THE WONDER THAT WAS

INDIA

A SURVEY OF THE CULTURE OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT BEFORE THE COMING OF THE MUSLIMS

BY

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IN MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER
WHO DIED WHILE THIS WORK
WAS IN PROGRESS

"I shall not now speak of the knowledge of the Hindus, . . . of their subtle discoveries in the science of astronomy—discoveries even more ingenious than those of the Greeks and Babylonians—of their rational system of mathematics, or of their method of calculation which no words can praise strongly enough—I mean the system using nine symbols. If these things were known by the people who think that they alone have mastered the sciences because they speak Greek they would perhaps be convinced, though a little late in the day, that other folk, not only Greeks, but men of a different tongue, know something as well as they."

The Syrian astronomer-monk SEVERUS SEBOKHT (*writing A.D. 662*).

PREFACE

THIS book has been written to interpret ancient Indian civilization, as I understand it, to the ordinary Western reader who has little knowledge of the subject, but some interest in it. The three nations of the Indian Sub-continent, since the momentous days of 1947 when they gained complete independence, have been playing an ever-growing part in the affairs of the world, and there is perhaps room for a new outline of their ancient culture, to replace the many excellent works now out of print, and to further our understanding of the civilization of these new states in the contemporary world.

As this book is intended for the general reader I have tried, as far as possible, to leave nothing unexplained. And as I believe that civilization is more than religion and art I have tried, however briefly, to cover all aspects of Indian life and thought. Though primarily intended for Westerners I hope that the book may be of some interest to Indian, Pākistānī and Sinhalese readers also, as the interpretation of a friendly *mleccha*, who has great love and respect for the civilizations of their lands, and many friends among the descendants of the people whose culture he studies. The work may also be of help to students who are embarking on a course of serious Indological study; for their benefit I have included detailed bibliographies and appendices. But, for the ordinary reader, the work is cumbersome enough, and therefore I have not given references for every statement. I have tried to reduce Sanskrit terms to a minimum, but the reader without background knowledge will find definitions of all Indian words used in the text in the index, which also serves as a glossary.

Sanskrit, Prākrit and Pāli words are transliterated according to the standard system at present used by Indologists; this, with its plethora of diacritic marks, may at first seem irritating, but it is the only sound method of expressing the original spelling, and gives a clear idea of the correct pronunciation. Modern Indian proper names are generally given in the most usual spelling* with the addition of marks over the long vowels, to indicate their approximately correct pronunciation. I have tried to employ consistently the names and spellings officially adopted by the new states of the Sub-continent (e.g. Banāras for Benares, Uttar Pradesh for United Provinces, etc.,) and as these do not appear in pre-war atlases they are shown in the

* Except in a few cases where, to avoid confusion, I have substituted *a* for the more usual *u*, e.g. Panjāb, Satlej, etc.

map of modern India in the endpaper.[1] Throughout this work the word "India" is of course used in its geographical sense, and includes Pākistān. Though very inadequately, I have tried to include in the scope of this survey Ceylon, whose culture owed much to India, but developed many individual features of its own.

The translations, except where specified, are my own. I lay no claim to great literary merit for them, and have not been able to reproduce the untranslatable incantation of the originals. In most cases they are not literal translations, since the character of Indian classical languages is so unlike that of English that literal translations are at the best dull and at the worst positively ludicrous. In places I have taken some liberty with the originals, in order to make their purport clearer to the Western reader, but in all cases I have tried to give an honest interpretation of the intentions of their authors, as I understand them.

In the course of writing this book I have asked the advice of several friends and colleagues, and have also received their encouragement and help in other respects. I must specially thank (in alphabetical order) Mr. F. R. Allchin, Dr. A. A. Bake, Dr. L. D. Barnett (my respected teacher, whose *Antiquities of India*, written over forty years ago, has to some extent served as a model for this book), Professor J. Brough (who first suggested that I should write this book), Mrs. Devahuti, Professor A. T. Hatto, Mr. J. R. Marr (for translations on p. 464ff), Dr. A. K. Narain, Professor C. H. Philips, Mr. P. Rawson, Mr. C. A. Rylands, and Dr. Arthur Waley (for translations on p. 477f). I would also thank the numerous institutions and individuals who have kindly allowed me to reproduce illustrations of which they hold the copyright, and whose names are recorded above each plate[2]; and the Librarian and Staff of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for their courtsey and help. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my wife for much encouragement.

A. L. BASHAM

London, 1953

[1] Endpapers not included in this edition.

[2] At the time of going to press it has not been possible to trace the present owners of the copyright of the following illustrations: plates XVIb, XIXc, XXa, XLIIb, LIX. They are asked to communicate with the Publisher.

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* The dates given for these dynasties are the periods of their importance. In many cases their existence can be traced both earlier and later.

PRONUNCIATION

MORE detailed notes on the Indian alphabet and its pronunciation are given in App. X, p. 506ff. The following is a rough guide for the general reader.

The vowels *ā, ī, ū, e, ai, o, au* are long, and have approximately the same pronunciation as in Italian, or as the vowels in the English words *calm, machine, rule, prey, time, go* and *cow*, respectively. *A, i, u* are short, and equivalent to the vowels in the English words *cut, bit* and *bull*. The reader should avoid the temptation to pronounce *a* as in English *sat*. Thus Sanskrit *sama* is pronounced as English *summer*. *Ṛ* is classed as a short vowel, and is pronounced as *ri* in *rich*.

The aspirated consonants *th* and *ph* must never be pronounced as in English *thin* and *phial*, but as in *pothole* and *shepherd*. *C* is pronounced as *ch* in *church*. *Ś* and *ṣ* are both generally pronounced as English *sh* in *shape*. The distinction between the other sub-dotted "retroflex" consonants (*ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh* and *ṇ*) and the dentals, without dots, is not important to the general reader.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

NOTES marked with *, †, ‡, etc., are given at the bottom of the page. Those marked with figures are references only, and are given with classified bibliographies at the back of the book; they may be ignored by the reader who does not intend to pursue the topic further.

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THE WONDER THAT WAS INDIA

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I

INTRODUCTION: INDIA AND HER ANCIENT CULTURE

THE LAND OF INDIA

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

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

Of the two river systems, that of the Indus, now mainly in Pākistān, had the earliest civilization, and gave its name to India.* The Fertile Plain of the Panjāb ("Five Rivers"), watered by the five great tributaries of the Indus—the Jhelam, Chenāb, Rāvī, Beās and Satlaj—had a high culture over two thousand years before Christ, which spread down the lower course of the Indus as far as the sea. The lower Indus, in the Pākistān province of Sind, now passes through barren desert, though this was once a well watered and fertile land.

* The Indians knew this river as *Sindhu*, and the Persians, who found difficulty in pronouncing an initial *s*, called it *Hindu*. From Persia the word passed to Greece, where the whole of India became known by the name of the western river. The ancient Indians knew their sub-continent as *Jambudvīpa* (the continent of the *jambu* tree) or *Bhāratavarṣa* (the Land of the sons of Bharata, a legendary emperor) (p. 488f). The latter name has been in part revived by the present Indian government. With the Muslim invasion the Persian name returned in the form Hindustān, and those of its inhabitants who followed the old religion became known as Hindūs.

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

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

From Kashmīr in the North to Cape Comorin in the South the sub-continent is about 2,000 miles long, and therefore its climate varies considerably. The Himālayan region has cold winters, with occasional frost and snow. In the northern plains the winter is cool,

with wide variation of day and night temperature, whereas the hot season is almost intolerable. The temperature of the Deccan varies less with the season, though in the higher parts of the plateau nights are cool in winter. The Tamil Plain is continuously hot, but its temperature never rises to that of the northern plains in summer.

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

Then clouds appear, high in the sky; in a few days they grow more numerous and darker, rolling up in banks from the sea. At last, in June, the rains come in great downpouring torrents, with much thunder and lightning. The temperature quickly drops, and within a few days the world is green and smiling again. Beasts, birds and insects reappear, the trees put on new leaves, and the earth is covered with fresh grass. The torrential rains, which fall at intervals for a couple of months and then gradually die away, make travel and all outdoor activity difficult, and often bring epidemics in their wake; but, despite these hardships, to the Indian mind the coming of the monsoon corresponds to the coming of spring in Europe. For this reason thunder and lightning, in Europe generally looked on as inauspicious, have no terrors for the Indian, but are welcome signs of the goodness of heaven (p. 255).

It has often been said that the scale of natural phenomena in India, and her total dependence on the monsoon, have helped to form the character of her peoples. Even today major disasters, such as flood, famine and plague, are hard to check, and in older times their control was almost impossible. Many other ancient civilizations, such as those of the Greeks, Romans and Chinese, had to contend with hard winters, which encouraged sturdiness and resource. India, on the other hand, was blessed by a bounteous Nature, who demanded little of man in return for sustenance, but in her terrible anger could not be appeased by any human effort. Hence, it has been suggested, the Indian character has tended to fatalism and quietism, accepting fortune and misfortune alike without complaint.

How far this judgement is a fair one is very dubious. Though an element of quietism certainly existed in the ancient Indian attitude

to life, as it does in India today, it was never approved by moralists. The great achievements of ancient India and Ceylon—their immense irrigation works and splendid temples, and the long campaigns of their armies—do not suggest a devitalized people. If the climate had any effect on the Indian character it was, we believe, to develop a love of ease and comfort, an addiction to the simple pleasures and luxuries so freely given by Nature—a tendency to which the impulse to self-denial and asceticism on the one hand, and occasional strenuous effort on the other, were natural reactions.

THE DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT INDIA

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

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

Meanwhile a few Jesuits succeeded in mastering Sanskrit, the classical language of India. One of them, Father Hanxleden, who worked in Malabar from 1699 to 1732, compiled the first Sanskrit grammar in a European tongue, which remained in manuscript, but

was used by his successors. Another, Father Coeurdoux, in 1767, was probably the first student to recognise the kinship of Sanskrit and the languages of Europe, and suggested that the brāhmaṇs of India were descended from one of the sons of Japhet, whose brothers migrated to the West. Yet the Jesuits, for all their studies, gained no real understanding of India's past: the foundations of Indology were laid independently, in another part of India, and by other hands.

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

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

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

a 17th-century Persian version—the translation of the whole manuscript, containing 50 Upaniṣads, appearing in 1801.

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

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

Meanwhile the study of ancient Indian culture was proceeding in another direction. The first work of the Asiatic Society of Bengal had been almost entirely literary and linguistic, and most of the 19th-century Indologists were primarily scholars, working on written

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

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

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

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

Even in the last century, much valuable work was done by natives of India, especially by such Sanskritists and epigraphists as Drs. Bhāū Dājī, Bhagavānlāl Indrājī, Rājendralāl Mitra, and the great Sir R. G. Bhāndārkar (pl. IV*c*). Now the chief initiative in Indology comes from the Indians themselves. Indians are well on the way to completing the first critical edition of the gigantic *Mahābhārata*, and have started work on the enormous Poona Sanskrit Dictionary, which, when complete, will probably be the greatest work of lexicography the world has ever seen. The Director General of the Archæological Department is now an Indian (Dr. A. Ghosh), and today the European Indologist cannot hope to be more than the helper and friendly critic of the Indian. In times like these, however, when Asia is reacting against a century and a half of European domination, and a new culture, which will contain elements of East and West in firm synthesis, is in the process of birth, the European student still has a useful role to play in Indology.

THE GLORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

At most periods of her history India, though a cultural unit, has been torn by internecine war. In statecraft her rulers were cunning and unscrupulous. Famine, flood and plague visited her from time to time, and killed millions of her people. Inequality of birth was given religious sanction, and the lot of the humble was generally hard. Yet our overall impression is that in no other part of the

M. Hürlimann, "Indien", Atlantis Verlag, Zürich

The Plains. Irrigation near Chingleput, Madras

M. Hürlimann, "Indien". Atlantis Verlag, Zürich

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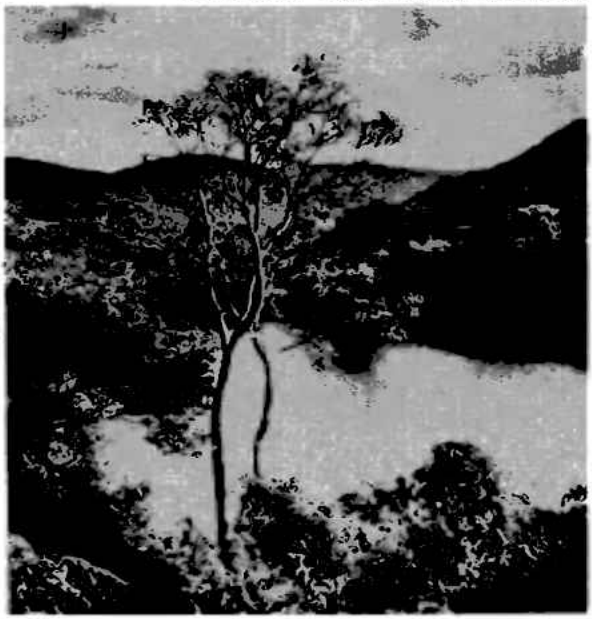


The Jungle.
Western Ghāts

A. Naurath, "Glories of Hindustan". Methuen & Co., London

b

The Hills.
On the Jhelam,
Kashmīr

A. L. Basham

c

The Deccan
Plateau.
Fortress of
Devagiri
(Daulatābād)

PLATE II

ancient world were the relations of man and man, and of man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number, and in no other ancient lawbook are their rights so well protected as in the *Arthaśāstra* (p. 152f). No other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu (p. 126). In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of non-combatants. The ghastly sadism of the kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but, in comparison with conditions in other early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity.

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

The European student who concentrates on religious texts of a certain type may well gain the impression that ancient India was a land of "life-negating" * ascetics, imposing their gloomy and sterile ideas upon the trusting millions who were their lay followers. The fallacy of this impression is quite evident from the secular literature, sculpture and painting of the time. The average Indian, though he might pay lip-service to the ascetic and respect his ideals, did not find life a vale of tears from which to escape at all costs; rather he was willing to accept the world as he found it, and to extract what happiness he could from it. Daṇḍin's description of the joys of a simple meal served in a comparatively poor home (p. 444ff) is probably more typical of ancient Indian everyday life than are the Upaniṣads. India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration of her ancient culture.

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

II

PREHISTORY: THE HARAPPĀ CULTURE AND THE ĀRYANS

PRIMITIVE MAN IN INDIA

LIKE prehistoric Europe, Northern India experienced ice ages, and it was after the second of these, in the Second Interglacial Period, from about 400,000 to 200,000 B.C., that man first left surviving traces in India. These are the palæolithic pebble tools of the Soan Culture, so called from the little river in the Panjāb where they have been found in large numbers. In type they resemble tools widely distributed all over the Old World, from England to Africa and China. In India no human remains have been found in association with the tools, but elsewhere such industries have been shown to be the work of primitive anthropoid types, such as the *Pithecanthropus* of Java and China.

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

The Ganges Valley is one of the newest parts of the earth's surface, and many geologists believe that at the time of these two stone-age industries much of it was still a shallow sea; but there may have been contact between them by way of Rājasthān, for the tools of one culture have been found sporadically in the region of the other. The men who used these palæoliths must have lived in India for many millennia. Who they were and what became of them we do not know. Their blood may still flow in the inhabitants of modern India, but if the pebble industry of Soan was the work of proto-human anthropoids they must have vanished long ago, like the Neanderthal men in Europe and the Pithecanthropi of the Far East. *Homo sapiens* continued in India, his skill and technical equipment imperceptibly improving down the ages. He learnt to fashion microliths,

tiny and delicate stone arrowheads and other implements, which have been found in many parts of India, from the N.-W. Frontier to the extreme south. Similar microlithic industries occur in many parts of the Near East and Africa, but their chronological relationship with the microlithic industry of India is not clear. In parts of the Deccan microliths are often found together with polished stone axes, and it would seem that in the remoter parts of the Peninsula their use was only fully replaced by that of iron tools around the beginning of the Christian age.[1]

THE FIRST VILLAGES

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

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

Developed agriculture and permanent villages probably began in the 5th millennium B.C., in the Middle East. In India the earliest remains of a settled culture are of little agricultural villages in Balūchistān and lower Sind, perhaps dating from the end of the 4th millennium.

Classical writers show that when, in 326 B.C., Alexander of Macedon crossed the Indus, the climate of N.-W. India was much as it is today, though perhaps a little moister. The river valleys were fertile and well wooded, though the coastal strip to the west of the Indus, now called the Makrān, and much of Balūchistān, were already dry and desolate. But in 3000 B.C. the climate was very different. The whole Indus region was well forested, providing fuel to burn

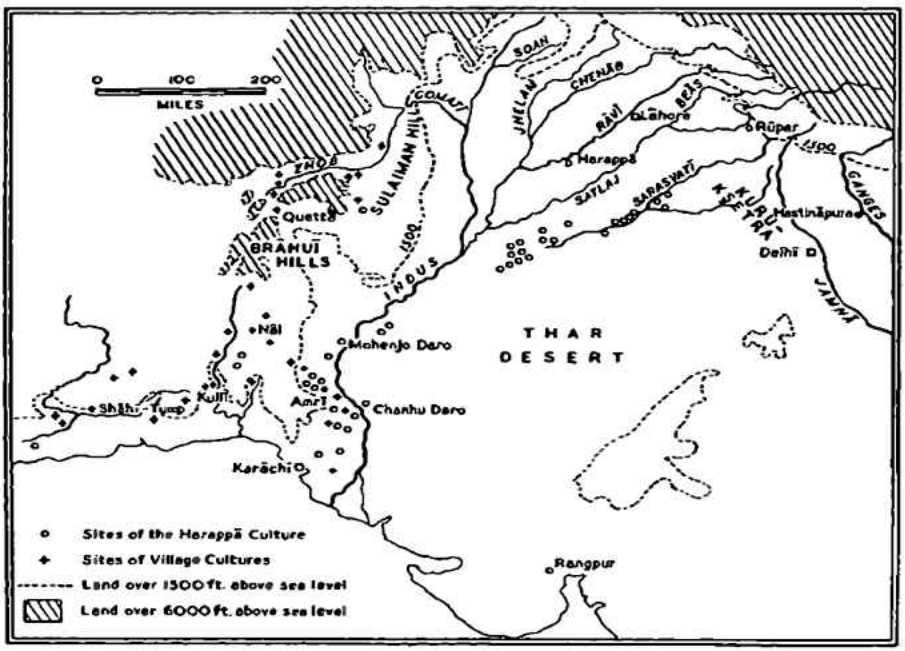


Fig. i.—Some Prehistoric Sites of N.-W. India

bricks and food for wild elephants and rhinoceros, and Balūchistān, now almost a waterless desert, was rich in rivers. This region supported many villages of agriculturists, who had settled in the upland valleys of Balūchistān and in the then fertile plain of the Makrān and the lower Indus.

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

Fig. ii.—Terracotta Figurines of Goddesses. a. Kullī, c. 2500–2000 B.C. b. Zhob, c. 2500–2000 B.C. c. Harappā, c. 2000 B.C. d. Kauśāmbī, c. 100 B.C.

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

Their religion was of the type practised by other early agricultural communities in the Mediterranean region and the Middle East, centring round fertility rites and the worship of a Mother Goddess. Figurines of the Goddess have been found in many sites, and in those of the Zhob Culture, to the north of Quetta, phallic emblems have also been found. In many ancient cultures the worship of the Mother

Goddess was associated with that of the bull, and these were no exception. Bull figurines have been discovered, and the bull forms a favourite motif for the decoration of the pottery of Kullī and Rānā Ghundāī, one of the most important of the Zhob sites.

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

THE HARAPPĀ CITY CULTURE

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

The civilization of the Indus is known to the archæologist as the Harappā Culture, from the modern name of the site of one of its two great cities, on the left bank of the Rāvī, in the Panjāb. Mohenjo Daro, the second city, is on the right bank of the Indus, some 250 miles from its mouth. As well as these two cities at least three small towns are known, and a large number of village sites, from Rūpar on the upper Satlaj to Rangpur in Kāthiāwār. The area covered by the Harappā Culture therefore extended for some 950 miles from north to south, and the pattern of its civilization was so uniform that even the bricks were usually of the same size and shape from one

end of it to the other. Outside this area the village cultures of Balūchistān seem to have continued much as before.

This great civilization owed little to the Middle East, and there is no reason to believe that it was formed by recent immigrants; the cities were built by people who had probably been in the Indus Valley for several centuries. The Harappā people were already Indians when they planned their cities, and they altered hardly at all for a thousand years. We cannot fix a precise date for the beginning of this civilization, but certain indications synchronize it roughly with the village cultures of Balūchistān. The site of Rānā Ghundāī produced a stratification which showed, in the third phase of the village's history, a type of pottery with bold designs in black on a red background. From evidence discovered by Sir R. Mortimer Wheeler in 1946 it seems that the city of Harappā was built on a site occupied by people using similar pottery. There is no evidence of the date of the foundation of the other great city of Mohenjo Daro, for its lowest strata are now below the level of the Indus, whose bed has slowly risen with the centuries; though diggings have reached 30 feet below the surface, flooding has prevented the excavation of the earliest levels of the city.

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

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

Probably the most striking feature of the culture was its intense

conservatism. At Mohenjo Daro nine strata of buildings have been revealed. As the level of the earth rose from the periodic flooding of the Indus new houses would be built almost exactly on the sites of the old, with only minor variations in ground plan; for nearly a millennium at least the street plan of the cities remained the same. The script of the Indus people was totally unchanged throughout their history. There is no doubt that they had contact with Mesopotamia, but they showed no inclination to adopt the technical advances of the more progressive culture. We must assume that there was continuity of government throughout the life of the civilization. This unparalleled continuity suggests, in the words of Professor Piggott, "the unchanging traditions of the temple" rather than "the secular instability of the court".[2] It seems in fact that the civilization of Harappā, like those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, was theocratic in character.

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

The average size of the ground floor of a house was about 30 feet square, but there were many bigger: obviously there were numerous well-to-do families in the Indus cities, which perhaps had a middle

class larger and more important in the social scale than those of the contemporary civilizations of Sumer and Egypt. Remains of workmen's dwellings have also been discovered at both sites—parallel rows of two-roomed cottages, at Mohenjo Daro with a superficial area of 20 × 12 feet each, but at Harappā considerably larger; they bear a striking resemblance to the "coolie lines" of modern Indian tea and other estates. At Harappā rows of such buildings have been found near the circular brick floors on which grain was pounded, and

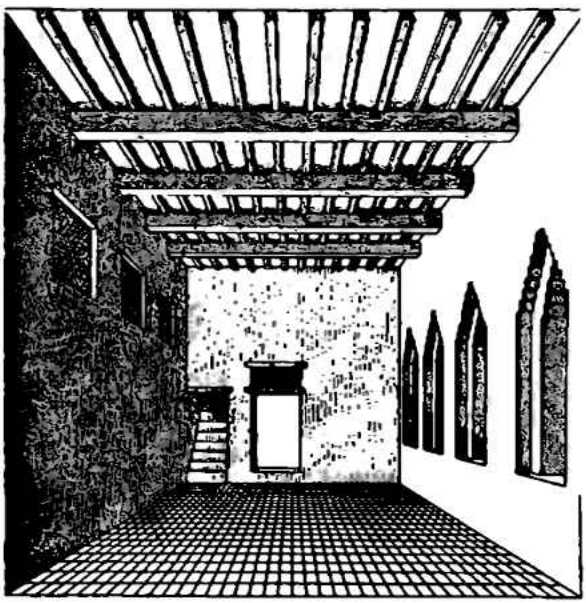


Fig. iii.—Interior of a House of the Harappā Culture
(By permission Dept. of Archæology Government of India, and Arthur Probsthain, London.)

they were probably the dwellings of the workmen whose task was to grind corn for the priests and dignitaries who lived in the citadel. Drab and tiny as they were, these cottages were better dwellings than those in which many Indian coolies live at the present day.

The most striking of the few large buildings is the great bath in the citadel area of Mohenjo Daro. This is an oblong bathing pool 39 × 23 feet in area and 8 feet deep, constructed of beautiful brickwork made watertight with bitumen (pl. VI*b*). It could be drained by

an opening in one corner and was surrounded by a cloister, on to which opened a number of small rooms. Like the "tank" of a Hindu temple, it probably had a religious purpose, and the cells may have been the homes of priests. The special attention paid by the people of the Harappā culture to cleanliness is hardly due to the fact that they had notions of hygiene in advance of those of other civilizations of their time, but indicates that, like the later Hindus, they had a strong belief in the purificatory effects of water from a ritual point of view.

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

On the basis of this thriving agricultural economy the Harappā people built their rather unimaginative but comfortable civilization. Their bourgeoisie had pleasant houses, and even their workmen, who may have been bondmen or slaves, had the comparative luxury of two-roomed brick-built cottages. Evidently a well organized commerce made these things possible. The cities undoubtedly traded with the village cultures of Balūchistān, where outposts of the Harappā culture have been traced, but many of their metals and semi-precious stones came from much longer distances. From Kāthiāwār and the

Deccan they obtained conch shell, which they used freely in decoration, and several types of stone. Silver, turquoise and lapis lazuli were imported from Persia and Afghānistān. Their copper came either from Rājasthān or from Persia, while jadeite was probably obtained from Tibet or Central Asia.

Though their culture extended nearly to the mouth of the Indus the people of Harappā and Mohenjo Daro seem to have cared little for the sea. Only two representations of ships have been found among their remains, and these are of small river vessels. But whether by sea or land, the products of the Indus reached Mesopotamia, for a number of typical Indus seals and a few other objects from the Indus Valley have been found in Sumer at levels dating between about 2300 and 2000 B.C. Evidence of Sumerian exports to India is very scant and uncertain, and we must assume that they were mainly precious metals and raw materials. The finding of Indus seals suggests that merchants from India actually resided in Mesopotamia; their chief merchandise was probably cotton, which has always been one of India's staple exports, and which is known to have been used in later Babylonia.

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

This script had some 270 characters, evidently pictographic in origin, which had an ideographic or syllabic character. It may have been inspired by the earliest Sumerian script, which probably antedates it slightly, but it bears little resemblance to any of the scripts of the ancient Middle East, though attempts have been made to connect

it with one or other of them. The most striking similarities are with the symbols used until comparatively recent times by the natives of Easter Island, in the eastern Pacific,[3] but the distance in space and time between the two cultures is so great that there is scarcely any possibility of there having been any form of contact or influence. We do not know what writing media were used, though it has been suggested that a small pot found at the lesser site of Chanhu Daro is an inkwell. Certainly the Harappans did not inscribe their documents on clay tablets, or some of these would have been found in the remains of their cities.

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

But if the Harappā folk could not produce works of art on a large scale they excelled in those of small compass. Their most notable artistic achievement was perhaps in their seal engravings, especially those of animals, which they delineated with powerful realism and evident affection. The great urus bull with its many dewlaps, the rhinoceros with knobbly armoured hide, the tiger roaring fiercely, and the many other animals (pl. IX) are the work of craftsmen who studied their subjects and loved them.

Equally interesting are some of the human figurines. The red sandstone torso of a man (pl. VIII*a*) is particularly impressive for its realism. The modelling of the rather heavy abdomen seems to look forward to the style of later Indian sculpture, and it has even been suggested that this figurine is a product of much later times, which by some strange accident found its way into the lower stratum; but this is very unlikely, for the figure has certain features, notably the strange indentations on the shoulders, which cannot be explained on this hypothesis. The bust of another male figure, in steatite (pl. VII), seems to show an attempt at portraiture. It has been suggested that the head is that of a priest, with his eyes half closed in meditation, but it is possible that he is a man of Mongolian type, the presence of which type in the Indus Valley has been proved by the discovery of a single skull at Mohenjo Daro.

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

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

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

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

As far as we can reconstruct it from our fragmentary knowledge, the religion of the Harappā people had some features suggesting those characteristics of later Hinduism which are not to be found in the earliest stratum of Indian religious literature. The Mother

Fig. iv.—Painted Pottery of the Harappā Culture

Goddess, for instance, reappears only after the lapse of over a thousand years from the fall of Harappā. As already stated she was evidently the divinity of the people, and the upper classes seem to have preferred a god, who also shows features found in later Hinduism. As well as the figurines already mentioned, which may represent divinities, there are a few in terracotta of bearded nude men with coiled hair; their posture, rigidly upright, with the legs slightly apart, and the arms held parallel to the sides of the body, but not touching it, closely resembles the stance called by the Jainas *kāyotsarga*, in which meditating teachers are often portrayed in later times; the repetition of this figure, in exactly the same posture, would suggest that he was a god. A terracotta mask of a horned deity has also been found.

The most striking deity of the Harappā culture is the horned god of the seals (pl. IX*c*). He is depicted on three specimens, in two

seated on a stool or small dais, and in the third on the ground; in all three his posture is one well known to later Indian holy men, with the legs drawn up close to the body and the two heels touching, a position quite impossible to the average European without much practice. The god's body is nude, except for many bangles and what appear to be necklaces, and he wears a peculiar head-dress, consisting of a pair of horns, which may have been thought of as growing from his head, with a plant-like object between them. On the largest of the seals he is surrounded by four wild animals, an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo, and beneath his stool are two deer, as in the representations of the Buddha preaching his first sermon in the Deer-park at Banāras. The animals, the plant-like growth from the head, and the fact that he is ithyphallic, indicate that he is a fertility god. His face has a fierce tigerish aspect, and one authority has suggested that it is not meant to be human;[4] to the right and left of the head are small protuberances which were believed by Sir John Marshall to represent a second and third face on either side. Marshall boldly called this god Proto-Śiva, and the name has been generally accepted; certainly the horned god has much in common with the Śiva of later Hinduism, who is, in his most important aspect, a fertility deity, is known as *Paśupati*, the Lord of Beasts, and is sometimes depicted with three faces.

Sacred animals played a big part in the religion of the Indus people. Though all the animals shown on the seals may not have been particularly sacred, the bull occurs in contexts which prove that he at least was so; on many seals he stands before a peculiar object which is evidently not a manger, and has no utilitarian purpose, but is a "cult object", probably a table on which corn was grown for fertility rites.[5] On some seals small lines emerge from the table, which may represent the growing corn, no doubt eaten by the sacred bull as part of the ceremony. The bull is usually depicted with a single horn, and has sometimes been referred to as a unicorn, though there is little doubt that the artist was trying to portray a normal bull, whose second horn was concealed by the first. In Hinduism the bull is specially associated with the god Śiva, but he does not seem to have been connected with the "Proto-Śiva" of Harappā, for he is not among the animals surrounding the god on the famous seal*. The cow, so revered in later Hinduism, is nowhere depicted.

Certain trees were sacred, as they are in Hinduism today, notably the *pīpal*, which is specially honoured by Buddhists as the species under which the Buddha found enlightenment. One very interesting seal (pl. IX*d*) depicts a horned goddess in a pīpal tree, worshipped

* The horns of the "Proto-Śiva" are evidently those of a buffalo.

by a figure also wearing horns, with a human-headed goat watching the ceremony and a row of seven pigtailed women, probably priestesses, in attendance.

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

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

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

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

The modern South Indian is usually a blend of Mediterranean and Proto-Australoid, the two chief ethnic factors in the Harappā culture;

A. L. Basham

a

Irrigation.
The "Sea of Parākrama",
Pollonnaruva,
Ceylon

A. L. Basham

b

The Edge of the Plain.
Site of Rājagṛha,
Bihār

A. L. Basham

c

The Ganges,
Banāras

PLATE III

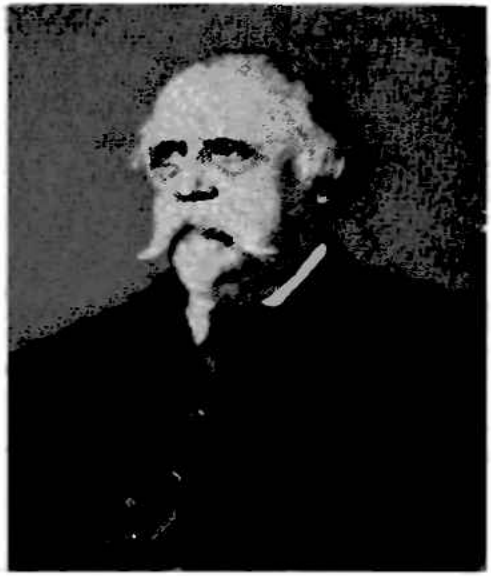
From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, by courtesy of the Earl Spencer

a

Sir William Jones (1746–94)

Institution of Royal Engineers

b



Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814–93)

Bhāndārkar Institute, Poona

c

Sir R. G. Bhāndārkar (1837–1925)

Sir John Marshall

d

Sir John Marshall (1876–)

PIONEERS OF INDOLOGY

PLATE IV

moreover the Harappā religion seems to show many similarities with those elements of Hinduism which are specially popular in the Dravidian country. In the hills of Balūchistān, where the people of the Nāl and Zhob Cultures built their little villages, the Brāhuīs, though ethnically now predominantly Iranian, speak a Dravidian language. Thus it has been suggested that the Harappā folk were Dravidians, and Father H. Heras, one of the authorities who have tried to read their script, has even claimed that their language was a very primitive form of Tamil.

It might be suggested that the Harappā people consisted of a Proto-Australoid element, which at one time may have covered the whole of India, overlaid by a Mediterranean one, which entered India at a very early period, bringing with it the elements of civilization. Later, under the pressure of further invasions, this Mediterranean element spread throughout the sub-continent, and, again mixing with the indigenous peoples, formed the Dravidians. The chief objection to this theory is that the megaliths erected by the early Dravidians in South India have been shown to be not very ancient; a recent theory even holds that the Dravidians came to India from the west by sea as late as the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.[6] We can only say with certainty that some of the inhabitants of the Indus cities were of a type widely found further to the west, and that their descendants must survive in the present-day population of India.

There is no archæological evidence of cities of the Harappā people beyond the Indus basin, but small outposts existed in Kāthiāwār; yet it does not follow that the rest of India was wholly ignorant of the Harappā culture. Certain finds of copper implements in the district of Rānchī (S. Bihār) suggest that the peoples of North India learnt the use of metal from Harappā, for the blades are without the strengthening midrib; but the dating of these objects is very uncertain, and they may be much later than the fall of Harappā.

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

Perhaps the most widely appreciated of prehistoric India's gifts to the world is the domestic fowl. Ornithologists are agreed that all domestic species descend from the wild Indian jungle fowl. The Harappā people knew the domestic fowl, though its remains are few and it is not depicted on the seals. It was probably first tamed by neolithic Indians in the Ganges Valley, whence it found its way by the Burma route to China, where it appears in the middle of the 2nd millennium. The Egyptians knew it at about the same time, as a rare luxury bird.[7] Clearly India, even at this remote period, was not wholly cut off from the rest of the world.

THE END OF THE INDUS CITIES

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

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

After the barbarians had conquered the outlying villages the ancient laws and rigid organization of the Indus cities must have suffered great strain. At Mohenjo Daro large rooms were divided into smaller, and mansions became tenements; potters' kilns were built within the city boundaries, and one even in the middle of a street.

The street plan was no longer maintained. Hoards of jewellery were buried. Evidently the city was overpopulated and law and order were less well maintained, perhaps because the barbarians were already ranging the provinces and the city was full of newcomers, whom the city fathers could not force into the age-old pattern of the city's culture.

When the end came it would seem that most of the citizens of Mohenjo Daro had fled; but a group of huddled skeletons in one of the houses and one skeleton of a woman lying on the steps of a well suggest that a few stragglers were overtaken by the invaders. In this level a fine copper axe has been found, with a very strong shaft-hole and an adze blade opposite that of the axe—a beautiful tool, adapted both for war and peace, and superior to anything the Harappā

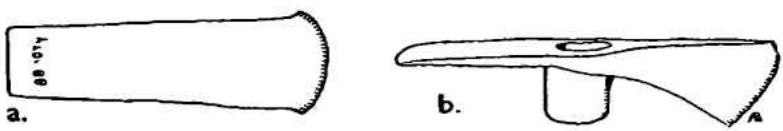


Fig. v.—Axes of the Indus Cities
a. Inscribed unsocketed axe-head. b. Shaft-hole axe-adze

people possessed (fig. v). Swords with strengthening midribs also make their appearance. A single pot burial of a man of somewhat Mongol type may be that of one of the invaders.

From Harappā comes evidence of a different kind. Here, near the older cemetery of interments, is another cemetery on a higher level, containing fractional burials in pots of men with short-headed Armenoid skulls. A skull of similar type was buried in the citadel itself. At Chanhu Daro, on the lower Indus, the Harappā people were replaced by squatters, living in small huts with fireplaces, an innovation which suggests that they came from a colder climate. These people, though unsophisticated in many respects, had superior tools and weapons. Similar settlements were made in Balūchistān at about the same time. Among the scanty remains of these invaders there is clear evidence of the presence of the horse. The Indus cities fell to barbarians who triumphed not only through greater military prowess, but also because they were equipped with better weapons, and had learnt to make full use of the swift and terror-striking beast of the steppes.

The date of these great events can only be fixed very approximately from synchronisms with the Middle East. Sporadic traces of contact can be found between the Indus cities and Sumeria, and there is some reason to believe that these contacts continued under the First

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

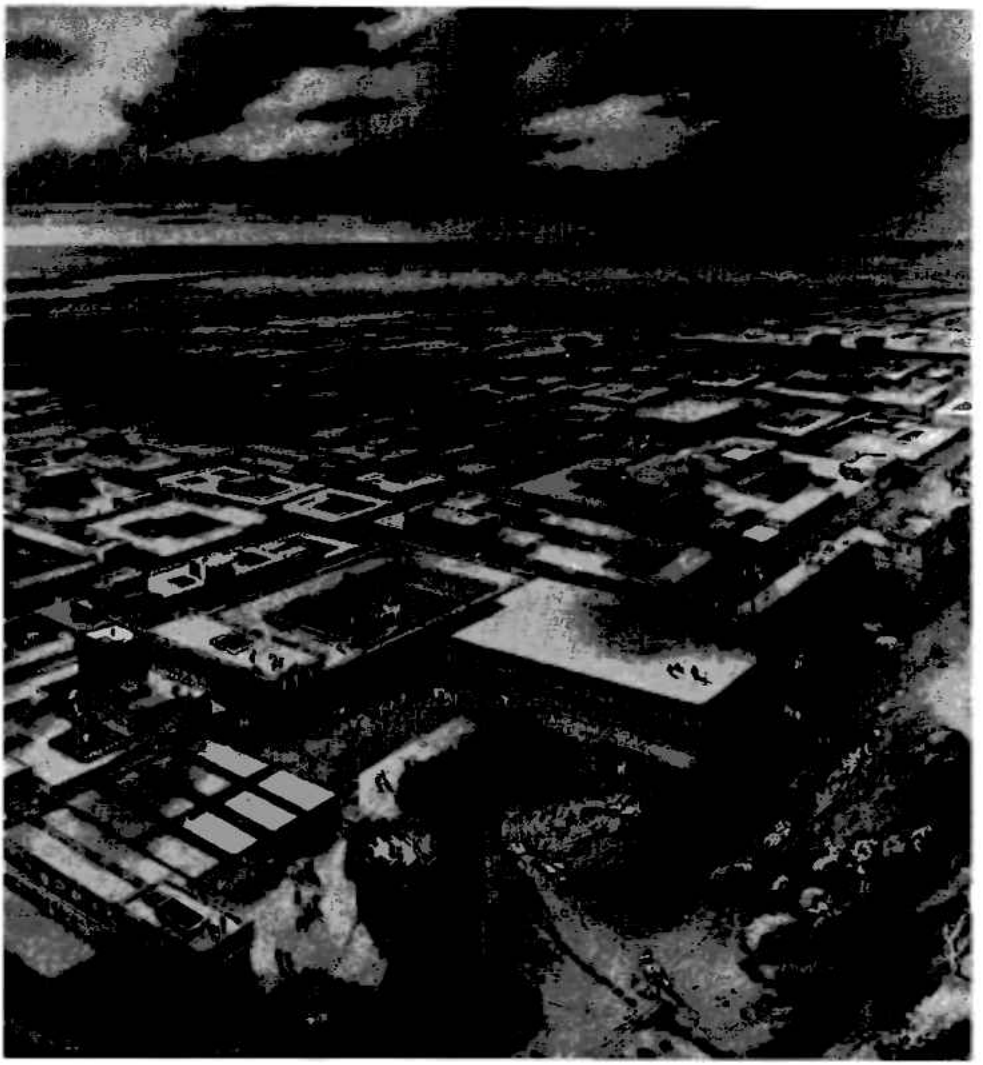
The earliest Indian literary source we possess is the *Ṛg Veda*, most of which was composed in the second half of the 2nd millennium. It is evidently the work of an invading people, who have not yet fully subjugated the original inhabitants of N.-W. India. In his great report on the excavations at Mohenjo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

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

INDO-EUROPEANS AND ĀRYANS

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

Crayon Drawing by Alan Sorrell. Festival of Britain Trustees



Mohenjo Daro, *c.* 2000 B.C.
A Hypothetical Reconstruction

PLATE V

a *Dept. of Archaeology, Government of India*

"First Street", Mohenjo Daro

b *Dept. of Archaeology, Government of India and Messrs. Arthur Probsthain, London*

The Great Bath, Mohenjo Daro

PLATE VI

About 2000 B.C. the great steppeland which stretches from Poland to Central Asia was inhabited by semi-nomadic barbarians, who were tall, comparatively fair, and mostly long-headed. They had tamed the horse, which they harnessed to light chariots with spoked wheels, of a much faster and better type than the lumbering ass-drawn cars with four solid wheels which were the best means of transport known to contemporary Sumer. They were mainly pastoral, but practised a little agriculture. Though they may never have come into direct contact with the Sumerians, they had adopted some Mesopotamian innovations, notably the shaft-hole axe. In the early part of the 2nd millennium, whether from pressure of population, desiccation of pasture lands, or from both causes, these people were on the move. They migrated in bands westwards, southwards and eastwards, conquering local populations, and intermarrying with them to form a ruling class. They brought with them their patrilinear tribal organization, their worship of sky gods, and their horses and chariots. In most of the lands in which they settled their original language gradually adapted itself to the tongues of the conquered peoples. Some invaded Europe, to become the ancestors of the Greeks, Latins, Celts and Teutons, while others appeared in Anatolia, and from the mixture of these with the original inhabitants the great empire of the Hittites grew up. Yet others remained in their old home, the ancestors of the later Baltic and Slavonic peoples, while others moved southwards and, from the Caucasus and the Iranian tableland, led many attacks on the Middle Eastern civilizations. The Kassites, who conquered Babylon, were led by men of this stock. In the 14th century B.C. there appeared in N.-E. Syria a people called Mitanni, whose kings had Indo-Iranian names, and a few of whose gods are familiar to every student of Indian religion: *Indara*, *Uruvna* (the Vedic god Varuṇa), *Mitira*, and *Našatiya*. As well as the Mitanni other chiefs in Syria and Palestine had names of Indo-Iranian type.

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

The Āryan invasion of India was not a single concerted action, but one covering centuries and involving many tribes, perhaps not all

of the same race and language. It seems certain that many of the old village cultures of the western hills were destroyed before the cities of the Indus Valley, but otherwise the course of Āryan expansion cannot be plotted, owing to the paucity of material remains. Evidently the invaders did not take to living in cities, and after the fall of Harappā and Mohenjo Daro the Panjāb and Sind became a land of little villages, with buildings of wood and reed the remains of which have long since perished. For over a thousand years from the fall of Harappā India is almost an archæological blank, which at present can only be filled by literary sources.

THE ĀRYANS IN INDIA. THE PROTO-HISTORIC PERIOD

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

The period of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads is a sort of transition from prehistory to history. If history, as distinct from archæology, is the study of the human past from written sources, then India's history begins with the Āryans. The *Ṛg Veda*, and the great body of oral religious literature which followed it in the first half of the 1st millennium B.C., are part of the living Hindu tradition. The Vedic hymns are still recited at weddings and funerals, and in the daily devotions of the brāhmaṇ. Thus they are part of

historical India, and do not belong to her buried prehistoric past. But they tell us little about the great events of the time, except in irritatingly vague incidental references; even on social conditions their information is scant; only on religion and thought is the historian more fully informed.

Yet from the hymns of the *Ṛg* and *Atharva Vedas*, the sacrificial instructions of the Brāhmaṇas, and the mysticism of the Upaniṣads, the outlines of a culture emerge, though often all too vaguely, and here and there we see the faint wraiths of great sages and tribal leaders, whose importance for their times was such that their names were recorded in sacred literature. Around these phantoms later tradition draped a glittering mantle of legend, legend in which many Indians still implicitly believe, and which, in other contexts, is exceedingly important. But when the mantles are removed only vague shadows remain, little more than the names of chieftains who three thousand years ago waged successful war against their enemies. For the period before the time of the Buddha we can only trace the general character of the civilization which produced the Vedic literature and give a brief and tentative sketch of its expansion.

THE CULTURE OF THE *ṚG VEDA*

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

When the hymns were written the focus of Āryan culture was the region between the Jamnā (Sanskrit *Yamunā*) and Satlaj (*Śutudrī*), south of the modern Ambālā, and along the upper course of the river

Sarasvatī. The latter river is now an insignificant stream, losing itself in the desert of Rājasthān, but it then flowed broad and strong, and probably joined the Indus below the confluence of the Satlaj. The Vedic poets knew the Himālayas, but not the land south of the Jamnā, and they did not mention the Vindhyas. To the east the Āryans had not expanded far beyond the Jamnā, and the Ganges (*Gaṅgā*) is mentioned only in one late hymn.

At this time the Āryans had not wholly subjugated the indigenous inhabitants. Though many hymns refer to battles between one Āryan tribe and another, there is, underlying this intertribal rivalry, a sense of solidarity against the *Dāsas* or *Dasyus*, who evidently represent the survivors of the Harappā Culture, and kindred peoples of the Panjāb and the North-West. The Dāsas are described as dark and ill-favoured, bull-lipped, snub-nosed, worshippers of the phallus, and of hostile speech. They are rich in cattle, and dwell in fortified places called *pur*, of which the Āryan war-god Indra has destroyed hundreds. The main work of destroying the settlements of the Dāsas had been accomplished some time before the composition of the hymns, and the great battles which must then have taken place are already misted over with legend; but the Dāsas are still capable of massing armies of 10,000 men against the invaders.

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

The Āryans were not uninfluenced by the earlier inhabitants. In classical Sanskrit the word *dāsa* regularly means "slave" or "bondman", and in the later hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* it was already acquiring that meaning, while the feminine form *dāsī* is used in the sense of a "slave-girl" throughout the book; but, though many of the vanquished Dāsas must have been enslaved, some seem to have come to terms with the conquerors, and one Dāsa chief is mentioned as following Āryan ways and patronizing the brāhmans.[8] One result of this contact of Āryan and non-Āryan is evident even in the earliest stratum of the *Ṛg Veda*, the language of which is appreciably affected by non-Indo-European influences. All Indian languages, from Vedic to the modern vernaculars, contain a series of sounds, the retroflex or cerebral consonants, which cannot be traced in any other Indo-European tongues, not even in Old Iranian, which is closely akin to Sanskrit. These sounds must have developed quickly, from the efforts of non-Āryans to master the language of their

conquerors. No doubt the invaders often married indigenous women, whose children would be bilingual, and after a few generations the Āryans' original language would show the effect of the admixture of aboriginal blood. Numerous words in the *Ṛg Veda* are not connected with any known Indo-European roots, and were evidently borrowed from the natives. Non-Āryan influence on religion and culture must also have been felt very early, and the gradual disappearance of much of the original Indo-European heritage beneath successive layers of non-Āryan innovations can be traced through the early religious literature of India.

The primitiveness of early Āryan society was much exaggerated by some 19th-century Indologists, who thought they found in the highly formalized and rigidly controlled style of the *Ṛg Veda* the first outpourings of the human spirit and an echo of Rousseau's noble savage. In fact, by the time that even the earliest hymns were composed the Āryans were not savages, but were on the fringes of civilization. Their military technique was in advance of that of the Middle East, their priestly schools had raised the tribal sacrifice to a fine art, and their poetry was elaborate and formalized. On the other hand they had not developed a city civilization. The complete absence of any words connected with writing in the *Ṛg Veda*, despite its size and the many contexts in which such words might be expected to occur, is almost certain proof that the Āryans were illiterate. They were a people of warlike stockbreeders, organized in tribes rather than in kingdoms. Their culture bears a generic likeness to that of *Beowulf*, the earlier Icelandic sagas, and the old Irish prose epics, and was less advanced than that depicted in the *Iliad*.

The tribes were ruled by chiefs who bore the title *rājā*, a word related to the Latin *rex*. The rājā was not an absolute monarch, for the government of the tribe was in part the responsibility of the tribal councils, the *sabhā* and *samiti*. These two words occur together in many contexts and the distinction between them is not wholly clear—perhaps the first was a meeting of the great men of the tribe, while the second was a mass gathering of all free tribesmen, or of heads of families. These two bodies exerted much influence on the king and their approval was necessary to ensure his accession. Some tribes seem to have had no hereditary chief, but were governed directly by the tribal council, for in one passage[9] we read of kings sitting down together in the assembly, which suggests that, as in some later oligarchic clans, the title of rājā was taken by all the great men of the tribe, who governed it through a folk-moot.

But hereditary kingship was the rule, and the rājā, dwelling in a fine hall, had a rudimentary court, attended by courtiers (*sabhāsad*)

and chiefs of septs (*grāmaṇī*). Already he had a general (*senānī*), who was responsible under the king for minor campaigns and cattle-raids against neighbouring tribes. Very important was the chief priest (*purohita*), who by his sacrifices ensured the prosperity of the tribe in peace, and its victory in war. Often the purohita appears as a tribal medicine-man, performing magical ceremonies and muttering spells for victory both before and during battle.

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

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

When the Āryans entered India there was already a class division in their tribal structure. Even in the earliest hymns we read of the *kṣatra*, the nobility, and the *viś*, the ordinary tribesmen, and the records of several other early Indo-European peoples suggest that a

tribal aristocracy was a feature of Indo-European society even before the tribes migrated from their original home. As they settled among the darker aboriginals the Āryans seem to have laid greater stress than before on purity of blood, and class divisions hardened, to exclude those Dāsas who had found a place on the fringes of Āryan society, and those Āryans who had intermarried with the Dāsas and adopted their ways. Both these groups sank in the social scale. At the same time the priests, whose sacrificial lore was becoming more and more complicated, and who therefore required greater skill and training, were arrogating higher privileges to themselves. By the end of the Ṛg Vedic period society was divided into four great classes, and this fourfold division was given religious sanction and looked on as fundamental. This is evident from one of the most important hymns of the collection, in which the four classes are said to have emanated from the dismembered primeval man, who was sacrificed by the gods at the beginning of the world (p. 240f).

The four classes, the priest (*brāhmaṇa*), warrior (*kṣatriya*), peasant (*vaiśya*) and serf (*śūdra*), were crystallizing throughout the period of the *Ṛg Veda*. They have survived to the present day. The Sanskrit word used for them, *varṇa*, means "colour", and itself indicates their origin in the development of the old tribal class structure in contact with people of different complexion and alien culture. The term varṇa does not mean "caste", and has never meant "caste", by which convenient word it is often loosely translated (p. 148).

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

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

The horse was almost as important as the cow, though mainly for military reasons. The chestnut horses of the Āryans, harnessed to

light chariots, must have terrified the people of the Indus Valley, as the horses of the conquistadores terrified the Aztecs and Incas. A few hymns of the *Ṛg Veda*, which, according to the rubric, describe a divine horse Dadhikrā, contain some of the finest lines on the horse in the world's literature, and recall the famous passage in praise of the war-horse in the Book of Job.[10]

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

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

"And at his deep neigh, like the thunder of heaven,
the foemen tremble in fear,
for he fights against thousands, and none can resist him,
so terrible is his charge."[11]

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

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

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

The Āryans were a wild, turbulent people and had few of the taboos

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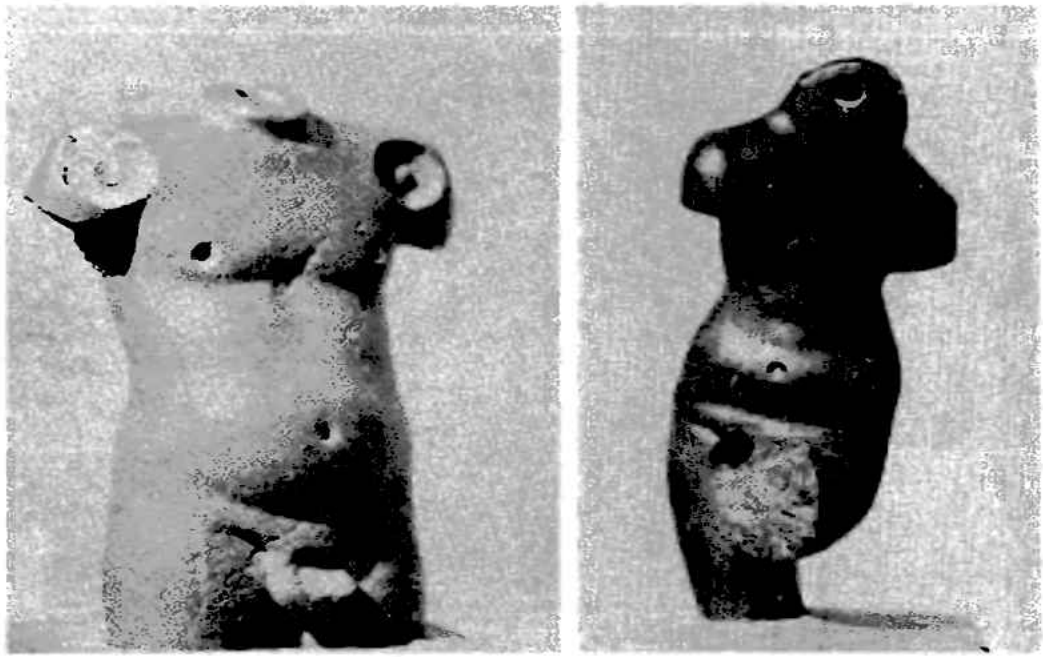
Statuette of a Bearded Man, Mohenjo Daro

PLATE VII

Messrs. Faber & Faber, Royal Academy Trustees and Museum of Central Asian Antiquities, New Delhi

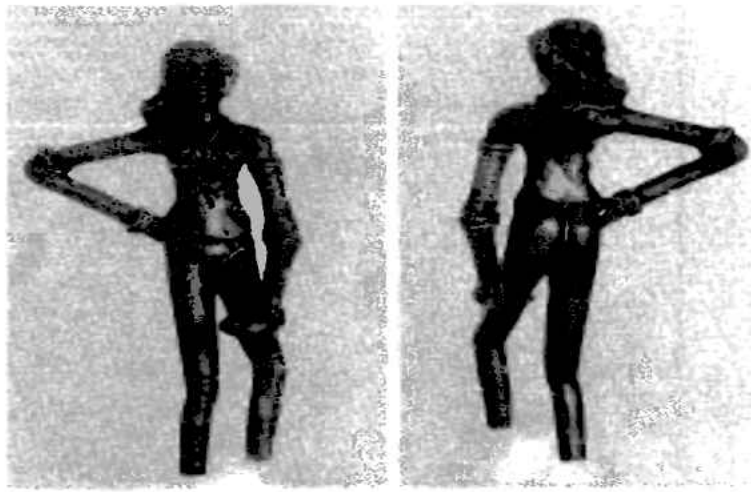
a



Male Torsos, Harappā

Dept. of Archæology, Government of India and Messrs. Arthur Probsthain, London

b



Bronze Statuette of a Girl, Mohenjo Daro

PLATE VIII

of later India. They were much addicted to inebriating drinks, of which they had at least two, *soma* and *surā*. Soma was drunk at sacrifices and its use was sanctified by religion (p. 295f). Surā was purely secular, and was evidently very potent; in more than one passage it is mentioned with disapproval by the priestly poets.

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

Besides these amusements the Āryans delighted in gambling. At all times India has loved to gamble. In the remains of the Indus cities numerous dice have been found, and the Āryans have left their own record of their gambling propensities in the beautiful "Gamester's Lament", one of the few predominantly secular poems which by lucky chance have found their way into the *Ṛg Veda* (p. 403ff).

Though they had not developed a city civilization, and did not build in stone or brick, the Āryans were technically well equipped. Their bronze-smiths were highly skilled, and produced tools and weapons much superior to those of the Harappā Culture. They, and the carpenters and chariot-makers, are frequently referred to in the hymns with much respect. There is no good reason to believe that iron was used in India at this period. *Ayas*, one of the terms for metal in the *Ṛg Veda*, came to mean iron at a later date, and is related to the German word *Eisen* and the English *iron*; but it is also akin to the Latin *aes*, meaning bronze, and it certainly means this metal or copper in the *Ṛg Veda*. No trace of iron has been found in the upper levels of the remains of the Indus Culture, and at this period iron implements were rare, even in the advanced civilizations of Mesopotamia. Iron ore is common enough, but its smelting demands higher skill than the Āryans had developed. At the time of the composition of the *Ṛg Veda* the process of smelting iron was hardly known outside Anatolia, where the Hittite kings tried to keep it a secret. Only at the very end of the 2nd millennium did the use of iron begin to spread widely over the civilized world, and it is very unlikely that it had reached India by this time.[12]

As might be expected of a people without cities, the Āryans did not have an advanced economic system. In Mesopotamia the silver shekel, though unstamped, served as a means of exchange, but the Āryans relied for their unit of value and means of barter on the unwieldy cow. The *niṣka*, a term later used for a gold coin, is also mentioned as a sort of currency, but at this time was probably a gold

ornament of some kind. There is no evidence of a regular class of merchants or moneylenders, though indebtedness is sometimes referred to.

The religion of the early Āryans, about which we know much more than we do about their everyday life and customs, will be discussed in a later chapter (p.232 ff).

THE LATER VEDIC AGE

Between the composition of the *Ṛg Veda* and the age of the Buddha, when we begin to trace the history of India with comparative clearness, a period of some four or five hundred years elapsed. During this time the Āryans pushed eastwards down the Ganges, and their culture adapted itself to changed conditions. Very recently Indian archæologists have excavated a site which belongs to this period, that of the ancient city of Hastināpura, the lowest level of which has been reasonably fixed at between 1000 and 700 B.C., the time of the later Vedas.[13] The town was almost completely destroyed by flood at the end of its existence, and little remains but sherds of painted grey pottery, a few copper implements, and traces of houses of unbaked brick. The typical pottery has been found from the Sarasvatī Valley in the west to Ahicchatrā, near the upper Ganges, in the east. With these exceptions we have scarcely any direct knowledge of the period, and our sources are still almost entirely sacred texts, the later Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, which will be treated elsewhere from a religious and literary point of view (p. 241ff).

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

One event, not definitely recorded in these contemporary sources, but so strongly remembered that it must have been very important,

was the great battle of Kurukṣetra, not far from the modern Delhī. This battle, magnified to titanic proportions, formed the basis of the story of the greatest of India's epics, the *Mahābhārata*. According to the legend the whole of India, from Sind to Assam and from the Himālayas to Cape Comorin, took part in the war, which arose through a dynastic dispute in the great Kuru tribe (p. 408). It is by no means certain that the war was in fact a civil one, and the story has been plausibly interpreted as a muddled recollection of the conquest of the Kurus by a tribe of Mongol type from the hills. But certainly a great war took place, and succeeding generations looked on it as marking the end of an epoch. The names of many of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* may genuinely be those of contemporary chieftains, but we must regretfully record that the story is of less use to the historian even than the *Iliad*, or most of the Norse and Irish saga literature. It compares better to the *Nibelungenlied*, the product of an age very different from that which it purports to describe, and the result of the assimilation of many diverse martial traditions. It is as futile to try to reconstruct the political and social history of India in the 10th century B.C. from the *Mahābhārata* as it would be to write the history of Britain immediately after the evacuation of the Romans from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

According to the most popular later tradition the Mahābhārata War took place in 3102 B.C., which, in the light of all evidence, is quite impossible. More reasonable is another tradition, placing it in the 15th century B.C., but this is also several centuries too early in the light of our archæological knowledge. Probably the war took place around the beginning of the 9th century B.C.; such a date seems to fit well with the scanty archæological remains of the period, and there is some evidence in the Brāhmaṇa literature itself to show that it cannot have been much earlier.[14] From this time onwards the centre of culture and political power shifted to the Gangetic Doāb and the Kuru capital, Hastināpura or Āsandīvant. Throughout most of the later Vedic period the Kurus and their neighbours the Pañcālas were the greatest and the most civilized of Indian peoples. The names of several Kuru kings have been passed down in legend and two at any rate, Parikṣit and Janamejaya, are mentioned in the literature of the time as mighty conquerors.

Early in this period the Āryans pressed further eastward, and set up kingdoms in Kosala, to the east of the Doāb, and in Kāśī, the region of Banāras. The former, which grew in importance with time, was the realm of Rāma, the hero of the second of the great Indian epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* (p. 412f). For all his later fame the literature of the period ignores Rāma and his father Daśaratha completely, so we must

conclude that they were both comparatively insignificant chieftains, whose exploits were by chance remembered, to be elaborated and magnified by later generations of bards until, around the beginning of the Christian Era, they received their final form. It is not even certain that Rāma was a king of Kosala at all, for the earliest version of the legend that we possess makes him a king of Banāras, which was for a time a kingdom of some importance, but was conquered by Kosala towards the end of this period.

Another important kingdom was Videha, to the east of the River Gandak and north of the Ganges. One of the Brāhmaṇas[15] tells that once the fire-god Agni moved eastwards, burning up the earth, until he came to the River Sadānīrā (the modern Gandak), where he stopped. In his wake followed a chieftain from the Sarasvatī, Videgha Māthava. Before his arrival no Āryan would cross the river, because the purifying fire-god had not burnt the land on its eastern bank; but Agni instructed Māthava to carry him over, and thus the land of Videha was Āryanized, and took its name from that of its first colonizer. The legend is important because it is the only significant account of the process of colonization in an approximately contemporary source. In the progress of Agni, burning up the earth, we see not only the gradual eastward expansion of the Āryan fire cult, but also the clearing of jungle and waste by burning, as bands of migrating warrior peasants founded new settlements.

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

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

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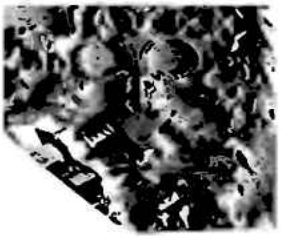
a

Bull with Cult-object

b

Humped Bull

c



Horned God with Animals

d

Worship of a Tree-goddess

e

Hero Grappling with Tigers

f

Fight between Horned Man (Tree-god ?) and Horned Tiger

SEALS OF THE HARAPPĀ CULTURE

g

Monkey. Harappā Culture

PLATE IX

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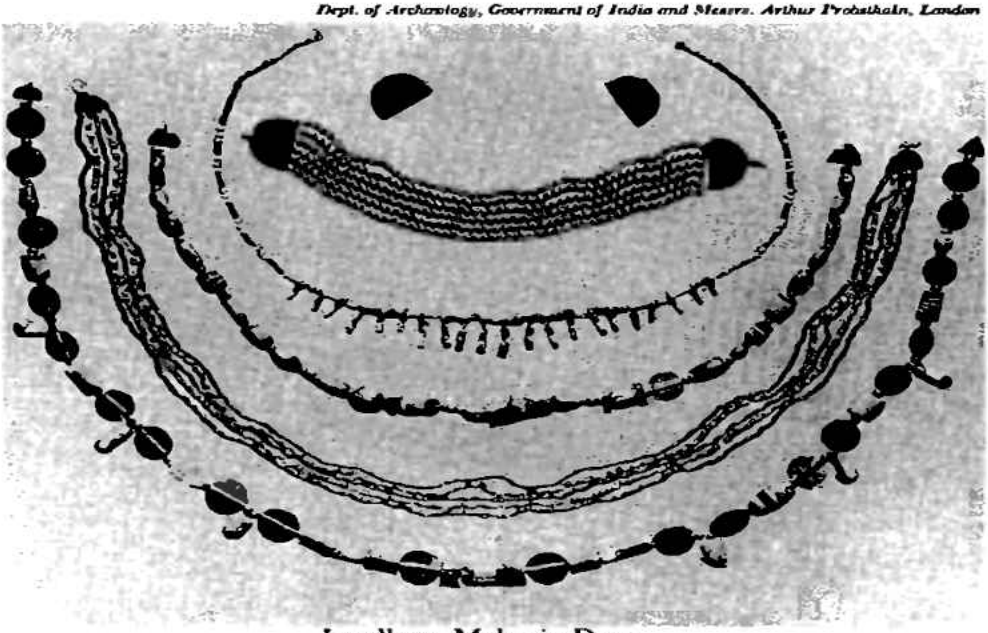
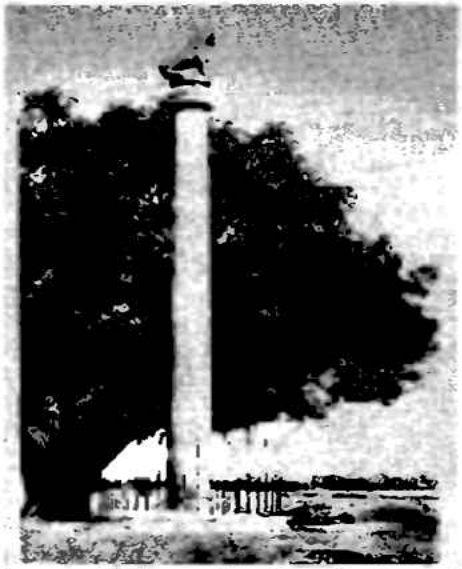
a



Jewellery, Mohenjo Daro

Dept. of Archaeology, Government of India

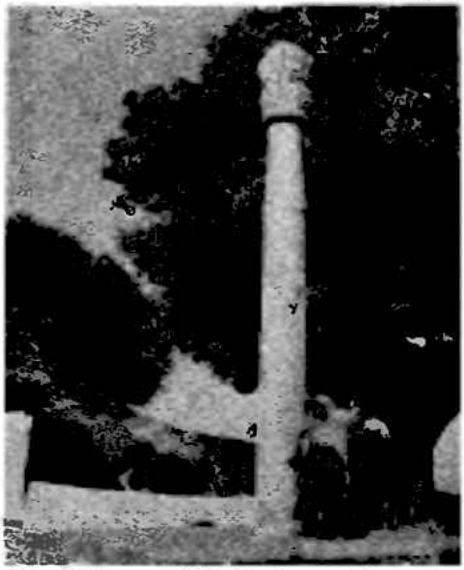
b



Mauryan Column, Lauriyā Nandangarh, Bihār

A. F. Basham

c



The Column of Heliodorus, Besnagar, M.B. *c.* 100 B.C.

PLATE X

Thus the texts of the period are mainly concerned with the region from the Jamnā eastwards to the borders of Bengal. The area south of the Ganges receives little attention, and it has been reasonably suggested that the main line of Āryan penetration was not down the river, the banks of which were then probably thick swampy jungle, but along the Himālayan foothills. Expansion was not wholly confined to the north of the Ganges, however. Contemporary literature has little to say about the rest of Northern India, but conditions at the time of the Buddha were such that it must have been colonized some time previously, and this is confirmed by tradition. On the Jamnā the tribe of the Yādavas had settled in the region of Mathurā, while further down the river the kingdom of Vatsa was ruled from its capital of Kauśāmbī, very important in later times. By the end of this period the Āryans had advanced down the Chambal River, had settled in Mālwā, and had reached the Narmadā. Probably parts of the N.-W. Deccan were also under Āryan influence. According to the Epic tradition Kāthiāwār was colonized by a branch of the Yādavas, led by the great hero Kṛṣṇa, and, though the association of Kṛṣṇa with the story is probably unhistorical (p. 304f), the legend may be founded on fact.

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

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

If the popular assemblies had lost power, another element in the state was rising in influence—the *ratnins*, or "jewel bearers", the relatives, courtiers and palace officials of the king, who were looked on as so important that at the king's consecration special sacrifices were performed to ensure their loyalty. The list of ratnins includes the purohita, or chief priest of the palace, the general, the chamberlain, the king's charioteer, and various other influential palace servants. Two of the ratnins, the *saṃgrahītṛ* and *bhāgadugha*, have been dubiously explained as treasurer and revenue-collector respectively, and if these interpretations are correct they indicate a rudimentary ministerial system and civil service.

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

By now the Āryans had nearly all the equipment of a civilization of the ancient type. Where the *Ṛg Veda* speaks only of gold and copper or bronze the later Vedic texts also mention tin, lead, and silver, and probably iron.* The elephant was tamed, though little used in war. The Āryans now cultivated a large range of crops, including rice, and they understood something of irrigation and manuring.

Specialized trades and crafts had appeared. In place of the few occupations in the *Ṛg Veda* many are now referred to, including jewellers, goldsmiths, metal-workers, basketmakers, ropemakers,

* "Black bronze" is referred to in the *Yajur Veda*, but no iron has been discovered in the remains of Hastināpura at this level. Iron was probably a comparatively rare metal until Mauryan times.

weavers, dyers, carpenters and potters. Various types of domestic servant are mentioned, and a rudimentary entertainment industry existed, with professional acrobats, fortune-tellers, fluteplayers and dancers, while there are also references to usurers and merchants.

Though Āryan culture had by now made great advances there is still no mention of coined money or writing, both of which were certainly used in India before the time of the Mauryas. Coinage may have been introduced towards the end of the 6th century B.C., through Persian influence, but it is not completely certain that we can accept the negative evidence of later Vedic literature to show that writing was wholly unknown. This literature was intended for a limited audience of priests, who had developed a unique system of memory training, and who may well have looked on writing as an objectionable innovation. There is evidence in the literature itself of faint contacts with Mesopotamia, notably in the Indian flood legend (p. 302), which first appears at this time, and bears some similarity to that of Babylon. After a break of many centuries Indian merchandise was again finding its way to Mesopotamia, and it is possible that Semitic merchants, or Indian merchants returning from the West, brought an alphabetic system of writing, which was gradually taken up by the learned, and adapted to the phonetics of Indian speech, to become the *Brāhmī* script of Mauryan times (p. 394f).

The most important developments of this age were religious, and will be considered elsewhere (p. 242ff). Culturally the period of the later Vedic literature saw Indian life and thought take the direction which it has followed ever since. The end of this shadowy age, with its kings growing in power, its priests arrogating to themselves ever greater privileges, and its religious outlook rapidly changing, marks the beginning of the great period of India's culture in which the pattern of her society, religion, literature and art gradually assumed something of its present shape.

III

HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL EMPIRES

SOURCES OF HISTORY

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

Thus our knowledge of the political history of ancient India is often tantalizingly vague and uncertain, and that of the medieval period, which we may take as beginning in the 7th century A.D., is but little more precise. History must be pieced together from passing references in texts both religious and secular, from a few dramas and works of fiction purporting to describe historical events, from the records of foreign travellers, and from the many panegyrics or other references to reigning monarchs and their ancestors which have been found engraved on rocks, pillars and temple walls, or incorporated as preambles to the title-deeds of land grants; the latter, fortunately for the historian, were usually engraved on copper plates (pl.LXXXIX). The early history of India resembles a jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces; some parts of the picture are fairly clear; others may be reconstructed with the aid of a controlled imagination; but many gaps remain, and may never be filled. Few dates before the middle ages can be fixed with certainty, and the history of Hindu India, as far as we can reconstruct it, is almost completely lacking in the interesting anecdotes and vivid personalities which enliven the study of history for professional and amateur historians alike. Moreover there is much disagreement among competent authorities on many important topics.

As our knowledge is so vague and unsatisfactory the reader may well suggest that the political history of Hindu India should be left to the expert; here, however, we cannot agree with him. Too many Indologists have studied Indian religion, art, language and literature in a political and historical vacuum, and this has tended to encourage the widespread fallacy that ancient Indian civilization was interested almost solely in the things of the spirit. However defective our knowledge may be, we have ample evidence to show that great empires rose and fell in India, and that, as in religion, art, literature and social life, so in political organization India produced her own system, distinctive in its strength and weakness. Therefore some knowledge of her political history is essential for a true understanding of her ancient civilization.

THE AGE OF THE BUDDHA

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

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

By now the focus of civilization had shifted eastwards, and four great kingdoms, outside the earlier area of brāhmanic culture, had eclipsed the old land of the Kurus in both political and economic importance; these were Kosala, Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti, of which the first three have been located in the last chapter and the fourth was approximately equivalent to the region later known as Mālwā. Of the four we know most about Kosala and Magadha, the chief scenes

of the activities of the Buddha and of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism. Kosala, the home of the legendary Rāma, was already in decline. Her king, Prasenajit (in Pāli, Pasenadi), was indeed still a mighty monarch, ruling an area little smaller than France; but from fleeting references in the Buddhist scriptures it seems that he was inefficient, and squandered his time and wealth on holy-men, both orthodox and heretical. His kingdom, which was infested by robbers, was loosely controlled through tribal chieftains and vassal kings.

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

Bimbisāra was deposed, imprisoned and murdered about 490 B.C.—some seven years before the death of the Buddha—by his son, Ajātaśatru. Soon after usurping the prosperous kingdom built up by his father, the parricide went to war with his aged uncle Prasenajit, and gained complete control of Kāśī. Just after this Prasenajit, like Bimbisāra, was deposed by his son, and died. The new king, Virūḍhaka (in Pāli, Viḍūḍabha), then attacked and virtually annihilated the little autonomous tribe of the Śākyas, in the Himālayan foothills, and we hear no more of the people which produced the greatest of Indians, the Buddha. Probably Virūḍhaka, like Ajātaśatru of Magadha, had ambitions of empire, and wished to embark on a career of conquest after bringing the outlying peoples, who had paid loose homage to his father, more directly under the control of the centre; but his intentions were unfulfilled, for we hear no more of him except an unreliable legend that he was destroyed by a miracle soon after his massacre of the Śākyas. A little later his kingdom was incorporated in that of Magadha.

After his war with Prasenajit Ajātaśatru turned his attention to the tribal confederation of the Vṛjjis, on the north bank of the Ganges, which had often caused trouble by raiding Magadhan territory. After a protracted war he succeeded in occupying their chief city, Vaiśālī, and in annexing their lands. The chief element of the confederation, the tribe of the Licchavis, succeeded in preserving its identity, however, and survived at least until the 4th century A.D., when it was again influential in the politics of Eastern India. The early stages of Ajātaśatru's war with the Vṛjjis took place around the time of the Buddha's death, in about 483 B.C.

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

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

The Buddhist and Jaina scriptures give us little information on the

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

ALEXANDER AND THE MAURYAS

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

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

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

* This is the name as given by classical sources. It probably represents the Sanskrit *Ambhi*.

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

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

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

The immediate effects of the invasion were slight. The little kingdoms and tribes of the North-West were disorganized and

* Probably the Sanskrit *Paurava*, which would connect Porus with the old Kuru tribe, of whose ruling family this was a cognomen.

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

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

Both Indian and classical sources agree that Candragupta overthrew the last of the Nandas and occupied his capital, Pāṭaliputra; the latter add that after Alexander's retreat Candragupta subdued the North-West, driving out the Greek garrisons. It is not clear which of these operations was first undertaken, and, with the annoying uncertainty of much ancient Indian history, estimates of the date of Candragupta's accession vary within a decade (324–313 B.C.); but though the detailed history of his rise to power is uncertain, it is evident that he was the chief architect of the greatest of India's ancient empires. According to all Indian traditions he was much aided in his conquests by a very able and unscrupulous brāhmaṇ adviser, called variously Kauṭilya, Cāṇakya and Viṣṇugupta; indeed in the play *The Minister's Signet Ring*, a work of the 6th century A.D., which purports to describe the last stages of Candragupta's triumph over the Nanda (p. 441), the king is depicted as a weak and insignificant young man, the real ruler of the empire being Cāṇakya. The minister is the reputed author of the *Arthaśāstra*, or "Treatise on Polity", a very valuable source of information on state administration. The text as we have it at present is certainly not the work of Kauṭilya (p. 79), but it is very valuable nevertheless, and contains genuine Mauryan reminiscences.

Soon the Greeks were again at the doors of India. Alexander's

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

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

Megasthenes much admired the Emperor Candragupta for his energetic administration of justice, which he presided over personally in open *darbār*.* He dwelt in great luxury in an enormous palace at Pāṭaliputra, which, though built wholly of wood, was of unbelievable beauty and splendour; but his life was not a happy one, for he was in constant fear of assassination, an ever-present danger to many Indian kings, and very stringent precautions were taken for his security. The capital was a large and fine city, surrounded by a wooden wall; it was controlled by an administrative board of thirty members, who regulated in detail the whole social and economic life of the city. Megasthenes noticed the existence of caste, though his classification of the population in seven endogamous groups is certainly erroneous (p. 147).

According to Jaina tradition Candragupta abdicated the throne, became a Jaina monk, and fasted to death, in the manner of Jaina

* In this context this word is an anachronism, as it is Persian, and was introduced by the Muslims, but it is better known and less ambiguous than the equivalent Sanskrit word, *sabhā*.

Fig. vi. The Empire of Aśoka
(The pillars originally at Mīrath and Toprā are now at Delhi)

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

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

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

"When the King, of Gracious Mien and Beloved of the Gods, had been consecrated eight years Kaliṅga was conquered. 150,000 people were thence taken captive, 100,000 were killed, and many more died. Just after the taking of Kaliṅga the Beloved of the Gods began to follow Righteousness, to love Righteousness, to give instruction in Righteousness. When an unconquered country is conquered, people are killed, they die, or are made captive. That the Beloved of the Gods finds very pitiful and grievous. . . . Today, if a hundredth or a thousandth part of those who suffered in Kaliṅga were to be killed, to die, or to be taken captive, it would be very grievous to the Beloved of the Gods. If anyone does him wrong it will be forgiven as far as it can be forgiven. The Beloved of the Gods even reasons with the

forest tribes in his empire, and seeks to reform them. But the Beloved of the Gods is not only compassionate, he is also powerful, and he tells them to repent, lest they be slain. For the Beloved of the Gods desires safety, self-control, justice and happiness for all beings. The Beloved of the Gods considers that the greatest of all victories is the victory of Righteousness, and that [victory] the Beloved of the Gods has already won, here and on all his borders, even 600 leagues away in the realm of the Greek king Antiyoka, and beyond Antiyoka among the four kings Turamaya, Antikini, Maga and Alikasudara, and in the South among the Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas and as far as Ceylon."[2]

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

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

From the passage above quoted, as well as from other indications, it is clear that Aśoka was not a complete pacifist. The wild tribesmen of hill and forest were a constant source of danger to the more settled parts of the empire, and it would seem that earlier kings had

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

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

It is evident that, after his change of heart if not before, Aśoka was a Buddhist, and some authorities believe that he actually entered the Buddhist order. But the inscriptions show that he was no metaphysician, and indeed he probably had little interest in or understanding of the finer points of Buddhism. Although he never mentions the Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, he speaks frequently of heaven; and he seems to have held the naive belief that, as a result of the growth of morality through his reforms, the gods had manifested themselves on earth, a phenomenon which had not occurred for many years previously.[3] For Aśoka, Buddhism seems to have been a system of morals which led to peace and fellowship in this world and heaven in the next. His metaphysical presuppositions were not distinctively Buddhist, but were evidently those traditional in India at the time. A streak of puritanism in the Emperor is to be inferred from the edict banning rowdy popular fairs and allowing religious gatherings only.

Aśoka's Buddhism, though enthusiastic, was not exclusive. More

than once he declared that all sects were worthy of respect, and he dedicated artificial caves to the sect of Ājīvikas, who were among the chief rivals of the Buddhists. His relations with the Buddhist clergy seem to have been erastian, for he had no compunction in prescribing passages of scripture which the order was specially to study, and he instructed local officers to ensure that all ill-behaved Buddhist monks were unfrocked. It was in Aśoka's reign that Buddhism ceased to be a simple Indian sect and began its career as a world religion. According to tradition a great council of the Buddhist clergy was held at Pāṭaliputra, at which the Pāli canon was finally codified, and after which missions were sent throughout the length and breadth of India and beyond.

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

To the modern student Aśoka towers above the other kings of ancient India, if for no other reason than that he is the only one among them whose personality can be reconstructed with any degree of certainty. But even Aśoka is not as clear a figure as we would wish, and his policy has been the subject of varied judgements. Critics have accused him of ruining the Mauryan Empire, either by antagonizing the brāhmaṇs or by sapping the martial spirit of the ruling classes.[4] We cannot accept either of these accusations. It appears that the old Emperor, who died about 232 B.C., somewhat lost grip in his latter years,[5] and the succession was disputed by his sons. The Empire began to fall apart on his death, when the governors of the great provinces, usually members of the royal family, established their virtual independence. The successors of

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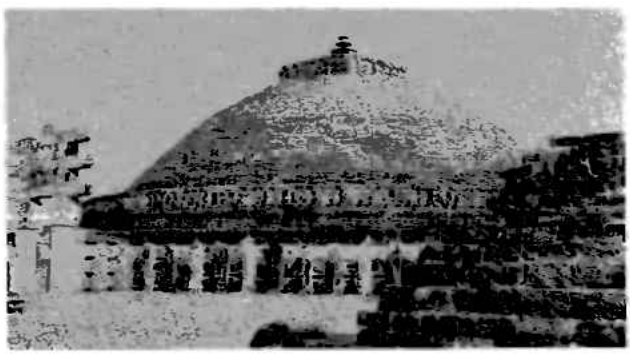
a

Aerial view of the site of a fortified city, Śiśupālgarh, Orissā.
Approximately 1 mile square. 1st–2nd century A.D.

A. L. Basham

b



The Great Stūpa, Sānchī, M.B.
2nd–1st century B.C.

PLATE XI

a *A. L. Basham*

Dhamekh Stūpa, Sārnāth, near Banāras, with foundations of monasteries. Gupta Period

b *A. L. Basham*

The Great Stūpā, Nālandā, Bihar (note the human figures on the top)

c *A. L. Basham*

Remains of Monasteries, Nālandā

A. L. Basham

d

Corner Turret, Great Stūpa, Nālandā

PLATE XII

Aśoka were lesser men than he, and little is known of them but their names.

The Aśoka of the Buddhist legends is, in the words of a 19th-century authority, "half monster and half idiot",[6] his humanity and practical benevolence overlaid by the accretion of monkish legends of later centuries; but the king of the rock and pillar inscriptions comes alive, as a real man, and a man far ahead of his times. Aśoka was by no means an other-worldly dreamer, but every inch a king, a little naive, often rather self-righteous and pompous, but indefatigable, strong-willed and imperious. It is with good reason that the Indian Republic has adopted for the device of its state seal the capital of an Aśokan column (pl. XXIII*a*).

THE AGE OF INVASIONS

For some fifty years Mauryan kings continued to rule in Magadha until, about 183 B.C., Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, a brāhmaṇ general of Bṛhadratha, the last Mauryan king, succeeded in gaining power by a palace revolution. Puṣyamitra was a supporter of the orthodox faith, and revived the ancient Vedic sacrifices, including the horse-sacrifice; but the flourishing state of Buddhism at this period is attested by the remains at Bhārhut, and the stories of his persecution of Buddhist monks are probably much exaggerated by sectarian tradition. The kingdom of the Śuṅgas was by no means a closely-knit centralized empire, like that of the Mauryas, but one of a looser type, which was to become normal in Hindu India, and which may be broadly termed feudal (p. 98ff). Its centre was in Vidiśā (E. Mālwā), which at most times seems to have been directly controlled by the king, whose domains were surrounded by a circle of vassal states, small and great, in varying degrees of subservience, but some evidently autonomous enough to issue their own coins. Beyond the realm of Puṣyamitra much of the old Mauryan Empire was now independent, and little is known of the condition of Magadha, the former centre of culture and power.

The inspiration of the Mauryas was soon almost forgotten. Later the Guptas tried to build an empire of a more centralized type, and directly controlled much of North India for over a hundred years, but, with this major exception and a few minor ones, all later Hindu imperialism was of the quasi-feudal type, loose and unstable. The memory of Aśoka's renunciation of further conquest was soon forgotten, and aggressive war again became the sport of kings, and was looked upon by theorists as a normal activity of the state. In general the history of post-Mauryan India is one of the struggle of one

dynasty with another for regional dominance, and the political, though not the cultural, unity of India was lost for nearly two thousand years.

Puṣyamitra is mentioned in several sources, and his name is recorded in one brief inscription, referring to an obscure descendant.[7] He did not take regal titles, but was throughout his reign referred to by the simple title *senāpati*, or "general". Agnimitra, his son, who seems to have been king during his father's lifetime, is known from Kālidāsa's drama *Mālavikā and Agnimitra*, while his grandson Vasumitra is recorded in the same source as having defeated the Greeks. An inscription on a column at Besnagar (pl. X*c*), near Bhīlsā, records that a Śuṅga king Bhāgabhadra received an ambassador named Heliodorus from a Greek king of Takṣaśilā, Antialcidas. Otherwise the Śuṅgas are mere names, recorded, usually in garbled form, among the muddled king-lists of the *Purāṇas*, religious texts dating from Gupta times onwards.

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

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

Valley and the district of Takṣaśilā. The Greek domains in India were divided into several petty kingdoms, those of the Kābul Valley and the N.-W. Frontier chiefly ruled by kings of the line of Eucratides, and those of the Panjāb under the line of Euthydemus.

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

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

This period was a very important one in the history of Buddhism, and Kaniṣka is remembered in Northern Buddhist tradition as a great patron of the faith. Numerous remains testify to the importance and popularity of Buddhism at the time, and it was now that it began to spread to Central Asia and the Far East. Some intimations of the Indian religion had already reached China, but it exerted no real influence until now, when the Kuṣāṇa and Chinese empires were in

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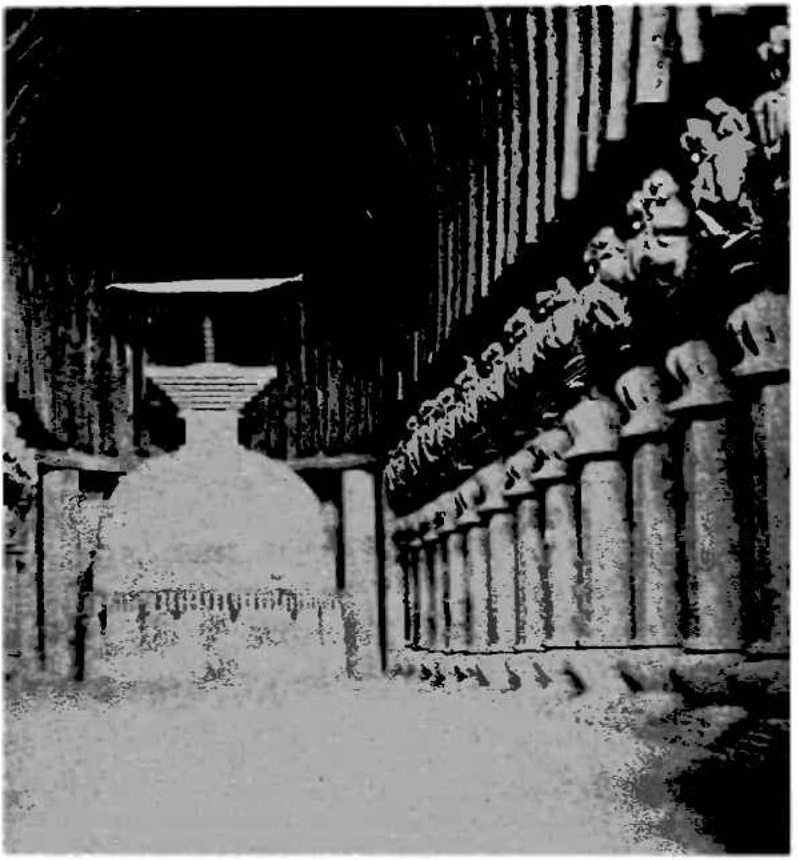


The Great Caitya-hall, Kārlī, Bombay, *c.* 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

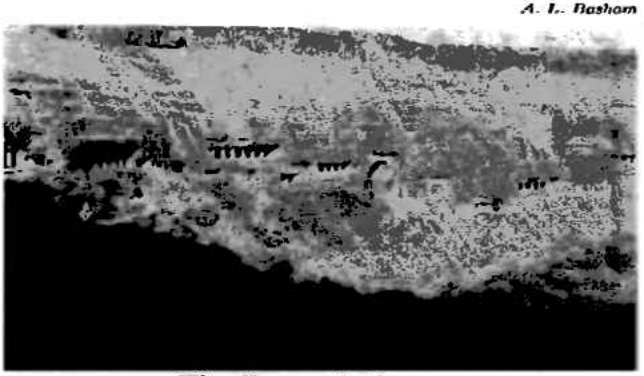
Dept. of Archæology, Government of India

a

Façade of Cave XIX, Ajantā. Gupta Period

A. L. Basham

b



The Caves of Ajantā

PLATE XIV

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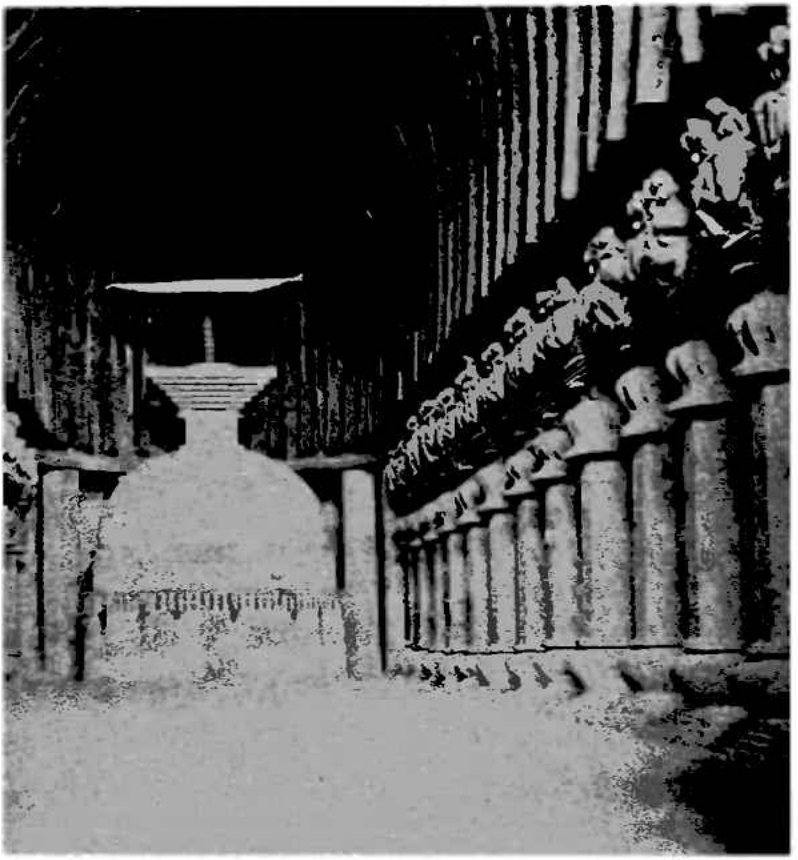

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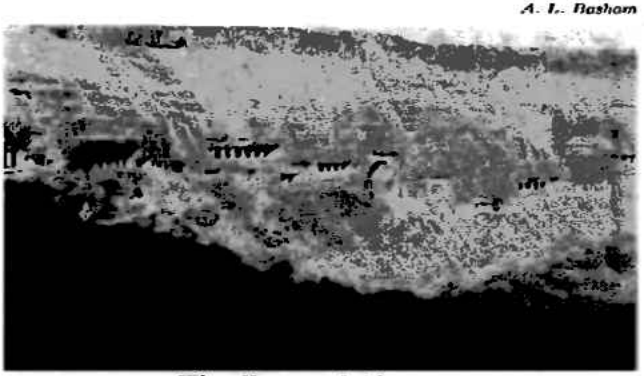


The Caves of Ajantā

PLATE XIV

close contact. The period is also noteworthy for the Gandhāra school of art, which was influential not only in India but also, indirectly, in the Far East (p. 368f).

The date of Kaniṣka, like the chronology of the whole Śaka-Kuṣāṇa period, is very uncertain, and estimates of the year of his accession have varied from 58 B.C. to A.D. 288. At present opinions of most competent authorities are divided between A.D. 78 and 144. The former date is that of the foundation of one of the most widespread Indian systems of dating, later known as the Śaka Era. Kaniṣka was not, strictly speaking, a Śaka, but the term was very loosely applied, and he is known to have founded an era. Though the date A.D. 78 fits well with other Indian evidence, certain complicated synchronisms mainly based on non-Indian sources suggest that he reigned some decades later than this, and the question cannot be finally settled until new evidence appears. The successors of Kaniṣka continued to reign in N.-W. India, but their empire was soon much reduced. About the middle of the 3rd century Vāsudeva, one of Kaniṣka's successors, was soundly defeated by Shāpur I, of the new Sāsānian dynasty of Persia, and from now on the North-West came much under Iranian influence.

Meanwhile new kingdoms had been set up in the Peninsula. In Orissā a great conqueror, Khāravela, appeared about the middle of the 1st century B.C.; he raided far and wide over India and was a great patron of Jainism; but his empire was short-lived, and we know nothing of his successors. At about the same time an important kingdom arose in the N.-W. Deccan from the ruins of that of the Mauryas—the kingdom of the Sātavāhanas or Āndhras, centred on Pratiṣṭhāna (modern Paithān). This survived for 300 years or more, until the 3rd century A.D., its power often reaching beyond the Narmadā into Mālwā and, in the 2nd century A.D., from coast to coast. Traditionally the first Sātavāhana king, Sīmuka, put an end to the last insignificant Śuṅgas and to the Kāṇva kings, who reigned for a short time in part of the old Śuṅga Empire. For a while, around the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., the Sātavāhanas were driven from the N.-W. Deccan by invading Śakas of the clan of Kṣaharāta, whose great satrap Nahapāna left a number of inscriptions; but the Sātavāhanas, under the greatest of their rulers, Gautamīputra Sātakarṇin, recovered their lands about A.D. 130, and nothing more is heard of the Kṣaharātas.

Another Śaka dynasty, generally known as the "Western Satraps", gained control of Kāthiāwār and Mālwā at about the same time, and ruled until soon after A.D. 388, at its height governing much of Rājasthān and Sind. The greatest ruler of this line

was Rudradāman, who has left the earliest important inscription in correct Sanskrit, a long panegyric which records his martial exploits and his reconstruction of a great artificial lake at Girnar in Kāthiāwār, which had been excavated under Candragupta and improved in the time of Aśoka. This inscription is among the earliest certainly dated records of ancient India, and proves that Rudradāman was reigning in A.D. 150.

At this time the Dravidian South first begins to appear in the light of history. Traditionally the Tamil country has always been divided into three kingdoms—Cōḷa (the Coromandel Coast), Keraḷa or Cēra (Malabār), and Pāṇḍya (the southern tip of the Peninsula). These three are mentioned by Aśoka as the scenes of his "victories of Righteousness" beyond his own dominions, and a few rough inscriptions indicate that Buddhist and Jaina ascetics visited the Tamil land before the beginning of the Christian era. In the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, which was probably composed in the early centuries A.D., we find the three kingdoms in a state of almost continual warfare. Their kings, and the numerous lesser chieftains who are also mentioned, seem to have been more bloodthirsty than those of the North, and the literature contains hints of massacres and other atrocities such as are rarely heard of in Sanskrit literature; one passage even suggests cannibal feasts after battle.[9] The ancient Tamil, by no means perfectly Āryanized, was a man of very different stamp from his gentle and thoughtful descendant. Wild and ruthless, delighting in war and drink, worshipping fierce gods with bacchanalian dances, passionate in love, he compares strikingly with the grave and knightly warriors of the Sanskrit epics, which were probably receiving their final form at the time when the poems of the Tamil anthologies were being written. A few centuries were to alter the picture somewhat, and the next stratum of Tamil literature shows a much deeper penetration of Āryan ideals and standards, but a streak of ruthlessness and disregard for individual life is evident in the Dravidian character down to the fall of Vijayanagara.

Very early the Tamils took to the sea. Even in the 2nd century B.C. they twice invaded Ceylon, the first time soon after the death of the great king Devānampiya Tissa, and the second a little later. The latter invasion resulted in the long occupation of the whole of the northern half of the island by the Tamil king Eḷāra, who was expelled with great difficulty by the Sinhalese national hero, King Duṭugāmuṇu (in Pāli, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi) (161–137 B.C.). Tamils probably found their way to S.-E. Asia at about the same time, and in the 1st century A.D. were in close contact with Egypt and the Roman Empire, through the flourishing trade with the West (p. 227ff).

THE GUPTAS AND HARṢA

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

In A.D. 320 a new Candra Gupta,* arose, whose successors in great measure restored the splendour of the Mauryas. He owed his rise to power largely to his marriage with a princess Kumāradevī, of the tribe of the Licchavis, who now reappear on the scene, eight centuries after their defeat by Ajātaśatru. From the prominence given to the Licchavi princess in the genealogies of later Gupta kings, and the minting of special coins to commemorate her marriage to Candra Gupta (fig. xxiv*a*, p. 381), it seems that the Licchavis had profited by the absence of any strong central control to carve a new kingdom, and were very influential in Magadha at the time. Candra Gupta I possessed fairly large domains, including the regions of Magadha and Kosala.

Under his successor, Samudra Gupta (c. A.D. 335–376), Pāṭaliputra once more became the centre of a great empire. Samudra's power reached from Assam to the borders of the Panjāb. He aimed at the establishment of a closely knit empire of the Mauryan type, for in his great Allahābād inscription he is said to have "violently uprooted" no less than nine kings of Northern India, and to have annexed their kingdoms to his own. The martial tribes of Rājasthān, however, merely rendered him homage, as did several kingdoms on his frontiers, while in the Eastern Deccan, where Samudra led a very successful expedition as far as Kāñcī (Conjeeveram), the defeated kings were reinstated on giving homage and tribute, and probably heard no more of their titular overlord.

Samudra Gupta's main effort was in the direction of the west, where the Śakas had ruled for over 200 years and the land was enriched by the lucrative western trade. From their capital of Ujjayinī (modern Ujjain) the Śakas still controlled Mālwā and Kāthiāwār, and were a power to be reckoned with. Though Samudra's inscription makes a vague reference to his receiving homage from "the Śaka Lords", it is probable that he did not measure swords with them, or,

* We divide the name into its two component parts to distinguish this king and Candra Gupta II from Candragupta Maurya. In Sanskrit the names are identical.

Fig. vii. The Gupta Empire

if he did, was unsuccessful, for it is unlikely that he would have allowed them to remain independent if he could have prevented it. There is indeed a story that on his death the Śakas actually succeeded in shaking the Gupta Empire, and forced a weak king, Rāma Gupta, to conclude a dishonourable peace. Most authorities reject the story, and deny the historicity of Rāma Gupta, but the recent discovery of copper coins bearing this name tends to strengthen our belief that it has a basis of fact.[10]

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

The reign of Candra Gupta II perhaps marks the high watermark of ancient Indian culture. Later Indian legend tells of a great and good King Vikramāditya, who drove the Śakas out of Ujjayinī, and ruled over all India, which in his reign was most prosperous and happy. Vikramāditya was certainly one of the titles of Candra Gupta II, and the legend seems therefore to refer to him. The only important discrepancy is that the traditional Vikramāditya is said to have founded the Vikrama Era, the most important of India's many systems of dating, which is still widely current in North India, and which commences in 58 B.C.; thus legend places him some 400 years too early. Kālidāsa, the greatest of India's poets and dramatists, is traditionally associated with Vikramāditya, and the internal evidence of his works points to the fact that he wrote at about this time.

The prosperity and happiness of Candra Gupta's empire is attested by another foreign traveller, unfortunately not as observant and informative as Megasthenes. This was Fa-hsien, a Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled to India in order to obtain authentic copies of the scriptures. The account of his travels gives much information about temples and monasteries, and repeats many Buddhist legends, but only a few passing phrases mention social conditions, and nothing at all is said about Candra Gupta himself, although Fa-hsien was in India for some six years of his reign. The pilgrim did, however, note the peacefulness of India, the rarity of serious crime, and the mildness of the administration. He stated that it was possible to

travel from one end of the country to the other without molestation, and without the need of passports. In his remarks on social custom he noted that all respectable people were now vegetarians, meat eating being confined to low castes and untouchables, in regard to whom he gives us the earliest clear reference to "pollution on approach". He found Buddhism flourishing still, but theistic Hinduism very widespread.

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

Candra Gupta II was succeeded by his son Kumāra Gupta I (c. 415–454), who, like Samudra Gupta, performed the Vedic horse-sacrifice, which, in theory at least, might only be performed by great conquerors. There is no evidence, however, that he added to his empire, although for most of his reign he preserved it intact. But in the last years of Kumāra Gupta I the empire suffered a severe blow; as with many other important events of early Indian history, details are annoyingly absent, but it is clear that among the chief enemies with whom the Guptas had to contend were new invaders, called in India the Hūṇas. They were a Central Asian people, known to Byzantine writers as Hephthalites or White Huns, and it is usually considered that they were a branch of the great group of Turko-Mongol peoples who were threatening Europe at about the same time; certain modern scholars, however, claim that they were in no way related to the Huns of Attila, but were of Iranian stock.[11] The Hūṇas had occupied Bactria some time before, and now, like the earlier Greeks, Śakas and Kuṣāṇas, they crossed the mountains and attacked the plains of India; it is probable that kindred Central Asian tribes came in their train.

Once more Western India was the prey of fierce raiders, who were with the greatest difficulty kept at bay by the Emperor's son, Skanda Gupta. During the war with the Hūṇas Kumāra Gupta died, and Skanda Gupta (c. 455–467) assumed power, though not born of the

chief queen and therefore not the regular heir to the throne. He succeeded in re-establishing the Gupta Empire, and by the end of 455 it was again at peace; but he reigned for little more than twelve years, and on his death the great days of the Guptas were over. The empire continued, but central control weakened, and local governors became feudatory kings with hereditary rights. Beyond Magadha and Bengal the Gupta emperors now exercised little more than titular control.

At the close of the 5th century fresh Hūṇa inroads occurred, and this time were even more difficult to repel. The empire was disunited, and no strong man of the calibre of Skanda Gupta came forward to drive out the invader. For some thirty years, from A.D. 500 onwards, Western India was in the hands of Hūṇa kings, two of whom, Toramāṇa and his son Mihirakula, were apparently mighty monarchs. The latter is remembered by the 7th century Chinese traveller Hsüan Tsang as a fierce persecutor of Buddhism, and in Kashmīr, one of the centres of his power, memories of his sadistic tyranny were still alive in the 12th century, when they were recorded by the historian Kalhaṇa. Mihirakula seems to have been driven from the plain of the Ganges by Narasiṃha Gupta, who had the cognomen Bālāditya, under which his triumph is recorded by Hsüan Tsang; about 530 Mihirakula was also defeated in Western India, this time by Yaśodharman, an energetic king of Mandasor, who built a large kingdom which did not survive his death. Though Mihirakula apparently retained his hold on Kashmīr and parts of the North-West, Hūṇa power never again seriously threatened India, and the Hūṇas soon lost their individuality.

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

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

Harṣa ascended the throne in 606 at the age of sixteen, and in the forty-one years of his reign he succeeded in partially restoring the glories of the Guptas. Some of his fame is due to the fact that, in comparison with most other early Indian kings, his reign is remarkably well documented. The poet Bāṇa, who was patronized by Harṣa, has left a florid account of the events leading up to his rise to power (p. 446ff), while in the latter part of his reign India was visited by another Chinese pilgrim, Hsüan Tsang, who wrote a very valuable description of India, which, unlike the account of Megasthenes, has survived intact. While his main purpose, like that of Fa-hsien, was to obtain Buddhist manuscripts and visit sacred sites, Hsüan Tsang was less other-worldly than the earlier pilgrim, and he was in close touch with Harṣa, whom he much admired and who gave him an honoured place at his court. His work is therefore of much greater historical value than that of Fa-hsien.

Although Harṣa gained control of most of Northern India, from Kāthiāwār to Bengal, his empire was feudal in structure. Outside the immediate domains of Kānyakubja and Sthānvīśvara, many of the old kings retained their thrones. Śaśāṅka, the fierce anti-Buddhist king of Bengal, who overran Magadha at the time of Harṣa's accession, was driven back to his own domains and his kingdom fell to Harṣa, but Deva Gupta, the king who had been chiefly responsible for the downfall of Harṣa's brother-in-law Grahavarman Maukhari, was replaced by a relative, Mādhava Gupta, and the Maitraka king of

a M. Hürlimann, "Indien", Atlantis Verlag, Zürich

General View

b A. L. Basham

Column (*dhvajastambha*) in Courtyard

c A. L. Basham

Pillar

KAILĀSANĀTHA ROCK-TEMPLE, ELLORĀ. 8TH CENTURY A.D.

PLATE XV

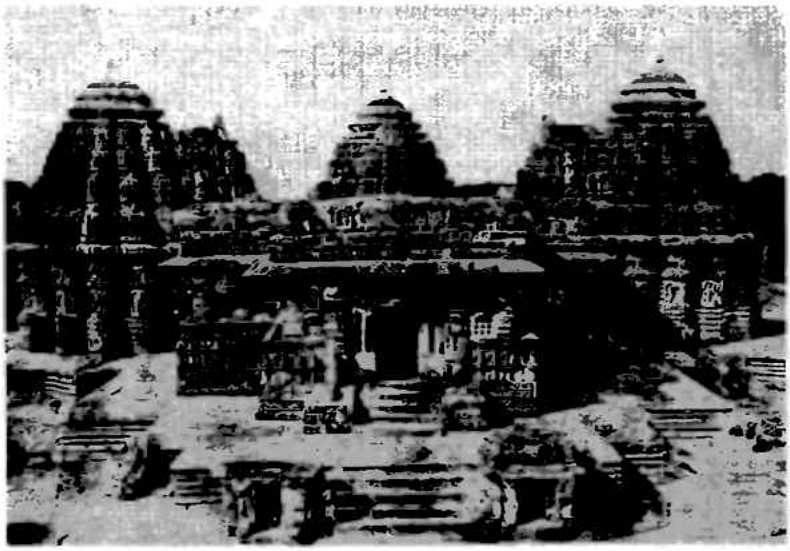
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

a

Shore Temple, Māmallapuram. End of 7th century A.D.

Source Unknown

b



Temple, Somnāthpur, Mysore

PLATE XVI

Kāthiāwār, after being defeated by Harşa, was allowed to retain his throne as a vassal. Harşa controlled his great empire by ceaselessly travelling from province to province, both in his own domains and in those of his feudatories, who seem to have spent much time in attendance on their overlord. When he died without heirs it is not surprising that his empire fell to pieces.

Harşa seems to have been a man of great gifts and intense energy. As Candragupta by Megasthenes, he is described by Hsüan Tsang as hearing the complaints of his humbler subjects with unwearying patience, not in his audience hall, but in a small travelling pavilion by the roadside. He loved pomp, however, and in his progresses he was accompanied by a tremendous train of attendants, courtiers, officials, Buddhist monks, and brāhmaṇs. He was a loyal and warm friend, and, if we can believe the sources, fantastically generous to those whom he favoured. He loved philosophy and literature, and in his leisure found time to write three very competent dramas (p. 441).

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

Hsüan Tsang shows that Buddhism was definitely declining in India at this time, although in the latter part of his reign Harşa fell increasingly under its influence. Now certain elements of later Hinduism, of which there are few traces in the time of the Guptas, were strongly in evidence. The growth of tantric cults (p. 337) and of such practices as *satī* (p. 187f) shows that a cultural decline had already set in. Law and order were not as well maintained as in Gupta times, for, in contrast to Fa-hsien, who was so impressed by the peaceable and law-abiding state of India, Hsüan Tsang was twice robbed by bandits in Harşa's domains, and on one occasion was nearly sacrificed to the goddess Durgā by river pirates, in the very heart of the empire.

THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE NORTH

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

of the period, but the detail is monotonous and uninteresting to all but the specialist.

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

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

In the 9th and 10th centuries the Gurjara-Pratihāras, who probably originated in Rājasthān, were masters of Kānyakubja, and the most powerful kings of Northern India. They successfully resisted the Arabs, who, in 712, had occupied Sind, and who for over a century made frequent attacks on their eastern neighbours. The two most powerful Pratihāra kings, Mihira Bhoja (c. 840–885) and Mahendrapāla (c. 885–910), pushed back the Pālas, and were overlords of most of Northern India as far as the borders of Bengal. But they were weakened by the repeated invasions of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of the Deccan, who, in 916, temporarily occupied Kānyakubja. These

Fig. viii. India in the early 11th century, A.D.
(Names in brackets are of dynasties which were feudatory at the time, but became important later)

persistent raids from the south seem to have turned the attention of the Pratihāra kings away from the North-West, where new forces were gathering which were ultimately to overthrow Hindu India. Though the Pratihāras regained their capital after its occupation by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, they never regained their strength, and throughout the 10th century the Pratihāra feudatories grew more and more powerful at the expense of their former masters.

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

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

For about a century and a half Northern India retained its independence. In Banāras and Kānyakubja a new ruling family, the Gāhaḍa-

A. A. Bake

a

A Corner of the Temple, Somnāthpur

A. A. Bake

Frieze, Somnāthpur

J. R. Marr

c

Guardian Deity (*Dvārapāla*), Hoysaleśvara Temple, Halebīd, Mysore. 12th century A.D.

PLATE XVII

a

b

The Temple of Bēlūr, Mysore. 12th century A.D.

c

J. R. Marr

Pilaster, Temple of Śrīrangam. 16th century A.D.

PLATE XVIII

vālas, managed to build a fairly prosperous kingdom. In Rājasthān the dynasty of the Cāhamānas rose in prominence and power. The influence of the Candellas of Bundelkhand grew with the fall of the Pratihāras. In Gujarāt there ruled the prosperous line of the Caulukyas or Solaṅkīs, much under the influence of Jainism. In Mālwā the Paramāra dynasty flourished under King Bhoja (1018–1055), famous in legend, who was an accomplished scholar and a great builder of dams and artificial lakes for irrigation (p. 192f). Madhya Pradesh was in the hands of the Kalacuri dynasty. In Bengal the Pālas were replaced by the Senas, who were strong supporters of orthodox Hinduism, and who inaugurated something of an anti-Buddhist reaction.

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

A new Turkish ruling house supplanted the line of Mahmūd in Afghānistān. In 1173 Ghiyās-ud-dīn of Ghor annexed Ghaznī. His younger brother, Shihāb-ud-dīn, usually known as Muhammad of Ghor, proceeded to conquer the Ghaznavid possessions in the Panjāb and Sind, and then turned his attention to the Hindu states. The initiative in resistance came from Pṛthvīrāja, who patched up his quarrels and prepared to meet the invader. In 1191 the Hindu army met Muhammad at Tarain, not far from Thānesar, once the capital of the great Harṣa. The invaders were defeated, but in the following year they returned with a larger force. This time the mounted archers of the Muslims overpowered the Hindu army and Pṛthvīrāja was defeated and killed. He is remembered to this day by the Rājputs as a model of chivalry and courage, and is the hero of many folk ballads.

Muhammad returned home, and left the work of conquest to his generals. The chief of these, Qutb-ud-dīn Aibak, occupied Delhī, an important city of the Cāhamāna kingdom, and made it his headquarters. Another general, Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyār, pressed on down

* These names are often met in their Hindī forms: *Prithvīrāj* or *Pithorā Chāuhān*, *Jaichand Gāharwār*, and *Parmāl Candel*.

the Ganges and overran Bihār, where he put many Buddhist monks to the sword. He then occupied Bengal with little difficulty. The Candella kingdom of Bundelkhand fell in 1203. In 1206 Muhammad, who had succeeded his brother as sultan of Ghor, was assassinated, and his general Qutb-ud-dīn, a manumitted slave, became the first sultan of Delhī.

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

THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE PENINSULA

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

Power was generally centred on two foci, one in the Western Deccan and the other in the Cōḷa country, the Coromandel coast. The political history of the medieval Deccan is largely concerned with the struggles between the dynasties controlling these two centres. Many lesser kingdoms also existed, however, often tributary to the larger ones, but sometimes rising to considerable power.

In the Northern Deccan the Vākāṭakas vanished at about the same time as the Guptas, and in the middle of the 6th century the west and centre of the Peninsula came under the control of the Cālukya Dynasty, ruling from Vātāpi (now called Bādāmi) in Hyderābād. Its greatest king, Pulakeśin II (c. 609–642), was the approximate contemporary of Harṣa, whom he successfully resisted, only to be defeated at the end of his reign by Narasiṃhavarman, the Pallava king of Kāñcī (Conjeeveram). The Pallavas, who had been ruling since the 4th century, were great temple builders (p. 355), and seem to have much encouraged the growth of Āryan institutions in the South.

In the 7th century the Cālukyas divided into eastern and western

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

The Pallavas of Kāñcī persisted with declining fortunes until the end of the 9th century, when their territories were annexed by the Cōḷa kings of Tanjore, Āditya I (c. 870–906), and Parāntaka I (c. 906–953). The Cōḷa kingdom, one of the three great kingdoms of Tamil tradition, had been virtually submerged by the Pallavas for centuries. Now it rose again, and for some 300 years ruled the Coromandel Coast and much of the Eastern Deccan, giving a large measure of security to its people and supporting a flourishing social and cultural life. The most notable of the Cōḷa kings were Rājarāja I (985–1014) and Rājendra I (1014–1042), in whose reigns the power of the dynasty reached its zenith. The former conquered Ceylon, and the latter carried his power by land to the mouth of the Ganges, and sent out a great naval expedition, which occupied parts of Burma, Malaya and Sumātra. This was perhaps despatched with the intention of suppressing the piratical activities of the Indonesian kings, who interfered with the flourishing trade between South India and China. The Cōḷa hold on S.-E. Asia does not appear to have lasted long, however, and Rājendra's naval expedition is unique in the annals of India.

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

Though their power declined, the Cōḷas long maintained the central

part of their empire, the region around Kāñcī and Tanjore. The political stability and freedom from attack afforded by their efficient government greatly encouraged Tamil culture, and the large number of donative inscriptions of this period testifies to a flourishing economy. Administratively the Cōḷa Empire is remarkable for the influence exerted by local autonomous bodies; village and district councils, under the supervision of the central government, introduced an element into the structure of the state which, if not democratic, was at least popular (p. 106).

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

The Dravidians were not finally subjugated, however. Within a few years of Malik Kāfūr's raids, in 1336, an independent Hindu kingdom was founded at Vijayanagara, on the Tuṅgabhadrā River. This kingdom, after desperately resisting the Bahmanī sultans of the Northern Deccan, established its hegemony over the whole Peninsula from the Kṛṣṇā River southwards. Learning something of military strategy from their Muslim enemies, the kings of Vijayanagara maintained their independence until the middle of the 16th century, and, in a reduced form, even later. Of the splendour and affluence of their capital we have European accounts, from the Italian Nicolo dei Conti, who visited India in the early 15th century and from the Portuguese travellers Paes and Nuniz, who made contact with the kingdom of Vijayanagara about a hundred years later from the recently established Portuguese settlement of Goa. All were impressed by the splendour of the capital and the wealth of the court.

The great king Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya (1509–1529) (pl. LXXI), had he lived longer, might have driven the Muslims from the Deccan altogether. Of him Paes wrote in terms rarely used by a European traveller of an oriental monarch:

"He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners, . . . asking about all their affairs whatever their condition may be. He is a great ruler and a man of much justice, but subject to sudden fits of rage. . . . He is by rank a greater lord than any, by reason of what he possesses in armies and territories, but . . . he has nothing compared to what a man like him ought to have, so gallant and perfect is he in all things."[12]

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

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

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

This brief outline of the political history of Hindu India shows that she produced many bold adventurers and imperious conquerors. As our following chapter tells, they were ruthless in gaining and retaining power, and looked on war as a normal political expedient. Except during the Mauryan period political unity was unknown, and the highly organized and tightly controlled administration of the ancient Indian state had no counterpart in inter-state relations, where endemic anarchy was only mitigated by a tradition of fair play in warfare, which was by no means always followed. Here, and in the conservatism of the medieval period, lay the great weakness of Hindu India, which made her a prey to successive invaders. Of these the wild tribes of Central Asia were rapidly assimilated, but the Muslims with their rigidly codified religion, were too much for even the omnivorous Hindu culture to digest. Interaction between the two

religions and ways of life indeed took place, and once at least a *modus vivendi* was almost reached (p. 480). It is not wholly surprising, however, that, when India began to reassert herself, two nations should have replaced the single British Rāj; but all impartial students must regret that the unity of the Indian sub-continent has been once more lost, and trust that the two great nations of India and Pākistān may soon forget the bitterness born of centuries of strife, in co-operation for the common welfare of their peoples.

IV

THE STATE: POLITICAL LIFE AND THOUGHT

SOURCES

FROM the days of Plato and Aristotle European thought has turned its attention to such questions as the origin of the state, the ideal form of government, and the basis of law, and politics has long been looked on as a branch of philosophy. India also thought on such questions, but she had no schools of political philosophy in the Western sense. The problems which form the stock-in-trade of the European political philosopher are answered in Indian texts, but in a take-it-or-leave-it manner, with little discussion; often indeed the only argument in favour of a proposition is the citation of an old legend, used much as Plato's adaptations of older myths to reinforce his theories.

Though India had no formal political philosophy, the science of statecraft was much cultivated, and a number of important textbooks on this topic have survived. *Daṇḍanīti*, the administration of force, or *rājanīti*, the conduct of kings, was a severely practical science, and the texts cursorily dismiss the more philosophical aspect of politics, but give comparatively detailed advice on the organization of the state and the conduct of governmental affairs. The later Vedic literature tells us something, incidentally, about political life and thought in the pre-Buddhist period, and we can gather much from the Pāli scriptures of Buddhism; but the earliest and most important textbook specifically devoted to statecraft is the *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, which is attributed to Kauṭilya, the famous minister of Candragupta Maurya (p. 50). Some authorities still maintain the full authenticity of the work, but there are grave objections to this view. The text refers to people and places (notably China) which do not seem to have been known to the Indians in the 4th century B.C. It does not use much of the official terminology employed in the Aśokan inscriptions or in the Pāli scriptures, but it contains many governmental terms which apparently did not become popular until post-Mauryan times. Yet it is certainly pre-Guptan, and is, we believe, the elaboration of a Mauryan original which was perhaps the work of Kauṭilya himself. Whatever its age, the *Arthaśāstra* gives very detailed instructions on the control of the state, the organization of the national economy, and the conduct

of war, and it is a most precious source-book for many aspects of ancient Indian life.

The next important source, in chronological order, is the great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, of which the twelfth book, known as the *Śānti Parvan*, is a collection of many disparate passages on statecraft and human conduct, inserted into the body of the epic in the early centuries of the Christian era. Other passages on statecraft are found elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, and in the second of the great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The great body of literature generally called *Smṛti*, giving instruction in the Sacred Law, is very important in this connexion, and will be discussed later (p. 128f); especially significant is the seventh section of the lawbook ascribed to the primeval sage Manu, probably composed early in the Christian era.

From the Gupta period and the Middle Ages a number of political texts survive, the most important of which are the *Nītisāra* ("Essence of Politics") of Kāmandaka, perhaps written during the Gupta period, the *Nītivākyāmṛta* ("Nectar of Aphorisms on Politics") of Somadeva Sūri, a Jaina writer of the 10th century, and the *Nītiśāstra* ("Treatise on Politics") attributed to the ancient sage Śukra, but evidently of late medieval origin. These repeat much that has been said before, but here and there contain original ideas. Besides sources specifically dealing with political life and thought, ancient Indian literature as a whole, from the *Ṛg Veda* onwards, yields much information, and inscriptions of one kind and another are extremely valuable in this connexion.

The texts do not discuss wholly impossible utopias; their advice is often pedantic, but usually more or less feasible. However, it is not likely that any king conducted his affairs wholly on textbook lines, and there is ample evidence that the recommendations of the experts were not always put into effect. The reader must always bear in mind that in the texts on statecraft and Sacred Law the authors describe things not as they were in fact, but as they believed they ought to be. Probably in no kingdom of ancient India, not even in that of the Mauryas, was the influence of the state quite so all-pervading as in the system envisaged by the *Arthaśāstra*, though its author evidently based his precept upon current practice. Similarly the vicious punishments laid down by Manu for religious crimes (for example a śūdra who "arrogantly teaches brāhmaṇs their duty" shall have boiling oil poured in his mouth and ears[1]) are the suggestions of a fanatic and were rarely if ever put into practice. Moreover the texts are permeated with pedantry, and show the passion for sterile classification to which the Indian paṇḍit has often been prone. It is unlikely that the more energetic and self-reliant rulers worried

overmuch about the *Arthaśāstra's* discussion of different schools of thought on such questions as whether it is better to acquire a wild and rebellious but prosperous country, or a pacific but poor one. Many errors have been made by historians through their uncritical acceptance of these political texts as giving an exact picture of things as they were.

KINGSHIP

The earliest legend on the origin of kingship occurs in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[2] one of the later Vedic texts, perhaps of the 8th or 7th century B.C. This tells how the gods and demons were at war, and the gods were suffering badly at the hands of their enemies. So they met together and decided that they needed a *rājā* to lead them in battle. They appointed Indra as their king, and the tide soon turned in their favour. This legend suggests that in the earliest times kingship in India was thought to be based upon human need and military necessity, and that the king's first duty was to lead his subjects in war. A little later the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*[3] repeats the story, but in a significantly altered form; the discomfited gods did not elect Indra, but sacrificed to the high god Prajāpati, who sent his son Indra to become their king. At this stage the king was still thought of as primarily a leader in war—"they who have no king cannot fight" says the text—but kingship was already given divine sanction and the king of the immortals, who was the prototype of all earthly kings, held his office by the appointment of the Most High.

Even at this time, before the days of the Buddha, the king was exalted far above ordinary mortals, through the magical power of the great royal sacrifices. The Royal Consecration (*rājasūya*), which in its full form comprised a series of sacrifices lasting for over a year, imbued the king with divine power. In the course of the ceremonies he was identified with Indra "because he is a kṣatriya and because he is a sacrificer",[4] and even with the high god Prajāpati himself.[5] He took three steps on a tiger's skin, and was thus magically identified with the god Viṣṇu, whose three paces covered earth and heaven. The chief priest addressed the gods with the words: "Of mighty power is he who has been consecrated; now he has become one of yours; you must protect him."[6] The king was evidently the fellow of the gods, if not a god himself.

The magical power which pervaded the king at his consecration was restored and strengthened in the course of his reign by further rites, such as the ceremonial rejuvenation of the *vājapeya* and the horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedha*, p. 42), which not only ministered to his

ambition and arrogance, but also ensured the prosperity and fertility of the kingdom. Implicit in the whole brāhmaṇic ritual was the idea of the king's divine appointment, and though the rājasūya was replaced in later times by a simplified *abhiṣeka*, or baptism, the ceremony still had this magical flavour.

But the centre of brāhmaṇic culture was the Ganges-Jamnā Doāb. If among the Kurus and Pañcālas, who were the chief tribes of this region, the king was hedged about with divine mystery, elsewhere his status may have been less exalted, for the Buddhists had their own legend of the origin of kingship, which involved no heavenly prototype, but looked back to a primitive social contract.[7] The story is put into the mouth of the Buddha himself, and, whether or not it is really his, it certainly represents the thought on the subject in the eastern part of India in the centuries following the Buddha's death, for the Jainas, who rose at about the same time and in the same region, had a very similar legend.[8]

In the early days of the cosmic cycle mankind lived on an immaterial plane, dancing on air in a sort of fairyland, where there was no need of food or clothing, and no private property, family, government or laws. Then gradually the process of cosmic decay began its work, and mankind became earthbound, and felt the need of food and shelter. As men lost their primeval glory distinctions of class (*varṇa*) arose, and they entered into agreements one with another, accepting the institutions of private property and the family. With this theft, murder, adultery, and other crime began, and so the people met together and decided to appoint one man among them to maintain order in return for a share of the produce of their fields and herds. He was called "the Great Chosen One" (*Mahāsammata*), and he received the title of rājā because he pleased the people. The etymology of the word *rājā* from the verb *rañjayati* ("he pleases") is certainly a false one, but it was widely maintained and is found even in non-Buddhist sources.

The story of the Mahāsammata gives, in the form of a myth worthy of Plato, one of the world's earliest versions of the widespread contractual theory of the state, which in Europe is specially connected with the names of Locke and Rousseau. It implies that the main purpose of government is to establish order, and that the king, as head of the government, is the first social servant, and ultimately dependent on the suffrage of his subjects. Thus in ancient Indian thought on the question of the origin of monarchy two strands are evident, the mystical and the contractual, often rather incongruously combined.

In thought, if not in practice, it was the mystical theory of kingship

which carried most weight with succeeding generations. The author of the *Arthaśāstra* had no illusions about the king's human nature, and seems to have had little time for mysticism, but he recognized that legends about the origin of kingship had propaganda value. In one place he advises that the king's agents should spread the story that, when anarchy prevailed at the dawn of the aeon, men elected the mythical first king Manu Vaivasvata to kingship.[9] He thus encourages a contractual theory. In the same passage, however, he states that the people should be told that, as the king fulfils the functions of the gods Indra (the king of the gods) and Yama (the god of death) upon earth, all who slight him will be punished not only by the secular arm, but also by heaven. When the king harangues his troops before battle he is advised to tell them that he is a paid servant just as they are;[10] but at the same time he is told to go to the length of having his secret agents disguised as gods, and allowing himself to be seen in their company, in order that his simpler subjects may believe that he mixes with the gods on equal terms.[11] Aśoka and other Mauryan kings took the title "Beloved of the Gods" (*Devānampiya*), and, though they seem not to have claimed wholly divine status, they were no doubt looked on as superior semi-divine beings.

In the period of the later Vedas, though there is no evidence that a really large Indian kingdom had existed since the days of the then forgotten Harappā Culture, the possibility of a realm reaching to the sea was recognized, perhaps as a result of what Indians had heard of Babylonia or Persia. With the Mauryas the possibility was realized, and though they too were soon largely forgotten, they left behind them the tradition of the Universal Emperor (*cakravartin*), which was incorporated into Buddhist tradition, and, blended with later Vedic imperialist ideas, was taken over by orthodox Hinduism. Just as Buddhas appear from time to time in the cosmic cycle, heralded by auspicious omens and endowed with favourable signs, to lead all living beings along the road to enlightenment, so do Universal Emperors appear, to conquer all Jambūdvīpa and rule prosperously and righteously. The concept of the Universal Emperor was also known to the Jainas, and in the Epics numerous kings of legend, such as Yudhiṣṭhira and Rāma, are said to have been *digvijayins*, conquerors of all the four quarters. The Universal Emperor was a divinely ordained figure with a special place in the cosmic scheme, and as such was exalted to semi-divine status. The tradition was an inspiration to ambitious monarchs, and in the Middle Ages some even claimed to be Universal Emperors themselves.

The invasions of the Greeks, Śakas and Kuṣāṇas brought new influences from West and East. Their kings, following the practice

of the orientalized Seleucids and other rulers of the Middle East, took the semi-divine title *trātāra*, equivalent to the Greek σωτήρ (saviour); they were not satisfied with the simple title of *rājā*, which had served Aśoka, but were "great kings" (*mahārāja*) and "kings of kings" (*rājātirāja*) on the Persian model. The Kuṣāṇas, perhaps from the influence of China, where the emperor was the Son of Heaven, took the further title "Son of the Gods" (*devaputra*). Later, from Gupta times onwards, every important king would take some such title as "Great King of Kings, Supreme Lord" (*mahārājādhirāja-paramabhaṭṭāraka*), while even the title mahārāja was used only for small vassal kings.

Fig. ix. A Cakravartin

After a relief from the stūpa of Jagayyapeta on the lower Kistnā c. 200–100 B.C. On his right the wheel, symbolizing universal empire, and his chief queen On his left the chief minister and the crown prince. At his feet the imperial elephant and horse.

With these influences at work the doctrine of royal divinity was explicitly proclaimed. It appears first in the Epics and the Lawbook of Manu. The latter declares in dignified language:

"When the world was without a king
and dispersed in fear in all directions,
the Lord created a king
for the protection of all.

"He made him of eternal particles
Of Indra and the Wind,
Yama, the Sun and Fire,
Varuṇa, the Moon, and the Lord of Wealth.

"And, because he has been formed
of fragments of all those gods,
the king surpasses
all other beings in splendour.

"Even an infant king must not be despised,
as though a mere mortal,
for he is a great god
in human form."[12]

To the ideal of the Universal Emperor was added the inspiration of the revival of such brāhmaṇic ceremonies as the horse-sacrifice, which apparently fell into desuetude under the Mauryas, but was revived by the Śuṅgas, and was performed by many later kings both in north and south. Even comparatively feeble and petty monarchs managed to perform horse-sacrifices of some sort, and claimed the exalted status of the emperors of legend. After the time of the Guptas these sacrifices became rare, however—the last we have been able to trace took place in the Cōḷa Empire in the 11th century[13]—but the tradition of royal divinity continued. Kings referred to their divine status in their titles and panegyrics, and they were regularly addressed by their courtiers as *deva*, or god. The Cōḷa kings and some others were even worshipped as gods in the temples.

In the period between the Mauryas and Guptas anarchy frequently prevailed. Mass lawlessness, riot, pillage and rape, were widespread. Raiding bands of invaders from the North-West penetrated far into the heart of India, and some brāhmaṇs even believed that the end of the aeon was drawing near and that the world would soon be destroyed. It was then that an almost pathological dread of anarchy (*mātsya-nyāya*, literally "the way of the fishes", of whom the stronger eat the weaker) grew in the minds of Indian thinkers. In the words of the *Rāmāyaṇa*:

"Where the land is kingless the cloud, lightning-wreathed
and loud-voiced, gives no rain to the earth.

"Where the land is kingless the son does not honour his father,
nor the wife her husband.

"Where the land is kingless men do not meet in assemblies,
nor make lovely gardens and temples.

"Where the land is kingless the rich are unprotected,
and shepherds and peasants sleep with bolted doors.

"A river without water, a forest without grass,
a herd of cattle without a herdsman, is the land without a king."[14]

Passages such as this, which may be paralleled in many sources, further assisted in strengthening the royal prestige, and it is in their light that we must read later legends on the origin of kingship.

There is a very ancient story of a first man, Manu, who combined the characteristics of Adam and Noah in Hebrew tradition (p. 302). This story appears in many forms and versions, one of which, found in the *Mahābhārata*,[15] tells that at the beginning of this period of cosmic time, when greed and wrath had disturbed human relations, men inflicted untold misery upon one another. As in the Buddhist legend, they agreed to respect each other's life and property, but they had no confidence in their contracts, and so they approached the high god, Brahmā, to help them; he nominated Manu, here thought of not as a man, but a god, to be their first king. Some such legend as this was in the mind of the author of the Laws of Manu, when he composed the passage we have quoted. Variants of this story occur in other parts of the *Mahābhārata* and elsewhere, some making the first king Virajas, the son of the god Viṣṇu.[16] All adapt the earlier legends to stress the divine status of the king, and his divine appointment to the kingly office. With the exception of a few Rājput families who claimed descent from the fire-god Agni, nearly all medieval Indian kings traced their genealogies back to Manu, either through his son Ikṣvāku or his daughter Ilā; descendants of Ikṣvāku are referred to as of the solar, and those of Ilā as of the lunar line.

Despite the growth of royal pretensions through the centuries the claims of the king did not go unchallenged, and in practice his divinity often made little difference to the body politic. Divinity was cheap in ancient India. Every brāhmaṇ was in a sense a god, as were ascetics with a reputation for sanctity. Householders sponsoring and financing sacrifices were in theory raised to divinity, at least for the duration of the ceremony, while even sticks and stones might be alive with inherent godhead. Moreover the gods were fallible and capable of sin. If the king was a god on earth he was only one god among many, and so his divinity might not always weigh heavily upon his subjects. The Buddhists and Jainas explicitly denied the king's godhead, and one court poet at least, Bāṇa, who was patronized by the great Harṣa, had the temerity to reject the whole rigmarole of royal divinity as the work of sycophants who befuddled the minds

of weak and stupid monarchs, but did not fool the strong and the wise.[17] The king was usually held in great awe and respect, but it is doubtful if he was ever treated with quite the same abject servility as were, for instance, the more psychopathic Roman or Chinese emperors.

Though the king was an autocrat, not limited by constitutional controls, there were many practical checks on his sovereignty. The *Arthaśāstra*, totalitarian and secular in tendency, maintains that royal ordinance can rightly override all other sources of law, but most theorists would have disagreed with this statement. The king's function was not conceived in terms of legislation, but of protection, and this involved the protection not only of his subjects from invasion, but also of the order of society, the right way of life for all classes and ages (*varṇāśrama-dharma*, p. 137), as laid down in the sacred texts. If he infringed sacred custom too blatantly he incurred the hostility of the brāhmaṇs, and often of the lower orders also. In such a case his fate was pointed out to him in many a cautionary tale, the most common of which was that of the legendary Veṇa. This king apparently took his divinity too seriously, for he forbade all sacrifices except to himself, and confused society by enforcing inter-class marriages. The divine sages (*ṛṣis*) remonstrated with him, but Veṇa continued in his evil courses. At last the exasperated sages beset him in a body and slew him with blades of sacred grass (*kuśa*), which miraculously turned to spears in their hands. This story, repeated in numerous sources, must have been a continual warning to the secularly-minded king tempted to flout the Sacred Law. No doubt many headstrong kings succeeded in breaking it with impunity, but the recognition of the moral justification of revolt against an impious king must always have acted as some check on his autocracy. More than one great dynasty, such as the Nandas, Mauryas and Śuṅgas, fell as a result of brāhmaṇic intrigue. The *Mahābhārata* explicitly sanctions revolt against a king who is oppressive or fails in his function of protection, saying that such a ruler is no king at all, and should be killed like a mad dog.[18]

The brāhmaṇs and the Sacred Law were not the only checks on the king. All textbooks on statecraft recommend the king to listen to the counsel of his ministers, who are advised to be fearless in debate, and more than one king was overthrown through the intrigues of his councillors. Another and very important check was public opinion. The Vedic rājā was limited by popular or semi-popular assemblies, and though these disappeared in later times kings were invariably advised to keep a finger on the pulse of public feeling, and never to offend it too blatantly. The Buddhist Jātaka stories

(p. 267), which are certainly not historical, but reflect conditions in Northern India well before the beginning of the Christian Era, give more than one instance of kings deposed by mass revolt. In the legend of Rāma (p. 412f), who was held up as an ideal king to later Hindu rulers, the hero exiles his beloved wife Sītā, though he is himself convinced of her innocence, on hearing the news that his subjects suspect her chastity, and fear that her presence in the palace will bring misfortune on the nation. At the very end of our period the great king of Vijayanagara, Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya (p. 76) remitted a marriage tax because it was not popular.[19] The Indian town mob was dangerously inflammable, and the king who seriously outraged popular opinion did so at his own peril. Most textbooks insist that he must at all costs keep the masses contented.

Nevertheless ancient India had her supporters of passive obedience. The *Mahābhārata*, which, as we have seen, in places expressly allows revolt against a wicked king, elsewhere states that any king is better than none. The dread of anarchy was a potent factor in preserving even a weak and oppressive king on his throne.

> "A man should first choose his king, then his wife,
> and only then amass wealth;
> for without a king in the world
> where would wife and property be?"[20]

THE ROYAL FUNCTION

The idea of a body politic, of the state as an organism transcending its component parts, though it appears in a rather vague form, does not seem to have taken any great hold on ancient Indian thought. A classification popular with the theorists enumerates seven elements of sovereignty,* which are occasionally compared to the limbs and parts of the human body—the king to the head, the ministers to the eyes, the ally to the ear, the treasury to the mouth, the army to the mind, the fortifications to the arms, and the land and people to the legs. Such weak analogies carried little weight, however. Society, the age-old divinely ordained way of Indian life, transcended the state and was independent of it. The king's function was the protection of society, and the state was merely an extension of the king for the furtherance of that end.

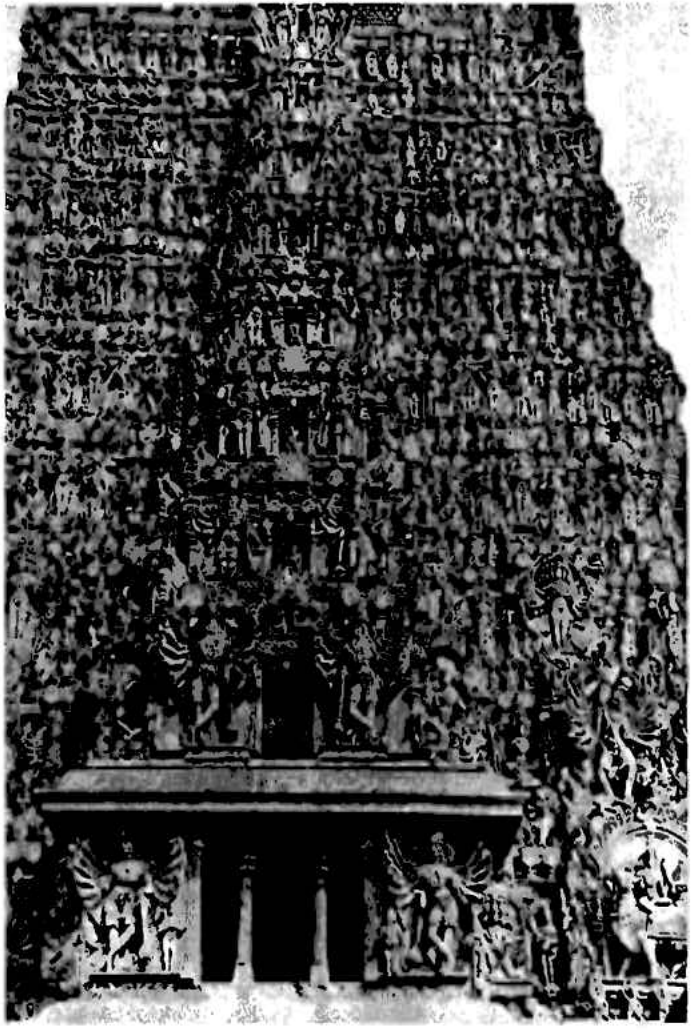
The king's function involved the protection not only of his kingdom against external aggression, but also of life, property and traditional custom against internal foes. He protected the purity of class and

* The *Arthaśāstra* significantly adds an eighth—the enemy.

North Gateway,
Temple of
Chidambaram,
16th century A.D.

Source Unknown

Suchindram, Travancore. A Typical South Indian Temple.
17th century A.D.

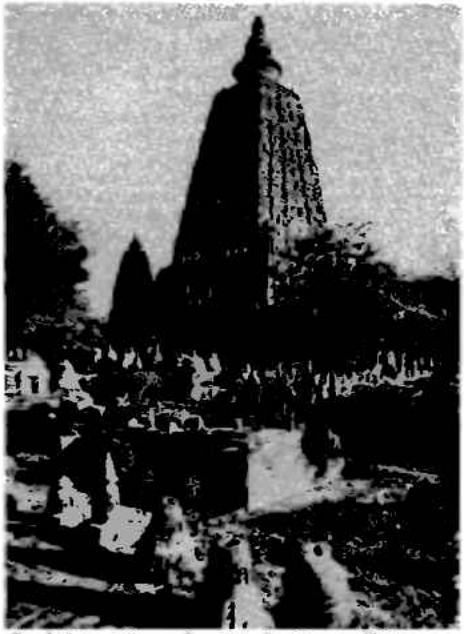


Sculpture on the South Gateway, Great Temple, Madurai.
17th century A.D.

PLATE XIX

a

Source Unknown



Buddhist Temple, Bodh Gayā, Bihār.
5th–6th century A.D.

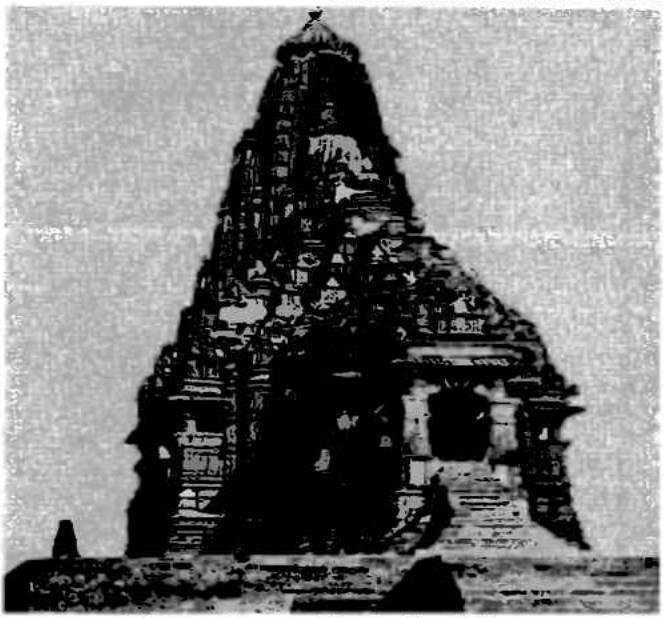
b

Messrs. Johnston & Hoffm.

Lingarāja Temple, Bhubanesar, Orissā.
11th century A.D.

c

Messrs. Johnston & Hoffmann, Calcutta



Kandāriya-Mahādeo Temple, Khajurāho, V.P. c. A.D. 1000

PLATE XX

caste by ensuring that those who broke caste custom were excommunicated; he protected the family system by punishing adultery, and ensuring the fair inheritance of family property; he protected widows and orphans by making them his wards; he protected the rich against the poor by suppressing robbery; and he protected the poor against the rich by punishing extortion and oppression. Religion was protected by liberal grants to learned brāhmaṇs and temples, and frequently to heterodox sects also. The duty of protection was often little more than the preservation of the *status quo*, but it was nevertheless onerous, and involved positive duties, such as developing irrigation, relieving famine, and generally supervising the economic life of the realm.

The ideal set before the king was one of energetic beneficence. Aśoka was not the only king of India to proclaim that all men were his children, or to take pride in his ceaseless activity. The *Arthaśāstra*, despite its advocacy of every dishonest expedient for the acquisition and maintenance of power, puts the kingly duty in simple and forceful language, setting an ideal such as few ancient civilizations can boast of. Comparing the king and the ascetic it says:

> "The king's pious vow is readiness in action,
> his sacrifice, the discharge of his duty.
>
> . . . .
>
> "In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness,
> in the welfare of his subjects, his welfare.
> The king's good is not that which pleases him,
> but that which pleases his subjects.
>
> "Therefore the king should be ever active,
> and should strive for prosperity,
> for prosperity depends on effort,
> and failure on the reverse."[21]

Elsewhere the *Arthaśāstra* suggests a time-table for the king's day, which allows him only four and a half hours' sleep and three hours for eating and recreation, the rest of the day being spent in state affairs of one kind or another. No doubt such a programme was rarely kept in practice, but it at least shows the ideal at which the king was expected to aim. Candragupta Maurya is said by Megasthenes to have listened to the petitions of his subjects even while in the hands of his masseurs, while his grandson Aśoka ordered that important business was to be set before him at all times, even when he was in his harem. In all sources the king is told that he must be prompt in the administration of justice and always accessible to his

people. The swarms of guards, ushers, and other officials who surrounded the king's person must often have demanded bribes, and otherwise have obstructed the access of the subject to his sovereign, but the best of Indian kings at all times have made the public audience, or darbār, an important instrument of government.

Nearly all the foreign travellers who visited India during our period were much impressed by the pomp and luxury of the Indian king, and their impressions are confirmed by native sources. The king's splendid palace was controlled by a chamberlain, who had a large staff of palace servants of both sexes; the spiritual life of the palace was cared for by the court chaplain, or *purohita*, and many lesser brāhmaṇs; while numerous astrologers, physicians, poets, painters, musicians and learned men dwelt in the purlieus of the palace and enjoyed royal patronage. An important figure in early days, though he is not referred to in the inscriptions of later times, was the *sūta*, who combined the functions of royal charioteer, herald and bard, and was often the friend and confidant of the king. Another member of the royal entourage was the *vidūṣaka*, known to us chiefly from the Sanskrit plays, who corresponded approximately to the court jester of medieval Europe.

Many kings were almost constantly on the move, touring their kingdoms with enormous trains of troops, courtiers, wives, concubines and servants. On such tours business was combined with pleasure—hunts were arranged and famous shrines visited, but also recalcitrant vassals were chastised and local grievances investigated. Many inscriptions on stone and copper, from the days of Aśoka onwards, record the munificence of pious kings to religious foundations and brāhmaṇs while on such tours.

Kings were expected to patronize art, letters and learning. Like most men of the upper classes they were literate, and often devoted much of their leisure to hearing the recitations of their court poets. Some were themselves competent writers, and numerous works ascribed to royal authors have survived. Samudra Gupta was a famous musician, and is depicted on some of his coins playing the harp (fig. xxiv*b*, p. 381).

Despite the injunctions of the *Arthaśāstra* the king often found time for other, less intellectual, pursuits. Hunting was usually among the chief of his pleasures, and though the doctrine of non-injury discouraged it, a tacit exception was made in the case of kings and nobles. Kings are often referred to as gambling with their courtiers, and sometimes as indulging in drinking bouts, not only with the court, but in the privacy of the harem with the queens and concubines. The textbooks reprobate all these amusements, which are reviewed

in the *Arthaśāstra*, whose author quaintly quotes the opinions of various earlier authorities on their comparative perniciousness.

The harem (*antaḥpura*) was in charge of an official (*kañcukin*), usually not a eunuch, as in many other ancient civilizations, but an elderly man, who is generally depicted in literature as a benevolent and fatherly friend both of the king and his ladies. The ladies of the harem, whether queens or concubines, seem, from several plays and stories dealing with this aspect of palace life, to have been fairly well treated; though both they and the king often went in some fear of the chief queen (*mahiṣī*), whose power in the harem was very great and was often wielded rather harshly over the lesser queens and concubines.

Ideally a royal family was of the kṣatriya or warrior class, but in practice this was often not the case. The Śuṅgas and Kāṇvas were brāhmaṇs, as were several other Indian dynasties; the family of Harṣa is said by Hsüan Tsang to have been of the vaiśya, or mercantile class; while the Nandas, and perhaps even the Mauryas, sprang from the despised śūdras. In practice the aphorism "whoever bears rule is a kṣatriya" was applied, and after a few generations kingly families from the lower orders were quietly assimilated in the martial class.

Kingship was normally reserved for the male, though a few small Orissan ruling families in the Middle Ages seem regularly to have permitted a daughter to inherit the throne. Diddā, the wicked 10th-century queen of Kashmīr, managed to retain control of the state by acting as regent for her sons, and putting them to death one after the other before they reached their majorities. The benevolent queen of the Kākatīyas of Warangal, Rudrammā (c. 1259–1288), governed by a legal fiction, drafting her state documents in the masculine gender. Queens did, however, act as regents during their sons' minorities, as in the case of Diddā and Prabhāvatī Guptā (p. 65), and royal ladies sometimes wielded much power in the state. Thus Rājyaśrī, widow of Grahavarman, the last Maukhari king of Kānyakubja, regularly took a seat of honour beside her brother Harṣa, and shared in state deliberations. Women in politics were often to be found in the medieval kingdoms of the Peninsula; for instance Akkādevī, sister of the Cālukya king Jayasiṃha II (1015–1042), was a provincial governor, and Kuṇḍavai, the elder sister of the great Cōḷa Rājarāja I, seems to have played a role similar to that of Rājyaśrī. Women even sometimes took part in war—Akkādevī fought battles and superintended sieges, while Umādevī, queen of the Hoysaḷa king Vīraballāla II (1173–1220), led two campaigns against recalcitrant vassals.

Succession was normally by primogeniture, but exceptions might often occur for the Sacred Law did not allow a diseased, maimed or seriously infirm prince to ascend the throne, and the line could not pass through such a prince. Thus in the *Mahābhārata* legend (p. 408) the Pāṇḍava princes were quite within their rights in claiming the throne from the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Moral perversity might also exclude a prince from succession. "A wicked son, though an only one," says the *Arthaśāstra*, "should never ascend the throne".[22] Kings sometimes nominated their successors, overriding the claims of their eldest sons if these were given to evil courses. Thus Samudra Gupta was nominated by his father, Candra Gupta I, against other claimants, at a great darbār, after which the old king apparently abdicated; and similar instances can be found. The absence of a strict rule of primogeniture was the cause of dynastic disputes, and hence undoubtedly led to the weakening of empires.

Princes were trained with great care, and the heir to the throne (*yuvarāja*) was often associated with his father in government. This custom was widespread, and was especially strong with the invaders of the North-West, and with the Cōḷas, whose crown princes often issued charters in their own names and acted independently of their fathers while the latter were still on the throne. The Śakas and Pahlavas often inscribed the name of the ruling king on the obverse of their coins, while that of the sub-king was given on the reverse.

Princes might be a great source of danger to their parents. According to a Buddhist tradition Magadha was ruled from Ajātaśatru onwards by five parricides in succession, which suggests that at the time this region of India followed the widespread primitive practice of putting the king to death when his vital powers failed, a practice of which the customary nature was not remembered by succeeding generations. Kings are warned against the intrigues both of sons and wives, "for princes, like crabs, eat their own parents".[23] The activities of the princes must be strictly controlled, and they must be constantly spied upon, to ensure that they will not revolt against their fathers.

The prince's impatience to acquire his patrimony was often gratified by the voluntary abdication of an elderly king—a practice approved by precept and tradition, examples of which may be found at all times and in all parts of India. Sometimes the abdication was followed by religious suicide. Several kings, the most notable being Candragupta Maurya, are said to have abdicated and slowly starved themselves to death under the influence of Jainism. Others passed straight to heaven by drowning in a sacred river, notably the Cālukya king Someśvara I (c. 1042–1068), who, when his powers began to

A. Nuwrath, "Glories of Hindustan" Methuen & Co., London

A Wheel of the Sun's Chariot. Temple of Sūrya, Konārak, Orissā. 13th century A.D.

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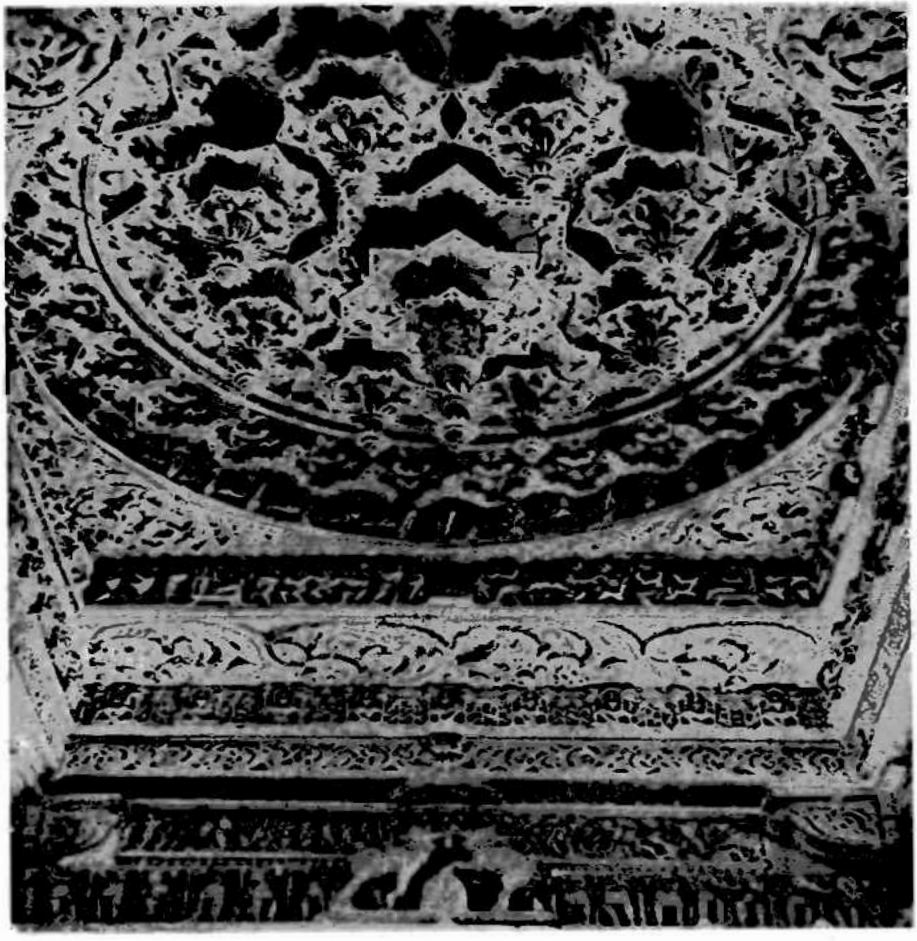
City Gateway, Dābhoī, Barodā
11th century A.D.

M. Hürlimann, "Indien", Atlantis Verlag, Zürich

Chapel of the Temple of Neminātha, Mt. Ābū, Rājasthān. 13th century A.D.

M. Hürlimann, "Indien", Atlantis Verlag, Zürich



Ceiling, Temple of Ādinātha, Mt. Ābū

PLATE XXII

fail, waded into the holy Tuṅgabhadrā and drowned himself to the sound of religious music, while his courtiers lined the banks. In some of the medieval principalities of Malabār the ritual suicide of the king became a regular institution.

Other systems of inheritance prevailed in a few cases. Thus the throne of the Śaka satraps of Ujjayinī passed not to the king's son, but to his younger brother, and only when all the brothers were dead did the eldest son of the eldest brother inherit. There are indications that brother-to-brother succession was not wholly unknown elsewhere in India, and it was almost regularly followed in Ceylon. This system prevailed in China under the Shang dynasty (c. 1500–1100 B.C.), and was also followed by many Central Asian tribes; it is still known in East Africa.

In the early days of the Cēra kingdom of Malabār inheritance was through the male line, but about the 12th century a matrilinear system became regular, according to which the heir to the throne was not the son of the king, but of his eldest sister. This system, called *Marumakkattāyam*, continued in Cochin and Travancore until very recent times, both for royal succession and the inheritance of estates. Perhaps it existed in Malabār at an early period, but was dropped by the upper classes for a while under brāhmaṇical influence, to be revived in the course of centuries. Other traces of matrilinear succession can be found in ancient India, notably in the very common use of metronymics in royal titles, but it was not regularly followed by any important kingdoms.

If the king died with no heir to the throne much power was wielded by the magnates of the realm, for the courtiers, nobles, ministers, religious leaders and wealthy merchants would sometimes meet together and choose a king. Thus the nobles of Kānyakubja invited Harṣa to assume the throne when Grahavarman died childless. Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla line of Bengal and Bihār, was chosen as king by the great men of the land. A further example is the appointment of the boy Nandivarman (735–797) as the Pallava king of Kāñcī by an assembly of nobles and ministers. The Kashmīr Chronicle provides other instances.

QUASI-FEUDALISM

Authorities differ on the definition of a feudal system. Some would confine the term to the complex structure of contractual relations covering the whole of society from king to villein, which prevailed in medieval Europe. Others use the term so loosely that they apply it to any system where political power is chiefly in the

hands of those who own land. Most British historians would prefer the narrower definition, according to which ancient India never had a true feudal system. Something very like European feudalism did evolve among the Rājputs after the Muslim invasions, but this is outside our period. Ancient India had, however, a system of overlordship, which was quasi-feudal, though never as fully developed as in Europe, and resting on a different basis.

In the later Vedic period there were already lesser chiefs tributary to the greater. Terms in these texts like *adhirāja* and *saṃrāṭ*, often loosely translated "emperor", seem actually to imply lordship over a number of feudatories. Magadhan imperialism aimed at a centralized realm, though even in Mauryan times vassal chiefs existed in the more remote regions of the empire. With the fall of the Mauryas the typical large kingdom had a central core of directly administered territory, and a circle of vassal kingdoms subordinate in varying degrees to the emperor. The vassals themselves had vassals of their own in petty local chieftains calling themselves rājās. The Indian system differed from that of Europe in that the relations of overlord and vassal were not regularly based on contract, whether theoretical or otherwise, and ancient India had nothing quite comparable to the European manor.

When decisively defeated in battle a king might render homage to his conqueror and retain his throne. Thus vassals usually became so by conquest rather than by contract, though the *Arthaśāstra* advises a weak king to render voluntary homage if necessary to a stronger neighbour. This state of affairs was supported by the Epics and Smṛti literature, which discouraged outright conquest. "Lawful conquest" (*dharmavijaya*) did not involve the absorption of the conquered kingdom, but merely its reduction to vassal status. Though many later kings, such as Samudra Gupta, ignored the Sacred Law and incorporated conquered kingdoms into their empires, custom was against such a practice.

The degrees of control of overlord over vassal varied much. Ideally the vassal was expected to pay regular tribute to his emperor, and to assist him with troops and funds in war. He attended the overlord's court on ceremonial occasions, and the panegyrics of powerful medieval kings regularly mention the jewels of many splendid turbans glittering like the waves of the sea, as the vassals bow before their lord. In his charters the vassal was expected to mention the name and title of his overlord before his own. In some cases a resident representative of the overlord was stationed at the vassal's capital. The vassal's sons might be educated with the princes of his master, and serve as pages, and his daughters might be demanded

for the imperial harem. Often a vassal king acted as a minister of his suzerain, or a minister or favourite might be set up as a vassal king by his master. Hence in the medieval period the status of minister often merged with that of vassal, and the provincial governor, holding office at the king's pleasure, tended to become a feudatory king or chief in his own right.

The great vassal (*mahāsāmanta*) was always very powerful, and had his own administration and army. Among the many threats to the security of a king the revolting vassal was one of the most dangerous. The history of the Western Deccan offers typical examples. Here, from the 6th century onwards, the Cālukya dynasty held sway; a vassal, Dantidurga Rāṣṭrakūṭa, overthrew it and established his own dynasty about 753, and the Cālukyas were reduced to insignificant vassalage; but some 200 years later they profited by the weakness of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas to regain the hegemony, which they maintained until the end of the 12th century, when their vassals, the Yādavas, Kākatīyas and Hoysaḷas, shared their domains between them.

In fact the suzerain's hand weighed very lightly on the more powerful and remoter vassals, and many claims to homage and tribute amounted to very little. Samudra Gupta, for instance, even claimed the king of Ceylon, Śrī Meghavarṇa, as his vassal; but it is clear from a reliable Chinese source that the claim was based merely on the reception of a Sinhalese mission bearing gifts and requesting permission to erect a Buddhist monastery at the sacred site of Gayā.

The lesser chiefs, on the other hand, had little more power than the lords of the manor in medieval Europe, though they claimed the proud title of rājā. In this connection an interesting story is told in an inscription at Dūdhpānī, in S. Bihār, dating from the 8th century A.D.

Three merchant brothers were returning from the port of Tāmralipti to their home in Ayodhyā, with a caravan of merchandise and provisions, and rested for the night at a village called Bhramaraśālmalī. Meanwhile the local king, Ādisiṃha, passed by on a hunting expedition, with a large train of followers, and, as was the custom, demanded food and fodder of the villagers. But they were suffering from a temporary shortage, and could scarcely meet this demand. So they sent a deputation to the merchants, who at their request gave the king provisions from their own stock. The king found the companionship of the eldest brother, Udayamāna, very agreeable, and so he and his brothers became members of Ādisiṃha's court. One day, Udayamāna revisited the village of Bhramaraśālmalī, and the villagers, remembering his former kindness, asked him to become their king. King Ādisiṃha approved the request, and so the merchant Udayamāna became

rājā of Bhramaraśālmalī, while his two brothers were made kings of adjoining villages.[24]

This little story illustrates another means whereby quasi-feudal relations arose. After the Mauryan period it became usual for kings to pay their officers and favourites not with cash, but with the right to collect revenue from a village or a group of villages. Such a right often carried other privileges, and usually made the recipient the intermediary between king and taxpayer. It greatly encouraged the tendency towards devolution, instability, and inter-state anarchy.

OLIGARCHIES AND REPUBLICS

Though monarchy was usual in ancient India, tribal states also existed, which were governed by oligarchies. The term "republic" is often used for these bodies, and though it has been criticized by some authorities, it is quite legitimate if it is remembered that the *gaṇas*, or tribes, were not governed like the Republic of India by an assembly elected by universal suffrage. The Roman Republic was not a democracy, but it was a republic nevertheless, and the evidence shows that in some of these ancient Indian republican communities a large number of persons had some say in the government.

Vedic literature gives faint indications of such tribes at a very early date (p. 33), and the Buddhist scriptures recognize the existence of many republics, chiefly in the foothills of the Himālayas and in N. Bihār. These were mostly tributary to the greater kingdoms, but exercised internal autonomy. One such people was the Śākyas, who dwelt on the borders of modern Nepāl, and to whom the Buddha himself belonged. Though in later legend the Buddha's father, Śuddhodhana, is depicted as a mighty king living in great pomp, he was in fact a tribal chief, depending on the support of a large assembly of householders, who gathered regularly to discuss tribal politics in a meeting hall (in Pāli, *santhāgāra*).

The most powerful non-monarchical state at this time was the Vṛjjian confederacy, of which the chief element was the tribe of the Licchavis, and which long resisted the great Ajātaśatru. According to a rather dubious Buddhist tradition the Licchavis had no less than 7707 rājās, a term which must have covered all the heads of families of the tribe who were eligible to take part in the tribal assembly. Jaina sources tell of an inner council of thirty-six tribal chieftains controlling the affairs of the Licchavis, Mallas and allied tribes in their war with Ajātaśatru. The whole confederation had a rājā-in-chief, an executive head who, like the rājā of the Śākyas, seems

to have held office for life and often to have passed on his office to his heir.

It has been reasonably suggested that the organization of the Buddhist clergy, which is said to have been laid down by the Buddha himself, is modelled on the constitution of one of these republican tribes, perhaps the Śākyas. Buddhist monastic affairs were managed by a general meeting of the monks, with a regular system of procedure and standing orders, not very different from that of the business meeting of a present-day society. The Buddhist chapter differed from the modern committee, however, in that all decisions needed the unanimous consent of the assembled monks. Differences which could not be settled were referred to a committee of elders.

In the Buddha's day the free tribes were standing up with difficulty to the internal pressure of changing social and economic conditions, and the external pressure of the rising kingdoms of Eastern India. We have seen that both the Śākyas and the Vṛjjis were conquered at about the time of the Buddha's death, the former never to rise again (p. 46). The Buddha himself, though a friend of kings, seems to have had a deep affection for the old republican organization, and in a remarkable passage he is said to have warned the Vṛjjis shortly before his death that their security depended on maintaining their traditions and holding regular and well attended folk-moots.

Western India did not feel the force of imperialism as strongly as the east, and here republican tribes survived for much longer. Several such peoples are mentioned in the classical accounts of Alexander's invasion, and the *Arthaśāstra* devotes a whole chapter to the means whereby such tribes may be reduced to vassalage by an ambitious king—the main method being to sow dissension between the leading tribesmen so that the tribal assembly loses its unanimity and the tribe is divided against itself. Such a procedure, according to a Buddhist legend, was employed by Ajātaśatru's wily minister Varṣakāra to weaken the Vṛjjis before invasion. The *Arthaśāstra* probably refers ironically to the martial arrogance and practical ineptitude of the republics when it states that the members of seven named tribes "make a living by their title of rājā".[25]

The *Mahābhārata* takes full cognisance of the existence of republican tribes in Western India, and their survival until the 5th century A.D. is attested by numerous coins and a few short inscriptions. Perhaps the most important western republic was that of the Yaudheyas in Northern Rājasthān, which issued numerous coins, bearing the inscription "Victory to the Yaudheya tribe"; one of their official seals has been found, with the proud legend, "Of the Yaudheyas, who

possess the magic spell of victory"; and one fragmentary Yaudheya inscription survives. This mentions the chief of the tribe, whose name has unfortunately been worn away by the weathering of the stone; he has the regal title of mahārāja, but he is also called *mahā-senāpati*, or general-in-chief, and he is "placed at the head of the Yaudheya people".[26]

The Mālava tribe may be the same as the Malloi described by Greek historians as living in Panjāb at the time of Alexander. If so, the tribe moved south during the centuries, for its coins are found in Rājasthān, and it gave its name to Mālwā, the region around Ujjayinī, north of the Narmadā. Some brief 3rd-century inscriptions at Nandsā in Rājasthān refer to the Mālava Śrīsoma, who "supported the ancestral yoke of government", and whose position was therefore hereditary.[27] It is probable that the Mālavas founded the era later known as the Era of Vikrama, for several early inscriptions refer to this as "the Era handed down by the Mālava tribe".

Most of these western tribes became tributary to the Guptas after Samudra Gupta's great conquests in the 4th century (p. 63). After this we hear little more of them, and they probably vanished as a result of the Hūṇa invasions. We know very little of their organization, which may have been loosely feudal, with a large number of petty chieftains more or less subordinate to a single head, who held office with their consent and could do little without their help. In any case modern India may take legitimate pride in the fact that, though she may not have had democracies in the modern sense, government by discussion was by no means unknown in her ancient civilization.

COUNCILLORS AND OFFICIALS

"A single wheel cannot turn", says the *Arthaśāstra*, rather inaccurately, "and so government is only possible with assistance. Therefore a king should appoint councillors and listen to their advice."[28] At the head of affairs was a small body of elder statesmen, whom the king was advised to choose with the utmost care. The size of this privy council (*mantri-pariṣad*) varied, and the authorities suggest figures ranging from seven to thirty-seven; we have little evidence of its size in practice, but it seems more often to have approached the smaller of these figures than the larger.

The council was not a cabinet in the modern sense, but an advisory body, with few corporate functions. Thus the king is in one place advised to lay his most secret plans before only one member of the council, to avoid leakage. The council's purpose was primarily to

advise and aid the king, and not to govern; but it was no mere rubber-stamping body, for all authorities stress that councillors should speak freely and openly, and that the king should give full consideration to their advice.

In fact the council often exerted great powers. It might transact business in the king's absence, and the Aśokan inscriptions show that it might make minor decisions without consulting him. The Śaka satrap Rudradāman (p. 62) referred the question of rebuilding the Girnar dam to his councillors, who advised against it, so that he was forced to undertake the work against their advice, apparently at the expense of the privy purse and not of public funds. The Kashmīr Chronicle gives one case of a privy council deposing the king, and another of its vetoing the king's nomination of his successor.

At its meetings the council took the strictest precautions to preserve secrecy of deliberations, for agents of the king's enemies at home or abroad were constantly in search of information. The texts advise that women, notoriously unreliable, and even talking birds such as parrots and mynahs, whose vocal powers were much overestimated in ancient India, should be excluded from the vicinity of the council chamber.

Though the *Arthaśāstra* advises the king to appoint ministers by merit alone it would seem that in later times most of the privy councillors, and indeed of the whole civil service of the kingdom, enjoyed their positions by virtue of inheritance. Candella inscriptions show that a line of five generations of councillors held office during the reigns of seven generations of kings, and there are many similar examples.

Sometimes a minister succeeded in obtaining complete control of a kingdom, and the king became a mere puppet. This tendency was exemplified in later times in the Marāthā state, where the descendants of Śivājī were completely eclipsed by the *Peshwās*, or hereditary ministers, and a similar state of affairs has prevailed in Nepāl until the present day. In ancient India there were many cases of ministerial usurpation and of ministers who became de facto rulers under weak kings. The aged Rāma Rāja of Vijayanagara (p. 77), who lost the battle of Tālikoṭa, and thus brought about the end of the last great empire of Hindu India, was not the legal king, but the hereditary minister of the insignificant Sadāśiva, who was later murdered by Rāma Rāja's brother.

The functions of the councillors were not always sharply defined or delimited, and terminology varied considerably. There seems usually to have been a chief counsellor, the *mantrin* par excellence, often called "great counsellor" (*mahāmantrin*). With orthodox

kings the *purohita* or court chaplain was very influential, and one source even suggests that before coming to a final decision the king should deliberate privately with him.[29] The treasurer and chief tax-collector (called in the *Arthaśāstra sannidhātṛ* and *samāhartṛ* respectively), were important, as was the "minister of peace and war" (*sāndhivigrahika*), a title which does not appear until Gupta times. This minister approximated to the foreign secretary of the modern state, but had more definite military functions and often accompanied the king on campaign. The *prāḍvivāka*, or chief judge and legal advisor, seems to have been important in medieval Hindu kingdoms, and the *senāpati*, or general, was always influential, while the *mahākṣapaṭalika*, or chief record keeper and secretary no doubt attended the council meetings.

In theory neither the king nor his council were legislative bodies in the modern sense of the term. The royal decrees (*śāsana*) which they promulgated were not generally new laws, but orders referring to special cases. Dharma and established custom were usually looked on as inviolable, and the king's commands were merely applications of the Sacred Law. Heterodox kings, however, did from time to time issue orders which were in the nature of new laws, the most notable case being Aśoka.

To transmit the royal decrees a corps of secretaries and clerks was maintained, and remarkable precautions were taken to prevent error. Under the Cōḷas, for instance, orders were first written by scribes at the king's dictation, and the accuracy of the drafts was attested by competent witnesses. Before being sent to their recipients they were carefully transcribed, and a number of witnesses, sometimes amounting to as many as thirteen, again attested them. In the case of grants of land and privileges an important court official was generally deputed to ensure that the royal decrees were put into effect. Thus records were kept with great care, and nothing was left to chance; the royal scribes themselves were often important personages.

Councillors and high officials in general are often referred to in early sources as *mahāmātras*, and from Gupta times onwards as *kumārāmātyas*, or "princely ministers"; the latter epithet seems to have been a title of honour. There was no high degree of specialization, and councillors, like modern cabinet ministers, often changed their posts. All of them, even aged ministers of the brāhman class, might perform military functions. In some sources they are divided into two groups—deliberative officials (*matisaciva* or *dhīsaciva*), and executive officials (*karmasaciva*). The former were councillors, while the latter approximately corresponded to high-ranking civil servants of modern times.

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a

Sarnāth

b

Rāmpūrvā, Bihār (now in the National Museum, New Delhi)

CAPITALS OF MAURYAN PILLARS

c

The Dream of Queen Mayā

d

The merchant Anāthapindaka buys the Jetavana grove by covering it with square coins (right) and presents it to the Buddhist order (left)

e

RELIEF MEDALLIONS FROM THE RAILING OF THE BHĀRHUT STŪPA (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta)

PLATE XXIII

Warrior, Bhārhut (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta)

PLATE XXIV

Of the seven occupational classes into which Megasthenes divided all the inhabitants of India, two were connected with the government; the last of the seven, "those who deliberate on public affairs", must represent the councillors, while the penultimate class of "overseers" (ἐπίσκοποι) are the *adhyakṣas* or superintendents of the *Arthaśāstra*. As well as most of the officials we have mentioned this text enumerates many others—the superintendents of crown lands, of forests, of forest-produce, of state herds, of waste lands, of the treasury, and of mines, the chief goldsmith, the comptroller of state granaries, the superintendent of commerce, of tolls and customs, of state spinning and weaving workshops, of slaughter houses, of passports, and of shipping. Military requirements were cared for by the superintendents of the armoury, of cavalry, of elephants, of chariots, and of footmen, all of whom seem to have been rather civil than military officials, as far as it is possible to draw a dividing line between them in ancient India. The less reputable amusements of the populace were controlled by the superintendents of liquor, of gaming, and of prostitutes. Aśoka inaugurated a further class of official called *dharma-mahāmātra*, or minister of Righteousness, whose duty was to supervise the affairs of all religious bodies, and to ensure that the officials followed the Emperor's new policy; this class of official existed under different titles in some later empires, as did officers who administered the great royal donations to religious establishments.

Thus in Mauryan times every aspect of the life of the individual was watched over, and as far as possible controlled, by the government. Though no later state developed the same degree of control as the Mauryas, the ideal of the *Arthaśāstra* did not wholly disappear. Not only did the government regulate the economic life of the country, but it also took an important part in it. All mines, which term included, for the ancient Indian, pearl fisheries and salt pans, were owned by the state, and were either worked directly with the labour of criminals or serfs, or let out to entrepreneurs, from whom the king claimed a percentage of their output as royalty. The produce of the forests, from elephants to firewood, was the property of the state. There were large state farms, cultivated either by direct labour or on a share-cropping basis, the products of which went to the state granaries. The state owned manufactories for spinning and weaving, which were staffed by indigent women, rather like the houses of industry under the Elizabethan poor-law. Munitions of war were made in state arsenals, and ships were built in state shipyards, to be let out to fishermen and merchants. In fact there was no question of *laissez-faire* in ancient India.

This highly organized bureaucracy was much tied up with "red tape". The *Arthaśāstra*[30] suggests that departments should be headed by more than one chief, to prevent excessive peculation, and to ensure that no one individual grew too powerful; the text adds that officials should be transferred frequently and states that no government servant should be allowed to take any decision without reference to his superior, except in emergency.

The *Arthaśāstra* envisages the payment of the many officials of the state in cash, and gives a lengthy tariff of salaries.[31] This is very obscure, however, since bare figures are quoted, without specifying the type of coin or the period of payment. The period was probably a month, and the coins were *paṇas*, but these might be either silver or copper. Whatever they were, the list makes it clear that the crown servant of ancient India, like the Indian civil servant of modern times, enjoyed a standard of life much above that of his less fortunate fellows. The chief councillor, the purohita, the heir apparent, the chief queen, the queen-mother, the king's preceptor, and the chief sacrificial priest of the palace received 48,000 paṇas monthly, while at the lower end of the scale even palace workmen, attendants, and bodyguards received sixty. In contrast to these a labourer on the crown lands received only one and a quarter paṇa and provisions.[32] The last figure is so low that we cannot but believe that the coin referred to by the *Arthaśāstra* was a silver one, otherwise a single copper cooking pot would cost more than the labourer's annual wage.

These data apply to the Mauryan epoch, or to the period immediately following it. Later it became usual for kings to reward their officers by grants of the revenue of a village or district, a system not unknown even in earlier times, and which, as we have seen, helped in the development of the quasi-feudal system of medieval India.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The ancient Indian kingdom was divided into provinces and these into divisions and districts, all with very variable terminology. In the Maurya and Gupta periods the provincial governor was appointed directly by the king, and was usually a member of the royal family. In later times his status was often hereditary and he approximated to a vassal king. We can see the development of this in a series of inscriptions from Western Bengal, issued by the governors of the Gupta emperors in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D.[33] Here we read of three successive generations of governors, of whom the first, Cirātadatta, is merely an *uparika*, a viceroy; with the

decline of the central administration under Budha Gupta his successors call themselves *uparika-mahārāja*, and are well on the way to becoming kings, holding office by birth rather than by appointment. Numerous independent dynasties did in fact arise through provincial governors growing too strong for their masters.

District governors were not usually appointed from the centre, but by the provincial governors. Like the District Officers of the Indian Civil Service, they combined judicial and administrative functions. At this level, in some parts of India at least, the government was assisted by a council, for from the Gupta inscriptions already mentioned we find that the decisions of the district officer were made after consultation with a body of leading residents which included the chief banker, the chief caravan leader, the chief craftsman, and the chief scribe. These members of the council were no doubt heads of guilds or castes, and probably held office by hereditary right. In the Peninsula, especially under the Cōḷas, similar district councils existed, and had even wider powers, levying local taxes and exercising judicial functions with the concurrence of the representative of the central government.

Cities too had their councils. Megasthenes' description of the government of Pāṭaliputra by a committee of thirty members divided into six sub-committees is not exactly confirmed elsewhere, and some doubts have been cast on his accuracy. But some cities issued their own coinage, and must therefore have had considerable local autonomy. Councils existed in small towns and large villages in various parts of India, especially the Cōḷa country, where they were very vigorous.

In general the most important element in city administration was the governor (*nāgaraka*, *purapāla*). His chief responsibilities were revenue collection, and the preservation of law and order by means of police, secret agents and troops, which were stationed in the chief towns under a captain (*daṇḍanāyaka*), who might be the governor himself. The watchmen or police were sometimes fierce and oppressive, and amongst the privileges given to brāhmaṇ villages by benevolent kings immunity from entry by police was one of the most valued.

The system of government envisaged by the *Arthaśāstra* involved a careful check on the movements and activities of all the inhabitants of the city through petty officials called *gopa*, probably often working in a part-time capacity, who were responsible for the collection of revenue, and the supervision of forty households each. These men not only kept careful note of the births, deaths, income and expenditure in the families under their charge, but even of the visitors they received and of any important developments in the

households. The information obtained by the gopa was passed on to the town office and permanently recorded, and similar records were kept in the villages. We cannot be sure that the system advocated by the *Arthaśāstra* was ever wholly put into effect, but Megasthenes confirms that registers were maintained and the movements of strangers carefully supervised. It would seem, in fact, that conditions in the larger Mauryan cities approximated to those of a modern police state, with the open supervision of the gopas supplemented by a vigorous secret service.

The city governor had other, more positive duties. He was responsible for the cleanliness of the streets and the prevention of fire. His duties also involved the prevention or alleviation of such disasters as famine, flood and plague. Thus the last record we have of the Girnar dam tells how it burst, and was reconstructed by the local city governor, Cakrapālita, in 455, during the reign of Skanda Gupta.[34] Cakrapālita, the son of the provincial governor Parṇadatta, is praised in the inscription commemorating the rebuilding of the dam in terms which are evidently formal panegyric, but certain passages are quite unexpected, and depict the city governor as a popular figure on the most friendly terms with the citizens. In any case, these verses show us the ideal set before the local official in Gupta times, and are therefore very significant.

"He caused distress to no man in the city,
but he chastised the wicked.
Even in this mean age
he did not fail the trust of the people.
He cherished the citizens as his own children
and he put down crime.
He delighted the inhabitants
with gifts and honours and smiling conversation,
and he increased their love
with informal visits and friendly receptions."

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

At all times the village was the unit of government. In the South, and occasionally in the North, districts were classified according to the number of villages they were supposed to contain, for instance the *Gangāvādi 96,000* or the *Nidgundige 12*. The number of villages supposed to exist in the larger units is evidently exaggerated, but it must be remembered that almost any settlement, even a tiny group of huts in a jungle clearing, qualified for the name of *grāma*; but a grāma might also contain as many as 1,000 families, and there was no clear dividing-line between a village and a town.

Yakṣī, Bhārhut (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta)

PLATE XXV

Victoria & Albert Museum. Crown Copyright

a

Yakṣī, bearing a *chaurī*.
Dīdārganj, Bihār. ? 1st century B.C.
(Now in Patnā Museum)

b

Dept. of Archaeology, Government of India

Liṅgam, Guḍimallam, Madras.
1st century B.C.

PLATE XXVI

From pre-Mauryan times collectors were appointed over groups of villages, and in the villages themselves two elements, which survive to the present day, represented the last link in the chain of governmental control. These were the village headman and the village council.

The headman's was normally a hereditary position, though he was frequently looked on as the king's representative, to be replaced at his pleasure. He was usually one of the wealthier peasants, and was remunerated with tax-free land, dues in kind, or both. In the larger villages he was a very important functionary, with a small staff of village officials, such as an accountant, a watchman and a toll-collector. These offices too were often passed from father to son, and were remunerated in the same way as that of the headman.

In some sources the headman seems an oppressive local tyrant. The *gāmabhojaka*, who appears in numerous Pāli Jātaka stories, is not so much the representative of his people and one of their number as a squire, with wide powers over the villagers, fining them for minor offences and expelling them for serious ones. In more than one passage in this source we read of villagers appealing to the king for protection against wicked headmen. Usually, however, the headman appears rather as the champion of the villagers. He was responsible for the defence of the village, and in the South, where the village council received greater recognition, this was his most important function. Villages were liable to raids from neighbouring kingdoms, or by the wild tribesmen of hill and jungle. In less settled times bandits roamed the country in large gangs, and Āryans and Dravidians alike had a very ancient tradition of cattle-raiding. When the central government was weak, village feuds and cattle-raids might lead to pitched battles. All over the Deccan are to be found "hero-stones" (*vīragal*) recording the death of a village warrior, often the headman, "while defending the cattle". The pseudo-Śukra, writing in the late Middle Ages, speaks of the headman as the mother and father of the village, protecting it from robbers, from the king's enemies, and from the oppressions of the king's officers.[35] By this time the headman seems often to have been incorporated into the quasi-feudal system. The merchant Udayamāna (p. 95f), for instance, though dignified by the title of rājā, was in fact little more than a village headman.

The village council is rarely referred to in most sources, though it certainly existed all over India. In most kingdoms it was not recognized as part of the state machine. One lawbook gives it a brief mention,[36] and states that its powers derive from the king, but

this is certainly a false interpretation. There is no evidence that the rights of the village council ever depended on the delegation of royal power. It was independent of the government and continued to function, whatever dynasty was ruling the district. Southern kings, however, seem increasingly to have given it recognition, and hence in the Cōḷa empire it played an important part in administration.

We have no record of the composition of the village council in the North, where in later times it traditionally consisted of five of the most respected villagers, including the headman. The Southern councils had constitutions that differed according to local custom. In some villages of the Western Deccan all householders attended the village meeting, although they may have had chiefs who formed an inner council. Elsewhere villages were governed by committees, often chosen by lot. At Uttaramērūr, in the Cōḷa kingdom, a large village inhabited by brāhmaṇs (*agrahāra*), a number of inscriptions from the 10th century onwards throw much light on local politics. The village was divided into thirty wards or sections, each of which had a representative on the council, chosen annually by lot. The council was divided into five sub-committees, the first three of which were responsible for gardens and orchards, tanks and irrigation, and the settlement of disputes respectively, while the functions of the last two are uncertain. Members were unpaid, and could be removed from office for misconduct. The right to sit on the council was limited by a property qualification of a house and a small plot of land. Membership was confined to men between the ages of thirty-five and seventy, and those who had served for a year were ineligible for re-appointment for another three years.

The two latter features of the Uttaramērūr constitution are also found in the constitutions of other villages of which records have survived. All seem to have closed their councils both to youth and old age, and in some the minimum age was as high as forty. Most had checks on the reappointment of retiring members, no doubt to avoid corruption and to prevent any individual from growing too influential. In one case even close relatives of a retiring member were debarred from membership for five years, and in another the retiring member could not be reappointed for ten years.

These Southern councils not only arbitrated disputes and managed social affairs outside the jurisdiction of the government, but were responsible for revenue collection, assessing individual contributions and negotiating the village's collective assessment with the king's representative. They had virtual ownership of the village's waste land, with right of sale, and they were active in irrigation, road-building, and other public works. Their transactions, recorded on the

walls of village temples, show a vigorous community life, and are a permanent memorial to the best side of early Indian politics.

PUBLIC FINANCE

All ancient Indian authorities on statecraft stress the importance of a full treasury for successful government, and India had evolved a regular system of taxation before the Mauryan period. At all times the basic tax was the tax on land, usually called *bhāga* or "share", which was a fixed proportion of the crop. The figure generally given in the Smṛti literature is one sixth, but Megasthenes gives it as one quarter, while the *Arthaśāstra* suggests one quarter or even one third for fertile lands; there is some reason to believe that one quarter was the proportion generally levied even in the mild reign of Aśoka. The tax was usually paid in kind, and the Jātakas refer to the royal officers measuring out grain on the threshing floor for conveyance to the king's granary; but in the middle ages, especially in the South, many villages had commuted their land tax for a regular annual cash payment.

Numerous exemptions and remissions were granted; thus land brought newly under the plough was not taxed fully for five years, while the tax might be wholly or partially remitted in times of bad harvest. Remissions might also be given to a village embarking on a collective irrigation project or some other enterprise in the public interest. Generally the tax was levied on the gross yield, but sometimes an allowance was made to cover the requirements for consumption and seed until the next harvest, and some medieval Indian assessments seem to have been levied on the net yield only.

According to the Sacred Law women, children, students, learned brāhmaṇs and ascetics should not be taxed in any form, and many grants of tax-free land were made to brāhmaṇs and temples; but in practice even religious establishments often paid tax, though at a lower rate than the ordinary peasant. At the other extreme, classes which society in general disliked often had to pay extra taxes, especially in the South; these included those who followed objectionable trades, such as leather workers, and followers of heterodox faiths, such as Muslims and Ājīvikas (p. 294ff).

As well as the basic land tax several other taxes fell upon the cultivator, such as fixed annual cash payments, and dues for the use of water from a tank or canal owned by the king. Taxes were paid on cattle and other livestock, and on all kinds of agricultural and dairy produce. Peasants in South India often paid house taxes, and taxes were also levied on shops and necessary industrial equipment such

as looms, potters' wheels and oil presses. Many of these lesser taxes were the perquisites of the local council, and were devoted to the needs of the village.

According to the *Arthaśāstra* merchants travelling from place to place paid small road tolls which were collected by an officer called *antapāla*, who was responsible for the upkeep of the road and its safety. If we are to believe the text these taxes formed a sort of insurance, for the antapāla was expected to make good any loss suffered by the merchants from thieves. It is doubtful whether this system was regularly adopted in later times, when kingdoms were less well organized, but something like it must have prevailed in the Mauryan period. Tolls were also levied at the city gates on incoming merchandise, on a varying *ad valorem* tariff. The *Arthaśāstra* suggests that essential goods such as grain, oil, sugar, pots and cheap textiles should be taxed at one-twentieth of their value, and other goods at rates varying from one fifteenth to one fifth. Various market dues were also levied, but the ten per cent sales tax recorded by Megasthenes is nowhere mentioned in an Indian source.

All craftsmen were expected to devote one or two days' work per month to the king, but this tax was probably often commuted to a sort of income tax on average daily earnings. There was also liability to forced labour (*viṣṭi*), though this does not seem always to have fallen very heavily upon the masses. Services in labour and gifts of provisions were expected by the king and his officers when on tour, and this might put small rural communities into serious difficulties (p. 95). Such obligations of forced labour and service prevailed in some Indian states until very recent times.

So complex a system of taxation could not be maintained without surveying and accountancy. The Jātaka stories refer to local officers as "holders of the [surveyor's] cord" (*rajjugāhaka*), and the officers called in the Aśokan inscriptions *rajjūka* may have been the same; Megasthenes records that the land was thoroughly surveyed. Land was only transferred to a new owner after reference to the local land records, and this fact, with the name of the record keepers who had certified its transferability, was often noted in the copper-plate title deeds. The better organized kingdoms evidently kept full and up-to-date records of land ownership corresponding to the English Domesday Book. Unfortunately they were written on perishable materials, and all have long since vanished.

Taxation was burdensome, especially in times of bad harvest or under rapacious kings. There are numerous references in Jātaka stories to the harsh exactions of local officers, and to peasants emigrating en masse from their villages to escape crushing taxation. In

later South Indian inscriptions we read of something like the rent-strikes of later times, and of a whole village council being imprisoned for failure to pay tax. One inscription records an appeal to the Cōḷa emperor Rājarāja I, in protest against the looting of a village in punishment of tax default; in this case the king upheld the action of his local officers. A defaulting taxpayer was liable to eviction, though he might be given a year's grace or more in case of real need.

The textbooks on statecraft invariably stress the danger of unduly heavy taxation. Nobody can hold honey in his mouth without tasting some of it, and it is to be expected that local officers will claim more tax than their due, but really extortionate collectors are a great danger to the king's safety. Certain admirable general principles are laid down in our sources—taxation should never act as a check on trade and industry; the king should tax as a bee sucks honey, without hurting the flower; taxes should be fixed so as always to allow a profit to the taxpayer; articles of commerce should not be taxed more than once; increases in taxation should not be imposed without due warning. No doubt the better monarchs tried to maintain these principles in their fiscal policy.

Taxation was theoretically justified as a return for the protection granted by the king. In the story of the primeval king, Manu (p. 86), it is said that when Brahmā first appointed him he demurred, fearing that he would be responsible for the sins of the people; but the people were so direly in need of government that they promised that their sins would be upon their own heads, and undertook to give Manu a share of their crops and herds if he would protect them. The Buddhist story of the first king (p. 82) records a similar promise as part of the contract. Generally it is stated that the king is only entitled to tax his people if he protects them, and that he obtains in addition a share of the religious merit acquired by them, especially by his brāhmaṇ subjects; if he fails in his duty he has no moral right to receive tax, and reaps a share of all the demerit accruing to his subjects.

On the other hand more than one source speaks of the king as the owner of all the land and water in his kingdom; the corollary of this proposition would be that the tax on crops and the other products of the earth was a sort of rent in return for tenancy. That this idea, as well as the doctrine of taxation in return for protection, underlay ancient Indian practice, is evident from the fact that the king had the right to evict defaulting peasants, that he claimed the reversion of the property of those dying without heirs, that he sometimes demanded a fee comparable to the medieval European heriot before a holding was transferred to the heirs of a dead householder, and that

he was the owner of treasure trove. Manu speaks of the king as ultimate lord (*adhipati*) of the land,[37] and therefore entitled to his share of treasure and minerals. Bhaṭṭasvāmin, the medieval commentator on the *Arthaśāstra*, declares bluntly that the king is lord of land and water, but that other things are the property of individual householders.[38] His statement is borne out by several other sources, and by the record of Megasthenes. More than one legend tells of kings giving away or trying to give away their kingdoms, as though they were personal property.

A few sources, however, reject the idea of the king's ultimate ownership of the land. Thus in a Jātaka story a king tells his mistress that he cannot give her his kingdom, for he is not its owner. When a legendary king, Viśvakarman Bhauvana, gave land to the priests, the goddess of earth rose up in person and rebuked him, saying that he had no right to give her away. A medieval commentator, probably basing his statement on this old story, says that kings cannot give away land, because it is owned in common.[39] The 16th-century jurist Nīlakaṇṭha states that land is the property of its owner, and kings have only the right to tax it; he adds that a gift of land does not imply a gift of the soil itself, but only of the right to make use of it.[40]

The attempts of some scholars to prove that the idea of the royal ownership of land never existed in ancient India seems to have sprung from the implicit presupposition, perhaps derived from the *laissez-faire* social philosophy of Herbert Spencer, that there was something primitive and shameful in such a conception. It is noteworthy that those authorities who denied royal ownership most forcibly were also those who overstressed the democratic element in the ancient Indian way of life. Such patriotic scholars as Dr. K. P. Jāyaswāl, writing when India's independence had not been achieved, did much to give her people faith in themselves, and therefore may have served a practical purpose. Now, with a free India, there can be no excuse for attempting to force the interpretation of texts whose meaning is perfectly obvious, in order to try to prove that the king laid no claim to ownership of the land and water of his domains. On this question, as on many others, ancient Indian opinion differed,[41] but our sources show that the majority of thinkers on the subject favoured the doctrine of royal ownership.

Whatever the theory, we may assume that in practice the royal ownership weighed lightly on the peasant who paid his taxes regularly; but the *Arthaśāstra* suggests that not only tax defaulters but also peasants who failed to cultivate their holdings efficiently should be evicted, though we have no evidence that this was regularly done.

The system which we have outlined was followed with many variations in normal times throughout pre-Muslim India; but in emergencies whips might be changed for scorpions. According to the theorists a king in serious financial straits was justified in adopting the most drastic and oppressive measures, rather than lose his throne. He might raise taxes indefinitely, levy forced loans and benevolences from wealthy people, resume grants and immunities promised in perpetuity, confiscate the hoarded wealth of goldsmiths and even rob religious establishments, especially those of heterodox sects. There is good evidence from the Kashmīr chronicle and elsewhere that kings did sometimes go to these extreme lengths. In fairness, however, it must be pointed out that the theorists give as justifiable motives for such extortion not only danger from external and internal enemies, but the hunger of the poor through famine, flood or plague.

We know much about the income of the Indian king, but comparatively little about his expenditure. Much of the income of the state was stored, and the wealth of even small kingdoms is attested by foreign travellers and by the records of the booty obtained by Muslim invaders. The late textbook on polity ascribed to Śukra states that the total annual income of an emperor might amount to 500 m. *karṣas*, by which term the author probably means silver coins of about the weight of the modern rupee, but with much greater purchasing power. Of this considerable income Śukra advises the king to reserve one sixth in his treasury.[42] According to accepted theory a well-stocked treasury was the king's chief source of strength, and no kingdom could function properly without it. The effect of this doctrine was certainly bad. The great reserves of precious metals and jewels, never touched except in direst emergency, were economically useless, and the treasury of a king was inevitably the target of the greed of his neighbours. The royal treasures, the existence of which was reported by early Muslim travellers, were important factors in encouraging the invasions which ultimately destroyed Hindu India.

After storing one sixth of his income in his treasury the king was advised by Śukra to allot one half to what is nowadays called defence —a euphemism which many Indian kings would have scorned. This proportion of expenditure on military needs probably does not compare unfavourably with that of many modern states. One twelfth of the revenue was for the king's personal use, and one twelfth for charity, chiefly no doubt to religious causes. A further twelfth was devoted to the payment of civil servants, and the last twelfth to *prakṛtayaḥ*. This term is very ambiguous in many contexts, since it

may mean either ministers or subjects. In the former case it would overlap somewhat with the previous head of expenditure, and it may be that Śukra intended it to apply to works of public value, such as the building of roads, canals and tanks, which were certainly undertaken by many Indian kings, and which would not otherwise be covered by any head in the list.

LEGAL LITERATURE

With the passage of time the sacrificial instructions of the Brāhmaṇas became obscure, and a new group of texts was composed to elucidate them. These were *Śrauta Sūtras*: the term *sūtra* literally means "thread", but was used with the secondary meaning of a manual of instruction in the form of brief aphorisms; the whole title may be translated "Manuals Explaining the Scriptures". A little later *Gṛhya Sūtras* were composed on domestic religious ceremonies, and finally manuals of human conduct, the *Dharma Sūtras*. A set of three sūtras, one on each of these topics, and attributed to the same legendary sage, was called a *Kalpa Sūtra*. The Dharma Sūtras are our earliest sources for Hindu law, the most important being those attributed to Gautama, Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Āpastamba. They were probably mainly composed between the 6th and the 2nd centuries B.C., but in some respects they look back to earlier times, while they contain later interpolations. The first three seem to have been written in a more westerly part of India than the early Buddhist scriptures, with which they are approximately contemporary, and the *Āpastamba* may have been composed in the Northern Deccan.

Later, from the early centuries of the Christian era onwards, the prose sūtras, including several now lost to us, were expanded and remodelled in verse form. These are the *Dharma Śāstras* ("Instructions in the Sacred Law"). The latter term is sometimes used for the Dharma Sūtras also, but most modern authorities reserve it for the longer versified texts of later days. There are numerous Dharma Śāstras, the earliest of which is that of Manu, probably composed in its final form in the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Other important Dharma Śāstras after Manu are those of Yājñavalkya, Viṣṇu and Nārada, which date from the Gupta period and the Middle Ages, and there are numerous others of less importance, or preserved in a fragmentary form. Manu is still largely concerned with human conduct generally, but the works of his successors approach more and more closely to purely legal textbooks.

The Sūtras and Śāstras taken together are known as *Smṛti* ("remembered"), as distinct from the earlier Vedic literature, which

is *Śruti* ("heard"), and which was believed to have been directly revealed to its authors, and therefore of greater sanctity than the later texts. Thus the *Mānava Dharma Śāstra*, or lawbook of Manu, is often known as the *Manu-Smṛti*. The Epics and Purāṇas were also looked on as Smṛti, and contain much legal lore. In fact hundreds of verses in Manu are also to be found in the *Mahābhārata*, and were probably not plagiarized, but inherited from a common source.

Many medieval jurists wrote lengthy commentaries on the Smṛti literature. Of these the most important was Vijñāneśvara, who wrote at the court of the great Cālukya emperor, Vikramāditya VI (c. 1075–1127). His *Mitākṣarā*, a commentary on the lawbook of Yājñavalkya, played a very important part in forming the civil law of modern India. Other important jurists of the middle ages were Hemādri (c. 1300), and Jīmūtavāhana (12th century), whose treatise on inheritance (*Dāyabhāga*), part of a great compilation called *Dharmaratna*, has also influenced the law of modern India.

It cannot be too strongly stressed that the whole Smṛti literature is the work of brāhmaṇs, who wrote from their own point of view. The *Arthaśāstra*, written from a more secular angle, differs from the Smṛtis in many particulars. It is certain that the advice of the Smṛtis was not regularly followed in many ancient kingdoms, though it became increasingly authoritative with time. The statements of the Smṛtis must as far as possible be checked by comparison with the *Arthaśāstra* and by passing references to law and custom in general literature, inscriptions, and the writings of foreign travellers.

THE BASIS OF LAW

Though we know very little about the legal system of the Ṛg Vedic period it is clear that the idea of a divine cosmic order already existed. *Ṛta*, the regularity of the universal process, was perhaps the forerunner of the later concept of *Dharma*. The latter word, etymologically akin to the English word "form", is untranslatable, and had many meanings. In the Aśokan inscriptions and some other Buddhist sources it seems to have the broad general meaning of "righteousness"; but in legal literature it may perhaps be defined as the divinely ordained norm of good conduct, varying according to class and caste. In this context we translate it as the "Sacred Law".

As well as Dharma there are, according to the textbooks, other bases of law: contract, custom and royal ordinance. The earlier religious lawbooks give little attention to these, but their importance increases with time. It was recognized that, owing to the decadence of the age, Dharma was not now known in its fullness and purity and

therefore supplementary sources of law were needed. Generally Dharma was thought to override all other bases of law, but the *Artha-śāstra* and one other lawbook[43] maintain that the royal ordinance overrides the others, a doctrine which we must ascribe to the totalitarianism of the Mauryas, and which few jurists would have supported.

The king's duty of protection was chiefly the protection of Dharma, and as protector of Dharma he was Dharma incarnate. From Aśoka onwards kings sometimes assumed the title *Dharmarāja*, which was also one of the names of Yama, the god of death and the departed. Both Yama and the king maintained the Sacred Law by punishing evil-doers and rewarding the righteous.

Another concept, much in evidence in some sources, was that of *Daṇḍa*. The primary meaning of this word is "a stick", from which its secondary meanings may be easily inferred. In varying contexts it may be translated as "military force", "coercion", "punishment", "a fine", or simply "justice". Human nature was evil and corrupt. In the benighted age in which most ancient Indian writers on law and morals believed themselves to be living mankind could only be disciplined to observe the Sacred Law by fear of punishment. In the stern words of Manu:

> "If the king did not inflict punishment
> untiringly on evil-doers
> the stronger would roast the weaker,
> like fish upon a spit. . . .
>
> "The whole world is controlled by punishment,
> for a guiltless man is hard to find. . . .
>
> "Where dark and red-eyed Punishment
> walks the land, destroying sinners,
> the people are not harassed,
> if he who inflicts it is discerning."[44]

The king's responsibility for maintaining Dharma by means of Daṇḍa was not taken lightly. Impartial administration of justice brought him the same spiritual reward as Vedic sacrifices. Kings failing in their duty suffered in Hell. Even delay in justice was visited with dire penalties, for a legendary king called Nṛga was reborn as a lizard, because he kept two litigants waiting in a dispute over a cow. Some sources declared that it was incumbent upon a king to restore the full value of stolen articles to the plaintiff, if the thief could not be brought to justice. Moreover, the king was

believed to incur the demerit of criminals not brought to book, and to suffer in the next life accordingly, while from the secular point of view the king who perverted justice or was negligent in its administration was in danger of losing his throne.

CRIME

Megasthenes speaks of the Indians as remarkably law-abiding, and states that crime was very rare; similar evidence is given by Fa-hsien and by medieval Arab travellers, though Hsüan Tsang gives a somewhat less favourable picture. The impressions of foreign travellers are not wholly confirmed by Indian sources, however, and a profound sense of the insecurity of life and property underlies much of the legal literature.

In the earlier part of the period with which we deal, a process was going on in some ways comparable to that which is now taking place in parts of Africa. Uncivilized or semi-civilized tribes were breaking up under the pressure of Āryan Culture; even as early as Mauryan times villages were often overpopulated; many poor folk from the country and the hills drifted to the towns, as they are doing at the present day, and found life even more difficult than in their old surroundings. Some of these unfortunate and uprooted people provided the submerged tenth of habitual criminals which seems to have existed in all ancient Indian cities. In order to suppress crime the *Arthaśāstra* advises the imposition of a stringent curfew from about two and a half hours after sunset to the same time before dawn. Later sources speak of castes of professional thieves who had developed stealing to a fine art, and who made use of written manuals on their profession.

Crime was equally rampant in the countryside, where the existence of large robber bands is attested from the time of the Buddha onwards. Hsüan Tsang gives the earliest account of hereditary bandits who robbed their victims and murdered them as a religious duty, like the later thugs. Trading caravans were heavily guarded, but were nevertheless frequently plundered by highwaymen. Thus ancient India was faced with a very serious crime problem, though the evidence of most of the foreign travellers suggests that the best ancient Indian kings managed to cope with it. Crime was suppressed through the local officers and garrison commanders, who had large staffs of police and soldiers, as well as secret agents who served as detectives. Watchmen kept guard through the night in city and village, and in some medieval kingdoms special officers (*duḥsādhasādhanika*) were deputed to track down and apprehend bandits.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

In the small kingdoms to which the early Dharma Sūtras refer the king might be the sole source of justice and indeed his own executioner, striking down condemned thieves with his mace; but in general the administration of justice was delegated, the king's court being reserved for appeals and serious crime against the state. In medieval kingdoms, the councillor called Prāḍvivāka, the king's chief legal adviser, seems to have been responsible for justice and might also himself act as a judge.

The composition of the courts varied with time and place, but the evidence indicates that ancient India preferred a bench of magistrates to a single judge. A Jātaka story tells of a bench of five magistrates, all of whom, incidentally, are corrupt, while the *Arthaśāstra* advises that a court with a bench of three magistrates be set up for every ten villages, with higher courts in districts and provinces. Manu suggests a bench consisting of the Prāḍvivāka and three lesser judges, while the drama called "The Little Clay Cart" (p. 441) contains a scene in a court of justice, presided over by a chief judge, here called *adhikaraṇika*, a wealthy merchant (*śreṣṭhin*), and a representative of the caste of scribes (*kāyastha*). The title given to the chief judge is derived from *adhikaraṇa*, "a government office", and suggests that he was an official who combined judicial and administrative functions; the two other magistrates were evidently leading citizens, who served on the bench as do our justices of the peace.

Though judicial corruption is often referred to, the standards set for judges and magistrates were very high; they were to be learned, religious, devoid of anger, and as impartial as humanly possible. To prevent bribery it is suggested that no private interviews should be allowed between judges and litigants until cases are settled. The *Arthaśāstra* advises that the honesty of judges should be periodically tested by agents provocateurs, while the *Viṣṇu Smṛti* prescribes banishment and forfeiture of all property for a judge found guilty of corruption or injustice—the most severe penalty a brāhmaṇ could incur under the Sacred Law.

False witness was generally looked on with great abhorrence, and, besides various temporal penalties, incurred a hundred unhappy rebirths in the afterworld. In serious criminal cases evidence might be accepted from all sources, but in civil law only certain witnesses were qualified; generally women, learned brāhmaṇs, government servants, minors, debtors, persons with criminal records, and persons suffering from physical defects could not be called on to give evidence, while the evidence of low-caste people was not valid against persons

of higher caste. Several tests, some very sound psychologically, are laid down to assess the veracity of witnesses.

Where the accused was open to grave suspicion not amounting to certainty he might be tortured to elicit confession. The tortures enumerated for this purpose are not all of the most extreme type, and include various forms of whipping. Brāhmaṇs, children, the aged, the sick, lunatics and pregnant women were theoretically exempt from torture, while only light torture was prescribed for women.

Another means of ascertaining guilt was the ordeal, which could be used in both civil and criminal cases, and in certain forms is still sometimes resorted to in India to settle disputes out of court. Ordeal is but little mentioned in early texts, but seems to have grown more popular in later times. The Smṛti writers apparently distrusted ordeals, and generally limited their application to cases in which there was no concrete evidence on either side. Several ordeals are mentioned, however, including ordeals by fire and immersion similar to those known in medieval Europe, and possibly having a common Indo-European origin in the remote past. Specially interesting is the ordeal of the ploughshare, in which the accused man had to touch a red-hot iron ploughshare with his tongue; if it was not burned he was deemed innocent—psychologically a fairly sound test of his own confidence in the result, since if he had a guilty conscience his salivary glands would not function properly, and his tongue would be burnt.

Megasthenes remarked that the Indian was not inclined to litigation, and he may have been correct, though the same could not be said of India of more recent times. In any case, though there were many brāhmaṇs learned in law they never constituted a class of professional pleaders, and those who did not serve on the bench presumably used their knowledge to settle cases out of court. There is evidence, however, that by the end of our period a class of lawyers, in the modern sense, was beginning to develop, for some late textbooks allow litigants to employ proxies, who are to be rewarded with a share of the money involved, while one source grants to any learned brāhmaṇ the right to give his views on a case from the body of the court.[45]

PUNISHMENT

The penalties imposed for criminal offences developed from two very ancient customs, the wergeld and the religious penance imposed for ritual offences. The influence of both can be clearly traced in the system of punishment followed in later times.

The early Sūtras laid down fines for the punishment of murder—1,000 cows for killing a kṣatriya, 100 for a vaiśya, and 10 for a śūdra or a woman of any class; the killing of a brāhmaṇ could not be expiated by a fine. The cattle were handed to the king, who passed them on to the relatives of the slain man, a bull being added as the king's perquisite. Later sources lose sight of the true nature of the fines as means of buying off the vengeance of the family of the dead man, and lay down that the cattle are expiatory gifts, to be given to the brāhmaṇs. But the wergeld left its mark on the legal system in the form of the fines, which, with or without other punishment, are a special feature of ancient Indian justice. Fines ranging from a small copper coin to the confiscation of all property were levied, and could atone for all but the most serious crime. They were an appreciable source of income to the state, and many medieval charters, giving revenue rights over a village or district, specifically include the right to receive the fines levied at the local court. A condemned person who could not pay his fine was reduced to bondage until it was paid by his labour.

The Smṛti writers rarely mention imprisonment, but all other sources show that it was common. Aśoka was proud of the many gaol-deliveries which he had ordered in the course of his reign; according to a later tradition he is said to have maintained in his unreformed early years a prison in which the most fiendish tortures were inflicted, and from which no prisoner came out alive.[46] Hsüan Tsang mentions imprisonment as the usual form of punishment under Harṣa. Forced labour in the state mines and elsewhere is mentioned as a punishment in the *Arthaśāstra*, and no doubt amounted to imprisonment of a very severe type. Mutilation and torture were common penalties for many crimes, and numerous forms are described by legal writers. Such punishments were often looked on rather as penances, and the idea of religious penance was never completely absent from the thought of the pious authors of the Smṛtis, in considering the punishment of crime. It was generally believed that by undergoing punishment in this life the criminal escaped the evil consequences of his crime in the next.

The death penalty is laid down in many forms and for many crimes. Unlike the early Sūtras the *Arthaśāstra* prescribes it for murder, even as a result of a duel or quarrel, if the injured man dies within seven days. Hanging is the penalty for spreading false rumours, housebreaking, and stealing the king's elephants and horses. Those who plot against the king, force entry into the king's harem, aid his enemies, create disaffection in the army, murder father, mother, son, brother or an ascetic, or commit serious arson, are to be burnt alive. Beheading is the penalty laid down by the *Arthaśāstra* for

wilful murder or stealing a herd of cattle. The man who deliberately breaks a dam is to be drowned in the same dam. Women murdering their husbands or children, killing others by poison, or committing arson are to be torn apart by oxen. Civilians stealing military supplies are to be shot to death with arrows. These are some of the many forms of execution suggested by the *Arthaśāstra*. This text is comparatively lenient towards sexual crime, but Manu also prescribes death in various unpleasant forms for most types of adultery and sexual assault. Even the benevolent Aśoka, for all his distaste for the taking of life, did not abolish the death penalty (p. 55). The usual form of execution, little mentioned in the textbooks on law, but often referred to in general literature, was impalement.

Nevertheless it is evident that some opinion definitely opposed the death penalty, and the question is considered from both sides in a remarkable passage in the *Mahābhārata*.[47] Here the argument against capital punishment and heavy penalties in general is not based, as might be expected, on the doctrine of non-violence, which in no way forbade either capital punishment or war, but rests wholly on humanitarian considerations. In most cases mutilation, long imprisonment and execution result in untold suffering for many innocent people, especially for the wife and family of the criminal. The argument is quickly refuted—in this dark age the innocent must suffer with the guilty, in order that society may be protected, anarchy avoided, and men enabled to pursue the Sacred Law in peace.

Humanitarian ideas, probably encouraged by Buddhism, were effective in Gupta times in moderating the fierce punishment of earlier days. Fa-hsien records that the death penalty was not imposed in Northern India, but most crime punished by fines, and only serious revolt by the amputation of one hand. The Chinese traveller may have exaggerated, but his testimony at least suggests that executions were rare. Hsüan Tsang 200 years later, reported that prisoners were not executed under Harṣa, but were left to rot in dungeons. In later times there is good evidence that capital punishment was inflicted, and criminals often became the victims of human sacrifice, but in the medieval period we read of sentences which, even by modern standards, seem surprisingly mild. Thus a Cōḷa inscription records the gift of 96 sheep to endow a perpetual lamp in a temple, the donor being a man who had stabbed an army officer to death; this was apparently the only penalty he suffered. Other South Indian instances can be found of murderers being let off with comparatively small penances of this nature. It would seem that here the blood feud had by no means disappeared, and if a murderer could appease the enmity of his victim's family the court would let him off lightly.