

ANCIENT INDIA

A Historical Survey up to 700 A. D.

BY MR. S. KRISHNASWAMI AIYANGAR, M.A., M.R.A.S.

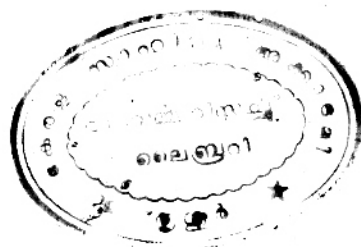
BAVA VARMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE
CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

8 DEC 1954

H. No. 14

310





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IN attempting to look back upon our own history the first essential would appear to be marking a few of the more salient features, so that we might group round these a number of minor events and incidents. This will give us perspective; and whatever imperfection there may be in detail it will make the whole presentable. If at this distance we take a retrospect, the history of India of the Aryan invasions would appear, like our own Himalayas at a great distance, all smooth but for a few peaks of commanding height. "Happy is the nation whose annals are a blank," said Carlyle, and if we can derive comfort from this seeming blankness, we shall perhaps be in a delusion. I shall attempt, therefore, to present in outline the outstanding features with a view to clothing these later on to make them as presentable looking as we may.

We have to begin with the Aryans in their own homes wherever they might have been and move along with them. This will be extra-Indian in character and withal essential to the proper understanding of their doings in India. We shall name this the Pre-Indian age of the Indo-Aryans Circa. B. C. 3000. During this age the Aryans advance up to the Indian frontier and are a nomadic-agricultural folk, already differentiated from their Iranian brethren and developing some of the features peculiar to the Indo-Aryans of the Rig-Veda.

The next step in advance takes them across the frontier into India. During this age of their migration we find them in occupation of the land of the five rivers. It is here for the first time that the Aryans come in contact with the aboriginal inhabitants of India and the struggle for possession of the country begins. The more rudimentary civilization, of course,

gives way to the more advanced and vigorous. It is again in the land of the five-rivers, that the simple civilization and compact tribal organization take form and are pictured to us in the Rig-Veda. The rich soil and flourishing communities catch the eyes and attract the desires of the neighbouring, but still primitive, cousins of these Indian Aryans. To make room for these new arrivals, not without a fight perhaps, the Indo-Aryans move forward across the rivers to the Doab of the Ganges and the Jumna. All this may roughly be ascribed to the half millennium 2000-1500 B.C.

As with the Greek cousins of these Indo-Aryans, these latter underwent a similar course of development according to their own environment, geographical and political. In the Gangetic Doab, we find the Aryans developing more powerful communities, which, instead of becoming city-states as in Greece, led to powerful monarchies ruling powerful tribes and vast kingdoms particularly as the country was more open. It was in these regions that the great inter-tribal wars typified in the Mahabharata must have taken place. At least, the incidents referred to in the great epic have their theatre here. Hence this period of history has come to be known that of the Mahabharata. It is here for the first time that the Aryans get into touch, not only with the uncivilized aborigines who are the feature of the Punjab plains, as even the later Brihat Katha makes it clear, but also with the civilized Dravidians of India. It is here, as with the Greeks in Attica and Boeotia, that the Aryans change their policy of usurpation to that of amalgamation, which alone was possible under the circumstances. To these events is ascribed the period include in the centuries between 1500 B.C.—1000 B.C.

From here the further expansion eastwards could not be in the wholesale fashion as heretofore, but have to be in dribblets. This expansion takes the form of a few powerful kingdoms farther east than the Doab. What the Kurus (or Kauravas) and the Pāṇchālas were to the Doab, the Kōśalas and Videhas were to the further east of those times. It is of these regions that the Ramayana tells and the period taken up in the expansion (or infiltration) into these regions ~~may~~ have been the quarter millennium 1000 B.C. to 750 B.C.

During these periods then the Indo-Aryans have been rearing those great edifices of learning and religion which have given this land of ours all its claims to greatness in the various departments of human activity. The Pre-Vedic Aryans brought in their traditions, which they could elaborate at leisure in the Punjab. This in course of time was put into shape in the hymns of the Veda, which as time advanced, required to be explained by an elaborate commentary. These commentaries are the Brāhmanas. These in their turn led to the further disquisitions called the Aranyakas culminating in the philosophical flights of the Upanishads. This transformation, or rather elaboration, has been going on steadily up to the period we have arrived at in the last section. This is not all. Certain scientific enquiries had to be made for the proper understanding of the Vedas and the Vedic ritual. Their need was met by the Vedangas having been elaborated, viz., (1) Kalpa which included Geometry so far as it applied to the construction of sacrificial altars, (2) Siksha or Phonetics, (3) Chandas or Metre, (4) Viyakarana or Grammar, (5) Nirukta or study of words, (6) Jyotisha or astronomy. These Vedangas find brief treatment in the Brāhmanas or Upanishads and acquire the necessary scientific cast in the age we have come to just now.

This development leads us on to the so-called Sutra period, because this growing mass of literature required to be put in such shape as could easily be mastered. The alphabet, no doubt, had been invented already (or adapted thoroughly to Indian requirements) though perhaps it was not brought quite into common usage. This period overlaps the next and may be taken to occupy the 4 centuries between 750 B. C. and say 350 B. C. So far then we have to rely entirely upon such evidence as is available in our sacred literature and these have been allotted to very varying periods by scholars.

The Aryan home is placed within the Arctic Circle by Mr. Tilak and he ascribes a very early period (7000 B. C.) indeed for the earliest hymns of the Rig-Veda; while European scholars would bring it to 1500 B. C. Mr. Tilak rests his arguments upon certain solar and other astronomical phenomena referred to in the earlier hymns which upon his hypothesis find clear explanation. The late Mr. Shankar Balakrishna Dikshīt refers certain at least of the Brāhmanas to 3800 B.C.; there being a reference in the Satapada Brāhmaṇa to the Pleiades being in the Equinox, which is verifiable astronomically. Dr. Thibaut ~~considers~~ the verse referred to as a late interpolation. So then our position here is not very secure and therefore our chronology respecting this period cannot lay claim to much accuracy. The ultimate downward limit of our period may be taken to be accurate, as it brings in an unlooked for synchronism. Pythagoras the Greek philosopher is believed to have learnt in India not only his theory of transmigration but also his theory of numbers from our Sankya system. Drs. Goldstrucker and Bhandarkar refer the Grammarian Panini to this period and if this be correct it brings the history of south India into touch with that of the north.

Taking a fresh starting point, therefore, somewhere in the 6th century B. C. we find ourselves

upon somewhat firmer ground as outside light begins to beat upon us. In the centuries on either side of B. C. 750 the Aryans begin penetrating into the Mahakantara round about the Vindhya, the memory of which is preserved in the tradition regarding Agastya's advent into the south. If the Ramayana could be trusted to be correct regarding its geographical details the great forest extends up to the Pampa Saras, which must have been somewhere near modern Lampa, where unfortunately no Saras (or tank) has been brought to notice under the name. Perhaps this difficulty has already been felt. The Author of the Tamil Ramayana makes it Pampanadi. The advent of Agastya introduces reclamation of the jungle into arable land and he is the author of the first Tamil Grammar. Whoever this Agastya was Rishi or some one else by that name, he does for Tamil what Panini did for Sanskrit. That he criticises Panini appears to be in evidence in one of the very few quotations that have come down to us. It would thus appear that the Aryan migration into South India, has to be referred to this period of the Sutras.

When the whole of India, north and south, is getting organised, the overgrowth of ritualism and perhaps of religion becoming too much of a mystery, sets thoughtful people athinking regarding this very subject. There appear in the 6th century B.C. two great men who have contributed to bring about a mighty transformation. It is certainly in the fitness of things that these should have flourished in the spots favoured by nature where before them the daring flights of speculation into the mystery of the Unknown^{*} reached its grand climacteric under the Indian Pisistratus, as he is called, Rajarishi Janaka. These two great sons of India are Maha Vira Vardhamana the founder of the religion of the Jina and Gautama Sakyamuni, the Buddha. The new teachings of the latter and the appeal they

made to the people have long been recognised, as the potent cause of the development of the languages of the people. This influence from the distant north found ready response even in the distant south with which communication appears to have been maintained by way of the sea, while yet the Dandakaranya had not been penetrated by a great high way, the Dakshinapatha. The advent of the Buddha has also been in another way of advantage to students of history. His religion it was that took India from her blissful isolation and brought her to take her place among the world powers, but this was not as yet.

With the advent of Buddhism comes into prominence the Kingdom of Maghada, perhaps semi-aryan, having been in the borderland of the Aryavarta. The capitals of this kingdom appear to have been Rajagriha, Kaikeyi's father's kingdom, and Vaisali, also spoken of in the Ramayana. Bimbisara of the Saisunaga dynasty and his patricide son Ajatasatru were contemporaries of the Buddha. Before the Buddha attained *Nirvana* Buddhism had obtained a great hold upon the people of India, and Buddhist monks and nuns have been going about carrying the Buddhist gospel.

This age when two religious reformers flourished and in which the foundation of the greatness of the Kingdom of Maghada was laid is remarkable in many ways. This is the age in which an Indian contingent fought in the battles of Thermopylae and Plataea in Greece, 'in cotton clothes, canebows, and iron-tipped arrows.' This was possible because of the twentieth Satrapy on the west bank of the Indus formed by the adventurous skill of the Carian admiral of Darius Hystaspes, by name Skylax. The date of the navigation of the Indus by this admiral and the foundation of the Satrapy are placed at about 510 B. C. About this period India, then known to the Aryans was divided into sixteen kingdoms and a number of autonomous tribes. For besides

* It would appear there is a tank of that name quite close to the river from which it is separated by an embankment.

the accepted line of advance of the Aryans, there appear to have been two other streams of migration—one skirting the lower Himalayas and the other down the valley of the Indus. The tribes are found along the mountain borders east of the Ganges, some of them also along the upper reaches of the Punjab rivers. Several of them were governed by their own tribal meetings in the Hall of the tribe—Santhâgâra.

I need mention here only one of them because of its having been a Kingdom previously. I mean the Videhas of modern Tirhut whose King Janaka has already been mentioned. These were a section of the great Vajjia clan and were during this period under the Government of a republic, whose headman, as in the case of other republics as well, was called a Raja, answering to the Roman Consul or Athenian Archon. It is from one of these clans of Northern Bihar that the Buddha himself was born.

The Kingdoms were, proceeding from the west in geographical order: Kambhoja with capital Dvaraka, answering to modern Sindh and Gujarat; Gandhara, Eastern Afghanistan between the Afghan mountains and a little way to the east of the Indus with capital Taxila (near Shah Deri); Avanti, the modern Malwa with capital Ujjain; the Assaka (Asmaka or Asvaka) with capital Potali or Potana on the banks of the Godavari (modern Paitan); the Surasenans with their capital Madhura, the modern Muttra; the Matsyas west of the Jumna answering to the cis-Sutlej Sikh States or Phulkian states; the two Panchalas round about Kanouj and Kampilla; the Kurus occupying the country round about Delhi; Vamsa, the country of the Vatsas with capital Kosambi; Chedi, one at least of the tribes having had their local habitat in Bundelkhand, the other being located somewhere in Nepal; the Mallas roundabout Kusinara along the Nepal Tarai; the Vajjians, a confederation of eight clans of which the chief

were the Licchavis of Vaisali and the Videhas of Mithila; the Kôsâlas whose kingdom during this period included Sravasti in Nepal on the one side and Benares on the other with Saketa in the middle; the Kasis round modern Benares; Maghada round Patna including in it Southern Behar up to Bhagalpur on the Ganges; and Anga with capital Champa not far from Bhagalpur.

It is clear from the above that so far the Southern expansion had come up only to the Godavari. This is not inconsistent with the state of things portrayed in the Ramayana, as this latter nowhere mentions an aryan kingdom nor of an aryan settlement of any importance beyond Janasthana along the upper reaches of the Godavari. The political feature of this period is the struggle for supremacy between the neighbours, the Kôsâlas and the Magadhas. The Saisunagas particularly under Bimbisara and his patricide son Ajatasatru were successful in expanding Magadha to include Vaisali and the Licchavi country and keeping Kôsala well within bounds. It was during their rule that Rajagriha was fortified and the capital changed to Vaisali. It was a successor of Ajatasatru by name Udayana who enlarged his predecessor's fort of Patalipura into the great capital of Magadha. The fall of this great dynasty was, however, at hand and was probably brought about by dissensions within and invasion from without. The invasion of Chanda Pajjota* (Pradhyôta) of Ujjain must have weakened the state much and a palace revolution did the rest. The Saisunagas were overthrown and the Nandas came to power. The ill-gotten power lasted for two generations only, and the Nandas, in turn,

* (1) This is the Father of Vasavadatta, Queen of Udayana of Kosambi. It was this King who is described in the Brihat Katha, as Chanda Mahasena. That the two refer to the same King is clear from P'iyadasika.

were overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya as is well known.

It is while this revolution in politics was gradually working out in the middle kingdoms that the western frontiers were thrown into confusion by the advent of one of the world's conquering heroes. Starting from Macedonia, the young champion of Hellenism, Alexander the Great, marched eastwards combining with the warlike instincts of the General the insatiable curiosity of the explorer. Meeting with feeble resistance on the way across the Empire of Persia, he marched along the left banks of the Kophen (Cabul river) and crossed the Indus somewhere above Attock, with the friendly hospitality of Omphes of Taxila, whose jealousy towards his powerful neighbour Porus threw him into the arms of Alexander. It cost Alexander a great effort of skill and daring before he could take the hill-fort of the Mahaban. This done he marched down the Peshawar plain to the banks of the Jhelum. Here at last he met his match. Porus was after all worsted; but so far compelled Alexander's admiration, as to get himself restored to his Kingdom somewhat extended, perhaps under the Viceroy Philip. Alexander's further advance upon the Kingdom was prevented by a mutiny among Magadha his troops and he had to turn back but never to return. Having been thus baulked in his attempt to bring about Alexander's intervention, Chandragupta was able to levy troops in the Punjab among the several war-like tribes, and brought about the revolution which, thanks to the exertions of the most astute diplomatist of the times Chanakya (or Kautilya or Vishnugupta.) gave him the Kingdom of Magadha. The accession of this first Maurya is placed in the year B.C. 321 and provides us with the first reliable date in the History of India. During the first decade of his reign, he was able so far to organise his resources that he was master of Hindustan up to the frontiers. Porus was assassinated in the meanwhile.

It was in 305 B.C. or a few years earlier that one of the most promising among Alexander's generals who had made himself ruler of Asia after his master's death, attempted the conquest of the East. This time the east outmatched the west. Seleucus Nicator (the Victorious) had to agree to a humiliating treaty, giving up to Chandragupta Alexander's Eastern Viceroyalty under Philip i.e., the country of Afghanistan.

Chandragupta's Empire stretched after this from the mountains running across Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal, and from the Himalayas to the Vindhya. This vast empire was organised on the time-honoured basis of local autonomy with the condition attached of providing contingents to the Imperial army and acknowledging supremacy, as no other closer arrangement could have been made on account of mere distance alone. The Empire might have lasted on, on this basis if only the members of such a federated Empire understood each other better and acted up to the agreements entered into, or in the absence thereof, consulted the common interests of all. This perhaps was too much in advance of the times to expect.

Chandragupta's successor Bindusara followed in the wake of his predecessor and had considerably added to the Empire. He entrusted the two important frontiers to his two sons, the eldest being viceroy of the North-west at Taxila while the younger, but the more famous Asoka, was the Viceroy at Vidisa (Bhilsa) of the Dhakshinapatha.

From Bindusara we pass on with pleasure to his son Asoka, the Constantine of India. Asoka was Viceroy of the then most difficult frontier when his father died. Asoka had to assert his claim as against an elder brother the Viceroy of Taxila and overthrew him at last. Having thus got the throne, he began his reign in the manner of both of his predecessors. His only acquisition to the Empire, however, is explicitly stated to be Kalinga, the Mahanadi Delta and Orissa. The

rest of the Dakshinapâtha must have been conquered and brought under, while yet his father was alive. Passing over the Buddhist delineation of the character of Asoka almost as the evil principle incarnate, we find him accepting Buddhism, after his conquest of Kalingam, out of remorse for the bloodshed, on account of which he is said to have given up Brahmanism in which he was born. The merciful doctrines he taught, the hospitals he built both for man and animal, the interest he took to spread the Gospel of the Enlightened far and wide; and the pains he bestowed upon the collecting and consolidating of the teaching of the Great One are matters of common knowledge. In spite of the great changes that had come over, the administration of the Empire has been going on in the time-honoured method with little change of principle except the personnel. This Empire now extended in the south into Mysore and the southern frontier may be regarded as about 12° N. Latitude. Along the frontiers of this vast empire and particular places within, he cut out his own instructions to his officials and people on rocks and pillars. Besides, he had erected innumerable stupas or topes to hold the remains of the great *Arhats*. These are the material most reliable for his history. His missionary enterprise carried the teachings of the Buddha to at least as far as Syria. From his own edicts we learn that he negotiated with five kingdoms along the southern frontier and they were, Chola, Pandya, Kerala, and Satiyaputra in India and Ceylon close to it. At the western most extremity of Asia and Eastern Europe his influence prevailed. He entered into diplomatic relations with Antiochus of Syria, Ptolomy II of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia and Alexander of Epirus. According to Professor Mahaffy, at any rate, Buddhist monks preached in Palestine and Syria a couple of centuries before Christ. He is said to have sent 84,000 missionaries to different parts of India

and dominions beyond. Among them, his brother and sister (or son and daughter) he sent to Ceylon. Having done the best he could to further Buddhism and ruling the vast empire in the most humane spirit possible, he resigned the responsibilities of this fleshly existence to weakling successors, as the Fates would have it.

Asoka was followed by four successors and the dynasty came to an end by the accession to the Empire of the Senapathi Pushyamitra, the founder of the so-called Sunga dynasty. He is believed to have assassinated the last Maurya Brihadratha on the occasion of a review of the army. There appears to have been a loyalist in the person of the minister, the *Maurya Sachiva* * of the Malavikagnimitra, which after all is better authority for the period, as Kalidasa claims to base his facts upon others' accounts which might have been contemporary, as we have reason to infer. This usurpation was not unchallenged from outside. Pushyamitra could hardly have secured his position when he was threatened by two great enemies from without—Menander (Milinda of Buddhist tradition) from across the North-Western frontier and Karavella, the Kalingaraja from the south. Having laid waste the country as far east as even Saketa (possibly that in Oudh) and besieging Madhyamika (near Chitor in Rajaputana) Menander retired and no other European attempted the conquest of India from the land side ever since; nor any at all up to the days of Vasco-de-Gama. It is a part of this army, according to Vincent Smith, that was defeated by Prince Vasumitra on the banks of the Sindhu between Rajaputana and Central India and not the Indus. This appears a needless limitation of authority for one who thought of celebrating a *Rajasuya* and who had his son Agnimitra Viceroy of Malwa.

* This according to the Drama was a brother-in-law of the King at Vidarbha who demands his release of Agnimitra. The commentary makes Maurya Sachiva almost a proper name.

Pushyamitra got the upper hand of even the other enemy of Kalinga, which appears to have kept at peace with the Empire since the conquest of Asoka.

Pushyamitra's was the age of the Grammarian Patanjali and from his time there was revival of Brahmanism. There appears to be no foundation in fact for regarding him as a persecutor. Agnimitra, while yet his father's Viceroy, had conquered Vidharba, the modern Central Provinces and placed it under two kings of the same family subsidiary to himself.

Brilliant as Pushyamitra's achievements have been, they did not avail much to keep his dynasty long in power. The Punjab and the North-West frontier were in a state of flux and there began movements among the great Mongol tribes on the Chinese frontier. This pulsating movement began to be felt on the banks of the Indus. A domestic revolution subverted the dynasty of the Sungas after three generations and there was a line of rulers of the Kanvayana family for less than half a century. This in turn was overthrown by the Andhras, a purely South Indian dynasty of the Dravidians, whose territory occupied the region between Kalingam and the Krishna.

The overthrow of the Brahman Kanvas and the accession of the Andhras in 27 B. C. mark an epoch in Indian History. It opens to our view India south of the Vindhya which hitherto remained *terra incognita*. We shall have to treat of Indian History hereafter in three compartments viz., that of Hindustan up to the Vindhya, that of the Dekhan between the Vindhya and the Krishna, and that of India south of the river Krishna.

The age of the Sungas and the Kanvas was to Hindustan the age of Sanskrit revival and there appears to be some historical foundation for the tradition which places a Vikramaditya at the latter end of this age. It was at the same

time an age of domestic revolution. The ebb in the fortunes of the Kingdom of Asia under the descendants of Seleucus was felt in Central Asia and it was communicated thence to India. After the successful invasion of the East, Antiochus the Great, fared badly in the contest he had brought on himself from the Romans. Under his immediate successors, two Kingdoms came into existence, the Parthian under Arsakas and Bactria under its own Greek Viceroy. This Viceroy whose independence had been recognised tried to extend his territory eastwards and was himself overthrown by a usurper. This latter carried arms up to and perhaps even beyond the Indus and had been assassinated by his son. It was his successor Menander who invaded Pushyamitra's dominions and had to draw back because of the movements among the Sakas who themselves moved because of the Yu-echi beyond ousting them. It is these Sakas that marched into India and founded Kingdoms in the Punjab and the lower Indus, perhaps under the Parthian suzerainty of Mithridates I. These Sakas appear to have been finally beaten back and gave their name to Sakastan (Seistan.) In this enterprise perhaps a ruler of Malva distinguished himself who was the patron of Kalidasa and has been handed down to us by a grateful people as the saviour of India. There still were Sakas or Kshetrapas on the right bank of the Indus and of these we shall have to speak in the section on the Dekhan.

The Sakas of the Punjab were overthrown by a branch of Yu-echi about 50 A.D., and with the first rulers of this dynasty this part of India came in touch with Rome on the one side and China on the other.

Third in succession in this dynasty of Gandhara is Kanishka, famous in Buddhist history and one of the most powerful of Indian Emperors. Doctors disagree regarding the actual date of accession of Kanishka and his successors, but all agree, as to his greatness. He was more successful

in an invasion of the neighbouring parts of Chinese territory where his predecessor failed and was able to hold his own against the Parthians. His fame, rests, however, upon his acceptance of Buddhism and his successful attempts to make the "middle country" of China accept it. After a successful reign when his frontiers extended to Patalipura on the one side and touched the Parthian and Chinese Empires in the West and North and the Sea in the South, Kanishka died or was assassinated by a discontented army about the middle of the second century A.D. Two or three of his successors continued to rule from Peshawar this Empire which up to the very last, appears to have included the country from Muttra on the East to Cabul in the West. When the last of them Vasudeva passed away the Empire broke up about the first quarter of the third century.

To turn now to the Dekhan. Among the powers mentioned as under the empire of Asoka we find the Andhras who appear to have been then along the east coast. They develop gradually expanding westwards so as to occupy all the Dekhan from sea to sea. In the decadence that followed the death of Asoka, the Andhras appeared to have had their own share and these may possibly have helped Karavella of Kalinga when he invaded Maghada in the middle of the second century B.C. When the Kanvas were overthrown the Andhras extend their power northwards and occupy Maghadha having had their flank protected by the hills and rivers, from the Yavana invasions of Menander. During all the transactions described in the last section, the Andhra power in the interior was unaffected; and these had to be active only on the West where the Kshetrapas or the Saka Satraps of the Parthians were pushing their arms southwards. The Andhras have had to counteract this and do so by making Paitan an alternative capital to Dhanakataka in the East.

The later rulers among these shewed themselves quite successful against these Sakas particularly Vilivayakura II* (the Baleokuros of the Greeks). He is able to beat off the Kshetrapas from the South where their power went as far down as the Malaya country along the coast. His son followed in the wake of his father and after two more generations the dynasty came to an end about the same time the Kushana rule died out in the north.

On the South-Eastern side of the Andhras we see a new power arising viz., that of the Pallavas, regarded the same as Pahlava or Parthiva (Parthian). The earliest records of these come from places far north of Kanchi which, later on, became the capital of the Pallavas. The Pallavas have not yet come up to be a political factor.

South of this region we find a number of petty states and farther south still the three kingdoms of Chola, Pandya and Kerala and beyond Ceylon. These powers appear to have actively helped the Andhras, as each of these states (at least certain rulers among them,) claim having defeated "the Aryan forces". A somewhat later Tamilian ruler of Kerala with his capital at modern Kranganore claims to have beaten some princes "on the banks of the Ganges." These three states had their own local rivalries and as history opens upon this part of the country, the Cholas are in the ascendant. This ascendancy passes to the Chera or Kerala ruler when we reach the end of this period i.e., about the end of second century A.D. This period, all known circumstances point to, as the era of great and Tamil literary activity in the development of the local prakrits—and family among the former Paisachi. It is in this language and under the Andhras that Gunâdya composed his Brihat Kathâ.

* (3) Called Gotamiputra Satakarni by some historians.

It is an unfortunate coincidence that the century following is a century of blank in Indian History in all the three regions into which we have divided the country. When again the mist lifts, the Pallavas are dominant in the South; the Chalukyas occupy the Dekhan and the Guptas are prominent in the North. Thus there appear to have been a great *interregnum* in India, which may be accounted for somewhat as follows. The great Arsakian dynasty of Parthia was making way before the Sassanian Persians. The rise of this new power in Persia put pressure upon the Sakas of Seistan, who perhaps moved eastwards to join their cousins along the lower Indus and Guzerat. This must have thrown the whole western frontier in confusion. From this salient angle the Sakas, among whom there might have been some Parthians, pushed themselves eastward into Malva and southward into the Dekhan. This puts an end to the Dekhan power. A similar incursion into the Punjab would overthrow the Kushana dynasty there. When we come upon the Guptas, we find them just at the place where, under the circumstances, we ought to expect resistance to the advance of this aggressive power. The next Dekhan Power is the Chalukya, in the south of the Bombay Presidency, about Bijapur. It is also perhaps out of this confusion there arises the "foreign Pallava" State in the Nellore District.

This aggression provokes resistance and the organiser of the general resistance rises up, out of the struggle. With respect to South India, the Chera ascendancy is questioned by the united Chola and Pandya and these wear out each other. This leads to the break-up of one empire into a number of petty principalities, which fall an easy prey to the rising Pallavas.

When the light of day breaks in upon the theatre of our history at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., there is a wedge of the

Sakas driven in between the Dekhan and Hindustan. These Sakas known in this region the Kshetrapas had already overthrown the Andhras of the Dekhan and were in secure occupation of the land of Vikramaditya.—Malva with its capital Ujjain. These have been continually here from the beginning of the Christian era and getting eventually the better of the Andhras, they had become a great Power under the greatest of their rulers Rudradaman. One of the records bearing upon the history of this ruler's reign throws a curious light upon the times. Armies passed and re-passed and dynasties rose and fell but the peaceful pursuits of the agriculturist and the artisan went on undisturbed. The grant has reference to the repairing of a tank by name Sudarsana constructed in the reign of Asoka but damaged owing to a breach. This was repaired under Rudradaman and adequate provision made for its up-keep in the manner usual in the country, foreigner as he was in that region. But for this sensible continuity of administrative policy, the evil consequences of the rapid succession of invasions would have been immensely more detrimental to the country.

It was in the region set over against Malva that the next great Indian Power comes into being. A certain officer possibly of the Andhras by name, or title, Gupta, had a petty province in and about Kosambi south-west of Allahabad. His son passed away unnoticed also. It was the grandson Chandragupta who became the founder of a dynasty whose period of rule was certainly a golden age in Indian history. Chandragupta married a Licchavi Princess of Vaisali, which gave him such influence and what is more, such powerful aid, that he was able easily to make himself the ruler of what was ancient Magadha. He not only beat back the advancing tide of Kshetrapa aggression in Central India, but also uprooted the power of these Sakas rulers. Having made himself so far

successful, he founded an era in 319 A.D. known as the Gupta era. Chandragupta's long reign was devoted to securing what under the Mauryas was Maghadha. Having been happily successful in this, he had also the discernment to join with him in this work of empire-building his eldest son Samudragupta, the Napoleon of India.

Samudragupta well deserves the comparison. He was a great conqueror not only but also a capable administrator; and both the father and son were skilled in the fine arts. Samudragupta is described as a *rupakrit* which scholars interpret as a dramatist. The word ordinarily means a sculptor. He seems to have early conceived the idea of uniting the whole of India into one Empire and this idea he began to put into practice with all the uncompromising zeal begotten of confidence in his capacity. Leaving in the extreme East Kamarupa (Assam), Davaka (middle) and Samatata (the Delta) independent allies upon his eastern frontier, he conquered the whole of Hindustan excepting the Punjab, his father Chandragupta carried his conquests up to the Arabian Sea. This done he started on a career of conquest to the South. Starting from Patua, he passed rapidly through the Mahanadi valley down the east coast coming up to Kanchi in the South where the Pallavas had already made themselves secure. Taking a turn to the North-West, he passed through the Maharashtra country and Khandesh and entered his territory again. From the eleven Kingdoms he passed through, he exacted allegiance but otherwise left them autonomous. He then entered into satisfactory political engagements with the autonomous tribes of the Punjab, Rajputana and Malva; and with Nepal and the tribes along its borders. Not content with this, he entered into diplomatic relations with the Kushana rulers of the Ghandhara and Kabul not only, but also with the chief Kushana ruler on the Oxus. In the south he received a mission

from Meghavarna of Ceylon who requested permission to build a Buddhistic monastery at Gaya. Having achieved so much, he got his exploits set in the best Sanskrit verse and inscribed it upon an Asoka pillar now at Allahabad. What was mere vanity in Samudragupta is comfort to the historian. He was succeeded by his son Chandragupta Vikramaditya who through an equally long reign with his father and grandfather preserved the grand fabric of Empire handed down to him and made his reign so glorious that scholars now find it the most suitable to ascribe to the traditional Vikramaditya. With the Guptas, Brahmanism and Sanskrit literature take a fresh start though Buddhism was not persecuted as such.

If the ambassadors of the Ceylonese king are to be trusted Buddhism seems to have already decayed considerably. Somewhat later, however the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian visited the country and passed across the whole of Hindustan from Taxila to the mouths of the Ganges. His observations are all the more valuable, as they were those of a man who notes them only by the way. If Fa Hian is to be believed Buddhism was not in such a bad way. The whole administration was very creditable and criminal law was mild, capital punishments having been few. There appears to have been nothing harassing in the Government. People enjoyed a large measure of freedom and considerable wealth. Private benefactions were large and the whole country wore a look of great prosperity. The roads were well looked after and kept clear of marauders; and through all his long journey, Fa Hian was not subjected to any molestation whatever, Buddhist though he was. The Guptas were Vaishnavas but like Indian monarchs their benefactions were distributed alike among all religions in the country. Tolerance may be a virtue or a weakness; but the most powerful Hindu dynasty was tolerant, in the highest degree. Fa

Hsien spent a number of years in learning Sanskrit and was rewarded by gaining valuable Buddhist works in that language.

In the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya that great scourge of the world the Huns broke in upon the Gupta Empire as they did upon the Roman Empire. Skandagupta his grandson repaired the mischief done to the Empire in the reign of his father Kumaragupta I not only, but also beat back the Huns. But a later invasion of these made him fall back, as it were, and the Huns under Toramana established themselves in Malva, and the country in the North-West, having overthrown the Saka rulers of Gandhara by the way. It was as a result of this mishap to the Empire that Guzerat separated under Senapathi Bhattaraka who founded the Vallabhi dynasty which lasted on till they were overthrown by the Mohamedan. invasions about 770 A.D. Although divided, the ruler of Malva Yasodharman and the Emperor Baladitya, now confined to Magadha, both defeated Mihiragula, the fierdish son of Toramana. Mihiragula was taken prisoner but was restored by the magnanimity of Baladitya and lived to hand down his name to posterity, as an infamous tyrant of Kashmir, a despoiler of temples and monasteries who cultivated cruelty almost as a fine art. With the continued incursions of these Huns the Gupta Empire comes to an end. Before ringing the Gupta Empire out it is but doing justice to a great dynasty of Emperors who not only built an empire but took great pains to administer it upon the most enlightened principles, despotic as their authority was, to quote a small passage from Fa Hsien regarding free hospitals, which were due perhaps to the influence of that humane predecessor of the Guptas, Asoka. These hospitals were endowed by benevolent and educated citizens. "Hither come all poor or helpless patients suffering from all kinds of infirmities. They are

well taken care of and a doctor attends them food and medicine being supplied according to their wants. Thus they are made quite comfortable and when they are well they may go away." Comment would be superfluous. The overthrow of the Guptas brings Indian History to almost the end of the sixth century A. D.

Turning to the Dekhan during the period, the disintegration that came upon it in consequence of the successful wars of the Malva Kshetrapas continued, and the whole region was broken up into a number of petty principalities. When Samudragupta undertook his great invasion of this region it was composed of eleven kingdoms, possibly more. Even then the western half remained a little more compact having been divided between Daivarashtra and Erandapalla corresponding respectively to the modern Maharashtra and Kandesh. It is from the former that the first powerful dynasty works its way up. During the period of the later Guptas when they were engaged in that death grapple with the Huns, the Chalukyas gradually occupied the territory of their northern neighbour and pushed down the Krishna to occupy the country since known as Vengi. Here they come into touch with the Pallavas with whom they have had to maintain perpetual war along the borders.

The farther south was also getting consolidated under the new rulers, the Pallavas of Kanchi. When Samudragupta came to the south Vishnugopa was the ruler of Kanchi. His successors at Kanchi gradually annexed other Pallava States in the neighbourhood, and expanded southwards, adding the smaller states between the dominions under Kanchi and the Chola and Kerala kingdoms. Along the banks of the Krishna then these rising Pallavas had to keep vigilant, as against the Chalukyas. The rise of the Pallavas marks the rise of Brahmanism in the south and these Pallavas were great temple builders and patrons

of Tamil literature, some of the earliest of the rock-cut temples dedicated to Siva and Vishnu belonging to this period.

When we emerge out of this formative period when states reform in India, the whole country falls into three well-marked divisions viz., the Empire of Hindustan under the supremacy of Thanesvara, the Dekhan under the Chalukyas; and the farther south under the Pallavas. These shall be taken in this order, as it was during this period that there were a few Chinese pilgrims, chief among whom was Hieun Tshang. Not only this; we have also more of indigenous historical material to hand; to mention only a few. Bana's Harshacharitra, inscriptions of all the three, Nandikkalambakam, the Prabandhas of the Vaishnavas, the works of the Saivite Adiyars, &c.

It would preserve chronological continuity to begin with South India first. The Pallava power from the northern frontier of this region proved a bulwark against the advancing Chalukya power. About 500 A.D. while the Gupta Emperors were engaged in fighting the Huns, the Pallavas had become the chief southern power; while the Dekhan also had been united under Kirtivarman and his brother Mangalisa. When Mahendra Pallava's death leaves the Pallava dominions to his son Narasimbavarman, one of the greatest among the dynasty, the Chalukya Power simultaneously passes to the greatest among them Pulikesin II. The accession of these princes to power took place about the same time that a certain combination of circumstances brought about the accession of Harshavardhana Siladitya of Thanesvar, later on of Kanauj. We must now turn to this ruler.

Out of the confusion caused by the incursions of Mihiragula, the Hun king of Sagala (the capital of Ancient Madra Desa), there arose, in the line of march of the enemy and in the far-famed region of battles where more than once

the fate of India was to be decided, a Chieftain by name Prabhakaravardhana, who was connected by marriage with the imperial Guptas. Prabhakara beat back the Huns through his two valiant sons the elder Rajyavardhana and the younger, a lad of fifteen, Harshavardhana. The latter commanding the rear, while his brother marched ahead, was still in the region below the mountains on his way, when he heard his father had taken ill and returned. The elder soon followed having crushed the enemy and placed the frontier in a condition of safety. Prabhakara died and was succeeded by his eldest son, who heard of a misfortune that befell his only sister Rajyasri married to Grahavarman of Magadha. The latter had been killed by the ruler of Malva and Rajyasri had been thrown into prison. Rajyavardhana marched upon Malva and having defeated the king of that country, was on the march homeward when he was entrapped by Sassanka of Bengal. Rajyavardhana was assassinated by Sassanka and Rajyasri had to escape to the Vindhyan forests to save herself. Harshavardhana seems to have been unwilling to accept the responsibility of rule which he had to do all the same.

His first task was to go in search of, and find the whereabouts of, his sister which he soon did and just saved her from death. He then turned to Sassanka and reduced him to subjection. This done, he set to himself the task of rebuilding the Empire, as it was under the Guptas. Throughout a comparatively long reign he was constantly engaged in war for about thirty years and brought the whole of Hindustan under his sway, his authority having been acknowledged by the Brahminical rulers of Kamarupa (Assam) and the Saivite ruler of Bengal on the one side to the far off Vallabhi and Kashmir at the other extremity. In one direction his arms were set a limit and so his achievement fell far short of his ambition which was probably that of Samudragupta. Harsha undertook an invasion

of the Dekhan, but the Vindhyan passes were so well guarded by Pulikesin of the Dekhan that Harsha was actually defeated. Like many another great man he recognised the limitation to his own capacity and acquiesced in this defeat, as he never again made any other attempt on this side. Thus having reconstructed an Empire of Hindustan, he turned his attention to maintaining this empire.

It was during the later part of his reign that Hieun Tshang, the great master of the Law from China travelled in India. He found the administration of the Empire as satisfactory as his predecessor of a couple of centuries ago, except the land and water ways were not as secure as in the age of the Guptas. The Emperor was constantly on the move and his camp was almost a moving city. Criminal justice appears to have been prompt but somewhat severer than in the previous age. There have been a regular system of official records although none of these have ever come down to us. Harsha, a great scholar and poet himself, gave a stimulus to learning, and according to the Chinese scholar education appears to have been widespread. In his court, and under his direct patronage, many poets flourished, so much so that his name ranks among typical patrons of letters. By nature or education, he appears, to us to have been extremely tolerant.* His was an eclecticism much like that of Akbar but latterly and through the influence of Hieun Tshang, he leant more and more to the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The great Buddhist festival he celebrated at Kanouj and the toleration feast he held at Allahabad shew that he entertained very broad and enlightened views upon religion. Although he had to carry on wars incessantly for thirty years, he seems to have been led into war out of sheer necessity rather than of a taste for it. The stories regarding his acts of persecution have to be considerably discounted. When

he passed away in 648 A.D., he does not appear to have left a proper successor. A minister of his Arjuna usurped the Empire and the usurpation proved a failure through the intercession of a Chinese ambassador. Harsha sent a Brahman as ambassador to China. When this ambassador returned, China sent a return embassy under Wang-Hiuen-t'se. When this latter arrived the usurpation had taken place. The usurper ill-treated the ambassador who fled to Tibet for protection. Returning with Tibetan help, he overthrew the usurper and thus came to an end the last Hindu Empire, of Hindustan. During the centuries following 700 A.D. up to the Mahamadan conquest, there never was built up another Empire and the want of a central power accounts for the conquest of India by the Muhamadans with comparative ease.

At about the same time also came to an end the great Pallava Power in South India. Since administering the check to Harsha, Pulikesin had to grapple with the Pallava Narasimhavarman, the builder of the cave-temples at Mamallapuram, the seven pagodas. One of the Pallava generals marched up to the capital of the Chalukyas at Badami and destroyed it so completely that there was an *interregnum* of thirteen years after Pulikesin. His successors, however, often carried the war into the Pallava territory the northern frontier having been undisturbed. It was to maintain peace on this Pallava frontier that Pulikesin organised a separate Viceroyalty at Vengi under his brother who in his turn became the founder of a dynasty.

A sad calamity overtook the Chalukyas about the latter half of the Seventh century A.D. This was the overthrow of their dynasty and the usurpation of the Chalukya Empire by the Rashtrakutas, with their capital further and therefore safer, from the Pallavas. This gave the Pallavas a little respite; but after the temporary occupation of Kanchi by the Rashtrakuta Vaira-

* (4) This is the age and Benares the place where Sankaracharya is believed to have written his Bhashyam.

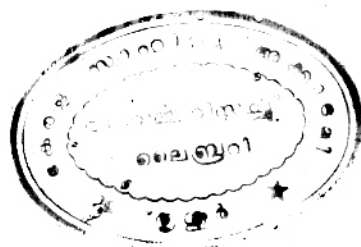
megha, the Pallava Empire breaks up into smaller states from out of which is eventually to rise the great Chola Empire.

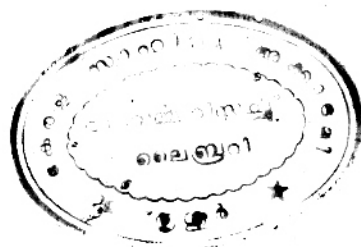
Amidst all this ceaseless flux of the political units that constituted India through all these ages that I took you through there stands out one fact, viz., that whenever great empires were in existence such as the Maurya or Gupta or even that of Harsha, India enjoyed not only internal tranquillity and the blessings of a good administration but also security on the frontiers. Whenever this imperial unity was wanting, it follows as unmistakably that the anarchical elements inside asserted themselves. This state of division invited an invader and he was readily forthcoming so that if there is one feature which can be said to be the dominant feature of the history of India during the millenium ending 700 A. D., we might state that feature to be an attempt at building a permanent Empire. In spite of all these disturbances there still has been a good measure of peace and plenty in the country and what follows as a necessary consequence thereof considerable success, in making life not only tolerable but comfortable. Our literary and artistic achievements are things we may well be proud of; and this has been due entirely to a broader outlook into the future in

our ancestors than some of us moderns can boast of.

It is only to be regretted that our ancestors did not discover a method of reconciling the opposing principles of local autonomy with imperial unity and this would account for all the ills that followed.

I might well close this paper with a word of explanation as to what my object was. It has been nothing more than to indicate, as far as I could in a lecture that Indian History, i.e., the History of Hindu India with which alone I am concerned here, has a unity of its own if only the material available be used constructively. This unity will become the clearer if we could but bring upon a single canvas all the available information to picture to us the history of the people rather than of their rulers. This latter is impossible without the former and this has alone been attempted above. It is every day becoming more and more possible thanks to the exertions of orientlists, to write such a history whoever is the happy historian fortunate enough to achieve it. My object has only been to indicate the outlines here and if I have succeeded only in stimulating others to take up the work, I shall consider myself amply rewarded for all the pains I bestowed upon this subject.





A Historical Survey up to 700 A. D.

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