"For a long time past it has not happened that business has been despatched and that reports have been received at all hours

Now by me this arrangement has been made that at all hours and in all places—whether I am dining, or in the ladies' apartments, or in my private room, or in the mews, or in my (?) conveyance, or in the palace gardens—the official Reporters should report to me on the people's business; and I am ready to do the people's business in all places I have commanded that immediate report must be made to me at any hour and in any place, because I never feel full satisfaction in my efforts and dispatch of business. For the welfare of all folk is what I must work for—and the root of that, again, is in effort and the dispatch of business. And whatsoever exertions I make are for the end that I may discharge my debt to animate beings, and that while I make some happy here, they may in the next world gain heaven".*

How far he succeeded in living up to the ideal enunciated above is difficult to know, but there is no doubt that he made a genuine effort to serve his people and make their lives virtuous and happy. With a sublime ideal of kingship, a lofty conception of society and a career devoted to a noble cause Asoka deserves to be ranked among the great rulers of the Ancient Age and great men of all times.

*Rock-Edict VI. Quoted in Oxford History of India, p. 110.

It is almost certain that art must have flourished in the time of Asoka's father and grandfather, but their buildings have disappeared mainly because they were constructed of perishable wood. Asoka whose greatness as a builder has been exaggerated by tradition is said to have founded the cities of Srinagar in Kashmir and Deva-Pattana in Nepal. Unfortunately we do not have any buildings to judge the progress that architecture had made under his rule "unless some of the stupas near Bhilsa may have been built by him". It is in sculpture rather than architecture that we find the highest manifestation of the artistic skill of the Asokan age. "The art of his time", says Dr. Smith, "although obviously affected by Persian and Hellenistic influences, is mainly Indian in both spirit and execution". Indeed the skill shown by the Indian artist in Asoka's monolithic columns is marvellous and the pillar which still stands in the ruins of Feroz Shah's fort-palace is so exquisitely polished that some observers took it to be metallic. Equally fine is the incision of the letters of inscriptions on stone.

It has been suggested by some scholars that the fact that Asoka's inscriptions were composed in vernacular dialects and that he chose for them places where they could be easily accessible to the people at large shows that the percentage of literacy was fairly large. The monasteries were the chief centres of intellectual life and served the purpose of schools and colleges, but the assumption that they 'produced a higher general percentage of literacy among the populations than that existing at present' is absurd. Nor is Dr R. K. Mookerji's argument very convincing when he quotes the

census figures of 1901 to show that Burma's percentage of literacy was far higher than that of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

We have very meagre information about the family and descendants of Asoka. He was a polygamist and had several wives. The name of one of them, Karuvaki, called 'the second Queen', is preserved in an edict relating to her charities. She was the mother of Tivara. Another son of Asoka was Jalauka who figures in the Kashmir tradition as an important and vigorous ruler of that State and is reputed to have conquered vast territories in the plains of Northern India. He is represented as a zealous devotee of Siva and is said to have erected many temples in his honour. But the details of the Kashmir tradition about Jalauka's story have not been corroborated by independent evidence. The person who seems to have succeeded Asoka in the Eastern Provinces was his grandson Dasratha. He is known from a dedicatory inscription which records an endorsement made by him in favour of the Ajivika sect. Another grandson, Samprati, was, according to Jain tradition, a devoted follower of Jainism. His existence is not verified, however, by epigraphic evidence.

The *Puranas* allot a duration of 137 years to this dynasty. It ended in 185 B. C. when the last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, was murdered by his commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra, who became the founder of the Sunga dynasty. For many centuries various minor dynasties continued to claim their descent from the Mauryan emperors, and one of them has been mentioned by Hiuen Tsang.

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CHAPTER VIII

The Sunga Kanva and Andhra Dynasties.

Pushyamitra, the founder of the Sunga dynasty had usurped the throne of Magadha after murdering the last of the Mauryan rulers at a military review. His rule extended over the basin of the Ganges, or, roughly speaking, the modern provinces of Bihar and U.P. and a portion of Central India. In 165 B.C. Pushyamitra's territories were attacked by Kharavela, the ruler of Kalinga. But the invader decided to withdraw his forces on finding that his enemy had made a strategic retreat to Mathura. Four years later Kharavela again invaded Magadha and is said to have forced Pushyamitra into submission and seized the treasures of his capital, Pataliputra.

From certain passages in Patanjali's book on grammar it may be inferred that a Yavana (Greek) Prince attacked the Sunga territories. This fact is verified by *Malavikagnimitra* which is ascribed to Kalidas. There is no doubt as to the identity of the Greek invader. "It is permissible to conjecture", says Dr. Raychaudhuri, "that one of the two conquering kings, viz., Menander and Demetrios, was identical with the Yavana invader who penetrated to Saketa in Oudh, Madhyamika near Chitor and the river Sindhu in Central India, in the time of Pushyamitra". But after a critical and lengthy discussion of the problem he holds the view that "Menander could not have been the Indo-Greek contemporary of Pushyamitra".

The Yavana or
Greek Invasion

Sunga It is Demetrios who should, therefore, be identified with the Yavana invader referred to by Patanjali and Kalidasa, one of whose armies was defeated by Prince Vasumitra.* Dr. V. A. Smith, on the other hand, is definitely of the opinion that the invader was Menander, King of Kabul and the Punjab, who had extended his dominion over the Indus delta and Saurashtra Kathiawar) The Sungas repelled the invader and forced him to withdraw to his own territories, but probably he managed to retain his conquests in Western India for sometime

Pushyamitra's son Agnimitra who was the viceroy of the southern provinces lying on the banks of the Narbada enhanced the prestige of his father's Government by a victorious campaign against his southern neighbour, the Raja of Vidarbha. After these victories against the Indian rajas and the foreign invader Pushyamitra considered it justifiable for himself to celebrate the *Asva Medha* or horse sacrifice which, according to an old tradition, could be performed by a paramount sovereign only. The consecrated horse was let loose to wander for a year under the protection of the King's grandson, Vasumitra, who is said to have routed a band of the Yavanas on the bank of the river Sindhu in Central India. The performing of this sacrifice which had remained in abeyance under the Mauryas is undoubtedly a step towards the Brahmanical reaction. The Buddhist writers represent Pushyamitra as a cruel bigot and a persecutor of Buddhism, but they are probably guilty of exaggeration. There is no

*Political History of Ancient India, pp. 240-49.

doubt, however, that the Sungas were staunch adherents of the Hindu faith which must have enjoyed a preferential position under their rule.

In on about 149 B.C. Pushyamitra died after a reign of about 36 years and was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. According to the *Vishnu Purana*, Agnimitra was followed by eight other kings of the dynasty, one of whom was his son, Vasumitra. The later Sungas were weak rulers and the tenth king, Devabhuti or Devabhumi, a young man of dissolute habits was overthrown by his minister. "In a frenzy of passion" says Bana, "the over-libidinous Cunga was at the instance of his minister Vasudeva reft of his life by a daughter of Devabhuti's slave woman disguised as his Queen".* The usurper Vasudeva became the founder of the Kanva dynasty, but probably the Sunga princes continued to rule over a limited territory till the rise of the Andhras who are said to have "swept away the remains of the Sunga power".

Of the unimportant dynasty of the Kanvas founded by Vasudeva we know very little. It had four kings who ruled over a comparatively short period of 45 years. The last ruler of the dynasty was overthrown by the Andhras about 28 B.C.

The Andhras are mentioned in the *Aitareya Brahmana* as a *Dasyu* tribe living on the borders of the Aryan settlements. We learn from Pliny that in the time of the early Mauryans their "territory included thirty walled towns,

The Kanvas.
73 B.C. to 28 B.C.

The Satvahanas or The Andhras: Early History.

*English Translation of Bana's Harsa-charita, as quoted by Dr. V. A. Smith in his Early History of India, p. 215, n. 2.

besides numerous villages, and the army consisted of 100,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 1,000 elephants". The town of Sri Kakulam on the Krishna is said to have been their capital. In Asoka's edicts they are mentioned among peoples who had received his missions and accepted his message. They were, therefore, only under a nominal suzerainty of the Mauryan Emperor and enjoyed considerable independence in their country.*

The founder of the Satvahana dynasty, Simukha seems to have taken advantage of the decline of the Mauryan power after Asoka and laid the foundation of an independent state. The expansion of the Andhra State must have, therefore, begun in the last quarter of the third century B.C.; but some of the modern scholars have accepted the testimony of the *Puranas*, according to which Simukha flourished in the 1st century and destroyed not only the Kanva dynasty but also "whatever was left of the Sungas". Krishna the brother and successor of Simukha is mentioned in an inscription at Nasik, which shows that the expansion of the Andhras was very rapid and that in a short time they had succeeded in extending their dominion almost across the whole width of India. The third king was Sri Satakarni

* "This is why so many states and peoples of India were left unconquered when they could be easily conquered by a sovereign of Asoka's paramount power and position: the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputras, the Keralaputras (Rock Edict II), the Yavanas (Greeks) the Kambojas, the Nabhapantis of Nabhaka, the Bhojas and Pitinikas the Andhras and Pulindas. All these are mentioned as lying outside his 'conquered territory' (*vijita*) or direct dominion (Rock Edict. XIII)". This passage shows that Andhras were an independent tribe. See Dr. R. K. Mookerji's *Asoka*, p. 21.

who is mentioned as Lord of the West in the inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga, and it is inferred from a later inscription at Sanchi that Malwa was included in their dominion. About 28 B.C. the last ruler of the Kanva dynasty was slain by the Andhra king whose name is not known.

This is followed by a long gap in the history of this

Wars between
the Andhras
and Kshahara-
tas.

dynasty about which we know almost nothing. At the beginning of the second century we find the Andhras involved in a conflict with the Saka dynasty of the Ksha-

harata Kshatrapas who had risen to power by that time. The earliest ruler of the dynasty whose name is known to us was Bhumaka who lived in the early years of the first century after Christ and was subordinate to one or the other of the Indo-Parthian kings. Under Nahapana who assumed the title of 'Great Kshatrapa' (Satrap) the Kshaharata dominion extended to Ajmer in the north, Poona and Nasik in the west and included the peninsula of Saurashtra or Kathiawar. The dynasty was overthrown by Raja Gautamiputra Satakarni, the 23rd king of the Andhras, in the first century. He signalized his victory by re-stamping the coins of the Kshaharata chiefs and annexing their territories to his dominion.

Gautamiputra was succeeded by his son Raja Vasishtiputra Sri Pulumavi about 128 A.D. He was twice defeated by his father-in-law Rudradaman I, the great Satrap of Ujjain, and lost much of the land that his father had conquered.

After Pulumavi's death the only important ruler of this dynasty was Yajna Sri who ascended the throne in 166 A.D. and occupied it for

about thirty years. He seems to have renewed the struggle with the Western Satraps and struck coins after their model, probably for circulation in the territory which he had conquered from them. Some of his coins bear the figure of a ship, which indicates that his power was not confined to land.

After Yajna Sri the power of the Andhras declined rapidly and the dynasty came to an end about 225 A. D. It has been suggested that Sri Pulumavi's policy of appointing military officers as viceroys hastened the process of disintegration. These powerful chiefs took advantage of the weakness of the central government and set up independent states. The most important of such principalities was the Chutu Kingdom of Banavasi whose ruler bore the title of Satakarni. Later on, the Pallavas obtained the southern provinces of the Andhra Empire through a matrimonial alliance with the Chutu chief. Besides this internal weakness the Andhra power received a great blow from foreign invasions in the second century. Yajna Sri had succeeded in arresting the decline of the dynasty, but his successors could not continue his vigorous policy. The later kings lingered on for sometime in the eastern portion of the Empire which disappeared with the rise of other dynasties like the Pallavas and the Kadambas.

The inscriptions of the Andhra period give us some idea of the social life of the people. Buddhism had no doubt received a set-back after Asoka's death, but it seems that the two religions flourished side by side under the Andhras. Most of the Buddhist caves in the Deccan belong to this period, while

the popularity of Hinduism is indicated by the fact that the Satvahana chiefs performed the *Asvamedha* and other Brahmanical sacrifices. It was during this period that "foreigners of various origins, Sakas and Yavanas, were penetrating all ranks of Hindu Society and adopting Hinduism and Brahmanism". The Andhra kingdom had commercial relations with the West, and ships laden with foreign commodities sailed through the Red Sea to reach the ports of India.

Some of the Andhra kings patronized learning, but it is to be noted that they extended their patronage to Prakrit rather than to Sanskrit. Hala, the seventeenth king of the dynasty, according to the *Puranic* lists, is credited with having compiled an anthology of erotic verses in the Prakrit of Maharashtra. This should not, however, be taken to mean that Sanskrit had lost its hold in the country: in fact it was regaining its influence with the revival of the Brahmanical Hinduism.

CHAPTER IX.

Foreign Invaders of North West India.

The disintegration of the Mauryan Empire after Asoka exposed its outlying provinces in the north-west to the attacks of the Indo-Greek princes who had established their power beyond the Hindu-Kush mountains. On Alexander's death his Asiatic dominion was won and consolidated into a powerful monarchy by Seleukos who styled himself as Nikator or the Conqueror. He is known as the King of Syria, but in reality his empire stretched in the east to the borders of India, which naturally made him anxious to recover the Indian provinces that had been conquered by his great master. As has been related in a previous chapter he was defeated by Chandragupta Maurya and failed to materialize this scheme. In 261 B. C. his empire passed into the hands of his grandson Antiochos, a worthless prince, towards the end of whose reign the provinces of Bactria and Parthia raised the standard of revolt and became independent states.

The Parthian revolt had its origin in a national rising under the leadership of a brave chief named Arsakes who became the founder of the well-known Arsakidan dynasty of Persia which lasted for about five centuries. Bactria with Baktra (Balkh) as its capital had become an important colony of the Greeks since the days of Alexander. Here the revolt was due to a military revolution under its Greek governor Diodotus who seems to have assumed independence and laid the foundation of a new dynasty about 250 B.C.

He died after a brief reign of about five years and was succeeded by his son Diodotus II who made an alliance with Parthia.

Diodotus II was overthrown by another adventurer named Euthydemos who was soon involved in a war with Antiochos the Great of Syria (223-187 B.C.). After a long but unsuccessful siege of Balkh, Antiochos recognized the independence of Bactria by a treaty and was so deeply impressed by Demetrios, the son of Euthydemos, who had conducted the negotiations of peace on behalf of his father that he gave his daughter in marriage to him. Shortly after this Antiochos crossed the Hindukush and compelled Subhagasena (Sophagasenas of the Greeks) to purchase peace by offering the victorious invaders a large indemnity and a considerable number of elephants * Euthydemos died after a long and prosperous reign in 190 B. C. and was succeeded by Demetrios who had already earned a good reputation. The new monarch finding his position perfectly secure in Bactria led his forces towards the Indian border land and succeeded in taking possession of the Kabul Valley and portions of the Punjab and Sindh (circ. 190 B.C.) His Indian conquests cost him the throne of Bactria which was seized by a rebellious adventurer named Eukratides about 175 B.C. But Demetrios managed to retain the possession of his newly conquered territories with Sangala (or Sialkot)

*It has been suggested that Subhagasena was a grandson of Asoka.

as his capital and became known as the "King of the Indians". He was compelled, however, to resist the arms of Eukratides who had successfully attacked the Kabul Valley and extended his frontiers to the borders of the western Punjab. Probably it was during this struggle against his rival that Demetrios met with his end about 160 B. C. The triumph of Eukratides also was short-lived, because he was murdered on his way back from India by his own son and successor Heliokles. It was in the reign of this parricide that Bactria was seized by the Sakas and the Greeks were forced to seek shelter in their Indian dominions.

Thus the houses of Demetrios and Eukratides continued to rule in the eastern Punjab and the Kabul Valley respectively. The coins give us the names of several kings of the house of Eukratides after its expulsion from Bactria. One of them, Antalkidas, is mentioned in an inscription at Besnagar (near Bhilsa), which records the erection of a column by his ambassador to the court of the Sunga ruler Bhagabhadra. This inscription shows that the Yavana princes had diplomatic relations with other states in the interior of the country and also proves that some of these foreigners had adopted Indian religions, for the Greek ambassador styles himself as *Bhagvata*. The last of these Greek princelings of the Indian border-land was Hermaeus.

Of the princes of the house of Euthydemus the names of Appolodotos and Menander appear in literature. It was probably in the time of Appolodotos that the dynasty lost its hold on eastern Afghanistan. Menander is a well-known

figure in Indian literature and is identified with King Milinda of the Buddhist work *Milinda-panha* (Questions of Milinda). This book is in the form of a dialogue between Nagasena, the Buddhist saint, and Menander who ultimately becomes a convert to Buddhism. Menander seems to have enjoyed a long and prosperous reign and was, according to some scholars, the Yavana prince who had invaded Magadha. His successors were not strong rulers, and the dynasty came to an end in the first century B.C. on account of the pressure of the Saka invaders.

The Scythians (Sakas) and the Parthians (Pahlavas) are usually associated with each other and often with the Yavanas (Greeks) in Indian literature and inscriptions. In the second century B.C. the Sakas who lived in the territory to the north of the Jaxartes were pushed southward into Bactria by another horde of nomads known as the Yueh-chi. The Sakas burst upon the kingdoms of Parthia and Bactria and occupied Ariana (Herat) and Sistan, which came to be known as Sakastan. In a long and severe struggle the Parthian king, Mithradates II, succeeded in establishing his supremacy over these nomadic tribes. It was also during his reign that the inter-mingling of the two peoples took place, and there arose a number of vassal states which were governed by mixed Saka and Parthian princes. After the death of Mithradates II, the Saka chiefs re-asserted themselves, entered India through Arachosia and the Bolan pass and occupied the lower portion of the Indus valley which came to be known by the name of Indo-Scythia.

Of these Saka-Pahlava families the two most important ones were those of Maues (King Moga of inscriptions) and Vonones. In a later generation both these families became associated with each other. Maues who was the earliest of the Saka kings of India flourished in the first century B. C. and seems to have conquered Gandhara and extended his rule over the Punjab. He had assumed the title of "King of Kings" and occupied his throne for a fairly long period.

Maues was succeeded by Azes I who was a Pahlava and not a Saka Prince and seems to have had a long reign. The reigns of the next two princes, Azilises and Azes II occupied a period of about forty years. About A. D. 20, Azes II was succeeded by Gondophares who ruled over an extensive territory for more than a quarter of a century as is evident from an inscription.

It would be interesting to note that in Christian traditions the name of Gondophores is associated with the legend of St. Thomas. The saint, according to this tradition, is said to have visited the kingdom of Gondophares and converted him and many of his subjects to Christianity. Evidently the whole story is a myth, but "it is permissible to believe that a Christian mission actually visited the Indo-Parthians of the north-western frontier during his reign, whether or not that mission was conducted by St. Thomas in person".

The house of Maues is associated with the system of Government by satraps under a Suzerain. The most important of these Satrapal families were those of Taxila and Mathura in the

Satrap Dynasties.

north and Malwa and Gujrat in western India. The names of several Saka chiefs of Mathura and some of the Satraps of Taxila are mentioned in the inscriptions.

Far more important than these chiefs of Taxila and Mathura were the Satrap dynasties of Malwa and Gujrat, who have been mentioned before. The distinguished families of the Western Kshatrapas (Satraps) were the Kshaharatas and the Chashtanas. Bhumaka, the founder of the Kshaharata line, was succeeded by Nahapana who was the real builder of the powerful Saka kingdom extending from Malwa to Nasik and seems to have enjoyed a long reign. The Kshaharatas were overthrown by the Andhra Satvahanas. The founder of the other line, which was closely connected with the Kshaharatas, was Chashtana* who issued coins as Mahakshatrapa. His grandson, Rudradaman was a war-like prince, and his victories over the Satvahanas and other chiefs are recorded in the Girnar inscription. He repaired the great Sudarsana embankment which was built by the Mauryas. He was an accomplished person and enhanced the prestige of his dynasty which continued to rule till the end of the fourth century when it was overthrown by the Guptas. The Sakas had adopted the Hindu faith and did much to promote its cause.

For the early history of the Kushana dynasty we have to depend mostly upon Chinese sources of information. In the second century B. C.—

Kushanas.

* The name of Chashtana's father was Ysamotika which has been supposed by some scholars as the Saka original of the Sanskrit form Bhumaka.

the date usually given is 165 B.C.—a central Asian tribe, the Hiung-nu, defeated their neighbours, the Yueh-chi, and compelled them to abandon their home-lands in north-western China and move westwards. The king of the Yueh-chi was slain in this action, and his skull is said to have been used as a drinking cup by the victorious chief. In the course of their march the Yueh-chi people who numbered several millions defeated another tribe known as the Wu-sun in the basin of the Ili river. After this victory a small section of these nomads turned southwards and settled on the Tibetan frontier. They became known as the Little Yueh-chi, while the main body which was designated the Great Yueh-chi continued its westward march until they succeeded in expelling the Sakas from their lands in the north of the Syr-Daria. The Sakas were therefore compelled to seek a new home which they found in southern Afghanistan. In the meantime the son of the Wu-Sun chief, who had escaped after the defeat and death of his father, had reached manhood and succeeded in securing the help of the Hiung-nu against the common foe. He drove the Yueh-chi out of the lands which they had wrested from the Sakas and forced them to move on to the Oxus valley where they defeated the Ta-Hia people and gradually occupied Bactria and Soghdiana. By the end of the first century B.C. the Yueh-chi had changed their nomadic habits for a settled life and divided themselves into five different tribes, of which the Kushanas were one.

After the lapse of a period of over a hundred years the Kushana chief, Kujula Kadphises, succeeded in bringing the whole of the Yueh-chi people and their territory under his sway. He then started a series

of campaigns and added to his dominion the territory of Gandhara and the Kabul valley and occupied the lands south of the Hindu-Kush. He could also find time and opportunity to invade Parthia. Thus the Kushana empire under Kadphises I stretched from the frontiers of Persia to the Indus. His march across the Hindu-kush involved him into a struggle with the Greek and Parthian dynasties which were crushed and overthrown. The fact that the name of Kadphises appears on some coins conjointly with that of Hermaeus shows that either they were struck at a time when the two princes were in a temporary alliance or that the Kushana victor simply imitated the coins of his vanquished enemy.

Kadphises I died at the age of eighty about 78 A.D.

and was succeeded by his son Wima Kadphises II. Kadphises who is known as Kadphises II. He was not less ambitious and war-like than his father and is said to have extended his power over the Punjab and a part of the Gangetic plain. His Indian Provinces were governed by viceroys "to whom should be attributed the large issues of coins known to numismatists as those of the Nameless King, which are extremely common all over Northern India from the Kabul valley to Ghazipur and Benares on the Ganges, as well as in Cutch (Kachcha) and Kathiawar".*

In the last quarter of the first century A.D. the great Chinese general Pan Chao carried his victorious arms almost to the shores of the Caspian Sea and conquered Khothan

*V. A. Smith's Early History of India, p. 208.

and Kashgar and other places lying on the borders of the Kushana Empire. Kadphises was alarmed by these victories and tried to assert his power by demanding a Chinese princess in marriage. He sent this proposal to General Pan Chao who considered it insulting for his master and ordered the arrest of the envoy. The Kushana Emperor now felt justified in sending an army across the Pamir to attack China. The army was so shattered by the hardships of the journey that it was easily routed by the enemy and Kadphises was compelled to purchase peace by promising a tribute. His relations with the Romans were far more happy. It has been suggested that the Indian embassy received by Trajan was sent by the Kushana Emperor, and there is evidence to show that Roman gold came to India in return for the precious commodities of the East. Probably it was for this reason that Kadphises II was in a position to issue gold coins in large numbers.

Kadphises II was succeeded about 120 A.D. by Kanishka who is a well-known figure in Buddhist tradition.* In spite of his fame as a mighty conqueror and a great patron of Buddhism we have but

*There is considerable difference of opinion among scholars about the actual date of Kanishka's accession and his relation to Kadphises II. One view is that Kadphises and Kanishka belonged to two different families of the Kushanas and the connection between them, if there was any, is not known. According to another view Kanishka succeeded Kadphises II and was closely related to him. "K. P. Jayaswal is of opinion that the Statue of the seated king, discovered close to the Statue of Kanishka near Mathura is that of Wema Kadphises (Kadphises II) and that Kanishka was the son of Kadphises II". (Early History of India, p. 273). For a fuller discussion of the various theories see H. Raychaudhuri's Political History of Ancient India. (pp. 294-299).

scanty material for a detailed study of his achievements. There is little doubt, however, that he did not only complete the conquest of upper India but also extended the frontiers of his empire to the regions beyond the Pamir passes. He seems to have led a victorious campaign in the Gangetic plain as far east as Sarnath (near Benares) where inscriptions of the year 3 of his era have been discovered. He conquered Kashmir and built there, in addition to numerous monuments, the town of Kanishkapura. According to tradition he brought from his eastern campaign the Buddhist saint named Asvaghosha. The capital of Kanishka's empire was Purushapura (Modern Peshawar) where he erected a great tower and a magnificent monastery which flourished as a place of Buddhist learning till the ninth century.

Besides his Indian conquests Kanishka is alleged to have led a successful invasion against Parthia. But the most remarkable of his military exploits was his campaign across the Pamirs which resulted in the annexation of the provinces of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan. He thus avenged the defeat of his predecessor and brought back hostages* who were treated with the utmost consideration and allowed to live in monasteries.

*A curious story is related about the treasure which these hostages had deposited as an endowment for one of these monasteries. The narrator says how attempts made to appropriate the treasure by a Raja and some of the monks living there ended in failure, and how it was in the time of Hiuen Tsang and through his pious intercession that the workmen could dig up the spot and discover a vessel full of gold and pearls which were utilized for the repairs of the monastery.

In Buddhist tradition Kanishka is also depicted, like Asoka, as an unscrupulous tyrant before his conversion to the religion of Buddha. But the story that his ideas began to change when he realized that he had been responsible for the slaughter of thousands of men in war is not corroborated by other sources. A more authentic account of Kanishka's religion is given by scholars who have carefully studied his numerous and varied coins. It is beyond doubt that he had become a Buddhist, but his coins show that he also respected Zoroastrian and Greek divinities. "The finest, and presumably the earliest, pieces bear legends, Greek in both script and language, with effigies of the sun and moon personified under their Greek names, Helios and Selene. On later issues the Greek script is retained, but the language is Khotanese, a form of old Iranian, while the deities depicted are a strange medley of the gods worshipped by Greeks, Persians and Indians. The rare coins exhibiting images of Buddha Sakyamuni with his name in Greek letters are usually considered to be among the latest of the reign, but they are well executed and may be earlier in date than is generally supposed"*

Kanishka's Buddhism is of the Mahayana form in which Buddha appears "among a crowd of heterogeneous deities" and becomes "a god, with his ears open to the prayers of the faithful, and served by an hierarchy of Bodhisattavas and other beings acting as mediators between him and sinful men." It should be noted, however, that

*V. A. Smith, Early History of India, p. 281.

Kanishka was not the founder of the Mahayana* system although he did much to promote it. The worship of images, an elaborate ritual and a belief in the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Buddha were some of the main features of this newer form of Buddhism.

According to Buddhist traditions of Northern India which are preserved in the works of Tibetan Buddhist Council. and Chinese writers Kanishka summoned a Council like that of Asoka. The object of this Council was to obtain an authoritative exposition of the doctrines of Buddhism. It is said that in the course of his studies Kanishka was puzzled by the conflicting views of the various sects. He therefore summoned a Council of the learned theologians, which met in Kashmir under the presidency of Vasumitra and gave its verdict on various issues. The aged Asvaghosha also attended this assembly. About 500 members took part in these discussions, and the results of their deliberations were inscribed on copper plates and deposited in a stupa which was erected for this purpose. It is certain that the Council was held, but its connection with Kanishka has been questioned by some scholars.

The story of Kanishka's death is preserved in a legend which says that he was murdered by his own people who were sick of his policy of incessant wars and campaigns.

Kanishka's two sons, Vasishka and Huvishka, probably acted as his father's viceroys in upper India. The fact that Vasishka's coins are

Kanishka's successors.

*The names Mahayana and Hinayana meant the Great Vehicle and the Little Vehicle respectively.

not known lends support to the view that he died before his father and that the latter's immediate successor was his other son, Huvishka, whose coins have survived in large numbers. He seems to have enjoyed a long reign, but we know nothing about the events of this period. The town of Huvishkapura was built by Huvishka and was situated near the Baramula pass in Kashmir. It was an important place in the 7th century and was visited by the famous traveller Hi *en* Tsang.

In the reign of the next ruler, Vasudeva, the Kushana power began to decline, and it was probably at this time that the Satraps of Saurashtra became independent. After Vasudeva the extensive empire of the Kushanas broke up into fragments and a number of petty independent states rose to power. The last traces of Kushana rule in Kabul were swept away by the White Huns. It has been suggested by some scholars that the fall of the Kushanas "must have been hastened by the terrible plague of A. D. 167, which started in Babylonia, and desolated the Roman and Parthian empires for several years."

India's Relations with other Countries
It has been related before that from very ancient times India had commercial relations with some of the Mediterranean countries. There is no doubt that the invasions of Darius, Alexander and Antiochos strengthened these lines of communications, and scholars have discovered traces of Persian and Greek influences in Mauryan art. After Alexander India's trade with Egypt increased considerably. Her commodities were carried through the Red Sea to the Egyptian ports from where they were transported to Alexandria which had become the emporium of trade

between the East and the West and the meeting place of the various nations.

The numerous and beautiful coins issued by the Indo-Greek princes of the Punjab and the Kabul valley were imitated by the Western Satraps, the Kushanas and the Guptas. But it should be noted that the Indo-Greek dynasties did not leave any permanent mark on the institutions of this country. On the contrary, the foreigners were soon absorbed in the native population and adopted the social and religious practices of this country.

Under the Kushanas whose dominions touched the frontiers of the Chinese and Persian empires the contact of India with foreign countries seems to have increased to a great extent. They sent ambassadors to the Roman Emperor, and one of them is said to have visited the Court of Trajan who received him with great courtesy. This diplomatic intercourse gave a fresh stimulus to trade, and Indian spices became very popular with the Romans. The Kushana Princes imitated Roman coins. Consequently India began to attract the attention of Western writers, and some of them have supplied us fragmentary but useful information about her.

In the domains of art, religion and literature, like coinage, it is not difficult to find traces of foreign influence. In the Gandhara School, for example, "the forms of Greek art were applied to Buddhist subjects, with considerable artistic success in many cases." On the other hand Christian Gnosticism shows unmistakable signs of the influence of Indian philosophy. Similarly, the Indians borrowed some ideas in medicine and astronomy from the Greeks.

Chapter X.

The Gupta Period.

The period from the fall of the Kushanas to the rise of the Guptas forms a dark epoch in the history of India, because our sources of information for its study are extremely meagre. But it is now considered to be almost a certainty that a considerable portion of northern India had passed under the sway of the Nagas in the third and fourth centuries A. D. Another dynasty that had risen to power in the third century was that of the Vakatakas who seem to have flourished in the territory of Bundelkhand.

The Nagas are mentioned in the *Puranas* as the rulers of Vidisa which they seem to have occupied after the decline of the Sungas for it was the seat of a viceroyalty under the latter. An inscription of the first century A.D. at Padmavti in Central India mentions one of the Naga rulers. Evidently therefore it appears probable that the expansion of the Kushana power drove the Nagas southward and compelled them to take refuge in the region now covered by the Central Provinces.

With the decline of the Kushanas the Nagas seem to have revived their power and glory and are therefore called Nava-Nagas in the *Puranas*. The first important ruler of the revived dynasty was Virasena who established his authority over the territory of the Doab and became the founder of the Bharasiva line. The Bharasivas extended their dominion over a large part of modern U. P. and the adjoining districts of Bihar and had under their control several vassal princes

and clans. They were devoted to the Hindu faith and did much to revive the ancient culture of the Hindus.

Another powerful dynasty that rose to power in the third century was that of the Vakatakas whose original territory roughly corresponded with modern Berar. The descent of this dynasty has been traced from Vindhyaśakti. He did not enjoy the status of a ruling sovereign, but his son, Pravarasena I, assumed the title of *Samraj* or emperor and is said to have performed several *asva-medhas* or horse sacrifices. He was succeeded by his grand-son, Rudrasena I, whose son and successor Prithivisena was a contemporary of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. Prithivisena had a long reign during which he extended his kingdom by conquering a part of the Karnataka country and the kingdom of the Kadambas. His son Rudrasena II married Prabhavati, a daughter of Chandragupta II, and from this time the Vakatakas seem to have eclipsed before the rising power of the Guptas. Probably the fortunes of the Vakatakas had begun to revive on the decline of the Guptas and they appear to have acted as a bulwark in western India against the inroads of the Hunas. About the middle of the sixth century the Vakataka dynasty disappeared and was supplanted by the Kalachuris. Like the Bharasivas the Vakatakas also followed the Hindu faith and the period of their ascendancy witnessed a vigorous revival of Hindu art. They patronized Sanskrit which had become the language of their court and inscriptions.

With the dawn of the fourth century we come to a period for which we have better sources of information than the previous one. Of the many inscriptions of this age the most important

The Rise of the Gupta
Dynasty: Chandra-
gupta I.

is that of Samudragupta which gives a detailed account of his conquests and is a precious record for the study of contemporary history. The origin of the Gupta dynasty is lost in obscurity, but we know from the evidence of the Chinese pilgrim, I Tsing, who visited this country in the last quarter of the seventh century, that a *maharaja* named Sri Gupta had built a temple for the Chinese pilgrims. Nothing is known of the immediate successors of Sri Gupta, and the earliest prince of the house, who is mentioned in the inscriptions, is Gupta, the great-grandfather of Samudragupta.* Gupta's son was Ghatotkacha Gupta, but it was in the time of his grandson, Chandragupta I, that the dynasty rose to prominence. He is therefore held as the real founder of the Gupta dynasty.

Chandragupta strengthened his power and resources by marrying Kumaradevi, a Lichchavi princess of Vaisali. His coins indicate that he owed his position to his queen, for they have on the obverse the figures of the husband and the wife and on the reverse the legend "*Lichchhavayah*". He seems to have extended his dominion by annexing some territories in Bihar and Oudh, and commemorated the establishment of his kingdom by founding the Gupta era which begins from the date of his coronation (February 26, A. D. 320).

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Samudragupta who was a man of varied accomplishments
Samudragupta, 335-375 A.D. The Allahabad Inscription shows that Chandragupta had chosen his as his heir because he was the

* Some scholars have identified Shri Gupta with Chandragupta I. But this is improbable because I Tsing's date would place him in the second century, while Chandragupta flourished in the fourth century.

worthiest of his sons. At the time of his accession which may be placed about 335 A. D. India was divided into a number of states. This political disunity of the country must have encouraged the new monarch in his ambitious schemes of conquest and aggression. According to his famous inscription Samudragupta waged two distinct wars in Aryavarta and utilized the interval between them for his celebrated campaign in the south. The author of this panegyric (Allahabad Inscription) classifies his master's enemies under four heads according to the treatment meted out to them: kings whose territories were annexed; kings who were defeated but re-instated as tributaries; frontier kings who paid homage to the victor; kings who felt the force of his arms.

Samudragupta opened his campaigns with a war against the chiefs of Northern India who were
His Campaigns. under the leadership of the Ganapati Naga of Padmavati. The forces of the confederacy were defeated and most of the territory belonging to the vanquished chiefs was annexed by the victor. This was followed by a successful raid in the regions of Chotanagpur, Mahakoshala and Andhra. But Samudragupta's fame as a warrior rests on his southern campaign. He marched from his capital in a southerly direction and defeated King Mahendra of South Koshala in the valley of the Mahanadi. From here he proceeded against the chiefs of Mahakantra, the forest region adjoining the Koshala country. The victorious monarch continued his march southwards and defeated the ruler of a vast kingdom which included Pishtapura (modern Pithapura), the ancient capital of Kalinga and the hill forts of Mahendragiri and Kottura. Among other princes who became the victims of

Samudragupta's aggression were Damana of Erandapali (Ganjam district), Vishnugopa, the Pallava king of Kanchi, Hastivaraman of Vengi (north of Ellore), Ugrasena of Palaka, Kubera of Devarashtra and Dhanamjaya of Kushtalapura. These states were not annexed. It has been suggested by some scholars that the last-named princes in the above list formed a confederation which proved too strong for Samudragupta and successfully stemmed the tide of his invasions. Of the defeated princes none seems to have been deprived of his territories, but there is no doubt that the victorious invader of the North carried away enormous wealth to enrich his capital.*

Samudragupta now attacked the regions of Bundelkhand and Central India for a second time and annexed the country lying between the Jumna and the Vindhya. In this campaign he is said to have defeated a chief, named Rudradeva, who has been identified with Rudrasena of the Vakataka dynasty. Besides these annexations Samudragupta secured the allegiance of the kingdoms of Samatata (Sunderbans), Davaka (Eastern Bengal) and Kamarupa (Assam) on his eastern frontier and the submission of Nepal and Katripura (Kangra and Garhwal), whose kings acknowledged his suzerainty but were allowed to retain their autonomous position.

*For a long time Samudragupta was believed to have reached the Malabar coast and returned to the north through Khandesh and Maharashtra; but recent researches have shown that his campaigns covered a much more limited area and that all the States attacked by him and mentioned in the inscription lay near the east coast of India. For a detailed discussion of place names of the Allahabad Inscription see "Shorter Cambridge History", pp. 89-90.

The territory which was under the direct government of Samudragupta thus extended from the Brahmaputra in the east to the Jumna and the Chambal in the west. In the north it stretched up to the foot of the Himalayan hills, while the southern frontier touched the Narbada. Beyond these limits were the five frontier kingdoms, mentioned above, and a number of tribes living under republican or, at any rate, oligarchical institutions. They were in subordinate alliance with his Government. The inscription also mentions a group of Kushana princes of the north-west with whom Samudragupta had diplomatic relations. The Buddhist king of Ceylon, Meghavarma (352 to 379 A.D.) sent an envoy with costly presents to the court of Pataliputra and requested the Emperor to grant him permission to build a monastery at Gaya for the use of pilgrims from his country. This permission was granted and the Ceylonese monarch erected a magnificent convent (near the Bodhi Tree) which was found in an exceedingly prosperous condition by Hiuen Tsang who visited it in the 7th century.

Samudragupta celebrated his manifold victories by reviving the ancient rite of *asva medha* or horse-sacrifice, which was offered in the midst of great festivities. He distributed lavish gifts to the Brahmans and commemorated the event by issuing a medal which bore a suitable legend along with the figures of the Queen and the sacrificial horse.

In spite of the eulogistic style of Harisena, the author of the Allahabad Inscription, it is possible to form a fairly correct idea of the personal attainments of this illustrious

monarch by a careful study of that document. He was not a mere war-lord, and although most of his wars were of an aggressive nature they were not conducted in a barbarous manner. Undoubtedly one of his favourite titles was *Sarvarajochchelta* ("exterminator of all kings", but evidently it is not to be understood in too literal a sense and it was adopted to show the extent of his conquests rather than the destruction of human life at his hands. He patronized learning and was himself a poet and a musician of high order. According to his panegyrist, "he put to shame the preceptor of the lord of gods and Tumburu and Narada and others by his sharp and polished intellect and choral skill and musical accomplishments. He established his title of *Kaviraja* by various poetical compositions". Unfortunately none of his compositions has been preserved, but his poetical taste is manifested by the fact that some of his coins bear metrical legends; similarly his love for music is indicated by those coins which show him seated and playing a lyre. He was a great patron of Hinduism; but his orthodoxy had not made him a bigot, for he employed the learned Buddhist author Vasubandhu as his councillor.

The exact date of Samudragupta's death is not known, but it may be placed about the end of the third quarter of the fourth century. He was succeeded by Chandragupta II (his son by Queen Datta Devi) whom he had nominated as his successor during his life. He is known as Vikramaditya (Sun of

Chandragupta II,
Vikramaditya
375-413 A.D.

*Quoted from Raychaudhuri's 'Political History of Ancient India,' p. 345.

Valour) and "has a greater claim than any other sovereign to be regarded as the original of the mythical King of that name who figures so largely in Indian legends". His reign was essentially a period of peaceful development, but he fought some wars which resulted in the expansion of his ancestral dominions towards the south-west.

The first important achievement of the new monarch was in the field of diplomacy. He married his daughter Prabhavati to Rudrasena II, the Vakataka prince of the Deccan and thus secured the alliance of that dynasty*. The Kshatrapas against whom Chandragupta now decided to launch his campaign had received a great blow at the hands of their rivals, the Vakatakas; but the defeat of the latter by Samudragupta had enabled their vanquished rivals to revive their power and offer a stiff resistance to his son. Consequently Chandragupta had to spend several years in his wars against the Western Kshatrapas. Ultimately, however, the last of the Kshatrapas, Rudrasinha, was defeated and slain, and his entire dominion was annexed to the Gupta Empire. According to a scandalous tradition, "in his enemy's city the king of the Sakas,

*That the motive of Chandragupta in marrying his daughter to Rudrasena II was a diplomatic alliance with that king is evident, for "the Vakataka Maharaja occupied a geographical position in which he could be of much service or disservice to the northern invader of the dominions of the Saka Satraps of Gujrat and Saurashtra. Ghandra Gupta adopted a prudent precaution in giving his daughter to the Vakataka prince and so securing his subordinate alliance", Dr. Smith. J. R. A. S. 1914, p. 324.

while courting another man's wife, was butchered by Chandragupta, concealed in his mistress's dress".* The new annexations were exceedingly important because they pushed the south-western frontier of the empire to the sea coast and thus "placed Chandragupta II in direct touch with the sea-borne commerce with Europe through Egypt". Another important result of these conquests was that Ujjayini (Ujjain), one of the most ancient cities of Malwa and a famous seat of learning, became a sort of a second capital. The old imperial city of Pataliputra was still the official capital of the Guptas although Chandragupta II and his father preferred for their residence Ajodhya which naturally became the premier city of their empire.

Chandragupta was a Vaishnavite, but he showed no hesitation in giving responsible posts to the followers of other faiths. His general Amrakardava, "the hero of a hundred fights," was a Buddhist and several of his ministers were Saivaites.

The Raja was assisted by a body of ministers whose office was usually hereditary. The empire was divided into a number of provinces, called *desas* or *bhuktis*, which were subdivided into districts for purposes of administration. The *desas* were governed by *Goptris*, and the *bhuktis* were often entrusted to princes of the ruling family. A *vishaya* or district included a number of villages (*gramas*) which were in the charge of their headmen (*Gramikas* and *Bhojakas*).

* *Harsha-charita*, as quoted by V. A. Smith in 'Early History of India', p. 309.

The Gupta rulers were great patrons of Hindu religion and literature, and under their rule Brahmanism reached the climax of its power and glory. It should be noted, however, that the Brahmanical faith had undergone great changes during a long course of struggle and rivalry with Buddhism for attaining popularity in the country. "In this race for popular favour, Brahmanism came out triumphant. It assimilated, slowly but silently, some of the soundest principles of Buddhism and even adopted similar methods in preaching the new religion to the people at large. Temples for the worship of the Puranic gods were multiplied and impressive processions and festivals were inaugurated. The old rigours of caste were relaxed and the casteless foreigners, who had established independent principalities, and the non-Kshatriya monarchs, such as the Guptas, were assigned to the Kshatriya caste, and Brahman priests also vied with one another in giving *gotras* to rulers. Thus coaxed and flattered, it was no wonder that the rulers of states encouraged in every possible way the development of Hinduism. The cults of Vishnu, Siva, Chandi, Surya, etc., became very widespread and popular."*

The ascendancy of Brahmanism encouraged the revival and growth of Sanskrit literature. Even before the advent of the Guptas Sanskrit had begun to displace Prakrit in inscriptions as well as literature. But it received great encouragement from the illustrious monarchs of the Gupta

*C. S. Srinivaschari and M. S. Ramaswami Aiyangar, *A History of India*, Part I, Hindu India, pp. 174-75.

dynasty, and some of the finest of Sanskrit works were produced under their patronage. Some of the *Puranās* were revised and edited in the time of the early Guptas. The *Navaratana* or Nine Gems of Sanskrit literature are supposed by tradition to have flourished at the Court of Chandragupta II who is identified as the original of the legendary hero, *Vikramaditya*. Of these "gems" the most distinguished was Kalidas the celebrated author of *Shakuntala*. Among his other works may be mentioned two dramas, *Vikrama and Urvashi* and *Malavika-Agnimitra*, and the well-known poems, *Megha-duta* and *Rahgu-Vamsa*.

The earliest of the Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hien, visited India in the time of Chandragupta II and spent nearly six years in his empire. He was so absorbed in his search of Buddhist traditions and religious works that he did not care for the worldly affairs and has not even mentioned the name of the reigning monarch. But in spite of his pre-occupation with religious matters he has touched certain facts concerning the daily life of the people and has thus given us an opportunity to form an idea of the state of the country. At Pataliputra he was particularly impressed by Asoka's palace which was "so cunningly constructed of stone that the work clearly appeared to be beyond the skill of mortal hands, and was believed to have been executed by spirits in the service of the emperor." He spent three years in its famous monasteries and studied Sanskrit. In Magadha which he calls by the name of the Middle Kingdom there were big towns, and people lived in prosperity. There

were many charitable institutions like rest-houses and hospitals. Speaking of his journey from the Indus to Mathura Fa-hien says that the country had numerous monasteries occupied by thousands of monks whose activities kept Buddhism alive. He was greatly delighted by the pleasant climate and moderate government of Malwa. The administration of Criminal Law was milder than in China; most of the crimes were punished by fines, but for rebels against the state the usual punishment was the mutilation of hands.

The Buddhist rules of conduct were generally observed and "throughout the country no one kills any living thing, or drinks wine, or eats onions and garlic...". But such statements are to be accepted with great reservation, and we should not forget that Fa-hien "saw everything through Buddhist spectacles" and therefore failed to detect the evident symptoms of the decline of that religion and the ascendancy of Brahmanism. He himself admits, for instance, that the holy cities of Buddhism like Gaya, Kapilavastu and Kusinagara had scanty population and were in a state of complete decay.

Fa-hien left India in 411 A.D. and embarked for Ceylon and Java at Tamralipti which was an important port in those days and was situated at the mouth of the Ganges.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumara-Kumaragupta, who managed to keep intact his 415-455 A.D. ancestral dominions for more than thirty years. The rare *asva-medha* type of his coins suggests that he was a strong ruler and felt justified in celebrating

that sacrifice. But towards the end of his reign the Gupta Empire suffered a crushing blow at the hands of the Pushyamitras, a northern tribe possessed of great courage and skill in arms. It was saved however from complete destruction by Prince Skandagupta's victory over the enemy, which he had to announce to his mother because his father had died in his absence.

The victorious Skandagupta had no difficulty in ascending the throne of his father. His short reign **Skandagupta, 455-67 A.D.** (455-67 A.D.) was disturbed by the invasions of the Hunas. The young monarch defeated the invaders and saved his land for the time being, but the Hunas were able to secure fresh hordes of recruits and repeat their incursions. The details of his struggle against these barbarians are not known, but he is said to have been attacked by them "in the heart of his dominions", and the debasement of his currency indicates the strain of war on his finances.

With the death of Skandagupta the power and glory of the Guptas began to disappear. He was succeeded by his half-brother, Pura-gupta, who occupied the throne for five years and was the last Gupta king to control the western provinces. His son and successor Narsimha-gupta Baladitya has been wrongly identified with King Baladitya who is mentioned by Hiuen Tsang as the leader of the forces that resisted the advance of the Huna chief Mihira-kula. Narsimha-gupta was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta II who had a very short reign. The next ruler, Budhagupta, was probably a younger son of Kumara-gupta I and a brother of Pura-

Decline and Fall of the Guptas

gupta. Budha-gupta's grandson was Baladitya who is said to have defeated Toramana, the Huna chief, and imprisoned his son, Mihira-kula. The latter was released after some time and was finally crushed by Yasodharmana of Mandasor, who seems to have risen to power suddenly and extended his authority over a large part of the Gupta dominions. But his power was short-lived and within a few years the Guptas recovered their territory.

The names of several princes of the Gupta dynasty are recorded, but they were local rulers in Magadha and had to share its territories with another dynasty known as the Maukharis. The matrimonial alliances between the two dynasties could not stop them from a struggle for supremacy in the Gangetic plain. One of them, Mahasena-gupta, had intimate relations with Prabhakaravardhana of Thanesvar and seems to have utilized this friendship for protection against the Maukharis. Madhava-gupta was a contemporary and subordinate ally of Harshavardhana. After Harsha's death the power of the Guptas was revived by a capable ruler of the dynasty, named Adityasena, who is stated to have asserted his authority by assuming the title of *Maharajadhiraja* and celebrating the *asvamedha*. He was followed by three other rulers who continued to enjoy independence in the latter half of the seventh century. Ultimately the dynasty was overthrown by the Gaudas.

The most important cause of the decline of the Gupta power was the blow that it had received from the Hunas. The rise of the Pushyamitras and the insubordination of the provincial governors accelerated the process of disintegration. Some rulers of the dynasty, like Budhagupta and Baladitya,

had Buddhistic leanings which affected their military and political activities considerably. The rise of the Vardhanas in Northern India threw the Guptas into obscurity, and the revival of their fortunes after Harsha was but "the last flicker of the candle before dying out". The final blow came from the Gaudas who occupied Magadha in the eighth century A. D.

The Gupta monarchs occupy a pre-eminent position in the ancient history of this country. It has been stated above that most of them were orthodox Hindus and great patrons of Hindu religion and literature. Buddhism which had become the premier religion of the country under the Mauryas was gradually pushed back into a secondary position, and Brahmanism flourished because it enjoyed state patronage. The literary activities of the period reached their climax under Chandragupta II whose *Navaratna* or 'nine gems' are well known. A reference has already been made to Kalidasa and his celebrated works. Besides these, there are other noteworthy works which have been ascribed by scholars to the Gupta period. The famous drama *Mudra Raseshvara* which tells the story of Chandragupta Maurya's usurpation was written about 400 A.D. and the *Vayu Purana*, one of the oldest of the eighteen *Puranas*, belongs to the earlier part of the same century. The names of Aryabhata and Varahamihira may be mentioned as eminent scholars of mathematics and astronomy who flourished in this age. The well-known *Code of Manu* was compiled before the advent of the Guptas, but the *Code of Yajnavalkya* belongs to this period.

Art and Literature under the Guptas.

Samudra-gupta's keen interest in music and poetry is amply manifested in his coinage. Recent discoveries have proved that the Gupta kings also extended their patronage to architecture and sculpture. The stone temple at Deogarh in the Jhansi district and the brick temple at Bhitargaon in the Cawnpore district give us a fairly good idea of the degree of perfection that had been attained in these arts. The iron pillar at Delhi which is ascribed to the reign of Samudra-gupta and the colossal *Sultanganj Buddha*, 7½ feet high (now at Birmingham) are living proofs of the metallurgical skill of the people of those days. For these reasons some writers have called this period 'the Golden Age of Hindu India'.

Towards the close of the fifth century a new dynasty was founded by a chief, named Bhatarka who belonged to the Maitraka clan. It seems that the earlier chiefs of the dynasty were not independent kings and had to pay tribute to the Hunas. After the destruction of Huna dominion, however, the Valabhi chiefs asserted their independence and extended their power considerably. Hiuen Tsang speaks of Valabhi as a thriving and populous city with a great reputation as a seat of learning. The kingdom of Valabhi is supposed to

The Kingdom of Valabhi, A. D. 490-770.

*"A learned European scholar declares that 'the Gupta period is in the annals of classical India almost what the Periclean age is in the history of Greece'. An Indian author regards the time as that of 'the Hindu Renaissance'. Both phrases are justified. The age of the great Gupta kings presents a more agreeable and satisfactory picture than any other period in the history of Hindu India". V. A. Smith. *The Oxford History of India*, p. 156.

have been overthrown by the Arabs in the eighth century, and the place of Valabhi as the chief city of Western India was taken by Anhilwara (Nahrwala or Patan)*.

The original home of the savage nomads known as the Hunas was in the steppes of Central Asia. In the fourth century they left their homeland because its unproductive soil could not cope with their increasing numbers and began to move in two different directions. One of these two branches proceeded towards the Oxus and came to be known as the Ephtalites or White Hunas. The other branch directed its predatory movement towards the basin of the Volga, entered Eastern Europe and ultimately succeeded in founding an extensive empire under their famous leader, Attila. The death of Attila in 453 A. D. was a great blow to the power of the Hunas, which perished with him.

The white Hunas marched into Persia and defeated and slew King Feroz in 484 A. D. The defeat of Persia opened the road to India which they entered after assailing the Kushana kingdom of Kabul. Their first dash into the Gupta territory must have been made by a comparatively weak body for it was successfully repulsed by Skandagupta (A. D. 458). Ten years later the barbarians renewed their attack with much greater force and overthrew the Gupta empire. The leader of these hordes who invaded India was their well-known chief, Toramana, who seems to have

*At the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit to India the ruler of Valabhi was Dhruvabhata. He attended as a vassal the solemn assemblies at Kanauj and Prayag.

extended his sway over a considerable part of north-western India. His coins and inscriptions, which are our main source of information for his reign, are distributed over a vast region extending from Eran in Central Provinces to the Salt Range in the Punjab.

Toramana was succeeded about 502 A. D. by his son, Mihira-Kula, whose capital was at Sakala (Sialkot). The Indian territories formed only one province of the vast empire of the Hunas who had their head-quarters at Bamyin. "The Hun King," says Mr. V. A. Smith, "to whose court, whether at Bamyin or Herat cannot be determined, Song-Yun, the Chinese pilgrim envoy, paid a visit in A.D. 519, was a powerful monarch levying tribute from forty countries, extending from the frontier of Persia, on the west, to Khotan on the borders of China in the east. This king was either Mihirakula himself, or his contemporary overlord, more probably the latter. The local Hun King of Gandhara, to whom Son Yung paid his respects in the following year, A.D. 520, must be identified with Mihirakula. He was then engaged in a war with the King of Kashmir (Kipin), which had already lasted for three years*".

Mihirakula is represented in Indian traditions as a great tyrant and an "oppressor of mankind, the foremost among the wicked men†. His cruelties forced the Indian princes to take up arms against him. Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty was the first ruler to inflict a defeat on him, but it

*Early History of India, p. 335.

†Gibbon's remarks give us some idea of the features and cruelties of Hunas. "The numbers, the strength, the rapid motions, and the

was Yasodharmana of Mandasor who thoroughly crushed the Hunas about 533 A.D. On his retreat Mihira-Kula found that his capital had been seized by his younger brother. He was thus forced to seek shelter at the court of the ruler of Kashmir whose confidence he betrayed by raising against him the standard of revolt and usurping his throne. He extended his new kingdom by annexing Gandhara where he treacherously slew the king and exhibited the ferocity of his nature by slaughtering multitudes of people on the banks of the Indus. He was a worshipper of Siva, the god of destruction, and worked havoc with the peaceful cult of the Buddhists by plundering and destroying their stupas and monasteries mercilessly. He was not destined, however, to enjoy his ill-gotten power for a long time, for he died soon after his usurpation. Nor did the dominion of the white Hunas in the Oxus Valley long survive the death of Mihirakula. The rise of the Turks in the middle of the sixth century changed the situation in Central Asia. They made an alliance with Khusrau Anusherwan of Persia and destroyed the power of the Hunas between 563 and 567 A.D. For sometime the Persians held a portion of the Hunan empire, but the growing weakness of the Sassanian dynasty enabled the Turks to seize the whole of it and extend their sway as far as Kapisa.

implacable cruelty of the Huns", says that eminent historian, "were felt, and dreaded, and magnified by the astonished Goths; who beheld their fields and villages consumed with flames, and deluged with indiscriminate slaughter. To these real terrors, they added the surprise and abhorrence which were excited by the shrill voice, the uncouth, and the strange deformity of the Huns..... They were distinguished from the rest of the human species by their broad shoulders, flat noses, and small black eyes deeply buried in the head, and, as they were almost destitute of beards, they never enjoyed the manly graces of youth or the venerable aspect of age" (Ibid, pp. 336-37).

Chapter XI.

Harshavardhana. 606 607. A. D.

The disintegration of the Gupta empire and the inroads

Political
Condition of
India at the
beginning of
the 7th Century
A.D.

of the barbaric Hunas had created political chaos in Northern India. In these days of confusion and disorder several new dynasties rose to power and enjoyed a brief tenure of existence before their final incorporation into the Vardhana Empire. The Maitraka* dynasty of Valabhi has already been mentioned. Its ruler Dhruvabhata (Dhruvasena of the inscriptions) was the son-in-law of Harsha and paid tribute to him. The other important state was that of the Gurjaras, a foreign people with Hunnic affinities. They had established their kingdom at Bhinmal (near Mount Abu) in Rajputana. Later on they conquered Kanauj and became the leading power of North India, as will be related in the next chapter. A junior branch of this family set up a separate kingdom with Bharoch as its capital.

Another conspicuous dynasty was that of the Maukharis of Kanauj, who had extended their rule over a vast territory between the Vindhya and Oudh. Grahavarmana Maukhari who was the husband of Harsha's sister, Rajyasri, was slain in a battle with the King of Malwa in 606. Rajyasri's elder brother Rajyavardhana avenged her wrong by routing

*The origin of this dynasty has been a subject of controversy. According to Hiuen Tsang and some traditions the king of Valabhi was a Kshatriya, but some eminent scholars have shown that they were foreigners and had come to India with the Hunas. (See V. A. Smith's 'Early History of India', P. 332, and C. V. Vaidya's History of Medieval India, I, P. 242,

the forces of Malwa but was himself treacherously murdered by Sasanka, the king of Central Bengal and an ally of his vanquished adversary. Rajyavardhana was succeeded by his younger brother, Harsha, who was determined to avenge this double insult to his family. He rescued his sister who had taken refuge in the Vindhya and annexed the Maukhari dominion in her name.

For the first half of the seventh century which was mostly covered by Harsha's reign we have fuller sources than usual. Besides the epigraphic and numismatic evidence there are two literary works which throw considerable light on the life and times of Harshavardhana. The *Harshacharita* (The Deeds of Harsha) composed by the Emperor's court poet, Bana, is not a historical work in the modern sense of the word, but the author has chosen a historical rather than mythological theme for his 'exercise in a particular literary genre'. The second literary work is the valuable account of the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, who visited many parts of this country during his sojourn which lasted for about 15 years (630-644 A. D.). Primarily interested in religion the learned traveller could not help touching many points which provide us with valuable information for the study of political and social life of the people.

The Vardhana dynasty of Thaneshwar had come into prominence in the time of Prabhakara—vardhana* who distinguished himself by fighting successful wars with his

*He was the son of Adityavardhana who had probably married a princess of Magadha. Their son Prabhakara was the first Vardhana chief to assume the title of *Maharajadhiraja*.

neighbours, particularly the Hunas in the north-western Punjab. In 604 A.D. the energetic Raja of Thaneshwar had sent an army against the Hunas under the command of his youthful son, Rajyavardhana. The latter's younger brother, Harshavardhana, who was four years junior to him was ordered to follow him after an interval with reinforcements.

Before reaching his destination Harsha was informed of the serious illness of his father and had to return to the capital immediately. Prabhakara whose condition was critical died before his elder son could come back from his victorious campaign. Thus there is a probability that Rajyavardhana's accession was contested by his younger brother. "There are indications," says V. A. Smith, "that a party at court inclined to favour the succession of the younger prince; but all intrigues were frustrated by the return of Rajyavardhana, who ascended the throne in due course".* Soon after his accession the new monarch received the distressing news that his brother-in-law, Grahavarmana, was slain by the king of Malwa and that his widowed sister was treated like "a brigand's wife, with a pair of iron fetters kissing her feet." As has been related above Rajyavardhana avenged this insult by defeating the ruler of Malwa, but he could not enjoy the fruits of his victory because he was treacherously murdered by Sasanka.

Harshavardhana was now invited by the nobles to accept the responsibilities of the royal office, which he did after some hesitation. Even after giving his consent he is said to have abstained from assuming the kingly style and scrupu-

Rajyavardhana:
War with
Malwa.

Harshavar-
dhana, 606-647
A. D.

*Early History of India, pp. 349-50.

lously designated himself as Prince (*Rajaputra*) Siladitya. It was not before 612 (six years after his accession) that his formal coronation could take place.* Whatever may have been the reasons of Harsha's hesitation to accept the throne, there is no doubt that he more than justified the confidence of those who had placed the responsibilities of government on his shoulders.†

Obviously Harsha's first problem was the pursuit of his brother's murderer and the search of his widowed sister. The latter task was more urgent and the promptness shown by the young monarch was none too great, as the unfortunate princess, unable to bear her calamities, had decided to end her life. But it was just at the time when she was going to throw herself into fire that her royal brother reached the spot, having traced her whereabouts with the help of a hermit. Bana's *Harshacharita* ends with their reunion.

Harsha now concentrated his attention on an elaborate scheme of conquests which aimed at bringing the whole country "under one umbrella". With a formidable but mobile army consisting

*The era called after his name begins from the year of his accession (606 A. D.).

†According to Mr. C. V. Vaidya, Harsha's hesitation to accept the responsibility of government is to be connected with the kingdom of Kanauj and not Thaneswar. "To my mind," he says, "this explanation of the apparent hesitation of Harsha is simple and plain..... The nobles of Thaneswar, as related by Bana, had at once acclaimed him King of Thaneswar and it was only at Kanauj where he arrived in his conquering expedition with his widowed beloved sister Rajyasbri that doubts arose with regard to the succession to the throne of that kingdom—doubts which were finally removed as aforesaid." *History of Medieval India*, Vol. I. pp. 8 and 9.

of 5000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry he over-ran a considerable part of Northern India through incessant fighting for about six years during which, the Chinese pilgrim informs us, "he went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient; the elephants were not unharnessed, nor the soldiers unhelmeted." According to the same authority, he conquered the 'Five Indies', meaning the Punjab, Kanauj, Gauda (Bengal), Mithila and Orissa. His panegyrist Bana speaks of the conquest of Valabhi, Cutch, Suratha and Sindh. The king of Assam is said to have sought the victorious emperor's alliance and the ruler of Nepal probably acknowledged his supremacy. We do not possess a connected and detailed account of his campaigns, but it is beyond doubt that all these territories were not annexed by him; the Punjab, Sindh, and Kashmir were certainly outside the empire of Harsha.

The conquest of Northern India was followed by a long interval of peace which was broken about 620 A.D. when Harsha started on a campaign against the powerful Chalukya ruler, Pulakesin II, who had ascended the throne not long after Harsha's own accession. Pulakesin had extended his sway over a large part of the Deccan and was now the master of an extensive dominion in the south and a vast army.* Harsha's ambitious schemes of conquest

*Hiuen Tsang's description of Pulakesin's army and people is interesting. "The inhabitants (of Maharashtra) were proud, spirited and warlike; grateful for favours and revengeful for wrongs, self-sacrificing towards supplicants in distress and sanguinary to death with those who treated them insultingly. Their martial heroes went to the conflict intoxicated and their war elephants were also made drunk before engagement. Relying on the strength of his heroes and elephants the king treated neighbouring countries with contempt. The benevolent sway of this king reached far and wide and his vassals served him with loyalty. The great king Siladitya (Harsha) was invading at this time east and west and the countries far and near were giving him allegiance but Maharashtra refused to become subject to him." (Quoted in Vaidya's *Medieval Hindu India*, I, p. 12).

could not ignore the expanding state of the Chalukyas. He, therefore, left his capital at the head of "troops from the five Indies and the best generals from all countries," with a view to crush the kingdom of Pulakesin II. But the "Lord of the Deccan" had guarded the passes on the Narbada so effectively that all efforts on the part of the northern invaders to cross them ended in failure. Harsha was thus forced to give up his attempt to conquer the Deccan and accept the Narbada as his southern frontier. The last recorded campaign of Harsha was directed against Ganjam and seems to have taken place in 643 A.D. A few years earlier he had attacked and defeated Dhruvasena, the King of Valabhi, who was compelled to accept the position of a feudatory chief and was honoured by being made the son-in-law of the victorious emperor. For the date of this campaign a clue has been found in Hiuen Tsang's statement that Dhruvasena, whom he met at the court of Kanauj, was a recent convert to Buddhism.

The victories of Harsha's reign were undoubtedly due to a huge and efficient army. According to Hiuen Tsang, even in the days of peace his military establishment included 1,00,000 cavalry and 60,000 elephants. The number of elephants appears to be exaggerated and improbable, although they were received from vassal chiefs as presents and in tribute in addition to those acquired by capture in the forests. Long spears and broad shields, swords, battle-axes and arrows formed the main arms of the soldiers.

To control his extensive dominion Harsha had to rely to a great extent on his personal supervision and untiring energy. He made frequent tours of inspection in the various parts of the empire in order to reward those who had rendered meritorious services and punish the evil-doers for their offences. He moved in great state, accompanied by a large number of followers and hundreds of drummers 'who beat a note on golden drums for each step taken.' Tents had not come into use and a 'travelling palace,' a temporary structure of boughs and reeds, had to be prepared for the king at each halting-place.

Harsha was a busy man and divided his day into three parts, of which one was devoted to the **Administration.** affairs of government and religion. The Chinese pilgrim was favourably impressed by the working of his administrative machinery. The emperor was assisted by a large number of officials who were remunerated by grants of lands, 'but the soldiers were paid in cash.' The main source of revenue was the rent realized from crown lands, which was one-sixth of the produce. Taxes were not heavy, and compulsory labour was paid for.

It appears that roads were not safe from brigands, for Hiuen Tsang himself was robbed on more than one occasion. Criminal laws were very harsh and prisoners were treated cruelly; they were 'simply left to live or die,' and were 'not counted among men'. Mutilation of nose, ears, hands or feet was the usual punishment for serious crimes, while offences of a minor nature were visited with mere fines. Ordeal by water, fire or poison was considered to be an effective method of ascertaining the truth.

Hiuen Tsang's picture of the life and conditions of the Indian people is full of interest. That it was known as "the country of the Brahmans" indicates that the Brahmans had succeeded by that time in establishing their unquestioned supremacy in the Indian society. Sanskrit had become the language of culture and religion. Harsha who was a great patron of literary merit is also credited with having written three Sanskrit dramas. Of these plays the *Nagananda* 'is considered to rank among the best works of the Indian theatre,' while the *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarsika* are admired by the people for their 'simplicity of both thought and expression.' Bana, the author of the famous *Harsha-charita*, was undoubtedly the greatest of the literary figures of the time, although he has shown bad taste on some occasions. "The man who attributes," says V. A. Smith, "to the Commander-in-Chief, Skandagupta, 'a nose as long as his sovereign's pedigree,' may be fairly accused of having perpetrated the most grotesque simile in all literature."

In his early life Harsha was a worshipper of Siva but permitted himself to show honour to Buddha also. This inclination towards Buddhism kept on growing, and in the latter part of his reign he became a devout Buddhist with a keen desire to emulate Asoka in the task of disseminating the doctrines of that faith. He took steps to prohibit the destruction of animal life, forbade the use of meat under pain of death and "sought to plant the tree of religious merit to such an extent that he forgot to sleep and eat." We hear of many benevolent and charitable institutions for travellers and the destitute in addition to numerous monas-

teries and stupas. According to Hiuen Tsang the number of the occupants of these monasteries was not less than two hundred thousand. It should be noted, however, that despite the favour and patronage of the reigning monarch enjoyed by Buddhism it could not check the growing popularity of the Brahmanical faith and the bulk of the population worshipped the Puranic gods.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the faith of Buddha suffered grievously on account of its persecution by Sasanka, the ruler of Bengal and the treacherous murderer of Harsha's brother. He is said to have dug up and burnt the Bodhi tree and scattered the monks by destroying their convents. The *sacred tree* was replanted after some time by a local raja, named Purna-Varmana.

Harsha's keen interest in religion is exhibited by the anxiety with which he listened to the expositions of the learned doctors of various sects. He was so deeply impressed by the learning and ability of the Chinese pilgrim that he decided to hold an assembly at Kanauj so that the learned traveller might get an opportunity of giving publicity to his teachings and ideas. Besides the Buddhist monks and scholars and the feudatory chiefs and dignitaries of the empire, the king invited to this assembly a large number of Brahmans and Jains. A shrine specially erected for the occasion on the bank of the Ganges and a full-size golden image of Buddha which was kept in a tower, 100 feet high, made the place more attractive. A similar but smaller image was daily taken in solemn processions when the King scattered precious articles in honour of

the Three Jewels-Buddha, the Religion and the Order. These ceremonies and functions which lasted for several days were marred by tragic incidents. The monastery caught fire and a great part of the building was reduced to ashes before it could be brought under control. This was followed by an attempt on the life of Harsha. On being captured the assassin made a confession which revealed the existence of a plot by 'heretics' who resented the royal preference for Buddhism. Several hundred Brahmans were arrested and punished by death and exile for having conspired against the life and throne of the King.

Harsha next took his honoured guest to Prayaga (Allahabad) where he witnessed the sixth of the quinquennial assemblies which the king used to convene at the site of the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna. It was attended

by the vassal chiefs and nobles of the empire and a large number of scholars, poor people, and orphans who amply profited by a lavish distribution of wealth by the emperor. A conspicuous feature of the assembly was the eclectic nature of worship that was offered on this occasion: the gods Siva and Surya were honoured along with Buddha. On the termination of these ceremonies which lasted for two months and a half the king allowed the Chinese pilgrim to resume his homeward journey which he did after staying for another ten days.

Harsha died in 647 A.D., and the last piece of information that we get about his reign is from the pages of Hiuen Tsang. He had maintained diplomatic relations with China where he had sent an envoy in 641. After two years he returned to India,

The Quinquennial Assembly at Prayaga.

accompanied by a Chinese mission. The leader of a second Chinese mission, Wang Hiuen Tse, was attacked by Harsha's minister Arjuna who had usurped the throne of his master in the confusion that had followed his death. Wang-Hiuen Tse and his colleague were able to manage their escape and enter Nepal, but their belongings were seized and the members of their escort massacred and imprisoned. At the head of troops supplied by Tibet and Nepal Wang-Hiuen Tse soon re-entered India and besieged Tirhut. He inflicted a crushing defeat on Arjuna and carried him as a prisoner to the court of China. After a few years he paid his third visit to India and saw the holy places of Buddhism.

The most celebrated of the Chinese pilgrims, Hiuen

Hiuen Tsang. Tsang, visited India in the time of Harsha and travelled in almost all parts of the country except the extreme south during his sojourn which lasted for about fifteen years (629-645 A.D.). He was known as the Master of the (Buddhist) Law and enjoyed a wide reputation for piety and learning. The account of his travels will always remain a precious source of information for the scholars of ancient history of India. He was primarily interested in religious affairs, but he tells us many valuable things which throw abundant light on the political and social life of the country in the seventh century. Much of what has been related in the above paragraphs about Harsha's Government and the social and political conditions under his rule has been taken from his book which has been described as "a treasure-house of accurate information, indispensable to every student of Indian antiquity, and has done more than any archaeological discovery to render possible the remarkable resuscitation of lost Indian History which has been recently effected"*.

* V, A. Smith, Early History of India, pp 14-15.

Chapter XII.

Minor Dynasties of Northern India.

Harsha's death was a signal for the break-up of the Vardhana Empire and the rise of minor kingdoms most of which were founded by Rajput families. The origin of the Rajput clans who seem to have developed their power and resources in this period of transition has been a subject of controversy.* According to Dr. V. A. Smith, "the term Rajput, as applied to a social group, has no concern with race, meaning descent or relationship by blood. It merely denotes a tribe, clan, sect, or caste of warlike habits, the members of which claimed aristocratic rank, and were treated by the Brahmans as representing the Kshatriyas of the old books."† The view

*Of the numerous mythical stories which were invented and popularized by the Brahmans and bards who were attached to the courts of the princes and were therefore anxious to glorify the families of their royal patrons the most interesting is the one which relates the origin of the four *Agnikula* tribes. "When the Brahman Parasu Rama (Rama with the axe) had destroyed the ancient Kshatriyas, men were masterless, and impiety spread over the land. The gods repented them of the evil they had wrought," the story goes, "and repaired to Mount Abu, the abode of the holy rishis, to create a new race of the warriors who should rule the earth. Out of the cauldron of fire on Mount Abu, they brought forth the Parihars (Pratihars), the Ponwars, the Solankis (Chalukyas), and the Chauhans (Chahamanas), most famous of the Rajput clans."

Some of the clans traced their origin to the ancient heroes of the epics. The Yadavas and the Rashtrakutas, for example, claimed descent from Krishna, while the Chalukyas and the Sessodias of Mewar traced the origin of their clans to Rama.

†The Oxford History of India, p. 172.

generally accepted by the modern scholars is that most of the Rajput clans are descended from the numerous hordes of foreigners who entered India in the fifth and sixth centuries. The Hunas and other tribes associated with them, like the Gurjaras, settled down in the Punjab and Rajputana. In course of time they became merged within the Hindu society and lost their old tribal organization: the ruling families and the upper classes became *Rajputs* or *Kshatriyas*, while the rank and file developed into castes of a lower social status, such as Gujars, Jats and Ahirs, etc.

Thus, as has been stated above, it was in the period of transition after Harsha's death that the Rajput Period Rajput clans succeeded in founding a number of states and establishing their ascendancy in Northern India. Indeed in the centuries immediately preceding the conquest of this country by the Mussalmans the influence of the Rajputs had become so wide-spread and their leadership so universally recognized that we may call that period as the Rajput period. By this time they had developed a remarkable homogeneity in their social life and had come to occupy the place of the ancient Kshatriyas in the Hindu society. Their notions of chivalry and nobility were peculiar to themselves, and their cynic conception of the honour of women was manifested in the customs of *Jauhar* and widow-burning.

The Rajputs were ardent followers of Hinduism, and it was under their patronage and through their efforts that the modernized form of that faith became popular in the country. The fabric of modern or Neo-Hinduism was built up by two distinguished

teachers, Kumarila and Sankaracharya. The former preached the sanctity of the *Vedas* and revived the Vedic ritual which had been discarded by the Buddhists. Sankaracharya was a native of Kerala and was born, according to tradition, in 788 A.D. He wrote commentaries on the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vedanta Sstras*, and visited many parts of the country in order to preach his ideas. He laid great stress on *Sanyasa*, denounced animal sacrifice and recommended idol-worship. For the propagation of these doctrines he established a number of monastic and other institutions at various places. The movement made great progress and the revived faith soon absorbed within itself the numerous foreign settlers and many of the aboriginal tribes. The natural result of this rapid growth of Neo-Hinduism was that Buddhism and Jainism lost ground and began to decline.

The Rajput princes were despotic rulers and "enjoyed a semi-divine respect paid to them by the people". The nobles and chiefs who were allowed to enjoy considerable independence often built their castles in inaccessible places and maintained large retinues of soldiers and slaves to guard them. Public and private wars which were almost incessant had become the main feature of their life. The princes took pride in patronising scholars, poets and bards who were usually attached to their courts and extending their generosity to temples and other similar institutions situated within their territories by making big endowments and gifts. The most famous of such bards was Chand, the author of the well-known Hindi epic, *Chand-Raisa*.

Government
and Society

This mutual warfare and their rigid notions of caste and occupational division of society had made the Rajputs weak and divided and rendered other classes of people entirely unfit for war. Under these conditions it was impossible for them to develop a feeling of nationality; nor could their patriotism extend beyond the limited frontiers of their petty states.

Besides the Rajput kingdoms in the plains there were several states, situated on the northern frontiers of India, which also deserve a brief notice. The most important of them were the north-western kingdoms of the Brahman-Shahis and the States of Kashmir, Nepal and Assam.

Our best authority for the dynasty which held sway over the Kabul valley after the fall of the Kushana Empire is Al-Beruni who calls them Turks. Perhaps they traced their descent from the Kushanas. The last ruler of the family was imprisoned by his Brahman minister who founded a new dynasty which is known as the Brahmanshahi or Hindushahi dynasty. According to Al-Beruni the names of the kings of this family were Samand, Kamalu, Bhim, Jaipal, Anandapala, Tarajanpala (Trilochanpal) and Bhimpala. The author of *Rajatarangini* throws some light on the history of this dynasty. Bhim, he says, was the grand-father of Queen Didda of Kashmir. Jaipal and his son fought against Sultan Mahmud who crushed their power and annexed their territories to his Empire. They are described as men of noble character by Al-Beruni.

The
Brahman-
Shahis.

For the history of this State we have to depend mainly on Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* which was composed in the 12th century and is therefore of little value for the earlier period. Kashmir formed part of the Mauryan Empire under Asoka and of the Kushana Empire under Kanishka. In the 8th century Muktapida of the Karkota dynasty, who is also known as Lalitaditya extended his frontiers by annexing a part of the territories of Kanauj, Tibet and other neighbouring States. In the middle of the next century the Karkota dynasty was replaced by the Utpalas. Avantivarman (855-83 A. D.), the founder of the new dynasty, was an energetic ruler and devoted himself to internal reform and patronage of literature. But his successor involved himself into a series of foreign wars which adversely affected the financial condition of his subjects. He was succeeded in 902 A. D. by his son, Gopalavarman, who was soon deposed and replaced by his own mother. Her death was followed by a period of civil war in which the soldiers of the army played a vital part. This state of anarchy was brought to an end by Chakravarman (936-37 A.D.). He was a powerful king but was murdered soon after his accession by the nobles who could not bear his infatuation for a low caste dancing girl. In 939 A.D. this dynasty came to an end and the Brahmans elected a new king, Yasaskara, who ruled the country with success. His son Kshemgupta was completely under the influence of his queen, Didda, who continued to govern the State even after the death of her husband in 958 A.D. She was a cruel woman and put to death at least three of her grandsons who could possibly challenge her claim to the throne. On her death the throne passed to her nephew who

became the founder of the Lohara dynasty which came to an end in 1172 A.D. The thirteenth century was a period of weak kings and civil wars. In the first quarter of the following century Kashmir was over-run by a Muslim army, and in 1339 it passed into the hands of the Mussalmans when Shah Mir ascended the throne with the title of Shamsuddin Shah. It remained independent until its incorporation into the Mughal Empire under Akbar.

The present kingdom extends over a vast territory between Sikkim and Kumaon; but the Nepal of ancient history was a small valley about twenty miles long and fifteen miles broad, which contained the town of Khatmandu. According to tradition, it was included in the empire of Asoka who is said to have founded there the city of Lalitapatan. It also appears that it acknowledged in some degree the sovereignty of Samudragupta as it is mentioned as a tributary state in the *Allahabad Inscription*. In Harsha's time it was ruled by a prince named Amsuvarmana who was a vassal of Tibet. A new Nepalese era which began in A.D. 879 perhaps marks the end of this foreign domination. Under its independent rulers whose names and dates are known to us it began to flourish and became a prosperous state. The later Chalukyas are said to have raided the foot-hills of Nepal and reckoned it among their vassal states. In the time of Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, Nepal came into contact with the Delhi Sultanate when its forces over-ran and conquered the small principality of Tirhut. In the same century a new dynasty, the Mallas, rose to power and retained its hold for a long period. The Gurkhas conquered it and established their rule in 1768.

Assam (Kamrupa) was a powerful kingdom in ancient times. The earliest historical event known to us is its conquest by Samudragupta who counts its ruler among the tributary princes of the frontier. In the time of Harsha it was ruled by Bhaskaravarman who is said to have entertained the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, at his court. In the thirteenth century the Ahoms, a Shan tribe from Upper Burma, occupied the land and established their rule which lasted for a long time. The Mussalmans also made several attempts to conquer Assam. In 1205 Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji had invaded Tibet against the advice of the ruler of Kamrupa, with whom he had entered into a treaty. He reached Tibet with an exhausted army which was compelled to make a retreat on account of the superior forces of the enemy. The Assamese demolished a bridge on the only route by which he could return and attacked and destroyed a considerable part of his army. Similarly the Mughal expedition of 1662 which was led by Mir Jumla also met with but a partial success. In 1825 Assam was occupied by the British.

It was ruled by the Paramara dynasty from the 9th to the 11th century. They traced their origin to a legendary figure Paramara, "slayer of the enemies". The first historical king Upendra, also known as Krishnaraja, seems to have greatly extended the territory which he had inherited from his ancestors. The next important member of the family was Harshasimha who is said to have defeated his neighbours and plundered the capital of one of them. His son, Vakpati II, also known

as Munja, was a poet and soldier of considerable fame. He led several campaigns against the Chalukyas who captured and put him to death in 995 A.D. His grandson Bhoja is the most well-known king of the family and is famous for his patronage of architecture as well as his literary versatility. He was a great fighter and was either slain by his enemies or lost his life in the course of a campaign. It is impossible to accept the highly extravagant claims made in an inscription about the extent of his kingdom, "which, far from extending from the Himalaya to Malabar, as is asserted, can scarcely have exceeded the limits of modern Malwa." After his death in 1065 A.D. the kingdom of Malwa began to decline.

The Gurjaras, a people of Central Asian origin, came to this country after the Hunas and played a vital part in the history of Northern India for several centuries. The anarchy that followed the death of Harshavardhana gave them an opportunity to expand their possessions. The first strong ruler among the Gurjaras was Harichandra who conquered a part of Rajputana. His younger brother, Dadda I, established himself in Broach. This branch in which Dadda II was the most powerful king flourished on account of the support of the Gurjaras of Rajputana.

Besides this junior line of Broach the Gurjaras had divided themselves into two branches. The history of the main line is obscure, but the other one known as the Avanti dynasty produced some remarkable rulers. It was this latter dynasty that checked the advance of the Arabs when they had over-run almost the whole territory of the Gurjaras.

The two families struggled for supremacy which ultimately passed from the older branch to the Avanti Kings. They had to fight against strong neighbours like the Rashtrakutas and Palas of Bengal. Nagabhata II (800-25 A.D.) is said to have defeated Dharampala at Monghyr and also successfully fought in Kathiawar, Malwa and Rajputana. His grandson, Mihira Bhoja, was an able king. In the beginning he met with reverses in his wars with the Palas and the Rashtrakutas, but ultimately he defeated his enemies, recovered his lost possessions and ruled over an extensive empire from his capital at Kanauj.

The capital of Harsha which had now become the seat of Kanauj. the Parihar (Pratihara)* branch of the Gurjaras suffered much during this period of turmoil. We know very little about its history before the time of Raja Yasovarman who was defeated and slain by Lalitaditya of Kashmir in 740 A.D. In the early years of the 9th century Dharampala, the ruler of Bengal, deposed the Raja of Kanauj and placed on the vacant throne his own nominee who, in his turn, was expelled by Nagabhata II about 816 A.D. His grandson Bhoja enjoyed a long reign of about half a century (A.D. 840-90) and ruled over an extensive kingdom. His son, Mahendrapala, (A.D. 890-908) was able to keep in tact the vast dominions of his father, but in the next reign the kingdom began to decline and Mahipala, the grandson of Bhoja, was severely defeated by Indra III, the Rashtrakuta King of the Deccan, who seized the capital

*The dynasty founded by Nagabhata I is known by this name. The seat of Government was transferred to Kanauj by Nagabhata II.

itself. Mahipala recovered Kanauj but failed to stop the disintegration of his dominions.

All that we know of the internal condition of Kanauj under the rule of the Parihars is from the account of an Arab traveller who says that the King had a large army including the best cavalry force in the country. He had immense wealth and 'no country in India was more safe from robbers'.

Another family that came into prominence in the 12th century was that of the Chauhans of Ajmer, whose ancestors were given the credit of having taken an active part in checking the advance of the Arabs. Ajayadeva extended his ancestral dominion and founded the city of Ajmer. Vignaraja was another important member of the family and is believed to have been the author of a drama. His nephew, Prithviraja was the most famous of the Chauhan Kings and has become a well-known figure in popular literature. His greatest achievement was his victory over the Chandel Raja Paramardi, and his most romantic exploit was the abduction of the daughter of Jaychandra the ruler of Kanauj. In 1191 A.D. he defeated Shihabuddin of Ghor but was routed and slain by him in the following year. The Muslim conqueror appointed Prithviraja's illegitimate son Governor of the conquered territory, but he was soon expelled by his uncle, Hariraja. He fled to Ranthambhor and there established an independent State which was finally annexed to the Sultanate of Delhi by Alauddin Khilji in 1301. Ajmer had been conquered and annexed much earlier by Qutbuddin Aibak.

The collapse of the Pariharas was followed by the rise of several petty families. Ultimately the **Gaharwars of Kanauj**, Gaharwars (Gahadavalas) seized power and established their rule in the Gangetic Plain. The first king who rose to fame was Chandradeva who took possession of Kanauj. Chandradeva reigned approximately from 1085 to 1102 A.D. His grandson, Govindchandra, who succeeded to the throne of his father in 1112 A.D. was the greatest ruler of the dynasty and seems to have enjoyed a long and prosperous reign which lasted till 1155 A.D. He is said to have distinguished himself as a soldier in fighting against the Pala King of Bengal and extended his territories at the expense of the Kalachuris. His son Vijayachandra occupied the throne from 1155 to 1170 A.D. and was succeeded by Jayachandra, (1170-1190 A.D.) who is described by Muslim writers as a very powerful king. The romantic episode of the abduction of his daughter, Samyogita, by Prithiviraj is "a famous theme of bardic lays" and was the main cause of quarrel between the two dynasties. In 1193 A.D. Jayachandra was defeated at Chandwar by Sultan Shihabuddin who annexed his kingdom to his dominion. A later inscription suggests that Jayachandra's son, Harichandra, ruled for sometime over a small portion of his father's vast kingdom.

The Chandel dynasty also rose to prominence at the expense of the Pariharas whose suzerainty they **Chandels of Jejakabhukti** seem to have acknowledged at the beginning. Harshadeva, the first great ruler of this family, helped the Parihara King of Kanauj when he was expelled by the Rashtrakutas and succeeded in replacing him on the

throne. His son, Yasovarman (A.D. 930-950) was a great warrior and waged wars against all the neighbouring states. He was strong enough to extort from Devapala of Kanauj an image for the famous Vishnu temple which he had built at Khajuraho. His son Dhanga ruled for half a century and was a member of the confederacy of the Hindu princes that Jaipal had formed against Sabuktigin. In 999 A.D. he was succeeded by his son, Ganda, who provoked Sultan Mahmud by slaying Rajyapal of Kanauj for his submission to the Mussalmans. The Sultan attacked the Chandel Kingdom and carried away vast booty without fighting because Ganda had fled by night. In 1023 A.D. he led a second campaign against the Raja who again refused to fight and surrendered his stronghold of Kalinjar. The Chandel Rajas were not disturbed by any Muslim conqueror for the next two hundred years, but they were involved in occasional wars with their neighbours. In 1182 Prithiviraja defeated the Chandel Raja, Paramardi, in the battle of Sirswagarh. But after sometime the Chandels recovered from this reverse and were able to offer a vigorous resistance to Qutbuddin Aibak who granted them honourable terms. But the Raja died before these terms could be carried out and his minister decided to continue the defence until he was forced to make an unconditional surrender. The fall of Kalinjar, one of the strongest forts of medieval India, brought the Chandel dynasty to an end.

The Kalachuris were the neighbours of the Chandels and traced their descent from Kokalla I who is **Kalachuris** said to have fought wars with Bhoja of Kanauj and the Rashtrakuta Raja, Krishna II. One of his

descendants, Lakshmana, invaded Orissa and brought a famous image to be placed in the temple of Somnath. Another Raja of this family, Karna, fought unsuccessful wars against the kings of the Pala, Chandel and Chalukya dynasties. These wars weakened the Kalachuris so much that in the reign of Karna's successor the King of Malwa attacked their territory and met with little opposition, for he describes his campaign as a "pleasure excursion". The dynasty broke up into two lines in the 12th century with their capitals at Tripura and Ratanpur.

Since the beginning of the 8th century a family of petty chiefs, known as the Chavadas, had come into prominence in Gujrat and had established their capital at Anhilwara. The last of the Chavadas was slain by his son-in-law, Mulraja, who captured the throne and founded the Chalukya or Solanki dynasty. He was a great warrior and is credited with several victories over the chiefs of Kutch, Kathiawar and Ajmer. The last years of his life were devoted to works of public welfare. He built many temples and extended his patronage to scholars of his own kingdom as well as to those who came from other places. He was succeeded by his son, Chamunda, of whom almost nothing is known. The next ruler, Durlabha, was followed on the throne by his nephew, Bhima I, who extended his dominion and conducted a campaign in Sindh. But during his absence Anhilwara was completely sacked by an army of the Parmara king of Malwa. It was also in his time that Somnath was attacked by Sultan Mahmud. Bhima had taken refuge in the fort of Khandahat, but the Sultan expelled him from there also. On Mahmud's return to

Solankis of
Gujrat.

Ghazni Bhima rebuilt the temple of Somnath. He died in 1064. Another important ruler of the dynasty was Siddharaja who was a great builder and is remembered for his generous remission of taxes on the pilgrims who visited Somnath. He fought a long but successful war with the Parmara Raja who was made captive and imprisoned in a cage at Anhilwara and celebrated his victory by assuming the title "Lord of Avanti". But in his war with the Chandels he did not achieve any great success. Siddharaja had left no heir and his throne, therefore, passed to Kumarapala, a member of another branch of the same family. The new king was a capable man and conducted successful campaigns against the neighbouring States. He patronized learning, and his Chief Minister Hemchandra was one of the most learned men of the time. Under his successors the power of the Solankis began to decline and the government of the country fell into the hands of the Vaghelas. In the time of Visaldev (1243-61 A.D.) the Vaghela rule was established over the whole of Gujrat. The last king of the dynasty was Karnadeva who was defeated and expelled from his kingdom by the generals of Alauddin Khilji, and Gujrat became a province of the Khilji Empire.

The history of Bengal in the period following the death of Harshavardhana is obscure. It passed through many troubles during this period and was attacked and over-run by the armies of Kanauj, Kamrupa, the Gurjaras and the Rashtrakutas at different times. It was in these days of anarchy and confusion that Gopala was chosen by the people to protect them. This choice was made on account of his personal accomplishments rather

Bengal.

than noble birth, although later writers could manage to discover a mythical origin for the dynasty of the Palas. He ruled for a short period but seems to have consolidated his power because his son, Dharampala, (A.D. 770-785) started a career of conquest soon after his accession. He expelled the king of Kanauj and placed his own nominee on the throne of that important State. This brought him into clash with the Gurjaras and Rashtrakutas. He was ultimately compelled to seek alliance with Govinda III, the Rashtrakuta king, against Nagabhata II. He was an enthusiastic follower of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism and built the famous monastery of Vikramsila (in Bhagalpur District). His son and successor, Devpala, was a great conqueror and is considered to be the greatest king of his dynasty. Epigraphic evidence shows that pilgrim traffic existed between Bengal and the Far East in his time. He was succeeded by his cousin who was a man of peaceful nature and was followed by his son, Narayanapala (cir. A.D. 845-897). During his long reign of over 50 years the Pala territory suffered from the invasion of Bhoja I, and Magadha was added to the expanding dominions of the Gurjaras. On their decline Bengal was over-run by the Rashtrakutas who claim to have "bathed their horses where the Ganges enters the sea". But the Palas had to face greater calamities. Under Mahipala I (cir. 992-1040), who had succeeded in recovering to some extent the position and territory of his dynasty the Palas came into clash with the Kalachuris, the Karnata and the Chola States. Rajendra Chola I led a successful campaign through Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, but his advance into Eastern Bengal was checked by Mahipala. His successor Nayayapala ruled for about 15 years. The

power of the Pala dynasty had now begun to decline, but it lasted until the conquest of Bihar by the Mussalmans in 1199.

The Pala dynasty lasted for a long period and under some of its kings Bengal was one of the important states in Northern India. They were patrons of learning and zealous followers of Buddhism which is proved by the monasteries built by them.

In the 11th century the Senas rose to power and gradually supplanted the Palas in Bengal. The origin of the dynasty is obscure, but so far is certain that they had come from the south. According to inscriptions, the founder of the dynasty, Samantasena, was "born in a family of Brahma-Kshatriyas", which suggests that he was of Brahman origin but had taken to the Kshatriya profession of fighting. His son, Hemantasena, appears to have been an important prince, but very little is known of his achievements. Hemantasena's son and successor, Vijayasena (1100-1165 A.D.) may be regarded as the real founder of the Sena Kingdom because he fought a number of wars with his neighbours including the kings of Gauda and Kamrupa. He ruled over an extensive territory and conferred lavish gifts on pious men. His grandson, Lakshmanasena, was a great warrior, but he failed to offer an organized resistance to the victorious arms of Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji who conquered his Kingdom with a surprisingly small number of troopers.

Chapter XIII.

The Deccan and the Far South.

The word 'Deccan' which is only a changed form of the Sanskrit *Dakshina* is generally used to denote the entire region south of the Vindhyas; but in a restricted sense it includes the table-land and the neighbouring country lying to the north of the Krishna. The Aryan expansion towards the south was checked by the hilly tracts of Central India, and their civilization remained more or less confined to the *Aryavarta* for a long time. However, there are references in ancient Sanskrit literature to the peoples living in the south which show that parts of the Deccan were known to the Aryans as early as the fourth century B.C. But there is no doubt that a definite contact between the north and the south was established for the first time in the time of the Mauryas. That this contact was weak and almost nominal is amply proved by the sudden collapse of the Mauryan empire after the death of Asoka. Hence it is obvious that the process of the mingling of the two cultures, which was the result of peaceful methods and not of conquest, must have been very slow, and this is why in spite of the hold of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire over the peninsula the civilization of the south has retained many of its distinctive and unique features.

The Chalukya dynasty had two branches; the main branch is known as the Western Chalukyas whose history falls into two periods, while the Eastern Chalukyas were an offshoot of the main line. Pulakesin I was the first independent prince of the dynasty

and established his rule at Vatapi (modern Badami) about the middle of the sixth century.

The Chalukyas extended their territory at the expense of the Kadambas and captured their capital, Banavasi. Pulakesin II who ascended the throne after slaying his uncle in 608 A.D. was a great warrior. He defeated the Latas and the Gurjaras and checked the army of Harshavardhana on the Narbada. He won brilliant victories over the Kalingas in the east and the Pallavas in the south and entered into an alliance with the Cholas, Pandyas and Keralas. His dominion had now become very extensive, and therefore he handed over the government of the eastern territories to his brother Vishnuvardhana I, who soon established himself as an independent ruler at Vengi and became the founder of the Eastern Chalukyas. In the last years of his reign Pulakesin suffered defeats at the hands of the Pallava ruler Narsimhavarman I.

Pulakesin's son and successor, Vikramaditya I, fought a series of wars with the Pallavas and ultimately succeeded not only in recovering the lost territories of his ancestors but also in capturing the Pallava capital, Kanchi, and restoring the supremacy of his dynasty. On his death he was succeeded by his son Vinayaditya who had distinguished himself as a soldier in the time of his father. The next occupant of the throne, Vijayaditya, was also a great soldier. His son, Vikramaditya II, raided the Pallava country, captured Kanchi and defeated the Pandyas and the Cholas. But in the time of Vikramaditya's son and successor, Kirtivarman II, the Chalukyas were defeated by the Rashtrakutas who enjoyed supremacy in the Deccan for about two centuries.

The dynasty of the Eastern Chalukyas which Vishnuvardhana had founded at Vengi ruled there for several centuries and ultimately merged into the Cholas in the time of Kulottunga Chola Deva.

The founder of the supremacy of the Rashtrakutas was Dantidurga. He was expelled by his uncle, Krishna I, who completed the destruction of the power of the Western Chalukyas and extended his rule over the whole of their territory. His son and grandson further increased their ancestral dominion by fighting successful wars with their neighbours. In the time of Amoghavarsha (815-877 A.D.), the wars with the Chalukyas became more frequent, and the Rashtrakutas held sway over a major portion of the extensive dominions of Pulakesin II. He was a follower of Jainism, while his enemies were Hindus; religious animosity was, therefore, added to the bitterness of political rivalry. Krishna III (940-970 A.D.) defeated the Chola King, Rajaditya, who was murdered treacherously. But the power of the Rashtrakutas had been declining fast, and in 973 A.D. their last ruler, Kakka II, was overthrown by the Chalukya chief, Taila II.

The dynasty founded by Taila II is known after its capital as the dynasty of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Taila had to fight a series of wars with his neighbours especially with Munja, the Parmara Raja of Malwa, whom he defeated and killed in 995 A.D. The next important ruler of the dynasty was Somesvara I who defeated the Chola King and is said to have captured Dhar, the capital of Malwa, and destroyed the power of the Kalachuris of Chedi. He ended his life

The Rashtrakutas.

The Chalukyas of Kalyani.

by suicide in 1068 A.D. and was succeeded by his eldest son who was deposed by his younger brother, Vikramaditya, after a short and uneventful reign, in 1075 A.D. The new king enjoyed a long and peaceful reign. But the power of the Chalukyas had begun to decline and their throne was ultimately seized by a minister, named Bijjala. He assumed the title and the power of an independent ruler and laid the foundation of a new dynasty. It did not last for a long period and the Chalukyas re-established their authority in 1183 A.D. But they were too weak to resist the encroachments of their neighbours from the west and the south, and by the end of the 12th century they disappeared from history. The whole of the Deccan was now divided among the Yadavas, the Kakatyas and the Hoysalas who fought among themselves for supremacy in the south. In the beginning of the fourteenth century they were defeated by the armies of Sultan Alaaddin Khilji and compelled to accept his suzerainty.

The territory lying to the south of the Krishna has been named 'South India' or the 'Far South' for the sake of convenience. The earliest people living here are called pre-Dravidians for want of a better name, and the origin of some of the hill tribes still found in this part of the country may be traced to them. The Dravidians whose origin remains even to-day an open question are supposed to have spread at one time over the whole of the Indian Peninsula. It is not possible, however, to fix even approximately the time when the Tamils, who have been regarded as the earliest exponents and the best representatives of Dravidian culture, occupied this land.

The Far South.

From very ancient times South India was divided into three kingdoms, Chola, Pandya and Chera. There is linguistic and other evidence which shows that these states were in a prosperous condition and had commercial relations with Egypt and Arabia in the west and Malaya and the Indian Archipelago in the east. Their sea-ports had become thriving centres of trade, and the Roman authors complain that their gold was being "poured into India in payment for luxuries". This is supported not only by references to the fine ships of the '*Yavanas*' in Tamil poetic literature but also by extensive finds of Roman coins in Southern India. The classical writers of the west, however, tell us almost nothing about the political history of the Tamil land, and for that we have to depend on local sources. They are inadequate and supply but meagre information about the early history of the three States.

The Cholas are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Asokan period. Their kingdom, Cholamandalam (*i.e.* Coromandel) lay near the east coast between the Pannar and Velur rivers. The first historical figure is Karikala who succeeded to the throne of his grandfather at a comparatively early age and distinguished himself by his victory over the combined forces of the Chera and Pandyas. On the conclusion of peace he gave his daughter in marriage to the son of the Chera King. He strengthened his resources and power by making a raid in Ceylon and bringing from there 12,000 men as slaves who were employed as labourers at the irrigation works on the Kauveri. He abandoned Uraiyur in favour of a new capital which was built by him at Kaverripattanam. He

was succeeded by his grandson in whose time the power of the Cholas played no important part in the history of the south. But in the middle of the ninth century they again rose to prominence under Vijalaya who stabilized his position by taking advantage of a war between the Pallavas and the Pandyas and established his new capital at Tanjore. His son and successor Aditya continued the policy of his father and further extended his ancestral dominion by fresh annexations. His son Parantaka I enjoyed a long reign of about forty years (907-947 A.D.). He defeated the Pandyas and sacked their capital Madura and thus considered himself justified in assuming the title of Maduraikondan (Conqueror of Madura). About the end of his life the Rashtrakutas attacked the dominion of the Cholas and continued their efforts to curb their power throughout the reigns of the next five rulers.

In 985 Rajaraja, the greatest of the Chola kings, ascended the throne and started a career of conquest which raised his dynasty to a position of unquestioned supremacy in the south. His first campaign was directed against the Cheras whose naval fleet was destroyed at Kandalur. The Pandyas were also defeated and their king was taken prisoner. After conquering the territories of his neighbours the Chola prince carried his campaign of conquest as far as Kalinga in the north and Travancore in the south. The Cholas thus became masters of the whole of Southern India and Rajaraja was able to lead a successful expedition to Ceylon and add that island to his already extensive dominions. He recorded his achievements on the stone walls of the magnificent

temple of Rajarajesvara which he built at Tanjore. It is supposed to have served as a model for a number of other temples in southern India.

Rajaraja's son and successor Rajendra occupied the throne for about thirty years and extended the dominions that he had inherited from his father. After crushing the Chalukyas in 1020 A. D. he advanced northwards and marched on Bengal where he inflicted a defeat on Mahipala and carried his arms to the banks of the Ganges. In memory of this exploit he assumed the title of *Gangaikonda* and gave his newly-built capital the name of *Gangaikonda-Cholapuram*. Not far from this beautiful city he had built a huge dam for providing irrigation facilities to the neighbouring area. He was succeeded by his son Rajadhiraja who is chiefly known for his wars with the Chalukyas. He was slain in the battle of Koppam on the Tungabhadra. He was succeeded by his brother Rajendra who occupied the throne till his death in 1063. The last ruler of the dynasty, Adhirajendra, was murdered in 1074 and the Chola and Chalukya crowns were united when a Chalukya prince (who had married the daughter of a Chola King) ascended the throne with the title of Kulottunga Chola.

The new ruler took up his residence in the Chola capital and placed the old Chalukyan province of Vengi in the charge of one of his sons. Besides minor victories over his neighbours the achievements of Kulottunga included two expeditions to Kalinga. It appears, however, that the transmarine possessions of the Cholas were lost in his time and the Hoysalas of Mysore had become strong enough to have

Kulottunga,
(1070-1118).

asserted their independence and "shaken the pride of the Cholas" under the leadership of Vishnuvardahna.

Kulottunga's reign is marked with great religious and literary activity. The well-known Vaisnava reformer Ramanuja was his contemporary, but he had to seek shelter in the Hoysala dominion for fear of persecution at the hands of Kulottunga. Several other scholars also flourished in his time.

With the death of Kulottunga begins the decline of the Cholas. The last ruler of the dynasty who possessed a semblance of authority was Raja Raja III in whose reign Tanjore and Uraiyur were raided and burnt by the Pandya forces. A civil war between the King and his successor further weakened the state and encouraged the neighbouring princes and chiefs to seize fragments of the Chola Kingdom which came to an end in 1267.

The Cholas had evolved a fairly good system of administration. The empire was divided into provinces or *mandalams* which were again subdivided into *valanadus* or groups of districts. A district was comprised of several *Kurrams* or groups of villages. The local administration in the districts and villages was mainly run by small bodies or assemblies which enjoyed extensive powers and worked under the general supervision of the government officials. In the villages of the *Brahmadesa* the assembly was known as the *Sabha* and was composed of Brahmans only.

The king conducted the administration of the state with the help of a regular hierarchy of officials whose existence is

Decline of the
Cholas.

Chola Adminis-
tration.

proved by the numerous inscriptions of the period. There is no doubt that the Cholas maintained a vast army and a strong fleet which was employed for purposes of conquest and annexation as well as the maintenance of order in the empire. The main source of income was the land-tax, and therefore the Government paid particular attention to the improvement of agriculture. Karikala's embankment on the Kauvery is a clear proof of the anxiety of the Cholas to improve their system of irrigation.

The earliest mention of the Pandyas is found in the work of Megasthenese who speaks of the **The Pandyas.** Kingdom of *Pandaie*, which was famous for its pearls. In Asoka's inscriptions it is counted among the neighbours of the Mauryas. In the first century of the Christian era an ambassador of the Pandya ruler was received by the Roman Emperor, Augustus. We possess, however, very little information about the early history of the dynasty besides references in what is known as the *Sangham literature** of the South, which throw some light on the social rather than political life of the people.

It appears, however, that the Pandyas remained in a state of obscurity till the seventh century when a revival of their power began under Kadungon and his successors. His great-grandson, Maravarmana is said to have won victories over the Chera and the Pallava rulers. His son Kochchadaiyan. Ranadhiran extended his territory to Mangalore in the west where he defeated the Maratha (possibly the Chalukya) king. The next ruler, Rajasimha I

*The expression "*Sangham literature*" is used for those works which are attributed to the traditional *Sanghams* (or academies) of the various capitals of the Pandyas.

consolidated the conquests of his father and routed the Pallavas in a battle. The Pandiyan conquests continued in the time of Rajasimha's son, Prantaka, who was one of the greatest rulers of the dynasty and enjoyed a long reign of nearly fifty years. The next important ruler was Srimara (830-862) who is said to have successfully invaded Ceylon and also won a victory over the Pallavas and other chieftains. But the power of the Pandyas had begun to decline, and the reign of Srimara has been described as a "mixed record of success and failure". The last ruler of the dynasty was routed by the Chola King in the battle of Velur and compelled to seek refuge in Ceylon, leaving his capital to be occupied by the victor.

For the next three hundred years the Pandyas remained in oblivion and their kingdom was reduced to the position of an appendage of the Chola empire. But they began to revive their power towards the end of the 12th century under Jatavarman Kulasekhara who ruled till 1216 A.D. His son Maravarman Sundra Pandya I (1216-1239) extended his dominion by defeating the Chola ruler in a campaign in which he destroyed and burnt the cities of Uraiyur and Tanjore. The next ruler who occupied the throne till 1251 bore the same name and is known as Maravarman Sundra Pandya II. His successor Jatavarman Sundra Pandya was the greatest of the later Pandyas and ruled over the whole of the peninsula. He defeated the Kakatiya ruler of Warrangal, won a brilliant victory over the Hoyasalas and reduced the Cholas to vassalage. After all these victories, he thought, he was justified in assuming the title of *Maharajadhiraja*. His

lavish endowments to temples show that he possessed abundant wealth.

Sundra was succeeded by Maravarman Kulasekhara (the Kales Dewar of the Muslim historians) who enjoyed a long reign of more than forty years (1268-1311 A.D.). He is credited with having led a successful expedition to Ceylon and with the capture of the important port of Quilon. His last years were disturbed by a civil war among his two sons. Sundra the legitimate heir to the throne murdered his old father who had shown preference to his illegitimate son Vira Pandya. The disputed succession facilitated the task of Malik Kafur who captured and occupied Madura. The rival brothers continued to rule over the remnants of their territories; but the end of the dynasty could not be long postponed: the two brothers were defeated in 1315 by the ruler of Travancore, and it succumbed before the advance of the Kakatyas.

The third and the least important of the traditional states of the Tamil country was the Chera (or **The Cheras.** Kerala) kingdom which was situated to the north-west of the Pandya territory and comprised the modern district of Malabar and the states of Cochin and Travancore. Of its early history we know very little beyond meagre references in Tamil literature and Chola and Pandya inscriptions. It may be stated, however, that the Cheras rose to prominence in the early centuries of the Christian era, and the earliest of their kings about whom we know something was Adan I who was defeated and killed in a battle against the Cholas. On the conclusion of peace his son and successor Adan II became the son-in-law of Karikala Chola. Later on he made an alliance with the

Pandyas against the Cholas but was defeated and wounded in a battle and committed suicide on account of shame. His successor Senguttuvan was a famous king in whose time the Cheras rose to an imperial position. His achievements are recorded in the Tamil epic *Silappathikaram* which is said to have been composed by his own brother who had become a monk. He is credited with having established his Chola cousin firmly on the latter's throne and carried his victorious arms to Northern India. This ascendancy of the Cheras was lost in the time of Senguttuvan's successor whose capture by the Pandyas and ultimate escape from imprisonment are the last recorded events in their history till the eighth century when the Pallavas claim to have defeated them.

Towards the close of the tenth century A. D. the Chera fleet was destroyed by Rajaraja. His grandson Rajadhiraja conquered the southern portion of the Chera country, which the Cholas seem to have retained in their possession till their decline in the twelfth century. On recovering their independence the Cheras began to stabilize their power and their ruler Ravivarman Kulasekhara claims to have made conquests at the expense of the Cholas and the Pandyas. But these triumphs were short-lived, for he was soon driven back to his own country and his successor ruled over a diminished territory in Travancore.

The Pallavas who held a predominant position in the south from the fifth to the ninth century **The Pallavas.** "constitute one of the mysteries of Indian History". Their origin has been a subject of controversy. Some scholars hold that they were a foreign tribe of Paha-

lavi (or Parthian) origin. But recent researches have shown that there is stronger evidence to believe that they represented a local dynasty of Chola and Naga origins.*

Of the earliest references to the members of this dynasty the most notable is to the name of Vishnugopa who is mentioned in Samudragupta's *Allahabad inscription* as the ruler of Kanchi. The glorious period of the Pallava history, however, begins with the reign of Simhavishnu who ascended the throne in the last quarter of the sixth century. His son and successor Mahendravarman I (cir. 600-25 A. D.) was a great builder and is credited with having built a number of rock-cut temples. In his reign the Pallavas were attacked and defeated by the famous Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II who seized the province of Vengi and placed it in the charge of his brother.

Mahendravarman was succeeded by his son Narasimhavarman (625-60 A. D.) who inflicted a crushing defeat on the Chalukyas and captured their capital, Vatapi. He is also stated to have sent two expeditions to Ceylon in order to instal upon its throne a claimant who had sought his protection and aid. Narasimhavarman who was also a builder like his father founded the city of Mamallaparam and erected a rock-temple there. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen

* "The conjecture that they were Pahlavas, that is to say Parthians or Persians from the north-west, was suggested solely by a superficial verbal similarity and may be summarily dismissed as baseless. Every thing known about them indicates that they were a peninsular race, tribe or clan, probably either identical or closely connected with the Kurumbas, an originally pastoral people who play a prominent part in early Tamil tradition." (Oxford History of India p. 205).

Tsang visited Kanchi in his reign and speaks of it as a prosperous city, where Buddhism flourished along with the various forms of Hinduism. He mentions neither the name of the king nor the reigning dynasty but calls the country by the name of *Dravida*.

The next ruler, Mahendravarman, had a short and uneventful reign and was succeeded by his son Paramesvaravarman I in whose time the Pallava country was invaded by the Chalukyas. It was only with the help of other Tamil powers that he was able to drive the invaders out of his country. He was followed by Narasimhavarman II who enjoyed a peaceful reign and could, therefore, devote himself to building. The most famous of his monuments is Kailasnatha temple at Kanchi. His successor Paramesvaravarman was the last ruler in the direct line of Simhavishnu.

Paramesvaravarman's death was followed by a civil war which ended with the accession of his cousin, Nandivarman, who had an exceptionally long reign of about sixty-five years. In the war with the Chalukyas which was resumed in his time the Pallavas lost Kanchi. But Nandivarman seems to have ultimately driven back the invaders and regained the possession of his capital. Under his successors the Pallavas had to fight defensive wars against the Rashtrakutas and the Pandyas. The last of the Pallavas was Aparajita with whom their rule came to an end.

The Pallava rulers were patrons of art and literature. Some of them were great builders and have left noteworthy monuments. Their patronage of Sanskrit had made their capital a great centre of Sanskrit studies. It appears that

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