CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND UNDERLYING UNITY

India is the name given to the vast peninsula which the continent of Asia throws out to the south of the magnificent mountain ranges that stretch in a swordlike curve across the southern border of Tibet. This huge expanse of territory, which deserves the name of a sub-continent, has the shape of an irregular quadrilateral. Ancient geographers referred to it as being “constituted with a four-fold conformation” (chatur samsthana samasthitam), “on its south and west and cast is the Great Ocean, the Himalavat range stretches along its north like the string of a bow”. The lofty mountain chain in the north—to which the name Himalavat is applied in the above passage—includes not only the snow-capped ridges of the Himālayas but also their less elevated offshoots—the Patkai, Lushai and Chittagong Hills in the east, and the Sulaiman and Kirthar ranges in the west. These lead down to the sea and separate the country from the wooded valley of the Irrawaddy on the one hand and the hilly tableland of Irān on the other.

Politically, the Indian empire as it existed before August 15, 1947, extended beyond these natural boundaries at several points and included not only Baluchistān beyond the Kirthar range, but also some smaller areas that lay scattered in the Bay of Bengal. With the exception of the outlying territories beyond the seas, the whole of the vast region described above lay roughly between Long. 61° and 96° E. and Lat. 8° and 37° N. Its greatest length was about 1,800 miles, and its breadth not less than 1,360 miles. The total area of the empire, excluding Burma which was constituted as a separate unit under the Government of India Act of 1935, might be put at 1,575,000 square miles and the population inhabiting it at three hundred and eighty-eight millions.

The sub-continent of India, stretching from the Himālayas to the sea, is known to the Hindus as Bhārata-Varsa or the land of Bharata, a king famous in Purānic tradition. It was said to form part of a larger unit called Jambu-dvīpa which was considered to be the innermost of seven concentric island-continents into
which the earth, as conceived by Hindu cosmographers, was supposed to have been divided. The Purānic account of these insular continents contains a good deal of what is fanciful, but early Buddhist evidence suggests that Jambu-dvīpa was a territorial designation actually in use from the third century B.C. at the latest, and was applied to that part of Asia, outside China, throughout which the prowess of the great imperial family of the Mauryas made itself felt. The name “India” was applied to the country by the Greeks. It corresponds to the “Hīṃdu” of the old Persian epigraphs. Like “Sapta sindhavah” and “Hapta Hindu”—the appellations of the country of the Aryans in the Vedas and the Vendidad—it is derived from the Sindhu (the Indus), the great river which constitutes the most imposing feature of that part of the sub-continent which seems to have been the cradle of its earliest known civilization. Closely connected with “Hīṃdu” are the later designations “Hind” and “Hindusthān” as found in the pages of mediaeval writers.

India proper, excluding its outlying dependencies, is divided primarily into four distinct regions, viz., (1) the hill country of the north, styled Purvaśravān in the Purāṇas, stretching from the swampy jungles of the Tarai to the crest of the Himalayas and affording space for the upland territories of Kāshmir, Kangra, Tehri, Kumān, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhūtān; (2) the great northern plain embracing the flat wheat-producing valleys of the Indus and its tributaries, the sandy deserts of Sind and Rājputāna as well as the fertile tracts watered by the Ganges, the Jumna and the Brahmaputra; (3) the plateau of South Central India and the Deccan stretching south of the Gangetic plain and shut in from the rest of the peninsula by the main range of the Pāripātra, roughly the Western Vindhya, the Vindhya proper, the Sābyādri or the Western Ghāts and the Mahendra or the Eastern Ghāts; and (4) the long and narrow maritime plains of the south extending from the Ghāts to the sea and containing the rich ports of the Koṅkāṇ and Mālabār, as well as the fertile deltas of the Godāvarī, the Kṛishnā and the Kāveri.

These territorial compartments marked by the hand of nature do not exactly coincide with the traditional divisions of the country known to antiquity. In ancient literature we have reference to a fivefold division of India. In the centre of the Indo-Gangetic plain was the Madhya-desa stretching, according to the Brāhmaṇical accounts, from the river Sarasvati, which flowed past Thānesar and Pehoa (ancient Prithuḍaka), to Allahābād and Benares, and, according to the early records of the Buddhists, to the Rājmahal Hills. The western part of this area was known as the
PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND UNDERLYING UNITY

Brahmarshi-śā, and the entire region was roughly equivalent to Aryavarta as described in the grammar of Patañjali. But the denotation of the latter term is wider in some law-books which take it to mean the whole of the vast territory lying between the Himalayas and the Vindhya's and extending from sea to sea. To the north of the Madhya-śā, beyond Pehoa, lay Uttarāpatha or Udichya (North-west India), to its west Aparānta or Pratičhya (Western India), to its south Dakshināpatha or the Deccan, and to its east Pārva-śā or Prāchya, the Prasi of Alexander's historians. The term Uttarāpatha was at times applied to the whole of Northern India, and Dakshināpatha was in some ancient works restricted to the upper Deccan north of the Krāshnā, the far south being termed Tamilakam or the Tamil country, while Pārva-śā in early times included the eastern part of the "middle region" beyond the Antaresi or the Gangetic Doāb. To the five primary divisions the Purānas sometimes add two others, viz., the Purvā-dārayin or Himālayan tract, and the Vindhyan region.

The course of Indian history, like that of other countries in the world, is in large measure determined by its geography. Each of the territorial units into which the hand of nature divides the country has a distinct story of its own. The intersection of the land by deep rivers and winding chains flanked by sandy deserts or impenetrable forests, fostered a spirit of isolation and left the country asunder into small political and even social units, whose divergences were accentuated by the infinite variety of local conditions. Tendencies towards union and coalescence are most marked only in the vast riparian plain of the north and the extensive plateau in the interior of the peninsula, enriched and regenerated by the life-giving streams that flow from the heights of the Himalayas and the Western Ghāts. The stupendous mountain chain which fences this country off from the rest of Asia, while it constituted India a world by itself and favoured the growth of a distinct type of civilisation, never sufficed to shelter the sunny realms of the Indus and the Ganges from the inroads of ambitious potentates or wandering nomads. These invaders stormed one after another through the narrow defiles that break through the great rocky barrier and lead into the plains of the interior. The long coast studded with wealthy ports "lay open to the banks of" intrepid buccaneers and adventurers from far-off climes.

The mountain passes and the sea, however, were not mere gates of invasion and conquest. They fostered also a more pacific intercourse with the outside world. They brought to this country
the pious pilgrim and the peaceful trader and constituted high-
ways for the diffusion of Indian culture and civilisation through-
out the greater part of the Asiatic continent as well as the islands 
that lie off the coast of Coromandel and the peninsula of Malaya. 
The size of India is enormous. The country is almost as large 
as the whole of the continent of Europe without Russia, and 
is almost twenty times as big as Great Britain. Even more 
remarkable than the immensity of its area is the extreme diversity 
of its physical features. India embraces within its boundaries 
lofty mountains steeped in eternal snow, as well as flat plains 
"salted by every tide", arid deserts almost untouched by the 
feet of man, as well as fertile river valleys supporting a population 
of over three thousand persons to the square mile. The greater 
part of this sub-continent had been knit into one political unit in 
the nineteenth century. But from August 15, 1947, two self-
governing Dominions were carved out of it, known respectively as 
India and Pakistan, which form parts of the British Common-
wealth. There are, however, certain areas, e.g. Nepal, Bhutān, and 
the French and Portuguese possessions, which lie outside the limits 
of this Commonwealth. There were, moreover, more than five 
hundred states, ruled by Indian Princes, with a total area of about 
700,000 square miles, which commemorated the vanished glory of 
defunct kingdoms and empires, and enjoyed a certain amount of 
autonomy in internal affairs under the aegis of the British Crown. 
With very few exceptions they are now undergoing a process of 
integration with either India or Pakistan.

The magnitude of the population of India is quite in keeping with 
the immensity of its geographical dimensions. As early as the fifth 
century B.C. Herodotus observed that "of all the nations that we 
know, it is India which has the largest population". The total 
number of inhabitants included within the sub-continent, excluding 
Burma, according to the Census of 1941, amounts to three hundred 
and eighty-eight millions, or about one-fifth of that of the whole 
world. This huge assemblage of human beings is made up of diverse 
ethnic groups, split up into countless castes, professing numerous 
creeds, speaking about two hundred different languages and 
dialects. It represents every phase of social evolution, from 
that of the primitive tribesman who still lives by hunting 
and collecting forest produce, to that of the polished inhabitant 
of cities well equipped with the most up-to-date scientific or 
humanistic lore.

A close examination of this variegated conglomeration of races, 
castes and creeds reveals, however, a deep underlying unity which
PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND UNDERLYING UNITY

is apt to be missed by the superficial observer. This unity was undoubtedly nurtured in the nineteenth century by a uniform system of administration and the spread of education on modern lines. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that it is wholly the outcome of recent events and was quite non-existent in ages long gone by. The fundamental unity of India is emphasised by the name Bhārata-

*Varṣha*, or land of Bharata, given to the whole country in the Epics and the Purāṇas, and the designation Bhāratī santati, or descendants of Bharata, applied to its people.

"Uttaram yat samudrasya
Himādreschaiva dakshinam,
Varsham tad Bhāratam nāma
Bhāratī yatra santatih."

(Vishnu Purāṇa, II, 3. 1.)

"The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bhārata; there dwell the descendants of Bharata."

This sense of unity was ever present before the minds of the theologians, political philosophers and poets who spoke of the “thousand Yojanas (leagues) of land that stretch from the Himalayas to the sea as the proper domain of a single universal emperor” and eulogised monarchs who sought to extend their sway from the snowy mountains in the north to Adam’s Bridge in the south, and from the valley of the Brahmaputra in the east to the land beyond the seven mouths of the Indus in the west. In the third century B.C. a single language, Prākrit, sufficed to bring the message of a royal missionary to the doors of his humblest subjects throughout this vast sub-continent. A few centuries later another language, Sanskrit, found its way to the royal archives of the remotest corners of this country. The ancient epics—the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata—were studied with as much devotion in the courts of the Tamil and Kanarese countries as in the intellectual circles of Taxila in the western Punjab, and Naimishāranya in the upper Ganges valley. The old religion of the Vedas and the Purāṇas still gives solace to the vast majority of the people of this country, and temples in honour of Śiva and Vishnu raise their spires on the snowy heights of the Himalayas as well as in the flat deltas of the Krīṣṇā and the Kāverī. The religious communities that do not worship in these shrines have not been altogether unaffected by their Hindu surroundings. Instances are not unknown of friendship and communion between
saints and prophets of rival creeds. Since the days of al-Biruni many adherents of Islam, the second great religion of India in point of numbers, have shown a profound interest in the science, philosophy and religion of their Hindu brethren, and to this day Hindu practices are not altogether a negligible factor in the village life of this country for the votaries of a different creed. Islam with its ideals of social democracy and imperialism has, in its turn, done much to counteract the fissiparous tendencies of caste and check the centrifugal forces in Indian politics by keeping alive the ideal of a Pan-Indian State throughout the Middle Ages.
CHAPTER II

THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

History is a record of the achievements of man. The history of India, like the annals of every other country, should therefore begin with an account of the times when men first settled in this land. But history proper only deals with facts, and facts can only be known from records of some kind or other. We cannot know the history of any people who have left no record of their existence. There may have been people or peoples who lived in India in primitive times, but the evidence of whose existence has not yet been discovered. For the present, at any rate, they must be left out of account altogether. We shall only deal with those inhabitants of India whose existence is known to us from some records they have left behind.

To begin with, these records consist almost solely of the rude implements which the people used in their daily lives. According to the nature and material of these implements, the earliest settlers in India have been divided into two classes, viz., Palaeolithic and Neolithic.

Palaeolithic Men

The term Palaeolithic is derived from two Greek words meaning Old Stone. This name is applied to the earliest people, as the only evidence of their existence is furnished by a number of rude stone implements. These are small pieces of rough undressed stones, chipped into various forms, which were originally fitted with handles made of sticks or bones. They served as weapons for hunting wild animals, and could also be used as hammers or for purposes of cutting and boring.

These chipped stones have been found in large numbers in different parts of India. They are usually, though not exclusively, made of a species of hard rock called "quartzite". From this fact the Palaeolithic men in India are also known as "Quartzite men".

From the rough and rude stone implements which are the only records left behind by the earliest-known inhabitants of India, we
can form only a very vague idea of their lives and habits. It is obvious that they were ignorant of any metals, and most of them had no fixed homes, though a few might have made huts of some sort with trees and leaves. They lived in constant dread of wild animals like tigers, lions, elephants and the rhinoceros. They
THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

had no idea of agriculture, but lived on the flesh of animals and such fruits and vegetables as grew wild in jungles. They could not make pottery, and probably did not even know how to make a fire. In short, from our standpoint we can only regard them as savages, little removed from an animal life. It is well to remember this if we are to judge aright the long strides that men have made in developing that culture and civilisation of which we are so justly proud to-day.

It has been suggested that the Palaeolithic men belonged to the Negrito race, like the modern people of the Andaman Islands, and were characterised by short stature, dark skin, woolly hair and flat noses.

Neolithic Men

The capacity for progress is, however, an inherent characteristic of human beings which distinguishes them from animals. Consequently, as years rolled by, men acquired greater knowledge and skill in mastering the forces of nature. The rate of progress is, of course, difficult to estimate, and it may have been hundreds or thousands of years before a distinctly higher type of civilisation was evolved in India. The men who belonged to this age are called Neolithic. This term is also derived from two Greek words meaning New Stone. The significance of this name lies in the fact that in this age also men had to depend solely on stone implements, and were ignorant of any metals, except gold. But their implements were very different from those of the preceding age, for they used stones other than quartzite, and these were not merely chipped, but in most cases “ground, grooved and polished” as well. They were highly finished articles made into different forms to serve various purposes. They can be easily distinguished from the rough and rude implements of the Palaeolithic Age.

Remains of the Neolithic men are found in almost every part of India. An ancient factory for the manufacture of stone implements has been discovered in the Bellary district, Madras, where we can still trace the various stages of their construction.

The civilisation of the Neolithic men shows distinct traces of advance. They cultivated land and grew fruits and corn. They also domesticated animals like the ox and the goat. They knew the art of producing fire by the friction of bamboos or pieces of wood, and made pottery, at first by hand, and then with the potter's wheel. They lived in caves and decorated their walls by painting scenes of hunting and dancing. A few of these can be seen to-day both in Northern and Southern India. They also painted and
decorated their pottery. They constructed boats and went out to sea. They could spin cotton and wool and weave cloth. They used to bury their dead, and neolithic tombs have been discovered in some parts of India. Sometimes the dead body was put in a large urn and many of these urns have been discovered intact under the ground. The tombs known as Dolmens consist of three or more stone props in a circle, supporting a massive roof stone. These dolmens or megalithic tombs are characteristic of the Neolithic Age all over the world.

The age of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic men is called prehistoric, as we know hardly anything of this period save the meagre evidence supplied by the cave drawings and stone implements. We have not even any definite knowledge regarding the relations between these two groups of men. There are indications that suggest that the Neolithic men may have been the descendants of their Palaeolithic predecessors. But there are certain facts which militate against this view. Some scholars are of opinion that not only are there no such relationships, but that there was a gap of many hundreds or thousands of years between the two periods. So long as our evidence remains as meagre as it now is, there will always be scope for such differences of opinion, and we shall have to deal with theories or hypotheses based on speculations. The question, however, belongs to the domain of anthropology rather than history, and need not be pursued any further.

The Age of Metals

There is, however, a general agreement that Neolithic men were the ancestors of the people who ushered in the next stage of civilisation which is distinguished by the knowledge and use of metals. That the transition from stone to metal was a slow and gradual process is proved by two undeniable facts, viz., the use of stone and metallic implements side by side, and the close resemblance in the shape of early metal and Neolithic implements.

There was, however, no uniformity in the use of metals in different parts of India. In Northern India, copper replaced stone as the ordinary material for tools and weapons. Axes, swords, spearheads and various other objects made of that metal have come to light in different parts of the country. It was not till centuries later that iron came to be known and gradually used as a substitute for copper. We can thus distinguish between a Copper Age and the Early Iron Age in Northern India. In Southern India, however,
the Iron Age immediately succeeded the Stone Age, and we find no traces of the intermediate Copper Age.

Bronze is a good substitute for copper. It is an alloy made up of nine parts of copper and one of tin, and, being harder than copper, is more suitable for the manufacture of tools and weapons. We find accordingly that in some countries in Europe a Bronze Age succeeded the Neolithic. Bronze implements of early date have been found in India along with those of copper, but it does not appear that that metal was ever generally used in India to the exclusion of copper. In other words, there was, properly speaking, no Bronze Age in India.

With the Copper and Iron Ages we enter the limits of the historical period. It is a moot point to decide whether the period of the Rig-Veda—the earliest period of Indian history for which we possess written documents—belongs to the former or to the latter epoch. The general opinion is in favour of the view that the Iron Age had already commenced when the Rig-Veda was composed. Be that as it may, we have now a splendid example of the civilisation of the Copper Age. This civilisation flourished in the Indus Valley and spread over the neighbouring regions to a considerable distance. It is known as the Indus Valley civilisation and merits a detailed treatment in view of its importance. But before taking it up we must say a few words about the races of India.

Races

If we examine the people of India, both according to physical type and language, we can easily distinguish four broad classes.

First, the majority of high-class Hindus, who are tall, fair-skinned and long-nosed and whose language is derived from Sanskrit. These are known as Aryans or Indo-Aryans.

Secondly, the people mostly living in the South Indian Peninsula, whose features are somewhat different from those of the first group and whose languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kanares and Malayalam—are entirely different from Sanskrit. These are called by the generic name of "Dravidians".

Thirdly, primitive tribes living in hills and jungles who offer a striking contrast to the first category in physical type, being short in stature, dark-skinned and snub-nosed. Their languages are also quite different from those of the preceding two. The Kols, Bhils and Mundas belong to this class.

Fourthly, a people with strong Mongolian features, beardless, yellow in colour, snub-nosed, with flat faces and prominent
cheekbones. These mostly live on the slopes of the Himalayas and mountains of Assam. The Gurkhás, Bhutiyas and Khásis are striking examples of this class.

The last two classes of people may be regarded as descendants of the Neolithic peoples. We have already referred to the primitive type of civilisation in the Neolithic Age, and it does not appear that these peoples have made any appreciable progress during the thousands of years that have elapsed since then.

There is hardly any doubt that these primitive races at one time spread all over India. But they had to yield to the superior forces of the Dravidians, who gradually occupied some of their lands. The same process was repeated when large tracts of the country were conquered at a later time by the Aryans. The effect of these successive invasions by more cultured races on the primitive peoples was far-reaching. Many must have perished, and many more, reduced to subjection, formed the lowest strata in the community of the conquerors, while a few bands were saved from a similar fate by the shelter offered by fastnesses and jungles. This last category alone has preserved, to a certain extent, the physical features, the languages, and the habits of their remote ancestors, offering us a fair glimpse of the sort of life they must have led in times long gone by.

Philological researches have established a connection between these Neolithic peoples of India and the primitive tribes that lived in Indo-China, the Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago. The German scholar Schmidt, for example, holds that the languages of the Mundás and Khásis belong to the same family of speech (called Austro) from which those of the peoples of Indo-China and Indonesia have been derived. According to this view, these peoples, who were originally settled in India, "passed gradually to the east and south-east and traversed, at first the whole length of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, and then over all the islands of the Pacific Ocean up to its eastern extremity". Schmidt further believed that another current of emigration of the same people also started from India, but turned more directly towards the south and, touching only the western fringe of the Pacific Ocean, proceeded, perhaps by way of New Guinea, towards the continent of Australia.

According to Schmidt's view, the Neolithic men of India played a dominant part in the early history of South-eastern Asia. But his theory has already been challenged by other scholars and can only be regarded as a provisional hypothesis.
The Indus Valley Civilisation

In recent years archaeological excavations have been carried on at Mohenjo-Daro in the Larkana district, Sind, and at Harappā, in the Montgomery district of the Punjab. These and smaller trial excavations at various other sites in Sind and in Baluchistān have proved beyond doubt that some five thousand years ago a highly civilised community flourished in these regions. The antiquity of civilisation in India is thus carried back nearly to the same period which witnessed the growth of ancient civilisations in Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. The valley of the Indus thus takes its rank with the valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates as having contributed to the most ancient phase of human civilisation of which we are yet aware.

Unfortunately we have no written records about the Indus valley civilisation comparable to those we possess in respect of the others. A number of seals have certainly been discovered with a few letters engraved on each, but these still remain undeciphered. We are therefore totally ignorant of the political history of the Indus valley and are not in a position to form an adequate idea of its culture and civilisation. We possess, at best, a vague and general idea of the subject which is entirely derived from a careful examination of the objects unearthed at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappā.

Mohenjo-Daro—"Mound of the Dead—is the local name of a high mound situated in the plains of Larkana in a narrow strip of land between the main bed of the Indus river and the western Nara canal. The surrounding region is wonderfully fertile and is called even to-day Nakhlistān, or the "Garden of Sind". Here a city was built some five thousand years ago. This city was successively destroyed and rebuilt no less than seven times, the inundation of the Indus being perhaps the chief agency of destruction. The rebuilding did not always immediately follow the destruction, but sometimes the city remained in ruins for a considerable period before a new city rose upon them. Thus, after the foundation of the city, many centuries passed before it was finally abandoned.

The ruins of this city have now been laid bare, and we shall try to sum up what we have been able to learn about it and the people who lived therein.
The City

The city is fairly big. The dwelling-houses are many in number and vary in size from a small building with two rooms to a palatial structure having a frontage of 85 feet and a depth of 97 feet, with outer walls four to five feet thick. They are made of bricks which are usually well burnt and of good quality. Sometimes very large bricks, measuring 20½ inches long, 10½ inches broad and 3½ inches thick, are used. The big houses have two or more storeys and are furnished with paved floors and courtyards, doors, windows and narrow stairways. It is specially noteworthy that almost every house has wells, drains and bathrooms.

In addition to the numerous dwelling-houses, we find a few spacious buildings of elaborate structure and design. Some of these contain large pillared halls, one of them measuring 80 feet square. The exact nature and purpose of these buildings cannot be ascertained. They are thought to have been palaces, temples or municipal halls.

The most imposing structure in the city is the Great Bath. It consists of a large open quadrangle in the centre with galleries and rooms on all sides. In the centre of the quadrangle is a large swimming enclosure, 39 feet long, 23 feet wide and about 8 feet deep. It has a flight of steps at either end and is fed by a well.
situated in one of the adjoining rooms. The water is discharged by a huge drain with a corbelled roof more than six feet in height. The Great Bath is 180 feet long and 108 feet wide, and its outer walls are about 8 feet thick. The solidity of the construction is amply borne out by the fact that it has successfully withstood the ravages of five thousand years.

The streets of the city are wide and straight and are furnished with an elaborate drainage system together with soak-pits for sediment.

On the whole, the ruins leave no doubt that there was on this site a large, populous and flourishing town whose inhabitants freely enjoyed, to a degree unknown elsewhere in the ancient world, not only the sanitary conveniences but also the luxuries and comforts
of a highly-developed municipal life. We must also conclude that the art of building had reached a high degree of perfection.

The People

The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro tell us a great deal about the people who lived in this luxurious city, and, as they afford us the first comprehensive view of the culture and civilisation of India, we must note the essential features of the social, economic and religious condition under appropriate heads or items.

Food. Wheat was the principal article of food, but barley and palm-date were also familiar. They also used mutton, pork, fish and eggs.

Dress and ornaments. Cotton fabrics were in common use, but wool was also used, evidently for warm textiles. Ornaments were worn by both men and women of all classes. Necklaces, fillets, armlets, finger-rings and bangles were worn by both men and women; and girdles, nose-studs, ear-rings and anklets by women alone. There was great variety in the shape and design of these ornaments, and some of them are of singular beauty. These ornaments were made of gold, silver, ivory, copper and both precious and semi-precious stones like jade, crystal, agate, carnelian, and lapis lazuli.
THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

Household articles. The earthenware vessels, of rich variety, were made with the potter’s wheel and were either plain or painted. In rare cases they were glazed. Vessels of copper, bronze, silver, and porcelain were known, though very rarely used. It is important to bear in mind that not a scrap of iron has been found, and that metal was obviously unknown.

Among other articles of domestic use may be mentioned spindles and spindle whorls made of baked earth, porcelain and shell; needles and combs, made of bone or ivory; axes, chisels, knives, sickles, fishhooks and razors made of copper and bronze; small cubical blocks of hard stone, probably used as weights.

The children’s toys included, in addition to familiar articles, small wheeled carts and chairs, and we may easily infer that these were used in actual life. The discovery of dice-pieces shows the prevalence of that game.

Domesticated animals. The remains of skeletons prove that the humped bull, the buffalo, sheep, elephant and camel were domesticated. There are some doubts about the horse. The carvings of dogs on children’s toys show that that animal was also familiar.

Weapons of War. These include axes, spears, daggers, maces and slings, with comparatively fewer specimens of bows and arrows. The absence of swords is significant. Shields, helmets or any other defensive armour are conspicuous by their absence. The weapons of war, all offensive in character, are usually made of copper and bronze, though a few stone implements have also been found.

Seals. More than five hundred seals have been discovered. These are made of terra cotta and small in size. Some contain fine representations of animal figures—both mythical and real—engraved on them. All of them contain a short record inscribed in a sort of pictorial writing which still remains undeciphered.

Fine Art. The representations of the animals carved on these seals often exhibit a high degree of excellence. A few stone images found at Harappā recall the finish and excellence of Greek statues and show a high degree of development in the sculptor’s art.

Trade and Commerce. The seals were most probably used in connection with trade. Indeed there is abundant evidence that the people traded not only with other parts of India but also with many countries of Asia. It is certain that they secured tin, copper and precious stones from beyond India.

Arts and Crafts. Some aspects of the art and industry of the early Indus people have been dealt with above. Agriculture must
have played an important part in the daily life of the common people, and among other things wheat, barley and cotton were cultivated on a large scale. Among the industrial classes, the potter, the weaver, the carpenter, the mason, the blacksmith, the goldsmith, the jeweller, the ivory-worker and stone-cutter were the most important.

A great advance in technical knowledge is indicated by the potter’s wheel, kiln-burnt brick, the boring of hard substances like carnelian, and the casting and alloy of metals. A high aesthetic sense is indicated by the beautiful designs of ornaments, the superb relief figures on seals and the execution of fine stone statues.

Religion. The objects found at Mohenjo-Daro also teach us something about the religious faiths and beliefs of the people. The cult of the Divine Mother seems to have been widely prevalent, and many figurines of this Mother-Goddess have come to light. This cult may not be exactly the same as the Śakti-worship of later days, but the fundamental ideas appear to be the same, viz., the belief in a female energy as the source of all creation.

Along with this, there was also a male-god who has been identified as the prototype of the God Śiva. On one particular seal, he seems to be represented as seated in the Yoga posture, surrounded by animals. He has three visible faces, and two horns on two sides of a tall head-dress. It is very interesting to note how this figure corresponds with, and to a certain extent explains, the later conception of Śiva. As is well known, Śiva is regarded as a Mahāyogi, and is styled Paśupati or the lord of beasts, his chief attributes being three eyes and the Trisūla or the trident.
THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

Now the apparent Yoga posture of the figure in Mohenjo-Daro justifies the epithet Mahāyogin, and the figures of animals round him explain the epithet Paśupati. The three faces of the figure may not be unconnected with the later conception of three eyes, and the two horns with the tall head-dress might have easily given rise to the conception of a trident with three prongs.

The identification of the male-god with Śiva is further strengthened by the discovery of stone pieces which look exactly like a Śiva-liṅga, the form in which Śiva is almost universally worshipped to-day.

In addition to the worship of Śiva and Śakti, both in human and symbolic forms, we find the prevalence of that primitive religious faith which we call animism. It means worship of stones, trees and animals in the belief that these are abodes of spirits, good or evil. A natural corollary of this faith is the worship of Nāgas, Yakshas, etc., who are embodiments of these spirits. Clear traces of all these are found at Mohenjo-Daro.

It is obvious, therefore, that modern Hinduism, which possesses all the features mentioned above, was indebted, to a great extent, to the Indus-valley culture. Indications of the existence of the Bhakti cult (loving devotion to a personal God), and even of some philosophical doctrine like Metempsychosis, have also been found at Mohenjo-Daro. We must therefore hold that there is an organic relationship between the ancient culture of the Indus valley and the Hinduism of to-day.

*General Conclusions*

The study of the Indus-valley civilisation raises several interesting problems of a general nature. In the first place it offers a striking resemblance to the ancient civilisations in Sumer and Mesopotamia proper. The developed city-life, use of the potter's wheel, kiln-burnt bricks, and vessels made of copper and bronze, and, above all, the pictorial writings, are some of the common and distinctive features of all the three civilisations of the pre-historic period. The discovery of two seals of the Mohenjo-Daro type in Elam and Mesopotamia, and of a cuneiform inscription at Mohenjo-Daro, leaves no doubt that there was intercourse between these countries. The question therefore naturally arises, were these three civilisations developed independently, or was any of them an offshoot of the other? To put the same thing in another form, did the civilisation spread from the Indus valley to the west or vice versa? Or are we to assume that the growth of civilisation
in the Indus valley was uninfluenced in any way by the sister-civilisations in the west?

These and connected questions cannot be answered definitely. It will suffice to say that all the alternative hypotheses mentioned above have their supporters and opponents.

The next question, and one of greater practical importance, is the relationship of the Indus-valley culture with the Vedic civilisation of the Indo-Aryans, which is usually regarded as the source from which issued all the subsequent civilisations in India. On the face of it there are striking differences between the two. The Vedic Aryans were largely rural, while the characteristic features of the Indus-valley civilisation are the amenities of a developed city life. The former probably knew of iron and defensive armour, which are totally absent in the latter. The horse played an eminent part in the Vedic civilisation, but its early existence is doubted in the Indus valley. There were also important differences in respect of religious beliefs and practices. The Vedic Aryans worshipped the cow while the Indus people reserved their veneration for bulls. Not only do the Mother-Goddess and Śiva the chief deities of the Indus valley, play but a minor part in the early Ṛgveda, but the latter, according to some interpreters, definitely condemns phallic worship. The worship of images was familiar in the Indus valley, but almost unknown to the Vedic Aryans.

In view of these striking dissimilarities, the Indus-valley civilisation is usually regarded as different from and anterior to the culture of the Vedic period. This also fits in well with the generally accepted chronological scheme. For, as noted above, the Indus-valley civilisation goes back to the third millennium B.C., while the date usually assigned to the Ṛgveda does not go beyond the second millennium B.C. But some would place the Vedic civilisation before that of the Indus valley and shift the date of the Ṛgveda to a period before 3000 B.C.

The question is not indeed free from difficulties. While the points of difference would undoubtedly incline us to the view that the Indus-valley civilisation and Vedic civilisation represent two different types of culture, the arguments for the priority of the one to the other are not conclusive. The reference to iron in the Ṛgveda would have indeed been a very strong argument for relegating the Vedic civilisation to a later period, but this is at best doubtful. As regards the other points, the data are not established sufficiently well to warrant a definite conclusion. On the whole, however, the priority of the Indus-valley civilisation appears to be more probable, and at present holds the field.
THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

Be that as it may, there is not the least doubt that we can no longer accept the view, now generally held, that Vedic civilisation is the sole foundation of all subsequent civilisations in India. That the Indus-valley civilisation described above has been a very important contributory factor to the growth and development of civilisation in this country admits of no doubt.

Lastly, there is the question of the race of the people among whom the Indus-valley civilisation grew. The preceding discussion would prepare us for some of the replies that have been given. Some hold that they were the same as the Sumerians, while others hold that they were Dravidians. Some again believe that these two were identical. According to this view, the Dravidians at one time inhabited the whole of India, including the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistān, and gradually migrated to Mesopotamia. The fact that the Dravidian language is still spoken by the Brahui people of Baluchistān is taken to lend strength to this view.

There is also a theory that the "Indus" people were Aryans, but this at present finds but few supporters. It is impossible to come to any definite conclusion on this point, and there is always the possibility that the people of the Indus valley might have belonged to an altogether separate race.
CHAPTER III
THE EARLY VEDIC AGE

Early Aryan Settlements

India, as is well known, derives its name from the Sindhu (Indus), and the earliest civilisation of this country of which we have any definite trace had its cradle in the valley of the same river. We have seen in the last chapter that excavations at several places in the lower part of the valley have laid bare the ruins of well-built cities, and seals surprisingly similar to those discovered at Eshnunna, Kish and Ur in Mesopotamia, and assigned by archaeologists to the third millennium B.C., have been found. The identity of the originators of this early Indus culture is uncertain. They appear to have professed a religion that was Iconic and laid emphasis on the worship of the Mother-Goddess and a male deity who seems to have been the prototype of Śiva. The phallic cult was prevalent, but fire-pits were conspicuous by their absence.

Far different is the picture of another civilisation which had its principal home higher up the Indus valley. The people who evolved this culture called themselves Aryas or Aryans. Their earliest literature makes no reference to life in stately cities comparable to those whose remains have been unearthed at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Their religion was normally aniconic, and in their pantheon the female element was subordinated to the male, and the place of honour was given to deities like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, the Nāsatyas, Sūrya, Agni (Fire) and other supernal beings who seem to have been quite unknown to the originators of the “Indus” culture as described in the last chapter. Unfortunately, the early literature of this remarkable people—called the Veda—cannot be dated even approximately, and it is impossible to say with absolute precision in what chronological relation the civilisation portrayed in the Veda stood to the “Indus” culture of the third millennium B.C. Max Müller hesitatively placed the beginning of the Vedic literature in the latter half of the second millennium B.C. Tilak and Jacobi, on the other hand, tried to push the date

1 i.e. in which images played no part.
much farther back on astronomical grounds. But, as pointed out by several Indologists, astronomical calculations prove nothing unless the texts in question admit of unambiguous interpretation. Tilak himself points out how unsafe it is to act upon calculations based on loose statements in literature regarding the position of the heavenly bodies.

In the chaotic state of early Aryan chronology, it is a welcome relief to turn to Asia Minor and other countries in Western Asia and find in certain tablets of the fourteenth century B.C., discovered at Boghaz Keui and other places, references to kings who bore Aryan names and invoked the gods Indra, Mitra, Varuna and the Nasatyas to witness and safeguard treaties. It is certain that the tablets belong to a period in the evolution of the Aryan religion when Indra, Varuna, and the other gods associated with them, still retained their early Vedic pre-eminence and had not yet been thrown into the shade by the Brähmanic Prajāpati or the epic and Purānic Trimūrti.

Did the worshippers of Indra go from an earlier home in the Indus valley to Asia Minor or was the process just the reverse of this? In this connection it is interesting to note that in one passage of the Rīg-Veda a worshipper invokes from his pratna okas, or ancient abode, the god Indra whom his ancestors formerly invoked. We are also told that Yadu and Turvaśa, two among the most famous Rīg-Vedic tribes, were brought by Indra from a distant land. The former is in several passages brought into special relation with Paśu or Parśu, a name borne by the ancient people of Persia. The latter took part in a conflict with a king who is styled a Pārthava. The contest is thus described in the Rīg-Veda:

"Favouring Abhyāvartin, the son of Chayamāna, Indra destroyed the race of Varaśikha, killing the descendants of Vṛichīvat (who were stationed) on the Hariyūpiyā, on the eastern part, whilst the western (troop) was scattered through fear.

"Indra, the invoked of many, thirty hundred mailed warriors (were collected) together on the Yavyāvati, to acquire glory, but the Vṛichīvats advancing hostilely, and breaking the sacrificial vessels, went to (their own) annihilation.

"He whose bright prancing horses, delighted with choice fodder, proceed between (heaven and earth) gave up Turvaśa to Śrīnījaya, subjecting the Vṛichīvats to the descendants of Devavāta (Abhyāvartin).

"The opulent supreme sovereign Abhyāvartin, the son of
Chayamāna, presents, Agni, to me two damsels riding in eams, and twenty cows: this donation of the Pārthava cannot be destroyed."

We have in the above passage an account of a great struggle in which the Turvasas, whom Indra had brought from a distant country, apparently took part on behalf of a local folk known as the Vṛichivats. The Turvasas were abandoned by their deity, who granted victory to the Śrīñjayas, apparently led by a prince who is styled a Pārthava, a name that reminds us of Iran and is comparable to Parsu mentioned in connection with the Yudus. If the name Hariyāṇīdā, which is the designation of a river or a city according to the commentators, and is associated with the mysterious people called Vṛichivats who "broke the sacrificial vessels", can be connected with Harappā, as has already been suggested by some, we have here an interesting glimpse of a period when that great centre of early Indus civilisation formed a battle-ground of fierce invaders exulting in the worship of Indra, clad in coats of mail (varminah) and possessed of "prancing horses", both of which the warriors of the lower Indus culture possibly lacked.

The Indra-worshipping tribes seem to have been divided into two rival groups. One of these included the Śrīñjayas and their allies the Bharatas, both lauded by the priestly family of the Bhāradvājas. To the other group belonged the Yudus, Turvasas, Druhyus, Anus and Pūrus who are found frequently in alliance with indigenous tribes. The first two tribes of the second group are branded as Dāsas in one passage of the Rig-Veda, and of the remaining three, the Pūrus are styled mridhravāchah, "of hostile speech", an epithet otherwise applied only to the non-Aryan Dasyus.

Distinct from both these Indra-worshipping groups were the Dāsas proper or Dasyus, a dark-skinned, flat-nosed race who spoke a tongue unintelligible to the Aryans, possessed forts and herds of cattle coveted by the new-comers, despised the sacrificial religion of the latter and possibly worshipped the phallus. This latter characteristic connects them with the men who evolved the pre-historic civilisation of the lower Indus valley.

It may be that the folk (jana) of the Bharatas represents an Aryan stock altogether different from that of the Yud group. The memory of the migration of the Bharatas is not distinctly preserved in any of the hymns, while Yudus and Turvasas are expressly mentioned as new arrivals. In the Rig-Veda Bharata
princes are found sacrificing on the Drishadvatī, the Sarasvatī and the Āpayā, all rivers in the western part of the Madhya-deśa, far away from the north-west frontier. It is interesting to note that they are specially associated with the cult of Agni, the Fire-God, a deity conspicuous by his absence in the Boghaz Keui records of the fourteenth century B.C., and of whose worship no traces are found in the early ruins of Mohenjo-Daro.

The Bharatas were at first admittedly inferior to their foes and were "shorn of their possessions, like the staves for driving cattle stripped of their leaves and branches: but Vasishtha became their family priest, and the people of the Tritus prospered". Tritu seems to have been the name of the ruling dynasty of the Bharatas, the most famous representatives of which were Divodāsa and his son or grandson Sudās.

Opposed to the Tritus and the allied tribe of the Śrīnjayas stood the Yudas, Turvaśas, Druhyus, Anus and Pūrus. The first two tribes figure as enemies of Divodāsa, and appear to have pushed their conquest as far as the Sarayu, which may be the river of the same name in Oudh, although the possibility of its being a river in Iran cannot altogether be excluded. The Druhyus are connected by tradition with the people of Gandhāra—the Gandhāris, who are mentioned in a Rig-Vedic passage as famous for their sheep and wool, and who occupied the territory round modern Peshawar. The Anus are closely associated with the Druhyus, while the Pūrus are found along with their enemies, the Bharatas, on the banks of the Sarasvatī, though settlements in the western Punjab are also known.

It is clear that the Bharatas and their allies did not like the idea of being permanently "shorn of their possessions" by their enemies. The result was that the two rival groups of tribes engaged in a deadly struggle with one another. In one of these contests the Śrīnjayas scattered the forces of the Turvaśas and their allies the Vṛchivats. In another and a more famous conflict, known as the Battle of the Ten Kings, Sudās, the Tritus king, defeated the hostile tribes, who were joined on the river Parushni by the Sivas, Pakthas and associate tribes from the north-west. The Bharatas now definitely established their pre-eminence among the Aryan folks, and a late Vedic text—the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa—refers to an old gāthā which describes "the greatness of the Bharatas neither the men before nor those after them attained".

More important than the internal conflicts of the Aryans were their struggles with the non-Aryans, which gradually led to a considerable extension of the Aryan dominion towards the east.
To Divodása belongs the credit of fighting against a Dāsa chieftain named Śambara. His policy was continued by Sudās who crushed a hostile combination of indigenous tribes on the banks of the Jumna. Under the guidance of a priest named Viśvāmitra, the Bharatas even seem to have entertained designs against the Kikaśas, a non-Aryan people traditionally associated with South Bihār. In the campaign against the Dāsas, the Bharatas were ably seconded by their rivals the Pūras, one of whose kings bore the significant name of Trasadasyu, i.e. “terror to the Dasynes”.

The geographical area eventually occupied by the Rig-Vedic tribes is clearly indicated by the mention of certain rivers which permit of easy identification. The most important among these are the Kubhā (Kabul), the Suvāstu (Swāt), the Krumu (Kurram), the Gomati (Gumal), the Sindhu (Indus), the Sushamā (Sohān), the Vitastā (Jhelum), the Asiknī (Chenāb), the Marudvidhā (Marwardwan), the Parushnī (Rāvi), the Viśā (Bias), the Śatudrī (Sutlej), the Sarasvati, the Drishadvatī (the Rakshi or Chitang), the Jumna, the Gangā, and the Sarayū. The mention of these rivers implies the possession by the Aryans of a considerable portion of the country stretching from eastern Afghanistan to the upper valley of the Ganges. The major part of this area came to be known as Sapta Sindhu—the Land of the Seven Rivers. The whole of this extensive tract of land could not have been occupied entirely by Aryan tribes, because we hear also of the clans (Viśaḥ) of the Dāsas who must have occupied some part at least of this territory, and whose supersession in any case must have been a slow and gradual process. Moreover, vast tracts of country were still covered with forest (aranyānas) or were altogether barren, containing only a few wells (prapā) here and there.

Political Organisation of the Rig-Vedic Aryans

The basis of the political and social organisation of the Rig-Vedic people was the patriarchal family. The higher units were styled grāma, viś and jana, and in some rare passages we even hear of aggregates of janas. The precise relationship between the grāma, the viś and the jana is nowhere distinctly stated. Sometimes the words seem to have been used almost synonymously. The Bharatas, for example, are described in one passage as Viśah (people) of the Tritus, and in another text the jana (folk) of the Bharatas is styled the grāma (horde) seeking cows. That the grāma was normally a smaller unit than either the viś or the jana appears
probable from the fact that the grāmaṇī, the leader of the grāma (horde or village), who is usually a Vaiśya, is clearly inferior to the lord of the vīś (vīśpati) or the protector (gopā) of the jana, who is often the king himself.

It is more difficult to say in what relationship the vīś stood to the jana. In some Vedic passages there is a clear contrast between the two, and Iranian analogies seem to suggest that the vīś is a sub-division of a jana, if the latter may be taken as a parallel to the Iranian Zantu. It is also to be noted that the Bharatas are referred to as a single jana, but when the word vīś is used in reference to them, we have the plural Viśāḥ possibly pointing to the existence of a plurality of such units.

The prevailing form of government among the Rig-Vedic tribes was monarchical. But names applied in later ages to non-monarchical communities were also known. We have references to the jana with the ganapati or jyeshtha (elder) at its head. The mention of the term jyeshtha, which corresponds to jetthaka of the Pāli texts, possibly points to some sort of organisation parallel to that of the well-known tribal republics of early Buddhist times.

The Rig-Vedic state (rāṣṭra) seems, however, to have been normally ruled by a potentate styled rājan (king) who was "without a rival and a destroyer of rivals". Kingship was usually hereditary. Thus the Pūras and the Trisūs, two among the most famous of the Rig-Vedic clans, had as their rulers dynasties of princes, some of whose names are recorded in the Rik-Saṃhitā. Elective monarchies were perhaps not altogether unknown, though the Rig-śāstra has no clear reference to them. In the Atharva Veda and the Great Epic, however, we have several explicit references to the election of the rājan to the kingship by the people, and in the Rig-śāstra itself the need of the people’s approval, if sovereignty is to be steady and unvacillating, is emphasised in the consecration hymns. In addition to the title rājan we come across the designation samrāṭ, which in later times undoubtedly meant a paramount ruler. In the Rig-śāstra, however, there is no trace of any terrestrial kingship of the Mauryan or Gupta type, though the idea of a universal monarch (vidvāsya bhuvanasya rāja) is met with.

The rājan occupied a position of pre-eminence in the tribe. He was formally consecrated to kingship and was marked out from the commonalty by his shining robes and the splendid palace where he lived, surrounded by his officers and retainers and lauded by priests and singers.

The foremost duty of the king was the protection of the tribe and the tribal territory. He fought against external enemies.
He employed spies (espāka) to watch over the conduct of the people, who were apparently punished when they went wrong. He had to maintain a body of priests who performed the sacred rites and received a contribution (bali) from the people. The king was assisted by a number of functionaries of whom the most important was the Purohita or chaplain. The Purohita not only gave advice to the ruler, but used his spells and charms to secure the success of his patron's arms and lauded his exploits when victory was won. Another important official was the Senāni or the leader of the army. About the organisation of the Senā or army which he led, our information is meagre. It must have included foot soldiers, later called Patti, as well as Rathins or warriors who fought from chariots. "Prancing horses" are also alluded to in certain battle songs. But the use of the elephant in war was as yet uncommon. Warriors of noble descent wore coats of mail, metal helmets, and hand-guards. The chief offensive weapon was the bow. Two kinds of arrows were used; one was poisoned and had a head of horn; the other was copper or iron-headed (ayomukham). Spears, swords and axes are also mentioned. We have also reference to the purcharishau or moving fort which may have been an engine for assaulting strongholds. Banners were used in war, and musical instruments are mentioned. The army may have been divided into units termed sardha, vritta and gana, but the matter is obscure. Kulapas or heads of families fought under the banner of the Vṛājapati, who is sometimes identified with the Grāmanī. The latter functionary was probably the head of the village both for civil and military purposes. Forts or strongholds were under the Pūrpati. The Vedic king had a system of espionage and also employed dātas or messengers.

The rājan, though the lord of the people, did not govern without their consent. The business of the tribe was carried out in a popular assembly styled Samiti, at which princes and people were alike present. We have also references to another body, termed Sabhā, which some regard as a Council of Elders. Others think it was a village assembly or the place of meeting which also served as a centre for social gatherings. Certain passages of the Rig-Veda seem to connect the Sabhā with the men of wealth, opulence and godly form, and this lends countenance to the view that in the main it functioned as a Council of Elders rather than an assembly of the whole tribe. Women at any rate were, according to a later Vedic text, excluded from the Sabhā. The Sabhā gave decisions regarding matters of public moment and, in later literature, figures prominently in connection with the administration of justice.
Social Life

It has already been stated that the foundation of the political and social structure in the Rig-Vedic age was the family. The members of a family lived in the same house. Houses in this age were presumably built of wood or reed. In every house there was a fireplace (agniśāla), besides a sitting-room and apartments for the ladies. The master of the house was called grihapati or dāmpati. He was usually kind and affectionate, but occasional acts of cruelty are recorded. Thus we have the story of a father who blinded his son for his extravagance.

Families being patrilineal, people prayed for abundance of sons. The birth of daughters was not desired, but once born they were treated with kindness and consideration. Their education was not neglected, and some of them lived to compose hymns and rise to the rank of seers like Viśvārū, Ghosūla and Apālā. Girls were given in marriage when they attained full development. Marriage for love as well as for money was known. Weddings were celebrated in the house of the bride’s parents. Ordinarily a man married but one wife. Polygamy was, however, practised, but not polyandry. Remarriage of widows was permitted. Women were not independent persons in the eye of the law, and had to look to their male relations for aid and support. Their position in the household was one of honour. The term dāmpati is sometimes used to designate the mistress as well as the master of the house. The wife participated in the religious offerings of the husband and was the queen of his home. There is no evidence in the Rig-Veda of the seclusion of women, and ladies trooped to festal gatherings “decked, shining forth with sunbeams”.

Particular attention was paid to dress and adornment. The Vedic costume seems to have consisted of three parts—an undergarment styled muni, a garment called vāśa or paridhāna and a mantle styled adhivāsa, atka or drāpi. The clothes were of different hues and were made of cotton, deer skin or wool. Garments were often embroidered with gold. The use of gold ornaments and floral wreaths was common, especially on festive occasions. Both the sexes wore turbans. The hair was worn long and combed. The long locks of women were folded in broad plaits.

The daily fare of the Vedic household consisted mainly of parched grain, cakes (apūpa), milk and its various products such as curd and butter, and many sorts of vegetables and fruits. The use of animal food was common, especially at the great feasts and family gatherings. The slaying of the cow was, however, gradually
looked upon with disfavour as is apparent from the name aghnyā (not to be killed) applied to it in several passages. Curiously enough, we have no reference to the use of salt in the Rīg-Veda.

Drinking water was obtained not only from rivers and springs (utsa), but also from avalas or artificial wells from which it was raised by a wheel of stone and poured into buckets of wood. Reference is also made to more exhilarating drinks such as Soma and Surā. The former was the juice of a famous plant that grew on mountains, especially on the Mājavat peak of the Himalayas. It was identical with the Haoma of the Avesta. Its use was restricted to religious ceremonies. On the other hand Surā was an ordinary intoxicating drink, the use of which was condemned in later ages.

The favourite amusements of the more virile classes were racing, hunting and the war-dance. The chariot-race was extremely popular and formed an important element of the sacrifice celebrated in later times as the Vājasāya. No less popular was hunting. The animals hunted were the lion, the elephant, the wild boar, the buffalo, and deer. Birds also were hunted. Another favourite pastime was diceing, which frequently entailed considerable loss to the gamer. Among other amusements, mention may be made of boxing, dancing and music. Women in particular loved to display their skill in dancing and singing to the accompaniment of lutes and cymbals. Lute-players played an important part in the development of the epic in later ages.

The Vedic singers loved to dwell on the joys of life and seldom referred to death except in the case of enemies. When a man died, he was either cremated or buried. The burning of widows does not appear to have been prevalent.

The Vedic Kulas or families were grouped into larger units in the formation of which Varna (colour) and Sūjātya (kinship) played an important part. From the beginning, the white-hued (svitnyā) Aryan invaders were marked out from their dark-skinned opponents, who were called dāsa, dasyu or śūdra. In the Aryan community itself men of kingly family (rājanya or kshatra) and descendants of priests (Bṛāhmaṇas) were clearly distinguished from the common free men, the vish. The quadruple division of society is mentioned in some of the earlier hymns, but it makes its formal appearance in the Purushasūkta which seeks to explain the existing divisions by adumbrating the theory that “when they divided the primeval being (Purusa) the Bṛāhmaṇa was his mouth, the Rājanya became his arms, the Vaśya was his thighs, and from his feet sprang the Śūdras”.

THE EARLY VEDIC AGE

The social divisions mentioned here have their parallel in other Indo-European communities. But it is important to remember that in the hymns of the Rig-Veda there is little trace of the rigid restrictions typical of caste in its mature form. There was hardly any taboo on intermarriage, change of occupation or commensality. We have instances of marriages of Brāhmaṇas with Raṣṭrya women, and of the union of Árya and Śúdra. Families were not wedded to a particular profession. "I am," says the author of a hymn, "a poet, my father is a doctor, and my mother is a grinder of corn. With our different views, seeking after gain, we run, as after cattle." There was no ban on the taking of food cooked by the Śúdras, and there is no evidence that impurity was communicated by the touch or contact of the inferior castes.

The rigid restrictions with regard to occupation, commensality, etc., originated, according to recent writers, not with the Áryans but with the totemistic proto-Australoid and the Austro-Asiatic inhabitants of pre-Dravidian India who dreaded the magical effects of the practice of strange crafts and the taking of tabooed food. A taboo on intermarriage is also traced to a similar source. The Aryan invader, with his ideas about colour and hypergamy, simply crystallised and perpetuated a system which was already in existence and was based on the taboo arising from magical ideas. Other factors, geographical, economic, and religious, have had their share in later developments.

In later ages, a member of each of the three higher castes, who wished to lead an ideal life, had to pass through the rigorous discipline of the Áśramas or the four stages of life. First he was a brahmachārin or Vedic student vowed to chastity, then a gṛihastha or married householder, next a vānaprastha or forest hermit, and finally a sannyāsīn, that is, an ascetic who had renounced the world. The germ of the system of Áśrama is already met with in the Vedic hymns. Besides the gṛihapati, we have reference to the brahmachārin as well as the muni. The brahmachārin practised self-restraint and studied the sacred lore. "The master recited the texts and the disciple repeated them after him as frogs croak one after another." The munis are described as "long-haired, some were wind-clad, others wore a soiled garment of brown colour and led a life of wandering".

Economic Life

The Rig-Vedic Áryans were mostly scattered in villages. The word nagara (city) does not occur in the hymns. We find indeed mention of pūrṇa which were occasionally of considerable size and
were sometimes made of stone (āṣmamagā) or of iron (āystate). Some were furnished with a hundred walls (satabhujā). But the purs were in all probability rather ramparts or forts than cities, and served as places of refuge, particularly in autumn, as is suggested by the epithet Sāradī applied to them in some passages. It is significant that, unlike the later texts, the Rig-Veda makes no clear mention of individual cities like Āsandivat or Kāmpila.

Regarding the organisation of the village we have a few details. There was an official styled the Grāmanī who looked after the affairs of the village, both civil and military. We have also reference to a functionary called Vṛājapati who may have been identical with the Grāmanī, and who led to battle the various Kulaśpī or heads of families.

Homestead and arable lands in the village appear to have been owned by individuals or families, while grass lands (khilya) were probably held in common.

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the village folk. The importance of the art of tilling is clearly brought out by the name Kṛiṣhi or Charshaṇi (agriculturist) which is applied to people in general, and in particular to the five principal tribes into which the early Vedic community was divided. Cultivated fields were known as Uruvā or Kṣetra. They were often watered by irrigation canals. The use of manure was also known. The grain grown on the soil was styled dhanā or yava, but the exact significance of these terms in the earliest literature is not known. In later times they meant rice and barley. When ripe, they were cut with a sickle, tied in bundles and threshed on the floor of the granary. They were next winnowed, ground in the mill and made into cakes (apūpa).

The rearing of cattle and other domestic animals was scarcely less important than agriculture. Cows were held in much esteem, and milk, as we have seen, formed an important part of the dietary in the Vedic household. Herds of cattle were daily led to the pasture by the gopa (cowherd). The valley of the Yamunā was especially famous for its wealth of kine. The marking of the ears of cattle was a common practice, as is shown by the use of the expression ashtakarni (having pierced ears or having the sign of 8 marked on the ear) to mean a cow.

Other useful animals were the draught-ox, the horse, the dog, the goat and the sheep. The ewes of the land of Gandhāra were famous for their wool.

Though mainly an agricultural and pastoral people, the Vedic tribes were not indifferent to trade and industry. Commerce
was largely in the hands of a people styled Paṇi, who were probably non-Aryans and whose niggardliness was proverbial, but amongst them we have reference also to bountiful merchants like Bribu. Trade probably consisted mainly of barter. The chief articles of trade, judging by the evidence of the later Saṁhitās, were clothes, coverlets and skins. The standard unit of value was the cow, but necklets of gold (nīshka) also served as a means of exchange. Whether nīshkas in the early period possessed all the characteristic marks of a regular coinage, is a highly debatable question. No gold coin of the old indigenous type has yet been discovered in India, but the transition to the use of coined money was clearly prepared by the nīshka, which was a piece of metal that came to possess a definite weight, if not the hallmark of State authority. We have also in the Rg-Veda, in an enumeration of gifts, reference to the golden manā which some authorities identify with the old Babylonian weight-unit, the manah (Latin Mina).

The principal means of transport by land were chariots (ratha) and wagons (anaś), the former usually drawn by horses and the latter by oxen. The epithet pathi-kri, "path-maker", applied to the Fire-God, suggests that the services of the deity were frequently requisitioned to burn the primeval forests, infested by wild animals and haunted by highwaymen (taskara, stena), to make roads for the use of travellers and merchants.

A great controversy has centred round the question as to whether marine navigation was practised in Rig-Vedic times. According to one view, navigation was limited to the crossing of rivers in boats, but we have undoubted references to navigators sailing in ships with a hundred oars. In the story of the shipwreck of Bhujyu, mention is made of the Samudra, "which giveth no support, or hold, or station". Some think that Samudra means no more than the stream of the Indus in its lower course. Others regard the story as a matter of hearsay knowledge gathered from travellers, but acquaintance with the sea is rendered probable by references to the "treasures of the deep". If the identification of the Vedic manā with the Babylonian manah is correct, we have indubitable testimony to a very early intercourse between Vedic India and distant lands beyond the seas.

Of the industries of the Rig-Vedic period, those of the wood-worker, the metal-worker, the tanner, the weaver and the potter deserve special mention. The wood-worker or carpenter not only made chariots, wagons, houses and boats, but showed his skill in carved work of a finer type such as artistic cups. The metal-worker or smith fashioned all sorts of weapons, implements and
ornaments from various kinds of metal including gold and the mysterious ajas, which some authorities take to mean copper or bronze while others favour the sense of iron. Workers in leather made water-casks, bow-strings, slings and hand-guards for the protection of the archers. Weavers included men as well as women. The latter showed their skill in sewing, weaving and the plaiting of mats from grass or reeds. The potter (Kalāda) also plied his craft for the benefit of the people.

Arts and Sciences

The art of poetry was in full bloom as is evidenced by the splendid collection of lyrics known as the Rik-Samhāla which consists of hymns in praise of different gods. The number of hymns is 1,017. These are grouped into books termed ashtakas or mandalas containing eight and ten hymns respectively, which were recited by priests styled hotris or reciters. The old hymns are chiefly to be found in the so-called Family Books (II-VII), each of which is ascribed by tradition to a particular family of seers (rishis). Their names are Gṛṣṭamadā, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bharadvāja and Vasishṭha. Book VIII is ascribed to the Kanvas and Angirases. Book IX is dedicated to Soma. The latest parts of the collection are to be found in Books I and X, which, however, contain some old hymns as well.

Fine specimens of lyric poetry are to be found among the Rīg-Vedic hymns, notably in those addressed to the Goddess of the Dawn.

"The radiant Dawns have risen up for glory, in their white splendour like the waves of waters. She maketh paths all easy, fair to travel and rich, hath shown herself benign and friendly.

We see that thou art good: far shines thy lustre; thy beams, thy splendours have flown up to heaven.

Decking thyself, thou makest bare thy bosom, shining in majesty, thou Goddess Morning."

A knowledge of the art of writing has been deduced from references to ashtakarni cows, where the epithet ashta-karni is interpreted to mean "having the sign for the number 8 marked on the ear". But the expression admits of other interpretations. The prevailing view has been that the Rīg-Vedic people did not possess the art of writing, and that the old script in which the
inscriptions of Asoka and his successors are written goes back to a Semitic, and not Vedic Aryan, origin. Writing was no doubt practised by the pre-historic people of the Indus valley who developed the ancient culture of Harappá and Mohenjo-Daro, but it is significant that the early literature of the Aryans was transmitted orally.

Architecture made some advance in Rig-Vedic India. There are references to mansions supported by a thousand columns and provided with a thousand doors. Mention is also made of stone castles and structures with a hundred walls. Allusions to images of Indra possibly point, according to some, to the beginnings of sculpture.

The medical art of the age distinguished quite a number of diseases. But the physician (bhishaj) was still a fiend-slayer as well as a healer of disease, and charms and spells were regarded as equally efficacious with healing herbs and drugs. The use of iron legs as a substitute for natural ones points, however, to some advance in surgery. The science of astronomy made definite progress, and certain stars had already been observed and named.

**Religion**

The early Vedic religion has been designated by the name of henotheism or kathenotheism—a belief in single gods, each in turn standing out as the highest. It has also been described as the worship of Nature leading up to Nature's God. The chief deities of the earlier books owe their origin to the personification of natural phenomena. Abstract deities like Dhaútri, the Establisher; Vidhátrí, the Ordainer; Vişvarkarman, the All-Creating, and Pragápati, the Lord of Creatures, Sraddhá, Faith; Manu, Wrath, make their appearance at a later stage. Besides the higher Gods, lauded by priests, we have reference to others whose worship was not countenanced in orthodox circles. Some scholars find in the hymns traces of the cult of the liṅga, and even of Krishna. Mention is made in this connection of the Śiśnadevas, "worshippers of the phallus", the Śivas who opposed the Indra-worshiping Trítsus, and a foe of Indra named Krishñá who lived on the banks of the Amúmati. But Śiśnadeva is taken by some to mean simply "incontinent". The Śiva opponents of the Trítsus appear to have been a tribe, not a religious sect, and Śiva occurs as an epithet of the god Rudra worshipped by the Vedic priests. The Krishna mentioned in Rig-Vedic hymns can hardly be identified with his epic and Purānic namesake, as the river with which he is
associated in the *Rig-Veda* is not the Jumna but some stream in
the Kuru country, as we learn from the *Brihaddevata*.

Father *Dyaus* (Zeus, Dispiter), the Shining God of Heaven,
and Mother *Prithivi*, the Earth Goddess, are among the oldest
of the Vedic deities, but the hymns scarcely reflect their former
greatness. They have been cast into the shade by *Varuna*, the
Encompassing Sky, and *Indra*, the God of Thunder and Rain.
*Varuna* is the most sublime deity of the early Vedic pantheon.
He bears the epithet *Asura* (Avestan *Ahura*) and he is the great
upholder of physical and moral order, *Rita*, the idea of which is
at least as old as the fourteenth century B.C., as we learn from
inscriptions mentioning the names of the Mitanni kings. To
*Varuna* people turned for forgiveness of sin just as they did to
Vishnu in a later age.

“If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever
wronged a brother, friend, comrade,
The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O *Varuna*, remove
from us the trespass.

“O *Varuna*, whatever the offence may be which we as men
commit against the heavenly host,
When through our want of strength we violate thy laws,
punish us not, O God, for that iniquity.”

The worship of *Varuna*, with its consciousness of sin and trust
in the divine forgiveness, is undoubtedly one of the first roots
of the later doctrine of *Bhakti*.

If *Varuna* is the sovereign of the Universe and the guardian
of the moral laws, *Indra* is the puissant God of war, the lightning-
wielder, who

“. . . slew the serpent, then discharged the waters,
And cleft the caverns of the lofty mountains”;
“. . . made all earthly things unstable,
Who humbled and dispersed the Dasa colour,
Who, as the player’s stake the winning gambler,
The foemen’s fortune gains . . . ”

*Indra* came to occupy the chief place among the Vedic gods,
while *Varuna* receded to the background and became merely the
Lord of Waters, a sort of Indian Neptune.

Closely connected with *Varuna* is *Mitra*, the friend, the personi-
fication of the sun’s beneficent agency, and the two belonged to
the class of deities styled *Aditya*, sons of *Aditi*, the Goddess of
Eternity. Other important deities of the upper realm of light are Sūrya, the Illuminator; Savitri, the Enlivener; Pāshana, the Nourisher; Vishnu Urukrama, the wide-striding Sun; the Aśvin or the Nāsakyas, perhaps the Morning and Evening Stars, later the gods of healing, parallel to the Dioscuri; and Ushas, the lovely Goddess of the Dawn.

Between the world of light above and the earth below lies the realm of the air, and the chief deities of this region are, besides Indra, the Maruts (Storm Gods), Vāyu and Viṣṇa (the Wind Gods), Rudra (the Howling God of Storm and Lightning), and Parjanya (the God of Rain). Of the terrestrial deities, the chief are Agni, Soma and Sarasvati. Agni, or the Fire-God, received special homage because no sacrifice could be performed without offerings to him. The libation of Soma was also regarded as specially sacred. Sarasvati was a river deity who came to be regarded later as the Goddess of Learning. Of the three principal deities of the later mythology, Vishnu and Rudra (Śiva) are, as we have seen already, known to the Rig-Veda, and Brahmā, though not explicitly mentioned, has his precursors in Vidhātrī (the Ordainer), Hiranyakarśa (the Germ of Gold), Prajāpati (the Lord of Creatures) and Brahmanaspati (the Lord of Prayer).

An important characteristic of Vedic Mythology is the predominance of the male element. Goddesses like Prithivi, Aditi, Ushas, and Sarasvati occupy a very subordinate position. In this respect the Vedic civilisation presents a contrast to the prehistoric culture of the Indus valley, where the Mother Goddess is co-equal with her male partner.

Another important feature of the Vedic religion is the tendency towards monotheism and even monism. The hymns foreshadow the idea of universal unity, and express the belief that God is One although he bears many names.

"They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa,
And Agni; he is the heavenly bird Garutmat:
To what is One, the poets give many a name,
They call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan."

The monotheistic conception appears more prominently in the hymns addressed to Hiranyakarśa (the Gold Germ), and to Viśvakarman (the All-Creating).

"Who is our Father, our Creator, Maker,
Who every place doth know and every creature,
AN ADVANCED HISTORY OF INDIA

By Whom alone to gods their names were given,
To Him all other creatures go, to ask Him."

Finally, we have a song of Creation according to which in the beginning

"... neither death nor deathlessness existed;
Of day and night there was yet no distinction.
Alone that One breathed calmly, self-supported,
Other than It was none, nor aught above It."

Sacrifices occupy a prominent place in the Vedic ritual. These include offerings of milk, grain, ghee, flesh and juice of the Soma plant. The use of material objects as symbols of deities was perhaps not altogether unknown, and one passage apparently makes a reference to an image or symbol of Indra. The symbol of phallic worship is, as we have seen, detected by some in the allusions to the Śīnadevas.

Regarding life after death, the Rig-Vedic hymns have no consistent theory. According to some passages, the dead dwell in the realm of Yama, the beneficent king of the departed. The idea of metempsychosis is, however, not yet developed.
CHAPTER IV

LATER VEDIC CIVILISATION

Aryan Expansion

We have seen that in the Rig-Vedic period the Aryan tribes had spread over the whole country from the Kābul to the upper Ganges, and had built up small kingdoms mostly under hereditary monarchs who held their own against the non-Aryan peoples by whom they were surrounded. But internecine strife in which some of the tribes engaged even in Rig-Vedic times produced far-reaching results. Some of the weaker tribes were absorbed by their more powerful neighbours, and the increase in the wealth and territory of the conquering tribes was reflected in the growth of the power of the kings, who governed large and compact kingdoms. Stately cities made their appearance for the first time in the later Vedic texts.

Simultaneously with the growth of large kingdoms, we have a further extension of the political and cultural sway of the Aryans towards the east and the south. This was due as much to the adventurous spirit of kings and princes as to the desire of the priests to cause Agni, the Fire-God, to taste new lands through sacrifices. Before the close of the later Vedic period, the Aryans had thoroughly subdued the fertile plains watered by the Jumna, the upper Ganges and the Sadānirā (the Rāpti or the Gaṇḍak). Adventurous bands penetrated into the Vindhyan forest and established powerful kingdoms in the Deccan to the north of the Godāvari.

The centre of the Aryan world was the "firm middle country" (dhrusā madhyamā dis) stretching from the Sarasvatī to the Gangetic Doāb and occupied by the Kūras, the Pañchālas and some adjoining tribes. It was from this region that Brāhmanical civilisation spread to the outer provinces, to the land of the Kosalas and the Kāsīs drained by the Sarayū and the Varanāvatī, to the swamps east of the Gaṇḍak colonised by the Videshas, and to the valley of the Wardha occupied by the Vidarbhas. Beyond them lived the tribes of mixed origin like the Aṅgas of East Bihār and the
Magadhas of South Bihār, as well as Daukus or aboriginal folk like the Pundras of North Bengal, the Pulindas and Śavaras of the Vindhyan forest, and the Andhras in the valley of the Godāvari.

The most distinguished among the tribes of the period were at first the Kurus and the Pañchālas with their capitals at Āsandīvat and Kāmpīlā (Kāmpīlya) respectively. The former occupied Kurukshetra—the tongue of land between the Sarasvati and the Drishadvati (Chitang-Rakshi)—as well as the districts of Delhi and Meerut. The latter occupied the Bareilly, Budāīn and Farrukhābād districts of the United Provinces and some adjoining tracts. The Kuru nation was probably formed by the amalgamation of several smaller tribes including a section of the Pūrus and the Bharatas, while the Pañchālas sprang from an obscure Rig-Vedic tribe known as the Kṛvis, with whom were associated the Śṛiṅjayas and the Turvaśas.

The later Vedic texts mention powerful Kuru kings like Balhika-Pratīpiya, Parikshī İstanbul and Janamejaya, all of whom figure prominently in epic legends. Parikshī is the hero of a famous song of praise found in the Atharva Veda. It describes him as a universal king (rājā viśva-vanāśa) and his kingdom as flowing with milk and honey. His son Janamejaya is credited with having gone round the earth, completely conquering on every side. His successors were not so powerful as he was. They sustained disasters and were finally obliged to fly from Kurukshetra. According to later tradition a secon of the Kuru race transferred his residence to Kauśāmbi (Kosam, near Allahābād) and ruled over a powerful kingdom which survived till the rise of Buddhism.

The Pañchālas also produced conquering kings who engaged in wars and alliances with the Kurus. But their chief title to fame rests on their land being the home of theologians and philosophers like king Pravāhana-Jaivalī and the sages Āruni and Śvetaketu.

In the time of the Upanishads the fame of the land of the Pañchālas as a centre of Brāhmaṇical learning was eclipsed by the country of the Videhas, whose king Janaka, the patron of Yājñavalkya, won the proud title of Śaṃrāti. He gathered the celebrities of the Kuru-Pañchāla countries at his court “much as the intellects of Athens gathered at the Court of Macedonian princes”. The Videhan monarchy fell shortly before the rise of Buddhism, and its overthrow was followed by the rise of the Vajjian Confederacy.
Growth of Royal Power and Elaboration of the Administrative Machinery

The amalgamation of tribes and the increase in the size of kingdoms in the later Vedic age, coupled with the successful leadership of the kings in war, inevitably led to a growth in the royal power. Kings now claimed to be absolute masters of all their subjects, excepting perhaps the Brāhmanas who proclaimed Soma to be their king. But even the Brāhmanas were "liable to removal at will". The common free men had to pay tribute (bāli, śulka and bhāga) and could be "oppressed at will", while the members of the servile classes were liable to be "expelled and slain at will".

The chief functions of the king were of a military and judicial character. He was the protector of his people and the laws, and the destroyer of their enemies. Himself immune from punishment, he wielded the rod of chastisement (dānḍa).

Successful monarchs set up claims to the rank of universal king (rājā viśvajñāna), lord of all the earth (sarcabhiṣāmi) or sole ruler (ekarāt) of the land down to the seas, and celebrated sacrifices befitting their status like the Rājasūya (royal consecration), the Vājayanta (drink of strength) and Aśvamedha (horse sacrifice). The Rājasūya included offerings to divinities in the houses of officials, styled ratnīna, and a formal abhisheka or besprinkling by the priest, besides certain popular rites such as a cow raid, a sham fight and a game of dice in which the king is made to be the victor. The most interesting feature of the Vājayanta rites was a chariot-race in which the sacrificer was allowed to carry off the palm. This was followed by homage to Mother Earth and a formal enthronement. In the Aśvamedha ceremonial, a horse was set free to roam abroad under the guardianship of youths of rank who were fully armed. If the period of wandering were successfully passed, the steed was sacrificed. The features of the rite included a circle of tales narrated by a priest, and laudatory verses sung by a lute-player.

While the kings of the middle country were generally content with the title of rājā, rulers in the outlying parts of India preferred other designations. The eastern kings were styled Samrāt, the southerners Bhoja, those in the west Svarāj, while the rulers of the northern realms (janapadas) were called Virāt. The association of the Samrāt, whose status was now regarded as higher than that of the rājān, with the east is important. It probably points to the growth of imperialism in the east—a tendency that became more marked in the early days of Buddhism.
The king was usually, though not invariably, a Kshatriya. The office of monarch now, as before, was normally hereditary, though cases of election by the people were probably not rare, as is apparent from the coronation songs of the Atharva Veda. But popular choice seems to have been generally limited to members of the royal family.

The royal claim to absolutism did not pass unchallenged. The ceremonial of consecration included certain rites which required the king to descend from the throne and make obeisance to the Brāhmaṇas. He had also to take an oath not to play false to the priest, and was specially charged with the duty of protecting the Brāhmaṇas and the laws of the realm. That the Brāhmaṇas did not tamely acquiesce in all that the king did, appears from several stories about the conflict of kings and Brāhmaṇas recorded in the later Vedic texts. As to the commonalty, they supplied important officials like the Śūla and the Grāmanī, whose title rājā kartri or “king-maker” indicated their importance in the body politic. The popular assemblies styled the Sabhā and the Samiti were still regarded as important, and it is stated in the Atharva Veda that concord between the king and the assembly was essential for the former’s prosperity. Popular wrath vented itself in the expulsion of tyrannical kings together with erring officials.

With the growth of royal power came an elaboration of the machinery of administration. In the Rig-Vedic period we have, barring the Purohita (chaplain), scarcely any reference to a purely civil functionary among the higher officials of the king. But in the later Vedic texts we come across the Samgrahitri (treasurer), the Bhāgadujha (collector of taxes), the Śūla (royal herald, bard or charioteer), the Kshatriti (Chamberlain), the Akshavīpa (superintendent of gambling), the Go-vikartana (king’s companion in the chase), the Pālīgala (courier), in addition to the older ecclesiastical and military officials like the Purohita (chaplain), the Senātī (general) and the Grāmanī (leader of the host or of the village). Mention is also made of the generic title Sachiva applied to ministers in later ages. The references to the Samgrahitri and the Bhāgadujha, coupled with the mention of regular contributions from the people in the shape of bāli and ākulka, point to important developments in the system of taxation and revenue administration.

The beginnings of a regular system of provincial government may be traced in references to the Shapati and the Satapati. The former was apparently charged with the duty of administering outlying areas often inhabited by aboriginal tribes, while the latter probably looked after a group of a hundred villages and was
the precursor of the long chain of rural officials mentioned in the law-books. On the lowest rung of the ladder stood the village officials (adikyata) appointed by the king himself according to the Praśna Upanishad. Regarding police arrangements, we know very little. Some find a reference to police officials in the Jīvaṇārthā of the Rig- Veda and the Ugras of the Upanishads. But the matter is not free from doubt.

The king had a very large part in the administration of justice, but power was sometimes delegated to Adhyakshas or overseers. Certain cases were referred to the tribe for adjudication. The judicial work of the tribal assembly was usually entrusted to a small body of Sabhāsads or assessors. Petty cases in the village were decided by the Grāmyavādīn or village judge and his court (Sabhā). The use of Ordeal as a part of judicial procedure was not unknown. Civil cases were sometimes decided by arbitration, and private vengeance in criminal cases was still recognised.

**Social Changes**

Little change can be traced in the mode of house-building and the style of dress. In regard to dietary, the eating of meat was being looked upon with disfavour. New forms of social entertainment had come into existence. We have references to the Śaṅkū or actor, and gāthās or verses were sung by the lute-players (vina-gāthīn) at great public festivals to the accompaniment of musical instruments which were sometimes furnished with a hundred strings (ṣata-tantu). Such gāthās foreshadow the “songs of victory” which developed into the Great Epic.

In regard to the position of women, there was hardly any improvement. Daughters were regarded as a source of misery. Women could not go to the tribal council or assembly (Sabhā), neither could they take an inheritance. Married women of the upper classes had often to suffer the presence of rival wives. The lot of queens was specially enviable in this respect. While some of them, e.g. the mahīshī or chief queen, and the vāvātā or the favourite, were loved and honoured, others like the parivṛkti were admittedly neglected. But they continued to have their share in religious rites. The education which some of them received was of a high order, as it enabled them to take a prominent part in philosophical disputations at royal courts. The rules of marriage underwent a change towards greater rigidity, and there were instances of child marriage.

As regards class distinction, changes of far-reaching importance
were taking place. The two higher classes, namely the Brāhmaṇa and the Kshatriya, enjoyed privileges denied to the Vaiśya and the Śūdra. The latter could be “oppressed at will”. Different modes of address were laid down for the four castes. Change of caste was becoming difficult, if not impossible, but the higher classes were still free to intermarry with the lower orders, though marriage with Śūdras was not much approved. The life of a member of the higher castes was now rigidly regulated. The Chāndogya Upanishad makes pointed reference to three stages, that of the householder engaged in sacrifice, study and charity, that of the hermit who practised austerity, and that of the Brahmachārin who dwelt with his Āchārya or teacher. The power and prestige of the Brāhmaṇas had increased immensely. But though the priest claimed to be a god on earth and the protector of the realm, and the same individual might be the Purohita of several kingdoms, there was no pope to oppose the king. The Brāhmaṇas claim to supremacy was now and then contested by the Kshatriya, and we have declarations to the effect that the Kshatriya had no superior and that the priest was only a follower of the king. The great community of ordinary freemen was splitting up into small functional groups and we have references, in addition to those engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, to the merchant, the chariot-maker, the smith, the carpenter, the tanner, the fisherman, etc., as names of distinct castes. Some of them were sinking in social estimation, and in a Brāhmaṇa passage a carpenter’s touch is said to impart ceremonial impurity. The Śūdra, too, was regarded as impure and was not allowed to touch the milk needed for oblations to the Fire-God. The gulf separating him from the humbler freeman was, however, becoming narrower. He was not infrequently grouped with the Vaiśya, and the two together were set against the priest and the noble. The right of the Śūdra to live and prosper was gradually recognised and prayers were even uttered for his glory. The ranks of Śūdras were constantly swelled by the admission of new aboriginal tribes into the Aryan polity.

Outside the regular castes stood two important bodies of men, namely, the Brāhyas and the Nishādas. The Brāhyas were probably Aryans outside the pale of Brāhmaṇism. They did not observe Brāhmaṇic rules, spoke some Prākritic language and led a nomadic life. They appear to have had some special connection with the people of Magadha and the cult of Śiva and of the “Arhats”. They were permitted to become members of the Brāhmaṇical community by the performance of some prescribed rites.
The Nishādās were clearly a non-Aryan people who lived in their own villages and had their own rulers (Sthapati). They were probably identical with the modern Bhils.

Economic Condition

The people, including even men of wealth (ibhyas), still lived mostly in villages, but the amenities of city life were no longer unknown. In certain villages peasant proprietors, working in their own fields, were being replaced by a class of landlords who obtained possession of entire villages. Transfer of land, however, did not meet with popular approval during this epoch, and allotments could only be made with the consent of clansmen.

Agriculture continued to be one of the principal occupations of the people. Considerable improvement was effected in agricultural implements, and new kinds of grain and fruit trees were grown on the soil. But the cultivator was not free from trouble, and an Upanishad passage refers to a hailstorm or a swarm of locusts that sadly afflicted the land of the Kuruš and forced many people to leave the country. Trade and industry flourished. A class of hereditary merchants (vīnicā) came into being. There was inland trade with the Kirūtas inhabiting the mountains, who apparently exchanged the drugs which they dug up on the high ridges for clothes, mattresses, and skins. The sea was known intimately, and the mention of the legend of the flood in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa is taken by some authorities to point to intercourse with Babylon. Commerce was facilitated by the use of convenient units of value like the nishka, the šatamāna, and the krishnala, but it is doubtful if these had acquired all the characteristics of a regular coinage. The nishka, formerly a necklet, was now probably a lump of gold possessing a definite weight which was equal to three hundred and twenty ratis, which was also the weight of a šatamāna. A krishnala weighed one rati, that is, 1/8 grains. Merchants were probably organised into guilds, as appears from references to gānas or corporations and the śresthpīns or aldermen.

The variety of industrial occupations was remarkable. Specialisation had gone far. The chariot-maker was distinguished from the carpenter, the maker of the bows from the maker of the bow-strings and of arrows, the tanner from the hide-dresser or furrier. Women took part in industrial life as makers of embroidered garments, workers in thorns, dyers, etc
Religious Development

Great changes took place in the religious life of the people. The lustre of the older gods was gradually dimmed, though one would still find, here and there, especially in the Atharva Veda, magnificent hymns celebrating the omniscience of Varuna or the beneficence of the Earth-Goddess. The sacrificial side of religion was greatly developed by the priests, while the popular superstitious belief in spirits, imps, spells, incantations and witchcraft found a place in the sacred canon. The monotheistic and monistic tendencies, that showed themselves prominently towards the close of the Rig-Vedic period, became more marked with the efflux of time. Prajāpati, the lord of created beings, cast all the older deities into the shade. The germ of the later doctrine of the Avatāras, or divine “descents” or incarnations, can be traced in stories about Prajāpati assuming the form of a boar to raise the earth from the primeval waters and becoming a tortoise when about to create offspring. While the priests and the theologians were absorbed in elaborate sacrificial rites and muttered litanies in honour of Prajāpati, the First Sacrificer and the Embodiment of Sacrifice, philosophers threw doubts on the efficacy of ritual, speculated about the underlying unity of the universe, and strove for union with the supreme Brahma or Paramātmā, the universal Soul or the Absolute “that dwelleth in every thing, that guideth all beings within, the Inward Guide, Immortal”.

The common people, however, did not understand abstruse theological or philosophical speculations and began to show predilection for certain deities already known to the Rig-Veda but not so prominent as Indra or Varuna. One of them was Rudra, who already bore in the early litanies the epithet of Śiva (propitious) and soon came to be regarded as the Great God (Mahādeva) and the lord of animate beings (Paśupati). His popularity may have been due to his identification with the chief male deity of the pre-historic people of the Indus.

Side by side with Rudra arose another figure—Vishṇu, a solar deity famed in the Rig-Veda for his three strides. As the source of cosmic and moral order, the deliverer of mankind in distress and saviour of the Gods, Vishṇu soon came to occupy the place of Varuna as the most sublime among the celestials, and his highest step (paranampadam) became the goal of sages and seers. Before the final close of the Vedic canon, he came to be identified with Vāsudeva—a hero or demi-god known to epic tradition as Krishna-Devakiputra. In one Upanishad we find Krishna associated with
a school of thought that rejected the purely ritualistic interpretation of sacrifice and considered the practice of virtue to be as effective as gifts to priests. In the final hour one should, according to this school, take refuge in these three thoughts: “You are the imperishable, the never-falling and the very essence of life.” The goal of spiritual endeavour according to them, was the realm of light higher than heaven where dwelleth the God among the gods. Here we see the germ of some of the doctrines that received a more systematic treatment in later ages and lay at the root of the Bhāgavata creed.

Literature and Science

Before the close of the Vedic period, the Aryans possessed an extensive literature handed down in the Brāhmaṇical schools by memory. Some idea of the wide range of subjects in which the people interested themselves may be obtained from several lists given in the Upanishads. One such list makes mention not only of the Vedas but of Itihasa-parāṇa (legend and ancient lore), Pitṛya (the science relating to the Manes), Rāṣi (mathematics), Daiva (knowledge of portents), Nidhi (chronology), Vākorākya (dialectics), Ekaṇyana (ethics), Deva-vidyā (etymological interpretation of divine names), Brahmavidyā (knowledge of the Absolute), Bhūtavidyā (demonology, or science of elements), Kṣatra vidyā (the military science), Nakṣatra vidyā (astronomy), Sarpa vidyā (the science of snakes), and Devajana vidyā (dancing and music or mythology). Another list mentions the Vedas, phonetics (śikṣā), ritual (kalpa), grammar (nyākarana), etymology (nirukta), metries (chhandas) and astronomy (jyotisha). If all the subjects mentioned in the former list were dealt with in special treatises, most of them have not come down to us. A brief account of the extant works of Vedic literature included in the second list is given below.

The word Veda comes from the root vid, to know. It means knowledge in general. It is specially applied to a branch of literature which has been handed down from time immemorial by verbal transmission and is declared to be sacred knowledge or divine revelation (Śruti).

The Veda consists of four different classes of literary compositions:

(1) The Mantra (saying, song, formula) constitutes the oldest division of Vedic literature, and is distributed in four Samhitās or collections known as the Rīk, Sāma, Yaṣu, and Atharva Samhitās. The first three are sometimes spoken of as the Trayī
or threefold knowledge, being alone recognised at first as canonical scriptures.

The Rik-SAṁhitā is a collection of lyrics in praise of different gods. These were recited by the priest styled the hotri. Most of the songs belong to an age anterior to what we have called the Later Vedic period, but the collection as a whole may not be so old. The SAṁhitā of the Sāmaveda, or the Book of Chants, contains hardly any independent matter, all its verses except seventy-five being taken directly from the Rig-Veda. Its songs were meant to be sung at the Soma sacrifice by a special class of priests called Udgātri. The SAṁhitā of the Yajurveda, or Book of Sacrificial Prayer, consists not only of stanzas taken from the Rig-Veda, but also of original prose formulas to be uttered by the Adhvaryu priest who performed the manual work involved in a sacrifice. The collection has two divergent texts, viz., (a) the SAṁhitā of the Black Yajurveda preserved in the Taittiriya, Maitrāyani and Kāthaka recensions, and (b) the SAṁhitā of the White Yajurveda preserved in the Vājasaneyi recension.

At a time considerably later than the SAṁhitās mentioned above, a fourth attained to canonical recognition, the Atharva Veda, or the Book of Magic Formulas. Though its recognition came late, much of the matter contained in the collection is old. Some of the Atharvan hymns were of popular rather than priestly origin and may be as old as the earliest parts of the Rig-Veda. The Atharva-SAṁhitā is, in the main, a collection of songs, spells and incantations for the healing of disease, the restoration of harmony, the exorcism of evil spirits, etc. But there are certain hymns of rare beauty that celebrate the power and omniscience of God and the beneficence of Mother Earth.

May Earth pour out her milk for us,
    a mother unto me her son.
O Prithivi, auspicious be thy woodlands,
    auspicious be thy hills and snow-clad mountains.

(2) The second class of Vedic works are known by the name of Brāhmaṇas, i.e. treatises relating to prayer and sacrificial ceremony. They are mainly prose texts containing observations on sacrifice. They also contain cosmogonic myths, old legends and gāthās or verses celebrating the exploits of kings famed in priestly tradition.

(3) Next come the Ṛgveda and forest texts, books of instruction to be given in the forest or writings meant for wood-dwelling hermits, which are found as appendices to the Brāhmaṇas. These treatises resemble the Brāhmaṇas in language, style and even
content, but they are concerned more with the allegorical significance of rites, and the mystic meaning of the texts of the Samhitās, than with elaborate rules for the performance of the great sacrifices. The bulk of the Āranyaka literature is old, but certain portions may belong to a date posterior to the period under review.

(4) Lastly we have the Upanishads, “secret or esoteric doctrines”. The name is derived by some from the root upa-ni-sad which means “to sit down near some one” and is applied to doctrines that may be imparted to a son or a trusted pupil seated near the teacher. The Upanishads are either imbedded in the Āranyakas or form their supplements. They are also found as independent works. They contain deep speculations of a philosophical character which “revolve around the two conceptions of Brahman and Atman”, i.e. the universal soul, the Absolute and the individual self. The oldest Upanishads are usually regarded as pre-Buddhist, but some of the treatises bearing the name “Upanishad” certainly belong to a much later period.

The classes of literary works named above are alone classed as Śruti, or Revelation, and constitute the Vedic literature proper. But closely connected with them as auxiliary treatises, though not regarded as a part of the Revelation, there exist a class of compositions called Vedāṅga, “members or limbs of the Veda”. They are regarded as less authoritative than the Śruti, and are styled Smṛtī, memory or tradition, as handing down only the tradition derived from ancient sages to whom the Vedas were “revealed”. They originated mostly in Vedic schools (Charanas) and their contents are often expressed in an extremely condensed style of prose intended for memorisation, to which the name Sūtra (thread, clue, guide, rule, aphorism) is given. Some of the treatises were versified in later times.

The Vedāṅgas are six in number, viz., Śikṣā (phonetics), Kalpa (ritual), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Chhandas (metrics), and Jyotisha (astronomy). These subjects are already mentioned in some of the Upanishads, though the extant manuals may belong to a much later period.

The manuals of Śikṣā deal with the correct pronunciation and accentuation of the Vedic hymns. The productions of the Śikṣā school include the “connected text” of the Rig-Veda as well as the “word-text” which gives the text of the verses in a complete grammatical analysis. But the most remarkable compositions of the Śikṣā class are the Prātiṣākhyya Sūtras which contain the rules by the aid of which the Samhītā-pātha (connected text) can be formed from the Pāda-pātha (word-text).
The treatises on Kalpa or ritual include the Śrauta Sūtras which lay down rules for the performance of the great sacrifices, the Grihya Sūtras which give directions for the simple ceremonies of daily life, and the Dharma Sūtras which deal with sacred and secular law and administration. As integral parts of the Śrauta Sūtras are found compositions styled Śulva Sūtras which lay down rules for the measurement and building of the place of sacrifice and the fire-altars, and are the oldest treatises on Indian geometry.

There are manuals supplementary to the Kalpa Sūtras styled Pariśishyas or addenda.

In Vyākaraṇa, Nirukta and Chhandas we have the great works of Panini, Yaska, and Pūgala. A metrical work on Jyotisha Vedāṅga is extant, but it seems to belong to a comparatively late date.
CHAPTER V
THE BEGINNINGS OF MAGADHAN ASCENDANCY AND THE COMING OF THE YAVANAS

The Great Janapadas
The idea of a universal king was present before the minds of the Rig-Vedic poets, and in the later Vedic texts we find mention of several rulers who went round the “earth” conquering on every side. These conquests, however, did not normally involve a permanent annexation of the territories of the vanquished people, though minor tribes may now and then have been reduced to vassalage and governed by rulers (sthapati) appointed by the conquering rājan (king). But from the sixth century B.C. we can trace a new development in Indian politics. We have the growth of a number of powerful kingdoms in eastern India—the very region which in the Brāhmaṇa texts is associated with rulers consecrated to a superior kind of kingship, styled sāmrājya—which gradually absorbed the neighbouring states till at last one great monarchy swallowed up the rest and laid the foundations of an empire which ultimately stretched from the Hindukush to the northern districts of Mysore. But before we take up the history of this remarkable political transformation, it is necessary for us to note the changes in the map of India since the period of the Brāhmaṇas and the classical Upanishads.

The widest area known to the Aryans of the Brāhmaṇa period is that described in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. The boundaries of the Aryan world stretched from the countries of the Uttara Kuras and the Uttara Madras beyond the Himalayas to the land of the Satvats (and Bhojas), south of the Jumna and the Chambal, and from the territory of the Nichiyas and Apāchyas in the west to the realm of the Prāchyas in the east. The exact position of the Nichiyas and Apāchyas cannot be determined. But the Prāchyas were doubtless the Prasii of Greek writers, i.e., the people of Magadha and the neighbouring provinces. Beyond Magadha lived the Pundras of North Bengal and the Vaṅgas of central and eastern Bengal who were outside the pale of Aryandom. The Vaṅgas,
however, are not mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa proper but possibly in the Aranyakas attached to it. In the south, besides the Aryan realms of the Bhojas, we find the Andhras of the Godāvari valley and some aboriginal tribes inhabiting the Vindhyan forests.

The later literature of the Brāhmaṇical Hindus and the sacred canon of the Buddhists introduce some new names, e.g. Kaliṅga on the east coast stretching from the Vaitarani in Orissa to the neighbourhood of the Godāvari, Aśmaka and Mūlaka on the Upper Godāvari, Avanti in Mālwa, Surāśṭra in Kāṭhāwār and Śindhu-Sauvira in the lower valley of the Indus. In an early Buddhist text we have a list of sixteen great nations that occupied the territory from the Kābul valley to the banks of the Godāvari shortly before the rise of Buddhism. The names of these states are Aṅga (East Bihār), Magadha (South Bihār), Kāsi (Benares), Kosala (Oudh), Vṛji (North Bihār), Malla (Gorakhpur district), Chedi (between the Jumnā and the Narmadā), Vatsa (Allahābād region), Kuru (Thānesar, Delhi and Meerut districts), Pañcāla (Bareilly, Budāūn and Farrukhābād districts), Matsya (Jaipur), Sūrasena (Mathurā), Aśmaka (on the Godāvari), Avanti (in Mālwa), Gandhāra (Peshāwār and Rawalpindi districts), and Kamboja (Southwest Kāshmir and parts of Kārifistān). The palmy days of the Kurus and the Pañcālas were now over, and the centre of political gravity had shifted to the east.

The Vṛjījan State

Among the eastern nations mentioned in the above list, the name of the Videhas is conspicuous by its absence, and in its place we find mention of Vṛji (Vajji). The Vṛjījan State was formed by the union of several clans including the Līchhāvis and the Jūāṭikas. Its capital was at Vaishali, modern Besar or Basar and Bakhira in the district of Muzaffarpur. The Vṛji people have been represented by a modern writer as of Mongolian origin because they followed certain customs that are classed as Tibetan, such as exposure of the dead, and also because they are regarded by the Brāhmaṇa law-givers as Vṛtyas or degraded Kāshtriyas. But similar customs are found also among the Irānians; and the Vṛtyas, judging from Vedic evidence, were clearly an Aryan people, though outside the pale of orthodox Brāhmaṇism. It is significant that in Buddhist literature the fine appearance of the Līchhāvis is compared to that of the Tāvatiṃsa gods.

The Vṛjījas had no monarch, but a popular assembly and elders
who carried on the business of the State. This type of polity was known as a Gana or republic. The Malvas had a similar constitution and there were besides these a number of smaller republics, e.g., the Śākyas of Kapilavastu, the Bhargas of Sumsumāra Hill, the Mauryas of Pipphalivana, etc.

Four Great Kingdoms

The republics had soon to contend with formidable enemies in the persons of the ambitious potentates of the neighbouring monarchies. Four of the kingdoms had grown more powerful than the rest and were following a policy of expansion and aggrandisement at the expense of their neighbours. These were Avanti, Vatsa, Kosala and Magadha.

The kingdom of Avanti had its capital at Ujjain in modern Mālwa. It was ruled by King Chanda Pradyota Mahāsena, who brought the states in the vicinity of his realm under his control. In the Vatsa territory, i.e., the district round Kaśāmbī or Kosam near Allahāhād, reigned Udayana, a scion of the Bharata race, who carried off the beloved daughter of Pradyota and took a wife also from the royal house of Magadha. The supremacy of Udayana extended over the adjoining territory of the Bhargas.

Kosala was ruled by King Mahākosala and his son Prasenajit. It roughly corresponded to modern Oudh. In the heroic age it had its capital at Ayodhyā, on the bank of the river Sarayū, and was ruled by a dynasty that claimed descent from the illustrious Ikshvāku, famed in Vedic and epic tradition. Kosala kings like Para, son of Aṭṭāra, won renown as conquerors and sacrificers. Epic tradition represents Kosalan princes as having penetrated through the wilds of Daṇḍakāraṇya, in the Deccan, to the banks of the Pampā or the Tuṅghabhadra and even to the distant island of Ceylon. A branch of the ruling family established itself in Śrāvasti, which has been identified with the great ruined city on the south bank of the Rāpī represented by Saheṭh-Maheṭh. Members of this line extended the boundaries of Kosala in several directions and absorbed the territory of the Śākyas in the Nepalese Tarai and that of the Kāśis in the present district of Benares. But the ambitious designs of Kosala were soon frustrated by another power that arose in the fastnesses of South Bihār.

Magadha, embracing the districts of Patna and Gaya in the southern part of Bihār, could boast of powerful chieftains even in the days of the Vedic Rishis and the epic poets. As the probable home of the non-Aryan Kātakas, who were noted for their wealth
of kine, it was a coveted prize of the Aryan invader, who, however, could not Brāhmaṇise it thoroughly even in the period of the Kalpa Sūtras. It came to possess a mixed population. Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas coming to the land were spoken of in a derisive tone as Brahma-bandhu and Kṣattra-bandhu, that is, so-called Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas. It had special relations with Aryans outside the pale to whom the name Vṛtāya was given in the Vedic canon.

In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. the throne of Magadha was occupied by a line of kings styled Śaśānuṇāgas in the Purāṇas, an appellation derived from Śaśānuṇāga, the first king of the line in the Purānic list. Buddhist writers, however, place Śaśānuṇāga much lower in the list of kings, and split up the line into two distinct groups. To the earlier of the two groups they give the name Haryāṇa. The second and later group, consisting of Śaśānuṇāga, his son and grandsons, alone deserve, according to their evidence, the name Śaśānuṇāga.

Bimbisāra

The most remarkable king of the Haryāṇa line was Śrenika or Bimbisāra, who was anointed king by his father while yet a boy of fifteen. The event took place, according to Ceylonese tradition, sixty years before the Parinirvāṇa, or the death of the Buddha. The Parinirvāṇa happened in 544 B.C. according to a Ceylonese reckoning and in 486 B.C. according to a Cantonese tradition of A.D. 489. The date 544 B.C. can, however, hardly be reconciled with a statement in the Ceylonese Chronicles that Aśoka Maurya, who is known to have flourished in the third century B.C., was consecrated two hundred and eighteen years after the Buddha had passed into Nirvāṇa. This fact and certain Chinese and Chola synchronisms led Geiger and a few other scholars to think that the era of 544 B.C. is a comparatively modern fabrication and that the true date of the death of the Buddha is 483 B.C.—a result closely approaching that to which the Cantonese tradition leads us.

The Chinese account of embassies which King Meghavarna sent to Samudra Gupta and King Kiu-che (Kassapa) sent to China in A.D. 527 also speak in favour of the date 486 B.C. or 483 B.C. for the Parinirvāṇa. Geiger's date, however, is not explicitly recognised by tradition. The Cantonese date, therefore, may be accepted as a working hypothesis for the Aśokan and pre-Aśokan periods. The date of Bimbisāra's accession, according to this reckoning, would fall about 545 B.C.

From the first, Bimbisāra pursued a policy of expansion. He
possessed certain advantages denied to many of his contemporaries.
He was the ruler of a compact kingdom protected on all sides by
mountains and rivers. His capital, Girivraj, was enclosed by five
hills. It was also girded with stone walls which are among the oldest
extant stone structures in India. The soil of the country was
rich, yielding luxuriant crops. It was made richer by the gold-
bearing stream, the Hiranyavaha or the Son, which unites with the
Ganges near Patna. The people profited by the trade that
passed along the Ganges, or followed the land-route through the
city of Gayâ. In his war-elephants the eastern monarch had a
fighting machine which could be used with terrible effect against
his western neighbours.

The most notable achievement of Bimbisâra was the annexation
of the neighbouring kingdom of Añga or East Bihâr, which had
its capital at Champa near Bhâgalpur. He also entered into
matrimonial alliances with the ruling families of Kosala and Vaiśâli.
His Kosalan wife brought a Kâsi village yielding a large revenue.
The Vaiśâli marriage ultimately paved the way for the expansion
of Magadha northward to the borders of Nepal. Bimbisâra organised
an efficient system of administration. He is also credited by a
Chinese pilgrim with having built a new city at the foot of the
hills lying to the north of Girivraj, which he named Râjagriha,
or the king's house, the modern Râjgir in the Patna district.
Under him Magadha became a flourishing kingdom which attracted
the most enlightened men of the age. Both Vardhamâna Mahâvira,
the last apostle of the Jainas, and Gautama Buddha, the great
Master of the Buddhists, preached their doctrines during the
reign of Bimbisâra. Tradition affirms that in his old age the
king was murdered by his son Ajâtaśatru.

Ajâtaśatru

Ajâtaśatru, also known as Kûnika, soon found that his throne
was not a bed of roses. Prasenajit of Kosala, brother of the queen-
dowager, who had died of grief, resolved to avenge himself on the
parricide. The republican tribes on the northern and north-
western borders of Magadha were restive and entered into a league
with the enemies of Ajâtaśatru in Kâsi-Kosala. The Magadhan
king had thus to face the hostility not only of the ruler of Sravasti
but also of the Vrijis of Vaiśâli and the Mallas of Kuśânagara
(Kasia in Gorakhpur) and Pâvâ (probably Padraona on the Gândak
river). To repel the Vrijis, Magadhan statesmen fortified the village
of Pâtaligrâma which stood near the confluence of the Ganges
and the Śoṅga. Thus was founded the famous fortress which, within a generation, developed into the stately city of Pātaliputra, the metropolis of India for well-nigh four centuries.

Thanks to his own tenacity and the Machiavellian policy of his ministers, Ajātaśatru succeeded in defeating all his adversaries. The Vṛjī territory was annexed to the kingdom of Magadha. Kosala was humbled but not crushed, and, at a slightly later period, we hear of a Kosalan king, a son of Prasenajīt, powerful enough to perpetrate a massacre of the Śākyas. Prasenajīt himself had to renounce his claim to the Kāsi village which had hitherto formed a bone of contention, and give his Magadhan antagonist his daughter in marriage. In religious tradition Ajātaśatru is remembered as a patron of Devadatta, the schismatic cousin of the Buddha, and also as a friend of both the Jains and the Buddhists. Both Mahāvīra and the Buddha are said to have died early in his reign. After the death of the latter, a Buddhist Council was held at Rājagriha which took disciplinary measures against certain prominent members of the Church and compiled the holy scriptures.

Successors of Ajātaśatru

According to the Purāṇas, the immediate successor of Ajātaśatru was Darśaka, after whom came his son Udāyi. The name of Darśaka occurs also in a play named S.Capna-Vāsavadatta, attributed to Bāṣa, which represents him as a brother-in-law and contemporary of Udayana, king of Kauśāmbi. But Buddhist and Jain writers agree in asserting that Udāyi was the son of Ajātaśatru and also his successor. A Nāga-dāsaka is placed by the former at the end of the list of kings of Bimbisāra's line, and this ruler is identified by some with the Darśaka of the Purāṇas. In view of the antiquity of the Buddhist tradition, it is difficult to accept the Purānic statement about Udāyi's relationship with Darśaka and Ajātaśatru as correct.

Udāyi had probably to fight with the king of Avanti, but the most notable event of his reign was the foundation of the city of Kusumapura or Pātaliputra nestling under the shelter of the fortress erected by the ministers of Ajātaśatru.

The history of Magadha after Udāyi is obscure. The Purānic Chronicles place immediately after him two kings named Nandivardhana and Mahānandin, the last of whom is said to have had a son, by a Śūdra woman, named Mahāpadma or Mahāpadmapati Nanda, with whom began a line of Śūdra or semi-Śūdra kings. Buddhist writers, on the other hand, insert thirteen additional
names between Udāyi and Nandivardhana. They omit Mahānandin and mention in his place a prince named Pañchamaka. According to the Buddhist account, Udāyi was followed by Anuruddha, Munda, and Nāgadāsaka, all parricides, of whom the last was banished by the indignant citizens, who met together and anointed as their king a worthy minister known by the name of Susunāga (Śīsunāga). Śīsunāga was succeeded by his son Kālāsoka, after whom came his sons, ten in number, of whom the ninth was Nandivardhana and the tenth Pañchamaka. One Buddhist work, the *Asokāvarāṇa*, mentions Kākavarnin, instead of Kālāsoka, among the successors of Munda.

The most important divergence between the Buddhist and Purānic accounts is in regard to the place assigned to Śīsunāga and Kākavarnin (Kākavarna) in the dynastic lists. While Buddhist writers place them long after Bimbisāra, Ajātasatru and even Udāyi, and represent them as belonging to a different family, the Purāṇas make them head the whole list and actually refer to them as ancestors of Bimbisāra and Ajātasatru. There is, however, one detail in the Purānic account which throws doubt on the credibility of the tradition it transmits, and tends to confirm the Buddhist evidence. After mentioning the successors of Pradyota, king of Avanti, whom we know to be a contemporary of Bimbisāra and Ajātasatru, the Purāṇas say: “Śīsunāga will destroy all their prestige and will be king.” This clear assertion undoubtedly supports the view that Śīsunāga came long after Bimbisāra and Ajātasatru, and carried on their forward policy by the absorption of the powerful kingdom of Avanti (Mālwa).

Śīsunāga’s successor, Kālāsoka or Kākavarnin, seems to have been a ruler of some consequence. He transferred his royal residence permanently from Girivraja to Pāṭaliputra, though Vaiśāli was occasionally graced by the presence of the sovereign. It was in this last city that the second great Council of the Buddhists is said to have been held in the tenth year of the king’s reign when a century had gone by since the *Parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. The Assembly settled some disputed points of discipline and condemned the action of certain Vṛjjan monks who tried to introduce a relaxation of the rules. The end of Kākavarna was tragic. Tradition affirms that he had a dagger thrust into his throat in the vicinity of a city which may have been Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśāli or some other important city in the empire. His sons were probably young and inexperienced and soon made room for a man of stern stuff.
The Nandas

The new king belonged to a family called Nanda by all our authorities. His personal name or epithet was Mahāpadma or Mahāpadmapati, "sovereign of an infinite host", or "of immense wealth", according to the Purāṇas, and Ugrasena, "possessed of a terrible army", according to Buddhist writers. After him his eight sons ruled in succession, and then the crown went to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of a new and more illustrious dynasty. The total duration of the Nanda line was 159 years according to the Jain texts, a century according to the Purāṇas, and only 22 years according to the Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon. The Jain figure is too high for a couple of generations. The Purāṇas agree in assigning a period of 12 years to the sons of Mahāpadma. But they differ in regard to the duration of the reign of Mahāpadma himself, which some put at 88 years and others at 28 years. The smaller figure 28 when added to 12 does not make up the total 100. The higher figure 88 for one reign is incredible and its rejection involves a reduction of the total period of 100 years assigned by Purānic tradition to the Nandas. In view of this, the Ceylonese account cannot be lightly dismissed.

The total number of kings belonging to the dynasty is nine. Some recent writers, however, take the word Nava, in the expression Navananda occurring in the texts, to mean not nine but new or later. They contrast the Navanandas with the so-called Pūrvanandas, or earlier Nandas, alleged to be mentioned by Kāhemendra, and take the latter to be identical with the last kings of the Śaśānāga line. But the dynastic designation Nanda is never applied to the kings of the Śaśānāga family. Our authorities know of only one Nanda line, and are unanimous in taking Nava to mean nine and not new. In Kāhemendra's story, Pūrvananda is the name of a single individual and not a dynasty, and he is distinguished, not from the Navanandas, but from Yogananda or Pseudo-Nanda, reanimated corpse of king Nanda.

Regarding the parentage of the first Nanda, we have two distinct traditions. The Purāṇas represent him as son of Mahānandin, the last king of the Śaśānāga dynasty, by a Śūdra woman. Jain writers, on the other hand, represent him as the son of a courtesan by a barber. The Jaina tradition about the barber origin of the first Nanda is strikingly supported by the testimony of Quintus Curtius. Referring to the father of the predecessor of Chandragupta Maurya who must be identified with the first Nanda, Curtius says that he was a barber who gained the affections of the queen, murdered his
sovereign, and then, under the pretence of acting as guardian of the royal children, usurped the supreme authority. He next put the young princes to death. The murdered sovereign seems to have been Kākavarnī, whose sons were evidently the young princes who were done to death by the ambitious barber.

The new king, though of humble origin, was a vigorous ruler. Purānic tradition affirms that he exterminated all Kshatriyas and became sole monarch, bringing all under his undisputed sway. The ascription of a wide dominion to the Nanda king is supported by Greek evidence which refers to the most powerful peoples who dwelt beyond the Beas in the time of Alexander as being under one sovereign who had his capital at Pātaliputra. A Kalinga inscription of early date refers to Nanda’s connection with an aqueduct in that country. This may be taken to imply that King Nanda held sway also in Kalinga, that is, Southern Orissa and the contiguous part of the Northern Circars.

The first Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons, of whom the last was named Dhama-Nanda, the Agrames or Xandrames of classical writers. This monarch owned a vast treasure and commanded a huge army of 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariots and no less than 3,000 elephants. Some writers raise the number of horsemen, chariots and elephants to 80,000, 8,000, and 6,000 respectively. To amass the treasure and maintain the huge force, the king had to resort to heavy taxation. His conduct towards the people bespoke his low origin. It is therefore no wonder that he was “detested and held cheap by his subjects”. The discontented element found a leader in Chandragupta who overthrew the Nanda dynasty, and laid the foundation of the illustrious family of the Mauryas. If tradition is to be believed, a Taxilian Brāhmaṇa named Kauṭilya or Chāṇakya played a leading part in the dynastic revolution. The conqueror of theandas had also another problem—the presence of foreign invaders in the northwestern provinces of his country.

Persian and Macedonian Invasions

Gandhāra, the territory round Peshāwar and Rāwalpindi, was, in the time of Bimbisāra, under a king named Pukkusāti, who sent an embassy and a letter to the king of Magadha. What the object of the mission was we do not know, but about the middle of the sixth century B.C. we find the hordes of Cyrus (c. 558–530 B.C.), the founder of the Achaemenian empire of Persia, knocking at the gates of India and destroying the famous city of Kāpīṣa near the
junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir rivers north-east of Kābul. The district west of the river Indus became tributary to the Persians, and the name of Gandhāra began to appear prominently among the subject nations in the early inscriptions of Darius (522–486 B.C.), the most illustrious among the successors of Cyrus. Darius followed up the earlier successes of his house by sending a naval expedition to the Indus under the command of Skylax. This expedition paved the way for the annexation of the Indus valley as far as the deserts of Rājputāna. It constituted the twentieth and the most populous satrapy of the Persian empire. It paid a tribute proportionately larger than all the rest—360 Euboic talents of gold dust, equivalent to more than a million sterling.

Xerxes, the son of Darius I, and his successors seem to have maintained some control over the Indian provinces, which furnished contingents to their army. Reference is made in certain inscriptions of Xerxes to the suppression of rebellion in lands "where, before, the Daivas were worshipped; then, by Ahuramazda's will, of such temples of the Daivas I (the king) sapped the foundations". The Daiva-worshipping lands may have included the Indian satrapies. But the hold of the later Achaemenians on their eastern possessions gradually became weak and towards the middle of the fourth century B.C. the Indian borderland was parcelled out among various small States, the rulers of which were practically independent.

The hill country north of the Kābul river, drained by the Kunar and the Swāṭ, was occupied mainly by the Aśvakas, a people whose name is derived from the Sanskrit Āśva, Iranian Aspa (horse). Somewhere in this mountain region stood also the city of Nyaśa, alleged to have been founded by Greek colonists. The old territory of Gandhāra was divided into two parts by the Indus. To the west of the river lay the kingdom of Pūshkalāvati in the modern district of Peshāwār and to its east was the realm of Taxila in the present district of Rāwalpindī. Taxila was a prosperous kingdom governed by good laws. Its capital was a noble city which occupied the site of the present Bhir Mound near Saraikala, twenty miles north-west of Rāwalpindī. It lay on the high road from Central Asia to the interior of India, and the fame of its market-place spread to the distant corners of the civilised world. Great as an emporium of commerce, the city was greater still as a centre of learning. Crowds of eager scholars flocked to it for instruction in the three Vedas and the eighteen branches of knowledge. Tradition affirms that the Great Epic, the Mahābhārata was first recited in this city.
The mountain territory just above the Taxila country was occupied by the kingdoms of Urašā (Hazarā district) and Abhisāra (Punch and Naoshera). To the south-east of Taxila lay the twin kingdoms of the Pūras or Pauravas, a people already famous in the Vedic hymns. The territory of the prince mentioned by Greek historians as the elder Puros, was situated between the Jhelum and the Chenāb, while the principality of his nephew, the younger Puros, stretched from the Chenāb to the Rāvi. On the confines of the country of the Pauravas lay the territories of the Glaukanikoi and Kathuoi and the principality of Saubhūti. The southern part of the Jhang district with the contiguous portion of the lower valley of the Rāvi was occupied by the Śīties and the Mūlvanas, with whom were associated the Kāshadrakas, while lower down the Chenāb lived the Ambāshythus. These tribes were autonomous and some of them are expressly mentioned as having a democratic government. Upper Sind was divided among a number of potentates of whom the most important was Mousukanos, whose capital probably lay at or near Alor. In the Indus delta stood the city of Pattala which, like Sparta, was governed by two kings and a Senate of Elders.

The distracted condition of the country invited invasion from without, and political changes in western Asia and the land of the Yavanas or the Greeks and Macedonians indicated the quarter from which it came. The door was opened to the invader by certain Indians whose hatred for their neighbours made them blind to the true interests of their country.

In 336 B.C., the throne of Macedon, a powerful military State in the land of the Yavanas in south-east Europe, was occupied by Alexander, a prince of remarkable energy and ability. In 333 and 331 B.C., Alexander inflicted two severe defeats on the great king of Persia, the last of the line of Darius and Xerxes, and occupied his realm. In 330 B.C., the Persian king died, leaving his conqueror the undisputed master of the Achaemenian empire. Three years later, in 327 B.C., Alexander crossed the Hindukush and resolved to recover the Indian satrapies that had once acknowledged the sway of his Persian predecessors. To secure his communications, he garrisoned a number of strongholds near modern Kābul and passed the winter of 327-326 B.C. in warfare with the fierce hill tribes of the Kunar and Swāt valleys. He stormed the fortresses of Massaga and Aornos and received the submission of the city of Nysa. His generals took the city of Pushkalavati. Massaga probably lay to the north of the Malakand Pass. Aornos has recently been identified with the height of Unā between the Swāt
and the Indus, while Nysa has been located on the lower spurs of the three-peaked Koh-i-Mor between the Kumar and Swāt valleys. Pushkalāvati is represented by the modern Charanadda near the junction of the Swāt and Kābul rivers, about seventeen miles north-east of Peshawār.

The conqueror next forced his way through dense jungles to Ohind and crossed the Indus by a bridge of boats (326 B.C.). In his operations, he received valuable help from Ambhi, king of Taxila, who now received the invader in his own capital with obsequious pomp. After a brief respite, Alexander resumed his march and pushed on to the Hydaspes (Vitastā, modern Jhelum). According to one theory, he followed the line of the modern Grand Trunk Road to the town of Jhelum. According to another view, he descended through the pass of Nandana to the right bank of the Hydaspes close to the village of Haranpur. On his arrival, he found a huge army drawn up on the other bank of the river to oppose his further progress. The formidable host was led by the elder Paurava king, a man of gigantic and powerful build, who was mortified at the pusillanimous conduct of his Taxilian neighbour, and resolved to defend his hearth and home against the audacious invader from the west. Alexander found it impossible to cross the stream, which was then in full flood, in the face of a mighty array of warriors and elephants. He diverted the attention of his enemy by demonstrations in different directions and then stole a passage at a sharp bend of the river about seventeen miles above his camp, under cover of a thickly wooded promontory and an island in mid-stream covered with jungle. The place of crossing is located by some above the town of Jhelum and by others at Jakalpur. A small force that had hurried to dispute the passage of the invaders was easily routed, and Alexander advanced quickly to give battle to the Indian king. The Paurava, too, marched forth to meet his adversary and drew up his army in battle array. He had with him 30,000 foot, 4,000 horses, 300 chariots, and 200 elephants. He arranged his elephants in front of the infantry and placed the cavalry on the wings with chariots in front of them. The vast force looked like a city with elephants as bastions and men-at-arms as the circumvallating wall. The field of battle cannot be definitely located. Scholars who place Alexander’s camp at Jhelum think that the hostile forces met in the Karri plain.

The Indian king made the mistake of allowing the Macedonians to take the offensive with their superior cavalry. The latter began by an attack on the Indian left wing. The Indian charioteer and
horseman could not withstand the onslaught of the mounted archers in the Macedonian ranks, and the Indian infantry were prevented by the slippery slush under foot from making an effective use of their formidable bows. The elephants for a time spread havoc in the enemy’s ranks, but many of the monsters were maddened by wounds and rushed on friends and foes alike. The Paurava force suffered most and was soon scattered by the veterans of Alexander. The Indian king, however, did not flee, but went on fighting on a mighty elephant until he received a severe wound. He was then brought to the presence of the conqueror, who asked him how he would like to be treated. “Act like a king,” answered the valiant Paurava. The Macedonian treated his gallant adversary generously and gave him back his kingdom. It was no part of Alexander’s policy to alienate the sympathy of powerful local princes if it could be helped, and he understood the value of brave and chivalrous allies in a newly-acquired territory, far away from the seat of empire, who could be trusted to uphold the authority of the supreme ruler and serve as a check on one another.

The invader next overran the petty principalities and tribal territories in the vicinity of the realm of the great Paurava. He crossed the Akesines (Chenāb) and the Hydronetes (Rāvī), stormed Sāngaha, the stronghold of the Kathai, probably situated in the Guadaspur district, and moved on to the Hyphasis (Beas). He wished to press forward to the Ganges valley, but his war-worn troops would not allow him to go farther. The king erected twelve towering altars to mark the utmost limit of his march, and then with a heavy heart retraced his steps to the Jhelum. He sent part of his troops down the river in a flotilla of boats under the command of Nearechos. The rest fought their way through the territory of free and warlike tribes inhabiting the lower valley of the Rāvī and the Chenāb. Thousands of people, including women and children, perished in the course of the struggle, and the inhabitants of one city, preferring death to dishonour, threw themselves into the flame in the manner of the Rājpūts who practised Jauhar in later times.

The conqueror himself received a dangerous wound while storming one of the citadels of the powerful tribe of the Māhuvas. The subdued nations made presents of chariots, bucklers, gems, draperies, lions, tigers, etc. Alexander next reduced the principalities of Sind and sailed to the open sea (325 B.C.). A portion of the Macedonian host had already been sent home through Afghanistan. Another division, led by the king himself, trudged through the deserts of Baluchistān and, after terrible sufferings, reached Babylon. The
rest of the troops returned by sea to the north of the Tigris under the command of Nearchus. Alexander did not long survive his return to Babylon, where he died in 323 B.C.

Administrative arrangements made by Alexander

The Macedonian king had no desire to renounce his new conquests. He wished to incorporate them permanently into his extensive empire. He formed the districts to the west of the Hydaspes into regular satrapies under Persian or Macedonian governors who were assisted, in some cases, by Indian chiefs like Sukhagupta of Aornos and Āmbli of Taxila. Beyond the river he created a system of protected States under vassal kings, among whom the great Pana jav and the king of Abhisāra were the most eminent. Macedonian garrisons were stationed in Pushkalāvati, Taxila, and other important strategic centres. New cities were built, mostly on the great rivers, to establish the authority of the conqueror firmly in the acquired territories and stimulate trade and navigation in the land of the Five Rivers.

Effect of the Persian and Macedonian Invasions

The Macedonian prefectures and garrisons were soon swept away by Chandragupta Maurya, and within a few years all vestige of foreign domination disappeared from the Punjab and Sind. But the invasions of Darius and Alexander had not been in vain. The Persian conquest had unveiled India probably for the first time to the Western world and established contact between this country and the peoples of the Levant. Indian spearmen and archers fought under the Persian banner on European soil in the fifth century B.C. and quickened the interest of the peoples of Hellas in this land of strange folks and surpassing wealth. Persian and Greek officials found employment in the Indus provinces and made their presence felt in various ways. The introduction of new scripts—Aramaic, Kharōṣṭhī, and the alphabet styled Yavanālī by Panini, is probably to be traced to this source. Whether some important features of the architecture of the Maurya period and certain phrases used in the Aśokan edicts are also to be attributed to their enterprise, is a highly debatable question. The hold of the great king on the Indian frontier slackened considerably in the fourth century B.C. The arduous campaigns of Alexander restored the fallen fabric of imperialism and laid the foundation of a closer contact between India and the Hellenic
world. The Macedonian empire in the Indus valley no doubt perished within a short time. But the Macedonian had welded the political atoms into one unit and thus paved the way for the more permanent union under the Mauryas. The voyages and expeditions planned by Alexander widened the geographical horizon of his contemporaries, and opened up new lines of communication and new routes for trade and maritime enterprise. The colonies that the conqueror planted in the Indian borderland do not appear to have been altogether wiped out by the Mauryas. Yavana officials continued to serve the great king of Magadha as they had served the great king of Ecbatana and Persepolis, and Yavana adventurers carved out independent kingdoms in the north-west when the sun of Magadha set. If Greeks in later ages learnt lessons in philosophy and religion from Indian Buddhists and Bhāgavatas, the Indians on their part imitated the Greek coinage, honoured Greek astronomers and appreciated Hellenistic art. This was due ultimately to the measures that Alexander had adopted "to set little bits of Hellas down" in the wilds of Western and Central Asia and on the banks of the Indus and the Akesines.
CHAPTER VI

CIVILISATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF MAGADHAN ASCENDANCY

Sources

For the history of the Indian civilisation during the early period of Magadhan hegemony we have to turn to various sources. No single set of documents gives a picture of the whole of India. For an authentic account of the Indus valley and the north-western borderland, we have to depend mainly on Greek evidence. For the Madhya-deśa or the upper Ganges valley, and particularly its western part, the land of the Kurus and the Pañchālas which was the cradle and centre of Brahmansim, we have to look to the Brāhmaical Śūtras and the early epic. The epic, no doubt, looks back to the heroic age which is coeval with the later Vedic period, but the extant poems have a wider geographical outlook than the later Vedic texts. It is, however, significant that neither epic mentions the city of Pātaliputra. Girivraja, Rājayuha, or Vasumati is mentioned as the capital of Magadhā. Both the epics are familiar with the prowess of the king of Magadhā, and the longer poem presupposes a Magadhan empire. The lesser epic mentions a powerful Kosalan realm contemporaneous with Vaiśālika Nṛjjas (rulers of Vaiśāli). References to Buddhism occur in both but are extremely rare. Greeks and Sakas are familiar but have no essential connection with the original tale. Barring the bulk of the didactic books and the latest episodes and cantos, the evidence of the epic may with confidence be utilised for our period. For north-east India the most useful information is to be found in the early Pāli canon and the sacred books of the Jainas. Stray notices of the peoples of Southern India are found in some of these works, but detailed information is lacking and the picture is dim. South India possesses a splendid literature of its own, but the date of the extant works is comparatively late and can hardly be utilised for the pre-Mauryan period.
Administration

Neither in the east nor in the west was monarchy the only form of government in the beginning of our period or towards its close. There were, no doubt, powerful rājās in South Bihār and Oudh, as well as in Mālwa and the Punjab, who were fighting to extend their authority at the expense of their neighbours and build up true imperial States. But they had to reckon with free and warlike tribes, governed by their own elders and owning the authority of no monarch. Kingship, again, was not everywhere of the same type. Some of the kingdoms in eastern India were true Śūrājyus, governed by rulers who could justly call themselves Ekarī or sole monarch. In the Indus delta, on the other hand, we have kings who commanded in war but left the work of government to a Senate of Elders. The number of kings was two, as in Sparta, an early instance of demokrati or democracy, so famous in Indian history and tradition. While Śūdras acquired supreme power in the lower Ganges valley, the state of things in the lower valley of the Indus was different, and great political power was exercised by the Brāhmanas. The rājā of the Mīndhyā-śālā, judging by the testimony of the epic, was no autocrat. He carried on the affairs of his realm with the assistance of the Sabhā, usually consisting of princes of the blood and military chiefs. The circle of advisers was sometimes enlarged by the admission of priests and officials or representatives of lower orders like the Śāstras. Among certain tribes, all clansmen had a right to attend the Sabhā, which was thus a popular assembly and not a council of magnates. Even in kingdoms where the popular assembly is not much in evidence, the monarch had to defer to the wishes of Brāhmanas, elders of corporations and the conmunality. He had to do what was pleasing to the people. For the efficient discharge of his duties he had to lean on the Veda and the Śāstras. Tyrannical princes were not infrequently expelled from the throne. Even in Magadha, the citadel of imperialism, the king consulted the village headmen. A dynasty was driven out by the citizens because of its delinquencies.

Monarchies were often hereditary and the reigning prince at times nominated his successor. But cases of election are referred to by all our authorities. Choice was sometimes limited to members of the royal family, but on occasions selections were made from outside. A Greek writer tells us that in a certain district of the Punjab the handsomest man was chosen as king. Kingship was no longer a monopoly of the Kshatriya caste, and one of the most powerful dynasties of the age was of Śūdra extraction.
With the growth of kingdoms and the incorporation of new territory, the office of the viceroy and provincial governor became more and more important. In the eastern and north-western monarchies it was often held by a prince of the blood, a practice that was followed in later times by the Mauryas and some of the Timurids. The epic does not seem to favour the policy of permanent annexation of foreign territory. Conquered provinces were usually restored to the old ruling family, but when appointments to rulership were made from the centre, the choice fell not on a prince of the blood but on military chiefs at the imperial court. These chiefs were not always Kshatriyas. The Kuru, for example, appointed a Brāhmaṇa to rule over a portion of the Pañchipura territory that they had conquered, and a Kuru king gave the government of Aṅgā to a warrior who was believed to be the son of a Sūta. In Kosala Brāhmaṇas received districts with power over them as if they were kings.

Among State functionaries, the Purohita was of special importance in Kāsi-Kosala, as we learn from the Rāmāyaṇa and several Jātakas. A Sūtra work tells us that a single person was at one time the Purohita of the three kingdoms of Kāsi, Kosala, and Videha. The eka-Purohita was the priestly counterpart of the warrior eka-rāj. In the Kuru-Pañchipura and Matsya countries, on the other hand, the Purohita was over-shadowed by the Senāpati, whose office was scarcely inferior to that of the king himself. The Senāpati was often a prince of the blood or a person of royal rank, and, like the king, had to do judicial work in certain parts of the country in addition to his military duties.

The most important feature of the administrative development of the period under review was the rise of a class of high officials styled mahāmātras, who are unknown to the Vedic texts and gradually tend to disappear after the Maurya and Śālavāhana periods. They were charged with duties of a varied character. Some looked after general affairs (sārvarthaka). Others administered justice (vyāvahārika). A third body had charge of the army (senā-nāyaka). Others were entrusted with the work of cadastral survey (rajyugrāhaka) or measurement of the king's share of the produce (dronamāpaka).

In the administration of justice, the king continued to play an important part. It was his duty to give decisions in accordance with the special laws of the districts, castes, and families. But much of the judicial work was now entrusted to the Vyāvahārikas or judges. The process of law in certain localities was, according to Buddhist tradition, a complicated affair. There were various
tribunals, set one above the other, from the court of the Vinīṣkaḥyaa mahāmātra to that of the rājan. Judgments were pronounced according to the Book of Customs. But the work which records the tradition is of late date, and it is difficult to say whether the procedure outlined in it was the special characteristic of a particular locality governed by a republic, or had a wider application. In criminal law the use of Ordeals is recognised.

Scarcely less important than the administration of justice was the protection of the people from armed foes. To do this duty the rulers had to maintain big armies. Important changes were effected in military organisation by the introduction of war-elephants as a regular feature of the fighting forces, and the creation of the body of mahāmātras to take charge of the department of war. Armies of the period usually consisted of four elements: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. To these the later epic adds the navy, labourers, spies and local guides. Greek writers refer to expert sailors in the Indus delta whom the Macedonians employed to steer their vessels down to the ocean when their own attempts at navigation failed. It is not improbable that rulers of the deltaic regions maintained small fleets even before the organisation of a big naval department by the founder of the Maurya dynasty.

About the equipment of Indian troops in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. we have fortunately a few details recorded by Greek observers. The Indian infantry, clad in cotton garments, usually carried long bows and iron-tipped arrows made of cane. Some were armed with spears. They also carried a two-handed sword and a buckler of undressed ox-hide. The cavalry had usually the same equipment as the infantry. The chariots were drawn by horses or wild asses and carried six men apiece, of whom two were bowmen, two were shield-bearers, and two were charioteers. Epic poets refer to the division of the army into akṣauḥpihīs, vihitīs, etc., mention different kinds of battle-array (vyāha), and allude to various projectiles including the satagahā or hundred-killer. Jain writers refer to the use made by Ajāśatru of the mahāsālakara and rathāmusala. The first seems to have been some engine of war of the nature of a catapult which threw big stones. The second was a chariot to which a mace was attached and which, running about, effected great execution.

Greek writers bear testimony to the fact that in the art of war Indians were far superior to the other peoples of Asia. Their failure to offer a successful resistance to foreign invaders was often due to an inferiority in cavalry. Indian commanders in ancient times pinned their faith more upon elephants than upon horses.
The maintenance of a splendid court, a big army and a large body of civil officials required money. Weak rulers had sometimes to appease their conquerors by the payment of heavy tribute. Some of the kings loved to hoard treasure to the amount of several millions. The collection of revenue was, therefore, all-important to the State, and sometimes strange expedients were resorted to by rulers to fill their treasuries. The oldest source of revenue was the bāli, a contribution mentioned as early as the Vedic hymns. 

Balikrit, payer of contribution, was a common epithet for the ordinary freeman in the Vedic period. The word śulka is found by some scholars in a dubious passage of the Atharva Veda. The use of the revenue term bhāga is implied by the name Bhāga-dugha applied to a high State official in the Brāhmaṇa texts. Bhāga, the king's share of reaped corn, became, in course of time, the most important source of State revenue, and skandabhāgin, "a sharer of the sixth part", a standing epithet of the king. The bhāga was measured out either by the village authorities or by royal officials at the barn-doors, or by survey of the crops. Among the most important revenue officials was the Gritma-bhojaka or village head-man. The office was sometimes held by royal ministers. Bali gradually acquired the sense of an oppressive impost, and the collectors of baii were apparently classed with man-eating demons. Among other royal dues, mention may be made of "milk-money," payable by the people when an heir was born to the king, and taxes and octroi duties paid by merchants. The ruler also imposed at times forced labour and claimed the right to dispose of forest land and unowned property.

About the kingless States or republics our information is mainly derived from Buddhist and Greek sources, though some details are given by the Sanskrit epics and works on polity as well as the sacred literature of the Jainas. Coins and inscriptions are not of much help for our period. The word for a republic was Saṅgha or Gana, but the terms were also applied to religious fraternities and economic corporations. Like monarchies, the republics, too, were not all of the same type. Some were tribal oligarchies, others are expressly mentioned as having a democratic constitution. Some of these States embraced several clans, others were limited to single Kumar or even cities. Some were sovereign States owning no allegiance to any external authority. Others did homage to some neighbouring potentate, though enjoying a considerable degree of local autonomy. There were, however, certain features common to all. Each had its parishad or assembly which met in the samsthāgāra or mote-hall where young and old alike were
present. According to a high authority, the method of procedure generally adopted in the tribal meetings was not by voting on a motion. The point at issue was either carried unanimously or referred for arbitration to a committee of referees. Besides the central assembly at the capital, there were local parishadis in all the more important places in the State. The citizens honoured and esteemed the Mahallakas or elders and held it a point of duty to hearken to their words. Executive government was in the hands of a single chief or a number of chiefs styled Rāja, Gana rājan or Saṅghamukhya, corresponding to the Roman consul or Greek archon. The Rājas or Saṅghamukhyas were either identical with the Mahallakas or selected from them. The title Rājan was sometimes loosely applied to all the chief men of the State, for we hear of 7,707 Rājas among the Lichchhavis, though one document puts the figure at 500 and a Jaina text seems to limit the title to only nine. A Buddhist commentary seems to suggest that the Rājas ruled by turns. The number of elderly citizens eligible for the chief executive office probably fluctuated from time to time.

Besides the Rājan there were other functionaries styled Upaśriya (vice-consul), Śrāvastī (general), Bhāgavārīka (treasurer), etc. Tradition points to the existence of a succession of officials for the administration of criminal law in the Vrijian State—the Vinischaraya mahāmātra (deciding magistrates), Vyākharika (lawyer-judge), Sūtradhara (canonist), Ashtakalika (representative of the eight clans), Śrāvastī (general), Upāraja (vice-consul), and Rājan (consul). But the evidence is late and we do not know how far the procedure was actually followed in our period.

Social Life

With the Aryan expansion over practically the whole of India, came a wide diversity of social conditions. Customs not approved in the Gangetic Doab were admitted as good usage in the north beyond the river Sarasvatī or the south beyond the Narmadā. Women, for example, enjoyed in southern India certain privileges denied to their mid-Indian sisters. The wife in the south was allowed to eat in the company of her husband, and restrictions on the marriage of cognates were not so strict in the south as in the north. Widow marriage and Levirate had not fallen into disuse even in the Ganges valley, and burning of widows was not sanctioned by the orthodox lawgivers. But the practice of Sati could not have been unknown in the north-west. In the epic we hear of the self-immolation of a princess born in the Madra
country in the Punjab, and Greek writers refer to the widow of an Indian commander who “departed to the pyre crowned with fillets by her women and decked out splendidly as for a wedding”.

A few polyandrous marriages are alluded to in the epic, but these were not sanctioned by general usage and must have been of very rare occurrence.

The picture of the woman in the Greek accounts, Buddhist discourses or epic tales does not always agree with that portrayed in the formal codes of law. The women of the Dharma-Sūtras were helpless beings who were always dependent on their male relations and were classed with properties of minors or sealed deposits. The women known to Alexander’s contemporaries took the arms of their fallen relatives and fought side by side with the men against the enemy of their country. The epic matron exhorted her indolent son to “flare up like a torch, though it be but for a moment, but smother not like a fire of chaff just to prolong life”. Education was not denied to women, some of whom are described as being widely known for their knowledge, learning, and dialectic skill. Buddhist texts refer to princesses who composed poems that are preserved in the Therī-gāthā or the Psalms of the Sisters. In several epic stories we find references to svagamvara or choice of a husband by the bride herself, and in a famous episode of the Mahābhārata a king asked his daughter to choose a husband and said that he would give her the man of her choice. Seclusion of women was practised in certain families, but many of the epic tales bear witness to a freer life where women laid aside their veils and came out of the seclusion of their houses. This was specially the case on the occasion of a great national festival or sorrow. “Women should not be slain,” says one great epic poet. “A wife is half the man,” says another, and adds that

“Where'er we suffer pain and grief
Like mothers kind they bring relief.”

The common people mostly lived in villages in humble dwellings made of thatch which were sometimes mud-plastered for fear of fire. Kings resided in fortified towns (pur) or cities (nagara) provided with lofty walls, strong ramparts, watch-towers and gates. These cities contained pleasure parks, streets lighted with torches and watered, assembly halls, dancing halls, gambling houses, courts of justice, booths for traders and work-places of artisans. The number of big cities was not large. Early Buddhist texts refer to six such places—Champā (near Bhagalpur), Rājagriha (in the
INDIA IN EARLY MAGADHAN EPOCH

Patna district), Śrāvasti (Saheb-Mahoth), Sāketa (Oudh), Kauśāmbī (near Allahābād), and Benares—as flourishing in the days of the Buddha. Taxila is omitted in this list, either because it had not yet risen to greatness or because it was far away in the north-west. The city of Pāṭaliputra was founded after the death of the sage of the Sākyas. One of the capital cities, that of a kingless State, is expressly mentioned as a "little wattle and daub town", "a branch township" surrounded by jungles.

The royal residence in the Brāhmanical Sūtras is a modest structure probably built of wood. Buddhist texts refer to a palace of stone, but it was in fairyland. They also mention buildings of seven storeys in height (saptabhūnotka prāśāda). It is suggested by a high authority that in early times the superstructure at least of all dwellings was either woodwork or brickwork. But certain texts refer to workers in stone who built houses with material from the ruins of a former village. The imperial palace described in the epic is a noble mansion made of stone and metal and provided with arches and roofs supported by a thousand pillars.

The inner court of the palace contained playgrounds with flowers and fountains where the women amused themselves. Little princesses had their dolls, pañchālika. They also played with a ball, kanduka, while the boys sported with a ball or hockey (rākti), which they rolled or tossed about. The usual recreations of women were singing, dancing and music. There was a dancing hall attached to almost every palace. Men, too, are represented by Greek authors as being very fond of singing and dancing. But the chief pastimes of knights were gambling, hunting, listening to tales of war, and tournaments in amphitheatres surrounded by platforms for spectators. Buddhist texts refer to acrobatic feats, combats of animals and a kind of primitive chess play.

The dress of the people of the Indus valley consisted of a tunic made of cotton and two other pieces of stuff, one thrown about their shoulders and the other twisted round their heads. Men wore ear-rings and dyed their beards. They used umbrellas and shoes. Women of the aristocratic class were decked with golden stars about their heads and a multitude of necklets and bangles set with precious gems. Girls of the same classes in the Gangetic region also wore necklaces besides waist-bands and anklets adorned with bells. They were gaudily attired in linen or yellow or red silk.

The early epic warrior did not feel much compunction in taking meat, but in the later epic the slaughter of animals in the manner of the Kshatriyas is regarded as cruel and ghoulish. The growing
feeling of pity for animate beings is reflected in the exhortation “don’t kill the guiltless cow”, and the practice of substituting images of animals made out of meal for real living creatures. The ordinary fare of the Indians of the north-west borderland, according to Greek observers, consisted of pulpy rice and seasoned meat. These were served up on a gold dish placed on a table. The drinking of wine was not widely prevalent except on the occasion of religious festivals. People in upper Sind had a kind of Lacedaemonian common meal where they ate in public. Their food consisted of what was taken in the chase.

Social distinctions were becoming rigid, though the epic philosophers declared that “There was no distinction of caste. The whole of this universe was divine, having emanated from Brähman. Created equally by the supreme spirit men had on account of their deeds been divided into various castes”. The Greek writers note at the end of this period that the custom of the country prohibited intermarriage between the castes. Custom also prohibited anyone from exercising two trades, or from changing from one caste to another. The sophist only could come from any caste, Brähmanical lawgivers developed the theory of defilement and laid a ban on certain kinds of food as being intrinsically unfit for consumption by the twice-born or upper castes. Others, when defiled by the touch of certain classes of men and women, were regarded as impure. The theory of mixed castes is produced so as to explain the presence of new communities like the Yavanas. But such a theory tacitly admits that intermarriage between the castes did take place, and was legally recognised, though it was looked upon with disfavour by some of the law-givers. Legal maxims were counsels of perfection which were not always followed in practice. Greek historians refer to the matrimonial alliance between an Indian king and a Greek potentate. They also draw attention to the political activities and militancy of the Brähmanas in the lower Indus valley, and allude to the rise of a dynasty of barber origin in the valley of the Ganges. Purânic writers refer to marriages of Kshatriya kings with Śudra women and the assumption of royal authority by the Śudras. Cases of intermarriage between castes and change of caste and occupation are also found in the epic. An epic king marries a Brähmana girl. A Kshatriya prince is promoted to the rank of a Brähmana. A Brähmana warrior leads the Kuru host against the Pāṇḍus and chieftains of the Pañchala country. A Kshatriya prince does not hesitate to embrace a Nāshāda whom he calls his friend, and takes food from a Śavara woman who has already served several sages.
Buddhist writers acknowledge the existence of the four varnas and numerous degraded tribes and low trades (kinañjiti and kinaśilpa) besides aboriginal peoples, outcasts and slaves. They refer to pride of birth and taboos on intermarriage and inter-dining, especially with slave girls and outcasts. But they give the palm to the Kshatriya and, like some epic poets, usually regard character, and not birth or ceremonial purity, as the true test of caste. Like the epic poets again, they refer to a certain elasticity of caste rules in the matter of connubium, commensality and change of calling. Brāhmaṇas took wives from royal houses. Princes, priests and peddlars ate together and intermarried. Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas took to trade and menial work. Weavers became archers. It is clear that social divisions and economic occupations did not exactly coincide, though the texts testify to a natural predilection of artisans and traders for the ancestral calling.

**Economic Condition**

As already stated, the vast majority of the people seem to have preferred country life to residence in “towns covered with dust”. The rural population consisted mainly of agriculturists and ranchmen, but we have also references to “craft villages” of carpenters, smiths and potters. Towns mainly attracted the ruling and commercial classes.

The simple rites of the Grihya Śūtras, such as “the furrow sacrifice” and “the threshing-floor sacrifice”, testify to the importance of the agricultural population. The farmers lived in villages, the number of which was very large in every kingdom. Villages were largely autonomous, though under the suzerainty of the king who received certain dues that have already been specified above and sometimes claimed the right of appointing the headman or officials who collected the village dues for him. The king’s right to agricultural land was probably limited to a share of its produce. The king could remit the tithe due to the Government or make it over to anyone he wished to favour. But even royal officials scrupulously avoided encroachment upon the rights of the peasant householders (grihapati).

Nearchos refers to the cultivation of lands in the north-west by a whole kinship. Each individual took what he needed out of the produce and the remnant was destroyed to discourage sloth. In the Ganges valley, the arable land of the village (grāma-ksetra) was split up into plots held by heads of houses who managed their own holdings but co-operated for purposes of fencing
and irrigation under the guidance of the headman (Bhojaka, Orümika). The holdings were usually small, but large estates farmed by Brähmanaśas were known though they were very rare. The bigger holdings were to a great extent managed with the assistance of hired labour. Slaves were not kept in large numbers and were ordinarily employed as domestic servants.

The householders who had shares of the village field and constituted the village community have been described as peasant proprietors, but it is not clear whether they had any proprietary rights as against the community or could transfer their shares to outsiders. Sale or gift of land was not unknown in Oudh or South Bihār, but the recorded cases generally refer to big estates owned by priests or nobles, and not to the small holdings of the ordinary members of the village community.

The village peasants were a generally contented lot, and both men and women had the civic spirit to work for the common good. The result of co-operation was seen in the construction of reservoirs and the laying out of irrigation canals. In spite of their best endeavours, however, villagers could not escape famine for all time. The calamity, however, was not of frequent occurrence and, when it did come, its area was restricted.

The rural population included, besides the village agriculturists, a considerable body of ranchmen who tended cattle. They avoided towns and villages and lived in cattle-ranches styled ghosha. Some of the cowboys roamed about with their flocks in forests and on the mountains. The herdsman was frequently employed to guard the royal cattle and to take the flocks of the village folk to the common grazing field beyond the cultivated lands.

Handicraftsmen constituted a large part of the population both in rural and urban areas. The number of callings was large and included workers in stone and ivory and painters of frescoes. In some of the industries a considerable degree of specialisation was reached. They were also, to a large extent, localised and limited to particular families, for there was a general tendency among artisans for the son to follow the paternal calling. Eighteen of the more important crafts were organised into guilds (Śreni, Pāga), each of which was presided over by a Pramukha (foreman), Jyeṣṭhāka (elder) or Śreṣṭhin (chief). We sometimes hear of a Mahāśreṣṭhin or supreme chief, and Anuśreṣṭhin or deputy chief. Above all the guild officials stood the Bhāndāgarika who combined the post of State Treasurer with supreme headship over all the Śrenīs.

It is doubtful if the full guild organisation had spread to sea- men and traders. Some of them had a Jyeṣṭhāka (elder) or a
Sārthavāha (caravan-leader) and worked in union under a Sreshthin. But subordination to the leader or elder was not always in evidence, and merchants often plied their trade alone.

The range of activities of sailors and merchants in the period represented by the Pāli texts whose exact date is unknown was wide. We hear of sea-voyages and of trading journeys to the coast of Burma and the Malay world (Suvarga-bhāma), Ceylon (Tānasaparī) and even to Babylon (Bauera). But navigators for the most part trafficked up and down the great rivers, especially the Indus, the Ganges and its tributaries. The principal sea-ports were Bhriguakahecha (Broach), Sūpāraka (Sopara, north of Bombay) and perhaps Tāmralipti (Tamluk in West Bengal). Of the riparian ports, Sāhajāti (in Central India), Kauśambi on the Jumna, Benares, Chaumā (near Bhagalpur), and latterly Pātaliputra on the Ganges and Pattala on the Indus deserve special mention. The great inland routes mostly radiated from Benares and Śrīvasti. One great highway connected the chief industrial and commercial centres of the Ganges valley with Central and Western Asia by way of the prosperous city of Taxila. Another stretched from Rājagriha in South Bihār by way of Śrīvasti in Oudh to the banks of the Godāvari. Still another, and a far more difficult, route lay across the desert of Rājputāna to the ports of Sauvira in the lower Indus valley and of the Upper Deccan near the mouth of the Narmada. Adventurous merchants were guided along this route with difficulty by land-pilots who kept to the right track by observing the stars.

The chief articles of trade were silk, muslin, embroidery, ivory, jewellery and gold. The system of barter had not died out altogether, but the use of coins as the medium of exchange was becoming general. The standard unit of value was the copper Kārshāpana, weighing a little more than 146 grains. Silver coins were also in circulation. King Āmbhi of Taxila presented Alexander with two hundred talents of coined silver. The weight of a silver Kārshāpana, also called Purīna or Dharmāṇa, was a little more than 58 grains, which is one-tenth of that of the Nīshka or Sāhampāna known to the Vedic texts. The weight and relative value of coins seem to have varied in different localities.

Religion

From the point of view of religion, the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy were among the most eventful in Indian history. Great changes took place within the fold of Brāhmaṇism. Old
ideas changed. New ones sprang into vigorous life. Popular cults and beliefs obtained recognition at the hands of the upper classes, and humanitarian and theistic movements gathered force and momentum as popular faith in animal sacrifice and barren ritual tended to diminish with the growth of free speculation presaged in the Upanishads. Outside the Brāhmaṇical Holy Land, spiritual leadership passed from the hands of priestly theologians and sacrificers to ascetics and wanderers (Śramaṇa, Pāriṇājaka) who laid the utmost stress on non-injury to living beings and the cessation of craving for the things of the world.

Greek references to the worship of Zeus Ombrios (Zeus of the rain-storms) probably suggest that the Vedic rain-gods like Indra and Parjanya were still honoured in North-West India. It is to be noted that the deities in question figure prominently in the ritual of the Grihya Sūtras. Parjanya finds mention also in the Buddhist Suttantas, which probably describe conditions in the north-east, but the place of Indra was there occupied by Śakra who is co-partner with Brahmā in the lordship over the gods. Brāhmaṇical texts refer to the growing popularity of Vaiśravaṇa, Kumāra (Kārttikeya), and the goddesses Umā-Haimavati and Vaśini who are regarded as different aspects of Durgā, the mother-goddess, consort of Śiva. Side by side with these divinities appear the spirits dwelling in waters, herbs, trees, etc. The mention of Vaiśravaṇa points to the influence of the Yāksa cult, the popularity of which is attested both by epic and Buddhist evidence. The cult of trees and of water deities like the Ganges is noted by Curtius and Strabo, and the idea of the Kalpa-yāksa, the tree which will give a man all he wants, occurs prominently in literature, including that of the Jainas.

Most of the deities are now thoroughly anthropomorphised and become quite human in dress, talk and action. With the growth of anthropomorphism came the increased use of images and the construction of temples for daily service. Icons were known to the ancient people of the lower Indus valley, and stray allusions to images have been traced in some Vedic texts. But the first undoubted historical reference to image-worship by an Aryan tribe occurs in a passage of Curtius, who states that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the Paurava army as it advanced against Alexander. Patanjali refers to the exhibition and sale of images of Śiva, Skanda, and Viśūkhā by the Mauryas who rose to power at the end of our period. Temples of a primitive kind are mentioned already in the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa, but these were not meant for
iconic worship. In the epic, however, we have clear references to temples sacred to deities.

Blood sacrifices were sometimes offered to some of the gods, but all our authorities bear testimony to a new feeling of pity for living beings. The Mahābhārata refers to the rescue by Pāndu princes, led by Krishna, of hundreds of kings who were kept for sacrifice in the fortress of Girivraja “as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion”. The Grihya Sūtras prescribe rules for the substitution of images of meal at a sacrifice for real living creatures. Greek and Latin observers note that Brahmans do not eat the flesh of animals which help man in his labours. The remark undoubtedly confirms the Indian evidence regarding the growing feeling of reverence for the cow. The doctrine of Akināśa or non-injury was specially inculcated by the ascetics and wanderers who had great influence over the people especially in Eastern India. An interesting glimpse of the ascetics of Taxila is afforded by the account of Onesikritos who accompanied Alexander to that city in 326 B.C.

Among the most important religious concepts of the period, a prominent place should be assigned to the doctrines of Sāṁśītra and Karma, i.e. belief in repeated transmigration and the Law of the Deed. The whole world is conceived as a “perpetual process of creation, destruction and re-birth filling eternity with an everlasting rhythm”, and the entire scheme is placed under the Law of Karma which secures that every individual shall reap the fruit of deeds performed in antecedent existences. “As a calf could recognise its mother among a thousand kine, so the deeds of the past would not fail to find out the doer.” The operation of the Law might, however, be modified by the grace (prasāda) of the Lord, the Ordainer (Īśvara, Bhūti), combined with the loving faith (Bhakti) of the worshipper. This new doctrine is preached among others by the Vāsudevakas, later called Vaiśṇavas. They teach Bhakti in Vāsudeva, also known as Krishna Devakiputra, who is identified in an Arānyaka with Vishnu and Narāyana. We have already seen that the Chhāndogya Upanishad represents him as the disciple of a solar priest who declared righteous conduct to be as efficacious as fees given to a sacrificing priest. The epic refers to him as a prince of the Satvata or Vṛṣṇi clan of the Vādava tribe of Mathurā who put a stop to human sacrifice in Magadha and avenged insults to womanhood in the Kuru country. He is further represented as preaching the doctrines of nishkāma Karma (deed done without seeking any reward) and loving faith (Bhakti) in a God of Grace (prasāda). The religious and philosophical
views of his followers are expounded in the *Bhagavad Gītā* which forms part of the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata*. *Bhaktas* of Vāsudeva were known to Pāṇini, and are probably to be identified with the worshippers of the Indian Herakles whose cult was specially popular with the Sūrasenas of Mathurā in the fourth century B.C.

Rival sects also make their appearance, the most notable being the devotees of Śiva, later called the Śiva-Bhāgavatas, Māheśvaras or Pāśupatas. In one of the later Upanishads—the Śvetāsvatara—Śiva is the lord (Īśa or Iśāna) of the universe—the *Bhagavat* or the Blessed One, the object of devotion to the faithful. By devoting oneself to him, ignorance is dispelled, the nooses of death are snapped and eternal peace is attained.

The new theistic sects, though preserving their distinct individuality, did not break away altogether from Brāhmaṇism, and attempts at a synthesis were made in the epics and later literature whereby the gods of the Bhāgavatas and the Pāśupatas or Śiva-Bhāgavatas were recognised as emanations of the supreme divinity of Brāhmaṇism. This leads to the enunciation of the doctrine of *Trimūrti* which, in its mature form, belongs to a later age.

Eastern India saw the rise of a class of wandering teachers who, though believing in the doctrine of transmigration and *Karma*, rejected the authority of the Vedas and of Vedic priests, denounced the blood sacrifices that constituted so large a part of the Brāhmaṇic ritual, and even denied the existence of God and consequently the efficacy of divine grace. Right conduct, they declared, was the way of getting out of the meshes of *Karma* and *Sāṃśīra*, and this right conduct included, among other things, the practice of *Ahimsā* or non-injury to living beings.

It is a notable fact that the greatest of the wandering teachers were, like the lord of the *Bhāgavatas*, scions of free Kshatriya clans hailing from the territory that lies on the fringe of the Brāhmaṇical Holy Land. One of them, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, belonged to the Jñātirika clan of Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagrāma, a suburb of Vaiśāli in North Bihār. The other, Gautama Buddha, was a prince of the Sākya clan of Kapilavastu near Rummindei in the Nepāl Tarai.

**Mahāvīra and Jainism**

The parents of Mahāvīra were Siddhārtha, a Jñātirika chief of Kuṇḍapura, and Trisāli, a Kshatriya lady related to the ruling families of Vaiśāli and Magadhā. The early life of Mahāvīra is veiled in obscurity. According to the tradition of the Śvetāmbara
(white-robed) Jainas, he married a princess named Yaśodā. He lived for some time the life of a pious householder, but forsook the world at the age of thirty. He roamed as a naked ascetic in several countries of eastern India and practised severe penance for twelve years. For half the period he lived with a mendicant friar named Gosāla who subsequently left him and became the leader of the Aśāvaka sect. In the thirteenth year of his penance, Mahāvīra repaired to the northern bank of the river Rijupālīka outside Jīnabhikagrama, a little-known locality in eastern India, and attained the highest spiritual knowledge, called Kṛṣṇa-jñāna. He was now a Kṛṣṇa (omniscient), a Jñata (conqueror) and Mahāvīra (the great hero). He became the head of a sect called Nirgranthas ("free from fetters"), known in later times as Jaina or followers of the Jina (conqueror). For thirty years he wandered about as a religious teacher and died at Pāśa in South Bihār at the age of seventy-two. The event is said to have happened 215 years before the Mauryas and 470 years before Vikrama. This is usually taken to refer to 528 B.C. But 468 B.C. is preferred by some modern scholars who rely on a tradition recorded by the Jain monk Hemachandra that the interval between Mahāvīra’s death and the accession of Chandragupta Maurya was 153, and not 215, years. The latter date does not accord with the explicit statement in some of the earliest Buddhist texts that Mahāvīra predeceased the Buddha. The earlier date is also beset with difficulties. In the first place, it is at variance with the testimony of Hemachandra, who places Mahāvīra’s Nirvāṇa only 153 years before Chandragupta Maurya. Again, some Jain texts place the Nirvāṇa 470 years before the birth of Vikrama and not his accession, and as this event, according to the Jainas, did not coincide with the foundation of the era of 58 B.C. attributed to Vikrama, the date 528 B.C. for Mahāvīra’s death can hardly be accepted as representing a unanimous tradition. Certain Jaina writers assume an interval of eighteen years between the birth of Vikrama and the foundation of the era attributed to him, and thereby seek to reconcile the Jain tradition about the date of Mahāvīra’s Nirvāṇa (58 + 18 + 470 = 546 B.C.) with the Ceylonese date of the Great Decease of the Buddha (544 B.C.). But the suggestion can hardly be said to rest on any reliable tradition. Merutūngas places the death of the last Jina or Tirathākara 470 years before the end of Śaka rule and the victory and not birth of the traditional Vikrama. The date 528 B.C. for the Nirvāṇa of the Jñāti teacher can to a certain extent be reconciled with the Cantonese date of the death of the Buddha (486 B.C.). But then we shall have to assume
that Mahāvīra died shortly after Buddha’s enlightenment, forty-five years before the Parinirvāṇa, when the latter could hardly have become a renowned religious teacher of long standing as the Buddhist canonical texts would lead us to believe. Certain Jaina Sūtras seem to suggest that Mahāvīra died about sixteen years after the accession of Ajātaśatru and the commencement of his wars with his hostile neighbours. This would place the Nirvāṇa of the Jaina teacher eight years after the Buddha’s death, as, according to the Ceylonese Chronicles, the Buddha died eight years after the enthronement of Ajātaśatru. The Nirvāṇa of the Tīrthaṅkara would, according to this view, fall in 478 B.C., if we accept the Cantonese reckoning (486 B.C.) as our basis, and in 536 B.C., if we prefer the Ceylonese epoch. The date 478 B.C. would almost coincide with that to which the testimony of Hemachandra leads us, and place the accession of Chandragupta Maurya in 323 B.C., which cannot be far from the truth. But the result in respect of Mahāvīra himself is at variance with the clear evidence of the Buddhist canonical texts which make the Buddha survive his Jñāṇatīra rival. The Jaina statement that their Tīrthaṅkara died some sixteen years after the accession of Kūnika (Ajātaśatru) can be reconciled with the Buddhist tradition about the death of the same teacher before the eighth year of Ajātaśatru if we assume that the Jainas, who refer to Kūnika as ruler of Champā, begin their reckoning from the accession of that prince to the viceregal throne of Champā, while the Buddhists make the accession of Ajātaśatru to the royal throne of Rājagriha the basis of their calculation.

The Jainas believe that Mahāvīra was not the founder of a new religious system, but the last of a long succession of twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras or “ford-makers across the stream of existence”. The twenty-third teacher, Pārśva, the immediate predecessor of Mahāvīra, seems to have been a historical figure. He was a prince of Benares, and he enjoined on his disciples the four great vows of non-injury, truthfulness, abstention from stealing and non-attachment. To these Mahāvīra added the vow of Brahmacharya or continence. He also emphasised the need of discarding all external things, including garments, if complete freedom from bonds is to be attained. By following the three-fold path of Right Belief, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct, souls will be released from transmigration and reach the pure and blissful abode (Siddha Śilā) which is the goal of Jaina aspiration. There is no place in Jainism for a supreme creative spirit. The doctrine of non-injury is given a wide extension by attributing souls not only to birds and beasts but also to plants, metals, water, etc.
INDIA IN EARLY MAGADHAN EPOCH

According to the tradition of the Śvetāmbara Jaines, the original doctrine taught by Mahāvīra was contained in fourteen old texts styled Pāras. Towards the close of the fourth century B.C., when a famine in South Bihār led to the exodus of an important section of the Jaines, headed by Bhadrabāhu, to the Mysore country, those that remained behind in Pataliputra convoked a council with a view to reviving the knowledge of the sacred texts which was passing into oblivion. The result was the compilation of the twelve Aūgus which are regarded as the most important part of the Jaina canon. Another council was held at Valabhi in Gujarāt, in the fifth or sixth century A.D., which made a final collection of the scriptures and reduced them to writing. The complete canon included not only the Aūgus, but sundry other treatises styled Upānga, Māla Sātra, etc.

The followers of Bhadrabāhu, on their return to the north, refused to acknowledge the canon as drawn up by their co-religionists at home, who came to be known as Śvetāmbaras (clad in white) as they wore white garments notwithstanding the injunctions of Mahāvīra. Those who continued to follow scrupulously the directions of the famous Jhātrika teacher regarding nudity, came to be called Dīgambaras (sky-clad or naked). The division of the Jaina Church into these two sects is at least as old as the first century A.D. But it may be much older, and some scholars find in the followers of Pārśva, the Tirthāṅkara who immediately preceded Mahāvīra, the precursors of the Śvetāmbaras of later ages.

Gautama Buddha

Among the notable contemporaries of Mahāvīra was a wandering teacher who belonged to the Śākya clan of Kapilavastu in the Nepāl Taru to the north of the Basti district of the United Provinces. His name was Siddhārtha and he belonged to the Gautama gṛha or family. He was born in the village of Lumbinī-grāma near Kapilavastu about the year 566 B.C. according to the system of chronology adopted in these pages. The site of his nativity is marked by the celebrated Rummindei Pillar of Aśoka Maurya. He was the son of Śuddhodana, a Rāja or noble of Kapilavastu, and of Māyā, a princess of Devadaha, a small town in the Śākya territory. Māyā died in child-birth and the little Siddhārtha was brought up by his aunt and stepmother P(r)ajāpatī Gautamī. At the age of sixteen the prince was married to a lady known to tradition as Bhadda Kachchāṇā, Yasodharā, Subhadrakā, Bimbā or Gopā, whom some authorities represent as a niece of
Māyā. After his marriage, Siddhārtha grew up amidst the luxurious surroundings of the palace till at last the vision of old age, disease and death made him realise the hollowness of worldly pleasure. He felt powerfully attracted by the calm serenity of the passionless recluse, and the birth of a son, Rāhula, made him decide to leave his home and family at once. The Great Renunciation took place when Siddhārtha reached the age of twenty-nine. For six years he lived as a homeless ascetic, seeking instruction under two religious teachers and visiting many places including Rājagriha, in the Pātana district, and Uruvilva, near Gayā. At Uruvilva he practised the most rigid austerity only to find that they were of no help to him in reaching his goal. He then took a bath in the stream of the river Nairanjana, modern Lilajan, and sat under a pipal tree at modern Bodh-Gayā. Here at last he attained unto supreme knowledge and insight and became known as the Buddha or the Enlightened One, Tathāgata (“he who had attained the truth”) and Sākya-muni or the sage of the Sākya clan.

The Enlightened One now proceeded to the Deer Park near Sarnath in the neighbourhood of Benares and began to preach his doctrine. For forty-five years he roamed about as a wandering teacher and proclaimed his gospel to the princes and people of Oudh, Bihār and some adjoining territories. He laid the foundation of the Buddhist Order of monks (Sāṅgha) and received important gifts of groves and monasteries from friendly rulers and citizens. Among his converts was his cousin Devadatta who subsequently broke away from him and founded a rival sect that survived in parts of Oudh and Western Bengal till the Gupta period. The Buddha is said to have died at the age of eighty at Kuśinagara, modern Kasin in the Gorakhpur district of the United Provinces. The date of his Great Decease (Parinirvāṇa) is a subject of keen controversy. If the Ceylonese tradition that 218 years intervened between the Parinirvāṇa and the consecration of Priyadarśana (Aśoka) has any value, the date cannot be far removed from 486 B.C., the starting-point of the famous “dotted record” at Canton.

Buddha taught his followers the four “Noble Truths” (Ārya Satya) concerning suffering, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering and the way that leads to the destruction of sorrow. That way did not lie either in habitual practice of sensuality or in habitual practice of self-torture. There was a “Middle Path” called the “Noble Eightfold-path”, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Contemplation. This
was the path that "opened the eyes, bestowed understanding, led to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvāṇa". Nirvāṇa literally means "the blowing out" or extinction of craving, of the desire for existence in all its forms, and the consequent cessation of suffering. But it is not mere extinction. It is a tranquil state to be realised by one who "from all craving want was free".

In his last exhortation to his disciples just on the eve of his death, the Buddha said, "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence (tapasyā)."

The striving for salvation requires in the first place the observance of the Śikṣas or Moralties, that is to say, abandonment of killing, stealing, incontinence, falsehood, slander, luxury, hankering for wealth, performance of blood sacrifices, the worship of the Sun, or of Brahmā and sundry other practices. The next requisite is Sāmādhi (concentration), and finally Prajñā (insight). These ultimately lead to Sambodhi (enlightenment) and Nirvāṇa.

(The Buddhists shared with their fellow-countrymen of other persuasions, including the Brāhmaṇical Hindus and the Jainas, the belief in Sāṁśāra (transmigration) and Karma (retribution for the deed done). Like the Jainas, they rejected the authority of the Vedas, condemned blood sacrifices, denied or doubted the existence of a supreme creative spirit, and inculcated reverence for saints who, from their point of view, attained to supreme knowledge. But unlike the followers of the Jñātraika teacher they did not acknowledge a permanent entity or an immortal soul, were not convinced of the efficacy of discarding garments, and considered rigid penance to be as useless as indulgence in sensual pleasure. The disciples of Mahāvīra on the other hand, endowed even plants, metals, water and air with souls and gave a wide extension to the doctrine of non-violence. They considered all external things, including garments, to be an impediment to spiritual progress, and believed that the ideal man should lead a life of rigid austerities, putting up with all sorts of torments and tribulations, never seeking any relief. The saints and prophets of Jainism were of a different type from the saints and prophets of Buddhism, and the Jainas did not altogether dispense with the worship of the old deities or the services of the Brāhmaṇas.)

Buddhist Scriptures

The unanimous tradition of all Buddhist schools records that shortly after the death of the Master a great Council (Sāṅgīti)
was held at Rājagriha to compile the Dharma (religious doctrine) and the Vinaya (monastic code). A century later a dispute arose regarding the code of discipline as the monks of Vaiśāli wanted a relaxation of the rules in respect of ten points. A second council was convoked at Vaiśāli which condemned the ten heresies and revised the scriptures. A fresh condemnation of heresy is said to have taken place in the reign of Aśoka Maurya, under whose patronage a third council was summoned at Pātaliputra by a learned monk, Tissa Moggaliputta, 236 years after the death of the Buddha, to make a final compilation of the scriptures. The council of Pātaliputra was probably not a plenary assembly of all Buddhists, but a party meeting of the school of Vibhajjvādins. A fourth council was held under Kanishka which prepared elaborate commentaries (Upadeśa Śāstras and Vibhāśā Śāstras) on the sacred texts. This council was also not a general assembly but probably a gathering of only the Hinayānists of Northern India.

The tradition about some of the earlier councils is not accepted by all scholars. But the unanimity of tradition about the first two assemblies and Aśoka’s decrees against heretical monks indicate that there must have been a substratum of truth behind the stories narrated by the Chroniclers. The canon as we have it at present may not be as old as the first or even the second council. One text, the Kathāvatthu, is admittedly a work of the third century B.C. But quotations from scriptures in the Aśokan edicts, and references to points well read in the sacred texts in inscriptions of the second century B.C., suggest that works on doctrine and discipline were current before the rise of the Maurya and Śuṅga dynasties, though such works may not be exactly identical with any of the extant texts. According to the Ceylonese tradition, the sacred texts and commentaries were written down in books in the first century B.C. during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmanī Abhaya. In the fifth century A.D. the texts, as distinguished from the commentaries, came to be known as Pāli. The use of the term Pāli to denote the language in which the texts were written is not warranted by any early evidence. The language was called Māgadhānām Nirutth or the idiom of the people of Magadha, which was probably a dialect spoken in Magadha in the early days of Buddhism and which had ceased to be the current speech in the days of Aśoka who used a somewhat different idiom in his inscriptions.

The Pāli Canon is divided into three Piṭakas or baskets, viz. the Sutta, the Vinaya, and the Abhidhamma. The first consists of five Nikāyas or collections of Suttas or Suttantas, i.e. religious
discourses. The second contains rules of monastic discipline, and the third contains disquisitions of a philosophical character. The fifth Nikāya of the Sutta-Piṭaka includes the famous Dhammapada, the psalms of the brethren and of the sisters (Therigāthā and Therigāthā) and the still more celebrated Jātakas or Buddhist Birth Stories. The extant Jātaka commentaries belong to a period much later than the rise of the Maurya dynasty, but the original stories are fairly old and are often illustrated in bas-reliefs of the second and first centuries B.C. They were apparently not so well-known in the second as in the first century B.C. The Jātakas belong to a class of literature which foreshadows the epic, and there are indications that the epic itself was assuming coherent shape during the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy.

The Beginnings of Epic Poetry

In Vedic literature we come across lays in praise of heroes and tales about the deeds of princes and sages. These hero-lays (gāthā mārāsvatī) and narrative stories (ākhyāna) formed an important feature of great sacrifices like the Rājasūya (royal consecration) and the Asvamedha (horse-sacrifice). In the horse-sacrifice, a priest recited the purāṇa ākhyāna (circling narrative) and tales of ancient kings, while a Kshatriya lute-player (vīṇā- gāthin) sang to the lute extempore verses which referred to victories connected with the sacrificer. Among such sacrificers were many kings of the Kuru and Kosala realms. It is, therefore, not surprising that some of the most famous lays and tales found in the Vedic texts celebrated the benevolence and prowess of Kuru kings like Purukṣ shit and Janamejaya, and of Ikshvāku and Kosalan monarchs like Harisandra and Paśa Aśura. The narration of the Ākhyāna of the Ikshvāku Harisandra formed a part of the ritual of the Rājasūya, and another rite of the same sacrifice was connected with an important episode of Kuru history. The popularity of such stories is attested by Buddhist scriptures, and the Buddha strongly reproved the practice of narrating tales of kings, of war, and of terror, in which certain Brāhmaṇas and even ascetics indulged. Some of the Ikshvāku and Kuru lays and tales centred round heroes not explicitly mentioned in the extant Vedic texts. One such story, that of Dāsaratha and his son Rāma of the Ikshvāku family, is alluded to in the Jātaka gāthās and illustrated in bas-reliefs of the second century B.C. Another tale, that of the Pāṇḍus, is also known to the Jātaka gāthās and is hinted at by Greek writers of the fourth century B.C.
the confused legends about the Indian Herakles and Pandia. Moreover, it is alluded to by the grammarians Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali. The last-mentioned writer also shows some acquaintance with the Kishkindhayā episode of the Rāma story. It is, however, difficult to say when the ballads about Rāma’s adventures or the Pāṇḍu’s victory first assumed the form of a full-fledged heroic Kāvyā or epic. The names of Vālmiki and Vyāsa, son of Purāsara, the reputed authors of the Rāmāyana and the Pāṇḍu epic, the Mahābhārata, seem to occur in certain later Vedic or Vedāṅga texts. But the first dated reference to the Rāmāyana as an epic is contained in the works of Buddhist and Jaina writers of the earliest centuries of the Christian era. But even then it contained only 12,000 verses, i.e., only half of its present size. The Mahābhārata is first mentioned by Āśvalāyana in his Grihya Sūtra and by Pāṇini in his Ashādhyāya. It was admittedly at first only about a quarter of its present size. The complete Mahābhārata of 100,000 verses is mentioned for the first time in an inscription of the Gupta period. By the sixth century A.D. the fame of both the epics had spread to far-off Cambodia. Both the poems contain a good deal of pseudo-epic or didactic material which came to be included at a comparatively late date. The genuine epic refers to a powerful Magadhan military State with its capital at Girivraja. There is no reference to Pātaliputra. This probably points to a date before the later Haryāṇa-Saśāmāga kings for the early epic. The age of the epic cannot be pushed much farther back because the knowledge, however inadequate, of Southern India beyond the Godāvari, and of Eastern India beyond the land of the Pundras and the Vaṇgas, betrays a geographical outlook that is distinctly wider than that of the entire Vedic canon and the early Buddhist Nikāyas. Of the two ancient Sanskrit epics the Rāmāyana is alluded to in, and was probably completed before, the extant Mahābhārata. But while the Mahābhārata was known to Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini, there is no similar early reference to the Rāmāyana. The latter epic, moreover, mentions Janamejaya and “Vishnu who upraised a mountain with his hands”, i.e., probably Krishna. The latest books refer to Vāsudeva of the Yādu family and his close associate, the incarnation of Nara, i.e., Arjuna.

The nucleus of the Rāmāyana is the story of Rāma, the eldest son of Daśaratha, a prince of the Ikshvāku family of Ayodhyā in the Fyzabad district of Oudh. The prince married Sītā, the daughter of Janaka, king of Videha in North Bihār. Owing to a palace intrigue, the Ikshvāku prince had to leave his home and go into
exile for a period of fourteen years. He repaired to the Dandaka forest in the Deccan with his wife and faithful half-brother Lakshmana. He dwelt for some time on the banks of the Godavari in Pañchavati, which is usually identified with Nārīk. Here he came into conflict with the Rākhshasas or cannibal chieftains who were a source of disturbance to the peaceful hermits of the locality. Among the hostile chieftains were some persons closely related to Rāvana, the mighty king of Lanka (Ceylon). That potentate sought to avenge his injured relations by carrying off Sītā, wife of Rāma, to his island home. In their distress, the Ikshvāku princes allied themselves with Sugrīva, Hanumān and other monkey chiefs of Kiskindhavā in the Bellary district of South India and crossed over to Lanka. They killed the Rākhshasa king with most of his clan and rescued the princess Sītā. As the period of Rāma's exile was now over, he returned with his wife and brother to Ayodhyā where he was warmly received by his half-brother Bharata in whose favour he had been made to relinquish his rights. Meanwhile people came to question the propriety of taking back a princess who had long been kept confined by a Rākhshasa king. To silence the unreasonable clamour of the multitude, Rāma had to banish his faithful consort, the ideal of Indian womanhood. The duty of a Rājā, according to Hindu notions, was always to please his subjects who were his "children". The virtuous royal lady found a shelter in the hermitage of Vālmiki, where she gave birth to the twins, Kuśa and Lava, who subsequently returned to their ancestral home and succeeded to their heritage.

It is difficult to say if there is any kernel of historical truth underneath this tale of a prince's adventures in the land of cannibals and monkeys. Rāma and Sītā are names met with in the Vedic literature, though not always as appellations of human beings. They are, however, in no way connected in the Vedic texts with the illustrious lines of the Ikshvākus or the Valakas. The name of Rāvana is absolutely unknown to Brāhmaṇical or non-Brāhmaṇical literature till we come to the epics themselves or to works like the Kautiliya Arthaśāstra, which show acquaintance with the epics. It is, however, possible that Ikshvāku princes played a leading part in the colonisation of the Far South of India, as names of Ikshvāku kings figure prominently in the early inscriptions of Southern India. Whether the name of Ikshvāku was first popularised in the south by princes from Ayodhyā or by followers of the Śākya teacher of Kapilavastu, who also claimed Ikshvāku descent, must remain an open question.

The kernel of the Mahābhārata seems to be the victory of the
Pândus, helped by Krishna and the Páñchálas, over the Kuru
proper, the sons of Dhritarāṣṭra Vaichitravirya, a king mentioned
already in the Kāthaka recension of the Yajur Veda. The epic is
often mentioned as the “tale of victory” (Jayānāma itihāsa). Of
the leading figures on the side of the victors the name of one,
Krisna, son of Vasudeva and Devaki, is mentioned in the
Chhāndogya Upanishad and the latest book of the Taittiriya
Aranyaka. In the later text he is identified with the god Vishnu
or Nārāyaṇa. The name of another victor, Arjuna, is alluded to
in the Vājasaneyi recension of the Yajur Veda and the Śatapatha
Brāhmaṇa. In the Brāhmaṇa he is identified with Indra, and in
the epic he is the son of Indra. But the Brāhmaṇa identification
of Arjuna with Indra is on a par with the identification in the
Aranyaka of Vāsudeva, i.e. Krisna, son of Vasudeva, with Vishnu,
and cannot be advanced to support the view that he was from
the beginning nothing but a Brāhmaṇic god. The ruin of the
Kurus is hinted at in the Chhāndogya Upanishad and one of the
Śrauta Sūtras. Among their principal enemies were the Śrīvijayas,
and the Kuru hostility to this people is alluded to in the Śatapatha
Brāhmaṇa.

According to the story related in the Mahābhārata, King
Vichitravirya of Hūṣānapura, in the Kuru country, identified
with a place in the Meerut district, had sons named Dhritarāṣṭra
and Pându. Dhritarāṣṭra was born blind and hence Pându
succeeded to the throne. He died in the lifetime of his elder
brother, leaving five sons, Yudhishthira, Bhīmasena, Arjuna,
Nakula and Sahadeva. Dhritarāṣṭra had more than a hundred
children, of whom the eldest was Duryodhana. The sons of Pându
married Draupadi, daughter of the king of Pañchala. The third
prince, Arjuna, married also Subhadra, sister to Krisna who
belonged to the powerful Yādava confederacy of Mathura and
Dvārakā (in Kāṭhīwār). The Pândus claimed a share of their
paternal kingdom. They were given the Khāṇḍaya forest to the
south of the Kuru kingdom, where they built the stately city of
Indraprastha near modern Delhi. At the instance of Krisna they
overthrew Jarāsandha, the powerful king of Magadha, who was
seeking to establish his own supremacy. The Magadhan ruler had
carried off hundreds of princes as prisoners to the fastness of Girivraja
with a view to offering them as victims in a horrid rite. The Pândus
now effected conquests in all directions and laid claim to the rank
of paramount rulers, performing the Rājasūya, which was now a
sacrifice of imperial inauguration. The prosperity of their rivals
roused the jealousy of the sons of Dhritarāṣṭra. They invited
Yudhishthira, the eldest among the Pându princes, to a game of
dice, secured his defeat, and sought to enslave Draupadi. The Pându
queen was dragged to the open court and there subjected to the
grossest insults. The Pândus were next sent into exile for a period of
thirteen years. At the end of the period the five brothers demanded
the return of their kingdom but met with a refusal. Thereupon the
rival cousins engaged in a deadly conflict on the field of Kurukshetra.
The Kuru host, led by Bhishma, Drona, Karna and other mighty
warriors, was destroyed. The Pândus with their allies, the Pandâlæas
and Śrîjñayas, also suffered terrible losses, but they succeeded
in gaining back their kingdom.

Although there is no clear reference in the extant Vedic texts to
the battle of Kurukshetra, we have distinct hints in some of the
Brâhmaṇas, Upanisâads and Śrauta Sûtras of the hostility between
the Kûras and the Śrîjñayas, the disasters threatening the Kûras
and their final expulsion from Kurukshetra. The name Pându
is not mentioned in Vedic literature, but we have references to
Arjuna, Parikshhit and Janamejaya, and the first two have already
been delimited in some of the later Vedic texts. That the Pândus
were a historic tribe or clan is proved by the testimony of Ptolemy
in whose time they occupied a portion of the Punjab.

Both the Kûras and the Pândus are frequently represented by
epic bards as violating the kingly code of honour. The unhumane
deeds of the Pândus are often attributed by the Kûra
chronicler to the instigation of Krishna, just as the misdeeds of
Ajñātâsâstru are ascribed by Buddhist writers to Devadatta, the
sârmanatic cousin of the Buddha. The Buddha himself is accused
by Purânic chroniclers of having beguiled the demons. The
Bhâgavatas, the followers of Krishna, were not regarded as quite
orthodox even in the time of Śâṅkara-châryya, and that may account
for the attitude that a section of the Kûra bards adopted towards
the Yadava chief, whom they regarded as a vaistha (outside the pede).
It is difficult to believe that the great poets, philosophers and
dedicated worshippers who produced the Bhagavat Gîtâ and laid the
utmost stress on the virtues of dama (self-restraint), tyâga (renunciation)
and apramânda (vigilance) in an inscription of the second century
B.C., could have been aware of the dark deeds that are attributed
to their lord and his closest associates in battle-songs that find a
place in the extant epic. That some of the battle-books were revised
at a later period is proved by references to the Yavana and the
Sakas.

The Mahâbhârata is not merely a "song of victory", it is a
Parâśa-Sambhâlâ, a collection of old legends, and an Itiârâta or
traditional account of high-souled kings and pious sages, of dutiful wives and beautiful maids. We have charming and edifying stories like those of Śakuntalā and Śāvitrī, of Nala and Śibi. Side by side with these we have the thrilling lays of Ambā and Vidulā. In the first book the epic claims to be a Śāstra or authoritative manual laying down rules of conduct for the attainment of trivarga or the three great aims animating all human conduct, Dharma (moral and religious duties), Artha (material wealth) and Kāma (pleasures of the flesh). Finally it claims to be a Moksha-śāstra pointing the way of salvation to mankind. Manuals of a didactic character are chiefly found in the later books. Among the religious poems that form part of the epic, the most famous is the Bhagavad Gītā or the "Song of the Lord", which constitutes the bed-rock of Hindu theism.
CHAPTER VII

THE MAURYA EMPIRE

Chandragupta Maurya

In 326 B.C. India was faced with a crisis. The imperial crown of Magadha and the neighbouring provinces was worn by a king who was "detested and held cheap" by his own people. The Land of the Five Rivers was overrun by the Macedonians and allied peoples from the West who resolved to incorporate it permanently into their growing empire. Alexander, the great leader of the invading bands, withdrew, it is true, to the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, where he died in 323 B.C. Philippos, the satrap whom he had appointed to govern the Western Punjab, met his doom in 324 B.C. But the surviving commanders, who met to partition the Macedonian empire in 323 B.C. and again in 321 B.C., had no desire to withdraw altogether from the conquered territories in the Indian borderland. The civil government of the districts to the east of the Indus had to be left virtually in the hands of Indian princes. Macedonian governors were retained in the trans-Indus satrapies, and an officer, named Eudemus, was appointed to command the garrison in the Western Punjab after the murder of Philippos. The successors of Alexander were, however, torn by internal dissensions and had to recall some of their commandants in India. The indigenous population had, in the meantime, found a leader who knew how to take advantage of the disunion and the thinned ranks of the foreign invaders and "shake the yoke of servitude from the neck" of his fatherland.

Signs of disaffection against foreign rule appeared in the Indian borderland as early as 326 B.C. when the Macedonian king was still in the Punjab. A formidable rising followed in the lower Indus valley which was fomented by the Brāhmaṇas of the locality. But all these insurrections seem to have been crushed, and the band of the invader fell heavily on the instigators. Retribution came quickly and, if tradition is to be believed, it was a Taxilian Brāhmaṇa named Čāṇaka or Kautilya who raised to power the great avenger to whose mighty arms "the earth, long harassed by outlanders, now turned for protection and refuge".
The new Indian leader was a young man who bore the name of Chandragupta. He is described by Justin as a man of humble origin who was prompted to aspire to regal power by an omen significant of an august destiny, immediately after an encounter with Alexander himself. The visit to the Macedonian king is referred to by Plutarch as well as Justin, but, strange to say, some modern writers emend the text of Justin and propose to read "Nandrum" (Nanda) in place of Alexandrum (Alexander). Such conjectural emendations are hardly justified. They mislead the unwary student of Mauryan antiquities.

The family to which the young leader belonged is named Maurya by Indian writers, and is identified by some with the tribe of Moriga mentioned by the Greeks. According to one tradition the designation is derived from Mūri, the mother or grandmother of Chandragupta, who was the wife of a Nanda king. Medieval epigraphs, on the other hand, represent the Mauryas as Kshatriyas of the solar race. Buddhist writers of an early date also knew them as members of the Kshatriya caste and referred to them as the ruling clan of the little republic of Pipplavana, probably lying between Rum-mindel in the Nepalese Tarai and Kasai in the Gorakhpur district, in the days of the Buddha. The cognomen Vṛshala applied to Chandragupta in the Sanskrit play called the Madhrākāsana does not invariably mean a man of Śādra extraction. It is also used of Kshatriyas and others who deviated from rules enjoined in Brāhmaṇical scriptures. That Chandragupta did deviate from Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy is proved by his matrimonial alliance with Seleukes and the predilection shown for Jainism in his later years.

The Maurya clan was reduced to great straits in the fourth century B.C., and tradition avers that Chandragupta grew up among peacock-tamers, herdsmen, and hunters. While still a lad he met Alexander in the Punjab, but, having offended the king by his boldness of speech, and orders being given to kill him, he saved himself by a speedy flight. In the place of his refuge he is said to have been joined by a personage who had left his home in Taxila. This was the famous Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya, who went at first to Pāṭaliputra but, being insulted by the reigning Nanda king, repaired to the Vindhyā forest where he met Chandragupta. With the help of treasure found underground he gathered an army for the young Maurya. Greek and Latin writers do not mention Kauṭilya but allude to Chandragupta's encounter with a lion and an elephant, which accords well with his residence in the Vindhyān wilds, and refer to the collection of a body of armed men who are characterised as a band of robbers by some modern
historians. But the original expression used by Justin, to whom we owe the account of the rise of Chandragupta, has the sense of “mercenary soldier” as well as that of “robber”. The former sense is in consonance with Jaina tradition.

Having collected an army, Chandragupta solicited the Indians to support his new sovereignty”, or, according to another interpretation, “instigated the Indians to overthrow the existing government”. Therefore (divine) he went to war with the precepts of Alexander and fought vigorously with them. Chandragupta acquired the throne when Seleukos, a general of Alexander, was laying the foundations of his future greatness. Seleukos obtained as his share of Alexander’s empire the satrapy of Babylon, first after the agreement of Triparadicos (321 B.C.) and afterwards in 312 B.C., from which year his era is dated. In 306 B.C. he assumed the title of King. As Chandragupta had acquired the throne when Seleukos was on the threshold of his career, his accession took place certainly before 306 B.C. and probably before 312 B.C. It may have taken place even before 321 B.C. The Buddhist tradition of Ceylon puts the date 162 years after the Parinirvana of the Buddha, i.e. in 382 B.C. if we take 544 B.C. to be the year of the Great Decease and 324 B.C. if we prefer the Ceylonese date 186 B.C. for the death of the Buddha. The earlier date is opposed to Greek evidence and is clearly untenable. The date 321 B.C. accords with the testimony of Greek writers.

A Jaina tradition fixes the date of Chandragupta’s accession at 313 B.C. It is, however, difficult to reconcile this tradition with the statement of the Buddhist chroniclers of Ceylon and Burma that the coronation of Asoka took place $24 + 27$ (or $28) + 4 - 55$ or 56 years after the accession of Chandragupta. The Puranas agree with the Buddhist chroniclers in assigning a period of 24 years to Chandragupta. They give a smaller figure, 25, instead of the 28 of the Buddhist chroniclers of Ceylon and the 27 of the chroniclers of Burma, for the reign of Bindusāra and ignore the interval between the accession and coronation of Asoka. But, as pointed out by Smith, they assign 137 years to the Maurya dynasty. The total of the lengths of reigns, according to the Vāyu Purāṇa, is, however, only 133. The difference of four years may be accounted for by the period of interregnum before the formal coronation of Asoka. That emperor, in the thirteenth Rock Edict, mentions certain Yavana (Hellenic) kings as being alive. This must have been written after the twelfth year from his coronation, when he caused rescripts of morality to be written apparently for the first time. Among these Yavana kings there is no reference to Diodotos I
of Bactria, who rose to power in the middle of the third century B.C. Magas of Cyrene, one of the kings named by Asoka, died, according to the best authorities, not later than 238 B.C. His successor, Demetrios the Fair, is said to have met his death in that year. If 258 B.C. is the latest possible date for the thirteenth Rock Edict, the coronation of Asoka must have taken place certainly not later than 269 B.C. The accession of Chandragupta must have taken place, according to Buddhist evidence, not later than 269 + 55 = 324 B.C. and, according to the Puranic statements, not later than 269 + 25 + 24 = 318 B.C., or, including the period of interregnum before Asoka, not later than 322 B.C.

In the account of the rise of Chandragupta given by Justin, we are expressly told that the young Indian leader was stimulated to aspire to kingship by an incident that happened immediately after his flight from the camp of Alexander in 326 B.C. The use of the term déndre ("thereafter", "some time after") in connection with the war against the prefects of Alexander suggests that the acquiescence of Indians in a change of government and the establishment of a new sovereignty is quite distinct from the war with the Macedonian prefects. There was an interval between the two events, and the Macedonian war came some time after the change of government among Indians.

In the Sanskrit play, the Madrārākṣasa, too, the destruction of the Mlecchha (barbarian) chieftains and troops follows the dynastic revolution in the interior of India. In 321 B.C. the Macedonian governor of Sind had already been forced to retire beyond the Indus, and no new satrap had been appointed in his place. The successors of Alexander in 321 B.C. confessed their inability to remove the Indian Rājās without royal troops under the command of some distinguished general. The abandonment of Sind, the complaint about the inadequacy of troops, and the wholesome respect for the power of the Indian Rājās, must have been due to new developments in politics. Greek military power to the east of the Indus was virtually extinguished as early as 321 B.C. The result could not have been due to Ambhi, the Paurava, or any petty Rājā who had once acknowledged the Macedonian sway. Had they been instrumental in freeing their country from the foreign yoke, they and not Chandragupta and his band of mercenaries would have been mentioned by Justin as the great liberators. Moreover, if the destruction or expulsion of Greek commanders had already been effected by Ambhi or the Paurava, then whence had come the prefects against whom Chandragupta went to war and fought so vigorously, as narrated by Justin?
THE MAURYA EMPIRE

It is true that Chandragupta is not mentioned in connection with the partition treaties of Babylon and Tripuraredus. But we have a similar reticence in regard to Eudemos, the Yavana commandant in the Western Punjab who stuck to his post up to about 317 B.C. The presence of this officer and that of his Indian colleagues does not preclude the possibility of the assumption of sovereignty by Chandragupta in the lower Indus valley at the plains and uplands of the Indian interior some time before 321 B.C.

Tradition avers that in overthrowing the unequalled rule of the last Nanda, Chandragupta was greatly helped by the Brāhmaṇa Kautiliya or Chānakaḥya who became his chief minister. A direct attack on the heart of the Nanda empire is said to have failed. Next time the young Maurya is said to have commenced from the frontiers and met with success. The Nanda troops, led by the general Bhadrāśāna, were defeated with great slaughter, and Chandragupta seized the sovereignty of Pātaliputra.

The first Maurya is known to have been in possession of Mālwa and Kāthiāwār. The Jaina date, 313 B.C., if based on a correct tradition, may refer to his acquisition of Avanta (Mālwa). Westward of Avanta, Chandragupta's rule extended as far as Surāṣṭra in which was stationed a Vaiṣṇava official (vaishnava) named Pushyagupta. Tamil tradition refers to the advance of "Maurya upstarts" as far south as the Tinnevelly district. But the achievement is attributed by certain scholars to the Mauryas of the Konkan who belong to a much later date. Even if the earlier Mauryas had really pushed on to Tinnevelly they must have withdrawn from this region within a short time, because the southern frontier of the Maurya empire in the days of Asoka, grandson of Chandragupta, did not extend beyond the Chitaldrug district of Mysore, and the Pāṇḍya realm which included the Tinnevelly district is referred to in the edicts of that emperor as a frontier kingdom.

Towards the close of the reign of Chandragupta, the Maurya empire received a further extension in the north-west. Seleukos, the general of Alexander, who had made himself master of Babylon, gradually extended his empire from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus and even tried to regain the provinces to the east of that river. He failed and had to conclude a treaty with Chandragupta by which he surrendered a large territory including, in the opinion of certain writers, the satrapies of Paropamisadai (Kābul), Aria (Herāt), Arachosia (Qandahār), and Gedrosia (Bakhtistān), in return for 500 elephants. The inclusion of a part at least of the Kābul valley within the Maurya empire is attested by the evidence of the Aśokan inscriptions. The treaty was cemented.
by a marriage contract. A Greek envoy was accredited to the Court of Pataliputra.

If Jaina tradition is to be believed, Chandragupta was converted to the religion of Mahâvîra. He is said to have abdicated his throne and passed his last days at Sravana Belgola in Mysore. Greek evidence, however, suggests that the first Maurya did not give up the performance of sacrificial rites and was far from following the Jaina creed of Ahîmâsak or non-injury to animals. He took delight in hunting, a practice that was continued by his son and was also alluded to by his grandson Aśoka in the eighth Rock Edict. It is, however, possible that in his last days he showed some predilection for Jainism just as Harsha in the seventh century A.D., though officially a Śaiva, paid respect to the Buddha and the Buddhist Master of the Law.

Bindusâra

The successor of Chandragupta Maurya was his son Bindusâra, apparently called Amîragîhâta, "slayer of foes", by Greek writers. As Chandragupta's accession could not have taken place before 326 B.C., and as Brâhmanical as well as Buddhist writers unanimously assign a period of twenty-four years to his reign, the new king could not have come to the throne before 302 B.C. His reign must have terminated before 289 B.C. if the king Magas, mentioned in the thirteenth Rock Edict of his son Aśoka, really died in 258 B.C. The actual period of his rule is not known for certain. According to Purânic writers, he reigned for twenty-five years. Burmese tradition allots to him a period of twenty-seven years, while Ceylonese chroniclers fix the length of his reign at twenty-eight years. If the Cantonese date for the Buddha's Nirvâna (488 B.C.) be accepted, then he must have reigned from c. 300 B.C. to c. 273 B.C.

Bindusâra seems to have retained undiminished the empire of his father. Tradition credits him with the suppression of a revolt in Taxila. Whether he effected any new conquests is not known for certain. His empire must have embraced not only the greater part of northern India but also a considerable portion of the Deccan, probably as far south as the Chitaldrug district of Mysore. The kingdom of Kaliṅga, embracing the major part of Puri, Ganjam and some adjoining tracts, is known, however, to have been independent.

In foreign affairs Bindusâra maintained the friendly relations with the Hellenic West established by his father. He received as ambassador a Greek named Deimachos and curious anecdotes have
been preserved of private friendly correspondence between him and Antiochos I Soter, king of Syria, son of Seleukos Nikator.

Bindusāra had many children, both sons and daughters. One of the sons, Aśoka, seems to have held successively the important viceroyalties of Taxila and Ujjain. Tradition avers that when the emperor fell sick Aśoka left the government of Ujjain and came to Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital. When his father died, he seized the sovereignty of the city, and put his eldest brother to death. He is said to have slain ninety-nine brothers born of different mothers. In the fifth Rock Edict, however, which was issued not earlier than the fourteenth regnal year, Aśoka refers to the harems of his brothers which were objects of his anxious care. This has been taken to indicate that the story of the slaughter of the brothers is a silly fiction, but we have to remember that the formal consecration of Aśoka was very probably delayed. This suggests a disputed succession. The fifth Rock Edict undoubtedly proves the existence of harems of brothers thirteen years after Aśoka’s anointment, but it does not prove that the brothers themselves without any exception were all alive at that date. The traditional account may not be correct in all particulars, and the number of brothers killed may have been exaggerated, but that there was a fight for the crown, in the course of which the eldest brother perished, does not appear to be altogether improbable. Aśoka himself refers in the fourth Rock Edict to the growth for a long period past of unseemly behaviour to relatives. This unseemly behaviour was only stopped when feelings of remorse were awakened in his breast after the blood-bath of the Kaliṅga war.

Aśoka

The reign of Bindusāra probably terminated in, or within a few years of, 273 B.C. Some time after—four years later according to tradition—his successor was solemnly enthroned at Pāṭaliputra and died after a reign of thirty-six or thirty-seven years, in or about 232 B.C. The name of the new king as known from literature, the Maski edict, and certain later epigraphs, was Aśoka. He is generally mentioned in his inscriptions as Devānampiya Piyaḍasi. Devānampiya, “beloved of the gods”, is a title which he shared with some of his predecessors, successors and contemporaries. The other appellation Piyaḍasi (Priyaḍarsin) or Piyaḍassana (Priyaḍarsana), “of amiable appearance”, is said to have been borne also by his grandfather Chandragupta. The form Piyaḍassana (Priyaḍarsana) occurs in literature and the famous Aramaic
inscription from Taxila which may have referred to his reign if not to that of his grandfather.

We know very little about the early years of Aśoka's reign. He must have continued the aggressive policy of his forebears. Literary tradition credits him with the suppression of a fresh revolt in Taxila, and a contemporary inscription records that when he had been anointed eight years the Kalingas were conquered by him. The conquest of this province rounded off the Maurya empire, which now embraced almost the whole of non-Tamil India and a considerable portion of Afghānīstan. It stretched from the land of the Yonās, Kambojas and Gandhāras in the Kābul valley and some adjoining mountain territory, to the country of the Andhras in the Godavari-Krishnā basin and the district (Āhāra) of Isla in the north of Mysore, and from Sopārā and Gīnnār in the west to Dhauli and Jangāḍa in the east. In the north-west, the empire touched the realm of Antiochos II, the Greek king of Syria and Western Asia, and in the south it extended as far as the kingdom of the Cholas, Pāṇḍyas, Satiyaputra and Keralaputra in the Tamil country. If tradition is to be believed, the dominions of Aśoka included the secluded vales of Kāshmir and Nepāl as well as the riparian plains of Punḍra-vardhana (North Bengal) and Samatata (East Bengal). The inclusion of the Himālayan valleys is rendered probable by the discovery of inscriptions at Manshehra in the Hazāra district, at Kālsi in the Dehra Dun district, at Nigāli Sāgar and Rummundei in the Nepalese Tarai and at Rampurva in the Champaran district of North Bihār. But no recension of the Aśokan edicts has yet been found in Bengal, though an old Brāhma inscription of Malāsthān in North Bengal, which refers to the prosperous city of Punḍra-nagara, apparently belongs to the Pre-Christian Age.

The Kalinga war proved a turning-point in the career of Aśoka and produced results of far-reaching consequence in the history of India and of the whole eastern world. The sight of misery and bloodshed in the Kalinga campaign smote the emperor's conscience and awakened in his breast sincere feelings of repentance and sorrow. It made Aśoka intensely devoted to the practice of Dharma (morality and piety), the love of Dharma and the instruction of the people in Dharma. It also led to a momentous change in foreign policy. The emperor eschewed military conquest involving slaughter and deportation of people and evolved a policy of dharma-vijaya, "conquest by piety", in place of the old conquest by bows and arrows.

Aśoka had doubtless inherited the traditional devotion of Hindu kings to gods (deva) and the Brāhmaṇas, and, if the Kāshmir
chronicle of Kalhana is to be believed, his favourite deity was Śiva. Shortly after the Kaliṇga war he seems to have been greatly influenced by Buddhist teaching. He became a lay worshipper (upāsaka) of the Buddha, but for some time did not show much zeal for the new faith. He then went out to Sambodhi, taken by some to refer to Bodh-Gayā, and also established intimate relations with the Buddhist Saṅgha or order of monks. According to one view, he actually entered the Saṅgha and became a monk. Contact with the place of enlightenment of the Blessed One, and the pious fraternity that he had founded, apparently galvanised Aśoka into greater exertions for the cause of religion and morality. His new-born zeal showed itself in many ways. He made a deep study of the Buddhist scriptures and undertook “tours of morality” (dharma-yātra) in the place of the pleasure tours (rīhāra-yātra) of his ancestors. In the course of these tours he visited the people of the country, instructing them in Dharma (morality and piety) and questioning them about Dharma. The royal preacher was highly pleased with the result of his tour. The sovereign was no longer to be seen only among litigants, priests, soldiers, and hunters of big game. The “Beloved of the Gods” had been among the country folk lecturing on Dharma. He had taught them that attainment of heaven is not the monopoly of the great alone. Even a lowly person could attain heaven if he was zealous in following the ancient rule of morality. At the end of 256 nights spent on tour, the emperor was satisfied that men in India and some adjoining tracts (Jambudvīpa), who had hitherto been un-associated with the gods, were now mingled with them. The royal tours were apparently decennial. One was undertaken when the king had been anointed ten years, and another when he had been consecrated twenty years. In course of the second tour, the emperor visited the birthplace of Śākya-muni and that of a previous Buddha, and worshipped at these holy spots.

The dominions of Aśoka were vast, and the royal preacher must have soon realised that with all his zeal it would not be possible for him alone to bring the message of Dharma to the doors of all his subjects in the remotest corners of his far-flung empire. When he had been anointed twelve years, that is to say within two years of his first tour, he requisitioned the services of important officials like the Rajukas (probably district judges and survey officers), Pradeśikas (apparently officers in provinces charged with revenue collection and police) and Yuktas (clerks or secretaries). He ordered his officers to publish rescripts on morality and set out on tours every five years to give instruction in morality as well
as for ordinary business. The rescripts and proclamations were to be engraved on rocks and on existing stone pillars. New “pillars of morality” (dharma-stambha) were also to be set up. These orders must have taxed the capacity of the officials to the utmost, and within a year the emperor felt the need of special functionaries whose sole business would be the promotion of religion. Accordingly, new officials, styled Dharma-Mahāmātras or high officers in charge of religion, were appointed. They were employed in the imperial capital as well as in the outlying towns and tribal territories, especially on the western and north-western border of the empire. They busied themselves with the affairs of all sects and of the people in various walks of life, including princes and princesses of the blood as well as prisoners in jail, ordinary householders and their servants as well as homeless ascetics. Reporters were posted everywhere to keep the king informed of the doings of his officials and subjects. The moral uplift and the welfare of the country folk were specially entrusted to functionaries styled Rajyakas who had imperial agents to guide them. Envoys went out to foreign courts so that people outside the empire might conform to morality.

The old policy of chastisement of turbulent forest tribes and troublesome neighbours, and conquest by force of arms, was given up, and a new policy of peace and forbearance, of “conquest by morality”, was evolved. “The reverberation of the war-drum” (bherī ghoṣa) was to become “the reverberation of the law” (dhamma ghoṣa). Not content with what he did himself, the emperor called upon his sons and other descendants not to think of fresh conquest, but to take pleasure in mercy and light punishment, and regard the “conquest by morality” as the only true conquest. Here we have a complete reversal of the old policy pursued by the rulers of Magadha since the days of Bimbisāra. Aśoka said that his policy of dharma-vijaya met with phenomenal success, and he claimed to have made a spiritual conquest of the realms of his Hellenistic, Tamil and Ceylonese neighbours. His Hellenistic contemporaries were Antiochos (II, Theos of Syria, 261-246 B.C.), Ptolemy (II, Philadelphos of Egypt, 285-247 B.C.), Antigonos (Gonatas of Macedon, 276-239 B.C.), Magas (of Cyrene, c. 300-258 B.C.) and Alexander (of Epirus, 272-c. 255 B.C., or, as some say, of Corinth, 252-c. 244 B.C.). The Maurya emperor, it is true, established philanthropic institutions in the realms of some of these princes, and Buddhism doubtless made some progress in western Asia and influenced later sects like the Manicheans. But the Greeks apparently were not much impressed by lessons on non-violence. When the strong arm of Aśoka, “who possessed
the power to punish in spite of his repentance”, was withdrawn, the Greeks poured once more into the Kābul valley, the Punjab and even the Gangetic region and threw all these provinces into confusion.

The southern missions were more successful. If tradition is to be believed, the Ceylonese mission was headed by Prince Mahendra, a son or brother of Aśoka. Devānāhipiya Tissa, the ruler of the island kingdom, was converted and his example was followed by his subjects. Ceylonese tradition avers that missionaries were sent even to Suvarna-ālāmi, i.e. Lower Burma, Sumatra and possibly some adjoining lands.

Aśoka's Dharma

In one of his inscriptions, Aśoka made an open confession of his faith in the Buddha, the Dharma (the Buddhist doctrine) and the Saṅgha (the Buddhist order of monks). He called the Buddha Bhagavat—an epithet applied by a Hindu to the object of his loving devotion. He went on pilgrimage to the places of the Blessed One’s nativity and enlightenment and worshipped at the former place. He declared that whatever had been spoken by the Buddha, all that was quite well spoken. He took much interest in the exposition of the Buddhist Dharma or doctrine so that it might long endure. As to the Saṅgha, he kept in close touch with it after his memorable visit to the fraternity a year or so after his conversion. He impressed on the clergy the need of a correct exposition of the true doctrine and appointed special officers to busy themselves with the affairs of the Brotherhood. He also took steps to maintain the integrity of the church and prevent schism within its fold. Attempts in this direction are also recorded by tradition which avers further that a council was convened during his reign to compile the scriptures. That Aśoka interested himself in Buddhist scriptures as well as monastic discipline is amply attested by contemporary records.

But with all his faith in Buddhism, Aśoka was not intolerant of other creeds. He sought, it is true, to put an end to practices and institutions that he considered to be opposed to the fundamental principles of morality which, according to him, constituted the “essence of all religions”. But he never became an enemy of the Devas and the Brāhmaṇas, or of any other religious fraternity. He continued to style himself the “Beloved of the Devas”. He condemned unseemly behaviour towards Brāhmaṇas and showered gifts on them as well as on the Ajivikas, the followers of Gosāla.
His Dharma-Mahāmātrās were told to look after all sects including even the Nirgranthas or the Jainas. The emperor laid special emphasis on concourse (samavāya) and the guarding of speech (vachaguti), and warned people against the evil consequences of using harsh language in respect of other sects.

Though himself convinced of the truth of Buddha's teaching, of the efficacy of worship at the Buddhist holy places, of the necessity of making a confession of faith in the Buddhist trinity, of keeping in close touch with the Buddhist Saṅgha and maintaining its solidarity, Aśoka never sought to impose his sectarian belief on others. The prospect that he held before the people at large is not that of sambodhi or nīrveṇa but of saṃarga (heaven) and of mingling with the Devas. Saṃarga could be attained by all people, high or low, if only they showed zeal, not in adherence to a sectarian dogma or the performance of popular ritual (maṅgala) but in following the ancient rule (porāṇā pākiśā), namely:

"Obedience must be rendered to mother and father, likewise to elders; firmness (of compassion) must be shown towards animals; truth must be spoken; these same moral virtues must be practised.

"In the same way the pupil must show reverence to the master, and one must behave in a suitable manner towards relatives."

In the pillar edicts it is declared that "happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience, and great fear of sin and great energy". Prominence is also given, in the pillar edicts, to "spiritual insight". Towards the end of his career, Aśoka seems to have been convinced that reflection and meditation were of greater efficacy than moral regulations. But the need of such regulations was keenly felt by him in the first part of his reign.

It was a characteristic of Aśoka that he practised what he preached. He inculcated the virtues of compassion, liberality and toleration. He showed his compassion by abolishing or restricting the slaughter and mutilation of animals, and making arrangements for the healing both of men and beasts. He put a stop to the massacre of living creatures to make curries in the imperial kitchen, and discontinued the royal hunt. He abolished the sacrificial slaughter of animals and regulated festive gatherings (saṃājja) so as to prevent loss of life or the practice of immorality. He provided
medical herbs both for men and lower animals. His officers constructed reservoirs of water and planted trees and groves for the comfort of travellers. Special officials were sent from headquarters to check oppression in the outlying provinces. Liberality and toleration were shown by undertaking pious tours for the distribution of gifts of gold to Brahmans as well as śramanas, by making gifts of cave-dwellings even to non-Buddhist sects, and by the creation of special officers for the distribution of alms to all sects. Queens and princesses were encouraged to participate in these works of charity, and at least one of the queens, Kāravāki, readily co-operated with her consort.

The reference to cave-dwellings affords us a glimpse into another side of the emperor’s activity. As late as the fifth century A.D., sojourners in Pātāliputra were struck with wonder at the magnificence of Aśoka’s architectural achievements. Tradition credits him with the construction of a splendid palace besides numerous relic mounds, monasteries and temples. He is actually known to have enlarged the stūpa of Kauśākumara, a “former Buddha” and predecessor of Sākyamuni. He also set up pillars of morality (dharma-stambha). Modern critics are eloquent in their praise of the polished surface of his columns and the fine workmanship of their crowning sculptures.

Aśoka’s Character

Aśoka is one of the most remarkable personalities in the history of India. He was tireless in his exertions, and unflagging in his zeal—all directed to the promotion of the spiritual and moral welfare of his people whom he called his children. Of his energy, ability and power of organisation, there is no doubt. He was the statesman who conducted successfully a great military campaign that led to the destruction of a powerful adversary whose sway extended over a vast and populous realm. He organised, a few years later, missions for the spiritual conquest of three continents, and turned a local sect in the Ganges valley into a world religion. He preached and practised the virtues of concord, toleration and non-violence. He eschewed military conquest, not after defeat but after victory, and pursued a policy of gentleness and clemency while still possessed of the vast resources of a mighty empire. The generosity and forbearance of this strong man were only matched by his sincerity and veracity, and he describes in words at once truthful and straightforward the terrible misery that he had inflicted on the people of a hapless kingdom. The
example of the pious Maurya king exercised an ennobling influence on succeeding generations. But the ruler who turned officers of state into religious propagandists, abolished the royal hunt and jousts of arms, entrusted the fierce tribesmen of the north-western and southern provinces to the tender care of preachers of morality, and did not rest till the sound of the war-drums was completely hushed and the only sound that was heard was that of religious discourses, certainly pursued a policy at which the great empire-builders who came before him would have looked askance. And it is not surprising that within a few years of his death the power that had hurls back the battalions of Seleukos proved unequal to the task of protecting the country from the princelings of Bactria.

The Later Imperial Mauryas

If Purānic tradition is to be believed, the immediate successor of Asoka was his son Kunāla. The Chronicles of Kāśmīr, however, do not name this prince and mention Jahuja as the son and successor of Asoka in that valley. It is not improbable that the Maurya empire broke up after the death of Asoka, and was divided among his sons, one of whom inherited the home provinces and another made himself independent in the north-west. Tivara, the only son named in the inscriptions, does not appear to have got a share of the patrimony. Kunāla was succeeded by his sons, one of whom, Bandhupālita, is known only in the Purāṇas, and another, Sampadi or Samprati, is mentioned by all our traditional authorities—Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist as well as Jaina, and is represented by the latter as a ruler of Pāṭaliputra and Ujjain and a great patron of their faith. The Purāṇas, however, with the exception perhaps of the Bhāgarata, do not actually represent Samprati as a son of Kunāla, and interpose between him and Kunāla a number of princes amongst whom Daśaratha was certainly a historical figure. He ruled in Magadha shortly after Asoka and has left three epigraphs in the Nāgārjuni Hills, Bihār recording the gifts of caves to the "venerable Ājīvikas".

After Daśaratha and Samprati came Śaṅkūya, a prince mentioned in the astronomical work, the Gṛgī Śarnātā, as a wicked quarrelsome king. "Unrighteous, although theorising on righteousness, he cruelly oppressed his country." The successors of Śaṅkūya, according to the Purāṇas, were Devavarman, Satandhanus and Bṛihadratha. The last prince was overthrown by his commander-in-chief, Pushyunitra, who laid the foundations of a new dynasty styled Śuṅga in the Purāṇas.
There can be no doubt that during the rule of the later Mauryas the empire suffered a gradual decay. The secession of Kāshmir and possibly of Bera is hinted at by Kalliana, the historian of Kāshmir, and Kālidāsa, the author of the Sanskrit play, the Mālavikāgnimitram, respectively. Towards the close of the third century B.C. the Kābul valley was under a king named Subhāgasena whose title, "king of the Indus", suggests that his territory included the Indus valley as well. As his name does not occur in any list of the later Mauryas, he may have belonged to a different family which rose to power in the north-west on the ruins of the Maurya empire. Even if he was connected with the Maurya line, he could not have belonged to the main branch of the family ruling at Pātaliputra. The title given to him by the Greek historians indicates that he was an independent potentate and not a mere viceroy of Taxila. The disintegration of the empire invited invasions from without, and we are told by Polybius that Antiochus III, the Great (223-187 B.C.), grandson of Antiochus II Theos, the contemporary of Aśoka, and great-great-grandson of Seleukos I Nikator, the contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya, descended into India and received a number of elephants from Subhāgasena. If the Gārgī Samhālā is to be believed, a Greek army penetrated even to Pātaliputra.

The decline of Maurya authority is attributed by some scholars to a reaction promoted by the Brāhmaṇas whose privileged position is said to have been affected by the policy of Aśoka. But there is nothing in the records of Aśoka himself to suggest that he was an enemy of the Brāhmaṇas. On the contrary, he showed extreme solicitude for their welfare and extended his patronage to members of this community as well as to Buddhists, Jains and Ājīvakas. One Brāhmaṇa historian, Kalliana, praises him for his piety and benefactions and testifies to the friendly relations subsisting between one of his sons and the Brāhmaṇical Hindus. Another Brāhmaṇa writer, Bāna, applies the epithet anārya, ignoble, to the general who overthrew Brāhadratha, the last of the Imperial Mauryas. Certain Purānic writers, it is true, refer to the Mauryas as asura or demons, and the Gārgī Samhālā draws pointed attention to the oppressive rule of Śalīśūka, but there is nothing to suggest that the Brāhmaṇas were the special victims of Maurya oppression, and a Brāhmaṇa appears as the commander-in-chief under the last Maurya. The epithet asura, demon, or suradvīsh, enemy of the gods, was applied not only to the Mauryas but to all persons "beguiled by the Buddha". But the evidence of the Purāṇas in this respect is contradicted by that of contemporary
inscriptions which refer to Aśoka and the only one among his successors who has left any epigraphic record as "devināmīpiya", that is, "beloved (and not enemy) of the gods".

The true cause of the Maurya debacle lies deeper. Aśoka eschewed military conquest after the Kāliṅga war when he had been anointed eight years, and called upon his descendants not to entertain any thought of aggressive warfare. Shortly afterwards, even the royal hunt was abolished. The army seems to have been mostly inactive during the remaining part of the reign—a period of twenty-nine years—as the emperor himself exultingly declares that "in consequence of the practice of morality on his part, the sound of bheri, or the war-drum, had become the sound of morality". The ease with which the general Pushyamitra, according to the testimony of Bāna, overthrew his king in the very sight of the troops shows that, unlike the earlier kings of the dynasty who often took the field in person, the last of the Mauryas lost touch with his armed forces and ceased to command their affection. Great difficulty was also experienced in controlling the officials in the outlying provinces even in the days of Bindusāra and Aśoka. If tradition is to be believed, ministerial oppression had twice goaded the people of Taxila to open rebellion. The quinquennial and triennial anusamāyāna or tour of mahāmātras (high officers) was specially instituted by Aśoka to check this evil. But when his strong arm was withdrawn, central control apparently became slack. Some of the outlying provinces seceded from the empire, and the process of disintegration was accelerated by members of the imperial family, some of whom set up independent sovereignties while others cruelly oppressed the country. The distracted condition of the country emboldened the Greeks to renew their incursions. The final coup de grâce was given by the general Pushyamitra.
CHAPTER VIII

THE DISRUPTION OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE AND INCURSIONS FROM CENTRAL ASIA AND IRAN

Successors of the Imperial Mauryas

With the fall of the Mauryas, Indian history for the time being loses its unity. The command of one single political authority is no longer obeyed from the snowy heights of the northern mountains to the verdant plains of Bengal and the North Carnatic. Hordes of foreign barbarians pour through the north-western gates of the country and establish powerful kingdoms in Gandhāra (North-West Frontier), Śākala (North-Central Punjab) and other places. The southern provinces throw off the yoke of Magadha and rival in power and splendour the remnant of the great empire of the Gangetic plain. A new dynasty supplants the Mauryas in the Madhya-deśa, or the Upper Ganges valley, and finds it no easy task to maintain its position against the rush of invasion from the south and the north-west.

In Magadha and the neighbouring provinces, the immediate successors of the Mauryas, according to the Purāṇas, were the so-called Śūngas whose sovereignty is commemorated by a Bharhut inscription. The Śūngas are usually regarded as a Brāhmaṇa family belonging to the Bhāradvāja clan. The founder, Pushyamitra, is known from literature and also from a much discussed epigraph, discovered at Ayodhyā. In one famous work, the family to which he belonged is styled Baimbika and not Śūnga. He was the general of the last of the Imperial Mauryas, whom he overthrew in the very sight of the army. The people seem to have acquiesced in the change of dynasty as the later Mauryas had proved tyrannical and incapable of stemming the tide of Greek invasion and maintaining the prestige of the arms of Magadha.

The dominions of the new king at first extended as far south as the Narmadā (Narbadā or Nerbudda). The north-western boundary seems to have been ill-defined, but tradition credits the house of Pushyamitra with having exercised control as far as Jālandhar and Siālkoṭ in the Punjab. Pāṭalinutra continued to
be graced with the presence of the sovereign, but it had a rival in the city of Vidišā, modern Besnagar in Eastern Mālwa, where the crown prince Agnimitra held his court.

The prince was soon involved in a war with the neighbouring kingdom of Vidarbha or Bener. He succeeded in defeating his adversary and reducing him to obedience. A more serious danger threatened from the north-west. The Greeks had renewed their incursions towards the close of the third century B.C. and a Greek king, Antiochus the Great of Syria, had penetrated into the Kābul valley and induced the Indian king Subhāgasena to surrender a number of elephants. His example was soon followed by his son-in-law Demetrios, prince of Bactria, who effected extensive conquests in the Punjab and the lower Indus valley. Equally brilliant achievements are attributed to a later king, Menander. The war-like activities of the Greeks are alluded to by Patañjali, Kālidāsa and the author of the Gārgī Sāmbhālā. We are told that the "viciously valiant barbarians" besieged Sākota in Oadh and Madhyamikā near Chitor and threatened Pāṭaliputra itself. The tide of invasion was arrested and prince Vasumitra, son of Agnimitra, inflicted a defeat on the Yavana on the banks of the Sindhu, either the Indus or some stream in Central India. The grandfather of the victorious prince signified the triumph of his arms by the successful performance of two horse-sacrifices. These rites had a double significance. On the one hand they proclaimed the rise of a new empire on the ashes of Mauryan hegemony, which was successful in defending Āryāvarta against the barbarian outcastes of the frontiers. On the other hand they heralded the dawn of a new Brāhmanical movement which reached its climax in the spacious days of the Guptas.

Pushyaimitra died after a reign of thirty-six years, according to the Purāṇas (c. 187–151 B.C. according to the system of chronology adopted in these pages). He was succeeded by his son Agrimitra. This prince is the hero of a famous drama by India's greatest playwright, Kālidāsa. After him the history of the dynasty became obscure. Vidišā, modern Besnagar in Eastern Mālwa, continued to be a great political centre, and its princes had diplomatic relations with the Greek potentates of the borderland. But the power of the family gradually weakened, and in the end the ruler of the line became a puppet in the hands of his Brāhmaṇa minister, like the Childerics and Chilperics of Western Europe in the hands of their Carolingian Mayors of the Palace. Eventually the ministerial family, known as Kānya, assumed the purple under Vasudeva (c. 75 B.C.), but permitted the jainbānt kings of the
Śuṅga dynasty to continue to rule in obscurity in a corner of their former dominions. In or about 40-30 B.C., both the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇyas were swept away by a southern power, and the province of Eastern Mālwa where stood the metropolis of Vidiśā was eventually absorbed within the dominions of the conqueror. Princes with names ending in Mitra, and possibly connected with the Śuṅgas and Kāṇyas, seemed to have exercised sway in Magadha and the Ganges-Jumna valley till the Scythian conquest.

The Sātavāhanas

The southern potentate who put an end to the rule of the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇyas is described in the Purāṇas as an Andhra, a name applied to the people of the Telugu-speaking tract at the mouth of the Godāvari and the Krishnā. In contemporary epigraphic records, however, kings of this line are invariably referred to as Sātavāhana and a "district of the Sātavāhanas" has been proved to lie in the neighbourhood of Bellary in the Kanarese area of the Madras Presidency. The memory of the dynasty lingers in the story of the king Śālavāhana famous in Indian folk-lore. This legendary hero seems to have appropriated to himself the glorious deeds of several distinguished members of a long line of emperors of the Deccan.

The founder of the family was Śīnuma, but the man who raised it to eminence was his son or nephew Śatakarni I. The latter allied himself with the powerful Mahāraththa chieftains of the western Deccan, and signalled his accession to power by the performance of the horse-sacrifice. Some time after his death, the Sātavāhana power seems to have been submerged beneath a wave of Scythian invasion. But the fortunes of the dynasty were restored by Gautamiputra Śatakarni, who took pride in calling himself the destroyer of the Śakas (Scythians), Yavanas (Greeks) and Pahlavas (Parthians), Gautamiputra built up an empire that extended from Mālwa in the north to the Kanarese country in the south. His son, Vāsishṭhiputra Pulumāyi, ruled at Pratishṭhāna or Paithan on the banks of the Godāvari, now situated in the Aurangabad district of the Nizam’s dominions. Two other cities, Vaijayanti (in North Kanara) and Amarāvatī (in the Guntur district), attained eminence in the Sātavāhana period. A king named Vāsishṭhiputra Śatakarni, who may have been a brother of Pulumāyi, married the daughter of the contemporary Śaka satrap (viceroy) Rudradāman I, but this did not prevent the latter from inflicting crushing defeats on his southern relation. The power of the Sātavāhanas revived under
Sri Yajña Sātakarni, but he was the last great prince of the line, and after him the empire began to fall to pieces like the Bahmani kingdom of a later age.

The most important among the succeeding powers in the Deccan were the Abhiras and the Vākāṭakus of Nāsik and Berar in Upper Mahārāṣṭra, the Ikshvākus and the Śālankāyanas of the Krishṇa and West Godāvari districts, the Pulavas of Kānlī (near Madras) and the Kadaumbas of Vajrayanti or Banavasi in North Kanara.

Khāravela of Kaliṅga

The earlier Sātavāhana empire had a formidable rival in the kingdom of Kaliṅga, which had thrown off the yoke of Magadha some time after the death of Aśoka and risen to greatness under Khāravela, a prince of remarkable vigour and ambition. Khāravela defeated or rescued Sātakarni, probably the first of that name, and humbled the pride of Magadha, then under a prince who has been identified with Bṛhaspatimitra. Bṛhaspati is, in the opinion of some scholars, the same as Pushyamitra, but the theory lacks plausibility. The Kaliṅga king is also credited with having pushed his southern conquests beyond the Godāvari. His career was meteoric, and after his death his empire vanished as quickly as it had risen.

The Tamil Country

The far south of India beyond the Venkaṭa Hills, known as the Tamil or Dravida country, was parcelled out among many States of which three were important, namely, Chola, Pāṇḍya and Kerala. The Chōlas occupied the present Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts with some adjoining areas, and showed great military activity in the second century B.C. A Chōla prince, Eḷara, conquered Ceylon, and many anecdotes have been preserved which testify to his strong sense of justice. The Pāṇḍyas excelled in trade and learning. They occupied the districts of Madura and Tinnevelly with portions of South Travancore. A Pāṇḍya king sent an embassy to the Roman emperor, Augustus, in the first century B.C. To the north and west of the Pāṇḍyas lay the Kerala country embracing Mālabār, Cochin and North Travancore.

Renewed Incursions of the Greeks

The political disintegration of India after the Great Mauryas invited invasions from without, and we have already referred to
renewed warlike activities on the part of the Greeks of Syria and Bactria. The Syrian empire, once so powerful under Seleucos, was now seriously weakened by the secession of Parthia and Bactria which were torn from the Seleukid dominions by satraps who revolted and asserted their independence. And it was from these rebellious provinces that fresh invaders swooped down upon the smiling plains of the Punjab.

At first Bactria showed the greatest activity. Demetrios, son of Euthydemos, king of Bactria, reduced to submission a considerable portion of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Sind, and founded or embellished cities in the conquered territories which bore his own name and possibly that of his father. But a rival appeared in Eukratides, who made himself master of the Indian borderland, leaving to his antagonist the precarious tenure of some provinces in the interior. A later king, Menander, who apparently belonged

![Coin of Demetrios](image)

...to the house of Demetrios, reigned gloriously at Śākala (Euthymelos or Euthydemia), identified with modern Śālkot in the Punjab. His dominions may have included the Kājaur territory in the North-West where an inscription dated in the fifth year of his reign has been discovered recently. He is credited with having pushed his arms beyond the river Beas. Another king, Antialkidas, ruled at Taxila (near Rawalpindi) in Gandhāra and sent an embassy to the court of Vidişā. Some of these later Greek princes and members of their court succumbed to the influence of their environment and became adherents of Buddhism or of Vaishnavism. Greek political power in parts of Afghānistān and the Indus valley was soon threatened by the Parthians led by Mithradates I, a contemporary of Eukratides who ruled in the second century B.C. In the first century A.D. all vestige of Greek rule seems to have disappeared from the Punjab as well as the borderland. The last known Greek king was Hermias, who soon made way for the
founding of the Parthian and Kushān monarchies to the south of the Hindukush.

The Sakas and Parthians

The foreign conquerors who supplanted the Greeks in north-west India belong to three main groups, namely, Śaka, Pahlava or Parthian, and Yue-chi or Kushān. The Śakas were displaced from their home in Central Asia by the Yue-chi and were forced to migrate south. We are told by Chinese annalists that the Śaka king went south and ruled in Ki-pi, which about this time probably corresponded to the territory drained by some of the northern tributaries of the Kābul river. They are found settled in southern Afghanistān in the time of Isidore of Charax, probably about the beginning of the Christian era, and the territory they occupied came to be known as Śakasthāna, modern Sistān. Gradually they extended their sway to the Indus valley and Western India, which came to be styled Scythia by Greek mariners and geographers in the first and second centuries A.D. In the first century after Christ part of this territory had already fallen into the hands of the Parthians. Inscriptions and coins disclose the names of many Scytho-Parthian kings and provincial governors. One of the earliest among these rulers was Maues, Moa or Moga, who was acknowledged as their suzerain by the governors of Chuksha near Taxila. Maues seems to have been followed by Azes I, Azilises and Azes II, after whom the sovereignty of the Indian borderland passed into the hands of Gondophernes, a Parthian. Some scholars attribute to Azes I the foundation of that reckoning commencing 58 B.C. which afterwards came to be known as the Vikrama Samvat, but the matter cannot be regarded as certain. Indian tradition ascribes to it an indigenous origin. It was handed down by the Mālava tribe, and in the post-Gupta period came to be associated with the great Vikramāditya, the destroyer of the Śakas.

With one of the kings named Azes was associated a ruler named Spalirizes who seems to have reigned in Southern Afghanistān and to have been a successor of King Vonacci. The identity of this Vonacci with any king of the imperial line of Arsakes must remain a baffling problem. The Śaka-Pahlava kings ruled over an empire that embraced several provinces. The governors of these administrative units were known as satraps (Kṣatrapa) or great satraps (Mahākṣatrapa). One of these satrapal families ruled in Kāpiśa near the junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir rivers in Afghanistān,
DISRUPTION OF MAGADHAN EMPIRE

another near Taxila in the Western Punjab, a third at Mathurā in the Jumnā valley, a fourth in the upper Deccan and a fifth at Ujjain in Mālwa. The satraps of the upper Deccan and part of Western India belonged to the Kshaharāta race, probably a branch of the Śakas. They carved out a principality on the ruins of the early Sātavāhana empire and attained great power under Nāhāpāna. But they were finally overthrown by Gautamiputra Sātārakara who restored the fallen fortunes of the Sātavāhana family. The satraps of Ujjain traced their descent from the lord (sudhāra) Chashṭana, the Tiastanes of Ptolemy the geographer. Radrādānu, grandson of Chashṭana, ruled from about A.D. 130 to 150, and was one of the greatest Sāka rulers of ancient India. He entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Sātavāhana dynasty, but this did not prevent him from inflicting defeats on his southern neighbour. His court poet is to be believed his sway extended from the Konkan in the south to Sind and Mārwār in the north. The successors of Radrādānu were not so strong as he was. Internal feuds were common. Power gradually fell into the hands of the Ābhira chieftains. The death-knell of satrapal rule in Mālwa and Kāśthīvār was sounded when a new indigenous empire rose in the Gauges valley in the fourth century A.D. and the arms of Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta II swept through the tableland of Mālwa and involved Sāka and Ābhira in common ruin.

Fall of the Parthians and the Kushān Conquest

Long before the final cataclysm that ultimately overtook the satrapal line of Chashṭana, the Sāka-Pahlava emperors of the north-west had passed through vicissitudes of another kind. Cambodrophernes, who had probably succeeded Azes II on the imperial throne of the north-west, had a chequered career.Numismatic evidence points to the wide extent of his sway and his leaning towards Indian culture. Tradition associates his name with that of the Christian apostle St. Thomas. He does not seem to have left to his successors a stable government. We are told by a contemporary Greek mariner that Parthian princes in the latter half of the first century A.D. were constantly driving each other out. The Yue-chi nomads of Central Asia, who had been driven from their ancestral abode on the Chinese frontier about 185 B.C. and had settled in the Oxus valley, were not slow to take advantage of Parthian disunion. The five principalities into which the Yue-chi were divided in their new home were consolidated into a powerful monarchy by Kieu-tsieu-k'io, identified with Kupila Kasa, Kadphises or
Kadphises I, head of the Kushān (Kusana) section of the horde. Kadphises attacked the Parthians, took possession of Ki-pin and Kābul and became complete master of the Indian borderland. Copper coins of Kujula bearing a remarkable resemblance to Roman denarii, particularly to the Constantia type of the emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54), prove that he ruled not earlier than the middle of the first century A.D. A terminus ad quem is probably fixed by the Chinese reference to the Yue-chi occupation of Kābul or some territory in its neighbourhood before A.D. 92.

The successor of Kien-tseu-k’io or Kujula Kadphises was Yen-kao-chien or Vima Kadphises (II) of the coins. The new king is credited by Chinese annalists with the conquest of the Indian interior, where he set up a governor to rule in his name. He became a convert to Śaivism and proclaimed himself as Māhiśevara on his coins. The wealth and prosperity of his dominions are illustrated by the fine gold coins that were issued under his orders. Ambassadors from India presented their credentials to the Roman emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117). They may have arrived from the Kushān court, but it is uncertain whether they were sent by Kadphises II or a later king, Kanishka.

Kanishka I

Kanishka is usually regarded as a successor of Vima Kadphises (Kadphises II). To him is attributed by many scholars the foundation of the Śaka era of A.D. 78. This era is the only Indian reckoning traditionally ascribed to a Śaka potentate, and Kanishka is the only Scythian king known to have established an era, that is to say, his regnal reckoning was continued by his successors for several generations, and was thus transformed into an era. Kanishka was no doubt a Kushān and not strictly speaking a Śaka, but
the latter designation was used in India in a wide sense to include all kindred tribes. Chinese historians refer to a famous conflict between a Kushān king and the great general Pan-chao in the last quarter of the first century a.d. The view held by certain scholars is that the Kushān antagonist of Pan-chao was Kadphises II. No such event is, however, associated with Yen-kao-chen or Kadphises II by Chinese annalists. On the other hand Kanishka, whose name was not known to the official historians of China, certainly came into conflict with that country and Huen Tsang speaks of one or more Chinese hostages detained at his court. If Kanishka was the contemporary of Pan-chao the ascription to him of the Śaka era cannot be regarded as untenable. The rival theory which makes Kadphises II the founder of the era and places Kanishka in the second quarter of the second century a.d., fails to explain why in the time of Kadphises II his own reckoning is not used in the metropolitan territory, and why no era commencing from the second century a.d. is alluded to by later writers including al-Biruni. The fame of Kanishka and his line was still green in the days of the Khāvān scholar, who gives a list of Indian eras, and it is difficult to believe that a reckoning commencing from the second century a.d., if really founded by Kanishka and perpetuated by his descendants, escaped his notice.

According to Huen Tsang the great empire over which Kanishka exercised his sway had its capital at Purushpura or Peshawār. Epigraphic evidence points to the inclusion within his dominions of the wide expanse of territory from Gandhāra and Sue Vihar to Oudh and Benares. The inclusion of Kāshmīr is testified to by Kalhana, and clashes with the rulers of Sāketa and Pātaliputra are vouched for by other writers. As already stated, the pilgrim Huen Tsang refers to a war with China in the course of which the Kushān king obtained some initial successes in eastern Turkestan. But he was unable to make much impression on his mighty northern neighbour. The north alone, according to tradition, remained unsubdued.

But it is not as a conqueror that Kanishka is chiefly remembered by posterity. His chief title to fame rests on his monuments and on the patronage he extended to the religion of Sākya-muni. The celebrated chaitya that he constructed at Peshawār excited the wonder and admiration of travellers down to a late period, and the famous sculptures executed under his orders include a life-size statue of the king himself. In Buddhist ecclesiastical history his name is honoured as that of the prince who summoned a great council to examine the Buddhist scriptures and prepare commentaries
on them. Inscriptions and coins bear eloquent testimony to the
king’s zeal for the religion of the Buddha. That his association with
it dated from the beginning of his reign is possibly proved by the
Peshāwār Casket Inscriptions. Among the celebrities who graced his
court the most eminent was perhaps Āśvaghosha, philosopher, poet,
and dramatist, who wrote the Buddha Charita and other books.

Successors of Kanishka I

Kanishka’s rule lasted for twenty-three years. His immediate
successor was Vāsishka, who had a short reign and was succeeded
by Huviska. The empire of Huviska was not less extensive than
that of the traditional patron of Āśvaghosha. It may have spread
further to the west, as a record of his reign has been unearthed at
Wardak to the west of Kābul. Mathurā was now a great centre
of Kushān power and it was adorned with monuments by Huviska
as the city of Peshāwār had been embellished by the greatest of
his predecessors. For some time Huviska had apparently a
colleague or rival in Kanishka of the Ārā inscription, who is
described as a son of Vājheska, possibly the same as Vāsishka,
and receives in addition to the titles of great king, the king of kings,
son of heaven (decaputra) assumed by his predecessors, the novel
title of Kaisara, “Caesar”. In Kalhaṇa’s Chronicle we have a
reference to the rule of “Huska, Juska and Kanisha”, appar-
ently identical with Huviska, Vājheska and his son. They
were the reputed founders of three cities in Kāshmir named after
them. Kanishka of this passage may have reference to the pre-
deceessor of Vāsishka, but it is more probable that the king referred
to by Kalhaṇa is identical with his namesake mentioned in the
Ārā inscription.

The last great Kushān king was Vāsudeva I, who ruled from
about the year 67 to 98 of the Kanishka era. Most of his inscriptions
have been found at or near Mathurā, and his coins usually bear the
god Śiva and rarely any Iranian deity. It is not improbable that
he gradually lost touch with the north-western provinces. The
decline of the Kushān power in the north-west was hastened by
the rise of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia. In the third century
A.D. we find references to four separate kingdoms all dependent on
the Yue-chi. This possibly suggests territorial disintegration
though the nominal suzerainty of the “Son of Heaven” may have
continued to be acknowledged by all these states. The rule of the
Kushāns in part of the Jumna valley seems to have been supplanted
by that of the Nāgas. The latter are represented as ruling over
Mathurā, Padmāvatī (Padam Pawaya) and a few other places in Mid-India contemporaneously with the Guptas of Prayāga (Allahābād), Sāketa (Oudh) and Magadha (South Bihār). About the middle of the fourth century A.D. the Nāgas were reduced to subjection by the Gupta emperors. The “Son of Heaven” continued to rule in diminished glory over an obscure corner of the Indian borderland where he soon felt the irresistible might of Gupta arms.
CHAPTER IX

CIVILISATION IN THE ERA OF MAURYAN IMPERIALISM AND OF
GRAECO-SCYTHIAN INVASIONS (c. 324 B.C.—A.D. 320)

Forms of Government

In the period under review we have for the first time in the history of this country great empires extending from the Hindukush to the valleys of the Godāvari and the Krishnā. It will, however, be a mistake to think that the imperial or even the ordinary monarchical system was the only form of government known to the people of the age. Greek observers referring to the activities of the overseers who “enquire into and superintend all that goes on in India” add that “they make report to the king or, where the state is without a king, to the magistrates”. Thus non-monarchical states governed by their own magistrates flourished side by side with territories ruled by kings. Arrian makes distinct mention of self-governed cities. Towards the end of our period the existence of autonomous tribal governments is proved by numismatic evidence. Such states are usually referred to as yuvās, although the designation suṅgha is also known.

But monarchy was in this, as in all ages, in this country, the prevailing form of government. A remarkable feature of the period is the association in many parts of India of a prince of the blood or an allied chieftain with the titular or real head of the government as co-ordinate ruler or subordinate colleague. Such a prince was often called yuvārāja or yuvra-mahārāja (crown prince or junior king). Sometimes he was honoured with full regal titles. In the literature on polity this type of rule was known as dvairāja or diarchy.

Ideas of Kingship

Ideas of kingship underwent a change during the period. At the commencement of the age a king was considered to be a mere mortal, though a favoured mortal, the beloved of the deities. Thus Aśoka referred to himself and his forebears as devānāmipīya, the beloved of the gods. The Greeks, however, introduced titles like the “divine king”, the “god-like queen”, etc. In the early centuries
of the Christian era a Parthian king took the title of Devavrata, an epithet applied to an epic hero, the son of a river goddess, and also to Kārttikeya, the god of war. The Kushān emperors adopted the still more significant title of devaputra, “Son of Heaven”. The deification of rulers was clearly on the way to accomplishment, and ideas of divine kingship found favour especially in tracts which came under foreign influence. Greek and Chinese influence is clearly discernible in the title of devaputra.

Kings, even those who preceded the Scythian “Sons of Heaven”, were no puppets. They had usually at their disposal powerful standing armies and the material resources of vast empires over which they presided. From the observations of Greek writers and the actual records of the reigns of Chandragupta, Aśoka, Khāravela, Gautamiputra and many other rulers, it is clear that kings often led the troops in person to the battlefield. They also administered justice, issued rescripts, made important appointments, granted remission of taxes and took a large share in the ordinary work of civil government. They generally held in their hands the main strings of policy. Rulers with such powers and resources cannot be regarded as limited monarchs of the type with which the modern world is familiar. Nevertheless it is a mistake to consider Hindu kings of the age as absolute despots. There was a body of ancient rules which even the most masterful of the rulers of the period viewed with respect. The people were an important element (prakṛti) of the state. They were looked upon as children (prejā) for whose welfare the head of the state was responsible, and to whom he owed a debt which could only be discharged by good government. There was a certain amount of decentralisation notably in the spheres of local government, legislation and administration of justice in the rural areas. The existence of autonomous communities, urban and rural, political and economic, social and religious, put a limit, in normal times, on the exercise of authority by the supreme executive. Lastly, there was usually at imperial headquarters, and also at the chief centres of provincial government, a body of ministers (maṇtri parishad, maṇi saśāstra) who had a right to be consulted especially at times of emergency.

Literature on Polity

For a detailed record of the administrative arrangements of the period we have to look mainly to three classes of evidence, namely, inscriptions, accounts of Greek and Roman observers, notably Megasthenes, and literature on polity styled Rājaśāstra or Arthaśāstra.
Treatises on polity are often found embedded in legal or Purānic collections. But a few exist as independent works. The most famous among these is the Arthashastra attributed to Kautilya, the traditional minister of Chandragupta Maurya. The Arthashastra certainly existed before Bāna (seventh century A.D.) and the Nandi Sūtra of the Jainas (not later than the fifth century A.D.). But it is doubtful if in its present shape it is as old as the time of the first Maurya. Reference to Chinapattas, China silk, a commodity often mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature, points to a later date, as China was clearly outside the horizon of the early Mauryas, and is unknown to Indian epigraphy before the Nāgārjunikonda inscriptions. Equally noteworthy is the use of Sanskrit as the official language, a feature not characteristic of the Maurya period. A date as late as the Gupta period is, however, precluded by the absence of any reference to the denarius in the sections dealing with weights and coins. Quite in keeping with this view is the reference to the Arthashastra contained in the Jaina canonical works that were reduced to writing in the Gupta age.

Maurya Administration

The administrative history of the epoch is best studied under two heads, namely, Maurya administration and the system prevailing in the days of their Indian and Graeco-Scythian successors.

As already stated, the Maurya king did not lay claim to divine rank. Aśoka looked upon his people as his children and assigned their care to his officers just as a mother does to skilful nurses. The idea of government paternalism persists in these expressions. In one record he declared that whatever effort he was making was intended to discharge the debt which he owed to living beings. The Kautiliya Arthashastra, which in its present shape may be post-Mauryan but which uses older material, declares that "whatever pleases himself the king shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good." The king is also advised to show fatherly kindness to his people.

The powers of the king were extensive. We have it on the authority of Megasthenes that the king took part in war and the administration of justice. While listening to causes he did not suffer himself to be interrupted even though the time arrived for the massage of his limbs. Appointments to the most important offices were made by the ruler himself and the same authority often laid down the broad lines of policy and issued rescripts and codes of regulations (āsana, dharmaṇiyama) for the guidance of his officers.
and the people. Control was maintained over the most distant officials by an army of secret reporters and itinerant judges, and communication with them was kept up by a network of roads marked with pillars at every ten stades.

It was impossible for a single individual to support the Athenian load of administration. The king had the assistance of a council of advisers styled the Parishad or the mantra parishad, who were specially consulted in times of emergency. There were also bodies (nikāya) of trained officials who looked after the ordinary affairs of the realm. Greek writers refer to three important classes of officers, styled district officials (Agronomon), city commissioners (Astynomoi) and a third body who had the care of military affairs. In the inscriptions of Aśoka we have references to Rajakas and Prādeśikas, charged with the welfare of Jánapadas or country parts and Pradēṣas or districts, Mahāmātras or high officers charged with the administrations of cities (Nagala Vayabhāaka) and sundry other matters, and a host of minor officials including clerks (Jata), scribes (Līpikara) and reporters (Pātivedaka). The Arthasastra mentions the official designations Mahāmātra, Yaka, etc. It refers to the highest officers as the eighteen Śrīthas, the chief amongst whom were the Muni (chief minister), Parakhta (high priest), Yuvāraja (heir-apparent) and Senāpati (commander-in-chief). Another important class of officials mentioned in the literature on polity are the Adhyakshas or superintendents in charge of the various departments of the state. Officials were appointed irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. Vaiśyas and even Vāraṇas were admitted to the highest offices of the state.

At the head of the judiciary stood the king himself. But there were special tribunals of justice, both in cities and the country parts, presided over by Mahāmātras and Rajakas. Greek writers refer to judges who listened to the cases of foreigners. Petty cases in villages were doubtless decided by the headman and the village elders. Aśoka seems to have introduced many reforms in judicial administration and procedure. While preserving a certain amount of uniformity he is said to have allowed considerable discretion to the Rajakas so that they could discharge their duties unperturbed. Judges in the outlying provinces do not appear to have done their work to the satisfaction of the emperor. Greek writers testify to the severity of the penal code, and the emperor admits in some of his inscriptions that in Kālaṅga individuals suffered from arbitrary imprisonment and torture. To check maladministration in this and other outlying areas the emperor or his viceroys sent forth in rotation every five or three years such
officers as were of mild and temperate disposition and regardless of the sanctity of life.

The army was often led by the king himself. Chandragupta personally undertook the campaign against the generals of Alexander, and Asoka was an eye-witness of the terrible carnage in Kaliṅga. It is only in the days of the last Maurya that we find a senāpati overshadowing the king and transferring to himself the allegiance of the troops. The army of Chandragupta, according to Pliny, included 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 elephants, besides chariots. The protection of the king's person was entrusted to an amazonian bodyguard of armed women. The fighting forces were under the supervision of a governing body of thirty divided into six boards of five members each. Each of these boards was responsible for one of the following departments, namely, the navy, transport and commissariat, the infantry, the cavalry, the chariots and the elephants. In military as well as judicial affairs Asoka must have introduced great innovations. He deprecated wars and abolished even hunting. In one of his inscriptions he declares exultingly that throughout his dominions the sound of the war-drum had become the sound of dharma (religious discourse). It would have been a miracle if the army could have preserved its morale and efficiency under such circumstances.

The cost of civil and military administration even at the centre must have been enormous. The chief sources of revenue from villages mentioned in an inscription of Asoka are the bhāga and the bāli. The bhāga was the king's share of the produce of the soil, which was normally fixed at one-sixth, though in special cases it was raised to one-fourth or reduced to one-eighth. Bāli is explained by commentators as an extra impost levied on special tracts for the subsistence of certain officials. According to Greek writers, husbandmen paid, in addition to a fourth part of the produce of the soil, a land tribute because "all India is the property of the Crown and no private person is permitted to own land". Originally bāli may have had reference to this land tribute. Taxes on land were collected by the Agronomoi who measured the land and superintended the irrigation works. Other state-dues included cattle from herdsmen and tribute and prescribed services from those engaged in the trades. In urban areas the main sources of revenue were birth and death taxes, fines and tithes on sales. The distinction between taxes levied in rural and fortified areas (rāṣṭra and durgā) is indicated in the Arthashastra, which refers to certain high revenue functionaries styled the samāharī and the sanāhidhāri.
No such officials are, however, mentioned in the known Maurya inscriptions. Greek writers on the other hand, in describing the seventh caste of Indian society which consisted of the king’s councillors and assessors refer distinctly to treasurers of the state or superintendents of the treasury.

A considerable part of the revenue was spent on the army. The artisans, too, according to Diodorus, received maintenance from the imperial exchequer. They made armour for the troops, and constructed implements for husbandmen and others. The services of some of them must have been requisitioned for the construction of the wooden ramparts and towers encircling the city of Pāñjaliputra, and the splendid palaces which excelled in magnificence the stately regal edifices of Susa and Ecbatana. To them we owe also the splendid monoliths and other monuments of the time of Aśoka.

Herdsmen and hunters received an allowance of grain from the state in return for clearing the land of wild beasts and fowls. Another class which benefited from the royal bounty were the philosophers, among whom were included Brahmans as well as Śramanas (ascetics). Vast sums were also spent for irrigation and other works of public utility. The most famous of the irrigation works of the early Maurya period is the Subarśana lake of Kāṭhāwār, constructed by Pushyagupta the Vaiśya, an officer of the founder of the dynasty, and provided with supplemental channels by the Yavannarāja Tushāśṭha in the days of the emperor Aśoka. Roads furnished with milestones had already been constructed by the officials of the first Maurya. These were provided with shady groves and wells by his famous grandson. The latter also built hospitals both for men and other living creatures.

For the efficient administration of their huge empire the Mauryas divided their dominions into provinces subdivided into districts called āhāra, viśaya and perhaps also pradeśa. Each of the provinces was placed under a viceroy or governor who was either a prince of the blood or an official of the crown. In one case, and perhaps in several others, the local ruler or administrator bore the title of rājā, which is normally indicative of feudal rank. The system of hereditary officials does not seem to have come into use in the early period, at least in the province of Surāśṭra or Kāṭhāwār. The assumption of the title of rājā by local rulers, and the grant of autonomy to the Rājakas in the days of Aśoka, ultimately let loose centrifugal forces which must have helped in the dismemberment of the empire. In the early Maurya period, however, efficient control over the provincial governors was
maintained in various ways. With the princely viceroyals were associated a number of high officers (mahāmātrás) who received orders from the sovereign. The work of erring mahāmātrás in certain areas was supervised by special officers sent periodically from the metropolis. There was, besides, a host of secret emissaries of the central government (ephors, episkopoi, pativedakas) who enquired into and superintended all that went on in India and made reports to the emperor. Aśoka gave special directions to the reporters that they were to report to him the affairs of the people at any time anywhere “while he was eating, in the harem, in the inner apartment, at the cow-pen, in the palanquin or in the park”.

It may be thought that the all-embracing activities of the Maurya imperial government left little room for popular initiative or self-government. Nevertheless it is a fact that autonomous communities did exist in Maurya India, and classical writers make distinct mention of self-governed cities. Important affairs of the metropolis itself were conducted by a commission of thirty members divided, like the governing body of the defence forces, into six boards of five members each. There was a small committee to look after each of the following departments, namely, the mechanical arts, foreign residents, registration of births and deaths, sales, exchanges, weights and measures, supervision of manufactured articles, and collection of tithes on sales. Officers in charge of the city (nagarādhyakṣa, niyamapradhāna) find mention in Indian literature. The Kautilya Arthāśāstra says in the chapter dealing with the examination of government servants that each department shall be officered by several heads (bahumukhya), and that the adhyakṣa, or chief executive officer of a department, shall carry on his work in company with four other officials. The Nagaraka or the Town Prefect, whose duties are described in a subsequent chapter, was a distinct official whose existence in the Maurya period is proved by the testimony of the Kālinga edicts of Aśoka.

Administration in the Post-Maurya Period

In the post-Maurya period ideas of kingship changed, but a ruler still considered it to be his duty to please his people. The official machinery of the Aśokan age continued to function at least in those parts of India which did not come under Greek and Scythian domination. The science of government (arthavidyā) was now regularly studied and its influence is seen in epigraphic references to the education of princes, insistence on prescribed
CIVILISATION IN MAURYA-SCYTHIAN ERA

qualifications for appointment to high offices, classification of ministers, measures taken to secure the welfare of citizens both in urban and rural areas, and abstinence from oppressive imposition of vexatious taxes like Kāra (extra cess), Vishī (forced labour) and Prānaya (benevolence) in addition to the customary Bali (tribute), Śalka (duty), and Bhāga (king's share of the produce).

Innovations in administration were, however, introduced in north-west India, the territory that was ruled by successive dynasties of foreign conquerors. One of the most important changes related to the system of provincial government. The system of government by hereditary officials with the Persian title of Satrap was introduced in Taxila, Mathurā, Ujjain and a few other places, and we have references even to functionaries with the Greek titles of meriarch and strategos. A body of counsellors (mantis sarvīra) seems to have been associated with some of the provincial rulers, but the rule of others was often of a purely military character. The influence of the system of military governors (strategos) is clearly seen in the appointment by Sātavāhana kings of district officers styled mahāśāluṭi.

In spite of the prevalence of military rule in certain areas the old self-governing institutions did not wholly perish. Town councils (nigama subha) and officials styled nagaśāhādāna (city judges) are mentioned in several records and these correspond to the municipal commission and the nagaśa vishāhākara of the Maurya period. The affairs of the village continued to be controlled by the village functionaries led by the head-man. The village assembly afforded a field for co-operation between kings and villagers.

Social Conditions

Varṇa (caste) and āśrama (periods or stages of religious discipline), the two characteristic institutions of the Hindu social polity, reached a definite stage in the Maurya period. Greek writers inform us that no one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to exercise any calling or art except his own. For instance, a soldier could not become a husbandman or an artisan a philosopher. It is, however, added by some that the sophists could be from any caste. Philosophers lived in simple style and spent their lives listening to serious discourses. Some of them became wood-dwellers (hylobioi) who subsisted on leaves and fruits and wore garments made from the bark of trees. These undoubtedly correspond to the vānaprastha order of Hindu anchorites. In the inscriptions of Ashoka we have mention of householders and wandering ascetics.
The system of the four āśramas was thus well established in the early Maurya age.

The rise of heterodox creeds, the influx of foreigners and many other causes must have affected to a certain extent the rigidity of caste rules. Instances of matrimonial alliances between Indian monarchs and foreign potentates are known, and a Sātavāhana record makes pointed reference to the mingling of the four castes which a king considered pains to prevent. The same king is eulogised as a promoter of the households of Brāhmaṇas and the lowly orders, doubtless the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. The Kautiliya Arthashastra mentions agriculture, cattle breeding and trade as the common occupation of Vaiśyas and Śūdras, and, if Greek writers are to be believed, the old distinction between the Vaiśya and Śūdra was gradually obliterated and replaced by a new distinction between husbandmen, herdsmen, and traders, who constituted distinct castes. The physicians too emerge as a distinct group of philosophers next in point of honour to the wood-dwellers. Another remarkable feature of the period is the growth of two official castes, namely, the overseers and the councillors. The latter doubtless correspond to the amātya (or amacca) kula of the Pāli texts. The philosophers, the husbandmen, the herdsmen and hunters, the traders and artisans, the soldiers, the overseers and the councillors constituted the seven castes into which the population of India was divided in the days of Megasthenes. There is no reason to doubt that the Greek writer described the actual conditions as witnessed by him as opposed to the theory of the law-books. The restoration of the fourfold division of caste (chāturvarṇa) was sought by the great Gautamiputra Śātakarni, who referred to dviṣas (Brāhmaṇas) and avaras (the lower orders) as objects of his special care and to the Kṣatriyas as a consecrated class whom he did much to repress. The cause of Gautamiputra's hostility to the warrior caste is not clear. It is possible that the ranks of the latter were being swelled by Vārānas, Śakas, and Pahlavas who are classed by the author of the Māṇḍara-dharmaśāstra (Institutes of Manu) as degraded Kṣatriyas. It is well known that the wrath of the great Sātavāhana was specially directed against the latter. Caste rules could not, however, be rigidly enforced. The Sātavāhanas themselves intermarried with Śakas, and Brāhmaṇas figure as generals and kings like Drona of old.

Regarding the position of women, Greek writers and contemporary epigraphs give us a few details. We are told that some of them pursued philosophy and lived a life of continence. But married women were denied the privilege of sharing with their husbands
a knowledge of the sacred lore. Polygamy was practised, especially by rulers and noblemen. The care of the king’s person was entrusted to women, and we have the curious story that a woman who killed a king when drunk was rewarded by becoming the wife of his successor. Ashoka refers to women as particularly given to the performance of many trivial and worthless ceremonies. The practice of seclusion of women is hinted at by expressions like 

Ghadana occurring in inscriptions. Superintendents to look after women are mentioned. That the wife took a prominent share in religious activities by the side of her husband is clear from the record of the benefactions of Kāruvāka, the second queen of Ashoka himself. A glimpse of the way in which the life of a pious widow was spent is afforded by a Vāsik record which refers to the queen dowager Gantani Balaśtri as one who delighted in truth, charity, patience and respect for life, who was bent on penance, self-control, restraint and abstinence, fully working out the type of a royal sage’s wife (rājavrśabhadha). Her son is eulogised for unquestioning obedience towards his mother. “Women though deserving of honour should not have independence” says the law-giver. But history records instances of royal ladies who guided the affairs of a realm on behalf of their children.

Slavery was an established institution. It is recognised not only by the law-books and the literature on polity, but is expressly referred to in inscriptions. Ashoka draws a distinction between the slave and the hired labourer and inculcates kind treatment for all. Arrian, however, probably relying on Megasthenes, states that “all the Indians are free and not one of them is a slave”. Strabo also quotes Megasthenes as saying that none of the Indians employed slaves. But the same writer in describing the customs of the court of Pātaliputra observes that the care of the king’s person is entrusted to women who are bought from their parents. Buying and selling of women are thus admitted. We have it on the authority of Hegesander and Athenaeus that Amintas, that is Bindusāra, wrote to Antiochus asking him to purchase and send him not only sweet wine and dried figs but a sophist, only to be reminded that it was not lawful in Greece to sell a sophist. The implication is that a different law prevailed in the realm of Bindusāra. It has been pointed out by some scholars that Megasthenes may have been misled by the statement of Onesikritos about the non-existence of slavery in the lower Indus valley, or he may have heard of the principle laid down in Indian works on polity that no Aryan should be kept in the condition of permanent slavery.
About the manners and customs of the Indians we are told by Greek and Latin writers that they lived frugally and observed good order. Cultivators were mild and gentle. Theft was a thing of very rare occurrence and no Indian was accused of lying. The people never drank wine except at sacrifices and their food was principally a rice pottage. Their laws were simple. They had no suits about pledges or deposits nor did they require seals or witnesses, but they made their deposits and confided in each other. Their houses and property were generally left unguarded. We are further told that the Indians were a simple folk ignorant of writing and conducted all matters by memory. That the picture is a little overdrawn seems clear from what the same writers say about the different sections of the people in other passages. Thus Strabo tells us that fighting men when not engaged in active service passed their time in idleness and drinking. Speaking about a great synod that used to be held by philosophers, the same writer informs us that some of them commit their suggestions to writing. In another passage he quotes Nearchos as saying that Indians wrote letters on pieces of closely woven linen, while Curtius informs us that the bark of trees was used for writing on.

Games and Recreations

Inscriptions of the period refer frequently to utsava and samāja, festivities and merry gatherings. Kings considered it a duty to give practical demonstration of their sympathy with the people by liberality on such occasions. Dancing, singing and instrumental music must have formed an important part of all festivities. Samājas were often held in honour of a deity, e.g., Brahmā, Paśupati-Śiva, or Sarasvati. A prominent feature of some of these assemblies was a joust of arms in which wrestlers from distant regions took part. Fights between men and between elephants and other animals are mentioned by Aelian, who also describes chariot races with teams of oxen and horses as practised in the imperial city of Pātaliputra. The combats of men and animals often led to shedding of blood, and this was perhaps the reason why Aśoka issued an edict forbidding certain types of samāja “in which he saw much offence”, while admitting that there were other festal meetings which were excellent in his sight. Patañjali makes mention of dramatic representations by the Saubhikas or Sobhanikas who gave before the eyes of the spectators an actual demonstration of the incidents mentioned in the plays. He also refers to Granthikas who related the fortunes of their subjects from birth to death.
CIVILISATION IN MAURYA-SCYTHIAN ERA

Dice play afforded pleasure to many though its baneful effects are frequently alluded to. Buddhist writers refer to games on boards with eight or ten rows of squares from which chess play ultimately evolved. The Jaina Sūtrakṛtāṅga makes explicit mention of chess (ashtapada), a game that must have become very popular by the time of Bāna’s Harsha-charita and Ratnakara’s Haravijaya (ninth century A.D.).

Condition of the Peasantry

The common people, as distinguished from the intellectual and official aristocracy, seem to have been divided into three main classes, namely, husbandmen, herdsmen and hunters, and traders and artisans. Husbandmen formed the most numerous class of the population. Their lot in the early Maurya period does not appear to have been hard. We are told by Greek observers that they were exempted from fighting and other public services, and devoted the whole of their time to tillage. Men of this class were regarded as public benefactors and were not molested in times of war and conflict. The land remaining unravaged produced heavy crops and supplied the inhabitants with all that was requisite to make life very enjoyable. Husbandmen lived in the country away from towns. They paid into the treasury a share of the produce of the soil besides a land tribute which may be identical with the bali of the epigraphs. In times of emergency they had to pay benevolences. But such imposts were levied on rare occasions and a Saka ruler specially notes the fact that he carried out certain works without resorting to forced labour, extra cess or benevolences.

In parts of India the lot of the rural population was probably a little harder. Some idea of the burden borne by the ordinary villagers in these tracts may be gathered from the immunities (parīhāra) that were granted, according to certain records of the Śātavāhanas and their successors, to Vājākas and Kṣetras, that is, gardens and fields, conferred on privileged individuals or communities by royal personages. Such plots were “not to be entered by royal officers, not to be touched by any of them, not to be dug for salt, not to be interfered with by the district police”. A fuller list of various kinds of immunity is given in a Pallava record which says that a garden which belongs to the Brāhmaṇas is to be “free from Kara (extra cess), free from the taking of sweet and sour milk, free from troubles about salt and sugar, free from forced labour, free from the taking of the oxen in succession, free from the taking of grass and wood, free from the taking of vegetables and flowers”.
The rural areas were exposed to danger from flood, fire and beasts. Philosophers are represented by classical writers as gathering together at the beginning of the year to forewarn the assembled multitude about droughts and wet weather and also about propitious winds and about diseases. Storehouses were set up to provide for emergencies due to pests. The state was enjoined by the Arthaśāstra writers to show favour in times of distress by distributing seeds and food. We have it on the testimony of Greek writers that the sovereign always made adequate provision against a coming deficiency, and never failed to prepare beforehand what would help in time of need. The duty of clearing the country of all sorts of wild beasts and birds which devoured the seeds sown by husbandmen devolved on herdsmen and hunters who lived in tents or on the hills. By hunting and trapping they freed the country from pests. Implements for agriculturists were made by the artisans, who were not only exempted from taxation but received maintenance from the royal exchequer. In return for these concessions they had to render to the state certain prescribed services.

Trade and Navigation

Kings as well as independent cities depended to a large extent on the tribute paid by the peasantry, but a considerable portion of the state revenues came from traders. In records of the period sulkā is mentioned as an important source of royal income along with bali and bhāga. Maurya India had direct relations with Syria, Egypt and other countries of the Hellenistic West. There was a considerable body of foreign residents in the metropolis whose affairs were looked after by a special board of municipal commissioners. These foreigners could not all have been diplomats. Some of them were in all probability traders. As early as the first century B.C. contact was established between India and the Roman empire. In the early centuries of the Christian era we have epigraphic as well as literary references to intercourse with China, the Hellenic world, Ceylon and Farther India. These are recorded in the Nāgarjunikonda inscriptions and the Milindapanha.

Classical writers bear testimony to the activity and daring of the Indian navigators. One writer narrates how, in the reign of Euergetes II (145-116 B.C.), an Indian was brought to the king by the coast guard of the Arabian Gulf. They reported that they had found him in a ship alone and half dead. He spoke a language which they could not understand. He was taught the Greek tongue and then he related how he had started from the coast
of India but lost his course and reached Egypt alone. All his companions had perished from hunger. If he were restored to his country he would point out to those sent with him the route by sea to India. Eudoxus of Cyzicus was one of the number thus sent. He brought back with him aromatics and precious stones. Another writer relates that a present was given by the king of the Suevi to a pro-consul in Gaul, consisting of some Indians who, sailing from India for the purpose of commerce, had been driven by storms into Germany.

Sweet wine and dried figs of the West were eagerly sought by a Maurya king in the third century B.C. In the first century A.D. presents for the king of Broach, which was one of the greatest marts in the east, included costly vessels of silver, singing boys, beautiful maidens for the barem, fine wines, thin clothing and the choicest ointments. The Westerners on their part imported articles of luxury including the fine muslin of the lower Gangetic region. Pliny bears testimony to the vast sums of money sent to India in payment for these commodities. As early as the fourth century B.C. the municipal authorities of Pāṭaliputra had to constitute a special board to superintend trade and commerce. Its members had charge of weights and measures and saw that products in their seasons were sold with an official stamp. In the first century A.D. trade between India and the West was greatly facilitated when the pilot Hippalus discovered how to lay his course straight across the ocean. The splendid river system of northern India rendered transport comparatively easy in this area. The Maurya government built ships and let them out on hire for the transport of merchandise. Communication was more difficult in the Deccan, where vast tracts were without roads and goods had to be carried with difficulty by wagons from Paithan and Tagara to the port of Broach.

**Medium of Exchange**

Foreign commerce brought a large quantity of specie to India, and we have already referred to Pliny’s complaint about the drainage of Roman coins to this country. In the opinion of scholars the institution of a gold coinage by the Kushān imperial government from the time of Kadphises II is due to the influx of gold from the Roman empire. The Indians had an indigenous silver and copper coinage even in the pre-Maurya period. The gold nīshka, though often used as a medium of exchange, probably did not in the early period possess all the characteristics of a
regular coinage. The silver coin of thirty-two ratis (58.56 grs.) was known to the writer of the Mānava-dharmaśāstra (Institutes of Manu) as Purāṇa or Dharana. The copper coin of eighty ratis (146.4 grs.) was known as Kārshāpana. Smaller copper coins styled Kākani were also in circulation. The name Kārshāpaṇa was also applied to silver and gold coins particularly in the south. Buddhist commentators distinguished between the old (porana) nīla kahāpana (Kārshāpaṇa), apparently a silver coin, and the new type of coinage introduced by the satrap Rudradāman which was three-fourths of the old Kārshāpaṇa in weight. An old Kārshāpaṇa was equivalent to twenty māshas in certain areas and sixteen māshas in others. The actual weight of the extant silver coins of the western satraps is from thirty-four to thirty-six grains. The rate of exchange between the Kārshāpaṇa of thirty-six grains and the gold coins of the period, the Sunarpa of one hundred and twenty-four grains, was as 1 to 35. The ratio of silver to gold at this time was approximately 1 to 10.

Industry

The importance of the manufacturing industry in the Maurya period is emphasized by the fact that one committee of the municipal board of Pātaliputra was specially entrusted with the supervision of manufactured articles in the metropolis. Greek writers make pointed reference to the manufacture of arms and agricultural implements and the building of ships mainly for purposes of river navigation. Strabo speaks of dresses worked in gold and adorned with precious stones and also flowered robes made of fine muslin worn by the wealthy classes, and umbrellas used by their attendants. Indian muslin was exported in large quantities to the Roman empire in the first century A.D. Muslins of the finest sort were then called Gangetic and were produced in the valley of the lower Ganges. The fame of Eastern Bengal and the Gangetic delta for its white and soft dūkula is also vouched for by the Kanṭṭitiya Arthaśāstra. The fabric produced in Northern Bengal was black and as smooth as the surface of a gem. Muslins in great quantity were also exported from several market towns of southern India. The North-West was famous for its cotton cloth and silk yarn. The weaving industry gave employment to hundreds of helpless women and special arrangements were made for those who did not stir out of their houses. Weavers and other handycraftsmen were often organised into economic corporations called Śreniśa. Śreniśa or guilds were very much in evidence during this
period. Records of the Sātavāhana age refer to guilds of weavers, braziers, oil-millers, bamboo-workers, corn-dealers, and of artisans fabricating hydraulic engines. These guilds often served the purpose of modern banks.

Religion

For a description of the state of religion in the days of the Imperial Mauryas and their successors we have to rely on Greek and Latin authors, inscriptions and coins, the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali and the testimony of later writers. The worship of the Vedic gods was still far from obsolescent. Zeus Ombrios, the rain-god, worshipped by the Indians, probably represents the Vedic Indra or Parjanya. Indra and Varuṇa are invoked as late as the Sātavāhana period. But side by side with them appear other deities whose popularity dates from the epic period. The river Ganges, for example, is mentioned as an object of worship by classical writers. Quintus Curtius states that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the army of Poros as he advanced against the Macedonian conqueror. The connection of the Indian Herakles with the Śūrasenas and the city of Mathurā suggests his identification with Vāsudeva or Saṅkarṣana. Patañjali refers to the exhibition and sale by the Mauryas of images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha. Skanda and Viśākha retained their popularity till the Kushāna period when they appeared on the coins of Huvishka.

Even Aśoka, in many respects a great innovator, took pride in calling himself devānampiya, Beloved of the Gods.

Sacrifices are very much in evidence during this age. Of the occasions on which the Maurya king, according to Strabo, went out in times of peace, one was for the performance of sacrifice. Sacrifices were also offered by private persons and the services of "philosophers" were requisitioned for the purpose. The people of India, generally sober, freely indulged in drink when these ceremonies were performed. Aśoka tried to put a stop to the killing of living creatures on such occasions. Vaishnava reformers made an attempt to spiritualise sacrifices by giving them a new ethical meaning. But a great Brāhmanic revival followed the rise of the houses of Pushyamitra, Simuka-Sātavāhana and Śiva-skanda-varman Pallava. Rites like the Āśvamedha and Vājapeya came to be celebrated by princes on a grand scale.

From the beginning of the period Brāhmanism had to reckon with the heterodox creeds of the Ājivikas, Jainas and Buddhists which obtained a firm hold on certain sections of the people,
especially in Oudh, Bihār and Orissa. Tradition says that Chandragupta and Samprati of the Maurya dynasty were Jainas. The epithet *Vrishala*, applied to the first Maurya by a Brāhmaṇical playwright, makes it likely that in his later days he swerved from strict orthodoxy. An undoubted Jaina king of this period was Khāravela, who, strange to say, engaged in sanguinary conflicts with his neighbours in spite of the quietist teachings of the Arhats and Siddhas, saints and perfect beings, whom he invokes at the beginning of his inscription. Jaimism enjoyed special pre-eminence at Mathurā during the early centuries of the Christian era along with the cult of the Nāgas or Serpent deities like Dādhikarnā. The rival sect of the Ājivikas enjoyed, like many other denominations, the bounty of the emperors Aśoka and Daśaratha who granted cave dwellings for these sectaries. If tradition is to be believed the Ājivikas were also favoured by Bindusāra.

Buddhism, as is well known, secured the imperial patronage of Aśoka and became, mainly through his efforts, a world religion. It received marked favour from Menander and made a convert of the great Kanishka. But the Buddhism of Kanishka differed much from the simple ethical creed of the great Maurya. The human teacher of the four noble truths and the noble eight-fold path now became not merely a *deva* (deity) but *devatīdeva* (the god of gods). Like the Blessed Lord of the Bhāgavatas or Vaishnavas he is repeatedly born in the world of the living to remove the affliction of creatures and reveal to them the true law. Images of the teacher now appear in Buddhist sculpture and receive the devout worship of the faithful, like the icons of Brāhmaṇic deities.

Side by side with the Buddha appear the *dhyānī* Buddhas and Bodhisatvas. The newer Buddhism was known as the *Mahāyāna* or the Great Vehicle to distinguish it from the older creed which came to be styled *Hinayāna*. The formulation of its basic ideas is associated with the name of Nāgārjuna, a philosopher of the Sātavāhana period. In the early centuries of the Christian era Buddhism spread to China and several other parts of central, eastern and southern Asia. The Nāgārjunikonda inscriptions make mention of the fraternities of monks who converted Kāshmir, Gandhāra, China, Chilāta, Tosali, Aparantā, Vāṅga, Varnavāsi, Yavana, Damīla, Palura and the island of Ceylon. The introduction of Buddhism into China is traditionally attributed to a sage named Kaśyapa Mātaṅga. There is, however, evidence to show that Buddhist scriptures were communicated to the Chinese by a Yue-chi Chief as early as 2 B.C.

Another Indian faith which showed great missionary activity
was Bhāgavatism or Vaishnavism, which already in the second century B.C. spread amongst the Greeks of the Indian borderland. Heliodorus, the ambassador of Antialkidas, king of Taxila, set up a Garuḍa column at Besnagar in honour of Vāsudeva, the God of gods. Several contemporary epigraphs bear testimony to the prevalence, especially in Central India and the Deccan, of the cult of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarshana, that is Krisna and his brother. The rival cult of Śiva enjoyed the patronage of Kadphises II and Vāsudeva Kushā. A foreign religion, Christianity, claims to have established some connection with the Indian borderland in the days of Gondophernes. The worship of Babylonian, Iranian and other non-Indian deities like Xamaia, Mithra or Mihira (Sun), Mao (Moon), and Pharro (Fire) in the Kushan empire is proved by numismatic evidence. The cult of Mihira attained much popularity, thanks to the endeavours of the Magian priesthood.

**Literary Activity**

It is difficult to assign any extant Indian work definitely to the Maurya age. Three works, the *Kautūla Arthāśāstra*, the *Kapasyāstra* of Bhadrabahu and the Buddhist *Kathā vaithu* are traditionally attributed to personages who are said to have flourished in the Maurya period, but the ascription in all these cases has not met with general acceptance. A considerable body of literature is presupposed by Patañjali, usually regarded as a contemporary of Pushyanitra. Though many of the compositions mentioned by him existed long before the Mauryas, some of them may have been products of the Maurya epoch. The Grammarian knows the Pāṇḍu epic and refers to dramatic recitals and the performance of *Kaviśrābhaha* (slaying of Kamsa by Krisna) and *Balibandha* (binding of Bali by Vishnu in his Dwarf Incarnation). He also alludes to *ākhyānas* or tales of Yavakrita, Yayāti, Vāsavadatta and others, and makes mention of a *Vāravṛti Kavya*. That parts of the *Mahābhārata* were composed during the Maurya or early post-Maurya period appears probable from references to the unconquerable Asoka and also to a Yavana overlord of the lower Indus valley and his compatriot Dattāmitra, possibly Demetrios. The reference in the sister epic to mingled hordes of Yavanas and Sakas suggests that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, too, received accretions in the Graeco-Scythian age. The *Mānavadharma śāstra* which mentions the Yavanas, Sakas, Pāradas, and Pahlavas among Khatriya clans which were degraded for non-observance of sacred rītes and neglect of Brāhmaṇas may also be assigned to this period.
The epoch under review probably saw the composition of the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, an exposition of the grammatical aphorisms of Pāṇini. Another grammatical work, the Kāṭākṣa or Kalāpaka of Sarva-varman, is traditionally assigned to the Sātavāhana period. To the same age probably belongs the Brihat kalhkā of Gûnāḍhya. The Gāthā Saṃhitā attributed to Hāla, a Sātavāhana king, bears signs of a much later date. The epoch of the Kushāṇs produced the great work of Aśvaghosha, poet, dramatist and philosopher. Among other celebrities of the period mention may be made of Charaka, Suśruta, Nāgārjuna, Kumāralāta and possibly Āryadeva.

The Pāli Buddhist canon is said to have been reduced to writing in the first century b.c. The celebrated work known as the Milinda-pañhā, or the Questions of Menander, is also usually regarded as a product of the period under review. Some scholars believe that the astronomical work of Garga, the Pañmacchāriya of Vimalasūri, portions of the Divyāvadāna as well as the Lalitavistara and the Saddharma puṇḍarika are also to be assigned to this age.

Greek and Roman Influence

For centuries during the period under review India was in intimate contact with the Graeco-Roman world. Embassies were exchanged with the Hellenic powers by the sovereigns of Magadha and Mālwa. Indian philosophers, traders and adventurers were to be found in the intellectual circles of Athens and in the markets of Alexandria. The first of the Mauryas had entered into a marriage contract with a Greek potentate. His son was eager to secure the services of a Greek sophist. The third and the greatest of the Mauryas entrusted the government of a wealthy province and the execution of important irrigation works to a Yavana chief. The services of Greek engineers seem to have been requisitioned by the greatest of the Kushāṇs in the early centuries of the Christian era. Greek influence on Indian coinage and iconography is unmistakable.

A Greek orator, Dion Chrysostom, informs us that the poetry of Homer was sung by the Indians, who had translated it into their own language and modes of expression so that even Indians were not unacquainted with the woes of Priam, the weeping and wailing of Andromache and Hecuba and the heroic feats of Achilles and Hector. The reference may be to the Mahābhārata, but the possibility of an actual translation of the Greek epic is not entirely excluded. Indian writers bear testimony to the proficiency of the
Greeks in the sciences, and one author admits that they were honoured as though they were Rishis (Sages). Western singers were welcomed at the court of Broach. On the other hand Greek authors speak with admiration of the sages of India. Hellenic rulers and statesmen listened with respectful attention to Indian philosophers. One of the greatest of the Indo-Greek kings, Menander, showed great predilection for Buddhist teaching and issued coins of Buddhist type. A Greek ambassador erected a Garuda column in honour of Vāsudeva. Greek meridarchos are mentioned in Kharoshthi inscriptions as establishing Buddhist relics and sanctuaries. Indian cultural influence on the Greeks of Egypt has been traced in the Oxyrhynchus papyri.
CHAPTER X

THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The Rise of the Gupta Power

The Scythian conquerors of India had received their first great check in the Deccan. Gautamiputra Satakarni of the Sātavāhana dynasty had extirpated the Kshaharāta race and dealt crushing blows to the Śakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas. The power of the invaders was, however, still unshaken in the north where the “Son of Heaven” ruled in undiminished glory in the first part of the second century A.D. Even in Western India there was a Śaka revival under the great satrap Rudradāman I. Chinese evidence shows that the Yue-chi power was still far from being broken in A.D. 230. The rise of the Nāgas in the Jumna valley pushed the Northern Scythians further towards the north-west borderland of India, but the descendants of Rudradāman continued to rule over the fair provinces of Mālwa and Kāthiawār. The later Scythian rulers proved to be tyrants. A Brāhmaṇa historian of the seventh century A.D. refers to one of them as Parakalatrukāmukha, “coveting the wife of another”. An epic poet makes the prophecy that Śakas and other Melechha (barbarian) kings will rule unrighteously in the evil age to come. The members of the four orders will not adhere to their duties and the country will become a desert. Harassed by barbarians the earth in an earlier epoch had taken refuge in the strong arms of Chandragupta Maurya. She now found shelter in another line of Chandraguptas.

Chandra Gupta I

The first Chandra Gupta of the new line, though the third member of his dynasty to be mentioned in inscriptions, was the earliest to assume the imperial title of Mahārājadhirāja, “supreme King of great Kings”. Like the great Bimbisāra he strengthened his position by a matrimonial alliance with the powerful family of Lichchhavis then controlling portions of Bihār and perhaps even Nepāl. The Lichchhavi princess Kumāradevi must have
brought to her husband’s family an enormous accession of power and prestige. Before the death of her husband the Gupta sway very probably extended to Allahābad, Oudh and South Bihār, territories assigned to the family by the Purānic chronicles at a time when the Nāga power was still unbroken in the Ganges-Jumna valley. It is believed that the Gupta era commencing from A.D. 320 originated with Chandra Gupta I. An important act of this king was the holding of an assembly of counsellors and members of the royal family at which Prince Samudra Gupta was formally nominated successor to the imperial throne of the Guptas.

Samudra Gupta

Samudra Gupta, the next king, is probably the greatest of his house. The exact limits of his reign are not known. He probably came to the throne sometime after A.D. 320 and died before A.D. 380, the earliest known date of his successor. He is not altogether unknown to tradition. He appears to be mentioned in the Ārya-mañju-sṛi-mūla kalpa, and also in the Tāntrikāmandaka, a Javanese text. A Chinese writer, Wang-hiuen-tse, refers to an embassy sent to him by Śrī Meghavarma (-Vappa), king of Ceylon, to seek permission to build at Bodh-Gayā a monastery for Ceylonese pilgrims. But the most detailed and authentic record of his reign is preserved in two contemporary documents, viz. the Allahābad Pillar Inscription, a eulogy of the emperor composed by Harishena,
and an epigraph found at Eran in the Central Provinces. Certain copper plates purporting to belong to his reign are regarded by scholars as spurious. Samudra Gupta also left an extensive coinage. Some important events of his reign are known from this source and the records of his successors.

The eulogy of Harisheṇa is damaged in several parts so that it is difficult to follow the sequence of events. The Gupta monarch seems at first to have made an onslaught on the neighbouring realms of Ahichchatrā (Rohilkhand) and Padmāvatī (in Central India) then ruled by Achyuta and Nāgasena. He captured a prince of the Kota family and then rested on his laurels for a period in the city named Pushpā, i.e. Pāṭaliputra. Whether the Kota dynasty actually ruled in Pushapura or Pāṭaliputra about this time, and were dispossessed of it by the Gupta conqueror, is not made clear in the damaged epigraph that has come down to us. Other indications point to Śrāvasti or a territory still farther to the north as the realm where the Kota-kula ruled. A subsequent passage of the inscription names along with Achyuta and Nāgasena several other princes of Āryāvarta or the upper Ganges valley and some adjoining tracts, who were violently exterminated. These include Rudradeva, Matīla, Nāgasatā, Chandravarman, Ganaṭati Nāga, Nandin and Balavarman. The identity of most of the princes named in this list is still uncertain. Matīla has been connected by some scholars with the Bulandshahr district in the centre of the Ganges–Jumna Doab, while Ganaṭati Nāga seems to be associated by numismatic evidence with Narwar and Besnagar in Central India. Chandravarman is a more elusive but interesting figure. Suggestions have been made that he is identical with a ruler of the same name, the son of Śrīhivarman, mentioned as the lord of Pushkarana in an inscription discovered at Šušunia in the Bankura district of Western Bengal. His name has also been traced in the famous Chandravarmanāṇ in the Kotwalipāḍā pargana of the Faridpur district of Eastern Bengal. Bolder theorists have identified his father Śrīhivarman with a prince of Mandasar, the father of Naravarman, and located Pushkarana at Pokarna in Mārwar. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the Chandravarman of Samudra Gupta's record is not only a ruler of Rājputāna and a brother of Naravarman of Mandasar, but he is no other than the great emperor Chanda of the Meherauli Iron Pillar near Delhi. The last-mentioned scholars were apparently not aware of the existence of a place called Pokharan in the district of Bankura itself near the site of the record of Chandravarman. They also forget that no prince bearing the name
THE GUPTA EMPIRE

Chandragupta, still less a Chandravarman of Pokarna in Mārwar, is mentioned in any record of the Mandasor family, and that King Chandra of the Meherauli epigraph, who is called simply Chandra and not Chandravarman, is an emperor, the reputed conqueror of the whole of India, who can hardly be identified with the ruler of Samudra Gupta's record who is classed with a host of comparatively insignificant princes.

The great Gupta conqueror is next represented as reducing to the status of servants the forest kings apparently of the Vindhyan region. In an earlier passage we have reference to a grand expedition to the south in the course of which the emperor captured and again set at liberty all the kings of the Deccan. The rulers specially named in this connection are Mahendra of Kosala in the Upper Mahānadi valley, Vyāghra-rāja or the Tiger king of the great wilderness named Mahākāntāra, Manṭarāja of Kurala, Mahendragiri of Pīshāpura or Pithāpura in the Godāvari district, Svāmīdatta of Koṭṭura somewhere in the northern part of the Madras Presidency, Damana of Eranḍapalla possibly in the same region, Vishvugopa, the Pallava king of Kāñchī in the Chingleput district, Nīlarāja of Avamukta, Hastivarmā, the Śākākṣiyāna king of Veṅgi lying between the Godāvari and the Kṛishṇā, Ugrasena of Palalakka, probably in the Nellore district, Kubera of Devarasāthra in the Vizagapatam district and Dhanaṅjaya of Kusthalapur, possibly in North Arcot.

The reference to the liberation of the southern potentates shows that no attempt was made to incorporate the kingdoms of the Deccan south of the Nerbudda and the Mahānadi into the Gupta empire. From the territorial point of view the result of the brilliant campaigns of Samudra Gupta was the addition to the Gupta dominions described in the Purāṇas, of Rohilkhand, the Ganges-Jumna Doab, part of Eastern Mālwa, perhaps some adjoining tracts and several districts of Bengal. The annexation of part of Eastern Mālwa is confirmed by the Eran inscription. The suzerainty of the great Gupta, as distinguished from his direct rule, extended over a much wider area, and his imperious command was obeyed by princes and peoples far beyond the frontiers of the provinces directly administered by his own officers. Among his vassals we find mention of the kings of Samata (in Eastern Bengal), Īvāka (probably near Nowgong in Assam), Kāmarūpa (in Western Assam), Nepāl, Kartrijpura (Garhwal and Jalandhar) and several tribal states of the eastern and central Punjab, Mālwa and Western India, notably the Mālvas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras and Śanakāṅkikas. The descendants of the Kushān "Son of Heaven",
many chieftains of the Śakas, the Ceylonese and several other insular peoples hastened to propitiate the great Gupta by the offer of homage and tribute or presents. It was presumably after his military triumphs that the emperor completed the famous rite of the horse-sacrifice.

Great as were the military laurels won by Saṃudra Gupta, his personal accomplishments were no less remarkable. His court poet extols his magnanimity towards the fallen, his polished intellect, his knowledge of the scriptures, his poetic skill and his proficiency in music. The last trait of the emperor’s character is well illustrated by the lyric type of his coins. He gathered round himself a galaxy of poets and scholars, not the least eminent among whom was the warrior-poet Harisena who resembled his master in his versatility. Both Saṃudra Gupta and Aśoka set before their minds the ideal of world-conquest by means of parākrama. Parākrama, in the case of the Maurya, was not warlike activity but vigorous and effective action to propagate the old Indian morality as well as the special teaching of the Buddha. In the case of the Gupta it was an intense military and intellectual activity intended to bring about the political unification of Aryanvarta, the discomfiture of the foreign tormentors of the holy land and an efflorescence of the old Indian culture in all its varied aspects—religious, poetic, artistic.

Chandra Gupta II Vikramādiya

Saṃudra Gupta was succeeded, according to contemporary epigraphs, by his son Chandra Gupta II surnamed Vikramādiya who ruled from c. A.D. 380 to 413. Some recent writers have traced hints in literature of uncertain date and in inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., that the immediate successor of Saṃudra Gupta was his son Rāma Gupta, a weak ruler, who consented to surrender his wife Dhruvadevi to a Śaka tyrant. The honour of the queen was saved by Chandra Gupta, younger brother of Rāma Gupta, who killed the Śaka, replaced his brother on the imperial throne and married Dhruvadevi. We do not know how far the story embodies genuine historical tradition. No prince named Rāma Gupta is known to contemporary epigraphy, and the story shows signs of growth. The earliest version to which a definite date may be assigned is that of Bana who simply refers to the destruction of a libidinous Śaka king by Chandra Gupta disguised as a female. There is no reference here either to Rāma Gupta or to Dhruvadevi. The matter should, therefore, be
regarded as *sub judice* and can only be decided when contemporary evidence confirming the story is forthcoming.

Chandra Gupta II carried on the policy of "world-conquest," pursued by his predecessor. He effected his purpose partly by pacific overtures and partly by military activity. Political marriages occupy a prominent place in the foreign policy of the Guptas as of the Hapsburgs and Bourbons of Europe. The Lichhāvī alliance of the real founder of the dynasty, and the acceptance of presents of maidens from the courts of contemporary potentates by Səṃdrə Gupta, served to consolidate the nascent Gupta power as the Rajput marriages strengthened that of the Timurid sovereigns of a later date. A further step in the same direction was taken by Chandra Gupta II when he conciliated the Nāga chieftains of the upper and central provinces by accepting the hand of the princess Kūberanāgā and allied himself with the powerful family of the Vālakīṭakas of the Deccan by giving his daughter Prabhāvati in marriage to Rudrasena II. Thus strengthened, the king marched to Eastern Mālwa accompanied by his minister Viśasena-Sāha and possibly his general Āmnakāṇḍavā. He received the homage of the Snakāṇīka chieftain of the locality and took measures to wipe out Śaka rule in Western Mālwa and Kāthāwār. His efforts were crowned with success as we know from the evidence of coins and of Bāna's *Harsha-charita*.

On many of his coins Chandra Gupta II receives the epithet Vīkramāditya. In certain records of the twelfth century A.D. he is represented as the lord of the city of Ujjain as well as Pātaliputra. The cool courage he showed in going to fight with the Śakas and killing their chieftain in the enemy's own city entitles him to the epithets "Sāhāṣāka" and "Śakāri". These facts have led scholars to identify him with the Vīkramāditya Śakāri of legend, whose court is said to have been adorned by "nine gems" including Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira. The tradition about the nine gems is, however, late. It is uncertain if all of them actually flourished about the same time. Varāhamihira at any rate is to be placed after Āryabhata, who was born in the latter half of the fifth century A.D. But if Mallinātha is to be believed, Kālidāsa may have been a contemporary of Chandra Gupta II, for the great commentator mentions as one of his opponents the famous Dignāgācharya who is assigned to this period.

Another notable contemporary of Chandra Gupta II was Fa Hien. The celebrated Chinese pilgrim was struck with admiration by the famous royal palace and the houses for dispensing charity
and medicine at Pātaliputra. He speaks highly of the system of
government in the Madhya-desa and the benevolence of the
people, especially the moneyed classes.

Kumāra Gupta I and Skanda Gupta

The successor of Chandra Gupta II was his son Kumāra Gupta I
Mahendrāditya, whose known dates range from A.D. 415 to 455.
He maintained his hold over the vast empire of his forebears, which
now extended from North Bengal to Kāṭhīawār and from the
Himālayas to the Nerbudda. Numismatic evidence seems to
suggest that his influence at one time extended southwards, possibly
as far as the Satara district of the Deccan. His achievements were
sufficiently remarkable to entitle him to perform the famous rite
of the horse-sacrifice. But his last days were not happy. A people
known as the Pushyamitrās, probably located in or near Mekala
in the Nerbudda valley, developed great power and wealth and
reduced the imperial government to such straits that a prince
imperial had to spend a whole night on bare earth. The sovereign
himself seems to have perished before the issues were finally decided
in favour of the imperial family, mainly through the exertions of
Prince Skanda Gupta.

The victorious prince had soon to deal with a more formidable
enemy, the Huns. But he succeeded in repelling their early
invasions and recovering most of the imperial provinces, which
were placed under special Wardens of the Marches. In one inscription
the goddess of royal fortune is said to have chosen him as
her lord, having discarded the other princes. The full import of
this passage is somewhat obscure. It is, however, certain that the
superior ability and prowess of Skanda Gupta in a time of crisis
led to his choice as ruler in preference to other possible claimants.
The choice of Harsha in the seventh century apparently furnishes
a parallel.

Proud of his success against the barbarians Skanda Gupta
assumed the title of Vikramāditya. The memory of his achieve-
ments is popularly preserved in the story of Vikramāditya, son
of Mahendrāditya, narrated in the Kathāsaritsāgara. The reign
of Skanda Gupta probably terminated about A.D. 467.

The Last Days of the Gupta Empire

The history of the ensuing period is obscure. Inscriptions prove
that the Gupta sovereignty was acknowledged in the Jabalpur
region in the Nerbudda valley as late as A.D. 528, and in North Bengal till A.D. 543–544. A Kumāra Gupta is known to have been ruling in A.D. 473–474, a Budha Gupta from A.D. 476–477 to c. A.D. 495, a Vaiṣṇava Gupta in or about A.D. 508 and a Bhānu Gupta in A.D. 510–511. Bhātari and Nālandā seal inscriptions disclose the names of four kings, Puru Gupta, son of Kumāra Gupta I; Narasimha Gupta (Bālāditya), son of Puru Gupta; Kumāra Gupta, son of Narasimha, and Vishnu Gupta, son of Kumāra Gupta, who must be assigned to this obscure period. Narasimha Bālāditya has been identified with the conqueror of Mihiragula, a Hun tyrant, whose power was finally broken before A.D. 533–534. But the existence of several Bālādityas renders this identification doubtful. Another theory splits up the Gupta dynasty into two rival branches, one of which consisted of the kings mentioned in the Bhātari and Nālandā seals. The other included Kumāra Gupta of A.D. 473–474, Budha Gupta and Bhānu Gupta. But Budha Gupta is now known to have been a son of Puru Gupta, and the incontrovertible facts of his reign render the theory of a partition of the empire in the closing years of the fifth century A.D. unworthy of credence. A more plausible conjecture identifies Kumāra, son of Narasimha, with the Kumāra Gupta who ruled in A.D. 473–474. The only difficulty in accepting this view is the abnormal shortness of the period assignable to Puru Gupta and his son Narasimha (A.D. 467–473). But the difficulty is not insuperable, and we know of other instances of short reigns in the later days of an imperial dynasty.

Inscriptions make it clear that the Gupta empire maintained some sort of unity till the days of Budha Gupta (476–495) though it might have lost some of its westernmost provinces. After Budha Gupta the Huns, under Toramāna and Mihirakula or Mihiragula, undoubtedly pushed their conquests deep into the Indian interior as far as Eran in Eastern Mālwa. But the Huns received a check in the time of a king named Bālāditya who may have been identical with Bhānu Gupta, the hero of a “very famous battle” fought in the region of Eran. The Hun imperial power was finally shattered by Yaśodharmar, an energetic and ambitious chief of Māndasor in Western Mālwa before A.D. 533–534. Yaśodharmar seems to have made use of his victory to establish his own supremacy. But the Gupta power undoubtedly survived in North Bengal till A.D. 543–544. Even in later times we find a king whose name ended in Gupta fighting on the banks of the Brahma-putra. Other “Gupta” princes who are associated with Mālwa and Magadha came into contact with the rising power of the Pushyabhūti family of Thānesar and Kanauj in the latter half
of the sixth and first half of the seventh century A.D. These "Later Guptas" restored the glory of the line to a certain extent under Ādityasena in the latter half of the seventh century, and used titles indicative of imperial rank. They disappeared in the eighth century when Magadha became the battle-ground of the rival empires of Yaśovarman of Kanauj and an unnamed king of Gaudā lineage.