

# THE VĀKĀTAKA-GUPTA AGE

(Circa 200—550 A. D.)

*Edited by*

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## FOREWORD

In the middle of the 19th Century all the parts of India were united under one sceptre, and then began a change, almost revolutionary in its character, in the evolution of India's political life and thought. At exactly the same time a revolution also began in Indian historiography. Hitherto our historians' stock-in-trade had been only pious legends, age-worn traditions, laudatory poems in hyperbole, and very late compilations of blended fact and fiction. The Hindu period of our past, covering nearly two thousand years, was dark, and the darkness was often made more misleading by the false light of Sanskrit romances. Even in the Muslim period the current histories were mostly popular abridgements and not original sources.

But a new era in the study of Indian history had dawned shortly before the Sepoy Mutiny. General Alexander Cunningham had begun to dig down to the roots of our Buddhistic, Jaina and Hindu past, and Sir Henry M. Elliot had begun the monumental translation of the History of India as told by its own historians. His great work, destined to be completed in a vastly amplified form and by another hand in eight volumes in 1877, made its first appearance in 1849 under the title of *Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Muhammadan India*. The first author to utilise the vast material, thus made available in English, was Stanley Lane-Poole, whose *Mediaeval India under Muhammadan Rule* (1903), when read with Elphinstone's chapters on the same subject, illustrates the advance in our knowledge made in less than half a century.

In the Hindu period, the immense mass of raw materials, in the form of inscriptions, coins, architectural remains and

antiquities, brought to light by our field archaeologists—both official and private, scattered all over this continent of a country, was pieced together for the first time in V.A. Smith's *Early History of India* (1904). Indian readers had, no doubt, had an earlier glimpse of this new material, though in a very compressed form, in Hara Prasad Shastri's *School History of India*. But Smith's work, occupying a much ampler canvas and full of details and exact references, can rightly claim to be called an epoch-marking book.

But our progress did not stop here. An army of Indian scholars, some trained, but most others amateurs, continued Cunningham's work in their own localities or subjected the discoveries of others to critical study, and thus built up a vast body of more exact knowledge about our past than was available to Vincent A. Smith. All this knowledge lies scattered over numberless learned journals, popular magazines, sometimes even daily papers, pamphlets and books, in many languages besides English. Our problem for several years now has been to concentrate all these scattered rays of light into one focus, to make a synthesis of all our special treatises and researches in Indian history. As Professor Patrick Geddes used to warn our scientific students, "We have plenty of spinners, who have produced fine threads. We now want a master weaver who will synthetise all these isolated facts. That the crying need of the modern world of science : weave ! weave !"

A new History of India embodying all this accumulated knowledge and abreast of the latest research must fill many volumes. Such a work, both by reason of its size and the diversity of its contents, can be produced only by a syndicate of scholars. The writing of such a co-operative History of India was first discussed by me with the late Mano Mohan Chakravarti in 1908 after the first volumes of the *Cambridge Modern History* had come out and shown us the way. The plan was discussed in great detail and even lists of chapters drawn

up on two occasions in collaboration with the late Rakhaldas Banerji in 1918 and 1920. A fourth project, confined solely to the cultural aspects of India's past on the model of the "Heritage" series, was pondered over by me with the late Rev. J. Farquhar. But all of these schemes very soon came to nothing because we felt that the time was not yet ripe and we had not enough scholars to do equal justice to every part of the subject.

At last in 1937, Dr. Rajendra Prasad publicly broached the present scheme and we two inaugurated it at a meeting held in Benares on 28th December, 1937. He was to take charge of the administrative and financial side of it, and I was to be the chief literary manager or chairman of the Editorial Board. Prompt and generous donations were received from the Indian mercantile community whose liberality to all good causes is well-known : and we actively set ourselves to planning the details, making the preliminary arrangements and corresponding with various scholars whose aid or advice we sought. Just after the actual writing had started, came the Japanese invasion in 1941, and our scholars were scattered and public libraries closed or removed elsewhere, which made us lose four years. At last in 1945, two volumes (the Fourth and the Sixth) out of a projected series of twenty (see the list at the end) were ready for the press and a third (the Twelfth, on Akbar) half completed. Now that the ground has been fully prepared, our progress both in writing and in printing will be much quicker.

It has been my dream to produce these volumes at a price (say Rs. 4 each) which would place them within reach of all our people, as the volumes would be sold separately. With the knowledge of our land's storied past daily advancing, revised editions would be frequently called for, in order that this science may not be stereotyped ; but a low price would enable most purchasers of the old edition to scrap it up and buy its

improved and corrected successor. But the economic disturbance caused by World War II has belied this hope.

This History is being written entirely by Indians. Lest this limitation of choice should cause its spirit to be suspect I invite the reader's attention to the following correspondence which makes our aim fully clear.

*From Sir Jadunath Sarkar to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, 19th November, 1937*—"National history, like every other history worthy of the name and deserving to endure, must be true as regards the facts and reasonable in the interpretation of them. It will be national not in the sense that it will try to suppress or whitewash everything in our country's past that is disgraceful, but because it will admit them and at the same time point out that there were other and nobler aspects in the stages of our nation's evolution which offset the former, that a "drain inspector's report" is not the whole truth about any nation. The first duty of our national historian will be to depict all the aspects of our nation's life in the past usually ignored by foreign writers, who merely give us an unrelieved picture of bloodshed and dynastic change. Social life and thought, art and culture, will have no less importance in the history to be written by us. In addition, we shall try to explain, with that sympathetic insight which only a native can possess,—or a rare foreigner like the gifted Sister Nivedita,—why things happened with our ancestors as they did actually happen. In this task.....the historian must be a judge. He will not suppress any defect of the national character, but add to his portraiture those higher qualities which, taken together with the former, help to constitute the entire individual."

*From Dr. Rajendra Prasad to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, 22nd November, 1937*—"I entirely agree with you that no history is worth the name which suppresses or distorts facts. A historian who purposely does so under the impression that he thereby does good to his native country really harms it in the end

Much more so in the case of a country like ours which has suffered much on account of its national defects, and which must know and understand them to be able to remedy them."

Our thanks are specially due to Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar and Dr. A. S. Altekar, who have edited this volume and written most part of it, Dr. Majumdar contributing eight chapters and Dr. Altekar ten out of a total of 23. We have been fortunate enough to enlist the co-operation of a number of other scholars, each eminent in his special subject : Rao Bahadur K. N. Dikshit has written on Archaeological Remains, Prof. K. A. Nilkant Sastri on South India, Dr. Dines Chandra Sircar on the Eastern Deccan, Dr. P. C. Bagchi on Chinese Contact, Dr. Paranavitana on Ceylon, Dr. C. Sivarama-murti on South Indian Art, and Dr. V. S. Agrawala on Gupta Art. We offer our sincere thanks to all of them and also to the Director-General of Archaeology, Government of India, the authorities of the Nizam's Archaeological Department and the Mathura Museum for permission to print illustrations of which they hold the copyright.

We also take this opportunity to thank Mr. S. K. Sarasvati, M.A., Lecturer, Calcutta University, who has helped the editors in seeing the book through the press and has rendered very useful service in many ways. Our thanks are also due to the Sri Gouranga Press for having undertaken the printing of this book in a time of exceptional difficulty and executed it with commendable promptitude.

JADUNATH SARKAR,

General Editor.

General scheme of

## A NEW HISTORY OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

IN TWENTY VOLUMES

### VOLUME

- I. The Land, the People and pre-History.
- II. Aryan Colonisation and the Vedic Age.
- III. The Earliest States,—Jainism, Buddhism.
- IV. Nanda and Maurya Empires. 366-210 B.C.
- V. Śuṅgas, Sātavāhaṇas and Śakas. 210 B.C.-c.200 A.D.
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- XIII. Seventeenth century in the North. 1605-1707. (Includes Sikh Gurus).
- XIV. Deccan Sultanates (1526-1687) and Maratha Royal House (1624-1707).
- Vol. XV Later Mughals and early Peshwas. 1707-1761. (Includes Anglo-French rivalry for empire of India).
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- XIX. Modern India, Political History. 1858-1940.
- XX. Modern India, Cultural and Economic. 1800-1940.

## EDITORIAL PREFACE

A FEW words are necessary to explain the scope and nature of the history narrated in the following pages. As planned by the General Editorial Board, this volume covers the period 200 to 550 A.D. and is called the Gupta-Vākāṭaka age. The title of the volume was selected for the sake of convenience only. It is not claimed that the political or cultural achievements of the Vākāṭakas were comparable to those of the Guptas and sufficiently important to justify their association with the name of the age. Although this volume is intended to cover the period from 200 to 550 A.D., it has not always been possible to conform to these chronological limits. The history of the Western Kshatrapas commences with 160 A.D., as the death of Rudradāman I is a convenient starting point. The history of Ceylon begins with 66 A.D., as the dynasty that was founded at that time continued to rule practically to the end of our period. The history of the Maghas of Kauśāmbī is taken back to c. 150 A.D. when their house started its career, as it was found more convenient to deal with the whole history of the dynasty in one place. The careers of the Vishṇu-kuṇḍins and the Maitrakas began at about 500 A.D., and several independent kingdoms, notably those of Nepal and Assam, arose about the same time. Their early history is not discussed in this volume but reserved for full treatment in the next one dealing with the period when they played an effective part in Indian history. In the case of the Maukharis and Later Guptas, however, their early history to the end of our period is dealt with, as it was necessary to discuss it in connection with the decline of the Gupta empire. It has been recently suggested (*IHQ*. XXI, 19) that the kings of Assam were mainly instrumental in bringing about the downfall of the

Guptas, but hardly any convincing evidence has been adduced to support so novel a hypothesis.

The reader of the modern or medieval history, whether of India or Europe, will no doubt find the narrative of the political history in this volume rather meagre and sketchy. But in the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to give a fuller account. In spite of the discovery of a large number of coins, inscriptions and monuments, it has to be confessed that there are some dynasties in our period where even the names of most of its rulers are unknown to us. Such, for instance, is the case with the Nāgas of Mathura and the Ābhīras of northern Mahārāshtra. Sometimes we know the names of the kings of a dynasty, but are ignorant of their dates and inter-relations, as for example, the Later Kushāṇas and the early Pallavas. Sometimes the evidence is so indecisive that the historian cannot state with certainty whether a particular event did or did not occur, or whether a certain personage, *e.g.*, king Rāma-gupta, is or is not a historical figure. Sometimes the evidence is so scanty and dubious that it lends itself of diverse interpretations and the historian finds it difficult to choose between two or more possible alternatives. Such, for instance, is the case with the history of the successors of Skanda-gupta. If, therefore, the picture appears at places to be hazy, the account scanty and the discussions inconclusive, the fault lies primarily with the original sources and not the writers who have attempted to reconstruct the history. As a matter of fact, the first part of the period dealt with in this volume, *viz.*, 200 to 300 A.D., is usually known to be the 'Dark Period' of ancient Indian history. An effort has, however, been made to elucidate it as best as possible.

On account of the paucity of evidence some of the dynasties, which ruled during our period, have only been incidentally referred to, but not treated in detail. As notable examples may be mentioned the Ābhīras and the Traikūṭakas. We possess

some coins and a few inscriptions of the Traikūṭakas, but beyond the names of two or three kings we know hardly anything about them. The Ābhīras are known from a single inscription and a number of incidental notices. But though the foundation of the so-called Kalachuri era, commencing in 248-9 A.D., has been ascribed to them, and an attempt has been recently made (*ABORI. XXV, 161*) to show that they established an empire, our knowledge of them is still very meagre. The little that is definitely known about them will be found in the chapters dealing with the history of the Western Kshatrapas and the Vākāṭakas, with whom they had come into close contact (pp. 48, 121). This book, it should be remembered, is intended to be a general history, and not an encyclopaedic account of each and every dynasty that ruled in our period. This will also explain the absence of reference to some of the unimportant feudatories or obscure chieftains that belonged to our age.

In a co-operative work of this kind, based upon data so vague and uncertain, it is almost inevitable that different writers, including the two editors, will express or at least entertain different opinions. In spite of long discussions between the two editors it was not possible to eliminate these differences altogether. Among important points on which they could not agree may be mentioned 'the extent of the Vākāṭaka empire (pp. 98 ff.) and the view that Pravara-sena II of the main dynasty was the Kuntaleśa of the Kālidāsa tradition, (p. 110 fn. 1), the struggle for independence waged by the Yaudheyas and others against the Kushāṇas (pp. 28 ff), and the relation between Piro and Rāma-gupta and specially the inference drawn from the coins of Piro about his character (pp. 22-23), Nor did complete agreement become possible with reference to the views expressed about the abdication of Chandra-gupta I (pp. 137-8). the precise western boundary of the empire of Samudra-gupta (p. 144),

the assumption by him of the title *Vikrama* towards the end of his reign (p. 155), and the nationality of Toramāṇa (p. 198).

A careful reader would come across other instances of this kind in the body of this work, clearly showing that where difference really exists, no attempt has been made, by dogmatic assertions, to accept one view as authoritative and final and reject the others.

We are fully conscious of the defects and imperfections of this volume. Most of its chapters were written during the unusual circumstances created by the Second World War, when some of our contributors were denied the facilities of good reference libraries, as many of them had removed important books for safety. The proofs also could not be sent to some of our contributors owing to want of time. The fact that this, the sixth volume of the series, had to be published before its predecessors has also created some peculiar difficulties particularly with reference to controversial points of the earlier periods, which have their bearing on our age as well. We could not also know how the earlier history of the various cultural movements treated in this volume would be dealt with by other writers in the preceding volumes. We have, however, tried our best to give as complete and comprehensive a picture of the political and cultural history of the age as was possible in a volume of 500 pages. The political history with its wars and conquests is not allowed to dominate the scene ; cultural history, describing the religion and philosophy, the social and economic condition, the literature and sciences, and the art and architecture of the age occupies almost equal space with the political history. Nor have we looked at the history of our country from the view-point of the isolationist. India's commercial, cultural and religious contacts with and influence upon its neighbours, both in the east and the west, have been adequately described.

We wish to express our thanks to our contributors for their promptness in sending their promised chapters. We are indebted to Prof. K.A. Nilkanta Sastri, M.A., for supplying us some data from the Tamil literature, which have been utilised in the chapters dealing with the cultural history of the age. Mr. S. K. Sarasvati, M.A., has been of immense help in seeing the volume through the press and we are thankful to him for his care and assiduousness. And finally we have great pleasure in expressing our indebtedness to Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar for his valuable advice and suggestions.

R. C. MAJUMDAR,  
A. S. ALTEKAR.









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(Courtesy, Department of Archaeology  
Hyderabad)

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ABORI*.—Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.  
*Aham*.—Ahanānurru.  
*Aiyangar Comm. Vol.*—S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar Volume.  
*AHD*.—Ancient History of the Deccan by G. Jouveau Dubreuil. Pondicherry, 1920.  
*AIG*.—Age of the Imperial Guptas by R. D. Banerji. Benares, 1933.  
*AIC*.—Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon by E. Muller. London, 1883.  
*ASC*.—Archaeological Survey of India, Reports of Sir Alexander Cunningham.  
*ASI. (ASR)*.—Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports.  
*ASR. WC*.—Archaeological Survey of India, Western Circle, Annual Reports.  
*ASWI. IV*.—Reports on the Buddhist Cave Temples and their Inscriptions by J. Burgess (Archaeological Survey of Western India, Vol. IV). London, 1883.  
*Beal—Records*.—Si-yu-ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsang by Samuel Beal. London, 1906.  
*BEFEO*.—Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. Hanoi.  
*Bhandarkar Comm. Vol.*—Commemorative Essays presented to Sir R. G. Bhandarkar. Poona, 1917.  
*Bhandarkar—List*.—List of Inscriptions of Northern India (Appendix to *EI*).  
*CAI*.—Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India (in the British Museum) by John Allan. London, 1936.  
*CGD*.—Catalogue of Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śeśāṅka, King of Gauḍa (in the British Museum) by John Allan. London, 1914.  
*CII*.—Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Vol. III. (Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors by J. F. Fleet). Calcutta, 1888.  
*CJS*.—Ceylon Journal of Science, Sec. G. Colombo.  
*DKA*.—Dynasties of the Kali by F. E. Pargiter. London, 1913.  
*DL*.—Descriptive Lists of Inscriptions in the Central Provinces and Berar by Rai Bahadur Hiralal. Nagpur, 1916.  
*DUS*.—Dacca University Studies. Dacca.  
*EC*.—Epigraphia Carnatica.  
*EDA*.—History of the Early Dynasties of Andhradeśa by B. V. Krishnarao. Madras, 1942.  
*EHAC*.—Early History of the Andhra Country by K. Gopalachari. Madras, 1941.  
*EHI*.—Early History of India by V. A. Smith (4th ed.). Oxford, 1924.  
*EI*.—Epigraphia Indica.  
*EZ*.—Epigraphia Zeylanica. Colombo.



## INTRODUCTION

The Vākāṭaka-Gupta age (c. 200 A.D. to c. 550 A.D.), which is covered by the present volume of the *New History of the Indian People*, is undoubtedly a very important epoch in Indian history. A new political consciousness was created in the country and national solidarity was restored after the lapse of nearly four centuries of political disintegration and foreign domination. At the commencement of our period (c. 200 A.D.) the Kushāṇas and the Western Kshatrapas were the leading political powers, more powerful than any other state in the country. It is true that they had become completely Hinduised at this time and were as zealous champions and admirers of Hindu religion and Sanskrit literature as any other indigenous dynasty. But probably it was still felt that they were ethnically different; at any rate the local states and powers whom they had subdued a century earlier were not prepared to reconcile themselves with their domination. As the third century advanced the Kushāṇas were gradually ousted from the U.P. and the eastern Punjab where the Maghas, the Nāgas, the Yaudheyas and the Kuṇindas re-established their own independence. The rise of the Sassanians in Iran further weakened the Kushāṇa power, till eventually it sank into insignificance towards the end of the 3rd century A.D.

The Śaka power also began to decline in western India. At the death of Rudra-dāman I in c. 170 A.D., the Sakas were the masters of northern Mahārāshṭra, Kathiawar, Gujarat, Malwa, Sindh and greater part of Rajputana. Very soon, however, the Sātavāhanas re-asserted themselves and reconquered Northern Mahārāshṭra during the reign of Gautamīputra Yajñaśrī Sātakarṇi. Rajputana revolted under the leadership of the Mālavas and re-asserted its independence in c. 225 A.D. The rise of the Vākāṭakas under the emperor Pravara-sena I

(c. 275-330 A.D.) led to the further decline of the Śakas. Their rulers are seen reduced to the feudatory status during the first half of the 4th century, and though there was a temporary revival under Rudra-sena III, the family was eventually wiped out by the Guptas towards the close of the 4th century A.D.

The third century had succeeded in practically putting an end to foreign domination. Early in the fourth century A.D. the Guptas rose to power (c. 320 A.D.). Their great achievement was to secure as large a political unity and solidarity for the country as was practicable in those days. The Yaudheyas and the Nāgas, the Kuṇindas and the Mālavas had no doubt re-established their independence, but their political horizon did not extend beyond their own homelands. They did not aim at establishing a strong state that might become a bulwark against foreign aggression and secure peace and prosperity for the country as a whole. The great Gupta emperors definitely aimed at founding a powerful unitary state, which could achieve these goals. Traditional political philosophy no doubt recommended that a conqueror should permit the vanquished kings to rule as feudatories; but like Ajātaśatru and Chandragupta Maurya, the Gupta emperors showed scant respect to it and boldly proceeded to annex the territories of a number of kings that were then ruling in Bihar, Bengal, the United Provinces and Central India. In the days of Samudra-gupta, Magadha once more became the leading power of India after a lapse of 500 years. He, however, did not follow the annexation policy throughout; he permitted the Yaudheyas, the Arjunāyanas, the Madras, the Mālavas and a few others to rule as his feudatories and restored the kingdoms of the conquered kings in Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Andhra-deśa. Probably he realised that the means of communication being what they were, it would be impracticable for a power in Magadha to rule effectively over these distant provinces, and the very aim of a strong central power would be defeated if the impossible was sought to be achieved.

Chandra-gupta II, the son of Samudra-gupta, attempted to bring his father's ideal to greater fruition. His conquest of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar resulted in a considerable expansion of the Gupta empire. And if we assume, as is very probable, that king Chandra of Meharauli inscription is none other than Chandra-gupta II, it would follow that he succeeded in extending his sphere of influence over the Punjab as well. When his son-in-law, the Vākāṭaka king Pravara-sena II, died a premature death, the administration of the Deccan also came and remained under his guidance and supervision for about twenty-five years during the regency of his daughter Prabhāvatī guptā. For a time at any rate the extensive territories between the Godāvarī and the Śūtlej were welded together under his sceptre, and most of the neighbouring states were willing to recognise his leadership.

The Guptas were thus practically an all-India power towards the end of the reign of Chandra-gupta II. The unity, however, did not last long. It was dependent to a great extent upon the ability of the reigning emperor. Neither Kumāra-gupta I nor Skanda-gupta was as able as Chandra-gupta II or Samudra-gupta. They also suffered from a political blunder that had been already committed by their great predecessor Chandra-gupta II. He did not realise the vital necessity of keeping an effective control over the Punjab and the Khyber pass, if the political integrity of the rest of India was to be maintained. The Guptas showed in this respect less political insight than the Mauryas, who did not relax their efforts till they had secured an effective control over the Khyber and Bolan passes. Had the Guptas followed their example, country might not have suffered as much as it did from the Hūṇa invasions during the 5th and 6th centuries. Had they effectively garrisoned the Khyber pass, the critical battles with the Hūṇas would have been fought beyond the Indus and not in Malwa and Central India.

The overlordship of the Guptas in the political field did not

last for more than a century (c. 360 to 460 A.D.). The later Gupta emperors were not so able as the earlier ones; local governors began to develop into semi-independent feudatories, and the great strength acquired by the alliance with the Vākātakas disappeared when that Deccan power began to decline towards the middle of the 5th century. In the first half of the 6th century, it was clearly realised that the days of the Guptas and the Vākātakas were over and there was a great scramble for the imperial position between the Later Guptas, the Maukharis, the Hūṇas, and the Aulikaras in northern India, and the Naḷas, the Kadambas and the Kalachuris in the Deccan. The history of India once more assumed the spectacle of interminable wars between rival powers which decimated national strength without benefitting any party. The time-honoured political philosophy, which maintained that local powers should not be sacrificed for establishing a strong central state, was mainly responsible for this state of affairs. The situation was worsened by the influx of the Hūṇas, whose invasions were facilitated by the failure of the Guptas to secure or keep control over the Khyber pass and the Punjab.

In the course of Indian history, north Indian powers are often seen to be trying to dominate over south India. During our period, the Guptas made one such attempt, but it was successful only for a short time. In a later period a Deccan power—the Rāshtrakūtas—attempted to secure political domination in northern India; during our period, no such attempt was made by any Deccan or South Indian power.

The absence of an enduring political unity in the country was more than counterbalanced by an all-pervasive cultural uniformity that prevailed throughout the land. The administrative machinery was similar all over the country. The powers of the king, the items of taxation and the extent of local self-government did not show much variation, whether we consider the Gupta or the Vākātika or the Pallava administration. The

same three religions,—Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism—met a foreign observer, whether he was travelling in Bengal or in Mahārāshtra. New religious ideas and philosophical views were travelling from one end of the country to the other with lightning rapidity. There is no doubt that the missionary and religious activities of monks and preachers contributed a good deal towards the fostering of the cultural unity. A Vasubandhu from Peshawar would go to Ayodhyā to preach his Mahāyāna philosophy, a Dharmapāla from Kāñchī would settle down in Nālandā to preside over and guide its educational activities. Ceylonese monks were moving about in India preaching the gospel of the master in the land of his birth, and Indian monks like Buddhaghosha and Buddhadeva were settling down in Ceylon to start a new era in its literary and religious history. The effect of the new ideas and movements in Hinduism could also be seen all over the country. During the 3rd century A.D. the enthusiasm for Vedic sacrifices was as marked in Rajputana as it was in the Tamil country. A little later the *Bhakti* movement made as pronounced a headway in the south as in the north. It is needless to add that the family structure, the caste system and religious rituals were almost the same all over the country and further helped its cultural unification.

But perhaps the greatest force in this direction was the existence of a common *lingua franca* for cultural purposes. Till the 3rd century Prākṛits which still showed only slight variations served this purpose, but their place was soon taken more effectively by Sanskrit, which became the official language of administration, and the favourite medium of expression for poets, philosophers and scientists. It is interesting to note that even the Buddhists and the Jains gave up their predilection for Pāli and Prākṛits and began to write in chaste and classical Sanskrit during our period. Nay, Sanskrit became the *lingua franca* between India and her cultural colonies in Insul-

India. When it became the sacred language of the Buddhist also, it began to be studied by the Chinese as well.

The cultural unity that was thus secured by the popularisation of Sanskrit was more deep-rooted than the one that is secured today by English, the present official language. English is not understood by the masses. Such was not the case with Sanskrit ; for it could be followed by ordinary people, as the Prakṛit dialects they spoke were still fairly akin to Sanskrit during our period. This cultural unity secured by a common *lingua franca* did not, however, last much longer than our age ; for from about the 6th century Dravidian languages gradually began to displace Sanskrit in South Indian administrative documents. In Northern India the spoken dialects—Prākṛits and Apabhraṁśas—began to diverge more and more from the parent language, Sanskrit, and the latter ceased to be understood by those who spoke the former from c. 800 A.D. onwards.

The Vākāṭaka-Gupta age will be ever remembered by a grateful posterity for its successful efforts to spread Indian religion and culture in eastern Asia. Hindu colonising activity was, no doubt, started long before our period, but it is after the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. that we are able to trace its definite course and achievements. Without getting any help from any state in the mother country, private merchants, captains and missionaries managed to spread Hindu religion and culture and establish Hindu institution in Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, Cochin, China, Annam and Borneo. In China the Buddhist missionaries made a strenuous effort to spread their religion and translated a number of important works in the language of that country. If there exists an appreciable cultural unity today between India on the one side and China on the other, if valuable monuments which are silent witnesses to the glory of Indian culture are seen scattered all over Indo-China, Java, Sumatra and Borneo, the credit must be given to the great impulse given by the Gupta age to the spread of Indian culture

outside India. It must be added here that the contribution of South India in this respect was as great as that of Northern India. It is interesting to note that the Brāhmaṇas of the age had no objection to the sea voyage ; we find them going to and settling in distant islands like Java, Sumatra and Borneo and also marrying local women. Some of them are seen performing Vedic sacrifices in Borneo and others maintaining Hindu temples in western Asia down to the beginning of the 4th century A.D.

A comprehensive intellectual renaissance was another important feature of our age. It helped the rise of organised educational institutions and the endowment of *Agrahāra* villages, which gave a great impetus to the cause of higher education. New Indian Universities were beginning to acquire international status and reputation. The literary products of the age were numerous and varied, and some of the great masterpieces of Sanskrit literature like the *Śakuntalā*, the *Raghuvaṁśa* and the *Mṛicchhakaṭika* were composed in our period. The Purāṇas were remodelled and a number of important Smṛitis were composed. Philosophy was mostly critical in our period, but it was remarkably creative as well in the case of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism. The most original, the most daring and the most far-reaching contributions of this school to the progress of Indian philosophy were made by its thinkers who flourished in our period.

But it was not only in the realm of literature, religion and philosophy that the intellectual renaissance manifested itself. It was equally active in the realm of science. The epoch-making discovery of the decimal system of notation with the place value of zero, which was to simplify the arithmetical processes all over the world, was made by the Hindus during our age. They had a lead over their contemporaries in the fields of algebra and arithmetic. Their progress in astronomy was also remarkable. The discovery that the earth rotates round its axis

was made by Āryabhaṭa in the 5th century. The length of his solar year is nearer its true duration than that postulated by Ptolemy. A comparison of the astronomical constants of Hipparchus and Ptolemy on the one side and those of the Hindu astronomers like Āryabhaṭa on the other shows that Hindu results were not only independent, but also usually more accurate. The progress in physics, chemistry and metallurgy was also remarkable. The famous Iron Pillar by the side of the Qutb Minar near Delhi is an eloquent testimony to the striking metallurgical skill of the Gupta age.

If Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II were typical representatives of the age—as seems very probable—it follows that intellectual vigour usually went hand in hand with physical prowess, and martial spirit was often harmonised with literary and artistic temperament, during our period. Its leaders could thus take a comprehensive view of culture in its widest sense and promote its all-round progress.

One important characteristic of the Hindu scholarship of our age was its complete freedom from self-complacency and narrowness of outlook. Hindu scholars were keen to ascertain and study the advances made by the *savants* of other countries. Greeks were no doubt regarded as Mlechchhas but were nevertheless respected as highly as the ancient sages for their proficiency in astronomy. Hindu scholars had realised that there was nothing wrong in studying the contributions made by other countries and utilising them, if necessary, for further advancement of knowledge and science.

The intellectual urge of the age naturally resulted in strengthening the rational attitude in society. Leaders of religious thought were not content merely to appeal to ancient texts, but they sought to evolve logical systems based upon rational grounds. The six systems of Hindu philosophy assumed their classical form in our age. Every one of them was constantly on the alert and anxious to examine the new

theories that were being advocated in contemporary times, and to refute them, if necessary. Conflict of theories and ideas that we see in our age is indeed interesting and exhilarating. The followers of the different religions, however, lived in harmony and there was complete toleration. Hindu kings endowed Buddhist monasteries. Buddhist kings performed Hindu rituals. In the same family some members followed the Buddhist, and some the Vedic religion.

Hinduism still believed that its scheme of religion and philosophy was intended for the whole humanity, and successfully tried to spread it in Java, Sumatra and adjacent islands. In the mother country itself foreign tribes still continued to be absorbed in the Hindu fold. The Scythian kings were so completely Hinduised during our period that their princesses began to be married into orthodox families. The Hūṇas became staunch and zealous Śivaites within two generations of their settlement in India.

*Dhārma* (piety), *Artha* (economic prosperity), *Kāma* (pursuit of normal pleasures) and *Moksha* (spiritual salvation) are the four aims of life (*purushārthas*) recognised by Hinduism, and every individual is expected to pursue them in the different stages of his life. In the Gupta period, an even balance was kept among them. *Dharma* did not, as happened in a later age, mean an unending series of rituals and *vratas* to be performed all the year round. Society sought to realise the goals of *Artha* and *Kāma* as zealously as those of *Dharma* and *Moksha*. Hence our age made as remarkable a progress in philosophy as it did in the fine and useful arts. The best sculptures and the best paintings of ancient India undoubtedly belong to the Gupta age. The artists succeeded in perfecting their technique and evolving a technical language quite adequate to express abstruse conceptions and spiritual idealism. Here, again, there was a perfect balance between the aesthetic and the spiritual. The best sculptures and paintings of our age strike us as vigorous as

well as serene, lovely as well as spiritual. In the famous seated Buddha in the Sarnath museum, for instance, the artist, who did not care even to hand down his name to us, has wonderfully succeeded in depicting the feeling of confidence, composure, compassion and the inexpressible glow of boundless spiritual bliss that marked the features of the great teacher. Our age succeeded in evolving the classical phase of Indian art, characterised by restraint, dignity, naturalness, expressiveness and beauty, and its influence made itself felt in the sandy deserts of Central Asia and the far-off islands of the Indian archipelago.

The Hindus of that age were as successful in evolving new and bold systems of philosophy as in building large and sturdy vessels to carry goods over the sea. Foreign trade increased the national income. The ample gold currency issued by the Guptas and the large number of Roman gold coins found in South India show that the balance of trade was in favour of India and that the country was overflowing with the yellow metal. The surprising variety of gold and pearl ornaments that were popular in society make it clear that the people had enough money to spare for rich and costly ornaments. Most of the country's wealth was derived from trade and industry, which could make considerable strides owing to the existence of numerous and efficient guilds.

A few words are necessary here about the governments of our period. They were both efficient and popular, and their laws and measures, humane as well as effective. It is true that there was no central parliament to control the king and ministers, but we have to remember that government was remarkably decentralised, and most of its functions were exercised by the district administration. In the district headquarters, the officials of the Central Government were assisted and controlled by popular councils, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell its own waste lands. Villages,

had their own popular councils which administered almost all the branches of administration, including the collection of taxes and the settlement of village disputes. The poor and the sick were offered free relief in hospitals and charitable institutions. Governments were keen in guarding the roads, promoting trade and agriculture and extending patronage to learning and fine arts. People as a whole were rich and prosperous and had very little ground to complain against the administration either for high-handedness or for inefficiency.

We should also draw attention to some developments in our age that were eventually to lead to the decline of Hindu culture and civilisation. The *Upanayana* of the Kshatriyas and the *Vaiśyas* began to be discouraged in this age. As it disappeared in the course of a few centuries, the gap between the classes and masses increased, and the standard of culture and education was lowered in society as a whole, putting a severe handicap on the progress in trade, industry and useful arts. The marriageable age of girls was lowered down to 12 or 13 in our period. This practically put an end to female education and eventually lowered the marriageable age of boys also, rendering *Brahmacharya* impossible to the end of the educational course. Inter-dining and inter-marriages were still taking place in the society of our age, but the *Smṛiti*-writers has begun to frown upon them. This was to result in their stoppage a few centuries later, leading to greater cleavage among the different sections of society, and rendering the admission of foreigners within the Hindu fold impossible.

The above survey of the features and achievements of our age will show that it was undoubtedly a very important epoch of Indian history. It put an end to foreign domination and political disintegration and evolved a mighty state which could protect the country against foreign aggression for a long time. Governments of the age were both efficient and popular and secured peace and prosperity for the people. Indians of our

period made successful but peaceful efforts to spread Indian culture in Central Asia, China and Indian Archipelago and thus created new and valuable bonds of common culture between India and several islands and states in Eastern and Central Asia. Indian intellect in our period was remarkably creative and its achievements were notable as much in the spheres of religion, philosophy and literature as in those of science, and the fine and useful arts. An even balance was kept between *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha*, which enabled society both to lead a pious and religious life and to secure the economic prosperity and political greatness. Different religions and sects lived in peace and harmony, and the standard of average education and culture was higher than in any other period of Indian history. An age characterised by the above features may well be called the Golden Age of Indian history.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PUNJAB, SINDH AND AFGHANISTAN

(c. 180 A.D. to c. 450 A.D.)

Owing to the dearth of original sources, the history of the Punjab, Afghanistan and Sindh, subsequent to the death of Vāsudeva I (in c. 180 A.D.), is shrouded in considerable obscurity. There are no contemporary inscriptions to throw light upon the events in the political history of these provinces during the 3rd century A.D. The Purāṇas no doubt refer to Śāka, Yavana and Tushāra rulers ruling in the north-west during this period, but do not give their names or the duration of their reigns. Foreign sources supply us with some more definite information, but it is meagre and often difficult to interpret. Coins of the kings ruling in these provinces and their contemporaries in Iran and Bactria are almost the only reliable source of information. These, however, are not dated, and their legends also are often incomplete or illegible. It will be thus seen that we can at present reconstruct the history of this period only in broad outline; subsequent discoveries may modify our present tentative conclusions.

#### I. KANISHKA III

(c. 180-210 A.D.)

According to the chronology accepted for this history, the accession of Kanishka III took place in c. 180 A.D.<sup>1</sup> The coins

<sup>1</sup> The latest known date for Vāsudeva I is 98 (of the Śāka era). He was then on the throne for at least 24 years and so we may place the accession of Kanishka III in c. 102 or 180 A.D.





Kushāno-Sassanian coinage, which was issued by the royal governors of Bactria. The coins of this series have on the reverse Śiva and the Bull, which was the only type issued by Vāsudeva II, and which is known to have been current in Bactria. Following the usual practice of conquerors in ancient Bactria and India, the Sassanians imitated the coinage of the king whom they supplanted. He must, therefore, have been Vāsudeva II and none else.

### 3. THE PERIOD OF SASSANIAN ASCENDANCY

The Kushāno-Sassanian coinage<sup>1</sup> issued by the Sassanian viceroys was current only in Balkh, Merv and Samarkand; its specimens are not to be found in Afghanistan, Seistan or the Punjab (Pl. I, 3). It is, therefore, clear that for some time the Sassanians were content to occupy only the home provinces of the Kushānas. Their titles on the coins, 'the king of the Kushānas' and 'the king of kings of the Kushānas' would further indicate that the Sassanians did not drive the Kushāns out of Bactria, but only established their suzerainty over that province. Very probably some Kushāna chiefs may have continued to rule as their feudatories.

The conquest of some Indian provinces of the Kushāna empire was attempted and accomplished by the Sassanian emperor Varahran II. This ruler succeeded in annexing Afghanistan, North-Western Frontier Province, Seistan and Sindh to the Sassanian empire by c. 284 A.D. Varahran II now transferred the crown prince Varahran III to Seistan as its Governor with the privilege of issuing coins with the title *Śakān-Shāh*, the king of the Śakas. We can understand the significance of this title of the crown-prince when we remember that

<sup>1</sup> These coins are called Kushāno-Sassanian because the obverse is in imitation of the Sassanian coins and the reverse of the Kushāna coins. Cunningham had described them as Scytho-Sassanian, but Kushāno-Sassanian is no doubt a more accurate term.

Śaka chiefs were in power in Sindh and Seistan for about two hundred years. The Punjab was not conquered by the Sassanians; their coins are but rarely found in that province.

Afghanistan and the Indus valley continued to be under the Sassanian rule for about 80 years down to c. 360 A.D. There were frequent wars of succession during this period and therefore it was at one time thought that the Sassanian rule in the Indus valley must have been very short-lived. Inscriptions recently discovered at Persepolis show, however, that even in 310-I, A.D., when the reigning Sassanian emperor Shapur II was only a baby, his elder brother continued to rule in Seistan enjoying the titles, King of Śakastān, Minister of ministers of Sindh, Śakastān and Tukhāristān. The Sassanian rule in these regions was well established and organised; for the Persepolis inscription discovered by Herzfeld refers to a High Judge at Kabul and a Minister of Public Instruction in Śakastān (*Śakastān andarzpet*).<sup>1</sup>

We must, however, note that during the period of Sassanian ascendancy in Afghanistan and the Indus valley, some Śaka and Kushāna chiefs continued to rule as petty feudatories. Thus there was a feudatory Kushāna family ruling at Kabul; for the wife of the Sassanian emperor Hōrmuzd II (303-309 A.D.) was a Kushāna princess belonging to that family. It is quite possible that there may have been other Kushāna and Śaka feudatories in the Indus valley as well.

### 4. THE PUNJAB DURING c. 230 TO c. 340 A.D.

We have seen already that the Sassanian conquests in the east did not extend to the Punjab proper. The conquest of this province is not explicitly claimed for any Sassanian ruler, nor does the coinage of the province of the 3rd century A.D. show any Sassanian influence. It is, however, difficult to state

<sup>1</sup> Herzfeld, *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.





Their names would show that they had been completely Hinduised by this time. They were probably professing allegiance to the Guptas, when it became necessary to do so. It must be admitted that neither Chandra-gupta II nor Kumāra-gupta showed keen interest in securing an effective hold over the Punjab. The expedition of Chandra-gupta II to the Indus appears to have been a mere raid, for it does not seem that he took any steps to occupy the Punjab or to garrison the north-western frontier in an effective manner. The local Kidāra chiefs, referred to above were swept away easily and completely when the Hūṇa avalanche broke in its full fury by the middle of the 5th century.

## CHAPTER II

NEW INDIAN STATES IN RAJPUTANA AND  
MADHYADEŚA

(c. 200 to c. 350 A.D.)

The history of the United Provinces during the 3rd century A.D. is still shrouded in considerable mystery. Kanishka was most probably ruling over Benares in 81 A.D. but no inscription of his successors has been found east of Mathura. It is, however, not unlikely that *Madhyadeśa* or the upper Gangetic plain continued to be under the Kushāṇa sphere of influence, if not under Kushāṇa administration, down to the death of Vāsudeva I in c. 180 A.D. ; for seventeen coins of Huvishka and a coin-mould of Vāsudeva were found at Bhita in the Allahabad district.<sup>1</sup> It was during the reign of Kānishka III, the successor of Vāsudeva I, that the upper Gangetic plain slipped out of the Kushāṇa control ; coins of neither this ruler nor those of any of his successors are found in this region.

There is, however, no unanimity of views as to the causes and circumstances that led to the disintegration of the Kushāṇa empire in its eastern portion. Which powers drove out the Kushāṇas from the United Provinces and Rajputana, what part did each of them play in this achievement, and where precisely they were ruling, are questions upon which there is a sharp difference of opinion among the scholars.

## 1. DID THE BHĀRĀŚIVAS DRIVE OUT THE KUSHĀNAS ?

The credit for the overthrow of the Kushāṇa power in the Gangetic plain was once given to the Guptas,<sup>2</sup> but this view

<sup>1</sup> ASI. 1911-12, pp. 63-5.  
Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 5.





































which gives an exhaustive account of his conquests, does not mention any smashing defeat inflicted on the Śakas of Western India. Shapur II, the contemporary Sassanian emperor, is known to have led an expedition to the east in 356-7 A.D. Can it be that after conquering the Kidāra king of the Punjab in 357 A.D. he turned to Kathiawar from his base in Sindh and totally eclipsed the power of Rudra-sena III for some time? Had Sassanian coins been found in Kathiawar, this conjecture might have appeared probable; as it is, there is nothing to support it. The view that Śarva Bhaṭṭāraka, who started the so-called Valabhī coinage, may have temporarily overpowered Rudra-sena III is also not free from difficulties.<sup>1</sup> It must, therefore, be admitted that the cause of the eclipse of the power of Rudra-sena during 351 to 364 is still unknown. Nor do we know how he re-established it in *c.* 365 A.D.

378 A.D. is the last known date of Rudra-sena III. He may have ruled for a year or two more and we may place his death in *c.* 380.

The history of the Western Kshatrapas subsequent to the death of Rudra-sena III is again shrouded in mystery. He was succeeded by Siṃha-sena who was his sister's son, and not his own. The succession therefore may not have been a peaceful one. We find Siṃha-sena ruling as Mahākshatrapa in 382 A.D., but within the next six years or so not only his own reign but that of his son Rudra-sena IV came to an end, for in 388 A.D., or soon after we find Rudra-siṃha III on the throne ruling as Mahākshatrapa. The relationship of this ruler to his predecessor Rudra-sena IV is not known. It is not unlikely that his father Satya-siṃha may have been a brother of Rudra-sena III; he may, therefore, have felt that he was a better claimant to the throne than Rudra-sena IV, who derived his title from a sister of Rudra-sena III.

Rudra-siṃha III, however, could not rule the kingdom for a long time. In less than 10 years from 388 A.D. he was completely defeated by Chandra-gupta II, who annexed Gujarat and Kathiawar to the Gupta empire and put an end to the Śaka rule. An account of this conquest will be given in Chapter VIII.

<sup>1</sup>JNSI. VI, 19-23.









































































## CHAPTER VII

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

With the accession of Samudra-gupta our knowledge of the political history becomes fuller and more precise. This is due to a large number of records, engraved on stone and copper during the reigns of this monarch and his successors, which have been found all over Northern India from Bengal to Kathiawar. It has become possible with their help to reconstruct the chronology and the main outline of the history of the Guptas with a tolerable degree of certainty.

Of Samudra-gupta himself we possess two records on stone and two on copper (Nos. 1-4).<sup>1</sup> The first two bear no dates, but the others are dated respectively in years 5 and 9. The genuineness of these two dated copper-plate charters has been doubted by many, but so far at least as the first of them is concerned, grounds for this opinion, as stated above, are certainly very inadequate.

The inscriptions engraved on the Aśoka Pillar at Allahabad (No. 3) is by far the most important record not only of Samudra-gupta, but also of the whole Gupta series. It describes the political condition of India and the achievements and personality of Samudra-gupta with such fullness of details as is not to be found in the record of any other king of Northern India, with the single exception of Aśoka. It forms our principal, and

<sup>1</sup>The figures within brackets refer to the serial number in the List of Gupta inscriptions given in the Bibliography at the end of the volume.

almost the only, source of information about the history of Samudra-gupta and as such requires careful study.

This long royal *praśasti* (eulogy) of 33 lines was composed by Harishena, who held various important offices in the state. Although Fleet held that the record was incised after the death of Samudra-gupta, there are no adequate grounds against the natural assumption that it was set up during the life-time of the great emperor.

## 2. SAMUDRA-GUPTA'S ACCESSION.

The fourth verse of this inscription refers to a memorable scene in the court of Chandra-gupta I. We are told that, in the presence of a full assembly in the open *Durbar*, the king embraced his son Samudra-gupta, and overcome with emotion, with the hairs of his body standing erect, said, with tears in his eyes: "Thou art worthy, rule this whole world". The poet adds that while this declaration caused the joy (*lit. made them heave a sigh of relief*) of the courtiers (*sabhya*), it caused heart-burning among others of equal birth, who looked with sad faces at Samudra-gupta, the fortunate winner of the prize.

It is generally assumed that the above verse refers to the selection of Samudra-gupta as heir-apparent by Chandra-gupta. But literally interpreted, the passage would rather imply that Chandra-gupta I formally renounced the throne and anointed his son as king. It may, no doubt, be argued that the poet's dramatic account was a bit exaggerated, and the words put in the mouth of the king were to refer to future events. But the emotion of the king, so vividly described, suits more with his abdication and final leave-taking than merely a formal announcement of his successor. On the other hand, the attitude of the king and the tense atmosphere prevailing in the Court might have been due to special circumstances which invested the selection of the heir-apparent with an extraordinary interest. The













more than 1,000 priests, and the pilgrim has described the rich decorations and massive grandeur of the buildings. Referring to the old history of its foundation Hiuen Tsang says that the Ceylonese king 'gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewels of his country'. It is likely that Samudra-gupta's courtier also regarded the rich present as tribute, and construed the Ceylonese king's prayer for permission to build a monastery into an 'application for charter confirming him in the enjoyment of his territories', one of the forms of homage paid by the category of states into which Simhala is included. There may be similar basis for the inclusion of the other states in this category, the offer of a daughter's hand being very common among neighbourly kings. In view of the great name and fame of Samudra-gupta, the neighbouring Śaka and Kushāna rulers might have thought it politic to cultivate friendly relations with him and strengthen them by personal visit or matrimonial alliance. This might have been easily twisted into *ātma-nivedana* and *kanyopāyana-dāna*, the two other forms of homage referred to above. It may be easily admitted that the weaker states of the fourth category, situated just outside the limits of the mighty empire, maintained diplomatic relations with Samudra-gupta and deliberately sought to win his favour and goodwill by various measures which, however derogatory to a sense of royal pride and position of equality, did not theoretically infringe their independent status. But it is difficult to believe, without more positive evidence, that these rulers in any way openly acknowledge the suzerainty of the Gupta Emperor, or enjoyed their kingdoms merely as fiefs on the basis of charters granted by Samudra-gupta. Such evidence is, however, not altogether wanting. The discovery of Kushāna type of coins with the names of Samudra and Chandra may be taken to indicate the suzerainty of Samudra-gupta over the Kushānas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For these coins, cf. *JARS*. 1893, p. 145. See also Ch. I.

The inclusion of 'all islands' in addition to Simhala, in this category, is worthy of note. Although none is specifically named, it very likely refers, in a general way, to the Hindu colonies in Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra and other islands in Indian archipelago. As will be shown in a separate chapter, the Hindus had established colonies and kingdoms in these regions during or before the Gupta period, and the influence of Gupta culture is deeply imprinted on most of them. That there was a constant and intimate intercourse between India and these colonies is proved by Fa-hien's narrative, and it is only natural that the Hindu colonists in these far-off regions would maintain contact with the most powerful empire in their motherland. Many of them must even have originally migrated from the different regions which constituted that empire. The reference to homage paid by dwellers of all islands need not, therefore, be treated as mere rhetoric, but may be based on actual relationship with some of them, the exact nature of which, however, cannot be ascertained.

As in the case of the fourth category, there is some element of doubt in respect of Samudra-gupta's exact relationship with the rulers mentioned in the first. All that is said in the record is that he acquired glory by the favour shown in capturing and then liberating the kings. The natural conclusion, of course, is that these vanquished rulers were re-instated on their throne as feudatory kings, and whatever might have been the actual terms imposed upon each of them in respect of payment of tribute or other services, they at least had to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Gupta emperor and owe allegiance to him. But there is no specific mention of the exact status of these kings after their restoration to the throne.

The above discussion enables us to describe the nature and extent of the empire of Samudra-gupta with an accuracy and fulness of details which are rare in ancient Indian history. It comprised nearly the whole of Northern India, with the exclu-

sion of Kashmir, Western Punjab, Western Rājputāna, Sindh and Gujarat, together with the highlands of Chattisgarh and Orissa and a long stretch of territory along the eastern coast extending as far south as Chingleput and probably even further. Of these vast territories, a considerable portion of Northern India, more accurately defined above, was directly administered by the emperor through his own officials. This was surrounded on all sides except the south by an almost continuous line of tributary states, five kingdoms on the north and east, and nine tribal states on the west mentioned above. The twelve conquered kingdoms in the south also probably occupied similar status. Beyond these tributary states, lay the Śaka and Kushāna principalities on the west and north-west, and Ceylon and other islands in the south and south-east, whose rulers were within the sphere of influence of the empire and, even if not actually subordinate, maintained a submissive and respectful attitude towards their powerful neighbour and endeavoured by all means to win his grace and favour. Thus was "the (whole) world bound", as the courtly author puts it, "by means of the amplitude of the vigour of the arm" of Samudra-gupta.

The organisation of the conquered territories reflects great credit upon the statesmanship of Samudra-gupta. The Allahabad inscription clearly demonstrates that he was inspired by the vision of an all-India empire. But he did not attempt the almost impossible task of bringing the whole country under his direct rule. At the same time he established a strong central authority, sufficiently powerful to check the disruptive tendencies of smaller states and their mutual dissensions which had proved to be India's ruin in the past. By a ruthless campaign he extinguished the numerous petty states contiguous to his own dominions and carved out a big empire. But he was not intoxicated by his success. He did not follow the Kauṭīliyan policy of establishing one imperial sway over all and try to annex the frontier kingdoms like East Bengal, Assam

and Nepal which were hard to conquer and still harder to retain, as the Muslim and British rulers of India were to realise at a later date. Towards the distant tribal states on the western frontier he adopted the same policy, specially perhaps as they were buffer-states against the foreign rulers like Śakas and Kushānas. By retaining these frontier states as faithful tributaries, he added to the defensive strength of the infant empire. The rulers of the states in South India were made to feel the weight of the new power, but were conciliated by a wise and liberal policy. Solid and lasting foundations were thus laid for a great imperial fabric on which the successors of Samudra-gupta were to build in future.

The vast empire was undoubtedly the fruit of numerous military campaigns extending over many years which testify to his prowess and military skill of a very high order. It is not necessary to suppose that he had to fight with every ruler or state mentioned in the Allahabad inscription, for many might have submitted without opposition. It is known from the coins and inscriptions that Samudra-gupta performed an *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, and no historical Indian ruler, either before or after him, had greater justification for this time-honoured ceremony and age-old unique method of establishing universal supremacy. But it may justly be doubted whether he scrupulously followed the prescribed method of letting loose the sacrificial horse and these extensive conquests were undertaken merely as the necessary prelude to the great ceremony. For it is significant that the Allahabad inscription which describes these conquests in detail does not refer at all to the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. The probability rather is that the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice was thought of towards the close of his reign as a fitting symbol to signalise the wonderful results achieved by arduous military campaigns of a long life. The statement that Samudra-gupta restored the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, which had long been in abeyance, cannot be regarded as correct, for we







Chālukya kings from Vikramāditya V to Someśvara III ruled for 118 years.

It would thus follow that while there is much to support the view that Samudra-gupta ascended the throne in 320 A.D. or c. 350 A.D. there is little justification for the date 325-335 A.D. usually assigned to his accession.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE EXPANSION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE.

## RĀMA-GUPTA

Until about twenty years ago it was unanimously held that the great emperor Samudra-gupta was succeeded by his son Chandra-gupta II. Since then, the recovery of a few passages of a lost dramatic work, *Devī-Chandra-gupta* by Viśākhadatta, has thrown altogether new light on this question.<sup>1</sup>

By piecing together the scattered evidences contained in this drama and supplementing them by isolated references contained in the *Harsha-charita*, Sanjan and Cambay copper-plates, and the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, some scholars have reconstructed the story somewhat as follows:—

Samudra-gupta was succeeded by his son Rāma-gupta whose wife was Dhruvadevī. In course of a war with the Śaka king he was closely besieged and placed in such a difficult position that, in order to assure the safety of his people,<sup>2</sup> he agreed to surrender his queen to the Śaka king. His younger brother Chandra-gupta protested against this act of dishonour, and offered to go to the enemy's camp in the disguise of queen Dhruvadevī in order to kill the hated Śaka king. The stratagem succeeded, and Chandra-gupta saved the empire and its honour.

<sup>1</sup>The question has been discussed by a large number of scholars among whom the following deserve special mention : S. Lēvi (*JA.* CCIII, pp. 201 ff); R. Sarasvati (*JA.* LII, pp. 181 ff); A. S. Altekar (*JBORS.* XIV, 223 ff; XV, 134 ff); R. D. Banerji (*AIG.* pp. 26 ff); Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar (*Malaviya Comm. Vol.* pp. 189 ff); K. P. Jayaswal (*JBORS.* XVIII, 17 ff); Winternitz (*Aiyangar Comm. Vol.* pp. 359 ff); Sten Konow (*JBORS.* XXIII, 444); V. V. Mirashi (*IHQ.* X, 48; *IA.* LXII, 201); N. Das Gupta (*IC.* IV. 216); V. Raghavan (*Benares Hindu University Magazine*, II, 23-54, 307); H. C. Raychaudhuri (*PHAI.*<sup>4</sup> p. 465.

<sup>2</sup>"*Prakṛitīnām=āsvāsanāya*". Some take it to mean for satisfying the Councillors".





















construction, Kumāra-gupta should be understood to have been the overlord at the time the record was set up *i.e.*, in 472 A.D. but most of the scholars have taken the reference to Kumāra-gupta in connection with the original construction of the temple. In other words, they hold that in 436 A.D., when the temple was built, Bandhu-varman was the governor of Daśapura, and Kumāra-gupta was his overlord. According to this view, the Gupta suzerainty was established over Mandasor in or before 436 A.D. In that case it becomes significant that the record does not name either the Gupta overlord or the local governor of Mandasor in 472 A.D. *i.e.*, at the time when it was actually set up. On the other hand, it vaguely refers to other kings (the plural number denoting at least three) ruling between 436 and 472 A.D. Whether these refer to the local rulers or Gupta overlords we cannot say, but it gives the impression of some trouble or confusion prevailing in the region between A.D. 436 and 472. The importance of this will appear in the discussion of the history of the Guptas after Skanda-gupta. But whether Bandhu-varman was really a feudatory of Kumāra-gupta or not, it may be reasonably held that Western Malwa had probably already been a feudatory state under Skanda-gupta, as it undoubtedly was in 472.

It is necessary to discuss in this connection the claims put forward by the Vākāṭaka king Narendra-sena that his 'commands were obeyed by the lords of Kosalā, Mekalā and Mālava'.<sup>2</sup> It is undoubtedly tempting to connect Narendra-sena's invasion with the early struggles of Skanda-gupta's reign or the troubled state in Malwa between 436 and 472 A.D. as disclosed by the Mandasor inscription, discussed above, but it is difficult to come

<sup>1</sup>This is the view of Pannalal (*Hindustan Review*, 1928, p. 31) and Mr. Diskalkar (*JBBRAS*. NS., II, 176) who naturally take this Kumāra-gupta to be Kumāra-gupta II.

<sup>2</sup>El. IX, 271. For the history of Narendra-sena cf. *ante* Ch. V.

to any definite conclusion until the date of Narendra-sena is more definitely known.

On the whole, so far as the available evidence goes, we may reasonably hold that in spite of the Hūna invasion and other troubles, probably at the beginning of his reign, Skanda-gupta maintained till the last his hold over the vast empire that now literally stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, and comprised practically the whole of Northern India to the east of the Punjab and Rājputāna. The poet who referred in the year A.D. 460-1 (Ins. No. 27) to the tranquil reign of Skanda-gupta, the lord of hundred kings, was not probably guilty of serious exaggeration. When this great Gupta emperor died about 467 A.D., little did he or anyone else dream that the mighty empire which he left in peace and security would crumble away almost before the eyes of the existing generation.

















dhism, already narrated above, Hiuen Tsang tells a long story how finally Bālāditya triumphed over his rival. This may be summed-up as follows :—

“Bālāditya-rāja, king of Magadha, profoundly honoured the law of Buddha. When he heard of the cruel persecution and atrocities of Mihirakula, he strictly guarded the frontiers of his kingdom and refused to pay tribute. When Mihirakula invaded his dominions, Bālāditya took refuge with his army in an island. Mihirakula left the main part of his army in charge of his younger brother, embarked on boats, and landed, with a part of his troops on the island. He was, however, ambushed by the troops of Bālāditya in a narrow pass and was taken prisoner. Bālāditya resolved to kill Mihirakula but released him on the intercession of his mother. Mihirakula found on his return that his brother had gone back and occupied the throne. He, therefore, sought and obtained an asylum in Kashmir. Then he stirred up a rebellion there, killed the king and placed himself on the throne of Kashmir. He next killed the king of Gandhāra, exterminated the royal family, destroyed the *stūpas* and *saṅghārāmas*, plundered the wealth of the country and returned. But within a year he died.”

Apart from the fact that the general account of Hiuen Tsang is liable to suspicion, on the ground of his placing Mihirakula several centuries ago, it is difficult to believe many of the details in this story.

It has already been noted above, that Kashmir probably and Gandhāra certainly was already a part of the Hūṇa empire in India, and Hiuen Tsang was evidently wrong in describing them as new conquests by Mihirakula. The long account of the defeat and discomfiture of Mihirakula in the hands of Bālāditya, and particularly the manner in which it was achieved, undoubtedly contains a great deal of exaggeration. But in spite of all these we may, in the absence of a better or more satisfactory hypothesis, provisionally regard Bālāditya as ‘having

defeated Mihirakula and saved the Gupta empire from the Hūṇa depredations. That would explain why, as noted above, his name and fame as a great hero survived even two centuries later. The defeat of Mihirakula<sup>1</sup> appears to have finally crushed the Hūṇa political supremacy in India. For although the existence of a Hūṇa community, and even of small Hūṇa principalities, is known in later periods, the Hūṇas no longer appear as a great power or even as a disturbing element in Indian history.

<sup>1</sup>The way in which Yaśodharman refers to Mihirakula, particularly that his head was never before bent to anybody, is hardly compatible with the view that the latter had already suffered defeat in the hands of Bālāditya. I have therefore accepted the statement of Hiuen Tsang that Mihirakula's power was finally broken by Bālāditya, and consequently Yaśodharman's victory must have preceded it. This view was held up Heras (*IHQ.* III, 1). It is not, however, unlikely as Hoernle suggested (*JASB.* LVIII, Part I, p. 96) that Yaśodharman, as a feudatory chief, helped Narasimha-gupta in his expedition against Mihirakula, and later asserted independence and carried on victorious raids even against his suzerain. In later and more prosperous days his earlier successful operations against Mihirakula might have been easily construed as an independent victory.

## CHAPTER X

## THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

About the time of the inroads of Toramāṇa and Mihirakula, and largely as a direct consequence of them, we notice a steady progress of the forces of disintegration within the empire itself. Feudal chiefs and high officials gradually assumed great power and authority and finally set up as independent kings. The dwindling resources of the empire are shown by the poor and scanty coinage of a single type. The inscriptions of different chiefs such as the Maukharis and Later Guptas refer to battles in all directions, and although we cannot always locate them, they unerringly indicate a period of unrest and excitement. Taking advantage of this situation Harisheṇa, the Vākāṭaka ruler, invaded Malwa. According to the Vākāṭaka records he conquered or extended his political authority over Mālava, Gujrat and other countries (see *ante* Ch. V). Although the exact date of Harisheṇa is not known, he flourished towards the close of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century A.D. It is probable, therefore, that it was during the trouble and confusion following the invasion of Toramāṇa that he invaded the distracted province of Mālava and obtained some success. But his triumph was short-lived. Soon an ambitious and enterprising hero appeared on the scene. This was Yaśodharman, who not only established independent authority in Mālava but was soon in a position to hurl open defiance against the emperor.

Little is known of Yaśodharman's origin save that he had probably some connection with the family to which belonged the long line of rulers ending with Bandhu-varman who governed Mālava or a part of it, as a feudatory chief under Kumāra-gupta I with Daśapura (Mandasor) as his capital.

x]

But nearly a century intervened between Bandhu-varman and Yaśodharman, and we do not know anything about the history or activities of this family during this period. Suddenly, some time about 530 A.D. Yaśodharman appears as a meteor in the political horizon, carries his victorious arms far and wide, and sets up a big empire. Like a meteor again, he suddenly vanishes, and his empire perishes with him.

All that we know of the achievement of Yaśodharman by way of military conquests is derived mainly from an inscription (No. 70) engraved in duplicate on two stone pillars at Mandasor. It is a *praśasti* of the type of Samudra-gupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription, but unlike the latter it does not specify the countries conquered by Yaśodharman. Instead we find only a somewhat vague and boastful assertion that "spurning (the confinement of) the boundaries of his own house", he conquerèd 'those countries which were not enjoyed (even) by the Gupta Lords and which the command of the chiefs of the Hūṇas failed to penetrate', and, further, that to his feet bow down chiefs "from the neighbourhood of the river Lauhitya up to the mountain Mahendra, and from Himālaya up to the Western Ocean". The only specific reference to any conquest is that over Mihirakula, referred to above.

Such a general and conventional description of universal conquest (*digvijaya*), so familiar to us in Sanskrit poetry and royal *praśastis*, cannot of course be taken at its face value, and we shall hardly be justified in regarding Yaśodharman, on the basis of this record alone, as the sole monarch of Northern India. At the same time such a claim, publicly made, must have some basis in fact, and we need hardly doubt that Yaśodharman was a great conqueror. It seems also to be quite clear that his arms were mainly directed against, and his conquests were mostly accomplished at the cost of, the Hūṇas and the Guptas, though probably some other powers also had to feel the weight of his power.









meagre data that we possess, these conclusions are very uncertain. If the Gauḍa-enemy of Īśānavarman were different from Gopachandra or his successor, we have to presume that the people of West Bengal, too, were asserting their authority and had come to be recognised as an important political entity. But we have no definite information of its political status at this period.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FALL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

We are now in a position to resume the history of Nara-simha-gupta Bālāditya (See p. 193) and to view his reign in a true perspective. He had ascended the throne at a time when internal dissensions and foreign invasion (under Harishena and Toramāṇa) had still further weakened the power and prestige of the empire which had already been considerably diminished even in the reign of Budha-gupta. The Gupta empire now resembled the Mughal empire after the death of Aurangzeb. The imperial authority was acknowledged in name, but already some provincial satraps and feudatory chiefs behaved almost like independent rulers. It was not long before Yaśodharman openly took up arms against the Gupta emperor and began his victorious raids. But although we may credit Yaśodharman with a number of successful military campaigns, it is difficult to believe that he could consolidate his conquests and establish a big empire. It is interesting to note in this connection how epigraphic evidence clearly indicates that his conquests did not bring about any political change either in the eastern or in the western extremities of the area over which he is said to have carried his victorious arms. No less than fourteen Valabhī Grants ranging in date between 525 and 545 A.D. have been discovered so far. They all refer to *Mahārāja* Dhruvasena and are drawn up in the normal style reflecting no political change of any importance. In N. Bengal, as we shall see, a grant dated 543 A.D. definitely refers to the Gupta emperor. These may not be regarded as conclusive evidences, but certainly favour the supposition that Yaśodharman's campaigns were of





political rôle save in the border regions of Kashmir and Afghanistan. The decline and downfall of the Gupta empire was brought about by the same causes which operated in the case of the Maurya empire in the older and the Mughal empire in later days.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOUTH INDIA.

The three centuries and a half of South Indian history, forming the subject of this Chapter, are full of unsettled questions. The fitful evidence, alike of literature and epigraphy, admits of diverse interpretations; consequently there is no consensus of opinion among the scholars who have written of this period. However, no attempt will be made here to review rival theories; our aim will be rather to state the evidence concisely and offer the minimum of comment calculated to set forth our view of the most probable course of the events of the period.

#### 1. THE CLOSE OF THE ŚANGAM AGE.

The later phases of Śangam poetry in Tamil may well be taken to fall within our period, and the celebrated Chola monarch Karikāla and his contemporary who ruled in Kāñchī, Toṇḍaimān Iḷam Tiraiyan (Iḷandiraiyan), may well be placed about its commencement or a little earlier. The two kings are extolled in two poems by one poet, Uruttirangannār, a Brāhmin of Kaḍiyālūr. To a somewhat later period belonged Nannan of Kaṅkānam and the minor chieftains famed for their patronage of the arts and for that reason counted along with some earlier names as Kaḍai-yelu-vallalkaḷ, the Seven Patrons of the last Śangam. Later than this generation was that dominated by the Pāṇḍyan ruler, Neḍuñjeliyan. This may be inferred from the facts that Nakkirar who celebrates him in the Neḍu-nal-vāḍai mentions Karikāla in one of his poems<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>Aham, 141.















































the throne in 845 B.E. (302 A.D.) and this is not in conflict with the fact that he was a contemporary of Samudra-gupta, as we learn from the Chinese writer Wang-Hieun-t'se.

There is no valid ground to doubt the general accuracy of the chronicle for the three or four centuries preceding Mahā-nāma's reign. The great majority of the kings of this period are mentioned in contemporary records and when regnal years are given in these records, they do not come in conflict with the data furnished by the chronicles. Sylvain Lévi, who has tested numerous dates from the fifth to eighth centuries by means of Chinese references, concludes that "the accuracy of the Sinhalese annals is triumphantly vindicated by this test". Vincent Smith, than whom there was no severer critic of the Sinhalese chronicles, confesses that "there is not, I believe, any reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the Ceylonese dates even for the much earlier time of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, about B.C. 161' (*IA*. XXI, 195). The question is not whether the *Parinirvāna* of the Buddha actually took place in 483 or 543 B.C., but whether a Buddhist era with 483 B.C. as its starting point was current in Ceylon at any period. The evidence available not only disproves the contention of Wickremasinghe, Geiger and others that such an era was in use during the period covered by this chapter, but establishes that dates were computed during this period in the traditional Buddhist era of Ceylon having 543 B.C. as its epoch.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION

The prosperity of a country and the happiness of its inhabitants depend to a great extent upon the efficiency of its government and the ideals which inspire its administration. Let us, therefore, now review the administrative machinery of our period and find out how far it was well developed and efficient, and how far it could succeed in promoting the moral and material progress of the people of the country.

In the Vākāṭaka-Gupta period, there were two types of states in the country, monarchical and non-monarchical or republican. Monarchies existed throughout the country, but republics were flourishing only in certain parts of northern India. Democracy was better developed in the sphere of the village government in south India than in the north; it is, therefore, rather surprising to find that its application in the higher branches of government should not have resulted in the development of republics to the south of the Vindhya as it did to its north.

#### 1. REPUBLICAN STATES.<sup>1</sup>

Let us first consider the non-monarchical states of our period. The chief ones among these were those of the Madras in the Central Punjab, the Kuṇḍas in the Kangra valley, the Yaudheyas in the south-eastern Punjab, the Arjunāyanas in

<sup>1</sup> Standard works and authorities on political science define republic as a state, where the sovereign power rests, not with a single person as in monarchy, but in a group or college of persons, more or less numerous. Oligarchies, aristocracies and democracies have all been labelled as republics. Thus Sparta, Athens, Carthage, Rome, medieval Venice, the United Netherlands and Poland have all been described by political writers as republics, though none of them possessed that full representative character which some are inclined to consider as the





























cal tendencies. Government, moreover, was remarkably decentralised, and most of its functions were transferred to district administration. In the district headquarters, the officers of the central government were assisted and controlled by popular councils of *Mahattaras*, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell the waste land of its own. Villages had their own councils, which functioned as corporate bodies and administered all the branches of its administration, including the settlement of disputes and the collection of taxes.

People were virtuous, rich and prosperous; cities were teeming with population. The poor and sick were offered free relief and medicine in hospitals and charitable institutions. Peace and prosperity secured by the government led to a rich and remarkable development of art, literature, philosophy and science, as will be shown in later chapters. We may, therefore, be well proud of the Gupta administrative system, which served as the ideal for contemporary and later states.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE COINAGE.

In this chapter we shall consider the coinage current in our age. Owing to want of space, it is not possible to describe in detail all the coin-types issued by the different rulers of our period. We can only refer to the main types issued by each dynasty, the different metals used for them, the weight standards followed, and the relative value of the different denominations. The question of the origin and development of the different types with special reference to foreign influence, if any, will engage our special attention, and brief reference will also be made to the light thrown by important types on the contemporary history.

#### 1. THE COINAGE OF THE PUNJAB AND AFGHANISTAN.

In the Punjab the Later Great Kushāṇa rulers, Kanishka III and Vāsudeva II, continued to issue gold coins (Pl. I, 1 & 2), closely resembling some of the earlier Kushāṇa types. On the obverse, there is the king offering oblation at the altar, with a legend in Greek, which becomes progressively more and more degenerate. Brāhmī letters are introduced in the field, the probable significance of which has been already discussed (*ante*, pp. 14-16). The reverse has two types; in one there is Śiva standing by his bull (Pl. I, 2), as on the coins of Vāsudeva I, and in the other there is Ardoksho seated on the throne, as on the coins of Huvishka (Pl. I, 1). The first type was common in the Kabul valley and the second in the Western Punjab.

When the Later Kushāṇas lost Afghanistan to the Sassa-





































perfect and that is why his translations are of a high literary value. He translated within a few years about 106 Sanskrit texts into Chinese and some of these texts were quite extensive. He was the first to interpret the Mahāyāna philosophy to the Chinese. Kumārajīva died in 412 A.D. but the service which he rendered to the cause of Buddhism in China was lasting. His Chinese disciples gave a new orientation to the faith. Their interpretation made Buddhism acceptable to the Chinese and it ceased to be looked upon as a foreign religion.

Kumārajīva was also responsible for attracting best Indian scholars to China. In number of Indian scholars who had gone to China before his time was not considerable and Buddhist missionaries of foreign nationalities were then more active. Kumārajīva had personal touch with the Buddhist scholars of Kashmir, and it was through his intervention that some of the Kashmirian scholars were induced to go first to Kuchi and then to China. One of them as Puṇyatrāta who came to China most probably in 403 A.D. and worked there in collaboration with Kumārajīva. The other was Buddhayaśas who was also a Kashmirian scholar settled at Kashgar. It was probably there that he came in contact with Kumārajīva. The attachment was so great that when Kuchi was invaded by the Chinese army Buddhayaśas exercised all his influence with the king of Kashgar and induced him to march with his army to the help of Kuchi. But it was already too late and the town had fallen before he could render any help. Later on Buddhayaśas went to Kuchi and then to the capital of China at the special request of Kumārajīva. During his stay in China he collaborated with the latter in the work of translation. Of other Kashmirian scholars who had gone to China in the 5th century mention may be made of Gautama Saṅghadeva, Dharmayaśas, Guṇavarman, Guṇabhadra, and Buddhavarman. A few other Indian scholars from other parts of India had also been to China in this period. Most of them remained in China

and died there. They were responsible for numerous translations of the canonical texts from the Sanskrit Tripiṭaka, specially of the Sarvāstivāda school of which the largest centre was then in Kashmir. They contributed the most to the interpretation of Indian culture of the Chinese and the establishment of a relation of amity between the two countries which for many centuries yielded a fruitful result.







settled in that region in the second century B.C. About A.D. 304 St. Gregory appeared before these temples, and in spite of heroic defence by the Indians, defeated them and broke the two images of gods which were 12 and 15 cubits high.<sup>1</sup> St. Gregory, who thus anticipated Mahmud of Ghazni and his successors, must have been instrumental in destroying to a large extent the traces of Indian religion in the West. But the fact remains that Indian religion, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, was still a living force in the region where Christianity arose and had its early field of activity. It strengthens the belief that the similarities noticed between the two may not be accidental, but the effect of the old religion upon the new. The resemblance of the interior of the Christian church to a Buddhist *Chaitya*, the extreme and extravagant forms of asceticism in early Christian sects, such as the Thebaid monasticism, metempsychosis, relic-worship and the use of the rosary might all have been borrowed by Christianity from Indian religious ideas. It is also very likely that the Manichaeans and the Gnostics were influenced by Indian ideas. Certain it is that several religious leaders of the West took the name of Buddha.

It is, of course, always difficult to define precisely the extent of the influence that one religion exercised upon the other, but of the general influence of Indian ideas upon Christianity there cannot remain any possible doubt. It is more difficult to estimate the effect of Christianity on India. That Christian missionaries visited India from an early period, and small Christian communities were established there, may be easily accepted. We have reference to progress of Christian church in south India in the 'Nations of India', a pamphlet included in the *Romance History of Alexander* of the Pseudo-Kallisthenes (5th Century) and in the *Christian Topography* of

Cosmas Indikopleustes, a Christian monk who visited India in the first half of the sixth century A.D.

We have described above, in a very brief outline, the relations between India and the Western World between 200 and 550 A.D. The facts, definitely known, are few, and hence the picture is vague and incomplete. But the little that we know is enough to show that India did not lead an isolated life but kept contact with the great civilisations of the West through trade and commerce, and this led to political and cultural relations. Such relations which began much earlier and continued in later periods, were fairly constant and active during the period under review.

<sup>1</sup> *JRAS.* 1904, p. 309.





























































































































































































