Chapter Ten

Harsha-Vardhana and His Age

I. Sources

Harsha was one of India’s greatest rulers who, by his conquests, made himself a paramount sovereign and an emperor, and brought about the political unification of a large part of Northern India. Fortunately, the history of his reign does not suffer from want of information. As remarked by V. A. Smith, his history is almost as fully known as that of Chandra-gupta Maurya or Asoka.

A very important source of Harsha’s history is the Sanskrit work named Harsha-charita written in prose by Bana, who was Harsha’s court-poet and wrote from his personal and intimate knowledge of Harsha’s early life and rule. Perhaps the historical value of his work suffers somewhat by being a poet-laureate’s panegyric on his royal patron. But it is quite easy to separate facts from the poet’s fancies and exaggerations. Some of the statements of Bana are corroborated by other sources as indicated later. But the Harsha-charita has its great value as a source of the social history of the times. It calls up a graphic picture of the life of those days at different levels, the life of the lowly in the village, the busy and strenuous life of the camp, the high life of luxury and ceremony at the court and the palace, or the ascetic and austere life at the hermitage.

The India of Harsha is also described by a foreign eye-witness, the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuan Tsang. His account, in its wide scope and abundant and concrete details, reads almost like a gazetteer. Hiuan Tsang’s record is supplemented by his biography written by his friend Hwui-li.

To these may be added a few inscriptions and coins which are valuable supplements to literary evidence.¹

¹ The inscriptions are:

1 Banskhera CP., year 22 (A.D. 628), EI, IV, 210.
3 Sonpat Copper Seal, CII, III, 231.
4 Nalanda Seals, MASI, 6.66, p. 68.
II. ACCESSION

The history of the Pushyabhūti family, to which Harsha belonged, down to the tragic events which led to the death of his elder brother Rājya-vardhana, has been discussed in the preceding chapter. Bāna has described in detail how on the death of Rājya-vardhana, his younger brother Harsha ascended the throne of Thāneśvar. Curiously enough, Hiuian Tsang has represented Harsha and his ancestors as rulers of Kanauj. He has also narrated how the statesmen of Kanauj, on the advice of their leader Po-ni (Bhanḍi ?), invited Harsha to become their sovereign, how he at first seemed unwilling to comply with their request, but later agreed on the advice of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and being warned by the latter 'not to occupy the actual throne, and not to use the title mahārāja, became king of Kanauj with the title rājaputra and the style Śilāditya'.

Bāna’s testimony is enough to show that Hiuian Tsang’s account is wrong, and Harsha could not possibly have felt any hesitation in ascending the throne of Thāneśvar which was his by hereditary right. Evidently Hiuian Tsang had in mind the circumstances leading to the accession of Harsha on the throne of Kanauj, at a later date. As we have seen, his sister Rājyaśrī was the queen of Kanauj, but her husband was killed by the king of Mālava and she herself was made a prisoner. We shall see presently how Harsha rescued her, and it was possibly then that the throne of Kanauj was offered to him, for the widowed Rājyaśrī had no male issue. In any case Hiuian Tsang’s account leaves no doubt that Harsha not only became king of Kanauj but actually fixed his capital there and was known in later lays as the king of Kanauj rather than of Thanesvar.

2 HIC. Tr., 178 ff.
3 HTW, I, 343.
4 This is the only way in which it is possible to explain the curious story of Hiuian Tsang about Harsha’s accession to the throne. But it must be admitted that a mystery hangs round Harsha’s assumption of the sovereignty of Kanauj. It is true that Graha-varman had no male issue (HIC, Tr., 245), but as pointed out above (p. 186), Graha-varman had a brother whose name, beginning with Su, occurs in the Nālandā Seal as the successor of Avanti-varman. As Graha-varman is expressly said by Bāna to be the eldest son of Avanti-varman, it may be safely presumed that his younger brother, whose name began with Su, succeeded to the throne of Kanauj after his tragic death. This can be hardly made to fit in with the story of Hiuian Tsang, even if it is applied to Kanauj. We know from the inscriptions of Nepal that a Maukhari prince Bhoga-varman, whose father’s name probably began with Su, was living at a time not far removed from Harsha’s time (HNI, 119). The Mahāyāna-mūlakalpa also hints that the Maukhari lost their kingdom and royal rank after Graha-Suvra, whom we may easily take as the two sons of Avanti-varman and the last Maukhari rulers of Kanauj. It is not unlikely therefore that Harsha had to conquer Kanauj by force, and that the story of the offer of the throne is a later fabrication (Ed.).
Immediately after his accession, young Harsha was confronted with a double task: to recover his sister who 'burst from her confinement at Kānyakubja and with her train entered the Vindhyā forest'; and to punish his enemies. Sēnāpati Simhanāda, a friend of his father, gave him an aggressive plan: 'Think not of the Gauda king alone: so deal that for the future no others follow his example.' Harsha thus planned a digvijaya and asked Skanda-gupta, the commandant of his elephant force, to prepare for it. His feudatories were also infected by the war-fever and dreamt of the conquest of distant lands like those of Turushkas and the Sakas, Persia, Pārīyātra and the Deccan. Thus began a military career which was not solely inspired by aggressive designs but was partly an act of vengeance and partly an effort to re-establish political unity. The first event of his march was the arrival of an envoy from king Bhāskara-varman of Assam, with an offer of alliance which was accepted by him. Next, he met on his way Bhaṇḍi coming with the whole force of the lord of Mālava defeated by Rājya-vardhana, with an enormous booty in elephants, horses, and other costly articles. Then, after a few days' march, he reached the Vindhyā forest where he established contact with its chiefs named Vyāghraketu and Bhūkampa whose nephew Nirghāta referred him to a hermit named Divākaramitra for news about his sister. There a mendicant told him that in the morning he had seen a young lady in despair mounting the funeral pile. Then the whole company with the saint, whom Harsha recognized as the friend of his sister's husband, hurried to the spot in time to prevent Rājyaśrī from committing herself to the flames. From the Vindhyas, Harsha 'went back in a few marches to his camp stationed along the banks of the Gaṅgā'. It was probably to be the base of his operations against Saśāṅka, but, as noted above (p. 206) it is doubtful if there was any actual conflict between the two. According to the Ārya-Maṅjuśrī-mūlakalpa (vv. 723-25) there was a clash between the two kings, Harsha defeating Saśāṅka and 'carrying a great havoc among the Bengali people'.

Harsha was thus now free for his second task of achieving his digvijaya for which he collected a large force comprising 5,000 elephants, 2,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry. The details of his conquests are not fully known. According to Hiuan Tsang he first 'proceeded eastwards, invaded the States which had refused allegiance, and waged incessant warfare until in six years he had brought the five

5 For a different view about the encounter between Harsha and Saśāṅka, see ante, p. 206.
Indias under allegiance. Bāna tells us that Harsha put Bhanḍi in charge of the campaign. We also gather from Bāna that Harsha 'pounded (pramathya) a king of Sindh', and took 'tribute from an inaccessible land of snowy mountain' (which may mean Nepāl). In the west, his conquests included the kingdom of Valabhi. At first 'the lord of Valabhi, who had been defeated by the great lord, the illustrious Harshadeva', sought the protection of Dadda II, the Gurjara king who belonged to the political system of the South under its paramount sovereign, Pulakeśin II, the Chālukya (Ch. XV). But later, the Valabhi king got back his kingdom and even became the son-in-law of Harsha. As such, he appears in the train of his father-in-law at the Assemblies held at Kanauj and Prayāga. The name of this son-in-law of Harsha, as given by Huan Tsang, probably corresponds to Dhruvabhaṭṭa, but he is undoubtedly Dhruvasena II.

Harsha's campaigns in Western India seem to have resulted in the submission to his suzerainty of a few other States like those of Anandapura, Ki-ta or (?) Cutch, and Su-la-cha or Surāṭha (Surat), all of which are described by Huan Tsang as dependencies of Molapo or Western Mālava, formerly subject to Valabhi. Some historians hold that Harsha's conquests or political influence extended also to Nepāl, on the assumption that his era was in use there, but this is denied by S. Lévi, who further points out that Nepāl at that time was a dependency of Tibet.

The course of Harsha's conquests suffered a serious set-back on his expedition towards the Deccan. Pulakeśin II of the Chālukya dynasty of Vātāpi inflicted a decisive defeat on him so that 'Harsha's harsha (joy) melted away through fear'. The Chālukya records describe Harsha as the lord of the whole of northern country (sakalottarāpathēśvara) by defeating whom Pulakeśin acquired the high title of Parameśvara. Thus the suzerainty of India was practically divided in their days between Harsha and Pulakeśin whom the Yakkeri inscription calls Dakshināpathaprithivyāḥ svāmī, 'Lord of the vast territory known as Dakshināpatha'.

On the completion of his military campaigns Harsha sought to enforce peace by making his army sufficiently large and strong. He

6 HTW, I, 343. According to some texts the passage simply means that Harsha fought the Five Indias. The Five Indias are stated to comprise the whole of India between the Himalayas and the sea (HTB, I, 70). Cf. also Cunningham, Anc. Geo. of India, 13.

7 IA, XIV, 420.

8 Le Nepal, II, 152.

9 Aiholes ins., v. 23; EI, VI, 6. For a contrary view that Harsha was not defeated, cf. IHQ, XXXVII, 246 (Ed.).

10 EI, V, 8.
brought his elephant corps up to the formidable strength of 60,000 and his cavalry to 100,000, as stated by Hiuan Tsang, so that with this overwhelming military might he was able ‘to reign in peace for thirty years without raising a weapon’.

Thus his empire rested ultimately upon the basis of physical force. Bāna tells us that the elephants of the army were acquired by the emperor as tribute or presents or secured by ‘the rangers of his own elephant forests’. The royal elephant, the emperor’s ‘friend in battle and sport’, was named Darpaśāta. The horses of the army came from distant countries like Vanāyu (Arabia), Āraṭṭa, Kaṁboja, Bharadvāja, Sindh and Persia. Harsha’s army also included camel corps as stated by Bāna.

As noted above (p. 206) Saśānka’s death paved the way for the extension of Harsha’s empire towards the east. In A.D. 643 he conquered Koṅgoda (Ganjam) on the east coast. This formed the limit of his empire which included Orissā, 80 townships of which he offered as a gift to a local Buddhist divine. He was also contemplating the holding of a Mahāyāna Buddhist Conference in Orissa. Karṇasuvrana, after Saśānka, seems to have passed under the rule of Harsha’s friend, Bhāskara-varman, king of Kāmarūpa.

IV. EXTENT OF EMPIRE

The term empire connotes the sphere of direct administration as well as the sphere of influence. These two are to be separately viewed. In Harsha’s case, the territory directly governed by him included (1) Thāneśvar (Eastern Panjab), (2) Kanauj, (3) Ahichchhatra (Rohilkhand), (4) Srāvastī (Oudh) and (5) Prayāga. To these were added, after A.D. 641, (6) Magadha and (7) Orissa. In 641 Harsha Śilādītva assumed the title of king of Magadha and in that capacity exchanged embassies with China, as related below. His empire also included the small State of Kajaṅgala (Rajmahal) where he held his camp and first met Hiuan Tsang. There were many satellite States surrounding this imperial dominion and forming its extensive sphere of influence and suzerainty. Among these the most prominent were those of Kāmarūpa in the east, and Valabhi in the west, besides 18 States of his feudatory chiefs who formed his following and attended on him at Kanauj and Prayāga on the occasions of his quinquennial assemblies. Some of the distant kings maintained cordial relations with him and were his brethren in faith. Thus the king of Kapiśa, following Harsha, used to hold the moksha parishad ‘at which he gave liberally to the needy’ and had in his territories more than 100

11 HITW, I, 343.
12 For a critical discussion of the different views on the extent of Harsha’s empire, cf. IBORS, 1923, pp. 311 ff.
Mahāyāna monasteries. Like Harsha, too, he sought the company of Hiuan Tsang, whom he escorted for some distance on his return journey. The king of Kashmir was also a devout Buddhist like Harsha and shared his respect for Hiuan Tsang whom he retained as his guest for two years, giving him 20 clerks to copy out manuscripts and 5 men to act as attendants. On the occasion of a conflict, the king of Kashmir had to respect the requisition of Harsha for a tooth-relic of the Buddha. King Udito of Jālandhara in the Punjab became a convert to Buddhism, ‘whereupon the king of “mid-India” (Harsha) gave him sole control of matters relating to Buddhism in all India’. Both he and the king of Kapiša supplied escort for the Chinese pilgrim during his return journey. Harsha further commissioned four official guides to accompany the escort with letters written by the emperor (on fine white cotton stuff and sealed with red wax), which they were instructed to present in all the countries through which they conducted the pilgrim, ‘to the end that the princes of these countries might provide carriages or modes of conveyance to escort the master even to the borders of China’. Thus Harsha’s influence and fame extended all over Northern India and even up to the borders of China. Embassies were exchanged between him and the Chinese Emperor. A Brahmin envoy returned in A.D. 643 with a Chinese mission bringing the reply. This mission, which returned to China in A.D. 645, was followed by another mission from China under Wang-hiuen-tse, sent with an escort of thirty horsemen.

Hiuan Tsang sums up the position as follows:

‘Harsha reduced the neighbouring States to subjection, invaded the States which had refused allegiance, and ultimately brought the five Indias under allegiance, while countries far and near were also giving allegiance to him with the exception of Mahārāśtra.’

A reference may be made in this connection to an old Kanarese inscription found in Shimoga district in Mysore, stating that ‘while Silāditya, the light of the quarters, the most powerful, and a thorn in the way of the bravest, ascended the throne of the empire’, his general, Pattani Satyānka, fell fighting in battle against the army

13 HTW, I, 123.
14 Ibid., II, 269.
15 Ibid., I, 259.
16 Ibid., I, 296.
18 Ibid., 55; HTW, I, 343.
of Mahendra. Dr. R. Shama Sastry19 takes Śilāditya to be Harsha and Mahendra as his contemporary Pallava king, Mahendra-varman I. But this supposition is unlikely in view of the check to Harsha’s progress towards the South from Pulakesin II. Besides, it is more likely that this Śilāditya was the Chālukya prince Śryāśraya who was at war with Pallava king, Mahendra-varman II of the seventh century A.D. Again, to Mayūra, Bāna’s father-in-law, is attributed a verse which describes Harsha as the conqueror of Kuntala, Chola and Kāñchi. This was undoubtedly a poetic fancy though Harsha’s fame as an emperor seems to have spread all over India.

Harsha’s imperial position is also indicated in the institution of the Harsha era, used in inscriptions found in Nepāl, Magadha, Panjāb and Kanauj.20

V. THE GREAT CONTEMPORARIES OF HARSHA

In order to understand fully the position of Harsha in contemporary politics and to form a correct estimate of his imperial authority, reference must be made in some detail to the contemporary rulers of Kāmarūpa, Nepāl, Nāndīpurī and Valabhi.

1. Bhāskara-varman of Kāmarūpa

Bhāskara-varman (p. 210) is the only king of Kāmarūpa who is known to have played some part in Indian politics. It was no doubt dictated by necessity, but nevertheless it reflects great credit upon his sagacity and statesmanship. At the time of his accession there existed a long-standing hostility between his country and the powerful kingdom of Gauḍa. Although his predecessor had checked the enemy, Bhāskara-varman wisely foresaw the necessity of making political alliances in order to ensure the security of his State against his aggressive neighbour. He followed the wise maxim laid down by Kautilya that ‘common enemies of a state are the most natural friends’. Gauḍa was an age-long enemy of the Maukharis recently allied to the Pushyabhūtis of Thāneśvar, and so he was naturally attracted to them. Though we have no positive evidence that he sought alliance with the Maukharis, his ambassador Haṁsavega carried a proposal of alliance to the Pushyabhūti king who was intimately connected with the Maukharis and formed a political group with them. It has been suggested that Bhāskara-varman did this ‘when Harsha stepped

19 MAR, 1923, pp. 8, 83.
20 Cf. Bh. List, Nos. 1385 to 1421. The attribution of those in Nepāl and even many others to Harsha era is, however, very doubtful. This will be discussed in connection with the history of Nepāl (Ch. XX). Cf. also Ref. 2 in fn. 29 (Ed.).
into the shoes of the Maukhari’s. But this is hardly accurate. For when Harsha met the envoy from Kāmarūpa he had not established his authority over Kanauj and the Maukharis. The probability is that the envoy started from Kāmarūpa even before Graha-varman, king of Kanauj, was defeated and killed. It is not unlikely that Bhāskara-varman also desired to make a similar alliance with him. Such an alliance might have been actually formed, though we have no record of it, or it might have been prevented by the rapid march of events at Kanauj. There is, however, little doubt that Bhāskara-varman desired an alliance with the powerful Pushyabhūti-Maukhari group as a counterpoise against the aggressive designs of Gauḍa. This clearly follows from the statement which Bānabhaṭṭa has put into the mouth of the envoy of Kāmarūpa. He said, in effect, that his royal master resolved never to do homage to any except God Siva, and as he realized that such an object could not be achieved except by an alliance with a powerful ruler, he proposed an ‘imperishable alliance’ with Harsha. Harsha’s reply, while accepting the alliance, is equally explicit: ‘The prince’s design, too, is excellent. Stout-hearted himself, with me, a devotee of the bow for his friend, to whom save Siva need he pay homage’? It was thus clearly understood on both sides that the main object of their alliance was to protect Bhāskara-varman against an enemy who threatened his independence. So far as we know, the only possible enemy of this kind, and against whom Harsha might be of some help to Bhāskara-varman, was Sāśāṅka.

In the course of his speech Hamsavega observed, with the shrewdness befitting a seasoned diplomat, that ‘friends enter upon a slavery disguised under a synonym’. Whether the envoy actually said this or not, it becomes very significant in the light of later events, and one may even suspect that Bāṇa deliberately put it in his mouth in anticipation of what actually happened. For while Bhāskara-varman achieved his main object and his territory was secure from foreign aggressions, there is no doubt that with the growing power of Harsha, the alliance, so far as Bhāskara-varman was concerned, became almost a synonym for subordination. This is at least the only reasonable inference we can draw from the somewhat circumstantial narrative of Hiuan Tsang about him.

About the beginning of a.d. 643, when Hiuan Tsang was staying at Nālandā, Bhāskara-varman sent a messenger to Śīlabhadra, the head of that great monastery, with a request to send the Chinese

21 PIHC, VI, 49.
22 HC, Tr., 217-19.
23 Beal, Life, I, 70 ff.
priest to him. Silabhadra not having consented to the proposal, Bhāskara-varman sent a personal despatch to him stating that if the request be not acceded to, he would 'equip his army and elephants and trample to the very dust the monastery of Nālandā'. The threat had the desired effect and Hiuan Tsang visited Kāmarūpa.

Little did Bhāskara-varman dream, in the hour of his ignoble triumph, that there was even a greater bully than he. Harshavardhana, who had already sent several invitations to Hiuan Tsang, was surprised to hear that he had gone to Kāmarūpa. So Harsha sent a messenger to Bhāskara-varman, 'bidding him to send the priest of China to him at once'. With a great bravado Bhāskara-varman replied that 'Harsha might take his head, but not the Chinese priest'. This infuriated the great Emperor who sent a messenger to 'bring the head without any delay'. This laconic and peremptory message deeply alarmed Bhāskara-varman who immediately equipped his army of 20,000 elephants and his ships 30,000 in number, and passing along the Gaṅgā reached Harsha's camp at Kajaṅgala, near Rajmahal, along with Hiuan Tsang.

From this time forward Bhāskara-varman assumed a very submissive attitude. He accompanied Harsha to Kanauj and took part in the religious festivities. Later he attended the great quinquennial assembly of Harsha at Prayāga.

How far the detailed account of Hiuan Tsang may be regarded as historically true, it is difficult to say. But accepting it in the main as a correct version of what he actually saw and heard, we may draw some important conclusions about Bhāskara-varman. In the first place there is no doubt that he had gained in power and strength, and either directly ruled or exercised supremacy over a large part of Bengal, if not the whole of it. This is clearly proved by his threat to destroy Nālandā, as well as the journey across Bengal, to meet Harsha, with a fully equipped army and navy. Fortunately we have also epigraphic evidence in support of this view. For a copper-plate found at Nidhanpur records some grants made by Bhāskara-varman from his victorious camp at Karnasuvarna. This shows that the dominions of Śaśānka in Bengal, including his capital city, passed into the hands of Bhāskara-varman, while, as we have seen above (p. 251), the remaining parts of Śaśānka's empire, corresponding to modern Bihar and Orissa, were conquered by Harsha. Evidently all this took place after the death of Śaśānka, and more or less about the same time, i.e. about A.D. 641-42. Whether it was a result of tacit or definite understanding between the two allies or each independently acted.

24 E.I, XII, 65; XIX, 115, 246.
according to his convenience and opportunity, it is difficult to say. The latter view seems more probable, and offers a satisfactory explanation of the strained relations between the two. The incident of Hiuan Tsang might have been the immediate and obvious cause of the quarrel, but probably there were more deep-seated causes of the strange animosity displayed by each over this comparatively trifling affair. We can well imagine that Bhāskara-varman was puffed up with vanity at his recent annexation of Bengal and this sufficiently explains his haughty and overbearing attitude towards both Śilabhadrā and Harsha. But the latter, now the lord of a big empire, could ill brook this defiant attitude of one who, though nominally an ally on equal terms, was really much inferior in power and status. He seized the earliest opportunity to teach his friend a lesson which he never forgot. Bhāskara-varman now realized, what his envoy hinted long ago, that friendship between unequals often becomes the synonym of slavery in disguise. In seeking an alliance with Harsha-vardhana Bhāskara-varman gave evidence of statesmanship in his early life. In accepting without demur the role of an inferior ally he showed a shrewd practical wisdom befitting his old age. This seems to be the most reasonable interpretation of the position of Bhāskara-varman vis-a-vis Harsha-vardhana. It would be idle to pretend that in a.d. 643 he continued to be an ally on equal terms, as in a.d. 606,25 and equally wrong to suppose that he was a feudatory of Harsha, or paid formal homage or allegiance to that emperor.26

We do not hear anything more of Bhāskara-varman till after the death of Harsha-vardhana. It is said in the Chinese chronicle that while Wang-hiuen-tse, with the help of the contingents from Nepāl and Tibet, carried on his victorious campaign in N. Bihar, as will be related later, Bhāskara-varman sent supplies to him. What part he played in that strange episode is not fully known, but the Tibetan invasion which followed in its train, under Srōng-ṭsan Gampö, seem to have had disastrous effect on his kingdom.

2. Aṁśu-varman of Nepāl27

Aṁśu-varman, who usurped the royal authority in Nepāl (p. 215), founded a new dynasty which is designated Vaiśya-Ṭhākuri in the

25 This is maintained by Tripathi (Kanauj, 104-6). 
26 This is the view of R. K. Mookerjee (Harsha, 44) who further states that Bhāskara-varman was anointed king by Harsha. That this position is untenable has been shown by D. C. Sircar (PIHC, VI, 49) who thinks that in c. a.d. 643 Bhāskara-varman was 'a subordinate ally' of Harsha. I would prefer the term 'inferior ally' as there is no evidence of political subordination of Kāmarūpa (Ed.).
Vamśāvalis. All Thākurs are still regarded in Nepāl as belonging to the royal clan, whatever be their actual station in life, and they enjoy certain privileges. 'Vaiśya' probably denoted the clan to which Aṃśu-varman belonged rather than the caste of that name, and it is interesting to note that his great contemporary, Emperor Harsha-vardhana, is also called a Vaiśya by Hiuan Tsang. Another point of contact between the two was that the sisters of both were married to members of the Maukhari family of Kanauj. Whether these had anything to do with the rise of Aṃśu-varman to power it is difficult to say. But there is no doubt that he established his authority on a strong basis. The findspots of Aṃśu-varman's inscriptions prove that he was the master of the whole of the Nepāl valley proper, and his kingdom probably extended a great deal further to the east. Although we do not find any royal title in his inscriptions, wherein he calls himself only mahāvāmana, he issued coins with the title Mahārājādhirāja, and is referred to as such in the inscriptions of his successor.

It is a moot point whether Nepāl at this time formed a part of Harsha-vardhana's empire. Those who advocate this view advance two arguments in favour of it. In the first place they rely upon the passage in the Harsha-charita which implies that Harsha conquered a Himalayan territory, difficult of access. But, as has been pointed out by Lévi, this country need not be taken as Nepāl and most probably refers to Tukhāra. The second argument rests on the interpretation of the date in the inscription of Aṃśu-varman. His charters are dated in the years 30, 32, 34, 39 and another, of which the decimal figure is certainly 40, but the unit figure has been doubtfully read as 4 or 5. Almost all the scholars have referred these dates to the Harsha era, and if we accept this view, we have to admit that Aṃśu-varman acknowledged the supremacy of Harsha-vardhana. This view is apparently based on a tradition recorded in the Vamśāvalis that about this time king Vikramāditya of Ujjain conquered Nepāl and introduced his era. But there is nothing in the charters themselves to show that the years are reckoned according to Harsha era, nor do they


28 HTR, I. 209. Cunningham has suggested that ‘Vaiśya’ here means the Vaisa or Bais Rājputs who are met with in large numbers in Oudh (Ibid., n. 12).

29 Bhoga-varman, the nephew of Aṃśu-varman (ins. no. 7 of Indraj), is described as 'King Bhoga-varman, the crest-jewel of the illustrious Varman of the Maukharī Dynasty' (ins. no. 15 of Indraj). For Harsha's sister married to Maukharī Graha-varman, see above, p. 242.

30 For the coins, cf. CCIM, I, 281, 283.

31 Atra pārāmavesvara tushāro-sāla-bhuvo durgāyā grahūtaḥ karoh.

32 Le Nepal, II, 145.

H-17
indicate in any way the subordination of Amśu-varman to Harsha-vardhana. But there is a more fatal objection to the theory. Hiuan Tsang, who visited Eastern India some time about A.D. 637, observes as follows in connection with Nepāl:

'Lately there was a king called Amśu-varman who was distinguished for his learning and ingenuity. He himself had composed a work on “sounds”; he esteemed learning and respected virtue, and his reputation was spread everywhere.'\(^{33}\)

Hiuan Tsang’s account shows that Amśu-varman had died shortly before his visit to that quarter, i.e. c. A.D. 637.\(^{34}\) But the latest known date of Amśu-varman, viz 44 (or 45), would correspond to A.D. 650 if referred to Harsha era. We cannot, therefore, accept the view that Amśu-varman used Harsha era in his records. In order to get over this difficulty the advocates of this view have suggested that Hiuan Tsang did not actually visit Nepāl but based his account on reports which were either inaccurate or misunderstood by him.\(^{35}\) But this is a gratuitous assumption, and cannot be seriously considered unless we know from an independent authority that his observations were wrong. Besides, we now know that the Chinese embassy, which visited Magadha in A.D. 643,\(^{36}\) passed through Nepāl and was received with honour by its king Narendradeva. This also proves that Amśu-varman had died before that date, and we must accordingly discard the theory which refers the dates in Amśu-varman’s records of Harsha era.

S. Lévi has referred these dates to an era of Tibetan origin beginning in A.D. 595. But apart from the fact that no such era is known from Tibetan or any other source, it is equally incompatible with the fact that Amśu-varman was dead before A.D. 637. For the year 44 of his reign, which is given in one of his charters, would then correspond to A.D. 639.\(^{37}\)

\(^{33}\) HTB, II, 81.
\(^{34}\) Watters gives this date for Hiuan Tsang’s visit to this part of India (HTW, II, 335). Whether he actually visited Nepāl has been doubted (Ibid., 84), but it is reasonable to hold that he got his news about Nepāl when he was travelling in that region. I do not know on what authority R. C. Basak holds that Hiuan Tsang visited Nepal in A.D. 645 (HNI, 295), i.e. more than a year after the pilgrim had left India (Ed.).
\(^{35}\) IA, XIII, 422.
\(^{36}\) Le Nepal, II, 162.
\(^{37}\) Presumably in view of this difficulty Lévi assumed that Amśu-varman died in A.D. 639-40 (II, 155). But this is in conflict with Hiuan Tsang’s statement, though it may be argued that the pilgrim got his information about Amśu-varman’s death when he visited Nālandā for the second time at the end of A.D. 642 (HTW, II, p. 335) (Ed.).
Nevertheless there is a great deal of force in Lévi's argument that the era might be of Tibetan origin. It was introduced at a time when the Tibetans are known to have exercised supremacy over Nepal, and it was used in spite of the currency of the old era which is actually found about the same time in the charters of his nominal overlord. It is reasonable to hold that Aṃśu-varman whose daughter was married by the Tibetan king, was upheld as the *de facto* suzerain, and he therefore deliberately used the Tibetan era.

Lévi has pointed out that the Dalai Lama of Tibet wrote two letters to Lord Cornwallis in A.D. 1789 and 1792, and these were dated respectively in 1203 and 1206. The epoch of the era used by the Dalai Lama would thus be A.D. 586. The dates in Aṃśu-varman's charters may be referred to this era, which probably commemorates the foundation of the united kingdom of Tibet by Srong-tsan, or his accession to the throne. Aṃśu-varman's rise to power may therefore be dated in or shortly before A.D. 616, the date of his earliest known charter. Although this is very problematical, it may be regarded as least open to objection. Further, it is to be remembered that the proved existence of an era starting from A.D. 586 makes it very unlikely that another era was instituted in Tibet only 9 years later. Lévi suggests that the era known as San, and now current exclusively in Bengal, is the Tibetan era of A.D. 595. The fact, however, is that the Hejira era was, for purposes of collecting revenue, counted as a solar year in Bengal under orders of Emperor Akbar, and this came to be known as the Fasl San now used in Bengal. There is no ground to suppose that the Tibetan era has left its trace anywhere else than in Nepal. It may be urged that the dates in Aṃśu-varman's charters were his own regnal years and that the reckoning was continued by his successors. In that case, his accession to power has to be placed some time before A.D. 593. It has been urged against this view that the Harigaon Stele inscription of Aṃśu-varman, dated near 30, refers to some details of his coronation which therefore must have taken place shortly before that. This inscription mentions *abhisheka-hasti*, and *abhishek-āśva* (coronation elephant and horse), and it is very probable, though by no means certain, that the donations referred to in detail were made on the occasion of his coronation. Further, it is to be remembered that although seven inscriptions of Aṃśu-varman's reign are known, none of them bears any date prior to 30. Thus, the theory of the Tibetan era of A.D. 586, though not altogether free from objections, seems to be the most reasonable view.

38 *Le Nepal*, II, 153.
39 The dates are most probably to be referred to Saka era with five hundred omitted (cf. *JAS*, 1959, Vol. I, 47-49) (Ed.).
The seven charters issued by Aṃśu-varman not only prove that his dominions were extensive and that he enjoyed high power and prestige, but also throw a great deal of light on the system of administration. Several of them describe him as 'busy in bringing about the welfare of the people' and 'pondering day and night over the meaning of various sāstras'. This is, in a way, corroborated by the statement of Hiuan Tsang quoted above, and the religious temperament of the king is further proved by his numerous donations and appointment of committees to administer the endowed property of the temples. On the whole his career must be regarded as a remarkable one, as he rose by his own efforts from an humble origin to occupy the highest position in the kingdom.

In suggesting a Tibetan origin for the era used in Aṃśu-varman's records Lévi was undoubtedly influenced by the view that Tibet at this time exercised supremacy over Nepāl. This rests upon the account of the Tibetan rulers Śrong Tsan and his son Śrong-tsan Campo who ruled in the latter part of the sixth and the first half of the seventh century a.d. According to Tibetan chronicles the former led a victorious campaign to 'Central India', a geographical term the exact implication of which is obscure. This would imply that he passed through Nepāl and consequently must have conquered it. Again, we are told in the same chronicles that Śrong-tsan Campo conquered Assam and Nepāl and exercised suzerainty over half of Jambudvīpa. Whatever we might think of this larger claim, we learn from the Chinese source also that Nepāl was a dependency of Tibet about a.d. 645. The Tibetan king Śrong-tsan Campo married the daughter of Aṃśu-varman, and she was instrumental in introducing Buddhism to Tibet. Nepāl also closely co-operated with Tibetan forces in assisting the Chinese ambassador Wang-hiu-en-tse, as will be noted later. But the inscriptions of Nepāl do not indicate in any way its subjection to Tibet. It is not unlikely, however, that the dual government in Nepāl, inaugurated by Aṃśu-varman, was an indirect effect of Tibetan conquest. For while the Líchchhavī king was not actually dethroned, the actual power of government was placed in the hands of Aṃśu-varman as the representative of the Tibetan authority. But whatever we might think of this, the Tibetan supremacy over Nepāl was perhaps more nominal than real, and did not seriously interfere with its internal administration.

40 This constitutes the strongest argument against the view that Nepāl formed a part of the empire of Harsha-vardhana (Ed.).

41 Unless, of course, the dates in the charters of Aṃśu-varman be referred to a Tibetan era. For Aṃśu-varman's data and the eras of Nepāl, cf. Journal of the Asiatic Society, Vol. I, 1959, pp. 47-49 (Ed.).
3. Dadda II of Nándipurí

Reference has been made above (p. 240) to the Gurjara State of Nándipurí in the region round Broach and to its king Dadda II, who bore the title Prašāntarāga. Two inscriptions of Dadda II’s reign have been found in Kaira, and three at Sankhed, in Baroda. The two Kaira inscriptions, dated A.D. 629 and 634, were issued from Nándipurí. Dr. Bühler identifies Nándipurí with an old fort of that name, just outside the Jhanḍeswar gate to the east of Broach. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji prefers to identify it with the modern Nandod in the Rajpipla State.

Of the three inscriptions from Sankhed, one, dated A.D. 640, was issued by Raṇagraha, son of Viṭarāga. Some think that Raṇagraha was the brother of Dadda II, but Dr. Bhandarkar suggests that Dadda II had another name Raṇagraha. The other two inscriptions were dated in A.D. 641.

Three inscriptions assigned to Dadda II are considered as spurious by some scholars. All were issued by the Mahārājādhirāja Dadda II from Bhrigukachchha, and are dated in Śaka 400, 415 and 417 (A.D. 478, 493 and 495). These dates are obviously too early for Dadda II. But if they are referred to the Kalachuri era like the other inscriptions of this king the chronological difficulty disappears. Bühler regarded these plates as genuine.

Dadda II Prašāntarāga is also unanimously identified with the king of this name who was the grandfather of Dadda Bāhusahāya. The Nausari plate of Jayabhata III states that Dadda II won glory ‘protecting the lord of Valabhi, who had been defeated by the great lord, the illustrious Harsha-deva’. Harshadeva is identical with Harsha-vardhana of Kanauj, and the lord of Valabhi seems to have been Dhruvasena II. How Dadda II became powerful enough to defy the might of Harsha-vardhana it is difficult to say. Probably his alliance with, or acknowledgement of the suzerainty of, Pulakeśin II explains his hostility and success against Harsha. It is stated that some hostile sāmanius made some unsuccessful attack on Dadda II.

4. Valabhi and the Adjacent States

Silāditya Dharmāditya succeeded his father Dharasena II (p. 221) on the throne of Valabhi about the same time as Harsha. His known

42 IA, XIII, 81, 88. 43 EI, II. 21. Bh. List. 1211.
dates range between A.D. 605 and 611 and his kingdom extended at least up to Junāgadh on the west. Hiuan Tsaṅg⁴⁸ who visited Mo-la-p'o, i.e. Mālava, in A.D. 640 says that sixty years before his time Silāditya, the uncle of Dhruvabhāta, the reigning king of Valabhi, was the king of Mo-la-p'o. This Silāditya must be identified with Silāditya Dharmāditya, though Hiuan Tsaṅg was undoubtedly wrong in describing him as king of Mālava who flourished after A.D. 580, the latest known date of his father. Mālava, along with Ānandapura, was under the sway of a Kalachuri dynasty from A.D. 595 to 610.⁴⁹ Most likely Silāditya conquered Mālava, Ānandapura, and Broach from the Kalachuris shortly after A.D. 609.

Hiuan Tsaṅg⁵⁰ reports that Silāditya had great administrative abilities and was a man of learning and wisdom. The pilgrim gives a long description of his scrupulous regard for the sanctity of animal life as befits a devout Buddhist. 'During the fifty years and more of his reign', we are told, 'the wild beasts became familiar with men, and the people did not injure or slay them.' The king built a magnificent vihāra, and put in it images of the seven Buddhas. Every year he convoked an assembly called moksha-mahāparishad, and made rich gifts to the priests of the four quarters. According to the evidence of inscriptions Silāditya ascended the throne after A.D. 589 and closed his reign before A.D. 616. Hence Hiuan Tsaṅg is wrong in stating that the king ruled for fifty years. Silāditya seems to have abdicated his throne in favour of his younger brother Kharagraha I. Silāditya's son Ďerabhaṭa did not rule, though a later inscription relates that he was the 'lord of the earth'.⁵¹ Ďerabhaṭa had three sons, Silāditya II, Kharagraha II and Dhruvasena II.

It is stated that Kharagraha I administered the affairs of the kingdom in obedience to the order of his guru, who was his elder brother.⁵² Kharagraha seems to have wrested Mālava from the hand of the Kalachuri Buddhārāja. An inscription of Kharagraha's reign⁵³ was issued from the victorious camp at Ujjayinī in A.D. 616. This is the earliest known epigraphic evidence to prove that Mālava formed a part of the kingdom of the Maitrakas. Kharagraha I was succeeded by his son Dharasena III, an inscription⁵⁴ of whose reign is dated A.D. 623. The executor of the grant was the yuvaṛāja and sāmanta

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Silāditya. Dharasena III was succeeded by his younger brother Dhrūvasena II Bālāditya.

Dates of the inscriptions of Dhrūvasena II’s reign range from A.D. 629 to 641. They prove that Dhrūvasena II's kingdom extended from Saurāśṭra to Mālava. 55 Two of these inscriptions 56 record that the king granted some lands situated in the Mālavaka-bhukti or Mālavaka-ūshaya, in Mālavaka, which is undoubtedly identical with Mālava. The villages containing the donated lands have been located near Ratlam and Mandsor.

Huan Tsang 57 visited Valabhi (Fa-la-pi) in A.D. 640. The country was 6000 li in circuit and the reigning sovereign was Tu-lo-po-po-t’a (Dhruvabhaṭa, i.e. Dhrūvasena II), a nephew of Silāditya. The king was of a hasty temper and of shallow views, but he was a sincere believer in Buddhism.

As stated above (p. 261) Dhrūvasena II was once defeated by Harshavardhana and forced to take refuge with the Gurjara king Dadda II. The details of the conflict are not known, but there is no doubt that Dhrūvasena soon regained his kingdom. We know further from Huan Tsang’s account that he married the daughter of Harsha. Evidently the alliance which concluded the hostility was cemented by this marriage. It is hardly any wonder therefore that Dhrūvasena attended the religious assemblies of Harsha-vardhana. It is unreasonable to infer from this that Valabhi was an integral part of Harsha’s empire or that Dhrūvasena was either his feudatory or subordinate ally. 58 His own inscriptions show him to be an independent king ruling over an extensive kingdom from A.D. 629 to 641, though like Bhāskara-varman, and many others, he undoubtedly thought it politic to win the goodwill of the great emperor Harsha. As the latter was also his father-in-law, it is less excusable to interpret his submissive obedience to him as a sign of political vassalage. One important fact is generally overlooked though it has an important bearing on this question. It is the assumption of imperial titles by Dharasena IV, the son of Dhrūvasena II, even in C.E. 326 (A.D. 645-46) i.e. before the death of Harsha. This is hardly compatible with the view that Valabhi formed a part of Harsha-vardhana’s empire right up to the very end of his reign.

Huan Tsang mentions the independent kingdom of Mo-la-p’o which was more than 2000 li (333 miles) north-west of Bhirgukachcha. This direction is wrong in view of the information given by him that Mo-la-p’o (or its capital) was to the east of Mo-hi (Mahi

55 For possession of Kaira, cf. JBBRAS (NS), I, 70; Saurāśṭra, Ibid., 53.  
56 EI, VIII, 190.  
57 HTW, II, 246.  
58 PAIOC, XII, 524.
Su-la-ch'ä (Saurāśṭra), K'i-t'a (Kaira) and Ānandapura (Vadnagar) were the dependencies of Mo-la-p'o. The pilgrim visited Mo-la-p'o in A.D. 640. It has been noticed above that Ujjayinī, which was the capital of Mālava, was under the sway of the Maitrakas, and Dhrusena II's kingdom extended from Saurāśṭra to Raṭlam and Mandasor in A.D. 640. Kaira, Vadnagar, and Kathiāwār were obviously within his kingdom. The independent kingdom of Mo-la-p'o, mentioned by Hiuan Tsang, must therefore be placed to the east of the 'Raṭlam State'. Hiuan Tsang tells us that the people of Mo-la-p'o were of gentle disposition and for the most part very intelligent, of refined speech, and with a liberal education. Mo-la-p'o in the south-west and Magadha in the north-east, were the two countries in India in which learning was prized. The pilgrim takes the civilization of Mo-la-p'o as a model, which he compares with those of Valabhī, Saurāśṭra, Ānandapura, Khetaka, and A-t'a-li.

Mālava, the capital of which was Ujjayinī, was the only country in western India which could claim the honour of possessing a high state of civilization such as is described by Hiuan Tsang. Ujjayinī was one of the chief centres of cultural movements in India from the time of Buddha down to the end of Hindu rule. Kālidāsa closely associates himself with it, and Bāṇa, who was a contemporary of Hiuan Tsang, gives a glowing description of its culture.

Hiuan Tsang refers to another kingdom, named Wu-she-yen-na which was 466 miles south-east of Pi-lo-mo-lo, and which was 1,000 miles in circuit. It was ruled by a king of the Brāhmin caste. It is generally identified with Ujjayinī, but its distance and direction from Pi-lo-mo-lo bring us to ancient Daśārṇa country (Bhopal State) or further east of it. The pilgrim says that the ways of the people of this country resembled those of the people of Surāṭth i.e. the people were of a rude violent nature, and did not care for education. Thus Hiuan Tsang’s Wu-she-yen-na can hardly be taken as identical with Bāṇa’s Ujjayinī. It may be noted in this connection that Hiuan Tsang’s description of the political condition of Mālava and Gujarāt in the third and fourth decades of the seventh century, A.D. is palpably inaccurate.

59 HTW, II, 248. Hiuan Tsang says that Su-la-chi’s (i.e. Saurāśṭra) is 500 li west of Valabhi. It is 4,000 li in circuit. ’It had the Mo-hi river on its east side; the inhabitants were rich and flourishing; it was subject to Mālava.’ The people were of rude violent nature, did not care for education... As the country was on the highway to the sea all its inhabitants utilised the sea and were traders by profession. Near the capital was the Yuhshan-to hill (Ujjayanta).

60 Ridding, Kādambarī, 211-12.
61 HTW, II, 250; 248; JBORS, XIX, 407.
VI. ASSEMBLIES

Harsha convoked a vast religious Assembly at Kanauj and arranged for discourses on Mahāyāna Buddhism by its exponent Hsuan Tsang. Invitations were issued to all the disciples of the various religious sects or schools, the Śramaṇas, Brāhmīns and heretics of the five Indias. From his camp at Kajángala, Harsha proceeded along the bank of the Gaṅgā in a huge procession of ‘several hundreds of thousand people’, till he reached Kanauj in 90 days, and saw there assembled in advance 18 other kings, besides the kings of Assam and Valabhi, with their retinues, 3,000 Buddhist monks, 3,000 Brāhmīns and Nirgranthas and about 1,000 Buddhist scholars with a following of 20,000 elephants and 30,000 ships. Harsha as god Sakra, and Kumāra (Bhāskara-varman) as god Brahmā, took in procession to the Assembly the statue of Buddha on an elephant followed by more than 300 elephants carrying the distinguished guests—the Chinese pilgrim, the kings, ministers, and chief priests of different countries. The conference continued for 18 days under Hsuan Tsang as its president.

Next, Harsha found that it was time for him to hold the quinquennial Assembly (the sixth of his reign) for distribution of royal charities at Prayāga, the holy place of confluence of the two rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā (Jamunā). The king came to Prayāga attended by eighteen kings and found there already assembled about 500,000 people. Invitation was issued ‘through the five Indias to the Śramaṇas, heretics, Nirgranthas, the poor, the orphans, and the solitary (bereaved) to come to the arena of charity and receive the royal gifts’. The accumulated gifts included gold, silver, pearls, silks and cotton, besides gold and silver-coins kept in hundreds of store-houses. One hundred long buildings were erected for accommodating the visitors, besides the imperial camp and the Assam and Valabhi camps. Images of the Buddha, Ādityadeva (Sun), and Iśvaradeva (Siva) were installed on successive days, for purposes of the offerings. Ten thousand selected Buddhists were given each 100 pieces of gold, pearl, one cotton garment, besides drinks and meats, flowers and perfumes. Twenty days were taken to distribute gifts among Brāhmīns. In the end, ‘the accumulation of five years was exhausted. The king freely gave away his own gems and goods, his clothing and necklaces, earrings, bracelets, chaplets, neck-jewel, and bright head-jewel, and

62 Life, 172. (The reference given by the author shows that Kumāra, king of Assam, visited Harsha with 20,000 elephants and 30,000 ships when the latter was at Kajángala near Rajmahal and then after a long interval they proceeded to Kanauj where they arrived after 90 days. There is nothing to indicate that the 20,000 elephants and 30,000 ships were taken by the king of Assam to Kanauj—Ed.)
then begged from his sister an ordinary second-hand garment.' What remained were only 'the horses, elephants, and military accoutrements' to maintain law and order in the country. This record of Harsha's charity remains unbeaten in history. Besides these special Assemblies, Harsha used to convene annually an Assembly of Buddhists for purposes of discussion.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{VII. ADMINISTRATION}

The first few years of Harsha's reign were spent on campaigns and conquests by which his empire was being established and consolidated over a large part of Northern India. According to Hsiian Tsang, Harsha waged incessant warfare for six years and then was able 'to reign in peace for 30 years'. In about 643, the king told the Chinese pilgrim that 'he had been lord of India for thirty years and more'.\textsuperscript{64} This would mean that all his campaigns were over by about A.D. 612 including those with Valabhi and Pulakesin. There is, however, a view that the war with Pulakesin took place much later, probably shortly before A.D. 643, the date of the Aihole inscription which mentions it (see Appendix). Harsha's conquest of Saśānka's kingdom also took place after A.D. 619 while his conquest of Ganjam is dated A.D. 643. Thus Hsiian Tsang's statement that Harsha's conquests were over in six years by A.D. 612 and that he enjoyed peace for thirty years is to be understood as referring to the internal conditions of his kingdom and not to his later distant conquests. The peace that Harsha was able to give to the country so long was no doubt the result of his efficient administration. Unfortunately, very few details are known about it. It is apparent that the king himself took a large part in administration. The empire itself was won by his incessant activities and no one was more acquainted with all its different and distant parts. He was constantly moving through it, on hunting excursions, military expeditions, administrative tours, ceremonial progress, or religious pilgrimages. He went to distant Kāshmir to offer worship to a tooth-relic of the Buddha which he found concealed underground and then had it unearthed, and carried off by force, to enshrine it in a vihāra in Kanauj.\textsuperscript{65} He held his camps at many places, and issued his two grants from his camps at Vardhamānakoṭi and Kapitthikā (Saṅkāśya). The Chinese pilgrim tells us how at the time when he first saw Harsha at Kajāngala, 'the emperor was visiting different parts of his empire'.\textsuperscript{66} Here he held his court in his progress to East India'.\textsuperscript{67} He came to that place from Koṅgoda

\textsuperscript{63} HTW, I, 344.
\textsuperscript{64} Life, 183.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 181.
\textsuperscript{66} HTB, I, 215.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., II, 183.
Bāṇa describes his camp at Maṇitāra along the Ajirāvatī river. It was surrounded by 'many camps of the renowned subject-kings'. As remarked by Hiuan Tsang, 'the king made visits of inspection throughout his dominions, not residing long at any place, but having temporary buildings erected for his residence at each place of sojourn'. His travels in the far north probably made him acquainted with 'the martial fame and exploits of the Chinese emperor'.

The Emperor, when at headquarters, also worked very hard, as stated by Hiuan Tsang: 'He forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works... and the day was too short for him.'

Next to the sovereign ranked the chief officers of the state, who probably constituted a Mantri-Parishad or Council. During the reign of Rājya-vardhana, Bhaṇḍi, his cousin, seems to have been the chief minister, for, on his death, Bhaṇḍi (Po-ni) called a meeting of the Council of Ministers to determine the succession. At the meeting, Bhaṇḍi said: 'I propose that he (Harsha) assume the royal authority: let each one give his opinion on this matter, whatever he thinks.' It shows that the Council of Ministers wielded real power in the State, and the election of the king was in their hands. The Emperor appointed to the provinces governors, called Lokapālas by Bāṇa. They were posted at chosen centres in different quarters.

The administrative divisions are thus mentioned in Harsha’s inscriptions in the descending scale:

1. Bhakti (province) such as Sravasti or Ahichchhatra Bhakti;
2. Vishaya (district), e.g. Kundadhāni or Āṅgadiya;
3. Pāthaka (subdivision of a district), and
4. Grāma (village), e.g. Somakunḍaka-grāma.

Among the chief officers of the State under Harsha are mentioned the following:

1. Bhaṇḍi;
2. Avanti whom Bāṇa mentions as Harsha’s ‘Supreme minister of war and peace’;
3. Śrīhanāda, Harsha’s senāpati;
4. Kuntala, the commandant of the cavalry;
5. Skanda-gupta, the commandant of the elephant force;
6. Sāṃanta Mahārāja Īśvaragupta, keeper of records, mentioned in the Madhuban Plate;
7. Bhāna or Bhaṇḍi? mentioned in the Banskhera Plate.

The Emperor’s decrees were issued to officers of different ranks and grades, such as ‘the mahāśāmantas, mahārājas,’ daussādha-sādhanikas,

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68 Life, 172.
69 Ibid., 159.
70 HTW, I, 344.
71 Ibid., 351.
72 Ibid., 344.
73 HTB, I, 211.
pramātāras; rājaśthānīyas, Kumārāmātyas, uparikas, vishayapatis, and regular and irregular soldiers (bhaṭachāṭa).\textsuperscript{75}

Hiuan Tsang says that these ministers and officers of State were paid their salaries not in cash but in kind, in grants of land, cities being assigned to them for their maintenance. The Emperor set apart a fourth of the crown lands ‘for the endowment of great public servants’, and another fourth for the ‘expenses of government and State worship’. We are further told that ‘those who are employed in the government service are paid according to their work’.\textsuperscript{76} When the public works require it, labour is exacted, but paid for. The people were not subjected to forced labour.\textsuperscript{77} While payment in kind was the rule for the Civil Service, the soldiers were probably paid in cash.\textsuperscript{78} Harsha’s army was made up of the four traditional elements: (1) Infantry; (2) Cavalry; (3) Elephants; and (4) Chariots.

The following account of Hiuan Tsang throws interesting light on the composition of the army, and the equipment of war.

‘The National Guard (lit. warriors) are heroes of choice valour, and, as the profession is hereditary, they become adepts in military tactics. In peace they guard the sovereign’s residence, and in war they become the intrepid vanguard.

‘The army is composed of Foot, Horse, Chariot, and Elephant soldiers. The war-elephant is covered with coat-of-mail, and his tusks are provided with sharp barbs. On him rides the Commander-in-chief, who has a soldier on each side to manage the elephant. The chariot in which an officer sits is drawn by four horses, whilst infantry guard it on both sides. The infantry go lightly into action and are choice men of valour; they bear a large shield and carry a long spear; some are armed with a sword or sabre and dash to the front of the advancing line of battle. They are perfect experts with all the implements of war such as spear, shield, bow and arrow, sword, sabre, etc. (battle-axes, lances, halberds, long javelins and various kinds of slings) having been drilled in them for generations.’\textsuperscript{79}

The country was not entirely free from brigands who rendered travelling not very secure at places. Hiuan Tsang, crossing the Chandrabhāgā (Chenāb), had to pass through a palāśa wood where a band

\textsuperscript{75} For the various administrative offices, cf. Ch. XXVII.
\textsuperscript{76} HTW, I, 176.
\textsuperscript{77} HTB, I, 87.
\textsuperscript{78} Cf., ibid., where it is said that soldiers ‘are promised certain payments’ whereas governors, ministers, etc. have each a portion of land.
\textsuperscript{79} ibid., 83; HTW, I, 171.
of about 50 robbers fell upon him, but he was saved by a Brahmin peasant blowing a conch which brought together about 80 villagers with arms.\textsuperscript{80} Again, as he was sailing down the Gângâ on board a vessel with 80 fellow-passengers, ten pirate-boats, taking his ship in tow, brought it to the bank. The pirates then seized upon Hsuan Tsang as the best human sacrifice to offer to their deity, Durgâ, when a storm broke out and frightened the brigands who took it to be the wrath of the gods and so set him free and became his disciples.\textsuperscript{81} Harsha provided for a military escort to conduct the Chinese pilgrim safely across the Paurâb and its borders. In those days, 'the country between Si,rpura (Kâlacakrayā) and Taxila was frequented by robbers', and the pilgrim and his party were in constant fear of being despoiled on the way.\textsuperscript{82} The comparative insecurity of the times is also hinted at by Bâna, who tells us of villagers who, 'despondent at the plunder of their ripe grain and bemoaning their estates, censured the sovereign, as he passed along, at the risk of their lives, saying, "where's the king? what right has he to be king?"'\textsuperscript{83} and also of complaints against the tax-collectors (bhogapati) and policemen (châta).\textsuperscript{84}

These stray cases of lawlessness did not, however, affect the general security prevailing in the country. Hsuan Tsang himself admits that 'as the government is honestly administered, and the people live together on good terms, the criminal class is small'. He further says that the Indians 'are of pure moral principles' and will not take any thing wrongfully but will yield more than fairness required'.

Hsuan Tsang characterizes the administration as 'generous' in the sense that it did not make any large demands upon the liberties and the pockets of the people. He reports:

'Official requirements are few. Families are not registered and individuals are not subject to forced labour contributions. Taxation being very light, and forced service being sparingly used, every one keeps to his hereditary occupation and attends to his patrimony.'

The enlightened character of the administration is shown by the creation of a Department of Records and Archives. Both good and bad were faithfully recorded 'in the official annals and state-papers'. while 'instances of public calamity and good fortune are set forth in detail'.\textsuperscript{85} One of Harsha's inscriptions\textsuperscript{86} and Bâna\textsuperscript{87} mention the

\textsuperscript{80} Life, 73. \\
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 87. \\
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 191. \\
\textsuperscript{83} HC, 238 (Tr., 209). \\
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 280. \\
\textsuperscript{85} HTW, I, 154. \\
\textsuperscript{86} EI, I, 73. \\
\textsuperscript{87} HC, 227.
officers called *mahākshapatalika* (notary-in-chief), *akṣhapatalika* (the village notary), and the *karaṇika* (clerk).

Taxation was light. The main source of revenue was the crown lands, the tax on which amounted to a sixth of the crop according to the traditional standard.\textsuperscript{88} Revenue was also derived from trade; light duties were levied at ferries and barrier stations.\textsuperscript{89} The Madhuban Plate shows that the king's dues from a village comprised the *tulya-meya* (probably taxes depending on the weight and measures of the things sold), and *bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiranyādi*, i.e. the share of the produce, payments in cash, and other kinds of income.

While taxation was light the expenditure on mere administration was also very light, so as to leave the bulk of the revenue of the State for promoting public welfare. As stated by Hsuan Tsang, 'Of the royal land (the main sources of the sovereign's income) there is a fourfold division. One part is for the expenses of government and state-worship, one for the endowment of great public servants, one to reward high intellectual eminence, and one for gifts to various sects.'\textsuperscript{90}

**VIII. CAPITAL AND PALACE**

Bāna describes the capital city Sthānviśvara which was always resounding with shouts of triumph, booming of drums, songs of troubadours and minstrels, and bustle of business. Its principal street was 'the Bazaar street'. The Palace was surrounded by a white-washed wall, had mosaic floors of red lead, had four courts which on festive occasions appeared like 'seas of elephants and horses', was decorated with paintings and clay models of fishes, tortoises, crocodiles, coconuts, plantains, and betel trees. 'Its crocodile-mouthed conduits (*dhāraṇyantra*) conveying scented water filled its pleasure-ponds.' In the grounds of the Palace were seen lions in their cages, varieties of apes and orang-outangs (*vana-mañushāh*), musk deer scouting the garden, parrots, *śārikas*, and other rare birds in gold-painted bamboo cages, partridges in cages of coral. Harsha bathed in gold and silver vessels. He used golden footstools, water-pots, cups, spittoons and baths, even while on tour. He wore 'snow-white lower garments radiant with silk-threads, a bejewelled girdle, and a thin upper garment spangled with worked stars, with necklace of pearls and other ornaments'. He had women attendants. Valāhikā and Padmāvatī were the shampooing attendants of his father, and Hārini, Lilāvatī, Dhavalākṣī, Āvantikā, and others were his nurses.

\textsuperscript{88} HTW, I, 176; cf. Manu, VI, 130-31, 308.
\textsuperscript{89} HTW, I, 176.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
The palace had its own staff which included numbers of doorkeepers, porters, chowrie-bearers, chamberlains, chefs, bodyguards, physicians, Purohitas, Pāṇḍits, court-poets like Bāna and Haridatta and the King’s Advisers. The same pomp marked his camps for his tours. The gate was dark with crowds of elephants. Close by were the horses leaping up so as to make the place appear ‘all in waves’. Troops of camels made their place appear tawny.

IX. RELIGION AND LEARNING

We owe to Hiuan Tsang a first-hand account of India’s civilization in the time of Harsha. The very visit of Chinese pilgrims like Fa-hien, Hiuan Tsang and I-tsing to India as seekers after her saving knowledge shows the pre-eminent and proud position India had attained in the realm of thought. They were out to drink in India’s wisdom at its very sources, by visiting its chief seats of learning and contacting its teachers who were the exponents and repositories of that learning. India in that age was known to foreigners as ‘the country of the Brahmins’ who were ‘the purest and in most esteem among its various castes and clans’. Sanskrit was the language of the cultured classes and was used in the writings of the most famous Buddhist teachers. The best Sanskrit was then spoken in mid-India which was practically Harsha’s Empire. The vigour and vitality of Brahmanical religion were represented in the number of its sects and schools. Bāna describes them as ‘followers of Krishna, of Kapila, Kanāda, the Nyāya and the Upanishads, the Lokāyatikas, and so forth’. Bāna also mentions Pārāśara mendicants, Jaina monks, and Śaiva devotees; ascetic sects like the Karpaṭin (ragged ascetic), Kāśītha-muni (hermit on a pillar), Dagdhamunda, Pāṇḍurin, or Pīṇḍapātin. There were also worshippers of Śiva and Śakti like the Kāpālikas and devotees of Durgā. Hiuan Tsang also refers to the Bhūitas who cover themselves with cinders, the Nirgranthas who go without clothing, the Kāpālikas who wear chaplets of bones round their heads and necks and live in the holes and crevices of rocks, and the Jātiлас with matted hair, the Sāṅkhyas and the Vaisēshikas.

The religious and cultural conditions of the country are very well reflected and represented in the Vindhyān hermitage of the sage Divākaramitra, which was one of the most advanced centres of learning in those days and attracted students of various subjects. A good description of this noted seat of learning, located in the solitude of the hills, and amid sylvan surroundings, away from the dis-

91 Ibid., 140. 92 Life, 86, 159.
tractions of social life, is given by Bāna. At the Āśrama, they were all busy ‘pondering, urging objections, raising doubts, resolving them, giving etymologies, disputing, studying and explaining’. They represented the different sects of Jainas, the Arhats (Digambara?) and Śecatapātas (Śvetāmbaras); different classes of Brahmanical ascetics such as Pāṇḍuribhikshus (naked ascetics), the Maskarins (parivrāja), the Varnins (brahmačārins), the Bhāgavatas and Pañcharātrikas (Vaishnava ascetics), the Sāivas and Keśalunāchhakas (ascetics who pulled out their hair); atheists like the Lokāyatikas (Chārvākas), philosophers like the Kapilas, Kaṇādas, Aupanishadas (Vedāntins), and Aśvarakāramikas (Naiyāyikas); experts in law (Dharmaśāstra), linguistics (śābda), and the Purāṇas; experts in rituals (saptatantavāḥ); and even experts in the material sciences, the metallurgists (Karandhāminś). Buddhist learning was also represented in this Brahmanical school. There were students of the Sākya-Sāsanas (Buddhist law), followers of Three Refuges (Triśaraṇa) who performed the ritual of the chaitya (chaitya-karma), and those who specialized in Vasubandhlu’s Kośa and Bodhisattva-Jātakas.93

Most of these students were ascetics. As stated by Hiian Tsang:

‘Though their family be in affluent circumstances, such men make up their minds to be like vagrants and get their food by begging as they go about. With them, there is honour in knowing truth, and there is no disgrace in being destitute. The rulers treating them with ceremony and respect cannot make them come to court.’

Hiian Tsang further tells us that these ascetics were not anti-social recluse but were anxious to render social service as teachers. ‘Forgetting fatigue, they expiate in the arts and sciences.’ They travelled long distances in search of more advanced teachers. Thus these travelling scholars were the real educators of thought in those days.94

Though Brahmanism had been the predominant religion of India, especially after the impetus given to it by the Gupta Emperors, Buddhism was also quite flourishing. It was represented by as many as 18 different sects, besides its main divisions into Mahāyāna and Hinayāna. Between these various schools there were about 5,000 monasteries seen by the Chinese pilgrim in India in working order as so many Buddhist colleges where Buddhist monks were in actual residence, of whom the total number all over India, including Cey-

93 HC, Tr. 236. 94 HTW, I, 161.
ion, works out to be something like 2,12,130 on the basis of Hsiian Tsang’s totals for different sects and monasteries in different centres.

X. UNIVERSITY OF NALANDĀ

The largest monastery of the times was what is called in the inscriptions Śrī-Nalanda-Mahāvihāra, the central Vihāra or University of Nalanda, with which were linked up the smaller residential colleges or vihāras located in the same University town. As Nalanda was a seat of Brahmanical learning as well as Buddhist, it is called in some of the inscriptions a Mahāgrahāra. In the time of Harsha and of Hsiian Tsang’s visit, the University seems to have been in its most flourishing condition. The Chinese pilgrim was himself a resident student of the University for about two years, and has written about it from his direct and intimate knowledge of its working. He states that the number of its students always came up to 10,000, who were taught by more than 1,500 teachers. The resident students included foreign scholars from different countries such as Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Tukhāra, Tibet, China and Ceylon. They came to Nalanda for higher study and research. Thus Nalanda was a University for post-graduate studies. It was a unique institution in its large number of students seeking not elementary or intermediate but post-graduate, advanced learning.

The enthusiasm of the foreign scholars for India’s knowledge and wisdom made them face undaunted the enormous risks of the overland journey to India. Hsiian Tsang himself states that ‘alone he had crossed trackless wastes, and bravely climbed mountains high beyond conjecture, even chilled by icy wind and cold with eternal snow’.

This vast University population was accommodated in its many buildings which, as stated by Hsiian Tsang, were the gifts of kings. He saw at least seven monasteries and eight halls. The monasteries were of several storeys whose ‘upper rooms tower above the clouds’. The University was maintained by the gift of villages with their revenues remitted in its favour. According to Hsiian Tsang the king of the country, probably Harsha, alone made a gift to the University of 100 villages. He also made a further gift to the University of a vihāra or temple of brass or bronze about a hundred feet in height.

The resident students of the University were provided with free food, clothing, bedding and medicine, besides of course free tuition.

95 For Hsiian Tsang’s Account cf. Life, 112 ff; HTB, II, 167 ff; HTW II, 164. For a detailed account of the University, cf. The University of Nalanda by H. D. Sankalia (Madras, 1934); IM, XIII, 1471.

96 HTW, IX, 335.
The University's food supply of rice, milk and butter came from the villages belonging to it. According to Hsiian Tsang, the University's daily supply of food amounted to 'several hundred piculs of ordinary rice and several hundred catties in weight of butter and milk'. One picul is taken to be equivalent to 133 lbs = 66 1/2 srs—say, roughly, 1½ md. One catty = 160 lbs = 80 srs—roughly 2 mds. If 'several hundred' is taken to be even 300, then the daily supply of rice for the University would amount to about 450 mds, and of butter and milk to about 600 mds.

The fame of Nálandá as a seat of learning was due to that of its teachers. The Head of the University in the time of Hsiian Tsang and Harsha was the Brähmana scholar, Śīlabhadra, who was a prince of Samatāta, but renounced his kingdom and became a yogi. He was the highest authority in the theory and practice of yoga, which Hsiian Tsang came all the way from China to Nálandá to learn at his feet. Śīlabhadra was associated in his work with several other distinguished teachers among whom Hsiian Tsang singles out Dharmapāla, the previous President of Nálandá, Gunamati, Sthiramati, Prabhāmitra, Jīnamitra and Jñānachandra. Dharmapāla was a native of Kāñchī, taught at Nálandá for seven years, and went to Suvarṇadvīpa in his old age.

The teachers of the University delivered between them every day as many as 100 lectures or discourses, 'and the students attend those discourses without any fail, even for a minute'. These 100 lectures must have been delivered on 100 different subjects studied by 100 different classes at the University.

The method of study prescribed was appropriate for higher learning and research. It was the method of discussion and interrogation which roused the keenest interest in the students. It was not a dull process and their interest and enthusiasm did not flag. As noted by Hsiian Tsang, 'learning and discussing they found the day too short; day and night they admonished each other; juniors and seniors mutually helped to perfection'.

These discussions were carried on by Seminar classes where they were rendered very effective by the proportion of the number of teachers to taught, viz 1:6. It gave scope to the individual treatment of a pupil by his teacher and to intimate personal touch between them, as against the system of mass-instruction imparted by

97 Life, 113 n. 1, 2. According to Sir Francis Younghusband 1,000 catties were equivalent to 1,380 pounds and thus one catty was less than 1½ lbs (The Heart of a Continent, p. 18).

98 Watters thinks that the reference is to Sthilamati who was a contemporary of Dharmapāla, while Sthiramati must have lived before A.D. 400 (HTW, II, 169).
the individual teacher to a large number of students herded together in that arbitrary and artificial abstraction called a class, formed by treating as equals those whom Nature has made unequal.

The students of the time covered a wide field of knowledge, Brahmanical and Buddhist, sacred and secular, philosophical and practical, science and arts. Besides Mahâyâna, Nâlandâ offered instruction in the works belonging to the eighteen sects, and not only so, but even in ‘ordinary works, such as the Vedas and other books, the Hetuvidyâ (Logic), Sâbdavidyâ (Philology), the Chikitsâvidyâ (Medicine), the works on magic or Atharvaveda, and the Sânkhyâ’. Hiuan Tsang ‘penetrated, and examined completely, all the collection (of Buddhist books), and also studied the sacred books of Brâhmaṇas during five years’.99

This wide diversity of studies professed by students belonging to different communities and countries, sects, and creeds, did not at all affect the harmony of University life, which was characterized by a catholic and cosmopolitan outlook. Hiuan Tsang has recorded that, during seven centuries of its history, there did not occur a single case of ‘a guilty rebellion’ against the Institution.

XI. HARSHA’S LEARNING AND RELIGION

According to I-tsing, Harsha ‘versified the story of the Bodhisat-tva Jîmûtavâhana and had the play called Nâgânanda set to music and performed by a band accompanied by dancing and acting’.100 Two other dramas are also ascribed to him, viz Ratnâvalî and Priyadarśikâ which contain internal evidence of his authorship. Harsha was at once a poet and a patron of poets like Bâna, Mayûra, the author of Sûryâsataka, and Divâkara, as mentioned in Sârîgadharâ’s Paddhati. He is also recognized in later literature, and is classed with other royal poets like Muñja and Bhoja by Sodhala in his Udayasundarî-kathâ, which describes him as gir-harsha (one whose joy lay in composition) and as one who honoured Bâna by gift of 100 crores of gold-pieces. Jayadeva, in his Prasannarâghava, mentions him along with poets like Bhâsa and Kâlidâsa, Bâna and Chora (Bilhana), to whom the Subhâshita-ratna-bhândâra adds Mâgha, Mayûra, Bhâravi, Bhavabhûti, Bhojarâja, Dañchin and Subandhu.

Some later works doubt Harsha’s authorship of the works attributed

99 Life, 125 As Hiuan Tsang did not altogether reside more than two years at Nâlandâ (Life, 154; HTW, II, 335) the period of five years obviously includes the time he spent in learning these subjects in other places.
100 IRT, 163.
to him: e.g. *Kāvyaprakāśa* of Mammaṭa (eleventh century A.D.) hints at Harsha’s donation to Dhāvaka (in some MSS. Bāna) for composing a work for him. But the doubt is too late to be true.

As we have seen, Harsha’s religion was Śaivism to which he adhered for long. The Banskhera and Madhuban inscriptions of A.D. 628 and 631 still describe him as *parama-māheśvara*. His capital had temples of Chaṇḍi and Mahākāla. He offered worship to god Nīlaloḥita (Rudra-Siva) before embarking on his campaigns. It was Hsuan Tsang who apparently first converted him to Mahāyāna Buddhism about A.D. 643. Even as a Buddhist he had considerable catholicity in patronizing other religions, as seen in the account of his Assemblies.

**XII. PUBLIC WORKS**

Hsuan Tsang makes a remarkable reference to Harsha’s measures for public welfare. ‘In all the highways of the towns and villages throughout India he erected hospices (*punyasālās*), provided with food and drink, and stationed there physicians with medicines for travellers and poor persons round about, to be given without any stint.’ Here Harsha perhaps even beat Asoka whose rest-houses are not known to have offered to travellers free food and medical aid.

Bāna thus sums up and pays an eloquent tribute in his inimitable words to the contributions made by Harsha to the moral and material progress of the country:

‘Beneath his rule the Golden Age seemed to bud forth in close packed lines of sacrificial posts, the evil time to flee in the smoke of sacrifices meandering over the sky, heaven to descend in stuccoed shrines, Dharma to blossom in white pennons waving over temple minarets, the villages to bring forth a progeny of beautiful arbours erected on their outskirts for meetings, alms houses, inns, and women’s marquess.’

The moral and material progress of the country achieved under Harsha was best seen at his capital at Kanauj which then supplanted Pātaliputra as the premier city of Northern India, with its extension of four miles, its strong defences, its lofty structures, beautiful gardens and tanks, its museum of varieties collected from strange lands; inhabitants wearing glossy silk, their devotion to learning and arts, their clear and suggestive discourses, and the number of well-to-do classes and families of great wealth, as described by Hsuan Tsang.  

101 *HTB*, I, 213.  
102 *HC*, Tr., 102.  
103 *HTW*, I, 340.
Hiuan Tsang also saw at Kanauj 100 Buddhist monasteries as against only two seen by Fa-hien about two centuries earlier.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF HARSHA’S REIGN

The year 1 of Harsha era is A.D. 606. According to Hiuan Tsang Harsha was engaged on his campaign and conquests for 6 years, i.e. up to A.D. 612. His contest with Pulakesin II would thus also be over by A.D. 612, and this seems to be confirmed by the Haidarabad Grant, dated in that year, which mentions the new title Paramešvara won by the latter by defeating ‘the Lord of the whole of Uttarapatha’. But many scholars do not accept this view and place this campaign against Pulakesin at a much later date.\(^\text{104}\)

According to Hiuan Tsang, Harsha was able ‘to reign in peace for 30 years without raising a weapon.’\(^\text{105}\) From the Life we learn that in about A.D. 643 Harsha told the Chinese pilgrim that ‘he had been Lord of India for 30 years and more’,\(^\text{106}\) and further that the quinquennial Assembly held in the spring of A.D. 643 was the sixth held in his region.\(^\text{107}\) Thus the first of these Assemblies was held some time after A.D. 612 when all his conquests were completed and followed by an interval during which the normal peace time conditions could be restored. The peace was unbroken for thirty years from A.D. 612 to 642. In A.D. 643, he was out on his expedition to Konigoda (Ganjam) when the path of his eastern advance was open after the passing away of Saśānaka, as narrated above. Saśānaka was not alive in A.D. 637 when Hiuan Tsang visited Magadha. Thus the starting-point of the chronology with which we are concerned is the year of Harsha’s accession to sovereignty in A.D. 606. The year A.D. 605-6 witnessed four events: (1) Rājya’s expedition against the Hūnas as Crown Prince; (2) Prabhākara’s death; (3) Rājya’s accession to the throne; and (4) his assassination on his way to Kanauj. When Rājya was deputed to march against the Hūnas in A.D. 605, he showed a ‘faint growth’ of beard, as Bāna says. If he is taken to be 20 then, he was born in A.D. 585. According to Bāna, he was older by six years than his sister Rājyaśrī who was thus born in A.D. 591. Harsha was also older than his sister, but only by about two years, for when his sister was born, he was able ‘to manage five or six paces with the support

104 For a full discussion of the subject, cf. THK, 124 ff.
105 HTW, II, 349.
106 Life, 183.
107 Life, 184.
of his nurse’s fingers’, and ‘tiny teeth were beginning to adorn his mouth’, as Bāna tells us. Thus Harsha was born about A.D. 588 and became a king at 18, the age of majority in Hindu Law. Harsha ruled up to A.D. 648. According to the Life (p. 156) he died ‘towards the end of Yung Hui period’ which ended in A.D. 655 according to Takakusu. But Watters points out that, according to Chinese History, the Chinese envoy to India found a usurper on the throne of Harsha in A.D. 648 when Harsha must have died. Again Hiuan Tsang submitted the account of his Indian travel to Tai Sung in A.D. 648, probably after the passing away of Harsha.

108 IRT, 163.
109 HITW, 1, 347.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

CIVILIZATION OF THE GUPTA AGE

I. IMPERIAL PEACE AND HINDU CULTURE

The advent of the Guptas on the stage of Indian history ushered in an epoch characterized by great intellectual and material progress, which shone particularly brilliantly on the background of the immediately preceding period. The Gupta Empire can be said to have been essentially Indian—or Hindu—in character. It was heralded by the Vedic chants sung by Brahmanic priests at the āśvamedha sacrifice performed by Samudra-gupta after a considerable lapse of time. The Imperial Guptas created conditions which freed the people from fear, and guaranteed them considerable economic and social security. This fact naturally resulted in a remarkable outburst of the creative activity of Hindu genius. In the realms of art and literature, in political and economic enterprises, in religious and philosophical speculations, in short, in almost every sphere of life, we get, in this period, the best and the highest of which the ancient Indians were capable. It was an age of unique and most typically Indian achievements in the realms of thought and deed, and amply deserves to be called the Golden Age of Indian History.

The conception of ‘empire’ cannot be said to have been a new one in Indian political thought, but a special significance attached to the Gupta Empire in as much as it practically gave the death-blow to the republican form of government which had been a distinguished feature of Indian polity for more than a thousand years. Invasions from without and growth of empires within the country were mainly responsible for the downfall of the republics, and we find that, under the Guptas, most of them came to be gradually absorbed into the larger governmental scheme of the Gupta Empire (p. 23).¹

The great virtue of the Gupta Empire lay in its unifying effect. An emperor, an army and a bureaucracy controlled from the centre were the chief bonds of the imperial unity, and the external pomp and glory of the emperor, the symbol of this unity, were displayed, in all imperial dominions, through the members of the royal family who held viceregal positions there. Another significant result of such cen-

¹ For a different view on this point, cf. pp. 105-6 above.
tral political and military organization was that, under the Imperial Guptas, the country was made free from the danger of foreign invasions. But by far the greatest achievement of the Gupta Empire was the propagation and active promotion of Indian art and thought, which the Gupta emperors had made possible, even in the remotest parts of the country, perhaps through the agency of the agrahāras or religious endowments.

II. GREATER INDIA

But though India had become almost free from foreign invasions, she was not altogether cut off from the outside world. As a matter of fact, intercourse both with the West and the East became closer and more frequent than ever before. But it was of a peaceful nature. Friendly political contacts were actively promoted between the Gupta sovereigns and foreign rulers, an interesting example of which is furnished by the case of Meghavarṇa, king of Ceylon (p. 27). These friendly relations seem to have continued even between Chandragupta II and Kumāra-gupta I on the one hand and their Ceylonese contemporaries, Buddhādāsa, Upatissa I, and Mahānāma on the other.2 There is also sufficient evidence to show that Indian ambassadors were sent to foreign countries during the Gupta regime.3 The emperors Constantine and Julian are reported to have received, at their courts, ambassadors from India in A.D. 336 and A.D. 361 respectively. From the records of the Sung dynasty we know that an Indian ambassador reached China in A.D. 428. Another ambassador from Western India is said to have attended the court of the Chinese Emperor, Hio-wen-ti, in A.D. 477. Twenty-five years later we hear of an ambassador, by name Chu-lot, who was sent to China by one Kiū-to (probably, Gupta).

The contact between India and outside world had indeed begun to develop already in the pre-Gupta period. That epoch saw this intercourse in two main directions. Certain foreign races, like the Sakas, invaded India, temporarily ruled over a part of the country, and were ultimately absorbed into the Indian community. They came as foreigners but remained as Indians. Of more far-reaching significance, however, were the cultural and commercial contacts, which led to the birth of Greater India. The pre-Gupta period was characterized by the gradual spread of Indian cultural activities, particularly in the fields of art, letters and religion, outside India. The vanguards of this movement were the bands of Buddhist and Brahmanical missionaries,

2 Geiger, Cūlaśāṅkha., PTS, No. 20, Intr., p. xi.
3 NPP, 49 (1-4), pp. 271-72.
who were inspired by the noble ideal of carrying the message of Indian spiritual culture to distant lands beyond the mountains and across the seas. Their forward march towards Tibet, Central Asia, China, and Japan to the north and Indo-china and Malay Archipelago to the east and south was but a silent drift of an enormous religious and civilizing movement, and wherever they went, these ambassadors were received with open arms by the people of those regions. From the first centuries of the Christian era, the Indian ocean served as a popular highway of migration and trade. In the wake of the missionaries followed also political adventurers, who, in the course of time, settled down and established kingdoms in certain parts, particularly in Indo-china and the Malay Archipelago. This remarkable enterprise of colonization outside India seems to have been specially encouraged by the Gupta sovereigns, and the result of all this was that, in the age of the Guptas, several small colonial kingdoms came to be established in South-eastern Asia. From the cultural point of view, they may be regarded almost as the reproductions of Indian conditions; indeed they were smaller Indias across the seas. Without going into the details of this great colonizing activity, of which a fuller account is given in Ch. XXXII, we may emphasize its own outstanding characteristic, namely, that the driving force behind it was neither the imperial ambition for overseas expansion, nor economic exploitation aided by military power; it was the natural efflorescence of the most creative period of Indian culture.

III. THE IDEAL OF KINGSHIP

The Guptas had developed a highly efficient administrative machinery, and its sphere of operations extended over a large part of the life of the contemporary Indian. The Gupta sovereigns claimed for themselves some sort of divinity and this is indicated by the description of some of the Gupta monarchs in their inscriptions, as equalling the gods, Kubera, Varuna, Indra, and Yama, and also as gods in mortal form (above, p. 34). It is true that normally no king of ancient India was ever actually worshipped as a god in his lifetime. But in the literature produced in the age of the Guptas, the king is represented as the incarnation of Dharma, and as the earthly counterpart of Vishnu, the God in his aspect as the Preserver. With the downfall of the republics and their gradual absorption into the Gupta Empire, the truly Hindu ideal of a sārvabhauma or a chakravartin came to be definitely established in Indian political thought. Kalidāsa, who may be regarded as the best interpreter of the Gupta Age, has often glorified this ideal in his works.4 His descriptions of

4 Cf. Rāhuvaśīla, II, 47; Sakuntalā, VII, 33.
imperial sovereignty seem to echo what the epithets in the Gupta inscriptions and the legends on the Gupta coins indicate.\textsuperscript{5} The entire world, by which obviously they meant India, was thus included in the conception of the Chakravartin, the world-sovereign.

From the works of Kālidāsa, which may be presumed to be reflecting the culture of the Gupta Age, to a large extent, we can glean a few facts pertaining to the different aspects of the career of a contemporary king. Special efforts were made to give proper theoretical education and practical training to a prince, so that, after having gone through that discipline, he became fit to assume the responsibilities of an heir-apparent, and subsequently, of a king.\textsuperscript{6} The personal accomplishments of Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II in literary, artistic, martial and diplomatic spheres, to which frequent references are made in the inscriptions, indicate the wide range of subjects taught to princes. When Kālidāsa tells us\textsuperscript{7} that DilIPA was learned without being a demagogue, strong without being spiteful, and charitable without being a braggart, he seems to refer, as a matter of fact, to the virtues acquired and the vices avoided by his Gupta patrons. Through the descriptions of the great kings belonging to the race of Raghuv\textsuperscript{8} Kālidāsa has indicated how the personal life of a Gupta monarch must have been properly regulated and apportioned for the carrying out of royal duties and the enjoyment of private pleasures.

\textbf{IV. ECONOMIC CONDITION}

1. Growth of cities

The result of the highly organized and efficient administration of the Guptas was to be clearly seen in the prosperity and happiness of their subjects. The economic stability and development formed, as a matter of fact, the true basis of the all-round cultural progress made in that period of history. To begin with, that period saw a rapid growth of prosperous cities. The Gupta inscriptions support Fa-hien’s testimony to the effect that Magadha was a flourishing kingdom with rich towns possessing large population. Pātaliputra, which was the imperial capital, must have been also the centre of all economic activities. Next in importance was perhaps Ayodhā, which was probably the seat of a Jayaskandhāvāra as early as the time of Samudra-gupta and gradually rose to the position of the

\textsuperscript{5} Cf. Prithulīm-acajītya dīvaḥ āyatī apratvāryaśyaḥ.

\textsuperscript{6} Cf. Raghuvamśa, III, 35.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., I, 22.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., I, 5-8.
second capital of the empire. Ujjayinī also seems to have attained
the rank of a capital city in the time of Chandra-gupta II. It is
probable that Chandra-gupta II, after having conquered that part of
the country, became particularly fascinated by that city, and treated
it as his second capital. It is likely that this was necessitated by the
special exigencies of administration, caused by wars against the
Sakas and the re-organization of the newly acquired territory in that
region. Ujjayinī soon became the centre of all cultural activities and
has, since then, been immortalized in the annals of ancient India as
the seat of Vikramāditya and the Nine Gems in his court. Gargarā-
taṭa-pura, which was a city situated on the banks of the river Gar-
garā, is described, in an inscription, as having been adorned with
wells, tanks, temples, worship-halls, pleasure-gardens, etc. Daśapura
(Mandasor in Western Malwa) was a flourishing town, where a guild
of silk-weavers migrated from the Lāṭa province, being attracted by
the virtues of the sovereign. Aiṛikina (Eran) is described as the
svabhoganagara (pleasure-resort) of Samudra-gupta. Vaiśāḷī, where
a large number of Gupta seals have been discovered, seems to have
been an important industrial and administrative centre. Among
other cities mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions are Indrapura, and
Girinagara. It is needless to add that all these cities were
adorned with buildings and temples of great architectural beauty.
It must be mentioned, in this connection, that prominent sea-ports,
like Tāmralipti on the eastern coast, and Bhrigu kachchhā on the
western coast, were the main centres of sea-borne trade and com-
merce, and thus played an important part in the economic life of
the country.

2. Guilds

The Gupta sovereigns seem to have made special efforts to de-
velop industrial and commercial settlements in various parts of their
dominions, by offering concessions and patronage to guilds, i.e. cor-
porations of artisans and merchants. A typical example is that of the
guild of silk-weavers who migrated from Lāṭa to Daśapura in West-
ern Malwa. There they flourished in their business under the patro-
nage of the Gupta monarch; and, perhaps, in grateful remembrance
of this event, they built in that city a 'noble and unequalled' temple
of the Sun-god in A.D. 437, with the large amounts of wealth acquired
by them through their craft. Another guild, namely, that of oilmen, which carried on prosperous trade in the town of Indrapura, was designated after its head Jivanta. There is enough epigraphic evidence to show that the guilds were often mobile and moved from one place to another in order to improve their prospects. The unity of the members was the very essence of these guilds, as is indicated by the stipulation, in the above-mentioned record, that 'the temple of) the Sun (is) the perpetual property of the guild of oilmen, of which Jivanta is the head, residing at Indrapura, as long as it continues in complete unity, (even) in moving away from this settlement.' The Mandasor inscription shows that the guilds usually carried on prosperous business, and, in spite of occasional setbacks, often enjoyed quite a long career of useful activity. The details about the guild of silk-weavers given in the inscription are very important for the study of the corporate activities in the age of the Guptas. We are told that several members of that guild, after having migrated to Dasapura, took to various pursuits other than silk-weaving, such as archery, religion, astrology, story-telling and asceticism, while, at the same time, continuing to be members of that guild. It thus becomes clear that the guilds were not necessarily closed corporations of businessmen occupying themselves with one particular business alone, but members were given considerable freedom in the choice of their individual professions and inclinations. It is also to be noted that the members of these commercial guilds were interested not only in their own trade, but also in several other cultural activities. Interesting side-light is thrown by inscriptions on other works of public utility carried out by the various guilds. Such works included the construction of assembly-houses, watersheds, public gardens, wells, etc., aid given to poor people in the performance of sacrifices and other religious rites, banking business, and trusteeship of public funds and private bequests.

3. Public Works

It has to be mentioned in this connection that public works were undertaken and executed also by the State itself for the welfare and prosperity of the people. Reference may specially be made to the repairs of the Sudarśana lake and the connected irrigation plan, carried out in the province of Surāśṭra, under the benevolent rule

15 Ibid., 79.
16 Ibid., 68.
17 CII, III, 71.
18 Ibid., 79.
19 Lüder's List, Nos. 1133, 1180; EI, VIII, 82-86; CII, III, 79.
of Skanda-gupta’s provincial governor, Parnadatta, and his son Chakrapālita. When Kālidāsa says that, during the regime of Daśaratha, ‘no illness set its foot among his folk’, he must have had in his mind, it may be presumed, the measures taken by his imperial patrons in the matter of public health. It may be further presumed that, through his poems and dramas, Kālidāsa gives indications about other works of public utility, carried out by the Gupta sovereigns, such as construction of roads and bridges, improvement of communications, setting up of big and small industries and working of mines, which afforded means of livelihood to a large number of people, the capture of wild elephants and such other animals as were a menace to the neighbouring locality, etc. Endowments of religious as well as of secular character, founded by the Gupta sovereigns, in favour of a community as a whole, or of individuals, as known from epigraphic evidence, are too numerous to be mentioned here.

4. Industries

Several industries, even heavy industries, seem to have grown under the patronage of the Imperial Guptas. The casting of the wonderful iron pillar at Mehrauli would not have been possible except in a fully equipped iron and steel plant. The Allahabad pillar inscription mentions a large number of weapons, which also must have been manufactured in such iron works. Ship-building was another big industry which had developed in the age of the Guptas, and it must have considerably facilitated the trade and colonizing activities of the Indians in that period. Silk industry was a speciality of the Indians since very early times and reference has already been made to the prosperous guild of silk-weavers of Daśapura. The highly developed conditions of trade and industry, in the age of the Guptas, are clearly indicated also by the elaborate laws of partnership, contract, foreign trade and commerce, and allied topics, prescribed in the Yājñavalkya-smṛiti.

A striking indication of the prosperity and the wealth of the Gupta Empire is given by its gold coinage. This prosperity was no doubt due to great progress made in agriculture, rural economy, overland and seaborne trade and commerce, corporate activities in the economic field, and execution of works of public utility. Under the Guptas the country attained to a high state of material civilization, and the national

20 CII, III, 56.
21 Raghuvaṁśa, IX, 4.
22 Ibid., XVI, 2; XVII, 64 ff.
23 CII, III, 139.
24 Ibid., 81.
wealth of the country increased considerably. Just as the political and military organization of the Guptas helped to establish peace and order in their dominions, and thus secured, for the people, freedom from fear, their planned development of national economy ensured, for the country as a whole, freedom from want. Their entire economic policy aimed at creating conditions of economic security for the people as also at raising the general standard of life by increasing the national wealth. The great cultural activities such as those in the fields of art and letters, which characterize the Gupta Age, would not have been possible without such universal economic security and prosperity.

The account of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien provides us with ample first-hand information about the general, political, social and religious conditions in the age of the Guptas. Fa-hien arrived in India in A.D. 399 and remained in this country until A.D. 414. He was thus able to see the very acme of the Gupta imperial glory.

It would appear from the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim that distant parts of the country, on the frontiers of the Gupta Empire, were comparatively desolate. The holy places in North Bihar, which Fa-hien visited, were situated in a wilderness, and he saw only some priests and a few families living near the shrines. The Gangetic plain, however, was well-populated and prosperous. Throughout the imperial dominions, the pilgrim was able to travel in peace and free from fear, and he indirectly pays the highest tribute to the Guptas for the happy condition of India during their regime (above, p. 62).

All sorts of charitable institutions existed and Fa-hien was particularly impressed by ‘free hospitals’ endowed by benevolence, which he describes in some detail. ‘Hither come all poor or helpless patients suffering from every sort of infirmity. They are well taken care of and a doctor attends to them, food and medicine being given according to their wants. Thus they are made quite comfortable, and when they are well they may go away.’ It may be claimed without exaggeration that this is the first instance of a free general hospital recorded in the history of the world.

V. REVIVAL OF HINDUISM

By far the most important feature of the Gupta Age was the revival of Brahmanical religion in the form which is now known as Puranic Hinduism. Buddhism gradually lost its dominant position and the resurgence of Hinduism continued unabated ever since. This topic will be dealt with in detail in Ch. XXVIII and we cannot refer here to some striking features of that remarkable cultural movement.
Firstly, it becomes clear from the study of the Gupta inscriptions that the Gupta monarchs were imbued with the true spirit of Hinduism, namely, tolerance for other religions. This aspect of the religious policy of the Guptas was to be seen particularly in their attitude towards the Buddhists and the Jainas. Secondly, the new and vigorous Hinduism of the Guptas gave an unprecedented impetus to Sanskrit language and literature. In this connection, it is noteworthy that classical Sanskrit was then deliberately and widely used even for popular and secular purposes, as is clearly evidenced by the royal and private lithic and other records of that period. Moreover, in those days, even the Jainas and the Buddhists discarded the Prakrit and wrote their sacred texts in Sanskrit which thus became the lingua franca of India. Thirdly, the wandering Hindu minstrels visited distant parts of the country in the course of pilgrimages recommended by the popular scriptures, and carried the message of Hinduism through the Epics and the Puranas directly to the masses. Hinduism proved a significant force in unifying the heterogeneous elements in the country by the common bond of religion. Fourthly, Hinduism had then assumed a positive and an assertive role in the sense that the movements of the Hinduization of foreign tribes, and of the spread of Hinduism in foreign lands, which had already commenced in the preceding period of Indian history, were actively promoted during this period. And finally, Hinduism of the Gupta period was characterized, not only by the new popular forms of religious practices, but also by deep philosophical speculations of a large number of profound thinkers to which reference will be made in Ch. XXVIII.

VI. BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

But the revival of Hinduism was not immediately followed by the decline and downfall of Buddhism. True to their tolerant and eclectic spirit, the Guptas even helped the Buddhist expansion to a certain extent, and Fa-hien found Buddhism flourishing in many parts of India. The contribution made by the Buddhists to literature, philosophy, art and sciences, during the Gupta regime, was indeed marvellous, and it was not a little responsible for making that period the golden age of Indian culture. It was an epoch of a universal cultural awakening in India—an awakening, which was made possible by the best that was in Hinduism as well as in Buddhism. The monuments of Buddhist art of that period are as much representative of that great awakening as the poetry of Kālidāsa. It is interesting to note that Hinduism and Buddhism had come very close to each other in religious practices and beliefs. In the
region of philosophical speculations, the Buddhist thinkers aimed at discovering the unchanging amid change, while their Hindu compatriots carried on a passionate search for the One behind the many. Though, in course of time, the Buddhist religion as such disappeared from India, its special contribution to Indian civilization was of a permanent character.

As in the case of the Buddhists, the Gupta monarchs seem to have extended their patronage impartially also to the Jainas. It would appear from the Jaina inscriptions and literature that Mathura and Valabhi were the centres of the Svetāmbara Jainas, while the Digambara Jainas had mustered round Pudravardhana. Generally speaking, however, during the Gupta period, the influence of Jainism had been gradually waning in the north, though, in the south, it still continued to be actively promoted and patronized.

In accordance with the general trend in the matter of religion and philosophy, which characterized the Gupta period, the Jainas also reorganized their religious practices and philosophical teachings in those days. The ancient Jaina texts, which had become obscure and disorganized, were rearranged and finally consolidated by a council held at Valabhi by the middle of the fifth century A.D., under the leadership of Devarddhi Khamasramaṇa. Like the Mahāyāna Buddhists, the Jainas also felt the necessity of writing Sanskrit commentaries on their original Prakrit scriptures. Some Jaina authors even wrote independent religious and philosophical treatises in Sanskrit.

VII. LITERATURE

1. Introduction

No real and adequate idea of the brilliance of the Gupta Age can be conveyed without a somewhat detailed reference to the magnificent achievements of that age in the realms of art and literature. It is now recognized on all hands that in the domain of sculpture and painting the Gupta Age not only produced the best that India can show but also laid down the form and standard of aesthetic ideas for all succeeding ages. In the same way the belles lettres, particularly poems and dramas, as well as the treatises on technical and scientific subjects constitute the high-watermark of literary art and intellectual achievements in India.

In view of the importance of these two topics for a clear realization of the glory of the Gupta Age, they are treated here in some details, so that it may not be necessary to refer to them again in the subsequent chapters dealing in a general way with art and literature of the period covered by this volume.
2. Growth of Sanskrit Literature

Few scholars would now subscribe to the view, once propounded by Max Müller, that there was a sudden break in the growth of Sanskrit literature in the early centuries of the Christian era, until Kālidāsa inaugurated 'the Renaissance' of Sanskrit literature. This theory is definitely disproved by the works of Āśvaghosa, Bhāsa and Bhaṭṭarāta, among others, to which reference has been made above, as well as the epigraphic records composed in Sanskrit. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that the Gupta Age constitutes a new epoch in the history of Sanskrit literature. It reached its perfection in both form and content, and almost all the best works in its different branches were composed before the end of that glorious period. It may be called the great age of Sanskrit also from another point of view. For Sanskrit now replaced Prakrits not only in epigraphic, but, as noted above, even in the religious and philosophical literature of the heterodox sects like the Jainas and Buddhists. Sanskrit, which became the lingua franca of India, formed the one sure basis of a common culture in India, in Indo-China and Indonesia. Sanskrit became the language of the learned, and retained the position of supremacy for a thousand years.

3. Brahmanical Literature

The Gupta Age thus witnessed not the renaissance or revival, but the acme or efflorescence of Sanskrit literature. The continuity of the literary tradition is best marked in the field of the Brahmanical literature. For one of the foremost literary activities of the Gupta Age is to be seen in the final redaction of at least one of the two great Epics, viz the Mahābhārata, as well as the development of the Purāṇas and Smṛiti or Dharmaśāstra literature. Although the beginnings of these two belong to a much earlier period, some of the notable works in both were composed or received their final form during the age under review. The same thing is also true of the philosophical literature, though to a much less extent. In the Dharmaśāstra literature25 the Yajñavalkya-smṛiti may be regarded almost as the official law-book of the Guptas. Another important Dharmaśāstra-work, which belongs to the Gupta period, is the Nārada-smṛiti. It seems to have been a slightly earlier production

25 As regards the dates suggested for the different Dharmaśūtras and Dharmaśāstras, P. V. Kane (History of Dharmaśāstra) suggests the following dates (Ed.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smṛiti</th>
<th>A.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yajñavalkya-smṛiti</td>
<td>100 — 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brīhaspati-smṛiti</td>
<td>300 — 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nārada-smṛiti</td>
<td>100 — 400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
than the Yājñavalkya-smṛiti and depends primarily on the Bṛigu-saṁhitā, thus confirming the Purāṇa-tradition about Bṛigu, Nārada, Brihaspati, and Arīgas being the successive redactors of Manu's Dharmaśāstra. At the same time, the Nārada-smṛiti shows considerable advance over the Bṛigu-saṁhitā; it speaks of 132 sub-sections of Manu's 18 titles of law, of 15 kinds of slavery, of 21 kinds of acquisition, of 11 kinds of witnesses, etc. This, together with the fact that the word dīnāra (denarius), in the sense of a coin, occurs in it, would prove that the Nārada-smṛiti belonged to the early fourth century A.D.26 To a slightly later date belongs the Brihaspati-smṛiti which represents, in certain respects, an advance over the Nārada. On the whole, however, the Brihaspati-smṛiti also follows the Manu-smṛiti very closely, and may, therefore, be regarded, in a sense, as a vārttika on the Mānava-dharmaśāstra. It will thus be seen that, as in the case of several other departments of Hindu life and culture, the Guptas seem to have actively sponsored a movement for the reorientation also of legal thought and procedure in the light of the changing conditions.

The original texts of several other Smṛiti works were also probably composed during the Gupta Age, though they probably underwent considerable modifications at later periods. According to the chronology adopted by Kane, the latest writer on the subject, the following Smṛiti works belong to this class: Parāśara (A.D. 100-500); Kātyāvāna (A.D. 400-600); Pītāmaha (A.D. 400-700); Pulastya (A.D. 300-700); Vyāsa (A.D. 200-500); and Hārīta (A.D. 400-700).27

The nature of the Purāṇa literature and its beginnings have been dealt with in the preceding volume. But the Gupta Age witnessed not only new Purāṇa texts, but also considerable modifications of the old ones.

4. Purāṇas

The Purāṇas were an active and efficient medium of popular instruction, kept up to date by constant revision. Under the pressure of new demands, the Purāṇa outgrew the old pañchalakshana, and began to attract matter relating to Dharmaśāstra, details of the worship of particular deities, resumes of philosophical doctrine, and what

26 The word 'dīnāra' is commonly used first in the Gupta inscriptions. The Nārada-smṛiti is definitely earlier than the 7th century A.D., as it is referred to in Bāna's Kādambarī.

27 This para is a summary of passages in the original Chapter. In the latest volume of the work (Vol. V, Part II) cited in fn. 25 Kane says: 'Most of the metrical Smṛitis, such as those of Parāśara, Sankha and Devala, belong to A.D. 600-900 (Editor).
not. The number of Purāṇas increased, and sometimes several texts competed for one and the same name and for a place among the recognized list of eighteen main Purāṇas, e.g. Srimad-Bhāgavata and Devī-Bhāgavata. The views of the new sects now found expression in the Purāṇa texts; to wit, a Pāṣupata in Vaiyu and Liṅga, Sātvat in Vishnu; Dattātreya in Mārkendeya; Sun worship as practised by the Magas, Bhojakas and Śakadviṣpi immigrants in Bhavīṣhya and Śāmba. Māhāmyas of particular shrines and places of pilgrimage (tīrthas) came to be added to old texts as new sections. Dissertations on various branches of secular knowledge were also incorporated in the Purāṇa texts. The Agni is a thesaurus of poetics, dramaturgy, grammar, lexicography, astronomy and astrology, polity, war, architecture, medicine and so on, the Garuda takes note, in addition, of perfumery and the lapidary art, and the Vishnudharmottara, of the arts of dance, painting and sculpture. These prove the popular character of the Purāṇa texts which now formed the most important medium of popular education. Some of the Purāṇas contain a brief account of the royal dynasties of Northern India. These lists are found in Matsya, Vaiyu, Brahmanda, Bhavīṣhya, Vishnu and Garuda, and must have been put in their present shape between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D., as they do not come up to the reign of Harshavardhana in any sentence. Very remarkable is a sixth or seventh century manuscript, in later Gupta characters, found in the Nepal Darbar library, of the Skanda-Purāṇa, which naturally differs very much from the swollen and amorphous mass that now bears the name.

5 Belles Lettres

(a) Kāvya: The literary works mentioned above represent the great movement relating to the final revision and editing of ancient Brahmanic texts and further additions to them which was vigorously sponsored by the Guptas. It undoubtedly formed a significant aspect of the general development of Sanskrit language and literature in that age. But in order to realize the true beauty, grandeur and splendour of the literary efflorescence in the age of the Guptas, we have to turn up the belles lettres for the age of the Guptas was essentially the age of dramatic, lyrical and epic poetry. By far the most outstanding name associated with that age is that of Kalidāsa, whose unquestioned supremacy, unanimously recognized today, is further clearly established by two facts: firstly, most of the earlier classical writers however great by themselves, were almost entirely relegated to oblivion by this great luminary; and, secondly, the literary fashion started by Kalidāsa in the matter of form and con-
tent was assiduously imitated by most of the later writers, who there-
by paid him a well-deserved tribute.

That Kālidāsa lived in the fourth century A.D. and was a contempo-
rary of Chandra-gupta II, Vikramāditya, is now generally accepted
by scholars, though some still cling to the traditional view that the
great poet lived in the court of the great Vikramāditya of Ujjain
who founded the Samvat (era) in 57 B.C. 28

Kālidāsa’s literary genius was a versatile one, and it is difficult
to say whether he should be regarded as a dramatist first and a lyrical
and epic poet afterwards, or vice versa. Among Kālidāsa’s poems,
the Ritusamhāra is always mentioned—and rightly so—as his earliest
production. The poet describes, in that poem, in a very picturesque
manner, the beauties of six seasons and their reaction on the human
mind. On account of the utter lack in it of the ethical quality, which
characterizes Kālidāsa’s other literary works, some critics have al-
together denied his authorship of the Ritusamhāra. On the other hand,
the Ritusamhāra exhibits certain aesthetic and poetical features, which
unmistakably show the author of the Meghadūta in the making. The
delicate observation of, and the living sympathy with, nature are truly
Kālidāsian in character. Only the strong passion, seen in this youthful
production, has substantially mellowed in his later works.

Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta is the pioneer dūtakāvyā in Sanskrit literature,
and the fact that a large number of imitations of this kāvyā
has been produced in later times is a clear testimony to its eternal
enchantment. While a youthful husband, torn away from his spouse,
by a sentence of lonely banishment, wanders about disconsolately,
lamenting his hard fate, his attention is caught by the sudden ap-
pearance of a cloud. Ignoring, in his infatuation, the inanimate
nature of the cloud, he requests it to carry his message to his belov-
ed wife, living far away. The stanzas in which Kālidāsa depicts the
pining human heart are unrivalled for lofty imagery, unique
metaphors and heroic hyperboles—not only in Sanskrit, but, per-
haps, in any language of the world.

To turn from the Ritusamhāra and the Meghadūta to the Kumāra-
sambhava and the Raghuvamśa is to turn from lyrical beauty to
epic grandeur.

In the Kumārasambhava, which describes the union of Śiva and
Pārvatī in wedlock and the birth of their son Kumāra or Kārtika,
Kālidāsa exhibits richer variety and greater brilliance of fancy. The
three main characters, namely, Śiva, Pārvatī and Madana are

28 For the date of Kālidāsa, cf. A History of Sanskrit Literature, Classical Period,
Vol. I (by S. N. Das Gupta and S. K. De), pp. 124-25 and A History of Sanskrit Lite-
rature (by A. B. Keith), pp. 80-81.
delineated with an extraordinary power of suggestion, and the grand background of the Himālayas adds sublimity to the whole theme. The poet's power of description makes every scene appear to move before our very eyes.

The Rāghuvamśa is universally recognized as the finest specimen of Sanskrit mahākāvya. It is a true court-epic, and all of its nineteen cantos are at once dignified and entertaining. The poet describes, in this kāvya, the careers of twenty-eight kings belonging to the race of Rāghu. He has successfully tried to sustain the interest throughout this long poem by introducing in it quite a large number of fascinating episodes and by enlivening them with a rich variety of attractive characters. Considering the uniform propriety of sentiment and style, exhibited in the Rāghuvamśa, it must be considered to have been the fruit of Kālidāsa's mature literary genius. According to one literary tradition, Kālidāsa is believed to have written for king Pravarasena—or at least revised for him—the Prakrit poem Setubandha. Kālidāsa's part in connection with that poem, if any, seems however to have been not very substantial.

Besides the two epic poems of Kālidāsa, which are by far the most eminent representatives of real court-poetry, only two other poems, belonging to this class, may be mentioned as having been produced during the age of the Guptas. The epic poem, Jānakiharana, which deals with the life of Rāma up to the abduction of Sītā by Rāvana, is traditionally ascribed to Kumāradāsa, who is said to have been the king of Ceylon between A.D. 517 and 526. 28a Both in manner and general treatment of the subject, Kumāradāsa imitates Kālidāsa, without being able, even remotely, to approach the latter's height and grandeur.

Next in point of time is Bhāravi (c. A.D. 550) whose epic, Kīrātārjuniya, is reckoned among the five famous mahākāvyas. The poet gives in eighteen cantos the story of the fight between Arjuna and Lord Śiva, who had disguised himself as a Kīrāta. This is indeed a grand epic theme, and Bhāravi has expounded it with considerable art. But it is not the narration of the story that strikes us, in the Kīrātārjuniya, so much as Bhāravi's power of description and dignity of style. It must, however, be confessed that the many examples of what may be called literary gymnastics, which we come across frequently in this poem, instead of in any way enhancing the poetic effect, distinctly mar it. Bhāravi's art was, no doubt, influenced by Kālidāsa, while his own Kīrātārjuniya served as a model for

28a King Kumāradāsa of Ceylon (A.D. 508-16) was a different person from the author of the Jānakiharana bearing the same name (cf. History of Ceylon, Ed. by S. Paranavitana (Colombo, 1959), Part I, p. 398 (Editor).
the *Sisupālavadha* of Māgha (later than A.D. 700). It is possible to attribute to the Gupta period also the poem *Rāvaṇavadha* of Bhaṭṭi. This poem, which is more popularly known as the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, describes, in twenty-two cantos, the history of Rāma, while illustrating, at the same time, the rules of Sanskrit grammar and rhetoric. Bhaṭṭi was known to the rhetorician Bhāmaha and must have lived long before A.D. 641.

A few inscriptions of the Gupta Age also possess in some degree most of the characteristic features of Sanskrit kāvya. The first place, from the point of view of literary art, must necessarily be conceded to the panegyric of Samudra-gupta in the Allahabad Pillar inscription. The author of the inscription, Harishena, has handled both prose and verse with considerable mastery, and thus shows himself to be a worthy predecessor of Kālidāsa. Compared to Harishena, Vatsabhaṭṭi, the author of the Mandasor inscription, is certainly an inferior poet. There is, however, no doubt that Vatsabhaṭṭi was sufficiently conversant with the poetic conventions which were then in vogue. The Junagadh rock inscription also contains some beautiful stanzas. Mention must be made in this context also of the Meharauli iron pillar inscription and the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman, the author of which, Vāsula, shows considerable literary merit.

A literary study of the inscriptions of the Gupta period shows that their authors were acquainted with some sort of regular sāhitya-śāstra, though no text of this is now available. Although these inscriptions were mainly intended for the people at large, their style is essentially dissimilar to that of the popular epics, and resembles the artificial style of the contemporary court poetry. Further, the authors of most of these inscriptions seem to betray the influence of the greatest literary figure of that period, namely, Kālidāsa.

(b) *Drama*: While in the field of Sanskrit epic and lyrical poetry, we do not come across any outstanding figure before Kālidāsa (except, perhaps, to a certain extent, Aṇvaghoṣha) in the field of dramatic literature, we have to reckon with at least two very illustrious and able predecessors of his, namely, Bhāṣa and Śūdraka.34

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29 CII, III, 79.
33 The reference *sphuṭamadhurachitrakāntaśabdasaṃayodālākṛita* occurring in one of the Gupta epigraphs is quite significant in this connection.
34 It is not possible to estimate adequately the dramatic art of Aṇvaghoṣa, some fragments from whose dramas have been recently brought to light.
DRAMA

Reference has already been made to Bhāsa (Vol. II, p. 641). Śūdraka is the author of the famous drama, the Mrichchhakāatika, which is, in many respects, a unique work in Sanskrit dramatic literature. Though the play is ascribed to a king Śūdraka, the remarks in the prastāvāna about Śūdraka himself show it to be the handiwork of a court-poet. There seems to be no doubt that the author of the Mrichchhakāatika has revised and enlarged Bhāsa’s romantic play, Daridra-Chārūdatta, by adding to it the sub-plot relating to the political revolution of Āryaka, which may have been a historically authentic event. Though there is no direct positive evidence to determine the date of this drama, there is enough circumstantial evidence to support the assumption that its author lived in the earlier part of the fourth century A.D. The Mrichchhakāatika may, therefore, be regarded as one of the earliest literary productions of the Gupta period. The Mrichchhakāatika belongs essentially to the class of realistic dramas in Sanskrit. Unlike the majority of

35 The author of the Mrichchhakāatika lived after Bhāsa but before Kālidāsa. In the prologue to his Tapatiśāhvarana, Kulaśekhara refers to illustrious ancient dramatists in the following words: Śūdraka-kālidāsa ....., prabhūtānaḥ. The order in which the names of the two dramatists are mentioned here would clearly suggest that Śūdraka was prior in date to Kālidāsa. All the same, Śūdraka does not seem to have lived very much earlier than Kālidāsa. It may be assumed that his fame had not been well established in Kālidāsa’s times, otherwise the latter would have referred to Śūdraka as one of his eminent predecessors along with Bhāsa and Saumila (cf. Mālavikāgnimitra, I). A more acceptable hypothesis in this connection would be as follows: As indicated above, the Mrichchhakāatika was not written by Śūdraka at all, but by a court-poet. Kulaśekhara refers to a king Śūdraka, whose exploits were described by his court-poets, Ramila and Saumila (cf. tāu Śūdrakakathakārau rāmau rāmilasaumilau: kāyau yaqor dvyar avidadhanāyuvanopam). This Saumila may have been the same as the one who is mentioned by Kālidāsa along with Bhāsa. The original author of the Mrichchhakāatika must have been Saumila, the court-poet of king Śūdraka, and it must have been only later that the authorship of the drama came to be ascribed to his patron, Śūdraka. Kālidāsa must have lived soon after—or perhaps was a very junior contemporary of Saumila. In Kālidāsa’s times, therefore, Saumila was regarded as the author of the Mrichchhakāatika. This would explain why Kālidāsa mentions him in the Mālavikāgnimitra, along with Bhāsa, as one of the eminent dramatists preceding him. It may be further presumed that the real hero of the sub-plot, namely the political revolution of Āryaka, which Saumila introduced into his drama while enlarging the Daridra-Chārūdatta of Bhāsa, was his patron Śūdraka himself. His name may indicate that Śūdraka had originally belonged to a lower class; but later on he became a king as the result of a popular political revolution. While depicting this event through his drama Saumila perhaps thought it desirable to conceal the real name of his patron, and represent him under another euphemistic—but transparent—name. That is how a Śūdraka must have become an Āryaka. Once Śūdraka was firmly established on the throne there could not have been any objection to reverting to his original name. As a matter of fact the poet later on seems to have gone to the other extreme and claimed that Śūdraka was a devamukhyaṭāma well-versed in the Veda and other branches of learning (cf. stanzas 3 and 4 in the first act of the Mr.)
Sanskrit dramatists, the author has exhibited in this play a surprising sense of fact, which completely dominates reason or imagination. Particularly in the sub-plot, for which alone he is really responsible, there is no attempt made to unduly invest the characters with a touch of sublimity or grandeur. Action and characters are portrayed directly from life without giving any conscious consideration to their emotional possibilities. The author himself seems to be perfectly conscious of his unconventional treatment of the plot. To glorify a political revolution was in itself a novel thing; and the brilliant and dramatically effective manner in which the active politics of Āryaka is combined with the romantic tale of Chārudatta and Vasantasenā must have immediately caught the imagination of contemporary audiences. For variety of incidents and characters taken from different strata of the society, and the genuine humour, with which they are presented in the drama, there is hardly anything in Sanskrit dramatic literature to compare with the Mrichchhakatika.

The Mudrārākshasa deals with events immediately following the extermination of the Nandas, and relating to the foundation of an empire by Chandra-gupta Maurya under the guidance and with the help of Chānakya. The actual dramatic interest is created and sustained through the portrayal of the clash between the political strategies and counter-strategies employed by Rākshasa on behalf of Chandra-gupta Maurya. Unlike most Sanskrit dramas, Mudrārākshasa concerns itself with interests other than love. Though the sentiment of love, in the ordinary sense, is not represented in this drama, we do have here a fine portrayal of strong passion in the form of loyalty and patriotism. The drama presents a true and surprisingly living picture of an ancient Indian court—with all its political suspicions and intrigues, and the play and counter-play of its emissaries, retainers, and couriers. Though not conforming to the conventional model, the Mudrārākshasa must, all the same, be regarded as a great play in its own way.

The second drama by Viśākhadatta, namely, Devī-Chandra-guptam has already been discussed in connection with Rāma-gupta (pp. 46 ff.). The Abhisārikā-vāñchhitaka, another play of the same

The chronological order of the three dramatists, as indicated by literary tradition, would therefore be: Bhāsa: Saumila (or Śūdraka): Kālidāsa. Besides literary tradition, the circumstantial evidence in connection with the date of the Mrichchhakatika comprises the astrological references in the sixth act of the play, the Prākrit dialects, the political background, the legal procedure represented in the ninth act, the traditionally indicated proximity of Śūdraka and Vikramāditya, the reference to rudro rājā (VIII, 34), etc.

36 Cf. anyadiva sañvidhānamakam varate; navamica sañvidhānamakam (Act I).
37 JA, cc III, 201 ff.
author based on the love-stories of Udayana, is also known only from citations. But, as in epic and lyrical poetry, so too in drama, Kālidāsa must be said to represent the high watermark of India's creative genius. Among Kālidāsa's three plays, the Mālavikāgnimitra, based on the conventional theme of love between the Śunga king Agnimitra and Mālavikā, is clearly an immature production.

The Vikramorvaśīya shows a great advance in Kālidāsa's poetic and dramatic art. The drama depicts, in five acts, the romantic story of the love of a mortal for a nymph. Just a casual hint from a Vedic hymn was enough for Kālidāsa's imaginative power to weave an entire dramatic plot round it. In the portrayal of Purūravas's ardent but hopeless distraction caused by Urvāśī's disappearance, and his mad search for his beloved, the poet has reached a lyrical height unknown to the conventional erotic plays in Sanskrit.

The theme of love reaches its highest consummation in Kālidāsa's third play, the Abhijñāna-Sākuntalā. From love, which is depicted, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, as a flippant and sensuous passion, and, in the Vikramorvaśīya, as an ardent and lyrical—and therefore explosive—emotion ending in distraction, Kālidāsa now turns to love as a whole psychological experience—starting as a heedless, headlong and instinctive attraction between two youthful persons, then undergoing a process of purification through suffering and tribulations of the two souls and culminating into an abiding spiritual sentiment. In the Sākuntalā, Kālidāsa treats of love as a factor in the scheme of larger life and not merely as an isolated individual passion. But it is not only this philosophy of love which makes this drama a masterpiece. It is impossible not to recognize the great dramatic genius of Kālidāsa in the regular development of the plot, the just proportions of the cast, the happy choice of the incidents, the majesty and charm of the stage-effects, in his rich imagery and fine appreciation of nature, his grace, his elegance, and, above all, his noble rhythm.

Another notable dramatist in the Gupta Age is Viśākhadatta. In the prologue of the Mudrārākṣasa, we are told that the drama was written by Viśākhadatta, the son of Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta and the grandson of Sāmanta Vaṭeśvaradatta. From the bharatavākyā of the same drama we know that Viśākhadatta was a contemporary of a king Chandra-gupta.38 Some scholars take this king to be Chandra-gupta II of the Gupta dynasty,39 but others place him much later in the sixth or seventh century A.D.

38 There are several readings of the name, but on the basis of a critical study of a number of manuscripts of the play, Hillebrandt (Mudrārākṣasa: Breslau 1912) has confirmed the correctness of the reading: candraguptah.

39 It is suggested (Mudrārākṣasa or The Signet Ring: edited by R. S. Pandit, New Book Company, Bombay, 1944) that Viśākhadatta belonged to the Datta family,
It will thus be seen that, among the dramatists of the Gupta period, we have representatives both of the romantic and realistic schools of drama. In Kālidāsa's dramas, imagination dominates over sense of fact and reason, while, in the Mrichchhakatika and the plays of Viṣākhadatta, sense of fact dominates over reason and imagination. Drama, they say, is essentially a literature of the people and for the people. With the solitary exception of the Mrichchhakatika, however, the dramas of the Gupta period are distinctly dramas of kings and court life.

The royal courts in the Gupta period afforded the most favourable conditions for the production of such literature. For Gupta monarchs, as mentioned above, were not only patrons of learning and art, but were themselves learned men and artists. The background for the exuberant growth of the epic, lyrical and dramatic literature under the Guptas must have been already prepared by the treatises on Kāmaśāstra, alamkārashastra and nātyaśāstra, whose prior existence may be reasonably presumed. But far more significant than all these was the revival and the glorification of the Brahmanic ideal, so energetically sponsored by the Guptas. One of the salient features of this cultural movement was what may be fittingly called the apotheosis of the Sanskrit language. There can be no doubt that in the Gupta period, Sanskrit was generally spoken and understood, not only by the cultured people, but also by the populace. The evidence of the popular epics and the Purāṇas, of Sanskrit dramas, and of the many inscriptions and grants, which were essentially intended for the common people, would amply support the foregoing assumption. Sanskrit had already assumed a fixed and unalterable form—a circumstance which distinctly favoured its being used and understood, without much difficulty, in different parts of India. The Prakrits, on the other hand, varied according to local conditions and could therefore be used only as local dialects. Sanskrit thus became the real nāṭak language and even the Bauddhas and the Jainas had to adopt it as the most suitable vehicle for their religious and philosophical discourses. This undoubtedly gave the great impetus to Sanskrit language and literature which we find in the Gupta Age.

who were Sāmantas, but who rose to the position of mahārājas in the very next generation. The marriage of a lady from this family, namely, Dattadevi, with Sāmudra-gupta is presumed to have been the cause of this sudden rise in the position of the family. Viṣākhadatta was accordingly not only a contemporary but also a near relative of Chandra-gupta II.

40 The Kāvyamānāṁśa also indicates that kings like Sāhasānka of Ujjain had insisted that Sanskrit alone should be employed in their courts and households.

41 We hardly come across any copperplates or līthic inscriptions in Prākrit belonging to a period posterior to the fourth century A.D.
But the peculiar conditions and environments of the Gupta Age had also some bad effect on the literature produced during that period. Under the influence of the royal courts, Sanskrit poetry tended to become more and more aristocratic in character. It reflected the graces as well as the artificialities of court-life. Being overburdened with the many conventions, Sanskrit literature of the period grew more or less like a hot-house plant losing much of its natural vitality. Sentimentality came to be mistaken for genuine sentiment, fancy for real passion and ingenuity for true human feelings. Generally speaking, it attempted to cater to the tastes of the higher and refined classes of the society only, and so remained to that extent isolated from the life of the common people. A comparison of the popular epics with the epic kāvyas of the classical period would make this point abundantly clear. The classical poets were unmistakably inclined to become more pedantic than popular, and their appeal was always subtle and round-about rather than simple and direct.

(c) Ethical and Didactic Literature: Even the so-called ethicodidactic literature of that period can hardly be regarded as primarily the literature of the people and for the people. The famous Tantrākhyāyikā, for instance, which is essentially of the nature of a story-book, must have been originally composed with a view to imparting to young princes instruction in political science and practical conduct. The kathāmukha (introduction) of that work leaves no doubt in this regard. The Tantrākhyāyikā, popularly known as the Pañcatantra, has indeed had a long and eventful history. There is no doubt that its original text, which must have been made up of a large number of independent and unconnected stories, has undergone considerable modifications in the course of its transmission. And it is through such frequent modifications that the original work on the nitiśāstra and the arthaśāstra was gradually transformed into a story-book meant for the instruction and edification of the young in general. The original text of the Tantrākhyāyikā is of course, not extant, though it is possible for us to form some idea about it from the five oldest versions of the work which are available. These versions are: (1) the Tantrākhyāyikā which is available from Kashmir in an old and a new recension; (2) the text from which a Pehlevi translation was prepared circa a.d. 570; (3) a portion out of the Pañchatantra which was inserted in the Brihatkathā of Gūṇāḍhya, and which is now to be found, in a modified form, in the Brihatkathāmañjarī of Kshe-

42 The Tantrākhyāyikā would therefore fall under the category of narrative poetry as well as ethicodidactic poetry.

mendra and the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva; (4) a text, which may very well be called a children’s edition of the Pañčatantra and is specially current in South India; and (5) a Nepalese text in verse, which is closer to the South Indian version than to any other. It has been shown by Hertel, on the basis of textual criticism, that all these versions can be traced back to a common ancestor. In the introduction of the Tantrākhyaṭīkā, as well as in all the versions of the Pañčatantra, Viṣṇuśarmā is mentioned as the author of the work.

The Tantrākhyaṭīkā consists of five books out of which, broadly speaking, the first three contain instruction in politics, while the last two, which give the impression of having remained incomplete, contain general teachings regarding worldly wisdom. So far as its language and style are concerned, the Tantrākhyaṭīkā must be said to belong to the Sanskrit kāvya-type. Its prose is often characterized by long compounds, and its verses exhibit several classical alainikāras. Elegant prose, interspersed with gnomic stanzas, and a complex ‘box within a box’ style of story-telling are the two characteristics which the Tantrākhyaṭīkā has in common with the artistic narrative literature in classical Sanskrit.

The date of the composition of the Tantrākhyaṭīkā is not known, but it had become, already in the sixth century A.D., a very popular work—so much so that, at the instance of Khāsiš Anashirwan (A.D. 531-79), it was translated into Pehlevi. On the basis of the Pehlevi translation, were, soon after, prepared the Syrian and the Arabic translations of the work. It may, therefore, be reasonably assumed that the latest limit of the date of the Tantrākhyaṭīkā must be A.D. 500. As for the earliest limit, we have the evidence of the large number of quotations from the Kautūlya Arthaśāstra, which the Tantrākhyaṭīkā

44 This must have got ready after the 7th century A.D.
45 Op. cil.
46 Whether this ur-text was called Tantrākhyaṭīkā or Pañcatantra it is not possible to determine.
47 Benfev (op. cit.) had surmised that the real author of the Tantrākhyaṭīkā was Cāṇakya and that the name Viṣṇuśarmā was a clever invention, which would remind the reader of Cāṇakya’s other name, Viṣṇu-gupta. Hertel (op. cit.) also agrees with this view. Chronologically, however, Cāṇakya Viṣṇu-gupta’s authorship of the work is out of question. There is no difficulty in assuming that Viṣṇuśarmā was actually the author.
48 In his excellent introduction to his translation of the Pañcatantra, Benfev (op. cit.) has traced, in a masterly manner, the history of a large number of stories and popular motifs, and has pointed out that most of them have originated in India. The story of the migration of these fairy tales from India to the West is perhaps more absorbing than the tales themselves. Benfev has further clearly indicated how tremendously the Pañcatantra has influenced the literatures of three continents. See also Winternitz, Geschichte der indischen Literatur, 295 ff.
contains. Consequently, Hertel assigns the original text of the work to the second century B.C. But we also frequently come across in the *Tantrākhyāyikā* certain later technical terms relating to the *nitiśāstra*. It is, therefore, more probable that the original text became ready only after A.D. 250. The use of Sanskrit for such popular secular literature, the general kāvyā style of the work, the use in it of the words, *dīnāra* and *rūpaka*, the fact that the *Mahābhārata* had already assumed traditional authority in the eyes of its author, and its essentially Brahmanic character would further point to the *Tantrākhyāyikā* being the production of the early Gupta period.

Mention may also be made in this connection of the three *Satakas* of Bhartrihari—the *Srīṅgāraśataka*, the *Nitiśataka*, and the *Vairāgyaśataka*. Literary tradition in India is unanimous on the point that the *Satakas* are the work of a single poet, and not anthologies. This tradition is further confirmed by the remarkable imprint which the three *Satakas* bear of a unitary poetic personality. Unlike the *Amaruśataka*, the *Srīṅgāraśataka* contains general observations on love and woman. To this *Sataka*, dealing with sensuous life, the poet seems to have consciously added two more *Satakas*—one dealing with life of virtue and wisdom, and the other with life of renunciation. It has been held that Bhartrihari, the author of the *Satakatrayi*, was the same as Bhartrihari, the author of the *Vākyapadiya*. The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, who visited India, recorded in A.D. 691 that Bhartrihari who was a true Buddhist and was renowned throughout India had died forty years before. It has therefore been assumed that Bhartrihari, the author of the *Vākyapadiya* and the *Satakatrayi*, died about A.D. 651. His literary activity may, therefore, be placed just after the end of the Gupta period.

49 It is not necessary to presuppose the existence of any prākrit fable-literature as the precursor of this type of literature. The history of Sanskrit narrative literature shows that it is an independent creation.

50 The use of the word *dīnāra* shows that the work belongs to a period posterior to the second century A.D. The word *rūpaka*, in the sense of a coin, was first used by Āryabhaṭa, that is, in the Gupta period.

51 Perhaps to the Gupta period also belongs the original of the *Vetālapaṇcaviṃśatikā*. There is a tradition that Chanda-gupta II, Vikramāditya, was an adept in some kind of witchcraft. This may have given rise to the association of Vetāla and Vikrama (Vikramasena or Trivikramasena).

52 It would be highly interesting to see if it is possible to correlate the general conditions in the age of the Guptas with the three moods—perhaps successive—expressed by Bhartrihari in his *Satakas*. In recent time, the personality and the *Satakas* of Bhartrihari are critically studied by D. D. Kosambi (see his edition of the *Satakatraya* published by the Bhaṭatiya Vidyā Bhavan, Bombay, 1947; also see his article ‘The quality of Renunciation in Bhartrihari’s poetry’, BV; some extant versions of Bhartrihari’s *Satakas*, *JBBRAS*, XXI, 1945, pp. 17-32; On the authorship of the *Satakatrayi*, *JOR*, December 1945, pp. 64-77). According to Kosambi, the grammat-
6. Philosophical Literature

Reference has been made above to the Śūtras of the six Brahmanical systems of Philosophy (Vol. II, p. 659). The period dealt with in this volume witnessed the development of the polemical portions of these Śūtras and a vast literature for exposition of the leading ideas contained in the nuclear Śūtras, and the defence of each of these against attacks by the other systems or heterodox sects like Buddhists and Jainas.

The Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, once widely prevalent, now lost ground, its theism being absorbed by the epics, and its categories of Prakṛiti, Purusha and Gunas being taken over by Vedānta. Its tenets were succinctly set forth by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in his Sāṅkhya-kārikā, said to contain the essence of an earlier work Shashthitantra, probably by Vārṣhahanva, which dealt with the subject under sixty heads and contained many parables and dialectics against other schools. Vindhyavāsin (c. A.D. 300) came after Vārṣhahanva, and was successful in controversy against Buddhāmitra, the teacher of Vasubandhu. Īśvarakṛṣṇa was Vindhyavāsin's pupil. His Sāṅkhya-kārikā, also called Suvarna-saptati, was refuted by Vasubandhu in his Paramārtha-saptati. The identification of Vindhyavāsin and Īśvarakṛṣṇa proposed by Keith is improbable, and the former is known to have had the personal name Budra. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's work is referred to by the Jaina as Kanaka-saptati; it was taken by the Buddhist monk Paramārtha to China in A.D. 546, and there translated along with a gloss into Chinese between 557 and 568.

Mādhava was an important Sāṅkhya writer who flourished before Kumārila and held some striking views. He is referred to by Umveka

rian Bhartṛhari, who was the author of the Vākyapadiya, cannot be identified with the author of the Satakatrayi. Regarding the question of the Satakatrayi being an anthology, Kosambi suggests, on the basis of a text-critical study of the work, that though the work could not originally have been a Satakatrayi, there is some sort of a common source for all the extant MSS., so that at best one can say that the anthology is of stanzas ascribed to Bhartṛhari, though the compendium was probably made long after the author's death. He further points out that a certain type of stanzas had been associated with the name of Bhartṛhari from the earliest times (not later than the 3rd century A.D.), and these attracted others by similitude which rounded out the work. In that case, the nucleus of the Satakatrayi may be said to belong to a period immediately preceding the Gupta period. The Satakatrayi as such, however, may have been a product of the Gupta period.

54 HASI, 488.
55 Kamalāśīta's Pañjikā on Sāntarakṣita's Tatvasaṃgraha, 22.
in his commentary on Kumārila’s *Slokavārttika* as holding that sacrifices were *adharma* as they involved *hiṅsā*. A later writer Karnakagomin condemned Mādhava as Sāṁkhya-nāśaka. Mādhava seems to have been earlier than Diṅnāga. The polyhistor Vāchaspati Miśra (A.D. 841) wrote his erudite *Sāṁkhya-tattva-Kaumudi* on Iśvarakṛṣṇa’s *Kārikās*; he mentions another Sāṁkhya text of the period, the *Rājavārttika*.

As an allied system, Yoga shared the same fate as Sāṁkhya. Its practical discipline was adopted by all schools, orthodox as well as heterodox, but it had little influence on the metaphysical side. The *bhāṣya* on the *sūtras* of Patañjali attributed to Vyāsa may belong to this period as it refutes the Vijñānavāda of Buddhists at some length. Vāchaspati contributed to this system also his scholarly gloss *Tattva-viśāradā* in which he traces many of the citations in the Bhāṣya to Pañchaśikha.

The realistic and pluralistic philosophers of the Nyāya and Vaiśeshika schools, adherents of Śaiva sects by religion, bore the brunt of the fight with Buddhism in this age, and were designated by their adversaries as Pāṣupatas, Śaivas and Yaugas. Brahminical and Buddhist scholars, and later the Jainas as well, jointly built up the edifice of Indian logic as concomitant of their endless debates. Buddhist logic from Vasubandhu onwards is now seen to be derived from Praśastapāda whose exposition of the Vaiśeshika in the *Padārtha-dharma-saṃgraha* was so important as to supersede the *bhāṣya* of the school and take its place. As Vasubandhu refutes Praśastapāda in his *Buddha-gotra-śāstra*, we must hold that Diṅnāga borrowed from the Vaiśeshika writer in his *Pramāṇa-saṃuchchaya*. In Nyāya, the *bhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana on Gautama’s *sūtras* presupposes previous commentaries. Opinion is divided on the chronology of Praśastapāda and Vātsyāyana; Bodas puts them in the order just given while Keith and Randle reverse it on the ground that Vātsyāyana’s logic is less evolved than that of Praśastapāda. As Vasubandhu (c. A.D. 350) criticizes the *Nyāya-sūtras* and Vātsyāyana does not reply to him, we have to place Vātsyāyana about A.D. 300. He criticizes the Buddhist tenets of momentariness and idealism and the views of Nāgārjuna in particular. Vātsyāyana was criticized by Vasubandhu’s pupil Diṅnāga.

A Vaiśeshika work preserved in Chinese is the *Daśapadārtha-śāstra*

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57 Madras edn., p. 112, vv. 249-52.  
58 This and not Sāṁkhya-nāyaka as it appears in Uṅveka’s printed text is the correct form of the attribute, see Karṇākagomin on *Pramāṇa-Vārttika* of Dharma-kirti, *BORS.*, edn., 595.  
59 See next page.
of Chandra-mati or Mati-chandra based on Praśastapāda; this work was composed about the middle of the sixth century, was translated into Chinese by Huan Tsang in 648, and evoked no fewer than ten Japanese commentaries. It does not deal with God or means of deliverance, and adds four categories to the six of old Vaiśeshika—śakti and aśakti, sāmānya-viśesha and abhava.

7. Technical and Scientific Literature

(a) Grammar and Lexicography: The science of language has had a tremendous fascination for Indians ever since early times. Monumental works on grammar, of a very fundamental character, like those of Pāṇini and Patañjali, had already been produced. Further work in this field had, therefore, necessarily to be in the direction of abridgement, simplification, and elucidation. Among the grammatical works produced in the age of the Guptas, the earliest, perhaps, is the Kātantra of Sarva-varman. This elementary grammar which is certainly a more simplified text-book than Pāṇini's work, seems to have been written on the eve of the foundation of the Gupta Empire. Though Sarva-varman is not altogether independent of Pāṇini, he claims to have inaugurated, through his work, a new system of grammar. In the field of linguistics, as in several other fields, the name of Vararuchi is definitely one to conjure with. He is reputed to have been the author of the Vārttika on Pāṇini's Śūtras, of the Prākritaprakāśa, which is a work on Prakrit grammar, of the Vararuchisaṅgraha, which is a collection of twenty-five kārikās briefly dealing with the formation of words, compounds, verbs, etc., and of the Lingaviśeshavidhi, which is a work partly lexicographical and partly grammatical in character. According to a popular literary tradition, Vararuchi was one of the nine jewels which adorned the court of Vikramāditya. The historicity of this tradition is, however, highly questionable. It has to be confessed that, in the history of Sanskrit literature, Vararuchi's personality has unfortunately remained, till now, an unsolved mystery.

The Buddhists and Jainas tried to simplify the Pāninian system in different ways. One of the earliest efforts in this direction was the Chandravijākarana, by Chandragomin, which had been very popular in the Buddhist provinces, like Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet, and which had even reached Ceylon. According to the evidence from the Chinese sources, produced by Peri, Chandragomin must be supposed to have lived at the beginning or in the first half of the seventh century A.D. The facts that his grammar was used by the Kāśikā and that he was complimented by Bhartrihari (circa, A.D. 600-50) as having been the true reviver of the study of the Mahābhāṣya, would, however, indicate that Chandragomin must have lived in the last decades of the
sixth century A.D. Though essentially dependent on Pāṇini and Patañjali, Chandragomin has made some original contributions to Sanskrit grammar, and has introduced, in his grammar, his own terminology, which is distinct from that of Pāṇini. Liebich has proved that Chandragomin himself wrote the Chandravṛtti, which is a commentary on his own Vyākaranasūtras.

The name of Bhartrihari has already been mentioned in another context. According to I-tsing he lived in the first half of the seventh century A.D. but his true date may go back to the fifth century. He is reputed to have written a commentary on the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali, only a few fragments of which are now available. His other work, the Vākyapadīya, which is available in its entirety, is divided into three books, and is therefore also known as the Trikāndī. The first book deals with the philosophy of language in general, the second with ‘sentence’ and the third with ‘word’. To about the same time belongs also the Kāśikā-vṛtti of Jayāditya and Vāmana. According to I-tsing, Jayāditya died not later than A.D. 661-62. The Chinese pilgrim reports that students, in those days, commenced their study of this excellent commentary on Pāṇini’s sūtras at the age of fifteen, and had to continue it for a period of five years in order to be able to secure a thorough grasp of the subject. He further reports that the Chinese pilgrims who desired to make a trip to India made their first acquaintance with Sanskrit through the Kāśikā. The Lingānuśāsana of Harshadeva, which is a grammatical-cum-lexicographical work, is also generally ascribed to the middle of the seventh century A.D.

The most famous lexicographical work in Sanskrit is the Nāmaṅganaṃ spenta of Amarasiṃha—better known as the Amarakośa. What Pāṇini’s sūtras are to grammatical literature, the Amarakośa is to lexicographical literature. Amarasiṃha was a Mahāyāna Buddhist, but his kosā is in no special way influenced by his religious proclivity. According to the well-known—but historically unreliable—literary tradition, Amarasiṃha was one of the nine jewels of Vikramāditya’s court. Bhandarkar has suggested that, since Amarasiṃha was a Mahāyāna Buddhist, he cannot be placed later than the sixth century A.D. Whatever might have been the exact date of this famous lexicographer, there is no doubt that the Amarakośa is the oldest among the extant Sanskrit lexicons. It is a lexicon of synonyms, and is divided into three books—each book containing synonyms relating to certain specific categories. A similar method of division and arrangement is followed also in later dictionaries of synonyms.

60 Most probably Jayāditya is the author of the first five books of the Kāśikā, while Vāmana, who cannot be identified with the rhetorician Vāmana, wrote the last three.
61 R. G. Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism ... etc., 45.
(b) Mathematics: In ancient India, mathematics and astronomy originated and developed primarily as auxiliaries of the Vedic ritual. From the times of the Vedāṅga-Jyotisha and the Kalpasūtras up to the enlightened age of the Guptas, there has been practically a gap in mathematical and astronomical literature. The Bakshali manuscript and the Puranic portions dealing with these branches of learning would, however, seem to indicate that the tradition of the knowledge and practice of these sciences had not been seriously interrupted during the intervening period. Varāhamihira, who wrote in the middle of the sixth century A.D., has utilized, in his Pañchasiddhāntikā, five earlier important astronomical texts, and has mentioned the names of a number of his predecessors, presumably ranging between the second century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. This fact also confirms the assumption regarding the continuity of this study. In ancient India, mathematics has always been treated as a handmaid to astronomy. But Āryabhaṭa was the first writer to deal with it more or less as an independent science. As a matter of fact, that scholar must be said to have been the real pioneer of the revival of mathematical science in India. According to his own testimony, Āryabhaṭa wrote his work, the Āryabhaṭīya in Kusumapura (that is, Pāṭaliputra) in the year 3600 of the Kaliyuga, when he himself was 23 years old. This means that he was born in 476 and wrote in 499. The Āryabhaṭīya is divided into four parts, out of which the last three are sometimes erroneously regarded as forming an independent work under the name Āryasūstasa. The first part, called the Daśagnikāsūtra, which, as a matter of fact, consists of 13 stanzas in the āryā metre, describes the numerical notation, which is special to Āryabhaṭa. He had invented an alphabetic system of notation, which he has used for enumerating the numerical data of his descriptive astronomy. When later on, the idea of place-value was developed, the denominations (number-names) were used to denote the places which unity would occupy in order to represent them in writing a number on the decimal scale. According

62 This manuscript was discovered in 1880 near Bakshali in the Mardan tehsil, Peshawar district. It is written in the Sāradā script on leaves of birch bark and consists of 70 leaves. L. V. Gujjar (Ancient Indian Mathematics and Vedha, Bombay, 1947) suggests that the present manuscript is clearly a copy of some old manuscript, the text in which must have been composed between the 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D. The copy now available seems to have been made in about 8th century A.D.

63 There are two Āryabhataś well-known in the field of mathematics and astronomy. We are here concerned with Āryabhaṭa who wrote the Āryabhaṭīya, and who may be conveniently called Āryabhaṭa I. Āryabhaṭa II, who lived at a later date, wrote the Ārya-Siddhānta.

64 The rule is given in the Daśagnikāsūtra as follows: vargākṣaṇī vargē vargē vargākṣaṇī kāṭ nilosure yah khadrimacake suvarā nava vargē vargē navancetyavargā ca.
to Āryabhaṭa the denominations are the names of “places”. He says Eka, daśa, śata, sahasra, ayuta, niyuta, prayuta, koṭi, arbuda, and vrinda are respectively from place to place, each ten times the preceding.\textsuperscript{65} This must indeed be regarded as an outstanding landmark in the development of Indian mathematics. The second part of the Āryabhaṭīya, called the Gaṇita-pāda, consists of 33 stanzas, and is the only part which really represents Āryabhaṭa’s contribution to mathematical science. The third part Kālakrīyā (25 stanzas) contains calculations relating to time, and the last, called the Golapāda, deals, in 50 stanzas, with spherics. The Gaṇita-pāda in the Āryabhaṭīya is a monument of compactness as well as elegance of composition. Āryabhaṭa has given all his results in the form of finished formulas. As regards geometry, Āryabhaṭa considers, among other topics, the area of a triangle, the theorem on similarity of triangles, the area of a circle, and the theorem relating to rectangles contained by the segments of chords of a circle. The value of π given by him is correct to four places of decimals (3.1416). In algebra and arithmetic, he has given the rule of three, which is a definite improvement over the Bakhshali rule, and a rule for solving examples concerning interest. He has also enunciated the method of inversion and has stated a formula giving the sum of an arithmetical progression and its middle term, a formula for the solution of simple indeterminate equations, a formula giving the value of the number of terms when the sum of the series, the first term and the common difference are given, and a formula for the sum of the squares and the cubes of natural numbers.\textsuperscript{66}

(c) Astronomy: As in mathematics, so too in astronomy, Āryabhaṭa was an outstanding figure of the Gupta Age. Through his work, he has presented, in a compact form, the astronomical system which had already been developed in the Siddhāntas. Though he has evidently made an attempt to improve certain features of the Siddhāntas, he cannot, on the whole, be credited with having made any significant advance over the Sūrya-Siddhānta. His most original contribution, however, is his definite assertion that the earth rotates round its axis. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that two of his immediate successors, Varāhamihira and Brahma-gupta, have stoutly opposed this assertion. As for Āryabhaṭa’s other achievements in the field of astronomy, it may be mentioned that he was the first to utilize sine functions in astronomy; that he discovered an accurate formula to measure the increase or decrease in the duration of two consecutive days; that he enunciated his own epicyclic theory to explain the variations in planetary motions; that he stated accurately the angular diameter of


\textsuperscript{66} Cf. Gurjar, op. cit., 79-90; cf., 91-99.
the earth's shadow at the moon's orbit, and gave a method of finding the duration of an eclipse; and that he made a more correct calculation, than before, of the length of a year.

One of the most significant features of the astronomical works produced in the so-called scientific period is the obvious acquaintance of their writers with Greek astronomy. This fact becomes all the more clear from the work of Varāhamihira, who was another outstanding astronomer in the age of the Guptas. The time calculations in Varāhamihira's Pañchasiddhāntikā begin from A.D. 505. There has been a frequently mentioned tradition that Varāhamihira died in A.D. 587. It is, therefore, assumed by Kern that A.D. 505 was the date of Varāhamihira's birth. The tradition about the date of Varāhamihira's death is, however, not reliable. Moreover, the Pañchasiddhāntikā is a work of the nature of a Karana, and, usually, the time-calculation in a Karana-grantha are made from the date in which it is written. It is, therefore, more likely that A.D. 505 was the year in which Varāhamihira wrote his Pañchasiddhāntikā. It is needless to add that the other literary tradition, namely, that Varāhamihira was one of the nine jewels in the court of Vikramaditya is nothing better than a fiction. In the Pañchasiddhāntikā, Varāhamihira reproduces, in the Karana-form, the astronomical teachings of the five Siddhāntas, which were considered in his time the most authoritative works on astronomy. These five Siddhāntas are, in their probable chronological order, the Paitāmaha-Siddhānta, the Vāsishṭha-Siddhānta, the Paulīśa-Siddhānta, the Romaku-Siddhānta and the Sūrya-Siddhānta. Out of these, the Paitāmaha evidently belongs to the pre-scientific period, while the remaining four belong to the early Gupta period. The Vāsishṭha (circa A.D. 300) shows a definite advance in its knowledge about the movements of the heavenly bodies. It also introduces rāśis in the place of nakshatras, and the conception of lagna. The name of the Paulīśa-Siddhānta (circa A.D. 380) which enunciates a rule for calculating lunar and solar eclipses, and which also gives a table of sines and two trigonometrical rules, would remind one of Paulus Alexandrinus. But, since the latter is known to be the author only of an astrological hand-book, Thibaut is of the opinion that there cannot have been any connection between him and the Paulīśa-Siddhānta. Both in name and contents, the Romaku-Siddhānta (circa A.D. 400) clearly betrays Western influence. This may have been possible on account of the active contact between the Roman empire and the Gupta empire.

67 Kern, Brihatsarnhitā, Preface, 2 ff.
68 There are four kinds of scientific astronomical works: (1) Siddhāntas, (2) Karanas, (3) astronomical tables, and (4) commentaries.
69 G. Thibaut, Astronomie, Astrologie und Mathematik (Grundriss, II, 9), Strassburg, 1899.
The Sūrya-Siddhānta (circa A.D. 400) represents the standard type of Siddhānta work. It is also the most important and complete astronomical work of the period, and consists of fourteen chapters in verse. Alberuni mentions Lāṭa as its author. According to its opening stanzas, however, Sūrya revealed this Siddhānta to Asura Maya in the city of Romaka. Herein we may see the evidence of Greek astronomy having served as the basis of the Sūrya-Siddhānta. At the same time, the peculiarly Indian character of its teachings is indicated by its acceptance of the idea of kalpa and mahāyuga, and of the mount Meru lying at the North pole. It is difficult to determine accurately, on the basis of the available evidence, the authorship, the dates, and the nature of the original texts of these Siddhāntas. Great credit is, therefore, certainly due to Varāhamihira for having preserved their essential teachings in his Pañchastiddhāntikā.

(d) Astrology: In India, astronomy and astrology normally go hand in hand. Ever since very ancient times, astrologers have played not an insignificant part in the various departments of individual and communal life of the Indian people. It would not, therefore, be too much to presume that works on astrology must have been produced in India since very early times. Unfortunately, most of the older literature on the subject is now lost to us. However, whatever information we possess regarding the early astrological texts, their authors, and their contents, we owe it all, again, to Varāhamihira. As in astronomy, so too in astrology, Varāhamihira has, in his encyclopaedic work, preserved quite a considerable amount of the ancient knowledge on the subject. His Brihatsaṃhitā, besides being the most important text-book on natural astrology, is a veritable compendium of ancient Indian learning and sciences. Varāhamihira refers to many predecessors and their writings; but only one astrological work belonging to the earlier times, namely, the Vṛiddha-Garga-Saṃhitā, is available to us.70 Jyotiḥśāstra, according to Varāhamihira, comprises three branches; the Tantra or astronomico-mathematical branch; the Horā, which concerns itself with horoscope, and the third, which deals with natural astrology.71 The last is perhaps the most important, for Varāhamihira glorifies an astrologer in the following flattering term: ‘Like night without lamp and sky without the Sun, is a king without an astrologer. Just like a blind man he

70 Though the Vṛiddha-Garga-Saṃhitā does not belong to the Gupta period, one stanza from it may be here referred to with advantage, since it throws considerable light on the question of Greek influence on Indian astronomy and astrology. The purport of the stanza is: The Greeks are indeed barbarians; but their knowledge about heavenly bodies is very well-grounded. They therefore deserve to be respected like our own ancient seers.

71 Brihatsaṃhitā, I, 5.
flounders on his way. 72 Among Varāhamihira's other astrological
works may be mentioned the Brīhadvivāhapatāla and the Svaṭpapicāvāhapatāla, which principally deal with the favourable muhūrtas
for marriage; the Yogayātā, which describes the auspicious portents
for the expeditions of kings; and the Brīhajjātaka and the Laghujā-
taka, which concern themselves with the time of man's birth and its
influence on his future. 73 Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the
writings of Varāhamihira, which include more or less basic texts on
astronomy, astrology, and several other technical sciences, are no
less remarkable as poetic compositions. Varāhamihira's son, Prithu-
yasās, also was an ardent student of astrology, and wrote, in about
A.D. 600, a work called Horāshaṭpañchāśikā.

(e) Medicine: The earliest more or less definitely datable Indian
work on medicine belongs to the early Gupta period. In 1890, Lt. H.
Bower discovered, in a Buddhist stūpa in Kashgar, a group of ancient
texts (now popularly known as the Bower manuscript), three out of
seven from among which deal with medicine. 74 It has been shown,
on palaeographical grounds, that the Bower manuscript belongs to
the second half of the fourth century A.D. Though, on account of the
fact that the available tracts are obviously not complete, it is not
possible to determine the name of their author (or authors), it seems
almost certain, from the place of their find, that he was a Buddhist. 75
One of the three medical tracts concerns itself with the study of
garlic, the use of which is said to cure various illnesses, and to assure
a life of 100 years. It also deals with topics like digestion and eye-
diseases and their cure, and gives a prescription for an elixir to
secure a 1,000 years of life. Another tract contains formulas for the
preparation of fourteen kinds of specific for external and internal
application. The most important tract, however, is the second, which
is called the Nāvanītaka or the cream of the earlier texts on the sub-
ject. In sixteen sections, the Nāvanītaka deals, among other things,
with different kinds of powders, decoctions, oils, and elixirs, while

72 Ibid., II, p. 9.
73 This 'science' is probably of Babylonian origin, and is adopted from the Greeks
by other people. Jacobi believes that the Indians borrowed it about the middle of
the 4th century A.D. Against this, however, there is the evidence of presumably earlier
Indian works on the subject.
74 A. F. Hocnle, The Bower Manuscript Facsimile leaves, Calcutta, 1893-1912
(ASI—Vol. XXII). Texts 1 to 33 are medical; 4 and 5, called the Pāśakakevali, deal
with abomancy; 6 and 7, called the Mahā-mañīrī-cīḍgū-ṛja, contain charms against
snake-bite.
75 Apart from the Atharvaveda hymns and allied literature, the ancient Buddhist
literature also contains several indications regarding the antiquity of medicafl science
and practice in India.
a considerable portion of the tract is devoted to children's diseases. These medical tracts, which are metrical and often employ the metrēs familiar to Sanskrit kāvyā, are written in popular Sanskrit, not seldom overladen with Prakritisms. The Nācanūtaka mentions several earlier authorities like Aṅkiseśa, Bheda, Hārita, Jatukkarna, Ksharapāṇi and Parāśara—all of them being pupils of Pūnarvasu Ātreya. The only familiar name of a medical authority referred to in it is that of Śuśruta.

(f) Chemistry, Metallurgy, Physics: Another science, which must have developed along with medicine is chemistry. Without adequate knowledge of chemistry, any advance in medical science would have been almost impossible. Unfortunately, no work on chemistry, belonging to the Gupta period, has come down to us. Nāgārjuna, the great Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher, is reputed to have distinguished himself also in chemistry. As a matter of fact, he is believed to have been the real father of 'scientific' chemistry. It is, therefore, possible to assume that Nāgārjuna had founded an independent school of chemistry, perhaps with its centre at Nāgārjunikōṇḍa, and that his pupils continued to develop that science through that agency. Though we have no literary evidence to support this assumption, we do have the evidence of the actual application of that science. Besides medicine, chemistry must have substantially helped the development of metallurgy. Suffice it to point out, in this connection, that the Meharauli Iron Pillar will, for ever, remain a living monument to the progress in metallurgy achieved in the age of the Guptas. According to Dr. Murray Thomson, the Meharauli Iron Pillar, which is 23 feet and 8 inches in height and 16.4 inches in diameter at the base, and 12.5 inches in diameter at the top, is made of pure malleable iron of 7.66 specific gravity. Apart from its importance to the historian of ancient India, on account of the absence of rust on it, in spite of exposure to the open air for over 1,500 years, this iron pillar has become an object of research by such eminent metallurgists as Sir Robert Hadfield. It has been rightly said that, till very recent years, the production of such a pillar would have been an impossibility even in the largest foundries of the world. A reference must be made, in this connection, also to the colossal copper statue of the Buddha, found at Sultanganj, near Bhagalpur, which is about 7½ feet in height and nearly one ton in weight.

The art of the Gupta Age will be discussed in Chapter XXXI. The arts of sculpture and painting reached the highest degree of development during this age.