CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

SECTION I

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS IN INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

"Geography and chronology", it has been said, "are the sun and the moon, the right eye and the left eye of all history". The evolution of Indian history and culture cannot be rightly understood without a proper appreciation of the geographical factors involved.

BOUNDARIES, GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL

Geographically, India is bounded on the north, north-west, and north-east by mountain ranges, and elsewhere by the sea. Neither Burma nor Ceylon is geographically a part of India, although the latter is ‘geologically a fragment detached from the peninsula in relatively recent times’.

The historical boundaries of the country have not, however, always coincided with the geographical boundaries. Afghanistan and Baluchistan, which are, geographically, portions of the great Iranian plateau, have for many centuries been closely associated with India from the historical and political points of view. The Maurya Emperors ruled over some portions of these two countries. The Bactrian Greeks, the Parthians, the Sakas and the Kushans united some portions of north-western India with several districts of Afghanistan. Under Sultan Mahmud, Muhammad Ghuri and the Mughals, India again came into close political relations with Afghanistan. Under the Mughals Afghanistan was a part of the Indian Empire. Under Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors the Punjab, Sind and Kashmir became political dependencies of Afghanistan. Even now certain portions of Baluchistan which lie beyond the proper geographical limits of India and form an integral part of the Iranian plateau are controlled by the Government of Pakistan.
Turning to the north-east, we find almost inaccessible ranges of hills separating Burma from Assam and Bengal. Burma, indebted in many ways to Indian culture, remained outside the political jurisdiction of Indian Powers till the termination of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1826), when the Burmese territories annexed by the East India Company came under the control of the Government of Bengal. Burma remained an Indian province till 1937. This long political association makes it necessary for the historian of modern India to include the story of Burma in his narrative.

The islands in the neighbouring seas—the Andaman and Nicobar islands, Ceylon, the Laccadives and the Maldives—have on different occasions come within the administrative control of different Indian Powers. The Chola Kings of Southern India established their authority in some of these islands. Ceylon was ruled by an adventurous Indian coloniser named Bijay Singh, whom tradition represents as a native of Bengal. The British Government established its control over Ceylon and the Andaman and Nicobar islands after the foundation of the British Empire in India. The Andaman and Nicobar islands still form a part of India, but Ceylon never had any administrative connection with India.

NAVAL TRADITIONS

India has a very long coast line, extending over more than 3,000 miles; yet the number of natural harbours on the Indian coast is small, for the coast-line is comparatively straight and, consequently, unfavourable to the growth of convenient harbours. The Indian people never earned the reputation of being a maritime nation; it is, on the whole, true to say that their attention was always attracted towards the north-west and the north-east—to Western Asia, Persia, Central Asia, China and Tibet—rather than to the lands beyond the seas. But it would be a mistake to think that the mystery of the sea never allured the Indian mind. The Dravidians of the prehistoric times navigated the seas in pursuit of trade and commerce. The evidence about the maritime activities of the Aryans is not quite clear, but the well-known work entitled Periplus of the Erythrean Sea gives a detailed account of the maritime trade of India in the first century A.D. and refers to numerous Indian
ports. Commercial enterprise and the spirit of adventure led
thousands of Indians across the eastern seas to Burma, Malay
Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and the neighbouring islands.
Tamralipti (modern Tamluk, Midnapore district in West Bengal)
was a flourishing port, where the famous Chinese traveller
Fa-hien embarked on his return journey to China. The Cholas
extended their authority to many ‘ancient islands in the sea’.
In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Marathas built
up a respectable naval power. The Muslim rulers of India,
some of whom were very powerful on land, never cared for the
sea. Vincent Smith observes that the neglect of the sea power
was one of the causes responsible for the downfall of the
Mughal Empire.

Towards the beginning of the sixteenth century the
Portuguese established their supremacy in the Indian Ocean.
Albuquerque consolidated this supremacy by establishing
fortresses and bases at strategic points and also by concluding
alliances with rulers of coastal areas of strategic importance.
Although unable to challenge the Portuguese naval power, the
Dutch occupied Java, Malacca, Colombo and Cochin in the
seventeenth century. They were followed by the English and
the French, whose rivalry in the eighteenth century was finally
decided in favour of the former by their naval superiority.
After Suffren's failure to establish French supremacy in the
Indian Ocean (1782-84) British authority in the Indian seas was
never again questioned till the fall of Singapore during the
Second World War. For more than a century and a half the
Indian Ocean remained a British lake.

The area described as South-East Asia has been for long
known as Further India. The name reflects the idea that
India and South-East Asia have reacted on each other. From
the first century A.D. to the middle of the fifteenth century
this area was politically and culturally within the Indian sphere.
Sea power based on India united the mainland with island
India.

In the sixteenth century the Portuguese established a
political system in South-East Asia which was essentially based
on India. Though the Dutch who followed them established
their headquarters in South-East Asia in Batavia, it was Ceylon
which controlled their strategy of naval power. The Dutch
later held the Indies under the protection of the British navy. History thus indicates that the naval defence of South-East Asia has always been related to India.

CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

When we speak of the natural boundaries of India—the mountains and the seas separating her from the rest of the world—we are tempted to exaggerate her isolation. But Indian civilisation cannot be regarded as a plant growing in the shade, far away from the tempests of the outside world. Although 'the protective wall of the Himalayas' may be said to have 'given to India the continuity of its civilisation and social structure from the earliest times to our own times', yet the imposing mountain ranges on the north, north-west and north-east could never keep India immune from the political and cultural influence of other countries. In the north-west there are well-known passes (Khaibar, Gomal and Bolan) which, in spite of many natural obstacles, provided passage to the successive invaders of India, from the Aryans to Ahmad Shah Abdali. In the north there are roads from Tibet to Nepal that have carried for ages not merely peaceful missionaries of culture and religion, but soldiers as well. In the north-east there are considerable gaps in the chain of mountains separating Assam from Burma, through which the Tibeto-Burmans, the Ahoms and the Burmese entered into Assam. "The natural frontiers of India thus gave security, but not immunity, from invasion, and while they ensured definite individuality to her people by separating them from the rest of Asia by well-marked boundary lines, they never isolated them from the rest of the world.'

GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS WITHIN INDIA

India is divided into three so-called 'territorial compartments': (1) the Indo-Gangetic plain; (2) the Deccan plateau, lying to the south of the Vindhya, and to the north of the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers; and (3) the Far South. The Indo-Gangetic plain is, historically, the most important part of India, for it has always been 'the seat of the principal empires and the scene of the events most interesting to the outer world'. This feature of Indian history can be easily explained with reference to clearly noticeable geographical factors. The vast
plain of Northern India is divided into two unequal portions by the desert of Rajputana and the Aravalli mountains. The plain on the west of the desert is watered by the Indus, and that on the east by the Ganges and its tributaries. These rivers fertilised the soil and provided easy means of communication. Naturally the Indo-Gangetic plain became the seat of a flourishing, and ever-growing, population. Secondly, except in the case of the British, Indian history has always been dominated by invaders who came from the north-west. These invaders naturally followed the Ganges, and extended their power to the whole of Northern India, before they crossed the Vindhyas and appeared in the Deccan plateau. The history of the Aryan and the Muslim invasions illustrates this point. Delhi stands at the mouth of the Gangetic plain, and all invaders from the north-west had to pass through Delhi or its neighbourhood in order to gain entrance into the heart of Northern India. That is why five decisive battles of Indian history—two battles of Tarain and three battles of Panipat—took place in the neighbourhood of Delhi.

The two 'territorial compartments' lying to the south of the Vindhyas are somewhat isolated due to their geographical position. The Vindhyas cut them off from Northern India, but many centuries ago the Aryan invaders of India proved that this high and extensive range of hills was no insurmountable barrier. The political and cultural contact begun by them became more and more intimate with the progress of time, and for historical purposes Dakshināpatha is as much an integral part of India as Aryavarta. But for certain obvious reasons the historian of India is concerned primarily with the North; he can give only a subordinate place to the story of the Deccan plateau and the Far South. In the first place, the early history of trans-Vindhyan India is primarily the history of the Dravidians, but unfortunately we are not yet in possession of adequate materials to do full justice to this subject. Secondly, as Smith points out, "No southern power ever could attempt to master the north, but the more ambitious rulers of Aryavarta or Hindostan often have extended their sway far beyond the dividing line of the Narbada". The historian of India must concentrate his attention upon large States and Empires, seeking to give some sort of unity to the complicated story of the vast
country he has to deal with; naturally he is able to give only a secondary place to kingdoms which never attained more than local importance.

The Deccan plateau is sub-divided into three distinct regions by the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats. The Coromandel coast stands between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal; the Konkan and Malabar lie between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Between the two mountain ranges, on the east and the west, lies the main plateau of the Deccan. Historically, however, these three well-marked geographical divisions are not of much importance, for the mountains never stood in the way of political unity or cultural contact. The Marathas live on both sides of the Western Ghats, but they speak the same language and observe the same social customs. The Konkan often came under the political control of the Power which ruled Maharashtra proper.

The Far South, or the territory lying beyond the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, is not cut off from the Deccan plateau by any prominent natural boundaries, but it had a historical individuality which was affected only at very important occasions by the political fortunes of the trans-Krishna region. It was in the Far South that the cultural accomplishments and political genius of the Dravidians found a true home, where they could develop naturally, without being hampered by the triumphant North. No Hindu Empire-builder of the North ever succeeded in bringing the whole of the Far South under his control.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF RIVERS

The rivers of Northern India played an important part in the evolution of Indian history. It was in the valley of the Indus that the earliest civilisation known to Indian history—the civilisation of Mahenjodaro and Harappa—flourished. The rivers of the Punjab as well as the Ganges determined the nature and course of Aryan colonisation in India. Smith says, "The success of the English (against the French in building up an Empire in India) was dependent on their acquisition of rich Bengal and their command of the Gangetic waterway. In a later stage of the British advance the conquest of the Punjab was conditioned by the control of the Indus navigation,"
previously secured by the rather unscrupulous proceedings of Lords Auckland and Ellenborough”. The peculiar geographical features of the South Indian rivers do not offer similar facilities for penetration into the interior. Historically those rivers served merely as convenient political boundaries.

In connection with the Indian rivers and their historical influence, it is necessary to remember that many of them changed their courses in the past, and some are changing their courses even at present. When they are in full flood, they easily cut and carve the soft alluvial plains. Smith says, “Old beds of the Sutlej can be traced across a space eighty-five mile wide. . . . Who can tell where the Indus flowed in the days of Alexander the Great? . . . The rivers of the (Vedic) Rishis were not the rivers of to-day. . . . Ever since the early Muhammadan invasions the changes in the rivers have been enormous, and the contemporary histories of the foreign conquerors cannot be understood unless the reality and extent of those changes can be borne constantly in mind”. Naturally the changes in the courses of the rivers affected the position of the cities built on their banks. Pataliputra originally stood at the confluence of the Ganges and the Son, but at present its site is about twelve miles below the confluence. Had Pataliputra remained in existence to this day, it would have lost its strategic importance due simply to a change in the course of the Son. A city built on the bank of a river may be altogether ruined by a change in its course. Speaking of the Hakra, which once flowed through the Punjab towards Rajputana, Smith observes, “Scores of mounds, silent witnesses to the existence of numberless forgotten and often nameless towns, bear testimony to the desolation wrought when the waters of life desert their channels”.

Similar results may be brought about by changes in the coast-line and the level of the land. The ancient port of Tamluk is now far away from the sea. The famous commercial city of Kayal on the Tinnevelly coast is now miles from the sea and buried under sand dunes. In some cases the sea, instead of receding, has advanced. “The careful investigator of ancient history needs to be continually on his guard against the insidious deceptions of the modern map.”
MINGLING OF RACES

From time immemorial India has been receiving colonisers belonging to different races. Nothing definite can be said about the racial origin of the neolithic and paleolithic men who inhabited this country in the remote past, nor are we certain about the racial affinity of the Dravidians whose blood still flows in the veins of a large mass of Indian population. The tall and fair Aryans then came to India, and although at first they kept themselves sharply separated from the non-Aryan dark-skinned early inhabitants of the country, there is no doubt that a considerable intermixture of blood took place later on. No definite information is available about any influx of foreigners which may have taken place during many centuries after the Aryan immigration, but it is permissible to suppose that the north-western gates were not altogether closed. Nor do we know anything definite and detailed about the immigrations which certainly took place into the Brahmaputra valley through the north-eastern passes, till the Ahom invasion in the thirteenth century diverts our attention to that neglected corner of India.

In historical times the Greeks, who accompanied and followed Alexander the Great, were the first well-known foreign settlers in north-western India. Then came the Sakas, who ruled in north-western and western India for a considerable period and eventually merged themselves in the Indian population. "The term Saka was used by the Indians in a vague way to denote all foreigners from the other side of the passes, without nice distinction of race or tribe. It may have included both ugly, narrow-eyed Mongols, and handsome races like the Turks, who resemble the Aryans in physique". After the Sakas came the Kushans, a branch of the great Yueli-chi race, who were probably fair-complexioned and akin to the Iranians. During the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. north-western and central India was almost overwhelmed by the Huns, who must have introduced a large amount of foreign blood into the Indian population. In ancient Indian literature and epigraphy the term 'Huna' was sometimes used, like the term 'Saka', to cover
a mass of various tribes who swooped down on the declining Gupta Empire. Of these tribes the Gurjaras deserve special mention. Many modern scholars hold the view that some of the Rajput clans, as well as the Jats, Gujar and allied castes, are descended either from the Huns or from allied tribes which arrived simultaneously in this country.

From the seventh century onwards India became the hunting ground of Muslim travellers and invaders, most of whom eventually settled here. They belonged to various Asiatic races—Arabs, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Mongols; occasionally they included Africans, specially Abyssinians. The extensive settlement of the Muslims in India began in the eleventh century, when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni annexed the Punjab, for India proper had remained substantially unaffected by the Arab conquest of, and settlement in, Sind.

Lastly, the coming of the European merchants has created a considerable population of mixed Indo-European blood, derived from unions of Portuguese, English, and other Europeans with Indian women of various tribes and castes.

SEVEN RACIAL GROUPS

These facts substantially justify Smith’s conclusion: “The modern population of India almost everywhere is far too mixed to admit of the disentangling of distinct races, each of a well-marked physical type”. But anthropologists believe that useful inferences may be drawn from anthropometric measurements. According to them the modern population of India may be divided into seven broad racial groups.

(1) The Turko-Indian group, consisting of the population of Baluchistan, North-Western Frontier Province, and those districts of the Punjab which are situated to the west of the Indus. The people are tall and fair, with black eyes and long noses.

(2) The Indo-Aryan group, consisting of the Rajput, Khatri and Jat population of the Punjab, Kashmir and Rajputana. The people are tall and fair, with long heads and raised noses.

(3) The Scythian-Dravidian group, consisting of the population of Sind, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The people are not tall, but they have long heads and flat faces.
(4) The Aryan-Dravidian or Hindustani group, consisting of the population of the eastern districts of the Punjab, the United Provinces and Bihar. The higher castes generally belong to the Aryan type, while Dravidian characteristics are usually clear in the case of the lower castes.

(5) The Mongoloid-Dravidian or Bengal group, consisting of the population of Bengal and Orissa. The people are generally dark-complexioned, with medium height and broad noses.

(6) The Mongoloid group, consisting of the population of the Himalayan terai, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikim, Assam and Burma. The people are yellow-coloured, beardless, of small height, and with flat faces.

(7) The Dravidian group, consisting of the population of a considerable portion of Southern India and Ceylon. The people are dark-complexioned, of small height and with broad noses.

This classification serves very little historical purpose.

SECTION III

FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF INDIA

A LAND OF VARIETIES

India is pre-eminently a land of varieties; she has been aptly described as "the epitome of the world". From the physical point of view, there are varieties of temperature and climate, of moisture and rainfall, of flora and fauna. The temperature varies from the dry and bracing cold of the Himalayas to the humid, tropical heat of the Konkan and Coromandel coast. India offers all the three types of climate—the Arctic or Polar, the Temperate, and the Tropical. As regards rainfall, she offers an equally wide range, from the world's highest record of 480 inches at Chequnji (in Assam) to less than 3 inches per annum in parts of Sind and Rajputana. Of flora and fauna India contains most of the types known to natural science.

Scarcely less interesting than this physical variety is the human variety which India presents through her teeming millions. Smith rightly calls India "an ethnological museum". As we
have seen above, there are in India no less than seven main physical types of races. There are also no less than 14 separate peoples with their own languages. Each of these peoples has its own literature. The languages and dialects used in India exceed 200 in number.

India also presents the largest diversity in the religious aspect. Here are to be found all the world-religious—Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity,—and local religions like Jainism, Sikhism, etc. India is verily a museum of cults and customs, creeds and cultures, faiths and tongues, racial types and social systems.

POLITICAL DISUNITY

This manifold variety, no less than the large extent of the country, accounts for the fact that political unity is not the normal characteristic of ancient and medieval Indian history. In all ages this vast sub-continent was divided into numerous principalities, which were from time to time brought under sujection and integrated into a vast political organisation by powerful individuals and dynasties. When internal weakness, or foreign invasion, or both, broke up such Empires, India relapsed once again into political disunity.

IDEAL OF UNITY

Although the practical union of the whole country is the work of the Mughals and the British, yet, so far as the idea of a pan-Indian Empire is concerned, Indian unity is not the creation of her foreign rulers. That great idea is not a recent growth or discovery; it has a history running back to remote antiquity. The great founders of Indian civilisation were themselves fully conscious of the geographical unity of their vast mother country and sought in various ways to impress it on the popular consciousness.

The first expression given to this feeling of unity was their description of the entire country by the single name of Bhāratavarsha. This term has also a political import, for it was generally associated with the idea of universal monarchy. The conception of a Chakravartī Rājā or suzerain receiving the tribute and allegiance of subordinate Kings in all parts of India—from the Himalayas to the sea—was very familiar to the
ancient Hindus. Thus, the terms *Adhirāja, Rājādhirāja, Samrāt, Ekarāt* etc., and the performance of such sacrifices as the *Rājasuya* and the *Vājapēya*, show that the idea of universal conquest was not unknown to the ancients. Mahapadma Nanda was the first historical Emperor of India, and the tradition established by him was given a practical shape by the Mauryas and the Guptas.

**POLITICAL UNITY**

Later on the Mughals created an imperial system which stamped upon the Indian people ‘oneness of rule and sameness of political experience’. As Sir Jadunath Sarkar observes: ‘Mere autocratic dictation, the mere drawing of the administrative road roller over the rough surface of the people’s heads, cannot grind them into true uniformity; at least such uniformity is not natural and does not last long. Historical unity comes best from the people themselves working the same type of administration and sharing the success and failure of it because it is the product of their own efforts. Such administrative unity was given to most part of India by the Mughal Empire. . . .’ A centralised administrative system, uniformity of laws and customs, a common coinage, one official language (Persian)—these were some of the political bonds which the resourceful Mughals employed for unifying India. To a large extent the British adopted the Mughal system, and, working under more favourable modern conditions, gave India such political unity as she had never known before.

**CULTURAL UNITY**

The most essential aspect of Indian unity is the fact that the diverse peoples of India have developed a peculiar type of culture or civilisation utterly different from any other type in the world. ‘During the two thousand years of Hindu and Buddhistic rule in India, in spite of political disunion and differences of languages and customs, a uniform Sanskrit stamp was printed upon the literature and thought of all the provinces of this vast country. There was throughout India in the Hindu age—as there is among the Hindu population throughout India to-day—a basic unity of religion, philosophy, literary ideas and conventions, and outlook upon life’.
PHYSICAL UNIFORMITY

Sir Jadunath Sarkar points out that, in spite of frequent intermixture of races in India, "there has been achieved some approximation also in physical type and mode of life among the various foreign races that have lived long enough in India, fed on the same crops, drunk of the same streams, basked under the same sun and submitted to the same rule in their daily lives. Even the immigrant Indian Muslims have in the course of centuries received the imprint of this country and now differ in many essential points from their brethren living in other parts of Asia, like Arabia and Persia". Sir Herbert Risley rightly observes, "Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom, and religion, which strikes the observer in India, there can still be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. There is in fact an Indian character, a general Indian personality, which we cannot resolve into its component elements".

FOR FURTHER STUDY

*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. I.
*Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, Chapter I.
Risley, *Peoples of India*.
Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*.
R. K. Mookerjee, *Fundamental Unity of India*.
CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF INDIAN HISTORY

SECTION I

SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

ABSENCE OF HISTORICAL LITERATURE

Al-Biruni, a famous Muslim scholar who came to India in the eleventh century, says, “The Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things; they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of their Kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling”. The following observations of Fleet almost echo Al-Biruni’s words: “It is very questionable whether the ancient Hindus ever possessed the true historical sense, in the shape of the faculty of putting together genuine history on broad and critical lines... they could write short historical compositions, concise and to the point, but limited in extent. But no evidence of the possession by them of the faculty of dealing with history on general lines has survived to us in the shape of any genuine historical work, deliberately written by them as such, and also accurate and reliable.”

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LITERATURE

Scholars interested in ancient Indian history must, therefore, collect their materials from a variety of sources. So far as the earliest period, for which no epigraphic records are available, is concerned, they must depend mainly on religious literature. The Vedic literature supplies valuable information regarding the political, social and economic organisation of the Aryans. The religious works of the Buddhists and the Jains contain important references to historical persons and incidents. Even works on Astronomy (like the Ārgī-Samhitā) and Grammar (like Panini’s Astādhyāyī and Cāntānala’s Māhābhāṣyā) and purely literary compositions (like the brks of
Kalidasa and Bhasa) occasionally provide interesting and useful information. But it is quite obvious that no adequate picture of the past can be drawn from these scattered and casual references in literature.

**HISTORICAL LITERATURE**

In ancient times there was no lack of genuine materials from which histories of the most valuable kind might have been compiled. The preservation of pedigrees is a very old Indian custom. It is well-known that *Vamsāvalīs* (or lists of the lineal successions of Kings) were compiled and preserved from very early times. Many lists of this type were probably incorporated in the ‘Epics’ (the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*) and the *Puranas*. The traditional subject-matter of the Puranas consists of *Sarga* (primary creation), *Pratisarga* (recreation after the periodical dissolution of the world), *Vamsa* (genealogies of gods and *Rishis*), *Mannvantara* (groups of different ages of history), and *Vamsānucharīta* (dynastic history of the old Kings). Although the ‘Epics’ and the Puranas contain information relating to very early times, they received their present shape probably after the birth of Christ; some of the Puranas are undoubtedly later compositions. In the course of their evolution they naturally incorporated materials of little historical value and their chronology became confused. So it would be unsafe to place absolute reliance on the Puranas, although they yield valuable information to the careful and discriminating student of ancient Indian history.

In addition to the *Vamsāvalīs* there were official records as well as dynastic archives and chronicles, which, however, were not properly utilised for the composition of historical works. The *Rājarājanītī* of Kalhana, a dynastic chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, written in the twelfth century, is probably based on official records and older chronicles. Kalhana is fairly correct for his own time, and for the preceding century or so; but critical examination reveals the unreliability of his work so far as earlier periods are concerned. A few other important works are available; they are ‘historical romances’ rather than chronicles. Bana’s *Harshacharita*, Bilhana’s *Vikrājankadevacharita*, Sandhyakāranandi’s *Rāmācharīta*, and Patmagupta’s *Navasāhasānkacharīta* are written in
Sanskrit and aim at being historical chronicles. "But they do not present the plain straightforward language of sober common sense. They imitate the classical poems, with all their elaboration of diction, metaphor, and imagery". Vakpati's \textit{Gaudavāho} and Hemchandra's \textit{Kumārapālacakṛita}, composed in Prakrit, belong to this class of 'historical romances'.

\textbf{FOREIGN WRITINGS}

Students of ancient Indian history must devote serious attention to the accounts of foreign—Greek, Roman, Chinese, Tibetan, Muslim—writers and travellers, whose information about India was based either on hearsay or on actual travel or residence in this country. Herodotus, who never came to India, refers to the Persian conquest of north-western India. Our information regarding Alexander's invasion is derived solely from the accounts left by Greek and Roman writers like Quintus Curtius, Diodorus, Arrian, Plutarch and others. There is absolutely no reference to this important incident in Indian literature and epigraphy. The \textit{Indika} of Megasthenes, which has survived in the form of quotations by later authors, such as Arrian, Strabo, Justin and others, throws valuable light on the political and social institutions of the Maurya period. \textit{Periplus of the Erythraean Sea} by an unknown author and Ptolemy's geography provide information of great historical and geographical interest.

Chinese chronicles are indispensable for the reconstruction of the post-Maurya period of Indian history; without their aid we cannot follow the movements of the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushans. Chinese travellers, like Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang, have left for us valuable accounts of this country. No complete history of Buddhism can be constructed without utilising Chinese and Tibetan historical material. Taranath, a well-known Tibetan historian, furnishes useful information on this subject.

The gradual conquest of Northern India by the Muslims is described in detail in Muslim historical chronicles, and Muslim travellers, like Al-Biruni, help us to reconstruct the history of India as well as the society and religion of the Hindus in the period of decadence. Among the early Muslim
chroniclers Al Biladuri, Sulaiman, Al Masudi, Hasan Nizami and Ibn-ul-Athir deserve special mention.

INSCRIPTIONS\(^1\)

Fleet says, "... it is almost entirely from a patient examination of the inscriptions ... that our knowledge of the ancient political history of India has been derived. But we are also ultimately dependent on the inscriptions in every other line of Indian research. Hardly any definite dates and identifications can be established except from them. And they regulate everything that we can learn from tradition, literature, coins, art, architecture, or any other source".

The materials utilised for recording inscriptions are numerous: iron, gold, silver, brass, bronze, copper, clay, earthenware, bricks, stones, crystals etc. Sometimes inscriptions contain plain statements of events (e.g. the Hathi Gumpa inscription of Kharavela, the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta, etc.). These records illustrate 'how well the ancient Hindus could put together brief historical narratives, concise and to the point, but limited in scope'. Most of the inscriptions are, however, records of religious endowments or of secular donations. Generally they give us valuable genealogical information, and patient scrutiny may extract from them valuable incidental references to political, social, religious and economic conditions. The languages used in inscriptions are almost as numerous as the materials on which they have been inscribed: Sanskrit, Pali, Vedic, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Kanarese, etc. The Pali script (written from left to right) was generally used; but the use of the Kharosti script (written from right to left) was not very infrequent. Some of the Sanskrit inscriptions (e.g., the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta) possess considerable literary value.

Sometimes inscriptions in countries beyond India refer to incidents in the Indian history. For instance, (inscriptions found at Bogha in Asia Minor) probably refer to the movements of the Hellenic tribes before their arrival in India, and thus indirectly help us in the construction of the history of the Vedic period.)

Inscriptions discovered at Persepolis and Naksh-i-Rustam (in

\(^1\) See British Asiatic Society, "History of India," Vol. II, Chap. I.
Iran) contain valuable references to political contact between ancient India and Iran. Epigraphy is the most important source of information regarding the colonial activities of the ancient Hindus in the Far East.

COINS

Coins constitute another important source of information regarding ancient Indian history. They are primarily useful for testing the accuracy of the information supplied by literature, but occasionally they offer facts of independent value. Coins containing dates are of very great assistance in the construction of chronology. Even those coins which do not contain dates sometimes give us names of Princes and indirectly reflect the religious and economic conditions of the time when they were issued. The provenance of the coins of a particular King is often a valuable indication of the extent of his dominions. The history of the Bactrian and Scythian Princes of India has been recovered almost solely from a careful study of numismatic evidence.

MONUMENTS

Monuments hardly possess any value for the students of purely political history, but they constitute one of the most important sources of information regarding the cultural history of ancient India. They illustrate the development of art and religion, for most of them are structures devoted to religion; indirectly they also reflect the economic conditions of the time. The stratification of buildings may sometimes offer us valuable clues to chronological puzzles.

SECTION II

SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY

A student of Indian history can approach the period with some relief, for sources of mediaeval history are fuller and more abundant than sources of earlier history. Inscriptions, traditions, coins and other evidence need not be laboriously pieced together to form the skeleton of history. There are many medieval historians who have dedicated their lives to the study of Indian history.
semi-contemporary chronicles dealing with different Muslim dynasties which give us detailed topography and accurate chronology.

State papers and official or private documents possessed by individuals supply in all countries a mass of reliable information to historians. We know that the Mughals at least had a very efficient record department, but the principal cities of Northern India being the scene of devastating inroads, very few of these records have survived to guide us. Of the choice manuscripts, "written by great men", numbering 24,000, that formed the valuable library of Akbar, none has survived. We blame the climate of India, but much more than climate is the vandalism of man responsible for this loss to History.

CHRONICLES

In the absence of contemporary State papers we have to depend upon the chronicles. Some of them are general histories of the Muslim world in which Indian history occupies a small space, but there are also many chronicles that deal only with the history of India.

Minhaj-ud-din's Tabaqat-i-Nasiri is a general history of the Muslim world, but it discusses the history of the Slave Sultans of Delhi in detail up to 1267. It has been translated into English by Raverty. The story is then taken up by Zia-ud-din Barānī, whose Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi goes up to the first six years of the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq. Firuz Shah's own composition, Futuhat-i-Shahi, gives a record of the administrative achievements of that monarch. There is no contemporary chronicle for the Afghan dynasties and we have to rely on books written under Akbar or Jahangir. Babur's deservedly famous Memoirs has authoritative Persian and English translations. Humayun's personal attendant, Jauhar, wrote an interesting gloss called Tasikrat-ul-wakiat which has been translated into English by Stewart. Gulbadan Begam's

1 Sir and Professor John Dowson have made available to us in History of India as told by its own chronicles that the important Indian history have found serious mistakes and gaps up to 1835. Some of these have been corrected by Mr. Hodivalo, Persian in Indo-Muslim History.
Humayun-nama, which gives an insight into the affairs of the royal harem, has been translated into English by Mrs. Beveridge. Ain-i-Akbâri and Akbârnama, the two most important works dealing with the reign of Akbar, have been translated into English, the former by Blochmann and Jarrett, the latter by H. Beveridge. Another important contemporary history, Muntakhab-ul-Tawârikh by Badâuni, has been translated into English by Rankin, Lowe and Wolseley Haig. The Memoirs of Jahangir, an excellent source of history, has been translated into English by H. Beveridge. Two official chronicles—Padishahnama, in three sections by three writers, and Alamgirnama—cover the reign of Shah Jahan and the early years of Aurangzeb's reign. For the last forty years of Aurangzeb's reign there is Masir-i-Alamgiri compiled from official records after his death. Khafi Khan's Muntakhab-ul-lubab supplies us with many facts suppressed in the Court annals.

FOREIGN TRAVELLERS

The best known of all the travellers who visited India during the pre-Mughal period was Ibn Fârutah who lived in India for some years. His account bears the stamp of authenticity. [Nicolo Conti, Abdur Razzaq and Athanasius Nikitin have left us interesting information relating to Southern India.] From the sixteenth century onwards the European travellers who came to India left for our use a vast mass of information. The works of the Jesuit missionaries contain much interesting information and European travellers such as Fitch, Purchas, Terry, Roe, Tavernier, Bernier, Careri and Tranucci have described in some detail the condition of the people, the state of trade and industry and the magnificence of the court and the camp. Regarding the political history of India, however, apart from references to a few events, they merely reproduce the bazar rumours.

NEWS-LETTERS

Besides Court chronicles, memoirs, and traveller's accounts, we have fortunately preserved news-letters for the reigns of Aurangzeb at the Asiatic Society's library in London.
COINS AND MONUMENTS

We must also recognise the importance of coins and monuments as sources of history for the Sultanate as also the Mughal period. Regarding coins it has been observed: "In places where men did not print, these stamped moneys obtruding into every bazar constituted the most effective manifestos and proclamations human ingenuity could have devised". Catalogues of coins in the British Museum, the Indian Museum, and the Punjab Museum,—all prepared by British scholars,—offer us evidence of special value. Monuments testify to the growth of material prosperity and the development of culture. They do not help us much in reconstructing political history.

MARATHAS, RAJPUTS AND SIKHS

For Maratha history in the Mughal period there are several chronicles, of which the most important is the Sabhaśad Bakhar written by a contemporary of Shivaji, translated into English by Dr. S. N. Sen. The British factory records dealing with the seventeenth and the early years of the eighteenth century supply extremely valuable contemporary evidence. The records left by the Portuguese are also of great value. The Rajput bardic chronicles are useful as a source of Rajput history, but they should be treated with caution. We should try to find out the kernel of truth from a confused assemblage of fact and fiction. Tod’s classic work, Arms and Antiquities of Rajasthan, is based on the bardic ballads and poems; it should not be used as a source book without due caution. For the history of the Sikh Gurus and the doctrines of Sikhism we have several works, including the Guru Sahib, which have been summarised from the orthodox Sikh point of view in Macauliffe’s The Sikh Religion. In studying this subject it is necessary to discriminate between fact and fiction, reliable contemporary evidence and later myth.

LITERATURE

Some contemporary literature contains useful information on social and political history. We find, for example, valuable historical material in the writings of the famous Persian poet, Amir Khusrau. One of his works,
Khazain-ul-Futuh, is a very important source of information about the reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji.

SECTION III

SOURCES OF MODERN INDIAN HISTORY

OFFICIAL RECORDS

The French traveller Jacquemont who came to India in 1831 gathered the impression that India was governed by stationery. The State papers of the Government of India during the British period are undoubtedly very elaborate. The Government of India was from the beginning a government by writing. In 1719 the Court of Directors directed that every member should have the liberty to dissent from the resolutions of the Council and give his reasons in writing. When the East India Company turned to political business the notes and memoranda of members of Council naturally began to grow in volume. Sir John Malcolm, one of the greatest of the civil servants of the East India Company and a historian of no mean repute, said, "Verbosity and expansion are the sins that most easily beset our ingenious countrymen in the East". The mass of State papers is almost infinite. The National Archives of India in New Delhi and the Recorded Offices in Madras, West Bengal, Bombay, Poona and Lahore contain an enormous quantity of State records that have not yet been printed or calendared. Besides these, there are the records in the India Office, London. The Portuguese archives at Lisbon and Goa contain many documents concerning Indo-European relations. The French records at Pondicherry are invaluable for a proper study of the eighteenth century. Records in private custody are yet to be tapped. Even the records printed by the Central Record Offices, apart from their manuscript collections, are so overwhelming in their mass that it is very difficult to read and digest them all.

PERSIAN AND MARATHI SOURCES

For the British period Persian chronicles are as valuable as they are for the medieval period. An except
ever, be made in favour of *Siyar-ul-Mulakharin*, which is indispensable for a proper study of the history of India in the eighteenth century. It is available in English translation. Most of the Marathi records relating to the history of India in the eighteenth century have been published in the series entitled *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* edited by Sardesai. Many valuable Marathi records are also found in the works edited by Rajwade, Khare and others. The Tamil diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, the *Dubash* of Dupleix, runs into several volumes in its English translation. It is an indispensable source of information relating to Anglo-French rivalry in southern India. An abundant mass of contemporary or semi-contemporary accounts written by Englishmen who played an important part in Indian history, as also the mass of published memoirs and letters, must give a student of history his fill.

**EARLY BRITISH WRITERS**

Some historical works relating to the rise of the British power in India that were written at the beginning of the nineteenth century are even now valuable for reference. There is in them no conscious spirit of propaganda which spoils the value of some later histories of the British period. Three such books, inspite their obvious defects, deserve special mention—James Mill's *History of British India*, Wilks' *History of Mysore* and Grant Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*. Cunningham's justly celebrated *History of the Sikhs*, written in 1849, also belongs to a category of works which are old, yet not out of date, and which have at the same time the flavour of contemporary or semi-contemporary writing.
CHAPTER III
PRE-ARYAN INDIA

SECTION I
PRE-HISTORIC RACES

The coming of the Aryans can no longer be regarded as the beginning of Indian history. India was certainly inhabited by various races before the arrival of the Aryans, and the contributions of these pre-Aryan or non-Aryan races to the development of the so-called Aryan civilisation are by no means negligible. Unfortunately we know very little about these races. No literary evidence is available, except some vague statements in the Vedas and in early Tamil literature, and we must rely solely on archaeological discoveries.

PALEOLITHIC AGE

The earliest inhabitants of India were the palaeolithic men, whose rude tools of chipped stone are found in large numbers in many parts of the country, more especially in the districts along the eastern coast. They did not know the use of metals, nor could they cultivate nor make a fire. They did not construct tombs; so their skins and bones are not available for anthropological study.

NEOLITHIC AGE

The Palaeolithic Age was followed by the Neolithic Age. Although the use of rough stone implements was not altogether given up, yet most of the implements used by the neolithic men were ‘ground, grooved and polished’, turned into beautiful objects serving different purposes. They buried the dead and constructed tombs. They were in a state of civilization far above that of palaeolithic men, they cultivated land, domesticated animals, made pottery, produced fire by friction of bamboos or pieces of wood, construct boats and weave cloth. It is difficult to determine the palaeolithic and neolithic men belonged to the same race.
AGE OF METALS

Gold was probably the first metal used by the descendants of neolithic men, but it was used for ornaments only. As regards implements and weapons used for the ordinary purposes of life, they were made of iron in South India. In North India they were at first made of copper, which was some time later replaced by iron. Hoards of copper implements have been discovered in different parts of India. The earliest copper tools may be as old as 2000 B.C., and probably they were in use when the hymns of the Rig Veda were composed. Iron may have been introduced in North India as early as 1000 B.C.; it is mentioned in the Atharva Veda. In South India the use of iron was probably introduced much later and quite independently. In India, except in Sind, no Bronze Age intervened between the Neolithic and the Iron Ages.

THE DRAVIDIANS

The Dravidians were one of the earliest civilised races of India. Their language is now represented by the principal languages (except Marathi) spoken in South India—Tamil, Telegu, Kanarese, Malayalam, etc. Some scholars have traced Dravidian characteristics in Vedic and Classical Sanskrit as well. The ancient Dravidian alphabet, called Vatteluttu, may be of Semitic origin. Some scholars hold the view that the Dravidians were the descendants of the primitive inhabitants of India, and that the Vedic culture represents the gradual progress of pre-Dravidian culture. Other scholars rely on the similarity between Semitic and Dravidian ethnic types and argue that the Dravidians invaded India through Baluchistan from Western Asia. In discussing the question of the origin of the Dravidians, some importance must be attached to the fact that a Dravidian tribe, called the Brahui, speaks a language closely allied to the modern representatives of the original Dravidian stock. Those scholars, who regard the Dravidians as the descendants of the primitive inhabitants of India, believe that a Dravidian overflow from India into Baluchistan led to the foundation of a Dravidian colony in the Punjab. Those who represent the Dravidians as immigrants from Western Asia argue that the Brahui people
are the descendants of a group of immigrants who lingered in Baluchistan on their way to India. No definite conclusion can be arrived at on this important question until the discovery of further evidence.

There is no doubt that the Dravidians were a fairly civilised people. They were conversant with the use of metals. Their artistic sense is revealed by their highly finished pottery. They constructed buildings and forts. There are many references in Vedic literature to towns and forts (pura and durga) built by the Dasyus, who are usually identified with the Dravidians. In ancient Tamil literature there are many references to wealthy cities where many of the refinements and luxuries of life were familiar. Agriculture flourished in the Dravidian land, and dams were built across rivers for irrigation purposes. The Dravidians were not afraid of crossing the seas in pursuit of trade and commerce.

The civilisation of the Dravidians was in many respects different from that of the Aryans. The Dravidian society was partly matriarchal, and therefore it was fundamentally dissimilar to the Aryan society which was wholly patriarchal. The religion of the Dravidians has been described by some European writers as 'dark and repulsive'. They worshipped the Mother Goddess and various demons, and human sacrifice was an important feature of their worship. Caste was unknown. These differences were gradually obliterated after the expansion of the Aryans across the Vindhyas. The Dravidian culture submerged beneath the tide of Aryan invasion, accepted the religion and culture of the conquerors, but in course of time many elements of Dravidian religion, culture, and language were consciously or unconsciously, borrowed by the Aryans. Smith says that the 'demons' originally worshipped by the Dravidians were 'adopted by the Brahmans, given new names, and identified with orthodox Hindu gods and goddesses'. The assimilation of Dravidian elements in the Sanskrit language referred to above. Smith rightly observed many years ago: 'Early Indian history, as a whole, cannot be viewed from the perspective until the non-Aryan institutions of the society receive adequate treatment.'
SECTION II

INDUS CIVILISATION

MAHENJODARO AND HARAPPA

The excavations at Mahenjodaro (Larkana district, Sind) and Harappa (Montgomery district, West Punjab) have opened up a hitherto unknown chapter in the long history of India. That history is no longer taken to begin with the coming of the Aryans (circa 2000 B.C.). A rich and well-developed civilisation flourished in the Indus valley as early as 3000 B.C. As iron is not directly mentioned in the Rig Veda, the civilisation of the early Vedic age is generally regarded as a product of the Chalcolithic period. The Indus civilisation also belongs to this period. Our information about the various aspects of this civilisation is still very meagre, for archaeologists have not yet been able to decipher the words engraved on the seals discovered at Mahenjodaro and Harappa. It is almost certain that the language indicated on those seals is neither Vedic Sanskrit nor connected with it. Some scholars think that the language used by the Indians of the pre-historic Indus valley was similar to the language used by the Dravidians and agglutinative in character.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

As the civilisation of ancient Egypt grew up in the valley of the Nile, as the civilisation of Babylonia and Assyria grew up in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates, so also the civilisation of pre-Aryan India grew up in the valley of the Indus. (The Harappan civilisation.) At Mahenjodaro archaeologists have found the ruins of a large and beautiful city, which seems to have been designed by skilful engineers aiming at the

1 In the language the word 'Mohenjodaro' means 'mound of the dead. In the year 1924, a Buddhist mound attracted the attention of the late Mr. Hira Prasad Banerjee, who was at that time Superintendent of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. He began to excavate with the hope of discovering some ruins connected with the Harappan civilisation. Within a short time he came upon prehistoric remains. The same year Rai Bahadur Dayaram Sahni discovered similar remains at Harappa. Extensive excavations were then undertaken under the direction of Sir John Marshall, Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India.
of comfort and convenience of all citizens. There were many broad and narrow streets separating the houses from one another. Apart from the dwelling houses there were some spacious buildings which were probably palaces or temples or municipal halls. Brick was used for the construction of buildings. Curiously enough, neither brick nor wood contains any decoration. There were excellent doors and windows. The construction of regular arches was unknown, but some corbelled arches have been discovered. Water was drawn from wells constructed with burnt bricks. There were excellent drains and comfortable bathrooms. One of the bathrooms contains an area of 11,440 square feet. Within this room there was a large swimming pool, 39 feet long, 23 feet broad, and 8 feet deep.

So far as food is concerned, the people of Mahenjodaro used wheat, barley, milk, and fruits like dates. They were meat-eaters too, and fish was probably in extensive use. Probably the chief victims were sheep, boars and cocks. Among domesticated animals we find traces of humped bulls, cows, buffaloes, sheep, elephants, camels, boars, goats and cocks. Dogs were probably known, but the case of horses is doubtful. Among wild animals there were deer, wild cows, tigers, bears and hares.

The people of Mahenjodaro knew the use of gold, silver, copper, tin, lead and bronze. Iron was unknown. Gold was not locally procurable. Some writers believe that it was brought to the Indus valley from south Indian mines. Naturally the quantity was small. Copper and bronze were used for the construction of instruments of war as well as for utensils for domestic use. Even stone was rare, for it had to be brought from Kathiawad and Rajputana. Many varieties of stone were used for the construction of knives, seals, tools, small pots and ornaments. The women were probably very fond of ornaments which were made of gold, silver, ivory, jet and precious stones.

The pottery discovered at Mahenjodaro at Harappa is generally very smooth in the surface and occasionally decorated. The artistic taste of the people is evident from their pottery, utensils and ornaments. There were good sculptors. The representations of animals carved on the seals and stone images found at Harappa testify to the progress of
It is difficult to say anything definite about the religion practised by the people of Mahenjodaro. Probably there was no temple or church, for none of the houses so far excavated can be positively described as a house of worship. Tentative conclusions have, however, been drawn from the pictures found on the seals and small images of clay and metal. The worship of a mother goddess was probably widely practised. This feature of religious life connects Mahenjodaro with Western Asia, where the worship of this goddess probably originated, rather than with Vedic India, where male deities enjoyed a decided preponderance. Mahenjodaro also worshipped a male god, who may be identified with Siva. Phallus worship was practised. Here also we find a contrast with Vedic India, for the Rig Veda clearly denounces the phallus-worshippers. Animism also was prevalent: trees, beasts and snakes received their shares of worship. Closely connected with religion is the practice of disposing of dead bodies. Three different methods were known to the pre-historic inhabitants of the Indus valley: complete burial, fractional burial, and post-cremation burial.

CHRONOLOGY

The remains discovered at Mahenjodaro have been classified as products of three different periods: early period, intermediate period, late period. The history of these three periods probably covered not more than five centuries. But the history of pre-historic Indus civilisation began long before the foundation of the city of Mahenjodaro and continued to flourish even after the fall of that city. The city probably existed during the period 3200-2750 B.C.+

RACES

The inhabitants of Mahenjodaro probably belonged to three races: a Mediterranean race, the Caucasian race, and a race of Mongoloid stock, whose descendants are now inhabiting the area of Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. A Mongoloid skeleton has not been discovered. It is clear, therefore, that the culture of the Indus valley was not created by any particular race but was rather the creation of different races living together in a particular environment. Some
writers, however, believe that the people of Mahenjodaro belonged to the Dravidian race.

Attempts have been made to connect the people of the Indus valley with the Vedic Aryans, but there are very few valid arguments in support of this view. The Rig Veda is the product of a rural civilisation, while the civilisation of the Indus valley was definitely urban in character. The horse, probably unknown at Mahenjodaro, was in frequent use by the Vedic warriors. In the Vedas the cow enjoys a place of honour, but at Mahenjodaro the bull occupied a more important position. The worship of idols, a common practice at Mahenjodaro, was unknown to the Vedic Aryans. While in the Vedas male deities are predominant, at Mahenjodaro the mother goddess is decidedly superior to Siva. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the civilisation of the Vedic Aryans is posterior to, and different in character from, the Indus civilisation.

THE INDUS VALLEY AND WESTERN ASIA

There are good reasons to believe that the pre-historic civilisation of the Indus valley was closely connected with the contemporary civilisation of Western Asia. Numerous Indian seals, some of them containing the Mahenjodaro script, have been discovered at Uruk, Tel Asmar, and Bagdad and other places in Western Asia. The construction of corbelled arches and of niches in walls, the worship of a mother goddess, the pictures of certain common animals on the seals—these establish a clearly discernible link between Mahenjodaro and Mesopotamia. It has been assumed that the civilisations of these two distant areas owe their origin to a common civilisation, the differences being due to local conditions and racial peculiarities. It may be hoped that further excavations will throw more light on this very interesting and important problem.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Risley, Peoples of India.
Mackay, The Indus Civilisation.
Marshall, Mahenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation.
CHAPTER IV

THE COMING OF THE ARYANS

SECTION 1

ARYAN SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA

ORIGINAL HOME OF THE ARYANS

Although there are writers who believe that India was the original home of the Aryans, the generally accepted view is that they came to this country either from Central Asia or from an European country. In the present imperfect stage of our knowledge we may tentatively accept the theory that the primitive habitat of the Aryans lay in the region which we now call Hungary, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia. This theory seems to satisfy most of the conditions of life associated by ethnologists and linguists with the primitive Aryans.

DATE OF ARYAN IMMIGRATION INTO INDIA

It is difficult to ascertain, even roughly, the period when the migrations of the Aryans began. Probably the natural increase of population compelled them to leave their homeland, a small area encircled by mountains, and to seek food and shelter in distant lands. They must have had many hard struggles with the people of the countries they wanted to occupy, and centuries may well have passed away in this process. The famous Pòghaz-Koi inscriptions, discovered some years ago by German archaeologists in Cappadocia, seem to show that about 1400 B.C. the Aryans had succeeded in imposing some of their language over a people (known as the Mitanni) living in the East. This evidence, however, does not preclude the 1400 B.C.

Note: The word "Arya" in Avesta—Arhya in Old Persian. The same word is "the faithful ones", "the people of the Vedic hymns. This epithet is applied by the compilers of the Aryan sources from that of their enemies, the Persians, of India, whom they call Dāsas or Dasyus."
It is generally recognised that the Aryans who settled in India were racially akin to the ancient Iranians. This conclusion is based primarily on the evidence of language. The dialect spoken by the Aryan immigrants in the Punjab was closely related to the ancient Iranian and Avestic. Winternitz points out that "the difference between the language of the Vedas and this primitive Indo-Iranian language seems to be less, perhaps, than that between . . . Sanskrit and Pali." The differentiation between the Indo-Aryan and Iranian dialects seems to have begun after the date of the Boghaz-Koi inscriptions (circa 1400 B.C.).

In order to determine the date of the arrival of the Aryans in India we must find out the age of the Rig Veda. "Unfortunately", says Winternitz, "the opinions of the best scholars differ, not to the extent of centuries, but to the extent of thousands of years, with regard to the age of the Rig Veda. Some lay down the year 1000 B.C. as the earliest limit for the Rig Vedic hymns, while others consider them to have originated between 3000 and 2500 B.C." This remark of Winternitz still holds good. Probably we shall not be far wrong if we date the beginning of Vedic literature about 2000 or 2500 B.C. The most decisive evidence in calculating the age of this literature is the fact that Jainism and Buddhism presuppose its existence. If the earlier hymns of the Rig Veda were composed about 2000 or 2500 B.C., the principal Upanishads, which were certainly known to the Jains and the Buddhists, must be at least as old as 500 B.C.

EARLY ARYAN SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA

We conclude, therefore, that the Aryans appeared in northwestern India not later than 2000 B.C. Most of the hymns of the Rig Veda were probably composed in the country round the famous river Sarasvati, south of narmada. The Aryan occupation of Afghanistan and the Himalayas is proved by the mention in the Rig Veda of the Ganges, Swat, Kurram, Gomal, Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej. There are a few references to the Jumna and Tapti, which is no mention of the Narbada. Of mountains, the Vindhya and the Satpura were well known, but the Vindhya were the most prominent. These geographical references show that in the Rig Veda the
settlements of the Aryans were confined to eastern Afghanistan, the Punjab and the western portion of the United Provinces. The major part of this area was known as Sapta Sindhu (the land of the seven rivers).

EXPANSION OF THE ARYANS IN THE LATER VEDIC PERIOD

The Rig Veda is full of references to continuous fighting against the Dāsas or Dasyus (i.e. non-Aryans). We can almost visualise the Aryans pressing forward towards the east. In the Brahmanas the Punjab gradually loses its importance, and there is more and more frequent mention of the eastern lands. In that age the principal centre of Aryan culture was the Madhyadesa extending from the Sarasvati to the Gangetic Doab. We have frequent references to Kurukshetra, Kośala (modern Oudh), Kasi (Benares), Videha (North Bihar), Magadha (South Bihar) and Anga (East Bihar). The Kuruś and the Panchalas were the leading Aryan tribes of this period. Contact seems to have been established with the South; there are references to the Andhras of the Godavari valley and the Pulindas and Savaras of the Vindhyan forests. These tribes were not yet fully Aryanised, for they are described as outcasts. Aryan civilisation was just peeping through the Vindhya.

SECTION 16

VEDIC LITERATURE AND RELIGION

AUTHORSHIP OF THE VEDAS

According to the tentative conclusion adopted in this book, the entire Vedic literature was composed during the period circa 2500–500 B.C. Orthodox Hindus believe that the Vedas were not composed by men; they were either taught by God to the ancients or they revealed themselves to the seers. Whatever may be, there is no doubt that the Vedas are the primary records of the Aryans.

IMPORTANCE OF THE VEDAS

In the ruins at the two sides of the generations the Vedas were handed down from mouth to mouth. They are, therefore, known as Sruti (that
which is heard). The veneration in which the Vedas have ever been held by the Hindus made it possible for them to transmit through centuries so large a body of literature without putting it into writing and with little or no interpolation at all. A modern Indian philosopher thus estimates the place of the Vedas in the Hindu mind: "The religious history of India had suffered considerable changes in the later periods, since the time of the Vedic civilization, but such was the reverence paid to the Vedas that they have ever remained as the highest religious authority for all sections of the Hindus at all times. Even at this day all the obligatory duties of the Hindus at birth, marriage, death, etc., are performed according to the old Vedic ritual. The prayers which a Brahmin now says three times a day are the same selections of Vedic verses as were used as prayer verses two or three thousand years ago. . . . Most of the Sanskrit literatures that flourished after the Vedas base upon them their own validity, and appeal to them as their authority. Systems of Hindu philosophy not only own their allegiance to the Vedas, but the adherents of each one of them would often quarrel with others and maintain its superiority by trying to prove that it and it alone was the faithful follower of the Vedas and represented correctly their views. The laws which regulate the social, legal, domestic, and religious customs and rites of the Hindus even to the present day are said to be mere systematized memories of old Vedic teachings, and are held to be obligatory on the authorities. Even under British administration, in the inheritance of property, adoption, and in such other legal transactions, Hindu Law is followed, and this claims to draw its authority from the Vedas."

CLASSIFICATION OF VEDIC LITERATURE

The Vedic literature consists of four different classes of works:

I. The Samhitās or collections of Vedic Hymns, Incantations, Benedictions, Sacrificial Formulas, and Songs.

There are four Samhitās, of which the most ancient and most important is undoubtedly the oldest and most important. The

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1 S. N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*,-page 10-11.
consists of 1,028 *suktas* or hymns, which are divided into 10 *mandalas* or books. Some of these hymns were from the first intended for sacrificial songs and litanies, but there are others which arose independently of all sacrificial ritual and "in them the breath of genuine primeval religious poetry is felt."

The *Atharva Veda Samhita*, in its present version, consists of 731 hymns, which are divided into 20 books. Some of these hymns have been literally taken from the *Rig Veda Samhita*. As a whole, the *Atharva Veda Samhita* is undoubtedly later than the *Rig Veda Samhita*. The great importance of the former lies in the fact that "it is an invaluable source of knowledge of the real popular belief as yet uninfluenced by the priestly religion, of the faith in numberless spirits, imps, ghosts, and demons of every kind, and of the witchcraft, so eminently important for ethnology and for the history of religion."

The *Sama Veda Samhita*, in its present version, consists of 1,549 hymns, of which all but 75 are found in the *Rig Veda Samhita*. These 75 hymns are found in other works. All these hymns were used for singing in connection with sacrifices.

The *Yajur Veda Samhita* consists partly of hymns and partly of prose sentences (*yajus*) some of which are 'occasionally rhythmical and here and there even rise to poetical flight.' Most of the hymns of *yajus* also in the *Rig Veda Samhita*.

II. *The Brāhmaṇas*, or prose texts containing observations on various sacrificial rites and ceremonies. "They reflect the spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on the sacrifice describing its ceremonies, discussing its value, speculating on its origin and significance." The following are among the most important of the early *Brāhmaṇas*: *Aitareya Brahmana* and *Kausitaki Brahmana* belonging to the *Rig Veda*; *Sāndya Jāha Brahmana* and *Jaiminiya Brahmana* belonging to *Sāma Veda*; *Taittiriya Brahmana* and *Satapatha Brahmana* belonging to the *Yajur Veda*. The *Brāhmaṇas* of the *Asvaghosa Veda* of which the *Gopatha Brahmana* is very prominent, are of comparatively late origin.

III. has also *Sūryakas*, or forest texts. "These works were probably compilation for old men who had retired into the forest and who, race unable to perform elaborate sacrifices requiring a multitude of accessories and articles which could not be
procured in forests. In these . . . meditations gradually began to supplant the sacrifices as being of a superior order. It is here that we find that amongst a certain section of intelligent people the ritualistic ideas began to give way, and philosophic speculations about the nature of truth became gradually substituted in their place." The Āranyakas form component parts of the Brāhmaṇas. Thus, the Aitareya Āranyaka is a continuation of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

IV. The Upanishads, or treatises containing secret instructions imparted at private sittings by the preceptors to the pupils. The oldest Upanishads are partly included in the Āranyakas and partly appended to them; in fact, it is often difficult to draw the line between the Āranyakas and the Upanishads. The Upanishads marked a reaction against sacrificial religion and revealed the ultimate truth and reality, a knowledge of which was considered indispensable for the emancipation of man. They are written generally in prose, but a few are written entirely or for the most part in verse. At present more than 100 Upanishads are available. Among the most important we may mention Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhāndogya, Brihadāranyaka, Svetāsvatara, Kausitaki, etc.

RELIGION OF THE VEDAS

The Vedic literature enables us to draw a picture, however unsatisfactory, of the religious life in Vedic India. "The Rig Veda does not present us with any outpouring of the primitive religious consciousness, but with a state of belief which must have been the product of much primary effort, and the outcome of wholesale syncretism." The religion of the Vedic Indians was a continuation of the primitive faith of the Aryan race. Their pantheon included some gods worshipped by the Aryans before their arrival in this country. Some of the deities, again, like the river deity Sarasvatī, were conceived after their appearance in India. Most of these deities are very close to nature. We may mention Dyaus, Aṛni and Parjanya. There is no doubt that the beauty and grandeur of natural phenomena excited the imagination and inspired the devotion of the Vedic sages. The number of the deities known
to the Vedic literature is indefinite. Sometimes they are classified into three groups according to their abode—gods of the sky (e.g., Mitra and Varuna), gods of mid-air (e.g., Indra and Maruts), and gods of the earth (e.g., Agni and Soma). The predominance of the male element is a remarkable characteristic of the Vedic pantheon. There is no definite hierarchy, no supreme God; each deity 'shrinks into insignificance or shines supreme according as it is the object of adoration or not.' This stage has, therefore, been rightly described as neither polytheistic nor monotheistic, 'but one which had a tendency towards them both, although it was not sufficiently developed to be identified with either of them.'

The growth of ritual naturally eclipsed the importance of the deities as arbiters of human destiny. Early Vedic ritual was quite simple; the gods were worshipped with humble offerings of milk, grain and ghee. The motive was the desire to secure earthly happiness—to get children and cattle or to get one's enemy out of the way. Complications began to accumulate in the age of the Brāhmanas. The offerings became richer, the ritual more elaborate. Numerous priests were required for the proper performance of a sacrifice: the Hotri who recited the hymns, the Adhvaryu who performed the manual activities and muttered prayers, the Saṅgātri who sang the Sāma chants, and several assistants. A fundamental change came over the very object with which offerings were made. The gods were no longer to be conciliated; they were to be compelled by the sacrifice to grant to the sacrificer what he wanted. Thus the sacrifice was exalted above the gods. The logical consequence of this development was their total repudiation later in the Purva-māṇḍūkya system of philosophy.

We have already remarked that the beginnings of philosophic thought, a search after truth and reality, may be traced in the Āraṇyakas. In the Upanishads this search reached its logical conclusion. These treatises occupy a very important place in the history of Indian philosophy. The fundamental idea which runs through them is that underlying the visible world of change there is an unchangeable reality (Brahman) which is identical with that which underlies the essence in man (Ātman).
NON-ARYANS IN THE VEDIC PERIOD

Our information about the political history of the early Vedic period is, unfortunately, very meagre. There are many references to continuous fighting against the so-called Dāsas or Dasyus, the earlier inhabitants of this country, but systematic details are lacking. The main distinctions between the Aryans and their non-Aryan enemies were clearly those of physical appearance, speech and religion. The non-Aryans are described as black and ‘noseless’ (anāsah); their speech is derided and they are often reproached for their failure to offer sacrifices to the Aryan gods. Although the struggle must have been long and bitter, the triumphant Aryans do not seem to have made any attempt to exterminate the vanquished non-Aryan population. Many non-Aryans found shelter in mountains and forests, while others were enslaved. There are many references to male and female slaves in the Vedic and early post-Vedic literature; they were most probably non-Aryans. But the non-Aryans were not barbarous or uncivilised. They possessed large herds of cattle. They constructed towns, at least, well-built stockades (pura). There are instances in which Dāsas were to establish friendly relations with Arya.

POLITICAL DISUNITY OF THE ARYANS

There was no unity in the camp of the confréres. An Aryan King named Divodasa waged war against Turvasa, Yadu and Puru tribes. His son or grandson, Satisa, was the leader of a great contest between the Bharatas, an Aryan tribe settled in Brahmavarta (the land lying between the rivers Sarasvati and Drishadvati), and the Aryan tribes of the northwest. Of the Aryan tribes of the early Vedic period the most important were the Bharatas, the Purus (who lived round the ‘river Sarasvati’), the Kurus (who lived near the Indus and the Chenab) and the Srinjayas, who were neighbours of the Bharatas.
POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF THE ARYANS

Monarchy was probably the prevailing system of political organisation known to the Vedic Aryans, although there are references to the republican form of government. Monarchy was normally hereditary, although there are some doubtful references to election by the people. The King's primary duties were to protect his subjects and to maintain priests for the performance of sacrifices. He derived his income from the tribute paid by the conquered tribes and the gifts offered by his subjects. Whether these gifts were compulsory fixed payments or occasional voluntary offerings, we do not know. Among officials we find references to the senānī (leader of the army) and the grāmanī (village chief). The purohita (priest) occupied a very important position, and it is very probable that his authority was not limited to religious matters alone. "The Vedic Purohita was the forerunner of the Brahman statesmen who from time to time in India have shown conspicuous ability in the management of affairs; and there is no reason to doubt that a Visvamitra or Vasishthha was a most important element of the government of the early Vedic realm."

The popular part of the political organisation consisted of the samiti and the sūbhā. The precise nature and functions of these popular assemblies cannot be determined; but "there seems no reason to doubt that on great occasions the whole of the men of the tribe gathered to deliberate, or at least to decide, on the courses laid before them by the great men of the tribe." Although the King participated in the proceedings of these assemblies, his authority was probably to some extent checked by their very existence. Whether he was allowed to frame laws or to administer justice, we do not know. Our information about the administration of justice and the civil and criminal laws is extremely fragmentary. Probably war, as usual, magnified the executive authority enjoyed by the King. He not only led his troops in war, but personally fought from chariots.

EARLY ARYAN SOCIETY

But the social organisation of the Vedic Aryans we are able to form a clearer conception. The patrilineal family was the basis of social as well as political life. Monogamy was the
prevailing form of marriage, but polygamy was not unknown. There is no reference to polyandry. The status of women was high. They normally controlled the household. Some of them were apparently educated and cultured, for the Samhitâs contain hymns composed by women. Child marriage was unknown. Whether remarriage was allowed in the case of widows, we cannot definitely ascertain. The standard of female morality was high, although there are references to transgressions and prostitution.

Did the caste system exist in Aryan society during the early Vedic period? Indologists have proposed different solutions for this interesting and important problem. Those who deny the existence of the caste system in the age of the Rig Veda point out that the four castes—Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra—are mentioned only in a late hymn¹ of the Rig Veda. “Certainly there were warriors and priests, but of an exclusive warrior caste there is in the Rig Veda as little mention as of one or several lower castes of farmers, cattle-traders, merchants, artisans and labourers”. Those who disagree with this view point out that priesthood was normally hereditary in the age of the Rig Veda, and that the mention of the word Râjanya seems to indicate the existence of a class of nobles. Indeed, there are unmistakable traces of the division of early Vedic society into the holy power (Brahman), the royal power (Kshatru) and the commonalty (is). It is possible to reconcile these divergent views by saying that in the hymns of the Rig Veda we can trace the system only in a nebulous form: there were no rigid restrictions with regard to occupation, inter-marriage and inter-dining.

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE ARYANS

Our data about the economic life of the early Vedic Aryans must be collected from stray references in the literature of the period. They were pre-eminently a rural people; we find no reference to cities or even to small towns². Naturally the people lived a pastoral life. The chief source of income was cattle-

¹ The famous Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda (X. 90.12), which declares that Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras or andated respectively from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of the Crea.
² During the Brahma period we find clear references to the capital cities called Asandivat, Kausambi and Kasi.
rearing; "the stress laid by the poets on the possession of cows is almost pathetic". The horse also was greatly valued. Other domesticated animals were sheep, goats, asses and dogs, but the cat had not yet been domesticated. Agriculture was the most important of occupations. A crude system of irrigation is referred to. Hunting served a very useful economic purpose; usually the victims were lions, boars, buffaloes, antelopes and birds. Whether fishing was known, we cannot definitely say.

Specialisation in industry played a considerable part in Vedic economy. The tanner worked up the skin of the oxen into leather bottles, strings of bows and straps. The woodworker was at once carpenter, cabinet-maker and chariot-builder. There were metal-workers too. Shipping was in its infancy. Probably fairly large boats served for the navigation of the rivers. The sea was certainly not unknown, but it is very doubtful whether there was an extensive maritime trade. An extensive inland trade was carried on, in which oxen and gold ornaments took the place of money. Although there are frequent references to slavery, competent scholars believe that Vedic economy was not dependent on slave labour. No stigma was then attached to any profession; even tanners were not regarded as inferior members of the community.

The usual dress consisted either of three or of two garments, which were generally woven by women from the wool of sheep. Garments, usually made of gold, were worn by both sexes. The chief food consisted of butter, vegetables and fruits. Meat was probably used only at great feasts and family gatherings. Cows and bullocks were slaughtered at the sacrifices and for the entertainment of guests. Drinking played an important part in Vedic society. There are frequent references to soma, a sacrificial drink, and surā, a popular drink, probably distilled from grain.

The chariot probably the most exciting amusement. Dicing, dancing and music are frequently referred to. Of musical instruments the drum, the lute and the flute were very familiar. "The hymns themselves prove that singing was highly esteemed".

"We need not," says Winternitz, "imagine the people of the Rig Veda either as an innocent shepherd people, or as a horde of rough savages, nor, on the other hand, as a people of
ultra-refined culture. The picture of culture which is unfolded in these songs... shows us the Aryan Indians as an active, joyful and warlike people, of simple, and still partly savage habits. ... As yet we do not find in the songs of the Rig Veda that effeminate, ascetic and pessimistic trait of the Indian character which we shall meet again and again in later Indian literature."

SECTION IV

LATER VEDIC LITERATURE: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

LATER VEDIC LITERATURE

The Upanishads are collectively known as the Vedānta (concluding portion of the Vedas). In addition, we have six Vedāngas (sciences supplementary to the Vedas)—phonetics (sikshā), ritual (kalpa), grammar (vyākarana), etymology (nirukta), metrics (chhandah) and astronomy (jyotisha). The beginnings of these works may be sought in the Brāhmaṇas and Āranyakas. They are composed in the form of sutras (threads, i.e. short versified or memorisation).

Of the six Vedāngas, ritual was the first to receive systematic treatment in works known as the Kalpasutras. These Kalpasutras which deal with sacrifices are called Srautasutras, while those which deal with domestic ceremonies and sacrifices of daily life are called Grihyasutras. These works supply valuable information to the historian of religion as well as to the ethnologist. Directly connected with the Grihyasutras are the Dharmasutras, works on secular as well as religious law. The Sulvasutras attached to the Srautasutras deal with the measurement of altars and places of sacrifice. They are the oldest Indian works on geometry.

While the Kalpasutras supplement the Brāhmaṇas, the sutras relating to phonetics supplement the Samhitās. The earliest works on this subject are the Pratisākhya, which contain instructions upon the proper manner of reciting the Samhitās.
The only work on Vedic etymology which we possess now is the Nirukta of Vāşka. Old works on metrics, astronomy and grammar have been lost. The oldest of available grammars, that of Panini, deals primarily with classical Sanskrit and only casually refers to the Vedic language.

Caste in the Sutras

As the Kalpasutras deal with religious and social ceremonies, they naturally afford us valuable information about the evolution of the caste system. We have seen that this system existed in the age of the Rig Veda only in a nebulous form. In the age of the Brāhmanas it began slowly to crystallize into a form familiar to us. The priesthood and the nobility became hereditary, and the Vaiśyas and the Sudras began to be subdivided into 'an ever-increasing number of endogamous hereditary groups practising one occupation or at least restricted to a small number of occupations'. The rules relating to inter-caste marriage began to be rigid. How far change of caste was possible, we cannot definitely say. The position of the Sudras was partially improved. They ceased to be mere slaves and became humbler freemen, for the gradual expansion of Aryan rule over different parts of India made it impossible for the leaders of Aryan society to condemn migrations of non-Aryans to slavery. In the Sutras, the Sudras were sometimes allowed to participate in domestic rites. A retrograde step is, however, marked by 'the beginning of a formal theory of defilement which results in a pure-ran of the upper castes being defiled by the shadow of an impure man, and in the taboo of all contact with the impure'.

Political Changes in Later Vedic Period

Some information about the evolution of the political and social organisation of the Aryans in the Indian environment is available from the Brāhmanas, the Upanishads and the Sutra literature. The political subdivisions of the age of the Rig Veda were gradually giving place to territorial units of considerable extent and the growing ideal of political unity found concrete expression in religio-political ceremonies like the Vājapeya, Rājasuya and Asvamedha sacrifices, which were performed by
those Kings who had become somewhat successful in realising their imperial ambitions. The creation of comparatively large states naturally led to the growth of royal power and also to the rise of large cities. There are references in later Vedic literature to Kampila (the capital of the Panchalas), Asandivat (the capital of the Kurus), Kausambi (the capital of Vatsa) and Kasi (the capital of the Kingdom of Kasi). Some tribes who had enjoyed pre-eminence in the age of the Rig Veda, like the Bharatas, lost their political importance; their place was now taken by other tribes, like the Kurus and the Panchalas. It is hardly possible to construct even an outline of the political history of these tribes from the scattered references to their Kings in literature.

SOCIAL CHANGES IN LATER VEDIC PERIOD

Society was gradually assuming a new complexion, for the caste system was about to crystallize into a definite shape. The process of the formation of hereditary occupational groups may be clearly traced, although we can only form conjectures about the political, social and economic causes underlying this process. Those who specialised in the study of the Vedas and took charge of religious ceremonies were called Brahmanas. Those who devoted themselves to poetic and military activities were called Kshatriyas. The general people of the Arya race came to be known as Vaisyas; trade and agriculture were their principal occupations. It is clear, however, that the caste system was still very elastic; inter-marriage was not prohibited, and some Kshatriyas studied the sacred lore and officiated in sacrifices. The Sudras constituted a distinct order in society, but their position was one of great humiliation. The Aitareya Brahmana describes the Sudra as 'the servant of another, to be expelled at will, and to be slain at will.'

Some information regarding the social position of women may be culled from literature. Education was open to them, and some of them (Gargi and Maitreyi, for instance) distinguished themselves in this sphere. But the birth of a daughter was even in those early days regarded as 'a source of misery.' Polygamy was probably widely practised by the Kings and the richer classes. Women could not own or inherit property.
THE 'EPICS' AND THE 'DHARMASAstras'

ORIGIN AND AGE OF THE 'EPICS'

The beginnings of 'epic' poetry may be traced in the Vedic literature, and its connection with the Sutra literature is tolerably clear. We find frequent references to Itihāsa Purāna and Gātha Nārāsamiśi ("songs in praise of men"). Western scholars believe that the Mahabharata and the Ramayana have grown out of those peculiar compositions. "But," says Winternitz, "what we know as the popular epics of the Indians, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are not the old heroic songs as those court-singers and travelling minstrels of ancient India sang them, compiled into unified poems by great poets or at least by clever collectors, but accumulations of very diverse poems of unequal value, which have arisen in the course of centuries owing to continual interpolations and additions." (The Mahabharata, according to him, is 'not one poetic production at all, but rather a whole literature'.)

The oldest references in the Vedic literature relate to the central story of the Mahabharata rather than to that of the Ramayana. In that sense the former is older than the latter. An old heroic poem sung with the Ērīṣṭas, a tribe well known to the Rig Veda, probably forms the nucleus of the Mahabharata, but so many additions and interpolations have transformed it in the course of centuries that the nucleus is now altogether unrecognisable. The great sage Vyasa, to whom Indian tradition ascribes the authorship of the whole book, cannot be regarded even as the compiler of the 'Epic' in its present form. Scholars hold different opinions about the age of the Mahabharata. We may say that in its present form this 'Epic' is probably not older than the fourth century B.C. and not later than the fourth century A.D. Obviously different parts of the present version were composed at different periods.

The Ramayana, though a composite work, has much greater uniformity than the Mahabharata. Winternitz thinks that the

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1 Although Western scholars describe the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as 'Epics', these composite works do not satisfy the requirements of the literary type known to Sanskrit rhetoric as mahākāvya.
original Ramayana (i.e., the nucleus which has grown to its present volume due to countless additions and interpolations) was composed in the third century B.C. by Valmiki on the basis of ancient ballads. If this hypothesis is accepted, it is probable that the Ramayana had its present extent and contents as early as the close of the second century A.D.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AS REFLECTED IN THE 'EPICS'

The two 'Epics' emphasize the importance of the Kshatriyas and relegate the Brahmans to an inferior position in the body politic. Here we find a similarity with the Buddhist point of view. In the 'Epics' we find four classes: "a military power, whose head is the rājā; then a priestly power, politically unorganised, but divided into schools; then the merchant-power, represented by gilds, whose powerful heads (mahājana) are of political importance; then the farmers, unorganised but tenacious of certain rights and boasting of Aryan blood". Below the Aryans were the Sudras, the slaves and the wild tribes.

POLITICAL HISTORY IN THE 'EPICS'

Some historians believe that the genealogical lists given in the 'Epics' should be accepted as roughly accurate. Pargiter calculated that the great war described in the Mahabharata took place in or about 1100 B.C. The Kuśās were one of the most prominent Aryan tribes of the later Vedic period, but it is curious that the Pandus are mentioned for the first time in later Buddhist literature, where they are described as a hill tribe. Both Hastinapur and Indraprastha are historical cities. As regards the story of the Ramayana, some Western scholars take it as an allegorical description of the Aryan penetration of Southern India. But it is necessary to remember that Rama is mentioned in one of the Jatakas. We also know that Kosala was one of the important Aryan Kingdoms for a long time. (The kernel of the story of the Ramayana may well be historically true.)

THE DHARMASAstras

The Dharmasāstras deal with religious duties and civil law. The principal Dharmasāstras are the Samhitās ascribed to Nānu, Vishnu, Vajnavalkya and Narada. The dates of these works
cannot be precisely determined, but they are generally placed between the first and fifth centuries A.D.

In the Dharmasūtras we find the caste system in its rigid form. Apart from the traditional four castes, whose duties are prescribed with meticulous care, these works also refer to the so-called ‘mixed castes’ (i.e., new castes which are said to have originated from inter-marriages and illicit relations between the four original castes).

The Dharmasūtras give us a clear idea about one of the most remarkable features of early Aryan life. Every ‘twice-born’ was expected to pass through four stages (āśrama) of life. The first (Brahmacharya) began with the upanayana ceremony and ended with the completion of studies. During the second stage (Gārhatthyā) the ‘twice-born’ married and lived as a householder. In the third stage (Vānāprastha) he renounced worldly cares and repaired to the quiet forest, where he passed his days in religious contemplation. The fourth stage was Sannyāsa, in which the body was subjected to severe mortification and the soul devoted to the realisation of the ultimate truth.

The Dharmasūtras clearly testify to the gradual degradation of the position of women. According to Manu, they should not be allowed to live independently: "A woman does not deserve independence; she is protected by her father in childhood, by her husband in youth, and by her sons in old age."

It describes the early marriage of girls as a religious duty. Widow marriage was prohibited. Women could not inherit property.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Cambridge History of India, Vol. I.
Winternitz, 'A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I.
Radhakrishnan, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I.
CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION

SECTION I

JAINISM

In the sixth century B.C. north-eastern India witnessed a remarkable religious revolution which profoundly influenced the course of Indian history. It was in some respects a reaction against the cumbersome rituals and bloody sacrifices which in those days constituted the essence of the Vedic religion in its popular form. Viewed from the philosophical standpoint, however, it was a continuation of the metaphysical speculations of the Upanishads. It would be a mistake to regard the origin of Jainism and Buddhism as a breach with the Vedic view of life, although in course of time both these religions developed certain ideals and rituals inconsistent with Vedic philosophy and worship.

CAREER OF MAHAVIRA

Vardhamana Mahavira is usually regarded as the founder of Jainism, although according to the Jains he was but one of a long series of teachers (called Tirthankaras) to whom their sect owes its origin and development. Of the thirty-three Tirthankaras mentioned in Jain literature, only one, Parsvanath, was probably a historical personage; the others are legendary figures unknown to political history. Parsvanath is said to have been the son of a King of Benares. He renounced the world and became an ascetic. His main teachings emphasized the spiritual value of non-injury (Ahimsa), non-lying (i.e., truth), non-stealing and non-possession.

The dates of Mahavira's birth and death are uncertain but there is no doubt that he lived during the sixth century B.C. According to some authorities he died in 528 B.C., while some writers place his death as late as 468 B.C. He was born near Vaisali in North Bihar. He belonged to a well-known Kshatriya clan, and was related to the Lichchhavi ruling family of Vaisali.
He lived the life of an ordinary householder till his thirtieth year. Then he became an ascetic, and for twelve years he wandered about at various places, continually practising the utmost self-torture. At the age of forty-two he attained supreme knowledge (Kāivalya) and became known as Jīna (conqueror of passions) or Nirgranth (free from worldly fetters). From these terms are derived the names of his followers—Jainas or Nirgranthas. The remaining thirty years of Mahavira's life were spent in preaching his doctrines in Magadha, Anga, Mithila and Kosala. He is said to have come into personal touch with the powerful Kings of Magadha, Bimbisara and Ajatasatru. He accepted the teachings of Parsvanath as the basis of his faith, and to the four virtues enjoined by his predecessor he added a fifth, viz., chastity. His death took place at Pava (Patna district).

DOCTRINES OF JAINISM

The Jains rejected the authority of the Vedas and the practice of animal sacrifice. Their devotion to the doctrine of Ahimsā was far more strict than that of the Buddhists. They believed that every object possessed a soul (jīva) which was endowed with consciousness. They rejected the conception of the creation of the world by a Supreme Power, and according to them, "God is only the highest, noblest and fullest manifestation of the powers which lie latent in the soul of man". They accepted the Hindu theory of karma. Salvation meant complete deliverance from all karma inherited from past lives, and it could be attained only through the so-called 'three jewels' (Triratna: right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. They laid great stress on asceticism under the impression that the soul was strengthened by penances and self-torture.

EARLY HISTORY OF JAINISM

In the sixth century B.C. Jainism and Buddhism were rivals. Both Mahavira and Gautama preached their doctrines in Eastern India and recruited their disciples from the same class of people. Jainism was probably more successful at the beginning. Chandragupta Maurya is said to have embraced this religion. There is evidence to show that before the end of the fourth century B.C. Jainism had spread in Southern India.
In the third century B.C. the Jains were divided into two sects called Svetámbara and Digambara. The former put on white robes, but the latter remained stark naked in imitation of Mahavira’s practice.

Jainism never spread outside the boundaries of India, but for centuries it was one of the most flourishing religions in Southern and Western India.

SACRED LITERATURE OF THE JAINS

At the beginning of the third century B.C. a Jain Council held at Pataliputra arranged the teachings of Mahavira in twelve Angas. In course of time the twelfth Anga was lost. The remaining eleven Angas were rearranged by a Jain Council held at Valabhi in the fifth century A.D. The validity of these Angas was not recognised by the Digambaras; so they constitute the sacred literature of the Svetámbaras alone. This literature is written in a form of Prakrit called Ārsha or Ardha-Māgadhi, for the Jains, like the Buddhists, were anxious to make their holy books accessible to the common people. It was from the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. that commentaries and philosophical works began to be composed in Sanskrit.

The canonical literature of the Jains is vast, but its religious and philosophical value is much greater than its literary value. As Winternitz observes, “With rare exceptions the sacred books of the Jains are written in a dry-as-dust, matter-in-fact, didactic tone, and... are seldom instinct with that general interest which so many Buddhist texts possess. Hence, important as they are for the specialist, they cannot claim the interest of the general reader to anything approaching so great an extent.”

NON-CANONICAL LITERATURE OF THE JAINS

The Jains have a vast non-canonical literature as well, written partly in Prakrit and partly in Sanskrit. Among the Jain writers the following deserve special mention—Bhadrabahu, Siddhasena Divakara, Haribhadra, Siddha, Hemchandra. Narrative literature constitutes one of the most interesting achievements of the Jains. They have also composed remarkable epics, novels, dramas and hymns. More important are their contributions to philosophy. In opposition to the Buddhist
doctrines of Sunyavāda they elaborated the doctrine of Syādvāda. Jain philosophers attained special excellence in Logic. Grammar, Lexicography, Poetics, Mathematics, Astronomy, Astrology and Political Science have been considerably enriched by Jain contributions. The Jains also rendered valuable service to the development of some vernacular languages—Tamil, Telegu, Kanarese, Gujarati, Hindi and Rajasthani. On the whole, they occupy a very prominent place in the history of Indian thought and literature.

OTHER SECTS

In the sixth century B.C. the spiritual unrest in Eastern India was so acute that a large number of religious sects arose under different teachers. The Jain texts refer to 363 sects; according to the Buddhist works there were 62 sects when the Buddha began to preach his religion. Our information about these sects is extremely meagre. But there are frequent references to the Ajivikas, who are also mentioned in Asoka’s edicts.

SECTION II

BUDDHISM

LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Gautama, the illustrious founder of Buddhism, was a contemporary of Mahavira. In his case also the dates of birth and death are uncertain. Some scholars hold that he attained Parinibbāna in 483 B.C., while others prefer 543 B.C. He belonged to the Sakya clan, whose principality lay in the Nepal terai to the north of the Basti district in the United Provinces. Like Mahavira, therefore, he was a Kshatriya. His father, Suddhodana, was the elected chief of the Sakya clan, and lived at Kapilavastu. Gautama was born in the Lumbini garden (modern Rummimdei, in Nepal), where the well-known Rummimdei Pillar of Asoka still commemorates that great event. At an early age he married Gopa or Yasodhara, and a son named Rahula was born to him when he was twenty-nine years of age. His mind had already been infected by the prevailing
spiritual unrest, and he embraced asceticism in quest of salvation. For some time he studied philosophy at Rajagriha under two distinguished teachers. Then he went to Uruvilva (near modern Bodh Gaya) and practised the severest austerities in imitation of the ascetics of that age. But salvation still remained as distant as ever. Deep concentration and profound meditation at last led to the discovery of the ultimate truth. Gautama became Buddha (the Enlightened One). At that time he was in his thirty-fifth year.

The Buddha spent the remaining years of his life in preaching the truth as he realised it. (He first ‘turned the wheel of the Law’ and set it in motion in the Deer Park at Sarnath near Benares.) Here he was able to secure five disciples. During the next forty-five years he spread his doctrines and collected many disciples in Oudh, Bihar and some adjoining territories. He passed away at the age of eighty at Kusinagara (modern Kasia in the Gorakhpur district, U. P.).

DOCTRINES OF BUDDHISM

(The Buddha was a practical reformer. His primary aim was to secure deliverance from the grim reality of sorrow and suffering.) So he enunciated the Four Noble Truths: (1) There is suffering. (2) This suffering must have a cause. (3) Suffering must be got rid of. (4) In order to get rid of suffering, one must know the right way. Suffering was caused by desire; therefore, the extinction of desire would lead to the cessation of suffering. Desire could be extinguished if one followed the noble Eightfold Path: (1) right belief, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right means of livelihood, (6) right endeavour, (7) right recollection, (8) right meditation. This was the great Middle Path, for it avoided the extremes of gross luxury and severe austerity. This Middle Path led finally to Nirvana, which implied not only the extinction of desire but also the attainment of a perfect state of tranquillity. Emphasis was laid on the observance of the Silas (or moralities, e.g., giving up of killing, falsehood, luxury, etc.), Samādhi (concentration) and Prajñā (insight).

The Buddha differed from Mahavira in his attitude towards asceticism. He laid great stress on non-injury to living creatures, but in this respect Jainism is far more strict than Buddhism.
The Buddha repudiated the authority of the Vedas and denied the spiritual efficacy of Vedic rites and sacrifices, although he accepted the traditional belief in transmigration of the soul and the law of Karma. He did not concern himself with the problem of the existence of God, for abstruse metaphysical speculations were, according to him, quite irrelevant for the development of man's moral and spiritual worth. His simple faith was meant for all, irrespective of sex, age or social position. He introduced the practice of holding religious discourses in the language of the common people, and refused to confine spiritual teaching to Sanskrit, the language of the learned few.

SACRED LITERATURE OF THE BUDDHISTS

Shortly after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha his principal disciples met together in a general council at Rajagriha and made a complete and authentic collection of his teachings. But the sacred literature of the Buddhists did not probably take final shape till a century or two later. This literature is collectively known as the Tripitaka ('three baskets'). The first part is the Vinaya-pitaka, which lays down rules for the guidance of the Buddhist monks and the general management of the Buddhist Church. The second part is the Sutta-pitaka, a collection of the religious discourses of the Buddha. The third part is the Abhidhamma-pitaka, which contains an exposition of the philosophical principles underlying Buddhism.

The second general council of the Buddhists was held at Vaisali about a century after the Buddha's death. This council condemned some prevalent heresies and revised the scriptures. The third general council was held at Pataliputra under the auspices of Asoka. Once again some heresies were condemned and an attempt was made to give the old scriptures a definite and final shape. The fourth, and last, general council was held under the patronage of Kanishka either in Kashmir or at Jalandhar (in East Punjab). This council prepared authoritative commentaries on the sacred texts.

In connection with the sacred literature of the Buddhists we may refer to the Jātakas. These Buddhist Birth Stories are certainly older than the second and first centuries B.C. From their value to the devout Buddhists, the Jātakas should be carefully studied by all students of ancient Indian
history, for they provide important data relating to social and economic conditions.

SECTION III

GROWTH OF POLITICAL UNITY

IDEAL OF UNITY

The ideal of political unity is a familiar conception in later Vedic literature. The Vājaśeṣya sacrifice conferred on the performer a superior kind of monarchy called Sāmrājya. The object of Aindra Mahābhishēka was to attain the dignity of Ekarāt or sole ruler of the earth. A paramount ruler was expected to perform the Asvamedha sacrifice, and several monarchs who are said to have performed this great sacrifice are mentioned in ancient literature. But in the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to say whether any large empire was really founded in India before the fourth century B.C., when Mahapadma Nanda united a large portion of Northern India and probably also some parts of the Deccan under the imperial banner of Magadha.

POLITICAL CONDITION IN THE EARLY SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

We learn from ancient Buddhist sources that in the first half of the sixth century B.C. there were sixteen Śrāvás (mahājanapadas) in India. These States were the following:

1. Kasi: Its capital was Varanasi (modern Benares). At first Kasi was the most powerful of all the mahājanapadas, but later on it was compelled to yield the place of honour to Kosala.

2. Kosala: It roughly corresponds to modern Oudh. Its capital was Sravasti (modern Sahet Mahet, Gonda district, U. P.). Two other important cities in Kosala were Ayodhya and Saketa. This Kingdom included the territory of the Sakyas of Kapilavastu. About the middle of the sixth century B.C. Kasi formed an integral part of the Kosalan monarchy.

3. Anga: It lay to the east of Magadha. Its capital was Champa (near modern Bhagalpur in Bihar). It was a rival of Magadha. At one time the Anga Kingdom included Magadha, but later on it was annexed to Magadha by Bimbisāra.
4. Magadha: It corresponds roughly to the modern Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar. Its earliest capital was Girivraja, near Rajgir, among the hills in the neighbourhood of Gaya. Then the capital was transferred to Rajagriha, and finally to Pataliputra. Some early Kings of Magadha are mentioned in Vedic, 'Epic' and Jain literature.

5. The Vajji Confederation: This tribal State included confederate clans, of whom the Vajjis, the Vidchans, the
Lichchhavis and the Jnatrikas were the most important. The city of Vaisali (modern Basarh and Bakhira in the Muzaffarpur district in Bihar) was the capital of the Vajjis and the Lichchhavis and also of the entire confederation. Some modern scholars hold that the Lichchhavis were of Mongolian origin. The Videhans had their capital at Mithila (modern Janakpur in Nepal). The Jnatrikas, the clan of the Jain teacher Mahavira, lived at Kundapura and Kollaga, suburbs of Vaisali.

6. The Malla territory: The territory of the Mallas probably lay to the north of the Vajji State. It was divided into two main parts, which had for their capitals Kusinara (in Gorakhpur district, U.P.) and Pava (near Kusinara). It was a republican State like the Vajji Confederation, although in pre-Buddhist times it was a monarchy.

7. Chedi: It corresponds roughly to modern Bundelkhand and the adjoining tracts. Its capital was Suktimati (near Banda in U.P.).

8. Vamsa or Vatsa: It lay along the banks of the Jumna, to the north-east of Avanti, with its capital at Kausambi (modern Kosam, near Allahabad).

9. Kuru: Its capital was Indraprastha (near Delhi). Another important town was Hastinapura. In the sixth century B.C. the Kuru Kingdom was not at all politically important.

10. Panchala: It roughly corresponds to modern Bundelkhand and some portions of the Central Doab. The Ganges divided it into two divisions, northern and southern, of which the capitals were Ahichchhatra (modern Ramnagar in the Bareilly district, U. P.) and Kampilya respectively.

11. Matsya: Its capital was Virata-nagara (modern Bairat in the Jaipur State, Rajputana).

12. Surasena: Its capital was Mathura.

13. Assaka or Asmaka: It was situated on the banks of the Godavari.

14. Avanti: It roughly corresponds to Central Malwa and the adjoining parts of the Central Provinces. It was divided into two parts. The northern part had its capital at Ujjain.
the capital of the southern part was Mañishmati (modern Mandhata, on the Narmada).

15. Gandhara: It included Kashmir as well as the Taxila region. Its capital was Taxila (in the Rawalpindi district in West Punjab).

16. The Kamboja territory: The Kambojas probably lived in the north-west, for they are usually associated with Gandhara in epigraphic records and literature.

Apart from its importance from the standpoint of historical geography, this list of mahājanapadas enables us to form some general conclusions about the political condition of India in the early part of the sixth century B.C. In the first place, it is quite clear that there was no political unity. India was divided into numerous petty States engaged in internecine strife. Secondly, most of the mahājanapadas lay in modern Bihar, the United Provinces and Central India. There is no mention of Assam, Bengal, Orissa, the Far South, Gujarat and Sind.1 Asmaka is the only South Indian State mentioned in the list. With regard to the Punjab, the first Indian province colonised by the Aryans, only two States are mentioned: one (Gandhara) in the extreme north-west, and another (Kuru) in the extreme south-east. The central portion of the Punjab2 is altogether excluded from the list. The valleys of the Ganges and the Jumna were obviously the centre of political gravity in that area. Thirdly, although monarchy was the predominant form of government, there were some republican States in north-eastern India. In addition to the Vajjis and the Mallas mentioned in this list, we know from Buddhist evidence the names of some other republican tribes which flourished in the time of the Buddha. Of these the most important were the Sakyas, the Koliyas (the eastern neighbours of the Sakyas), the Bhaggas (whose State was a dependency of the Vatsa Kingdom), the Bulis of Allakappa, the Kalamas of Kesaputta (probably in Kosala) and the Moriyas of Pipphalivana (not far from Kusinara). Most of these republican States were gradually absorbed in the expanding empire of Magadha.

\footnote{There was a small kingdom named Rornka in Sauvira (the Lower Valley).}
BEGINNINGS OF MAGADHIAN SUPREMACY

About the middle of the sixth century B.C. Magadha was ruled by Bimbisara, who belonged to the Haryanka family. He was the son of a petty chief of South Bihar, but he extended his ancestral dominions and raised the power and prestige of Magadha. Rajagriha was his capital. He cultivated friendly relations with the prominent Kings of his age. The King of Gandhara sent him an embassy. He sent a physician to cure the King of Avanti. He contracted matrimonial alliances with the ruling families of Madra (Central Punjab), Kosala and Vaisali. His Kosalan wife brought a Kasi village producing a large revenue for bath and perfume money. These marriages undoubtedly strengthened Bimbisara’s political position. The old struggle between Magadha and Anga was continued, with the result that Anga was incorporated in Magadha. Bimbisara ruled over a fairly large Kingdom, which is said to have embraced 80,000 townships. That he had a strong personality is apparent from the fact that he is said to have exercised a rigid control over his high officers. The criminal law of Magadha was severe; the punishments inflicted for various crimes included imprisonment, scourging, branding, beheading, tearing out of the tongue, breaking ribs, etc. Probably this tradition continued till the Maurya period, but during the Gupta period the criminal law became humane.

Bimbisara was devoted to the Buddha and showed special marks of favour to the Buddhist monks. It is difficult to say whether he was really converted to the new faith. Some Jain works represent him as a devotee of Mahavira.

Bimbisara was succeeded by his son Ajatasatru, whom the Buddhist tradition represents as a parricide. The story that Ajatasatru visited the Buddha and expressed remorse for his sin is confirmed by one of the Bharhut sculptures of about the middle of the second century B.C.

Ajatasatru followed a policy of aggrandisement and enlarged the boundaries of the Magadhan Kingdom. His first war was probably waged against Kosala. After the death of Bimbisara’s Kosalan wife her brother Prasenajit wanted to re-occupy the Kasi village which had been settled on her. After a long struggle the two Kings came to terms. Ajatasatru...
married Prasenajit's daughter, who received the disputed Kasi village for her bath money.

Jain writers refer to Ajatasatru's war with the Lichchhavis of Vaisali. The causes of this war are uncertain, but it was probably not unconnected with the Kosalan war. Probably Kosala and Vaisali made a common cause against the establishment of Magadhan supremacy. After a long and protracted struggle Ajatasatru conquered Vaisali. Magadha now became the most powerful Kingdom in Northern India. It is probable that the rise of Magadha aroused the jealousy of Avanti, and the relations between the two States were strained. Whether hostilities actually broke out in the reign of Ajatasatru, we do not know.

According to ancient Jain works Ajatasatru was a follower of Mahavira, while the Buddhists represent him as a devotee of Buddha.

Ajatasatru was probably succeeded by his son Udayin, who founded a new capital known as Pataliputra. Its situation at the confluence of two large rivers, the Ganges and the Son, made it commercially as well as strategically important. The Jain writers represent the King of Avanti as an enemy of Udayin.

The successors of Udayin were probably weak rulers. The Buddhist tradition represents them all as parricides. The people became discontented, and taking this opportunity a minister named Sisunaga seized the throne. He transferred his capital at first to Girivraja and then to Vaisali. His important achievement was the annihilation of the power and prestige of the Pradyota dynasty of Avanti, which had meanwhile become more powerful by the conquest of Kausambi.

Kalasoka, who succeeded Sisunaga, transferred the capital to Pataliputra. The second general council of the Buddhists was held at Vaisali during his reign. He was probably murdered by Mahapadma, the founder of the Nanda dynasty.

THE NANDAS

According to the Puranas Mahapadma (or Ugrasena) was born of a Sudra mother; the Jain tradition represents him as the son of a courtesan by a barber. A Greek writer says that he 'led the affections of the queen', murdered the King and
his sons, and seized the throne. There is no doubt that he was low-born and occupied the throne by ignoble methods, but he was certainly a very able and powerful ruler. The Puranas describe him as 'the destroyer of all the Kshatriyas' and 'the sole ruler (ekarāt) of the earth'. It is difficult to ascertain the precise extent of the empire founded by Mahapadma Nanda. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela seems to prove that Kalinga was included in his dominions. The occupation of Kosala is proved by literary evidence. Some portions of the Deccan, specially Kuntala (the southern part of the Bombay Presidency and of Mysore) and Asmaka, probably formed part of the Nanda Empire, but the evidence on this point is doubtful. According to the Greek writers, the powerful peoples who dwelt beyond the river Beas in the time of Alexander the Great were under the rule of one sovereign who had his capital at Pataliputra. It is clear, therefore, that Mahapadma united a large portion of India under one sceptre. He may be regarded as the first historical empire-builder in India.

Mahapadma was followed by his eight sons who ruled in succession. The last King, called Dhana in Buddhist literature, was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. The Greek writers call him Agrammes or Xandrames (probably a corruption of the Sanskrit patronymic Augrasainya). There is no doubt that he was a very powerful ruler. According to a Greek writer, his army was composed of 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 3,000 four-horsed chariots and 3,000 elephants. The enormous wealth of the Nandas is frequently referred to in ancient Indian literature. But it seems that he was unpopular with his subjects for his low birth, irreligious disposition and financial extortion. He was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya dynasty, with the assistance of the crafty Brahmin statesman, Chanakya or Kautilya.

NOTE ON CHRONOLOGY

In the present state of our knowledge it is almost impossible to settle definitely the chronology of the rulers of Magadha till the invasion of Alexander the Great. In the absence of epigraphic and numismatic evidence we have to rely exclusively on literary data, but Brahmanical literature (i.e., the Pu
does not agree with Buddhist literature. For reasons which cannot be discussed here the statements of the Buddhist writers deserve preference. Accordingly, the Buddhist tradition has been followed in the text. According to the Puranas, Sisinaga founded a dynasty which ruled in Magadha for 321 years, and was overthrown by Mahapadma Nanda. Bimbisara was the fifth ruler of this dynasty. According to the Buddhist works, the rulers of the Haryanka dynasty (of whom Bimbisara was the first) were followed by Sisinaga and his descendants, and the total period covered by these two dynasties was 200 years. The accession of Bimbisara may be placed in or about 545 B.C.

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