THE LAND OF INDIA

The ancient civilization of India grew up in a sharply demarcated sub-continent bounded on the north by the world’s largest mountain range—the chain of the Himalayas, which, with its extensions to east and west, divides India from the rest of Asia and the world. The barrier, however, was at no time an insuperable one, and at all periods both settlers and traders have found their way over the high and desolate passes into India, while Indians have carried their commerce and culture beyond her frontiers by the same route. India’s isolation has never been complete, and the effect of the mountain wall in developing her unique civilization has often been overrated.

The importance of the mountains to India is not so much in the isolation which they give her, as in the fact that they are the source of her two great rivers. The clouds drifting northwards and westwards in the rainy season discharge the last of their moisture on the high peaks, whence, fed by ever-melting snow, innumerable streams flow southwards, to meet in the great river systems of the Indus and the Ganges. On their way they pass through small and fertile plateaux, such as the valleys of Kashmir and Nepal, to debouch on the great plain.

Of the two river systems, that of the Indus, now mainly in Pakistan, had the earliest civilization, and gave its name to India. More than two thousand years before Christ the fertile plain of the Panjab (“Five Rivers”), watered by the five great tributaries of the Indus—the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satlaj—had a high culture, which spread as far as the sea and along the western seaboard at least as far as Gujarāt. The lower Indus, in the region of Pakistan known

* The Indians knew this river as Sindhu, and the Persians, who found difficulty in pronouncing an initial s, called it Hindu. From Persia the word passed to Greece, where the whole of India became known by the name of the western river. The ancient Indians knew their sub-continent as Jambudwipa (the continent of the jambu tree) or Bharatavarṣa (the Land of the sons of Bharata, a legendary emperor) (p. 490f). The latter name has been in part revived by the present Indian government. With the Muslim invasion the Persian name returned in the form Hindustān, and those of its inhabitants who followed the old religion became known as Hindus. The form Hindusthan, popular in modern India, is an Indo-Iranian hybrid with no linguistic justification.
as Sind, now passes through barren desert, though this was once a well watered and fertile land.

The basin of the Indus is divided from that of the Gangā by the Thar, or desert of Rājasthān, and by low hills. The watershed, to the north-west of Delhī, has been the scene of many bitter battles since at least 1000 B.C. The western half of the Gangā plain, from the region around Delhī to Patnā, and including the Doāb, or the land between the Gangā and its great tributary river Yamunā (formerly spelt Jumna, Jamna), has always been the heart of India. Here, in the region once known as Aryāvarta, the land of the Āryans, her classical culture was formed. Though generations of unscientific farming, deforestation, and other factors have now much reduced its fertility, this was once among the most productive lands in the world, and it has supported a very large population ever since it was brought under the plough. At its mouth in Bengal the Gangā forms a large delta, which even in historical times has gained appreciably on the sea; here the Gangā joins the Brahmaputra, which flows from Tibet by way of the Valley of Assam, the easternmost outpost of Hindu culture.

South of the great plain is a highland zone, rising to the chain of the Vindhyā mountains. These are by no means as impressive as the Himālayas, but have tended to form a barrier between the North, formerly called Hindustān, and the Peninsula, often known as the Deccan (meaning simply "South"), a term used sometimes for the whole peninsula, but more often for its northern and central portions. Most of the Deccan is a dry and hilly plateau, bordered on either side by long ranges of hills, the Western and Eastern Ghāts. Of these two ranges the western is the higher, and therefore most of the rivers of the Deccan, such as the Mahānadi, the Godāvari, the Kistnā or Kṛṣṇā, and the Kāvirī, flow eastwards to the sea. Two large rivers only, the Narmadā and the Tāpti, flow westwards. Near their mouths the Deccan rivers pass through plains which are smaller than that of the Gangā but almost as populous. The south-eastern part of the Peninsula forms a larger plain, the Tamil country, the culture of which was once independent, and is not yet completely unified with that of the North. The Dravidian peoples of Southern India still speak languages in no way akin to those of the North, and are of a different ethnic character (p. 24f), though there has been much intermixture between Northern and Southern types. Geographically Ceylon is a continuation of India, the plain of the North resembling that of South India, and the mountains in the centre of the island the Western Ghāts.

From Kasmīr in the North to Cape Comorin in the South the sub-continent is about 2,000 miles long, and therefore its climate
varies considerably. The Himalayan region has cold winters, with occasional frost and snow. In the northern plains the winter is cool, with wide variation of day and night temperature, whereas the hot season is almost intolerable. The temperature of the Deccan varies less with the season, though in the higher parts of the plateau nights are cool in winter. The Tamil Plain is continuously hot, but its temperature never rises to that of the northern plains in summer.

The most important feature of the Indian climate is the monsoon, or "the Rains". Except along the west coast and in parts of Ceylon little rain falls from October to May, when cultivation can only be carried on by carefully husbanding the water of rivers and streams, and raising a winter crop by irrigation. By the end of April growth has practically ceased. The temperature of the plains rises as high as 110° F. (43° C.) or over, and an intensely hot wind blows. Trees shed their leaves, grass is almost completely parched, wild animals often die in large numbers for want of water. Work is reduced to a minimum, and the world seems asleep.

Then clouds appear, high in the sky; in a few days they grow more numerous and darker, rolling up in banks from the sea. At last, in June, the rains come in great downpouring torrents, with much thunder and lightning. The temperature quickly drops, and within a few days the world is green and smiling again. Beasts, birds and insects reappear, the trees put on new leaves, and the earth is covered with fresh grass. The torrential rains, which fall at intervals for a couple of months and then gradually die away, make travel and all outdoor activity difficult, and often bring epidemics in their wake; but, despite these hardships, to the Indian mind the coming of the monsoon corresponds to the coming of spring in Europe. For this reason thunder and lightning, in Europe generally looked on as inauspicious, have no terrors for the Indian, but are welcome signs of the goodness of heaven (p. 257).

It has often been said that the scale of natural phenomena in India, and her total dependence on the monsoon, have helped to form the character of her peoples. Even today major disasters, such as flood, famine and plague, are hard to check, and in older times their control was almost impossible. Many other ancient civilizations, such as those of the Greeks, Romans and Chinese, had to contend with hard winters, which encouraged sturdiness and resource. India, on the other hand, was blessed by a bounteous Nature, who demanded little of man in return for sustenance, but in her terrible anger could not be appeased by any human effort. Hence, it has been suggested, the Indian character has tended to fatalism and quietism, accepting fortune and misfortune alike without complaint.
How far this judgement is a fair one is very dubious. Though an element of quietism certainly existed in the ancient Indian attitude to life, as it does in India today, it was never approved by moralists. The great achievements of ancient India and Ceylon—their immense irrigation works and splendid temples, and the long campaigns of their armies—do not suggest a devitalized people. If the climate had any effect on the Indian character it was, we believe, to develop a love of ease and comfort, an addiction to the simple pleasures and luxuries so freely given by Nature—a tendency to which the impulse to self-denial and asceticism on the one hand, and occasional strenuous effort on the other, were natural reactions.

THE DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT INDIA

The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a break down to the present day. Until the advent of the archaeologist, the peasant of Egypt or Iraq had no knowledge of the culture of his forefathers, and it is doubtful whether his Greek counterpart had any but the vaguest ideas about the glory of Periclean Athens. In each case there had been an almost complete break with the past. On the other hand, the earliest Europeans to visit India found a culture fully conscious of its own antiquity—a culture which indeed exaggerated that antiquity, and claimed not to have fundamentally changed for many thousands of years. To this day legends known to the humblest Indian recall the names of shadowy chieftains who lived nearly a thousand years before Christ, and the orthodox brāhmaṇ in his daily worship repeats hymns composed even earlier. India and China have, in fact, the oldest continuous cultural traditions in the world.

Until the last half of the 18th century Europeans made no real attempt to study India’s ancient past, and her early history was known only from brief passages in the works of Greek and Latin authors. A few devoted missionaries in the Peninsula gained a deep understanding of contemporary Indian life, and a brilliant mastery of the vernaculars, but they made no real attempt to understand the historical background of the culture of the people among whom they worked. They accepted that culture at its face value, as very ancient and unchanging, and their only studies of India’s past were in the nature of speculations linking the Indians with the descendants of Noah and the vanished empires of the Bible.

Meanwhile a few Jesuits succeeded in mastering Sanskrit, the classical language of India. One of them, Father Hanxleden, who worked in Kerala from 1699 to 1732, compiled the first Sanskrit
grammars in a European tongue, which remained in manuscript, but was used by his successors. Another, Father Coeurdoux, in 1767, was probably the first student to recognize the kinship of Sanskrit and the languages of Europe, and suggested that the brâhmans of India were descended from one of the sons of Japhet, whose brothers migrated to the West. Yet the Jesuits, for all their studies, gained no real understanding of India’s past: the foundations of Indology were laid independently, in another part of India, and by other hands.

In the year 1783 one of the most brilliant men of the 18th century, Sir William Jones (1746–94), came to Calcutta as a judge of the Supreme Court, under the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings, who himself had deep sympathy with both Muslim and Hindu culture. Jones was a linguistic genius, who had already learnt all the more important languages of Europe as well as Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and Turkish, and had even obtained a smattering of Chinese with the aid of the very inadequate material which was available at the time. Before coming to India he had recognized the relationship of European languages to Persian, and had rejected the orthodox view of the 18th century, that all these tongues were derived from Hebrew, which had been garbled at the Tower of Babel. In place of this dogma Jones suggested that Persian and the European languages were derived from a common ancestor which was not Hebrew.

Of the little band of Englishmen who administered Bengal for the Honourable East India Company only one, Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), had managed to learn Sanskrit. With the aid of Wilkins and friendly Bengali pandits Jones began to learn the language. On the first day of 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded, on Jones’ initiative, and with Jones himself as president. In the journal of this society, *Asiatic Researches*, the first real steps in revealing India’s past were taken. In November 1784 the first direct translation of a Sanskrit work into English, Wilkins’s *Bhagavad Gita*, was completed. This Wilkins followed in 1787 with a translation of the *Hitopadeśa*. In 1789 Jones translated Kâlidâsa’s *Sakuntalâ*, which went into five English editions in less than twenty years; this he followed by translations of the *Gita Govinda* (1792), and the law-book of Manu (published posthumously in 1794 under the title *Institutes of Hindoo Law*). Several less important translations appeared in successive issues of *Asiatic Researches*.

Jones and Wilkins were truly the fathers of Indology. They were followed in Calcutta by Henry Colebrooke (1765–1837) and Horace Hayman Wilson (1789–1860). To the works of these pioneers must be added that of the Frenchman Anquetil-Duperron, a Persian scholar who, in 1786, published a translation of four Upaniṣads from
a 17th-century Persian version—the translation of the whole manuscript, containing 50 Upaniṣāds, appearing in 1801.

Interest in Sanskrit literature began to grow in Europe as a result of these translations. In 1795 the government of the French Republic founded the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, and in Paris Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824), one of the earliest members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, held prisoner on parole in France at the end of the Peace of Amiens in 1803, became the first person to teach Sanskrit in Europe. It was from Hamilton that Friedrich Schlegel, the first German Sanskritist, learnt the language. The first university chair of Sanskrit was founded at the Collège de France in 1814, and held by Léonard de Chézy, while from 1818 onwards the larger German universities set up professorships. Sanskrit was first taught in England in 1805 at the training college of the East India Company at Hertford. The earliest English chair was the Boden Professorship at Oxford, first filled in 1832, when it was conferred upon H. H. Wilson, who had been an important member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Chairs were afterwards founded at London, Cambridge and Edinburgh, and at several other universities of Europe and America.

In 1816, Franz Bopp (1791–1867), a Bavarian, on the basis of the hints of Sir William Jones, succeeded in very tentatively reconstructing the common ancestor of Sanskrit and the classical languages of Europe, and comparative philology became an independent science. In 1821, the French Société Asiatique was founded in Paris, followed two years later by the Royal Asiatic Society in London. From these beginnings the work of the editing and study of ancient Indian literature went on apace throughout the 19th century. Probably the greatest achievement of Indological scholarship in 19th-century Europe was the enormous Sanskrit–German dictionary generally known as the St. Petersburg Lexicon, produced by the German scholars Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolf Roth, and published in parts by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences from 1852 to 1875. England’s greatest contributions to Sanskrit studies were the splendid edition of the Rg Veda, and the great series of authoritative annotated translations, Sacred Books of the East. Both these works were edited by the great German Sanskritist Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who spent most of his working life as Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford.

Meanwhile the study of ancient Indian culture was proceeding in another direction. The first work of the Asiatic Society of Bengal had been almost entirely literary and linguistic, and most of the 19th-century Indologists were primarily scholars in the classical tradition, working on written records. Early in the 19th century, however,
the Bengal Society began to turn some of its attention to the material remains of India's past, as the East India Company's surveyors brought back to Calcutta many reports of temples, caves and shrines, together with early coins and copies of inscriptions in long-dead scripts. By working backwards from the current scripts the older ones were gradually deciphered, until in 1837 a gifted amateur, James Prinsep, an official of the Calcutta Mint and Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, interpreted for the first time the earliest Brāhmi script and was able to read the edicts of the great emperor Asoka. Among Prinsep's colleagues in the work of decipherment was a young officer of the Royal Engineers, Alexander Cunningham, the father of Indian archaeology. From his arrival in India in 1831 Cunningham devoted every minute he could spare from his military duties to the study of the material remains of ancient India, until, in 1862, the Indian government established the post of Archæological Surveyor, to which he was appointed. Until his retirement in 1885 he devoted himself to the unravelling of India's past with complete single-heartedness. Though he made no startling discoveries, and though his technique was, by modern archaeological standards, crude and primitive, there is no doubt that, after Sir William Jones, Indology owes more to General Sir Alexander Cunningham than to any other worker in the field. Cunningham was assisted by several other pioneers, and though at the end of the 19th century the activities of the Archæological Survey almost ceased, owing to niggardly government grants, by 1900 many ancient buildings had been surveyed, and many inscriptions read and translated.

It was only in the 20th century that archæological excavation on a large scale began in India. Thanks to the personal interest of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, in 1901 the Archæological Survey was reformed and enlarged, and a young archæologist, John (later Sir John) Marshall, appointed as Director General. For a country of the size of India the Archæological Department was still lamentably small and poor, but Marshall was able to employ a number of expert assistants, and had funds for excavation on a scale more extensive than anything previously attempted. For the first time traces of the ancient cities of India began to come to light—archæology, as distinct from the surveying and conservation of ancient monuments, had begun in real earnest. The greatest triumph of the Archæological Survey of India under Sir John Marshall's directorship was undoubtedly the discovery of the Indus civilization. The first relics of India's oldest cities were noticed by Cunningham, who found strange unidentified seals in the neighbourhood of
THE WONDER THAT WAS INDIA

Harappā in the Panjāb. In 1922 an Indian officer of the Archaeological Survey, R. D. Banerjī, found further seals at Mohenjo Daro in Sind, and recognized that they were the remains of a pre-Aryan civilization of great antiquity. Under Sir John Marshall’s direction the sites were systematically excavated from 1924 until his retirement in 1931. Digging was interrupted by financial retrenchment, and by the Second World War; but further important discoveries were made at Harappā during the brief directorship of Sir R. E. Mortimer Wheeler just after the war; though the sites are still by no means fully cleared.

Much has yet to be done. Many mounds as yet unexcavated may throw floods of light on the dark places of India’s past; unpublished manuscripts of great importance may yet lie mouldering in out-of-the-way libraries. India, Pākistān and Ceylon are poor countries, desperately in need of funds with which to raise the standard of living of their peoples; but with the resources available the archaeological departments of all three countries are working to their fullest capacity to reveal the past.

Even in the last century, much valuable work was done by natives of India, especially by such Sanskritists and epigraphists as Drs. Bhaū Dāj, Bhagavānāl Indrājī, Rājendralal Mitra, and the great Sir R. G. Bhāndārkar. Now the chief initiative in Indology comes from the Indians themselves. Indian scholars have already completed the first critical edition of the gigantic Mahābhārata, and have started work on the enormous Poona Sanskrit Dictionary, which, when complete, will probably be the greatest work of lexicography the world has ever seen. Since 1947 the Archaeological Department has been entirely under Indian direction, and today the Western Indologist cannot hope to be more than the helper and friendly critic of the Asian. In times like these, however, when Asia is reacting against a century and a half of European domination, and a new culture, which will contain elements of East and West in firm synthesis, is in the process of birth, the European student still has a useful role to play in Indology.

THE GLORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

At most periods of her history India, though a cultural unit, has been torn by internecine war. In statecraft her rulers were cunning and unscrupulous. Famine, flood and plague visited her from time to time, and killed millions of her people. Inequality of birth was given religious sanction, and the lot of the humble was generally hard. Yet our overall impression is that in no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and of man and the
state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number, and in no other ancient lawbook are their rights so well protected as in the Arthasastra (p. 164f). No other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu (p. 127). In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of the kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but, in comparison with conditions in other early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity.

Some 19th-century missionaries, armed with passages from Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, often taken out of their context, and with tales of famine, disease, and the evils of the Hindu caste and family system, have helped to propagate the widespread fallacy that India is a land of lethargic gloom. The traveller landing at Bombay has only to watch the rush-hour crowds, and to compare them mentally with those of London, to realize that the Indian character is neither lethargic nor unhappy. This conclusion is borne out by a general acquaintance with the remains of India's past. Our second general impression of ancient India is that her people enjoyed life, passionately delighting both in the things of the senses and the things of the spirit.

The European student who concentrates on religious texts of a certain type may well gain the impression that ancient India was a land of "life-negating" ascetics, imposing their gloomy and sterile ideas upon the trusting millions who were their lay followers. The fallacy of this impression is quite evident from the secular literature, sculpture and painting of the time. The average Indian, though he might pay lip-service to the ascetic and respect his ideals, did not find life a vale of tears from which to escape at all costs; rather he was willing to accept the world as he found it, and to extract what happiness he could from it. Danḍin's description of the joys of a simple meal served in a comparatively poor home (p. 446ff) is probably more typical of ancient Indian everyday life than are the Upaniṣads. India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration of India's ancient culture.

* This term, as applied to Indian religion, thought and culture, is that of the great Dr. Albert Schweltzer (Indian Thought and its Development, passim).
II

PREHISTORY: THE HARAPPA CULTURE AND
THE ÄRYANS

PRIMITIVE MAN IN INDIA

Like prehistoric Europe, Northern India experienced ice ages, and it was after the second of these, in the Second Interglacial Period, more than 100,000 years before Christ, that man first left surviving traces in India. These are the palæolithic pebble tools of the Soan Culture, so called from the little river in the Panjāb where they have been found in large numbers. In type they resemble tools widely distributed all over the Old World, from England to Africa and China. In India no human remains have been found in association with the tools, but elsewhere such industries have been shown to be the work of primitive anthropoid types, such as the Pithecanthropus of Java and China.

In the South there existed another prehistoric stone industry, which is not conclusively dated, but which may have been the approximate contemporary of that of the Soan Valley. The men of this culture made core tools, especially fine hand axes, formed by striking off flakes from a large pebble, and they evidently had much better command over their material than the Soan men. This Madras Industry, as it is called by the archaeologists, has affinities with similar core tool industries in Africa, western Europe, and southern England, where it has been found in association with a more advanced type of man—a true Homo sapiens.

The Gangā Valley is one of the newest parts of the earth’s surface, and geologists believe that much of it was still a shallow sea at the time of these two stone-age industries; but there may have been contact between them by way of Rājasthān, for the tools of one culture have been found sporadically in the region of the other. The men who used these palæoliths must have lived in India for many millennia. Who they were and what became of them we do not know. Their blood may still flow in the inhabitants of modern India, but if the pebble industry of Soan was the work of proto-human anthropoids they must have vanished long ago, like the Neanderthal men in Europe and the Pithecanthropi of the Far East. Homo sapiens continued in India, his skill and technical equipment imperceptibly improving down the ages. He learnt to fashion microliths,
tiny and delicate stone scrapers and other implements, which have been found in many parts of India, from the N.-W. Frontier to the extreme south. Similar microlithic industries occur in many parts of the Near East and Africa, but their chronological relationship with the microlithic industry of India is not clear. In parts of the Deccan microliths are often found together with polished stone axes, and it would seem that in the remoter parts of the Peninsula their use was only fully replaced by that of iron tools around the beginning of the Christian age.¹

THE FIRST VILLAGES

Palæolithic man was a hunter and food gatherer, and lived in very small communities, which were usually nomadic. In the course of time he learnt to kindle fire, to protect his body from the weather with skin, bark or leaves, and to tame the wild dog which lurked round his campfire. In India, as all over the world, people lived thus for many thousands of years.

Then, very recently in the perspective of geological time, great changes took place in man’s way of living. Certainly not much earlier than 10,000 B.C., and perhaps as late as 6000 B.C., man developed what Professor Gordon Childe calls “an aggressive attitude to his environment”. He learnt how to grow food crops, to tame domestic animals, to make pots, and to weave garments. Before discovering the use of metal, he taught himself to make well-polished stone implements far in advance of those of the palæolithic age. Such implements have been found all over India, but mostly in the North-West and in the Deccan, and usually on or near the surface. In much of the country neolithic culture survived long, and many of the wilder hill tribes of the present day have only recently emerged from this stage.

Developed agriculture and permanent villages probably began in the 7th millennium B.C., in the Middle East. In India the earliest remains of settled cultures are of little agricultural villages in Balûchistân and lower Sind, perhaps dating from the end of the 4th millennium.

Classical writers show that when, in 326 B.C., Alexander of Macedon crossed the Indus, the climate of N.-W. India was much as it is today, though perhaps a little moister. The river valleys were fertile and well wooded, though the coastal strip to the west of the Indus, now called the Makrân, and much of Balûchistân, were already dry and desolate. But in 3000 B.C. the climate was rather different. The whole Indus region was well forested, providing fuel to burn
Fig. 1.—Some Prehistoric Sites of N.-W. India
bricks and food for the wild elephant and rhinoceros, and Baluchistān, now almost a waterless desert, was rich in rivers. This region supported many villages of agriculturists, who had settled in the upland valleys of Baluchistān and in the then fertile plain of the Makrān and the lower Indus.

These people belonged to several cultures, primarily distinguished by different types of painted pottery. Each culture had distinctive features of its own, but all were of the same generic pattern as those of the Middle East. Though their settlements were small, rarely more than a few acres in extent, their material standards were comparatively high. The villagers dwelt in comfortable houses of mud brick with lower courses of stone, and made good pottery, which they painted with pleasant patterns. They knew the use of metal, for a few copper implements have been discovered in the sites.


The village cultures had varying customs, for the secluded valleys of the Brahmā Hills and the comparative simplicity of the lives of inhabitants did not encourage very close contact. Thus the northern villages made predominantly red pottery, and the southern buff; the people of the Kullī Culture, in the Makrān, burnt their dead, while those of the Nāl Culture, in the Brahmā Hills, practised fractional burial, or the inhumation of the bones after partial disintegration by burning or exposure.

Their religion was of the type practised by other early agricultural communities in the Mediterranean region and the Middle East, centring round fertility rites and the worship of a Mother Goddess. Figurines of the Goddess have been found in many sites, and in those of the Zhob Culture, to the north of Quetta, phallic emblems have also been found. In many ancient cultures the worship of the Mother
Goddess was associated with that of the bull, and these were no exception. Bull figurines have been discovered, and the bull forms a favourite motif for the decoration of the pottery of Kulli and Rānā Ghundāl, one of the most important of the Zhob sites.

The people of the Kulli culture excelled in making small boxes of soft stone, delicately engraved with linear patterns. Such boxes have been occasionally found in early Mesopotamian sites, and we may assume that they were exported by the Kulli people, perhaps filled with unguent or perfume of some kind. At Susa and elsewhere have been found a few pieces of painted pottery which are evidently imitated from the wares of the Kulli people, who obviously traded with the Middle East. Otherwise there is little evidence of contact. No certainly identifiable Mesopotamian remains have been found in Balūchestān, and there is no trace of objects from the Kulli Culture along the overland route. It seems that the Kulli people made contact with the earliest Mesopotamian civilizations by sea.

THE HARAPPĀ CITY CULTURE

In the early part of the 3rd millennium, civilization, in the sense of an organized system of government over a comparatively large area, developed nearly simultaneously in the river valleys of the Nile, Euphrates, and Indus. We know a great deal about the civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, for they have left us written material which has been satisfactorily deciphered. The Indus people, on the other hand, did not engrave long inscriptions on stone or place papyrus scrolls in the tombs of their dead; all that we know of their writing is derived from the brief inscriptions of their seals, and there is no Indian counterpart of the Rosetta Stone. Several brilliant efforts have been made to read the Indus seals, but none so far has succeeded. Hence our knowledge of the Indus civilization is inadequate in many respects, and it must be classed as prehistoric, for it has no history in the strict sense of the term.

The civilization of the Indus is known to the archaeologist as the Harappā Culture, from the modern name of the site of one of its two great cities, on the left bank of the Rāvī, in the Panjāb. Mohenjo Daro, the second city, is on the right bank of the Indus, some 250 miles from its mouth. Recently, excavations have been carried out on the site of Kāltbangan, in the valley of the old River Sarasvatī, now almost dried up, near the border of India and West Pākistān. These have revealed a third city, almost as large as the two earlier known, and designed on the same plan. As well as these cities a few smaller towns are known, and a large number of village sites, from
Rūpar on the upper Satlaj to Lothal in Gujarāt. The area covered by the Harappā Culture therefore extended for some 950 miles from north to south, and the pattern of its civilization was so uniform that even the bricks were usually of the same size and shape from one end of it to the other. Outside this area the village cultures of Balūchistān seem to have continued much as before.

This great civilization owed little to the Middle East, and there is no reason to believe that it was formed by recent immigrants; the cities were built by people who had probably been in the Indus Valley for several centuries. The Harappā people were already Indians when they planned their cities, which hardly altered for about a thousand years. We cannot fix a precise date for the beginning of this civilization, but certain indications synchronize it roughly with the village cultures of Balūchistān. The site of Rānā Ghundāl produced a stratification which showed, in the third phase of the village’s history, a type of pottery with bold designs in black on a red background. From evidence discovered by Sir R. Mortimer Wheeler in 1946 it seems that the city of Harappā was built on a site occupied by people using similar pottery. There is no evidence of the date of the foundation of the other great city of Mohenjo Daro, for its lowest strata are now below the level of the Indus, whose bed has slowly risen with the centuries; though diggings have reached 30 feet below the surface, flooding has prevented the excavation of the earliest levels of the city. Important fresh light on the origins of the Harappā culture has recently been thrown by the excavations at Kot Diji, opposite Mohenjo Daro a few miles from the left bank of the Indus. Here, below the level of the Harappa Culture, have been found remains of an earlier culture, with pottery and tools of cruder workmanship. This Kot Diji culture seems to have been the prototype of the developed city civilization which grew out of it.

Thus the Harappā Culture, at least in the Panjāb, was later in its beginnings than the village cultures, but it was certainly in part contemporary with them, for traces of mutual contact have been found; and some of the village cultures survived the great civilization to the east of them. From the faint indications which are all the evidence we have, it would seem that the Indus cities began in the first half, perhaps towards the middle, of the 3rd millennium b.c.; it is almost certain that they continued well into the 2nd millennium.

When these cities were first excavated no fortifications and few weapons were found, and no building could be certainly identified as a temple or a palace. The hypothesis was then put forward that the cities were oligarchic commercial republics, without sharp
extremes of wealth and poverty, and with only a weak repressive organization; but the excavations at Harappā in 1946 and further discoveries at Mohenjo Daro have shown that this idyllic picture is incorrect. Each city had a well-fortified citadel, which seems to have been used for both religious and governmental purposes. The regular planning of the streets, and the strict uniformity throughout the area of the Harappā culture in such features as weights and measures, the size of bricks, and even the layout of the great cities, suggest rather a single centralized state than a number of free communities.

Probably the most striking feature of the culture was its intense conservatism. At Mohenjo Daro nine strata of buildings have been revealed. As the level of the earth rose from the periodic flooding of the Indus new houses would be built almost exactly on the sites of the old, with only minor variations in ground plan; for nearly a millennium at least, the street plan of the cities remained the same. The script of the Indus people was totally unchanged throughout their history. There is no doubt that they had contact with Mesopotamia, but they showed no inclination to adopt the technical advances of the more progressive culture. We must assume that there was continuity of government throughout the life of the civilization. This unparalleled continuity suggests, in the words of Professor Piggott, "the unchanging traditions of the temple" rather than "the secular instability of the court". It seems in fact that the civilization of Harappā, like those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, was theocratic in character.

The two cities were built on a similar plan. To the west of each was a "citadel", an oblong artificial platform some 30–50 feet high and about 400 × 200 yards in area (pl. I). This was defended by crenelated walls, and on it were erected the public buildings. Below it was the town proper, in each case at least a square mile in area. The main streets, some as much as 30 feet wide, were quite straight (pl. IIa), and divided the city into large blocks, within which were networks of narrow unplanned lanes. In neither of the great cities has any stone building been found; standardized burnt brick of good quality was the usual building material for dwelling houses and public buildings alike. The houses, often of two or more stories, though they varied in size, were all based on much the same plan—a square courtyard, round which were a number of rooms. The entrances were usually in side alleys, and no windows faced on the streets, which must have presented a monotonous vista of dull brick walls. The houses had bathrooms, the design of which shows that the Harappan, like the modern Indian, preferred to take
his bath by pouring pitchers of water over his head and shoulders. The bathrooms were provided with drains, which flowed into sewers under the main streets, leading to soak-pits. The sewers were covered throughout their length by large brick slabs. The unique sewerage system of the Indus people must have been maintained by some municipal organization, and is one of the most impressive of their achievements. No other ancient civilization until that of the Romans had so efficient a system of drains.

Fig. iii.—Interior of a House of the Harappā Culture
(By permission Dept. of Archaeology Government of India, and Arthur Probsthain, London.)

The average size of the ground floor of a house was about 30 feet square, but there were many bigger ones: obviously there were numerous well-to-do families in the Indus cities, which perhaps had a middle class larger and more important in the social scale than those of the contemporary civilizations of Sumer and Egypt. Remains of workmen's dwellings have also been discovered at both sites—parallel rows of two-roomed cottages, at Mohenjo Daro with a superficial area of 20 x 12 feet each, but at Harappā considerably larger; they
bear a striking resemblance to the “coolie lines” of modern Indian tea and other estates. At Harappā rows of such buildings have been found near the circular brick floors on which grain was pounded, and they were probably the dwellings of the workmen whose task was to grind corn for the priests and dignitaries who lived in the citadel. Drab and tiny as they were, these cottages were better dwellings than those in which many Indian coolies live at the present day.

The most striking of the few large buildings is the great bath in the citadel area of Mohenjo Daro. This is an oblong bathing pool $39 \times 23$ feet in area and 8 feet deep, constructed of beautiful brickwork made watertight with bitumen (pl. I1b). It could be drained by an opening in one corner and was surrounded by a cloister, on to which opened a number of small rooms. Like the “tank” of a Hindu temple, it probably had a religious purpose, and the cells may have been the homes of priests. The special attention paid by the people of the Harappā culture to cleanliness is hardly due to the fact that they had notions of hygiene in advance of those of other civilizations of their time, but indicates that, like the later Hindus, they had a strong belief in the purificatory effects of water from a ritual point of view.

The largest building so far excavated is one at Mohenjo Daro with a superficial area of $230 \times 78$ feet, which may have been a palace. At Harappā a great granary has been discovered to the north of the citadel; this was raised on a platform of some $150 \times 200$ feet in area to protect it from floods, and was divided into storage blocks of $50 \times 20$ feet each. It was doubtless used for storing the corn which was collected from the peasants as land tax, and we may assume that it had its counterpart at Mohenjo Daro. The main food crops were wheat, barley, peas, and sesamum, the latter still an important crop in India for its seeds, which provide edible oil. There is no clear evidence of the cultivation of rice, but the Harappā people grew and used cotton. It is not certain that irrigation was known, although this is possible. The main domestic animals known to modern India had already been tamed—humped and humpless cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, asses, dogs, and the domestic fowl. The elephant was well known, and may also have been tamed. The Harappā people may have known of the horse, since a few horse’s teeth have been found in the lowest stratum of the Baluchistān site of Rānā Ghundai, probably dating from several centuries earlier than the foundation of Harappā. This would indicate that horse-riding nomads found their way to N.-W. India in small numbers long before the Aryan invasion; but it is very doubtful whether the Harappā people possessed domestic horses themselves, and if they did they
must have been very rare animals. The bullock was probably the usual beast of burden.

On the basis of this thriving agricultural economy the Harappā people built their rather unimaginative but comfortable civilization. Their bourgeoisie had pleasant houses, and even their workmen, who may have been bondmen or slaves, had the comparative luxury of two-roomed brick-built cottages. Evidently a well organized commerce made these things possible. The cities undoubtedly traded with the village cultures of Balūchistān, where outposts of the Harappā culture have been traced, but many of their metals and semi-precious stones came from much longer distances. From Saurāshṭra and the Deccan they obtained conch shell, which they used freely in decoration, and several types of stone. Silver, turquoise and lapis lazuli were imported from Persia and Afgānistān. Their copper came either from Rājasthān or from Persia, while jadeite was probably obtained from Tibet or Central Asia.

Whether by sea or land, the products of the Indus reached Mesopotamia, for a number of typical Indus seals and a few other objects from the Indus Valley have been found in Sumer at levels dating between about 2300 and 2000 B.C., and some authorities believe that the land of Melukka, reached by sea from Sumer, and referred to in Sumerian documents, was the Indus Valley. Evidence of Sumerian exports to India is very scant and uncertain, and we must assume that they were mainly precious metals and raw materials. The finding of Indus seals suggests that merchants from India actually resided in Mesopotamia; their chief merchandise was probably cotton, which has always been one of India’s staple exports, and which is known to have been used in later Babylonia. The recently excavated site at Lothal in Gujarāt has revealed harbour works, and the Harappā people may have been more nautically inclined than was formerly supposed. No doubt from their port of Lothal they were in touch with places farther south, and it is possibly thus that certain distinctive features of the Harappan culture penetrated to South India.

It seems that every merchant or mercantile family had a seal, bearing an emblem, often of a religious character, and a name or brief inscription in the tantalizingly indecipherable script. The standard Harappā seal was a square or oblong plaque, usually made of the soft stone called steatite, which was delicately engraved and hardened by heating (pl. V). The Mesopotamian civilizations employed cylinder seals, which were rolled on clay tablets, leaving an impressed band bearing the device and inscription of the seal; one or two such seals have been found in Mohenjo Daro, but with devices of the Harappā type. Over 2,000 seals have been discovered in the Indus
cities, and it would seem that every important citizen possessed one. Their primary purpose was probably to mark the ownership of property, but they doubtless also served as amulets, and were regularly carried on the persons of their owners. Generally they depict animals, such as the bull, buffalo, goat, tiger and elephant, or what appear to be scenes from religious legend. Their brief inscriptions, never of more than twenty symbols and usually of not more than ten, are the only significant examples of the Harappā script to have survived.

This script had some 270 characters, which were evidently pictographic in origin, but which had an ideographic or syllabic character. It may have been inspired by the earliest Sumerian script, which probably antedates it slightly, but it bears little resemblance to any of the scripts of the ancient Middle East, though attempts have been made to connect it with one or other of them. The most striking similarities are with the symbols used until comparatively recent times by the natives of Easter Island, in the eastern Pacific,‡ but the distance in space and time between the two cultures is so great that there is scarcely any possibility of contact or influence. We do not know what writing media were used, though it has been suggested that a small pot found at the lesser site of Chanhu Daro is an inkwell. Certainly the Harappans did not inscribe their documents on clay tablets, or some of these would have been found in the remains of their cities.

They were not on the whole an artistic people. No doubt they had a literature, with religious epics similar to those of Sumer and Babylon, but these are forever lost to us. The inner walls of their houses were coated with mud plaster, but if any paintings were made on these walls all trace of them has vanished. The outer walls, facing the streets, were apparently of plain brick. Architecture was austerely utilitarian, a few examples of simple decorative brickwork being the only ornamentation so far discovered. No trace of monumental sculpture has been found anywhere in the remains, and if any of the larger buildings were temples they contained no large icons, unless these were made of wood or other perishable material.

But if the Harappā folk could not produce works of art on a large scale they excelled in those of small compass. Their most notable artistic achievement was perhaps in their seal engravings, especially those of animals, which they delineated with powerful realism and evident affection. The great urus bull with its many dewlaps, the rhinoceros with knobbly armoured hide, the tiger roaring fiercely, and the many other animals (pl. V) are the work of craftsmen who studied their subjects and loved them.
Equally interesting are some of the human figurines. The red sandstone torso of a man (pl. IVa) is particularly impressive for its realism. The modelling of the rather heavy abdomen seems to look forward to the style of later Indian sculpture, and it has even been suggested that this figurine is a product of much later times, which by some strange accident found its way into the lower stratum; but this is very unlikely, for the figure has certain features, notably the strange indentations on the shoulders, which cannot be explained on this hypothesis. The bust of another male figure, in steatite (pl. III), seems to show an attempt at portraiture. It has been suggested that the head is that of a priest, with his eyes half closed in meditation, but it is possible that he is a man of Mongolian type, for the presence of this type in the Indus Valley, at least sporadically, has been proved by the discovery of a single skull at Mohenjo Daro.

Most striking of the figurines is perhaps the bronze “dancing girl” (pl. Vb). Naked but for a necklace and a series of bangles almost covering one arm, her hair dressed in a complicated coiffure, standing in a provocative posture, with one arm on her hip and one lanky leg half bent, this young woman has an air of lively pertness, quite unlike anything in the work of other ancient civilizations. Her thin boyish figure, and those of the uninspiring mother goddesses, indicate, incidentally, that the canons of female beauty among the Harappā people were very different from those of later India. It has been suggested that this “dancing girl” is a representative of a class of temple dancers and prostitutes, such as existed in contemporary Middle Eastern civilizations and were an important feature of later Hindu culture, but this cannot be proved. It is not certain that the girl is a dancer, much less a temple dancer.

The Harappā people made brilliantly naturalistic models of animals, specially charming being the tiny monkeys and squirrels used as pinheads and beads (pl. IVc). For their children they made cattle with movable heads, model monkeys which would slide down a string, little toy carts, and whistles shaped like birds, all of terracotta. They also made rough terracotta statuettes of women, usually naked or nearly naked, but with elaborate head-dresses (fig. ii, c); these are probably icons of the Mother Goddess, and are so numerous that they seem to have been kept in nearly every home. They are very crudely fashioned, so we must assume that the goddess was not favoured by the upper classes, who commanded the services of the best craftsmen, but that her effigies were mass produced by humble potters to meet popular demand.

Though they had not completely given up the use of stone tools the Harappā people used implements of copper and bronze; but in
many respects they were technologically backward in comparison with Mesopotamia. The Sumerians very early invented knives and spearheads with ribs in the middle for extra strength, and axeheads with holes for the shafts; but the blades of Harappā were flat and easily bent, while the axeheads had to be lashed to their handles; only in the topmost levels do we find tools of a better type, which were probably left by invaders. In one respect the Harappā people were technically in advance of their contemporaries—they had devised a saw with undulating teeth, which allowed the dust to escape freely from the cut, and much simplified the carpenter’s task. From this we may assume that they had particular skill in carpentry. They made beautiful beads of semi-precious stones and faience, and their pottery, though mostly plain and uninteresting, was well made, and a few specimens are delicately painted (fig. iv).

![Fig. iv.—Painted Pottery of the Harappā Culture](image)

The men wore robes which left one shoulder bare, and the garments of the upper classes were often richly patterned. Beards were worn, and men and women alike had long hair. The elaborate headdresses of the Mother Goddess figures probably had their counterparts in the festive attire of the richer women. The goddesses often wear only very short skirts, but on one seal women, perhaps priestesses, are depicted with longer skirts, reaching to just below the knee. The coiffures of the women were often elaborate, and pigtails were also popular, as in present-day India. Women loved jewellery, and wore heavy bangles in profusion, large necklaces, and earrings.

As far as we can reconstruct it from our fragmentary knowledge, the religion of the Harappā people had some features suggesting those characteristics of later Hinduism which are not to be found in the earliest stratum of Indian religious literature. The Mother Goddess, for instance, reappears only after the lapse of over a thousand years from the fall of Harappā. We have seen that she
was evidently the divinity of the people, and the upper classes seem to have preferred a god, who also shows features found in later Hinduism. As well as the figurines already mentioned, which may represent divinities, there are a few in terracotta of bearded nude men with coiled hair; their posture, rigidly upright, with the legs slightly apart, and the arms held parallel to the sides of the body but not touching it, closely resembles the stance called by the Jainas kāyotsarga, in which meditating teachers were often portrayed in later times; the repetition of this figure, in exactly the same posture, would suggest that he was a god. A terracotta mask of a horned deity has also been found.

The most striking deity of the Harappā culture is the horned god of the seals (pl. V). He is depicted on three specimens, in two seated on a stool or small dais, and in the third on the ground; in all three his posture is one well known to later Indian holy men, with the legs drawn up close to the body and the two heels touching, a position quite impossible to the average Westerner without much practice. The god's body is nude, except for many bangles and what appear to be necklaces, and he wears a peculiar headdress, consisting of a pair of horns, which may have been thought of as growing from his head, with a plant-like object between them. On the largest of the seals he is surrounded by four wild animals, an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo, and beneath his stool are two deer, as in the representations of the Buddha preaching his first sermon in the Deer-Park at Vārāṇasī. The animals, the plant-like growth from the head, and the fact that he is ithyphallic, indicate that he is a fertility god. His face has a fierce tigerish aspect, and one authority has suggested that it is not meant to be human; to the right and left of the head are small protuberances which were believed by Sir John Marshall to represent a second and third face on either side. Marshall boldly called this god "Proto-Siva", and the name has been generally accepted; certainly the horned god has much in common with the Śiva of later Hinduism, who is, in his most important aspect, a fertility deity, is known as Paśupati, "the Lord of Beasts", and is sometimes depicted with three faces.

Animals played a big part in the religion of the Indus people. Though all the animals shown on the seals may not have been particularly sacred, the bull occurs in contexts which prove that he at least was so; on many seals he stands before a peculiar object which is evidently not a manger, and has no utilitarian purpose, but is a "cult object", probably a table on which corn was grown for fertility rites. On some seals small lines emerge from the table, which may represent the growing corn, no doubt eaten by the sacred bull as
part of the ceremony. The bull is usually depicted with a single horn, and has sometimes been referred to as a unicorn, though there is little doubt that the artist was trying to portray a normal bull, whose second horn was concealed by the first. In Hinduism the bull is specially associated with the god Śiva, but he does not seem to have been connected with the "Proto-Śiva" of Harappā, for he is not among the animals surrounding the god on the famous seal. The horns of the "Proto-Śiva" are not those of an ox but of a buffalo. The cow, so revered in later Hinduism, is nowhere depicted.

Certain trees were sacred, as they are in Hinduism today, notably the pīpal, which is specially honoured by Buddhists as the species under which the Buddha found enlightenment. One very interesting seal (pl. Ve) depicts a horned goddess in a pīpal tree, worshipped by a figure also wearing horns, with a human-headed goat watching the ceremony and a row of seven pigtailed women, probably priestesses, in attendance.

One of the few traces of Sumerian contact is to be found in the seal showing a hero grappling with two tigers (pl. Vf) — a variant of a famous Mesopotamian motif in which the hero Gilgamesh is depicted as fighting two lions. The rotund face of the hero, and the peculiar treatment of his hair, suggest that he represents the sun, and that the night-prowling tigers are the powers of darkness.

Phallic worship was an important element of Harappā religion. Many cone-shaped objects have been found, which are almost certainly formalized representations of the phallus. The liṅga or phallic emblem in later Hinduism is the symbol of the god Śiva, who is more commonly worshipped thus than as an icon; it is a fair inference that these objects were connected with the ithyphallic "Proto-Śiva" of the seals. It has been suggested that certain large ring-shaped stones are formalized representations of the female generative organ and were symbols of the Mother Goddess, but this is most doubtful.

Until Sir Mortimer Wheeler's work at Harappā in 1946 nothing was known with certainty of the way in which these people disposed of their dead; but from a cemetery then discovered, containing at least 57 graves, it appears that burial was the usual rite. The whole cemetery has not been excavated and the evidence is not yet fully assessed, but it is clear that the dead were buried in an extended posture with pottery vessels and personal ornaments.

Who were the people who built this great civilization? Some Indian historians have tried to prove that they were the Āryans, the people who composed the Rg Veda, but this is quite impossible. From the skeletal remains so far examined it appears that some of the
Harappans were people of the long-headed, narrow-nosed, slender Mediterranean type, found all over the ancient Middle East and in Egypt, and forming an important element of the Indian population at the present day. A second element was the Proto-Australoid, with flat nose and thick lips, related to the Australian aborigines and to some of the wild hill-tribes of modern India. A single skull of Mongolian type has been found, and one of the short-headed Alpine type. The bearded steatite head to which we have referred shows elements of both the latter types, while the bronze dancing girl seems certainly Proto-Australoid. Then as now, N.-W. India was the meeting-place of many races.

The modern South Indian is usually a blend of Mediterranean and Proto-Australoid, the two chief ethnic factors in the Harappā culture; moreover the Harappā religion seems to show many similarities with those elements of Hinduism which are specially popular in the Dravidian country. In the hills of Bālūchistān, where the people of the Nāl and Zhob Cultures built their little villages, the Brāhuis, though ethnically now predominantly Iranian, speak a Dravidian language. Thus it has been suggested that the Harappā folk were Dravidians, and Father H. Heras, one of the authorities who have tried to read their script, has even claimed that their language was a very primitive form of Tamil.

It might be suggested that the Harappā people consisted of a Proto-Australoid element, which at one time may have covered the whole of India, overlaid by a Mediterranean one, which entered India at a very early period, bringing with it the elements of civilization. Later, under the pressure of further invasions, this Mediterranean element spread throughout the sub-continent, and, again mixing with the indigenous peoples, formed the Dravidians. The chief objection to this theory is that the megaliths erected by the early Dravidians in South India have been shown to be not very ancient; a recent theory even holds that the Dravidians came to India from the west by sea as late as the second half of the 1st millennium b.c. We can only say with certainty that some of the inhabitants of the Indus cities were of a type widely found further to the west, and that their descendants must survive in the present-day population of India.

It does not follow that the rest of India was wholly ignorant of the Harappā culture. Certain finds of copper implements in the district of Rānchī (S. Bihār) and elsewhere suggest that the peoples of North India learnt the use of metal from Harappā, for the blades are without the strengthening midrib; but the dating of these objects is very uncertain, and they may be much later than the fall of Harappā.

Certain pre-Ayran sites in the western half of northern India also
give evidence of Harappān cultural influence on peoples at a lower cultural level. Material from places such as Hastināpura, Kauśāmbī and the very recently excavated Atranjī Kherā near Aligarh, together with Deccan sites like Navdātoli and Nevasā, show that by the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. there were many settlements whose inhabitants lived in reasonably comfortable conditions, knowing the use of metal. They were apparently illiterate, but far from barbarous, and as our picture of prehistoric India grows more accurate it becomes clear that, even outside the region of the Harappā culture, many peoples in the sub-continent had attained a considerable degree of cultural progress. Even as far east as Bengal there was at least one metal-using settlement in the 2nd millennium—this was at a place now called Pāndu Rājar Dhibī, where a seal and pottery have been found somewhat resembling those of Minoan Crete, though we cannot be sure that this indicates actual contact. This latter site seems to indicate two strata of the population—a comparatively cultured, metal-using element living by the side of another which was still using microliths. The picture of prehistoric India beyond the region of the Harappā culture is rapidly becoming clearer, and in time it may be possible to trace in broad outline the movements of early peoples throughout the sub-continent, and solve many problems at present very obscure.

Whatever the case may be, pre-Āryan India made certain advances in husbandry for which the whole world owes her a debt. Cotton was to the best of our knowledge first used by the Harappā people. Rice was not one of their staple crops, nor was it grown in neolithic China, whose main food crop was millet. Wild rice is known in Eastern India, and it is here, in the swampy Gangā Valley, that it was probably first cultivated by the neolithic contemporaries of the Harappā people. The water buffalo, known to the Harappā people, was a comparatively late arrival in China, and it may have been first domesticated in the Gangetic Plain, though some authorities believe that it originated in the Philippine Islands.

Perhaps the most widely appreciated of prehistoric India’s gifts to the world is the domestic fowl. Ornithologists are agreed that all domestic species descend from the wild Indian jungle fowl. The Harappā people knew the domestic fowl, though its remains are few and it is not depicted on the seals. It was probably first tamed by neolithic Indians in the Gangā Valley, whence it found its way by the Burma route to China, where it appears in the middle of the 2nd millennium. The Egyptians knew it at about the same time, as a rare luxury bird. Clearly India, even at this remote period, was not wholly cut off from the rest of the world.
THE END OF THE INDUS CITIES

When Harappā was first built the citadel was defended by a great turreted wall, 40 feet wide at the base and 35 feet high. In the course of the centuries this wall was refaced more strongly than before, though there is no evidence that the city was dangerously threatened by enemies. But towards the end of Harappā’s existence its defences were further strengthened, and one gateway was wholly blocked. Danger threatened from the west.

First to suffer were the Balūchistān villages. The earliest level of the site of Rānā Ghundāt shows that bands of horse-riding invaders were present in the region before 3000 B.C., but they soon disappeared, to give way to the peasant culture which occupied the site in the 3rd millennium and was contemporary with the Indus cities. Then, in 2000 B.C. or a little later, the village was burnt, and a new, coarser type of pottery appears—evidently invaders had occupied the site. Soon afterwards came other invaders, using unpainted encrusted pottery. Similar though less complete evidence appears in other North Balūchistān sites, while in South Balūchistān people of an intrusive culture founded a settlement at Shāhī Tump, not far from Sutka-ken Dor, which was the most westerly outpost of the Harappā Culture. The Shāhī Tump people used the shaft-hole axe and round copper seals, and replaced the earlier local culture, known to archaeologists as the Kullī Culture. In the last phase of the life of Mohenjo Daro painted pottery and stone vessels resembling those of Balūchistān appear, and this may indicate a large influx of Kullī refugees, who brought their crafts with them.

After the barbarians had conquered the outlying villages the ancient laws and rigid organization of the Indus cities must have suffered great strain. At Mohenjo Daro large rooms were divided into smaller ones, and mansions became tenements; potters’ kilns were built within the city boundaries, and one even in the middle of a street. The street plan was no longer maintained. Hoards of jewellery were buried. Evidently the city was overpopulated and law and order were less well kept, perhaps because the barbarians were already ranging the provinces and the city was full of newcomers, whom the city fathers could not force into the age-old pattern of its culture, very frequent flooding much worsened the situation.

When the end came it would seem that most of the citizens of Mohenjo Daro had fled; but a group of huddled skeletons in one of the houses and one skeleton of a woman lying on the steps of a well suggest that a few stragglers were overtaken by the invaders. In this level a fine copper axe has been found, with a very strong
shaft-hole and an adze blade opposite that of the axe—a beautiful tool, adapted both for war and peace, and superior to anything the Harappā people possessed (fig. v). Swords with strengthening midribs also make their appearance. A single pot burial of a man of rather Mongolian type may be that of one of the invaders.

From Harappā comes evidence of a different kind. Here, near the older cemetery of interments, is another cemetery on a higher level, containing fractional burials in pots of men with short-headed Armenoid skulls. A skull of similar type was buried in the citadel itself. At Chanhu Daro, on the lower Indus, the Harappā people were replaced by squatters, living in small huts with fireplaces, innovations which suggest that they came from a colder climate. These people, though unsophisticated in many respects, had superior tools and weapons. Similar settlements were made in Balūchistān at about the same time. Among the scanty remains of these invaders there is clear evidence of the presence of the horse. The Indus valley fell to barbarians who triumphed not only through greater military prowess, but also because they were equipped with better weapons, and had learnt to make full use of the swift and terror-striking beast of the steppes. In other parts of India, however, the impact of the invaders was not immediately felt, and it appears that the Harappā city of Lothal, in Gujarāt, survived long after its parent cities had fallen, and its culture seems to have developed gradually, merging into that of the later period with no sharp break in continuity.

The date of these great events can only be fixed very approximately from synchronisms with the Middle East. Sporadic traces of contact can be found between the Indus cities and Sumeria, and there is some reason to believe that this contact continued under the First Dynasty of Babylon, which produced the great lawgiver Hammurabi. This dynasty was also overwhelmed by barbarians, the Kassites, who came from the hills of Iran and conquered by virtue of their horse-drawn chariots. After the Kassite invasion no trace of contact with the Indus can be found in Mesopotamia, and it is therefore
likely that the Indus cities vanished at about the same time as the
dynasty of Hammurabi. Earlier authorities placed the latter event in
the first centuries of the 2nd millennium B.C., but new evidence, which
appeared shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, has
resulted in a revised chronology. The fall of the First Babylonian
Dynasty is now thought to have taken place about 1600 B.C.

The earliest Indian literary source we possess is the Rg Veda,
most of which was composed in the second half of the 2nd millennium.
It is evidently the work of an invading people, who have not yet fully
subjugated the original inhabitants of N.-W. India. In his great
report on the excavations at Mohenjo Daro, Sir John Marshall
maintained that some two centuries or more elapsed between the
fall of the Indus cities and the invasion of the Áryans; but the more
recent excavations at Harappā and elsewhere, the revision of the
chronology of Babylon, and indications in the Rg Veda itself, have all
tended to reduce the gap. Many competent authorities, led by
Sir R. Mortimer Wheeler, now believe that Harappā was over-
thrown by the Áryans. It is suggested that the interments in the
later cemetery at Harappā are those of "true Vedic Áryans", and
that the forts or citadels which the Vedic war-god Indra is said to
have destroyed included Harappā in their number.

There is not enough evidence to say with certainty that the
destroyers of the Indus cities were members of the group of related
tribes whose priests composed the Rg Veda, but it is probable that
the fall of this great civilization was partly due to the widespread
migratory movements of charioteering peoples which altered the face
of the whole civilized world in the 2nd millennium B.C.

INDO-EUROPEANS AND ÁRYANS

The invaders of India called themselves Áryas, a word generally
anglicized into Áryans. The name was also used by the ancient
Persians, and survives in the word Irān, while Ėre, the name of the
most westerly land reached by Indo-European peoples in ancient
times, is also cognate. Here we cannot discuss the many theories
on the origin of these people, but can only give that which seems to
us most reasonable, and which, we believe, would be accepted by a
majority of those who specialize in the subject.

About 2000 B.C. the great steppeland which stretches from Poland
to Central Asia was inhabited by semi-nomadic barbarians, who
were tall, comparatively fair, and mostly long-headed. They had
tamed the horse, which they harnessed to light chariots with spoked
wheels, of a much faster and better type than the lumbering ass-drawn
cars with four solid wheels which were the best means of transport known to contemporary Sumer. They were mainly pastoral, but practised a little agriculture. There is no evidence that they were in direct contact with the Sumerians, but they had adopted some Mesopotamian innovations, notably the shaft-hole axe. In the early part of the 2nd millennium, whether from pressure of population, desiccation of pasture lands, or from both causes, these people were on the move. They migrated in bands westwards, southwards and eastwards, conquering local populations, and intermarrying with them to form a ruling class. They brought with them their patrilineal family system, their worship of sky gods, and their horses and chariots. In most of the lands in which they settled their original language gradually adapted itself to the tongues of the conquered peoples. Some invaded Europe, to become the ancestors of the Greeks, Latins, Celts and Teutons. Others appeared in Anatolia, and from the mixture of these with the original inhabitants there arose the great empire of the Hittites. Yet others remained in their old home, the ancestors of the later Baltic and Slavonic people. And yet others moved southwards to the Caucasus and the Iranian tableland, whence they made many attacks on the Middle Eastern civilizations. The Kassites, who conquered Babylon, were led by men of this stock. In the 14th century B.C. there appeared in N.-E. Syria a people called Mitanni, whose kings had Indo-Iranian names, and a few of whose gods are familiar to every student of Indian religion: Indara, Uruvna (the Vedic god Varuṇa), Mitira, and Nakatiya. As well as those of the Mitanni, other chiefs in Syria and Palestine had names of Indo-Iranian type.

The marauding tribesmen gradually merged with the older populations of the Middle East, and the ancient civilizations, invigorated by fresh blood and ideas, rose to new heights of material culture; but the culture of the Indus, weakened by recurrent floods, could neither withstand nor absorb the invaders. The culture which was to succeed that of Harappā was, as we shall see, diametrically opposed to its predecessor. Only after many centuries did some elements of the older civilization, kept alive no doubt by the poorer people and serfs, begin to influence the conquerors.

The Áryan invasion of India was not a single concerted action, but one covering centuries and involving many tribes, perhaps not all of the same race and language. It seems certain that many of the old village cultures of the western hills were destroyed before the cities of the Indus vanished, but otherwise the course of Áryan expansion cannot be plotted, owing to the paucity of material remains. Evidently the invaders did not take to living in cities, and after the fall
of Harappā and Mohenjo Daro the Panjāb and Sind became a land of little villages, with buildings of wood and reed the remains of which have long since perished. For centuries after the fall of Harappā this part of India is almost an archaeological blank, which at present can only be filled by literary sources.

THE ĀRYANS IN INDIA. THE PROTO-HISTORIC PERIOD

Among the many peoples who entered India in the 2nd millennium B.C. was a group of related tribes whose priests had perfected a very advanced poetic technique, which they used for the composition of hymns in praise of their gods, to be sung at sacrifices. These tribes, chief of which was that of the Bharatas, settled mainly in East Panjāb and in the region between the Satlaj and the Yamunā which later became known as Brahmāvarta. The hymns composed by their priests in their new home were carefully handed down by word of mouth, and early in the 1st millennium B.C. were collected and arranged. They were still not committed to writing, but by now they were looked on as so sacred that even minor alterations in their text were not permitted, and the priestly schools which preserved them devised the most remarkable and effective system of checks and counter checks to ensure their purity. Even when the art of writing was widely known in India the hymns were rarely written, but, thanks to the brilliant feats of memory of many generations of brāhmaṇs, and to the extreme sanctity which the hymns were thought to possess, they have survived to the present day in a form which, from internal evidence, appears not to have been seriously tampered with for nearly three thousand years. This great collection of hymns is the Rg Veda, still in theory the most sacred of the numerous sacred texts of the Hindus.

The period of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads is a sort of transition from prehistory to history. If history, as distinct from archaeology, is the study of the human past from written sources, then India’s history begins with the Āryans. The Rg Veda, and the great body of oral religious literature which followed it in the first half of the 1st millennium B.C., belong to the living Hindu tradition. The Vedic hymns are still recited at weddings and funerals, and in the daily devotions of the brāhmaṇ. Thus they are part of historical India, and do not belong to her buried prehistoric past. But they tell us little about the great events of the time, except in irritatingly vague incidental references; even on social conditions their information is scant; only on religion and thought is the historian more fully informed.
Yet from the hymns of the *Ṛg* and *Aitareya Vedas*, the sacrificial instructions of the Brāhmanas, and the mysticism of the Upaniṣadas, the outlines of a culture emerge, though often all too vaguely, and here and there we see the faint wraiths of great sages and tribal leaders, whose importance for their times was such that their names were recorded in sacred literature. Around these phantoms later tradition draped glittering mantles of legend, legend in which many Indians still implicitly believe, and which, in other contexts, is exceedingly important. But when the mantles are removed only vague shadows remain, little more than the names of chieftains who three thousand years ago waged successful war against their enemies. For the period before the time of the Buddha we can only trace the general character of the civilization which produced the Vedic literature and give a brief and tentative sketch of its expansion.

**THE CULTURE OF THE ṚG VEDA**

No real synchronisms are contained in the *Ṛg Veda* itself, to give us any certain information on the date of its composition. Some authorities in the past claimed an exceedingly early date for it, on the basis of tradition and ambiguous astronomical references in the hymns themselves—it was even believed by one very respected Indian scholar that it went back to 6000 B.C. The discovery of the Indus cities, which have nothing in common with the culture described in the Veda and are evidently prē-Vedic, proves that the hymns cannot have been composed before the end of Harappā. The great development in culture, religion and language which is evident in the later Vedic literature shows that a long period must have elapsed between the time of the composition of the last hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* and the days of the Buddha—perhaps as much as 500 years. It is therefore probable that most of the *Ṛg Veda* was composed between 1500 and 1000 B.C., though the composition of some of the most recent hymns and the collation of the whole collection may have taken place a century or two later.

When the hymns were written the focus of Āryan culture was the region between the Yamanā and Satlaj (*Sutudri*), south of the modern Ambālā, and along the upper course of the river Sarasvati. The latter river is now an insignificant stream, losing itself in the desert of Rājasthān, but it then flowed broad and strong, and probably joined the Indus below the confluence of the Satlaj. The Vedic poets knew the Himālayas but not the land south of the Yamunā, and they did not mention the Vindhyas. To the east the
Āryans had not expanded far beyond the Yamunā, and the Gangā is mentioned only in one late hymn. At this time the Āryans had not wholly subdued the indigenous inhabitants. Though many hymns refer to battles between one Āryan tribe and another, there is, underlying this intertribal rivalry, a sense of solidarity against the Dāsas and Dasyus) who evidently represent the survivors of the Harappā Culture, and kindred peoples of the Panjāb and the North-West. The Dāsas are described as dark and ill-favoured, bull-lipped, snub-nosed, worshippers of the phallus, and of hostile speech. They were rich in cattle, and dwelt in fortified places called pur, of which the Āryan war-god Indra had destroyed hundreds. The main work of destroying the settlements of the Dāsas had been accomplished some time before the composition of the hymns, and the great battles which must then have taken place were already misted over with legend; but the Dāsas were still capable of massing armies of 10,000 men against the invaders.

Other enemies of the Āryans were the Panīs, who are described as wealthy people who refused to patronize the Vedic priests, and who stole the cattle of the Āryans. They were not so strongly hated as the Dāsas, and their settlements seem often to have continued unmolested. It has been suggested that the Panīs were Semitic traders, but the evidence is so slight that this conclusion cannot be accepted.

The Āryans were not uninfluenced by the earlier inhabitants. In classical Sanskrit the word dāsa regularly means “slave” or “bondman”, and in the later hymns of the Rg Veda it was already acquiring that meaning, while the feminine form dāsi is used in the sense of “slave-girl” throughout the book; but, though many of the vanquished Dāsas must have been enslaved, some seem to have come to terms with the conquerors, and one Dāsa chief is mentioned as following Āryan ways and patronizing the brāhmans. One result of this contact of Āryan and non-Āryan is evident even in the earliest stratum of the Rg Veda, the language of which is appreciably affected by non-Indo-European influences. All Indian languages, from Vedic to the modern vernaculars, contain a series of sounds, the retroflex or cerebral consonants, which cannot be traced in any other Indo-European tongues, not even in Old Iranian, which is closely akin to Sanskrit. These sounds must have developed quickly, from the efforts of non-Āryans to master the language of their conquerors. No doubt the invaders often married indigenous women, whose children were bilingual, and after a few generations the Āryans’ original language showed the effect of the admixture of aboriginal blood. Numerous words in the Rg Veda are not connected with any known Indo-European roots, and were evidently
borrowed from the natives. Non-Aryan influence on religion and culture must also have been felt very early, and the gradual disappearance of much of the original Indo-European heritage beneath successive layers of non-Aryan innovation can be traced through the early religious literature of India.

The primitiveness of early Aryan society was much exaggerated by some 19th-century Indologists, who thought they found in the highly formalized and rigidly controlled style of the _Rg Veda_ the first outpourings of the human spirit and an echo of Rousseau's noble savage. In fact even when the earliest hymns were composed the Aryans were not savages, but were on the fringes of civilization. Their military technique was in advance of that of the Middle East, their priestly schools had raised the tribal sacrifice to a fine art, and their poetry was elaborate and formalized. On the other hand they had not developed a city civilization. The complete absence of any words connected with writing in the _Rg Veda_, despite its size and the many contexts in which such words might be expected to occur, is almost certain proof that the Aryans were illiterate. They were a people of warlike stockbreeders, organized in tribes rather than in kingdoms. Their culture bears a generic likeness to that of _Beowulf_, the earlier Icelandic sagas, and the old Irish prose epics, and was somewhat less advanced than that depicted in the _Iliad_. The tribes were ruled by chiefs who bore the title _rājā_, a word related to the Latin _rex_. The _rājā_ was not an absolute monarch, for the government of the tribe was in part the responsibility of the tribal councils, the _sabhā_ and _samiti_. These two words occur together in many contexts and the distinction between them is not wholly clear—possibly some tribes called their governing body _sabhā_ and others _samiti_, while yet others had both assemblies, the first an inner council of a few great men of the tribe and the second a larger gathering of heads of families. These two bodies exerted much influence on the king and their approval was necessary to ensure his accession. Some tribes seem to have had no hereditary chief, but were governed directly by the tribal council, for in one passage we read of kings sitting down together in the assembly, which suggests that, as in some later oligarchic clans, the title of _rājā_ was taken by all the great men of the tribe, who governed it through a folk-moot.

But hereditary kingship was the rule, and the _rājā_, dwelling in a fine hall, had a rudimentary court, attended by courtiers (_sabhāsad_) and chiefs of septs (_grāmanī_). Already he had a general (_senāni_), who was responsible under the king for minor campaigns and cattle-raids against neighbouring tribes. Very important was the chief _priest_ (_purohita_), who by his sacrifices ensured the prosperity of the
tribe in peace and its victory in war. Often the purohita appears as a tribal medicine-man, performing magical ceremonies and muttering spells for victory both before and during battle.

The Āryans looked on the king primarily as a leader in war, responsible for the defence of the tribe. He was in no sense a divine at this early period, and had no religious functions, except to order sacrifices for the good of the tribe and to support the priests who performed them. The priest-king of some other early cultures had no counterpart in Vedic India. There was no regular revenue system and the king was maintained by the tribute of his subjects and the booty won in battle. If the king had judicial functions, as he certainly had later, there is no reference to them; murder was probably punished by a system of wergeld, as with the Anglo-Saxons and some other early Indo-European peoples, but beyond this we have no information on the administration of justice in the time of the Rg Veda.

Several chieftains are mentioned by name, and around some of them later tradition has embroidered very unreliable stories, but only one rājā is recorded in the Rg Veda as performing any deed of historical importance. This is Sudās, king of the Bharatas, the tribe dwelling on the upper reaches of the Sarasvatī River. Three poems of the collection describe the great “Battle of the Ten Kings” at which Sudās defeated a coalition of ten tribes of the Panjāb and the North-West, on the banks of the River Paruṣñī, the modern Rāvī. The most powerful of these ten tribes was that of the Pūrus, who dwelt on the lower Sarasvatī and were the Bharatas’ western neighbours; their king, Purukutsa, was apparently killed in the battle. In the succeeding age we hear no more of either Bharatas or Pūrus, but a new tribe, that of the Kuru, controls the old land of the Bharatas and much of the northern Gangā-Yamunā Doāb. In the traditional genealogy of the Kuru chiefs both Bharata and Pūru occur as names of their ancestors, and they are referred to indiscriminately as “sons of Bharata” and “sons of Pūru”. The two tribes no doubt merged as a result of the conquest of one by the other, and this process of fusion, whereby tribes became peoples and nations, must have been going on all through the Vedic period.

When the Āryans entered India there was already a class division in their tribal structure. Even in the earliest hymns we read of the kṣatra, the nobility, and the vīś, the ordinary tribesmen, and the records of several other early Indo-European peoples suggest that a tribal aristocracy was a feature of Indo-European society even before the tribes migrated from their original home. As they settled among the darker aboriginals the Āryans seem to have laid greater stress than before on purity of blood, and class divisions hardened, to
exclude those Dāsas who had found a place on the fringes of Āryan society, and those Āryans who had intermarried with the Dāsas and adopted their ways. Both these groups were low in the social scale. At the same time the priests, whose sacrificial lore was becoming more and more complicated, and who therefore required greater skill and training, were arrogating higher privileges to themselves. By the end of the Rg Vedic period society was divided into four great classes, and this fourfold division was given religious sanction and looked on as fundamental. This is evident from one of the most important hymns of the collection, in which the four classes are said to have emanated from the dismembered primeval man, who was sacrificed by the gods at the beginning of the world (p. 242f).

The four classes, priest (brahmana), warrior (kṣatriya), peasant (vaiśya) and serf (śūdra), were crystallizing throughout the period of the Rg Veda. They have survived to the present day. The Sanskrit word used for them, varna, means "colour", and suggests their origin in the development of the old tribal class structure through contact with people of different complexion and alien culture. The term varṇa does not mean, and has never meant, "caste", by which convenient word it is often loosely translated (p. 149).

The basic unit of Āryan society was the family. A group of related families formed a seapt or grāma, a term which later regularly meant "village", but which in the Rg Veda usually refers to a group of kinsfolk rather than to a settlement. The family was staunchly patriarchal and patriarchal. The wife, though she enjoyed a respectable position, was definitely subordinate to her husband. Marriage was usually monogamous, and apparently indissoluble, for no reference to divorce or the remarriage of widows occurs in the Rg Veda.

The Āryans followed a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy, in which cattle played a predominant part. The farmer prayed for increase of cattle; the warrior expected cattle as booty; the sacrificial priest was rewarded for his services with cattle. Cattle were in fact a sort of currency, and values were reckoned in heads of cattle. There is no evidence that they were held sacred at this time—the cow is in one or two places given the epithet "not to be killed", but this may only imply her economic importance. In any case it is quite clear that both oxen and cows were slaughtered for food.

The horse was almost as important as the cow, though mainly for military reasons. The chestnut horses of the Āryans, harnessed to light chariots, must have terrified the people of the Indus Valley, as the horses of the conquistadores terrified the Aztecs and Incas. A few hymns of the Rg Veda according to the rubric describe a divine horse Dadhikrā, and contain some of the finest lines on the horse
in the world's literature, recalling the famous passage in praise of
the war-horse in the Book of Job.\textsuperscript{11}

"Rushing to glory, to the capture of herds,
swooping down as a hungry falcon,
eager to be first, he darts amid the ranks of the chariots,
happy as a bridegroom making a garland,
spurning the dust and champing at the bit.

"And the victorious steed and faithful,
his body obedient [to his driver] in battle,
speeding on through the mêlée,
stirs up the dust to fall on his brows.

"And at his deep neigh, like the thunder of heaven,
the foemen tremble in fear,
for he fights against thousands, and none can resist him,
so terrible is his charge."\textsuperscript{12}

Though there are passages which refer to riding, the horse is more
frequently described as the motive power of the chariot. References
to this vehicle—a favourite subject for similes and metaphors—are
so numerous that it is possible to reconstruct it in considerable detail.
It was a light chariot with two spoked wheels, drawn by two horses
yoked abreast, and carrying two warriors.

Among other domestic animals the Āryans knew the goat and the
sheep, which provided wool, their chief textile. The elephant is only
mentioned in late hymns, and was rarely if ever domesticated. A
divine bitch, Saramā, plays an important part in a legend which cannot
be fully reconstructed, but the dog did not mean as much to the people
of the \textit{Rg Veda} as it did to a kindred Āryan pastoral people, the
ancient Iranians, who made it a sacred animal.

Though stockbreeding receives more attention from the poets,
agriculture must also have been important, but it seems to have been
looked on as rather piebald, and therefore was not much referred to.
Only one word is used for corn—\textit{yava}, which later meant barley, but at
this period may have implied all species of cultivated grain. There
are references to ploughing and reaping, and others which have been
doubtfully interpreted as showing that the Āryans knew something of
irrigation.

The Āryans were a wild, turbulent people and had few of the taboos
of later India. They were much addicted to inebriating drinks, of
which they had at least two, \textit{soma} and \textit{surā}. Soma was drunk at
sacrifices and its use was sanctified by religion (p. 237f). Surā was
purely secular, and was evidently very potent; in more than one passage it is mentioned with disapproval by the priestly poets.

The Āryans loved music, and played the flute, lute and harp, to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums. They used a heptatonic scale, similar to our own major scale, which is thought by some to have originated in Sumeria and to have been spread by the Indo-European peoples. There are references to singing and dancing, and to dancing-girls, who may have been professionals.

Besides these amusements the Āryans delighted in gambling. At all times India has loved to gamble. In the remains of the Indus cities numerous dice have been found, and the Āryans have left their own record of their gambling propensities in the beautiful "Gamester's Lament", one of the few predominantly secular poems which by lucky chance have found their way into the Ṛg Veda (p. 405ff).

Though they had not developed a city civilization, and did not build in stone or brick, the Āryans were technically well equipped. Their bronze-smiths were highly skilled, and produced tools and weapons much superior to those of the Harappā Culture. They, and the carpenters and chariot-makers, are frequently referred to in the hymns with much respect. There is no good reason to believe that iron was used in India at this period. Āyas, one of the terms for metal in the Ṛg Veda, came to mean iron at a later date, and is related to the German word Eisen and the English iron; but it is also akin to the Latin aes, meaning bronze, and it certainly means this metal or copper in the Ṛg Veda. No trace of iron has been found in the upper levels of the remains of the Indus Culture, and at this period iron implements were rare, even in the advanced civilizations of Mesopotamia. Iron ore is common enough, but its smelting demands higher skill than the Āryans had developed. At the time of the composition of the Ṛg Veda the process of smelting iron was hardly known outside Anatolia, where the Hittite kings tried to keep it a secret. Only at the very end of the 2nd millennium did the use of iron begin to spread widely over the civilized world, and it is very unlikely that it reached India before this time.¹³

As might be expected of a people without cities, the Āryans did not have an advanced economic system. In Mesopotamia the silver shekel, though unstamped, served as a means of exchange, but the Āryans relied for their unit of value and means of barter on the unwieldy cow. The niska, a term later used for a gold coin, is also mentioned as a sort of currency, but at this time was probably a gold ornament of some kind. There is no evidence of a regular class of merchants or moneylenders, though indebtedness is sometimes referred to.
The religion of the early Āryans, about which we know much more than we do about their everyday life and customs, will be discussed in a later chapter (p. 234ff).

**THE LATER VEDIC AGE**

Between the composition of the *Rg Veda* and the age of the Buddha, when we begin to trace the history of India with comparative clearness, a period of some four or five hundred years elapsed. During this time the Āryans pushed eastwards down the Gangā, and their culture adapted itself to changed conditions. Recently Indian archaeologists have excavated parts of a few sites which belong to this period, such as Hastināpura, Ahicchatrā and Kadamba, the lowest levels of which have been reasonably fixed at between 900 and 600 B.C., the time of the later Vedas. The town of Hastināpura was almost completely destroyed by flood at the end of its existence, and little remains but sherds of painted grey pottery, a few copper implements, and traces of houses of unbaked brick. Kadamba has produced similar pottery, a little iron, and remains of a well made city wall faced with burnt brick, but there is some disagreement among archaeologists as to its dating. The typical pottery has been found from the Sarasvatī Valley in the west to Ahicchatrā, near the upper Gangā, in the east. With these exceptions we have scarcely any direct knowledge of the period, and our only important sources are sacred texts, the later Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, which will be treated elsewhere from a religious and literary point of view (p. 242ff).

Besides these contemporary documents there are many legends which seem to refer to this period contained in other sources, notably the Epics and Purāṇas; but these are so overlaid by the accretions of later centuries that no attempt at interpreting them historically has so far won general acceptance, and it may never be possible to sift the fact from the fiction. Even the social conditions described in the narrative portions of the Epics, the stories of which may have been composed in a primitive form at this time, do not always refer to this age, but to the obscure period between the Mauryan and Guptan Empires. Attempts of some earlier authorities to create an “Epic Age” in the history of India, as distinct from the age of the later Vedas, are quite unconvincing. There was no Epic Age, and for our knowledge of this period we may only rely on the literature of the period itself. This, like the *Rg Veda*, is wholly religious, and tells us little more than the older source about the history of the time.

One event, not definitely recorded in these contemporary sources,
but so strongly remembered that it must have been very important, was the great battle of Kurukṣetra, not far from the modern Delhi. This battle, magnified to titanic proportions, formed the basis of the story of the greatest of India’s epics, the *Mahābhārata*. According to the legend the whole of India, from Sind to Assam and from the Himālayas to Cape Comorin, took part in the war, which arose through a dynastic dispute in the great Kuru tribe (p. 410). It is by no means certain that the war was in fact a civil one, and the story has been plausibly interpreted as a muddled recollection of the conquest of the Kurus by a tribe of Mongoloid type from the hills. But certainly a great war took place, and succeeding generations looked on it as marking the end of an epoch. The names of many of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* may genuinely be those of contemporary chieftains, but we must regretfully record that the story is of less use to the historian even than the *Iliad*, or most of the Norse and Irish saga literature. It compares better with the *Nibelungenlied*, the product of an age very different from that which it purports to describe, and the result of the assimilation of many diverse martial traditions. It is as futile to try to reconstruct the political and social history of India in the 10th century B.C. from the *Mahābhārata* as it would be to write the history of Britain immediately after the evacuation of the Romans from Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*.

According to the most popular later tradition the Mahābhārata War took place in 3102 B.C., which, in the light of all evidence, is quite impossible. More reasonable is another tradition, placing the war in the 15th century B.C., but this is also several centuries too early in the light of our archaeological knowledge. Probably it took place around the beginning of the 9th century B.C.; such a date seems to fit well with the scanty archaeological remains of the period, and there is some evidence in the Brāhmaṇa literature itself to show that it cannot have been much earlier. From this time onwards the centre of culture and political power shifted to the Gangetic Doāb and the Kuru capital, Hastināpura or Āsandīvant. Throughout most of the later Vedic period the Kūrus and their neighbours the Pañcālas were the greatest and the most civilized of Indian peoples. The names of several Kuru kings have been passed down in legend and two at any rate, Parikṣit and Janamejaya, are mentioned in the literature of the time as mighty conquerors.

Early in this period the Āryans pressed further eastwards, and set up kingdoms in Kosala, to the east of the Doāb, and in Kāši, the region of Vārānasi.* The former, which grew in importance with time, was

* Until recently known as Benares or Banaras. The old Sanskrit form of the name has now been officially revived.
the realm of Rāma, the hero of the second of the great Indian epics, the *Rāmāyana* (p. 414f). For all his later fame the literature of the period ignores Rāma and his father Daśaratha completely, so we must conclude that both were comparatively insignificant chieftains, whose exploits were by chance remembered, to be elaborated and magnified by later generations of bards until, around the beginning of the Christian Era, they received their final form. It is not even certain that Rāma was a king of Kosala at all, for the earliest version of the legend that we possess makes him a king of Vārānasī, which was for a time a kingdom of some importance, but was conquered by Kosala towards the end of this period.

Another important kingdom was Videha, to the east of the River Gandak and north of the Gangā. One of the Brāhmaṇas tells that once the fire-god Agni moved eastwards, burning up the earth, until he came to the River Sadānīrā (the modern Gandak), where he stopped. In his wake followed a chieftain from the River Sarasvatī, Videgha Māthava. Before his arrival no Āryan would cross the Sadānīrā, because the purifying fire-god had not burnt the land on its eastern bank; but Agni instructed Videgha to carry him over, and thus the land of Videha was Āryanized, and took its name from that of its first colonizer. The legend is important because it is the only significant account of the process of colonization in an approximately contemporary source. In the progress of Agni, burning up the earth, we see not only the gradual eastward expansion of the Āryan fire cult, but also the clearing of jungle and waste by burning, as bands of migrating warrior peasants founded new settlements.

Though Rāma is ignored in the literature of the period his traditional father-in-law, Janaka king of Videha, is more than once mentioned and is clearly a historical figure. He was a great patron of the hermits and wandering philosophers who propagated the new mystical doctrines of the Upaniṣads, and he himself took part in their discussions. By the time of the Buddha the kingdom of Janaka had disappeared, and his capital city, Mithilā, had lost its importance. The kingdom was replaced by the tribal confederacy of the Vṛjjis, headed by the Licchavis, who may have been Mongols from the hills, but were more probably a second wave of Āryan immigrants.

South of Videha, on the right bank of the Gangā, was the region known as Magadha, then of little account. It was not wholly Āryanized, but bands of nomadic renegade Āryans called *vṛtyas*, who did not follow the Vedic rites, roamed the land with their flocks and herds. Only in the time of the Buddha, under the great king Bimbisāra, did Magadha begin to show the energy and initiative which were to lead to the setting up of the first great Indian empire. To
the east of Magadha, on the borders of the modern Bengal, the small
kingdom of Aṅga had arisen, while, beyond Aṅga, Bengal and Assam
were still outside the pale of Aryan civilization.

Thus the texts of the period are mainly concerned with the region
from the Yamunā eastwards to the borders of Bengal. The area south
of the Gangā receives little attention, and it has been reasonably
suggested that the main line of Aryan penetration was not down the
river, the banks of which were then probably thick swampy jungle,
but along the Himalayan foothills. Expansion was not wholly
confined to the north of the Gangā, however. Contemporary
literature has little to say about the rest of Northern India, but con-
ditions at the time of the Buddha were such that it must have
been colonized some time previously, and this is confirmed by
tradition. On the Yamunā the tribe of the Yādavas had settled in the
region of Mathurā, while further down the river the kingdom of
Vatsa was ruled from its capital of Kauśāmbī, very important in later
times. By the end of this period the Āryans had advanced down the
Chambal River, had settled in Mālwā, and had reached the Narmadā
where there was an important city, Mahiśmatī. Probably parts
of the N.-W. Deccan were also under Āryan influence. According
to the Epic tradition Saurāshtra was colonized by a branch of the
Yādavas, led by the great hero Kṛṣṇa, and, though the association of
Kṛṣṇa with the story is probably unhistorical (p. 306f), the legend
may be founded on fact.

While the Āryans had by now expanded far into India their old
home in the Panjāb and the North-West was practically forgotten.
Later Vedic literature mentions it rarely, and then usually with dis-
paragement and contempt, as an impure land where the Vedic sacri-
fices are not performed. It may have been once more invaded by
Indo-Iranian tribes who did not follow the orthodox rites.

The culture of the later Vedic period was materially much in
advance of that of the Rg Veda. The Āryan tribes were by now
consolidated in little kingdoms, which had not wholly lost their
tribal character, but had permanent capitals and a rudimentary
administrative system. The old tribal assemblies are still from time
to time referred to, but their power was waning rapidly, and by the
end of this period the king's autocracy was in most cases only limited
by the power of the brāhmaṇs, the weight of tradition, and the force of
public opinion, which was always of some influence in ancient India.
Here and there the old tribal organizations succeeded in adapting
themselves to the changed conditions, and gaṇas, or tribal republics,
survived for many centuries in outlying districts; but political
divisions based on kinship were giving place to those based on
geography, and in many parts of India the tribes were rapidly breaking up. This, and the strong feeling of insecurity which it caused, may have been an important factor in the growth of asceticism and of a pessimistic outlook on the world, which is evident throughout this period.

If the popular assemblies had lost power, another element in the state was rising in influence—the *ratnins*, or "jewel bearers", the relatives, courtiers and palace officials of the king, who were looked on as so important that at the king’s consecration special sacrifices were performed to ensure their loyalty. The list of ratnins includes the purohita, or chief priest of the palace, the general, the chamberlain, the king’s charioteer, and various other influential palace servants. Two of the ratnins, the *samgrahity* and *bhāgadugha*, have been explained as treasurer and revenue-collector respectively, but these interpretations are almost certainly false, and we have no clear evidence of a developed revenue system at this time.¹⁷

The period saw a great development of the sacrificial cult, which took place pari passu with rising royal pretensions. Much of the Brāhmaṇa literature is devoted to instructions for the meticulous performance of certain royal sacrifices not mentioned in the *Rg Veda*; among these were the lengthy *rājasūya*, or royal consecration, and the *vājapeya*, or "drink of strength", a sort of rejuvenation ceremony, which not only restored the vital forces of a middle-aged king, but raised him from the status of a simple rājā to that of a *samrāṭ*, a complete monarch free of all allegiance and with lesser kings subordinate to him. Most famous and significant of these sacrifices was the *asvamedha*, or horse-sacrifice, wherein a specially consecrated horse was set free to roam at will for a year, followed by a chosen band of warriors. Chieftains and kings on whose territory the horse wandered were forced to do homage or fight, and if it was not captured by a neighbouring king it was brought back to the capital and sacrificed at the end of the year. It was the ambition of every important king to perform a horse-sacrifice, and the evil effects of the sacrifice on inter-state relations were felt to the end of the Hindu period.

By now the Āryans had nearly all the equipment of a civilization of the ancient type. Where the *Rg Veda* speaks only of gold and copper or bronze the later Vedic texts also mention tin, lead, silver and iron.* The importance of iron, harder and cheaper than bronze,

* "Black bronze" is referred to in the *Tajur Veda*, and a little iron has been discovered at an early level at Kaudāmbi, but no iron has been found in the remains of Hastināpura at this level. Recently iron has been found in very early levels at Atranji Kherā (U.P.) and Pāndu Rājar Dhibi (Bengal). The view that iron was hardly known in India until the 6th century has now little to commend it.¹⁸
for clearing forests of hard tropical timber needs no stressing. Its introduction must have greatly accelerated the rate of Āryan expansion. The elephant was tamed, though little used in war. The Āryans now cultivated a large range of crops, including rice, and they understood something of irrigation and manuring.

Specialized trades and crafts had appeared. In place of the few craftsmen in the Rg Veda many are now referred to, including jewellers, goldsmiths, metal-workers, basketmakers, ropemakers, weavers, dyers, carpenters and potters. Various types of domestic servant are mentioned, and a rudimentary entertainment industry existed, with professional acrobats, fortune-tellers, flute-players and dancers, while there are also references to usurers and merchants.

Though Āryan culture had by now made great advances there is still no mention of coined money or writing, both of which were certainly used in India before the time of the Mauryas. Coinage may have been introduced towards the end of the 6th century B.C., through Persian influence, but it is doubtful whether we should accept the negative evidence of later Vedic literature to show that writing was wholly unknown, for this literature was intended for a limited audience of priests, who had developed a unique system of memory training, and who may well have looked on writing as an objectionable innovation. There is evidence in the literature itself of faint contacts with Mesopotamia, notably in the Indian flood legend (p. 304), which first appears at this time and which bears some similarity to that of Babylon. After a break of many centuries Indian merchandise was again finding its way to Mesopotamia, and it is possible that Semitic merchants, or Indian merchants returning from the West, brought an alphabetic system of writing, which was gradually taken up by the learned and adapted to the phonetics of Indian speech, to become the Brāhmī script of Mauryan times (p. 396f).

The most important developments of this age were religious, and will be considered elsewhere (p. 244ff). Culturally the period of the later Vedic literature saw Indian life and thought take the direction which it has followed ever since. The end of this shadowy age, with its kings growing in power, its priests arrogating to themselves ever greater privileges, and its religious outlook rapidly changing, marks the beginning of the great period of India's culture in which the pattern of her society, religion, literature and art gradually assumed something of its present shape.
III

HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL EMPIRES

SOURCES OF HISTORY

At the courts of ancient Indian kings careful records were kept of the events of chief importance to the realm, but unfortunately these archives are completely lost to us. In the 12th century A.D. a Kashmiri poet, Kalhana, thought fit to write the history of his native land in verse, but his "River of Kings" (Rājatarāṅgīni); although of great value for the study of the history of Kashmir, has little to tell us about India as a whole, and there is no good evidence that similar chronicles were composed elsewhere. The Ceylon Chronicle (Mahāvamsa) is primarily a history of Buddhism in Ceylon, though it gives reliable information on political history. It is perhaps unjust to maintain that India had no sense of history whatever, but what interest she had in her own past was mainly concentrated on the fabulous kings of a legendary golden age, rather than on the great empires which had risen and fallen in historical times.

Thus our knowledge of the political history of ancient India is often tantalizingly vague and uncertain, and that of the medieval period, which we may take as beginning in the 7th century A.D., is often but little more precise. History must be pieced together from passing references in texts both religious and secular, from a few dramas and works of fiction purporting to describe historical events, from the records of foreign travellers, and from the many panegyrics or other references to reigning monarchs and their ancestors which have been found carved on rocks, pillars and temple walls, or incorporated as preambles to the title-deeds of land grants; the latter, fortunately for the historian, were usually engraved on copper plates (pl. XLVIIIb). The early history of India resembles a jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces; some parts of the picture are fairly clear; others may be reconstructed with the aid of a controlled imagination; but many gaps remain, and may never be filled. Few dates before the middle ages can be fixed with certainty, and the history of Hindu India, as far as we can reconstruct it, is almost completely lacking in the interesting anecdotes and vivid personalities which enliven the study of the past for professional and amateur historians alike. Moreover there is much disagreement among competent authorities on many important topics.
As our knowledge is so vague and unsatisfactory the reader may well suggest that the political history of Hindu India should be left to the expert; here, however, we cannot agree with him. Too many Indologists have studied Indian religion, art, language and literature in a political and historical vacuum, and this has tended to encourage the widespread fallacy that ancient Indian civilization was interested almost solely in the things of the spirit. However defective our knowledge may be, we have ample evidence to show that great empires rose and fell in India, and that, as in religion, art, literature and social life, so in political organization India produced her own system, distinctive in its strength and weakness. Therefore some knowledge of her political history is essential for a true understanding of her ancient civilization.

THE AGE OF THE BUDDHA

It is in the 6th century B.C. that Indian history emerges from legend and dubious tradition. Now for the first time we read of great kings, whose historicity is certain and some of whose achievements are known, and from now on the main lines of India's political development are clear. Our sources for this period, the Buddhist and Jaina scriptures, are in many respects inadequate as historical documents. Their authors cared little for political affairs; like the Vedas, these texts were passed down by word of mouth for centuries, but, unlike the Vedas, they evidently grew and altered with time. Yet they contain authentic reminiscences of historical events, and, though composed independently in different languages, they partially confirm one another.

The age in which true history appears in India was one of great intellectual and spiritual ferment. Mystics and sophists of all kinds roamed throughout the Gangā Valley, all advocating some form of mental discipline and asceticism as a means to salvation; but the age of the Buddha, when many of the best minds were abandoning their homes and professions for a life of asceticism, was also a time of advance in commerce and politics. It produced not only philosophers and ascetics, but merchant princes and men of action.

By now the focus of civilization had shifted eastwards, and four great kingdoms, outside the earlier area of brāhmanic culture, had eclipsed the old land of the Kurus in both political and economic importance; these were Kosala, Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti, of which the first three have been located in the last chapter and the fourth was approximately equivalent to the region later known as Mālwā. Of the four we know most about Kosala and Magadha, the chief scenes
of the activities of the Buddha and of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism. Kosala, the home of the legendary Rāma, was already in decline. Her king, Prasenajit (in Pāli, Pasenadi), was indeed still a mighty monarch, ruling an area little smaller than France; but from fleeting references in the Buddhist scriptures it seems that he was inefficient, and squandered his time and wealth on holy-men, both orthodox and heretical. His kingdom, which was infested by robbers, was loosely controlled through tribal chieftains and vassal kings.

Bimbisāra of Magadha, on the other hand, was a man of a different stamp. The sources show us a resolute and energetic organizer, ruthlessly dismissing inefficient officers, calling his village headmen together for conferences, building roads and causeways, and travelling over his kingdom on tours of inspection. In general he seems to have been a man of peace, and to have kept on good terms with the kingdoms to the west of him, exchanging courtesies even with the king of far-off Gandhāra on the upper Indus. His one conquest was that of the little kingdom of Aṅga, on the borders of the modern Bengal. Campā, the capital city of Aṅga, was already of considerable commercial importance, for it was a river port from which ships would sail down the Gangā and coast to South India, returning with jewels and spices which were already much in demand in the North. Although Aṅga was Bimbisāra’s only conquest, he seems also to have gained control of part at least of the district of Kāśi (Vārānasī), as the dowry of his chief queen, who was the sister of Prasenajit of Kosala. His capital was Rājagṛha, some sixty miles to the south-east of the modern Patnā.

Bimbisāra was deposed, imprisoned and murdered about 494 B.C.—some seven years before the death of the Buddha—by his son, Ajātaśatru. Soon after usurping the prosperous kingdom built up by his father, the parricide went to war with his aged uncle Prasenajit, and gained complete control of Kāśi. Just after this Prasenajit, like Bimbisāra, was deposed by his son, and died. The new king, Virūḍhaka (in Pāli, Viḍūḍabha), then attacked and virtually annihilated the little autonomous tribe of the Śākyas, in the Himalayan foothills, and we hear no more of the people which produced the greatest of Indians, the Buddha. Probably Virūḍhaka, like Ajātaśatru of Magadha, had ambitions of empire, and wished to embark on a career of conquest after bringing the outlying peoples, who had paid loose homage to his father, more directly under the control of the centre; but his intentions were unfulfilled, for we hear no more of him except an unreliable legend that he was destroyed by a miracle soon after his massacre of the Śākyas. A little later his kingdom was incorporated in Magadha.
On concluding his war with Prasenajit Ajātaśatru turned his attention to the tribal confederation of the Vṛjñis, on the north bank of the Ganga, who had often caused trouble by raiding Magadhan territory. After a protracted war he occupied their chief city, Vaiśali, and annexed their lands. The main element of the confederation, the tribe of the Licchavis, succeeded in preserving its identity, however, and survived at least until the 4th century A.D., when it was again influential in the politics of Eastern India. The early stages of Ajātaśatru's war with the Vṛjñis took place around the time of the Buddha's death, in about 486 B.C.

The accounts of the reigns of Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru give evidence of a definite policy, aimed at the control of as much of the course of the Ganga as possible. It seems that they were the first Indian kings to conceive the possibility of a far-flung empire. Tradition indeed tells of earlier emperors who controlled the whole land from coast to coast, but these very shadowy figures are almost certainly the exaggerations of later story-tellers, inspired by the memory of the mighty Mauryas. There is little doubt that the legendary emperors, such as Rāma, do represent historical figures of the days before the Buddha, but they were probably small tribal chieftains only powerful in comparison with their fellows. For the traditions of their immense conquests we have no historical evidence whatever.

If there was any source of the inspiration of the two great kings of Magadha it must have been the Achæmenid Empire of Persia, whose founder, Cyrus the Great (558-530 B.C.), came to the throne about sixteen years before the accession of Bimbisāra, and proceeded rapidly to build up the greatest empire the world had then seen. At this time the city of Takṣaśilā, in the North-West, was already a centre of learning and trade. Young men from Magadha were sent there to finish their education, and Bimbisāra was in diplomatic contact with Puṣkarasārin (in Pāli, Pukkusāti), king of Gandhara, whose kingdom probably included Takṣaśilā. In an inscription of about 519 B.C. Darius I, the third of the Achæmenid emperors, claims possession of Gandhāra, and in a slightly later inscription he also claims Hindush, or "India", which, according to Herodotus, became the twentieth satrapy of the Persian Empire. The extent of the Persian province of Hindush is not certain, but it probably included much of the Panjāb. It is hardly likely that the kings of Magadha were ignorant of what was happening in the North-West, and perhaps their expansionist policy was in part inspired by the example of the Persians.

The scriptures of the Buddhists and Jainas give us little information
on the events which took place after the deaths of the founders of the
two sects, and therefore we know scarcely anything about the latter
part of Ājātaśatru’s reign. There is evidence that he fought
Pradyota, king of Avanti, and that for a time at least the fortunes of
war did not favour him; but he certainly succeeded in creating the
most powerful empire India had yet known, controlling both banks of
the Gangā from Vārānasī to the borders of Bengal, which was still
beyond the pale of Āryan civilization. In the succeeding century and
a half Magadha continued to expand, for, when the curtain is again
lifted on India’s past in the 4th century B.C., Pātaliputra (now Patnā),
the new capital of Magadha, controls all the Gangā basin; the rest of
Northern India, with the exception of Rājasthān, Sind, the Panjāb
and the North-West, is part of the Magadhan Empire, and the other
kingdoms are either annihilated or reduced to insignificant vassalage.

ALEXANDER AND THE MAURYAS

In the middle of the 4th century B.C., Mahāpadma Nanda was
emperor of Magadha. He was an unpopular upstart, but, as far as
can be gathered from the few references to him, he was an energetic
and ambitious king, who succeeded in gaining control of Kaliṅga (the
modern Orissā and the northern coastal strip of Āndhra Pradesha), and
perhaps of other parts of the Deccan. His death seems to have been
followed by a disputed succession, which coincided with important
events in the North-West. Out of the confusion of the times
emerged the greatest and most powerful of India’s many empires.

In 330 B.C. Alexander of Macedon defeated Darius III, the last
of the Achaemenids, and set out to subdue the whole of the former
Persian Empire, which had long ceased to exercise effective control
over its remoter provinces. In the decisive battle of Gaugamela
Alexander had already met Indian troops, for a small contingent of
soldiers from the west of the Indus, with fifteen elephants, had fought
with Darius. Over a hundred years earlier Greeks had already
measured swords with Indians, for, according to Herodotus, a detach-
ment of Indians fought in the Persian army at Platea.

After a long campaign in Bactria, the region watered by the River
Oxus on the borders of the modern Soviet Union and Afghānistān,
Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush and occupied the district of Kābul.
Then, fiercely but unsuccessfully resisted by the hillmen, he descended
the Kābul Valley and reached the Indus, which he crossed in the
spring of 326. Omphis, king of Takṣaśīlā (known to classical

* This is the name as given by classical sources. It probably represents the Sanskrit
Ambhi.
writers as Taxila), had already submitted, and the city offered no resistance. Beyond the Jhelam, however, lay the territory of the most warlike king of the Panjāb, Porus,* for fear of whom Omphis had willingly thrown in his lot with Alexander. It was only with great difficulty, after a surprise crossing of the Jhelam, that the Macedonians succeeded in defeating the troops of Porus, who was captured. Porus was a very tall and handsome man, whose courage and proud bearing made a great impression on the Greeks; when brought before his conqueror he was found to have received nine wounds, and he could barely stand; but when Alexander asked him how he wished to be treated he boldly replied: "As befits me—like a king!" Alexander was so impressed by his captive that he restored him to his kingdom as a vassal and, on the retreat of the Greek forces, left him in charge of the Panjāb.

After the defeat of Porus Alexander continued his advance, subduing numerous tribes and petty kingdoms; but at the Beās he was forced to turn back, for his generals feared mutiny if his troops were made to advance further into unknown country. Alexander returned across the Panjāb and fought his way down the Indus, often meeting stiff opposition from the martial tribes. At the mouth of the Indus the army divided, part returning to Mesopotamia by sea, and part, led by Alexander himself, by land, along the coast through the desolate Makrān. After much hardship both detachments reached the Euphrates, together with a smaller body which had been sent back earlier by way of Arachosia (the modern Kandahār). There is no doubt that Alexander intended to retain control of his Indian conquests, for he left garrisons behind him and appointed satraps to govern the conquered territories. But revolts in the Indian provinces and the sudden death of Alexander in 323 B.C. made the Macedonian position in India untenable, and the last of Alexander’s generals, Eudamus, left the North-West in 317.

Although the Greeks had known something of India before the invasion of Alexander, their knowledge was mostly of the nature of fantastic travellers’ tales. Now for the first time Greeks and Indians came into close contact. It is clear from classical accounts of Alexander’s campaign that the Greeks were not unimpressed by what they saw of India. They much admired the courage of the Indian troops, the austerity of the naked ascetics whom they met at Takṣaśilā, and the probity and simplicity of the tribes of the Panjāb and Sind.

The immediate effects of the invasion were slight. Greek colonies were established in Bactria, Afghanistān and N.-W. India. Some of

* Probably the Sanskrit Paūraṇa, which would connect Porus with the old Kuru tribe of whose ruling family this was a cognomen.
these prospered, for about seventy years later Greek was still the principal language spoken around Kandahār if we are to judge from the Greek inscriptions of Aśoka discovered there in recent years.

The kingdoms and tribes of the North-West were disorganized and overthrown, but Alexander made so small an impression upon India that in the whole of her surviving ancient literature there is no reference to him. In later centuries the Indians came to know the Greeks, but of Greek influence in India at this time there is scarcely a trace. However, it may be that the invasion, and the political vacuum created in the North-West by Alexander’s retreat, had indirect effects of the utmost importance.

Classical sources speak of a young Indian named Sandrocottus—identical with the Candragupta Maurya of Indian sources—who sided with the Greeks. Plutarch states that Sandrocottus advised Alexander to advance beyond the Beās and attack the Nanda emperor, who was so unpopular that his people would rise in support of an invader. The Latin historian Justin adds that later Sandrocottus offended Alexander by his boldness of speech, and the conqueror ordered that he should be put to death; but he escaped, and after many adventures succeeded in expelling the Greek garrisons and gaining the throne of India. Whether or not these stories are true, it is reasonable to believe that the emperor Candragupta Maurya, who rose to power soon after Alexander’s invasion, had least heard of the conqueror, and perhaps derived inspiration from his exploits.

Both Indian and classical sources agree that Candragupta overthrew the last of the Nandas and occupied his capital, Pātaliputra; the latter add that after Alexander’s retreat Candragupta subdued the North-West, driving out the Greek garrisons. It is not clear which of these operations was first undertaken, and, with the annoying uncertainty of much ancient Indian history, estimates of the date of Candragupta’s accession vary within a decade (324–313 B.C.); but though the detailed history of his rise to power is uncertain, it is evident that he was the chief architect of the greatest of India’s ancient empires. According to all Indian traditions he was much aided in his conquests by a very able and unscrupulous brāhmaṇ adviser, called variously Kauṭilya, Cāṇaka and Viṣṇugupta; indeed in the play The Minister’s Signet Ring, a work of the 6th century A.D., which purports to describe the last stages of Candragupta’s triumph over the Nanda (p. 449), the king is depicted as a weak and insignificant young man, the real ruler of the empire being Cāṇaka. The minister is the reputed author of the Arthasastra, or “Treatise on Polity”, a very valuable source of information on state administration. The text as
we have it at present is certainly not the work of Kauṭilya (p. 80), but it is very valuable nevertheless, and contains genuine Mauryan reminiscences.

Soon the Greeks were again at the doors of India. Alexander's general Seleucus Nicator had succeeded in gaining control of most of the Asiatic provinces of the shortlived Macedonian Empire, and turned his attention to the East. About 305 B.C. he met Candragupta in battle, and seems to have suffered the worst of the engagement, for he failed in his attempt to recover Alexander's Indian provinces, and was compelled to yield parts of what is now Afghānistān to Candragupta, receiving in exchange only 500 elephants. The peace was concluded by a matrimonial alliance, the exact nature of which is uncertain;¹ but it is not impossible that the successors of Candragupta had Greek blood in their veins.

Seleucus sent an ambassador, Megasthenes, to reside at the Mauryan court at Pāṭaliputra, and the envoy wrote a detailed account of India which became the standard textbook on the subject for later classical writers. Unfortunately no manuscript of Megasthenes' description of India has survived, but many Greek and Latin authors made abundant use of it, and from their works it may be partially reconstructed. The record of Megasthenes, though by no means as complete and accurate as might be wished, is of great importance as the first authentic and connected description of India by a foreign traveller. It is evident from a comparison of the fragments of Megasthenes with the Arthasastra that the Mauryan empire had developed a highly organized bureaucratic administration, which controlled the whole economic life of the state, and that it had a very thorough secret service system, which was active among all classes from the highest ministers to the submerged tenth of the towns.

Megasthenes much admired the Emperor Candragupta for his energetic administration of justice, which he presided over personally in open darbār.² He dwelt in great luxury in an enormous palace at Pāṭaliputra, which, though built wholly of wood, was of unbelievable beauty and splendour; but his life was not a happy one, for he was in constant fear of assassination, an ever-present danger to many Indian kings, and very stringent precautions were taken for his security. The capital was a large and fine city, surrounded by a wooden wall; it was controlled by an administrative board of thirty members, who regulated in detail the whole social and economic life of the people. Megasthenes noticed the existence of caste, though his classification

¹ This word is strictly an anachronism, as it is Persian and was introduced by the Muslims, but it is better known and less ambiguous than the equivalent Sanskrit word, sabhā.
of the population in seven endogamous groups is certainly erroneous (p. 149).

According to Jaina tradition Candragupta abdicated the throne, became a Jaina monk, and fasted to death, in the manner of Jaina saints, at the great Jaina temple and monastery of Sravana Belgola, in the modern Mysore. Whatever the truth of this legend, he was succeeded after a reign of twenty-four years by his son Bindusāra, about whom little is known except that he was in touch with Antiochus I, the Seleucid king of Syria. According to Athenæus, Bindusāra requested of the Greek king a present of figs and wine, together with a sophist. Antiochus sent the figs and wine, but replied that Greek philosophers were not for export. This quaint little story seems to indicate that Bindusāra, like many other Indian kings, shared his attentions between creature comforts and philosophy, but he was certainly energetic enough to hold the great empire intact, and it is even probable that he added to it in the Deccan. He was succeeded about 269 B.C., probably after a short interregnum, by his son Aśoka, the greatest and noblest ruler India has known, and indeed one of the great kings of the world.

According to Buddhist sources Aśoka usurped the throne, killed all possible rivals, and began his reign as a tyrant, but this story is not borne out by Aśoka's own inscriptions, which are the oldest surviving Indian written documents of any historical significance. They consist of a series of edicts engraved in very similar form on rocks and pillars at widely scattered points all over India (fig. vi), and form a unique monument to a great king's memory. The edicts are in part inspired by Achaemenid precedent, but their contents are very different from the great inscriptions of Darius I, for instance, which glorify the emperor, catalogue his conquests, and enumerate the peoples and tribes under his sway. Aśoka's edicts are in the nature of official pronouncements of policy, and instructions to his officers and subjects. They contain many personal touches, and the drafts were probably composed by the emperor himself.

They tell us that when the king had been consecrated eight years he underwent a complete change of heart, and embarked on a new policy. In Aśoka's own words:

"When the King, Priyadarśi, Beloved of the Gods, had been consecrated eight years, Kalinga was conquered. 150,000 people were thence taken captive, 100,000 were killed, and many more died. Just after

* "Of Gracious Mien", Aśoka's throne name. It is now certain that this is to be looked on as a proper name and not as a title, for the recently discovered Greek inscription of Aśoka at Kandahār renders it as Πολυμομενος, instead of translating it into Greek.
the taking of Kaliṅga the Beloved of the Gods began to follow Righteousness, to love Righteousness, to give instruction in Righteousness. When an unconquered country is conquered, people are killed, they die, or are made captive. That the Beloved of the Gods finds very pitiful and grievous... Today, if a hundredth or a thousandth part of those who suffered in Kaliṅga

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**Fig. vi. The Empire of Aśoka**
(The pillars originally at Mirath and Toprā are now at Delhi)
were to be killed, to die, or to be taken captive, it would be very grievous to the Beloved of the Gods. If anyone does him wrong it will be forgiven as far as it can be forgiven. The Beloved of the Gods even reasons with the forest tribes in his empire, and seeks to reform them. But the Beloved of the Gods is not only compassionate, he is also powerful, and he tells them to repent, lest they be slain. For the Beloved of the Gods desires safety, self-control, justice and happiness for all beings. The Beloved of the Gods considers that the greatest of all victories is the victory of Righteousness, and that [victory] the Beloved of the Gods has already won, here and on all his borders, even 600 leagues away in the realm of the Greek king Antiyoka, and beyond Antiyoka among the four kings Turamaya, Antikini, Maga and, Alikasudara, and in the South among the Cōlas and Pāṇḍyas and as far as Ceylon.”

Thus we see that the keynote of Aśoka’s reform was humanity in internal administration and the abandonment of aggressive war. In place of the traditional policy of territorial expansion he substituted conquest by Righteousness (as we here inadequately translate the very pregnant word dharma). He claims to have won many victories by this method, even among the five Hellenic kings whose names, loosely disguised by Indianization, are to be read in the above extract—Antiochus II Theos of Syria, Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. It seems that Aśoka believed that, by setting an example of enlightened government, he might convince his neighbours of the merits of his new policy and thus gain the moral leadership of the whole civilized world. He by no means gave up his imperial ambitions, but modified them in accordance with the humanitarian ethics of Buddhism.

In domestic affairs the new policy was felt in a general relaxation of the stern government of earlier times. Aśoka declared that all men were his children, and more than once reproved his local governors for their failure to apply this precept thoroughly. He strongly supported the doctrine of ahinsā (non-injury to men and animals), then rapidly spreading among religious people of all sects, banned animal sacrifices, at least in his capital, and regulated the slaughter of animals for food, completely forbidding the killing of certain species. He took pride in the fact that he had substituted pilgrimages to Buddhist holy places for hunting expeditions, the traditional sport of the Indian king, and he proclaimed that he had reduced the consumption of meat in the palace to negligible proportions. Thus Aśoka’s encouragement was in part responsible for the growth of vegetarianism in India.

From the passage above quoted, as well as from other indications,
it is clear that Aśoka was not a complete pacifist. The wild tribesmen of hill and forest were a constant source of danger to the more civilized villagers, and it would seem that earlier kings had kept them in check by ruthless campaigns of extermination. Aśoka clearly intended to try to civilize them, but it is quite evident that he was ready to repress them by force if they continued their raids on the more settled parts of his empire. He made no mention of reducing the army, and if, under the influence of Buddhism, he had done so, he would surely have taken pride in the fact. Despite his remorse at the conquest of Kaliṅga, he was too much of a realist to restore it to its original rulers, whoever they may have been, and he continued to govern it as an integral part of his empire. For all his humanitarianism he maintained the death penalty, which was abolished under some later Indian kings, and merely granted a stay of execution of three days to men condemned to death, so that they might put their affairs in order and prepare their minds for the next world. Though Buddhist tradition records that he abolished judicial torture, this is not clearly stated in his edicts.

Among his positive social services Aśoka mentions the improvement of communications by planting fruit trees along the roads to provide shade and food, digging wells at intervals, and setting up rest-houses for weary travellers. He developed the cultivation of medicinal herbs, which, with other drugs, were supplied to men and animals alike. To ensure that his reforms were put into effect he inaugurated a new class of official, the “Officers of Righteousness” (dharma-mahāmātra), who, taking their instructions direct from the centre, were ordered to investigate the affairs of all the provinces, to encourage good relations between man and man, and to ensure that the local officials carried out the new policy. Thus Aśoka’s reforms tended to centralization rather than devolution.

It is evident that, after his change of heart if not before, Aśoka’s personal religion was Buddhism, and some authorities believe that he actually entered the Buddhist order. But the inscriptions show that he was no metaphysician, and indeed he probably had little interest in or understanding of the finer points of Buddhism. Although he never mentions the Buddhist nirvāṇa, he speaks frequently of heaven; and he seems to have held the naive belief that, as a result of the growth of morality through his reforms, the gods had manifested themselves on earth, a phenomenon which had not occurred for many years previously. In fact the Dharma officially propagated by Aśoka was not Buddhism at all, but a system of morals consistent with the tenets of most of the sects of the Empire and calculated to lead to peace and fellowship in this world and heaven in the next. Aśoka’s
metaphysical presuppositions were not distinctively Buddhist, but were evidently those traditional in India at the time. A streak of puritanism in the Emperor’s character is to be inferred from the edict banning rowdy popular fairs and allowing religious gatherings only.

Aśoka’s Buddhism, though enthusiastic, was not exclusive. More than once he declared that all sects were worthy of respect, and he dedicated artificial caves to the sect of Ājivikas, who were among the chief rivals of the Buddhists. His relations with the Buddhist clergy seem to have been erastian, for he had no compunction in prescribing passages of scripture which the order was specially to study, and he instructed local officers to ensure that all ill-behaved Buddhist monks were unfrocked. It was in Aśoka’s reign that Buddhism ceased to be a simple Indian sect and began its career as a world religion. According to tradition a great council of the Buddhist clergy was held at Pāṭaliputra, at which the Pāli canon was finally codified, and after which missions were sent throughout the length and breadth of India and beyond.

Tradition unanimously ascribes the conversion of Ceylon to Mahendra (in Pāli, Mahinda), Aśoka’s son, or in some sources his brother, who had become a Buddhist monk. Though the relationship of the apostle of Ceylon to Aśoka is very doubtful, there can be no doubt of his historicity, or of that of King Devānampiya Tissa, his first convert. Though Āryans may have settled in Ceylon more than two centuries before this time, it was only now that the culture of the island began to develop, under the fertilizing influence of Buddhism. The Ceylon Chronicle, which, being nationalist in its sympathies, is not likely to be false in this particular, implicitly admits that Tissa was loosely subordinate to Aśoka, since it states that he underwent a second consecration and was converted to Buddhism on Aśoka’s instructions. Thus at least one of Aśoka’s “victories of Righteousness” outside his empire was successful; his attempts at the moral conquest of the Hellenic kings certainly ended in failure, for there is no reference to his embassies in any classical source, and if they reached their destinations they can have had little effect on the ambitious successors of Alexander.

To the modern student Aśoka towers above the other kings of ancient India, if for no other reason than that he is the only one among them whose personality can be reconstructed with any degree of certainty. But even Aśoka is not as clear a figure as we would wish, and his policy has been the subject of varied judgements. Critics have accused him of ruining the Mauryan Empire, either by antagonizing the brāhmaṇs or by sapping the martial spirit of the ruling classes. We cannot accept either of these accusations. It
appears that the old Emperor, who died about 232 B.C., somewhat lost grip in his latter years, and the succession was disputed by his sons. The Empire began to fall apart on his death, when the governors of the great provinces, usually members of the royal family, established their virtual independence. The successors of Aśoka were lesser men than he, and little is known of them but their names.

The Aśoka of the Buddhist legends is, in the words of a 19th-century authority, "half monster and half idiot," his humanity and practical benevolence overlaid by the accretion of monkish legends of later centuries; but the king of the rock and pillar inscriptions comes alive, as a real man, and a man far ahead of his times. Aśoka was by no means an other-worldly dreamer, but every inch a king, a little naive, often rather self-righteous and pompous, but indefatigable, strong-willed and imperious. It is with good reason that the Indian Republic has adopted for the device of its state seal the capital of an Aśokan column (pl. XVa).

THE AGE OF INVASIONS

For some fifty years Mauryan kings continued to rule in Magadha until, about 183 B.C., Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, a brāhman general of Bhadratha, the last Mauryan king, succeeded in gaining power by a palace revolution. Puṣyamitra was a supporter of the orthodox faith, and revived the ancient Vedic sacrifices, including the horse-sacrifice; but the flourishing state of Buddhism at this period is attested by the remains at Bhārhut, and the stories of his persecution of Buddhist monks are probably much exaggerated by sectarian tradition. The kingdom of the Śuṅgas was by no means a closely-knit centralized empire, like that of the Mauryas, but one of a type which was to become normal in Hindu India and which may be loosely termed feudal (p. 95ff). Its centre was in Vidiśā (E. Mālwā), which at most times seems to have been directly controlled by the king, whose domains were surrounded by a circle of vassal states small and great, in varying degrees of subservience, but some evidently autonomous enough to issue their own coins. Beyond the realm of Puṣyamitra much of the old Mauryan Empire was now independent, and little is known of the condition of Magadha, the former centre of culture and power.

The inspiration of the Mauryas was soon almost forgotten. Later the Guptas tried to build an empire of a more centralized type, and directly controlled much of North India for over a hundred years, but,
with this major exception and a few minor ones, all later Hindu imperialism was of the quasi-feudal type, loose and unstable. The memory of Aśoka’s renunciation of further conquest was soon forgotten, and aggressive war again became the sport of kings, and was looked upon by theorists as a normal activity of the state. In general the history of post-Mauryan India is one of the struggle of one dynasty with another for regional dominance, and the political, though not the cultural, unity of India was lost for nearly two thousand years.

Puṣyamitra is mentioned in several sources, and his name is recorded in one brief inscription, referring to an obscure descendant. He did not take regal titles, but was throughout his reign referred to by the simple epithet senāpati, or “general”. Agnimitra, his son, who seems to have been king during his father’s lifetime, is known from Kālidāsa’s drama Mālavikā and Agnimitra, while his grandson Vasumitra is recorded in the same source as having defeated the Greeks. An inscription on a column at Besnagar near Bhilsā, records that a Suṅga king Bhāgabhadraka received an ambassador named Heliodorus from a Greek king of Takṣaśilā, Antialcidas. Otherwise the Suṅgas are mere names recorded, usually in garbled form, among the muddled king-lists of the Purāṇas, religious texts dating from Gupta times onwards.

Meanwhile on India’s north-western borders events which were to have a profound effect both on her own history and on that of Asia generally were taking place. A series of invasions, all inadequately documented, brought the whole of what is now West Pākistān, Mālwā and Saurāshtra, much of Uttar Pradesh and Rājasthān, and even for a while part of Western Mahārāṣṭra under the control of alien kings.

The first invaders were the Bactrian Greeks. Small colonies of Asiatic Greeks had been settled in Bactria by the Achaemenids, and these were strengthened by settlements established by Alexander and Seleucus Nicator. About the middle of the 3rd century B.C. Diodotus, the governor of Bactria, declared himself independent of the Seleucid Empire, and the Iranian province of Parthia became independent at about the same time. Diodotus was succeeded by his son, also named Diodotus, who was soon overthrown and replaced by a usurper, Euthydemos. Euthydemos came to terms with the Seleucid emperor Antiochus III, who had vainly attempted to regain the lost province; with his flank now secure, he began to expand over the Hindu Kush, and gained a foothold on the N.-W. Frontier, which had probably already broken away from the Mauryan Empire. Early in the 2nd century B.C. Demetrius, the son and successor of Euthydemos, pressed further into India. He and his successors occupied most of the Indus Valley and the Panjāb, and led great raids
far into the Gangā Valley, at least one of which, perhaps led by King Menander, reached Pātaliputra. Soon the home domains of the Bactrian Greeks were wrested from them by another usurper, Eucratides, but descendants of Euthydemos continued to rule in the Panjāb and parts of the North-West. Then the Eucratids were also tempted to try their fortunes beyond the mountains, and gained control of the Kābul Valley and the district of Takṣaśīlā. The Greek domains in India were divided into several petty kingdoms, those of the Kābul Valley and the N.-W. Frontier chiefly ruled by kings of the line of Eucratides, and those of the Panjāb under the line of Euthydemos.

Little is known of the history of the Greeks in India, and their fortunes can only be faintly reconstructed from their remarkable coins, (pl. XLVI), most of which bear legends in Greek on the obverse and in Prākrit on the reverse. From now on, however, the Yavanas (a term borrowed by India through the Persian from the Greek Ἰάννας) are mentioned from time to time in Indian literature. Through the Greco-Bactrian kingdoms Western theories of astrology and medicine began to enter India, and perhaps the development of the Sanskrit drama was in part inspired from this source. More than one Indian tradition speaks of great Yavana raids. One of the Greek kings of the Panjāb is specially remembered by Buddhism as the patron of the philosopher-monk Nāgasena; this was Milinda, or Menander, who ruled at Sākala (?Sīālkot), and whose long discussions with the sage are recorded in a well known Pāli text, the Questions of Milinda. Menander is said to have become a Buddhist, but the Besnagar column, to which we have already referred, shows that the Greeks also sometimes supported the orthodox creeds, for it was erected by the ambassador Heliodorus in honour of the early Vaiṣṇava deity Vāsudeva. Thus some of the Greeks, while not completely merging with the local population, soon felt the influence of Indian ways of thought and made many compromises with Indian culture. The author of the law-book of Manu, writing probably a century or two later than Heliodorus, describes the Yavanas as degenerate kṣatriyas, or members of the warrior class, and thus gives them a place in Hindu society.

The Greco-Bactrian kingdoms, however, did not long survive. Bactria itself was occupied by the Parthians early in the second half of the 2nd century B.C., and the Greeks were confined to their possessions in India and Afghānistān. Then fresh invaders appeared from the north. A complex chain of causes, climatic and political, led to new movements of the peoples of Central Asia. The consolidation of the Chinese Empire under the great emperor Ch’ìn Shih Huang Ti
(247–210 B.C.), the building of the Great Wall of China, and perhaps also the drying up of the Central Asian pasture lands, had driven large bands of nomads westwards, from the confines of China to the region east of the Caspian. Soon a nomadic people, called by the Chinese Yüeh-chih, was bearing heavily on the Scythian tribesmen on the borders of Bactria. The Scyths, whom India was to know as Sakas, were driven by pressure from the north and east to attack Bactria, which they occupied, soon to be followed by the Yüeh-chih. The Sakas moved on from Bactria to attack first the Parthian rulers of Irân and then the Greeks in India. By the middle of the 1st century B.C. only a few petty Greek chiefs still ruled in India, and the power of the Sakas reached as far as Mathurā. The Sakas continued the earlier practice of issuing coins with inscriptions in Greek and Prākrit. The earliest of their kings known to have ruled in India was Maues (? c. 80 B.C.).

Towards the end of the 1st century B.C. a line of kings with Iranian names, usually known as Pahlavas, gained the brief suzerainty of N.-W. India. One of them, Gondophares, is worthy of mention as the ruler to whose kingdom St. Thomas is said to have brought India’s first knowledge of Christianity (p. 345). Some authorities have cast doubt on the truth of the legend, maintaining that Gondophares’ date was too early for him to have been St. Thomas’s contemporary; but at any rate he was important enough for his fame to reach the West, and that St. Thomas preached in India is by no means impossible. Gondophares was perhaps responsible for the extinction of the last of the Greek kings, Hermæus, whose line had held out in Kābul against the Sakas.

The Pahlavas were in turn conquered by the Yüeh-chih. The racial affinities of these people are uncertain; physically they were of Turkish type; like the Sakas they appear to have spoken an Iranian language. For a century or more they dwelt in Bactria and the neighbouring regions of Central Asia, divided into autonomous tribes, until control was consolidated in the hands of Kujūla Kadphises of the tribe of the Kuśāṇas. At some time in the first half of the 1st century A.D. Kujūla led his warriors over the mountains, and he and his son Vima Kadphises between them gained control of N.-W. India.

Vima Kadphises was succeeded, probably after a short interregnum, by Kaniṣka, who ruled all the western half of Northern India at least as far as Vārānasi, and whose dominions in Central Asia were very extensive. The Chinese annals speak of a Kuśāṇa king, either Kaniṣka or one of the Kadphises, demanding the hand of a princess of the imperial house of Han in marriage, and being soundly defeated for his arrogance by the great general Pan Chi’ao, who at the
end of the 1st century A.D. carried Chinese arms as far as the Caspian.

This period was a very significant one in the history of Buddhism, and Kaniska is remembered in Northern Buddhist tradition as a great patron of the faith. Numerous remains testify to the importance and popularity of Buddhism at the time, and it was now that it began to spread to Central Asia and the Far East. Some intimations of the Indian religion had already reached China, but it exerted no real influence until now, when the Kuśāṇa and Chinese empires were in close contact. The period is also noteworthy for the Gandhāra school of art, which was influential not only in India but also, indirectly, in the Far East (p. 370ff).

The date of Kaniska, like the chronology of the whole Śaka-Kuśāṇa period, is very uncertain, and estimates of the year of his accession have varied from 58 B.C. to A.D. 278. At present opinions of most competent authorities favour a date between A.D. 78 and 144. The former date is that of the foundation of one of the most widespread Indian systems of dating, later known as the Śaka Era. Kaniska was not, strictly speaking, a Śaka, but the term was very loosely applied, and he is known to have founded an era. Though the date A.D. 78 fits well with other Indian evidence, certain complicated synchronisms, mainly based on non-Indian sources, suggest that he reigned some decades later than this, and the question cannot be finally settled until new evidence appears. The successors of Kaniska continued to reign in N.-W. India, but their empire was soon much reduced. About the middle of the 3rd century Vāsudeva, one of Kaniska's successors, was soundly defeated by Shāpur I of the new Säsānian dynasty of Persia, and from now on the North-West came much under Iranian influence.

Meanwhile new kingdoms had been set up in the Peninsula. In Orissā a great conqueror, Khāravela, appeared in the latter half of the 1st century B.C.; he raided far and wide over India and was a great patron of Jainism; but his empire was short-lived, and we know nothing of his successors. At about the same time an important kingdom arose in the N.-W. Deccan from the ruins of that of the Mauryas—the kingdom of the Sātavāhanas or Āndhras, centred on Pratiśṭhāna (modern Paithāṅ). This survived for 300 years or more, until the 3rd century A.D., its power often reaching beyond the Nar- madā into Mālāṇ and, in the 2nd century A.D., from coast to coast. Traditionally the first Sātavāhana king, Śimuka, put an end to the last insignificant Śuṅgas and to the Kāṇva kings, who reigned for a short time in part of the old Śuṅga Empire. For a while, around the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., the Sātavāhanas were driven from
the N.-W. Deccan by invading Śakas of the clan of Kṣaharāta, whose
great satrap Nahapāna left a number of inscriptions; but the Śātavāhanas,
under the greatest of their rulers, Gautamiputra Sātakarpīṇ, recovered their lands about A.D. 150, and nothing more is heard of
the Kṣaharātas.

Another Śaka dynasty, generally known as the “Western Satraps”, gained control of Gujarāt and Mālwā at about the
same time, and ruled until soon after A.D. 388, at its height governing much of Rājasthān and Sind. The greatest king of this line
was Rudradāman, who has left the earliest important inscription in correct Sanskrit, a long panegyric which records his martial
exploits and his reconstruction at Girnar in Saurāshṭra of a great artifi-
cicial lake, which had been excavated under Candragupta and improved
in the time of Aśoka. This inscription is among the earliest certainly
dated records of ancient India, and proves that Rudradāman was reigning in A.D. 150.

At this time the Dravidian South first begins to appear in the light of history. Traditionally the Tamil country has always been
divided into three kingdoms—Cōla (the Coromandel Coast), Keraḷa
or Cēra (Malabār), and Pāṇḍya (the southern tip of the Peninsula).
These three are mentioned by Aśoka as the scenes of his “victories of Righteousness” beyond his own dominions, and numerous rough
inscriptions indicate that Buddhist and Jaina ascetics visited the Tamil
land before the beginning of the Christian era. In the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, which was probably composed in the
early centuries A.D., we find the three kingdoms in a state of almost continual warfare. Their kings, and the many lesser chieftains
who are also mentioned, seem to have been more bloodthirsty than those of the North, and the literature contains hints of massacres and
other atrocities such as are rarely heard of in Sanskrit literature; one
passage even suggests cannibal feasts after battle. The ancient
Tamil, by no means perfectly Āryanized, was a man of very different
stamp from his gentle and thoughtful descendant. Wild and ruthless, delighting in war and drink, worshipping fierce gods with bacch-
analian dances, passionate in love, he compares strikingly with the
grave and knightly warriors of the Sanskrit epics, which were
probably receiving their final form at the time when the poems of the
Tamil anthologies were being written. A few centuries were to alter the picture somewhat, and the next stratum of Tamil literature
shows a much deeper penetration of Āryan ideals and standards, but a streak of ruthlessness and disregard for individual life is evident
in the Dravidian character down to the fall of Vijayanagara.

Very early the Tamils took to the sea. Even in the 2nd century
b.c. they twice invaded Ceylon, the first time soon after the death of the great king Devānampiṭya Tissa, and the second a little later. The latter invasion resulted in the long occupation of the whole of the northern half of the island by the Tamil king Elāra, who was expelled with great difficulty by the Sinhalese national hero, King Duṭugāmūṇu (in Pāḷi, Duṭṭhagāmana) (161–137 B.C.). Tamils probably found their way to S.-E. Asia at about the same time, and in the 1st century A.D. were in close contact with Egypt and the Roman Empire, through the flourishing trade with the West (p. 230ff).

THE GUPTAS AND HARṢA

We know little of events in North India after the decline of the Kuśāṇas, but it seems that by the 3rd century A.D. all India east of the Panjāb and Mālwā was in the hands of small Indian kings and tribal chiefs. Some authorities have depicted the great Gupta emperors as liberators of India from the foreign yoke, but it seems that by this time the invaders had become thoroughly Indianized, and that their expulsion was the work of the little known predecessors of the Guptas.

In A.D. 320 there arose a new Candra Gupta, whose successors in great measure restored the splendour of the Mauryas. He owed his rise to power largely to his marriage with a princess Kumāradevi of the tribe of the Licchavis, who now reappear on the scene, eight centuries after their defeat by Ajātaśatru. From the prominence given to the Licchavi princess in the genealogies of later Gupta kings, and the minting of special coins to commemorate her marriage to Candragupta (fig. xxivb, p. 385), it seems that the Licchavis had profited by the absence of a strong central control to establish a new kingdom, and were very influential in Magadhā at the time. Candragupta I possessed fairly large domains, including the regions of Magadhā and Kosala.

Under his successor, Samudra Gupta (c. A.D. 335–376), Pāṭaliputra once more became the centre of a great empire. Samudra’s power reached from Assam to the borders of the Panjāb. He aimed at the establishment of a closely knit empire of the Mauryan type, for in his great Allahābād inscription he is said to have “violently uprooted” no less than nine kings of Northern India, and to have annexed their kingdoms to his own. The martial tribes of Rājasthān, however, merely rendered him homage, as did several kingdoms

* We divide the name into its two component parts to distinguish this king and Candragupta Maurya. In Sanskrit the names are identical but the Gupta emperors evidently looked on the latter element of their names as a surname.
Fig. vii. The Gupta Empire
on his frontiers, while in the Eastern Deccan, where Samudra led a successful expedition as far as Kānci (Kānchipuram, Conjeeveram), the defeated kings were reinstated on giving homage and tribute, and probably heard little more of their titular overlord.

Samudra Gupta's main effort was in the direction of the west, where the Śakas had ruled for over 200 years and the land was enriched by the lucrative western trade. From their capital of Ujjayini (modern Ujjain) the Śakas still controlled Mālwā and Gujarāt, and were a power to be reckoned with. Though Samudra's inscription makes a vague reference to his receiving homage from "the Śaka Lords", it is probable that he did not measure swords with them, or if he did was unsuccessful, for it is unlikely that he would have allowed them to remain independent if he could have prevented it. There is indeed a story that on his death the Śakas actually succeeded in shaking the Gupta Empire, and forced a weak king, Rāma Gupta, to conclude a dishonourable peace. Most authorities reject the story, and deny the historicity of Rāma Gupta, but the discovery of copper coins bearing this name tends to strengthen our belief that it has a basis of fact.10

It was Candra Gupta II (c. 376–415), the son of Samudra and younger brother of the shadowy Rāma Gupta, who finally defeated the Śakas, soon after A.D. 388. Thus he became the paramount sovereign of all Northern India, with the exception of the North-West; and he had some control over much of the Northern Deccan, thanks to the marriage of his daughter Prabhāvatī with Rudrasena, king of the Vākāṭakas, who ruled a large kingdom in the modern Madhya Pradesh, Maharāshtra and north-western Andhra Pradesh. Rudrasena died young, and his widow reigned until her sons came of age. It is evident from Prabhāvatī's charters that during her regency the Vākāṭaka court was much under Gupta influence.

The reign of Candra Gupta II perhaps marks the high watermark of ancient Indian culture. Later Indian legend tells of a great and good King Vikramāditya, who drove the Śakas out of Ujjayini and ruled over all India, which was most prosperous and happy beneath his sceptre. Vikramāditya was certainly one of the titles of Candra Gupta II, and the legend seems therefore to refer to him. The only important discrepancy is that the traditional Vikramāditya is said to have founded the Vikrama Era, the most important of India's many systems of dating, which is still current in North India, and which commences in 58 B.C.; thus legend places him some 400 years too early. Kālidāsa, the greatest of India's poets and dramatists, is traditionally associated with Vikramāditya, and the internal evidence of his works points to the fact that he wrote at about this time.
The prosperity and happiness of Candra Gupta's empire is attested by another foreign traveller, unfortunately not as observant and informative as Megasthenes. This was Fa-hsien, a Chinese monk who came to India in order to obtain authentic copies of the Buddhist scriptures. The account of his travels gives much information about temples and monasteries and repeats many Buddhist legends, but only a few passing phrases mention social conditions, and nothing at all is said about Candra Gupta himself, although Fa-hsien was in India for some six years of his reign. The pilgrim did, however, note the peacefulness of India, the rarity of serious crime, and the mildness of the administration. He stated that it was possible to travel from one end of the country to the other without molestation, and without the need of passports. In his remarks on social custom he noted that all respectable people were now vegetarians, meat eating being confined to low castes and untouchables, in regard to whom he gives us the earliest clear reference to "pollution on approach". He found Buddhism still flourishing, but theistic Hinduism was very widespread.

The record of Fa-hsien shows that India had changed much since the days of Megasthenes, some 700 years earlier. The mild ethics of Buddhism and Jainism had gradually leavened Indian society, which was now more gentle and humane than in the days of the Mauryas. In place of the old sacrificial Brahmaism, Hinduism had appeared, in form not very different from that of recent centuries. Soon harsher and more primitive elements were to re-emerge, but in the best days of the Gupta Empire Indian culture reached a perfection which it was never again to attain. At this time India was perhaps the happiest and most civilized region of the world, for the effete Roman Empire was nearing its destruction, and China was passing through a time of troubles between the two great periods of the Huns and the T'angs.

Candra Gupta II was succeeded by his son Kumara Gupta I (c. 415–454), who, like Samudra Gupta, performed the Vedic horse-sacrifice which, at least in theory, might only be performed by great conquerors. There is no evidence, however, that he added to his realm, although for most of his reign he preserved it intact. But in the last years of Kumara Gupta I the empire suffered a severe blow; as with many other important events of early Indian history, details are annoyingly absent, but it is clear that among the chief enemies with whom the Guptas had to contend were new invaders, called in India the Hunas. They were a Central Asian people, known to Byzantine writers as Hephthalites or White Huns, and it is usually considered that they were a branch of the great group of Turko-Mongol
peoples who were threatening Europe at about the same time;
certain modern scholars, however, claim that they were in no way
related to the Huns of Attila, but were of Iranian stock. The
Hūṇas had occupied Bactria some time before, and now, like the
earlier Greeks, Sakas and Kuśāṇas, they crossed the mountains and
attacked the plains of India; it is probable that kindred Central Asian
tribes came in their train.

Once more Western India was the prey of fierce raiders, who were
with the greatest difficulty kept at bay by the Emperor’s son, Skanda
Gupta. During the war with the Hūṇas Kumāra Gupta died, and
Skanda Gupta (c. 454-467) assumed power, though not born of the
chief queen and therefore not the regular heir to the throne. He
succeeded in re-establishing the Gupta Empire, and by the end of 455
it was again at peace; but he reigned for little more than twelve
years, and on his death the great days of the Guptas were over. The
empire continued, but central control weakened, and local governors
became feudatory kings with hereditary rights. To the west of
Vārāṇasī the Gupta emperors now exercised little more than titular
control.

At the close of the 6th century fresh Hūṇa inroads occurred, and
this time were even more difficult to repel. The empire was dis-
united, and no strong man of the calibre of Skanda Gupta came
forward to drive out the invader. For some thirty years, from
A.D. 500 onwards, Western India was in the hands of Hūṇa kings, two
of whom, Toramāṇa and his son Mihirakula, were apparently mighty
monarchs. The latter is remembered by the 7th century Chinese
traveller Hsüan Tsang as a fierce persecutor of Buddhism, and in
Kashmir, one of the centres of his power, memories of his sadistic
tyranny were still alive in the 12th century, when they were recorded
by the historian Kalhaṇa. Mihirakula seems to have been driven
from the plain of the Gangā by Narasimha Gupta, who had the
cognomen Bālāditya, by which name he is remembered by Hsüan
Tsang; about 550 Mihirakula was also defeated in Western India,
this time by Yaśodharman, an energetic king of Mandasor, who
built a large kingdom which did not survive his death. Though
Mihirakula apparently retained his hold on Kashmir and parts of the
North-West, Hūṇa power never again seriously threatened India,
and the Hūṇas soon lost their individuality.

These incursions were the death-blow of the Gupta Empire, which
by A.D. 550 had completely vanished. A new Gupta line, probably
not related to the great one, ruled in Magadha until the 8th century.
North of the Gangā another kingdom, that of the Maukharis, rose
to prominence, and first gave importance to the city of Kāṇyakubja,
the modern Kanauj, which until the coming of the Muslims was to be the cultural centre of Northern India and its largest and most prosperous city. In Gujarāt a line of Gupta feudatories, the Maitrakas, became strong and independent. Evidently all semblance of political unity had again vanished. It is at this time that we first hear of the Gurjaras, a new people who were to provide one of the strongest dynasties of the Middle Ages. The invasions of the Hūṇas destroyed or dispersed the older martial tribes of Rājasthān and their places were taken by newcomers, either acclimatized invaders or indigenous tribes from the hills, from whom most of the Rājput clans of the Middle Ages were descended.

The centre of interest now shifts for a time to Sthāṇḍīśvara (modern Thānesar), in the watershed of the Satlaj and the Yamunā, which is so important for India’s security, and where so many decisive battles have been fought. Here a local king, Prabhākaravardhana of the family of Puṣyabhuti, had grown in power as a result of successful raids on Western India and against the Hūṇas, who still held parts of the Panjāb. His mother was a princess of the second Gupta line, and his daughter, Rājyaśrī, was married to the Maukharī king Grahavarman. Thus Prabhākaravardhana kept on good terms with his neighbours in the east, while he gathered strength in the west. But the Guptas and Maukharis were hereditary enemies, and at about the time of Prabhākaravardhana’s death war broke out between them. Rājyavardhana, the new king of Sthāṇḍīśvara, hurried to the support of the Maukharis, while the Guptas had the assistance of Śaśāṅka, the king of Bengal. In the war both Grahavarman of Kāṇyakubja and Rājyavardhana of Sthāṇḍīśvara were killed. The former died without an heir, and the two kingdoms were combined under Harṣavardhana or Harṣa, the second son of Prabhākaravardhana and the brother-in-law of Grahavarman.

Harṣa ascended the throne in 606 at the age of sixteen, and in the forty-one years of his reign he succeeded in partially restoring the glories of the Guptas. Some of his fame is due to the fact that, in comparison with most other early Indian kings, his reiga is remarkably well documented. The poet Bāṇa, who was patronized by Harṣa, has left a florid account of the events leading up to his rise to power (p. 448ff’), while in the latter part of his reign India was visited by another Chinese pilgrim, Hsūn Tsang, who wrote a very valuable description of India, which, unlike the account of Megasthenes, has survived intact. While his main purpose, like that of Fa-hsien, was to obtain Buddhist manuscripts and visit sacred sites, Hsūn Tsang was less other-worldly than the earlier pilgrim, and he was in close touch with Harṣa, whom he much admired and who gave him an
honoured place at his court. His work is therefore of much greater historical value than that of Fa-hsien.

Although Harśa gained control of most of Northern India, from Gujarāt to Bengal, his empire was feudal in structure. Outside the immediate domains of Kānyakubja and Sthānviśvara many of the old kings retained their thrones. Saśāṅka, the fierce anti-Buddhist king of Bengal who overran Magadha at the time of Harśa’s accession, was driven back to his own domains and his kingdom fell to Harśa, but Deva Gupta, the king who had been chiefly responsible for the downfall of Harśa’s brother-in-law Grahavarman Maukhari, was replaced by a relative, Mādhava Gupta, and the Maitraka king of Gujarāt, after being defeated by Harśa, was allowed to retain his throne as a vassal. Harśa controlled his great empire by ceaselessly travelling from province to province, both in his own domains and in those of his feudatories, who seem to have spent much time in attendance on their overlord. When he died without heirs it is not surprising that his empire fell to pieces.

Harśa seems to have been a man of great gifts and intense energy. As Candragupta by Megasthenes, he is described by Hsüan Tsang as hearing the complaints of his humbler subjects with unwearying patience, not in his audience hall, but in a small travelling pavilion by the roadside. He loved pomp, however, and in his progresses he was accompanied by a tremendous train of attendants, courtiers, officials, Buddhist monks, and brāhmaṇs. He was a loyal and warm friend, and, if we can believe the sources, fantastically generous to those whom he favoured. He loved philosophy and literature, and in his leisure found time to write three very competent dramas (p. 443).

His empire was very extensive. Even Bhāskaravarman, the king of remote Assam, attended his court, and if not technically feudatory to him was much under his influence. It would seem that Bhāskaravarman assisted Harśa against Saśāṅka at the beginning of his reign, and the two kings were lifelong friends. Only in the Deccan Harśa could make no progress. Here he attacked the Cālukya king Pulakeśin II, but was thoroughly defeated, and could never again pass the Narmadā.

Hsüan Tsang shows that Buddhism was definitely declining in India at this time, although in the latter part of his reign Harśa fell increasingly under its influence. Now certain elements of later Hinduism, of which there are few traces in the time of the Guptas, were strongly in evidence. The growth of tantric cults (p. 339) and of such practices as widow-burning (p. 189f) shows that a cultural decline had already set in. Law and order were not as well main-
tained as in Gupta times, for, in contrast to Fa-hsien, who was so impressed by the peaceable and law-abiding state of India, Hsüan Tsang was twice robbed by bandits in Harṣa’s domains, and on one occasion was nearly sacrificed to the goddess Durgā by river pirates, in the very heart of the empire.

THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE NORTH

The history of the succeeding centuries is a rather drab story of endemic warfare between rival dynasties. It can be followed in some detail, thanks to the numerous inscriptions and copper-plate charters of the period, but the detail is monotonous and uninteresting to all but the specialist.

On Harṣa’s death there was great confusion. A usurper, Arunāśva, temporarily seized Kānyakubja, and attacked Wang Hsüan-ts’ē, who had come with a small detachment of troops as ambassador to Harṣa from the Chinese emperor T’ai-tsung. Wang escaped with his little force and gathered an army from Tibet, Nepal and Assam; with the aid of this he captured Arunāśva, who was taken back to China to end his days in attendance on the T’ang Emperor. After this Bhāskaravarman of Assam extended his power westwards, and occupied part of Magadha. Meanwhile the second Gupta dynasty revived, and Ādityasena Gupta was the most important monarch of the latter half of the 7th century, and one of the last great Indian kings to perform the Vedic horse-sacrifice. Early in the 8th century an upstart named Yaṣovarman established an empire at Kānyakubja, which for a while controlled much of the North, but which soon fell to Lalitāditya, one of the few kings of Kashmir to play an important part in the politics of the Gangetic Plain. In the following two centuries two great dynasties, the Pālas of Bihār and Bengal, and the Gurjara-Pratihāras of Kānyakubja, divided the hegemony of most of Northern India between them.

The Pālas of Eastern India were the first to gain the ascendancy, and for a while, in the early part of the 9th century, were the masters of Kānyakubja. The long reign of the great king Dharmapāla (c. 770–810) marks the apogee of Pāla power; by the time of his death control of Kānyakubja was lost, but his successor, Devapāla (c. 810–850), was still a very important king and was in diplomatic contact with the Śailendras kings of Sumātra. The Pāla kings are chiefly notable for their patronage of Buddhism, which, in a rather corrupt form, flourished in their dominions during the three centuries of their rule. It was from the Pāla empire that Buddhism
Fig. viii. India in the early 11th century, A.D.
(Names in parentheses are of dynasties which were feudatory at the time, but became important later)
was introduced into Tibet, where, combined with many native beliefs, it survives to the present day.

In the 9th and 10th centuries the Gurjara-Pratihāras, who probably originated in Rājasthān, were masters of Kānyakubja and were the most powerful kings of Northern India. They successfully resisted the Arabs, who in 712 had occupied Sind and who for over a century made frequent attacks on their eastern neighbours. The two most powerful Pratihāra kings, Mihira Bhoja (c. 840–885) and Mahendrapāla (c. 885–910), pushed back the Pālas, and were overlords of most of Northern India as far as the borders of Bengal. But they were weakened by the repeated invasions of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of the Deccan, who temporarily occupied Kānyakubja in 916. These persistent raids from the south seem to have turned the attention of the Pratihāra kings away from the North-West, where new forces were gathering which were ultimately to overthrow Hindu India. Though they regained their capital after its occupation by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pratihāras never regained their strength, and throughout the 10th century their feudatories grew more and more influential at the expense of their former masters.

In Afgānistān a line of Turkish chieftains had established a powerful kingdom at Ghaznī, and began to look covetously at the rich plains of India. In 986 one of their amīrs, Sabuktīghīn, made his first attack on the most important king of N.-W. India, Jayapāla; in a second raid he occupied Peshāwar. In 997 he was succeeded by his son Mahmūd, who soon embarked on a deliberate policy of raiding the rich and divided kingdoms of India. In 1001 he defeated and captured Jayapāla, who committed suicide. Jayapāla’s son Ānandapāla formed a league of Hindu princes against the invader, but the unwieldy and disunited Indian forces, basing their strategy and tactics on ancient precepts and relying on the unpredictable morale of the fighting elephant, were defeated near Peshāwar by the smaller and more mobile Muslim army, and the whole of India lay open to the invader. Between 1001 and 1027 Mahmūd made seventeen great raids on India. The whole western half of the land felt the force of the Tūrūkṣas; palaces and temples were looted and desecrated, and enormous caravans of booty and slaves were taken back to Ghaznī. The raids reached as far as the great shrine of Somnāth in Saurāshtra and the kingdom of the Candellas in Bundelkhand. Among India’s great cities Kānyakubja and Mathurā were captured and plundered.

Mahmūd did not remain in India, however, for, though Muslim chroniclers depict him as a staunch propagator of Islām, intent on converting the infidel and bringing India under the control of the true faith, his expeditions were for the purpose rather of plunder than of
conquest. But the N.-W. Frontier and the Panjāb were annexed to his kingdom, as were the Arab kingdoms of Sind, which had long ceased to be a menace to the rest of India. After the sack of Kānya-kubja the great Pratihāra dynasty, which had been losing power for a hundred years, soon disappeared. Its last important king, Rājyapāla, was defeated and dethroned by his neighbour Vidyādharā the Candella, whose kingdom had formerly been tributary to the Pratihiāras and who profited by their discomfiture at the hands of the Muslims to extend his own power; but Vidyādharā himself was too weak to resist Mahmūd effectively, and was forced to pay him tribute.

For about a century and a half Northern India retained its independence. In Vārānaśī and Kānya-kubja a new ruling family, the Gāhaḍavālas, managed to build a fairly prosperous kingdom. In Rājasthān the dynasty of the Cāhamānas rose in prominence and power. The influence of the Candellas of Bundelkhand grew with the fall of the Pratihiāras. In Gujarāt there ruled the prosperous line of the Caulukyas or Solāṅkīs, much under the influence of Jainism. In Mālwa the Paramāra dynasty flourished under King Bhoja (1018–1055), famous in legend, who was an accomplished scholar and a great builder of dams and artificial lakes for irrigation (p. 194f). Madhya Pradesh was in the hands of the Kalacuri dynasty. In Bengal the Pālas were replaced by the Senas, who were strong supporters of orthodox Hinduism, and who inaugurated something of an anti-Buddhist reaction.

Thus Northern India, in the twilight of Hindu independence, was hopelessly divided. As well as the main dynasties whose names we have mentioned there were many lesser lines, theoretically tributary to the greater, but virtually independent in their own territories and always ready to revolt against their overlords. The conservative kings of India had learnt no lessons from Mahmūd’s raids. They were still incapable of serious co-operation, and their enormous armies were slow and unwieldy. At the end of the 12th century the three chief kings of Northern India—Prithvīrāja Cāhamāna, Jayaccandra Gāhaḍavāla, and Paramardideva Candella*—were in a state of tripartite war.

A new Turkish ruling house supplanted the line of Mahmūd in Afgānīstān. In 1173 Ghīyās-ud-dīn of Ghor annexed Ghaznī. His younger brother, Shihāb-ud-dīn, usually known as Muhammad of Ghor, proceeded to conquer the Ghaznavid possessions in the Panjāb and Sind, and then turned his attention to the Hindu states. The initiative in resistance came from Prithvīrāja, who patched up his

* These names are often met in their Hindī forms: Prithvīrāja or Prithvī Chauhān, Jaishand Gāharwar, and Parmīl Candēl.
quarrels and prepared to meet the invader. In 1191 the Hindu army met Muhammad at Tarāin, not far from Thānesar, which had once been the capital of the great Harṣa. The invaders were defeated, but in the following year they returned with a larger force. This time the mounted archers of the Muslims overpowered the Hindu army and Prithvirāja was defeated and killed. He is remembered to this day by the Rājputs as a model of chivalry and courage, and is the hero of many folk ballads.

Muhammad returned home, and left the work of conquest to his generals. The chief of these, Qutb-ud-dīn Aibak, occupied Delhi, an important city of the Cāhamāṇa kingdom, and made it his headquarters. Another general, Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyār, pressed on down the Gangā and overran Bihār, where he put many Buddhist monks to the sword. He then occupied Bengal with little difficulty. The Candella kingdom of Bundelkhand fell in 1203. In 1206 Muham- mad, who had succeeded his brother as sultan of Ghor, was assassinated and his general Qutb-ud-dīn, a manumitted slave, became the first sultan of Delhi.

In Rājasthān and other outlying districts Hindu kingdoms continued, sometimes paying tribute to the more energetic sultans but often virtually free, while regions with sharply defined natural boundaries, such as Kashmir, Nepāl, Assam and Orissā, retained their autonomy. These kingdoms had always been in effect independent, only occasionally rendering tribute and homage to the greater kings of the Plains, and in general they had little political effect on India as a whole, and were little affected by it politically. From now on, until the 18th century, Muslim rulers dominated Northern India, and the great days of Hindu civilization were at an end.

THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE PENINSULA

While in Northern India Hindu culture declined somewhat after the Gupta age, in the Deccan it flourished and advanced. By this time Āryan influence had penetrated the whole of the Peninsula, and the contact of Āryan and Dravidian produced a vigorous cultural synthesis, which in turn had an immense influence on Indian civilization as a whole.

Power was generally centred on two foci, one in the Western Deccan and the other in the Cōḷa country, the Coromandel coast. The political history of the medieval Deccan is largely concerned with the struggles between the dynasties controlling these two centres. Many lesser kingdoms also existed, however, often tributary to the larger ones but sometimes rising to considerable power.
In the Northern Deccan the Vākāṭakas vanished at about the same time as the Guptas, and in the middle of the 6th century the west and centre of the Peninsula came under the control of the Cālukya Dynasty, ruling from Vātāpi (now called Bādāmi) in Mysore. Its greatest king, Pulakeśīn II (c. 609–642), was the approximate contemporary of Harṣa, whom he successfully resisted, only to be defeated at the end of his reign by Narasiṃhavarman, the Pallava king of Kāṇcī (Kanchīpuram). The Pallavas, who had been ruling since the 4th century, were great temple builders (p. 357), and seem to have much encouraged the growth of Āryan institutions in the South.

In the 7th century the Cālukyas divided into eastern and western branches, and in the following century the western branch was replaced by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānyakeṭa (modern Mālkhed in Mysore), whose martial efforts were largely directed against the North, and who made many raids beyond the Narmadā. A revived Cālukya line, ruling from Kalyāṇi, replaced the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in 973, and controlled the Deccan until the end of the 12th century, when their empire was divided between the Yādavas of Devagiri in the Northern Deccan, the Kākatīyas of Warangal in the Telugu-speaking areas of the east, and the Hoysalas of Dōrasamudra in Mysore.

The Pallavas of Kāṇcī persisted with declining fortunes to the end of the 9th century, when their territories were annexed by the Cōla kings of Tāṃjūvūr (Tanjore), Āditya I (c. 870–906), and Parāntaka I (c. 906–953). The Cōla kingdom, one of the three great kingdoms of Tamil tradition, had been virtually submerged by the Pallavas for centuries. Now it rose again, and for some 500 years ruled the Coromandel Coast and much of the southern part of the Peninsula, giving a large measure of security to its people and supporting a flourishing social and cultural life. The most notable of the Cōla kings were Rājarāja I (985–1014) and Rājendra I (1014–1042), in whose reigns the power of the dynasty reached its zenith. The former conquered Ceylon, and the latter carried his power by land to the mouth of the Gangā, and sent out a great naval expedition, which occupied parts of Burma, Malaya and Sumātra. This was perhaps despatched with the intention of suppressing the piratical activities of the Indonesian kings, who interfered with the flourishing trade between South India and China. The Cōla hold on S.-E. Asia does not appear to have lasted long, however, and Rājendra’s naval expedition is unique in the annals of India.

The Cōlas held Northern Ceylon until soon after 1070, when they were expelled by the Sinhalese king Vijayabāhu I (1070–1114). From now on the Cōla power declined, and the Pāṇḍya kings of Madurai were continually attempting to regain their independence,
while pressure from the Cālukyas increased. Vijayabāhu of Ceylon
inaugurated a period of success and prosperity for the island, which
culminated in the reign of Parākramabāhu I (1153–1186), the great-
est of Sinhalese kings (pl. XXXV), whose splendour can be seen
in the remains of his capital, Polonnaruva, whither the seat of govern-
ment had been transferred from the earlier capital of Anurādhapura
at the time of the Tamil invasions. Parākramabāhu for a while
turned the tables on the Tamils, and Sinhalese troops, profiting by
the Pāṇḍyan rebellions against the Cōlas, attacked the Indian coast
and even temporarily occupied Madurai.

Though their power declined, the Cōlas long maintained the central
part of their empire, the region around Kāncī and Tānjuvūr. The
political stability and freedom from attack afforded by their efficient
government greatly encouraged Tamil culture, and the large number
of donative inscriptions of this period testifies to a flourishing eco-
nomy. Administratively the Cōla Empire is remarkable for the
influence exerted by local autonomous bodies; village and district
councils, under the supervision of the central government, introduced
an element into the structure of the state which, if not democratic,
was at least popular (p. 107).

The Cōlas fell in the 13th century, when their territory was shared
by the Hoysalas of Mysore and the revived Pāṇḍya dynasty of
Madurai. Now the Deccan was soon to feel the force of İslām, which
was already the master of Northern India. In the reign of the able
sultan of Delhi, Alā’-ud-dīn Khaljī (1296–1315), a series of brilliant
raids led by the eunuch general Malik Kāfūr, a converted Hindu,
crushed the Deccan kingdoms, and for a time a Muslim sultanate was
set up even in Madurai, in the extreme south.

The Dravidians were not finally subjugated, however. In 1326,
within a few years of Malik Kāfūr’s raids, an independent Hindu
kingdom was founded at Vijayanagara, on the Tuṅgabhadra River.
This kingdom, after desperately resisting the Bahmani sultans of
the Northern Deccan, established its hegemony over the whole Penin-
sula from the Kṛṣṇā River southwards. Learning something of
military strategy from their Muslim enemies, the kings of Vijayanag-
gara maintained their independence until the middle of the 16th
century, and, in a reduced form, even later. Of the splendour and
affluence of their capital we have European accounts, from the Italian
Nicolo dei Conti, who visited India in the early 15th century, and from
the Portuguese travellers Paes and Nuno, who about a hundred
years later made contact with the kingdom of Vijayanagara from the
recently established Portuguese settlement of Goa. All were im-
pressed by the splendour of the capital and the wealth of the court.
The great king Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya (1509-1529) (pl. XXXIX), had he lived longer, might have driven the Muslims from the Deccan altogether. Of him Paes wrote in terms rarely used by a European traveller of an oriental monarch:

“He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners, . . . asking about all their affairs whatever their condition may be. He is a great ruler and a man of much justice, but subject to sudden fits of rage. . . . He is by rank a greater lord than any, by reason of what he possesses in armies and territories, but . . . he has nothing compared to what a man like him ought to have, so gallant and perfect is he in all things.”

Paes, in the reign of Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya, remarked on the prosperity of the people and the cheapness of provisions; but Nuniz, the second Portuguese traveller, who visited Vijayanagara in the reign of Kṛṣṇa’s successor Acyuta (1529-42), was less impressed, and stated that the underlings of the king were overbearing and the common people much oppressed. It is evident that the beneficial regime of Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya was not continued after his death. His successors were weaker men than he, and embroiled themselves unnecessarily in the intrigues of the Muslim sultanates of the Northern Deccan, relying on the prestige gained for them by their more powerful predecessor. In 1565 the de facto ruler of Vijayanagara, Rāma Rāja, was utterly defeated at Tālikōta by a coalition of Deccan sultans, the great city was mercilessly sacked, and the greatness of the empire was at an end.

This was the last important Hindu kingdom of the older type. That of the Marāthās, which arose in the Western Deccan in the late 17th century and was the most forceful element in Indian politics in the 18th, lies beyond our province.

The ultimate importance of this period in the history of the Peninsula was cultural and religious. Jainism was once very strong in Mysore and other parts of the South, and often, under royal patronage, it became virtually the state religion. But in the Tamil country at this period a new ecstatically devotional theism arose, looking for inspiration rather to hymns in the vernacular than to the Vedas or earlier sacred texts in Sanskrit. This was subsequently to set the standard for the popular religion of the whole of India, through the work of missionary theologians who travelled all over the sub-continent in the later middle ages. The work and influence of the great medieval Dravidian saints and philosophers will be discussed in another chapter.

This brief outline of the political history of Hindu India shows that she produced many bold adventurers and imperious conquerors. As
Our following chapter tells, they were ruthless in gaining and retaining power, and looked on war as a normal political expedient. Except during the Mauryan period political unity was unknown, and the highly organized and tightly controlled administration of the ancient Indian state had no counterpart in inter-state relations, where endemic anarchy was only mitigated by a tradition of fair play in warfare, which was by no means always followed. Here, and in the conservatism of the medieval period, lay the great weakness of Hindu India, which made her a prey to successive invaders. Of these the wild tribes of Central Asia were rapidly assimilated, but the Muslims, with their rigidly codified religion, were too much for even the omnivorous Hindu culture to digest. Interaction between the two religions and ways of life indeed took place, and once at least a modus vivendi was almost reached (p. 482). It is not wholly surprising, however, that, when India began to reassert herself, two nations should have replaced the single British Raj; but all impartial students must regret that the unity of the Indian sub-continent has been once more lost, and trust that India and Pakistan may soon forget the bitterness born of centuries of strife, in co-operation for the common welfare of their peoples.