Indian History and Culture



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History and the Enterprise of knowledge[1]

-By Amartya Sen

In an often-quoted remark, Henry Ford, the great captain of industry, said, "History is more or less bunk." As a general statement about history, this is perhaps not an assessment of compelling delicacy. And yet Henry Ford would have been right to think, if that is what he meant, that history could easily become "bunk" through motivated manipulation.

This is especially so if the writing of history is manoeuvred to suit a slanted agenda in contemporary politics. There are organized attempts in India, at this time, to do just that, with arbitrary augmentation of a narrowly sectarian view of India's past, along with undermining its magnificently multi-religious and heterodox history. Among other distortion, there is also a systematic confounding here of mythology with history. An extraordinary example of this has been the interpretation of the Ramayana, not as a great epic, but as documentary history, which can be invoked to establish property rights over places and sites possessed and owned by others. We see this for example in the confusing story of a recent statement by a director of the Indian council of Historical Research (ICHR) announcing exact knowledge of where Rama, the avatar, was born (not surprisingly precisely where the Babri masjid mosque stood—from which the property rights for building a temple exactly there is meant to follow),combined with the assertion that the masjid itself had no religious significance (followed by an embarrassed dissociation of the ICHR itself from these remarkable pronouncement), thus illustrating the confounding of myth and history. The Ramayana ,which Rabindra Nath Tagore had seen as a wonderful legend ("the story of the Ramayana " is to be interpreted ,as Tagore put it in a vision of India's history ,not as "a matter of historical fact" but in the plane of ideas") and in fact as a marvelous parable of "reconciliation", is now made into a legally authentic account that gives some members of one community an alleged entitlement to particular sites and land, amounting to a license to tear down the religious places of other communities. Thomas de Quincey has an interesting essay called "murder considered as one of the Fine Arts."Rewriting of history for bellicose use can also presumably, be a very fine art.

I note the contemporary confounding of historical studies in India as the starting point of this lecture even though I shall not be directly concerned with addressing these distortions: there are many superb historians in India to give these misconstruction their definitive due. Instead, I shall be concerned with outlining some methodological issues that relate to the subject of truth and falsehood in general history. I will also try to develop and defend a view of history as "an enterprise of knowledge."

[1] Appeared in the 'New Humanist' Summar 2001

There will be occasional references to contemporary debates (because I shall illustrate the general points with example from Indian history), but the overall focus will be on more general themes. There will be occasions, in this context, to take a fresh look at Indian's persistent heterodoxy, which includes not only its tendency towards multi-religious and multicultural coexistence (a point emphasized in Rabindra Nath Tagore's vision of India's history') but also its relevance for the development of science and mathematics in India. For history is not only an enterprise of knowledge in itself, it cannot but have a special involvement with the history of other enterprises of knowledge.

The view of history as an enterprise of knowledge is of course very old- fashioned: I am not trying to innovate anything whatsoever. However this and related epistemic approaches to history have taken some hard knocks over the last few decades. These have come not so much from sectarian bigots (who have barely addressed issues of method) but in the hands of sophisticated methodologists who are not only sceptical of the alleged virtues of modernity and objectivity (often for understandable reason) but have ended up being deeply suspicious also of the idea of truth or false hood in history. They have been keen in particular to emphasize the relativity of perspectives and the ubiquity of different points of view.

Perspectives and points of view, I would argue, are indeed important not just in history, but in every enterprise of knowledge. This is partly because our observations are inescapably "positional" Distant objects, for example, cannot but look smaller, and yet it is the job of analysis and scrutiny to place the different positional views in their appropriate perspectives to arrive at an integrated and coherent picture. The elementary recognition of the positionality of observations and perceptions does not do away with ideas of truth and falsehood, nor with the need to exercise reasoned judgement faced with conflicting evidence and clashing perspectives. I shall not here reiterate the methodological arguments I have presented elsewhere, such as in "positional Objectivity" in philosophy and public Affairs but will discuss their relevance to the interpretation of Indian history.

Indeed describing the past is like all other reflective judgment, which have to take not of the demands of veracity and the discipline of knowledge. The discipline includes the study of knowledge formation, including the history of science (and the constructive influences that are important in the cultivation of science) and also the history of histories (where differences in perspective call for disciplined scrutiny and are of importance themselves as objects of study). I shall be concerned with each.
I should make one more motivational remark, I address this talk primarily to non-historians, like myself, who take an interest in history. I am aware that no self respecting, historian will peacefully listen to an economist trying to tell them what their discipline is like. But history is not just for historians. It affects the lives of the public at large. We not historians do not have to establish our entitlement to talk

about history.

Rather, a good point of departure is to ask: why is history so often invoked in popular discussion? Also, what can the general public get from history? Why, we must also ask, is history such a battleground?

Knowledge and its use

Let me begin by discussing some distinct motivations that influence the public's interest in history.

1. **Epistemic interest:** The fact that we tend to have, for one reason or another, some interest in knowing more about what happened in the past is such a simple thought that it is somewhat embarrassing to mention this at a learned gathering. But, surely, catering to our curiosity about the past must count amount the reasons for trying to learn something about historical events. An ulterior motive is not essential for taking an interest in history (even thought ulterior reasons may also exits often enough).

The simplicity of the idea of historical curiosity is, however, to some extent deceptive, because the reason for our curiosity about the past can be very diverse and sometimes quite complex. The reason can be something every practical (such as learning from a past mistake), or engagingly illuminating (such as knowing about the lives of common people in a certain period in history), or largely recreational (such as investigating the chronology and history of Indian's multiplicity of calendars). Also, the historical question asked need not be straightforward, and may even be highly speculative such as Rabindranath Tagore's interesting but bold conjecture that the "mythical version of king Janamejaya's ruthless serpent sacrifice" may quite possibly stand for an actual historical events involving an "attempted extermination of the entire Naga race" by the dominate power in ancient India, whether or not it is easy to satisfy our curiosity (it may not always be possible to settle a debate regarding what actually happened), truth has an obvious enough role in exercises of this kind. In fact, curiosity is a demand for truth on a particular subject.

2. **Practical reason:** Historical connections are often involved in the context of contemporary politics and policies. Indeed, present-day attitudes in politics and society are often strongly influenced by the reading – or misreading – of the history of past events. For example, sectarian tensions build frequently on grievances (spontaneous or cultivated) linked to past deeds (real or imagined) of one group against another. This is well illustrated, for example, by the recent massacres in Rwanda or former Yugoslavia, where history—or imagined history—was often involved, concerning alleged past records of hostilities between Hutus and Tutsis, or between Serbs and Albanians, respectively. Since these uses of history are aimed primarily at contemporary acts and strategies, the counteracting arguments, which too invoke history, thought in the opposite direction, also end up being inescapably linked to current affairs. Given the dialectical context, we may be forced to take an

interest in historical disputations on battlegrounds that have been chosen by others—not ourselves.

For example in defending the role of secularism in contemporary India, it is not in any way essential to make any claim whatsoever about how India's Mughal rulers behaved – whether they were sectarian or assimilative, whether they were oppressive or tolerant. Yet in the political discussions that have accompanied the activist incursions of communal politics in contemporary India (well illustrated, for example, by the rhetoric that accompanied the demolition of the Babri Masjid), a heavily carpentered characterization of the Mughal rule as anti-Hindus was repeatedly invoked. Since this characterization was to a great extent spurious and based on arbitrary selection, to leave that point unaddressed would have, in the context of the on going debates, amounted to negligence in practical reason, and not just an epistemic abstinence. Even the plausibility or otherwise of the historical argument that some of the juridical roots of Indian secularism can be traced to Mughal jurisprudence (a thesis I have tried to present in my paper, "Reach of Reason: East and west"), even though a matter of pure history, ends up inescapably as having some relevance for contemporary politics (even through that was not a claim I made).
The enterprise of knowledge links in this case with the use of that knowledge. However this does not in any why; reduce the relevance of truth in seeking knowledge. The fact that knowledge has its use does not, obviously, make the enterprise of acquiring knowledge in any way redundant. In fact, quite the contrary.

3.Identity scrutiny: Underlying the political debates, there is often enough a deeper issue related to the way we construct and characterize our own identities, in which too historical knowledge – or alleged knowledge –can play an important part. Our sense of identity is strongly influenced by our understanding of our past. We do not, of course, have a personal past prior to our birth, but our self-perceptions are associated with the shared history of the members of a particular group to which we think we "belong" and with which we "identify." Our allegiances draw on the evocation of histories of our identity groups.

A scrutiny of this use of history cannot be independent of the philosophical question as to whether our identities are primarily matters of 'discovery' (as many 'communitarian' thinkers, such as Michael Sandal, claim), or whether they are to a significant extent matters of selection and choice (of course, within given constraints—as indeed all choices inescapably are). Arguments that rely on the assumption of the unique centrality of one's community-based identity survive by privileging—typically implicitly – that identity over other identities(which may be connected with, say, class, or gender, or language, or political commitments, or cultural influences). In consequence, they restrict the domain of one's alleged "historical roots" in a truly dramatics way. Thus, the increasing search for a Hindu view of Indian history not only has problems with epistemic veracity (an issue I

discussed earlier), but also involves the philosophical problem of categorical oversimplification.

It would, for example, have problem in coming to terms with, say, Rabindranath Tagore's description of his own background in the religion of man as "a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mohammedan and British." No less importantly, it cannot but be in some tension with the sense of pride than an Indian may choose to have, irrespective of his or her own religious background, at the historical achievements of, say, Ashoka or Akbar, or Kalidas or Kabir, or Aryabhata or Bhaskara. To deny the role of reasoned choice, which can draw on the knowledge of the past, can be a very serious loss indeed. Even those who want to identify with Indian's historical achievements and perhaps take some pride in them (as legitimate enough concern) must also examine critically what to take pride in, since it is easy to be misled into a narrow alley through incltements to ignore India's capacious heterodoxy in favour of a constricted sectarian identity. While discovery and choice compete as the basic of identity, knowledge and choice are essentially complementary to each other. Engagement with issues of identity enriches the enterprise of knowledge and extends its reach.

Science and Intellectual Heterodoxy

Let me now move to a more active view of the enterprise of knowledge, and turn to the history of science, which is among the historical subjects of study. As has already been argued, history is not only an enterprise of knowledge; its subject matter includes other enterprises of knowledge. The issue of heterodoxy, to which reference was made earlier, is particularly important here. Indeed, I would argue that there is a general connection between intellectual heterodoxy and the pursuit of science, and that this connection deserves more attention than it tends to get.

Heterodoxy is important for scientific advance because new ideas and discoveries have to emerge initially as heterodoxy views, at variance with established understanding. One need reflect only on the history of the scientific contributions of say, Galileo of Newton or Darwin, to see the role of heterodoxy in the process. The history of science is integrally linked with heterodoxy.

If this interpretation is correct, then the roots of the flowering of Indian science and mathematics that occurred in and around the Gupta period (beginning particularly with Aryabhata and Varahamihira) can be intellectually associated with persistent expressions of heterodoxies, which pre-existed these contributions. In fact, Sanskrit and Pali have a larger literature in defence of atheism, agnosticism and theological skepticism than exists in any other classical language.

The origins of mathematical and scientific developments in the Gupta period are often traced to earlier works in mathematics and science in India, and this is indeed worth investigating, despite the historical mass that has been created recently by the

ill- founded championing of the so-called "Vedic mathematics" and "Vedic science," based on very little evidence. What has, I would argue, more claim to attention as a precursor of scientific advances in the Gupta period is the tradition of scepticism that can be found in pre-Gupta India – going back to at least the sixth century B.C – particular in matters of religion and epistemic orthodoxy. Indeed, the openness of approach that allowed Indian mathematicians and scientists to learn about the state of these professions in Babylon, Greece and Rome. Which are plentifully cited in early Indian astronomy (particularly in the siddhantas), can also be seen as a part of this inclination towards heterodoxy.

Observation, Experience and Scientific Methods

Indeed, the development of India science has clear methodological connections with the general epistemological doubts expressed by skeptical school of thought that developed at an earlier period. This included the insistence on relying only on observational evidence (with scepticism of unobserved variables), for example in the Lokayata and Charvaka writings, not to mention Gautama Buddha's powerfully articulated agnosticism and his president questioning of received beliefs. The untimely death of professor Bimal Matilal has robbed us of the chance of benefiting from his extensive programme of systematic investigation of the history of Indian epistemology, but his already published works, particularly perceptions bring out the reach of unorthodox early writings on epistemology (by both Buddhist and Hindu writers) in the period that can be linked to the flowering of Indian science and mathematics in Gupta era.

Similarly, the expression of hereticism and heterodoxy patiently – if somewhat grudgingly – recorded even in the Ramayana (for example, in the form of javali's advice to Rama to defy his father's odd promise) presents methodological reason to be sceptical of the orthodox position in this field. Indeed, in A Vision of India's History, Rabindranath Tagore also notes the oddity of the central story of Rama's pious acceptance of banishment based on "the absurd reason ....about the week old king [Rama's father], yielding to a favorites wife, who took advantages of a vague promise which could fit itself to any demand of hers, however preposterous." Tagore takes it as evidence of "the later degeneracy of mind," when "some causal words uttered in a moment of infatuation could be deemed more sacred than the truth which is based upon justice and perfect knowledge."

There is not after-world, nor any religious practice for attaining that. Follow what is within your experience and do not trouble yourself with what lies beyond the province of human experience. (Translation from Makhanlal Sen, Valmiki Ramayana)

As it happens, the insistence that we rely only on observation and experience is indeed a central issue in the departures in astronomy — initiated by Aryabhata and others — from established theological cosmology. The departures presented in his book Aryabhatiya,

completed in 421 Saka or 499 A.D., which came to be discussed extensively by mathematicians and astronomers who followed Aryabhata (particularly Varahamihira, Brahmagupta and Bhaskara, and were also discussed in their Arabic translations), included, among others: (1) Aryabhata's advocacy of the diurnal motion of the earth (rather than the apparent rotation of the sun around it), (2) a corresponding theory of gravity to explain why objects are not thrown out as the earth churns, (3) recognition of the parametric variability of the concept of "up" and "down" depending on where one is located on the globe, and (4) explanation of lunar and solar eclipses in terms respectively of the earth's shadow on the moon and the moon's obscuring of the sun. Observational arguments, based on what Javali calls "the province of human experience," are central to the departures initiated by Aryabhata in these and related fields (more on this presently). In the enterprise of knowledge involving the natural sciences, the intellectual connections between scepticism, heterodoxy and observational insistence, on the one hand, and manifest scientific advances, on the other, require much further exploration and scrutiny than they seem to have received so far.

History of Histories and Observational Perspectives

The observational issue is important also for the particular subject of history of histories, or metahistories (as we may call them). Given the importance of perspectives in historical writings, history of histories can tell us a great deal not only about the subject of those writings, but also about their authors and the traditions and perspectives they reflect. For example, James Mill's The History of British India, published in 1817, tells us probably as much about imperial Britain as about India. This three-volume history, written by Mill without visiting India (Mill seemed to think that this non-visit made his history more objective), played a major role in introducing the British governors of India (such as the influential Macaulay) to a particular characterization of the country. There is indeed much to learn from Mill's history — not just about India, but more, in fact, about the perspective from which this history was written. This is an illustration of the general point that the presence of positionality and observational perspective need not weaken the enterprise of knowledge, and may in fact help to extend its reach.

James Mill disputed and rejected practically every claim ever made on behalf of Indian culture and intellectual traditions, but paid particular attention to dismissing Indian scientific works. Mill rebuked early British administrators (particularly, Sir William Jones) for having taken the natives "to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization." Indeed, since colonialism need not be especially biased against any particular colony compared with any other subjugated community, Mill had no great difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the Indian civilization was at par with other inferior ones known to Mill: "very nearly the same with that of the Chinese, the Persians, and the Arabians," and also the other "subordinate nations, the Japanese, Cochin-chinese, Siamese, Burmans, and even Malays and Tibetans".

Mill was particularly dismissive of the alleged scientific and mathematical works in India. He denied the generally accepted belief that the decimal system (with place values and the

placed use of zero) had emerged in India, and refused to accept that Aryabhata and his followers could have had anything interesting to say on the diurnal motion of the earth and the principles of gravitation. Writing his own history of histories, Mill chastised Sir William Jones for believing in these "stories," and concluded that it was "extremely natural that Sir William Jones, whose pundits had become acquainted with the ideas of European philosophers respecting the system of the universe, should hear from them that those ideas were contained in their own books."

A Contrast of Perspectives

It is, in fact, interesting to compare Mill's History with another history of India, called Ta'rikh al-hind (written in Arabic eight hundred years earlier, in the 11th century) by the Iranian mathematician Alberuni. Alberuni, who was born in Central, Asia in 973 A.D., and mastered Sanskrit after coming to India, studied Indian texts on mathematics, natural sciences, literature, philosophy, and religion. Alberuni writes clearly on the invention of the decimal system in India (as do other Arab authors) and also about Aryabhata's theories on the earth's rotation, gravitation, and related subjects.

These writings contrast sharply with Mill's history from a dominant colonial perspective well established by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The interest in Mill's dismissive history in imperial Britain (Macaulay, as quoted by John Clive in his Introduction to Mill's History, described Mill's History of British India to be "on the whole the greatest historical work which has appeared in our language since that of Gibbon") contrasts with extensive constructive interest in these Indian works among Islamic mathematicians and scientists in Iran and in the Arab world.

In fact, Brahmagupta's pioneering Sanskrit treatise on astronomy had been first translated into Arabic in the 8th century by Muhammad ibn Ibrahim alFazari and again by Alberuni three hundred years later in the eleventh century (since Alberuni had certain criticisms of the previous translation). Several Indian works on medicine, science and philosophy had Arabic rendering by the 9th century, and so on. It was through the Arabs that the Indian decimal system and numerals reached Europe, as did Indian writings in mathematics, science and literature, in general. Indeed, history of histories, particulary about science, can tell us a great deal about the nature of political and social relations between the different countries (such as Iran and Gupta India, on the one hand Britain and colonial India, on the other). As it happens, Alberuni's history also provides interesting illumination on scientific discussions within India, and particularly on the constructive role of heterodoxy in this context. Even thought Alberuni himself tended to reject Aryabhata's throry regarding the diurnal motion of the earth, he describes patiently the Indian arguments indefence of the plausibility of Aryabhaya's theory, including the related theory of gravity.

Conservatism, Courage and Science

It is, in this context, particularly interesting to examine Alberuni's discussion of Brahmagupta's conservative rejection of the exciting depertures proposed by Aryabhata and his followers on the subject of lunar and solar eclipses. Alberuni quotes Brahmagupta's criticism of Aryabhata and his followers, in defence of the orthodox religious theory involving Rahu and the so- called "head" that is supposed to devour the sun and the moon, and find it clearly unpersuasive and reactionary. He quotes Brahmagupta's supplication to religious orthodoxy, In Brahmasiddhanta:

> Some people think that the eclipse is not caused by the Head. This however is a foolish idea for it is he in fact who eclipses and the generality of the inhabitants of the world say that it is the Head that eclipses. The Veda which is the word of god from the mouth of Brahman says that the Head eclipses....on the contrary. Varahamihira, Shrishena, Aryabhata and Vishnuchandra maintain that the eclipse is not caused by the Head, but by the moon and the shadow of the earth, in direct opposition to all (to the generally of men), and from the enmity against the just- mentioned dogma. (Alberuni's India)

Alberuni who is quite excited about Aryabhata's scientific theories of eclipses, then accuses Brahmagupta (a great mathematician himself) for lacking the moral courage of Aryabhata in dissenting from the established orthodoxy. He points out that, in practice, Brahmagupta too follows Aryabhata's method in predicting the eclipses but this does not prevent Brahmagupta from sharply criticizing—from an essentially theological perpective –Aryabhata and his followers for being heretical and heterodox. Alberuni puts it thus:

> .....we shall not argue with him [Brahmagupta], but only whisper into his ear:... why do you after having spoken such [harsh] words [against Aryabhata and his followers], then begin to calculate the diameter of the moon in order to explain the eclipsing of the sun, and the diameter of the shadow of the earth in order to explain its eclipsing the moon? Why do you compute both eclipses in agreement with the theory of those heretics, and not according to the views of those with whom you think it is proper to agree? (Alberuni's India)

The connection between heterodoxy and scientific advance is indeed close and big departures in science require methodological independence as well as analytical and constructive skill. Even thought Aryabhata, Varahamihira and Brahmagupta were all dead for many hundred years before Alberuni was writing on their controversies and their implications, nevertheless Alberuni carefully critical scientific history helps to bring out the main issues involved and in particular the need for heterodoxy as well as moral courage in pursuit of science.

A Concluding Remark

To conclude, I have tried to illustrate the different ways in which history has relevance for non-historians – indeeded the general public.

First, there are diverse ground for the public's involvement with history which include (1) the apparently simple attractions of epistemic interest, (2) the contentious correlates of practical reason and (3) the scrutiny of identity-based thinking. All of them – directly or indirectly – involve and draw on the enterprise of knowledge.

Second, history is not only itself an enterprise of knowledge its domain of study incorporates all other enterprises of knowledge including the history of science. In this context it is easy to see the role of heterodoxy and methodological independence in scientific advance. The intellectual connections between heterodoxy (especially theological skepticism) and scientific pursuits (especially big scientific departures) deserve more attention in the history of sciences in India.

Third, metahistories – or histories of histories – also bring out the relevance of an appropriate climate for the enterprise of knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge not only requires an open mind (the contrast between Alberuni's scientific interest and mill's colonial predispositions radically differentiate their treatments of the same subject matter), it also requires an inclination to accept heterodoxy and the courage to stand up against orthodoxy (Alberuni's critique of Brahmagupta's criticism of Aryabhata relates to issue).The plurality of perspectives extends the domain of the enterprise of knowledge rather than undermining the possibility of the enterprise.

Science the rewriting of Indian history from the slanted perspective of sectarian orthodoxy not only undermines historical objectivity but also militates against the sprit of scientific skepticism and intellectual heterodoxy it is important to emphasize the centrality of skepticism and heterodoxy in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The incursion of sectarian orthodoxy in Indian history involves two distinct problems, to wit, (1) narrow sectarianism, and (2) unreasoned orthodoxy. The enterprise of knowledge is threatened by both.

9

Cultural Unity of India

The Evidence of Archaeology and Historical Geography

One of the most visible signs of early contact between different parts of India is the spread of objects which are either identical in form and manufacture or possess undeniable family resemblance over large parts of the country. From this point of view, the period of the Indus Civilization is as good a meaningful period as any. First, the objects of this civilization are distributed from Baluchistan-Iran border to roughly Haridwar and from Jammu to the Kim estuary in Gujarat and further south in Maharashtra. This distribution is most noticeable during the mature and late phases of the Indus Civilization, i.e. roughly from *c.* 2700 to 1300 BC. Secondly, the material needs of this civilization threw open many resource areas both within and outside its distribution zone and led to the development of various routes, many of which retained their significance in later periods. For instance, there was a clear alignment in the Indus period between the Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan sector in the northwest and Rohtak in the Delhi sector. The route came via Multan, Harappa, Pakpattan, Abohar, Sirsa, Hansi, and Hissar.

throwing offshoots all along the way. One of these offshoots touched Bhatinda, and even now a major bridge near the Bhatinda fort is called Multani bridge. The Rohtak-Hansi-Hissar-Sirsa-Fazilka-Abohar alignment was a major alignment in the historic period as well. The significance of the Indus period in mobilizing and channelizing both the raw materials and finished goods is well understood. Among other things, the finished cores made of the chert of the Sukkur-Rorhi Hills in Sind can be traced at Balu in Jind in Haryana. There need not be any doubt about the fact that the vast area in which Indus Civilization sites have been found evolved a network of interconnection between its component parts.

It is equally important to know how the Indus distribution area was interacting with the areas outside it. The occurrence of a late Harappan occupational level at Daimabad (Sali 1986) is a pointer in this direction. In another direction, the find of perforated ware of Indus tradition at Ramnagar on the bank of the Ganga opposite Banaras is mind-boggling, but the identification was done at the most competent level and there is apparently no reason to doubt it (personal information from R. Tewari).

The significance of the occurrence of the Indus script at Daimabad in the upper Godavari Valley and that of perforated ware at Ramnagar in the middle Ganga Valley are worth pondering over. Considering that at the other end the Indus artefacts are found in Baluchistan and Jammu, there was apparently an interconnecting orbit from this northern limit to the upper Godavari Valley and the middle Ganga Plain as far south as Banaras during the late phase of the Indus Civilization. Daimabad is Late Harappan and the chalcolithic context in which the Harappan

perforated ware has been found at Ramnagar belongs to the local chalcolithic context well within the second millennium BC.

A comparatively recent archaeological discovery has considerably highlighted this orbit. In the excavations at Sinoli, a presumably Late Harappan site near Baghpat (Sharma, Nauriyal and Prabhakar 2005-6), a copper antennae-hilted sword has been found, proving that the upper Gangetic Valley 'Copper Hoard 'tradition is linked with the Late Harappan tradition. I would put Sinoli around the middle of the second millennium BC. Such 'antennae-hilted swords' have been found in Gujarat on the west and the Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu and the Tea/Coffee plantation belt of Kerala in the south (the details in Chakrabarti and Lahiri 1996). This is remarkable because this shows that as early as the middle of the second millennium BC there is archaeological evidence that the Doab region was linked with west India and the deep south. I am not enthusiastic about the find of a Neolithic celt with Indus signs pecked into its surface from Cuddalore south of Pondicherry but the antennae-hilted copper swords have been found along a well-known stretch of the Ganga Plain-Deccan – south India route, and there is no reason to doubt the significance of these finds. Because of its being part of the Harappan tradition, the Doab area must have known also the western areas of the Harappan distribution belt up to Panjab, Sind and Baluchistan. Whether the concept of Bharatavarsha was there or not, the people were then certainly interacting over a vast stretch of the land which came to be called Bharatavarsha in literature. Tentatively, I would accept the chronological line of the mid-second millennium BC as a benchmark line in this regard.

As far as the dissemination of cultivated crops is concerned, interesting data have begun to emerge in the case of wheat, barley and rice.

Wheat and barley occur in the 8th millennium BC at Mehrgarh south of Quetta in Baluchistan. Both these crops occur in the Neolithic level of Jhusi (Pokharia 2009) opposite Allahabad. The dates from this level of Jhusi fall in the 8th and 6th millennia BC. This is supported by at least one early date from the Neolithic level of Tokwa (Pokharia 2008) near Mirzapur. On the other hand, the cultivation of rice began in central Ganga plain and the adjacent Vindhyan stretch in the 8th-6th millennia BC with its crucial evidence coming from Lohuradeva near Gorakhpur, Koldihawa and Chopani Mando in the periphery of the Vindhyas near Allahabad, and Jhusi in Allahabad itself (for Lohuradeva., Tewari et al. 2007-8). The story of the dissemination of rice cultivation is not yet clear but rice is known to occur in the context of the Indus tradition in Panjab and Haryana. The spread of different cultivated crops all over the subcontinent has its own story but roughly between the 8th and the 3rd millennia BC, most of the crops that we find in this region now attained more or less a subcontinental spread.

The ease with which many of the cultural traits spread from one part of the subcontinent to another had a lot to do with a basic characrer of its geography:

> The one clear unity which India possessed throughout history has been geographical. In no other part of the world, unless perhaps in South America, are the physical features on a grander scale. Yet no where else are they more simply combined into a single region.

This was written by a geographer, H.J. Mackinder (1922). To the south of the highlands from the western rim of Baluchistan

to the Patkoi and Arakan Yoma in the east, there was no major hindrance to human movements from one part of the subcontinent to another. And yet, some later geographers ignored this element and tried to impose some arbitrary cultural divides and rigid lines of movements on its map. I have tried to discuss some of the relevant issues in my *The Geo-Political Orbits of Ancient India* (Chakrabarti 2010a). In trying to understand how different parts of the Indian subcontinent interacted throughout ancient history, the book underlines how politics was enacted in various geographical orbits that kept interacting throughout the period without any fixed boundary or 'divide'. By closely examining the focal geographical points along which ancient Indian dynasties tried to expand their political power and interact with other contemporary dynasties, the book highlights the range of geographical possibilities of the regional power centres of various periods in ancient India. It also underlines the extent to which they operated within that frame. The book further argues that the web of inter-regional interaction was not limited to a particular set of regions but had a pan-Indian ramification. None of the regions could therefore thrive in political isolation. It underscores that regions in ancient Indian history never had any immutable historical shape or identity but were fluid, both in their interactions and outlines.

The notion of fixed geographical lines has seriously harmed the cause of Indian archaeological studies. For instance, the date of anything with Gangetic origin in the Deccan has been put at least 200 years later than its date in its centre of origin in the Ganga Plain. The way the NBP, a distinctive Ganga plain pottery of c. 800 BC and later, has been dated in the Deccan is a case in point. In the Deccan the NBP has seldom been put before 300 BC. This has been very unwise because this has distorted the

chronology of many Deccanese and even south Indian archaeological sites where cross-dating with the NBP is an important chronological marker. For instance, at Korkai, a port site in the Tamraparni delta area of the present-day Ramanathapuram district, a single radiocarbon date associated with its NBP-bearing level is in the 8th century BC or somewhat earlier. This was considered chronologically misfit, but a close examination of the NBP found in a neighbouring site, Alagunkalam, makes us feel that the Korkai date may well be correct because the Alagankulam material is identical in its colour and hue with the best Ganga Plain material (for a discussion of the issue, Chakrabarti 2010b). This is also likely to fit in the context of the radiocarbon date from a level at Porunthal near Palni at the foot of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu. This level contains sherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions and the date has been found to be around 500 BC (490 +/- 30 BC, uncalibrated), showing that the beginning of the historical period in Tamil Nadu may well be roughly contemporary with that in the Ganga Plain (personal information from K. Rajan, 2011). The sheer quality of the few pieces of the NBP that occur at Alagankulam (examined by R. Tewari, R.N. Singh and myself in 2005) makes us wonder if these sherds cannot be as early as *c.* 800 BC. If so, there should not be much difficulty in describing the early historic growth in Tamil Nadu as a process that took place between *c.* 800 BC and *c.* 500 BC, something that took place in the Ganga plain too. Whatever may transpire in future, I find no reason why artifacts like the NBP should be invariably dated outside their original distribution zone some centuries later than the date of their origin in the Ganga Valley. There was much faster movement of cultural items all over the subcontinent than we are prepared to admit.

The openness of Indian physical geography excepr at its northern perimeter has facilitated the development of a dense network of routes linking its various parts. The literary sources may underline some of them but for the details archaeological groundwork is necessary. For the past two decades or so, I have been doing precisely this and may put forward some of the relevant conclusions in the rest of this paper.

The incorporation of the Uttarakhand Himalayas in the orbit of India's sacred geography is a fact acknowledged widely in the traditional literary sources. One wonders if archaeology can throw any light on the general range of chronology by which it was likely to have been achieved (discussed in detail in Chakrabarti 2007). This sector of the Himalayas has a few major entry-points from the plains. The first one is at Kalsi where the upper course of the Yamuna has carved an access route, the earliest antiquity of which is marked by the Asokan edict at Kalsi itself. This entry leads to the uppermost stretch of the Yamuna Valley where Purola is located. This is a Painted Grey Ware site. The second entry is at Haridwar, and here, not far from Haridwar itself and towards Hrishikesh, is a Painted Grey Ware site. From Hrishikesh the road to Badrinath passes through Srinagar which is about half-way towards Badrinath. Srinagar in its immediate vicinity has a Painted Grey Ware site. It may be added that the plain opposite Manasa Devi hill at Haridwar has yielded painted pottery of the Harappan tradition, and there are sites of the Ochre Coloured Pottery and painted pottery of the Harappan tradition in the Saharanpur plain at the foot of the range where Kalsi is located. The third entry is through Kotdwar near Najibabad. A route links Kotdwar with Pauri, from where it is possible to join the Hrishikesh-Badrinath route via Srinagar. The Najibabad sector also possesses Painted Grey Ware. The fourth entry is through

Kashipur which is easily accessible from Rampur. There is a rich Painted Grey Ware site near Kashipur and there are also sites with the painted pottery of the Harappan tradition in this area. The fifth major entry is from Tanakpur which takes one to Champawat and Pithoragarh sectors of Uttarakhand. There is a Buddhist stupa site of *c.* 2nd century BC a few kilometres west of Tanakpur but from somewhere in Pithoragarh copper anthropomorphs, which are considered inseparable parts of the upper Gangetic Valley 'Copper Hoards' and have to be considered related to the late Harappan tradition after the discoveries at Sinoli, have been reported. It may be noted that Pithoragarh lies on the way to Mansarovar.

It may be recalled that the Uttarakhand Himalayas are full of steep V-shaped valleys with little cultivable lands being available either at the valley-bottoms or on their sides. Why the Painted Grey Ware settlers were moving into this area along defined routes to some pilgrim centres ? Was there any awareness of this zone among the people of the Copper Hoard/late Harappan tradition in the plains at its gate ? Nobody present in this sector of the plain could be unaware of the hills but whether they decided to enter this or not is a different matter. There is as yet no valid archaeological evidence except the occurrence of copper anthropomorphs in Pithoragarh. As far as the Painted Grey Ware is concerned, the evidence is unequivocal: from the Uttarkashi sector (cf. Purola) to Haridwar entry and Srinagar the Painted Grey Ware people moved deep into the Uttarakhand Himalayas which loom large in the Indian sacred geography. There is no independent date of the Painted Grey Ware from this sector but a date around 1000 BC may broadly be accepted, providing a clue to the time when the sacred character of the geography of this part of the Himalayas may be assumed to have developed a clear

profile. It is profiles such as these which throw light on how the cultural unity emerged at various points in various parts of the subcontinent.

Those familiar with the early political history of the subcontinent will know about the links of the Taxila region with the upper Ganga Plain. The importance of Takshasila near modern Rawalpindi in the early Indian literature is an important indicator of this link. No Indus site has yet been found in the Taxila area, but otherwise the entire area from Pakistani Panjab to the upper Ganga Plain is dotted with Indus sites, and our understanding is that this link between western Panjab and the upper Ganga Plain was maintained by two main alignments. The first one was Ludhiana-Ferozepur alignment which led to the Lahore sector, where Sohdara marked the ancient Chenab crossing. There is a straight run from Sohdara to Taxila with sites like Jhelam and Manikyala on the way. The second—and more important—alignment lay through Gurdaspur and Kalanour, both on the Indian side of the border. Kalanour is a massive site near the border and directly connected with Sialkot, from where Sohdara and thus the route to Taxila are easily approachable. What has to be understood that the linkage of the Taxila territory with the upper Ganga Plain near Delhi is rooted in the Indus times and takes textual shape by the time of the early Buddhist literature. Indus sites have not yet been found in the Sialkot sector of Pakistan and possibly not in the Lahore sector either. However, there are sites with pottery of the Indus tradition right up to the Siwaliks on the Indian side of Panjab and similarly there should be Indus-related sites up to the Siwaliks on the Pakistani side too (for the details, Chakrabarti 2010c). This is another instance of the subcontinent's cultural unity being given a chronological frame over a certain region.

These chronological frames will vary between different segments of the land. For instance, this chronological frame is considerably later in the case of the Bengal delta and the Brahmaputra Valley. The archaeological situations in both these areas are interesting. The available date of the NBP in the eastern part of the Bengal delta is *c.* 450 BC and there is no geographical difficulty in maintaining communications between this area and Assam along the Brahmaputra. In another part of the Bengal Delta the main communication point with Assam was the Karatoya Valley where a major archaeological site is located. This site—Mahasthangarh—has also yielded the NBP, although one is not sure of its radiocarbon dates here. The problem is that there does not seem to be any well-defined pre-NBP deposit in the Bangladesh part of the Bengal delta. This must be due to the lack of suitable work because Bangarh, only a short distance away from Mahasthangarh and in the same type of geographical setting, has recently yielded a substantial pre-NBP black-and-red ware deposit. The problem is more accentuated in the Assam section of the Brahmaputra Valley. No indisputable pre-Christian material has yet been found in this area. I can think of only two pieces of evidence: a second century BC bowl with incurved rim from the surface at Tejpur and a terracotta ring-well of about the same general period excavated in the cliff section of the Brahmaputra at the same place (information from S. Jamal Hasan 2011). I would argue that the Brahmaputra Valley part of Assam came into the Gangetic orbit by the beginning of the early historic period, although more positive data will be needed on this point.

The way the different sections of the subcontinent have interacted and shared elements of material culture calls for detailed research on the ground. The building up of its chronology segment by segment is also an important point. However, let

there be no doubt about the closeness of this interaction in the material domain of life. One season I scraped some pottery of *c.* 200 BC out of a cliff at Ror in the hilly region of Kangra, part of the ancient Trigarta. Next season, I scraped the identical pottery out of the Damodar cliff at Pokharna in Bankura. The point is that by *c.* 200 BC there was hardly any noticeable difference between the pottery types of the entire sweep of the country from Kangra to Paschim Banga. The fact that this uniformity extends well back in time is beyond doubt, but detailed comparative studies between different areas still remain to be undertaken.

The Vindhya-Satpura divide is supposedly a major divide in Indian history and geography. Contrary to this impression, the Ganga Plain and the Deccan were linked by a host of routes, the antiquity of which can securely be placed in the mid-second millennium BC, if not considerably earlier. These routes had their own ramifications in the Deccan and the southern peninsula and carved out a vast unit of political and economic interaction between the Konkan coast and the Godavari delta on the one hand and between the area south of the Narmada and the furthest parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala on the other. In 1999-2006 I studied these routes on the ground (Chakrabarti 2005, 2010b) beginning with the Gangetic Valley links with Maharashtra and Andhra. I shall offer a minimal outline of these routes in the rest of this paper.

Beginning with Rajagriha and Pataliputra, we find that the alignments towards the Deccan from these places converged upon Bhabua near Sasaram to follow the Bhabua to Chakia and Ahraura alignment towards Banaras which could be approached from this alignment in two ways: either from Ahraura or from Bhuili, the latter accessible directly from Chakia. The Ganga for Banaras

was crossed at Ramnagar. From Ahraura a route went up to Mirzapur but a route also went across the Sonabhadra or Robertsganj Plateau to the crossing of the Son at Agori Khas, from where there were routes to the Ramgarh area in the southern section of Sarguja Plain. The Hasdo River was followed in this section to enter the Bilaspur section of Chhattisgarh and end up near Raipur. The options at Raipur were to travel to the Vizianagram section of the Andhra coast through Bastar or to travel straight to the modern Gondia section of Vidarbha to turn south towards the Karimabad-Nizamabad section of Andhra. One could also travel straight west till the Aurangabad section and eventually Paithan on the Godavari were reached.

The route which went from Ahraura to Mirzapur was joined at Mirzapur by a route which came from Banaras following the left bank of the Ganga till Agiabir where the Ganga was crossed for Mirzapur. This route was also joined by a route which came from Sravasti north of Ayodhya and passed through Jaunpur. From Mirzapur the route climbed the Vindhyan scarp near Lalganj and Halia and proceeded towards Rewa, the ancient Chedi country. The Rewa Plateau received the Deccan-bound routes also from ancient Prayag and Kausambi, which ascended the Vindhyas at Baldaha Ghat and Sohagi Ghat. A little beyond Rewa the route bifurcated, one going to Chhattisgarh through Bandhavgarh to join the Bilaspur-Raipur alignment. Another route went to Jabalpur and turned south emerging in the Banganga plain near Pauni through Balaghat. From Pauni, the northern section of Andhra was easily accessible. Or, the route moved from Jabalpur to the area south of Bhopal where the Narmada was crossed near Hosangabad and the Tapti at Burhanpur. Maharashtra was reached by crossing the Tapti at Burhanpur and passing by Asirgarh on the way.

Proceeding further north from Allahabad-Kausambi, one reaches the Kanpur area where a route comes through Lucknow, crosses the Ganga at Kanpur and goes up to Ghatampur on the bank of the Yamuna only to cross it and follow the Betwa River alignment up to Vidisha and beyond to reach the Narmada and finally Burhanpur. The Betwa alignment was joined by a route which came from the area of modern Etahwa.

Further up is the Agra-Mathura area. Here the initial target was to reach the Ujjain section of Malwa. Bateshwar on the Agra side was a major point and from here the line went straight to modern Shivpuri via Pawayya or ancient Padmavati, and from Shivpuri, the Ujjain area was approachable. The more important place in this section was Mathura. Here a part of Rajasthan had to be crossed to reach Malwa. Rajasthan was entered through Bharatpur and Deeg and the route went by Rupbas, Bayana and Ranthambhor till the Kota area and Ujjain beyond it were reached. My idea of this section is incomplete because I have just begun fieldwork (2011) in this sector. The importance of Ujjain is highlighted more if we think of an alignment moving from the direction of Delhi and Mathura towards the Malwa Plain, especially Mandasore from where Ujjain is only but a step. Mandasore is easily accessed from the Mewar Plain. From Ujjain there is a straight route through Nagda to Gujarat, but from Ujjain one can also cross the Narmada at Maheswar and follow the Kasargad-Burhanpur (Tapti crossing)-Ajanta-Bhokardan-Paithan alignment. From Ujjain one can also move towards Dhar and then go up to Barwani where also the Narmada can be crossed. From Barwani, the alignment beyond the Narmada is Dhulia-Chalisgaon-Pitalkhora-Ellora-Bhokardan (?) –Paithan. From Dhulia one can also go to Nasik, Kalyan or Sopara, the last two

on the Konkan coast. From Nasik one can even go to Junnar and reach the Konkan coast through Malsejghat and Nanaghat.

In the next stage I tried to determine the major alignments within Maharashtra, Andhra and the southern regions up to Cape Comorin and Kerala. A major focus of this study was also the coastline from Daman on the Konkan coast to Srikakulam in the Vamsadhara estuary of Andhra which was home to almost innumerable pre-industrial ports, some of which played a major role in the ancient context too. In the Konkan coast our points of consideration were its geographical features, the distribution of its port sites and the links of communication between these ports and their Maharashtra and Karnataka hinterlands through a large number of passes in the Western Ghats. On the eastern side of the Western Ghats, the north- south alignment of Satara, Kolhapur and Belgaum plays a crucial role in mediating the routes which linked the different sections of the Konkan coast to a vast region covering large sections of inner Maharashtra, the Gulbarga-Bijapur-Badamy-Bellary section of Karnataka, and through them Andhra, and at a further remove, Tamil Nadu. One can also add to this network Solapur in the east and Dharwar in the south. Viewed in the context of such wider links, the narrow coastal plain of Konkan and the associated openings of varying importance in the Western Ghats cease to be a closed world and become an integral part of the vast network of routes covering the Deccan and the southern peninsula

In the case of Tamil Nadu and Kerala the situation is different and has been so mainly because of their different geographical characters. First, because of the presence of the Palghat gap, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have been closely linked historically. There are also some less prominent but nonetheless

important openings to the south of the Palghat opening. Apart from the Palghat gap, all the passes linked to the Kerala coast led either to the Mysore Plateau or to the southern section of Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu there are clear entry points in the north, which are linked to the Mysore Plateau and the Rayalseema tract of Andhra. These entry points are important to judge the flow of events in Tamil Nadu history. There are also uplands in the interior of Tamil Nadu. The configuration of these uplands and the Palghat gap have greatly influenced its internal lines of movements. Two communication lines have always been important: the Coimbature-Salem-Dharmapuri axis, with its own approach to the Kerala coast, and the axis from Kanchipuram-Madras sector to the areas down south up to Madurai and Tinnevelly.

The major internal barrier in Andhra lies in the Rayalseema sector where both across the Nallamalai and Erramala there are a few passes. These passes kept the line of communication between the Raichur Doab and Bellary sections of Karnataka and the Andhra coast between the mouth of the Krishna and Nellore open. Equally important is the opening of Tirupati, a camping ground of pilgrims from the north to Tirupati and further south. From Vidarbha and eastern India Andhra was open both on the north and the east.

Thus, right from the Ganga-Yamuna alignment to the southern tip of the peninsula there was a dense network of ancient routes giving material expression to the interconnection between different areas and the growth of a shared culture. By the middle of the second millennium BC most parts of the subcontinent were likely to be in the know of each other.

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3

Who Owns the Indian Past?

The Case of the Indus Civilization

The question 'who owns the past' is not a rhetorical question. On the one hand, it is tied to the issue of identities, which has played a major role in archaeological research since its very inception, and on the other, it is bound up with the various features of cultural resource management including the thorny relationship between the mainstream archaeology and the rights of indigenous people in the countries like USA, Australia and Canada.

There is a vast amount of literature on both themes. The first one, i.e. the question of identity, is linked to the establishment of national identity as well as various other collective identities like gender, ethnicity and religion. The issue of identity may assume many forms and generate many debates. In the context of Israel and the Palestinian territory, it has been argued[1], for instance, that there are four types of 'desired pasts' there: (1) the Israeli desired past which is sought by the Israeli state and the Jewish organizations of the United States; (2) the conservative Christian past which is championed by the Christian fundamentalist organizations, the American School of Oriental

Research and the Biblical Archaeological Society; (3) the Palestinian desired past, favoured by the Palestinian rights organizations and Palestinian archaeologists and intellectuals; and finally, (4) the diplomatic desired past, as represented by the appointed officials of the US State department.

Issues such as these have always been parts of archaeological research tradition, but in the modern world where the public awareness of such issues is much sharper, archaeological literature has to be concerned with the process and nature of various identity-formations.

The second theme is equally visible, although currently at its sharpest only in the United States and Australia. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, a federal law requiring agencies and institutions in receipt of federal funding to return native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony to their respective peoples, was passed in 1990. Similarly, the recognition of the traditional land-rights of the Australian indigenous people has also led to the recognition of their control over the cultural objects, sacred places and human remains found in their land[2].

The study of the past cannot be said to have ever been free of its socio-politics. Since 1986, when the World Archaeological Congress held its first session in Southampton, the study of this socio-politics has been a part of the mainstream study of the subject. There can never be an one-to-one answer to an archaeological problem, however science-based or logical it may be. In each case, the data are located in a field of uncertainty, however small, and that is filled up by the researcher's own socio-political predilection.

The focus of my present essay is to examine how the different aspects of the Indus civilizational studies have been conditioned by the socio-politics of our attitudes to the Indian past.

I shall begin by taking up the problem of the date of the beginning of this civilization. Many Indian books still refer to the date propounded first in 1946 by Mortimer Wheeler, i.e. 2500 BC. That was based on Wheeler's own subjective estimate of the date of the earliest contact between the Indus Civilization and Mesopotamia. Assuming that this contact was not significantly earlier than the reign of the Mesopotamian king Sargon and accepting 2325 BC as Sargon's date, he arrived at the round figure of 2500 BC, allowing 175-odd years for this civilization to form a relationship with Mesopotamia. The earliest date of the Mesoptamian civilization, typified by the Early Dynastic Period is 2700/2800 BC. Thus, according to Wheeler's scheme, the Indus Civilization was later than the Mesopotamian civilization, which was natural in the light of his belief that the idea of civilization came to the Indus from the former. In 1931 John Marshall thought that the date of Indus-Mesopotamia contact was earlier than the period of Sargon and he arrived, through various subjective calculations, at the date of *c.* 3250 BC for the beginning of the civilization on the Indus. Marshall, who spent his life laying the foundations of Indian archaeology, did not believe that India owed her Bronze Age civilization to any foreign source and thus he had no interest in making it look late in comparison with Mesoptamia and Egypt. By the time Wheeler wrote, India had ceased to be the jewel in the British crown and he had no particular reason to feel enchanted by Indian antiquity.

The modern situation is no less intriguing. After the first crop of radiocarbon dates from the Indus sites, D.P. Agrawal,

who, as the Secretary of the Radiocarbon Committee of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, had a hand in obtaining some of them, argued that these dates, could not suggest anything earlier than 2400 BC as the date of the beginning of the mature Indus Civilization. He believed that this tallied with Wheeler's opinion that the Indus-Mesopotamia contact did not date before Sargon, forgetting that radiocarbon dates are not historical dates. Agrawal represents some Indian archaeologists of the 1960s and 1970s, who considered it unsafe to go beyond the hitherto accepted framework of Indian archaeology. The premise was that any argument in favour of an earlier Indian past would not be 'scientific' and would more damagingly be termed 'nationalistic'.

The radiocarbon dates kept on coming, and definitive evidence of pre-Sargonic Indus-Mesopotamia contact also emerged. The largest series of the relevant radiocarbon dates emerged from the American excavations at Harappa, and the American interpretation of these dates was that the mature Indus Civilization began around 2600 BC. The American scholars, while interpreting their series of dates, did not even mention the historical profile of Indus-Mesopotamia contact, which was used by earlier scholars. The point is that an archaeologist from the Netherlands, the late ECL During-Caspers, and I demonstrated, independently of each other, that the famous Royal Graves of Ur, which are securely dated about 2600 BC, contained two types of carnelian beads of indisputably Indus manufacture. There could not be a shadow of doubt that there was a trading relationship between the Indus and Mesopotamia by 2600 BC. Assuming that the Indus Civilization must have taken some time before organizing trade with an area as far as Mesopotamia or modern Iraq, I pushed its inception 100 years earlier, and put it at 2700 BC. This date makes

the beginnings of the Indus and Mesopotamian civilizations contemporary[3].

Most of the Indian scholars, including Upinder Singh's much-publicised textbook of ancient and early mediaeval India, prefer to cite the American date of 2600 BC. The reason is two-fold: first, unfamiliarity with the primary data and the consequent inability to assess various scholarly opinions critically, and secondly, a marked reluctance to accept an early date for anything Indian in the fear that their names would be associated with the BJP, or worse, with the RSS. My familiarity with the various shades of political opinion among Indian archaeologists convinces me that none of our political parties and organizations has a coherent and professional attitude to the Indian past, archaeological or otherwise. Interestingly, a centre for the study of the Indus Civilization, funded by an American organization called Global Heritage Fund, was proposed to be set up in Vadodara where in the persons of K.K. Bhan and Ajith Prasad who have worked with the Americans, Italians, Spaniards and Japanese with funds coming from the latter, there is already a right kind of situation. The focus has now reputedly shifted to Deccan College, Pune, where the role of Bhan and Prasad in Vadodara has been assumed by Vasant Shinde who also likes to go to the field with assistance from the Americans and the Japanese. It is apparent that the concerned Indians have apparently no idea of how such internationally funded heritage organizations can be used to manipulate the sense of the past in the Third World. Or, even if they are aware of this dimension, they are not simply bothered, as long as they can hope to derive some advantage out of it.[4]

As I began by talking about the date of the beginning of the Indus Civilization, let me talk a bit more about the Indus

chronology. How long did it continue? The answer is: 'up to about 1300 BC'. This date is suggested both by the radiocarbon dates and the finds of Indus seals in the Kassite levels of the Mesopotamian site of Nippur. The point is that instead of a thousand-year-old chronology, we have now got a 1400-year-old chronology, and this longer chronology, as we shall see later, has some important implications.

Did this civilization whose full-fledged form dates from *c.* 2700 BC have a prelude or ealier formative stages, and if so, has this evidence been found in the subcontinent? Two sites in Haryana—Kunal and Bhirrana, both near Fatehabad—have shown two such stages, one 'early Harappan', the trace of which has been found at many sites, and second, 'pre-early Harappan' or what scholars call ' the level of the Hakra Ware'. There is no radiocarbon date from Kunal but there are several from Bhirrana, some dating from the 4th, 5th and 6th millennia BC. To be honest, there are some uncertainties regarding their context, but I shall not hesitate to put the beginning of the Hakra Ware level at this site at least in the first half of the 4th millennium BC, possibly closer to 4000 than 3500 BC. Now, if we look at the whole dated profile, we shall realize that the archaeological cultural tradition represented by the Indus Civilization covers really a long and continuous span—a span of about 2500 years (tentatively, 3800 BC as the date of the Hakra level at Bhirrana, and *c.* 1300 BC as the date of the end of the Harappan tradition), if not more.

If the chronological column of the Indus Civilization is, according to my argument, at least 2500-year-long, one of the most obvious inferences is that it was more deeply rooted in the subcontinental soil than we had hitherto been prepared to admit. Secondly, the very fact that this tradition lasted so long, covering virtually the whole area between Jammu and Gujarat and between

Baluchistan and the outer front of the Siwaliks in Panjab, Haryana and western U.P., implies that it interacted with the areas around it. From Gujarat, for instance, the Malwa plain of central India is open, and the western U.P. is inextricably connected with the vast sweep of the Ganga plain. *To argue that the Indus Civilization had no special archaeological bearing on the archaeology of the subcontinent outside its distribution area has no meaning in the geographical sense. Similarly, to speak of a 'Ganga Civilization', completely separate from the Indus Civilization, does not have much meaning either.* In western U.P., between the Yamuna and the Siwaliks, the two traditions are known to have interacted. The occurrence of the Gangetic Valley 'copper hoards' in the otherwise Harappan assemblage of Sinauli near Baghpat is a major evidence of this interaction, and so is the interlocking of the Harappan and Painted Grey Ware levels at Alamgirpur near Meerat. I suspect that the painted pottery that one finds in Bulandshahr and Aligarh at some of the OCP sites is a part of the Harappan tradition, although it is not yet possible to be positive on this issue. One of the outstanding discoveries of the Harappan material in the Ganga Plain is the find of what Dr. Rakesh Tewari of Uttar Pradesh State Archaeological Organization calls a piece of indisputably Harappan perforated vessel in an apparently mixed assemblage in the recent excavations at Ramnagar opposite Varanasi.[5]

There is an attempt in the archaeological literature to disassociate, as far as possible, the Indus Civilization from modern India. J.M. Kenoyer's name for it in his *The Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization* (Karachi, Oxford University Press) is the 'Indus Valley Civilization', which clearly carries the implication that it is primarily a product of the Indus Valley, all of which is in Pakistan. I find this erroneous term being freely used even in the Indian archaeology journals. I do not know if the Indians

who use this term are even aware of its implication. The term 'Indus-Sarasvati Civilization' is also wrong because it takes away the significance of the occurrence of the Indus sites in Gujarat and western U.P. The only logical terms are the Indus Civilization or the Harappan Civilization. The first excavated site of the civilization is Harappa.

Another related feature is the emphasis on what is called 'middle Asian interaction sphere' to explain the growth and appearance of the Indus Civilization. A convenient example of this emphasis is G.Possehl's *The Indus Civilization, a Contemporary Perspective* (Lanham, Maryland 2002: Alta Mira Press). The different kinds of interaction between the different components of the interaction zone between the Indus and the Oxus are well known, but the present archaeological data do not suggest that the growth of the Indus Civilization was due to this interaction. Among other things, this does not take into consideration the implication of the overwhelming number of Indus sites far to the east of the Indus. There is no doubt that the cultural sequence that has been unearthed at Kunal and Bhirrana, or for that matter, at Padri and Dholavira, is way beyond the Indus-Oxus orbit.

After the discovery of Mehrgarh in the Bolan Pass area of Baluchistan, the general tendency in the archaeological literature is to treat the Indus Civilization in a straight arrow-line of development beginning with the growth of wheat-barley agriculture in Baluchistan. Again, Possehl's book, which we have cited above, offers a ready example. The problem is that this notion downgrades, possibly wilfully, the role which the non-wheat-barley agricultural tradition to the east possibly played in the genesis of this civilization. Both rice and millets occur at several Early Harappan and Mature Harappan sites of Haryana and Panjab, including Harappa. These two crops are not known

to have been domesticated in Baluchistan. In the central Ganga plain and its Vindhyan fringe, the antiquity of rice cultivation goes back to the 7th millennium BC. The rice that one finds in the Early Harappan Haryana (Balu and Kunal) could have been only of eastern derivation. To relate the growth of the Indus Civilization only to the growth of wheat-barley agricultural tradition in Baluchistan is to imply that the growth of this Civilization is oriented to the West. This assumption ignores the multilineal character of its formation over a singularly large and diverse territory. Related to this trend is the current attempt by an American archaeobotanist to deny the presence of rice cultivation at Lohuradeva in the central Ganga Plain.[6]

A major archaeological fact disputing the notion of an exclusively Western orientation of the Indus Civilization is the growth of early agriculture and metallurgy along the Aravallis in Rajasthan. In my book *The Archaeology of Ancient Indian Cities* in 1995, I pointed out the probable role of the Aravalli metallurgical development in the genesis of the Mature Harappan Civilization, but regrettably, the whole issue has been ignored even by scholars who specialise in Rajasthan. For instance, in V.N. Misra's recent summation of the prehistoric and archaeological data from Rajasthan in his *Rajasthan: Prehistoric and Early Historic Foundations* (Delhi 2007: Aryan Books), there is no mention of this issue. On the other hand, the claim of the Aravalli system as an early and independent centre of agricultural origin is getting increasingly strong. First, we may consider the case of Bagor in Bhilwara. The fact that cattle, sheep and goat of Period I at Bagor were domesticated and the fact that the earliest chronological point of this period falls in the 6th millennium BC suggest the possibility of Bagor–I having an agricultural component. In the next period Bagor yielded copper implements,

of which the arrowhead is identical with the arrowhead type of the subsequently excavated site of Ganeshwar, located further up the Aravallis. In its first phase Ganeshwar was exclusively marked by microliths but possessed a number of copper tools in the next phase itself. It has not been generally realized that Bagor and Ganeshwar in two different sections of the Aravallis have the same archaeological sequence. It is likely that Ganeshwar–I and Bagor–I belonged to the same period, i.e. the 6th millennium BC and Ganeshwar also had an agricultural dimension like the latter site. The 6th millennium BC date for the so-called Mesolithic level in the Aravallis has also been highlighted by the mid-6th millennium BC date for a 60 cm thick Mesolithic deposit on the eastern face of Gilund-2 (Bhilwara district where Bagor also is situated). The issue needs further research, but what is intriguing is that the beginning of the chalcolithic occupation at Balathal in the same region has now been found to be about 3700 BC (calibrated). This implies a considerably earlier beginning of agriculture in the region, and as there is no reason to infer that this beginning was due to an infiltration from another area, one has to accept that this suggests an independent beginning of agriculture and metallurgy in the Aravalli zone[7].

The attempts to disassociate the Indus tradition from the later Indian heritage have also taken other forms. Those familiar with John Marshall's discussion on the Indus sculpture in *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization* (1931) will recall that the entire framework of that discussion was in terms of the 'Indianness' of the relevant specimens, and he worked out this 'Indianness' by pointing out the stylistic and conceptual similarities between the Indus sculptural objects and some examples of later Indian sculptures. It is this postulated link which is being currently questioned.

The famous 'priest-king' head and torso from Mohenjo-daro has been compared first with some specimens from Bactria and then with various other sundry representations from West Asia (cf. Ardeleanu-Jansen). This exercise has been singularly unedifying. Even if one assumes that the priest-king figure was a part of a seated image, the whole concept and representation of this image is completely different from the examples which have been cited from Bactria and other central and West Asiatic places. That the figure suggested the concept of a *Yogi* wrapped in meditation with his eyes fixed on the top of his nose was pointed out in detail by R.P. Chanda soon after its discovery at Mohenjo-daro. The problem with the study of Indus sculptural tradition is that very few specimens have so far been found, and that too primarily from two sites, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. One gets only occasional flickers of the fact that the spread of the Indus tradition was possibly more deep-rooted and widespread than we admit, in such discoveries as that of a stone monitor lizard or *Godhika* at Dholavira and the incised outline of the Mohenjo-daro 'dancing girl' on a potsherd at Bhirrana. That the iconographic tradition of this civilization was diverse is clear from the representations of sundry human figures on its seals. This tradition is also overwhelmingly 'Indian' in the sense that they can be explained in terms of the later and mostly current ritual beliefs.

This leads us to the question of the Indus religion. Many scholars, both foreign and Indian, are very reluctant to find any trace of modern Hindu rituals and beliefs in the finds which have been interpreted as evidence of Indus religion. Two facts, however, cannot be wished away—regrettably from the point of view of this group of people. One is the indubitable presence of

Siva in the form of *linga*-like stones found both at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, a distinctively phallic stone column at Dholavira, a seated ithyphallic stone figure from the same site, the famous 'Siva-Pasupati' figure on a seal, and the terracotta representation of a *Sivalinga* set in *Yonipatta* at Kalibangan. The second such evidence is the widespread presence of sacrificial pits at Lothal, Kalibangan, Banawali, Rakhigarhi and possibly a few other sites. These pits possibly have variations of their own. Their shapes and contents may also vary from site to site. However, their generic similarity with the 'havan kundas' which many devout people still dig up every day, light fire in, and pour offerings on, is undeniable.

Again, one has only to look up the section on religion in *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization* to find the footprints of later day Hinduism in the ruins of the Indus Civilization. I shall not argue that Hinduism in its modern forms flourished there. All that I would say that the roots of some major Hindu religious beliefs and rituals can be traced back to that period. As far as the early scholars were concerned, that was obvious. Even to people like me, that is the most simple and straightforward explanation of the category of artefacts which have been found at the Indus sites and can be associated with religion and ritual beliefs. Doubts have been expressed in the modern context because there are scholars who will not like to see the continuation of Hinduism in any form from this early period.

In a small but important volume entitled *The Sarasvati Flows On: the Continuity of Indian Culture*, (Delhi: Aryan Books, 2002), the seniormost archaeologist of the country, B.B. Lal, has offered an outline of the various traits of Indian behaviour which have continued from the protohistoric times to the present. Even outside this book some major examples can be given. For

instance, one has only to look up the list of the plant-remains found at the Indus sites to realize that the agricultural pattern of the subcontinent has been reflected in that list. The general idea is that the Indus people were not familiar with irrigation and depended on the over-bank floods of the Indus to sow their crops. There was certainly some dependence on the river floods of the rivers during that period, but a far more probable hypothesis in the light of modern but pre-industrial agricultural practices in Sindh is that canal irrigation was used. The practice of both double-cropping and irrigation was there, and I have been trying to argue this since 1988 (*Theroretical Issues in Indian Archaeology*, Delhi 1988: Munshiram Manoharlal) but without any effect on the mindset of Indus specialists. Regarding Harappan technology, especially regarding Harappan metal technology, it has been convincingly argued by Nayanjot Lahiri that the preference for pure copper products in the range of Harappan metal objects may be explained by the general preference for ritually pure copper materials in modern India[8]. The point is that it is no reflection on the technological status of Harappan metallurgy that many of its specimens were unalloyed.

In the general field of Indus technological studies, a noteworthy development in recent years is to analyse the technical skills involved in various crafts by employing village craftsmen to replicate them. The knowledge imparted by the traditional craftsmen is couched in terms of modern science, and by the time the process results in publications, the village craftsmen are forgotten and in their place we find modern 'western' scientists trying to lay down laws on the Indus crafts. This tendency has become dominant after the American excavations at Harappa under Kenoyer. Such studies are no doubt useful but provide an

excellent example of how the traditional crafts of the subcontinent can be appropriated by 'western science'.

At this point, it may be apt to point out how the study of the Indus Civilization itself is being appropriated by 'western science'. In June 2008, the American magazine *Science* published a lengthy article in several sections on the Indus Civilization. The sections numbered six and carried the following headings: (1) Unmasking the Indus: boring no more, a trade-savvy Indus emerges; (2) Unmasking the Indus: Buddhist stupa or Indus temple?; (3) Unmasking the Indus: Indus collapse: the end or the beginning of an Asian culture? (4) Understanding the Indus: trench warfare: modern borders split the Indus; (5) Understanding the Indus: trying to make way for the old; (6) Unmasking the Indus: Pakistani archaeology faces issues old and new.

As excavators two Indian names—V. Shinde and R.S. Bisht, both well-known associates of the American scholars G. Possehl and J.M. Kenoyer—and three Pakistani names–Qasid Mallah, Farzand Massih and G.M. Veesar—have been cited; otherwise the essay cites as 'scholars' only Americans. The title of the sections is, to us, academically meaningless. That the Indus Civilization was, as the writer put it, 'trade-savvy' has been known since its discovery and in 1931 its internal and external trade were comprehensively discussed. That there is a possibility of finding an Indus religious place below the ruins of the Buddhist stupa in the northeastern corner of the western mound of Mohenjo-daro was pointed out as early as 1931. The issue of the Indus decline has also been discussed for ages. That Indian and Pakistani archaeologists do not work together is well known, but to put the record straight, there is no 'trench warfare' between them. Research is a continuous process, and one is not sure why 2008 should mark a point when old ideas regarding the Indus are giving

way to the new. Archaeologists anywhere face both old and new issues, and one does not understand the reason of particular emphasis with reference to Pakistani archaeologists. The article states that Mehrgarh was the precursor of the Indus Civilization and that the Indus cities at 2600 BC were 600 years later than those of Mesopotamia, simply forgetting to mention the fact that some early Harappan settlements dating from before 3000 BC were fortified, planned and could be considered cities, especially in view of the fact that the Indus writing had made its appearance by then. Equally interestingly, he approvingly cites the Italian archaeologist G. Verardi's idea that the Buddhist stupa at the northeastern corner of the western mound at Harappa was not a stupa but only a series of platforms on the model of the Sumerian ziggurat, an idea which fits perfectly with Wheeler's idea that there was a strong Mesopotamian impetus to the growth of the Indus Civilization. Incidentally, this stupa structure was investigated by two of India's foremost early archaeologists, R.D. Banerjee and D.R. Bhandarkar, and I have no reason to believe that they did not recognize a Buddhist stupa when they saw one.

Most amazingly, considering that the articles figured in *Science*, the author, A. Lawler, allowed himself some comments on the domestic politics of India:

> The rise of Hindu nationalism in today's India has thrust this scholarly debate into the political spotlight. Hindu nationalists' push to see the roots of their religion in the 5000-year-old Indus civilization creates another barrier between Indian archaeologists and their mostly Muslim counterparts in Pakistan.... The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which ruled India from 1998 to 2004 declared the Indus to be progenitor of Hindu civilization, a controversial claim in a country with a large Muslim

> population. While in power, BJP pumped additional funding into Indus-related digs, and its influence over archaeological matters remains strong.

I agree with the last part of the author's comment. The BJP's influence over Indian archaeological matters must be strong because otherwise how an American-funded Indus Centre with J.M. Kenoyer on board is being set up in Gujarat with the support of its BJP government? Regarding the author's statement that the BJP "declared the Indus to be progenitor of Hindu Civilization", all that one can point out is that it is not usual for any political party in India to declare anything as the progenitor of any aspect of the Indian civilization, nor are they known to make such statements. Lawler's political comments go deeper. Citing Bisht's 'opinion' that the Indus people were 'one and the same with the Aryans', he writes that this 'theory finds little support among foreign scholars'. This attempt to put Indian scholarship vis-à-vis foreign scholarship has long been an important ingredient of Western scholarship on ancient India.

The idea that the Indus Civilization could bear an echo of the Vedic tradition has taken deeper roots in the recent period after it was understood that the densest distribution of the Indus Civilization sites was not along the Indus but along the Hakra which was a part of a river-system parallel to that of the Indus. This river-system has been known to modern scholarship since the late 18th century, and the Ghaggar-Hakra was identified with the Vedic Sarasvati by the French historical geographer L. Vivien de Saint-Martin (1802–1896) possibly in 1860 in his book on the study of the Vedic geography. By 1830, the general archaeological potential of its valley was also understood. The idea that the Indus Civilization and the Vedic tradition could

not have been poles apart was perfectly acceptable to scholars like R.P. Chanda, M.S. Vats, B.N. Datta and possibly most significantly, P.V. Kane. They did not discuss the issue from the point of view of modern politics. I do not know the political opinion of Chanda and Vats, but B.N. Datta was one of the forerunners of communist movement in India and, hopefully, P.V. Kane, *Bharatratna*, will not be accused of being a 'Hindu nationalist'. According to Datta, "in religious matters, the present-day Hindus are the descendants of the Indus valley people". Kane, in fact, wrote that the Rigvedic people were earlier than the Indus valley people" and that there was some evidence to believe that the Indus Valley people "were probably Aryans " or different but "contemporaneous with the Rigveda Aryans". I have cited these scholars only to show that the problem was not always tinged with political implications as it is now[9].

People who are very keen to insert a phase of Aryan invasions between the Indus Civilization and the later historic India would prefer to view Hinduism as Aryan in inspiration. This would mean, by implication, that Hinduism is as much native to the Indian soil as the much later immigrant religions like Islam and Christianity. If this belief gives a section of Indian people and what Lawler calls 'foreign scholars', happiness and peace, they are welcome to it. However, this should not be a deterrent on viewing the formative phase of Indian history in the light of the increasingly supportive archaeological data that there is no break in the continuity of Indian archaeological record since prehistory. As I wrote in 2004, "all the people of the subcontinent are, in one way or another, the inheritors of the Indus civilization"[10]. The Indian past represented by this civilization belongs to them.

I conclude this essay by pointing out a danger which is increasingly facing Indian archaeology today. If one goes through the archaeological literature on Egypt and Mesopotamia, the areas where Western scholarship has been paramount since the beginning of archaeological research in those areas, one notes that the contribution made by the native Egyptian and Iraqi archaeologists is completely ignored in that literature. The Bronze Age past of Egypt, Mesoptamia and the intervening region is completely appropriated by the Western scholarship. Also, when Western archaeologists write on Pakistani archaeology, they seldom mention the contribution made by the Pakistani archaeologists themselves. There are exceptions but they are very rare. After Independence, the Archaeological Survey of India pursued a policy of relative isolation, which enabled archaeology as a subject to develop in the country and helped Indian archaeologists to find their feet. The policy seems to be changing now, and supercilious articles like the one by Lawler are an indication of the effect of this change. There is a great deal of arrogance and sense of superiority in that segment of the First World archaeology which specializes in the Third World. Unless this segment of the First World archaeology changes its way and attitude, it should be treated with a great deal of caution in the Third World.

As a British author, William Dalrymple, possibly well known in Delhi, is supposed to have commented in an interview to the Channel 4 of the British television, "One should protect one's own history and fight for it by tooth and claw, as others will always try to change it".

PS. An important point that I have made in this paper is that there is a complete appropriation of the Bronze Age past of

Egypt, Mesopotamia and the intervening region by the Western scholarship. This also includes Pakistan where the Western scholars, even while writing on Pakistan archaeology, seldom mention the contribution made by the Pakistani archaeologists themselves.

This point has recently been driven home once again by what is reported of the Indus Civilization in *Science* under the heading "the ingredients for a 4000-year-old proto-curry" (20 JULY 2012 VOL 337 SCIENCE www.sciencemag.org). The occasion is the identification of cooked ginger and turmeric in human teeth at Farmana and of banana phytoliths from the same site. The author of the note, A. Lawler, does not mention it, but the first item of the ingredient of a curry in the Indus context was reported by an Indian worker, K.S. Saraswat, and it was fenugreek or *methi*, from Kunal. One is surprised by Lawler's emphasis on the occurrence of rice at Masudpur because rice was found much earlier at Kunal and Balu by the same Indian worker. The fact which possibly makes Masudpur rice significant from Lawler's point of view is that it was identified by a (white) Cambridge archaeologist with the name Bates ! He also makes a great deal of the point that Bates' work suggests that both summer and winter cropping were practised by the Masudpur people. The point that the Harappans prastised double-cropping was made by a (brown/ black) Cambridge archaeologist with the name Chakrabarti in 1988 in his book *Theoretical Issues in Indian Archaeology*.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Sandra Scham. Diplomacy and Desired Pasts. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 9(2), 2009: 163-99.
2. Cf. N. Ferries. Between Colonial and Indigenous Archaeologies: Legal and Extra-Legal Ownership of the Archaeological Past in

North America. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 27(2), 2003: 154-90; D. Ritchie, Principles and Practice of Site Protection Laws in Australia. In D. Charmichael, J. Hubert, B. Reeves, and A. Schanche (eds.), *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*. London, 1994: Routledge, pp. 227-44.

3. There is a detailed discussion on Harappan chronology with a historiographical survey of the various estimates and their basis in D. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of the Ancient Indian Cities*. Delhi 1995: Oxford University Press.
4. The details of the proposed Indus Centre can be easily located in the web-pages of 'Global Heritage Fund'.
5. For the archaeological details, D. Chakrabarti, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology*. Delhi 2006: Oxford University Press; I owe my information on the interlocking of Harappan and Painted Grey Ware levels at Alamgirpur to Dr. R.N. Singh of BHU, and I owe my information on the find of a Harappan perforated ware vessel at Ramnagar to Dr. Rakesh Tewari, Director of U.P. State Archaeology.
6. Regarding Lohuradeva rice, the following is the comment of Dorian Fuller in 'archaeoboranist blog', section: Indian archaeoborany watch: Lohuradewa 2008: "I now doubt even more, that the rice was domesticated. It is not even clear that it was cultivated, and is plausibly (perhaps safest interpreted as) wild gathered". Among other things, rice occurs at the site in the 7th-6th millennia BC context as plastering material in mud plaster. Those who have seen the practice in modern Indian villages will know that this practice itself implies a long and close familiarity with rice agriculture. Is there any context where wild rice occurs extensively in mud plaster?
7. The data are cited in detail in D. Chakrabarti, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology* (Delhi 2006: Oxford University Press).

8. N. Lahiri. Indian Metal and Metal-related Artefacts as Cultural Signifiers: An Ethnographic Perspective. *World Archaeology* 27 (1) 1995, pp. 116-32.
9. This literature has been surveyed in D. Chakrabarti, *The Battle for Ancient India*. Delhi 2008: Aryan Books.
10. D. Chakrabarti (ed.). *Indus Civilization Sites in India: New Discoveries*. Mumbai 2004: Marg Publications.

2

THE GREAT ANCIENT EMPIRES

THE RISE OF THE GANGETIC CULTURE AND THE GREAT EMPIRES OF THE EAST

The extension of the Vedic culture into the central and eastern Gangetic plains was as important for the further course of Indian history as the period of their early settlement in the Panjab and in the Ganga–Yamuna Doab. The penetration of the east very soon led to the emergence of the first historical kingdoms and to a second phase of urbanisation – the first phase being that of the Indus civilisation.

It is generally assumed that the eastward migration of the Vedic population was caused by a change of climate. The fertile area in Panjab and Doab became more and more arid and, at the same time, the Gangetic jungles receded and thus became penetrable. The ancient texts show that the tribes were constantly fighting for pasture and agricultural land. In the Brahmana texts, it is stated quite unequivocally that only he who fights on two fronts can establish a settlement successfully, because if he fights on only one front, the land which he has acquired will surely be taken over by the next of the migrating groups. Thus there was continuous warfare both against the indigenous people and against other Vedic tribes.

A further motivation for the movement east may have been escape from royal supremacy and a desire to preserve their earlier republican organisation by settling where the new kings did not yet have power. Heterodox groups and sodalities like the Vratyas which are mentioned in the Atharvaveda may have played an important role in this movement. It is interesting to note that Buddhist texts contain many references to powerful tribal republics which existed in the east in the fifth century BC while the Brahmana texts which originated in the western part of Vedic settlements refer mostly to kingdoms.

Not very much is known so far about the time and the direction of these movements beyond Kurukshetra. There are early references to movements south: 'The people move victoriously to the south.'[1] Avanti, with its capital at Ujjain about 500 miles south of Kurukshetra, was one of the earliest

outposts in central India and it showed traces of incipient urbanisation as early as about 700 BC. But groups of Vedic Aryans also moved north. A Brahmana text says: 'Whenever a father resettles a son, he settles him in the north.'[2] Probably those who went north did not stop at the foot of the Himalayas but moved east along the foothills. Indian historians maintain that this route was perhaps one of the earliest passages to the east because there was less jungle there and the many tributaries of the Yamuna and the Ganga could be more easily crossed upstream than down in the plains.

The penetration of the east

The movement east was certainly the most important one. In a text it is clearly stated: 'The people move from the west to the east and conquer land.'[3] It is essential to note that the term for land in this quote is *kshetra* which refers to fields fit for cultivation. There is also a highly instructive text in the Shatapatha Brahmana, the 'Brahmana of the Hundred Paths', which throws light on the extension of the late Vedic civilisation into the eastern Gangetic plains. This text reports the founding of a realm called Videha to the northeast of Patna by a prince, Videgha-Mathava. This prince is said to have started from the river Saraswati in the company of the fire god, Agni-Vaishvanara, of whose fame as a great coloniser we have heard already. Videgha followed him until they came to the river Sadanira (this is now the river Gandak). Here Agni stopped and did not proceed. The text[4] describes this episode very vividly:

> Mathava, the Videgha, was at that time on the [river] Sarasvati. He [Agni] thence went burning along this earth towards the East . . . and the Videgha Mathava followed after him as he was burning along. He burnt over [dried up] all these rivers. Now that [river], which is called Sadanira, flows from the northern [Himalaya] mountains: that one he did not burn over. That one the Brahmins did not cross in former times, thinking, 'it has not been burnt over by Agni Vaishvanara'.
>
> Nowadays, however, there are many Brahmins in the East of it. At that time it [the land east of the Sadanira] was very uncultivated, very marshy, because it had not been tasted by Agni Vaishvanara.
>
> Nowadays, however, it is very cultivated, for the Brahmins have caused [Agni] to taste it through sacrifices. Even in late summer that [river] . . . rages along . . .
>
> Mathava the Videgha then said [to Agni] 'Where am I to abide?' 'To the East of this [river] be thy abode!' said he. Even now this [river] forms the boundary of the Koshalas and Videhas.

The events reported here are of great significance. At the time when this text was composed there was obviously still a clear recollection that the land to the east of the river Sadanira (Gandak) was originally unclean to the Brahmins because their great god Agni had not traversed this river. Prince Videgha had nevertheless conquered this country. The term *etarhi* used in the text means 'now' and is obviously a reference to the state of affairs at the time of writing. So, by the time this Brahmana text was written (in approximately the eighth century BC) this land was considered to be acceptable to the Brahmins. But, because the god of the Brahmins had not stepped into this land, it was considered to be inferior to the land in the west. Because of its strong elements of an already highly developed indigenous chalcolithic culture and society this part of the country was suspect and impure to orthodox Brahmins even in the mid-first millennium BC. We can therefore only endorse the statement made by Hermann Oldenberg in his book on Buddhism which was first published in 1881: 'When we think about the origins of Buddhism we must keep in mind that the earliest Buddhist congregations were located in the country or at least at the border of the country into which Agni-Vaishvanara had not crossed on his way to the East, exuding flames.'

Archaeological research sheds more light on the establishment of a Gangetic culture than the stray textual references which cannot be accurately dated. Since India attained independence the Archaeological Survey of India has made great efforts to excavate the early historical cities of northern India. The dating of some sites is still open to debate but there is a consensus that the period from the late seventh to the late fifth century BC was a most decisive phase for the development of Indian culture. It may well be said that the history of the Indian subcontinent actually started at that time.

In this period the first territorial kingdoms were established in the central part of the Gangetic plains, northern India witnessed a second phase of urbanisation, and those parts of the subcontinent which are now included in Pakistan were annexed by the Persian emperor, Dareios the Great. At the end of this period the first historical personality of India, Gautama Buddha, stepped into the limelight of history.

From the numerous small tribal kingdoms (*janapada*) sixteen major ones (*mahajanapada*) emerged in the fifth century BC (see Map 1.2). The emergence of these principalities had a lot to do with agrarian extension, control of trade routes and a new and more aggressive type of warfare. The texts do not necessarily always use the same name for each of these mahajanapadas, but it is possible to list the most important ones which have also been documented by archaeological research. These are: Kamboja and Gandhara located in northern Pakistan; Kuru, Surasena (capital: Mathura) and Panchala in the western Doab; Vatsa (capital: Kausambi) in the eastern Doab; Kasi (capital: Varanasi) and to the north of it, Koshala; Magadha to

the south of Patna and the tribal republics of the Mallas and Vrijis to the north of it; and farther east, Anga, near the present border between Bihar and Bengal; in central India there was Avanti (capital: Ujjain) and to the east of it Chetiya. The hub of this whole system of mahajanapadas was the Ganga–Yamuna Doab and the immediately adjacent region to the east.

The origins and the internal organisation of these mahajanapadas are still a matter for speculation. As the earlier tribes were usually rather small, all the inhabitants of a mahajanapada could not have belonged to the tribe that gave it its name. Therefore, they must have been confederations of several tribes. Some of these mahajanapadas had two capitals which seems to be evidence for a fusion of at least two smaller units: Hastinapura and Indraprastha were both located in the land of the Kurus, and Panchala included Kampila and Ahicchatra. The structure of these states was perhaps similar to that of later medieval Hindu kingdoms: the direct exercise of royal power was restricted to the immediate tribal surroundings while other principalities belonging to the kingdom enjoyed a great deal of internal autonomy. The heads of these principalities only joined the king in warfare and plunder and they participated in his royal ceremonies. The only definite borders of such mahajanapadas were rivers and other natural barriers. The extension of royal authority depended on the loyalty of the border tribes which were also able to be influenced by neighbouring kingdoms.

Urbanisation in the Ganges valley

The rise of the mahajanapadas was directly connected with the emergence of the early urban centres of the Gangetic plains in the period after 600 BC. Five of the six major cities in the central Gangetic plains were capitals of mahajanapadas: Rajagriha (Magadha), Varanasi (Kasi), Kausambi (Vatsa), Sravasti (Koshala) and Champa (Anga). Only the sixth city, Saketa, was not an independent capital but was located in Koshala. It must have been the centre of an earlier janapada which merged with Koshala. In central India there was Ujjain (Avanti) and in the northwest there was Taxila (Gandhara) or rather the recently discovered early town which preceded both Taxila and the nearby township on the Bhir Mound which dates back to the period of Persian occupation around 500 BC. There seems to be a correlation between political development and urbanisation in this period of the sixth to the fifth centuries BC.

The most remarkable contrast between the new cities in the Gangetic plains and earlier towns like Hastinapura is that of the system of fortification. Whereas the earlier towns were not fortified, these new cities had moats and ramparts. The ramparts were made of earth which was covered in some cases with bricks from about the fifth century BC onward; later on they were even replaced by solid brick walls. A millennium after the decline of the Indus civilisation, one encounters once more bricks made in kilns.

Kausambi had the most impressive fortification, its city walls are about 4 miles long and at some places 30 feet high. The archaeologist G.R. Sharma, who excavated Kausambi in the 1950s, thought that these walls resembled those of the Indus cities. There were also public buildings like assembly halls in these early Gangetic cities, and after the rise of Buddhism they also contained monasteries and stupas. City planning with regard to the network of streets seems to have started again only in the fourth century BC.

An important indicator of the growth of an urban economy are the punch-marked coins which have been found in those Gangetic cities. There were also standardised weights which provide evidence for a highly developed trade in the fifth century BC. Was there perhaps some cultural continuity right from the time of the Indus civilisation down to this new Gangetic civilisation? This question cannot yet be answered, but it is interesting to note that the weight of 95 per cent of the 1,150 silver coins found at Taxila is very similar to the standardised stone weights of the Indus civilisation.

There was a great demand in this period of the Gangetic civilisation for a new type of ceramic referred to as 'Northern Black Polished Ware'. The centre of production of this was in the Gangetic plains. Just as the earlier Painted Grey Ware was identified with the period of Late Vedic settlement in Panjab and Doab, this new type of ceramic shows the spread of the Gangetic civilisation and its influence on other parts of India opened up by the many new trade routes. Northern Black Polished Ware made its first appearance around 500 BC and could be traced in all the mahajanapadas mentioned above; it even showed up in distant Kalinga (see Map 1.2). In 1981 a city was discovered and partly excavated in western Orissa, which was about 1 mile long and 500 yards wide, surrounded by a solid brick wall. At this site Northern Black Polished Ware was also discovered.

Another important indicator for a well-developed urban culture, a script, has not yet been found in those Gangetic cities. Ashoka's inscriptions of the third century BC still remain the earliest evidence for an Indian script. But since the two scripts Brahmi and Karoshthi were already fully developed, scholars believe that they may have originated in the fifth century BC. Script in India developed probably for the first time under Persian influence. The Persians held sway in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent at that time and Karoshthi, which was written from right to left, was based on the Aramaic script which was the official script of the Persian empire.

The rise of Buddhism

This new Gangetic civilisation found its spiritual expression in a reform movement which was a reaction to the Brahmin–Kshatriya alliance of the Late Vedic age. This reform movement is mainly identified with the teaching of Gautama Buddha who is regarded as the first historic figure

of Indian history. The date of his death (*parinirvana*) has always been a controversial issue. Whereas the Buddhist world celebrated in AD 1956 the 2,500th anniversary of his Nirvana (in 544 BC), modern historians and Indologists had generally accepted *c.*483 BC as the date of his death. But in the early 1980s the German Indologist H. Bechert has convincingly shown that none of these dates which are based on later Buddhist chronicles and canonical texts can be taken for granted and that the Buddha may instead have lived and preached about a century later. These findings were generally approved at an international conference at Göttingen in 1988 even though they are not unanimously accepted, especially by Indian historians. As early Buddhist literature, in particular the Jataka stories of the Buddha's previous lives, depict an already flourishing urban society in north India, archaeological evidence also seems to indicate that the Buddha lived in the fifth rather than in the sixth century when urbanisation in the Ganges valley was still in its incipient stage. The Buddha, however, was not the only great reformer of that age. There was also Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, who is supposed to have been a younger contemporary of the Buddha. Jainism, this other great ascetic religion, was destined to have an unbroken tradition in India, especially in the rich merchant communities of western India. Buddhism spread to many other countries later on, but has declined in India itself. It could be said that Mahavira's teachings reappeared in the rigorous ethics of Mahatma Gandhi who was influenced by Jainism as he grew up in a Gujarati Bania family, the Banias being a dominant traders' caste in that region.

Both these ascetic religious movements of the fifth century BC are characterised by a transition from the magic thought of the Vedas and the mystical speculations of the Upanishads to a new type of rationality. This rationality is also in evidence in the famous grammar of the great Indian linguist, Panini. His grammar, India's first scientific treatise, was produced in this period. Buddha's teachings were later on fused once more with mystical speculation and even with magic thought in Tantric Buddhism, but his original quest for rationally enlightened experience is clearly documented by this explanation of the four noble truths, and of the 'eightfold path' of salvation from the burden of human suffering. He had practised penance and experienced the futility of mystical speculation before he arrived at his insight into the causes of human suffering and the way to remove them. The eightfold path of right conduct (in vision, thought, speech, action, giving, striving, vigilance and concentration) which leads to a cessation of the thirst for life and thus stops the cycle of rebirths appears to be a matter of practical instruction rather than the outcome of mystical speculation.

The voluminous Buddhist scriptures throw a flood of light on the life and times of Gautama Buddha. He was born as the son of a Sakhya prince in a region which now belongs to Nepal. He left his family at the age of

29 and spent many years as a wandering ascetic until he experienced his enlightenment at Bodh Gaya. He then preached his first sermon at Sarnath near Varanasi and toured many parts of what is now Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, spreading his teachings and gaining more and more followers. He met the high and mighty of his time – among them King Bimbisara of Magadha.

After his death, a council of 500 Buddhist monks was convened at Rajagriha in order to edit the corpus of his sermons so that his authentic teachings could be preserved. A second council, convened at Vaishali, witnessed a schism: the 'old ones' (*theravadins*) insisted on the ascetic ideal of the community of monks (*sangha*), whereas a new movement stood for a greater accommodation of the lay members and a broadening of the concept of the sangha to include followers other than monks. In keeping with this aim, the new trend was called Mahasanghika. This was the origin of the 'Great Vehicle' (*mahayana*) as the new movement liked to call itself while looking down upon the 'Small Vehicle' (*hinayana*) of the orthodox monks. This schism was undoubtedly of great importance for the later development of Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, but it also predetermined the decline of Buddhism in India itself.

The west under Persian domination

In the sixth century BC, the Persian kingdom of the Achaemenids emerged within a few decades as the first major empire in recorded history. Kyros, the founder of this empire, is said to have sent an expedition to Afghanistan which reached the borders of India, but the conquest of northwestern India was left to Dareios (521 to 485 BC). In the famous inscription of Behistun (*c.*518 BC), he mentions Gandhara as a province of his empire. Other inscriptions add Hindush (Sindh) to this list of provinces only a few years later. The river Indus, which had already been explored by Skylax, a Greek in Persian service, thus had become the border of the Persian empire.

Not much is known about the administration of these Persian provinces on the banks of the Indus, but Herodotus reports that these regions (Indoi) provided the greatest amount of revenue to the Persian empire. This would indicate that under Dareios and Xerxes these regions were thoroughly subjected to Persian administration. News about this altogether novel style of administration must have reached Magadha, whose rulers were on the verge of founding the first major empire on Indian soil. But it is difficult to gauge the extent of Persian influence on Indian history because archaeological evidence is missing and the gold coins of the Achaemenids have not been found in India so far. Only the towns of the Bhir Mound at Taxila and Charsada, west of it, are attributed to the Achaemenids, but no distinctively Persian features have been noted by the archaeologists excavating those sites.

The origins of the early state

A new phase of political development began in the eastern Gangetic plains in the times of Dareios and Buddha. Some of the mahajanapadas of this region established their hegemony over others in the fifth century BC. There emerged a kind of strategic quadrangle: Koshala and the tribal confederation of the Vrijis held sway north of the Ganga; Vatsa, with its capital Kausambi, dominated the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna; and Magadha ruled the large region southeast of the Ganga.

Koshala and Magadha followed a particularly aggressive policy which was not only aimed at victory over their neighbours but at annexation of their territory as well. Bimbisara of Magadha seems to have started this struggle. During his long reign he laid the foundations for the rise of Magadha as the greatest power in India. An important step towards this aim was the conquest of neighbouring Anga. In this way Magadha could greatly enhance its control over the trade routes of the eastern plains and perhaps also gain access to the trade of the east coast. Bimbisara built a more magnificent capital at New Rajagriha to commemorate his supremacy. There he is also supposed to have met Buddha who converted him to his teachings. Bimbisara died a miserable death, his son Ajatashatru imprisoned and starved him.

Ajatashatru continued the aggressive policy of his father, but soon suffered defeat at the hands of his uncle, the king of Koshala. But this king was soon removed by his own son, Virudhaka. Koshala and Magadha then fought against the northern tribal republics. Koshala vanquished the tribe of the Sakhya, to which Buddha belonged. From then on Koshala held sway from Varanasi to the foothills of the Himalayas.

Magadha's warfare against the strong tribal confederation of the Vrijis is supposed to have continued for fourteen years, and it is said that Buddha himself advised Ajatashatru against starting this war. Magadha for the first time used heavy chariots that were armoured and catapults for hurling huge stones against the enemies in this war. In order to wage war more effectively two generals of Magadha fortified a village, Pataligrama, on the banks of the river Ganga, which soon rose into prominence under its new name Pataliputra (Patna). Vaishali, the capital of the Licchavis, the strongest tribe of the Vriji confederation, is highly praised in Buddhist literature. Its splendour and its multi-storey houses are specifically mentioned. The city is said to have been governed by the assembly of the heads of its 7,707 families who all proudly called themselves rajas. When Ajatashatru had barely established his hegemony over the Gangetic plains he was challenged by King Pradyota of Ujjain (Avanti) in western India who even conquered Kausambi and held it for some time. But Magadha was already so powerful that such challenges could not dislodge it any more from its eminent position.

The meteoric rise of Magadha within the lifetime of two generations has remained an enigma to all historians who have tried to explain the origins of ancient India's first empire. The main problem is not the sudden emergence of a successful dynasty – Indian history is replete with such success stories – but the fact that a vast state of hitherto unprecedented dimensions was born at the periphery of the Gangetic civilisation without any recognisable period of gestation. Historians who believe in the theory of diffusion of imperial state formation from a centre in Western Asia point to the fact that the rise of Magadha closely paralleled the Persian conquest of north-western India. The knowledge of the new style of imperial administration practised in the Persian provinces on the river Indus must have spread to eastern India, too. But the availability of this knowledge would not suffice to explain the actual rise of Magadha. We have to delve back into India's history in the seventh and sixth centuries BC in order to find clues for the emergence of this new type of state formation.

Early state formation in India usually proceeded in three phases. In the Gangetic region the first phase of this process was characterised by the transition of the small semi-nomadic tribes (*jana*) of the period of Vedic migration to a large number of tribal principalities of a definite area (*janapada*). During the second phase in a period of competition sixteen major mahajanapadas emerged in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC. The third or imperial phase was reached when one of these mahajanapadas (in this case, Magadha) annexed a few neighbouring principalities and established its hegemony over the others. This three-phase development can be considered as an autochthonous evolution, especially since the first two phases are certainly not due to external influences. They were accompanied by a marked social and political change in the Gangetic civilisation, and it is this change which contributed to the emergence of the empire in the third phase.

Indian Marxist historians insist that the introduction of iron implements in the seventh century BC, which enabled the people to clear the jungle and reclaim the fertile land of the eastern Gangetic plains, led to the rise of the powerful mahajanapadas and finally to the emergence of the great eastern empire. But hitherto there has been little archaeological evidence and there are only a few references in the ancient texts which would clearly support this Marxist thesis of economic change as the main reason for the rise of Magadha. Iron, however, must have indeed played an important yet different role in this period. But it seems that even in this period iron was mostly used for the making of weapons and Magadha may have had a strategic advantage due to its access to the deposits of iron ore in Chota Nagpur and its better armament. Thus it was perhaps no accident that Magadha's first great campaign was directed against neighbouring Anga which was equally close to these deposits of iron ore and perhaps controlled the trade routes through which iron would reach northern India. In this way, Magadha eliminated the most dangerous competitor at the very beginning of its imperial career.

The period of Ajatashatru's successors is not very well documented as yet. Buddhist texts refer to the four rulers who followed him as parricides just as he himself and his contemporary Virudhaka, the king of Koshala, were accused of that crime. These reports may not have been completely reliable but they seem to indicate that a new type of unscrupulous and ambitious ruler emerged at that time. This type was then succinctly described in the famous book on statecraft, Kautalya's *Arthashastra*. Among the rulers of Magadha, Shishunaga deserves special attention because he defeated the Prayota dynasty of Avanti, a major threat to Magadha for quite some time, and annexed its territories of Avanti and Kausambi. In the reign of Shishunaga's son Kakavarna the second Buddhist council was held which has been mentioned above. Kakavarna was assassinated and this time even one of the queens is supposed to have contributed to the violent death of the king.

The usurper who emerged from this intrigue as the new ruler of Magadha was Mahapadma who founded the short-lived but very important Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma was the son of a Shudra woman and later Purana texts refer to him as the destroyer of the Kshatriyas – obviously a reference both to his low birth and his victories over the kings of northern India. Mahapadma energetically continued the aggressive policies of his predecessors. He subjugated most of northern India, parts of central India and even Kalinga on the east coast. He rates as the greatest Indian ruler before the Mauryas and in the royal lists of the Puranas he is the first who bears the imperial title *Ekachattra*, meaning 'he who has united the country under one umbrella', the symbol of overlordship.

Greek and Roman authors report that the Nandas, who had their capital at Pataliputra when Alexander the Great conquered northwestern India, had a powerful standing army of 200,000 infantrymen, 20,000 horsemen, 2,000 chariots drawn by four horses each, and 3,000 elephants. This is the first reference to the large-scale use of elephants in warfare. Such war elephants remained for a long time the most powerful strategic weapons of Indian rulers until the central Asian conquerors of the medieval period introduced the new method of the large-scale deployment of cavalry.

The Nandas could maintain their large army only by rigorously collecting the revenues of their empire and plundering their neighbours. Their name became a byword for avarice in later Indian literature. The legend of their great treasure which they are supposed to have hidden in the river Ganga reminds us of the old German story of the Nibelungen whose treasure was hidden in the river Rhine. Mahapadma Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons; each of them ruled only for a short time until the last one was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya.

In spite of the very short period of their rule, the Nandas must be credited with having paved the way for their better-known successors, the Mauryas. They united a very large part of northern India under their rule

(see Map 2.1). Their army and their administration were taken over by the Mauryas as going concerns. But the empire of the Nandas lacked certain qualities which emerged only under the Mauryas. Just as certain new ideas coming from the West may have contributed to the rise of Magadha in the fifth century BC under Bimbisara, another wave of Western influence may have influenced the transformation of the empire of the Nandas into that of the Mauryas.

The impact of Alexander's Indian campaign

The Indian campaign of Alexander the Great is certainly one of the best-known events of ancient Indian history as far as European historiography is concerned. The historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have devoted much attention to this event. But Indian sources remain silent about Alexander's campaign. To the Indians he was only one of the nameless conquerors of the northwest who touched this part of India in an endless sequence of raids. The memory of Alexander the Great returned to India only much later with the Islamic conquerors who saw him as a great ruler worth emulating. One of the sultans of Delhi called himself a second Alexander, and the Islamic version of this name (Sikander) was very popular among later Islamic rulers of India and southeast Asia.

Alexander crossed the Hindukush mountains in eastern Afghanistan in the month of May, 327 BC. He fought for more than a year against various tribes in what is now northern Pakistan until he could cross the river Indus in February 326 BC. The king of Takshashila (Taxila) accepted Alexander's suzerainty without putting up a fight. He was a generous host to the Greeks and is reported to have fed them with the meat of 3,000 oxen and more than 10,000 sheep. Then he provided them with 5,000 auxiliary troops so that they could better fight his neighbour, King Poros. King Poros belonged to the tribe of the Pauravas, descended from the Puru tribe mentioned so often in the Rigveda. He joined battle with Alexander at the head of a mighty army with some 2,000 elephants, but Alexander defeated him by a sudden attack after crossing the river Hydaspes at night although the river was in flood. Alexander then reinstated the vanquished Poros and made him his ally.

By this time the monsoon had set in and the rains obstructed Alexander's march east. He was determined to go on, but when his army reached the river Hyphasis (Beas), east of the present city of Lahore, his soldiers refused to obey his orders for the first time in eight years of incessant conquest. Alexander was convinced that he would soon reach the end of the world, but his soldiers were less and less convinced of this as they proceeded to the east where more kings and war elephants were waiting to fight against them. Alexander's speech in which he invoked the memory of their victories over the Persians in order to persuade them to march on is one of the

most moving documents of Alexander's time, but so is the reply by Coenus, his general, who spoke on behalf of the soldiers. Alexander finally turned back and proceeded with his troops south along the river Indus where they got involved in battles with the tribes of that area, especially with the Malloi (Malavas). Alexander was almost killed in one of these encounters. He then turned west and crossed, with parts of his army, the desert land of Gedrosia which is a part of present Baluchistan. Very few survived this ordeal. In May 324 BC, three years after he had entered India, Alexander was back at Susa in Persia. In the following year he died in Babylon.

Alexander's early death and the division of his empire among the Diadochi who fought a struggle for succession put an end to the plan of integrating at least a part of India into the Hellenistic empire. By 317 BC the peripheral Greek outposts in India had been given up. Thus Alexander's campaign remained a mere episode in Indian history, but the indirect consequences of this intrusion were of great importance. The reports of Alexander's companions and of the first Greek ambassador at the court of the Mauryas were the main sources of Western knowledge about India from the ancient to the medieval period of history. Also, the Hellenistic states, which arose later on India's northwestern frontier in present Afghanistan, had an important influence on the development of Indian art as well as on the evolution of sciences such as astronomy.

The foundation of the Maurya empire

Alexander's campaign probably made an indirect impact on the further political development of India. Not much is known about the antecedents of Chandragupta Maurya, but it is said that he began his military career by fighting against the outposts which Alexander had left along the river Indus. How he managed to get from there to Magadha and how he seized power from the last Nanda emperor remains obscure. Indian sources, especially the famous play *Mudrarakshasa*, give the credit for Chandragupta's rise to his political advisor, the cunning Brahmin Kautalya, author of the *Arthashastra*.

At any rate Chandragupta seems to have usurped the throne of Magadha in 320 BC. He used the subsequent years for the consolidation of his hold on the army and administration of this empire. There are no reports of his leading any military campaigns in this period. But in 305 BC Seleukos Nikator, who had emerged as the ruler of the eastern part of Alexander's vast domain, crossed the Hindukush mountains in order to claim Alexander's heritage in India. Chandragupta met him at the head of a large army in the Panjab and stopped his march east. In the subsequent peace treaty Seleukos ceded to Chandragupta all territories to the east of Kabul as well as Baluchistan. The frontier of the Maurya empire was thus more or less the same as that of the Mughal empire at the height of its power

about 2,000 years later. Chandragupta's gift of 500 war elephants appears to be modest in view of this enormous territorial gain. But this Indian military aid is supposed to have helped Seleukos to defeat his western neighbour and rival, Antigonos, in a decisive battle some four years later.

European knowledge about India was greatly enhanced by the reports which Seleukos' ambassador, Megasthenes, prepared while he was in Pataliputra at Chandragupta's court. The originals have been lost but several classical authors have quoted long passages from Megasthenes' work and, therefore, we know a good deal about what he saw while he was there. Two parts of his report have attracted special attention: his description of the imperial capital, Pataliputra, and his account of the seven strata of Indian society which he observed there.

He reported that Pataliputra was fortified with palisades. This fortification was shaped like a parallelogram measuring about 9 miles in length and about 1.5 miles in breadth and it had 570 towers and 64 gates. The circumference of Pataliputra was about 21 miles and thus this city was about twice as large as Rome under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. If this report is true, Pataliputra must have been the largest city of the ancient world. There was an impression that Megasthenes may have exaggerated the size of the capital to which he was an ambassador in order to enhance his own importance. But the German Indologist D. Schlingloff has shown that the distances between the towers or between a tower and the next gate as derived from Megasthenes' account closely correspond to the distance prescribed for this kind of fortification in Kautalya's *Arthashastra* (i.e. 54 yards).

Megasthenes' description of the society of Magadha seems to be equally accurate. As the first estate, he mentioned the philosophers, by which he obviously means the Brahmins. The second estate was that of the agriculturists. According to Megasthenes, they were exempt from service in the army and from any other similar obligations to the state. No enemy would do harm to an agriculturist tilling his fields. For their fields they paid a rent to the king because 'in India all land belongs to the king and no private person is permitted to own land. In addition to this general rent they give one quarter of their produce to the state'. Megasthenes then named the herdsmen who lived outside the villages, then the traders and artisans 'who get their food from the royal storage'. The fifth estate were the soldiers who, like the war horses and war elephants, also got their food from the royal storage. The sixth estate was that of the inspectors and spies who reported everything to the emperor. The seventh estate was that of the advisors and officers of the king who looked after the administration, the law courts, etc., of the empire.

Although these seven social strata were not listed in any Indian text in this fashion (which does not seem to pay attention to any hierarchical order), there are references to each of them in Indian texts, too. The general impression we get from Megasthenes' report is that of a centrally

administered, well-organised state. Of special interest are his categorical assertions that all land belonged to the emperor, that artisans and soldiers were supported directly by the state and that spies reported on everything that went on in the empire. Perhaps these observations were applicable only to the capital and its immediate hinterland which was the area which Megasthenes knew well. But Kautalya's famous account of the proper organisation of an empire also talks about espionage.

The political system of the *Arthashastra*

The *Arthashastra* which is attributed to Kautalya, the Prime Minister and chief advisor of Chandragupta, provides an even more coherent picture of a centrally administered empire in which public life and the economy are controlled by the ruler. Ever since this ancient text was rediscovered and published in the year 1909 scholars have tried to interpret this text as an accurate description of Chandragupta's system of government. There is a consensus that Kautalya was the main author of this famous text and that he lived around 300 BC, but it is also accepted that parts of this text are later additions and revisions, some of which may have been made as late as AD 300.

Kautalya depicts a situation in which several small rival kingdoms each have a chance of gaining supremacy over the others if the respective ruler follows the instructions given by Kautalya. In ancient Indian history the period which corresponds most closely to Kautalya's description is that of the mahajanapadas before Magadha attained supremacy. Thus it seems more likely that Kautalya related in normative terms what he had come to know about this earlier period than that his account actually reflected the structure of the Mauryan empire during Chandragupta's reign. Thus the *Arthashastra* should not be regarded as a source for the study of the history of the empire only but also for the history of state formation in the immediately preceding period. The relevance of the *Arthashastra* for medieval Indian politics is that the coexistence of various smaller rival kingdoms was much more typical for most periods of Indian history than the rather exceptional phase when one great empire completely dominated the political scene.

The central idea of Kautalya's precept (*shastra*) was the prosperity (*artha*) of king and country. The king who strove for victory (*vijigishu*) was at the centre of a circle of states (*mandala*) in which the neighbour was the natural enemy (*ari*) and the more distant neighbour of this neighbour (enemy of the enemy) was the natural friend (*mitra*). This pattern of the *rajamandala* repeated itself in concentric circles of enemies and friends. But there were certain important exceptions: there was the middle king (*madhyama*) who was powerful enough that he could either maintain armed neutrality in a conflict of his neighbours or decide the battle by

supporting one side or the other, and finally there was the great outsider (*udashina*) whose actions were not predictable because he did not belong to one of these power circles but was able to interfere with it. He was to be carefully watched.

The *vijigishu* had to try to defeat one after another of his enemies. His ability to do so depended on the seven factors of power which supported his kingdom (*rajya*). These factors were, first of all, the qualities of the king, then that of his ministers, his provinces, his city, his treasure, his army and last, but not least, his allies. The main aim of the *Arthashastra* was to instruct the king on how to improve the qualities of these power factors and weaken those of his enemy even before an open confrontation took place. He was told to strengthen his fortifications, extend facilities for irrigation, encourage trade, cultivate wasteland, open mines, look after the forest and build enclosures for elephants and, of course, try to prevent the enemy from doing likewise. For this purpose he was to send spies and secret agents into his enemy's kingdom. The very detailed instructions for such spies and agents which Kautalya gives with great psychological insight into the weakness of human nature have earned him the doubtful reputation of having even surpassed Machiavelli's cunning advice in *Il Principe*. But actually Kautalya paid less attention to clandestine activities in the enemy's territory than to the elimination of 'thorns' in the king's own country.

Since Kautalya believed that political power was a direct function of economic prosperity, his treatise contained detailed information on the improvement of the economy by state intervention in all spheres of activity, including mining, trade, crafts and agriculture. He also outlined the structure of royal administration and set a salary scale starting with 48,000 panas for the royal high priest, down to 60 panas for a petty inspector. All this gives the impression of a very efficiently administered centralised state which appropriated as much of the surplus produced in the country as possible. There were no moral limits to this exploitation but there were limits of political feasibility. It was recognised that high taxes and forced labour would drive the population into the arms of the enemy and, therefore, the king had to consider the welfare and contentment of his people as a necessary political requirement for his own success.

The history of the Maurya empire after Chandragupta's defeat of Seleukos and the acquisition of the northwest remains a matter for conjecture. Since at the time of Ashoka's accession to the throne in 268 BC the empire extended as far as present Karnataka, we may conclude that either Chandragupta or his son and successor Bindusara (*c.*293 to 268 BC) had conquered these southern parts of India. Old Jaina texts report that Chandragupta was a follower of that religion and ended his life in Karnataka by fasting unto death, a great achievement of holy men in the Jaina tradition. If this report is true, Chandragupta must have started the conquest of the south. At Bindusara's court there were ambassadors of the Seleukids

and of the Ptolemaeans but they have not left us valuable reports as Megasthenes did a generation earlier.

Ashoka, the Beloved of the Gods

Ashoka's reign of more than three decades is the first fairly well-documented period of Indian history. Ashoka left us a series of great inscriptions (major rock edicts, minor rock edicts, pillar edicts) which are among the most important records of India's past. Ever since they were discovered and deciphered by the British scholar James Prinsep in the 1830s, several generations of Indologists and historians have studied these inscriptions with great care. The independent Republic of India selected Ashoka's lion pillar as the emblem of the state.

According to Buddhist tradition Prince Ashoka started his political career when he was appointed governor of Taxila in the northwest where he successfully suppressed a revolt. He was then transferred to Ujjain, the famous capital of the earlier kingdom of Avanti in central India. The precise date and the circumstances of Ashoka's accession to the throne are not yet

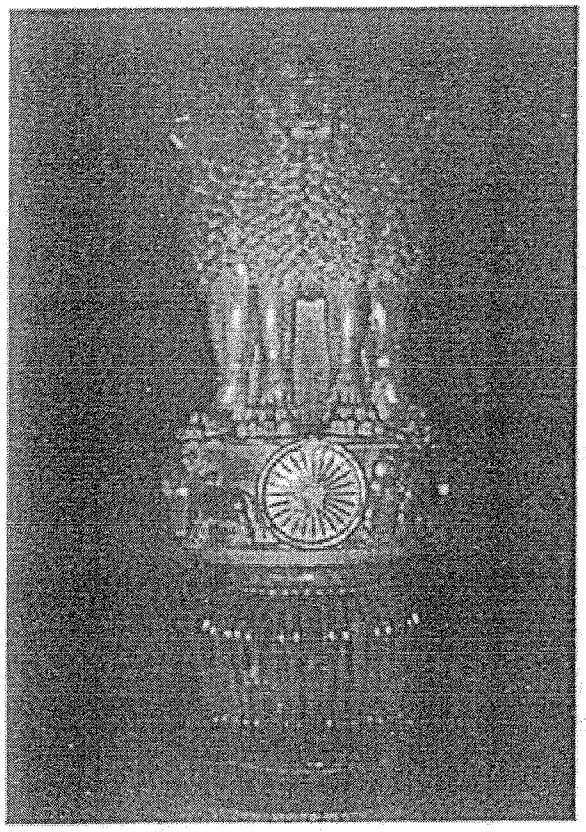


Figure 2.1 Sarnath, capital of an Ashoka-pillar, third century BC, now the coat of arms of the Republic of India

(Courtesy of Hermann Kulke)

known. Buddhist texts mention that Ashoka had to fight against his brothers and that he was crowned only four years after his de facto accession. But the Dutch Indologist Eggermont thinks that these are only legends which were invented later by the Buddhists, and he feels confident about dating Ashoka's reign from 268 to 233 BC.

The first important event of Ashoka's reign led to a crucial change in his life: in 261 BC he conquered Kalinga, a kingdom on the east coast which had resisted Maurya expansionism for a long time. In his inscriptions Ashoka told the cruel consequences of this war: '150,000 people were forcibly abducted from their homes, 100,000 were killed in battle and many more died later on.' Due to this experience Ashoka abjured further warfare and turned to Buddhism. In his famous thirteenth rock edict he stated: 'Even a hundredth or a thousandth part only of the people who were slain, killed or abducted in Kalinga is now considered as a grievous loss by Devanampiya [Beloved of the Gods, i.e. Ashoka]',[5] and he also stated that he now only strove for conquest in spiritual terms by spreading the doctrine of right conduct (*dhamma*).

He became a Buddhist lay member (*upasaka*) and two years after the Kalinga war he even went on a 256-day pilgrimage (*dhamma-yata*) to all Buddhist holy places in northern India. On his return to Pataliputra he celebrated a great festival of the Buddhist order and in the same year (258 BC, according to Eggermont) began his large-scale missionary activity. In numerous rock edicts strategically placed in all parts of his empire he propagated the principles of right conduct and, to all countries known to him, he sent ambassadors to spread the message of right conduct abroad. He instructed governors and district officers to have the principles of right conduct inscribed on rocks and pillars wherever possible, thereby producing a series of smaller rock edicts in which Ashoka openly confessed his Buddhist faith.

In the following year, 257 BC, he had the first four of altogether fourteen large rock edicts cut into rocks in the frontier regions of his empire. Eight more or less complete versions of these have been discovered so far. More recently two fragmentary versions came to light. One of them, a Greek–Aramaic bilingual, was found even in far-off Kandahar in Afghanistan. In these edicts Ashoka ordered all citizens of his empire to desist as far as possible from eating meat and he also prohibited illicit and immoral meetings. He indicated his goodwill to all neighbours beyond the borders of his empire: to the Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras, Keralaputras and to Tambapani (Sri Lanka) in the south and to King Antiyoka of Syria (Antiochos II, 261 to 246 BC) and his neighbours in the west. Further, he ordered different ranks of officers to tour the area of their jurisdiction regularly to see that the rules of right conduct were followed.

Ashoka's orders seem to have been resisted right from the beginning. He indirectly admitted this when, in the new series of rock edicts in the

thirteenth year after his coronation he stated: 'Virtuous deeds are difficult to accomplish. He who tries to accomplish them faces a hard task.' In order to break the resistance and to intensify the teaching of right conduct he appointed high officers called *Dhamma-Mahamatras* that year. They had to teach right conduct and supervise the people in this. They also had to report to the emperor, and he emphasised that these officers were to have access to him at all times even if he was having his meals or resting in his private rooms. These officers were 'deployed everywhere, in Pataliputra as well as in all distant cities, in the private rooms of my brothers and sisters and all of my relatives'.

In the same year in which he appointed these special officers he also sent ambassadors (*duta*) to the distant countries of the West. As a unique event in Indian history the kings of these distant countries are mentioned by name in the thirteenth rock edict: the king of the Greeks (Yona), Antiyoka (as mentioned above), Tulamaya (Ptolomaios II, Philadelphos, 285–247 BC), Antekina (Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, 276–239 BC), Maka (Magas of Cyrene, *c*.300–250 BC), Alikasudala (probably Alexander of Epirus, 272–255 BC). The independent states of southern India and Sri Lanka were once again visited by ambassadors and also some of the tribes in areas within the empire (e.g. the Andhras). The frequency of inscriptions in the border regions of the northwestern and southern provinces is an eloquent evidence of Ashoka's missionary zeal.

This activity of imperial missions was unique in ancient history. Of greater consequence than the establishment of direct contact with the Hellenistic world was, however, the success of missions in the south and in Sri Lanka. There Ashoka's son Mahinda personally appeared in order to teach right conduct. The northwest was also deeply affected by this missionary zeal. From southern India, Buddhism later travelled to southeast Asia and from northwest India it penetrated central Asia from where it reached China via the silk road in the first century AD.

Ashoka did not neglect his duties as a ruler while pursuing his missionary activities. In spite of his contrition after the conquest of Kalinga, he never thought of relinquishing his hold over this country or of sending back the people abducted from there. As an astute politician, he also did not express his contrition in the rock edicts which he put up in Kalinga itself (Dhauli and Jaugada). Instead of the text of the famous thirteenth rock edict we find in the so-called 'separate edicts' in Kalinga the following words:

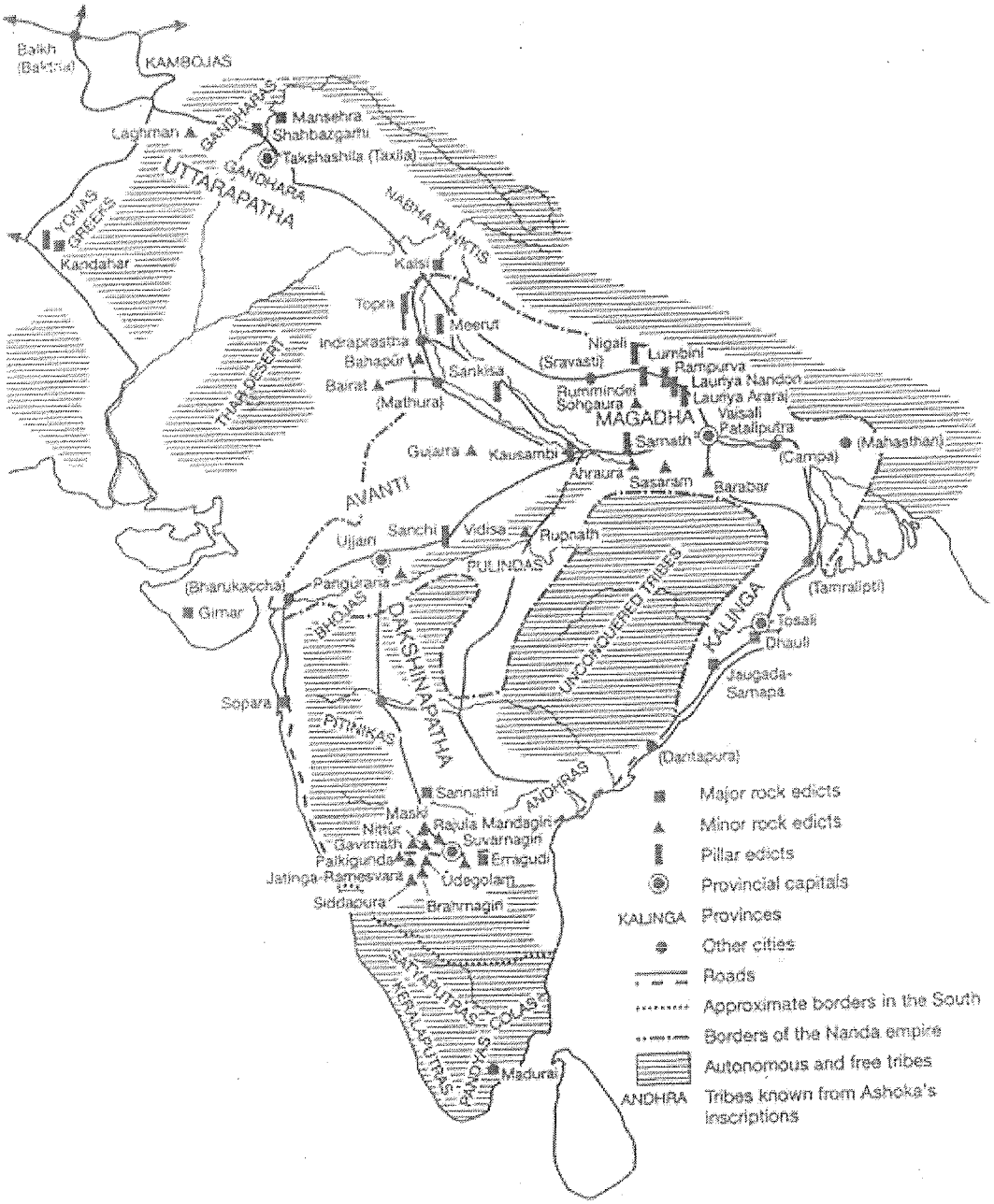
> All men are my children. As on behalf of my own children, I desire that they may be provided by me with complete welfare and happiness in this world and in the other world, even so is my desire on behalf of all men. It may occur to my unconquered borderers to ask: 'What does the king desire with reference to us?' This alone is my wish with reference to the borderers, that they may learn that

> the king desires this, that they may not be afraid of me, but may have confidence in me; that they may obtain only happiness from me, not misery, that they may learn this, that the king will forgive them what can be forgiven. (Ashoka orders his officers:) For you are able to inspire those borderers with confidence and to secure their welfare and happiness in this world and the other world.

Ashoka's inscriptions also provide a great deal of important information about the organisation of the empire which was divided into five parts. The central part consisted of Magadha and some of the adjacent old maha-janapadas. This part was under the direct administration of the emperor and, though not much is said about its administration, we may assume that it was conducted more or less in line with what had been mentioned by Megasthenes and Kautalya. Then there were four large provinces governed by princes (*kumara* or *aryaputra*) as governors or viceroys. The viceroy of the northwest resided at Taxila, the viceroy of the east at Tosali in Kalinga (near Bhubaneswar, the present capital of Orissa), the viceroy of the west at Ujjain, and the viceroy of the south at Suvarnagiri (near Kurnool in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh). As a newly discovered minor rock inscription at Panguraria in Madhya Pradesh is addressed by Ashoka to a kumara, this inscription is interpreted as an indication of the existence of a fifth province. But as the site of this inscription is only about a hundred kilometres away from Ujjain, the famous capital of the western province, the kumara addressed in this inscription may well have been the viceroy of Ujjain.

The large provinces were divided into fairly extensive districts, headed by *mahamatras*. The mahamatras were probably the high officers mentioned by Megasthenes. They were responsible for the relation between the centre and the provinces. In provincial towns they also were appointed as judges (*nagara-viyohalaka*). In addition to the mahamatras the inscriptions mention the following ranks of officers: *pradeshika*, *rajuka* and *yukta*. The latter were petty officers, probably scribes and revenue collectors. The pradeshikas were in charge of administrative units which could be compared to the divisions of British India which included several districts. Whether the rajuka was a district officer is not quite clear. The fourth pillar inscription belonging to the twenty-sixth year of Ashoka's reign mentions that the rajuka is 'appointed over many hundred thousands of people' and was given special powers of penal jurisdiction, but the same inscription also states that the rajukas had to obey orders conveyed by royal emissaries (*pulisani*) who, as Ashoka emphasised, knew exactly what he wanted done.

References of this kind have often been used to show that Ashoka was running a highly centralised direct administration of his whole empire. But the pillar inscriptions which contain these latter references have so



Map 2.1 Maurya empire under Ashoka (262–233 BC)

far been found only in central Gangetic region and the Ganga–Yamuna Doab. Similar inscriptions may still be found at other places, but the pillar inscriptions discovered so far seem to indicate that this specific type of administration prevailed only in the central part of the empire, and that the provinces had a greater degree of administrative autonomy. However, recently conquered Kalinga may have been an exception. In its rock edict,

the district administration of Samapa (Jaugada) was addressed directly without reference to the district's viceroy (*kumara*) at Tosali.

In modern historical maps Ashoka's empire is often shown as covering the whole subcontinent, with the exception of its southern tip. But if we look at the sites where Ashoka's inscriptions have been found, we clearly see a definite regional pattern (see Map 2.1). These sites demarcate the five parts of the empire. It is striking that the major rock edicts have so far been found only in the frontier provinces of the empire and not at its centre. Three were found in the northwest (Shahbazgarhi, Mansehra and Kandahar), two in the west (Girnar and Sopara), two in the south (Erragudi and Sannathi), two in the east (Dhauli and Jaugada), and one at the border between the central region and the northwestern province at Kalsi. It is also important to note that ten small rock edicts form a cluster in the southern province and that a good number of pillar inscriptions are concentrated in the central part of the empire and in the upper Ganga–Yamuna Doab. Moreover, the region around the provincial capital of Ujjain once must have formed another cluster, although only fragments of a pillar at Sanchi with Ashoka's famous 'schism edict' and the newly discovered minor rock edict of Panguraria have survived. This high incidence of inscriptions in certain main parts of the empire and on the frontiers contrasts with the vast 'empty' space of the interior of the subcontinent where no inscriptions have been found which can be attributed to Ashoka.

Of course, it is not impossible that some may be still discovered but after more than a century of intensive research in this field it seems highly unlikely that the regional pattern mentioned above would have to be completely revised. This means that large parts of present Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh as well as Kerala and Tamil Nadu were not actually included in the Maurya empire.

South of the Vindhya mountains the Mauryas mainly controlled the coastal areas and some of the interior near present Mysore which they probably coveted because of the gold which was found there (Suvarnagiri means 'gold mountain'). For the empire it was essential to control the major trade routes. Most important was certainly the northern route which led from Pataliputra through the Gangetic plain and the Panjab to Afghanistan. Another led from Pataliputra west via Kausambi and then along the northern slope of the Vindhya mountains via Vidisha (Sanchi) and Ujjain to the port of Bharukacha (Broach). There was a further route from there along the west coast to the area of present Bombay where the great rock edicts of Sopara were found. Southern parts could be reached along the east coast or via a central route from Ujjain via Pratishthana (Paithan near Aurangabad) to Suvarnagiri. The northern portion of this route – at least up to Ujjain – had been known since the late Vedic period as Dakshinapatha (southern route). Large areas of the interior were inhabited by tribes which had not been defeated. The inscriptions explicitly mention such undefeated

(*avijita*) neighbours and forest tribes (*atavi*) inside the empire, and one gets the impression that Ashoka regarded these tribes as the most dangerous enemies of his empire.

This revision of the spatial extension of the Maurya empire nevertheless does not detract from its 'All-India' dimensions and that it marked the apex of the process of state formation which had started in the sixth century BC. The hub of the empire remained the old region of the major mahajanapadas in the triangle Delhi–Pataliputra–Ujjain. Campaigns of conquest had added the northwest, Kalinga, and an enclave in the south to the empire. Control of major trade routes and of the coasts was of major importance for the access to mercantile wealth which must have been essential for imperial finance.

Ashoka's greatness was due to his insight into the futility of further expansionist warfare which would not have added much to the empire but would have impeded its consolidation. In order to conquer the vast areas in the interior, Ashoka would have had to fight many more bloody wars. About 2,000 years later the Mughal empire broke under the strain of incessant conquest when Aurangzeb tried to achieve what Ashoka had wisely avoided. In consolidating his empire, Ashoka adopted revolutionary methods. As emphasised by the Indian historian Romila Thapar, he must have realised that such a vast empire could not be based simply on the naked power polities of the *Arthashastra* but that it required some deeper legitimation. Therefore he adopted the doctrine of right conduct as the maxim of his policy. For the spread of this doctrine, he relied on the spiritual infrastructure provided by the new Buddhist community which was in ascendance in those days. But he carefully avoided equating his doctrine of right conduct with Buddhism as such. He also included the Brahmins and the sect of the Ajivikas in his religious policy.

After a period of unscrupulous power politics under the earlier rulers of Magadha, Indian kingship attained a moral dimension in Ashoka's reign. But in the means he adopted, he was influenced by the tradition of statecraft epitomised by Kautalya. The Dhamma-Mahamatras which he put into the entourage of his relatives – from whom challenges to his power would be expected to come – were different in name only from Kautalya's spies. This, of course, should not detract from the greatness of his vision which prompted him to strive for an ethical legitimation of his imperial rule. His success was nevertheless not only due to his ideology and the strength of his army and administration but also to the relative backwardness of central and southern India in his day. When regional centres of power emerged in those parts of the country in the course of an autochthonous process of state formation in later centuries, the course of Indian history was changed once more and the great regional kingdoms of the early medieval period arose. In that period the old tradition of the legitimation of Hindu kings was revived and Ashoka's great vision was eclipsed.

THE END OF THE MAURYA EMPIRE AND THE NORTHERN INVADERS

The history of the Maurya empire after the death of Ashoka is not very well recorded. There are only stray references in Buddhist texts, the Indian Puranas and some Western classical texts and these references often contradict each other. None of Ashoka's successors produced any larger rock edicts. Perhaps the paternal tone of these edicts and the instruction to recite them publicly on certain days of the year had caused resentment among the people. Buddhist texts maintain that there was evidence of the decay of the empire even in the last days of Ashoka but this view is not generally accepted. The more distant provinces probably attained independence from the empire after Ashoka's death. There is, for instance, no evidence in the south or in Kalinga for the continuation of Maurya domination after Ashoka. Perhaps even the central part of the empire in the north may have been divided among Ashoka's sons and grandsons. One descendant, Dasaratha, succeeded Ashoka on the throne of Magadha, and he is the only one whom we know by name because he left some otherwise unimportant stone inscriptions with which he established some endowment for the Ajivika sect at a place south of Pataliputra.



Figure 2.2 Buddha, Gandhara style at Takht-i-Bahai (near Peshawar), second to third century BC

(Courtesy of Museum of Indian Art, Berlin)

The last ruler of the Maurya dynasty, Brihadratha, was assassinated by his general, Pushyamitra Shunga, during a parade of his troops in the year 185 BC. The usurper then founded the Shunga dynasty which continued for 112 years but about which very little is known. No inscriptions of this dynasty have ever been discovered. Pushyamitra is reported to have been a Brahmin and it is said that his rise to power marked a Brahmin reaction to Buddhism which had been favoured for such a long time by previous rulers. Pushyamitra once again celebrated the Vedic horse sacrifice. This was certainly a clear break with Ashoka's tradition which had prohibited animal sacrifices altogether.

There is some other evidence, too, for the inclination of Indian kings to violate the rules established by the Mauryas and to revive old customs which had been forbidden by them. King Kharavela stated in an inscription of the first century BC near Bhubaneswar that he had reintroduced the musical festivals and dances which were prohibited under the Mauryas. There were reactions against the religious policy of the Mauryas, indeed, but this does not necessarily imply that Buddhism was suppressed and that the Shungas started a Brahmin counter-reformation as some Buddhist texts suggest. Several Buddhist monasteries, for instance the one at Sanchi, were renovated and enlarged under the Shunga rule. At Bharhut, south of Kausambi, they even sponsored the construction of a new Buddhist stupa. The Shunga style differed from the Maurya style, which was greatly influenced by Persian precedent. Old elements of folk art and of the cult of the mother goddess reappeared in the Shunga style which was 'more Indian' and is sometimes regarded as the first indigenous style of Indian art.

Immediately after taking the throne, Pushyamitra had to defend his country against the Greek invaders from Bactria who came to conquer the Indian plains. Pushyamitra prevented their complete success but nevertheless the whole area up to Mathura was finally lost. His son, Agnimitra, is supposed to have been posted as viceroy at Vidisha near Sanchi before ascending the throne. This was reported by the great poet Kalidasa, several centuries later. Towards the end of the second century BC the Greek ambassador, Heliodorus, who represented King Antialkidas, erected a tall Garuda pillar at Besnagar, very close to Vidisha. In his inscription on this pillar, Heliodorus calls himself a follower of the Bhagavata sect of the Vaishnavas and mentions a king by the name of Bhagabhadra who seems to have been a member of the Shunga dynasty. So Vidisha was probably still under the control of the Shungas, but they had obviously lost Ujjain, the old provincial capital situated about a hundred miles further to the west. The last king of the Shunga dynasty was murdered around 73 BC by a slave girl and, it is said, instigated by the king's Brahmin minister, Vasudeva.

The short-lived Kanva dynasty, which was founded by Vasudeva after the Shunga dynasty, witnessed the complete decline of Magadha which relapsed to its earlier position of one mahajanapada among several others.

The political centre of India had shifted to the northwest where several foreign dynasties struggled for supremacy. In 28 BC the last Kanva king was defeated by a king of the Shatavahana (or Andhra) dynasty of central India. This fact not only signalled the end of the Magadha after five centuries of imperial eminence but also the rise of central and southern India which continued throughout the subsequent centuries.

Greek rulers of the northwest

When the Maurya empire was at the height of its power it could thwart all attempts of the Seleukids to claim Alexander's heritage in India. Chandragupta had repulsed Seleukos Nikator at the end of the fourth century BC and a later king of the same dynasty, Antiochos III, who tried to conquer the Indian plains about one century later was equally frustrated. But this was due less to the efficacy of Indian resistance than to the great upheavals which had occurred in Bactria, Persia and southern central Asia in the meantime.

Around 250 BC the Parthians, under King Arsakes, had won their independence from the Seleukids. After a century of tough fights against their former masters and against central Asian nomadic horsemen, they had established hegemony over western Asia. Until their final defeat about AD 226 they remained the most dangerous enemies of the Romans. At about the same time that Arsakes won independence from the Seleukids, the viceroy of Bactria, Diodotos, did the same and established a kingdom of his own. But only the third Greek king of Bactria, Euthydemos, was able to get formal recognition from the Seleukid king, Antiochos III, when he was on his Indian campaign which has been referred to above.

The history of the Greek kings of Bactria became a part of Indian history when the successors of Euthydemos once again tried to follow Alexander's example. They are referred to as 'Indo-Greeks' and there were about forty such kings and rulers who controlled large areas of northwestern India and Afghanistan. Their history, especially during the first century BC, is not very well recorded. Of some of these kings we know the names only, from coins. There are only two inscriptions in India to give us some information about these Indo-Greeks. They appear as *Yavanas* in stray references in Indian literature, and there are few but important references in European sources. In these distant outposts, the representatives of the Hellenic policy survived the defeat of their Western compatriots at the hands of the Parthians for more than a century.

In India the history of the Indo-Greeks is particularly associated with the name of their most prominent king, Menander, who conquered a large part of northern India. This Indian campaign was started by King Demetrios and his brother Apollodoros with the help of their general, Menander, who subsequently became a king in his own right. There is a debate among

historians about whether these three military leaders conquered almost the whole of northern India jointly within a few years after 180 BC, or whether this was achieved in two stages, the second stage following the first by about three decades and exclusively managed by Menander. Menander also annexed most of the Ganga–Yamuna Doab and perhaps even reached Pataliputra. Some 150 years later Strabo reported in his *Geography*:

> The Greeks who occasioned its revolt (Bactria's) became so powerful by means of its fertility and the advantages of the country that they became the masters of Ariana and India. Their chiefs, particularly Menander if he really crossed the Hypasis to the East and reached Isamus [i.e. Yamuna] conquered more nations than Alexander. The conquests were achieved partly by Menander, partly by Demetrius, son of Euthydemus, king of the Bactrians.[1]

According to the findings of the British historian W.W. Tarn, Demetrios crossed the Hindukush mountains about 183 BC only shortly after Pushyamitra Shunga had seized power at Pataliputra. Demetrios conquered Gandhara and Taxila and established his new capital at Sirkap near Taxila. He continued his campaign down the river Indus and captured the old port, Patala, which he renamed Demetrias. His brother Apollodoros then marched further east in order to capture the ports of Gujarat, especially Bharukacha which was later known as Barygaza to the Romans who had a great deal of trade with this port.

The unknown seafarer who left us the famous account, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* in the first century AD reported that he had seen coins of Apollodoros and Menander at Barygaza. It is presumed that this port was in the hands of the Greeks for some time. Apollodoros proceeded east and conquered the area around Gwalior and probably also the old provincial capital, Ujjain. In a parallel move Menander, who was then still a general of King Demetrios, marched down into the Gangetic basin and reached Pataliputra. Whether he really conquered this capital and held it for some time, as Tarn assumes, or not, we know that Pushyamitra Shunga was finally able to defeat the Greeks.

But even more than Pushyamitra's resistance it was a revolt in Bactria which forced the Greeks to withdraw. Eukratides, a Greek adventurer with the mind of a genius, managed to seize power in Bactria. Thereupon Demetrios appointed Apollodoros and Menander as viceroys of the Indus region and of the Panjab and rushed back to Bactria where he was killed in the civil war. Eukratides then also defeated Apollodoros, but Menander was able to hold on to his territory further east. In subsequent decades the kingdom of Eukratides and his successors came under increasing pressure from the Parthians. Weakened by this constant warfare, this Greek kingdom finally succumbed to the Shakas, a central Asian tribe, between 141 and

128 BC. But in northwest India the period of Indo-Greek rule continued for some time and this was, in fact, a period of great splendour.

The greatest of the Indo-Greek rulers was undoubtedly Menander, who is called Milinda in Buddhist texts. The dates of his reign are still open to debate. Tarn suggests 166 to 150 BC, the Indian historian A.K. Narain prefers 155 to 130 BC. He was the only Indo-Greek ruler commemorated in Indian literature. The famous text *Milindapanho* records a dialogue between Menander and a monk, Nagasena, who introduced him to the Buddhist doctrine. This dialogue is justly praised for the incisive questions asked by Menander and it is regarded by the Buddhists as equal in value to their canonical scriptures. It is not certain whether Menander was actually converted to Buddhism, but he seems to have taken a deep interest in it. Some of his coins show a wheel similar to the Buddhist chakra. Plutarch reports that after Menander's death his ashes were distributed to all cities of his kingdom where monuments were then constructed to contain them – a kind of commemoration which was in tune with Buddhist practice.

After Menander's death, his large kingdom broke up into several small ones which survived for several generations. This survival, far removed from the Hellenistic polity, is a remarkable historical event. The pillar of Heliodoros, mentioned above, is an impressive testimony of this Greek presence right in the heart of India. The political influence of the Indo-Greek states on the further course of Indian history was negligible, but they did make an impact on the subsequent foreign invaders who came to India in quick succession. The most important legacy of the Indo-Greeks was Gandhara art which embodied a synthesis of Greek, Roman and Indian features that are reflected in the image of Buddha which then radiated from India to all other parts of Asia.

Another Indo-Greek contribution, of great importance for historians, is their highly developed coinage. Whereas the Maurya emperors had only produced simple punch-marked coins, even petty Indo-Greek kings issued splendid coins with their image. No period of Indian history is richer in impressive coins than this fairly short period of the Indo-Greeks. This style of coinage was followed by later dynasties and set the pattern for all coins of ancient India. Only some slight changes were made when the Kushanas adopted Roman standards for the weight of their coins and the Guptas then introduced an Indian standard. For the historians this new source proves to be often more reliable, at least for the identification and dating of rulers, than inscriptions and literary texts. For the Indo-Greek kings this coinage was not just an instrument of propagating their own importance, but a practical means of fostering regional and inter-regional trade which was so important for the maintenance of their rule. This combination of domination and commerce was copied from the Indo-Greek precedent by the Shakas and Kushanas who became their heirs in northern India.

The Shakas: new invaders from central Asia

In the last centuries of the first millennium BC northwestern India was once more subjected to a new wave of immigration from central Asia. In Bactria several tribes clashed in the second century BC and pushed each other towards the fertile lowlands in the south. This migration began around 170 BC in the eastern region of central Asia when the nomadic Xiongnu (Hiung-nu) (probably the ancestors of the latter-day Huns) defeated the Yuezhi (Yue-chi) who then moved west where they hit upon a third nomadic tribe, the Sai Wang or Shakas, who in turn moved to the west. According to Chinese reports some of these Shakas directly crossed the mountains and entered the Indus plains whereas others invaded Bactria and eastern Iran. Together with their kinsmen, the Scythians, they became a major threat to the Parthian empire and two Parthian rulers lost their lives in fighting against them. But in the reign of Mithridates II (123 to 88 BC), the Shakas seem to have recognised Parthian suzerainty and some of them settled down in Sakastan (Sistan) in what is now southern Afghanistan. There they intermarried with Scythians and with the local Parthian nobility. Other clans of the Shakas appeared as conquerors in India where they dominated the political scene of the northwest for nearly a century.

The first Shaka king in India was Maues. There are various estimates of the dates of his reign, ranging from 94 BC to AD 22. Under him and his successor, Azes I, the Shakas established a large Indian empire including the northwest and parts of central India from Gandhara down to Mathura and Ujjain and all the way to the coast of Saurashtra. The Shakas wiped out the Indo-Greek kingdoms but largely adopted their culture with which they had already become familiar in Bactria. The Shaka kings translated their Iranian title 'King of Kings' into Greek (*basileus basileon*), used the Greek names of the months and issued coins in the Indo-Greek style.

A Jaina text of a later period, the *Kalakacharyakathanaka*, reports that Kalaka went from Ujjain to the country of the Shakas. Kings were called Shahi there and the mightiest king was called Shahanu Shahi. Kalaka stayed with one of those Shahis and when this one, together with ninety-five others, incurred the displeasure of the Shahanu Shahi, he persuaded them to go to India. They first came to Saurashtra, but in the autumn they moved on to Ujjain and conquered that city. The Shahi became the superior king of that region and thus emerged the dynasty of the Shaka kings. But some time later the king of Malwa, Vikramaditya, revolted and defeated the Shakas and became the superior king. He started a new era. After 135 years, another Shaka king vanquished the dynasty of Vikramaditya and started another new era.[2]

Despite this story of the origins of the two Indian eras, the Vikrama era, which started in 58 BC and the more important Shaka era beginning in AD 78 (adopted officially by the government of independent India), historians are still debating the issue. They generally agree that there was no king by

the name Vikramaditya of Malwa. The Vikrama era is now believed to be connected with the Shaka king, Azes I. The beginning of the Shaka era is supposed to coincide with the accession to the throne of the great Kushana emperor, Kanishka, the dates of whose reign are still debated.

In other respects the Jaina text seems to reflect the situation in the Shaka period of dominance fairly accurately. The Shaka political system was obviously one of a confederation of chieftains who all had the Persian title Shahi. The text mentions that there were ninety-five of them. The Indian and Persian titles were 'Great King' (*maharaja*) and 'King of Kings' (*shahanu shahi*, or, in Sanskrit *rajatiraja*) which the Shakas assumed may have reflected their real position rather than an exaggerated image of their own importance. They were *primus inter pares* as leaders of tribal confederations whose chieftains had the title Shahi. The grandiloquent title 'King of Kings' which the Shakas introduced into India, following Persian and Greek precedents, thus implied not a notion of omnipotence but rather the existence of a large number of fairly autonomous small kings. But the Shaka kings also appointed provincial governors called Kshatrapas and Mahakshatrapas (like the Persian *satraps*), though it is not quite clear how they fitted into the pattern of a tribal confederation. Perhaps some of them – particularly the Mahakshatrapas – may have been members of the royal lineage, but there may also have been local Indian rulers among them whom one accommodated in this way. Such a network of Kshatrapas may have served as a counterweight to too powerful tribal chieftains.

In the last decades BC the Shaka empire showed definite signs of decay while the provincial governors became more powerful. Azes II was the last great Shaka king of the northwest. About AD 20 the Shakas were replaced by the short-lived Indo-Parthian dynasty founded by King Gondopharnes who reigned until AD 46. He seems to have been a provincial governor of Arachosia in southern Afghanistan. Though he managed to conquer the central part of the Shaka domain, the eastern part around Mathura seems to have remained outside his kingdom because the local Shaka Kshatrapas in this region had attained their independence. The same was true of Saurashtra where independent Shaka Kshatrapas still held sway until the time of the Gupta empire.

Gondopharnes appeared in third century AD Christian texts as Gunduphar, King of India, at whose court St Thomas is supposed to have lived, converting many people to Christianity. According to Christian sources of the third century AD which refer to St Thomas ('Acts of St Thomas'), the saint moved later on to Kerala and finally died the death of a martyr near Madras. These southern activities of St Thomas are less well documented, but there can be no doubt about early Christian contacts with Gondopharnes. In a further mutation of his name (via Armenian 'Gathaspar') Gondopharnes became 'Kaspar', one of the three *magi* or kings of the east who play such an important role in Christian tradition.

The Kushana empire: a short-lived Asian synthesis

While in the early first century AD Indo-Parthians, Shakas and the remnants of the Indo-Greeks were still fighting each other in India, new invaders were already on their way. The Yuezhi under the leadership of the Kushanas came down from central Asia and swept away all earlier dynasties of the northwest in a great campaign of conquest. They established an empire which extended from central Asia right down to the eastern Gangetic basin. Their earlier encounter with the Shakas whom they displaced in central Asia has been mentioned above. The Xiongnu, their old enemies, did not leave the Yuezhi in possession of the land they had taken from the Shakas but pushed them further west. Thus they appeared in Bactria only a few decades after the Shakas and took over this territory in the late second century BC. Here in Bactria they seem to have changed their previous nomadic life style and settled down in five large tribal territories with a chieftain (*yabgu*) at the head of each.

Around the time of the birth of Christ, Kujala Kadphises, Yabgu of the Kuei-shang (Kushana) vanquished the four other yabgus and established the first Kushana kingdom. The history of the further development of this kingdom is recorded in the chronicles of the contemporary Han dynasty of China which were compiled in the fifth century AD. These chronicles report that Kadphises, after uniting the five principalities, proclaimed himself king, attacked the Parthians, crossed the Hindukush and conquered Gandhara and Ki-pin (Kashmir). When he died at the age of 80 years, his son Vima Kadphises, so the chronicles state, proceeded to conquer India where he appointed a viceroy. Numismatic research has confirmed these statements in recent times. Several coins of Kadphises I were found, which show on one side the name of the last Greek ruler of the valley of Kabul, Hermaios and, on the reverse, his own name, Kujala Kada, Prince of the Kushanas. Since the later coins of Kadphises I no longer refer to him as Yabgu but as king (*maharaja*), historians assume that Kadphises had earlier



Figure 2.3 Kushana gold coin. Obverse: Kanishka in central Asian dress. Reverse: Buddha ('Buddo'), Greek script *c.*100 AD

(Courtesy of The British Museum)

recognised the suzerainty of Hermaios until the Parthians or Kadphises himself had defeated this monarch.

Kadphises I was followed by a 'nameless' king who was known only from his coins which referred to him as *soter mages* (great saviour). In 1993 a most important stone inscription of Kanishka was discovered in Rabatak in northern Afghanistan, which contains an unambiguous genealogy of the early Kushana rulers. Kadphises was followed by Vima Takto, Vima Kadphises II and Kanishka. Accordingly, Vima Takto is the king who had so far been nameless. The monumental sculpture at Mat/Mathura which bears the incomplete inscription 'Vima Tak' thus represents Vima Takto. Vima Takto and Kadphises II continued the aggressive policy initiated by Kadphises I and conquered northern India down to Mathura or even Varanasi. Kadphises II changed the standard of the coins which had so far been of the same weight as the Indo-Greek ones by following Roman precedent. The gold of these coins seems to have been procured by melting down Roman coins (*aurei*), which were pouring into India in increasing quantities ever since the Greek seafarer Hippalos had explored the swift monsoon passage across the Arabian sea in the first century BC. The Kushana coins are of such high quality that some historians believe that they must have been made by Roman mint masters in the service of the Kushana kings.

Whereas Kadphises I seems to have been close to Buddhism – he calls himself on his coins 'firm in right conduct' (*dharma thita*) – Kadphises II seems to have been a devotee of the Hindu god Shiva. There were some other Kushana rulers during this age. Inscriptions and coins refer to those kings but do not record their names. Thus, an inscription was found at Taxila of a king with the grandiloquent title 'Great King, King of Kings, Son of God, the Kushana' (*maharaja rajatiraja devaputra Kushana*). Other coins announce in Greek language a 'King of Kings, the Great Savior' (*basileus basileon soter mages*). It is assumed that some of these inscriptions and coins were produced on behalf of the 'nameless' king, i.e. Vima Takto, or by the viceroys whom Kadphises I had appointed in India and who have been mentioned in Chinese chronicles. The titles adopted by the Kushanas show that they valiantly tried to legitimise their rule over all kinds of petty kings and princes. 'Great King' (*maharaja*) was an old Indian title, 'King of Kings' (*rajatiraja*) was of Persian origin and had already been adopted by the Shakas, but the title 'Son of God' (*devaputra*) was a new one. Perhaps it reflected the Kushanas' understanding of the Chinese 'mandate of heaven'. The Greek titles *basileus* and *soter* were frequently used by the Indo-Greek kings of northwestern India.

Vima Kadphises II was succeeded by Kanishka, the greatest of all Kushana rulers. The first references to Kanishka were found in the eastern parts of the Kushana empire in the Ganga–Yamuna Doab, which was probably under the control of rather autonomous viceroys. In two inscriptions

of the second and third year of his reign which have been found at Kausambi and Sarnath in the east, he merely calls himself Maharaja Kanishka. Yet in an inscription of the seventh year of his reign at Mathura he gives his title as Maharaja Rajatiraja Devaputra Shahi, a designation which is repeated in an inscription of the eleventh year of his reign in the central Indus valley. All this would indicate that Kanishka first came to power in the east and, after he had seized the centre of the empire which was probably at Mathura, he adopted the full titles of his predecessors.

The vast extension of Kanishka's empire cannot be adequately outlined. It probably reached from the Oxus in the west to Pataliputra in the east and from Kashmir in the north via Malwa right down to the coast of Gujarat in the south. Not much is known about his hold on central Asia, but there is a reference to the defeat of a Kushana army by the Chinese general, Pan-Chao, at Khotan in the year AD 90 where coins of all early Kushana kings have been found. The kings wanted to control the trade routes connecting India with Rome, i.e. those land and sea routes which would enable this trade to bypass the Parthians' routes. This trade must have been very profitable to the Kushanas. Pliny (VI, 10) laments in those days: 'There is no year in which India does not attract at least 50 million sesterces [Roman coins].' Yet though fifty-seven out of the sixty-eight finds of Roman coins in the whole of southern Asia were found in south India, none at all were found in the area of the Kushana empire. This must be due to the fact that the Kushanas as a matter of policy melted down and reissued them. After the debasement of Roman silver coins in AD 63 in the reign of Nero, gold became the most important medium of exchange for the Roman trade with India, and this must have greatly contributed to the rise of the Kushanas to prosperity and power.

Kanishka's fame is not only based on his military and political success but also on his spiritual merit. The Buddhists rank him together with Ashoka, Menander and Harsha as one of the great Buddhist rulers of India. The great stupa near Peshawar is rated as his greatest contribution to Buddhist monumental architecture. Several Chinese pilgrims have left us descriptions of this stupa and have stated that it was about 600 feet high. When archaeologists excavated the foundations of this stupa at the beginning of the twentieth century they found that it was 286 feet in diameter. Therefore it must have been one of the great miracles of the ancient world. Kanishka is also supposed to have convened a Buddhist council in Kashmir which stimulated the growth of Mahayana Buddhism. For the development of Indian art it was of great importance that Kanishka not only favoured the Gandhara school of Buddhist art which had grown out of Greek influences but also provided his patronage to the Mathura school of art which set the style of Indian art. This school produced the famous statue of Kanishka of which, unfortunately, only the headless trunk has survived. His dress here shows the typical central Asian style.

Kanishka's religious policy is reflected in the legends and images of his coins. His far-flung empire contained so many cultures and religious traditions that only a religious syncretism could do justice to this rich heritage. Accordingly Kanishka's coins show Hindu, Buddhist, Greek, Persian and even Sumerian–Elamite images of gods. Personally Kanishka seems to have shown an inclination towards Buddhism but also towards the Persian cult of Mithras. An inscription at Surkh-Kotal in Bactria which was discovered in 1958 maintains that after Kanishka's death in the thirty-first year of the era which he had started with his accession to the throne, he himself became identified with Mithras. This was probably an attempt by the adherents of Mithras to claim the religious heritage of the great emperor for their cult. Kanishka's syncretism reminds us of that of Ashoka in an earlier and of Akbar in a later age. Great emperors of India who had a vision beyond the immediate control of the levers of power were bound to try to reconcile the manifold religious ideas represented in their vast realm in the interest of internal peace and consolidation.

Another important element of Kanishka's heritage was the introduction of a new era which influenced the chronology of the history of India, central Asia and southeast Asia. The inscriptions of Kanishka and of his successors are dated according to this new era for the ninety-eight years which followed his accession to the throne. But dating this new era is a knotty problem and historians have yet to reach agreement. Several international Kushana conferences, in London in 1913 and 1960, at Dushanbe in Soviet central Asia in 1968 and in Vienna in 1996, have not settled the debate on this date. In 1913 there was a tendency to equate the beginning of this era with the Vikrama era. Kanishka thus would have acceded the throne in 58 BC. Then there was a new trend to equate it with the Shaka era which begins in AD 78. But in recent decades there has emerged still another school of thought which maintains that the Kanishka era must have begun sometime around AD 120 to 144.[3]

When and how Huvishka succeeded Kanishka is not yet quite clear. There are two inscriptions dated in the years 24 and 28 of the Kanishka era and found at Mathura and Sanchi respectively which mention a ruler called Vashishka. There is another inscription at Ara in the northwestern Panjab of the year 41 by a king called Kanishka. From the year 28 to the year 60 there exist a considerable number of inscriptions of Huvishka. Since Vashishka did not issue any coins of his own it is assumed that he ruled together with (his brother?) Huvishka. The Kanishka who was the author of the Ara inscription must have been a second Kanishka. This is also confirmed by the fact that he mentions that his father's name was Vashishka. For some years he may have shared a condominium with (his uncle?) Huvishka. Under these rulers the Kushana empire seems to have maintained the boundaries established by the first Kanishka. This is confirmed by the inscription at Surkh-Kotal in Bactria in the year 31 and

another one at the Wardak monastery near Kabul in the year 51 which mentions Maharaja Rajatiraja Huvishka.

The Ara inscription of Kanishka II is unique in Indian history because of another feature: he added to the usual titles of Maharaja Rajatiraja Devaputra the Roman title Kaisara. He probably did this following the Roman victory over their common enemy, the Parthians. This victory was achieved by Trajan in the years AD 114 to 117 and Mesopotamia and Assyria became Roman provinces for some time. Trajan himself crossed the river Tigris and reached the Persian Gulf. It is said that when he saw a ship there which was leaving for India he remembered Alexander's campaign and exclaimed: 'Oh, if I were young what would I have better liked to do but to march towards India.' As Dion Cassius reports in his history of Rome, Trajan had heard much about India because he had received many ambassadors of the 'barbarians' and 'especially of the Indians'. Those who advocate the year AD 78 as the beginning of the Kanishka era would find support in this coincidence of Trajan's campaign and the assumption of the title Kaisara by Kanishka II. The date of the Ara inscription (41 Kanishka era) would then correspond to AD 119 when the Roman emperor's success must have been of recent memory in India.

When the Kushanas were at the height of their power in northern India, a branch of the Shakas ruling the area between Saurashtra in Gujarat and Malwa, including Ujjain, in western central India rose to prominence once more. They retained their old Shaka title Kshatrapa and perhaps initially recognised the suzerainty of the Kushanas until they attained a position of regional hegemony under King Rudradaman in the second century AD. Together with the Kushanas in the north and the Shatavahanas in the south, they emerged as the third great power of Indian history at that time.

Rudradaman is known for his famous Junagadh inscription which is the first Sanskrit rock inscription (Ashoka's were written in Magadhi and later ones in Prakrit). In this inscription Rudradaman tells about a great tank whose wall was broken by a storm in the Shaka year 72 (AD 150). This tank, so he says, had originally been built by a provincial governor (*rashtriya*), Pushyagupta, under Chandragupta Maurya, and a canal (*pranali*) had been added to it by a Yavanaraja Tushaspha under Ashoka Maurya.[4] This would indicate that a Yavana king served as a governor under Ashoka (though his name, Tushaspha, seems to be of Persian rather than Greek origin). Rudradaman then goes on to tell about the victories he himself attained over the Shatavahana kings and over the tribe of the Yaudehas near present Delhi. This particular reference to a Rudradaman's northern campaign has been variously interpreted: those who maintain that the Kanishka era began in AD 78 say that the Kushana empire must have declined soon after his death; and those who suggest a later date (around AD 144) for Kanishka's accession to the throne contend that Rudradaman



Map 2.2 India *c.* AD 0–300

could not have conducted this campaign at the time when the Kushanas were in full control of northern India.

The last great Kushana emperor was Vasudeva whose inscriptions cover the period from the year 67 to the year 98 of the Kanishka era. He was the first Kushana ruler with an Indian name, an indication of the progressive assimilation of the Kushanas whose coins show more and more images of Hindu gods. There were some more Kushana rulers after Vasudeva, but we know very little about them. They have left no inscriptions, only coins. Moreover, the knotty problem of the Kanishka era does not yet permit us to correlate foreign reports about India in the age of the Kushanas (such as the Chinese and the Roman ones) with the reign of clearly identifiable Kushana rulers.

In central Asia and Afghanistan the Kushanas seem to have held sway until the early third century AD. In those regions their rule was only terminated when Ardashir, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, vanquished the Parthians about AD 226 and then turned against the Kushanas, too. Ardashir I and his successor Shahpur I are credited with the conquest of the whole of Bactria and the rest of the Kushana domain in central Asia. Their provincial governors had the title Kushana-Shah. In the valley of Kabul local Kushana princes could still be traced in the fifth century AD. In northwestern India some Kushana rulers also survived the decline of the western centre of their empire. The famous Allahabad inscription of the Gupta emperor, Samudragupta (about AD 335 to 375), reflects a faint reminiscence of the erstwhile glamour of the Kushanas: among the many rulers who acknowledged Samudragupta's power he also lists the Daivaputras Shahi Shahanushahis, who were obviously the successors of the great Kanishka.

The splendour of the 'dark period'

The five centuries which passed between the decline of the first great Indian empire of the Mauryas and the emergence of the great empire of the Guptas has often been described as a dark period in Indian history when foreign dynasties fought each other for short-lived and ephemeral supremacy over northern India. Apart from Kanishka's Indo-central Asian empire which could claim to be similar in size to Han China, the Parthians of Persia and to the contemporary Roman empire, this period did lack the glamour of large empires. But this 'dark period', particularly the first two centuries AD, was a period of intensive economic and cultural contact among the various parts of the Eurasian continent. India played a very active role in stimulating these contacts. Buddhism, which had been fostered by Indian rulers since the days of Ashoka, was greatly aided by the international connections of the Indo-Greeks and the Kushanas and thus rose to prominence in central Asia. South India was establishing its important links with the

West and with southeast Asia in this period. These links, especially those with southeast Asia, proved to be very important for the future course of Asian history.

But India itself also experienced important social and cultural changes in this period. For centuries Buddhism had enjoyed royal patronage. This was partly due to the fact that the foreign rulers of India found Buddhism more accessible than orthodox Hinduism with its caste barriers. The Vedic Brahmins had been pushed into the background by the course of historical development although Hinduism as such did not experience a decline. On the contrary, new popular cults arose around gods like Shiva, Krishna and Vishnu-Vasudeva who had played only a marginal role in an earlier age. The competition between Buddhism, which dominated the royal courts and cities, and orthodox Brahminism, which was still represented by numerous Brahmin families everywhere, left enough scope for these new cults to gain footholds of their own. Of great importance for the further development of Hinduism and particularly for the Hindu idea of kingship was the Kushana rulers' identification with certain Hindu gods – they were actually believed to attain a complete identity with the respective god after their death.

Religious legitimation was of greater importance to these foreign rulers than to other Indian kings. Menander's ashes had been distributed according to the Buddhist fashion, and Kanishka was identified with Mithras, but Wima Kadphises and Huvishka were closer to Shiva as shown by the images on their coins. Huvishka's coins provide a regular almanac of the iconography of the early Shiva cult. The deification of the ruler which was so prevalent in the Roman and Hellenistic world as well as among the Iranians was thus introduced into India and left a mark on the future development of Hindu kingship.

Another feature of crucial importance for the future political development of India was the organisation of the Shaka and Kushana empires. They were not centralised as the Maurya empire had been, but were based on the large-scale incorporation of local rulers. In subsequent centuries many regional empires of India were organised on this pattern.

The best-known contribution of the 'dark period' was, of course, to Indian art. After the early sculptures of the Mauryas which were greatly influenced by the Iranian style, a new Indian style had first emerged under the Shungas and their successors in the Buddhist monuments of Bharhut and Sanchi which particularly showed a new style of relief sculpture. The merger of the Gandhara school of art, with its Graeco-Roman style, and the Mathura school of art which included 'archaic' Indian elements and became the centre of Indo-Kushana art, finally led to the rise of the Sarnath school of art. This school then set the pattern of the classical Gupta style.

Less well-known, but much more important for the future development of Hindu society, was the compilation of the authoritative Hindu law books (*dharmashastra*), the foremost of them being the Code of Manu which

probably originated in the second or third century AD. After the breakdown of the Maurya and Shunga empires, there must have been a period of uncertainty which led to a renewed interest in traditional social norms. These were then codified so as to remain inviolate for all times to come. If we add to this the resurgence of Sanskrit, as testified by Rudradaman's famous rock inscription of the second century AD, we see that this 'dark period' actually contained all the elements of the classical culture of the Gupta age. Thus the much maligned 'dark period' was actually the harbinger of the classical age.

THE CLASSICAL AGE OF THE GUPTAS

Like the Mauryas a few centuries earlier, the imperial Guptas made a permanent impact on Indian history. In his Allahabad inscription, Samudragupta, the first great ruler of this dynasty, mentions one Maharaja Shri Gupta and one Ghatotkacha as his ancestors. But, except for these names, nothing else is mentioned in any other Gupta inscription nor have any coins been found which bear their names. They were probably local princelings somewhere around Allahabad or Varanasi. The Puranas report that the early Guptas controlled the area along the Ganges from Prayag (Allahabad) to Magadha. But Pataliputra and the centre of Magadha were certainly not within their reach.

The dynasty stepped into the limelight of history with Chandragupta I (AD 320 to about 335) who married a Licchavi princess. This marriage must have greatly contributed to the rise of the Guptas because the Licchavis were a mighty clan controlling most of north Bihar ever since the days of the Buddha. Chandragupta's coins show the king and his queen, Kumaradevi, and on the reverse a goddess seated on a lion with the legend 'Licchavi'. Samudragupta was also aware of the importance of this connection and in his famous Allahabad inscription he called himself 'son of the daughter of the Licchavi' rather than 'son of the Gupta'. Chandragupta introduced a new era starting with his coronation in AD 320 and he also assumed the title 'Overlord of great kings' (*maharaja-adhiraja*).

Chandragupta's son, Samudragupta (*c.* AD 335–375), earned a reputation as one of the greatest conquerors of Indian history. This is mainly due to the fact that his famous Allahabad inscription on an old Ashokan pillar withstood the ravages of time and thus preserved a glorious account of his deeds.[1] The inscription, which is undated, was perhaps initially located at Kausambi. It contains a long list of all kings and realms subdued by Samudragupta. Only half of the names on this list can be identified, but the rest provide us with a clear picture of Samudragupta's policy of conquest and annexation. In the 'land of the Aryas' (*aryavarta*) he uprooted (*unmulya*) many kings and princes between west Bengal in the east, Mathura

in the west and Vidisha in the southwest and annexed their realms. The old kingdom of Panchala north of the Ganges and many Naga (Snake) dynasties which had arisen in the area from Mathura to Vidisha after the decline of the Kushanas were eliminated in this way. The conquest of Patāliputra was also achieved in this first great campaign.

The most famous campaign of Samudragupta was aimed at southern India. Altogether twelve kings and princes of the south (*dakshinapatha*) are listed among those whom he subdued at that time. Many of them are known only due to their inclusion in this list which is thus one of the most important documents for the early history of southern India. In Dakshina Koshala he defeated King Mahendra, then he crossed the great forest region (Kalahandi and Koraput Districts of western Orissa) so as to reach the coast of Kalinga. In this region he defeated four rulers, among them Mahendra of Pishtapura in the Godaveri Delta and Hastivarman of Vengi. His final great success in the south was the defeat of King Vishnugopa of Kanchipuram. The inscription states that Samudragupta 'defeated, released and reinstated' all these kings thus showing his royal mercy. But this is probably a euphemism typical of the campaigns of early medieval Indian kings who were more interested in conquest as such than in the annexation of distant realms which they could not have controlled anyway. We may therefore assume that those southern kings ruled their realms undisturbed after Samudragupta had returned to the north where he celebrated his imperial round of conquest (*digvijaya*) with a great horse sacrifice (*ashvamedha*). On this occasion he issued gold coins showing the sacrificial horse and on the reverse his chief queen. The coins have the legend: 'After conquering the earth the Great King of Kings with the strength of an invincible hero is going to conquer the heavens.' His grandson, Kumaragupta, praised him many decades later as the great renewer of the horse sacrifice which had been forgotten and neglected for such a long time. This shows that the Guptas consciously strove to renew the old Hindu institutions of kingship.

The Allahabad inscription also lists fourteen realms and tribes whose rulers are described as 'border kings' (*pratyanta-nripati*). These rulers paid tribute (*kara*) to Samudragupta and were prepared to follow his orders (*ajna*) and to show their obedience (*pramana*) by attending his court. The list includes Samatata (southeast Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam) and Nepal as well as tribal chieftaincies in eastern Rajasthan and northern Madhya Pradesh (e.g. Malwas, Abhiras and Yaudehas). Furthermore, some jungle rajas (*atavikaraja*) are mentioned whom Samudragupta had made his servants (*paricaraka*). The jungle rajas probably lived in the Vindhya mountains. Later inscriptions also mention eighteen such 'forest states' in this area. Another group of kings listed in the inscription are those independent rulers who lived beyond the realms of the border kings. The Kushanas (the Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi mentioned in the previous chapter),

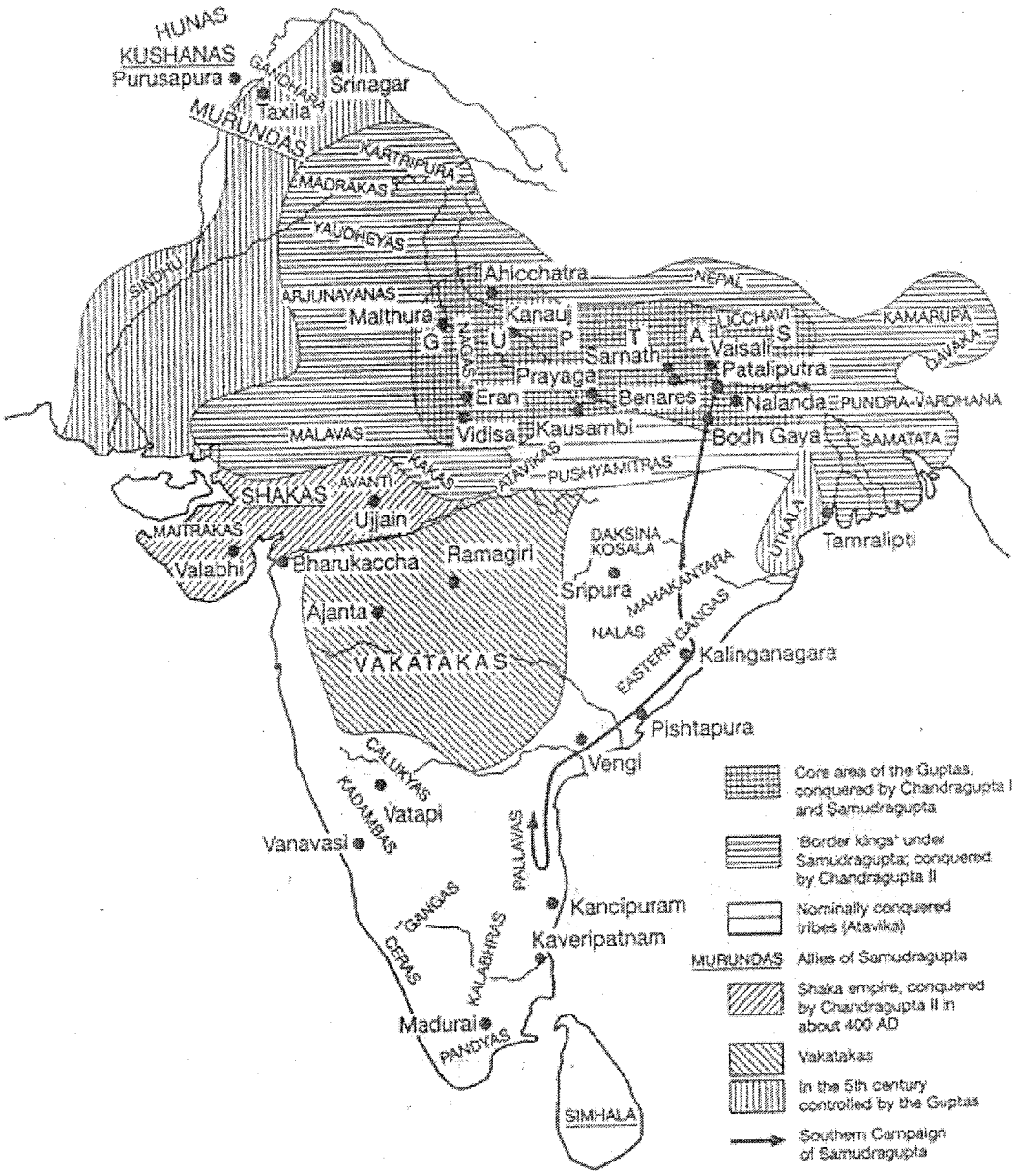
the Shakas, Murundas, as well as Simhala (Sri Lanka) and the inhabitants of 'all islands' are referred to in this context. It is stated that these independent rulers sent embassies to Samudragupta's court, donated girls for his harem and asked him for charters with the imperial Garuda Seal which would certify their legitimate title to their respective realms.

The Shakas or Kshatrapas of western India were subdued only by Samudragupta's successor after a long struggle. The Kushanas in northwestern India, Gandhara and Afghanistan were certainly beyond Samudragupta's reach but they must have been interested in good diplomatic relations with him. The reference to Sri Lanka and the inhabitants of all islands seems to be rather strange in this context, but there is fortunately some Chinese evidence for Sri Lanka's relations with Samudragupta. According to a Chinese report, King Meghavanna of Sri Lanka had asked Samudragupta for his permission to build a monastery and a guesthouse for Buddhist pilgrims at Bodh Gaya. For this purpose Meghavanna must have sent an embassy with presents to Samudragupta which he considered to be a tribute just as the Chinese emperor would have done in a similar context. Diplomatic relations were established in this way without any effect on the actual exercise of political control.

The structure of the Gupta empire

From the very beginning, the Gupta empire revealed a structure which it retained even at the height of its expansion (see Map 2.3) and which served as a blueprint for all medieval kingdoms of India. The centre of the empire was a core area in which Samudragupta had uprooted all earlier rulers in two destructive wars (*prasabha-uddharana*, i.e. violent elimination). This area was under the direct administration of royal officers. Beyond this area lived the border kings some of whom Samudragupta even reinstated after they had been presumably subdued by some of their rivals. These border kings paid tribute and were obliged to attend Samudragupta's court. In contrast with medieval European vassals they were obviously not obliged to join Samudragupta's army in a war. Thus they were not real vassals but, at the most, tributary princes. In subsequent centuries these tributary neighbours were called Samantas and rose to high positions at the imperial court thus coming closer to the ideal type of a feudal vassal.

Between the realms of the border kings and the core region of the empire there were some areas inhabited by tribes which had hardly been subdued. Of course, Samudragupta claimed that he had made all forest rulers his servants, but he probably could not expect any tribute from them. At the most, he could prevent them from disturbing the peace of the people in the core region. Beyond the forest rulers and the tributary kings were the realms of the independent kings who, at the most, entered into diplomatic relations with the Guptas. In the course of further development several regions



Map 2.3 The Gupta empire (AD 320–500)

of the Gupta empire, e.g. Pundravardhana in Bengal and Avanti with its ancient capital Ujjain, emerged as powerful centres. Some historians therefore prefer to speak of a multicentred rather than a unitary structure of the Gupta state. The subsequent balance of power of medieval regional kingdoms was foreshadowed in this way.

In his southern campaign, Samudragupta passed the circle of forest rulers and border kings and ventured into regions which had been completely outside the Gupta Rajamandala. Although this 'conquest of the four quarters of the world' (*digvijaya*) did not immediately lead to an expansion of

the Gupta empire south of the Vindhyas, it did provide a new imperial dimension to Gupta rule. It also contributed to the ideological unification of India in terms of the idea of Hindu kingship. With his great horse sacrifices after his campaigns of conquest, Samudragupta announced his claim to be a universal ruler (*cakravartin*). Therefore the Allahabad inscription praised him in a way which would have been inconceivable in later times when similar inscriptions were much more restrained. The inscription states: 'He was a mortal only in celebrating the rites of the observances of mankind [but otherwise] a god (*deva*), dwelling on the earth.' Samudragupta's royal propaganda influenced his successors, as well as many later rulers of southern and central India who tried to emulate his grandiose style however small their realms might have been.

Subjection and alliance: Shakas and Vakatakas

Under Samudragupta's son, Chandragupta II (*c.* AD 375–413/15), the Gupta empire attained its greatest glory both in terms of territorial expansion and cultural excellence. Chandragupta combined the aggressive expansionist policy of his father with the strategy of marital alliance of his grandfather. His foremost success was his victory over the mighty Shaka-Kshatrapa dynasty and the annexation of their prosperous realm in Gujarat. The date of this event is not recorded but it must have been between 397 and 409: after 397 because for this year coins of the Shaka ruler Rudrasimha III are existent, and before 409 because Chandragupta II that year produced coins of a similar pattern but with the Shakas' Buddhist vihara replaced by Garuda, Vishnu's eagle, the favourite symbol of the Guptas.

Chandragupta's other great achievement was the marriage of his daughter, Prabhavatigupta, with Rudrasena II of the Vakataka dynasty of central India. This dynasty had risen to prominence in the third century AD after the fall of the Shatavahana empire. The founder of the Vakataka dynasty was named Vindhyashakti after the goddess of the Vindhya mountains. His second successor, Pravarasena I, whom his descendants praised as *samraj*, an imperial title, divided his kingdom. His sons ruled over two flourishing independent kingdoms in what is now Madhya Pradesh. The eastern Vakatakas were faced by Samudragupta's expansionism and shifted their capital to Nandivardhana near Nagpur under Rudrasena I. Chandragupta II concluded the marital alliance with Rudrasena's grandson before attacking the Shakas so as to be sure to have a friendly power at his back when invading Gujarat. But Rudrasena II died after a very short reign in 390 and, on Chandragupta's advice, Prabhavatigupta then acted as regent for her two sons, who were 2 and 5 years old. During her regency which lasted for 20 years the Vakataka realm was practically part of the Gupta empire. Under Pravarasena II (*c.*419–455) whose reign is very well documented by many inscriptions, the eastern Vakatakas reasserted their

independence. But the relations between the Guptas and the Vakatakas remained close and friendly. Therefore, historians sometimes refer to this whole period as the Vakataka–Gupta Age. The eastern Vakatakas propagated the idea of Hindu kingship by building a veritable state sanctuary at Ramagiri, adorned by monumental temples, whereas the western Vakatakas created the Buddhist marvels of Ajanta. Both dynasties contributed to the spread of Gupta culture in central and southern India.

Chandragupta II controlled most of northern India from the mouth of the Ganges to the mouth of the Indus and from what is now northern Pakistan down to the mouth of the Narmada. In alliance with the Vakatakas, he also controlled a large part of central India. Assam, Nepal, Kashmir and Sri Lanka retained good diplomatic relations with this vast new empire, as did many realms of southeast Asia where a new wave of Indian cultural influence set in. The oldest Sanskrit inscriptions found in Indonesia which testify to the establishment of kingdoms on the Indian pattern can be traced back to this period. The Gupta empire was at its zenith.

Direct access to the eastern and western ports had greatly augmented trade in northern and central India. The large number of beautiful gold coins issued by the Guptas testify to the growth of the imperial economy. Initially these coins, like those of the Kushanas, conformed to the Roman pattern and were accordingly called Dinara. Skandagupta later on diminished the gold content of these coins but at the same time he increased their weight from 7.8 grams to 9.3 grams in keeping with Indian standards. These impressive coins also served as a means of imperial propaganda with their god-like portrayals of the Gupta rulers. Chandragupta II also started producing silver coins following the tradition of the Shakas. At first he restricted this practice to western India, but soon these silver coins circulated throughout the empire. Copper coins and shells served as local currency.

The age of the Guptas was also a prosperous time for the many guilds (*shreni*) of northern India which were often entrusted with the management of towns or parts of cities. There are seals extant of the guilds of bankers (*shreshthin*), traders (*sarthavaha*) and artisans (*kulika*). Sometimes such seals were even combined and there may have been joint organisations which may have performed functions similar to those of chambers of commerce.

Faxian (Fah-hsien), the first of the three great Chinese pilgrims who visited India from the fifth to the seventh centuries, in search of knowledge, manuscripts and relics, arrived in India during the reign of Chandragupta II. As he was only interested in Buddhism his report does not contain much political information, but he does give a general description of northern India at that time:

> The region to the South is known as the Middle Kingdom. The people are rich and contented, unencumbered by any poll-tax or

> official restrictions. Only those who till the king's land pay a land tax, and they are free to go or stay as they please. The kings govern without recourse to capital punishment, but offenders are fined lightly or heavily according to the nature of their crime. Even those who plot high treason only have their right hands cut off. The king's attendants and retainers all receive emoluments and pensions. The people in this country kill no living creatures, drink no wine, and eat no onion or garlic. The single exception to this is the Chandalas, who are known as 'evil men' and are segregated from the others. When they enter towns or markets they strike a piece of wood to announce their presence, so that others may know they are coming and avoid them.[2]

Faxian's report provides an idea of general peace and welfare in Chandragupta's India. He also gives us some glimpses of political and economic affairs. Thus he mentions that all officers of the royal court received fixed salaries – just as Megasthenes had reported about the Maurya court. The method prevailing in later periods of assigning land and revenue in lieu of salaries was obviously unusual in the Gupta age when enough money was in circulation to pay salaries in cash. Faxian also refers to the freedom of the rural people which is in contrast with a later period when land grants often specifically mention the people who will till the soil for the grantee. The Chinese pilgrim also recorded evidence of the caste system as he could observe it. According to this evidence the treatment meted out to untouchables such as the Chandalas was very similar to that which they experienced in later periods. This would contradict assertions that this rigid form of the caste system emerged in India only as a reaction to the Islamic conquest.

Kalidasa and classical Sanskrit literature

The fame of the Guptas rests to a great extent on the flowering of classical Sanskrit literature under their patronage. It was reported in later ages that Chandragupta II had a circle of poets at his court who were known as the 'Nine Jewels'. The greatest jewel among them was Kalidasa who excelled as a dramatist as well as a composer of epic poems. Among his greatest works are the two epic poems *Kumarasambhava* and *Raghuvamsha*, the lyrical poem *Meghaduta* and the great drama, *Shakuntala*. Although we know so much about his magnificent work, we know next to nothing about the poet himself. Indian scholars earlier surmised that he was a contemporary of the legendary ruler Vikramaditya of Ujjain who instituted a new era beginning in 58 BC. But some references to astronomy in Kalidasa's work which show the influence of Greek and Roman ideas seem to indicate that the poet could not have lived before the early centuries AD. Furthermore

there is some internal evidence in his work which would seem to corroborate the assumption that he was a contemporary of Chandragupta II. The title of his epic poem *Vikramorvashiya* is supposed to be an allusion to Chandragupta's second name Vikramaditya, and the *Kumarasambhava* which praises the birth of the war god, Kumara, may refer to Chandragupta's son and successor, Kumaragupta. The fourth book of the *Raghuvamsha* which glorifies the mythical dynasty of King Rama could be a eulogy of the deeds of Samudragupta. This transformation of history into myth was in keeping with the programme of the Gupta rulers. Whereas in earlier periods the ruler was seen as executing the immutable laws of a cosmic world order, the Gupta rulers were praised as gods on earth bringing about peace and prosperity by means of their heroic deeds.

Another category of Sanskrit literature which is of lesser literary merit than the great classical works but has nevertheless made an enormous impact on Indian life are the Puranas. These 'Old (Purana) Works' have earlier sources but they most probably attained their final shape in the Age of the Guptas. The Purana contain collections of myths, philosophical dialogues, ritual prescriptions, but also genealogies of northern and central Indian dynasties up to the early Guptas. They are therefore also important as historical sources. For the various sects of Hinduism they provide a storehouse of myths about different gods as well as legends concerning the holy places of the Hindus. There are altogether eighteen Great Puranas and eighteen Lesser Puranas which were frequently amended up to late medieval times. The Vishnu Purana is one of the most important religious books of the Vaishnavas. The devotees of the goddess, Durga, find a magnificent account of her deeds in the Devimahatmya which is a part of the Markandeya Purana. The fight of the goddess against the buffalo demon, Mahisha, is vividly portrayed in this text. The various incarnations (*avatara*) of Vishnu as well as the deeds of Durga are frequently depicted in the sculptures of the Gupta Age.

An age of religious tolerance and political consolidation

During the long reign of Chandragupta's son, Kumaragupta (415–455), the empire remained undiminished but there are no reports about additional conquests. Kumaragupta's rule was obviously a peaceful one and cultural life continued to flourish and to extend its influence into the distant parts of the subcontinent and southeast Asia. Although Kumaragupta was a devotee of Vishnu like his predecessors and had to pay his respects to Kumaraskanda, the god of war and his namesake, his reign was characterised by a spirit of religious tolerance.

Inscriptions registering endowments for the holy places of Buddhism and Jainism as well as for the Hindu gods like Vishnu, Shiva, Skanda and the

sun god, Surya, and for the goddess, Shakti, abound in all parts of the empire. Gold coins were donated to Buddhist monasteries with detailed instructions for the use of the interest accruing on the investment of this capital. Thus monks were to be maintained or oil procured for the sacred lamps or buildings were to be added or repaired, etc. The Buddhist monasteries retained their functions as banks in this way. But they were very much dependent on the rich citizens of the cities and towns of the empire. As these cities and towns declined in the late Gupta period this also greatly affected the fortunes of those monasteries. More secure were the donations to Brahmins and Hindu temples which took the form of land grants or of the assignment of the revenue of whole villages. Several such grants inscribed on copper plates were made during the reign of Kumaragupta. Five sets of copper plates, from 433 to 449, were found in Bengal alone. All referred to land granted to Brahmins for the performance of specific rites. One inscription provided for the maintenance and service of a Vishnu temple. Most of these grants referred to uncultivated land which indicates that the grantees had to function as colonisers who not only propagated the glory of their royal donors but also extended the scope of agriculture.

After nearly a century of rapid expansion, Kumaragupta's reign was a period of consolidation in which the administrative structure of the empire attained its final shape. It thus served as the model for the successor states of the Gupta empire. From inscriptions in Bengal we get the impression that the central region of the empire was divided into a number of provinces (*bhukti*) headed by a governor (*uparika*) who was appointed by the Gupta ruler himself. Sometimes these governors even had the title of Uparikamaharaja. The provinces were subdivided into districts (*vishaya*) headed by a Vishayapati. Districts close to the realm's capital were likely to have their heads directly appointed by the ruler. In distant provinces they were usually appointed by the governor. Larger provinces were subdivided into Vishayas and Vithis. But we do not know whether this rather centralised administration in Bengal existed also in other provinces of the Gupta empire.

At the lowest echelon there were the villages and towns which enjoyed a great deal of local autonomy quite in contrast with the instructions of the *Arthashastra*. Bigger cities had Ayuktakas at their head who were appointed by the governor. These Ayuktakas were assisted by town clerks (*pustapala*). The head of the city guilds (*nagarashreshthin*) and the heads of families of artisans (*kulika*) advised the Ayuktaka. In the villages there were headman (*gramika*) also assisted by scribes, and there were the heads of peasant families (*kutumbin*). The district officer rarely interfered with village administration but he was in charge of such transactions as the sale and transfer of land which are mentioned in many documents relating to land grants. The district administration was obviously of great importance and encompassed judicial functions (*adhikarana*).

Internal and external challenges: Pushyamitras and Huns

At the end of Kumaragupta's reign the Gupta empire was challenged by the Pushyamitras, a tribal community living on the banks of the Narmada. Skandagupta, a son and general of Kumaragupta, fought these Pushyamitras and in his later inscriptions he emphasised that the Pushyamitras had shaken the good fortunes of the Gupta dynasty and that he had to try his utmost to subdue them. Obviously such tribes living near the core area of the empire could seriously challenge the ruling dynasty. But Skandagupta may have had good reasons to highlight his role in this affair. He had usurped his father's throne by displacing the legitimate crown prince, Purugupta. As Skandagupta only mentioned his father's but never his mother's name in his inscriptions it can be assumed that his mother was a junior queen or concubine. In later genealogies of the Guptas, Skandagupta's name does not appear. The stigma of the usurper was not removed by the fact that he was a very competent ruler. Coins and inscriptions covering the period from 455 to 467 show that he was in control of the empire in this period and one, dated 458, explicitly states that he posted guards in all parts of the empire.

His vigilance enabled Skandagupta to successfully meet another and probably much more serious challenge to the Gupta empire when the Xiongnu or Huns descended upon India from central Asia where they had fought the Yuezhi in the second century BC. In the middle of the fourth century AD, the Huns invaded the Sassanid empire in Persia and then attacked the Alans and Goths living west of the Volga thus starting the great migration in Europe. Other tribes of the Huns remained in Bactria where they joined with other nomadic tribes and under a great leader, Kidara, who emerged as a powerful ruler towards the end of the fourth century. A new wave of aggressive Huns pushed these people farther south in the beginning of the fifth century. They crossed the Hindukush mountains and descended upon the Indian plains. In about 460, only a few years after the famous Hun ruler, Attila, was defeated in Europe, they seem to have clashed with Skandagupta. In the same inscription in which Skandagupta mentioned his victory over the Pushyamitras he also claims to have vanquished the Huns and in another inscription he again refers to victories over the foreigners (*mleccha*). Sassanid and Roman sources contain no reports of victories of the Huns in India and thus it seems that Skandagupta succeeded in thwarting the first attacks of the Huns on India. But this struggle disrupted the international trade of northwestern India and thus diminished one of the most important financial sources of the Gupta empire.

Skandagupta died around 467, and there was a long drawn-out war of succession between his sons and the sons of his half-brother, Purugupta. The winner of this war was Budhagupta, the son of Purugupta and the last of the great Gupta rulers. During his long reign (467 to 497) the empire remained more or less intact, but the war of succession had obviously

sapped its vitality. The successors of Budhagupta, his brother Narasimha and Narasimha's son and grandson, who ruled until about 570, controlled only small parts of the empire. In east Bengal a King Vainyagupta is mentioned in an inscription of 507 and in the west one Bhanugupta left an inscription of 510. It is not known whether these rulers were related to the Gupta dynasty or not, but they were obviously independent of the Guptas of Magadha whose power declined very rapidly.

The Huns must have noted this decline as they attacked India once more under their leader, Toramana. They conquered large parts of northwestern India up to Gwalior and Malwa. In 510 they clashed with Bhanugupta's army at Eran (Madhya Pradesh). Bhanugupta's general, Goparaja, lost his life in this battle. Coins provide evidence for the fact that Toramana controlled the Panjab, Kashmir, Rajasthan and presumably also the western part of what is now Uttar Pradesh. About 515 Toramana's son, Mihirakula, succeeded his father and established his capital at Sakala (Sialkot).

In this way northwestern India once more became part of a central Asian empire which extended from Persia to Khotan. Not much is known about the rule of the Huns in India. There is a Jaina tradition that Toramana embraced that faith. The Kashmir chronicle, *Rajatarangini*, reports that Toramana led his army also to southern India, but since this source originated many centuries later, the accuracy of this report cannot be taken for granted. All sources highlight the cruelty of Hun warfare and of their oppression of the indigenous people: a Chinese ambassador at the Hun court at Gandhara wrote such a report about 520; the Greek seafarer, Cosmas, also called Indicopleustes, recorded similar facts around 540; and finally the Chinese pilgrim, Xuanzang (Hsiuen-tsang), wrote about it from hindsight around 650. Hun rule in India was very short-lived. Yashodharman, a local ruler of Malwa, won a battle in 528 against Mihirakula who then withdrew to Kashmir where he died a few years later. But the final decline of the Huns in India was precipitated by their defeat at the hands of the Turks in central Asia around the middle of the sixth century.

Hun rule was one of the shortest instances of foreign rule over northwestern India, but it had far-reaching consequences. The Huns destroyed what was left of the Gupta empire in the northwest and the centrifugal forces were set free. They destroyed the cities and trading centres of northern India. Not much research has been done on this aspect of the Hun invasion but it seems that the classical northwestern Indian urban culture was eradicated by them. The Buddhist monasteries in the Hun territory also succumbed to this assault and never recovered. A further effect of the Hun invasion was the migration of other central Asian tribes to India where they joined local tribes. The Gurjaras and some Rajput clans seem to have originated in this way and they were soon to make a mark in Indian history. The Classical Age waned and the medieval era began with the rise of these new actors on the political scene of northern India.

THE RISE OF SOUTH INDIA

South India is separated from north India by the Vindhya mountains and the Narmada river and large tracts of barren and inhospitable land. The Deccan, particularly the central and western highlands and the 'far south', the Dravida country, had a history of its own. Cultural influences, however, were as often transmitted from northwestern India via the western highlands down to the south as along the Gangetic valley to eastern India. But, in spite of early influences from the north, the 'far south' remained rather isolated and could develop in its own way. However, in later centuries cultural influences from the south, like the great Bhakti movement, also made an impact on northern India.

The most important impact on the south was, of course, the spread of Late Vedic culture from the north. Scholars refer to this in different terms: Aryanisation, Sanskritisation, Hinduisation. But none of these terms can do justice to the complex transmission of cultural influences. During the early centuries AD north Indian culture had ceased to be a purely 'Aryan' culture and it was transmitted not only by those who spoke Sanskrit; in this early period of the last centuries BC Buddhists and Jainists speaking Pali and Prakrit were as important in this process as Brahmins who propagated various forms of Hinduism. In due course the Dravidian languages of the south absorbed a great many Sanskrit words and became themselves media for the expression of new cultural values.

Brahmin families who continued to transmit sacred texts orally from one generation to another were certainly of great importance in this context. They penetrated the south peacefully and made an impact by setting an example rather than by converting people. But the process of Hinduisation was also accompanied by the oppression and exploitation of former tribal groups as well as pariahs and untouchables within the caste society. Brahmins provided a justification and legitimation for the hierarchical structuring of society which was particularly useful to local rulers who emerged from a tribal status. The Brahmins brought along the ideology of Hindu kingship which such rulers eagerly adopted. The Brahmins literally put the tribal people in their place. They could recite the verses of the *Mahabharata* which state that it is the duty of tribes to lead a quiet life in the forest, to be obedient to the king, to dig wells, to give water and food to travellers and gifts to the Brahmins in such areas where they could 'domesticate' the tribal people.

South Indian geopolitics

The history of south India was determined by the contrast of highland and coastal lowland. At the height of the early medieval period this became very obvious when the great regional kingdoms of the southeast (Pallavas

and Cholas) and of the western highlands (Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas) vied with each other for the control of the large rivers flowing from west to east. The fertile delta of Krishna and Godaveri was particularly coveted by rival powers.

Prehistoric finds in northern and southern India mostly indicate that open areas in the interior of the country were preferred by early settlers whereas the early civilisations were based on the great river plains of the Indus and Ganges. The early history of the south was very much influenced by the proximity of the sea and the early historical development in the southeast centred on the coast. Settled agriculture and the growing of rice made the coastal plains around the mouths of the great rivers much more attractive. Social differentiation and political organisation started with the need for defence against raiders. The early nuclear areas along the great rivers were initially isolated from each other by large stretches of forest or barren lands. They could thus give rise to local principalities. At the same time these principalities could profit from maritime trade.

South India was known even in very ancient times as a rich land to which, according to the Bible, King Solomon may have sent his ships once every three years carrying gold, silver, ivory, monkeys and peacocks. Megasthenes reported that in the late fourth century BC the wealth of the Pandya rulers of the south was derived from the trade with pearls. The *Arthashastra* lists shells, diamonds and other precious stones, pearls and articles made of gold as south Indian products. Initially this kind of trade may have been of marginal importance only but in due course it contributed to economic growth. The organisation of trade accelerated the political development of the coastal nuclear areas and the local rulers gradually extended their sway over the surrounding countryside. It is significant in this context that ancient geographers like Ptolemy in the second century AD mention not only the ports of southern India but also the capitals of rulers located at some distance from the coast.

Five types of regional ecology

The pattern of gradual penetration of the hinterland of the southeast coast is clearly reflected in ancient Tamil literature. In the texts of the Sangam period five eco-types (*tinai*) are mentioned again and again. These types are: the mountains, forests and pastures, dry, barren land, the valleys of the great rivers, and the coast. These different eco-types were not only characterised by the particular plants and animals found there but also by different modes of economic activity and social structure.[1]

The mountainous region (*kurrinci*) was the habitat of hunters and food gatherers like the tribe of the Kuruvars. Below this region there was the forest and brushland (*mullai*) which also served as pasture for tribes of herdsmen like the Ayar. Agriculture was scarce in this area where only

millets would grow. Rice was introduced later and only in the small areas which offered conditions similar to those prevailing in the great valleys.

The Sangam texts indicate that the relations between the hunters of the mountains and the forests and the herdsmen in the adjacent region were often strained. They did share the same religious cults of Muruga, Lord of the Mountains, who was also worshipped as the god of war by the herdsmen. But constant cattle raids were a source of conflict here just as they had been in northern India in the Vedic Age. The Sangam literature abounds with stories about such cattle raids, the term for such a raid being synonymous with that for war.

The third ecotype, the dry, barren land (*palai*) was a transitional zone which often expanded in great droughts. This was a region to which robbers would withdraw and was thus feared by travellers.

The most important of the five types was the fourth one, the river valleys (*marutam*). Natural and artificial irrigation by means of canals, tanks and wells made rice cultivation possible in this area. Artisans and settled agriculturists, like the caste of the Vellalas, lived here and later the kings settled Brahmins in this fertile region who established whole Brahmin villages. These villages were usually located in the region which is below 300 feet above sea level. These river valleys with their well-developed agriculture and high population were the nuclear areas which formed the base of all regional kingdoms of south India.

The fifth eco-type, the coast (*neytal*) was an area where the people made a living by fishing, trading and making salt. Local trade consisted initially only of exchanging fish and salt for rice and milk products, but in the first centuries AD international maritime trade became more and more important for the coastal people. This is why both literary and archaeological evidence point to a higher degree of urbanisation in the coastal region than in the river valleys in this early period.

Sangam literature, just like late Vedic and early Buddhist literature, reflects the transition from tribal society to settled agriculture and early state formation. Even at this very early stage, social stratification in the river valleys of southern India shows traces of a caste system which then becomes increasingly rigid as Brahmin immigrants gain more and more influence and provide the justification for it. But in the early times, even the higher castes were not yet hemmed in by the rigid norms and conventions of a later age. The Sangam texts contain vivid descriptions of the uninhibited life in the early capitals of south Indian rulers, particularly in the Pandya capital, Madurai.

The political development of south India was greatly stimulated by the contact with the first great Indian empire of the Mauryas in the third century BC. The tribal rulers of the south thus gained an insight into new types of administration and large-scale state formation. Trade with northern India added to this flow of information, and so did the migration of Buddhist and Jaina monks who introduced their forms of monastic organisation in central

and southern India. Interregional trade and these highly developed monastic institutions often maintained a symbiotic relationship which was of great importance for the emergence of the political infrastructure of these early states of the south.

Kharavela of Orissa and the Andhra Shatavahanas

The history of central and south India in the centuries after the death of Ashoka is still relatively unknown. Thus the dating of the two major dynasties which emerged south of the Vindhyas after the decline of the Maurya dynasty, the Shatavahanas of Central India and the dynasty of Kharavela of Orissa, is as yet very uncertain. It was initially assumed that both emerged soon after the decline of the Maurya empire around 185 BC, but more recent research seems to indicate that they arose only around the middle of the first century BC.

Kharavela, one of the great rulers of ancient India, has left a detailed record of his deeds in the inscription found in the Jaina cave at Udayagiri near Bhubaneshwar. He called himself 'Supreme Lord of Kalinga' (*Kalinga-adhipati*) and he was probably a member of the Chedi dynasty which had migrated from eastern Madhya Pradesh to Orissa. Kharavela was a true chakravartin though he was a Jaina and should have believed in the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*). In his campaign against the rulers of northern India he got beyond Magadha and so frightened a Greek (Yavana) king who lived northwest of this area that he took to his heels. Marching westward, Kharavela entered the realm of the Shatavahana king, Satakarni, and, turning south, he defeated a confederation of Dravidian rulers (*Tamiradeha sanghata*).

The spoils of the many successful campaigns which Kharavela conducted almost every year seem to have made him so rich that by the sixth year of his reign he could afford to abolish all taxes payable by the citizens of towns (*paura*) and the rural folk (*janapada*) in his realm. The inscription also contains the interesting news that Kharavela reintroduced the sixty-four arts of song, dance and instrumental music (*tauryatrika*) which had been prohibited by the Mauryas. This testifies to the fact that Ashoka's Dhamma-Mahamatras had successfully implemented the imperial orders even in distant Orissa.

Kharavela's far-flung realm, which included large parts of eastern and central India, seems to have disintegrated soon after his death as had happened to the Maurya empire after Ashoka's death. Only his son and another member of the dynasty have left us some rather unimportant inscriptions. But it might be this empire about which Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) wrote in his *Naturalis historia*: 'The royal city of the Calingae is called Parthalis [i.e. Toshali]. This king had 66,000 foot soldiers, 1,000 horses and 700 elephants, always caparisoned, ready for battle.'

The central Indian state of the Shatavahana dynasty showed a much greater continuity and stability than Kharavela's short-lived realm. The Purana texts even maintain that the dynasty ruled for 460 years, but these texts do not always provide reliable historical evidence. Nothing is known about the antecedents of this dynasty which belonged to the great central Indian tribe of the Andhras, according to the Puranas. This tribe is listed among the non-Aryan tribes in the Aitareya Brahmana text of about 500 BC.

Satakarni I, who seems to be identical with the king mentioned in Kharavela's inscription, was the first great ruler of this dynasty. He claimed to have fought against the Greeks and Shakas in the west and northwest and then extended his kingdom to the east along the river Godaveri. His capital, Pratisthana (Paithan), was located on the banks of the Godaveri in what is now the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Due to this advance along the Godaveri towards the southeast he could proudly call himself 'Lord of the South' (*dakshinapatha-pati*). Pliny reports that in his time the Andarae, as he calls the Shatavahanas, had 30 fortified cities, 100,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry and even 9,000 war elephants. They were thus the strongest power in southern India. Nevertheless they were deprived of the central part of their realm on the upper Godaveri by the Shakas who were pushed to the south by the Kushanas.

Only King Gautamiputra was able to restore the Shatavahana realm to its earlier greatness in about AD 125. Gautamiputra's son, Vasishthiputra, alias Shri Pulumavi, ruled the Shatavahana kingdom around AD 140 at the time of Ptolemy, who referred to Shri Pulumavi as Shri Polemaios. The Shatavahanas had consolidated their hold on the east while being forced to concentrate on it for nearly a century until they could reclaim the western part once more. As their empire then stretched more or less from coast to coast they became very important for international trade which linked west and east Asia (see Map 2.2).

The Shatavahana inscriptions contain some information about their administrative system, but details are missing. The empire was divided into districts (*ahara*) headed by imperial officers (*amatya*) who probably had functions similar to the Mahamatras of the Maurya empire. We do not know whether there was an additional level of administration or not. In general, the Shatavahanas seem to have copied the Maurya system of administration with the important difference that they tried to take local interests into account and inducted allodial lords into their administration hierarchy. Furthermore, cities and guilds enjoyed a great deal of autonomy under Shatavahana rule. This was an important feature of later south Indian realms, too. The incorporation of local lords into the state hierarchy was a general feature of state formation in early medieval India.

Two other specific features, or perhaps even innovations, of the Shatavahana system were the distribution of military garrisons throughout the empire and the practice of granting land to Brahmins while at the same

time providing them with immunities (*parihara*). Both of these institutions were obviously designed to penetrate the countryside with royal agents. The officers (*gaulmika*) heading the garrisons had some local administrative functions and, as the garrisons were to be self-supporting, had to secure the necessary resources from the local people. This in turn made it necessary to exempt Brahmins and Buddhist monasteries, to whom land was granted very specifically, from such exactions by royal officers. Consequently, the grant of such immunities became part and parcel of the land grant.

The Shatavahana system was not based on a centralised bureaucracy but on a network of noblemen who had such grandiloquent titles as 'Great Lord of the Army' (*mahasenapati*). Recent research has established that there were many local and subregional centres which must have formed a kind of federation under Shatavahana rule. Brahmins and Buddhist monasteries probably served as countervailing forces to the potentially centrifugal forces of local magnates. The Shatavahanas were Hindus but they nevertheless provided a great deal of patronage to the Buddhist order. Perhaps the good connections between monasteries and guilds also recommended the Buddhist order to the rulers who benefited from international trade.

Shatavahana power declined in the third century, showing symptoms typical of the final stages of all Indian kingdoms. Local princes strove for independence and finally a series of small successor states emerged. The northern part of the empire remained under the control of one branch of the Shatavahanas for some time until the Vakatakas rose to prominence in this region; they then entered into the alliance with the Gupta empire.

The eastern part of the Shatavahana empire, especially the fertile delta region of Krishna and Godaveri, was then ruled by the short-lived Ikshvaku dynasty. The founder of this dynasty celebrated the great horse sacrifice obviously in order to declare his independence from his Shatavahana overlord. The Ikshvakus continued the policy of the Shatavahanas in extending their patronage both to Brahmins and to the Buddhist order. Inscriptions belonging to the reign of the second Ikshvaku king which were found in the monasteries at Nagarjunikonda show that even the queens made donations to the Buddhists. One of these inscriptions gives evidence of international relations of the monastery: Kashmir and Gandhara, the Yavanas (Greeks) in northwestern India are mentioned, also Kirata in the Himalayas (Nepal?), Vanavasi in western India, Toshali and Vanga (Orissa and Bengal) in the east, Damila (Tamil Nadu), the Island of Tamrapani (Sri Lanka) and even China. This shows to what extent Buddhism added an international dimension to the polity of India's early regional kingdoms.

In the beginning of the fourth century the delta region of Krishna and Godaveri was already in the hands of a governor appointed by the Pallava dynasty of Kanchipuram and the Ikshvakus had disappeared. Not much is known about south Indian history in this period except what Samudragupta

reported about his southern campaign in his famous Allahabad inscription. Vishnugopa of Kanchi (Kanchipuram) and Hastivarman of Vengi, probably a ruler of the local Shalankayana dynasty are mentioned in this inscription but we have no other evidence of their life and times.

Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras

The early history of the 'far south' is the history of the three tribal principalities of the Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras. They are mentioned in Ashoka's inscriptions of the third century BC, in some brief Tamil inscriptions of the second century BC (written in Brahmi script like the Ashokan inscriptions) and in Kharavela's inscription of the first century BC. The Sangam literature of the Tamils sheds a great deal of light on this period. Archaeological discoveries and the reports of ancient European authors provide additional evidence, particularly with regard to maritime trade. The chronicles of Sri Lanka contain many references to the fights between the kings of Sri Lanka and the kings of southern India. Compared to the sources available for other regions in early Indian history, this is a wealth of source material. Sangam literature was named after the 'academies' (*sangam*) of Madurai and its environs where poets worked under the patronage of the Pandya kings. Some traditionalist historians have maintained that these works were composed from about 500 BC to AD 500, but more recent research has shown that they were probably composed in the first to the third centuries AD, the second century being the most active period. The famous Tamil grammar, *Tolkappiyam*, is considered to belong to the beginning of this whole period (parts of it date back to *c*.100 BC) and the great Tamil epic poem, *Shilappatikaram*, to its very end, perhaps even to the fifth or sixth centuries AD.

North Indian royal titles (e.g. *adhiraja*) gained more and more currency in the south in this period but the early south Indian kings seem to have derived their legitimation from tribal loyalties and the network of their respective clan. This sometimes implied the division of power among many members of the clan. The Chera kingdom of the southwest coast (Kerala) must have been such a large-scale family enterprise. Kautalya has referred to this system of government in his *Arthashastra*; he called it *kulasangha* and thought that it was quite efficient. Among the Pandyas and Cholas the monarch seems to have played a more important role. This was particularly true of the Chola king, Karikala, who ruled over a relatively large area around AD 190 after he had vanquished a federation of the Pandyas and Cheras. Even about 1,000 years later the Chola rulers still referred to this great ancestor and they attributed to him the building of dikes along the banks of the Kaveri and the decoration of Kanchipuram with gold. Karikala's policy was obviously aimed at extending the territorial base of the Cholas at the expense of the other tribal principalities, but this policy

seems to have alienated the people who threatened to flee from Karikala's domains so that he had to make concessions to them.

At the end of the Sangam era the development of the three southern kingdoms was suddenly interrupted by the invasion of the Kalabhras. Historians have called the period which started with this invasion the 'Kalabhra Interregnum'. It ended only when the Pallava dynasty emerged as the first major regional power of south India in the sixth century. Nothing is known about the origins or tribal affiliations of the Kalabhras. In early medieval Tamil literature they are depicted as 'bad kings' (*kaliarashar*) who disrupted the order of the tribal kingdoms of coastal south India and in the river valleys. It is said that they destroyed legitimate kings and even cancelled land grants to Brahmins. Buddhist literature, however, contains some information about a Kalabhra king, Acchutavikkanta, under whose patronage Buddhist monasteries and poets prospered. A Jaina grammarian quoted some of Acchutavikkanta's poems even in the tenth century. The Kalabhras were probably a mountain tribe of southern India which suddenly swooped down on the kingdoms of the fertile lowlands. The kings who headed this tribe must have been followers of Buddhism and Jainism. In a later period of south Indian history a similar process occurred when the Hoysalas, a highland tribe, emerged at the time when the Chola empire declined. They were also at first depicted as highwaymen who disturbed the peace of the settled Hindu kingdoms. But, unlike the Kalabhras, once the Hoysalas had established their rule they turned into orthodox supporters of Hinduism.

International trade and the Roman connection

An important aspect of early south Indian history was the flourishing trade with Rome. The first two centuries AD were an important time for the trade links between Asia and Europe. In addition to earlier Greek reports, the Roman references to the trade with India provided the information on which the European image of India was based. The European discovery of India in the late medieval period by people like Marco Polo was in effect only a rediscovery of that miraculous country which was known to the ancient writers but had been cut off by the Arabs from direct contact with the West for several centuries. Hegel commented on the trade with India in his *Philosophy of History*: 'The quest for India is a moving force of our whole history. Since ancient times all nations have directed their wishes and desires to that miraculous country whose treasures they coveted. These treasures were the most precious on earth: treasures of nature, pearls, diamonds, incense, the essence of roses, elephants, lions etc. and also the treasures of wisdom. It has always been of great significance for universal history by which route these treasures found their way to the West, the fate of nations has been influenced by this.'[2]

For India itself the trade with the West flourished most in ancient times. But when India's trade with Rome declined in the third and fourth century AD, India, and especially southern India, turned to southeast Asia where Indian influence became much more important than the vague impression which India had made on the nations of the West.

Indian trade with the countries around the Mediterranean goes back far into the pre-Christian era. But this early trade was probably conducted mainly by isolated seafaring adventurers even though the Ptolemies of Egypt had tried for some time to gain access to the trade in the Indian Ocean. It was only under Emperor Augustus (30 BC to AD 14) that this trade suddenly attained much greater dimensions. The Roman annexation of Egypt opened up to the trade route through the Red Sea. Furthermore, after a century of civil war, Rome experienced a period of greater prosperity which increased demand for the luxury goods of the East, a demand which could not be met by means of the old cumbersome method of coastal shipping. Hippalus' discovery early in the first century AD that the monsoon could take a ship straight across the Arabian Sea shortened the trade route and greatly eased access to the goods of the East. In subsequent years there was a great spurt of trading activity which was paralleled only many centuries later by the renewed European trade with India after Vasco da Gama's voyage of 1498.

A comparison of Strabo's geography which was written at the time of Augustus (edited and amended between AD 17 and 23) with the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* which was written by an anonymous Greek merchant in the second half of the first century AD shows a great increase in Roman trade with India. Strabo was more interested in northern India and in the ports between the mouth of the Indus and present Bombay and he reported next to nothing about southern India, Sri Lanka and the east coast of India. The author of the *Periplus*, who probably visited India personally, described in detail the ports of the Malabar coast. When Ptolemy wrote his geography around AD 150 Roman knowledge of India had increased even more. He wrote about the east coast of India and also had a vague idea of southeast Asia, especially about 'Chryse', the 'Golden Country' (*suvarnabhumi*) as the countries of southeast Asia had been known to the Indians since the first centuries AD. However, recent research has shown that this so-called Roman trade was integrated into an already flourishing Asian network of coastal and maritime trade.

The most important port of the Malabar coast was Muziris (Cranganore near Cochin) in the kingdom of Cerobothra (Cheraputra), which 'abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia and by the Greeks'. The *Periplus* reported on Roman trade with Malabar:

> They send large ships to the market-towns on account of the great quantity and bulk of pepper and malabathrum [cinnamon]. There

> are imported here, in the first place, a great quantity of coin; topaz, thin clothing, not much; figured linens, antimony, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, wine, not much, but as much as at Barygaza [Broach]; realgar and orpiment; and wheat enough for the sailors, for this is not dealt in by the merchants there. There is exported pepper, which is produced in quantity in only one region near these markets, a district called Cottonora [north Malabar?]. Besides this there are exported great quantities of fine pearls, ivory, silk cloth, spikenard from the Ganges, malabathrum from the places in the interior, transparent stones of all kinds, diamonds and sapphires, and tortoise shell; that from Chryse Island, and that taken among the islands along the coast of Damirica [Tamil Nadu]. They make the voyage to this place in favourable season who set out from Egypt about the month of July, that is Epiphi.[3]

This provides evidence for a great volume of trade in both directions. It also indicates that the south Indian ports served as entrepôts for silk from China, oil from the Gangetic plains which was brought by Indian traders all the way to the tip of southern India, and also for precious stones from southeast Asia. But, as far as the eastern trade was concerned, the Coromandel coast to the south of present Madras soon eclipsed the Malabar coast. To the north of Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari) there was the kingdom of the Pandyas where prisoners were made to dive for precious pearls in the ocean. Still further north there was a region called Argaru which was perhaps the early Chola kingdom with its capital, Uraiyur. The important ports of this coast were Kamara (Karikal), Poduka (Pondichery) and Sopatma (Supatama) (see Map 2.2). Many centuries later European trading factories were put up near these places: the Danes established Tranquebar near Karikal, the French Pondichery, and the British opted for Madras which was close to Supatama.

The British archaeologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler discovered in 1945 the remnants of an ancient port near the fishing village Arikamedu about 2 miles south of Pondichery. The great number of Roman items found there seems to indicate that this was Poduka of the Periplus, called 'New Town' (*Puducceri*) in Tamil. Brick foundations of large halls and terraces were found, also cisterns and fortifications. Shards of Roman ceramics were identified as Red Polish Ware which Wheeler tried to trace to Arezzo in Italy where it was produced between 30 BC and AD 45. The finds of Arikamedu conjure up the image of a flourishing port just like Kaveripatnam as described in an epic poem of the Sangam era:

> The sun shone over the open terraces, over the warehouses near the harbour and over the turrets with windows like eyes of deer. In different places of Puhar the onlooker's attention was caught by the

> sight of the abodes of Yavanas, whose prosperity never waned. At the harbour were to be seen sailors from many lands, but to all appearances they live as one community.[4]

This Kaveripatnam situated at the mouth of the Kaveri was probably identical with the emporium of Khaberis described by Ptolemy.

The trade with Rome brought large numbers of Roman gold coins to southern India. In contrast with the Kushanas who melted down all Roman coins and reissued them in their own name, the rulers of south India did not do this but simply defaced the coins. A sharp cut across the face of the Roman emperor indicated that his sovereignty was not recognised but his coins were welcome and would be accepted according to their own intrinsic value. Just as in later periods, the Indians imported very few goods but were eager to get precious metals, so the quest for Roman gold was a driving force of India's international trade in ancient times. The Periplus reported this influx of coins and a text of the Sangam era highlights this, too: 'The beautifully built ships of the Yavanas came with gold and returned with pepper, and Muziris resounded with the noise.'[5] Thus it is no accident that the largest number of Roman gold hoards have been found in the hinterland of Muziris. In the area around Coimbatore, through which the trade route from the Malabar coast led into the interior of southern India and on to the east coast, eleven rich hoards of gold and silver Roman coins of the first century AD were found. Perhaps they were the savings of pepper planters and merchants or the loot of highwaymen who may have made this important trade route their special target.

CHAPTER 3

Sixth Century to Ninth Century

The New-Type States and the Bhakti *Movement*

3.1 THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW TYPE OF STATE

NOBORU KARASHIMA

In the sixth century, there emerged a new type of state in the Deccan and further south showing both discontinuities as well as continuities with states that had emerged in these areas from the third century onwards (section 2.4). Three of them, the Chalukyas of Badami in the western Deccan, the Pallavas of Kanchi, and the Pandyas in Madurai (both in the Tamil country) grew to be fairly big states and fought each other over south Indian hegemony from the beginning of the sixth till the ninth century (the Badami Chalukyas were replaced by the Rashtrakutas in the middle of the eighth century). One of the important factors for the establishment of their power might have been an environment within their territory conducive to the growth of agriculture. The Pallavas, for instance, took much pains to expand the cultivated area by developing irrigation facilities in the form of reservoirs. A few other states, like the Gangas of Talakad, and the Telugu Cholas of Renandu, sandwiched between the bigger ones, remained minor states. All these states came more and more under the spell of the Vedic and agamic religion, Hinduism in a broad sense, and some of them started to have an indifferent or hostile attitude towards the Sramanic Buddhism and Jainism. In the south, the spread of Hinduism was accelerated by the *bhakti* movement that enthused the common people. Here, in this section, we shall study the political history of the period from the sixth to the ninth century, and consider both the kingship of the new type of state and the *bhakti* movement in subsequent sections.

Among the three major states, the Pallavas appeared first at the end of the third century as successors to the Ikshvakus in southern Andhradesa and showing much north Indian influence. As for their origin, some early scholars suggested that they migrated to India from outside and identified them with the Pahlavas, but many scholars are now inclined to regard them indigenous to south India or with some mixture of north Indian blood (Mahalingam 1969: 21–4).

The early history of the Pallavas from the third to the beginning of the sixth century is

given in section 2.4. The Pallankoyil copper plates, the earliest Tamil copper plates assigned to the middle of the sixth century (*TASSI*, 1958/59: 41–110), record a land grant to a Jain temple near Kanchipuram by Simhavarman, the Pallava king and father of Simhavishnu (560–80). The latter is said to have conquered the Chola country up to the Kaveri and also perhaps fought the Kalabhras, according to later copper-plate inscriptions. In the north too he defeated his opponents. He opened a new epoch for the Pallavas and was followed by his son, Mahendravarman I (580–630), whom Appar, a famous *bhakti* saint, is said to have converted from Jainism to Saivism. During Mahendravarman's reign a new architectural style was introduced, namely the cave temples found at several places including Mamallapuram, the main port of the Pallavas.[1] At the same time, however, war broke out between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas of northern Karnataka.

The Chalukyas grew into a power in the middle of the sixth century under Pulakesin I who, in Badami, constructed a fort on a horse-shoe-shaped hill surrounding a lake and open to the town, and declared independence from the Kadambas by performing an *aśvamēdha* (Figure 3.1). Pulakesin I's grandson, Pulakesin II (609–42), extended his rule to the Konkan, and defeated, on the banks of the Narmada, the army of Harshavardhana who tried to invade Karnataka. The kings of Malwa, Kalinga, and the eastern Deccan submitted to Pulakesin II. Though he attacked Kanchipuram, Mahendravarman was able to thwart the attack and this was the beginning of the long struggle between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas.

[1] Recent excavations in Mamallapuram reveal the foundation of a large brick structure which might have been a temple or a public building going back to early Pallava times (Rajavelu 2008).

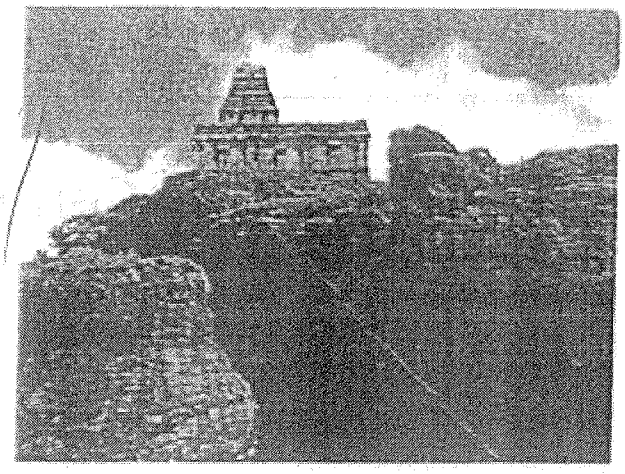
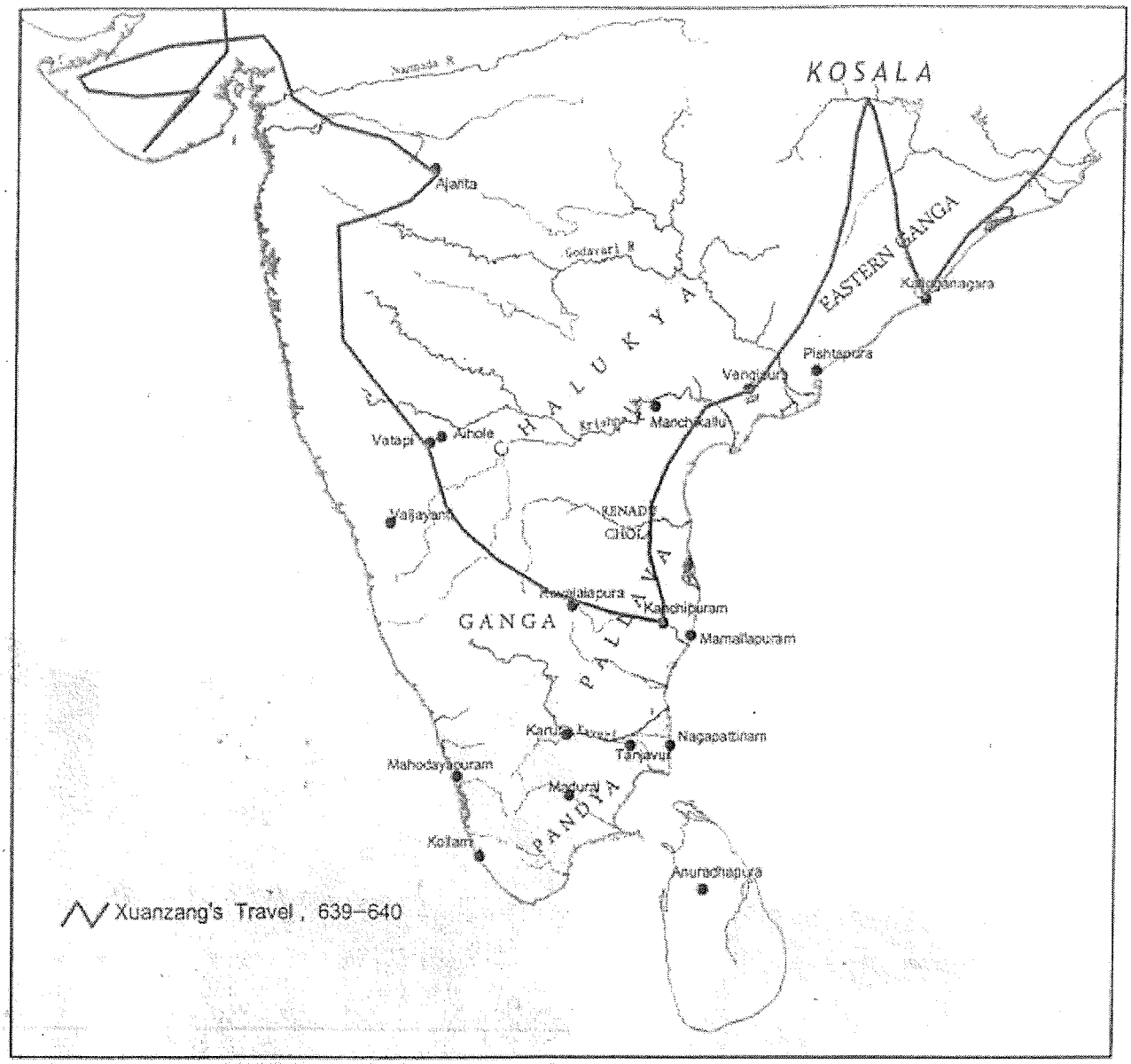


Figure 3.1 Malegitti Sivalaya Temple at Badami
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

After intermittent battles, Narasimhavarman I (630–68), the Pallava king, attacked and occupied Badami, and engraved an inscription on a rock there to commemorate his victory. Pulakesin II died in the battle. It was during this period that Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang; Yuan Chwang), a Chinese monk who studied Buddhism at the Nalanda monastery, also travelled in the south, including Kanchipuram and Badami in his itinerary (see Map 3.1). His visit to Badami was just before the attack on the city by Narasimhavarman. Xuanzang stated that there were more than one hundred Buddhist and over eighty Hindu temples in Kanchipuram (Watters 1905: 226).

In the Pandyan country, Kadungon (590–620) was the ruler who revived the dynastic power of the Pandyas towards the end of the sixth century. In a later copper-plate inscription (Velvikudi inscription, *EI*, xvii, 16) he appears as the 'destroyer' of the Kalabhra kings who had been dubbed anti-Brahmanical. From these references in the Pandyan and Pallava inscriptions, the Kalabhras were believed to have been Buddhists or Jains and to have harassed the Hindus, but a set of inscriptions recently discovered in Pulangurichi (*Ainnam*, 1: 57–69;



Map 3.1 South India, 550–850 CE
Source: Courtesy of Y. Subbarayalu.

Subbarayalu 2012: 27–37) records that Cēndan Kūṟṟan and Cēndan, who are supposed to have been Kalabhra kings, took care of one Jain and two other religious (not specified as Jain or Buddhist) institutions. This may advise us to alter the past notion that the Kalabhras were oppressors of Hinduism. The third king of the Pandyas, Sendan (654–70), extended his rule to the Chera country, and the fourth, Arikesari Maravarman (670–700), fought battles against the Pallavas.

Narasimhavarman I of the Pallavas, who sacked Badami, claimed to have defeated the Cholas, Cheras, Kalabhras, and also Pandyas. He constructed many rock-cut Siva temples in the kingdom after his conversion to Saivism. During the reign of his grandson, Parameśvaravarman I (670–700), Vikramaditya of the

Chalukya dynasty invaded the Pallava country and pitched battles were fought on the banks of the Kaveri involving the Gangas and probably the Pandyas too as his allies. However, the next five decades under the rule of the Chalukyan Vinayaditya (681–96) and Vijayaditya (696–734) and their contemporary, the Pallava Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha (700–28) were rather peaceful. During this period, the Shore Temple and the Kailasanatha temple were built at Mamallapuram and Kanchipuram respectively, and at Pattadakal and Aihole too many new temples were constructed, including the famous Durga Temple in Aihole (see Figure 3.2). Dandin, the great rhetorician and the author of *Daśakumāracarita*, seems to have spent some years at the Pallava court.

Narasimhavarman II was succeeded by his son Paramesvaravarman II, but when the latter died in a battle with a Ganga ruler who assisted Vikramaditya II, a crisis arose over the succession, as Paramesvara had died without an heir. Though there were some princes related to Paramesvara, the officials (*māttras*) acting in concert with the college (*ghaṭika*) of learned Brahmanas and the people (*mūlaprakritis*) chose a young prince of a collateral line, Nandivarman (II) Pallavamalla (731–96), the twelve-year-old son of Hiranyavarman. This story is narrated in the sculptured panels of the Vaikunthaperumal Temple built by Nandivarman II in Kanchipuram (see Figure 3.3) and in some copper-plate inscriptions. From the name of his father, Hiranyavarman, and other evidence, scholars suggest that this collateral line of the Pallavas existed in Cambodia in

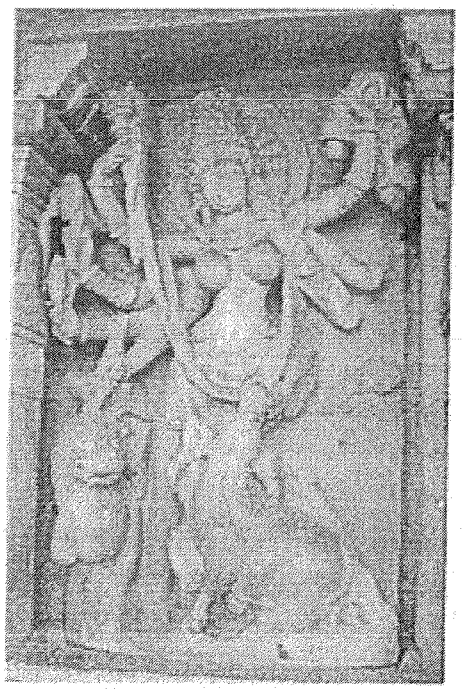


Figure 3.2 Durga Temple Panel at Aihole
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.



Figure 3.3 Sculptured Panel (the Fourth) of Vaikuntaperumal Temple
Source: Courtesy of Tsugusato Omura.

Southeast Asia.[2] However, there is no evidence to prove this, though the Pallavas and other south Indian dynasties of this period had close relations with Southeast Asian countries.[3]

In the Chalukya country, Vikramaditya II ascended the throne in 733/4, and invaded Kanchipuram immediately after. The young Pallava king, Nandivarman II, seems to have had a very difficult time for about twenty years or so, fighting against the Chalukyas, the Gangas, and the Pandyas, and even against a Pallava prince who, backed by the Chalukyas and others, claimed the Pallava throne. During that period, Nandivarman seems to have been helped by Dantidurga of the Rashtrakuta family, an erstwhile feudatory of the Chalukyas. Around 760, Nandivarman defeated the Gangas, but was unable to restrain the growing power of the Pandyas under the reign of Maravarman Rajasimha (730–65) followed by Nedunjadaiyan, alias Varagunavarman I (765–815).

In the Deccan, Vikramaditya was succeeded by his son, Kirtivarman II (744/5–55). He lost his southern territory as a result of his conflict with the Pandyas, and was the last Chalukyan king, his power undermined by the Rashtrakuta Dantidurga (752–6) who increased his sway by successfully fighting against the Gurjaras in Malwa and the rulers of Kosala and Kalinga. With the Pallavas, however, he maintained good relations and gave his daughter in marriage to Nandivarman II. He was followed by his uncle, Krishna I (756–75), who subdued the Gangas and also the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, and is known as the builder of the Kailasa Temple at Ellora. His son, Dhruva (780–92), and grandson, Govinda III (792–814), consolidated the strength of the Rashtrakutas by defeating north Indian powers, including the ruler of Kanauj and his protector, Dharmapala of Bengal. Govinda III invaded Kanchipuram too, defeating Dantivarman (796–847), who had succeeded Nandivarman II.

During the long reign of Dantivarman, the Pallava territory was reduced by the aggression of the Pandyas from the south and the Rashtrakutas from the north. The Telugu-Chodas in the southern Andhra country extended their rule to Tondaimandalam. Nandivarman III (846–69), son of Dantivarman, however, was able to defeat the Pandyas and the Telugu-Chodas by securing help from the Gangas, the Cholas (who were gaining power in the Kaveri delta), and even the Rashtrakutas. However, Aparajita, grandson of Nandivarman III, was killed by Aditya I of the Cholas who invaded Tondaimandalam. That was the end of the Pallava rule.

Returning to Pandyan history, Varagunavarman I invaded the Pallava country and annexed the Kongu region. He also extended his rule over Venad, the southern part of Kerala. His son, Srimara Srivallabha (815–62) invaded Sri Lanka during the reign of Sena I and sacked his capital, Anuradhapura. Srimara, however, was defeated in the battle with Nripatunga (859–99), the Pallava king who succeeded Nandivarman III. Madurai, the Pandyan capital, was sacked by Sena II of Sri Lanka, the successor of Sena I, and Varagunavarman II was installed by the Sri Lankan army as the successor of Srimara who died soon after.

[2] According to T. N. Subramaniam, the name of Hiranyavarman was popular in Cambodia (Subramaniam 1967: 94). For the connection of Nandivarman II with Cambodia, see also Mahalingam (1969: 137–85).

[3] There are many Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions of the Pallava period in Southeast Asia, the script and contents of which show their close relation with south India. The Takua Pa inscription in Thailand, which refers to Avaninarayana, one of the epithets of Nandivarman III, is one such example (Karashima 2002).

Though Kerala seems to have been under the rule of the Chera Perumals during the period when the three great powers were fighting each other, little is known about its history until the beginning of the ninth century. In 825, a local era called the Kollam Era came into currency. There are many theories regarding its origin but, according to M. G. S. Narayanan, it commemorated the foundation of Kollam harbour city after the liberation of Venad from the Pandyan rule (Narayanan 1996: 34–5).

3.2 KINGSHIP AND STATECRAFT

NOBORU KARASHIMA

Compared with the kingdoms of the Sangam period, the new kingdoms that struggled for hegemony over south India from the sixth century onwards were very different in their kingship and statecraft. As stated earlier in Chapter 2, the influence of north Indian political culture was already seen in the Deccan in the Satavahana state established during the first century BCE. Their kings are known to have performed the *aśvamēdha* (horse sacrifice) and other Vedic sacrifices. In the Tamil country also, north Indian influence was clearly seen in the rule of the Pallavas that began in the third century CE, as indicated in their early Prakrit and Sanskrit copper-plate charters. Sivaskandavarman, who issued a copper-plate charter in Prakrit to confirm a land grant by a former king to certain Brahmanas, is stated in the charter to be a *dhamma-mahārājādhirāja* (righteous, supreme king of great kings) and a performer of the *aśvamēdha* and other Vedic sacrifices.

The north Indian influence on dynastic rule continued in the succeeding period—both in the Deccan, and in Tamilagam. In the sixth century, Pulakesin I, the founder of the Chalukyan dynasty in the Deccan, was given the title of *dharmamahārāja* (righteous great king), besides *raṇavikrama* (valiant in war) in later inscriptions (*EI*, xxviii, 10: pp. 59–62), and is known to have performed the *aśvamēdha* and other Vedic sacrifices, including *hiraṇyagarbha*.[4] Though there is no Pandyan inscription recording the performance of the *aśvamēdha* sacrifice by its kings, Arikesari Maravarman (670–700) is known to have performed the *hiraṇyagarbha* sacrifice. These inscriptions prove that the kings of the three states followed the north Indian practice of legitimizing their rule through the adoption of these Brahmanic titles and the performance of Vedic sacrifices.

However, what distinguishes the rule of the three kingdoms in and after the sixth century from that of the earlier Satavahana/Sangam/early-Pallava period is the introduction of Hinduism and the rapid rise and spread of the *bhakti* movement. Though the kings of the earlier period followed Brahmanical political practice, Sramanic religions such as Jainism and Buddhism were also quite influential.[5] In the Tamil country, traditional local deities continued to be worshipped during the Sangam and post-Sangam (early Pallava) periods. This situation changed around the fifth/sixth century with the introduction of Hinduism, which had

[4] A ceremony in which a king crawled through a vessel made of gold and the vessel, after the ceremony, was broken for distribution to Brahmanas.

[5] Burton Stein emphasizes the Jain influence on south Indian kingship in the period from the post-Sangam kings to the Cholas (Stein 1978).

developed from Brahmanism during the Gupta period in north India with new puranic deities and agamic temple rituals and by incorporating various local religious traditions.

In the Tamil country, the new Hindu deities, Siva and Vishnu, were connected to the traditional deities. Mayon, a deified cowherd hero in the *mullai* (forests), was equated with Vishnu. Murugan, another hunter hero in the *kuṟiñji* (hills) deified as the god of love and war, was considered to be Skanda or Subrahmanya, namely a son of Siva, and Korravai, a goddess of victory in the *pālai* (desert) and mother of Murugan, was identified with the consort of Siva by the seventh century (Gurukkal 2010: 187; Champakalakshmi 2011: 55–6; Mahalakshmi 2011: 98). Temples were constructed or renovated at sites sacred to these Hinduized traditional deities. Many Siva and Vishnu temples were also built in other places that had no such traditional sacred connections.[6] The Tamil people thus accepted the Hinduism that had merged with the Tamil religious tradition. Consequently, there was a flourishing of the *bhakti* movement in the country. The story of the conversion of Mahendravarman I (580–630) from Jainism to Saivism by Appar, a famous *bhakti* saint, is the first evidence of its influence in the political sphere. The Pandyan king Nedumaran is also said to have changed his faith from Jainism to Saivism, influenced by Sambandar, another *bhakti* saint.

As we shall see in the section dealing with the *bhakti* movement, the conflict between Hinduism and Sramanic religions for hegemony continued during this period, leading to the decline of the latter in and after the tenth century. However, Jainism in Karnataka retained its strength even afterwards. Though the north Indian Brahmanical tradition merged with Tamil religious tradition,[7] the influence of the former was enhanced by the spread of its new and renovated form, namely Hinduism. The kings of the three kingdoms continued to conduct Vedic sacrifices, including the *rājasūya* (royal coronation) and made large-scale land grants to Brahmanas and to Hindu temples. Nandivarman II, who ascended the throne in 731, invited a large number of Brahmanas specialized in Vedic studies from the north to create Brahmana villages (*brahmadēyas*) in the Tamil country. This policy of his seems to have anticipated that of the Chola kings of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The north Indian influence thus effected a drastic change on south Indian kingship and states, particularly on those in the Tamil country. Rajan Gurukkal regards this as a reflection of the transition from 'chiefdom' to 'state' that occurred in relation to the change in the system of production, and the social formation brought about by the development of agriculture (Gurukkal 2010: 182–223). This is an important and debatable point,[8] though we cannot deny the fact that remarkable development in agricultural production did take place during this period. In the Deccan, as stated earlier, political change was seen from the time of the Satavahanas, that is, even before the beginning of the Common Era.

[6] This period witnessed technical advancement. Masonry improved and, from the seventh century, temples started to be built in the plains from cut stones and not just carved into rocky hills; consequently the number of temples increased considerably.

[7] In this period, copper-plate charters began to be written bilingually using a combination of Sanskrit and Tamil, symbolizing the merging of northern and southern cultural traditions.

[8] In section 2.3, Subbarayalu is inclined to interpret the three powers as kingdoms, while Gurukkal takes them as chiefdoms.

The changes in kingship and statecraft that occurred during the Pallava period have attracted the attention of many Indologists and anthropologists in the last forty years and they have discussed the issue variously in relation to the changes seen in the rituals related to kings (Karashima 1999: 1–16). According to Nicholas Dirks (Dirks 1976), for example, the sacrifice (*yajña*) was extremely important for kings of the early Pallava period, as it was the only way to make a person king. However, from the seventh century onwards, more certainly from the reign of Nandivaraman II, the concept of a sacred lineage of kings starting from Vishnu became significant for sovereignty. In accordance with this transition, the meaning and function of giving gifts (*dāna*) also changed from the offerings (*dakshiṇa*) to God and Brahmanas to gaining sanction from local powers in order to become king and share sovereignty with them. *Dāna* gained new importance,[9] and this change was closely related to changes in the political formation and enlarged the political circle that could participate in the royal rituals to include local chiefs too. Ronald Inden states that it is related to the transition from the Vedic 'sacrifice' in Brahmanism to the 'worship' (*pūja*) in Hinduism (Inden 1978).

Some scholars have been interested in the relations between the king and the Brahmanas expressed in the rituals performed in the king's installation ceremony (*rājasūya*). Though there is a difference of opinion among scholars on the point as to whether the king or the Brahmana is superior of the two, according to J. C. Heesterman, who discussed the issue of authority (Heesterman 1978; 1985), the kings with political power and the Brahmanas with religious authority were separate and belonged to mutually exclusive categories. There was really no solution to their conflict over hegemony, and this hindered the creation of a consistent theory of kingship in India. David Shulman, who studied south Indian myth and poetry, states: 'The spiritual powers of the Brahmin and the martial or administrative talents of the king are not permanently distinct and opposite forces but internally divided and mutually dependent symbolic clusters.' They are regarded by him as interpenetrative and transformational (Shulman 1985: 40).

Whatever the conceptual relations between a king and the Brahmanas might have been, their actual relations were mutually dependent in the long course of history. A king needed the authority of the Brahmanas for the legitimation of his sovereignty and the Brahmanas had to depend on the king's support for their living. Though this was part of the structure of the pre-modern Hindu society based on *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the relation took on a special feature during the later Pallava and early Chola period as indicated, for example, by the establishment of so many *brahmadēya* villages during this time. We should pay due attention also to this politico-economic change in kingship.

For a study of the historical aspects of kingship, such as a king's politico-economic relations with the Brahmanas, as well as other communities, we need to examine the king's political power, particularly the power exercised in the local administration of the kingdom, and this can be described also as relations between the centre and the periphery in a state. As we shall see later (section 4.2), while Burton Stein was of the view that the king did not wield political power in the state but did have religious authority, Dirks, who discussed the importance of *dāna* in the later Pallava period, stressed the importance

[9] For the importance of *dāna* in the prior periods, see Thapar (1976).

of the correlation between the two, namely religious authority and political power. He states, 'There was a definite relation between the modes of social and political relations on the one hand and ideas and ritual expressions of authority on the other. The correlations are imperative for this period of south Indian history'[10] (Dirks 1976: 156). We shall discuss this issue, however, in relation to Stein's 'segmentary state' theory later in section 4.2.

The above issue of legitimation of king's authority has recently attracted particular attention of scholars including David Beetham, H. Kulke, B. D. Chattopadhyaya, Rajan Gurukkal, and B. P. Sahu. In relation to the changing forms of patronage and legitimation Sahu states that 'a new legitimation structure was not usually imposed, nor was it easy to do so, but was designed to accommodate, incorporate and tap what was already available in local societies.... Legitimation entailed negotiations and integration of competing traditions' (Sahu 2013: 202).

The concept of 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' as enunciated by Sheldon Pollock (Pollock 1996) concerns also the discussed change in the Pallava period. According to him, the use of Sanskrit in various states in South and Southeast Asia for the period between roughly 300 to 1300 CE was only to articulate politics 'aesthetically' and not materially. He examines the Pallava inscriptions in his argument for the emergence in these regions of a pre-modern empire-system in which Sanskrit played a crucial role in its cultural articulation. His discussion extends the issue of north Indian influence seen in south India to the Indian (north/south integrated) influence witnessed in Southeast Asia. Cultural interaction between the northern and southern parts of India, and also between South Asia and Southeast Asia will be an important field of research in future.[11]

[10] It is quite ironical that Dirks, who had attracted our attention to a historical change in kingship, was criticized for the ahistoricity shown in his study of the 'little kingdom' of the later period (Peabody 2003: 8, note 21).

[11] For a critical appraisal of this view, see Manguin (2011) and Kulke (2012), referred to in section 2.6.

3.3 AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENTS

NOBORU KARASHIMA

The wide spread of Brahmana settlements and Hindu temples in south India is a conspicuous feature of this period. There are many copperplate inscriptions recording the grant of villages or land to Brahmanas by the Chalukya, Pallava, and Pandya kings and by their feudatories. Though the grants were made earlier by the Satavahanas and their successors in the Deccan and by the early Pallava kings in the Tamil country, their numbers increased remarkably from the sixth century. Temple construction for Siva and Vishnu, new Hindu deities, started or gained impetus also from the sixth century.[12] Consequently, more surplus agricultural production became necessary to support the livelihoods of Brahmanas and to maintain temples.

For this purpose, forests were reclaimed for cultivation. The first clear reference to

[12] In Kerala, no record of royal grant of villages to Brahmanas exists, but the spread of Brahmana settlements and temple construction was closely related and was in progress well before the ninth century (Gurukkal 1992: 29).

forest reclamation in the Deccan is found in an inscription of the sixth century in the Goa area, which records the grant of an entitlement to a Brahmana to clear a forest and cultivate the land by employing labourers (Nandi 2000: 89). In Tamil Nadu, the Rayakota copper-plate inscription (*EI*, v, 8) of the eighth century in Salem district records a village grant to a Brahmana inclusive of felled jungle (*aṟu-kāḍu*) and burnt jungle (*eri-kāḍu*), which may be taken as indicating that the village granted was created by clearing forest. In the Bahur copper-plate inscription (*EI*, xviii, 2: CE 867) of Nripatungavarman of the Pallavas that records a royal grant of three villages to Brahmanas, we find the description of the land granted as follows:

> Of the two [granted] villages,Vilangattangaduvanur and Settuppakkam, the eastern boundary is west of a forest (*kāḍu*).... The eastern boundary of Iraippunaichcheri [another granted village] is to the west of a forest surrounding the village (*nattam*).... Altogether, the land enclosed by the four great boundaries specified here, including wet land and dry land, villages and village buildings (*ūr-irukkai*), houses and house gardens, clearings and young trees, waste grounds for grazing, tanks, storehouses, ditches, wells, forests, brackish ground, water courses and breaches, wherever water is conducted, long harrows are applied, iguanas run, and tortoises creep, not excluding the cultivated land....

In many other inscriptions of this period, forests (*kāḍu*) are mentioned as the boundaries of villages granted, which indicates extension of cultivable land by clearing forests during the period.

Technological innovation in irrigation also contributed to the increase in agrarian productivity during this period and we find many references to water tanks (*ēri*, *taṭāka*, or *kuḷam*) in inscriptions (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5). In Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, an inscription of the fifth century refers to a big tank (*mahā-taṭāka*) named Paruvi in connection with the grant of a paddy field to a Brahmana by a Western Ganga king (Madhava II) (Reddy 2010: 14; *EI*, xiv, p. 331). Likewise, in Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, an inscription (*EI*, iii, 20) of Indravarman, an Eastern Ganga king of the sixth century, records a land grant to a Brahmana referring to a king's tank (*rāja-taṭāka*) probably constructed by Indravarman or one of his predecessors. Later, in the ninth and tenth centuries, there are epigraphical references in southern Karnataka also to tanks (*mahātaṭāka*, *galakkeṛe*, or *piriyakeṛe*) constructed by kings, officers, and local leaders (Adiga 2006: 40–5).

In Tondaimandalam (Pallava territory) too, as water supply from rivers was not available year round, huge tanks were built during this period. A copper-plate inscription (*EI*, viii, 12) of an early Pallava queen refers to Raja-taraka; Kasakudi plates of Nandivarman II (*SII*, ii, 342) mention Tiraiyan-eri constructed by a predecessor of Nandivarman II (731–96); and Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarman (*SII*, i, 151) refer to Paramesvara-taraka, evidently constructed by Paramesvaravarman (728–31). In Chengalpattu and North Arcot districts in Tamil Nadu, there are many large tanks, including Ten-eri identified with the above Tiraiyan-eri, Mahendra-taraka near Sholingur, and Vayiramegha-taraka in Uttiramerur, whose construction may be traced back to the Pallava period (Minakshi 1938: 94–9). In the Pandyan country also, many tanks were constructed from the eighth century onwards, as we shall see.

Channels (*kāl*, *vāykkāl*, or *aṟṟukkāl*) were dug to conduct water from rivers to these tanks and to draw water from rivers or tanks to fields for irrigation. *Nāṭṭukkāl* (water channel of the *nāḍu*) mentioned in the Kuram plates must have been the channel to draw water for

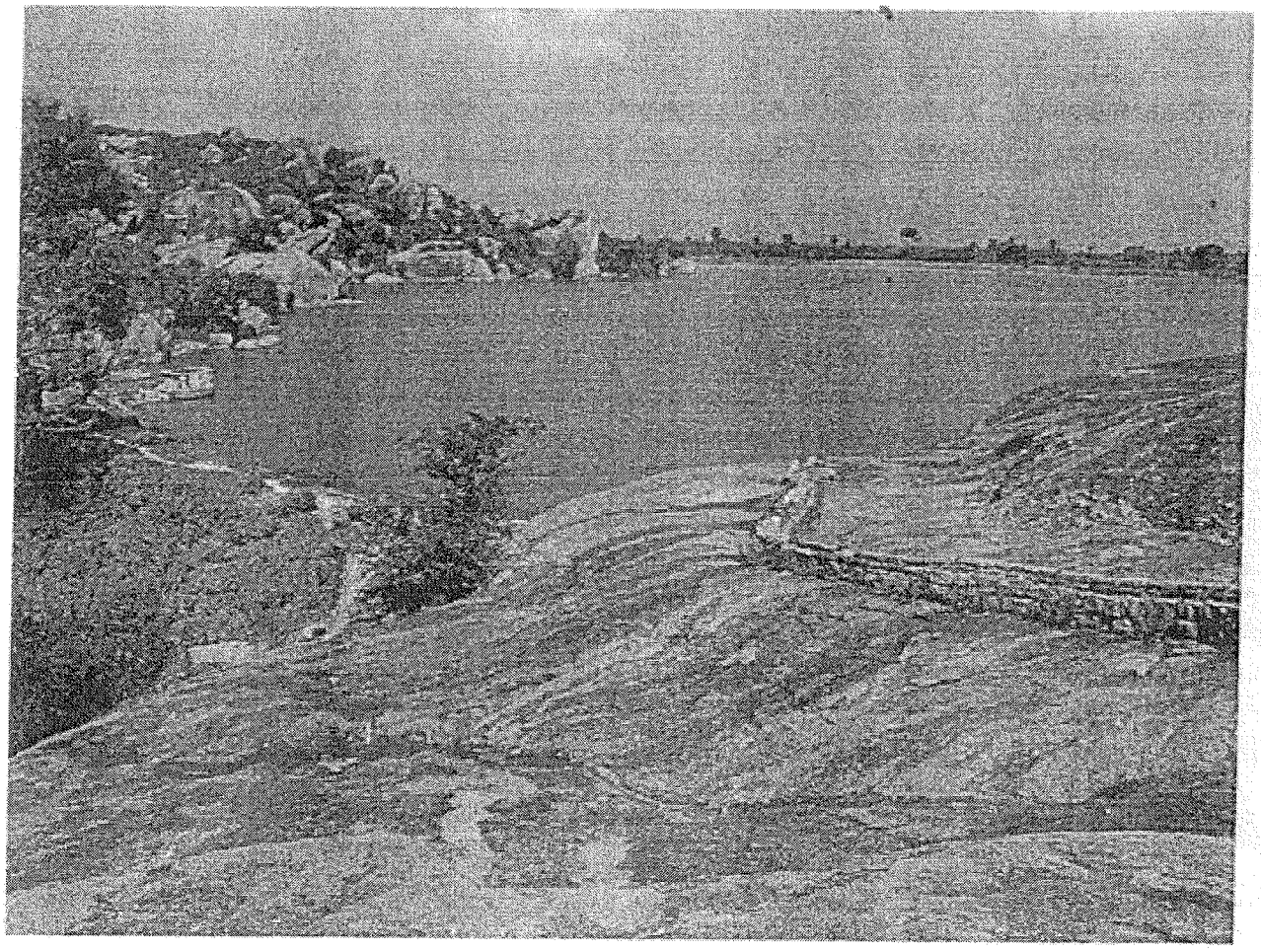


Figure 3.4 Irrigation Tank at Pulangurichi (c. Fifth Century)
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry.

irrigation from the Palar River to the *nāḍu* of the granted village. The same plates also mention a channel (Perumbidugu-kal) to feed water from the Palar to a tank (Paramesvara-tataka) in the granted village. A Pandyan inscription (c. 720) records the excavation of a channel (*kāl*) from the Vaigai River close to Madurai by a Pandyan king, Cendan Arikesari (Gurukkal 2010: 322). We can gather many more references to water channels in the inscriptions of the Pallavas, Pandyas, and the states in the Deccan, which indicate advanced irrigation technology during this period.

Another testimony to technological development is available from the reference to the sluices (*madagu*, *tūmbu*, or *kalingu*) attached to these tanks and water channels (Figure 3.6). In Karnataka, the first reference is found in an inscription of the middle eighth century (Nandi 2000: 93; *EC*, 10, Mulbagal 255) and in Tamil Nadu there are many references in Pallava inscriptions. The Pandyan inscription referred to above also records the construction of a sluice (*madagu*) in the Vaigai. During the reign of Srimara Srivallabha (c. 811–57), we find many records of construction of tanks in

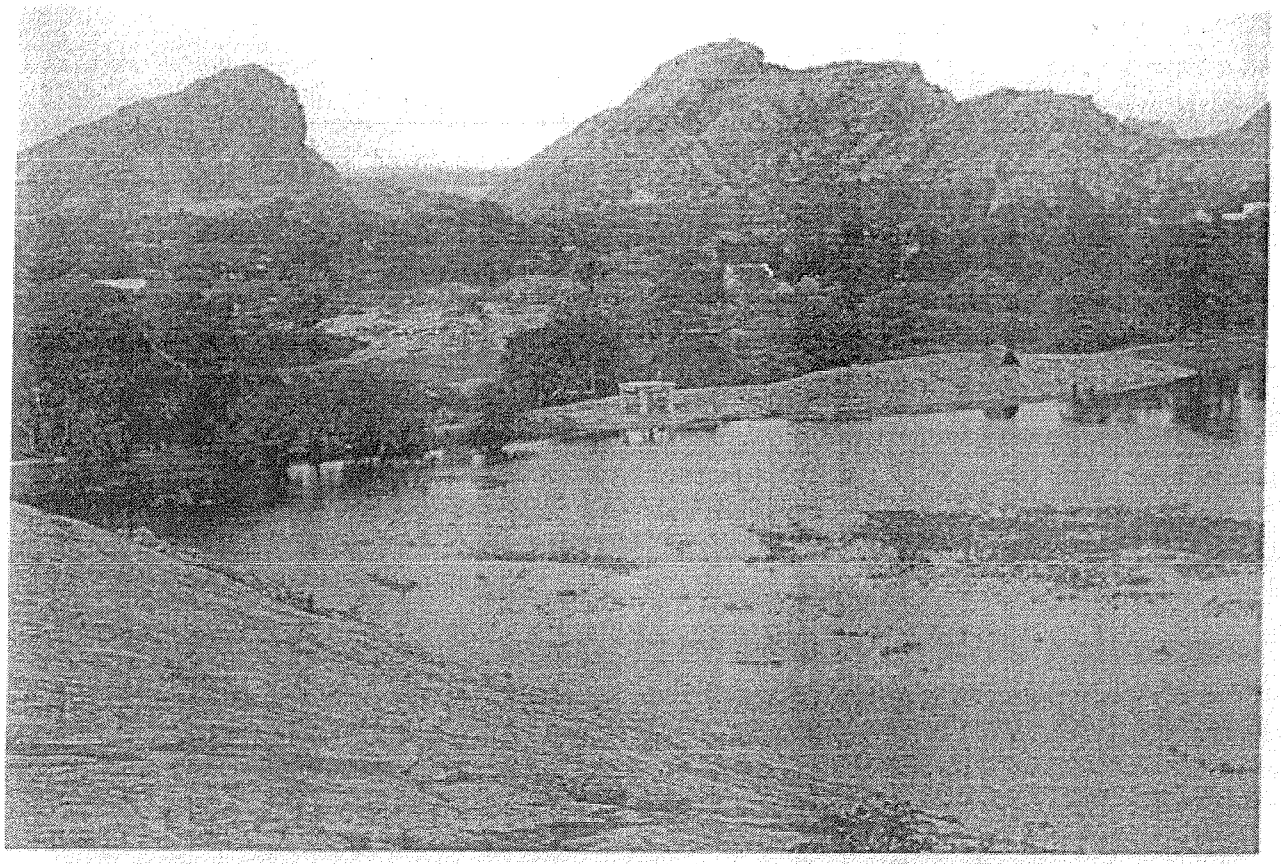


Figure 3.5 Irrigation Tank at Nattamalai (c. Eighth Century)
Source: Institut Français de Pondichéry.

the Pandyan country by a local chief who might have been conferred with the title of *kiḻavan*[13] by the king. The tanks he constructed were called *kiḻavan-ēri* (Gurukkal 2010: 323).

Before the introduction of the use of the sluice, which was constructed deep under water bodies and could be manipulated to control the flow and distribution of water from tanks, water must have been lifted with great effort from channels or tanks for irrigation by means of *picotah*s.[14] The sluice-making technique was common in south India and Sri Lanka, but the more advanced Sri Lankan technique seems to have been introduced very reluctantly in south India only during the Chola period. Leslie Gunawardana's field study identified the Sri Lankan type of sluice (which was made on the tank bund instead of in the interior of the tank) only in the Ponneri tank, which had been newly constructed during the time of Rajendra I for his new capital, Gangaikondacholapuram (Gunawardana:1984). The building of anicuts or dams across rivers, which started very early in Sri Lanka, was introduced in the Pandya area only in the twelfth century and after, and that technique was not employed by the Cholas.[15]

[13] The word *kiḻavan* means 'possessor'; we can interpret it as a title given to a landowner, like *uḍaiyān*, but it seems to have also connoted 'headman' or a 'local magnate'.

[14] A *picotah* is a lever device for raising water with a leather basket.

[15] There is persuasive evidence to indicate that the famous Kallanai or Grand Anicut across the

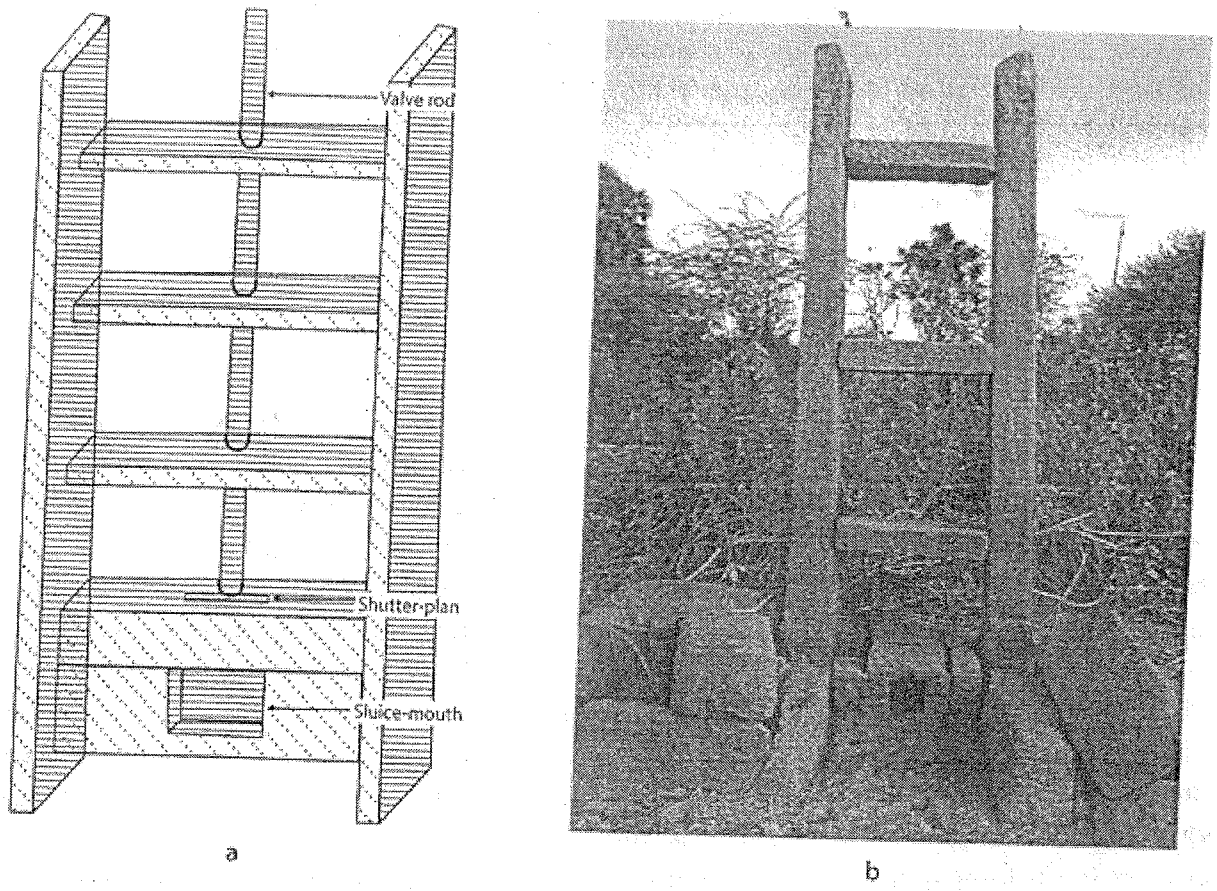


Figure 3.6 *Tümbu*
Sources: (a) Gurukkal (2010); (b) courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry.

To control supply of water, particular care was given to the head sluice (*vāyttalai* or *talaivāy*). The Tandantottam plates of Nandivarman II (*SII*, ii, 99) record the assignment of a share of the village income for the upkeep of the *vāyttalai*. In an early Chola inscription from Allur (a non-Brahmana village) near Tiruchirappalli (*SII*, viii, 689) reference is made to the *talaivāchchānṟār*, who were responsible for managing the *talaivāy*. They were assigned land in the village for their work. Local institutions like *nāḍu*, *sabhā*, and *ūr* were important for the maintenance of these water facilities (Gurukkal 2010).

Uttiramerur, a *brahmadēya* (Brahmana village) in Chengalpattu district, which flourished during the Pallava and Chola periods, is famous for its many inscriptions that record various activities of its *sabhā*.[16] Among these inscriptions we find mention of a 'tank committee' (*ēri-vāriyam*) that managed the tank affairs (*SII*, vi, 348).[17] In this village, land for paddy cultivation was divided into a number of square parcels called *sadukkam* that were numbered

Kaveri came up only in the late fifteenth century or so (Subramanian 1983).

[16] Inscriptions were studied by Nilakanta Sastri and Subrahmanya Aiyer (Sastri 1932: 96–175; Aiyer 1967: 209–88). Town planning is found in Gros and Nagaswamy (1970).

[17] Still extant in Uttramerur is a tank called Vairameghatataka, which was probably constructed during the Pallava period (Minakshi 1938: 97).

and linked to a drainage channel (*vadi*), feeder channels (*vāykkāl*) and/or branch channels (*kaṇṇāṟu*). A description of this in inscriptions is as follows (*SII*, iii, 154):

> Two hundred and ten *kuḻi*[18] in the first *sadukkam* (situated) west of (the drainage channel called) Paramesvara-vadi of the tenth *kaṇṇāṟu* north of the village; three hundred and eighty *kuḻi* of first-rate (land) in the fourth *sadukkam* (situated) east of (the channel) Vilakku-vaykkal of the third *kaṇṇāṟu* north of (the channel) Sridevi-vayakkal.

Similar descriptions are also found in other Brahmana villages, for example, Uttamasili-chaturvedimangalam (*SII*, iii, 111) in Tiruchirappalli district. These instances show that water management for cultivation in Brahmana villages that were newly established during the Pallava period was considerably well developed. This knowledge and practice spread soon to non-Brahmana villages too, as indicated by the reference in the foregoing account to *talaivāch-chāṉṟār* (controllers of the head sluice), in a non-Brahmana village in the early Chola period. The development of technology and a consequent increase in agrarian productivity enabled the growth of powerful states like the Cholas and Chalukyas in south India in the succeeding period. Chola inscriptions in the Kaveri delta generally refer to lands in this region yielding two crops of rice (*irupū-viḷaiyum-nilam*) (Karashima 1984: 96).

Crops cultivated in this period also indicate the development of production. Rice cultivation was common in the fertile areas, like the deltas of the Godavari/Krishna and Kaveri Rivers. In southern Karnataka also, rice cultivation developed to some extent during the ninth and tenth centuries (Adiga 2006: 48–52) and sedentary agriculture developed in interior Tamil Nadu by the thirteenth century (Murton 2001). In the dry areas of the Deccan, however, cultivation of cereals like millets (*rāgi*, *jowar*, and others) was common and seems to have been mandatory (Nandi 2000: 97–102). A late tenth-century inscription (*EC*, 8, Sorab 477) in the Deccan records an order by a local ruler to enforce *rāgi* cultivation. In cereal cultivation, greater domestication of wild and undeveloped species was seen during this period. It is known from the *Manasōllāsa* of the Chalukyan king Somesvara that *kangu*, which had earlier been considered an inferior grain that only the poor ate, became material for royal dishes by the twelfth century.[19]

During this period, cultivation of areca nuts and betel leaves increased considerably, and proportionately to the development of temple rituals and a new social habit. Cultivation of sugarcane, coconuts, and various spices also developed. Two ninth-century Pandyan inscriptions (*SII*, xiv, 16-A; *EI*, ix, 10) provide recipes for making dishes to be offered to the deity. One of these dishes was made of curd and *kāyam* comprising five spices (pepper, turmeric, cumin, mustard, and coriander). Tamarind, sugar, betel leaves, areca nuts, coconuts, plantains, green gram, and rice are also mentioned in these inscriptions.

[18] *Kuḻi* is a small land measure in the Tamil country. During the Chola period one *mā* (one-twentieth *vēli*) was equated variously to 100 to 256 *kuḻis* (Sastri 1955: 621).

[19] Nandi (2000: 98–9). Achaya (1994) provides information on various crops, dishes, and eating habits in medieval south India, including those in the *Manasōllāsa*.

3.4 CAPITALS AND TEMPLES

P. SHANMUGAM

3.4.1 Capitals

The capital cities were centres of the general administration of south Indian kingdoms; the capital served as the residence of kings and their retinues. In the south, Kanchipuram and Madurai, both located on river banks, were the capitals of the Pallava and Pandya rulers respectively. Badami, newly built on a hillock in the sixth century, was the seat of the Chalukyas. Kanchipuram (Kanchipuram district, Tamil Nadu), on the north bank of the Vegavati (or Vehka), a tributary of the Palar River, was the capital of a pre-Pallavan chief called Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan and was known by various other names, Kachchi, Kachchippedu, Kanchi, and Kanchimanagar. At that time the city was surrounded by a high rampart and a deep moat and had a temple to the Reclining Vishnu, according to the long poem, *Perumbāṇāṟṟuppaḍai*. From about the beginning of the fourth century it became the capital of the Pallavas and continued as such until the ninth century. Then it became a secondary capital of the imperial Cholas.

The 'insurmountable' rampart of Kanchipuram is mentioned in the Gadval plates of Vikramaditya I, circa 670 (*EI*, 10, 22: p. 105), and the remains of the rampart are found scattered at a site called Pallavamedu on the western bank of the Vegavati. The city seems to have been continuously enlarged to accommodate the growing needs of a capital and mercantile centre (*nagaram*) by incorporating the adjacent areas.[20] It was also an important religious centre, having attracted and nourished several religious beliefs, both Brahmanical and heterodox. Its Buddhist association is attested to both by Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang; Hieun-tsang; Yuan Chwang), who visited it in 634 CE, and by archaeological evidence. Several Buddhist monks and scholars lived there: Dinnaga (early sixth century) founder of Buddhist logic and Dharmapala (seventh century) a great commentator on Pali texts, (Minakshi 1979; Pathmanathan 2006: 8). Tirupparuththikkunram, a suburb of Kanchipuram, was an important centre of Jainism, whose pontiff received a munificent grant from Simhavarman in about 550 CE (Subramanian 1966). Kanchipuram was also a centre for Saivism and Vaishnavism; *bhakti* saints of both the faiths visited this place and sang praises of the deities enshrined in several temples here. The city had a centre for Sanskrit education called *ghaṭika*. Mayurasarman, the founder of the Kadamba dynasty, is said to have visited this city in about 350 CE to pursue Vedic studies in its *ghaṭika* (*EI*, viii: pp. 24–36).

Kanchipuram attained the special status of *nagaram*, a mercantile centre, in the post-Sangam period and continued to be an important centre of trade during the Pallava rule. Textile production and metal work were popular crafts. Smiths and weavers had separate quarters, and at another quarter called Videlvidugu-kudirai-cheri a local market was established in 864 CE (Shanmugam 2010: 52). The city is said to have had trade contacts with

[20] The construction of the Kailasanatha temple suggests a deliberate attempt by Rajasimha (700–28) to expand the city's western limits. Further attempts to enlarge the area of the city were made by Nandivarman II (731–96). Attiyur, the eastern part of the city, now known as Chinna Kanchipuram, was not a part of the Pallava city. We have evidence to show that it was integrated during late Chola times (Shanmugam 2010: xxx).

China, probably from the second century BCE. Ban Gu (Pan Kou), a Chinese writer of the first century CE, refers to trade ties with a kingdom called Huang Zhi (Huang Chih), identified with Kanchipuram, though the identification is contested by some historians (Ray 1990/91). Xuanzang's statement that Kanchipuram served as a port is not generally accepted as the city is situated well in the interior. Even under the Cholas it continued to be an important mercantile centre in the northern Tamil country.

The city of Madurai (Madurai district, Tamil Nadu), whose origin is shrouded in mythology, was not only a political centre, but also an important cultural and religious one. It had, according to some literary traditions, a Tamil Academy (*sangam*) from the early centuries CE (see section 2.2). Some Sangam works, such as the *Maduraikkāñchi* and *Neḍunalvāḍai*, glorify several parts of the city and its well-guarded palace and defences. After the establishment of the Pandyan kingdom in the sixth century CE, Madurai probably grew in size. As it has been under continuous occupation, new structures have often entailed demolition of older ones. Therefore, no structures belonging to the early centuries have survived. This is also the case with the famous Minakshi-Sundaresvara temple where continuous building activity through the centuries has obscured or destroyed any earlier structures.

Traditional accounts that relate to the 'sports' of the god Siva refer to heavy floods in the Vaigai River and the construction of protective banks by the Pandya king to save the city.[21]

[21] N. M. Venkatasami Nattar (ed.), *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* (Chennai, 1964). This is a collection of *purāṇa* or old stories relating the sacred sports of Siva at Madurai. Though this work is assigned to about the sixteenth century, some of the stories have come from earlier times. The story called 'Maṇ chumanda paṭalam' narrates the flood episode.

Madurai's close association with Vaishnavism can be seen in the myth of Alagar (Vishnu) visiting the city from his abode on the hill Alagarmalai, 20 kilometres north of Madurai, to perform the marriage of his sister Minakshi with Sundaresvara during the annual festival in the first month of the Tamil calendar.

Kings, merchants, and other laymen modified several rock shelters all around Madurai such as those at Alagarmalai, Arittapatti, Anaimalai, and Tirupparankunram, and had beds carved from stone for Jain monks. The names of the monks and patrons are given in short Tamil inscriptions written in Tamil-Brahmi characters datable to circa first–second centuries BCE. An inscription refers to a gold merchant from Madirai (old form of Madurai) (Mahadevan 2003: 369). The Jain centres here are the earliest ones so far known in the history of south Indian Jainism.

According to an inscription (*EI*, xxvii, p. 4), the hill fortress at Badami (Vatapi), in Bijapur district, Karnataka, was planned and constructed by Pulakesin I in 543 CE. It was strategically located on a semi-circular hillock overlooking a village and a small tank. One side of the hillock was dedicated to Hindu and Jain cave temples, and the other dotted with fortified structures and with temples. Its location in the hilly region testifies to the technological skill of the builders. The fortress, situated on top of the hillock and considered impregnable, was ransacked in 643 CE when the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I invaded the city and occupied it for a brief period. Badami was in close proximity to two other important cultural and commercial centres within 20 kilometres of each other; Pattadakkal with a remarkable assemblage of temples (see Figure 3.7), was a centre for royal rituals, and Aihole (Ayyavole) an important commercial centre, was considered the headquarters

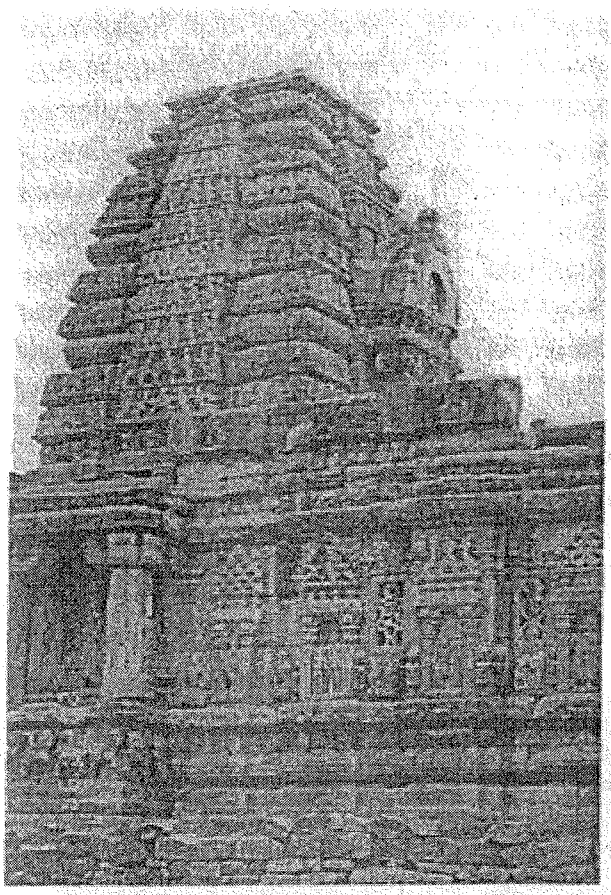


Figure 3.7 Northern-Type *Sikhara* of Papanatha Temple at Pattadakal
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

of the famous medieval Ayyavole mercantile guild.[22]

3.4.2 Temples

The temple as a central institution of worship had been well established by this period, though early structures have not been identified. The Karthikeya temple at Nagarjunakonda, constructed during the time of the Ikshvaku rulers, is the earliest archaeologically attested structural temple known so far. The Saiva and Vaishnava saints of the seventh to ninth centuries refer to a large number of temples (all over Tamil Nadu) that they visited and sang about in their hymns, (Prentiss 1999: 52; Champakalakshmi 2011). It is likely that many of these temples were in existence by the seventh century and were most probably either brick or mud structures. These earlier structures were converted into stone temples during the ninth century and later, and still continue to be important centres of pilgrimage for devotees of both sects.

In the Tamil country, the cult of Muruga (later identified with Subrahmanya) is very old and the associated shrines were situated on hillocks known as *paḍaiviḍus* (encampments). There are six such centres: Tirupparankunram and Alagarmalai near Madurai, Tiruchchendur in Tuttukkudi district in the south, Palani in Dindukkal district, Tiruveragam near Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district, and Tiruttani in the northern Tamil Nadu. Tiruveragam is alternatively identified with Tiruvedagam in Madurai district. The structural temples in some of these places go back to the eighth and ninth centuries.[23] At Tirupparankunram, the rock-cut shrine of Muruga seems to have been completed in the early eighth century as, by 783 CE, new sub-shrines were added to it for the deities Durga and Jyeshta. At Alagarmalai,

[22] For the relation of Aihole with *ainurruvar*, a merchant guild, see section 4.4.

[23] Tirupparankunram is located close to the Pandya capital, Madurai, where the rock-cut shrine of Muruga belongs to the time of the early Pandya rule (about the eighth century). At Alagarmalai, 20 kilometres north of Madurai, the old structure no longer exists. Tiruchchendur (or Tiruchchiralaivay) is an important pilgrimage centre. This also belongs to the early Pandya times. The temple at Palani, about 60 kilometres northwest of Madurai, is situated on top of a small hillock. This shrine is famous for the devotees of Muruga who visit it carrying a *kāvaḍi* (a portable shrine) on their shoulders. Svamimalai near Kumbakonam is supposed to be Tiruverakam. This is, however, not so definite. The temple at Tiruttani in Tiruvallur district has a late Pallava structure of about 850 CE.

the old structure no longer exists. The Murugan temple in Tiruchchendur is located near the shore as described in the *Tirumurgāṟṟuppaḍai*, and attracts a large number of pilgrims. The Palani temple is on the top of a small hillock and has inscriptions from the eleventh century, and the one at Tiruttani, which received grants from the Pallava king, Aparajita (c. 875–900), has a late Pallava structure.

Unfortunately, structural temples of brick, mortar, and timber that existed earlier have not survived. They were either destroyed intentionally to build new structures or ruined by the ravages of time. In this period, a new medium, namely stone, was introduced in south India. Stone had been used in the western Deccan much earlier. However, the rock-cut structures—mostly dedicated to the Buddhist religion—there were created using a somewhat softer kind of rock. The Pallava and Pandya artisans, on the other hand, had to work with hard granite, whereas the Chalukyas worked with the softer sandstone (see Figure 3.8).

Most of the Pallava rock-cut monuments are in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, that is, in the Kanchipuram, Cuddalore, and Villupuram districts, where there are abundant rocky outcrops. Mahendravarman I is credited with the introduction of rock-cut temples in the Pallava territory on the basis of his inscription

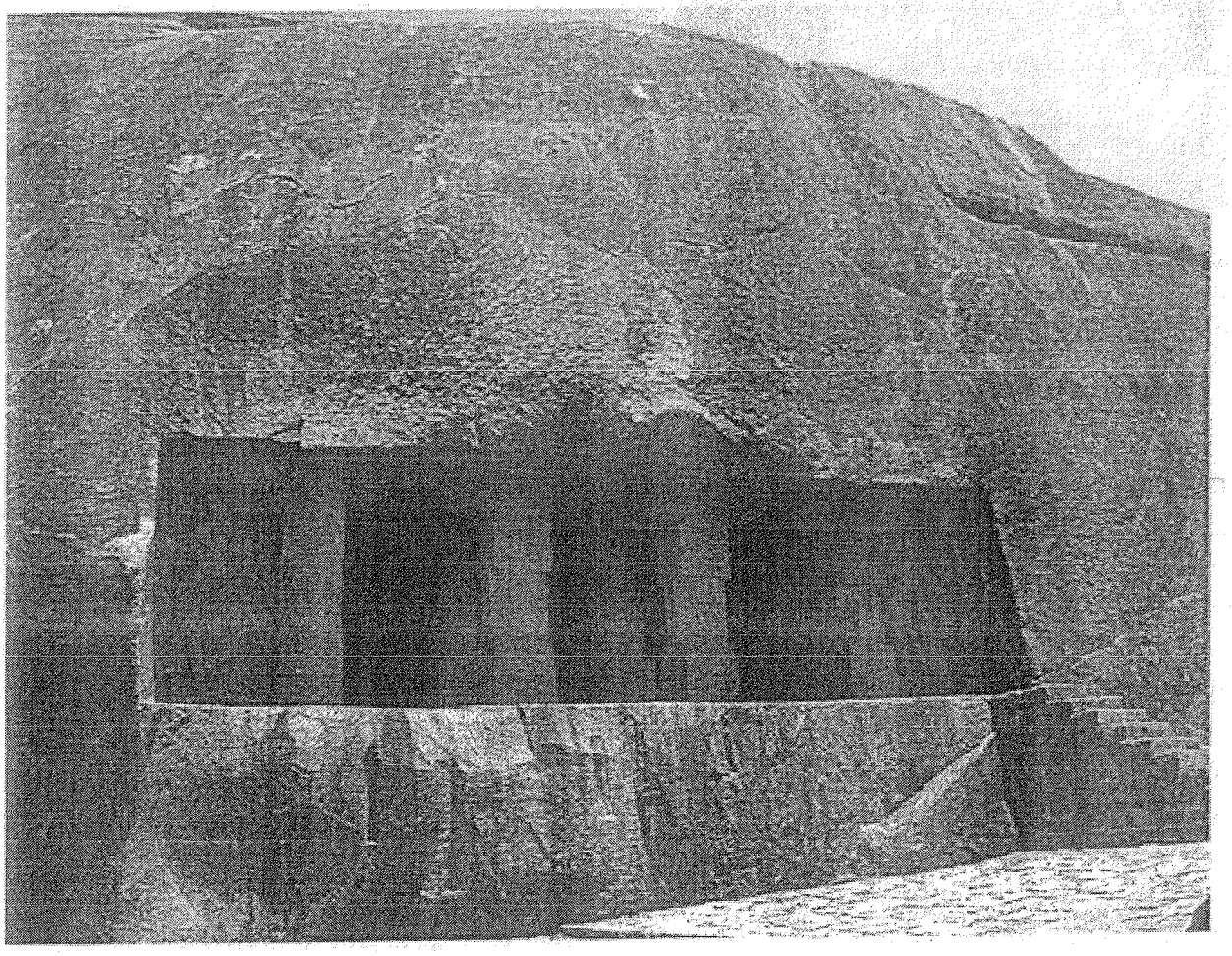


Figure 3.8 Rock-Cut Cave at Mandagapattu
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry.

from Mandagappattu (Srinivasan 1985: 34–5), in which he claims that his shrine to Brahma, Isvara, and Vishnu was made without using traditional materials like brick, timber, metal, and mortar (see Figure 3.9). His rock temples are usually of the *maṇḍapa* type with a pillared hall or *maṇḍapa* in front and a small shrine at the rear or sides. The pillars, carrying a heavy bracket, are massive. Later excavations revealed pillars carved with a splendid squatting lion at the base and, still later, a rearing lion motif. There are nearly twenty of the rock-cut shrines, some with foundation inscriptions.

The monolithic *vimānas* are peculiar to Mamallapuram. They are moderate in size and, carved in the round, are considered copies in granite of timber architecture. The five Rathas there are popularly known as the Panchapandava Rathas and also as the Seven Pagodas. Though named after the Pandavas, no iconographic connection has been established with them. The niches of the Arjuna Ratha contain exquisitely carved sculptures of Siva, Vishnu, *mithuna*, and *dvārapāla*. The most exquisite of the five is the Dharmaraja Ratha with a three-storeyed *vimāna* and a square base (Figure 3.10). The Bhima Ratha is rectangular in plan and has beautiful sculptures of Harihara, Brahma, Vishnu, Skanda, Ardhanarisvara, and Siva as Gangadhara.

The excellence of the Pallava artists can be seen in the massive sculptural friezes made by them at Mamallapuram. The most important is the magnificent carving popularly known as the Descent of the Ganga (Bhagirata's penance or Arjuna's penance), in which two boulders with an intervening gorge are utilized skilfully to depict a whole world of celestial gods, demi-gods, human beings, and animals. The portrayal of Puranic figures interspersed with popular local stories reveals the skill of the artists in happily blending various aspects of human and animal life. Equally important is the sculptural panel in the Krishna *maṇḍapa*, where village life with cows and cowherds is depicted with beauty and skill.



Figure 3.9 Panel Sculpture of Tiruchirappalli Hill Temple (c. Sixth Century)
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry.

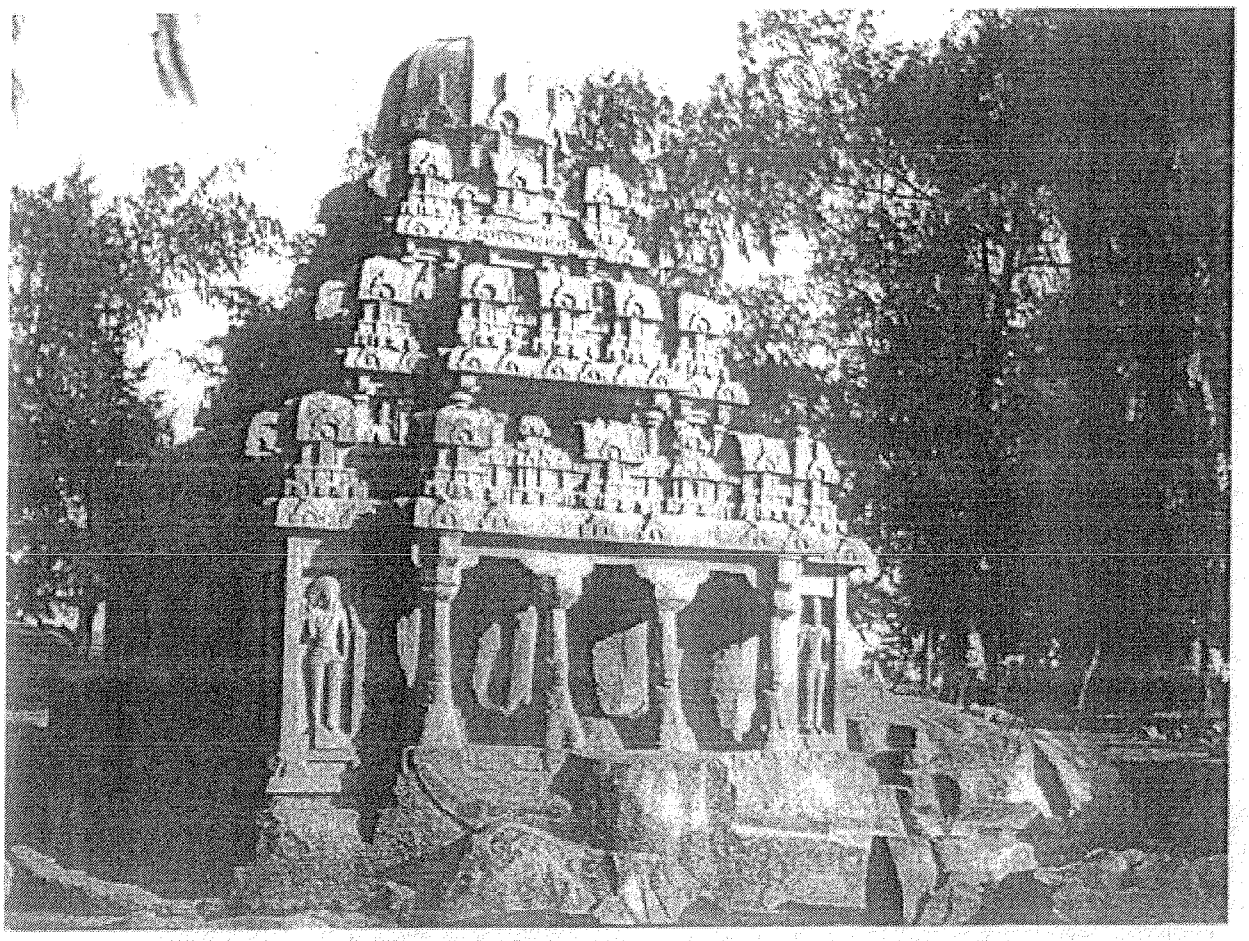


Figure 3.10 Dharmaraja *Ratha* at Mamallapuram
Source: Courtesy of Takeo Kamiya.

Rock-cut architecture was later completely abandoned and structural temples became a dominant feature of the Pallava idiom. Naturally, Pallava artists would have found structural temples more advantageous than rock-cut temples, as the former could be built even in plains without hillocks. The earliest extant structural temple, however, is the shore temple at Mamallapuram built by Rajasimha. The Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram are also the creations of Rajasimha. The Kailasanatha temple follows a peculiar plan in its execution and also in its selection of stone. It has a shrine surmounted by a pyramid-like *vimāna* with seven subsidiary shrines. The inner side of the high-walled enclosure is provided with small shrines in which traces of paintings are also found. This is a unique feature of the temple and was later adopted in the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakkal by the Chalukyas. The Vaikuntaperumal temple at Kanchipuram, built by Nandivarman II and dedicated to Vishnu, is considered the finest example of Pallava architecture. The three small sanctums are square and located one above the other enshrining the standing, sitting, and reclining forms of Vishnu, with a four-storeyed *vimāna*. It has a projected portico and is enclosed within a pillared circumambulatory; the walls on the inner sides have carved panels depicting events in the history of the Pallavas.

In the Pandya country, though rock-cut shrines were built, they exhibit features slightly different from the Pallava ones. The early shrines were scooped out of the rock without a *maṇḍapa* in front. Such excavations are numerous in the Pandya country but very rare in the Pallava territory. In the later creations, one or more cells were cut into the rear or side walls of the pillared *maṇḍapa*. The massive pillars have an octagonal section in the middle with square sections at the base and top and carry heavy corbels. The earliest example of the Pandya rock-cut cave is found at Pillaiyarpatti with a small cell with an image of Vinayaga. The Malaiyadikkurichi cave (Arikesari, c. 700) is a *maṇḍapa* type with a single shrine cell at the rear. One of the famous cave temples was the Subrahmanya temple at Tiruparankunram commissioned by a Pandya minister in 773 CE. It has a cave shrine to Jyeshta and a *maṇḍapa*-type cave with shrines on either side of the *maṇḍapa* bearing images of Subrahmanya, Ganesha, Durga, Vishnu, and Somaskanda. The cave temple at Sittannavasal (c. 850) is a typical *maṇḍapa*-type structure with a front *maṇḍapa* and a shrine cut into the rear wall. The Satyagirisvara temple at Tirumayyam has a *maṇḍapa* and a shrine cell at the side of the *maṇḍapa*. Though they largely follow the Pallava idiom, the pillars of the Pandya cave temples exhibit some variety. In the Vishnu cave temple at Malaiyadippatti, the pillar bases are shaped like squatting lions. Images of Subrahmanya, Ganesa, the Saptamatrikas, and Jyeshta have been sculpted. Siva is represented in the form of the *linga* as well. The two lateral shrines in the *maṇḍapa* of the lower cave at Tiruchirappalli have been dedicated to Siva and Vishnu respectively. In the niches of the rear walls are the images of Brahma, Ganesa, Subrahmanya, Surya, and Durga. The Vettuvankoyil shrine at Kalugumalai (800 CE) was a monolith of the Pandya country comparable to the monolithic Rathas of Mamallapuram. Here, the granite rock was cut and carved into a monolithic shrine with a two-storeyed *vimāna*. Though incomplete, the finished upper parts of the *vimāna* illustrate the excellent workmanship of the Pandya artists. The temple contains some outstanding sculptures of Dakshinamurthi, Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva.

The Chalukyas also executed *maṇḍapa*-type creations in stone. They worked on the soft sandstone available in the locality and created large structures with ease. Their creations are mostly found in their capital at Badami and in the neighbouring towns of Pattadakkal and Aihole. At Badami are found four temples of the *maṇḍapa* type, of which two are dedicated to Vishnu, and one each to Siva and to the Jaina tirthankaras. The earliest and largest cave temple (Cave 3) was built by Mangalesa in 578 CE and dedicated to Vishnu (Figure 3.11). The other caves also share similar architectural features in general with a shrine cut into the back wall and a pillared hall in the front. The pillars are tall and massive often with a square section carrying corbels supporting a beam. On each plinth in the Hindu caves are carved goblins (*gaṇas*) in various amusing postures. These caves contain fine sculpture of Narasimha, Harihara, Trivikrama, Nataraja, Ganesa, and Karthikeya. Two *maṇḍapa*-type caves are preserved at Aihole (Bijapur district, Karnataka). The Ravalagudi cave, dedicated to Siva, consists of a *maṇḍapa* with a large shrine having a rock-cut *linga* at the rear and two more shrines at the sides dedicated to the Saptamatrikas and attendant deities. The sculptures include Mahisasuramardhini, Ardhanarisvara, and Harihara. The other, a Jain cave, has a rectangular front *maṇḍapa* with slender pillars carrying the usual components.

Chalukya structural temples are confined to their capital at Badami and in neighbouring Mahakuta, Aihole, and Pattadakkal. The earliest structural temple was the Megutti temple at



Figure 3.11 Vishnu in Badami Cave *Maṇḍapa*
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

Aihole, built in 634 CE. Dedicated to the Jaina pantheon, it has a closed *maṇḍapa* on a raised and moulded plinth with four central pillars. Malegitti Sivalaya at Badami has a shrine with a *maṇḍapa* and frontal porch crowned with a single-storeyed *vimāna* (Figure 3.12). In this series fall the Jyotirlinga, Ladkhan (Figure 3.13), and Kontigudi temples at Aihole. The Ladkhan temple has a large *maṇḍapa* standing on a moulded *adhisthāna* with four central pillars.

The Mahakutesvara temple at Mahakuta represents a development of the earlier Dravidian monuments of Badami with an east-facing shrine, surrounded by a passageway on three sides. Images of Ardhanarisvara and Siva are found in the temple. The Sangamesvara temple at Mahakuta was built in the *nagara* style (northern style) with a simplified *śikhara*. The most important in the series is the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakkal, built by the queen of Vikramaditya II in commemoration of his victory over Kanchipuram and considered in some respects to be an imitation of the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram. The temple follows

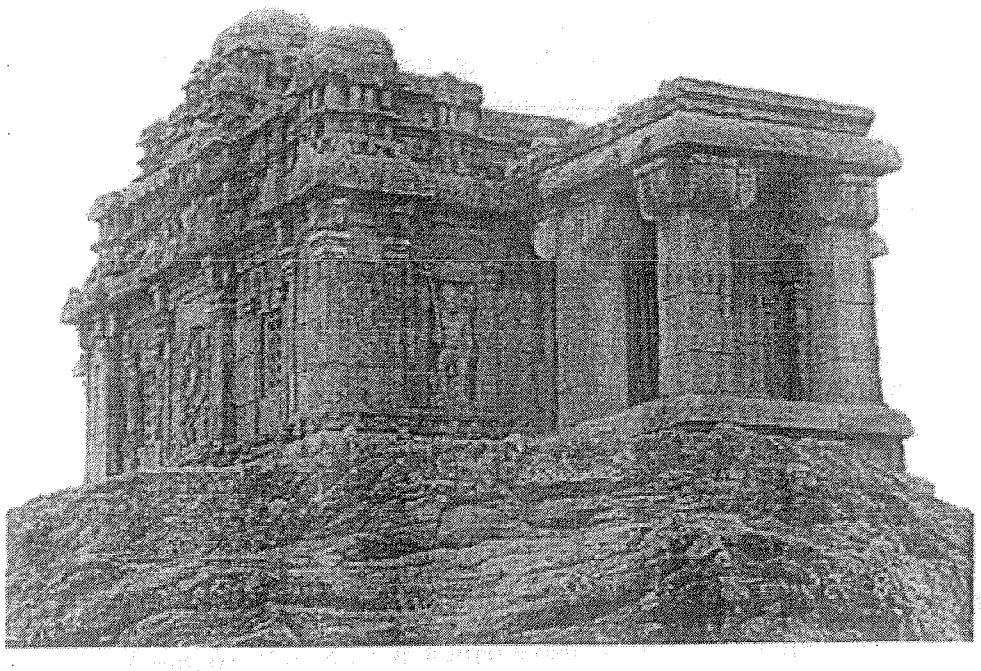


Figure 3.12
Malegitti Sivalaya Temple at Badami
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

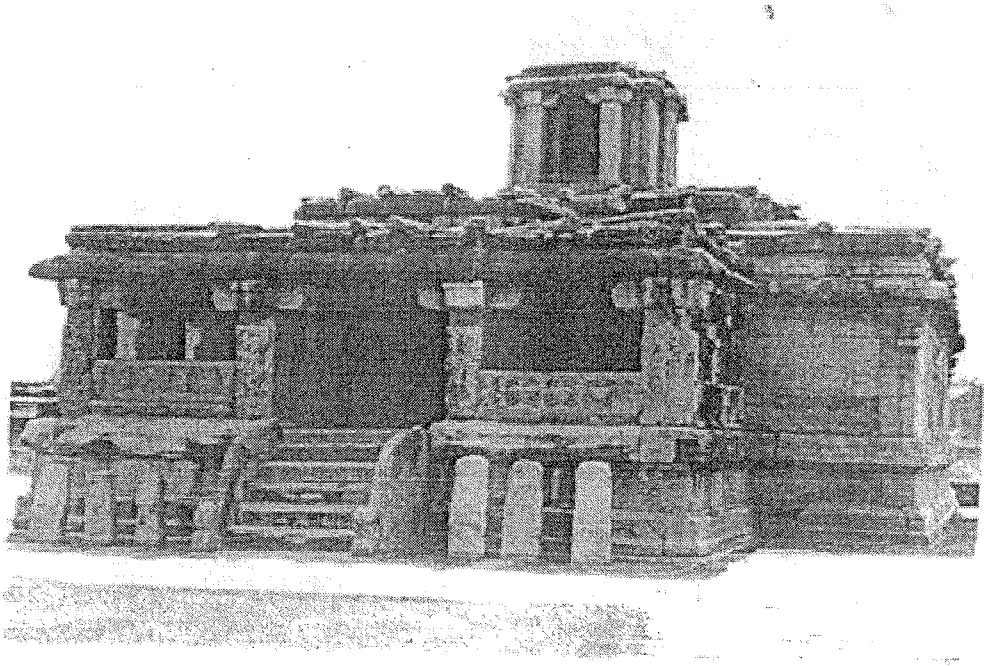


Figure 3.13 Ladkhan Temple at Aihole
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

a simple plan of a central shrine preceded by a *maṇḍapa* with a four-storeyed *vimâna*. The sculptures include Nataraja, Bhairava, and Trivikrama. The Durga temple at Aihole is seen as an attempt to adapt the Buddhist *chaitya* to a Brahmanical temple; with an apsidal shrine and a northern type of square *śikhara*, it stands on a high plinth.

3.5 THE *BHAKTI* MOVEMENT

NOBORU KARASHIMA

3.5.1 Synthesis of Southern and Northern Traditions

From the sixth to the ninth centuries there occurred in the Tamil country a religious movement called the *bhakti* movement, in which Saiva devotees called *nâyanârs* or *nâyanmârs* (63 were canonized) and Vaishnava devotees called *âḻvârs* (12 were canonized) played an important role. The *nâyanârs* and *âḻvârs* visited many temples and sacred places singing the hymns they composed in praise of the deities (Siva and Vishnu respectively) of those places or by performing, as the legends had it, miracles owing to their pure and total devotion.

The Saiva poets include Appar, Sambandar, and Sundarar, who were called *mûvar* (the trio; see Figure 3.14), and Manikkavasagar (see Figure 3.15) and the hymns of these Saiva saints and devotees, were compiled into an anthology of 11 books by Nambi Andar Nambi, probably at the end of the tenth century or during the beginning of the eleventh (Zvelebil 1995: 473). The first seven books, later commonly known as *Dêvâram*,[24] contain the hymns of Sambandar

[24] The name *Dêvâram* seems to have been given to this corpus of the *mûvar's* hymns later, probably in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

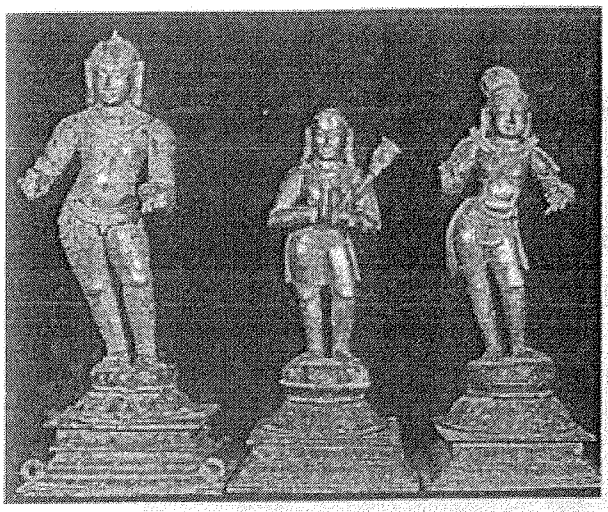


Figure 3.14 *Mūvar* Bronze Images (from Left, Sambandar, Appar, and Sundarar)
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry and École française d'Extrême-Orient.

(books I–III), Appar (books IV–VI), and Sundarar (book VII), the eighth book those of the Manikkavasagar, the ninth book *tiruvisaippā* (musical compositions) hymns by nine composers, the tenth the philosophical poems by Tirumular, and the eleventh various hymns of 12 poets, including Nambi himself, belonging to the period between the sixth and tenth/eleventh centuries.

To this corpus, Sekkilar, minister of the Chola king Anapaya (identified by most scholars with Kulottunga II), added in the twelfth century the *Periyapurāṇam* (*Tiruttoṇḍarpurāṇam*), an elaborate hagiology of the 63 *nāyanārs*, taking the whole collection to 12 books that later became known as the *Tirumuṟai*.[25] Seven out of the 63 *nāyanārs* were composers whose hymns are recorded in the *Tirumuṟai*, but the others are saints who were known only for their piety. The historicity of some of the latter is doubtful,



Figure 3.15 Bronze Image of Manikkavasagar (Madurai Museum)
Source: Courtesy of Noboru Karashima.

but Sundarar mentions the names of these 63 *nāyanārs*, including himself, in the early ninth century.[26]

[25] Though the word *Tirumuṟai* appears in the twelfth century, we are not sure whether it meant all 12 books or the first seven books, or some other combination in the early stage.

[26] There is a possibility that stories of some saints were fictions created to match in number the 63 Jain saints and heroes described in the Jain *Mahāpurāṇa* (Zvelebil 1995: 491).

Vaishnava hymns, including those composed by Periyalvar, his adopted daughter, Andal, Tirumangaiyalvar (Figure 3.16), and Nammalvar, were compiled in the *Nālāyira Divviyaprabandham* (Four Thousand Divine Works) by Nadamuni, probably at the end of the ninth century or at the beginning of the tenth. Nadamuni was a priest at the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam and the work comprises four thousand hymns composed by 14 poets. Of these 14, however, only 12, including the three mentioned above, were treated as *āḻvārs* who were canonized. Unlike the 63 *nāyanārs*, all 12 *āḻvārs* were poets, though some composed only a few hymns.

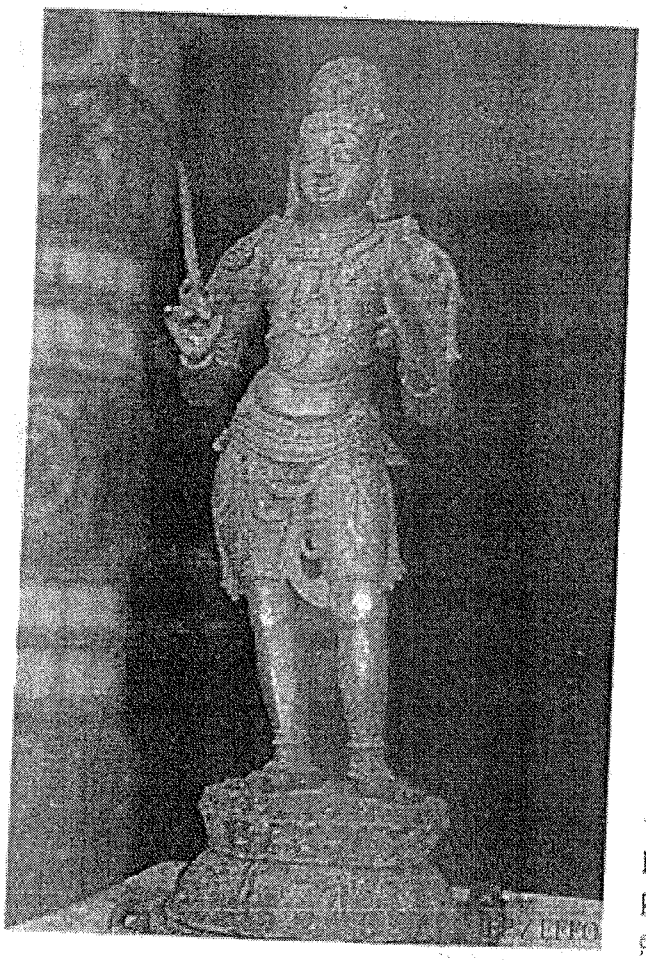


Figure 3.16 Bronze Image of Tirumangaiyalvar
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry and École française d'Extrême-Orient.

The concept of *bhakti* (devotion) can be seen in earlier north Indian religious works, including the *Bhagavadgīta* in the *Mahābhārata*, in which Krishna tells Arjuna that *bhakti*, together with *karma* (activity), is one of the ways (*mārgas*/*yōgas*) to attain the final salvation. Though the cult of devotion was practised in the Gupta state, it was in south India during the Pallava period from the sixth century onwards that, for the first time, it took the form of a religious movement, namely the *bhakti* movement. It coincided with the introduction of Hinduism that developed from Brahmanism in north India in association with the newly produced *purāṇas* and *āgamas* incorporating many local beliefs and religious traditions. Construction of many temples to the new deities, Siva and Vishnu, also began in this period as already seen.

This process of the spread of Hinduism is often called the Aryanization of south India but, at the same time, the spread of the *bhakti* cult in this period as a religious movement in the Tamil country should also be explained in its relation to ancient Tamil cultural tradition. In the Sangam literature, great importance was given to *aham*, which dealt with idealized and typified love between man and woman. This also transformed into the *bhakti* cult in south India, which expressed 'the ecstasies of the eternal love between the soul and the Lord' (Zvelebil 1973: 198). Had there been no *aham* tradition, *bhakti* brought from the north would have remained just a doctrine or dogma and would not have stirred the soul of the common people to give rise to a movement. Besides, *bhakti* poets, who travelled from one sacred place to another praising the Lord in those places, remind us of Sangam poets who travelled from one palace to another praising in their *puṟam* songs the valour and generosity of the chief of the locality, though the purposes of their travel were different.

In the Deccan, both Jainism and Buddhism were dominant during the Satavahana period and in the Tamil country they became influential in the post-Sangam period (fourth and fifth centuries). Newly arrived Hinduism had to compete against these Sramanic religions, which had more rational and egalitarian doctrines, but the foregoing description of the synthesis of northern and southern traditions in the form of the *bhakti* cult enabled Hinduism to dominate over Buddhism and Jainism. According to Champakalakshmi (2011: 90), a new synthesis had already appeared in the *Paripāḍal* and the *Tirumurugāṟṟupaḍai* (fifth to sixth century) revealing 'the idea of an absolute or universal godhead—Māl/Māyōn/Vishnu and Murugan/Subrahmanya—and their abode, that is, the temple'. Thus, the flowering of the *bhakti* movement and the advance of Hinduism in the south was made possible by the synthesis of northern and southern religious traditions.

In relation to the foregoing statement, there is another point to be considered in our further studies, namely the sectarian difference conceived by the worshippers of some deity in this period and the difference we make between the so-called *great* and *little* (Aryan and local) traditions. Leslie Orr discusses this point by studying goddess worship in the Tamil country in the period from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries (Orr 2005). According to her, the examination of the myths, iconography, inscriptions, and placement in ritual settings of female deities makes us open to the idea that the goddesses Parvati, Ambika, and Bhagavati, were regarded by their worshippers 'simply' as goddesses and not Saiva, Jain, or Vaishnava goddesses. She also states that the study calls into question not only the salience of sectarian classification in medieval Tamil Nadu but also the categorization of gods, and especially goddesses, as either 'local'/'village' or 'universal'/'pan-Indian' deities.

3.5.2 *Nāyanārs* and *Āḻvārs*

We shall now briefly discuss the lives of the famous saints recorded in the *Periyapurāṇam* and in the Vaishnava hagiographies called the *Guruparampara*, together with some of their poems.

Tirunavukkarasu (Appar), one of the trio, was born in a Vellala family in Tiruvarur and converted to Jainism in his youth. He returned to Saivism at his sister's pleading and is said to have converted the Pallava king, Mahendravarman I (580–630), from Jainism to Saivism. Wandering from temple to temple, he composed lyrical poems in praise of Siva and is believed to have composed 49,000 stanzas of which 33,000 are extant and constitute books IV to VI of the *Tirumuṟai*. In one of his poems, he eulogizes Siva in Arur (Tiruvarur):[27]

First, she heard His name
Then she heard about His colour and form
and His Arur.
Though dissuaded, she became mad for Him
and left her mother and father that very day,
abandoning the customs of the world.
Losing herself
forgetting her own name
this girl placed her head at the Lord's feet.

Tirunavukkarasu lived long enough to meet another of the *mūvar*s, Sambandar, who called him Appar (father).

Tirugnanasambandar (Sambandar) was born in a Brahmana family in Sikali in the first half of the seventh century. He is said to have won the Pandyan king Nedumaran[28] over from Jainism to Saivism by miraculously curing his

[27] Translation by Prentiss. Prentiss (1999: 53) cites this poem as a good example of *bhakti* hymns following the Sangam *aham* tradition.

[28] He was identified by Nilakanta Sastri with Maravarman Arikesari Parankusan (Sastri 1929: 53–4 [1972 reprint: p. 48]).

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illness. An implacable foe of Jainism and Buddhism, he is believed to have been responsible for the execution of 8,000 Jains by impalement. Considered a real prodigy, producing 4,181 fine stanzas praising Siva, his hymns are more powerful when set to music. He is said to have entered 'eternal bliss' on the occasion of his wedding at the age of sixteen.

Sundaramurti (Sundarar), the last of the trio, was born in a Sivabrahmana family in Tirunavalur on the south bank of the Then Pennai River probably at the end of the eighth century. Though he is said to have attained Siva's bliss at the tender age of eighteen together with his friend, the Chera king Cheraman Perumal, himself a *nāyanār*, he appears to have lived to a ripe old age. He had two epithets, one Tambiran-tolan ('the Lord's Comrade') and the other Vantondar ('Insolent Devotee') as he demanded from God many good things in life. He is said to have involved God even in his complicated matrimonial arrangement.

Manikkavasagar (meaning 'He whose utterances are rubies') was a Sivabrahmana from Tiruvadavur on the Vaigai River (Figure 3.15). He first served the Pandyan king Arimarttanar[29] as a minister, but later renounced his career to become a Saiva poet-saint. He lived later than Sundarar[30] and his hymns represent the Saivite mysticism that developed subsequently and reveal an inclination towards Saiva Siddhantism. His magnum opus, the *Tiruvāsagam*, represents 'the peak of the *bhakti* poetry' (Zvelebil 1975: 144) of which an example is the poem 'Longing for Union':[31]

I had no virtue, penance, knowledge, self-control,
A doll to turn
At others' will I danced, whirled, fell. But me
He filled in every limb
With love's mad longing, and that I might climb
there whence is no return,
He shewed His beauty, made me His. Ah me,
when shall I go to Him?

The *Periyapurāṇam* comprises many stories about non-poet *nāyanārs* and the miraculous episodes in their lives. The story of Tirunalaipovar (Nandanar) is one of them. Nandanar, a Paraiya working with leather, used to make drums and was an ardent devotee of Siva. He had a strong desire to visit Chidambaram. However, he was too busy to go and vowed each day that he would go the next, which gave him the name Tirunalaipovar (He who will go tomorrow). Ultimately, his dream of visiting Chidambaram was realized and his heart trembled with joy. But, being an untouchable, he was not allowed inside and he wept outside the temple wall. Siva appeared and instructed the temple priests to let him. Nandanar walked unharmed through a purifying fire and entered the sanctum where he disappeared under the raised foot of the dancing Siva idol.

Another story is that of Kannappan (Tinnan), a hunter in the Kalahasti area. On becoming a Saiva devotee, each day he cooked the game he hunted and offered it to the Siva *linga* on Kalahasti hill. One day, he saw one of the eyes on the *linga* bleeding. Unable to stop it, he plucked out his own eye with an arrowhead and applied it to the *linga*'s eye. Then he saw the other eye on the *linga* bleeding. When he was about to pluck out his other eye, Siva appeared before Tinnan addressing him as Kannappa (He of the eyes), blessed him, and restored his sight. Kannappan is also included among the 63 *nāyanārs*.

As for the *āḻvārs*, Periyāḻvār is considered among the most famous of the twelve. He was a

[29] Nilakanta Sastri suggests the identification of this Pandyan king with Varaguna II (862–85) (Sastri 1955: 425).

[30] This may explain the reason for his non-inclusion among the *nāyanārs*.

[31] Translation by F. Kingsbury and G. E. Phillips (Kingsbury and Phillips 1921: 127).

Brahmana of Sriviliputtur and lived in the ninth century, a contemporary of the Pandyan king Maravarman Srivallabha. His hymns are very popular and are recited in many Vaishnava rituals. The themes are mostly Krishna's childhood, and the hymns are therefore thought to have influenced Vallabha's worship of Balakrishna. One of his poems here illustrates that love exists between God and the devotee alone:[32]

A diadem dances on his brow as he strolls;
gold trinkets on his ankle tinkle in the dust.
Lovely young moon, if the eyes in your face are real,
come, watch the frolicking of my son Gōvinda.

Andal, another *āḻvār*, is found abandoned as a baby in Periyalvar's garden and he brings her up as his own daughter. Krishna is the hero in her hymns as well and they express her love for him. She imagines herself to be the bride of Ranganatha in Srirangam and refuses to marry any mortal. She is said to have been accepted by God and miraculously absorbed into the stone idol of her beloved in the sanctum sanctorum of the Srirangam temple. A song about her wedding with the Lord, which she experiences in her dream and narrates to her friend, is quite popular and is sung to this day at all Vaishnava marriages of the Tamil people. It runs:[33]

Today and in endless future births
our Lord Narayana, my Nambi
will be my constant companion—
with his holy lotus hands
upon the *ammi* stone he placed my foot—
This dream I dreamt my friend.

Nammalvar, a Vellala from Kurugur in Tirunelveli district, is considered by many to be the greatest *āḻvār*, and Vaishnava *bhakti* reached its culmination with his deeply philosophical hymns. He probably lived in the period from the end of the ninth century to the beginning of the tenth. According to a hagiology, for sixteen years he sat in silent meditation under a tamarind tree, which finally earned him a revelation of Vishnu. He is said to have conveyed the essence of the four Vedas in his four works, which include the *Tiruvāymoḻi*.

In these hagiological stories, we notice a merging of the northern Brahmanical ideas with the southern Tamil tradition of this period. Though the canonization of untouchables is against the Brahmanical tradition, that Nandanar was allowed to enter the temple only through the flame exemplifies the strength of the Brahmanical idea of pollution. The story of Kannappan, the hunter, concerns blood, offering game (flesh) to the Siva *linga*, the *linga* bleeding, and Kannappan plucking out his own eye, unmistakably reflecting the Tamil tradition of violent sacrifice (Shulman 1980: 10) noticeable in the Sangam poems (see Figure 3.17). In addition, it is significant that this story is found in the *Periyapurāṇam* composed in the twelfth century.[34] The story involving blood and sacrifice is found in the origin myth of some temples in Tamil Nadu, including the Sucindram temple (Shulman 1980: 93), and testifies to the enduring strength of Tamil religious tradition, superimposed though it is by north Indian religious ideology.

[32] Translation by Lynn Ate (2011: 78).

[33] Translation by Vidya Dehejia (1988: 123).

[34] In the *Periyapurāṇam*, there are some more stories that describe violent sacrifice. In one of them, the saint Sirutondar is said to have killed and cooked his five-year-old son and offered him as a meal at the request of a Bhairava devotee.



Figure 3.17 Stone Sculpture Depicting the Kannappan Story
Source: Courtesy of Institut Français de Pondichéry and École française d'Extrême-Orient.

3.5.3 The *Bhakti* Movement and the State

In order to clarify what implications the movement had for society and polity, we must now consider the people or the social groups who joined and promoted the *bhakti* movement. In the past, some scholars tried to define the movement as 'social protest' or 'social reform' organized to resist the oppressive rule of the new Hindu kingdoms based on the caste system. Recent scholarly interpretations run contrary to this view. It is true that the canonized *nāyanārs* and *āḻvārs* included persons considered untouchables, as the story of Nandanar shows, but the community/class-wise count reveals roughly the following distribution:

20 (26.7%)	Brahmana origin, for example Sambandar, Sundarar, Manikkavasagar, and Periyalvar
15 (20%)	Kshatriya origin (kings and chiefs) such as Cheraman Perumal, Kulasekhara Alvar, and Tirumangaialvar
14 (18.7%)	Vellala origin like Appar and Nammalvar
7 (9.3%)	Merchant origin
3 (4%)	Artisans and others of similar caste status (potters, fishermen, and shepherds)
6 (8%)	Low-caste (Paraiya and others) like Nandarar and Tiruppanalvar
10 (13.3%)	Caste unspecified as in the case of Andal

Sources: Rajamanikkam (2002) and Madhavadasan (1962).

The above chart indicates that 65 per cent of the *nāyanār* and *āḻvār* saints came from the upper social stratum, as Vellalas were a dominant agrarian caste in the Tamil country with matrimonial relations with the royal family. Even if we exclude Kshatriyas and Vellalas, Brahmanas alone comprise 27 per cent of the saints. This casts a doubt on the theory that the *bhakti* movement was possibly a means of social protest or social reform. On the contrary, M. G. S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat regard *bhakti* ideology as 'the cementing force bringing together kings, Brahmin priests and the common people in a harmonious manner' (Narayanan and Veluthat 1978: 45) to strengthen the rule of the newly established Hindu kingdoms based on the caste system.

As for the relation between this religious movement and political powers, we perceive that the latter were deeply involved in the movement and made good use of it for their rule. As already seen, the Pallava king, Mahendravarman I (580–630) is said to have been brought into Saivite fold by Appar, and during the later Pallava period introduced the recitation of the

hymns of the *mūvar* (*tiruppatiyam*) in temples enjoying royal patronage. Similarly, Sambandar was responsible for the Pandyan king, Nedumaran's, conversion from Jainism to Saivism. Both the Pallava and Pandyan kings, who followed Hinduism, utilized this vibrant new religious cult for their rule by incorporating the *bhakti* hymns into the liturgy offered in newly constructed temples.[35]

The Cholas, who established power in the Kaveri delta in the middle of the ninth century, had an advantage. If we do a check on the temples and sacred sites that figure in the songs of the *mūvar* (such places are called *pāḍalperṟatalam*), 190 sites out of the total 274 were in the Chola country (Chola-nadu), 32 in the Pallava country (Tondai-nadu), and 14 in the Pandyan country (Pandi-nadu) (Peterson 1991: 13) (see Map 3.2). The Cholas utilized this situation. Aditya I, who replaced the Pallavas at the beginning of the tenth century, is credited with having built many Siva temples in the *pāḍalperṟatalam* along the Kaveri. Sembiyan Mahadevi, queen of Gandaraditya (949–57), also built many Siva temples in the same way, incorporating the *bhakti* cult into the temple liturgy. As Narayanan and Veluthat say, *bhakti* seems to have functioned to bring together kings, Brahmanas, and the common people in harmony from the time of the early Pallava kings in the sixth century to the early Chola kings in the tenth.[36] Burton Stein, who laid stress on the 'Brahman–peasant alliance' of the period makes a slightly different argument. According to him (Stein 1980: 87), *bhakti* was an ideological factor that made the politico-economic alliance of Brahmanas and Vellalas possible and sustainable.[37]

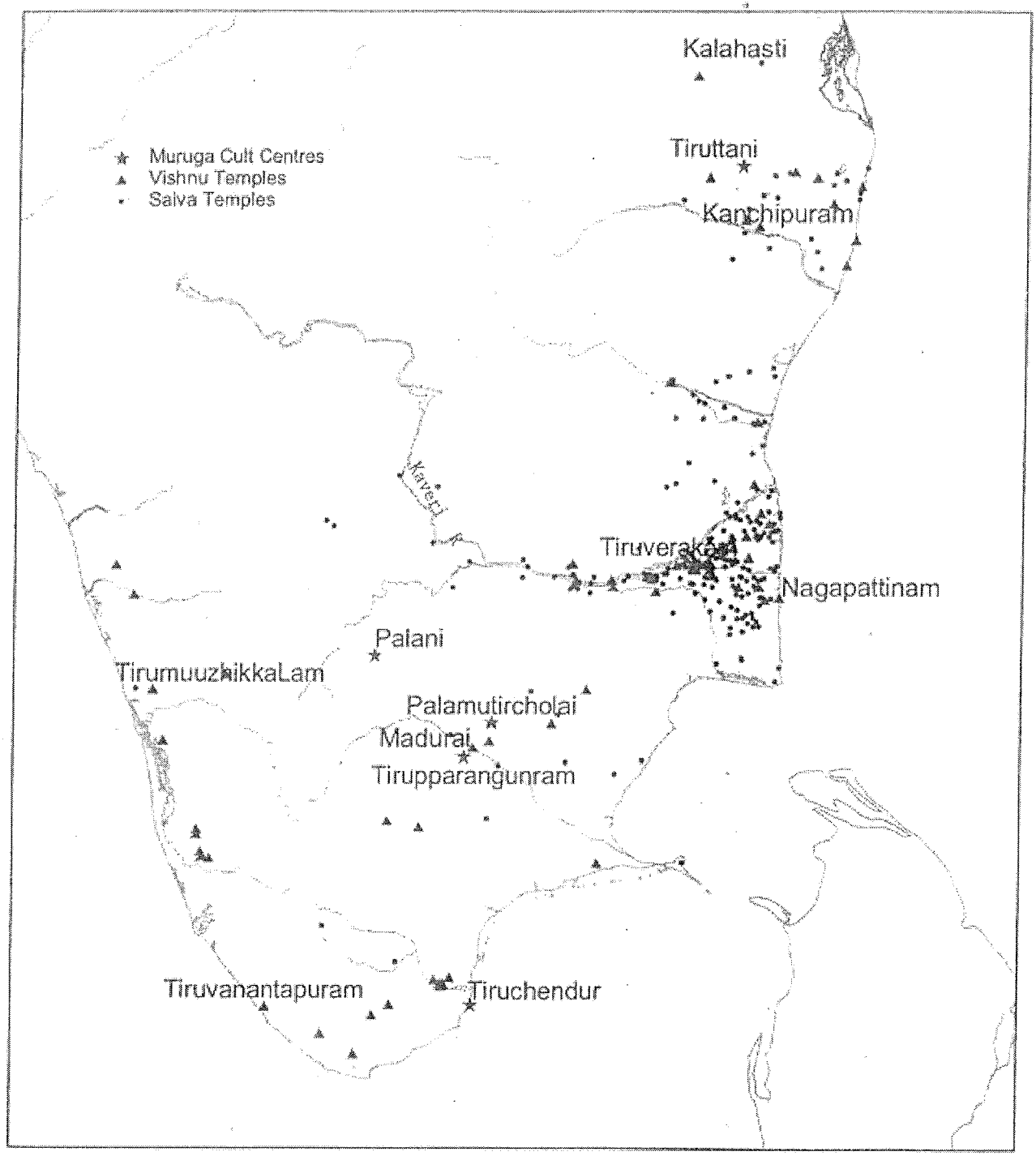
However, if we pay attention to the actual relations between kings, Brahmanas, Vellalas, and other communities, we realize that things are not so simple. Among Brahmanas we have to differentiate between those who lived in *brahmadēyas* granted by the king for adhering to Vedic tradition and those in temples serving as priests. Some priests and other temple functionaries, such as *tiruppatiyam* reciters, seem to have been Vellalas (Prentiss 1999: 101). During the Pallava/Pandya and early Chola period (sixth to tenth centuries), these two groups, namely *brahmadēya* Brahmanas, who managed temple affairs, on the one hand, and priests and other functionaries in the temple (temple-priest Brahmanas and Vellalas), on the other, were not antagonistic—they cooperated in glorifying the new Hindu deities, and Rajaraja I at the end of the tenth century seems to have tried to integrate them under his strong leadership by establishing a new *linga* cult in Rajarajesvara temple.

In and after the latter half of the Chola rule, there developed a rift between these two groups that widened, and led to the revival of orthodox Vedantic religion by the Brahmanas and the establishment of south Indian Saiva Siddhanta

[35] Prentiss (1999: 84 and 105) discusses the relation of this new policy to the change from sacrifice to *dāna* in the state ritual of the Pallavas which was pointed out by Dirks, and Champakalakshmi (2011: 100) suggests a relationship with the increase in land grants to Brahmanas under the Pallava and Pandyan rule.

[36] Narayanan and Veluthat state, 'This (*bhakti*) provided an illusion of equality' among the people in a caste-based society. A similar statement is made by Champakalashmi (2011: 73 and 619), though she is of the view that it was the Chola kings who employed *bhakti* as an ideology underpinning the state (2011: 624).

[37] Stein extends the period of alliance up to the fourteenth century, which is not correct as the alliance seems to have lost its rationale in the latter half of the Chola rule, but if we limit the time-frame to the late Pallava and early Chola period, Stein's position may be acceptable with some reservations.



Map 3.2 *Bhakti* Centres in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, 600–900 CE
Source: Courtesy of Y. Subbarayalu.

by the Vellalas. One of the reasons for this later development must have been the decline in and after the tenth century of Buddhism and Jainism, against which both groups had fought together. Another reason was that with the increase in the power of the people of the lower *jātis* in and after the eleventh century, the Tamil religious tradition regained its popularity and its importance in the society.

The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals*

STEPHEN P. BLAKE

A number of non-specialists have used the Mughal Empire as an example of various models of state organization,[1] but no authority on Muslim India has yet attempted to place the Mughal state in a larger context, as part of a more generalized type of political organization. Depending on which aspect of the state was examined (economic, administrative, social, religious or military), the Empire was characterized as oriental, despotic, Persian, Indian, Turkish, Mongol, or some combination of these. In no instance were the implications of these terms fully spelled out, and no complete model of this traditional state was presented.[2] The lack of a

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1 Compare the treatment of the Mughal Empire in the following: S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New York: The Free Press, 1969); Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols, (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935–64), p. 7, pt. 4; Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols, (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 3; Edward L. Farmer et al., *A Comparative History of Civilizations in Asia*, 2 vols, (Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1977), I; and Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds), 3 vols, (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 3.

2 M. Athar Ali exhibits the clearest perception of this failure in his presidential address to the 1972 meeting of the Indian History Congress, *Proceedings of the 33rd Session of the Indian History Congress* (Muzaffarpur: Indian History Congress, 1972), pp. 175–88. In the last chapter of his recent work, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976), Michael Pearson offers a model of the political system in Gujarat. This model certainly has implications for the organization

blueprint did not mean, however, that scholars wrote about the Mughal Empire in a vacuum, without presuppositions; on the contrary, a set of unexamined assumptions which established the categories of analysis and limited the varieties of evidence lay beneath most explications of the Mughal state. The following reinterpretation is based on the belief that these assumptions were non-indigenous and anachronistic, were not supported by the Persian sources, and were the cause of widespread misunderstanding.

The source of these assumptions was the notion that the Mughal Empire was ancestor to the British Raj—and, to be sure, there were a number of ways in which the British system followed the Mughal practice. For example, like the Mughals, the British divided governmental authority into two main branches, military and revenue; they kept the basic Mughal administrative subdivisions and centralized civil power at each level in the hands of one person; and they adopted, especially after the Mutiny of 1857, the Mughal position that the state's role should be limited to collecting taxes and maintaining law and order. As a result, most specialists on the Mughal period (particularly those writing in the early part of the century) looked to the highly structured military, judicial and administrative systems of late Imperial India (*c.* 1875–1914) for clues to the organization of the Mughal state. Thus, scholars described *mansabdārs*, the officers of the Mughal army, as members of a finely graded, hierarchical system of rank and responsibility similar to that of the British army, with detailed salary schedules, promotions, demotions, bestowal of honours, regulations regarding horses and equipment, with a great gap between officers and soldiers. Mansabdārs filled almost all the posts in what was portrayed as an elaborately bureaucratic administrative system. The Empire was divided and subdivided, according to this view, into provinces, districts and subdistricts for ease of administration. At each level, military, fiscal and judicial officials operated within definite jurisdictional limits. Carefully drawn lines of authority, it was argued, linked ministers of central departments in the capital to junior officials in small towns, with each official answering to his immediate superior. These scholars seem to have understood Mughal government as a kind

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of the empire at large, but Pearson does not spell them out in any detail. He restricts his analysis for the most part to western India and Gujarat.

of undeveloped forerunner of the rational, highly systematized military, administrative and legal framework of British Imperial India.[3]

THE PATRIMONIAL-BUREAUCRATIC EMPIRE

Before analysing the Mughal government, I would like to discuss briefly a model of the pre-modern state called the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire. As an ideal type, this model does not reflect the working of any actual state, but presents a catalogue of elements drawn from existing situations and ordered into a functioning but theoretical system. Just as an economy can be judged as a 'free market economy' without displaying

[3] Examples of this approach occur most frequently in the work of an earlier generation of scholars whose writings were responsible for the standard introductions to the Mughal state. See, for example, William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration* (1903; rpt. New Delhi: Eurasian Publishing House Private Ltd., 1962); Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (1936; rpt. Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967); Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire* (Karachi: Univ. of Karachi, 1966); A.L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, 2 vols, (Agra, U.P.: Shiva Lal Agarwala and Company, 1962–67), 2; P. Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals* (Allahabad, U.P., Kitabistan, 1941).

The younger historians, on the other hand, having narrowed their interests and limited their topics, have not yet begun to re-examine the larger question. While none of what I stress here is unknown to them, these scholars have not, because of their more circumscribed purview, reflected on the implications of these aspects of Mughal government for the established interpretation. They have not seen the contradiction between the patrimonial aspects of the Mughal state and the conventional description of it in the standard works. See M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968; paperback ed., 1970); and Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1972). Both authors have put together detailed studies that break important new ground, but neither has looked into the impact of his work on the conventional model of the Mughal state.

Two careful, imaginative Western historians of Mughal India, John F. Richards and Michael N. Pearson, are pertinent also. Pearson's closely argued study focuses almost exclusively on western India. Richards's painstaking examination of Mughal administration in the south Indian state of Golconda, a revealing look at an often-ignored area, discusses both the patrimonial and bureaucratic aspects of the Mughal state without touching the larger issue. See *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 75–8. Finally, a look at the new historical atlas of South Asia reveals that the older view is far from dead. The table portraying the administrative organization of the Mughal Empire is a perfect rendering of the standard interpretation. See Joseph Schwartzberg (ed.), *A Historical Atlas of South Asia* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), plate VI. A. 2, p. 45.

all the elements of Adam Smith's model, for example, so an empire can be termed 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' without demonstrating all the particulars of the type. Understood in this way, the model is more a suggestion, an outline, a guide, or point of departure than a final explanation of a particular historical circumstance.

In discussing the political framework of this type I draw heavily on Max Weber's work on the patrimonial state. The ruler of such a state governs on the basis of a personal, traditional authority whose model is the patriarchal family. Patrimonial domination originates in the patriarch's authority over his household; it entails obedience to a person, not an office; it depends on the reciprocal loyalty between a subject and his master; and it is limited only by the ruler's discretion. Patrimonial states arise, according to Weber, when lords and princes extend their sway over extrahousehold subjects (patrimonial masters themselves) in areas beyond the patriarchal domain. This extension involves a change of authority: from the patrimonial, which is domestic and personal, to the purely political, which is military and judicial and which must be administered by extrahousehold officials. Expansion does not limit the ruler's ambition, however. Within the larger realm, conceived as a huge household, the ruler/master tries to exercise military and judicial power in the same absolute and unrestrained way. In the description which follows I distinguish two variants within the patrimonial type of political organization. The first, the patrimonial kingdom, is the smaller of the two, and is closer in organization and government to the ideal represented by the patriarchal family. The second, the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire, is larger and more diffuse. Rulers of such empires developed a collection of strategies and techniques that allowed personal, household-dominated rule of an attenuated sort within realms of considerable area, population and complexity.

To govern successfully, a patrimonial ruler must have at his disposal a body of loyal, disciplined soldiers. Patrimonial armies were made up of troops whose primary allegiance was to an individual rather than to a dynasty or an office. In patrimonial kingdoms the military forces consisted, for the most part, of the household troops of the ruler. In patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, on the other hand, armies were large and complex. The armies required to maintain order in states of such size were too large for the imperial household to manage and support. As a result, the armies of patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors split into two

groups: the private household troops of the emperor, and the soldiers of major subordinates, who made up the bulk of the army—men who were bound more to their commanders than to the emperor.

Patrimonial administration followed a similar pattern. In the limited compass of the patrimonial kingdom the private domain of the ruler was virtually coterminous with the realm itself, and there was little or no difference between the state and household officials. In patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, however, these groups were not the same. The extension of control beyond the household domain called forth extra-patrimonial officials who administered, for the most part, the collection of taxes and the settlement of a limited number of disputes. Such officials, neither dependents nor bureaucrats, worked in an organization intermediate between the household apparatus of the patrimonial kingdom and the highly bureaucratized system of the modern state. For example, patrimonial-bureaucratic officials filled positions that were loosely defined and imperfectly ordered—a situation very different from the articulated hierarchy of precisely circumscribed offices in a modern bureaucracy. Candidates for posts in patrimonial-bureaucratic administrations had to demonstrate personal qualifications—loyalty, family and position—in addition to technical qualifications such as reading and writing. Whereas modern bureaucrats are given fixed salaries in money, members of these administrations were often assigned prebends or benefices, such as rights to certain fees, taxes or goods due to the state. In a modern bureaucracy a job is a career and is the primary occupation of the jobholder; in patrimonial-bureaucratic administrations, on the other hand, office-holders served at the pleasure of the ruler and often performed tasks unrelated to their appointments. Finally, while modern bureaucrats are subject to an official, impersonal authority, patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors demanded personal loyalty and allegiance of their officials. Such rulers ignored the modern distinction between private and official, or personal and professional, and tried to make household dependents of their subordinates.

In the smallest and most intimate patrimonial kingdoms, officials received compensation for their services directly from the ruler's household—they ate at his table, clothed themselves from his wardrobe and rode horses from his stables. Beyond that, however, they had no claim on the resources of the realm. In the larger, more complex situation of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire, on the other hand, rulers found it

impossible to maintain personally all members of their expanded administrations; thus they began more and more to give officials benefices or prebends. In time this led to a situation in which the greater portion of state revenues was assigned to soldiers and officials. Since these revenues bypassed the ruler entirely, and since the assigned lands were often at considerable distances from the capital, this arrangement meant a loosening of the emperor's control over his officials. Under such conditions the strength of personal, patrimonial authority began to wane, and officials began to appropriate prebends and declare their independence.

As a result, patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors began to devise strategies that would replace, to some extent at least, the traditional sources of control. In order to maintain their hold and prevent appropriation, emperors travelled widely and frequently, renewing in countless face-to-face meetings the personal bond between master and subject on which the state was founded; they demanded of all soldiers and officials regular attendance at court and, on their departure, often required that a son or relative be left behind as hostage; they periodically rotated officials from post to post, allowing no one to keep his job for more than a few years running; they maintained a network of newswriters or intelligence gatherers outside the regular administrative structure who reported directly to them; and, finally, in an effort to check the power of subordinates, rulers of patrimonial-bureaucratic empires created provincial and district offices with overlapping responsibilities.[4]

As I turn now to an analysis of the Mughal state, it is important to remember that I have just described the political structure of an ideal type. Although one cannot expect to find a perfect patrimonial-bureaucratic image in the governmental organization of any historical state, a number of states should approximate the model more or less closely. The Mughal Empire belongs to that number,[5] as do several other roughly

[4] The most complete discussion of the patrimonial state and its variants is in Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1: 229–57, 263–4; 3: 966–72, 1006–69, 1086–92. Weber's remarks on the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire are scattered and fragmentary, and so not easy to integrate and interpret. His style is to construct pure types—the patrimonial state and the modern bureaucratic state—and contrast them. No historical state, as Weber himself points out, exactly matches either type. All present and past state systems are combinations of elements from several types; the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire is a mixture of the modern bureaucratic and patrimonial states. Actual historical examples of the model differ as they approach closer to one or the other pure type.

[5] This is, as far as I know, the first serious attempt to analyse the Mughal empire in

contemporaneous Asian states—the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, the Safavid Empire in Iran, the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan and the Ming Empire in China.[6]

The *Ā'īn-i Akbari* (Regulations of Akbar) of Abu al-Fazl is the major text on Mughal government; it is the manual that expounds Akbar's conception of the state and his plans for ordering and administering it. The structure developed by Akbar and described in the *Ā'īn* by Abu al-Fazl endured: succeeding emperors left it pretty much alone, and it survived in its basic form down to the early eighteenth century. Most misinterpretations of the Mughal Empire stem from a misreading of the *Ā'īn*. It is not that scholars relied on inaccurate translations—most of them, in fact, knew Persian, and read the texts in the original. The misreading arose instead from the preconceptions they brought to their work. To examine the *Ā'īn* de novo, in Persian, and, as far as possible, without presuppositions, is the only way to uncover the indigenous categories of state organization.

The bulk of this essay concentrates on the details of reinterpretation. While I do not mean to imply that the Mughal state was unique, I also do not want to begin a search for origins. Such a search is often elusive and unproductive, especially when it is intended as an explanation. However, I do want to include a few lines on the Asian states that seem to have influenced, to some degree at least, the organization of the Mughal Empire.

The Mughal Emperors were Turks. Babar, the founder of the dynasty, spoke Chaghatai Turkish and descended from Timur, the great Central Asian ruler (r. 1370–1405). 'Timurid' is probably a more accurate name for the dynasty than 'Mughal' (from Mongol). As Turks, the Mughal Emperors—like the Timurid rulers before them—were influenced by both the Mongols and Persians. The Mongol state of Chinghiz Khan (r. 1206–27), much closer than the Mughal Empire to the pure patrimonial type, contributed a strong patrimonial strain. The Mongols, for example, gave Imperial officers household titles: the man in charge of one of Chinghiz's armies had the title 'cook', and some of the highest officials

terms of the patrimonial-bureaucratic model. Both Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers*, p. 62, and Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 12–14 mention Weber's work. Neither, however, writes at any length on the application of the model to Mughal India.

[6] See *Shahjahanabad*, ch. 7.

were given the title 'fifth-son'—Chinghiz had four natural sons and, at one time, three fifth-sons. Furthermore, a decree issued by Hulegu (son of the Grand Khan Mongke) in the mid-1250s divided government into the same three categories—household, army and empire—as did the *Ā'īn*.[7]

The Persians contributed a strong bureaucratic strain not only to the Mughals, but also to the other Turkish and Mongol states in West and Central Asia. From the time of the Sasanid Empire (*c.* AD 224–651), the Persians had a routinized system of tax collection, a well-developed, bureaucratic administrative system and a tradition of strong centralized rule under an absolute, semidivine emperor. Akbar's contribution to the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire in India was to develop, refine, and systematize the elements of state organization he had inherited from India and West and Central Asia. Both the Muslim dynasties which preceded the Mughals (collectively called the Delhi Sultanate, *c.* 1206–1526) and the earlier Hindu states such as the Mauryan Empire (*c.* 322–185 BC) exhibited aspects of patrimonial-bureaucratic organization. Akbar synthesized these elements into the coherent, rational system of government that we see described in the *Ā'īn-i Akbari*, and gave the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire in India its most systematic, fully developed, and clearly articulated form.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

In his preface to the *Ā'īn-i Akbari*, Abu al-Fazl states that the art of governing comprises three topics: 'I shall explain the regulations [*ā'īn*] of the household [*manzil*], the army [*sipāh*], and the empire [*mulk*] since these three constitute the work of a ruler.'[8] The divisions of the text reflect

7 Rashid al-Din, *Jami al-Tavarikh*, B. Karimi (ed.), 2 vols, (Tehran: n.p., 1959), 2: 688. I am indebted to Thomas Allsen for the reference and the information about the Mongols.

8 Abu al-Fazl, *The A'in-i Akbari*, H. Blochmann (ed.), 2 vols, (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872–77), 1: 7; Abu al-Fazl, *The A'in-i Akbari*, H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett, trans., corrected and annotated by Jadunath Sarkar, 2nd edn, 3 vols, (1927–49; rpt. New Delhi: New Imperial Book Depot, 1965), 1: 9. I follow the system of transliteration in F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. In all footnotes to the *Ā'īn*, I include references to both the Persian and English editions of the text, so that interested readers may discover Blochmann's errors by comparing his translation with the original work. All translations in this paper are, of course, my own.

this view of state organization. Book One discusses the Imperial household, Book Two the army, Book Three the empire at large, Book Four Hindu religious, social and intellectual activity, and Book Five the sayings of Akbar.

Household

The dominating presence in Book One and, indeed, in the text as a whole (two of the five books centre on him) is Akbar, the emperor. A major theme in the first book, one that is treated from a variety of perspectives, is the relationship between the emperor and his subjects. Abu al-Fazl defines a ruler as a man touched by God, a person ennobled by divine inspiration: 'Royalty [*pādshāhī*] is a light from God. . . . Without a mediator it appears as a holy form to the holders of power and at the sight of it everyone bends the forehead of praise to the ground of submission.'[9] On receipt of this illumination a ruler acquires the qualities and virtues needed to govern successfully. These include trust in God, prayer and devotion, a large heart, and, first and most important, a paternal love for the people—the ideal ruler governs as a father.[10] Such a ruler—and Abu al-Fazl uses Akbar as the exemplar—is presented as an *insān-i kāmil* (perfect man), a Sufi phrase which describes a person who enjoys a special and intimate relationship with God.[11] In his massive biography of Akbar, the *Akbar Namah*, Abu al-Fazl includes a number of miraculous stories intended to illustrate the emperor's close relationship with God, and to buttress the claim that Akbar was a perfect man.

This view of Akbar as a divinely inspired patriarch, an extremely wise, just, competent and creative father of his people, is one supported by the most controversial *ā'īn* in Book One, A'in 77. 'The Regulation on Guidance' (*ā'īn-i rāhnamūnī*), mistranslated 'His Majesty as the Spiritual Guide of the People',[12] has been interpreted by the translator Heinrich

[9] Ibid., 1: 2; trans. 1: 3. For a similar statement, see Ibid., 1: 158 and trans. 1: 172.
[10] Ibid., 1: 2; 1: 3.
[11] For a discussion of the term, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. edn, s.v. 'al-insan al-kamil'. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 3: 75–80; and Srivastava, *Akbar*, 2: 309 both argue that Abu al-Fazl presented Akbar in such a light throughout his writings. A'in 77 provides perhaps the best example of Abu al-Fazl's approach. See *A'in*, Blochmann (ed.), 1: 158–60; and trans. 1: 170–6.
[12] Ibid., 1: 158; trans. 1: 170.

Blochmann and others as Akbar's attempt to start a new religion called the *dīn-i ilāhī* or divine faith. As several scholars have pointed out, however, this interpretation is surely false. What Akbar almost certainly intended, as befits a perfect man, was to start a small Sufi sect with himself as *pīr* or leader.[13] A crucial phrase in A'in 77, 'regulations for the disciples' (*ā'īn-i irādat guzīnān*) was misrendered 'Ordinances of the Divine Faith' by Blochmann and was, without justification, set off from the body of the text.[14] Neither the regulations nor the ceremony of initiation described in A'in 77 would seem unusual to any member of a Sufi order.

The elaborate rules governing admission to the court and observing correct behaviour before the throne (A'ins 73–75) also support this reading of the relationship between emperor and subject. Extreme deference is the only attitude possible in the presence of an emperor who is also a perfect man. That rulers are touched by God, singled out, and called to the throne is a major theme in Abu al-Fazl's discussion of the Imperial household. Once in power a ruler is inspired by God to govern his state with the same strength, wisdom and compassion that a father employs in looking after his household.

A second theme—the mixing of household and state—surfaces in Abu al-Fazl's discussion of this first branch of government. In the Imperial household, departments dealing with purely domestic matters coexist side-by-side with departments of wider reach and greater significance. In Book One there are regulations for the harem, the wardrobe, the kitchen and the perfumery; there are also directives on the care and keeping of the emperor's elephants, horses, cows, camels and mules. Several *ā'īn* touch on matters of construction—on styles, materials and workmen. In addition to departments of a mostly personal and familial kind, there are departments whose responsibility extends beyond the care and comfort of the emperor's immediate family. Thus Book One contains regulations on the Imperial mint, the state arsenal, the department of the treasury,

[13] This issue has generated a good deal of controversy. For the arguments in favour of a new religion, see ibid., trans. 1: 176–223. For the opposing and, it seems to me, more plausible view, see Srivastava, *Akbar*, 1: 303–13, 2: 311–16; and S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, Ainslie T. Embree (ed.) (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 156–65. For a comprehensive and reliable discussion of the entire issue, see S.A.A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), pp. 374–417.

[14] *A'īn*, Blochmann (ed.), 1: 160 and trans. 1: 175.

the use of royal seals, the symbolic prerogatives of royalty and the organization of the Imperial camp.

A look at the finances of the Imperial household indicates something of the scale of this branch of government. In 1594 the income of Akbar's household (i.e. the monies from the emperor's private lands) was about 25 per cent of total state revenues, and salaries for clerks, servants and labourers—by no means the entire dependent population of the household—amounted to nearly 9 per cent of Imperial revenues.[15] All of this suggests close similarities between the Mughal and patrimonial-bureaucratic empires. The centrality and importance of the Imperial household in the organization of Akbar's empire parallels the position of the ruler's establishment in the ideal type. Abu al-Fazl's portrayal of Akbar as a divinely aided father to his people recalls the traditional, family rooted authority of the patrimonial-bureaucratic emperor. And, finally, the inclusion of state offices and officials in the Imperial household, the combination there of personal and official, brings to mind the thwarted ambition of patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors to absorb the state into the household and to rule the realm as one great extended family.

Army

In Book Two of the *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* Abu al-Fazl discusses the army, and divides this second branch of Mughal government into four classes: mansabdārs and their men, *aḥadīs* (from *aḥad*, 'one'), other soldiers and infantry. Although mansabdārs are clearly preferred, and although scholars have written a good deal about them, it is well to remember that this group did not make up the whole of the Mughal army. Men with mounted followers became mansabdārs only after an interview with Akbar. In the meeting between the emperor and the applicant, Akbar had an opportunity to size up the candidate and to inquire into his background and experience. With his divinely aided insight and judgement, Akbar was, according to Abu al-Fazl, consistently able to choose superior men: 'According to his knowledge of the temper of the times . . . he

[15] In *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556–1739* (Bombay, India: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 272, Irfan Habib estimates Akbar's private lands to have yielded about 25 per cent of total land revenues. For the salaries of servants and others, see *A'in*, Blochmann(ed.), 1: 9 and trans. 1: 12. The figure for total state revenues can be found in ibid., 1: 386 and trans. 2: 129.

evaluated many [candidates] immediately and gave them high rank at once.'[16] Akbar established sixty-six ranks, corresponding to the value of the letters in the word Allah. It is clear, however, that this division of the interval between ten and ten thousand, the high and low ranks, was mostly theoretical. Blochmann found, for example, that only thirty-three of the sixty-six possible ranks were ever actually filled during Akbar's reign.[17]

Aḥadis, the second class of the Mughal army, were single men who had no mounted military following, and so could not be given mansabdāri rank. Since they were often men of talent and birth, however, and skilled in fighting and administration, the emperor decided it was better to keep them nearby as a body of personal servants than to assign them to mansabdāri contingents. Aḥadis, like mansabdārs, had to maintain a certain number of horses in proper condition.[18]

The third class of the Mughal army included all those horsemen who were neither aḥadis nor members of a mansabdāri contingent. Since these men were usually too poor to own horses, the Mughals gave them lands or cash to buy mounts and to support themselves. In return, these cavalrymen served as extra troops for mansabdārs on campaigns and as auxiliaries for provincial authorities.[19]

The dominance of the cavalry in Mughal military thought and organization is reflected in the rag-tag character of the fourth class of the Mughal army, the footsoldiers. Of the nine groups listed under A'in 6, only one, matchlock bearers, participated in actual combat. Porters, runners, guards, gladiators, wrestlers, slaves, bearers and labourers worked as miscellaneous support personnel.[20]

The remainder of Book Two deals with other aspects of army organization: A'ins 7 and 8 establish procedures for the branding of horses, while A'in 9 outlines the regulations for mounting guard. For purposes of protecting the person and household of the ruler, the four divisions of the army were required to perform three kinds of guard duty. To staff the most visible and demanding shift, that which performed court duties and stood daily before the emperor, the army was divided into seven parts,

[16] Ibid., 1: 179 and trans. 1: 248. For another example of Akbar's penchant for making quick decisions on mansabdāri candidates see Ibid., 1: 191 and 1: 265.

[17] Ibid., trans. 1: 248–50.

[18] Ibid., 1: 187 and trans. 1: 259–60.

[19] Ibid., 1: 175, 187–8 and trans. 1: 241, 260–1.

[20] Ibid., 1: 188–90 and trans. 1: 261–4.

one for each day of the week. For the two longer shifts, the Mughal military forces were broken down into two separate and distinct divisions of twelve parts each. One shift, one-twelfth of the army, headquartered in the Imperial establishment for an entire month and the other shift, a different one-twelfth, lived with the emperor for a full year.[21]

Another group of regulations appears at first glance to have little in common with the subject matter of Book Two: A'ins 16–19 treat Akbar's charitable contributions; A'in 22 discusses feasts; A'in 23, fancy bazaars; A'in 24, marriage; and A'in 25, education. If these regulations are read carefully and in context, however, a common theme links them all: namely, the emperor's efforts to influence, order and shape the lives of his subordinates. Thus, the *ā'īns* on Akbar's gifts to the needy and deserving seem intended to give mansabdārs examples of meritorious activity.[22] The regulations on feasts and fancy bazaars are also exemplary, since feasts provide opportunities to dispense charity, and bazaars are occasions for hearing the grievances of local shopkeepers and inspecting the productions of household workshops.[23] Akbar's intention to regulate the private lives of his nobles is even more evident in the *ā'īns* covering marriage and education. In A'in 24 Akbar established rules for the size of dowries, the age of consent and the permitted degrees of consanguinity; he also appointed two officials to see that the rules were followed. Finally, in A'in 25 Akbar suggested reforms in the traditional system of education: he wanted the method of instruction simplified and its pace increased, and urged that the curriculum be expanded to include subjects of practical interest, like arithmetic, arithmetical notation, agriculture, household management, rules of government, and physiognomy in addition to the traditional religious topics.[24]

A'ins 27 and 28 cover hunting, and A'in 29, games. According to Abu al-Fazl, Akbar's motive in pursuing these activities was not primarily relaxation or diversion: hunting expeditions gave the emperor a chance to examine the condition of the people and the army, and games like chess and field hockey sharpened the reflexes, judgement and concentration of the participants.[25]

[21] Ibid., 1: 192 and trans. 1: 267–8.
[22] Ibid., 1: 197–9 and trans. 1: 276–80.
[23] Ibid., 1: 200–201 and trans. 1: 286–7.
[24] Ibid., 1: 201–2 and trans. 1: 287–89.
[25] Ibid., 1: 204–22 and trans. 1: 292–320.

It is time now to summarize Abu al-Fazl's discussion of the Mughal army. Mansabdārs, the most important of the four military divisions, received ranks and assignments only after an interview with the emperor. Acceptance into the army required no special qualifications and did not depend on heredity. Although Abu al-Fazl's table of sixty-six ranks suggests a carefully worked out system of organization, the fact that only thirty-three of these were ever used agrees with the individual and ad hoc character of other military arrangements—recruitment, promotion and assignment, for example. All mansabdārs reported directly to the ruler and not to other men of greater rank; no chain of command separated the emperor from his officer. Mansabdārs had to spend a good deal of time in the presence of the emperor. They were called to court on a change of assignment and for promotion, and they had to stand three separate guard duties in the Imperial household. The emperor apparently took advantage of these periods of proximity to meddle in their private lives: he regulated their marriages, prescribed the education of their sons and organized their leisure activities. The personnel of the Mughal army, like soldiers in patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, could not be contained within the Imperial household. As a result, the Mughal army functioned in two parts. One part was headquartered in the Imperial household. It included the ahadis, Imperial foot-soldiers and mansabdārs who had been assigned duty at court and their contingents. The other part, on campaign or stationed in posts around the realm, comprised the mansabdārs outside court, their cavalry, and the extra horsemen and infantry assigned them.

All of this suggests an empire much closer to the patrimonial-bureaucratic than to the British Indian. It is inappropriate, it seems to me, to characterize Abu al-Fazl's discussion of mansabdārs in Book Two as the delineation of a highly bureaucratic administrative system. To describe it this way, as many scholars have done,[26] is to employ categories anachronistic and foreign to the Mughal experience. And, as I have tried to show in the discussion above, Book Two of the *Ā'īn-i Akbari* cannot bear the burden of such an interpretation. Book Two *does* seem to support the interpretation of the Mughal state as a patrimonial-bureaucratic empire. In Abu al-Fazl's discussion, the Mughal army is the adjunct of a household-dominated patrimonial-bureaucratic empire rather than the fighting arm of a highly structured, bureaucratically administered state.

[26] See, for example, Srivastava, *Akbar*, 2: 218; 2: 37–41 and Qureshi, *Mughal Administration*, p. 102.

Empire

The designation of the empire as the third aspect of governance indicates a progressive widening in the range of the ruler's responsibility. A'in 1 of Book Three lays out the duties of the *sipāh sālār* (army commander), the man in general charge of provincial affairs. Known later as the *nāzim* or *ṣūbahdār*, this mansabdār controlled the largest body of troops in the area and was primarily responsible for keeping the peace.[27] A'in 2 discusses the major military subordinate of the sipāh sālār, the *faujdār*. This officer commanded a large body of cavalry and was supposed to maintain order in several subdivisions (*parganahs*) of the province. He was charged with not only subduing recalcitrant cultivators, but also with checking the ambitions of local revenue collectors and *jāgīrdārs* (mansabdārs who had been assigned lands in lieu of cash salaries).[28] A'in 3 outlines the duties of the Imperial subordinates (*qāzī* and *mīr' adl*) responsible for the administration of justice in the provinces. The regulation does not assign these men specific posts, and they may well have had permanent positions only in large towns and cities, spending the rest of their time riding circuit and dispensing periodic justice.[29] A'in 4 takes up the duties of the *kotwāl*, the chief urban official in Mughal India, who was charged with patrolling the streets and maintaining order, collecting information on townspeople, regulating artisans and merchants, seeing that markets ran properly, and collecting taxes.[30]

A'ins 5, 6, and 7 describe the responsibilities of revenue collectors. The *'amal-guzār* (collector) was the chief fiscal officer at the subprovincial level, who, with the help of his assistants, oversaw all aspects of revenue administration in the village. He dealt directly with village officials, and mediated between them and provincial and Imperial officers. He also sent to court information on prices, local assignees, artisans, cultivators and the poor.[31] A'in 6 sets out the duties of the accountant (*bitikchī*), writer, and assistant to the 'amal-guzār. He gathered data on land tenures, sales, leases, yields, prices and taxes and made it available to the collector. In the survey of village lands, and during the assessment and collection of taxes, the bitikchī prepared a meticulous record of all holdings,

[27] *A'in*, Blochmann, ed., 1: 280–3 and trans. 2: 37–41.
[28] Ibid., 1: 283 and trans. 2: 41–2.
[29] Ibid., 1: 283; and trans. 2: 42–3.
[30] Ibid., 1: 284–5 and trans. 2: 43–5.

assessments, payments, and disbursements. After being checked by the collector, this record was sent directly to the Imperial court.[32] The second assistant of the collector, the *khizānadār* (treasurer), is considered in A'in 7; this official deposited government revenues in a secure place in or near the collector's residence. All monies received were entered in an account book and no disbursements were made without the written order of the provincial or Imperial *dīwān* (finance officer).[33]

The rest of Book Three deals with matters of land revenue. A'ins 8 through 13 consider the classification and measurement of agricultural lands. To fully understand A'ins 14 (The Nineteen Years' Rate) and 15 (The Ten Years' Settlement) it is necessary to see them in the context of Akbar's attempts to determine a fair and accurate tax on agricultural produce. Before 1579 the tax demanded of an individual cultivator was based on estimates of the size of his land, the yield on his crop and its price in the market. In 1560, in an attempt to reduce the inaccuracy and unreliability of this method, Akbar's men began collecting data on the market prices and revenue rates of various crops in the provinces of Agra, Allahabad, Oudh, Delhi, Lahore, Multan and Malwa. These figures, collected for the years through 1579, are displayed in the tables of A'in 14.[34] In 1575, still dissatisfied with the revenue system, Akbar ordered that all lands in the central Indo-Gangetic provinces revert to the *khālisa*, the Imperial domain. This meant that mansabdārs who had been assigned the state's share of the tax on a group of lands (the lands were called a *jāgīr* and the person so compensated a *jāgīrdār*) were henceforward to be paid in cash from the Imperial treasury. During the following five years the lands in the newly expanded Imperial domain were carefully measured, crop prices meticulously noted and the tax rates accurately determined. In 1579 a new assessment was prepared: the revenue rates for the five years prior to 1575 were added to the figures collected from 1575 to 1579, and the total divided by ten. The new assessment, the average of the rates for each crop over a ten year period, is shown for the eight provinces of the central Empire in A'in 15.[35] After these figures were established, Akbar removed a large part of the rich lands of the

[31] Ibid., 1: 285–8 and trans. 2: 46–50.
[32] Ibid., 1: 288 and trans. 2: 50–2.
[33] Ibid., 1: 289 and trans. 2: 52–3.
[34] Ibid., 1: 303–47 and trans. 2: 75–93.
[35] Ibid., 1: 347–86 and trans. 2: 94–122.

central provinces from the Imperial domain and reassigned it to mansabdārs, but retained for his own household lands yielding some 25 per cent of total revenues. The remainder of A'in 15 is given over to a general account of the fifteen provinces of the empire. Included in these descriptions are revenue figures for each revenue subdivision of each district of each province.

The seven officials who made up the administrative structure described in Book Three are not presented as links in administrative chains joining individual villages—by way of subdistrict, district and provincial offices—to central departments in the capital. Rather, as we have seen, an official's responsibility often cut across several of these essentially fiscal divisions; individual men were not posted at each separate level. In such an arrangement Mughal officials, unlike modern bureaucrats, were expected to deal not only with those nearest them in the organization—immediate superiors and subordinates—but with others as well. In fact, the expectation seems to have been that most officials would report directly to the emperor. A passage in A'in 7 suggests the Mughal view: 'All of the work, from that of the sipāh sālār to that of this person [khizānadār], is primarily in the charge of the emperor. And since the strength of one person is not sufficient, he appointed a deputy for each task and gave the necessary threads [of government] extra strength.'[36] A look at what modern scholars call the central level of administration lends support to the idea that the emperor took direct and personal responsibility for all facets of governance. Book Three, as we have seen, discusses only the seven officials named above; it contains nothing whatsoever on the superiors of the army-commander, collector or judge stationed at court.

It is necessary to return to the preface to find mention of these officials. There Abu al-Fazl divides the men who assist the ruler, the men of the state, into four groups. The first group, nobles of the state (*nūyīnān-i daulat*), included all high-ranking mansabdārs. As the head of this group, the *vākīl* (prime minister) was the '. . . emperor's deputy in all things concerning the empire (*mulk*) and the household (*mangil*).'[37] Accordingly, he was the one person in the Imperial entourage most concerned with the problems of the army-commander and his subordinates in the districts. Group two, friends of victory (*auliyā-i nuṣrat*),

[36] Ibid., 1: 289 and trans. 2: 53.
[37] Ibid., 1: 4 and trans. 1: 4–5.

included all those who dealt with the collection and disbursement of state funds. The dīwān commanded these men, and was the person in the capital most interested in the reports of the 'amal-guzār and his assistants. Group three, companions of the emperor (*aṣḥābi-i ṣuḥbat*) included men of religion and learning. Here we find the *sadr*, to whom the provincial officials responsible for law and justice reported. Group four, servants (*arbāb-i khidmat*), included those who worked for and waited upon the emperor and his family in the Imperial household.[38]

Book Three, like Books One and Two, describes an empire much closer to the patrimonial-bureaucratic than to the British Indian model. Although the Mughal state was too large to be absorbed into the household and administered as the emperor's private domain, the Mughal policy of dividing the realm for purposes of land revenue administration into two types—household lands and assignable lands—enabled the Mughal ruler to control a large part of state revenues personally, as did the patrimonial-bureaucratic emperor. In the area of the Imperial domain, supplementary officers from the Imperial establishment were assigned to district and subdistrict levels to help the regular officials with the actual collection of taxes. Officials at court, whose responsibilities covered both the household and the empire, directed the activities of all administrative personnel in the lands of the Imperial domain.

The second area comprised the lands assigned to mansabdārs, and ranged from a minimum of 75 per cent of the empire during the reign of Akbar to a maximum of 95 per cent during the reign of his son Jahangir. Although the extra household officials of Book Three remained in the assigned lands to oversee the activities of the mansabdārs' agents, it is clear that this part of the empire could not be controlled as closely as the household lands of the emperor. Akbar's brief resumption of assigned lands—surely in part an attempt to extend the range of authority of the Imperial establishment—illustrates an important truth about patrimonial-bureaucratic empires: the impossibility of achieving in pre-modern times a degree of control over the empire at large comparable to that exercised in the household.

The organization of officials also followed a patrimonial-bureaucratic pattern. In Mughal India men of the state were not, for the most part, allowed to specialize in either the civil or military branches of government;

[38] Ibid., 1: 4–5 and trans. 1: 6–7.

all officials came from one class, the mansabdāri, and all were deemed capable of handling both kinds of responsibility. For the Mughals, there was no clear relationship between mansabdāri rank and position in government; high-ranking officials sometimes held provincial or subprovincial posts, and middling ranks often filled central level offices in the household. For Mughal officials, promotion depended as much on being present at court for birthday, New Year's and *Īd* (Islamic holiday) celebrations and on the quality of gifts given to the emperor, as it did on performance in office. Finally, as we saw above, Mughal officials usually reported directly to officers in the Imperial household rather than to officials of lesser responsibility outside the capital. All of this, it seems to me, argues against the prevailing interpretation of Mughal administration.

That interpretation supposes a complex system of offices arranged in a hierarchy stretching from villages to central departments, offices manned by graded and ranked officials with specific duties and responsibilities. Blochmann's decision to entitle Book Three of his translation of the *Āīn* 'Imperial Administration' encapsulates this entire misconceived attempt to explain the Mughal state on the model of the British Indian Empire. There is, in fact, no justification for such a heading: the Persian edition of the text uses the word mulk (empire)[39] and Book Three itself deals with the state at large—everything of interest outside the household and the army. It covers much more than 'Administration'. In the Mughal method of government there were no clear-cut lines of authority, no separate departments at successive levels of administration and no tables of organization. On the contrary, what one finds are groups of men in the Imperial household who oversaw, on behalf of the emperor, provincial and subprovincial officials, who in turn exercised military, financial or legal power within jurisdictions of varying scope.

Control of Officials

Within the smaller compass of the patrimonial kingdom, the ruler retained control by dint of personal force. Where the area and scale were restricted, and where the fiction of the state as a household approached reality, a ruler was better able to renew the ties of loyalty and devotion

[39] Ibid., 1: 265 and trans. 2: 1.

in the day-to-day job of governing. The great size of patrimonial-bureaucratic empires, however, denied emperors the advantages of such workaday intimacy. In order to prevent the appropriation of prebends or benefices, and to reinvigorate the relationship on which the empire was founded, patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors had to employ extraordinary measures: requiring attendance at court, establishing overlapping spheres of authority, transferring officials frequently, using intelligence gatherers and travelling regularly.[40] That the Mughals used all of these strategies again suggests the similarities between the patrimonial-bureaucratic model and the Mughal Empire.

As we have seen, the Mughal Emperor required regular attendance at court of all his officers. In addition to the intricate schedule of weekly, monthly and yearly visits set out in A'in 9 of Book Two, mansabdārs were expected to present themselves before the emperor on a number of other occasions: after a change in assignment, after a change in jāgīr posting, on the occasion of promotion, and, if at all possible, on days of special celebration. A second technique of patrimonial-bureaucratic control used by the Mughals was the appointment of officials with competing, cross-cutting areas of responsibility. In the provinces, the authority of the provincial governor was undercut by two other officials, the finance officer and the *bakhshī* (military official). The finance officer was responsible for collecting and disbursing monies at both the provincial and subprovincial levels. No sum of consequence could be withdrawn from the provincial treasuries without his signature. In matters concerning the army, the military official encroached on the provincial governor's territory. He inspected the contingents of provincial mansabdārs, including those of the provincial governor and the finance officer, to see that horses and riders met rank requirements. At the subprovincial level a similar system of checks and balances prevailed: the army captain worked to protect villagers against unjust demands by the collector and local assignees, and the treasurer would not make payments without the authorization of the finance officer.

The Mughal emperors relied on frequent transfers to curb the independence of far-flung subordinates; no man was allowed to keep his piece of land or stay at his post for more than three or four consecutive years. This strategy was designed to prevent distant mansabdārs from making

40 Weber, *Economy and Society*, 3: 1042–4.

TABLE 1

YEARS AWAY FROM THE CAPITAL: 1556–1739*

Regnal Years	*Akbar*	*Jahangir*	*Shahjahan*	*Aurangzeb*	*Bahadur Shah*	*Farrukhsiyar*	*Muhammad Shah*	
	1556–1605	*1605–1627*	*1627–1658*	*1658–1707*	*1707–1712*	*1712–1719*	*1719–1739*	
	49 years	*22 years*	*31 years*	*49 years*	*5 years*	*7 years*	*20 years*	
5	1556–60		1630–32	1662–64	1707–12			
10	1565–67	1613–19	1635–37					
15			1638–43	1669–71				
20	1577–78		1645–48	1674–76				
25			1651–53	1679–1707				
30	1585–86							
35								
40								
45	1599–1601							
50								
Percentage of Reign Absent	10/49 20%	6/22 27%	14/31 45%	34/49 69%	5/5 100%	0/7 0%	0/20 0%	Total 69/183 38%

* The sources for this table are the chronicles of each emperor's reign. The capital city of the empire shifted several times during the period. From 1564–71 it was in Agra, from 1571–85 in Fatehpur Sikri, from 1585–98 in Lahore, from 1598–1648 in Agra and from 1648–1858 in Shahjahanabad. Only the first twenty years of Muhammad Shah's reign, up to the sack of Delhi in 1739, are included. Muhammad Shah died in 1748.

alliances with local elements and building independent bases of power. Although such frequent shifts introduced a great deal of waste and uncertainty into Mughal government, Akbar and his successors thought the gain in control worth the loss in efficiency. A'in 10 of Book Two discusses the duties of the newswriter (*wāqi'-nawīs*). Although Abu al-Fazl concentrates on the duties of those men assigned to court, it is clear that newswriters were stationed in cities and towns throughout the realm, and were responsible for acquainting the emperor with the doings of the mansabdārs and local assignees in their areas.[41]

Of the strategies used by patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors to control their officials, travel was the one most heavily relied upon by Mughal rulers. Regular travel across the countryside to renew personal ties between the leader and distant subordinates was an important activity in the reigns of most emperors. Table 1 illustrates the pervasiveness of this tactic during the reigns of the seven emperors between 1556 and 1739. Even when trips of one year or less are excluded, rulers of the Mughal state spent nearly 40 per cent of their time during this approximately two hundred-year period on tour. An administrative manual written in the early eighteenth century and devoted to the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb corroborates this finding. The manual divides the reign of each emperor into two parts: settled (*istiqāmat*) and peripatetic (*safar*). Under 'settled' the manual lists the periods during which each emperor resided in the major cities of the realm; under 'peripatetic' the manual gives the itineraries of the longer journeys of each ruler.[42] A final piece of information, perhaps apocryphal, underscores the central role of travel in the life of the Imperial household. In a letter said to have been written to the emperor Muhammad Shah in the early eighteenth century, Nizam al-Mulk, the ruler of Haiderabad, referred to a curious practice among the women of the Imperial harem: the wives of the Mughal emperor, he wrote, gave birth lying on a saddle cloth.[43]

41 See *A'in*, Blochmann, ed., 1: 192–3 and *A'in*, Blochmann, trans., 1: 268–9 about newswriters at court. *A'in*, Blochmann, ed., 1: 5 and *A'in*, Blochmann, trans., 1: 7 discuss the need for spies. For such people in the provinces, see Noman Ahmad Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals: 1700–50* (Bombay: Aligarh Muslim University, 1970), p. 113.

42 'Dastur al-'Amal'. Persian Manuscript Collection, Oriental 1690, British Museum, folios 98a–99b, 145a–49b.

43 *Asiatick Miscellany* (Calcutta: n.p., 1785), 1: 491.

enclosure; this secluded location indicated the importance and secrecy of matters transacted there.[47]

It is clear from this discussion that the Imperial camp was a place of significance for the state at large. The emperor's frequent and extended travels and their activities on tour have led several scholars to conclude that the Imperial camp functioned as the administrative centre of the realm during much of the Mughal period.[48] Although it is difficult to point to a great deal of indigenous, contemporary evidence on this point, a look at the inscriptions on some of the coins from Akbar's reign suggests that the Mughals held this view. Coins issued for only one or two years from small towns or villages, the work of the camp mint, carried the epithet *dār al-khilāfat* (seat of sovereignty).[49] Since this same phrase was used to describe capital cities throughout the period 1556–1739,[50] it appears that the Mughals considered the Imperial camp—the temporary settlement of the emperor, princes, great nobles and their households—the seat of sovereignty of the state and the capital of the empire.

Aurangzeb, the most peripatetic of the seven emperors, stressed the importance of frequent movement. He wrote that ' . . . the ruler of a kingdom should not spare himself from moving about'.[51] Elsewhere, he justified the overthrow of his father Shahjahan: 'If Shajahan had not chosen to stay in *dār al-khilāfat* [Shahjahanabad] and *mustaqqar al-*

47 Ibid., trans. 1: xxii, plate iv, p. 48.

48 See, for example, Parmeshwari Gupta, 'A Study of the Mint Towns of Akbar', in *Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*, Hari Ram Gupta (ed.), 2 vols, (Hoshiarpur, India: Punjab University, 1958), 2: 147; Upendra Thakur, *Mints and Minting in India* (Varanasi, U.P.: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1972), pp. 140–1; and Irvine, *Army of the Indian Mughals*, p. 190.

49 Gupta, 'A Study of the Mint Towns of Akbar', 2: 157; Stanley Lane Poole, *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1892), pp. 24, 51; and V.P. Rode, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Central Museum, Nagpur: Coins of the Mughal Emperors* (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1969), pp. 23, 38, 39, 42.

50 The epithets for Akbar's capitals illustrate the point. For Agra, see Harawi, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 1: 331; 2: 145, 168, 202, 227, 249, 284, 298; and Abu al-Fazl, *Akbar Namah*, Agha Ahmad Ali and Maulavi Abd al Rahim (eds), 3 vols, (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873–86), 2: 14, 45, 60, 76, 78; 3: 4, 9, 19, 21, 23, 29; for Fatehpur Sikri, see Harawi, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2: 253; 256, 284, 324, 331, 362; and Abu al-Fazl, *Akbar Namah*, 2: 344, 364, 370; 3: 52, 66, 74; and for Lahore, see Harawi, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2: 402, 424, 646.

51 Hamid al-Din Khan, *Ahkam-i 'Alamgiri*, Persian text with an English translation by Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar and Sons, 1912), p. 14.

During the period 1556–1739, an emperor would leave the capital and begin a tour for one or more of the following reasons: to hunt, to put down a rebellion, to check the administration of a province, to conquer new areas, to reconquer old ones, to visit a shrine, to attend a festival or to escape the midsummer heat of northern India. Amidst all this change and variety, however, the place and function of the emperor remained constant. No matter where he might be, city or camp, the Mughal emperor held court and conducted state business. The organization and activity of the Imperial camp illustrate the exercise of sovereignty on tour. Virtually the entire Imperial household—men, women, animals, supplies and equipment—travelled with the emperor. In addition to officers, soldiers, clerks, artists, musicians, craftsmen and merchants of the palace, the records of the Imperial record office, the money and jewels of the Imperial treasuries and the men and equipment of the mint could all be found at the Imperial camp.[44] Those princes and great nobles assigned to court accompanied the emperor, of course, along with the personnel and supplies of their establishments.

A look at the arrangement and function of tents within the enclosure of the Imperial household confirms that the Mughal emperor continued to rule on tour. The map of the Imperial establishment in the *Ā'īn-i Akbari* shows a two-storied structure with a window or balcony near the harem.[45] From this balcony in camp, as from the balcony of audience in the palace, the emperor gave audience, listening to complaints, receiving petitions and dispensing justice to anyone who chose to come. In Akbar's reign the hall of ordinary audience of the camp stood just inside the gate to the Imperial enclosure.[46] The emperor conducted the routine business of state in the hall of ordinary audience in both the camp and city; that is, he received reports and petitions, examined financial accounts, granted promotions, decided on assignments, interviewed mansabdāri candidates and inspected the products of various Imperial workshops. During the reign of Akbar the hall of special audience was set back within the Imperial

44 For the *daftar*, see *A'in*, Blochmann, trans., 1: xxi, plate iv; for the treasuries, see Nizam al-Din Ahmad Harawi, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, B. De and Muhammad Hidayat Husain (eds), 3 vols, (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1913–40), 2: 284 and for the mint, see *A'in*, Blochmann, ed., 1: 27 and *A'in*, Blochmann, trans., 1: 16–18.

45 Ibid., trans. 1: xxii, plates iv, xi.

46 Ibid., 1: 42 and trans. 1: 48–9

khilāfat [Agra], but had been constantly travelling [safar], he would not have ended up as he did. . . .'[52] The Mughal emperor kept the personal, quasi-familial ties of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire fresh and vital by moving rapidly and frequently from one distant subordinate to another, renewing in the face-to-face contact of the court ceremonial the household bonds of loyalty, respect and devotion.

Summary and Implications

The prevailing view of the Mughal Empire has been based on the mistaken assumption that this state was a kind of unfinished, unfocused prototype of the British Indian Empire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This assumption has caused most writers to misunderstand and misinterpret the nature and organization of the Mughal state. A more fruitful approach, one closer to indigenous ideas and more consonant with the work of other scholars on pre-modern states, is to treat the Mughal Empire as one example of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire. A close and careful reading of the major document on Mughal government, the *Ā'īn-i Akbari* of Abu al-Fazl, not only reveals the weakness of the established interpretation, but shows as well the remarkable congruence between the state Akbar organized and the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire analysed by Weber. In its depiction of the emperor as a divinely aided patriarch, the household as the central element in government, members of the army as dependent on the emperor, the administration as a loosely structured group of men controlled by the Imperial household and travel as a significant part of the emperor's activities, the *Ā'īn-i Akbari* supports the suggestion that Akbar's state was a patrimonial-bureaucratic empire.

This view of the state has a number of implications for our understanding of Mughal India. First and most important, it alters our conception of Mughal political organization. This is obviously the basic argument of my essay; I have tried to show the new light this reinterpretation sheds on such aspects of the political system as the transfer of officials, administrative structure and the manṣabdāri system. Other issues in Mughal politics—the rebellion of princes and the causes of decline, for

[52] Ibid., p. 49.

example—I have not touched upon at all. Nevertheless, it seems clear that to accept this interpretation of the empire is to accept the necessity of re-examining the entire structure of Mughal political activity.

Our understanding of other facets of Mughal culture and civilization is also affected. Urban organization is one example. From this new perspective, like in the administrative centres of patrimonial-bureaucratic empires—capital cities, provincial headquarters and the like—is seen to revolve around the resources and requirements of Imperial and noble households. Thus, in Shahjahanabad (capital of the Mughal Empire from 1648 to 1858) the palace-fortress of Shahjahan and the mansions of princes and nobles dominated social, economic and political activity.[53]

Finally, taking this view of the state highlights a hitherto neglected aspect of the Mughal economy, and enables us to see the households of emperors and great nobles as important elements in the economic organization of the empire. In administrative centres in particular, the households of great men emerge as the central productive institutions in the urban economy and as major forces in the patterns of production, exchange and consumption.

[53] My book on Shahjahanabad discusses these points and those in the following paragraph in considerable detail.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF A 'CASTE SOCIETY'

INTRODUCTION: 'HISTORICISING' THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODELS

Caste is not and never has been a fixed fact of Indian life. Both caste as varna (the fourfold scheme of idealised moral archetypes) and caste as jati (smaller-scale birth-groups) are best seen as composites of ideals and practices that have been made and remade into varying codes of moral order over hundreds or even thousands of years. The context for this fluidity has been the subcontinent's remarkable diversity in culture and physical environment, and above all the diversity of its states and political systems. Those conventions of rank and corporate essence that are often seen as the defining features of caste have been shaped, critiqued and reconstituted in all sorts of ways, both century by century and region by region. As will be seen in the three final chapters, these processes of invention and reformulation are still taking place today at the local level, and also in the wider context of regional and pan-Indian political and social conflict.

Even in the distant past, recognisably castelike ideologies and practices were followed by some people in most or all of the subcontinent's regional cultures. Yet until relatively recent times, many Indians were still comparatively untouched by the norms of jati and varna as we now understand them. This was true not only of the forest and hill people who are now called 'tribals', but also of much larger groups of powerful plains-dwellers and martial pastoralists. Even under the Raj, caste as a 'system' was far less uniform and all-pervading than many colonial commentators believed. Nevertheless in the centuries immediately preceding the British conquest, social life in almost all areas of the subcontinent became significantly more castelike than had been the case in earlier times.

But what exactly did it mean to become part of a castelike social order, and what was it that caused these far-reaching changes in thought and behaviour? In the Introduction, it was noted that the social scientists who appear to have the most persuasive models of caste a conceptual system are those like Veena Das and Richard Burghart who emphasise a multidimensional array of themes ideals and principles. In these anthropological accounts which have both challenged and built on Louis Dumont's structuralist formulations three sets of values – those of priestly hierarchy kingship and ascetic renunciation – have particular importance in caste society as both opposing and interconnecting reference points for the caste Hindu[2].

[2] Without adhering literally to Das's or Burghart's schemes the book's attempt to portray caste as both historically shaped and multi-stranded draws on their insights and those of other anthropologists discussed lier. (On the relationship between dharmic kingly and ascetic ideals see below pp. 49-62 and Chapter 2.)

Looked at historically however it is possible to see a sequence of relatively recent political and ideological changes which brought these ideals into focus for ever more people in the subcontinent. Between about 1650 and 1850 all three of these core concepts came increasingly to make their mark in Indian life. Yet these developments did not bring all three conceptual principles to bear with equal force at one and the same time. On the contrary there seem to have been two distinct stage in the making of the elaborately ritualized schemes of social stratification which have come to be thought of as the basis of traditional faith and culture in the subcontinent. (The term ritualisation is being used her to denote an emphasis on forms of differentiation between group and individuals which appears to demand recognition through distinctive modes of action – rituals – and which derive from some quality of innate orhereditary status rather than immediate economic or political power.)[3]

What happened in the intial phase of this two-stage sequence was the rise of the royal man of prowess. In this period both king and the priests and ascetics with whom men of power were able to associate their rule became a growing focus for the affirmation of a martial and regal form of caste ideal. Across much of India those who embraced these values sought increasingly to establish firm social boundaries between themselves and the non-elite tillers and arms-bearers to whom their forebears had often been closely affiliated. The other key feature of this period was the reshaping of many apparently casteless
forms of devotional faith *(bhakti)* in a direction which further affirmed these differentiations of rank and 'community'. (See below, pp. 46-9.)

The spread of these lordly or Kshatriya-centred manifestations of caste values is therefore the focus of this chapter. Three important elements of change in the new states and dominions of the post-Mughal period will be discussed here: first, the emerging courtly synthesis between Kshatriya-like kings and Brahmans; second, the diffusion of these values and practices into the world of the upper non-elite 'peasantry'; and third, the continuing power and importance of martial 'predators' and so-called tribal peoples. The significance of these trends, and particularly the importance of individual agency in the forging of more castelike forms of social order, are explored more concretely at the end of the chapter through an account of the rise of the great Maratha-dominated polity of Shivaji Bhonsle (1630-80).

Chapter 2 will then explore the second stage in this sequence, which had its origins before the British conquest but reached its culmination during the period of colonial rule. Here Brahmans, together with scribes, ascetics and merchants who espoused Brahmanical social and spiritual codes, became ever more widely deferred to, even

[3] This is not to overlook the importance of forms of caste which focus on ideals of political power and kingship indeed king-centred manifestations of case will be emphasized throughout. Also in the light of important work on kingship and the royal gift (notably Dirks 1987) it is not being suggested here that politically conceived conceptions of caste were lacking in the element of ritulisation. See Dumont 1970 Humprey and Laidlaw 1994.

achieving a quasi-independent status in such areas as legal codes and colonial administrative practice. It was in this period that the power of the pollution barrier became for many Indians the defining feature of everyday caste experience.[4]

What will be seen in subsequent chapters is that British rule had the effect of intensifying many of the trends towards ritualisation in social life which were already underway well before the colonial period. Towards the end of British rule, and also in independent India, a process of what one might call de-ritualisation has been apparent. This has meant that Dumont's purity-conscious 'caste Hindu' has come in many cases to look more like a believer in material and political power as the chief measure of value in a dangerous and uncertain world. Yet these trends have never been complete. At no time in the past did all Indians deal with one another on a purely 'ritualistic' basis. By the same token, even in 'modern' environments, contemporary Indians have not entirely de-ritualised their understanding of social difference. The focus throughout this study will therefore be on the many ways in which the experience of caste has taken root often being forcibly challenged, and yet still spreading and diversifying in ways which had far-reaching effects across the subcontinent

CASTE AND THE ORDERING OF PLURALITY

Nothing quite like caste has evolved in other parts of the world. Of course there are schemes of idealised social and moral order outside the subcontinent, especially in east and southeast Asia where Indian gods and social norms are widely known, but these schemes took shape in very different contexts. Japan's *busbido* code defined a hierarchy of warriors *(samurai),* commoners, merchants and 'untouchables' which resembled the fourfold varna scheme but was not associated with a proliferation of smaller *jati-like* birth-groups. In Thailand, ostensibly casteless Buddhist norms have co-existed for centuries with an ideal of kingship derived from India: hereditary Brahman ritualists still serve the Thai royal house, and the deified hero Ram is still the model for Thai rulers (as for the former Khmer kings of Cambodia) in their capacity as protectors of faith and righteousness. Furthermore, both east and southeast Asia have sizable minority populations - pastoralists, swidden cultivators and hunter-gatherers -who have been looked upon by 'civilised' townspeople and sedentary 'peasant' villagers in much the same way that so-called caste Hindus have regarded India's 'tribals.[5]

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[4] On the important phenomenon of the pollution barrier, that is, the values and practices dividing those of ritually 'clean' and 'unclean' birth, see below, Chapters 2,5 and 8. (Despite their increasing power, these differentiations retained considerable fluidity and flexibility: see Parry 1970: 84-104 and 1979: 113.)

[5] For debate on the existence of caste outside India, especially in ***apartheid*** societies, see Dumont 1970: 243-8; Berreman 1979; Ursula Sharma 'Berreman revisited' in Searle-Chatterjee and Sharma 1994: 72 - 91; Beteille 1991b: 15-36. (Detailed consideration of the literature on caste in Sri Lanka and Nepal is beyond the scope of this volume.) Potter and Potter (1990) and Bloch (1989) have pointed to the

Yet in east and southeast Asia, where the expansion of the rice frontier was generally accompanied by the spread of Islam and Buddhism, castelike hierarchies did not emerge from these differentiations between wanderers or 'tribals' on the one hand and sedentary villagers and townsfolk on the other. This should not come as a surprise: in these other Asian lands, diversities of religion, culture and language have been considerably less dramatic than India's. These regions' political landscapes were generally much less diverse as well, with ideals of pre-colonial kingship often focused on only one divinely mandated royal house rather than many competing dynasties. Furthermore, in both the distant and more recent past, India's specialist Brahman priesthoods and ascetic preceptoral corporations tended to retain a considerable degree of separation and independence, even from very powerful rulers and their courts. Elsewhere in Asia, most notably in pre-modern Japan and China, both the Buddhist clergy (the monkhood or *sangha)* and its Confucian equivalents were often significantly more closely tied to state power than was the case for their Indian counterparts.

This difference can be attributed in part to the rise of regional Muslim kingdoms in India from the eleventh century onwards. Even where Muslim rulers patronised and interacted with Hindu religious foundations, as they often did, the subcontinent still did not develop a single composite 'national' faith. One further factor in the making of caste was the inheritance of a large body of sacred scripture elevating the Brahman to a status co-equal with or even superior to that of a reigning king, though this is certainly not to say that the *Institutes* of Manu or any other ancient code or text in some way 'created' the phenomenon of caste.[6]

Indeed the emergence of caste cannot be reduced to these factors or any other single causal factor. Yet the fact remains that, in contrast to other areas of Asia, the paramount fact of Indian history has been the subcontinent's remarkable array of contrasting ecologies, languages, religions, modes of production and political systems, as well as its great political fluidity, with persistent oscillations between prosperity and dearth, commercialisation and subsistence, pastoralism and peasant agriculture. One especially striking element of Indian life has been the presence of very large subordinated populations who have been identified as culturally, morally and even biologically distinct from other Indians: these are the people to whom such labels as 'tribals' and 'untouchables' have been applied.

All of these cultural, ethnic and historical diversities are reflected in the profusion of different meanings that Indians have given to the castes or caste-like groupings with which they have come to identify themselves. This was a particularly notable trend of the period explored in this chapter, this being the time when the great Mughal

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existence of castelike social groupings in China and Madagascar; Bourdieu (1962: 132) refers to the racial divide between whites and Muslims in colonial Algeria as a 'caste system'.

[6] On eclectic styles of religious patronage, see Chapter 2, below

polity was fragmenting into the fluid regional successor regimes of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[7] These critical changes in India's pre-colonial political landscape had profound but very dispa- rate social effects. In many respects the subcontinent had become more fully integrated by the later eighteenth century, both physically and culturally. This integration derived from an increase in inter-regional warfare, as well as increasing travel, pilgrimage and commercial exchange, and greater scope for the transfer of writings and social norms from one region to another. Yet the limited standardisation which had occurred under Mughal administration was counterbalanced by equally powerful decentralising trends. These were part! cularly widespread during the eighteenth century, with its proliferation of competing and decentralised kingdoms and petty chiefdoms.

In these new post-Mughal realms, *parvenu* ruling elites took bold initiatives in the attempt to assert their power and legitimacy, turning to the symbols and language of caste as a prop of their statecraft, and especially to versions of these which emphasised power and beneficence. Yet at the same time, most of these rulers had to tolerate the presence of smaller-scale social groupings possessing their own norms and social conventions. These people, who included networks of long^ distance traders, armed ascetics and arms-bearing tribals often had only tenuous connections to the ideologies of caste being promulgated in these fluid new dynastic realms.[8]

The great puzzle then is how to relate people's lives in these environments of plurality and dynamism to ideals of jati and varna which apparently reduce human experience to arbitrary stereotypes: high and low, clean and unclean, 'pure' Brahman and impure untouchable. In fact, however, pre-colonial kings and their subjects did not treat caste norms as one-dimensional absolutes but as reference points to be negotiated, challenged or reshaped to tit changing circumstances. In the period from the Mughal conquest to the early Stages of colonial rule, the caste or castelike conventions which had come into being in different regions equipped both the weak and the strong with a means to maximise assets and protect themselves from loss.

This often involved naked coercion: new rulers and other insecure elites frequently invoked jati and varna principles in attempts to assert authority over dependent cultivators and other subordinate groups. But even people whose 'community' was defined as low or inferior in caste terms could see advantage in being known by a recognised tide and status which they could associate with sacred norms and man-

[7] On the formation of these Muslim-, Sikh- and Hindu-ruled polities (including those of Bengal, Awadh, the Punjab and the Maratha domains) see e.g. Alam 1986 Cole 1988 Grewal 1990 Gordon 1993; C. Bayly 1988; Wink 1986; Peabody 1991; also S. Bayly 1989, Dirks 1992a: Perlin 1985; Kulke 1995; Brittlebank 1997.

[8] These circumstances of volatile politics and rapid but uneven economic growth ultimately together to create a foothold for British military and commercial expansion across the subcontinent. See note 6, above; also Marshall 1996; Subrahmanyam 1990a.

dates, especially when others around them were relating themselves to these same conventions. These strategies of collective classing and ranking proved particularly valuable in circumstances where state power was fluid or insecure, and where large numbers of people had to adjust to the unpredictable in their everyday environments. The experience of caste could even reflect individual achievement, although in theory there should have been no way to force the facts of jati and varna to take account of personal prowess, as for example when a man claimed to be of exalted or 'pure' substance even though his origins were clearly of quite a different order.

So how wide were the diversities, given that caste has often been portrayed as a single homogeneous 'system', rather than a grid of diverse and changeable ideals and practices? In the high period of Mughal power (c. 1580-1700), there certainly were areas where strictly defined orderings of rank and status had come to prevail quite widely, especially among ruling elites, settled cultivators, and specialist mercantile and service groups in zones where intensive cultivation had long been practised. Such norms were common in the densely populated eastern Ganges valley. Similar conventions emphasising conformity to Brahman-derived ideals of refinement and ritual purity had emerged even earlier under the great Hindu dynasties which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were centred on the royal courts and temples of the rice-growing southern river deltas.[9]

Yet even in south India, where Brahman-centred jati and varna codes are often thought of as being especially strict and all-embracing, the great ruler Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29) communicated an ideal of kingship which extolled both Brahman-centred piety and the virtues of lordship and armed prowess:

[9] Stein 1980 and 1989.

The expenditure of money ... [on] buying elephants and horses,... in maintaining soldiers, in the worship of gods and Brahmans and in one's own enjoyment can never be called an expenditure ... [A king] should protect one and all of his subjects, should put an end to the mixing up of the castes among them ... [and] should always try to increase the merit of the Brahmans ... A king should get the merit of severe fasting and subduing the body only by giving money and not by giving up the enjoyment derivable from the anointments, baths, feasts, smearings, clothes and flowers in the several seasons ... A crowned king should always rule with an eye towards Dharma.[10]

Indeed, much of south India had no uniform 'system' of caste even in the colonial period, and the regional societies which came under Nayaka warrior rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were far from being textbook illustrations of the fourfold varna scheme. On the contrary, among south India's trading people there was little emphasis on the Vaishya ideal. In addition, many of the superior Tamilnad landowners, who modelled their refined lifestyles on those of superior Brahman land-controllers *(mirasidars),* did not themselves wear the sacred thread of the twice-born, the *suta.* As far as the formal varna scheme was concerned, this meant that they could not claim to be anything but members of the lowest varna, that of the non-elite Shudras.[11]

SEIGNEURIAL RIGHTS AND STATUSES: AN ARCHETYPE OF THE 'HIGH-CASTE'

These former Nayaka-ruled regions then were among the many areas where caste or castelike forms of social organisation were either fluid and open-ended or were based on conventions that were special to one particular regional subculture.[12] Elsewhere, however, there were regions where more standardised understandings of varna had become widespread and where, in particular, armed men of power had come to exalt themselves as heirs to the scriptural Kshatriya ideal. The adoption and spread of the title Rajput among north Indian ruling clans was of critical importance here. In the arid hill country which is now known as Rajasthan, located to the southwest of the Mughals' original strongholds in the Gangetic plain, powerful lords and their arms-bearing retainers had been calling themselves Rajput, a title derived from the Sanskrit *rajaputra,* 'king's son', as far back as the thirteenth or fourteenth century AD, and possibly much earlier. These people's closest counterparts elsewhere were the users of the south Indian designations Nayar and Nayaka; such rides as Kanyakubja and Maithil had similar connotations in the eastern Gangetic plain. Nevertheless, through a process of assimilation and interaction with the statecraft of the Mughals and their eighteenth-century successors, it was the Rajput

[10] Sarasvati 1926; see Stein 1989: 51-2.
[11] See Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 1992
[12] See Chapter 3 below.

version of lordly caste values that became particularly influential across much of the subcontinent.[13]

The Rajasthan region's ideal of Kshatriya-centred caste ideology emerged in its initial form well before the Mughal conquest, through the struggles which transformed the area's most effectively militarised chiefdoms into expansive royal domains. In both the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Mughal armies fought bloody battles in this strategic frontier region, and through a mixture of force and conciliation, its kingdoms were eventually absorbed into the loosely textured Mughal political order. At this time, these armed elites had strong memories of the earlier clan chiefs who had made their mark in turbulent times by adopting known marks of lordship and exalted descent. Whether they were grandees commanding the region's great royal fortresses, or the armed retainers of such lords, such people now had to adapt themselves to the new circumstances of Mughal hegemony. Some clan heads accepted revenue-taking rights and military rank as Mughal clients, while others became 'rebel' opponents of Mughal rule; in either case such lineages had good reasons to identify with the potent-though still highly flexible ideal of the lordly royal Rajput[14].

Thinkers dating back to ancient times have written as if all of India (or non-Muslim India) were a domain of caste, with Brahman-centred caste values being everywhere revered as the core of human order and propriety, *dharma*. But the scholars of the Indo-Islamic courts knew that not all Indians, not even all 'Hindu' Indians, lived their lives by the principles of jati and varna. So to be Rajput or its equivalents elsewhere was more a matter of mediating between the formal world of courts, towns and villages and the big and vigorous populations who lived a more open or 'wild' life near the margins of the settled caste Hindu world.
India in the high Mughal period was therefore not yet embraced and integrated by proliferating Brahman-centred pilgrimages and royal rituals, with state power being exercised by and through pan-Indian Brahman service networks. As Chapter 2 will show, these were features of the far more castelike society that was only just beginning to take shape in many regions during the mid- to late eighteenth century. These were uneven processes even in the eighteenth century, with pacific Brahmanical norms often being confined to the lives of major courts and devotional centres, while the ways of prowess still flourished on the turbulent margins. Indeed, even at the centre of many new realms, these nominally opposing ways of life still existed side by side, sometimes in tension, but often interacting and interpenetrating, and with one only gradually coming to predominate over the others.

Yet the varna archetype of the Kshatriya-like man of prowess did become a key reference point for rulers and their subjects under the Mughals and their immediate

[13] Tod [1829-32] 1920; Peabody 1991 and 1996; Kolff 1990; Ziegler 1973: 3; Fox 1971; Ziegler 'Some notes on Rajpur loyalties during the Mughal period' in Richards 1978.
[14] Richards 1993.

successors. The chiefs and warriors whom the Mughals came to honour as Rajput lords in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may not even have been descendants of Rajasthan's earlier pre-Mughal elites. What mattered instead was that for both the Mughals' client feudatories and those who fought against them, these titles, and the markers of refined faith and social life which accompanied them, spoke in recognisable terms of exalted blood and ancestry.

Surprising as it may seem, Mughal rulers and their deputies actively-fostered these assertions of seigneurial caste values. While the empire's power was still expanding, there was obvious advantage to be gained from the establishment of overlordship over an exalted regional military nobility. Indeed for the many Rajasthan chieftains who served in the "Mughal armies as leaders of clan levies from their home domains, being Rajput came increasingly to be denned in precisely these terms, that is, as an entitlement to be enrolled in privileged military service within the imperial system. Mughal statecraft therefore consistently acknowledged the distinctiveness claimed by those professing Rajput birth and blood. In 1638 the Mughal dynast Shah Jahan personally placed the red *tilak* mark of investiture on the brow of his Rajput client Jaswant Singh of Marwar, despite the fact that this gesture had strong connotations of Hindu dharmic convention. Even Islamising' emperor Aurangzeb (reg. 1658-1707) included a high proportion of Rajput officers in the upper ranks of the imperial service hierarchy and exempted them all from payment of jizya the special tax on non-Muslims[15].

These bonds between Mughals and Rajputs were equally notable in the sphere of dynastic marriage. Despite their allegiance to the ostensibly casteless faith of Islam, the Mughals made much of their marriages to Hindu brides from the households of Rajput grandees. In "^doing they created strategic alliances and enhanced their legitimacy [5e] dynasts by conforming to the known moral traditions of south Asian kingship. By these conventions, a true ruler must have many seigneurial co-sharers in his sovereignty. Such a ruler thus proclaims his authority by means of bride-taking and other acts which establish a continual flow of shared honour and allegiance between the sovereign and the lordly lineages who take part in these transactions[16].

Under Mughal' rule, all these usages spread far beyond the royal domains of Rajasthan, particularly across the Gangetic plain and deep into central India. This occurred in part through the continuing out-migration of arms-bearing lineages who called themselves Rajput. It was also a reflection of the willingness of Mughal rulers and officials to recognise tides implying Rajput descent as a marker of such people's assumption of rights to lordship over land. Again there were equivalent usages in the south, most notably in the kingdoms of the Telugu-speaking Nayaka dynasts who

[15] Richards 1993: 179-80

[16] See Galey 1989; Richards 1978; Dirks 1987; Fox 1971; Stern 1977; Cohn Political systems in eighteenth-century India' in Cohn 1987: 483-99.

claimed to be heirs to the lordships created by the Deccan's Hindu Vijayanagar dynasts of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.[17]

Both within and beyond these domains, those who wished to claim ties of blood and privileged clientage with elite lineages became increasingly insistent on their superiority to the unrefined toiling 'peasant' groups. By the later seventeenth century, there were many areas of north and central India where the most fertile lands had become subject to lords based in mud-walled forts who used their bonds of marriage with fellow Rajput, Maithil, Bhumihar or Kanyakubja patricians to command a flow of resources and deference from non-elite tillers and dependent labourers. By the early nineteenth century, European travel writers regularly observed both fortress-dwelling chiefs and their more prosperous 'peasant' imitators who defined themselves as men of refinement whose forebears had never 'touched the plough'.[18]

In the north, these clusters of petty rural patricians looked to ideals of Kshatriya kingship which had originated within the grander Kshatriya-ruled realms and chiefdoms. Amongst such lineages, the wearing of the sacred thread came to be considered a distinguishing mark of the Rajput seigneur and his regional counterparts, and to be incompatible with the life of the non-elite 'peasant'. And ultimately, as Chapter 2 will show, a high proportion of these men of prowess turned to forms of high courtly culture which exalted the more purity-conscious versions of varna ideology, most notably those which proclaimed the dispensability of Brahmans to human and cosmic order.

Of course these areas still contained large numbers of non-elite tillers. In the Punjab and the western Gangetic plains, convention defined the Rajput's non-elite counterpart as a Jat Like the many similar titles used elsewhere, this was not so much a caste name as a broad designation for the man of substance in rural terrain. Even well into the nineteenth century, a male Jat was understood to be a man of worth but not a follower of exacting lordly codes. If he tilled land, his holdings were generally organised into common units of ownership (bhaiachara literally brotherhoods), with each co-sharer being a fellow member of the same descent unit (the clan or gotra). In theory at least, each of these kin groups was a tightly-knit unit exercising control over the lands and villages of its own self-regulating ancestral territory or khap: tradition holds that this control was maintained through the authority of bodies which were known as sarv-khap (clan-territory assemblies). To be called Jat has in some regions implied a background of pastoralism, though it has more commonly been a designation of non-servile cultivating people.[19]

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[17] Stein 1989.

[18] Pinch 1996: 86.

[19] Pradhan 1966: 94-111 notes Mughal references to these sarv-khap assemblies; see also Stokes 1986: 128-42. In the Deccan the most widely used designation for 'peasant' groups was Kanbi. Their closest counterparts were the people referred to as Kammas, Reddis and Lingayats in much of the south, and as Kurmis and Goalas in Hindustan.

During the later Mughal period, the seigneurial rights of the greater landed lineages had come to be widely understood in ritual terms, that is, as a claim of inherited superiority over people who were identified by lower-status caste names. However, the basis of such rights was in the assertion and sharing of lordliness: in the more formally ordered kingdoms and chiefdoms over which the Mughals established their suzerainty, these assertions of rank came to be rooted in the claim that some higher overlord, a king or other man of power, had recognised one's ability to collect and remit revenue, usually land tax, within a particular territory.[20]

As the scale of state power expanded during the later sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, such opportunities became more widely available. In addition to those who could plausibly call themselves Rajput or Nayaka, many of these newer revenue contractors *(zamindar)* came from families claiming Brahman origins. In such areas as Darbhanga (now in north Bihar), these powerful lineages found advantage in embracing the style and trappings of princely lords (rajas). Darbhanga's Brahman revenue-receivers signalled their seigneurial pretensions by adopting the jati title Maithil; this prestigious honorific had many equivalents elsewhere.[21] Such titles came to be associated with highly formalised jati and varna norms, and in particular with an insistence on the lordly man's duty to protect Brahmans and Brahmanical caste codes.

This kind of caste ideology became much more pervasive during the colonial period. Its most distinctive feature was its insistence on the power of the pollution barrier, that is, an emphasis on the impurity and degradation of so-called untouchables, and for those of 'clean' caste an ideal of strict exclusiveness in relation to marriage, dress and diet.[22] (See below, Chapter 5.) These are the rigorous social codes that have been widely regarded as the core of a single all-pervasive Hindu caste 'system', equipping both the weak and the strong to say in effect: Those are my inferiors; they are unclean by birth; by divine mandate their womenfolk are available to me, and they themselves must defer and toil in ways which I do not' But caste in these forms was not universal even in the Gangetic heartland of Mughal India or in the 'orthodox' Hindu south. Such highly developed manifestations of jati and varna had only a very rough similarity to the looser forms of community which were still prominent long after the decline of central Mughal power.

THE OTHER INDIA: 'MARAUDERS', UPLANDERS AND ARMS-BEARING 'PEASANTS'

Despite the prestige achieved by such people as Rajputs and Nayakas in their home locales, the life of the so-called traditional caste Hindu was still strange to many Indians even in relatively recent times. Long after the rise of the post-Mughal successor states, a large proportion of the subcontinent was still populated by

[20] See Tod [1829-32] 1920,1: 127; Westphal-Hellbusch 1974.
[21] Ludden 1985: 166; Brass 1974: 58-9.
[22] For further discussion of this important phenomenon, see Chapter 5, below.

martial uplanders and pastor-alists who knew little of Brahmans, purity norms or socially exclusive marriage practices. Yet here, too, the broad status categories employed by military recruiters and other key practitioners of Indo-Islamic statecraft had familiarised many Indians with the idea that, like Rajputs, such non-lordly arms-bearers were also to be identified by specific regional 'community' titles. Indeed the very assertiveness of the seigneurial groups who wished to be known as Rajput had its direct counterpart in the increasing use and recognition of such collective arms-bearers' designations as Gujar, Koli, Kallar, Marava and Rebari.

Yet the forebears of the Tamil-speaking Kallar 'caste' whom Dumont studied in the 1950s would have been hard to recognise as a caste in the modern sense even in the later eighteenth century Looking at such populations historically, it becomes clear that the turbulent events of state-building and ideological change both before and during the colonial period subjected such arms-bearers as south India s poligars (warrior chiefs), together with their counterparts elsewhere, to a further 200 years of caste-forming influences.[23] Not the least of these was the disappearance of the thick jungle which still covered much of this terrain until the late eighteenth century. Until relatively recent times there were few sedentary 'peasants' either in the pohgar country or in such areas as the Koli-dominated territories of Gujarat. The contemporary evidence suggests that hierarchical varna and jati concepts were of little Significance among these regions' arms-bearing people until this process of peasantisation was well in train.

Certainly the names by which these martial groups have come to be known often originated as dismissive outsiders' coinages, rather than caste or 'tribal' designations in the modern sense. Yet by the mid-eighteenth century, as Mughal authority fragmented and the rulers of the new regional successor realms fought to consolidate their power, many of the upland, forest and 'tribal' people made dramatic gains! The expanding state systems with which they became involved in this period played a crucial role in pulling the Kallars and their counterparts elsewhere into the world of jati and varna. This happened gradually at first, and in ways that generally reinforced the arms-bearers* command of ritual and material resources, and then more fully and disadvantageous^ as the East India Company's forces began to subjugate and 'sedentarise' these groups.

The statecraft of the Mughals and post-Mughal successor regimes certainly did not 'invent' caste. Yet by building on the inheritance of the Rajput domains and other pre-Mughal royal centres, these rulers familiarised a high proportion of their subjects with distinctions between high and low or meritorious and unmeritorious birth. By the early eighteenth century, a whole range of standardised social classifi-cations had become central to the language of officials, scholars and military men. In

[23] The chiefs known as poligars came to control much of the Tamil and Telgu country in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most were from the southern arms-bearing populations known as Kallars Maravas and Vadugas. See price 1996.

addition to the tides associated with Rajput status, such broad regional arms-bearers' designations as Kallar and Marava in the south, and Koli, Ahir and Maratha in the west and north, gained prominence both in Indo-Islamic record-keeping and in the usages of such rulers as the south Indian Nayakas.[24]

None of these was a truly castelike usage, signalling corporate affinity within an all-embracing dharmic order. Many were simply the usages of the scribe and the lofty urban moraliser in referring to those whom they regarded as frontiersmen and turbulent rustics, of interest primarily for purposes of record-keeping and intelligence-gathering. So a Mughal chronicler, commenting in 1664 on an abortive uprising involving 'predatory Kolis' from the Ahmedabad region, records: The Kolis, who always have the wind of revolt and the passion of rebellion in their heads, made that base person [a 'Balooch' rebel leader] a handle of revolt, and created disorder.' In the Gangetic north, arms-bearing Jat and Rohilla 'plunderer' populations were stereotyped in much the same way in eighteenth-century Persian commentaries.[25]

Crude as it was, this terminology did reflect a rough notion of shared geographical origin, and often a specific liability to revenue payment or military service. Not surprisingly then, these labels, and others which regional officials either coined or took over from their predecessors, were rapidly assimilated into local vernacular languages. This occurred particularly in areas where such terminology reflected moves made by new rulers to differentiate among those of their subjects whose skills could be used in expanding their armies and revenue networks.

Through the operation of these patronage and preferment systems, large numbers of Indians became accustomed to the use of the many corporate titles which the Mughals and their successors had applied to both martial and non-martial client groups. Again, it was the people to whom such tides as Koli and Kallar had been applied who were particularly, important here. Although most of the subcontinent's mobile forest- and plains-dwellers were disarmed and coercively 'peasantised' under British rule, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the waning of Mughal suzerainty brought rich opportunities for these groups. Aspiring dynasts competed for their skills and allegiances, and as they became more deeply involved with the people of towns and sedentary cash-cropping villages, it would have been hard to draw firm boundaries between the martial meat-eaters and the big groupings of rural people, who were known to other Indians either by superior lordly designations - Bhumihar, Rajput, Nayaka - or by so-called peasant titles - Jat, Kanbi, Kurmi and Kamma. Until well into the nineteenth century, these groups were all pan of the same social continuum as the lordly elites and toiling cultivators who are now thought of as conventional 'caste Hindus'.

[24] These were successors to south India's medieval Vijayanagar dynasts.
[25] Khan 1965 227.

Nevertheless, by the standards of those who lived among socially exclusive and varna-conscious 'caste Hindus', the sense of community displayed by Kolis, Kallars and other mobile arms-bearers was decidedly open and fluid. It is particularly notable then that in the new kingdoms and dynamic smaller lordships which came into being across most of India in the eighteenth century, many of the new men of power had precisely this kind of non-elite martial background. A significant number of these chiefs and dynasts were either descendants of humble tillers from the thinly settled lowland plains, or hillmen and pastoralists with an established warrior tradition and history of uneasy relations with sedentary village-dwellers.

Relatively few of the new lords and revenue magnates were superior 'caste Hindus' in the modern sense. Few wore the sacred thread *(suta)* and most were supported by socially diverse populations of warrior -cultivators who were relative strangers to Brahmanical convention. In the north, many of the individuals and armed lineages who forged these new dominions were identified as Marathas and Jats, and as Kallars and Maravas in the south. Many others called themselves Rajut. But as will be seen below, the armed lineages who expanded the margins of trade and commercial cultivation into remote areas in the Himalayan foothills and along the thinly populated fringes of the Gangetic plainland centres lived very different lives from those of the Mughals' grand patrician clients.

Initially at least, as they competed with their rivals for warrior recruits and other local allies, the rulers and their armed retainers in such dominions as the Jat-ruled Bharatpur kingdom southwest of Delhi, or in the other dry and thinly populated tracts of the poligar country and the western Gangetic plain, had good reasons to stay relaxed about matters of ritual purity. Many were from Muslim minority populations; these rulers particularly found advantage in building open and all-embracing networks of recruitment and affiliation. The non-Muslim soldiers, merchant and revenue contractors who took the new dynasts' patronage also needed to keep their options open: some Brahmanical exclusiveness in diet and marriage-making could signal to both Hindu and Muslim rulers that one's kin were honourable and thus suitable for service within the new realm. Too much, on the other hand, could foreclose options for tactical marriages and alliances with these rulers' other new-found clients.

In these areas where understandings of 'caste' were comparatively loose and flexible, the new rulers did recognise the more formal versions of jatt and varna which characterised certain of their subjects and near neighbours. The self-made dynasts thus knew and used the relatively precise and socially exclusive jati and varna titles which were common to the specialist merchants, priests and artisans whose skills were of value to them in the forging of their new domains. At the same time, not even all of these people drew hard and fast boundaries between themselves and the populations of nomadic hill people, pastoralists and forest

hunter-gatherers who made up a sizable proportion ot the Indian population in this period.

Certainly the eighteenth-century dynasts and lordly groups found it advantageous to interact with unsettled 'marauders' as well as settled villagers and the habitues of die more refined court and shrine centres. This was no longer the case for people who used patrician titles in the later nineteenth century, when the memories of such connections were being widely disowned by 'pure' caste Hindus. Indeed, as Chapter 2 will show, for all the openness and ambiguity of the eighteenth-century warrior rulers in such matters, it was paradoxically the strategic and ideological needs of the dynasts which tilted the balance towards stricter order and rank, both in the making of marriages and in other important areas of caste experience. Even so, it was only in the later colonial period, when a high proportion of the unsettled arms-bearers had been reduced to the status of tied labourers in the service of dominant cultivators, that plains-dwellers came more generally to shun hill and forest people as unclean enemies of the 'caste Hindu'.

Yet in most cases these changes came slowly and unevenly. Even well into the era of the East India Company's political ascendancy, many people who were recognised as Rajputs, or as persons of equivalent honour and refinement in other regions, still had attachments to meat-eating 'tribal' chiefs, recruiting warriors from their kin groups, recognising the power of their gods and forest holy places, and often accepting their daughters in marriage.

It is true that by the mid-eighteenth century, many of the expansive new post-Mughal lordships were encroaching deep into the territories of the supposedly fierce and carnal people who were known by such tides as Bhil, Gond and Santal. Yet these heightened contacts could still be mutually advantageous. As the new dynasts became increasingly dependent on cash revenue and commerce, many hill and forest groups provided a market for commodities from the plains. In many cases too, rulers increased their recruitment of irregular military levies from these turbulent margins, whose populations often still mixed forms of shifting cultivation with armed tribute-taking from adjacent 'peasant' locales. So, far from seeking to disarm or annihilate such people, the Marathas and other post-Mughal dynasts found at least until the later eighteenth century that it made strategic sense to vest the most valuable of these groups with forms of qualified sovereignty *(girasi),* often with a tacit right to raid adjacent populations of sedentary revenue-paying 'peasants[26]

In both north and central India, some new dynasts encouraged the itinerant quasi-Brahman bards known as Bhats or Charans to attach themselves to these armed hill lineages whom they called *girasias* (sometimes *girisi rajas,* later anglicised as Gracias or Grasia Rajas)[27] The idea of recruiting Bhats to sing the praises of these so-called

[26] Skaria 1992 also tod [1829-32] 1920 I: 190-1 Singh 1988 Unnithan 1994.
[27] Forbes 1813 II: 88-106. On these Bhat self-immolators see Chapter 2 below.

girasiadars was that these hill chiefs could thereby be exalted in the heraldic style associated with Rajputs, thus becoming more plausibly 'royal', and therefore fit to exercise the kind of parcelled-out lordship that had become the basis of suzerainty both in the Maratha-ruled territories and elsewhere. This seems to have been the means by which many self-made men of prowess equipped themselves with convincing Rajput 'caste' credentials. In the south too there were bardic groups who performed similar functions in the poligar country.

There was always a delicate balance between aggression and harmony in these relationships. Even so, until relatively recent times plains people tended to hold the bearers of 'tribal' titles in mingled fear and reverence. Their hills and forests commanded respect as the domains of blood-taking deities whose powers of *sakti* or activated divine energy empower both kings and gods to contend with the unclean or 'demonic' forces which continually menace the ordered dharmic world. Even well into the nineteenth century many powerful people still understood 'caste' codes to be saying to men of prowess that conformity to Brahmanical norms was not enough, that dynasts and their fellow Kshatriyas had a mandate to associate themselves however ambivalently, with the gods, peoples and warlike energies of the hills and forest margins.

This idea even entered the great sixteenth-century Mughal text on statecraft, the *Ain-i-akbari,* which records a legend about the founder of one of the great Rajput dynasties being brought up in the wilds by a spear-wielding Bhil. When the young prince succeeds to his throne he is given his *tilak,* his emblem of royal consecration, by being marked on the brow with human blood provided by his Bhil protector This stands in marked contrast to later versions of this story in which the Bhil guardian becomes a mere savage to be subdued and triumphed over, thus proclaiming that the lord; roan conforms to models of varna-derived Kshatriya refinement. The blood in the ritual is now that of the Bhil himself, slain by the prince who has won his throne by shedding the blood of the un-dharmic forest 'other.[28]

DEVOTION AND 'CASTELESSNESS'

Caste terms and principles were certainly no: in universal use in the post-Mughal period, but those seeking appropriate terminology could certainly glean much from the available sacred sources - from the Sanskrit Vedas and epics, from Manu and the other *dbarmasastras,* from the *purana* texts, from Brahmanical rituals, and even from the denunciations of anti-Brahmanical 'reformers'. Furthermore, by the early

[28] On the Marathas' bloody subjugation of Bhils in Indore, where worship was offered to the eighteenth-century rulers' royal executioner's axe, see Luard 1908, II: 222. Also Unnithan 1994: 109; M. Carstairs 'Bhils of Kotra Bhomat' in Mathur and Agarwal 1974; Deliege 1985; Guha 1996; and the anthropologist Adrian Mayer's account (1985: 215) of a Rajput prince's accession rite in 1918 when a Bhil reportedly performed the hereditary task of applying the installation brow mark with blood from his own gashed thumb.

eighteenth century, more and more Indians could see these schemes of rank and classification being used to advantage all around them.

Yet at this time both the subordinated and the newly advantaged could and did turn to other forms of religion which have been widely described as 'casteless' and anti-Brahmanical. These spiritual traditions derive from the religion of *bhakti* or devotion as expressed by the great *sampradayas* or organised sectarian orders. Initiates of these monk-led orders still bind themselves in loving communion to one of the incarnate forms of the all-India high gods, the most popular of these being Ram the warrior-king, and Krishna the pastoral lover and nurturer. In the centuries preceding the British conquest, these devotional networks spoke to both new and established 'peasants', and also to rulers, traders and artisanal populations, in the anti-Brahmanical language of Caitanya, Kabir and the other historic teachers and mystics.[29]

Islam too, which first took root in coastal areas of the west and south through contact with eighth- and ninth-century Arab traders, had a complex history of interaction with the anti-Brahman *sampradaya* faiths. By the sixteenth century, the rise of Muslim-ruled kingdoms in the Deccan and north spread the teachings of Islam to both humble and elite groups in much of the subcontinent, with Muslims comprising as much as one-fifth of the population in some areas. Even after the decline of Mughal power in the early eighteenth century, Muslim *pirs* (adepts of the mystical and devotional traditions known as Sufism) continued to be revered by both Muslims and non-Muslims. These *pirs* or cult saints attracted constituencies which were similar to the followings of Hindu *bhakti* teachers and Sikh gurus, and which shared many of their ideals and spiritual practices. Thus, from these sources too, Indians encountered messages of devotion to a deity who was to be seen as transcendent, but also as dissolving divisions of rank and hierarchy through practices of personalised mystical devotion.

Paradoxically, however, even though both Islam and the popular *bhakti* forms of Hinduism are often described as casteless and egalitarian, few if any adherents of these traditions should be seen as renouncers of caste. On the contrary, in the Punjab, Bengal and the southern poligar country particularly, the many non-elite 'peasants' and pastoralists who became devotees of Muslim *pirs* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seem to have become distinctly more castelike than hitherto through these new-found bonds of discipleship. Of course these ties were not based on Brahmanical purity, but they did foster a sense of Kallar, Rangar or Meo *qaum* or *jati* affinity which was nourished by shared attachment to the *pir* and his power.

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[29] Among other medieval preceptors in this tradition are Ramanuja, and also the originator of Sikh teaching, Guru Nanak; earlier versions of anti-Brahmanical teaching were disseminated through both Buddhism and Jainism. For historically informed anthropological treatments of the *sampra-daya* faiths see Burghan 1978a; van der Veer 1987 1988; Pinch 1996.

Such developments were particularly widespread in areas where the Muslim saint or spiritual preceptor had become a recipient of royal patronage, and an embodiment of lordly powers and virtues, in one of the fast-growing new regional realms and chiefdoms[30]. These trends closely resembled patterns of caste formation which were occurring at this time among hitherto amorphous and open-ended trading and service groups. Such people developed these enhanced jati affinities through attachment to *pir-like* local power divinities *(birs* and *virans),*or to the temples, *maths* and gurus of regional *bhakti* cult deities. Here particularly we see a connection between the movement of merchants and traders into the *bhakti* cults and their growing association with the larger and more settled kingdoms and royal patronage networks of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[31]

This was also true of the initiated adherents of Sikh teaching in the north, and the followers of the Shiva-Lingayat tradition in the southern Deccan. These adherents of devotional faith had already become castelike 'communities' in their own right well before the era of the post-Mughal successor realms. More generally, however, *bhakti* teaching simply gave to the ordinary so-called caste Hindu an experience of mystical and apparently casteless union with the divine.

Yet even when the *sampradaya* sectarian orders devalued worldly jati and varna hierarchies, their lay adherents did not deny their validity in everyday life. Especially where marriage was concerned, lay initiates who worshipped through a personal guru (preceptor) rather than a Brahman ritualist would still accept that the 'untouchable' Chamar or Paraiyan was radically unlike the devotee of respectable caste origin Many *bhakti* sects denied initiation to 'unclean' groups; some allowed only those of Brahman birth to become gurus. And at the very least these movements - like north India's Ram-worshipping Ramanandis, and the other *bhakti* networks which played a crucial role in the making of what we now call Hinduism - built on familiarity with jati and varna conventions, even though their devotees were urged to evade or transcend these boundaries in certain circumstances.[32]

Furthermore the activities of these 'conversion' faiths and *sampradaya* networks gave rise to assertive counter-movements like Bengal's early nineteenth-century Dharma Sabha organisations which rallied self-professed preservers of 'orthodox' faith to the defence of Brahmanical authority. Bengal was one of many ethnolinguistic regions where strong caste ideologies existed side by side with ostensibly un-Brahrmnical forms of *bhakti* Hinduism, as well as with Sikh, Muslim and even Christian variants of devotional faith. In many cases too, both before and during the colonial period, battles between organized groups of Hindu 'modernisers

[30] S. Bayly 1989.

[31] On such networks of affiliation among Hindus see Prakash 1990a: 41-58; Conlon 1977. On *pirs* see S. Bayly 1989; Eaton 1978.

[32] See e.g. Pinch 1996: 27. A similar diversity of messages can be seen in the teachings of Sikhism, and in the many 'indigenised' manifestations of Islam and Christianity which took root in the subcontinent in the centuries before European conquest.

and 'traditionalists' helped to heighten awareness of jati and varna concepts for people of varying social backgrounds, both before and during the colonial era.

THE INNER LOGIC OF CASTE

How then did perceptions of caste come to operate in these situations of rapid change over the last two to three centuries? How did the facts of an insecure environment shape the way in which Indians judged and classified both themselves and those of other 'communities'? And how is it that something in the nature of a caste 'system' came to be built out of such disparate principles as a reverence for the pure and the ascetic, and an exaltation of the warlike man of arms?

To return to the tripartite classifications identified at the beginning of this chapter, these questions may best be answered by exploring the uneasy synthesis that has emerged in relatively recent times between three distinct ways of life. These modes of conduct did not precisely match the three superior classifications of the varna scheme, though they came increasingly to serve as idealised reference points for people whose forebears had been comparatively untouched by caste values. These three modes of conduct were:

(1) the way of life of the kingly warrior or man of prowess;

(2) the way of life of the service-provider, meaning both the literate priestly man and the specialist record-keeper; and

(3) the way of life of the settled man of worth meaning both the productive and virtuous tiller and the man of commerce both of whom might favour the spiritual model of the ascetic renouncer rather than the Brahman priest.

Taken together these were the three main areas of opportunity which became available to those with appropriate skills at the rime when the declining Mughal state and its south Indian counterparts were giving way to the new seventeenth- and eighteenth-century successor regimes and thereafter to the growth of European colonial power None of these pursuits and callings was new to the subcontinent; what was new in this period was the conceptual and practical importance they were acquiring in circumstances of growing social complexity.

As has been seen, many of the new eighteenth-century rulers and their key retainers were members of caste 'communities' only in the sense of having being roughly generalised about by others in these terms, assigned by Brahmanical convention or a ruler's scribes and office-holders to an imprecise category with more or less pejorative overtones: Jat or Kurmi; Kallar or Marava; Rebari, Koli, Ahir or Gujar. From the vantage point of these people who had achieved new power and wealth through arms-bearing, India in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a world of individual opportunity and prowess, rather than one in which people of power were born into a known place on a ladder of strictly defined ritual precedence.

Yet everyday experience for many Indians was also corning into line with a picture of the civilised environment as one of more intricately delineated relationships between different social and occupational groups. What the rulers and their lordly clients were finding was that these insecurities could best be countered by projecting themselves as heirs to a known heroic tradition, this being the dharmic ideal of the Kshatriya king whose use of force is just, and who protects and orders the world according to strict norms of virtue and propriety.

Such rulers still needed flexibility in the relationships they were forging with other armed people and with the key specialist populations of the wider society. Brahman-centred formalities were therefore not immediately subscribed to by these new dominion-builders. Yet this was a period when lords and dynasts from comparatively humble backgrounds were adopting recognisably castelike ways of dealing with their subjects, drawing on the terms and archetypes of the Kshatriya ideal as a means of structuring their relationships with important retainers, allies and service-providers. So although they did not necessarily emphasise strict norms of purity, these rulers' claims of lordliness came increasingly to rest on a perception of their non-Muslim subjects as subordinated 'caste Hindus' leading a life of dharmic correctness under the supervision of a kshatriya like man of prowess. In making these claims, the new rulers already had a known repertoire of terms and concepts to tap into. Many occupationally specialised groups already used identifying titles which were much like modern caste names, and as we have seen, others were fast acquiring a more jati-like affinity through new patterns of migration and devotional attachment-

As will be seen in Chapter 2, a high proportion of these known 'caste Hindu' norms were associated either with named Brahman jati groupings (Nambudiris, Anavils, Chitrapur Saraswats, Kanyakubjas, Chitpavans) or with the specialist pollution-removers who served these varna-conscious groups (Bhangis, Doms, Chamars, Dheds,Kahars and many others). It was against this background that the ideal of the lordly and righteous Kshatriya acquired its appeal for an increasing number of lords and dynasts in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Anthropologists still find that when these tides and archetypes are invoked, Brahmans are widely thought of as people who should minimise their contacts with different classes of being. They should shun adornment and fleshly indulgence, placing an inherited calling to the spiritual above worldly ties and duties, even to the extent of rationing sensual impulses within marriage.[33] This contrasts sharply with the qualities that have come to be associated with those of lordly patrician birth. A lineage claiming Rajput descent is understood to inherit a Kshatriya's mode of conduct, that is, the ideal of the heroic sovereign who sheds blood in a righteous cause and performs feats of prowess through which disharmony and unrighteousness may be dispelled or kept at bay. The king-like being therefore makes contact with dangerous powers and energies and consumes substances that

[33] K. Gough Brahman kinship in a Tamil village in Uberoi 1993: 146-75.

would be incompatible with those prescribed for the Shudra, the Vaishya and the Brahman. Far from limiting his contacts with those of unlike kind, the environment of the man of prowess must be like the good king's realm, highly pluralistic, yet rendered harmonious and productive by his capacity to interact with and order the different classes of gods and humans. This was certainly the picture of the ideal realm conveyed in the dynastic chronicles which were commissioned by many rulers in the new realms and chiefdoms of the eighteenth century.[34]

In theory at least, although one does not need to live a soldier's life in order to be known as Rajput,, any more than one has to perform priestly functions to qualify as a Brahman, a male Rajput inherits a mandate to fulfil the Kshatriya ideal: to be an eater of rich foods a lover of women and a doer of heroic deeds. And since Indians commonly read important messages into what is put on and into the body, there have evolved strong expectations that Rajputs and their regional counterparts should live, eat and dress in styles recalling the virility and worldliness of warriors.

This is certainly the way Rajput rulers had themselves depicted by the artists and praise-singers (Charans) whom they recruited to their courts. By the eighteenth century these styles were spreading rapidly throughout the subcontinent. Thus the wearing of certain turbans and jewels and the cultivation of luxuriant moustaches, came to be widely adopted as marks of lordly identity both by the lord of Rajasthan and by those who were making similar claims in other regions These reflect perceptions of sexuality and the body's physical attributes that are found m many other societies, most notably in Islamic west Asia In the subcontinent, Muslims and Sikhs as well as Hindus commonly regard loosely flowing hair as being charged with sexual energy A mustachioed man is virile and soldierly, and by the same token mature woman's hair - indeed her whole body - should be subject to a demanding code of modesty and containment[35].

This is one of many areas in which the ideal of Rajput dress and conduct has come to overlap with those of the elite south Asian Muslim populations who have preserved a tradition of lordliness and arms-bearing. In both cases, men and women have contrasting obligations. It is expected that the Rajput man - or the man claiming equivalent warrior-like status - should parade his manliness and martial honour, while the sexuality of the Rajput woman should b. rigorously controlled. By these standards, to be non-Rajput was to be one of two things: a pure, pacific person who had need of the lordly man s protection to safeguard his women's honour or someone weak and lowly and therefore fair game, a provider of womenfolk for the patrician's gratification.[36]

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[34] See e.g. Burghart 1978b Dirks 1982 S Bayly 1989: 49-55.
[35] Beck 1976 Das 1976 Das Paradigms of body symbolism in Burghart and Cantlie 1985 Ward 1997 Bennett 1983 esp.p. 259 n. 31; O Hanlon forthcoming a and b.
[36] Tambiah 1973.

Those people in past centuries who wished to classify themselves by these lordly standards had a wide range of rituals, dietary codes and other markers which could be used to signal their distinctiveness in the eyes of others. Above all, however, there was the careful regulation of marriage alliances, so that it has become hard to conceive of caste without the central feature of endogamy - marriage within one's birth-group. Historically, and to a considerable extent today, people who subscribe to the more formalised versions of caste norms will tend to treat the mixing of seed from different human orders as bad dangerous and uncivilised.[37]
Nevertheless, many of these same people have also tended to pay close attention to complex internal gradations of status within a given birth-group, meaning that kin groups will compete to make marriages that are not merely permissible but are also regarded as prestigious So it is not just that Brahmans marry other Brahmans, or that those wishing to be known as Rajput or Vellala must find suitable matches amongst lineages of acknowledged Rajput and Vellala birth. Most of those whom we now call caste Hindus have come to see the jatis in which they claim membership as networks of hierarchically ranked descent groups. People who subscribe to these views will seek to make rnarriages not just with fellow Tamilnad Vellalas or Gujarat Patidars but with the best' available sub-class of their own kind or order In much of India, it has become common for people to try to elevate themselves in relation to others of the same overarching caste group through the poking of blood-lines, often by marrying daughters upwards into higher-status clans or lineages. This practice, which anthropologists call hypergamy, has been widely understood as sustaining and perpetuating ideals of ritualised hierarchy at the core of the Indian moral order. Among the many groups in south India and elsewhere who have not followed this practice of hypergamy, other means have existed to regulate marriage on a similar basis [38]

On the other hand, until relatively recently many 'clean-caste' people did not insist on the distinction between so-called cast-fellows, who were suitable to ally with, and non-caste-fellows who were beyond the pale of formal marriage ties. In past centuries many
non-elite tillers gloried in a tradition of open-ended matchmaking. Well into the colonial period many of the rural north Indians who called themselves Jats were known for their practice of *karewa,* that is, die taking of wives or concubines from non-Jat 'peasant' or nomadic groups. Far from being seen as low or polluting, this was taken as a sign of manly prowess on the pan of those who added to their kin groups stock of womenfolk in this way. It has been only in comparatively recent times that a much more exclusive ideal of marriage modelled on the practices ascribed to the 'purest' and grandest Rajputs and other lordly groups has come to be exalted by former followers of *karewa* or *karewa-like* practices.[39]

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[37] Ibdi.
[38] Important studies of south Asian marriage systems include Dumont 1966 Pocock 1972 Nicholas 1975 Kolenda 1984. See also Kolenda 1980 Parkin 1990 Uberoi 1993.
[39] See Pradhan 1966 4 78 Datta 1997: 101-2.

This marital dimension of caste has been a key concern of twentieth-century anthropology. Under the influence of Dumont many theorists have seen the marriage bond as the defining principle of the Indian social order, at least for professing Hindus. On this basis, caste becomes radically distinct from the descent-based social systems mapped by ethnographers in other parts of the world. Rather than making bloodlines carry the weight of people's social relationships, 'caste Hindus' have been thought to exalt the webs of alliance created through marriage over ties of blood, descent and affinity. In other words, it is not enough to ask who someone's father was; the key question in 'caste society' is held to be who will take one's kin as brides or grooms.

In times past, even the Indian state seems to have been shaped in these terms: marital alliances with the king and his kin become a critical source of power and status, and kingdoms grew and took shape around elaborate webs of royal marriage ties.[40] Even today, it is still widely reported that caste values define the kin of wife-receivers as conferring honour on the kin of the bride, the wife-givers. It is therefore a sign of true grandeur for a lineage if one's female kin are in demand as brides, and the most exalted matches are those made with the most exclusive descent groups.

If we ask how these trends evolved historically, in other words, who took the lead in embracing and spreading these conventions, we must stress again the role of the arms-bearers and self-made dynasts of the relatively recent past. Even men who achieved power through acts of individual prowess, and then went on to lead the sort of lordly and' lavish life deemed appropriate to a Rajput, still felt a need to show the world that they were adherents of a known moral code. This prescribed order in all things, starting with the most fundamental matters of blood and procreation, and emphasising the nullification of those innumerable ritual pollutions which emanate from all forms of active human life.

There have been countless ethnographic studies treating the importance of marriage rules as a universal given of Indian - or Hindu - life, and thus as a defining feature of caste.[41] Both now and in the past, certain kinship structures have been regarded as characteristic of specific jatis with anthropologists making much of the different ways in which defenders of caste norms in particular ethnolinguistic regions have defined the classes of km with whom a given jati or varna should either encourage or ban marriages. Anthropologists say that a caste Hindu' is heir to two distinct but related forms of birth group. The first of these is the jati, or status community, which is made up or many separate biological descent units, and is often identified with the defining moral code of one of the four varnas. The second is one s particular line of biological descent, with the added complication that women change these affiliations at the time of marriage.

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[40] Stern 1977: 52-78 Dirks 1987 Parry 1979: 11.
[41] See note 36 above.

Membership of these blood-based descent groups is reckoned at three or more different levels: the out-marrying clan often termed gotra; the out-marrying *kul,* a unilineal descent group of more limited depth than the *gotra,* and the hearth unit or family household with its single male head and joint access to property and food[42] Almost everywhere, people whose so-called caste lifestyles permit divorce and the remarriage of widows have been seen as distinct from the more refined populations who regard these practices as low and uncivilised All this can be related to the ideal of marriage as the paramount social act, to be understood not as a private matter, but as a sanctified binding of kin units through the 'gift of a virgin' *(kanyadan)*l from one descent group to another. So people from a wide range of different regions and status groups would say that the marriage union has meaning only if the bride is never-married and indisputably chaste. By this same logic, the severing of the all-important marriage bond is a cosmic and social rupture that makes the wife - never the husband - a person of radical and permanent inauspiciousness.[43]

Even today, it is common for widows whose kin claim superior caste origin to lead a penitential life, breaking their bangles shearing their hair, and abandoning the red cosmetic which a married woman applies to her hair parting to signify auspiciousness and fertility. Historically, the penances undergone by widows sometimes included *sati* (self-immolation by fire), much to the horror of British and Indian social reformers. As far as caste is concerned, this logic decrees that to allow divorce, or to accept widows as brides, must be the hallmark of people who are without the means to police their blood-lines scrupu-lously, and who cannot afford to 'waste the labour and child-bearing potential of available women kin in the interests of propriety and seemliness.

Looked at in these terms, caste as it has been lived and conceptualised becomes important in everyday life at the point when kin groups and individuals must look beyond their individual descent group for marriage partners, since the ideology of caste so consistently stigmatises marriages within the same direct blood-line, that is, one's clan or lineage *(gotra, kul,* etc). For people claiming exalted caste status, the making of marriage choices did become particularly complex at some point in the recent or distant past, with the greatest merit accruing to those who have been able to display the most elaborate and restrictive kinship rules.

THE PARADIGMATIC CASE: MARATHA KINGSHIP AND THE VALUES OF PROWESS

The career of the celebrated Maharashtrian dominion-builder Shivaji Bhonsle (1630-80) provides a telling case-study in keeping with the broad trends outlined above. The story of Shivaji's moves to consolidate his hard-won military and revenue-taking power may therefore be understood as exemplifying the first part of the two-stage

[42] For an introduction to debate on this topic see Dav« 1976; Kolenda 1978: 14-22; Parry 1979
[43] Madan 1993: 291-2; Fruzzetti 1982.

process which was referred to at the beginning of this chapter. In other words, what we see in this dynast's life-long manipulation of the Kshatriya ideal supports this chapter's argument about the complex new developments in Indian social and political life which brought the royal man of prowess into prominence as a maker; shaper and reference point in the assertion of more formalised caste ideals.[44] This remark. able self-made dynast made the fluidities of caste work for him in two strikingly different ways. First, Shivaji was notably eclectic in his recruitment practices, offering high office to men of skill and loyalty with little regard to their faith or formal caste background. At the same time, this man of rustic *non-dwija* (i.e. non-twice-born) origin made caste truly matter to large numbers of people both within and beyond his new domain. He did this both by building classifications of jati and varna into his court rituals and statecraft, and most famously, by inventing the means to have himself literally reborn into the status of a lordly thread-wearing Kshatriya.

This celebrated *parvenu* state-builder thus made a conscious decision to use caste as a strategic asset, garbing himself in the trappings of Kshatriya kingship as a means of stabilising his fortunes and those of his client groups. Other 'new men' in both north and south India subsequently emulated his techniques, finding that they too had good reason to manipulate caste symbols as a means of self-advancement.

Clearly caste was not a matter of fixed or inherited essences for Shivaji and his imitators. The Bhonsles are thought to have originated among the large, amorphous populations of non-Muslim Deccani tiller-plainsmen who had come to be known by the names Kanbi and Maratha. These people's religion was focused on *bhakti* devotional themes and gave little prominence to Brahmans. Even long after Shivaji's time, their social norms were loose and socially inclusive rather than formally castelike in the modern sense. Like the term Jat, which was its Gangetic equivalent, Kanbi has been for many centuries a broad designation for virtually all Gujarati- and Marathi-speakers who sustain themselves as ordinary cultivators. In the Maharashtra plateau country, a thinly populated land where agrarian livelihoods were difficult and insecure, the counterpart of Kanbi was Maratha. This term of modest distinction was used by rural people who had improved their lot through soldiering, mostly by taking up military service under the region's fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sultans. Initially, the term Maratha seems to have been no more specific-or castelike than 'Dakhni', this being the designation for the Indian-born Muslim soldiery of these same rulers.[45]

By the sixteenth century, the term Maratha was acquiring a more exalted significance, having become an honorific for people like Shivaji's own family of

[44] There are certainly ambiguities here; Shivaji has been widely treated as an illustration of the Brahmaiusation of kingship rather than the assertion of active martial agency. On Shrvaji's rule in the context of the kingly Kshatriya ideal, see Heesterman 1989.

[45] On the distinction in Gujarat between rustic Kanbis and refined superior 'peasants' (Patidars) see Chapter 5, below.

soldiers and petty office-holders who had been rewarded for service under the Deccan's Muslim sultans with special rights and land tenures *(inams* and *watans).*[46] In a relatively short space of time, the hereditary holders of these offices had come to differentiate themselves from the humbler tillers on whom they levied taxes in the name of their Muslim overlords. Few if any of these people wore the sacred thread *(suta).* Neither Kanbi nor Maratha signified a primordial 'caste' identity, or an ancient tradition of religious and social differentiation which was specifically Hindu in origin. On the contrary, as in the case of the title Rajput, these designations would not have acquired their modern-day significance without a great deal of sustained interaction between Muslim and Hindu dominion-builders in the relatively recent past.

A series of far-reaching changes was therefore set in train through Shivaji's bid for personal dynastic power beyond his original home terrain. In an environment where the Mughals and their great Rajput client lords were the best-known embodiments of kingship, Maratha-Kanbi origins were clearly not the appropriate antecedents for a would-be dynast. By the early 1670s Shivaji had used his formidable armies to create a core domain of directly administered revenue territories within the former realms of the Deccan Muslim sultanates. He also engaged in expansive revenue-talking operations which rapidly eroded the Mughals' sovereignty in their central Indian provinces, and as far south as the Thanjavur (Tanjore) delta of Tamilnad. Yet all these attainments were evanescent and vulnerable. No new man of power was safe from challenge in these uncertain circumstances. Within the loose grid of Mughal overlordship, everyone's environment was full of threatening newcomers; anyone's patrons and allies could be challenged or annihilated without warning.

But this man of modest origins was not content to leave himself as vulnerable as the refractory border chieftains and rebel generals whom the Mughals were still able to outmanoeuvre. In a period when only the grander Rajput rulers were known formally as thread-wearing Kshatriyas, Shivaji embarked on a strategy of unabashed self-promotion. His aim was to identify himself as a sovereign in terms that were intelligible both to his nominal Mughal overlords and to the peoples of the Deccan and central Mughal provinces from whom he was claiming military service and revenue dues.[47]

As has already been seen, Mughal and Rajput conceptions of kingship had been interpenetrating and reinforcing one another since the sixteenth century, both through the marriages which Mughal rulers contracted with Rajput princesses and through the interactions of their court cultures. Shivaji also drew to his court service people who had knowledge of both the Indie Muslim culture of the former Deccan sultanates and the syncretistic Vijayanagar-nayak court traditions of the far south.

[46] Gordon 1993:15.
[47] On the merging and overlapping of Indo-Islamie and Hindu-derived forms of statecraft in the Maratha realms, see Wink 1986

Not surprisingly then, he turned to a mixed array of Vijayanagar, Mughal and Rajput symbols through which to assert his claims of lordliness. The key symbolic act of his reign came in two distinct stages. The first was Shivaji's recruitment of a Brahman preceptor from one of the devotional *sampradaya* sects, this being a known mark of kingship both in the classical scriptures and in the practices of contemporary Rajput courts. His second move was to earner Brahman priests and .literati with the necessary ritual and genealogical skills to declare him a descendant of royal Rajput forebears. In 1674 these specialists invented an investiture rite for their new patron and installed him as *chhatrapati,* meaning lord of the *cbhatra,* the ceremonial canopy which signifies both godhead and kingship in Hindu temple tradition.[48]

These acts of statecraft transformed Shivaji the self-made conqueror into Shivaji the living embodiment of exalted thread-wearing Kshatriya kingship. The striking thing about this is that it was done m the teeth of strong resistance from eminent Brahmans in the great sacred centres of north India. These literati made much of the respected Hindu scriptural sources which held that mankind was living in a degenerate cosmic age, the Kaliyug. The hallmark of this dark epoch, they said, was the complete extinction of the Kshatriya varna. Only unworthy Shudras exercised power in this blighted world, which meant that there could be no grounds for investing Shivaji or any^ other self-made dynast with the thread and ritual devices of a Kshatriya. A similar principle had been pronounced by scriptural experts in south India, where both Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were widely thought to have disappeared at the dawn of the Kaliyug.[49]

Remarkably, however, Shivaji assembled another set of Brahmans who also had links to the holy city of Banaras, and through them with Mewar (Udaipur), the most prestigious of the great Rajput kingdoms. These Brahmans said, in effect, that great men like the Mewar rulers were Kshatriyas because their actions had made them so. This was quite different from a picture of varna as having been reduced to a permanently truncated state, and it was also very far from a representation of caste as an immutable fact of birth and blood. On the contrary, what was being proposed here was that in present social and political circumstances there was need for the virtues of the Kshatriya. Therefore a man who acted as a Kshatriya by preserving the order of *dharma* (ordered moral conduct) and, above all, by sponsoring the performance of Brahman rituals would indeed deserve to be recognised as a true embodiment of the scriptural Kshatriya varna.

On this basis it was perfectly proper for Shivaji to send to Mewar, as indeed he did, for knowledge of the proper vedic rituals to perform in the domain of a Kshatriya king. It may even be that the assertion of these arguments on behalf of the great new powers of the late Mughal period helped to lay the foundations for the view of caste propounded in a very different form during the late nineteenth century by the

[48] O'Hanlon 1985: 20-1; Gordon 1993: 86-90; Wink 1986: 34-49. 57-9,268-71.
[49] Grant Duff 1921,1:204-6.

radical theorists of the Arya Samaj, to the effect that even Brahmans were made and not born - in other words, that pious people should see the status of the Brahman as being determined by his personal virtue and learning, and not by his birth.

So Shivaji had liimself reborn as a Kshatriya through investiture with the sacred thread, and by the anointing of his body with the sweet and transforming essences of Brahmanical rituals, in particular the sacred products of the dl-nurturing and sacred cow: milk, curds and *ghee* (clarified butter). His ritualists reinforced the royal status of his new domain by initiating the ceremony of the vedic fire sacrifice at his rite of enthronement These rites of king-making became a model for many other self-made dynasts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as will be seen in Chapter 2.

This remaking of kings as Kshatriyas was much more than a matter of decorative rites and ceremonies. Real acts of statecraft were performed on this basis, and in a way that spread recognition of these more formalised jati and varna ideals to a considerable portion of the rulers' subjects. In classical sastric scripture, the thread-wearing king is by definition a maker and preserver of varna and can create lordly people (Kshatriyas) in his image. Indeed, the scriptures say that he must do so: if he does not issue and confirm jati and varna titles and order his retainers and subjects in the idiom of caste, he is no true embodiment of kingliness.

Rulers really did behave in this way in the turbulent eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In theory at least, a king was a perpetual provider of land and revenue-taking grants, like the *deshmukh* statuses and *patilships* which were supposed to emanate as a ceaseless demonstration of power by the Maratha rulers. With this flow of assets and retainerships went the provision of 'caste' identities to the king's subjects.[50] In both the north and the south, aspiring dynasts and their lordly retainers recruited soldiers and other followers on this basis. Those who became part of these networks therefore had good cause to follow the lead of a patron who was willing to vest them with a jati tide or other castelike designation. The forms of caste which were thus embraced identified such people as part of a 'community' in their lord's own image, or in the image of his affiliates and retainers.[51]

This goes far to explain why the tradition of the lordly conqueror and arms-bearer continued to be so widely acknowledged even into the nineteenth century and beyond. The descendants of recently sedentarised 'peasant' and pastoralist arms-bearing groups did become significantly more cohesive over time, but without necessarily embracing the same forms of jati and varna as other so-called caste Hindus. These included such people as the users of the Tamil titles Marava and Kallar. In the former domains of rhe south Indian Nayaka rulers, East India Company forces contended for much of the eighteenth century with the fortress-based poligar

[50] Dirks 1987; Fox 1971; Gordon 'Legitimacy and loyalty in some successor states' in Richards 1978.
[51] See, for example, Pinch 1996:86.

chieftains whose ethnically diverse groups of armed retainers they knew as 'Colleries' (a rendering of Kallar).[52] As with these other groups, Marava and Kallar 'caste' identity were clearly not ancient facts of life in the region. Insofar as these people of the turbulent poligar country really did become castes, their bonds of affinity were shaped in the relatively recent past.

We can see this happening in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when self-made dynasts like the Pudukkottai poligar chiefs were trying to secure their gains in areas which were cross-cut with dozens of conflicting and overlapping lordships. This gave the more successful of these armed clansmen an incentive to tell the world that they were rulers and the kin of rulers, with a mandate to enforce order and propriety in all things, including the policing of blood-lines by members of the 'royal' house. Even so, the local dynastic chronicles made it clear that the wider world knew Kallars as untamable despoilers of order and decency and that kallarness was hard to reconcile with Brahman-centred caste values.

For these groups becoming castelike was primarily a matter of being drawn into cults with only the most ambivalent connections to the formal pantheon of puranic Hinduism. Long after the demise of the marava- and kallar-ruled poligar realms kallar and marava identity was still being preserved as traditions of martial prowess emphasising the cults of club-wielding hero tutelaries. As was seen above many of these were not even nominally Hindu but included Muslim pirs (saints) and deified warriors like the Kallars' cult hero Khan Sahib This was Muhammad Yusuf Khan (d.1764) a self-made Muslim dominion-builder who had made the fortunes of many kallar war-bands in his bid to build an independent dynastic realm within the former Mughal subah of Arcot[53].

North India too contains many former arms-bearing group who acquired new bonds of affinity and castelike cohesion in the relatively recent past in much the same way that is without attaching great significance to Brahmans and without conforming to standards of purity which disparaged the shedding of blood and the worship of warlike deities. These include many user of the titles Jat, Ahir, koli and comparatively modern times. This occurred though service to self-made chiefs and rulers as recently as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and through allegiance to cult traditions which celebrated the virtues of warriors and heroic dynasts.None of these new dynasts would have survived without recruiting warriors from pastoral frontier areas and treating with armed hillmen and forest people from areas which had previously been beyond the margins of conventional Indian statecraft. At the same time no-one's gains were safe from their expansive rivals. So whether they were rulers or retainers the newly advantaged arms-bearers had strong incentives to

[52] As noted above, this term comes from the Tamil name Kallar, which had the same connotations as the western Indian usage Koli, implying a background of upland pastoralism and an allegedly 'thievish' or predatory way of life.
[53] S. Bayly 1989 compare Dirks 1987.

secure such gains as they had made by identifying themselves with the ideals of lordliness that had become so widely deferred to in the new realms. These patricians who exalted the values of virility and lordliness were crucial in the making of what we now call caste. Their origins were often humble their claims of dynastic legitimacy required them to tell the world that they were worthy to field power. So even if they themselves were not visibly castelike in the sense of following strict marriage rules and other 'pure' domestic practices, it was increasingly important for them to name and rank important classes of their subjects and dependants in a castelike fashion: it was this that made them recognisable as Kshatriyas, makers of order in a civilised or dharmic realm.

Yet the claims of prowess on its own were not sufficient to meet the needs of insecure dynasts in the* increasingly complex realms. In the age of the later eighteenth-century warrior-dynasts an uneasy balance came to be struck between the claims of Kshatriya-like warrior-rulers and the very different ideals and values of the Brahman, the trader and the pacific scribal specialist. These classes of people came to play an increasingly critical role as contributors to 'traditional' caste ideologies, and it is on them that the spotlight falls in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION : DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN COLONIAL INDIA

Assumptions about the nature and course of Indian economic history lie at the heart of many analyses of South Asia's recent past. Accounts of peasant society, of political mobilisation, of imperial policy, of the social relations of caste, class and community, all include fundamental hypotheses and expectations about the nature of economic structure and change over time, and the relations between producers, consumers and the state. Furthermore, the whole sub-discipline of development economics, at crucial stages in its evolution, has drawn heavily on the Indian example - in stressing the destructive effects of imperialism, for example, or the mechanisms by which government planning can mobilise savings in poor economies. Modern India is a country where economic history is important, where current issues and problems, and many of the institutions and systems that shape the contemporary economy itself, are closely linked to the legacy of the past.

Table 1.2 Estimates of Indian national product 1900-1946

	Constant prices aggregate			Constant price per head		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
I. Indices (1913 = 100)						
1900	83	89	85	89	95	91
1913	100	100	100	100	100	100
1920	100	94	96	100	94	95
1929	127	110	126	116	100	115
1939	138	119	134	110	925	107
1946	149	127	142	109	93	104
II. Rate of growth (%)						
1900-13	1.44	0.90	1.26	0.93	0.42	0.74
1914-20	0.03	-0.86	-0.58	-0.05	-0.88	-0.70
1921-29	2.69	1.76	3.06	1.67	0.69	2.14
1930-39	0.82	0.79	0.59	-0.54	-0.51	-0.72
1940-46	1.10	0.93	0.63	-0.13	-0.30	-0.41

A: Sivasubramonian (1938-9 prices).
B: Maddison (1938-9 prices).
C: Heston (1946-7 prices).
Siurce: Raymond W.Goldsmith Financial Development of India table 1.2.

London, 1971, pp. 167-8; A Heston, 'National Income", in Dharma Kumar with Meghnad Desai, (ed.), Cambridge Economic History of India: Volume *11, c. 1757-c 1970* (hereafter *CEHI,* ii) Cambridge, 1984, pp. 398-9 Maddison has updated his estimates somewhat in a recent article, 'Alternative estimates of the real product of India, 1900-1946', *Indian Economic and Social History Review,* 22, 2, 198

The wide spread of interest in our subject makes coherent generalisation about it more difficult. Accounts of social relations among rural producers, for example, are usually based on very different theories of the nature of economic behaviour than are institutional studies of government tariff policy, or statistically generated estimates of changes in the composition of the gross national product. The most detailed studies of production and consumption at the village level often assume that economic phenomena in India exist only as a function of social and cultural relations. Indeed, many scholars who approach the larger discipline of economic history by way of the history of social and economic structures in South Asia have suspected that accounts of autonomous and self-contained processes of economic development, growth and change in other parts of the world are oversimplified corruptions of a complex reality that has been seen through more clearly in India than elsewhere. In return, those studying the history of economic modernisation in the world as differ considerably in the relative shares of the total attributed to agriculture, manufacturing and services, and in the values assigned to each of these components, they do show a certain degree of convergence in identifying periods of growth and of stagnation.

The weakness of all these estimates is that we can have no certainty about the history of agricultural output in colonial India, especially the course of yield rates and productivity. The bulk of the Indian population remained employed in agriculture throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - the percentage of the workforce employed in agriculture may actually have risen very slightly in this period, and remained at over 70 per cent throughout - although the sectoral

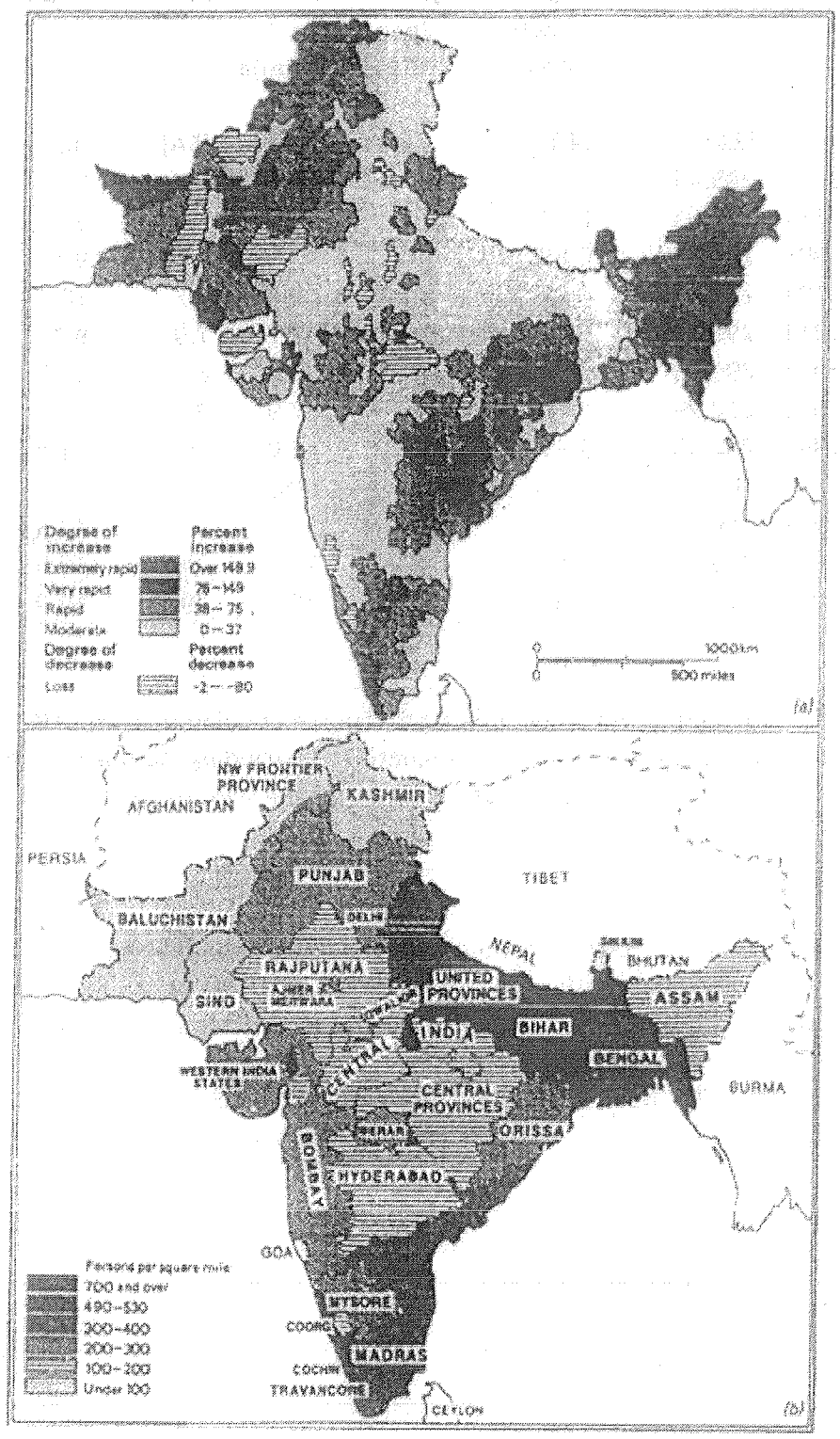
Table I.I. Demographic background India 1871-1971

	Population India (mil)	Annual Population growth rate (%)[a]	Birth rate (per thou)a	Death rate (per thou)a	Literary rate %	Urban Population %	Life expectancy at birth[a](m) (f)
	(1A)	(2A)	(3A)	(4A)	(5A)	(6A)	(7A)
1871	249.44	-	-	-	-	8.7	-
1881	254.51	0.20	-	-	-	9.3	-
1891	276.69	0.89	-	-	6.1	9.4	-
9101	280.87	0.11	51.4	50.0	6.2	10.0	20.1 21.8
1911	298.20	0.65	47.7	41.7	7.0	9.4	23.9 23.4
1921	299.63	0.09	49.1	48.6	8.3	10.2	20.1 20.9
1931	332.29	1.05	48.2	37.9	9.2	11.1	28.1 27.8
1941	382.56 (1B)	1.41 (2B)	45.0[b] (3B)	31.0[b] (4B)	15.1 (5B)	21.8 (6B)	33.1 31.1 (7B)
1951	360.2	1.23	40	27	-	17.3	34.9 32.5
1961	439.0	2.00	42	23	24.0	18.0	41.9 41.6
1971	561.0	2.30	40	16	29.4	19.9	46.4 44.7

[a]Decade ending with year indicated. [b]Source as column 3B and 4B. includes Burma. Column 1A-6A cover Indian subcontinent excluding Burma Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province; Columns [1] B-6B and $_7$A and $_7$B cover Indian Union.

Sources:

Cols. 1A-4A 6A: Leela Visaria and Prain Visaria Population (1757-1947) CEHI 2 tables 5.8 5.13 5.16 and 5.19.
Cols. 5, 1B,6B: Raymond W. Goldsmith The Financial Development of India 1860-1977 New Haven 1983 table 1-1.
Cols. 7A, 7B: Michelle B. McAlpin Famines Epidemics and Population Growth: The Case of India Journal of Interdisciplinary History 1,4,2,1983 table


Degree of increase
Percent increase
Extremely rapid
Over 148.9
Very rapid
76 – 148
Rapid
38 – 75
Moderate
0 – 37
Degree of decrease
Percent decrease
Loss
-2 – -80
1000 km
500 miles
(a)
NW FRONTIER PROVINCE
KASHMIR
AFGHANISTAN
PERSIA
TIBET
PUNJAB
DELHI
BALUCHISTAN
NEPAL
BHUTAN
RAJPUTANA
UNITED PROVINCES
ASSAM
SIND
AJMER-MERWARA
INDIA
BIHAR
CENTRAL INDIA
BENGAL
WESTERN INDIA STATES
CENTRAL PROVINCES
BURMA
BERAR
ORISSA
BOMBAY
HYDERABAD
GOA
People per square mile
700 and over
490–530
300–400
200–300
100–200
Under 100
MYSORE
COORG
MADRAS
COCHIN
TRAVANCORE
CEYLON
(b)

contribution of agriculture to national product probably declined. The most widely accepted set of estimates available (those made by George Blyn in his *Agricultural Trends m India, 1891-194-;* (1966)) suggests that productivity problems resulted in a clear fall of per capita agricultural output, especially for foodgrains, in the first half of the twentieth century.[54] The basis of these calculations has often been disputed, and there is some evidence to suggest that under-reporting may have increased as the colonial administration loosened its grip on agricultural taxation in the inter-war period, but even Alan Heston's more optimistic account of national income and per capita output during the colonial period has concluded that the safest assumption is that aggregate agricultural productivity was static over the period from i860 to 195c as a whole, at the levels achieved in the early 1950s. On the basis of this assumption, which he could produce no direct evidence to support, Heston has estimated that real NDP rose by 53 per cent between 1868 and 1912, while population increased by only 18 per cent. Between 1900 and 1947 real NDP per head was virtually stagnant at best (the estimates summarised in table 1.2 all show a slight decline), with any net increase coming almost entirely from the service sector. Heston's figures also suggest that per capita income rose by over 30 per cent between 1871 and 1911, and then stagnated for the rest of the colonial period. These data make it clear that at the close of the colonial period in 1947 the extent of development in India was still very limited: average per capita foodgrain availability was about 400 grams, the literacy rate was 17 per cent of those over the age of 10, and life expectancy at birth only 32.5 years.[55] While these indicators have risen somewhat in the forty-five years since Independence, India's economy has enjoyed a slower rate of growth than most others in the developing world, and she is still home to a large percentage of the world's poor.

This evidence, for what it is worth, suggests that there was a distinct but slow-moving process of economic change at work in India in the

1.2(a) Population, rates of increase by district, 1891-1941
Data plotted by districts in British Indian provinces, and by similar-size smaller states and agencies. Some of the 1891 data estimated.
1.2(b) Population densities by province, 1941

[54] For a further discussion of this issue, see below pp. 30-2.
[55] Heston, 'National Income', *CEHI,* u, pp. 390, 397-9, 410-11.

Modern period characterized by minimal improvements in rates in rates of capital and labour productivity and resulting in fluctuating and uncertain patterns of growth. While precise comparisons are not possible it would appear that crop yields, industrial productivity and levels of human capital formation have been as low in India as anywhere else in Asia over the last, ,15o years[56]. Such conclusions must be treated with care, however. The slight improvement in some indicators of living standards at various times over the last century of the colonial period is not evidence of the beneficial effects of British rule while the evident poverty of large numbers of the Indian population at Independence does not conclusively prove that imperialism was the sole cause of the destitution of its subject more importantly the bird's-eye view of the structure and characteristics of the Indian economy that can be derived from a very general interpretation of aggregate indicators should not lead us to the view that nineteenth-century India was a 'traditional' subsistence economy awaiting the transforming touch of commercialisation and modernization. Literacy urbanization the growth of national product improvements in productivity, and the spread of technical change can only properly be understood in an ecological, social economic and political context that pays due attention to local details as well as to national averages.

The economic history of India is not a story with a strong plot which lays bare the mechanism by which a set of progressive, or recessive circumstances came about. The Indian economy of the 1970s was different to that of the , 186os, but, it is hard to say that ,it had arrived at the end of a journey or had even progressed along a clear path from one point to the other. For this reason it is unwise to introduce the subject by simply laying out for analysis the conventional indicators of performance and structure - output, patterns of asset-holding, sectoral employment and so on. Such an approach would underestimate the true extent and complexity of economic, social and political change minimise regional diversity and give too firm a meaning to ambiguous' and inconclusive statistical and documentary evidence
While the overall aggregate rate of growth was sluggish and unpredictable, this does not mean that nothing was happening in the Indian colonial economy. At certain times, in particular sectors and specific regions, there was quite considerable growth in output, associated with capital accumulation by peasants, landlords, merchants, bankers and industrialists, and some investment in productivity- and profit-enhancing production processes. Some agriculturalists were able to take advantage of increased world demand for crops such as jute, cotton and groundnuts, while Indian businessmen manufactured cotton yarn for export in the nineteenth century and a wide range of products for the domestic consumer market in the twentieth. Whatever the problems of agriculture, rural producers managed to just about

[56] R.P. Sinha Competing Ideology and Agricultural Strategy Current Agricultural Development in India and China compared with Meiji Strategy World Development 1,6,1973 and Shigeru Ishikawa Essays on Tecnology Employment and Institutions in Economic Development Tokyo 1981, ch.1.

sustain a steadily rising population, which increased at an average rate of *0.6* per cent per year between 1871 and 1941, and more rapidly since then. While all the best agricultural land was probably in use by 1900, some colonisation went on until the 1950s, and the area under irrigation almost doubled between 1900 and 1939, and rose sharply after 1947. There is also considerable evidence of technical change in agriculture, in handicrafts, and in mechanised industry. The spread of new seeds and crop-strains aided output growth in cotton and groundnuts, for example, while techniques such as the transplantation of rice and the ginning of cotton increased yields and marketability. Indian workmen had few difficulties acquiring the skills needed to operate modern textile machinery, while the Tata Iron and Steel Company, the premier industrial enterprise of colonial India, set up a successful Technical Institute in 1921 and an Indian-staffed Research and Control Laboratory in 1937. In handicrafts, fly-shuttle looms and the use of rayon and other artificial fibres broadened the technological base of the handloom weavers in the inter-war years. While demonstration programmes and official research institutes played some part in this process, the chief incentive to technical change was economic. As one government official pointed out to the *Indian Famine Commission* in 1880, the spread of improved cotton gins in central India and elsewhere was chiefly the result of 'the first cotton merchant who offered a fraction of an anna more for clean than dirty cotton', who had done 'more for Wardha cotton than I, with all the resources of the Government at my back, ever accomplished'.[57]

This evidence all suggests strongly that some growth, capital accumulation, technical change and innovation occurred in colonial South Asia, but despite these signs of dynamism the Indian economy did not experience anything that can properly be called 'development' under British rule. Text-book definitions stress that development is a qualitatively distinctive phenomenon that should not be confused with the more limited process of output growth; as Gerald Meier has summarised it, in the conventional view:

Development is taken to mean growth plus change; there are essential qualitative dimensions in the development process that extend beyond the growth or expansion of an economy through a simple widening process. This qualitative difference is especially likely to appear in the improved performance of the factors of production and improved techniques of technical change – in our growing control over nature. It is also likely to appear in the development of institutions and a change in attitudes and values[58]

In addition to improvements in productivity as a result of technical innovation, many development economists stress equity considerations as a necessary part of any process of economic change that can properly be labelled development. Thus Meier's own preferred definition of development is of a 'process by which the real

[57] Quoted in D.R. Gadgil The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times 1860-1939 5th edn Bombay 1971 p. 74.
[58] Gerald m.Meier Leading Issue in Economic Development 5th edn New York 1989 p.6.

per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time - subject to the stipulations that the number of people below an "absolute poverty line" does not increase and that the distribution of income does not become more unequal.[59] In the setting of densely populated agrarian economies such as those of South, South-East and East Asia, these conditions can only come about if, over time, labour achieves sustained increases in productivity, employment, and returns above subsistence. This definition of development also helps to bring its opposite, underdevelopment, into sharper focus. As Joseph Stiglitz has suggested, LDCs (Less Developed Countries) are those in which fewer people than average have the capacity for full personal fulfilment, giving economists and economic historians the task of explaining the reasons for 'the dramatically different standards of living of those who happen to live in different countries and within different regions within the same country' which Stiglitz has characterised as 'the most central issue facing most of mankind today.[60]

For South Asia, then, our problem is to explain an economic history in which technical change and capital accumulation took place, but in which productivity and welfare did not improve very much. Economic historians have found it difficult to explain the absence of development in the modern world, and, like Gerschenkron and Schumpeter have usually only managed to define 'backwardness' in terms of the absence of dynamic features seen in other countries or in the same country at a later date. Those such as Kuznets and Rostow, who have conceptualised the process of development as a series of preconditions or stages of growth, offer little help in understanding the history of economies which have failed to pass through the evolutionary processes laid down for them. Lloyd Reynolds's recent study, Economic Growth in the Third World, 1850-1980, follows Kuznets in distinguishing extensive growth, in which population and output are growing at roughly the same rate, from 'intensive' growth, in which there is a rising trend of per capita output, and accepts that economies experiencing extensive growth can display economic sophistication and some innovation and institutional change. Thus Reynolds suggests that India in 1947 began intensive growth 'not from a situation of stagnation, but from an economy visibly in motion[61] but his account remains too one-dimensional, and too concerned to identify a link between a rising export: GDP ratio and the onset of intensive growth, to be of much use in explaining the South Asian experience.

The descriptions and explanations of the apparent lack of growth and development in the Indian economy produced during the colonial period itself were dominated by the nationalist critique of British rule and the imperial response to it. This debate, which has continued to haunt the modern literature as well, was political in origin

[59] Ibid italics in original.
[60] Joseph E. Stiglitz Rational Peasants Efficient Institutions and a theory of Rural Organization: Methodological Remarks for Development Economics in Pranab Bardhan (ed.) The Economic Theory of Agrarian Institutions Oxford 1989 pp. 19-20.
[61] Lloyd G. Reynolds Economic Growth in the Third World 1850-1980 an Introduction New Haven 1985 p. 30.

revolving around the question of whether India had suffered or benefitted from British rule In economic terms it focused attention on the evident poverty of the mass of the Indian people in the late nineteenth century, and the prevalence of famine in the 1870s and late 1890s, which seemed to suggest that agriculture could not support the population. The nationalist argument, put forward most forcefully by Dadabhai Naoroji, a Parsi businessman and founder of the Indian National Congress, who was elected to the House of Commons to speak for Indian interests in the 18$_9$0s, and by R. C. Dutt, who resigned from the ICS to pursue his attacks on the revenue administration of Bengal, focused on the distortions to the Indian economy brought about by British rule, and by the impoverishment of the mass of the population through the colonial 'drain of wealth' from India to Britain over the course of the nineteenth century.[62]

The nationalist case was underpinned by assertions that the British had destroyed or deformed a successful and smoothly functioning pre-colonial Indian economy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The coming of British rule was seen to have removed indigenous sources of economic growth and power, and replaced them by imperial agents and networks. This deprived Indian entrepreneurs and businessmen in the 'modern' sector of the chance to lead a process of national regeneration through economic development, and also had severe welfare and distributional effects in the 'traditional' sector by imposing foreign competition on handicraft workers and forced commercialisation on agriculturalists.

As we will see, modern studies of the transition to colonialism in India provide a rather different contrast between the economies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Indian economy certainly underwent structural change over the course of the nineteenth century, but the causes and results of this were complex. From recent work on the pre-British economy we know that commercialisation and unequal social structures existed before colonialism, yet although the pre-colonial economy contained nodes of mercantilist growth, their development and welfare effects remain unclear. Indian capitalists played an active role in helping the East India Company to create its empire in South Asia, and in working with it when it came. While British rule caused a set-back for some activities of Indian merchants and commercial capitalists, it did not suppress all of them for long, and may have helped some areas, such as the Gujerati textile centre of Ahmedabad, which had suffered particularly badly from the consequences of political instability.

The central theme of the nationalist case was the way in which Indian resources were drained off to Britain by the mechanism of imperial rule. India had long appeared to be a major asset for Britain When the East India Company first took control of Bengal in the 1760s, and became able to use tax revenue to purchase goods for export to England without needing to ship bullion to India, it seemed to

[62] Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-Bruish RhU*, London, 1901; R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age*, London, 1906.

some m London that these limitless revenues would become, in the words of the Earl of Chatham, 'the redemption of a nation ... a kind of gift from heaven[63]." Yet as early as 1772, when a financial crisis in Bengal prevented the EIC from paying a dividend and required it to ask the British government for assistance, London was forced to face up to what became the great riddle of the Raj - whether India was Britain's foremost asset or her greatest liability. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century India was the largest purchaser of British exports, a major employer of British civil servants at high salaries, the provider of half of the Empire's military might, all paid for from local revenues, and a significant recipient of British capital[64]." The crucial point for the nationalists was that India ran a persistent surplus in her current balance of trade account, with her exports of goods to the world as a whole meeting a large deficit in goods and services with Britain, plus interest charges and capital repayments in London.

The main lines of debate over the drain theory have long been established. Imperial apologists such as Sir Theodore Morison and Vera Anstey argued that most of India's payments to Britain were made in return for services or capital that increased the wealth of the local economy. The size of the unrequited transfers, those needed to meet the 'Home Charges' (the administrative and military expenses of the Indian Government in Britain), was small, running at around Rs 20 million a year, less than 2 per cent of total export values at the end of the nineteenth century and less than i per cent by 1913.[65] Anstey herself claimed that if there had been no Home Charges and no loans in London, but India had provided for her own military and naval defence, then India would have come out the loser - 'it is surely obvious that the "saving" effected would be a negative quantity[66] Nationalists fiercely contested the assumptions on which such calculations were based, arguing in particular that India's defence establishment was designed to meet Britain's needs, and that the railways were an expensive military asset rather than an appropriate piece of developmental infrastructure. The classic nationalist case was that Britain's entire favourable balance of payments with her colony represented the size of the drain of wealth, with a convenient floor-figure set by India's export surplus in merchandise (representing the net total of Indian current payments to Britain less British capital exports to India). A recent re-calculation on this basis has suggested that the drain in 1882 amounted to Rs 1,355 million (in 1946-7 prices), more than 4 per cent of national income in that year.[67]

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[63] P.J. Marshall Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757- 1813 LonDon 1968 pp. 30-1.

[64] Acording to the lastest estimates for british capital exports from 1860 and 1914 between 1239 and 1290 million raised in London was invested in India more than half of it in the form of government loans. The Indian total represented about 20 per cent of all capital sent to the Empire and about 7 per cent of all capital exports from Britain. See Lance E. Davis & Robert A. Huttenback Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire. The Political Economy of British Imperialism 1860-1912 Cambridge 1968 table 2.1.

[65] K. N. Chaudhuri India's International Economy in the Nineteenth Century: An Hmoncal Survey', *Modem Asian Studies, 2*,1, 1968, p. 44

[66] Anstey, *Economic Development of India*, p. 5 1 1.

[67] Irfan Habib, 'Studying a Colonial Economy - without Perceiving Colonialism', *Modern Auan Studies*, 19,), 1985, pp. 375-6.

Whatever definitions of the drain are used, it is hard to demonstrate that the poverty of the rural economy was the direct result of high rates of taxation to fund unrequited transfer payments to Britain. Although taxation in India increased markedly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, partly to meet the increased exchange costs of remitting money to London while the silver-standard rupee was depreciating sharply against the gold-standard pound sterling, this did not fall primarily on agriculture. Between 1872 and 1893 central government tax revenue rose from Rs 374 million to Rs 501 million, but over one-third of the increase came from non-agricultural taxation such as tariffs, excises and the income tax. While total taxes rose by 34 per cent, agricultural prices rose by 44 per cent and taxes on agriculture by 23 per cent[68]. By 1900 the land tax represented about 5 per cent of the value of gross agricultural output, and was responsible for less than half of the average per capita burden of taxation.

As S.B. Saul has shown[69] Britain's balance of payments surplus with South Asia was certainly an important element in the world pattern of settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century enabling the United kingdom to meet 30-40 per cent her deficit with other industrialized nations and helping to sustain her performance as an economy with a global balance of payments surplus long after her trading position in most parts of the world had declined. From the Indian end however the issues of the balance of payments surplus is complicated by the problem of classifying bullion imports of gold and silver which are usually added into the commodity trade import figures. The Indian rupee was a silver currency on a bullion standard with open mints until 1893 and India was a major importer of silver in the late nineteenth century. About one third of India's trade surplus in goods between 1872 and 1893 was financed by imports of specie mostly silver the bulk of which was used as transaction coinage or saved in the form of hoarded coin bullion and jewellery. If the inflow of precious metals were regarded as the repatriated profits of the export trade in commodities rather than as a visible commodity import then it can be argued that the Indian economy was running a surplus on goods services and capital combined which she was liquidating by importing the medium of mass saving in the form of specie some of which was minted to meet the need for increased monetary transaction in a period of commercial expansion and rising prices. The main elements of India's balance of payments in this period are set out in table 1.3.

This analysis sets South Asia's traditional role in world trade as a sink for precious metals first noted by Pliny in ancient times and used by J. M. Keynes in his Indian Currency and Finance (1913) to strengthen the case for a gold-exchange standard for Indian with a token currency against the late nineteenth century theory of the colonial drains of wealth from Indian to Britain. Although the gold price of silver in the world economy fell by about 40 per cent in this period it was not falling faster

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[68] Government of India, *Report of the Indian Currency Committee, 1898,* [Fowler Committee], Appendix it, no. 52.

[69] S. B. Saul Studies in British Overseas Trade 1870-1914 Livepool 1960 ch.viii.

than any other gold price and so it is difficult to sustain the argument that the world was somehow acquiring India's exports cheap by paying for them with a devalued commodity. After 1900 when the rupee was linked to gold at a fixed rate through an exchange standard with sterling, the story told by continued bullion imports is less ambiguous. In the pre-war trade boom between 1909-10 and 1912-13, for example, India imported Rs 1,174 million worth of gold, including Rs 4$ million worth of sovereigns which went into circulation, increased her gold reserves by Rs 294 million, and imported a further Rs 549 million worth of silver, only a third of which was used for coinage.[70]

Specie imports by themselves do not reveal anything about the pattern of distribution inside the colonial economy. It is possible to imagine a set of circumstances in which inequality increased along with bullion imports, and some modern historians working within the nationalist tradition have argued that capital did increase in India, but that it accumulated in the hands of 'parasitic' groups of landlords, usurers and native aristocrats. Certainly the availability of silver and gold for hoarding may well have discouraged the development of flexible savings instruments that could have helped finance more dynamic investment and more efficient provision of liquidity. What the inflow of specie does suggest, however, is that some Indians were increasing their assets during the colonial period. This is an important point, since the central contention of the drain theory in its original form was that the mechanisms of British rule removed any investible surplus above subsistence from India, and that therefore no growth at all was possible: as Naoroji put it, 'the drain prevents India from making any capital'[71] The imperial apologists who responded to this case argued that national income had increased somewhat in the late nineteenth century, but agreed that any process of economic growth was so slow as to be almost undetectable, being held back largely by social, cultural and religious barriers to material improvement. Despite the atavistic power of the debate over British rule and Indian 'improvement', this is the point at which the modern literature must part company with its colonial ancestor, for almost all current accounts of the recent economic history of India are concerned with classifying a distinguishable process of economic change, however distorted or sluggish it may have been, and analysing its effect on classes and interests inside rather than outside South Asia.

[70] J. M. Keynes, *Indian Currency and Finance*, London, 1913, pp. 108-10, and G. Findlay Shirras, *Indian Finance and Banking*, London, 1920, p. 463

[71] Dadabhai Naoroji, 'Poverty of India', p. 38, in *Poverty and Un-British Rule*.

Table 1.3. India annual balance of Payments on Current account 1869-70 to 1894-8 (Σmillions quinquennial averages)

	Balance merchandise Trade	Net Treasure Imports	Balance Visible Trade (1+2)	Home Charges	Other Invisibles	All Invisible (4+5)	Balance of Payments Current Account (3-6)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1869-73	+22.8	-8.4	+14.2	-8.8	-15.6	-24.4	-10.2
1874-8	+21.0	-6.4	+14.6	-9.3	-18.0	-27.3	-12.7
1879-83	+23.8	-7.1	+16.7	-10.7	-17.7	-28.4	-11.7
1884-8	+23.8	-9.2	+14.6	-12.3	-18.0	-30.3	-15.7
1889-93	+25.2	-9.7	+15.5	-13.5	-19.4	-32.9	-17.4
1894-8	+20.7	-5.6	+15.1	-13.9	-18.9	-32.8	-17.7

Note: a plus sign (+) indicates net exports of goods a minus sign (-) indicates net imports of goods and net exports of remittances service charges and other invisibles.

The most through direct estimate of flows of long-term foreign capital into India from 1870 to 1899 gives a total of between 123.2 million and 144.8 million most of which was in the form of sterling loans to the Secretary of State for India in Landon (see Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback Mammon and the pursuit of Empire. The Polotical Economy of British Imperialism 1860-1912 Cambridge 1986 table 2.1.)

Source: A.K. Banerji Aspects of Indo-British Economic Relations 1858-1898 bombay 1982 tables 34A and 40A.

In general, mainstream economic theory, in all its variants has had little to say about the absence of development. In neo-classical analysis all economies tend towards equilibrium, but it is difficult to identify or explain what is happening to those in which an equilibrium is reached below maximum efficiency. In both classical and orthodox Marxist analyses, capitalism is usually seen as a uniquely progressive force in an economy, with capital accumulation and investment the only way to increase productivity, raise output and provide a surplus that can be redistributed to maintain returns to labour above subsistence.

Karl Marx, like almost all his contemporaries saw the Asian economies of India and China as having no history, begin the products of societies in which political and economic networks and institutional systems did not interact. In Capital, and elsewhere Marx developed the concepts of 'primitive accumulation' and of an 'Asiatic mode of production' to explain the existence of large, static Eastern economies and societies that were not likely by themselves to progress through feudalism to capitalism. The self-sufficiency of the Indian economy was based on Village republics' with 'cut and dried' patterns of community organisation, which encompassed communal property rights in a combination of agriculture and handicraft manufacture Villages were entirely self-sustaining, containing within themselves, all the conditions of production and surplus accumulate, while cue were mere military or princely camps, .in wh.ch despotic ruler received tribute from the countryside in return for the maintenance of irrigation works[72].

Marx thiugh that the coming of British rule was the greatest threat to this existing social and economic order, and argued that it would prepare the way for a capitalist economy dominated eventual y by a domestic bourgeoisie. However, he was also highly critical of the disruptive effects of colonial administration in the 1830s 1840s and 1850s and saw the commercialisation of agriculture and the flooding of the Indian market with mass-produced Lancashire cotton goods as Lading to the destruction of old social arrangements without any dynamic process of constructive change. Later theorists have followed these dual strands in Marx's own thinking by developing theories of Imperialism that attribute the modes of production m the Third World economies of the twentieth century directly to the impact of imperial systems and colonial states.

Central to many of these later accounts has been the concept of dependency, 'a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected.[73] This notion of dependent development does distinguish between the role of capitalism as a progressive force in the core but a regressive one in the periphery, and gives a major role to imperialism in tightly circumscribing the extent of any development that peripheral capitalism can achieve. However, empirical studies of the pattern of growth in many Third World countries since the 1960s have led to the revival of a more orthodox Marxist view of peripheral development, encapsulated in Geoffrey Kay's comment that 'capitalism created underdevelopment not because it exploited the underdeveloped world but because it did not exploit it enough[74] The best-known revisionist account, Bill Warren's, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*[75] explicitly took Marx's analysis of Britain's necessary role in transplanting capitalism in

[72] For a convenient brief summary of Marx's views on India see Daniel thornier the Shaping of modern India New Delhi 1980 p. 363 ff.
[73] T. Dos Santos, 'The Structure of Dependence', *American Economic Review*, 40,2,1970, P 231.
[74] G. B. *Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis*, London, 1975, p.x.
[75] Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, London, 1980

India as its starting-point. These 'menshevik' theories, as they have been called[76] see capital as a progressive force, however exploitative, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are useful in disentangling capitalism from a functionalist relationship with imperialism, but they do not help much in analysing the inhibitory factors that prevented many economies subject to colonial rule from undergoing development. The notion of an underdeveloped world dominated by some sort of primitive economy in Marx's sense still lurks beneath their surface.

As we have seen, nationalist interpretations of Indian economic history from the late nineteenth century onwards argued that India was far from being a primitive economy before the British. Colonial rule was thought to have removed or distorted the developmental base reached by 'domestic industry and agriculture in the eighteenth century, and then suppressed the entire economy in the nineteenth century by the mechanism of the drain of wealth. These ideas were sustained and refined in Indian Marxists analyses during the early twentieth century notably in R. Palme Dutt India today (1940) and were then incorporated into dependency theory through the work of Paul Baran who revived the notion that the coming of British rule in India had broken up pre-existing self-sufficient agricultural communities and forced a shift to the production of export crops which distorted the internal economy. In his political Economy of Growth (1957) Baran took up the central insight of the nationalist analysis suggesting that about 10 per cent of India's gross national product was transferred to Britain each year in the early decades of the twentieth century and suggested that had this sum been invested in South Asia India's economic development to date would have borne little similarity to the actual sonmbre record[77]. To Baran the colonial drain was a mercantilist concept – India's loss of economic resources and their transfer to Britain was a consequence of her political subordination. Thus asymmetrical power and political relations rather than natural endowments or comparative advantage determined the economic history of underdeveloped countries:

Far from serving as an engine of economic expansion of technological process and of social change the capitalist order in these countries has represented a framework for economic stagnation for arthaic technology and fpr social backwardness[78].

The notion of colonial South Asia as host a particular regressive from of capitalism leading to dependency underdevelopment or sustained backwardness has been refined further in the work of Amiya Bagchi and Hamza Alavi for example into the

[76] Colin Leys, *Conflict and Convergence in Development Theory,* in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jurgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities,* German Historical Institute, London, 1986, pp. 321-2

[77] Paul Baran the Political Economy of Growth New Yorks 1957 p. 148. It is worth nothing that this estimate of the size of the drain is more than double that of Irfan Habib cited above (p.13).

[78] Ibid p. 163.

concept of a distinct colonial mode of production[79]. This argues that British rule brought about a process of economic change in South Asia which had some dynamic features but the these were functionally determined to serve the needs of the metropolitan economy and so established a dependent form of underdevelopment. Colonial rule broke down the autonomous economy of independent handicraft workers and self-sufficient peasants, and directed domestic economic activity towards two main areas - export-oriented agriculture with very small returns to provide primary products for the West at bargain prices before Independence, and limited industrialisation dependent on alliances with foreign firms for technology since then. The laws, institutions and social structure of contemporary South Asia were thus a creation of Britain's requirement for cheap labour and cheap exports within the imperial system, and the dominant classes that have exercised control over agricultural and industrial capital for the last hundred years or so are identified as the product of this colonial transformation. By these means Indian labour has been exploited indirectly but effectively for the sake of metropolitan capital, and successive forms of colonial and post-colonial capitalism have been created that did not need to increase productivity or wages.

The analysis of dependent underdevelopment contends, like the nationalist critique of the colonial economy before it, that the British conquest was the chief reason for India's development problems over the last 200 years. As we have already seen, such arguments put a heavy interpretative loading on the impact of British rule, and tend to overestimate the extent to which this destroyed either a self-sufficient 'primitive' economy, or a burgeoning state-capitalist developmental one The British certainly altered the political economy and state structure of India fundamentally in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and severely disrupted some established patterns of trade, of investment, and of agricultural and handicraft production, but the quantitative extent and qualitative significance of the consequences of this - in the form of de-industrialisation, forced commercialisation, and the transfer of land-holding to traders and moneylenders - is hard to assess. Studies of many different localities during the first century or so of British rule have stressed the extent of continuity rather than change in the holding and exercise of social and economic power. Local social structures, and the interaction between social power and economic opportunity, were often remarkably unaffected by the waxing and waning of imperial control; the chief reason, *(or* economic stagnation were usually present before the British arrived remained in place during their rule, and have stayed there after its ending.

India cannot be classified as a simple form of colonial economy, in which surplus extraction and functionally determined social organization created a system of non-progressive economic activity. British imperialism had a very important impact on the economic history of modern South Asia but it was not the only reason for the

[79] Amiya Kumar Bagchi The Political Economy of Underdevelopment Cambridge 1982; Hamza Alavi et al. Capitalism and Colonial Production London 1980.

phenomenon of growth without development. The economic history of South Asia is not broadly dissimilar to that of other large and populous Asian economies such as China and Indonesia which were not part of the British Empire. While these areas were exposed to European imperialism formal or informal in a broad sense neither shared India's precise experience under foreign rule. The history of the Indian economy since 1947 has revealed many of the same problems of low productivity and non-developmental social organization that were apparent in the colonial period. India like other Third World economies may have suffered from neglect by the liberal institutional structure of the post-war international economic system and may have been subjected to neo-imperial ties through aid and direct private investment mechanisms but such ties have been universal affecting large numbers of countries in Asia Africa and Latin America and their impact in India cannot be attributed solely to her colonial past.

While Indian interests were clearly subordinated to British ones in important respects during the lifetime of the British raj Indian economic history was not simply that of a subaltern subservient economy. As in other applications of subaltern studies to Indian history the separate levels of dominance and subservience among different groups of Indian must be accounted for. The theme of inequality runs strongly through Indian colonial history but economic relations were as unequal within colonial society as they were between the imperial power and its colonial subjects. Subaltern studies do no give much help in understanding the dominant agents in a subordinate economy. Some Indian professionals, businessmen, landlords and surplus peasants[80] derived considerable benefits from the local power that was conferred on them by British rule; it is hard to see that these elites missed out on profits or advantages in the medium term because of India's subordinate position. Even those Indian businessmen who found their industrialising ambitions apparently thwarted by the colonial government's commitment to laissez-faire economic policies were eventually able to supplant their expatriate rivals as the dominant element in the private sector. There was no such thing as an entirely subordinate economy within the British Empire - every country s economy contained both dominant and subordinate groups Subalterns certainly suffered in colonial India, and were more plentiful there than in imperial Britain, but they did exist in the core as well as at the periphery of the imperial system.

Like Marx, the orthodox classical economists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were concerned to understand and explain processes of rapid and fundamental economic change. For the classical economists such change would inevitably be accompanied by the conventional measures of growth and development; the only alternative to a developing economy was a static one - a 'stationary state, in which there was no capital accumulation (profit) and no

[80] Surplus peasants are defined as those controlling family that could in a normal years grow and retain enough food and other produce to produce a surplus over their own subsistence requirements without the need to seek off- farm employment.

technical progress (investment or increased labour productivity). Thus, as Adam Smith commented on China (and by extension all Asian economies of the late eighteenth century):

In, country which had acquired that full complement of riches which the nature of « soil and climate, and its situation with respect to other countries, allowed it to acquired which could, therefore, advance no further ... both the wages of labour and the profit, of stock would probably be very low....perhaps no country has Yet armed at this degree of opulence. China seems to have been long stationary and has probably long ago acquired that full complement of riches that is consistent with the nature of its laws and institutions. But this complement may be to what, with other laws and institutions, the nature of us sod, climate and situation might admit of.[81]

In the event, Smith argued, "the poverty of the taw people far surpasses that of the most beggarly nations of Europe[82]. Following Smith, later writers in the class.cal tradition, and the revisionist new-classical' school that has come to prominence n development economics over the lan twenty years, have sough, to explain economic backwardness in terms of inappropriate laws and Institutions which prevent the dynamics of capitalism from unleashing the forces of growth. Such arguments stress that all economies can achieve development providing that they expose themselves to the efficiencies generated by free markets and unfettered competition. In poor densely settled regions population pressures may make dynamic growth harder to achieve but simple Malthusian traps can be avoided by foreign trade by migration and by technical progress to make land and labour more productive.

Scholars adopting a new-classical focus on the Smithian analysis of the laws and institutions that have inhibited Indian development have produced important alternative interpretations of the economic history of modern South Asia. One of the earliest of these was Gunnar Myrdal's portrayal in Asian Drama of the Indian economy as determined by social systems that bound it to a low-level equilibrium characterized by low labour productivity low per capita incomes traditional and primitive production techniques and low levels of living. This interconnected causal relationship between productivity and incomes levels of living and labour inputs and productivity could only be overcome by a positive programme of modernisation that would promote rationality equality planning democracy and appropriate values as well as economic efficiency. The only force that Myrdal saw as powerful enough to overcome the forces of stagnation social stability and equilibrium that would perpetuate poverty and inequality was the nation state. Here however he thought the Indian government unequal to the task categorizing it as a soft state unable to impose the social discipline needed to force economic political and ideological

[81] Wealth of Nations I p. 106 quoted in H.W. Arndt The Rise and fall of Economic Development Melbourne 1978 p.8.

[82] Wealth of Nations I p. 73 quoted in H. W. Arndt Development Economics before 1945 in Jagdish Bhagwati and Richard S. Eckaus (eds.) Development and Planning Essays in honour of paul Rosenstein Rodan London 1972 p. 14.

change onto its unwilling subjects[83].

The economic activities of the Indian state have been examined more closely in a further extension of new-classical theory based on the notion of rent-seeking and the distortions that have followed from an inappropriate and ineffective regime of economic controls and planning. Bureaucratic controls in India have been seen in the work of Anne Kreuger and others[84] as forming an integral part of rent-seeking society in which the owners of scarce assets (land capital) or privileges (such as import licences) are simply rewarded for this ownership, rather than being forced to earn a return on them by efficient working in an open market. Thus productivity is not increased by competition; instead profits are maintained by limiting the number of rent-holders and closing off alternative routes for access to scarce assets. The result is political stability based on the interests of a narrow range of propertied and favoured groups, but this is accompanied by the economic irrationality of under-utilised industrial capacity, wasteful use of foreign exchange and industrial investment, inappropriate land reform, and a corrupt polity that makes any genuine development almost impossible.

Generally speaking, new-classical accounts of South Asian development identify Indian social and cultural arrangements as inhibitors of growth and change. However, culturalist explanations bring special problems with them, and should not be used on their own without very significant qualification. The apparent non-material spirituality of Hindu life and beliefs that was so often stressed by colonial officials is not a very useful explanatory variable - indeed, many of the most successful Indian businessmen had strong links to religious charities and institutions. Fatalism is stronger when choice is limited, and local cultural systems have often had strong connections to interlinked social, political and economic relationships. As Eric Stokes argued forcefully, agrarian history shows that the demands of economics often overrode the constraints of morality and law in village cultivation arrangements; in some parts of north India, for example, Brahmins did their own ploughing, and Rajput *thakurs* discarded their stereotypical image of indolent rentier pride when economic circumstances provided incentives.[85] Such examples can be matched and multiplied from all other parts of the sub-continent. Culturalist explanations also require us to believe that a unique culture will determine a unique performance and yet the economic consequences of Hinduism for the South Asian economy over the last 200 years or so have not been so singular. South Asia is not a solely Hindu region, yet its modern economic history has a certain unity, and also exhibits striking similarities to other areas, such as Indonesia and China, which have

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[83] Gunnar Myrdal Asian Drama. An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations Harmonds-Worth 1968 Volume II p. 895 ff. There is a convenient summary of these points in B.L.C.Johnson Development in South Asia Harmondsworth 1983 pp. 16-19.

[84] A. O Kreuger The political Economy of a Rent-Seeking Society American Economic Review 64, 1974.

[85] Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj. Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India*, Cambridge. 1978. pp.234-6.

a different cultural base. Where variations do exist in the comparative histories of these regions they can better be accounted for by secular factors than by dependence on culturalist explanations. Colonial India certainly exhibited an institutional rigidity in social and economic organisation, but this was not a uniquely Hindu, South Asian or colonial problem -indeed, much of the slow-down in Britain's own economic growth m the second half of the nineteenth century has often been attributed to the same cause. .

The most complete new-classical interpretation of modern Indian economic history to date has been Deepak Lai's analysis of a 'Hindu equilibrium' of cultural stability and economic stagnation.[86] This work provides a functional explanation of Indian social organisation and agricultural systems as a second-best Pareto-efficient response to a specific environment. Lai argues that traditional Hindu society, based around the caste system, was organised to facilitate decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, brought about by the four long-run constraints of labour shortage, political decentralisation in local warrior-states, climatic variability and ecological fragility, and a culture-based undervaluation of merchant activity. This identification of economic stagnation is so aggregated as to be highly misleading, however. Lai uses very general indicators that ignore regional diversity, and assumes changelessness over long periods and large areas, rather than self-cancelling fluctuations in time and space; he also assumes that the uniqueness of Hindu culture produces a unique economic situation in India, ignoring parallel work on labour utilisation in other rice-cultivating regions of Asia that suggest similarities to Indian cases at the local and regional levels.

Such accounts of the South Asian economy assume a uniformity of agrarian social and economic relations based on a unified physical environment. This makes them very difficult to apply to the historical evidence, since historians of localities and regions stress a great variety of ecological circumstances. At the very simplest level, there is a frequently noted division into 'wet' and 'dry' regions (see below, pp. 39-40), with 'wet' regions being characterised by surplus labour and large rentier profits, while farms in 'dry' regions were operated by a recognizable peasantry of owner-cultivators using extensive cultivation to minimise risk and subject to interlinked factor and product markets The distinct input requirements of different food crop also fenced soc.al organisation; it is clear, for example, that classic self-Sufficient., independent peasant family farms are more character-tic of dry- and wheat, than of wet-land rice cultivation. Such accounts as Lai's also assume a straightforward chronology in which development, however slow, has been a cumulative process built on the accretions of the past. In practice, as we will see, both agriculture and industry in India experienced a much more erratic type of progress with he form, nature and efficiency of production systems altering considerably as a result of fluctuating internal and external socio-political and economic circumstances.

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[86] Deepak Lal *The Hindu Equilibrium: Cultural Stability and Economic Stagnation, India 1 f o o Bc-1980 AD, Volume 1*, Oxford, 1984.

Both Marxian and new-classical approaches demonstrate the increasing unity of capital, commodity and labour markets across the Indian subcontinent, linking the subsistence sector and the commercial economy together. South Asian economic history was no dualistic we cannot identify and distinguish separate 'modern and traditional sectors each with its own institutions and sphere of operations The linkages and interconnections between the markets for agriculture land labour and capital, and between industrial organisation and the control of labour discipline and wages were elaborate, and often intermixed modern' and 'traditional' forms in a complex and subtle way. The imperial economy of colonial South Asia took the form that it did because of the nature of the indigenous economy while the indigenous economy was shaped in turn by the imperial economy Market relations in cash and kind however imperfect inefficient and often exploitative they may have been suffused the South Asian economy as much as any other in the world throughout the eighteenth nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The extent of market penetration the character of the markets that operate and the type of involvement of various economic groups of producers and consumer in them have often been identified as important determinants of production conditions in Indian agriculture since 1947[87] and these concepts provide a useful framework for understanding the modern economic history of colonial South Asia was well. Many of the capital, labour and commodity markets were interlinked, since the availability of land, credit and employment was often concentrated in the hands of the same small groups of agricultural managers and industrial entrepreneurs, although such interlinking was not constant, and could change in type and intensity over rime. In some sectors of the economy, notably in parts of the rural labour market and in mechanised industry and export-import trade, markets were internalised into institutional structures such as customary ***(jajmani)*** service networks or vertically integrated firms. These institutions represented alternatives to market arrangements, and could replace them, or be replaced by them, under certain circumstances. Where transactions costs were particularly high, especially the costs of labour discipline and recruitment, or the diffusion of information and technological capacity, such internalising institutions were common. They could be created to distort or bypass existing market arrangements by substituting tied for free labour in agriculture, for example, or by integrating manufacturing, sales and distribution with the securing of raw material supply in industry. At times, however, these institutions, could also collapse and fail, and by the end of the colonial period many had to be supported or replaced by state agencies.

[87] Krishna Bharadwaj Production Conditions in Indian Agriculture Cambridge 1974 reprinted in john Harriss (ed.) Rural Development. Yheories of peasant Economy and Agrarian Change London 1982 ch 12: see also her A view of the Commercialization in Indian Agriculture and the Development of Capitalism Journal of Peasant Studies 12 4 1985.

The underlying characteristics of economic growth and development in colonial and post-colonial India were determined by the nature of the markets that decided how any surplus over subsistence was generated, and then divided it between capital, labour, and the state. Imperfections in these markets led to the emergence of public and private economic institutions that altered, replaced and substituted for them over time, affected economic performance and decision-making profoundly, and magnified problems of risk and risk management that were endemic in an underdeveloped economy with high levels of uncertainty. The process of creating economic institutions or markets was not entirely dominated by narrow classes or particular interest groups, but the arrangements that were made tended to favour the few rather than the many, and to reward the owners, or controllers, of scarce resources (land, capital, power) rather than the owners of the plentiful resource, labour. In addition, the colonial regime, which had its own peculiar priorities and purposes, played an important role in both shaping and directing the organisational framework of the economy. Thus the role of political and social power in economic relations was central, and the ideology and scope of the state also played an important role in shaping economic action. While both underconsumptionist and 'rent-seeking' theories focus on important issues, neither are enough, on their own, to analyse the interplay of development and underdevelopment in colonial South Asia fully. We need instead an historical context that can show the pattern of change and *stasis* over time. The chapters that follow will provide this by investigating, in more detail, the indigenous and imperial structures that determined the performance of agriculture, and trade and manufacture, and that shaped the relations between the colonial and post-colonial state and the economy of modern India.

Society causing prolonged and widespread suffering among its constituents. Above all the colonial policy of intensifying demands for land revenue and extracting as large an amount as possible produced a veritable upheaval in Indian villages. In Bengal for example in less than thirty years land revenue collection was raised to nearly double the amount collected under the Mughals. The pattern was repeated in other parts of the country as British rule spread. And aggravating the unhappiness of the farmers was the fact that not even a part of the enhanced revenue was spent on the development of agriculture or the welfare of the cultivator.

Thousand of zamindars and poligars lost control over their land and its revenues either due to the extinction of their rights by the colonial state or by the forced sale of their rights over land because of their inability to meet the exorbitant land revenue demanded. The proud zamindars and poligars resented this loss even more when they were displaced by rank outsiders-government officials and the new men of money – merchants and moneylenders. Thus they as also the old chiefs who had lost their principalities had personal scores to settle with the new rulers.

Peasants and artisans as we have seen earlier had their own reasons to rise up in arms and side with the traditional elite. Increasing demands for land revenue were forcing large numbers of peasants into growing indebtedness or into selling their lands. The new landlords bereft of any traditional paternalism towards their tenants pushed up rents to ruinous heights and evicted them peasantry was reflected in twelve major and numerous minor famines from 1770 to 1857.

The new courts and legal system gave a further fillip to the dispossessors of land and encouraged the rich to oppress the poor. Flogging torture and jailing of the cultivators for arrears of rent or land revenue or interest on debt were quite common. The ordinary people were also hard hit by the prevalence of corruption at the lower levels of the police judiciary and general administration. The petty officials enriched themselves freely at the cost of the poor. The police looted oppressed and tortured the common people at will. William Edwards a British official wrote in 1859 that the police were a scourge to the people and that their oppression and exactions form one of the chief grounds of dissatisfaction with our government.

The ruin of Indian handicraft industries as a result of the imposition of free trade in India and levy of discriminatory tariffs against Indian goods in Britain, pauperized millions of artisans. The misery of the artisans was further compounded by the disappearance of their traditional patrons and buyers, the princes, chieftains, and *zamindars.*

The scholarly and priestly classes were also active in inciting hatred and rebellion against foreign rule. The traditional rulers and ruling elite had financially supported scholars, religious preachers, priests, *pandits* and *maulvis* and men of arts and literature. With the coming of the British and the ruin of the traditional landed and

bureaucratic elite, this patronage came to an end, and all those who had depended on it were impoverished.

Another major cause of the rebellions was the very foreign character of British rule. Like any other people, the Indian people too felt humiliated at being under a foreigner's heel. This feeling of hurt pride inspired efforts to expel the foreigner from their lands.

The civil rebellions began as British rule was established in Bengal and Bihar, and they occurred in area after area as it was incorporated into colonial rule. There was hardly a year without armed opposition or a decade without a major armed rebellion in one part of the country or the other. From 1763 to 1856, there were more than forty major rebellions apart from hundreds of minor ones.

Displaced peasants and demobilized soldiers of Bengal led by religious monks and dispossessed *zamindars* were the first to rise up in the Sanyasi rebellion, made famous by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his novel *Anand Math*, that lasted from 1763 to 1800. It was followed by the Chuar uprising which covered five districts of Bengal and Bihar from 1766 to 1772 and then, again, from 1795 to 1816. Other major rebellions in Eastern India were those of Rangpur and Dinajpur, 1783; Bishnupur and Birbhum, 1799; Orissa *zamindars*, 1804-17; and Sambalpur, 1827-40.

In South India, the Raja of Vizianagram revolted in 1794, the *poligars* of Tamil Nadu during the 1790's, of Malabar and coastal Andhra during the first decade of the 19th century, of Parlekamedi during 181314. Dewan Velu Thampi of Travancore organized a heroic revolt in 1805. The Mysore peasants too revolted in 1830-31. There were major uprisings in Vizagapatnam from 1830-34, Ganjam in 1835 and Kurnool in 1846-47.

In Western India, the chiefs of Saurashtra rebelled repeatedly from 1816 to 1832. The Kolis of Gujarat did the same during 1824-28, 1839 And 1849. Maharashtra was in a perpetual state of revolt after the final defeat of the Peshwa. Prominent were the Bhil uprisings, 1878-31 the Kittur uprising led by chinnava 1824 the Satara uprising 1841 and the revolt of the Gadkaris 1844.

Northern India was no less turbulent The present states of Western U.P. and Haryana rose up in arms in 1824 Other major rebellions were those of Bilaspur, 1805; the laluqdars of Aligarh 1814-17; the Bundelas of Jabalpur, 1842; and Khandesh, ,1852. The second Punjab War in 1848-49 was also in the nature of a popular revolt by the people and the army

These almost continuous rebellions were massive in then totality but were wholly local in their spread and isolated from each other. They were the result of local causes and grievances and were also localized in their effects. They often bore the same character not because they

represented national or common efforts but because they represented common conditions though separated in time and space.

Socially, economically and politically, the semi-feudal leaders of these rebellions were backward looking and traditional in outlook. They still lived in the old world, blissfully unaware and oblivious of the modem world which had knocked down the defences of their society. Their resistance represented no societal alternative. It was centuries-old in form and geological and cultural content. Its basic objective was to restore earlier forms of rule and social relations. Such backward looking and scattered sporadic and disunited uprisings were incapable of fending off or overthrowing foreign rule. The British succeeded in pacifying the rebel areas one by one. They also gave concessions to the less fiery rebel chiefs and *zamindars* m the form of reinstatement, the restoration of their estates and reduction in revenue assessments so long as they agreed to live peacefully under alien authority. The more recalcitrant ones were physically wiped out. Velu Thampi was, for example, publicly hanged even after he was dead.

The suppression of the civil rebellions was a major reason why the Revolt of 1857 did not spread to South India and most of Eastern and Western India. The historical significance of these civil uprisings lies in that they established strong and valuable local traditions of resistance to British rule. The Indian people were to draw inspiration from these traditions in the later nationalist struggle for freedom.

The tribal people, spread over a large part of India, organized hundreds of militant outbreaks and insurrections during the 19th century. These uprisings were marked by immense courage and sacrifice on their part and brutal suppression and veritable butchery on the part of the rulers. The tribals had cause to be upset for a variety of reasons. The colonial administration ended their relative isolation and brought them fully within the ambit of colonialism. It recognized the tribal chiefs as ***zamindars*** and introduced a new system of land revenue and taxation of tribal products. It encouraged the influx of Christian missionaries into the tribal areas Above all, ft introduced a large number of moneylenders, traders and revenue farmers as middlemen among the tribals. These middlemen were the chief instruments for bringing the tribal people within the vortex of the colonial economy and exploitation. The middlemen were outsiders who increasingly took possession of tribal lands and ensnared the tribals in a web of debt. In time, the tribal people increasingly lost their lands and were reduced to the position of agricultural labourers, share-croppers and rack-rented tenants on the land they had earlier brought under cultivation and held on a communal basis.

Colonialism also transformed their relationship with the forest. They had depended on the forest for food, fuel and cattle-feed. They practised shifting cultivation (jhum podu etc.), taking recourse to fresh forest lands when their existing lands showed signs of exhaustion. The colonial government changed all this. It usurped the forest lands and placed restrictions on access to forest products, forest lands and village common lands. It refused to let cultivation shift to new areas.

Oppression and extortion by policemen and other petty officials further aggravated distress among the tribals. The revenue farmers and government agents also intensified and expanded the system of beggar-making the tribals perform unpaid labour.

All this differed in intensity from region to region, but the complete disruption of the old agrarian order of the tribal communities provided the common factor for all the tribal uprisings. These uprisings were broad-based, involving thousands of tribals, often the entire population of a region.

The colonial intrusion and die triumvirate of trader, moneylender and revenue farmer in sum disrupted the tribal identity to a lesser or greater degree. In fact, ethnic ties were a basic feature of the tribal rebellions. The rebels saw themselves not as a discreet class but as having a tribal identity.
At this level the solidarity shown was of a very high order. Fellow tribals were never attacked unless they had collaborated with the enemy.

At the same time, not all outsiders were attacked as enemies. Often there was no violence against the non-tribal poor, who worked in tribal villages in supportive economic roles, or who had social relations with the tribals, such as telis, gwalas, lohars, carpenters, potters, weavers, washermen, barbers, drummers, and bonded labourers and domestic servants of the outsiders. They were not only spared, but were seen as allies. In many cases, the rural poor formed a part of the rebellious tribal bands.

The rebellions normally began at the point where the tribals felt so oppressed that they felt they had no alternative but to fight. This often took the form of spontaneous attacks on outsiders, looting their property and expelling them from their villages. This led to clashes with the colonial authorities. When this happened, the tribals began to move towards armed resistance and elementary organization.

Often, religious and charismatic leaders — messiahs — emerged at this stage and promised divine intervention and an end to their suffering at the hands of the outsiders, and asked their fellow tribals to rise and rebel against foreign authority. Most of these leaders claimed to derive their authority from God. They also often claimed that they possessed magical powers, for example, the power to make the enemies' bullets ineffective. Filled with hope and confidence, the tribal masses tended to follow these leaders to the very end.

The warfare between the tribal rebels and the British armed forces was totally unequal. On one side were drilled regiments armed with the latest weapons and on the other were men and women fighting in roving bands armed with primitive

weapons such as stones, axes, spears and bows and arrows, believing in the magical powers of their commanders. The tribals died in lakhs in this unequal warfare.

Among the numerous tribal revolts, the Santhal *hool* or uprising was the most massive. The Santhals, who live in the area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal, known as Daman-i-koh, rose in revolt; made a determined attempt to expel the outsiders — the *dikus* — and proclaimed the complete 'annihilation' of the alien regime. The social conditions which drove them to insurrection were described by a contemporary in the *Calcutta Review* as follows: 'Zamindars, the police, the revenue and court alas have exercised a combined system of extortions, oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a vanety of petty tyrannies upon the timid and yielding Santhals. Usurious interest on loans of money ranging from 50 to 500 per cent; false measures at the haut and the market, wilful and uncharitable trespass by the rich by means of their untethered cattle, tattoos, ponies and even elephants, on the growing crops of the poorer race; and such like illegalities have been prevalent"

The Santhals considered the dikus and government servants morally corrupt being given to beggary, stealing, lying and drunkenness.

By 1854, the tribal heads, the majhis and parganites, had begun to meet and discuss the possibility of revolting. Stray cases of the robbing of zamindars and moneylenders began to occur. The tribal leaders called an assembly of nearly 6000 Santhals, representing 400 villages, at Bhaganidihi on 30 June 1855. It was decided to raise the banner of revolt, get rid of the outsiders and their colonial masters once and for all, the usher in *Satyug,* 'The Reign of Truth,' and 'True Justice.'

The Santhals believed that their actions had the blessings of God. Sido and Kanhu, the principal rebel leaders, claimed that Thakur (God) had communicated with them and told them to take up arms and fight for independence. Sido told the authorities in a proclamation. 'The ThaCoor has ordered me saving that the country is not Sahibs ... The Thacoor himself will fight. "Therefore, you Sahibs and Soldiers (will) fight the Thacoor himself.

The leaders mobilized the Santhal men and women by organizing huge processions through the villages accompanied by drummers and other musicians. The leaders rode at the head on horses and elephants and in palkis. Soon nearly 60,000 Santhals had been mobilized. Forming bands of 1,500 to 2,000, but rallying in many thousands at the call of drums on particular occasions, they attacked the mahajans and zamindars and their houses, police stations, railway construction sites, the dak (post) carriers — in fact all the symbols of diku exploitation and colonial power.

The Santhal insurrection was helped by a large number of non-tribal and poor dikus. Gwalas (milkmen) and others helped the rebels with provisions and services; lohars (blacksmiths) accompanied the rebel bands, keeping their weapons in good shape.

Once the Government realized the scale of the rebellion, it organized a major military campaign against the rebels. It mobilized tens of regiments under the command of a major-general declared Martial law in the affected areas and offered rewards of upto Rs. 10,000 for the captured of various leaders.

The rebellion was crushed ruthlessly. More than 15,000 Santhals were killed while tens of villages were destroyed. Sido was betrayed and captured and killed in August 1855 while Kanhu was arrested by accident at the tail-end of the rebellion in February 1866. And the Rajmahal Hills were drenched with the blood of the fighting Santhal peasantry. One typical instance of the heroism of Santhal rebles has been narrated by L.S.S.O' Malley. They showed the most reckless courage never knowing when they were beaten and refusing to surrender. On one occasion forty-five Santhals took refuge in a mud hut which they held against the Sepoys. Volley after volley was fired into it ... Each time the Santhals replied with a discharge of arrows. At last when their fire ceased the Sepoy called on him to surrender whereupon the old man rushed upon him and cut him down with his battle axe.

I shall describe briefly three other major tribal rebellions. The Kols of Chhotanagpur rebelled from 1820 to 1837 Thousands of them were massacred before British authority could be re-imposed. The hill tribesmen of rampa in coastal Andhra revolted in March 1879 against the depredations of the government-supported mansabdar and the new restrictive forest regulations. The authorities had to mobilize regiments of infantry a squadron of cavalry and two companies of sappers and miners before the rebels numbering several thousands could be defeated by the end of 1880.

The rebellion (ulgulan) of the Mundra tribesmen led by Birsa Munda occurred during 1899-1900. For over thirty years the Munda sardars had been struggling against the destruction of their system of common land holding by the intrusion of jagirdars thikadars (revenue farmers) and merchant moneylenders.

Birsa born in a poor share-cropper household in 1874 had a vision of god in 1895. He declared himself to be a divine messenger possessing miraculous healing powers. Thousand gathered around him seeing in him a messiah with a new religious massage. Under the influence of the *sardars,* the religious movement soon acquired an agrarian and political content. Birsa began to move from village to village, organizing rallies and mobilizing his followers on religious and political grounds. On Christmas Eve, 1899, Birsa proclaimed a rebellion to establish Munda rule in the land and encouraged 'the killing of *thikadars* and *jagirdars* and Rajas and *Hakims* (rulers) and Christians.' *Satyug* would be established in place of the present-day *Kalyug.* He

declared that 'there was going to be a fight with the *dikus*, the ground would be as red as the red flag with their blood."' The non-tribal poor were not to be attacked.

To bring about liberation, Birsa gathered a force of 6,000 Mundas armed with swords, spears, battle-axes, and bows and arrows. He was, however, captured in the beginning of February 1900 and he died in jail in June. The rebellion had failed. But Birsa entered the realms of legend.

Peasant Movements and Uprisings after 1857

It is worth taking a look at the effects of colonial exploitation of the Indian peasants. Colonial economic policies, the new land revenue system, the colonial administrative and judicial systems, and the ruin of handicrafts leading to the over-crowding of land, transformed the agrarian structure and impoverished the peasantry. In the vast *zamindari* areas, the peasants were left to the tender mercies of the *zamindars* who rack-rented them and compelled them to pay the illegal dues and perform *begar*. In *Ryotwari* areas, the Government itself levied heavy land revenue. This forced the peasants to borrow money from the moneylenders. Gradually, over large areas, the actual cultivators were reduced to the status of tenants-at-will, share-croppers and landless labourers, while their lands, crops and cattle passed into the hands of landlords, trader-moneylenders and rich peasants.

When the peasants could take it no longer, they resisted against the oppression and exploitation; and, they found whether their target was the indigenous exploiter or the colonial administration, that their red enemy, after the barriers were down, was the colonial state.

One form of elemental protest, especially when individuals and small groups found that collective action was not possible though their social condition was becoming intolerable, was to take to crime. Many dispossessed peasants took to robbery, dacoity and what has been called social banditry, preferring these to starvation and social degradation.

The most militant and widespread of the peasant movements was the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60. The indigo planters, nearly all Europeans, compelled the tenants to grow indigo which they processed in factories set up in rural *(mofussil)* areas. From the beginning, indigo was grown under an extremely oppressive system which involved great loss to the cultivators. The planters forced the peasants to take a meager amount as advance and enter into fraudulent contracts. The price paid for the indigo plants was far below the market price. The comment of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, J.B. Grant, was that 'the root of the whole question is the struggle to make the *raiyats* grow indigo plant, without paying them the price of it." The peasant was forced to grow indigo on the best land he had whether or not he wanted to devote his land and labour to more paying crops like rice. At the time of delivery, he was cheated even of the due low price. He also had to pay regular bribes to the planter's officials He was forced to accept an advance. Often he was not in a position to repay it, but even if he could he was not allowed to do so. The advance was used by the planters to compel him to go on cultivating indigo.

Since the enforcement of forced and fraudulent contracts through the courts was a difficult and prolonged process, the planters resorted to a reign of terror to coerce the peasants. Kidnapping, illegal confinement in factory godowns, flogging, attacks on women and children, carrying off cattle, looting, burning and demolition of houses and destruction of crops and fruit trees were some of the methods used by the planters. They hired or maintained bands of *iathiyals* (armed retainers) for the purpose.

In practice, the planters were also above the law. With a few exceptions, the magistrates, mostly European, favoured the planters with whom they dined and hunted regularly. Those, few who tried to be fair were soon transferred. Twenty-nine planters and a solitary Indian *zamindar* were appointed as Honorary Magistrates in 1857, which gave birth to the popular saying je *rakhak se bhakak'* (Our protector is also our devourer).

The discontent of indigo growers in Bengal boiled over in the autumn of 1859 when their case seemed to get Government support Misreading an official letter and exceeding his authority, Hem Chandra Kar Deputy Magistrate of Kalaroa, published on 17 August a proclamation to policemen that in case of disputes relating to Indigo *Ryots,* they *(ryots)* shall retain possession of their own lands, and shall sow on them what crops they please, and the Police will be careful that no Indigo Planter nor anyone else be able to interface in the matter.'2
The news of Kar's proclamation spread all over Bengal, and peasants felt that the time for overthrowing the hated system had come. Initially, the peasants made an attempt to get redressal through peaceful means. They sent numerous petitions to the authorities and organized peaceful demonstrations. Their anger exploded in September 1859 when they asserted their right not to grow Indigo under duress and resisted the physical pressure of the planters and their *lathiyals* backed by the police and the courts.

The beginning was made by the *ryots* of Govindpur village in Nadia district when, under the leadership of Digambar Biswas and Bishnu Biswas, ex-employees of a planter, they gave up indigo cultivation. And when, on 13 September, the planter sent a band of 100 *lathiyals* to attack their village, they organized a counter force armed with lathis and spears and fought back.
The peasant disturbances and indigo strikes spread rapidly to other areas. The peasants refused to take advances and enter into contracts, pledged not to sow indigo, and defended themselves from the planters' attacks with whatever weapons came to hand — spears, slings, lathis, bows and arrows, bricks, bhel-fruit, and earthen-pots (thrown by women).

The indigo strikes and disturbances flared up again in the spring of 1860 and encompassed all the indigo districts of Bengal. Factory after factory was attacked by hundreds of peasants and village after village bravely defended itself. In many cases,

the efforts of the police to intervene-and arrest peasant leaders were met with an attack on policemen and police posts.

The planters then attacked with another weapon, their *zamindari* powers. They threatened the rebellious *ryots* with eviction or enhancement of rent. The *ryots* replied by going on a rent strike. They refused to pay the enhanced rents; and they physically resisted attempts to evict them. They also gradually learnt to use the legal machinery to enforce their rights. They joined together and raised funds to fight court cases filed against them, and they initiated legal action on their own against the planters. They also used the weapon of social boycott to force a planter's servants to leave him.

Ultimately, the planters could not withstand the united resistance of the *ryots,* and they gradually began to close their factories. The cultivation of indigo was virtually wiped out from the districts of Bengal by the end of I860.

A major reason for the success of the Indigo Revolt was the tremendous initiative, cooperation, organization and discipline of the ryots. Another was the complete unity among Hindu and Muslim peasants. Leadership for the movement was provided by the more well-off ryots and in some cases by petty zamindars, moneylenders and ex-employees of the planters.

A significant feature of the Indigo Revolt was the role of the intelligentsia of Bengal which organized a powerful campaign in support of the rebellious peasantry. It carried on newspaper campaigns, organized mass meetings, prepared memoranda on peasants' grievances and supported them in their legal battles. Outstanding in this respect was the role of Harish Chandra Mukherji, editor of die Hindoo Patriot. He published regular reports from his correspondents in the rural areas on planters' oppression, officials' partisanship and peasant resistance. He himself wrote with passion, anger and deep knowledge of the problem which he raised to a high political plane. Revealing an insight into the historical and political significance of the Indigo Revolt, he wrote in May 1860: 'Bengal might well be proud of its peasantry ... Wanting power, wealth, political knowledge and even leadership, the peasantry of Bengal have brought about a revolution inferior in magnitude and importance to none that has happened in the social history of any other country . . . With the Government against them, the law against them, the tribunals against them, the Press against them, they have achieved a success of which the benefits will reach all orders and the most distant generations of our countrymen.'

Din Bandhu Mitra's play, Neel Darpan, was to gain great fame for vividly portraying the oppression by the planters.

The intelligentsia's role in die Indigo Revolt was to have an abiding impact on the emerging nationalist intellectuals. In their very political childhood they had given support to a popular

peasant movement against the foreign planters. This was to establish a tradition with long term implications for the national movement

Missionaries were another group which extended active support to the indigo ryots in their struggle.

The Government's response to the Revolt was rather restrained and not as harsh as in the case of civil rebellions and tribal uprisings. It had just undergone the harrowing experience of the Santhal uprising and the Revolt of 1857. It was also able to see, in time, the changed temper of the peasantry and was influenced by the support extended to the Revolt by the intelligentsia and the missionaries. It appointed a commission to inquire into the problem of indigo cultivation. Evidence brought before the Indigo Commission and its final report exposed the coercion and corruption underlying the entire system of indigo cultivation. The 'result was the mitigation of the worst abuses of the system. The Government issued a notification in November 1860 that *ryots* could not be compelled to sow indigo and that it would ensure that all disputes were settled by legal means. But the planters were already closing down the factories — they felt that they could not make their enterprises pay without the use of force and fraud.

Large parts of East Bengal were engulfed by agrarian unrest during the 1870s and early 1880s. The unrest was caused by the efforts of the *zamindars* to enhance rent beyond legal limits and to prevent the tenants from acquiring occupancy rights under Act X of 1859. This they tried to achieve through illegal coercive methods such as forcell (eviction and seizure of crops and cattle as well as by dragging the tenants into costly litigation in the courts.

The peasants were no longer in a mood to tolerate such oppression. In May 1873, an agrarian league or combination was formed in Yusufshahi Parganah in Pabna district to resist the demands of the *zamindars*. The league organized mass meetings of peasants. Large crowds 'of peasants would gather and march through villages frightening *the-zamindars* and appealing to other peasants to join them. The league organized a rent-strike — the *ryots* were to refuse to pay the enhanced rents — and challenged the *zamindars* in the courts. Funds were raised from the *ryots* to meet the costs. The struggle gradually spread throughout Pabna and then to the other districts of East Bengal. Everywhere agrarian leagues were organized, rents were withheld and *zamindars* fought *m* the courts. The main form of struggle was that of legal resistance. There was very little violence — it only occurred when the *zamindars* tried to compel the *ryots* to submit to their terms by force. There were only a few cases of looting of the houses of the *zamindars*. A few attacks on police stations took place and the peasants also resisted attempts to execute court decrees But such cases were rather rare. Hardly any *zamindar* or *zaminda'rs* agent
was killed or seriously injured. In the course of the movement, the *ryots* developed a strong awareness of the law and their legal rights and the ability to combine and form associations for peaceful agitation.

Though peasant discontent smouldered till 1885, many of the disputes were settled partially under official pressure and persuasion and partially out of the *zamindar's* fear that the united peasantry would drag them into prolonged and costly litigation. Many peasants were able to acquire occupancy rights and resist enhanced rents.

The Government rose to the defence of the *zamindars* wherever violence took place. Peasants were then arrested on a large scale. But it assumed a position of neutrality as far as legal battles or peaceful agitations were concerned. The Government also promised to undertake legislation to protect the tenants from the worst aspects of *zamindari* oppression, a promise it fulfilled however imperfectly in 1885 when the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed.

What persuaded the *zamindars* and the colonial regime to reconcile themselves to the movement was the fact that its aims were limited to the redressal of the immediate grievances of the peasants and the enforcement of the existing legal rights and norms. It was not aimed at the *zamindari* system. It also did not have at any stage an anti-colonial political edge. The agrarian leagues kept within the bounds of law, used the legal machinery to fight the *zamindars,* and raised no anti-British demands. The leaders often argued that they were against *zamindars* and not the British. In fact, the leaders raised the slogan that the peasants want 'to be the *ryots* of Her Majesty the Queen and of Her only.' For this reason, official action was based on the enforcement of the Indian Penal Code and it did not take the form of armed repression as in the case of the Santhal and Munda uprisings.

Once again the Bengal peasants showed complete Hindu-Muslim solidarity, even though the majority of the *ryots* were Muslim and the majority of *zamindars* Hindu. There was also no effort to create peasant solidarity on the grounds of religion or caste.

In this case, too, a number of young Indian intellectuals supported the peasants' cause. These included Bankim Chandra Chatterjea and R.C. Dutt. Later, in the early 1880s, during the discussion of the Bengal Tenancy Bill, the Indian Association, led by Surendranath Banerjea, Anand Mohan Bose and Dwarkanath Ganguli, campaigned for the rights of tenants, helped form *ryot'* unions, and organized huge meetings of upto 20,000 peasants in the districts in support of the Rent Bill. The Indian Association and many of the nationalist newspapers went further than the Bill. They asked for permanent fixation of the tenant's rent. They warned that since the Bill would confer occupancy rights even on ram-cultivators, it would lead to the growth of middlemen — the *jotedars* — who would be as oppressive as the *zamindars* so far as the actual activators were concerned. They, therefore, demanded that the right of occupancy should go with actual cultivation of the soil, that is, in most cases to the under-*ryots* and the tenants-at-will.

A major agrarian outbreak occurred in the Poona and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra in 1875. Here, as part of the Ryotwari system, land revenue was settled directly with the

peasant who was also recognized as the owner of his land. Like the peasants in other Ryotwari areas, the Deccan peasant also found it difficult to pay land revenue without getting into the clutches of the moneylender and increasingly losing his land. This led to growing tension between the peasants and the moneylenders most of whom were outsiders — Marwaris or Gujaratis.

Three other developments occurred at this time. During the early 1860s, the American Civil War had led to a rise in cotton exports which had pushed up prices. The end of the Civil War in 1864 brought about an acute depression in cotton exports and a crash in prices. The ground slipped from under the peasants' feet. Simultaneously, in 1867, the Government raised land revenue by nearly 50 per cent. The situation was worsened by a succession of bad harvests.

To pay the land revenue under these conditions, the peasants had to go to the money lender who took the opportunity to further tighten his grip on the peasant and his land. The peasant began to turn against the perceived cause of his misery, the moneylender. Only a spark was needed to kindle the fire.

A spontaneous protest movement began in December 1874 in Kardah village in Sirur *taluq*. When the peasants of the village failed to convince the local moneylender, Kalooram, that he should not act on a count decree and pull down a peasant's house, they organized a complete social boycott of the 'outsider' moneylenders to compel them to accept their demands in a peaceful manner. They refused to buy from their shops. No peasant would cultivate their fields. The *bullotedars* (village servants) — barbers, washermen, carpenters, ironsmiths, shoemakers and others would not serve them. Mo domestic servant would work in their houses and when the socially isolated moneylenders decided to run away to the *taluq* headquarters, nobody would agree to drive their carts. The peasants also imposed social sanctions against those peasants and *bullotedars* who would not join the boycott of moneylenders. This social boycott spread rapidly to the villages of Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Satara districts.

The social boycott was soon transformed into agrarian riots when it did not prove very effective. On 12 May, peasants gathered in Supa, in Bhimthari *taluq*, on the bazar day and began a systematic attack on the moneylenders' houses and shops. They seized and publicly burnt debt bonds and deeds — signed under pressure, in ignorance, or through fraud — decrees, and other documents dealing with their debts. Within days the disturbances spread to other villages of the Poona and Ahmednagar districts.

There was very little violence in this settling of accounts. Once the moneylenders' instruments of oppression — debt bonds — were surrendered, no need for further violence was felt In most places, the 'riots' were demonstrations of popular feeling and of the peasants' newly acquired unity and strength. Though moneylenders' houses and shops were looted and burnt in Supa, this did not occur in other places.

The Government acted with speed and soon succeeded in repressing the movement. The active phase of the movement lasted about three weeks, though stray incidents occurred for another month or two. As in the case of the Pabna Revolt, the Deccan disturbances had very limited objectives. There was once again an absence of anti-colonial consciousness. It was, therefore, possible for the colonial regime to extend them a certain protection against the moneylenders through the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act of 1879.

Once again, the modem nationalist intelligentsia of Maharashtra supported the peasants' cause. Already, in 1873-74, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, led by Justice Ranade, had organized a successful campaign among the peasants, as well as at Poona and Bombay, against the land revenue settlement of 1867. Under its impact, a large number of peasants had refused to pay the enhanced revenue. This agitation had generated a mentality of resistance among the peasants which contributed to the rise of peasant protest in 1875. The Sabha as well as many of the nationalist Newspapers also supported the D.A.R Bill.

Peasant resistance also developed in other parts of the country. Mappila outbreaks were endemic in Malabar. Vasudev Balwant Phadke, an educated clerk, raised a Ramosi peasant force of about 50 in Maharashtra during 1879, and organized social banditry on a significant scale. The Kuka Revolt in Punjab was led by Baba Ram Singh and had elements of a messianic movement. It was crushed when 49 of the rebels were blown up by a cannon in 1872. High land revenue assessment led to a series of peasant riots in the plains of Assam during 1893-94. Scores were killed in brutal firings and bayonet charges.

There was a certain shift in the nature of peasant movements after 1857. Princes, chiefs and landlords having been crushed or co-opted, peasants emerged as the main force in agrarian movements. They now fought directly for their own demands, centered almost wholly on economic issues, and against their immediate enemies, foreign planters and indigenous *zamindars* and moneylenders. Their struggles were directed towards specific and limited objectives and redressal of particular grievances. They did not make colonialism their target. Nor was their objective the ending of the system qf-their subordination and exploitation. They did not aim at 'turning the world upside down.'

The territorial reach of these movements was also limited. They were confined to particular localities with no mutual communication or linkages. They also lacked continuity of struggle or long-term organization. Once the specific objectives of a movement were achieved, its organization, as also peasant solidarity built around it, dissolved and disappeared. Thus, the Indigo strike, the Pabna agrarian leagues and the social-boycott movement of the Deccan *ryots* left behind no successors. Consequently, at no stage did these movements threaten British supremacy or even undermine it.

Peasant protest after 1857 often represented an instinctive and spontaneous response of the peasantry to its social condition, ft was the result of excessive and unbearable oppression,

undue and unusual deprivation and exploitation, and a threat to the peasant's existing, established position. The peasant often rebelled only when he felt that it was not possible to carry on in the existing manner.

He was also moved by strong notions of legitimacy, of what was justifiable and what was not That is why he did not fight for land ownership or against landlordism but against eviction and undue enhancement of rent He did not object to paying interest on the sums he had borrowed; he hit back against fraud and chicanery by the moneylender and when the latter went against tradition in depriving him of his land. He did not deny the state's right to collect a tax on land but objected when the level of taxation overstepped all traditional bounds. He did not object to the foreign planter becoming his *zamindar* but resisted the planter when he took away his freedom to decide what crops to grow and refused to pay him a proper price for his crop.

The peasant also developed a strong awareness of his legal rights and asserted them in and outside the courts. And if an effort was made to deprive him of his legal rights by extra-legal means or by manipulation of the law and law courts, he countered with extra-legal means of his own. Quite often, he believed that the legally-constituted authority approved his actions or at least supported his claims and cause. In all the three movements discussed here, he acted in the name of this authority, the *sarkar.*

In these movements, the Indian peasants showed great courage and a spirit of sacrifice, remarkable organizational abilities, and a solidarity that cut across religious and caste lines. They were also able to wring considerable concessions from the colonial state. The latter, too, not being directly challenged, was willing to compromise and mitigate the harshness of the agrarian system though within the broad limits of the colonial economic and political structure. In this respect, the colonial regime's treatment of the post-1857 peasant rebels was qualitatively different from its treatment of the participants in the civil rebellions, the Revolt of 1857 and the tribal uprisings which directly challenged colonial political power.

A major weakness of the 19th century peasant movements was the lack of an adequate understanding of colonialism — of colonial economic structure and the colonial state — and of the social framework of die movements themselves. Nor did the 19th century peasants possess a new ideology and a new social, economic and political programme based on an analysis of the newly constituted colonial society. Their struggles, however militant, occurred within the framework of the old societal order.

They lacked a positive conception of an alternative society - a conception which would unite the people in a common struggle on a wide regional and all-India plane and help develop long-term political movement. An all-India leadership capable of evolving a strategy of struggle that would unify and mobilize peasants and other

sections of society for nation-wide political activity could be formed only on the basis of such a new conception such a fresh vision of society. In the absence of such a new ideology programme leadership and strategy of struggle it was not too difficult for the colonial state on the one hand to reach a conciliation and clam down the rebellious peasants by the grant of some concessions and, on the other hand, to suppress them with the full use of *its* force This weakness was of course, not a blemish on the character of the peasantry winch was perhaps incapable of grasping on its own the new and complex phenomenon of colonialism. That needed the efforts of a modern intelligentsia which was itself just coming into existence.

Most of these weaknesses were overcome in the 20th century when peasant dement was merged with the general anti-imperialist discontent and their political activity became a part of the wider anti-imperialist' movement. And, of course, the peasants' participation in the larger national movement not only strengthened the fight against the foreigner it also simultaneously enabled them to organize Powerful struggles around their class demands and to create modem peasant organizations

How Does Culture Matter?

AMARTYA SEN

Introduction

Sociologists, anthropologists, and historians have often commented on the tendency of economists to pay inadequate attention to culture in investigating the operation of societies in particular. While we can consider many counterexamples to the alleged neglect of culture by economists, beginning at least with Adam Smith (1776/1976,1790/1976), John Stuart Mill (1859/1974, 1861/1962), or Alfred Marshall (1891), nevertheless, as a general criticism, the charge is, to a considerable extent, justified.

This neglect (or perhaps more accurately, comparative indifference) is worth remedying, and economists can fruitfully pay more attention to the influence of culture on economic and social matters. Further, development agencies such as the World Bank may also reflect, at least to some extent, this neglect, if only because they are so predominately influenced by the thinking of economists and financial experts. The economist' skepticism of the role of culture may thus be indirectly reflected in the outlooks and approaches of institutions like the World Bank. No matter how serious this neglect is (and here assessments can differ), the cultural dimension of development requires closer scrutiny in development analysis. It is important to investigate the different ways- and they can be very diverse- in which culture should be taken into account in examining the challenges of development, and in assessing the demands of sound economic strategies.

The issue is not whether culture matters, to consider the title of an important and highly successful book jointly edited by Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (2000). That it must be, given the pervasive influence of culture in human life. The real issue, rather, is how-not whether- culture matters. What are the different ways in which culture may influence development? How can the influence be better under-stood, and how might they modify or alter the development policies that seem appropriate? The interest lies in the nature and forms of the connections and on their implications for action and policy, not merely in the general-and hardly deniable-belief that culture does matter.

I discuss these "how" questions in this essay, but in the process I must also take up some "how not" questions. There is some evidence, I shall argue, that in the anxiety to take adequate note of the role of culture, there is sometimes a temptation to take rather formulaic and simplistic views of the impact of culture on the process of development. For example, there seem to be many supporters of the belief- held explicitly or by implication- that the fates of countries are effectively sealed by the

nature of their respective cultures. This would be not only a heroic oversimplification, but it would also entail some assignment of hopelessness to countries that are seen as having the "wrong" kind of culture. This is not just politically and ethically repulsive, but more immediately, it is, I would argue, also epistemic nonsense. So a second object of this essay is to take up these "how not" issues.

The third object of the chapter is to discuss the role of learning from each other in the field of culture. Even though such transmission and education may be an integral part of the process of development, their role is frequently underestimated. Indeed, since each culture is often taken, not implausibly, to be unique, there can be a tendency to take a somewhat insular view of culture. In understanding the process of development, this can be particularity deceptive and substantively counterproductive. Indeed, one of the most important roles of culture lies in the possibility of learning from each other, rather than celebrating or lamenting the frigidly delineated cultural boxes in which the people of the world are firmly classified by muscular taxonomists.

Finally, while discussing the importance of intercultural and inter country communication, I must also discuss the threat-real or perceived- of globalization and the asymmetry of power in the contemporary world. The view that local cultures are in danger of destruction has often been expressed, and the belief that something should be done to resist this can have considerable plausibility. How this possible threat should be under-stood and what can be done to address- and if necessary counter- it are also important subjects for development analysis. That is the fourth and final issue that I intend to scrutinize.

Connections

It is particularly important to identify the different ways in which culture can matter to development (Rao and Walton, this volume; Wolfensohn 2000). The following categories would seem to have some immediacy as well as far-reaching relevance.

Culture as a constitutive part of development. We can begin with the question: what is development for? The furtherance of well-being and freedoms that we seek in development cannot but include the enrichment of human lives through literature, music, fine arts, and other forms of cultural expression and practice, which we have reason to value. When Julius Caesar said of Cassius, "He hears no music: seldom he smiles," this was not meant to be high praise for Cassius's quality of life. To have a high GNP per head but little music, arts, literature, etc., would not amount to a major developmental success. In one form or another, culture engulfs our lives, our desires, our frustrations, our ambitions, and the freedoms that we seek. The freedom and opportunity for cultural activities are among the basic freedoms the enhancement of which can be seen to be constitutive of development.

Economically remunerative cultural activities and objects. Various activities that are economically remunerative may be directly or indirectly dependent on cultural facilities and more generally on the cultural environment. The linkage of tourism with cultural sites (including historical ones) is obvious enough The presence or absence of crime or welcoming traditions may also be critical to tourism and in general to domestic as well as cross-boundary interactions. Music, dancing, and other cultural activities, may also have a large commercial- often global-market. The presence of centres of such artistic activities can, in addition, help to attract people to particular countries or regions, with various indirect effects.

There can, of course, be room for doubt as to whether cultural- including religious- objects or sites should be used for the purpose of earning money, and it may well be decided that in some cases, in which the significance of the objects or sites are threatened by commercial use, the opportunity of darning an income should be forgone. But even after excluding commercial uses that can be threatening, there will tend to remain plenty of other opportunities to combine economic use with cultural pursuits. Furthermore, people who come to visit well-administered sites of cultural or religious importance, without any direct commercial involvement, could still, indirectly, boost the tourist trade of the country or region as a whole

Cultural factors influence economic behavior. Even though some economists have been tempted by the idea that all human beings behave in much the same way (for example, relentlessly maximize their self-interest defined in a thoroughly insulated way), there is plenty of evidence to indicate that this is not in general so. Cultural influences can' make a major difference to work ethics, responsible conduct, spirited motivation, dynamic management, Entrepreneurial initiatives, willingness to take risks, and a variety of other aspects of human behavior which can be critical to economic success (Sen 1973, 1982, Basu 1980 Hirschman 1982; Margolis 1982; Akerlof 1984; Frank 1985, 1988; Granovetter 1985; Elster 1986; Mansbridge 1990; Ostrom 1990, 1998; Greif 1994a,b; Brittan and Hamlin 1995; Fukuyama 1995; Zamagni 1995; Becker 1996; Hausman and McPherson 1996; Frey I997a,b; Ben-Ner and r^utierman 1998; Akerlof and Kranton 20O0;Throsby 2001).

Also, successful operation of an exchange economy depends on mutual trust and implicit norms. When these behavioral modes are plentifully there, it is easy to overlook their role. But when they nave to be cultivated; that lacuna can be a major barrier to economic success. There are plenty of examples of the problems faced in precapitalist economies because of the underdevelopment of basic virtues of commerce and business.

The culture of behavior relates to many other features of economic success. It relates, for example, to the prevalence or absence of economic corruption and its linkages with organized crime. In Italian discussions on this subject, in which I was privileged to take part through advising the Anti-Mafia Cornmission of the Italian

parliament, the role and reach of implicit values was much discussed. Culture also has an important role in encouraging environment-friendly behavior (Ostrom 1990, 1998; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Puntam 1993). The behavioral contribution of culture would vary with the challenges encountered in the process of economic development.
Culture and political participation: Participation in civil interactions and political activities is influenced by cultural conditions. The tradition of public discussion and participatory interactions can be very critical to the process of politics, and can be important for the establishment, preservation, and practice of democracy. The culture of participation can be a critical civic virtue, as was extensively discussed by Condorcet, among other leading thinking of European Enlightenment (Condorcet 1795/1955; Hume 1777/1966; Smith 1790/1976).

Aristotle did, of course, point out that human beings tend to have a natural inclination toward civil interaction with each other. And yet the extent of political participation can vary between societies. In particular, political inclinations can be suppressed not only by authoritarian rules and restrictions, but also by a "culture of fear" that political suppression can generate. There can also be a "culture of indifference" drawing on skepticism that turns into apathy Political participation is critically important for development, both through its effects on the assessment of ways and means, and even through its role in the formation and consolidation of values in terms of which development has to be assessed (Sen 1999).

Social solidarity and association: Aside from economic interactions and political participation, even the operation of social solidarity and mutual support can be strongly influenced by culture. The success of social living is greatly dependent on what people may spontaneously do for each other. This can profoundly influence the working of the society, including the care of its less fortunate members as well as preservation and guardian- ship of common assets. The sense of closeness to others in the community can be a major asset for that community The advantages flowing from solidarity and supportive interactions have received much attention recently through the literature on "social capital" (Ostrom 1990, 1998; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Putnam 1993).

This is an important new area of social investigation. There is, however, a need to scrutinize the nature of "social capital" as "capital"—in the sense of a general purpose resource (as capital is taken to be). The same sentiments and inclinations can actually work in opposite directions, depending on the nature of the group involved. For example, solidarity within a particular group (for example, long-term residents of a region) can go with a less than friendly view of nonmembers of that group (such as new immigrants).The influence of the same community-centered thinking can be both positive for intercommunity relations and negative in generating or sustaining exclusionary tendencies (including violent "anti-immigrant" sentiments and actions, as can be observed in some regions of impeccable "within

community "solidarity). Identity-based thinking can have dichotomous features, since a strong sense of group affiliation can have a cementing role within that group while encouraging rather severe treatment of nonmembers (seen as "others" who do not "belong"). If this dichotomy is right, then it may be a mistake to treat "social capital" as a general-purpose asset (as capital is, in general, taken to be), rather than as an asset for some relations and a liability for others. There is, thus, room for some searching scrutiny of the nature and operation of the important, but in some ways problematic, concept of "social capital."

Cultural sites and recollection of past heritage: Another constructive possibility is the furtherance of a clearer and broader understanding of a country's or community's past through systematic exploration of its cultural history. For example, by supporting historical excavations, explorations and related research, development programs can help to facilitate a fuller appreciation of the breadth of—and internal variations within—particular cultures and traditions. History often includes much greater variety of cultural influences and traditions than tends to be allowed by intensely political—and frequently a historical—interpretations of the present When this is the case, historical objects, sites and records can help to offset some of the frictions of confrontational modem politics.

For example, Arab history includes a long tradition of peaceful relation with Jewish populations. Similarly, Indonesian past carries powerful records of simultaneous flourishing of Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian cultures, side by side with the Islamic traditions. Butrint in Albania as a historical site shows flourishing presence of Greek, Roman, and later Christian cultures, as well as Islamic history. The highlighting of a diverse past that may go with the excavation, preservation, and accessibility of historical objects and sites can, thus, have a possible role in promoting toleration of diversity in contemporary settings, and in countering confrontational use of "monocultural" readings of a nation's past.
For example, the recent attempt by Hindu activists to see India as just a "Hindu country, in which practitioners of other religions must have a less privileged position, clashes with the great diversity of Indian history. This includes a thousand years of Buddhist predominance (with sites ah over India), a long history of Jain culture, conspicuous presence of Christians from the fourth century and of Parsees from the eighth, Muslim settlements of Arab.traders in South India from about the same time, massive interactions between Muslims and Hindus all over the country (including new departures in painting, music, literature, and architecture), the birth and flourishing of Sikhism (as a new Indian religion that drew on but departed from previous ones), and so on. The recollection of history can be a major ally in the cultivation of toleration and celebration of diversity, and these are-directly and indirectly-among important features of development.

Cultural influences on value formation and evolution: Not only is it in the case that cultural factors figure among the ends and means of developments, they can also

have a central role even in the formation of values. This is turn can be influential in the identification of our ends and the recognition of plausible and acceptable instruments to achieve those ends For example open public discussion—itself a cultural achievement of significance—can be powerfully influential in the emergence of new norms and fresh priorities.

Indeed, value formation is an interactive process, and the culture of talking and listening can play a significant part in making these interactions possible. As new standard, emerge, it is public discussion as well as proximate emulation that may spread the new norms across a region and ultimately between regions. For example, the emergence of norms of low fertility rates, or nondiscrimination between boys and girls, or wanting to send children to schools, and so on, are not only vitally important features of development, they may be greatly influenced by a culture of free discussion and open public debate, without political barriers or social suppression (Basu 1992; Sen, Germain, and Chen 1994; Dreze and Sen 1995, 2002).

Integration

In seeing the role of culture in development, it is particularly important to place culture in an adequately capacious framework. The reasons for this are not hard to seek First, influential as culture is, it is not uniquely pivotal in determining our lives and identities' Other things such as class race, gender, profession, and politics also matter, and can matter powerfully. Our cultural identity is only one of many aspects of our self- realization and is only one influence among a great many that can inspire and influence what we do and how we do it. Further, our behavior depends not only on our values and predispositions, but also on the hard facts of fee presence or absence of relevant institutions and on the incentives-prudential or morai-they generate (North 1981, 1990; Ostrom 1990, 1998; Douglas 1992;Blau 1993 Goody 1996; Bowles 1998; Platteau 2000; Arizps, this volume; Sen 1984).

Second, culture is not a homogeneous attribute- there can be great variations even within the same general cultural milieu. Cultural determinists often underestimate the extent of heterogeneity within what is taken to be "one" distinct culture. Discordant voices are often "internal", rather than coming from outside. Since culture has many aspects, hetero-geneity can also arise from the particular components of culture on which we decide to concentrate (for example, whether we look particularly at religion, ore at literature, or at music, or generally at the style of living).

Third, Culture absolutely does not sit still. Any presumption of stationarity- explicit or implicit—can be disastrously deceptive. To talk of, say, the Hindu culture, or for that matter the Indian culture, taken to be well defined in a temporally stationary way, not only overlooks the great variations within each of these categories, but also ignores their evolution and their large variations over time. The temptation toward

using cultural determinism often takes the hopeless form of trying to fix the cultural anchor on a rapidly moving boat.

Finally, cultures interact with each other and cannot be seen as insulated structures. The isolationalist view—often implicitly presumed—can be deeply delusive (Goody 1996; Throsby 2001). Sometimes we may be only vaguely aware how an influence came 'from outside, but it need not be unimportant for that reason. For example, while chili was unknown in India before the Portuguese brought it there in the i6th century, it is now a thoroughly Indian spice. Cultural features—from the most trivial to the most profound—can change radically, sometimes leaving little 'trace of the past behind.

Taking culture to be independent, unchanging and unchangeable can indeed be very problematic. But that, on the other hand, is no reason for not taking full note of the importance of culture seen in an adequately broad perspective. It is certainly possible to pay adequate attention to culture, along with taking into account all the qualifications just discussed. Indeed, if culture is recognized to be nonhomogeneous, nonstatic, and interactive, and if the importance of culture is integrated with rival sources of influence, then culture can be a very positive and constructive part in our understanding of human behavior and of social and economic development.

Bigotry and Alienation

However, the "how not" issue does deserve extremely serious attention, since rapid-fire cultural generalizations can not only undermine a deeper understanding of the role of culture, but also serve as a tool of sectarian prejudices, social discrimination, and even political tyranny. Simple cultural generalizations have great power in fixing our way of thinking, and often enough they are not just harmless fun. The fact that such generalizations abound in popular beliefs and in informal communication is easily recognized. Not only are these under examined implicit beliefs the subject matter of many racist jokes and ethnic slurs, they sometimes surface as pernicious grand theories. When there is an accidental correlation between cultural prejudice and social observation (no matter how casual), a theory is born, and it may refuse to die even after the chance correlation vanishes altogether.

For example, concocted jokes against the Irish (such crudities as "how many Irishmen do you need to change a light bulb"), which have had some currency in England for a long time, appeared to fit well with the depressing predicament of the Irish economy, when the Irish economy was doing quite badly. But when the Irish economy started growing astonishingly rapidly-indeed faster than any other European economy (as it did, for many years) - the cultural stereotyping and its allegedly profound economic and social relevance were not junked as sheer and unmitigated rubbish. Theories have lives of their own, quite defiantly of the phenomenal world that can be actually observed.

As it happens, cultural prejudice did play a role in the treatment that Ireland received from the British government, and had a pan even in the non prevention of the famines of the 18405, which killed a higher proportion of the population than in any other recorded famine. Joel Mokyr (1983) has discussed the contribution of cultural alienation in London's treatment of Irish problems. As Lebow has argued, while poverty in Britain was typically attributed to economic change and fluctuations, Irish poverty was widely viewed in England as being caused by laziness, indifference, and ineptitude, so that "Britain's mission" was not seen as one to alleviate Irish distress but to civilize her people and to lead them to feel and act like human beings."

The cultural roots of the Irish famines extend, in this sense, at least as far back as Spenser's Faerie Queene, published in 1590, and perhaps even earlier. The art of blaming the victims, plentifully present in the Faerie Queene itself, survived through the famines of the 18405, and the Irish taste for potato was added to the list of the calamities which the natives had, in English view, brought on themselves. Charles Edward Trevelyan, the Head of the Treasury during the famines, expressed his belief that Britain had done what it could for Ireland, even as the famine—with little public relief—lolled rampantly, and even as ship after ship, laden with wheat, oats, cattle, pigs, eggs, and butter, sailed down the Shannon, bound for England (which had greater purchasing power than starving Ireland and could buy what the Irish—bit by the potato blight—could not afford).Trevelyan also pointed to some remarkable cultural explanations of the hunger, including: "There is scarcely a woman of the peasant class in the West of Ireland whose culinary art exceeds the boiling of a potato."

The connection between cultural bigotry and political tyranny can be very close. The asymmetry of power between the ruler and ruled can be combined with cultural prejudices in explaining failures of governance, as is spectacularly observed through the Irish famines of the 1840s (O Grada 1989; Eagleton 1995; Mokyr 1983; Woodham-Smith 1962). Similar use of cultural prejudice for political irresponsibility (or worse) can also be seen in the history of European empires in Asia and Africa. Winston Churchill's famous remark that the Bengal famine of 1943 was caused by the tendency of people there to "breed like rabbits" belongs to this general tradition of blaming the colonial victim, and it had a profound effect in crucially delaying famine relief in that disastrous famine. Cultural critique of the victims can be used by the rulers to justify hugely inefficient - as well as deeply iniquitous-tyrannies.

Cultural Determinism

While the marriage of cultural prejudice and political asymmetry can be quite lethal, the need to be cautious about jumping to cultural conclusions is more pervasive. It can even influence the way experts see the nature and challenges of economic

development. Theories are often derived from fairly scanty evidence. Half-truths or quarter-truths can grossly mislead—sometimes even more than straightforward falsity, which is easier to expose.
Consider, for example, the following argument from the influential and important book jointly edited by Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntingdon called Culture Matters (to which I referred earlier), and in particular from Huntington's introductory essay in that volume called "Cultures Count":

In the early 1990. I happened to come across economic data on Ghana and South Korea in the early 1960s, and I was astonished to see how similar their economies were then. Thirty years later, South Korea had become an industrial giant with the fourteenth largest economy in the world, multinational corporations, major exports of automobiles, electronic equipment, and other sophisticated manufactures, and per capital income approximately that of Greece. Moreover it was on its way to the consolidation of democratic institutions. No such changes had occurred in Ghana, whose per capita income was now about one-fifteenth that of South Koreas. How could this extraordinary difference in development be explained? Undoubtedly, many factors played a role, but it seemed to me that culture had to be a large part of the explanation. South Koreans valued thrift, investment, hard work, education, organization, and discipline. Ghanians had different values. In short, cultures count. (Harrison and Huntington 2000, xiii)

There may well be something of interest in this engaging comparison (perhaps even a quarter-truth torn out of context), and the contrast does call for probing examination. And yet, as used in the explanation just cited, the causal story is extremely deceptive. There were many important differences other than their cultural predispositions—between Ghana and Korea in the 19605 when they appeared to Huntington to be much the same, except for culture. First, the class structures in the two countries were quite different, with a very much bigger- and proactive - role of business classes in South Korea. Second, the politics were very different too, with the government in South Korea willing and eager to play a prime-moving role in initiating a business-centered economic development in a way that did not apply to Ghana. Third, the close relationship between the Korean economy and the Japanese economy, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other, made a big difference, at least in the early stages of Korean development Fourth—and perhaps most important—by the 19605 South Korea had acquired a much higher literacy rate and much more expanded school system than Ghana had. The Korean changes had been brought about in the post-World War II period, largely through resolute public policy, and it could not be seen just as a reflection of age-old Korean culture (McGinn et al. 1980).

On the basis of the slender scrutiny offered, it is hard to justify either the cultural triumphalism in favor of Korean culture, or the radical pessimism about Ghana's future that the reliance on cultural determinism would tend to suggest. -Neither can

be derived from the over rapid and under analyzed comparison that accompanies the heroic diagnostics. As it happens, South Korea did not rely just on its traditional culture. From the 1940s onward, it deliberately followed lessons from abroad to use public policy to advance its backward school education.

And it has continued to learn from global experience even today. Sometimes the lessons have come from experience of failure rather than success. The East Asian crisis that overwhelmed South Korea among other countries in the region brought out some of the penalties of not having a fully functioning democratic political system, when things moved up and up together, the voice that democracy gives to the underdog may not have been immediately missed, but when the economic crisis came, and divided they fell (as they typically do in such a crisis), the newly impoverished missed the voice that democracy would have given them to use for protest and to demand economic redress. Along with the recognition of the need to pay attention to downside risks and to economic security, the bigger issue of democracy itself became a predominant focus of attention in the politics of economic crisis. This happened in the countries hit by the crisis, such as South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, and others, but there was also a global lesson here about the special contribution of democracy in helping the victims of disaster, and the need to think not only about "growth with equity" (the old Korean slogan), but also about "downturn with security" (Sen 1999).

Similarly, the cultural damning of the prospects of development in Ghana and other countries in Africa is simply overhasty pessimism with little empirical foundation. For one tiling, it does not take into account how rapidly many countries—South Korea included—have changed, rather than remaining anchored to some fixed cultural parameters. Misidentified quarter-truths can be dreadfully misleading.

There have, of course, been various earlier attempts at cultural determinism in explaining economic development. Indeed, a century ago, Max Weber (1930), the great sociologist, had presented a major thesis on the decisive role of Protestant ethics (in particular of Calvinist ethics) in the successful development of a capitalist industrial economy. Weberian analysis of the role of culture in the emergence of capitalism drew on the world as he had observed it in the late 19 century. It is of particular dialectical interest in the contemporary world in light especially of the recent success of market economies in non-Protestant and even non-Christian societies.

Max Weber was particularly clear that Confucianism was quite unsuited for a dynamic industrial economy. "The Calvinist ethic," Anthony Giddens summarizes Weber, "introduced an activism into the believer's approach to worldly affairs, a drive to mastery in a quest for virtue in the eyes of God, that are altogether lacking in Confucianism," adding: "Confucian values do not promote such rational instrumentalist!!." 16 In sharp contrast with this view, many writers in present-day

Asia make the opposite claim that Confucian ethics is particularly suited for success of industrial and economic progress, as illustrated by the performance of East Asia. There have, in fact, been several different theories seeking explanation of the high performance of East Asian economies in terms of local culture. Michio Morishima (a great economist) has traced the roots of "the Japanese ethos" to the special history of its feudal system; Ronald Dore (a great sociologist) has emphasized the contribution of "Confucian ethics"; Eiko Ikegami (a brilliant young Japanese historian) has focused on the influence of the "Samurai code of honour."

There is much to learn from these theories, and the empirical connections they have brought out have been insightful. And yet it is also remarkable how the specific aspects of cultural explanations, based on observing the past, have often foundered in the tight of later experience. Indeed, theories of cultural determinism have often been one step behind the actual world. By the time Max Weber's privileging of "Protestant ethics" (based on 19th-century experience) was getting widely recognized, many of the Catholic countries, including France and Italy, were beginning to grow faster than' Protestant Britain or Germany. The thesis had to be, then, altered, and the privileged culture was taken more generally to be Christian and western, rather than specifically Protestant.

However, by the time that Eurocentric view of the culture of development got established, Japan was growing much faster than the West. So Japan had to be included in the privileged category, and there was useful work on the role of Japanese ethos, Samurai culture, etc. But, by the time of specialness of Japan was well understood, the East Asian economies were growing very fast, and there was a need to broaden the theory of Japans specialness to include the wider coverage of "Confucian" ethics and a wider and a more spacious regional tradition, fuzzily described as "Asian values." However, by the time that "Confucian" theory had become well established, the fastest growing economy in the world was Thailand, which is a Buddhist country. Indeed, Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan too have much Buddhist influence in their culture. The grand cultural theories have a propensity to trail one step behind the world of practice, rattier than serving as a grand predictive device.

This record need not, however, be seen as one of embarrassment, since we have learned many things from a closer understanding of the cultural linkages emerging from these specialized studies. But attempts to view culture as a singular, stationary and independent source of development have not—and could not have—worked.

Just to illustrate, consider Korea again, which is often seen as a quintessential exemplification of the power of "Asian values" and of the reach of Confucian ethics in industrial development Confucianism has indeed been a major cultural influence in this country, but there have been many different interpretations of Confucianism. For example, in the 15 century onward, the "Neo-Confucian literati" (Sarim)

challenged the earlier readings of Confucianism, and interpretational disputes were powerfully pursued by the different sides. Neo-Confucians themselves divide into different schools, according to different lines of division, including the classic Chinese distinction between li and ch'i (called, I understand, I and ki in Korea). In the 17th and early 18th century, the contest between the "Old Doctrine" (Noron), led by Song Si-yol, and the " Young Doctrine" (Soron), led by Yun Chung, related in part to different views of good behavior and of good social arrangements. Confucianism does not speak in one voice, and the particular emphasis on li (or i, in Korean) in the authoritarian interpretations of Confucius is by no means tile only claim that obtains loyalty.

There are also influences other than Confucianism. Buddhism, as was mentioned before, has been a major force in Korea, as it has been in China and Japan. From the seventh century when Buddhism became the state religion, it has had political ups and downs, but a constant cultural presence in this country. Christianity too has had a major presence in Korea, and from the i8th century, regular intellectual confrontations can be seen between the creed of so-called western learning, which disputed Confucian orthodoxy, along with other challengers, such as the individualist doctrines of the Wang Yang ming school of Neo-Confucianism, and of course various theorists of Buddhism. The richness and diversity in Korea's cultural past cannot be reduced into a simple story of cultural determinism, woven around an allegedly homogeneous Confucian ethics, or the overarching role of an ill-defined "Asian values" (Han 1971; Henthom 1971; Lee 1984).

Interdependence and Learning

While culture does not work in isolation from other social influences, once we place culture in adequate company, it can greatly help to illuminate our understanding of the world, including the process of development and the nature of our identity. Let me refer again to South Korea, which was a much more literate and more educated society than Ghana in the 1960s (when the two economies appeared rather similar to Huntington). The contrast, as was already mentioned, was very substantially the result of public policies pursued in South Korea in the post World War II period.

To be sure, the postwar public policies on education were also influenced by antecedent cultural features. It would be surprising had there been no such connection. In a two-way relation, just as education, influences culture, so does antecedent culture have an effect on educational policies. It is, for example, remarkable that nearly every country in the world with a powerful presence of Buddhist tradition has tended to embrace widespread schooling and literacy with some eagerness. This applies not only to Japan and Korea, but also to China, and Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Indeed, even miserable Burma, with a dreadful record of political oppression and social neglect, still has a higher rate of literacy than its neighbors in the subcontinent. Seen in a broader framework, there is probably

something here to investigate and learn from.

It is, however, important to see the interactive nature of the process in which contact with other countries and the knowledge of their experiences can make a big difference in practice. There is every evidence that when Korea decided to move briskly forward with school education at the end of the second world war, it was influenced not just by its cultural interest in education, but also by a new understanding of the role and significance of education, based on the experiences of Japan and the West, including the United States (Lee 1984; Mc Ginn et al. 1980).

There is a similar story, earlier on, of interaction and response in Japan's own history of educational development. When Japan emerged from its self-imposed isolation from the world from the beginning of the 17th century, under the Tokugawa regime, it already had a relatively well-developed school system, and in this Japan's traditional interest in education would have played a significant part. Indeed, at the time of Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan had a higher rate of literacy than Europe, despite being economically quite underdeveloped. And yet the rate of literacy in Japan was still low (as indeed it was in Europe too), and no less importantly the Japanese education system was quite out of touch with knowledge and learning in the industrializing West. When, in 1852, Commodore Mathew Perry chugged into the Edo Bay, puffing black smoke from the newly designed steamship, the Japanese were not only impressed-and somewhat terrified- and were driven to accept diplomatic and trade relations with the United States, they also had to reexamine and reassess their intellectual isolation from the world. This contributed to the political process that led to the Meiji restoration, and along with that came a determination to change the face of Japanese education. In the so-called Charter Oath, proclaimed also in 1868, there is a firm declaration on the need to "seek knowledge widely throughout the world" (Cummings 1980,17).

The Fundamental Code of Education issued three years later, in 1872, put the new educational determination in unequivocal terms: "There shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person. Kido Takayoshi, one of the most influential leaders of that period, put the basic issue with great clarity".

Our people are no different from the Americans or Europeans of today; it is all a matter of education or lack of education.

That was the challenge that Japan took on with determination, and things moved rapidly forward.

Between 1906 and 1911, education consumed as much as 43% of the budgets of the towns and villages, for Japan as a whole (Gluck 1985). By 1906, the recruiting army officers found that, in contrast with late 19th century, there was hardly any new

recruit who was not literate. By 1910, it is generally acknowledged that Japan had universal attendance in primary schools. By 1913, even though Japan was still economically very poor and underdeveloped, it had become one of the largest producers of books in the world—publishing more books than Britain and indeed more than twice as many as the United States. Indeed, Japan's entire experience of economic development was, to a great extent driven by human capability formation, which included the role of education and training, and this was promoted both by public policy and by a supportive cultural climate (interacting with each other). The dynamics of associative relations are extraordinarily important in understanding how Japan laid the foundations of its spectacular economic and social development.

To carry the story further, Japan was not only a learner but also a great teacher Development efforts of countries in East and Southeast Asia were profoundly influenced by Japans experience in expanding education and its manifest success in transforming society and the economy22 There is a fund of cultural and economic wisdom there from which the world can draw lessons in development. India today may be immensely more advanced technologically and even economically than Japan in the Meiji period, and yet India is paying a very heavy price for ignoring the cultural lessons on the critical role of basic education that emerged so profoundly in the economically poor and politically primitive Meiji Japan (Dreze and Sen 1995,2002).

A cultural interrelations within a broad framework does indeed provide a useful focus for our understanding. It contrasts both with neglecting culture altogether (as some economic models do), and also with the privileging of culture in stationary and isolated terms (as is done in some social models of cultural determinism). We have to go.well beyond both and integrate the role of culture with other aspects of our life.

Cultural Globalization

I turn now to what may appear to be a contrary consideration. It might be asked, in praising inter country interactions and the positive influence of learning from elsewhere, am I not overlooking the threat that global interrelations pose to integrity and survival of local culture? In a world that is so dominated by the "imperialism" of the culture of the western metropolis, surely the basic need is, it can be argued, to strengthen resistance, rather than to welcome global influence.

Let me first say that there is no contradiction here. Learning from elsewhere involves freedom and judgment, not being overwhelmed and dominated by outside influence without choice, without scope for one's volitional agency. The threat of being overwhelmed by the superior market power of an affluent West, which has asymmetric influence over nearly all the media, raises a different type of issue altogether. In particular, it does not contradict in any way the importance of learning

from elsewhere.

But how should we think about global cultural invasion itself as a threat to local cultures? There are two issues of particular concern here. The first relates to the nature of maker culture in general, since that is part and parcel of economic globalization. Those who find the values and priori-ties of a market-related culture vulgar and impoverishing (many who take this view belong to the West itself) tend to find economic globalization to be objectionable at a very basic level. The second issue concerns the asymmetry of power between the West and the other countries, and the possibility that this asymmetry may translate into destruction of local cultures – a loss that may culturally impoverish nonwestern societies. Given the constant cultural bombardment that tends to come from the western metropolis (through MTV to Kentucky fried Chicken), there are genuine rears that native traditions may get drowned in that loud din.

Threats to older native cultures in the globalizing world of today are, to a considerable extent, inescapable. It is not easy to solve the problem by stopping globalization of trade and commerce, since the forces of economic exchange and division of labour are hard to resist in an interacting world. Globalization does, of course, raise other problems as well, and its distributional consequences have received much criticism recently. On the other hand, it is hard to deny that global trade and commerce can bring with it- as Adam Smith foresaw – greater economic prosperity for each nation. The challenging task is to get the benefits of globalization on a more shared basis. While that primarily economic question need not detain us here (which I have tried to discuss elsewhere, particularly in Sen 1999), there is relate4d question in the field of culture, to wit, how to increase the real option-the substantive freedoms- that people have, by providing support for cultural traditions that they may want to preserve. This cannot but be an important concern in any development effort that brings about radical changes in the ways of living of people.

Indeed, a natural response to the problem of asymmetry must take the form of strengthening the opportunities that local culture can have, to be able to hold its own against an overpowered invasion. If foreign imports dominate because of greater control over the media, surely one counter-acting policy must involve expanding the facilities that local culture gets, to present its own ware, both locally and beyond it. This is a positive response, rather than the temptation –a very negative temptation-to ban foreign influence.

Ultimately, for both the concerns, the deciding issue must be one of democracy. An overarching value must be the need for participatory decision making on the kind of society people want to live in, based on open discussion, with adequate opportunity for the expression of minority positions. We cannot both want democracy, on the one hand, and yet, on the other, rule out certain choices, on traditionalist grounds, because of their "foreignness" (irrespective of what people decide to choose, in an

informed and reflected way). Democracy is not consistent with options of citizens being banished by political authorities, or by religious establishments, or by grand guardians of taste, no matter how unbecoming they find the new predilection to be. Local culture may indeed need positive assistance to compete in even terms, and support for minority tastes against foreign onslaught may also be a part of the enabling role of a democratic society, but the prohibition of cultural, influences from abroad is not consistent with a commitment of democracy and liberty.

Related to this question there is also a more subtle issue that takes us beyond the immediate worry about bombardment of mass western Culture. This concerns the way we see ourselves in the world- a world that is asymmetrically dominated by western preeminence and power. Through a dialectic process, this can, in fact, lead to a powerful inclination to be aggressively "local" in culture, as a kind of "brave" resistance to western dominance. In an important article, called "What Is a Muslim?," Akeel Bilgrami (1995) has argued that the confrontational relations often lead people to see themselves as "the other"—defining their identity as being emphatically different from that of western people. Something of this "otherness" can be seen in the emergence of various self-definitions that characterize cultural or political nationalism and religious assertiveness or even fundamentalism. While belligerently anti western, these developments are, in fact, deeply foreign-dependent—in a negative and contrary form. Indeed, seeing oneself as "the other" does less than justice to one's free and deliberative agency. This problem too has to be dealt with in a way that is consistent with democratic values and practice, if that is taken to be a priority. Indeed, the "solution" to the problem that Bilgrami diagnoses cannot he in "prohibiting" any particular outlook, but in public discussion that clarifies and illuminates the possibility of being alienated from ones own independent agency.

Finally, I should mention that one particular concern I have not yet discussed arises from the belief—often implicit—that each country or collectivity must stick to its "own culture," no matter how attracted people are to "foreign cultures." This fundamentalist position not only involves the need to reject importing McDonald s and beauty contests to the non- western world, but also the enjoyment there of Shakespeare or ballets or even cricket matches. Obviously enough, this highly conservative position must be in some tension with the role and acceptability of democratic decisions, and I need not repeat what I have already said about the conflict between democracy and the arbitrary privileging of any practice. But it also involves an additional philosophical issue about the labeling of cultures on which Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, had warned.

This concerns the issue whether one's culture is to be defined by the geographical origin of a practice, rather than by its manifest use and enjoyment, Tagore (1928) put his argument against regional labeling with great force:

Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have then origin. I am proud of my humanity when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own. Let me feel with unalloyed gladness that all the great glories of man are mine.

The criteria of understanding and assessment are important, but—as Tagore rightly noted — the inert place of origin has no right to alienate us from what we enjoy and have reason to cherish. Culture, after all, is more than mere geography.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, I have tried to discuss, first of all, how—in many different ways— culture interacts with development. There are complex epistemic, ethical, and political issues involved in identifying the ways in which culture may or may not influence development. Some specific lines of connection have been identified, particularly related to the demands of assessment and policy.

Second, the acknowledgment of the importance of culture cannot be instantly translated into ready-made theories of cultural causation. It is evidently too easy to jump from the frying pan of neglecting culture into the fire of crude cultural determinism. The Utter has caused much harm in the past (and has even encouraged political tyranny and social discrimination) and it continues to be a source of confusion which can seriously mislead assessment and policy m the contemporary world.

Third, what is needed is not the privileging of culture as something that works on its own, but the integration of culture in a wider picture, in which culture, seen in a dynamic and interactive way, is one important influence among many others. Attempts at integration have to pay particular attention to heterogeneity of each broadly defined culture, the interdependence between different cultures, and the vibrant nature of cultural evolutions.

Fourth, there has been much focus, in this essay, on the positive contributions that cultural influences across borders can make. But I have also discussed the cultural provocation that global asymmetry of power generates. There are good arguments for not being overwhelmed by this asymmetry— either in the form of submissive supplication, nor in the dialectical and negative form of redefining oneself as "the other" (in contrast with "the West"), which makes one lose one's independent identity. Both these reactions can be contrasted with reliance on free and informed choice, aided by public discussion, critical scrutiny and a participatory political environment.

There is no particular "compulsion" either to preserve departing life styles or alternatively, to adopt the newest fashion from abroad, but there is a need for

people to be able to take part, in these social decisions. This gives further reason for attaching importance to such elementary capabilities as leading and writing (through basic education), being well informed and well briefed (through a free media), and having realistic chances of participating freely (through elections, referendums and the general use of civil rights)There are institutional demands for cultural democracy.

A democratic commitment is consistent with assisting local cultures to compete in comparable terms, but does not encourage the arbitrary elimination of options on grounds of their foreign origin or a priori unacceptability. The ultimate test is the freedom of the citizens to exercise their free agency and choose in an informed and participatory way If that foundational value has priority, then other concerns have to be integrated with its preeminence.

Notes

I draw, in this essay, on three earlier presentations on related themes, respectively at a World Bank meeting on development in Tokyo on December 13, 2000, at the Pardee Center of Boston University on February 4, 2002, and at the University of Mumbai on February 26, 2002.

Douglas (1987), North (1990), and Blau (1993) provide interesting insights on how institutions think.

Douglas (1973/1982, 1992); Eliot (1948); Appadurai (1986); Inglehart (1990); Adorno (1991); Mosseto (1993); Grief (1994b); Appiah and Gates (1995); Jessor, Colby, and Shweder (1996); Klamer (1996); Landes (1998); Throsby (1999); Eagleton (2000); Platteau (2000); and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 1998, 2000) contain important illustrations of different aspects of these pervasive connections.

Cultural capabilities are among the major components of substantial freedoms; on the nature and use of the perspective of capabilities, see Alkire (2002a, c); Sen (1982, 1985a, b, 1999); Griffin and Knight (1990); Nussbaum (1993, 2000); Nussbaum and Sen (1993); Nussbaum and Glover (1995); Pattanaik (1998); Appadurai (2004); Arizpe (this volume); and Osmani (2001), among others.

There is a vast literature ion the connections between economic rewards and cultural pursuits (Baumol and Bowen 1966; Peacock and Weir 1975; Blaug 1976; Towse 1993, 1997; Peacock and Rizzo 1994; Throsby 1994, 2001; Klamer 1996; Hutter and Rizzo 1997; Bowles 1998; Cowen 1998; Avrami, Mason, and da la Torre 2000; Caves 2000; Frey 2000).

See Boniface (1995); Herbert (1995); Hutter and Rizzo (1997); Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre (2000); and Throsby (2001) on the interconnection between the cultural and economic aspects of tourism, among other contributions.

The concept of social capital and its uses receive attention of UNESCO (19988, 2000); Dasgupta and Serageldin (2000); Blau (2001b); and Throsby (2001).

Often many different arguments can point in the same direction, in terms of needed action. For example, there has been only partial excavation of the ruins of the ancient Buddhist university of Nalanda in India, which had come to its end in the 12th century about the time when Oxford University was being founded (after having flourished for many hundreds of years, and having attracted scholars from abroad as well as within India- Hsuan Tsang from China in t he seventh century was one of the most prominent alumni of Nalanda). Further investment in Nalanda excavation, accessibility, and facilities will not only encourage tourism, and generate

income in one of the poorest parts of India, but can also help to generate a fuller understanding of the diversity of India's historical traditions.

There are, as a consequence, considerable difficultie4s in finding suitable indicators of "cultural development" (Pattanaik 1998; Alkire 2002c).

Since I don't like chili, I have much practical experience of how hard it is to escape this foreign import in many parts of India. I also frequently encounter the comment that my culinary taste must have become corrupted by my spending a lot of time in the West. To this I have to reply, "No, it is pre-colonial- what we Indians ate prior to western imperialism messed up our eating habits." There seems to be little memory left in India of its pre- Portuguese, prechili taste.

In Why Ireland Starved, Joel Mokyr (1983, 291) argues that "Ireland was considered by Britain as an alien and even hostile nation."

See Mokyr (1983, 291-92) for a balanced assessment of this line of diagnosis.

See Woodham-Smith (1962, 76).

Churchill also explained that his job in governing India was made difficult by the fact that Indians were "the beastliest people in the world, next to the Ger-mans" (Roberts 1994, 213).

See, however, Goody's (1996) powerful critique of this reading of history.

Antohony Giddens, introduction to Weber (1930, xvi). See also Weber (1951).

See Morishima (1982); Dore (1987); and Ikegami (1995), among other investigations of the cultural aspects of Japanese economic success.

Given the importance that is attached in Buddhism to the ability of people to read religious and philosophical discourses, there is even a prima facie motivational connection here that can be cogently examined and critically scrutinized. Indeed, one of Buddha's criticisms of Hinduism in his time was that the scriptures were in Sanskrit, which made them inaccessible to the common people of India.

See, for example; Cummings (1980), chapter 2.

See Passin (1965, 209-11); also Cummings (1980, 17).

Quoted in Kumon and Rosovsky (1992, 330).

The role of education in the economic development of East and Southeast Asia is

extensively discussed in World Bank (1993).

See Hirschman (1977, 1982); Brittan and Hamlin (1995); Griffin (1996); Klamer (1996); Appadurai (1996); Bowles (1998)! Cowen (1998, 2002); Landes (1998); UNESCO (1998-2000); Arizpe (2000); Blau (2001); and Throsby (2001) for various assessments of market-oriented cultures, arguing in different directions.

On a related issue, in the context of Indian identity, see Sen (1997).

The Arts: Architecture. Sculpture, Painting, Music and the Dance'
The Spirit of Indian Art

-By A. L Basham

Nearly all the artistic remains of ancient India are of a religious nature, or where at least made for religious purposes. Secular art certainly existed, for literature shows that kings dwelt in sumptuous palaces, decorated with lovely wail paintings and sculpture, though all these have vanished. Much has been said and written about Indian art since, some forty years ago, European taste began to doubt the established canons of the 19th century and looked to Asia and Africa for fresh aesthetic experience. Since then most authorities on the subject, Indian and European alike have stressed the religious and mystical aspect of Indian art. While admitting the realism and earthiness of the earliest sculpture, most critics have read the truths of Vedanta or Buddhism into the artistic remains of our period, and have interpreted them as expressions of deep religious experience, sermons in stone on the oneness of ail thins in the Universal Spirit.

One student at least disagrees with this interpretation. There are indeed a few remains which seem imbued with an intensity of religious felling rare in the art of the world, but it is the full and active life of the times which is chiefly reflected in the art of ancient India, at first directly, as at Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati, then with a gentle idealism, as at Ajanta, and finally in the multitude f figures, divine and human, carved on the many temples of the Middle Ages. In all these phases there is a horror vacui and an intense vitality, which remained us rather of this world than the next, and suggest to us the warm bastle of the Indian City and the turbulent pollution of the Indian forest.

Gothic architecture and sculpture are vertical. Spire and arch point upward, and as the style develops the spire becomes taller and the arch more pointed. The Christs, saints and angles of the Middle Ages in Europe are often disproportionately tall, and their tallness is accentuated by long garments reaching to the ankles. Their poses are generally restful, and they rarely smile. Medieval European art was truly religious; its conventions seem to have been deliberately designed to lead the worshipper's thoughts away from the world of flesh to the things of the spirit. Much of it was the work of pious monks, or of men with deep religious vocations.

The tendency of Indian art is diametrically opposite to that of medieval Europe. The temple towers, though tall, are solidly based on earth. The ideal type is not abnormally tall, but rather short and stocky. Gods and demigods alike are young and

handsome; their bodies are founded and well-nourished, often by European standards rather effeminate, occasionally they are depicted as grim or wrathful, but generally they smile and sorrow is rarely portrayed. With the exception of the type of the dancing Siva the sacred icon is always firmly grounded, either seated or with both feet flat on the ground. We need hardly mention that all-Indian temple scutoture. Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina alike, made full use of the female form as a decorative motif, always scantily dressed, and nearly always in accordance with Indian standards of beauty.

Asceticism and self-denial in various forms are praised in much Indian religious literature. But the ascetics who appear in sculpture are usually wed fed and cheerful. As an example we may cite the colossal rock-cut medieval image of the Jaina saint Gommatesvara at Sravana Belgoia in Mysore. He stands bolt upright in the posture of meditation know as Kayotsarga, with feet firm on the earth, and arms held downwards but not touching the body, and he smiles faintly. The artist must have tried to express the soul almost setfree from the trammels of matter and about to leave for its final resting-place of everlasting bliss at the top of the universe. Whatever the intentions of the artist, however, Gommatesvara is still an ordinary young man of his time, full of calm vitality. The saint is said to have stood for so long in mediation that creepers twined round his motionless lags, and these are shown In the sculpture; but though intended to portray his sanctity, they do out emphasize that he is a creature of the earth whom the earth pulls back.

Ancient India's religious art differs strikingly from her religious literature. The latter is the work of men with vocations, Brahmans, monks and ascetics. The former came chiefly from the hands of secular craftsmen, who, though they worked according to priestly instructions and increasingly rigid iconographical rules, loved me world they knew with an intensity which is usually to be seen behind the religious forms in which they expressed themselves. In our opinion the usual inspiration of Indian art Is not so much a ceaseless quest for the Absolute as a delight in the world as the artist found it, a sensual vitality, and a feeling of growth and movement as regular and organic as the growth of living things upon earth.

Of the visual arts of ancient and medieval India much architecture and sculpture and a little painting have survived. As most of the existing sculpture was intended to be ancillary to architecture we deal with the latter first.

The utilitarian brick buildings of the Harappa Culture, strong and competent though they were, had apparently little aesthetic merit, and will not be mentioned here With the exception of the walls of Rajagrha (p.198), which also have no artistic value, we have no significant architectural remains between the Harappa period and that of the Mauryas. The was due to the fact that few if any buildings were made of stone during this time.

Megasthenes mentions that the palace of Chandragupta Maurya, though very large and luxurious, was built of carved and gilded wood, and the earliest stone buildings to have survived were evidently modeled on wooden originals. We must not assume, from the complete lack of material remains, that Indian building in the Mauryan period, or even before, was mean or primitive. The Mauryan monolithic columns prove that the craftsman of those days had a through mastery of working in stone, and if the great cities of Mauryan times were built of wood we must attribute this chiefly to the comparative scarceness of stone in the Gangetic Plain and the abundance of timber where it is now scarce. There is no evidence of a cultural advance in the Middle Ages, when building in stone became common, but foreign contacts, but also to the gradual disappearance of timber forests from the more populous and civilized regions of India.

The wonderful Mauryan columns with their finely carved capitals fal rather under the head of sculpture than of architecture, for most of those, which survive, had no architecture purpose. Fragments of similar coulumns, found at Patna, supported thereof of a place, which had been reasonably identified as that of Ashoka, the remains of the Patna pillared has are so fragmentary that the plan of the building cannot be accurately reconstructed, but it was evidently a large one. At this time, however, stone buildings must still have been very rare. At the Mauryan pillars and other products of Mauryan stonemasons come from the same quarry, at Chunar, not far from Bananas, and all bear the stamp of the same school. They are the work of craftsmen who had learnt much from Persia, and perhaps a little from Greece, but had given their output distinctive Indian characteristics. Their workshops were probably maintained by the Mauryan kings, and vanished with the dynasty. Working in stone had then to make new beginning in India.

THE STUPA

The Stupa began as an earthen burial mound, which was revered by the local population, and we have seen that the cult stupas was taken up by Buddhism, and that Asoka raised stupas In the Buddha's honour all over India. Only one stupa in Nepal, survives in the form in which the great emperor left it, but excavations of existing stupas have shown the character of the earlier ones. They were large hemispherical domes, containing a central chamber, in which the relics of the Buddha were placed in a small casket, often beautifully carved in crystal. The core of the stupa was of urburnt brick, and the outer face of burnt brick, covered with a thick layer of paster, the stupa was crowned by an umbrella of wood or stone, and was surrounded by a wooden fence enclosing a path for the ceremonial clockwise circumambulation (pradaksina), which was the chief form of reverence paid to the relics within It.88

88 It has been suggested that the stupa, like the later Hindu temple, was thought of as microcosm of the universe. There are Mesopotamian precedents for this belief, and the passion for cosmic symbolism, evident in India from Vedic times, certainly led to the making of the analogy at least in respect of the

In the period between the Mauryas and the Guptas much wealth and energy were spent on Buddhist architecture, and the older stupas were greatly enlarged and beautified. Of these three are specially noteworthy-those at Bharhut in Madhya Bharat, Sanchi in the old Bhopal state, and Amaravati in the tower Kistna Valley.

The Bharhut stupa perhaps in its present form dating from the middle of the 2nd century B.C., is important chiefly for its sculpture, and the stupa itself has now vanished. That at Sanchi, on the other hand, is one of the most striking architectural remains of ancient India.

In the 2nd century B.C. the old Sanchi stupa was enlarged to twice its original size, becoming a hemisphere of about 120 feet in diameter. It was then faced with well-cut masonry laid in regular courses, and besides the lower path on ground level, an upper terraced path some 16 feet from the ground was added. The old wooden railings were replaced by stone ones 9 feet high, tenoned and mortised in imitation of carpentry. Finally, towards the end of the 1st century B.C., four glorious gateways (torana) were added at the four cardinal points. Lesser stupas and monastic buildings surrounded the great stupa.

The Sanchi gateways are perhaps more noteworthy for their cared omamentation than their architecture. Each consists of two square columns, above which are three curved architraves supported by animals or dwarfs, the whole reaching some 34 feet above ground-level. The construction of these gateways, from technical point o view, is primitive, and it has been suggested their design is based on the log or bamboo portcullis of the ancient Indian village. The finish, on the other hand, is remarkably good, and the carvings are among the most fresh and vigorous products of the Indian sculptor.

In respect of size few Indian stupas greatly exceeded the Sanchi, but in Ceylon the stupa reached tremendous proportions. The Abhayagiri Dagaba at Anuradhapura, the capital of the early kings of Ceylon, was 327 feet in diameter, and larger than some of the pyramids of Egypt. It reached its present size, after a succession of enlargements, in the 2nd century A.D.

In India stupa architecture became more and more ornate. The Stupa of Amaravati, which in its final form was completed c.200 A.D., was larger than that of Sanchi, and its two promenades were adorned with carved panels (some of which can be seen British Museum) telling the story of the life of the Buddha. Meanwhile in Northern India stupas grew taller in proportion to their bases. They were often set on square platforms, which in Burma and Indonesia were developed into stepped pyramids,

temple But, though many authorities would disagree with us, we do not believe that cosmic symbolism played any great part in the thought of the ancient Indian architect.

the largest of which is the enormous stupa of Borobodur, in Java, built in the 8th century A.D. Pinnacles became higher, and developed towards the spring froms of the present-day temples of Burma and Siam.

Of later Indian stupas the two most famous are those of Sarnath and Nalanda. The tail stupa of Sarnath, near Banaras, the scene of the Buddha's first sermon, of which now little more than the inner core remains, was once a most imposing structure of beautifully patterned brickwork with a high cylindrical upper dome rising from a lower hemispherical one, and large images of the Buddha set in gable ends at the cardinal points. In its final form it dates from the Gupta period.

The stupa at Nalanda seven times successively enlarged In this present ruined state gives the impression of a brick pyramid with steps leading up to its terraces. It was originally a tall stupa raised on a high base, with a smaller stupa at each corner but the monument underwent so many alterations In Gupta and Pala times that It is now difficult for the untrained eye to recognize its original form at any one stage of Its development.

Around the great stupas were lesser ones, often containing the ashes of monks famous for their piety and learning, and a whole complex of buildings -monasteries, shrine-rooms, preaching halls and resthouses for pilgrims. At the greater Buddhist sites such as Nalanda the groups of monastic buildings were often surrounded by fortress-like walls, in their present partial dilapidation these heavy domes sometimes seem a little forbidding. Originally the lime washed or plastered stupa shone brilliantly white in the tropical sunlight, its pinnacle, now generally broken, rising like a golden spear from the ceremonial stone umbrella on top of the dome. Then it must have given a different impression. The great Ruvanvali Dagaba at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, which in recent years has been restored and is once more used In Buddhist worship, rising white in the distance out of the plain, shows the stupa at its best, as a worthy emblem of a great religion.

CAVE TEMPLES

Of the centuries before the Gupta period the chief architectural remains, other than stupas and their surrounding gateways and railings, are artificial caves, excavated for religious purposes. Early specimens -show a slavish imitation of carpentry, which proves conclusively that the art of building in stone was still in its infancy. Thus two of the caves of Barabar Hill, near Gaya, dedicated by Asoka to Ajlcika monks, are in the form of a plain rectangular outer hall, at one end of which is an inner chamber with a curved wall and over- hanging eaves. The caves were evidently substituted for a standardized religious meeting place consisting of a round thatched hut standing in a courtyard, and their designer could not transcend the pattern to which he had been used. Similar dependence on wooden models is evident in many other features of design until the Gupta period.

The caves of the Barabar and Nagarjuni Hills are quite unadorned, with the exception of one at Nagarjuni, near Barabar, which has a comparatively simple carved entrance, added during or soon after the Mauryan period. The inner walls of all the caves are finely polished, no doubt by workmen of the school which was responsible for the polish of the Asokan columns.

Later cave temples and monasteries are to be found in many parts of India, but it was in the Western Deccan, under the Satavahana Empire and its successors, that the largest and most famous artificial caves were excavated. The oldest Deccan cave, at Bhaja, near Poona, consists of a deep apsidal hall, cut in solid rock, with a row of plain octagonal pillars near the walls, which support curved ribs carved to represent the barrel vaulting of a wooden building. At the further end of the hall is a small stupa, also cut from solid rock, and the outside of the cave has a facade, carved like a gable, with smaller ornamental gables on either side. Beside this cave, which was a meeting hall for Buddhist monks and lay worshippers, is a second cave consisting or a broad cutting into the rock, leading to five ceils, which were the dwellings of the monks.

From these beginnings the cave temples developed in size and splendor. The finest single example is the great caitya hall at Karli, probable made about the beginning of the Christian era. This is cut 124 feet deep into the rock, and is of the same general pattern as that at Bhaja and many other caves of the Western Deccan, but much developed in size and splendour. The columns are no longer plain and austere, but by a process which can be traced through earlier stages they have become heavy and ornate. Each is set on a square steeped plinth, and rises from a bulbous base, which is carved to represent a large pot with base and rim; this is another survival of wooden construction, for the octagonal wooden pillars of earlier days were bedded in large earthenware pots to protect them from ants and other insects. Each pillar carries a complicated group of horses and elephants with riders to support the roof, which is carved in imitation of the timber rafters of barrel vaulting. The caitya or shrine at the end of the halls is much enlarged in comparison with those of other caves.

The simple facades of the earlier caves were developed into elaborately curved verandas, usually with a large window, the full size of the gable-end, which let light into the hall, the harli cave has three fine entrances, and a frieze of relief sculpture on the tower levels, with small carved gable-ends above.

With the caitya halls the associated rock-cut monasteries or sangharamas also developed in size and spledour as a cave monastery became too small for its inhabitants a new cave was cut nearby and so the complex of caves grew over the centuries. The most famous of these cave groups is that of Ajanta, in the northwest comer of Hyderabad. Here no less than twenty-seven caves, some going 100 feet

deep into the rock, were excavated in the horseshoe curve of a hillside, nor far from the great trade route leading from the North to the Deccan. The earliest caves date from the 2nd century B. C., while others are as late as the 7th century A.D. The splendid sculpture and lovely paintings with which they are adorned make them one of the most glorious monuments of India's past.

Perhaps even more impressive are the later cave temples of Ellora, near Aurangabad, some thirty miles from Ajanta. Here are no less than thirty-four caves, constructed from the 5th to the 8th centuries A. D., most of them Hindu but some Buddhist and Jaina. The crowning achievement of Ellora is the great Kailasanatha Temple, excavated on the instructions of the Rastrakuta emperor Krana (C.A.D. 756-773). With this the concept of the cave temple was transcended, for the king was not satisfied with a mere hollow in the rock. The entire rock face was cut away and a splendid temple carved like a statue from the hillside, complete with shrine- room, hall, gateway, votive pillars, lesser shrines and cloisters, the whole adorned with divine figures and scenes large and small of a grace and strength rarely seen again in Indian art. The ground plan of Kailasanatha Is of about the same size as the Parthenon, and it is half as high again. The labour necessary to construct it, however, was less than that which would be required to build a comparable temple of masonry, for transport created no problem, and the process of construction, beginning at the top of the cliff and working down to the base, avoided the need of scaffolding. But no considerations of this kind can disparage the glory of Kailasanatha, "the most stupendous single work of art executed in India".

Kailasanatha is the earliest temple hewn from solid rock, there are to be found at Mamallapuram, on the sea cost some thirty miles south of Madras, where seventeen temples, none very large in size, were carved from outcropping hillocks of granite under the patronage of 7th century Pallava kings. The most famous of these, the "Seven Pagodas", still show the influence of wood construction, and are of a distinctive style, possibly looking back to Dravidian prototypes.

The latest cave-temples of importance are those of Elephanta, a beautiful little island off Bombay. These, in the same style as those of Ellora, are famous for their sculpture, especially for the great Trimurti figure of Siva. After these no important caves were excavated. Indians had long known the art of building in stone. The Kailasanatha Temple carved in exact imitation of masonry, showed the dissatisfaction with the older cave form. The great period of medieval temple building had begun.

TEMPLES

The earliest free-standing religious building of which traces remain a small round hall, probably originally containing a Buddhist stupa, at Bairat near Jaipur, this dates from the 3rd century B.C., and was made of brick and wood; little but the

foundations now exist, and the form had no future.

The next landmark in temple architecture is the temple generally known, from the modem name of the site, as that of Jandial, excavated from one of the mounds which covered the city of Taksasila. This, one of the important buildings of the Greek city, contained a square inner sanctuary, a meeting hall and a courtyard, and its outer and inner entrances were each flanked by two large pillars of orthodox Ionian pattern. The Jandial temple was probably Zoroastrian, and had no direct successors, but the influence of Western architecture is clearly to be seen in Kashmir, where columns of Hellenic type were used throughout the medieval period, in conjunction with distinctive pyramidal roofs and arches surmounted by pointed gables, which give the Kashmir style an almost Gothic appearance. Most famous Kashmir's early temples is the Temple of the Sun at Martand, dating from the 8th century. There are no remains of free-standing Hindu temples erected before the Gupta period, though by-this time they must long have been built in wood, clay and brick. From the Gupta period, however, several examples survive, chiefly in Western India, all showing the same general pattern. Pillars were usually ornate, with heavy bell-shaped capitals surmounted by animal motifs, and the entrances were often carved with mythological scenes and figures. All the Gupta temples were small, and most had flat roofs. Their masonry was held together without mortar, and was far larger and thicker than was necessary for the comparatively small buildings. Evidently their builders had not yet fully mastered their technique, and were still thinking in terms of the cave: The finest Gupta temple, that of Deogarh near Jhansi, probably of the 6m century, marks a great advance. Here iron dowels were used to hold the masonry together, and a small tower rose above the sanctum. The portal veranda, vas continued all round the building, making a covered walk.

The standard type of the Hindu temple, which has persisted from the 6th century to the present day, was not fundamentally different from that of the ancient Greeks. The heart of the temple was a small dark shrine-room (garbhagrha), containing the chief icon. This opened on a hall for worshippers (mandapa), originally a separate building, but usually joined to the shrine-room by a vestibule (antarala). The hall was approached by a porch (ardhamandapa). The shrine-room was generally surmounted by a tower, while lesser towers rose from other parts of the building. The whole was set in a rectangular courtyard, which might contain lesser shrines, and was often placed on a raised platform.

The medieval period in India was, like the Middle Ages in Europe, an age of faith. With better techniques of stone construction new temples sprang up everywhere to replace earlier wooden buildings, and kings and chiefs vied with one another in .their foundation. Strict canons of design in both architecture and sculpture were laid down in textbooks (silpasastra), some of which survive. The technique of architecture was not far advanced, despite the great achievements of the period. Though arches occur in the cave temples and in Kashmir, the art of making a true

arch, dome or vault, seems to have been ignored, although corbelling-the building up of an arch or dome by overlapping courses of brick or masonry-was widely practised, and produced work of great beauty. Mortar was known, but rarely used, for the style of arch- less and domeless architecture employed made it virtually unnecessary.

The temple was ornately decorated, often even to the dark shrine- rooms lighted only by flickering oil-lamps. Despite this ornateness the apprenticeship of his tradition in rock architecture gave the architect a strong sense of mass. Heavy cornices, strong pillars, wide in proportion to their height, and the broad base of the Sikhara, or tower, give to Indian temple architecture a feeling of strength and solidity, only in part counteracted by the delicately ornate friezes and the many figures in high or low relief which often fill the whole surface of the temple wall.

Considering the size of the land, Indian temple architecture is remarkably uniform, but authorities distinguish two chief styles and numerous schools. The Northern or Indo-Aryan style prefers a with rounded top and curvilinear outline, while the tower of the Southern or Dravidian style is usually in the shape of a rectangular truncated pyramid. The stages of stylistic development are clearer in the South than in the North, where many ancient temples were destroyed by the Muslim invaders. We therefore consider the styles of the Peninsual first.

Temple building gained much from the patronage of the Pallava and Chalukya kings in the 6 -8 centuries. Important early temples of the former dynasty are to be found at Mamallapuram, already referred to, and Kanci, while the Calukyas left temple remains at their capital Badami, and the nearby site of Alhole, both in Hyderabad. Both styles show the gradual emancipation of the architect from the techniques of carpentry and cave architecture. The apogee of the Pallava style was reached in the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha Temple of Kanci, built early in the 8th century. The latter has a pyramidal tower formed of two courses of small barrel vaults, surmounted by a solid cupola suggesting a Buddhist stupa.

The stupa of the Pallavas was developed further under the Cola dynasty (10th -12th centuries), the finest products of which are the great e of Siva, at Tanjore built by Rajaraja the Great (985-1014), and the temple built by his successor, Rajendra I, at his new capital of Gangailkondacolapuram, near Kumbakonam. The former was probably the largest temple built in India up to that time, the comparatively modest tower of the Pallava style was replaced by a great pyramid, rising from a tall upright base and crowned with a domed final, the whole being nearly 200 feet high. This set the style of Dravidian sikhara, which has continued with some variation down to the present day. Both these temples contain elaborate pillared and beautiful decoration.

In the next phase of Dravidian architecture the emphasis shifted the tower above the chief-shrine to the entrance gateway of the surrounding wall. Though there are a

few records of the desecration of temples by hostile sectarians or invaders, it is difficult to find a practical reason for the growing custom of surrounding South Indian temples with strong and high walls, unless this was done in imitation of the palaces of kings, with which the temples had much in common. From the 12th century onwards it became usual to fortify the temple, often with three square concentric walls, with gates on the four sides. The gates were surmounted by watchtowers or gatehouses, and these developed into soaring towers (gopuram), generally much taller than the modest skikhara over the central shrine. The entrance tower was usually in the form of an oblong pyramid, with its broadest side parallel to the wall. The new style is often called oblong pyramid, with its broadest side parallel to the wall. The new style is often called Pandyan, from the name of the dynasty which supplanted the Colas in the Tamil country, and the kings of which were responsible for building walls and gateway towers round many existing shrines. The style introduced more elaborate ornamentation, and the use of animal forms in pilasters and columns, Including the rampant horses and leogryphs which give a distinctive character to late Dravidian architecture.

The culmination of the Pandyan style lies in the mighty temple complexes of Madurai, Srirangam, and elsewhere, which are strictly outside our period; belonging in their present form to the 17th century. The great temple of Madurai is the most famous and beautiful of these, but the largest is the Vaisnavite temple of Srirangam, which is contained in an outer wall measuring 2,475 by 2,880 feet, and has six Inner walls, ail with gopurams, surrounding a shrine of comparatively modest proportions. These later towers were covered with sculptured figures.

While these developments were taking place in the Tamil country, other styles developed in the Deccan, under the Calukyas, Rastrakutas and Hoysalas. The earliest Calukyan temples closely resemble the Guptan in style. By the 8th century they had developed individual features, including the wide overhanging caves which became characteristic of the medieval temples of the Central Deccan. The later Calukyas and Hoysalas (11th -14th centuries) developed a more elaborate style. Their temples were no longer built on a rectangular plan, but were polygonai or stellate, raised on a tall solid platform of the same shape as the building. These temples give a strong feeling of flatness, for platforms and walls alike are covered with rather narrow carved friezes of elephants, horsemen, geese, monsters (yali), and scenes of mythology and legend. The grotesque mask (kirtimukha)89 became very common as a decorative feature, and turned columns, often ornately carved, were widely used. The largest and most famous temples of this style, at Halebid (Dorasamudra, the Hoysala capital) and Belur, have no towers, and it is thought that they were not completed. Some smaller temples of the same period have towers, notably the

89 The Kirtimukha is found in other South Indian schools as a decorative motif, especially in the makara-torana, a gateway with a large kirtimukha made above the lintel connected by foliate design to two makaras or sea monsters at the base of the doorposts. These motifs were exported to South-East Asia and became regular features of Indonesian and Cambodian architecture.

charming temple of Somnathpur, which has three low domelike sikharas, their breadth emphasized by parallel mouldings. Its profusion of pillars, and its abhorrence not only of blank spaces but even of plane surfaces and straight lines, tend to give this style an impression of wedding-cake prettiness, despite the solid proportions of its masonry and the brilliance of its sculptured decoration.

The school which flourished under the Vijayanagara Empire, and reached its apogee in the 16th century, shows both Pandyan and Hoysala features. The florid carving of the Hoysalas was developed with even greater exuberance, and new elements appeared in temple complex. As well as the main shrine every important temple in South India was provided with a shrine for the amman, the god's chief wife, which was often nearly as large as the main shrine itself, and a marriage-hall (kalyanamandapam), wherein the icons of and goddess were ceremonially united on festival days. Another features of the Vijayanagara style is the profusion of strong yet delicate carving which adorns the pillared halls, the many columns of which are so decorated that they become sculptures in their own right. Prancing horses, vigorous and energetic, leap from the stone, with leogryphs and other fantastic monsters. For brilliancy of decorative imagination the Vijaynagara style of architecture was surpassed in Hindu India. Its finest production is undoubtedly the Vitthala Temple at Hampi, the old Vijayanagara.

In the chief cities of nmorthern India alsomst all traces of het architecture of the Hindu period have vanished. Even in holy Banaras all the great and famous temples are comparatively recent. One important exception, however, is the Buddhist temple at Gaya the main tower of which is probably as early as, the 6th century. This is a large pyramid of brickwork, set on a high plinth: it is a domed with parallel courses of "caitya, window" pattern is surmounted by a lofty pinnacle which was originally a small stupa. Similar towers existed in other Buddhist monastic establishments, but have long since vanished. The Gaya tower suggests rather the Southern than the Northern style of sikhara, but other temples of the period either have no towers or have small curvilinear ones which are evidently the prototypes of the later Northern sikhara. Medieval North Indian architecture is best illustrated by three schools those of Orissa, Bundelkhand, and Gujarat and South Rajasthan. There were other local developments, as well as the distinctive style of Kashmir which we have already noted, but these three are certainly the most important, and their products are the best preserved.

The Orissan School flourished from the 10th to the 13th centuries, and its chief monuments lie in and around the towns of Bhubanesar and Puri. The finest Orissan temple is the Lingaraja at Bhubanesar, which shows the North Indian sikhara in its final form-a tower which begins to curve inwards at about one third of its height, with rounded top crowned by a flat stone disc (amalaka) and a final (kalasa). The upward movement of this graceful curving tower is emphasized by deep vertical inlets, but its solidity and firm basis on earth are very evident. The Lingaraja, like

most Orrisan temples, is build as a series of four halls-a hall of offerings, a dancing hall an assembly hall and a sanctuary.90 The sanctuary is crowned by the great tower, but the other three elements of the temple, leading one by one to the shrine, are also roofed with characteristic towers of smaller size, carrying the eye to the main sikhara. The whole temple enclosure of the Lingaraja is filled with smaller shrines, built on the pattern of the great one.

The Orissan architects were lavish with their exterior decoration, and their sculptors produced works of great merit, but the interiors of their temples are unadorned. In the larger temples the corbelled roofs were often partly supported by iron girders; a striking technical innovation.

Among the most important Orissan temples are the Temple of Visnu-Jagannatha at Puri, still one of the most famous shrines of India, and the "Black Pagoda" of Konark, built in the 13th century. The latter, a temple of Surya, sun-god, was formerly one of the largest and most splendid temples on India, much larger than those of Bhubanesar. The tower, over 200 feet high, has long since fallen, but the great assembly-hall remains. Unlike the other temples of this region that of Konark had the two smaller outer halls completely separate from the main structure, and assembly-hall and tower were built on an imposing platform, round which were carved twelve decorated wheels, 10 feet in diameter. The entrance is reached by a broad flight of steps, flanked on either by prancing horses, the whole representing the chariot in which sun-god rides across the heavens. The court of the temple was rated with large free-standing sculptures of great strength and beauty. The exceptionally frank eroticism of many of the Konarak sculptures has given the "Black Pagoda" a rather infamous reputation. Maithuna figures, of couples closely embracing actually in cottu, are common enough as decorative features of many Indian temples, but those of Konarak are exceptionally vivid. Many suggestions have been made as to the true significance of these figures; it has been suggested that they merely served the mundane purpose of advertising the charms of the devadasis, or temple prostitutes, or that they were intended to represent the world of the flesh, contrast to the bare and austere interior, which symbolized the things of the spirit, probably they were connected, In the minds of their designers, with the sexual mysticism which played so great a part in medieval Indian religious thought No doubt the temple of Konarak was a centre of a flourishing tantric cult.

Under the Candella kings of Bundelkhand a great school of architecture flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries, the chief work of which is a beautiful group of temples at Khajuraho, about 100 miles South-East of Jhansi. These temples are built on a rather different plan from those of Orissa, and are not very large the finest, a Saivite temple known as Kandariya-Mahadeo, was built about A.D.1000, and not more than 100 feet high. The standard type of Khajuraho temple contains a shrine-room or

90 Often referred to by the modern vernacular names, bhog mandir, nat madir, jagmohan, and deul respectively.

sanctuary, an assembly-hall, and I entrance portico. Whereas in the Orissan temple these elements are conceived, rather as separate entities joined together by vestibules, the Khajuraho architects treated them as a whole, and though each part has its own roof they are not structurally separate. The Khaijraho sikhara, like those of most Northern temples, is curvilinear, but differs from the type of Orissa. It is curved for its whole length, and its upward thrust is accentuated by miniature sikharas emerging from the central tower. The crowning discs of lese projections break the upward movement, and remind the observer that the divine is to be found on earth as well as in heaven. The effect of the whole, despite its symmetry, is one of organic and natural growth. The tower, and indeed the whole temple, seems intimately at one with the earth, suggesting an enormous ant-hill, or a high peak surrounded by lesser mountains. Though expressed in the most baroque of styles, the Kandariya-Mahadeo is a striking instance of a feature common in much Indian art, a deeling of unity with nature.

The halls and porticoes of the Khajuraho temples are also crowned with smaller towers, which rise progressively to lead the eye up to the main tower, and thus intensify the impression of a mountain range. While the Orissan roof is pyramidal in pattern. The Khajuraho builders is broken by pillared window openings, which relieve the monotony of the ornately carved stone. A further distinctive feature of on by some as a microcosm of the world, as the open-air sacrifice had been in earlier days. In sculpture, and often in painting also, all the gods were depicted on its walls, every aspect of divine and human existence symbolized. Like Hindu civilization itself, the temple was at once voluptuous and austere, rooted in earth, but aspiring to heaven.

SCULPTURE

In architecture there is no real trace of relationship between the brick houses of Harappa and the stone temples of Hindu India, and the art of building in stone seems to have been learnt slowly from the time of Mauryas onwards. The earliest sculpture of historical times, on the other hand, shows a generic likeness to that of Harappa, which we have already described. From the end of the Indus cities to the rise of the Mauryas over a millennium elapsed, with no surviving work of art to fill it. Somewhere in North India the art of sculpture, no doubt in perishable materials, was certainly kept alive. The patronage of the Mauryan emperors, the influx of western influence, and growing material prosperity, led to its revival, and to the making of stone figures and reliefs which have survived to this day.

The capitals of Asoka's columns, some of which were perhaps made before his reign, are the earliest important sculptures after those of the Indus cities. They are not characteristic of Indian sculpture, though they contain many native features. The famous lions of the Sarnath column and the less famous but more beautiful bull of the column of Rampurva are the work of realistic sculptors, owing something to

Iranian and Hellenist tradition. Yet, if we did not know that the possibility of Western influence existed, we might suggest that the animal sculptures of the columns were those of a school directly descended from the engravers of the Indus seals, which also show a realistic treatment very unusual for so early a civilization. The abaci of the capitals perhaps show native influence more clearly than the crowning figures and animals in lively postures, wheels, representing both the Buddha and the Mauryan World-emperor, and floral and foliate designs in which typical motifs appear side by side with some borrowed from the West. Other than the pillars there are few remains of the Mauryan school, with its high polish and the finish. One beautiful figure, the "Didarganj Yaksi", bears the distinctive brilliant polish of the school, but the treatment of the figure suggests that it is post-Mauryan. The yaksi bears a auri, or ceremonial yak's tail fly-whisk with which kings and gods were fanned; this shows that the figure was made as the attendant on another figure or a object, which has now vanished.

A number of figures of yaksas, somewhat larger than life-size, are the only other important free sculptures of the centuries immediately before Christ. They are strong, bull-necked and heavy, and though not technically perfect, have an elemental solidity rarely found I later sculpture. The treatment of the ample abdomens of these figures has been figures has been compared with that of the abdomen of the Harappa torso and given further evidence of the survival of tradition over the long intervening period the style was the introduction of small transepts to the assembly hall, giving the whole a ground plan not unlike that of a Gothic cathedral.

Like all other schools of architecture, that of Khajuraho made much of carving. Here, in contrast to Orissa, the temples were adorned with sculpture both outside and in, and the halls have beautifully carved domical ceilings. The style of Khajuraho sculpture lacks the solidity and vigour of the best of Orissa, but the wonderful friezes of statuary contain figures of a graceful vitality, warmer and more immediately attractive than those of the Orissan temples.

In Rajasthan and Gujarat are many medieval temples, some of much architectural merit. Here we can only mention the greatest of these Western schools, that which rose under the patronage of the Caulukya or Solanki kings of Gujarat, and flourished from the 11th the 13th centuries. This kingdom was wealthy from the seaborne trade with the Arabs and Persians, and much of the treasure of kings, ministers and merchants alike was expended on beautiful Jaina and Hindu temples.

The most famous buildings of this school are the lovely Jaina shrines of Mount Abu, the style of which is not very different fundamentally from that of Khajuraho. The temples were built on high platforms and usually consisted of a shrine and hall only, without an entrance portico. The sikhara over the shrine, like those of Khajuraho, was adorned with a large number of miniature towers, d the ceilings were in the

form of corbelled domes. Perhaps rough the influence of Muslim architectural styles, these ceilings were carved so as to give the impression of a true dome, the steps of e corbelling being skillfully concealed by the sculptor, and the flat crossbeams, supported on pillars/often being adorned with large brackets meeting at the centre, which gave an arch-like effect, though the true arch was never employed. The most outstanding feature of this style was its minute and lovely decorativeness. The shrines of Mount Abu, made of cool white marble, are covered with the most delicate and ornate carving, especially in the interiors: it is however, rather flaccid and repetitive. In comparison with Bhubanesar, Konarak and Khajuraho the rich decoration of Mount Abu has a flavour of cold lifelessness.

Remains of pre-Musiim secular buildings are few. In the Middle ages kings and chiefs certainly built stone palaces, but of these only the base of Vijayanagara throne-room, and some remains in Ceylon, have survived. Several cities of Rajasthan and Gujarat have finely carved gateways from the medieval period. But, though secular architecture was no doubt highly developed, it is clear that India s architects and masons devoted their greatest energies to temple Gilding. Working according to strict traditions, but snowing much ingenuity and originality within the main standardized pattern, they erected monuments of fantastic beauty with the simplest technical equipment Many patient hands reared the sikharas above the plain, and capped them with great slabs of stone, raised on enormous ramps of earth, like the higher courses of the pyramids of Egypt. Whether or not the architects and craftsmen were conscious of the symbolism, the temple was looked.

The most important sculptural remains of the post-Mauryan are the carvings op the rails and gateways of the great Buddhist sites at Bharhut, Gaya and Sanchi. There is no absolute certainly about the dating of these remains, but the sculpture of Bharhut is in a less highly developed style than that of Gaya and Sanchi, and is probably the earliest, while the gateways of Sanchi, carved with great sureness and skill, are probably the latest of the three. The series Bharhut-Gaya-Sanchi is to some extent confirmed by epigraphic evidence, and we may date Bharhut c. 150 B.C. and Sanchi about the end of the 1st century B.C., with Gaya somewhere between the two. The criteria are not however, absolutely certain, for it is possible that the backward and advanced schools were approximately contemporary.

At Bharhut the upright posts of the stupa railings are carved with yaksas and yaksis, beautifully finished and very decorative, like all the best Indian sculpture, but archaic and uncertain in treatment Their flatness suggests that the artists were trained in working of ivory, and were laboriously learning to translate their skill into a different medium. The medallions of the crosspieces, mostly depicting scenes from Jataka stories, have a similar archaic flavour.

The Gaya railing, enclosing not a stupa but the sacred path where the Buddha walked in meditation after he had obtained enlightenment, shows an advance on

Bharhut The figures are deeper, more vital, more rounded, and the sculptors had by this time evidently gained greater mastery of their technique. Figures are no longer always-carved flat on the stone, but begin to appear in three-quarter poses. Notable at Gaya are the medallions containing human heads, which have such realism that they may well be portraits.

The crowning achievement of early North Indian sculpture is undoubtedly Sanchi. Here a smaller stupa (Stupa II) is adorned I carvings of very archaic character, according to some authorities doer than those of Bharhut. The railings of the main stupa are quite unadorned, but in sharp contrast, the great gateways are carved with a multitude of figures and reliefs. From top to bottom on all sides the massive square uprights and triple architraves are alive with the life of the times. Yaksis smile as they lean in easy graceful poses,91 or serve as brackets to the architrave's which are supported by massive elephants or cheerfully grinning dwarfs. The flat surfaces of the uprights and architrave's are covered with panels depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha or from Jataka stories. Cities are besieged, riders on elephants horses pass in procession, men and women worship sacred shrines, elephants roam the jungle; lions, peacocks, yaksis, nagas, mythical animals and ornate floral designs fill the whole. Some of the motifs are evidently of Mesopotamlan or Persian inspiration, but the whole is typically Indian in its complexity of pattern, its cheerful busy realism, and its exuberance.

The carvings of Sanchi gateways were not carried out according to any preconceived scheme. The sculptors were not commissioned the monastery, but by private patrons, who wished to gain merit beautifying the stupa, and they carved what their patrons told them the way they thought best. Superficially the result was lacking in formal unity, but was endowed with a unity transcending rule and pattern, the unity of a prosperous culture, pious in devotion to its shrines, and delighting in the world it lived in and knew. The visitor, standing on the hill of Sanchi on a sunny winter day, when the wild peacocks walk among the ruins and the great plain shimmers in the hazy distance, gets the overriding impression that this is the work a happy people at one with itself.

Technically the carvings are of high excellence. The sculptors have now fully mastered their material. There treatment, while not of course, realistic in the nineteenth-century sense, has transcended the rather stiff formalism of Bharhut, and is free and alive. The sculpture of Sanchi everywhere gives a sense of certainly; the artists knew what they had to depict, and clearly saw in their mind's eye hoe to do so.

At Bhahut, Gaya and Sanchi, and indeed in all the Buddhist sculpture of this period,

91 The triohanga, a pose in dancing and dramatics with one leg bent and the body slightly turned at the hips, was favourite with the sculptor from the earliest times. It contrasts sharply with the heretic poses of most ancient art other than that of the Greeks, and given an impression of life and vitality.

the Buddha himself is never shown, but symbolized by such emblems as a wheel, an empty throne, a pair of footprints pipal tree. The obvious reason for this iconographical peculiarity is that he was so venerated that it seemed sacrilegious to portray him, but we have no literary or other evidence to confirm this. The aversion to depicting the Buddha may have been to the fact that, since he had passed quite out of the universe, it thought misleading to show him in human form. In any case the familiar Buddha image of later times is not to be found at these three early Buddhist sites. The schools of Gandhara (the lower Kabul Valley and the upper Indus, around Peshawar) and Mathura, both of which flourished under the Kusana kings, vie for the honour of having produced the first images of the Buddha. Most Indian authorities now believe that the Buddha image originated at Mathura; most-earlier Europeans supported Gandhara, but some recent experts less certain.

The school of Mathura probably began at the end of the 1st century B.C., though some authorities would date it later. Working for centuries in the whittle-spotted red sandstone of the locality, it produced works which were carried far and wide, and had much influence later sculpture. Some of the school's inspiration was Jaina, and at early period the Mathura craftsmen were making votive plaques depicting the cross-legged naked figure of Tirthankara in meditation, which may have inspired the Buddhists to depict their own teacher. Perhaps the most striking remains of the Mathura school are the yaksis from the railings of a stupa, which was probably Jaina. These richly jeweled ladies, their figures exaggeratedly broad of hip and slender of waist, stand in pert attitudes reminiscent of the Indus dancing-girl, and their gay and frank sensuality in a context of piety and renunciation gives another frank sensuality gives example of the remarkable antinomy of the ancient Indian outlook on life, which found nothing incongruous in such a juxtaposition.

Rather outside the main range of Mathura art are the Kusana royal-statues, most of which were found at the nearby village of Mat, where the kings no doubt had a winter residence, with a chapel in the memory of former monarchs was revered. The figures have nearly all been broken by succeeding rulers, and that of the great Kaniska, the most striking of the statues, unfortunately lacks its head. Wearing the dress of Central Asia, a long coat and quilted boots, and grasping in one hand a sword and in the other its sheath, the king stands with legs apart, in an attitude of authority. This statue may be criticized technically as showing no sense of depth, being virtually in two dimensions. The sculptor was evidently working on a theme to which he was not used, but he succeeded in producing a work of much power, suggesting the hieratic royal statues of Egypt.

The early Buddhas and Boddhisattvas ot the Mathura school are happy fleshy figures with little spirituality about them, but later they developed in grace and religious feeling. Though the Mathura school owed much to earlier Indian tradition, it also borrowed from the North-West, and adopted more than one Greco-Roman motif. Through Mathura the style generally known as Gupta developed, and produced

some of the greatest Indian religious sculpture.

The school of Gandhara was evidently influenced by the art of the Roman Empire, and some of its craftsmen may have been Westerners. Though often called Greco-Buddhist, the Greek kingdoms of Bactria and N-W. India had long vanished when this school emerged. It is not to the Greco-Bactrian heirs of Alexander, but to the trade with the West, encouraged by the rising prosperity of Rome and the eastwards march of her legions, that we must attribute this syncretistic school. The Greeks left only a few lovely silver articles, beautiful coins, and one or two other objects, perhaps imported from the West. It was Kaniska and his successors and their wealthy subjects who gave to the school of Gandhara the encouragement and support through which it flourished. The new devotional Buddhism demanded iconic worship, and figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were produced in large numbers, as well as small votive plaques depicting scenes from the Buddha's life or Jataka stories.

The Mathura sculptors drew inspiration for their Buddha images from the burly yakṣa figures of the earlier centuries on the one hand and from the meditating Jaina Tirthankara on the other. The Gandhara sculptors had other models in the gods of the Greco-Roman World. Often their inspiration seems almost wholly Western, and it is hard not to believe that some of the Gandhara masters were foreigners from Syria or Alexandria. The school has depreciated in recent years. When all art was judged by classical norms it was thought to be the finest school of Indian art, which once and once only produced work of grace and realism. Now the sculpture of Gandhara is sometimes described as a mree imitation of an imitation, the weak copy of a great art in decline. Neither judgement is fair in an Indian context the style of Gandhara has a rather inspired flavour, but it is not without originality. The Buddhas of Gandhara, though perhaps lacking in the spirituality of those of the Gupta period, are gentry, graceful and compassionate, while some of the plaques are vivid and energetic. The School continued after the greater Kusanas, though with less prosperous times it produced few works in stone, but many in plaster or stucco. Its influence was felt far beyond the bounds of India, and can be traced even in China.

While these schools were developing in the North others appeared in the Peninsula. Here, in the Bhaja cave and at Udayagjri in Orissa, very ancient sculpture is to be found, possibly no later than that of Bharhut The great Buddhist cave temples of the Western Deccan contain much sculpture of great merit, perhaps the finest of which are the numerous figures of donors, often carved in high relief on the cave walls. These are frequently in couples, their arms, on one another's shoulders, and seem to be idealized portraits of the wealthy patrons of the Buddhist caves. Such couples are also to be found in early terracottas, and no doubt their originals believed that by piecing their effigies in shrines they would obtain both material and spiritual benefits. It may be that these are the forerunners of the maithuna couples of the medieval temples, but the spirit behind the early dampati pairs seems very different

for these figures have no overt sexual significance. The man usually looks not at his wife but outwards into the hall, while the woman glances downwards, and, quite unlike the bold yaksis of the North, holds her body diffidently, almost timidly, as if rather embarrassed at being stared at in public. We believe that these figures represent the ideals of ancient Indian married life, and are no more esoteric than the family memorial brasses in many English churches.

The region between the lower valleys of the Kishna and Godavari became an important centre of Buddhism at least as early as the 2nd century B.C., and some very ancient sculpture in low relief, intended to Adorn the sides of stupas, is to be found there. This already shows the characteristic elongation of the mature style of Amaravati. In the late Satavahana period (2nd – 3rd century A.D.) the great stupa of Amaravati was adorned with limestone reliefs depicting scenes of the Buddha's life and surrounded with free-standing Buddha figures. The relief medallions are certainly among the greatest works of Indian art Beautifully balanced in composition to fit the circular frames, they convey an intense vitality and sense of rapid movement, quite unexpected in the context of the grave and calm religion they illustrate. The slender, long-legged figures are portrayed in vigorous action, often rising almost to frenzy, as in the famous medallion showing a host of ecstatic demigods carrying the Buddha's begging-bowl to heaven. The Amaravati school had great influence. Its products were carried to Ceylon and South-East Asia and had a marked effect on local styles, while its influence on later South Indian sculpture is also very evident.

Meanwhile in the North the Saka and Kusala invaders had in part retreated and in part merged with the Indigenous population, to make way for the great Gupta Empire. From the point of view of art the Gupta Period is generally taken to include at least the 4th -6th centuries and the first half of the 7th. The plastic remains of this age are comparatively few, but enough survive to show the achievement of the time, if the schools of Bharhut Sanchi and Mathura are marked by a sensual earthiness, and that of Amaravati by vital, excited movement, the Guptan sculpture suggests serenity, security and certainty. It was at this time that India produced some of her most truly religious art, especially in the lovely Buddhas of Samath. Most famous of these is the icon of the Buddha "turning of Wheel of the Law", or preaching his first sermon, which, more than any other Indian sculpture, seems to convey the true message of Buddhism. Surrounded by a large and ornate halo, flanked by two small demigods, the Master sits majestically, his body slender and rounded, plastically so simplified that no trace of muscular contour can be seen, his delicate fingers forming the dharmacakra mudra, which indicates that he is preaching. His face is, as usual, that of a young man, with delicately modelled lips; his half-closed eyes and slight smile tell more graphically and vividly than any of the rather dry Buddhist scriptures his fundamental message, and emphasize not its first part, that the world is full of sorrow, death and decay, but that it is possible to transcend these evils, and reach a state where age and grief no longer affect the mind, and where earthly pleasure is transmuted into serene inner joy.

This great masterpiece, however, illustrates only one aspect of Gupta art. In the region of Gwalior and Jhansi an excellent school of Hindu sculptors existed, and the carvings of the temple of Deogarti, depicting Hindu gods and mythological scenes, show the beginnings of the early medieval style. The splendid figure of the sun-god Surya from Gwalior illustrates another aspect of the outlook of the times. Broad and sturdy, cheerfully smiling, the god looks straight ahead at his worshippers, his right hand raised in blessing-the god of a good-natured, happy people. Equally significant of the spirit of the Gupta Period, if less perfect in execution, is the charming relief of a dancer, accompanied by girl-musicians, found at Pawaya, near Gwalior. Another famous Guptan sculpture is the "Sanchi Torso",92 the delicately but vigorously modelled body of a Boddhlsattva, its smooth contours emphasized by the minutely carved Jeweled collar and belt and the scarf of antelope skin hanging over the left shoulder.

Perhaps the most immediately impressive of all Guptan sculpture; the Great Boar, carved In relief at the entrance of a cave at Udaya-giri, near Bhilsa. The body of the god Visnu, who became a mighty boar to rescue the earth from the cosmic ocean conveys the impression of a great primeval power working or good against the forces of chaos and destruction, and bears a message of hope, strength and assurance. The greatness of the god in comparison with his creation is brought out by the tiny female figure of the personified earth, clinging to his tusk. The deep feeling which inspired the carving of this figure makes it perhaps the only theriomorphic image in the world's art which conveys a truly religious message to modem man.

Sculpture of the medieval period are so numerous that they cannot be discussed here in dottal. By this time iconographical canons were fixed. Every god had his special attributes, which were regularly portrayed in his image; the proportions of body, limbs and features were laid down, and were adhered to with increasing rigidity, but the Indian sculptor succeeded in producing remarkable variety in his now almost hieratic art.

Under the Pala Sena kings of Bihar and Bengal (8th – 12th centuries) both Buddhists and Hindus made fine icons, many in the local black stone. The special characteristic of Pala art is its fine finish; its figures are much decorated and well polished, an often seem rather made of metal than of stone.

The sculpture of Orissa was greater than that of the Palas. The carvings of the temples of Bhubanesar and Konark show a deep sensuous appreciation of eh human form and an expressiveness which gives them a characteristic beauty of their own. The finest Orissan sculptures are those in the courtyard of the Temple of the Sun at Konark, where the forceful horses and the mighty elephant crushing a malefactor in

92 Said by some to be an exceptional Pala Production.

his trunk show a strength of treatment and a feeling for animal form rare in the world's art, and reminiscent of the animal sculpture and ceramics of the Tang dynasty of China.

The Khajuraho temples are covered with figures of divinities and pairs of lovers of wonderful delicacy and grace, and in man other of North India many works of beauty survive, although few can vie with those of Orissa.

In the Deccan individual schools of sculpture appeared. The temples of Aihole and Badami contain fine work of the 5th century onwards, which shows the influence of the Guptan style, with a tendency to elongation perhaps inherited from Amaravati. More important are the sculptures of Mamallapuram, adorning the wonderful complex of rock-temples made by the Pallava kings of Kanci. Most striking of these sculptures is the great relief of the descent of the Ganges, covering a rock face over 80 feet long and nearly 30 feet high. A natural cleft in the rock has been utilized to represent the Sacred River, whgoi is watched on either side by gods, demigods, ascetics and elephants, as she descends from the head of Siva, and who has sinuous snake-spirits (nagas) swimming in her waters. The artists who designed this splendid relief had a sardonic sense of humour, for among the worshipping ascetics they carved the crafty cat, who performed penance in order to lure the mice to their doom. Mamallapuram contains other fine relief sculpture, including an idealized portrait of the versatile king Mahendravikramavarman and his queens, and a number of free-standing animal figures, which are remarkable for their simple strength.

The influence of the Pallava School of sculpture was felt in Ceylon, and also in the Western Deccan. Here the Buddhist carvings of the Ajanta caves, though important, are dwarfed in significance by the wonderful mural paintings. The carvings of the later Ellora caves, on the other hand, especially those of the Kallasanatha Temple, are among the finest sculptures of India. They are chiefly in the form of deep reliefs, giving the effect of free-standing sculpture, and illustrate scenes on mythology. The whole series of reliefs is characterized by balanced design, and a graceful energy akin to that of Amaravati. Of the same school, but a century or two later, are the cave sculptures of Elephants. The rock temple of Siva contains a fine series of deep reliefs, all of which are dwarfed in significance by the colossal Trimurti, which is perhaps the best known of all Ancient Indian sculptures. The three-headed bust of Siva, calm with the calmness of eternity, is so impressive and so religiously inspired that it needs little comment. The serene god is perhaps the highest plastic expression of the Hindu concept of divinity.

After Mamallapuram and Elephanta much stone sculpture was produced in the Peninsula, but though often of great merit it lacked the depth and beauty of the work of the earlier schools. The splendid bronzes of the Colas and their Successors are the most outstanding products of the Dravidian artists of the later Middle Ages.

TERRACOTTAS

While the rich delighted in figures of stone, metal or ivory, poorer folk contented themselves with small images and plaques of clay, no doubt originally painted in bright colours. Nearly every archaeological site in India, from Harappa onwards, has produced many of these terracotta objects. Most are religious. Crude clay figures of goddesses-apparently early forms of Durga, worshipped by the lower classes before her inclusion in the orthodox pantheon-are common, and recall the similar but even cruder mother goddess figurines of Harappa. Other objects little if any religious significance, though they may have been charms or votive offerings; figures of mother and child, a type rare in sculpture, suggest offerings made by childless women, while the numerous figures of a man and a woman, standing in modest poses reminiscent of the donors of the cave temple sculpture, many have been charms for a happy marriage. While many terracottas are crude, others are of fine workmanship and real beauty. Some faces are well characterized and divine heads are sometimes beautifully modelled. The terracotta plaques often much charm.

Most of the terracottas so far found date from the Mauryan to the Gupta period, but the art of modelling in terracotta must have existed earlier, and certainly continued later, for the Buddhist sites of Bihar have yielded many medieval votive plaques of no great artistic interest.

METAL SCULPTURE AND ENGRAVING

Several works of art in metal, very Hellenistic in style, have been found In the North-West, dating from the early centuries of the Christian era. Some of these are quite un-Indian, and may have been improved, or produced by foreign craftsmen, for instance the lovely little en and jewelled reliquary casket from Bimaran. Further afield, in Soviet Central Asia and Northern Afghanistan, have been found beautiful silver cups and other objects, ornamented with motifs usually Hellenistic in inspiration and technique, but showing clear evidence of Indian contacts, Soviet archeologists believe that these are the products of the Greek kingdom of Bactira, and date from the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. Thus they are in no way connected with the Gandhara sculpture of the early centuries of the Christian era, Wholly Indian in style, and dating from pre-Gupta times, is the copper vase from Kulu, on the borders of Kashmir, engraved with a gay procession.

From the Gupta period a number of bronze and copper figures have survived, mostly Buddhist. The most impressive of these is the "Sultanganj Buddha", some 71/2 feet high, now in Brmingham Museum- a graceful figure, dressed in a diaphanous cloak. Like most of the work of the period it conveys a feeling of aliveness, not by attention to realistic detail and proportion, but by the sense of movement in the slightly tilted body, the delicate fingers, lightly clasping the corners of the robe, and the face,

impassively symmetrical yet with a vitality imparted by the delicate moulding of its features.

The use of bronze images in worship seems to have been specially prevalent among Buddhists. The Sultanganj Buddha was found in Bihar one of the great centres of Buddhism, where one of the two great medieval schools of metal sculpture arose, under the patronage of the Pala kings. Pala bronzes are so numerous that there is no doubt that they were mass-produced. They were exported to South-East Asia, where they are still found, and to Nepal and Tibet. Where they provide prototypes from indigenous schools, these images are characterized chiefly by delicacy of design and ornamental detail, and deep religious inspiration is usually lacking. The earliest Nepal bronzes, which go back to our period, are less ornate in design, but are glided and set with semi-precious stones, and give an impression of great brilliance and smoothness.

Other parts of India also produced metal icons, but many of those which have survived have no great artistic value. The Tamils still prefer metal to stone for the images used in temple and domestic worship, and it was in South India, especially in the kingdom of the Colas, that the greatest Indian works of art in metal were made, by a school of bronze-casters which has not been excelled in the world. South Indian bronzes vary in size, but many of the finest specimens are very large and heavy, their pedestals fitted with lugs for carrying in procession. The best specimens of South Indian metal work are of great grace and simplicity, for, though the statues have much ornamentation, this, as in most of the best Indian sculpture, is relieved by areas of bare smooth flesh. Physical features and the contours of face and limb are simplified and idealized, the proportions are rigidly fixed by canons laid down I iconographical textbooks, and every attribute of the deity portrayed is determined by convention. It is surprising that, bound as they were by these rigid rules, the Tamil craftsmen succeeded in producing works of such great beauty and often of considerable individuality. As well as images of the gods and goddesses the Tamil school produced many figures representing the saints of devotional theism and portrait figures of kings and queens, who, in theory, were themselves divine, and whose images were often placed in temples among the lesser divinities surrounding the chief god.

Of the latter class the finest figures are the life-size 16th century statues of King Krisna a Deva Raya and two of his chief queens, which still stand in a temple at Tirumalai. The faces of the queens seem quite conventional, though very beautiful, but that of the great king himself is almost certainly intended to give some idea of his actual appearance. Their hands pressed together in the gesture called anjali, to mark their homage and respect to the gods, their large eyes half closed, these three dignified figures seem to represent all that was good and noble in the old Hindu ideals of kingship, and, looking at them, we can understand why the king made so deep an impression on the Portuguese envoys.

The greatest and most triumphant achievements of Tamil bronze casting are undoubtedly the dancing Shivas, of which there are many examples dating from the 11th century onwards. It was as "Lord of the Dance" (Nataraja) that the Tamil masters specially delighted in portraying the god-a graceful young man, his four arms delicately posed, often with a flame in the open palm of one hand and a halo of flames encircling him, one foot firm on the back of a demon, and the other raised in a posture well know in the Indian dance. Thus the god appears as the very essence of vital, ordered movement, eternal youth, and ethereal light. This is not the European conception of the highest godhead, but, once the religious background is understood, even the European can recognize in the finest specimens of the dancing Siva a true religious inspiration, a wholly successful effort at depicting in plastic terms divine true beauty and joy.

An important school of-bronze casting existed in Ceylon, and produced works similar in style to those of South India. The finest metal product of Ceylon is undoubtedly the lovely large figure of a goddess, generally relived to be that of a Buddhist Tara, but perhaps Parvati, the wife of Siva. This lovely and delicate casting, now in the British Museum, can hold its own with the greatest products of the South Indian bronzesmith.

Nearly all Indian bronzes were made by the "cire perdue" process. The figure was first designed in wax, which was covered with coating of clay. The whole was then heated, so that the wax melted away, leaving a mould to be filled with molten metal. Larger standing figures, such as the Sultanganj Buddha, which weighs near a ton, were often made in two parts which were then welded together.

PAINTING

Literary references alone would prove that painting was a very highly developed art in ancient India. Palaces and the homes of the rich were adorned with beautiful murals, and smaller painting were made on prepared boards. Not only were there professional artist, but many men and women of the educated classes could ably handle, brush.

Though now all in very bad condition the surviving remains of ancient Indian painting are sufficient to show its achievement. They consist almost entirely of murals in certain of the cave temples. No doubt most temples were painted In some way, and the statuary was brightly coloured, as it often Is in Hindu temples today, and here and there more elaborate schemes of mural decoration were carried out A few caves in outlying places contain rough painted sketches of no special merit, often primitive in style, and believed by many authorities to be prehistoric. Some of the artificial caves dedicated to religious purposes, however, give us samples of the work of highly developed schools of painting, and few would dispute that the murals greatest

surviving paintings of any ancient civilization.

The cave paintings of Ajanta are often referred to as frescos, but this term is incorrect, for a fresco is painted while the plaster is still damp, and the murals of Ajanta were made after it had set. The walls were first covered with a costing of clay or cowdung bound together with straw or hair, and then finished with white gypsum. Considering the climate the surface has stood well, but in many places it has flaked away, and even since they were first copied in the last century the condition of the paintings has deteriorated. The pigments, on the other hand, are still remarkably fresh; in their original state the paintings must have been of great brilliance, and their colours are even now clear and well contrasted. The artists worked in the dim caves by light reflected from outside by metal mirrors.

The paintings in Cave X have been shown with fair certainty to date from before the beginning of the Christian era, while those of Caves I and XVI are from perhaps as much as six centuries later. The earlier paintings are more sharply outlined and the later show more careful modelling, but there is no good evidence of a progressively developing style, as in contemporary sculpture, and the differences may be accounted for by the personal styles of the craftsmen who supervised the work in the respective caves. The Murals chiefly depict scenes from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas. No frame divides one scene from the next but they blend one into the other, the minor figures and the pattern skillfully leading the eye to the central figures of each scene. There is no perspective, but an illusion of depth is given by placing the background figures somewhat above those in the foreground. The effect of this convention is rather like that of a photograph taken with a telescopic camera, and makes the figures stand out from the flat wall as though coming to meet the observer.

Though painted for religious purposes the murals of Ajanta bear rather a secular than a religious "message. Here, even more vividly than, at Sanchi, we see the whole life of ancient India in panorama. Here are princes in their palaces, ladies in their harems, coolies with loads slung over their shoulders, beggars, peasants and ascetics, together with all the many beasts and birds and flowers of India, in fact the whole life of the times, perpetuated on the dim walls of the caves by the loving hands of many craftsmen. Everything is gracefully and masterfully drawn and delicately modelled.

Among the many masterpieces of Ajanta we must mention the figure of a handsome young man, his body bent slightly in the pose called tribhanga, loved by Indian sculptors and artists, with jewelled crown on his head, and a white lotus in his right hand. His smooth features betray gentle sorrow, and his eyes look downward compassionately, as if at something far below him. Around him are apsarases, or heavenly damsels, and divine minstrel, all much smaller than the central figure, who

is the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara Padmapani, the Lord who Looks Down in Compassion. Here, once more, a work of deep religious feel in appears among the cheerfully sensuous scenes of everyday life. The Bodhisattva, for all his jewels and his smooth youthfulness, has share the sorrows of the world; his gentle eyes have seen countless ages of pain, and his delicately formed lips have spoken words of consolation to countless sufferers. The artist of the Bodhisattva has conveyed his message- the universe is not indifferent to the sorrows and strivings of its creatures.

Religious feeling of a different type is found in the painting I the glorified Buddha, begging his daily bread form a woman child believed to represent his wife Yasodhara and his son Rahula. The lovely portrayal of the two minor figures is scarcely noticed against the majesty of the Master, whose calm features and robed body convey, like the Sarnath Buddha, the serenity of self-transcendence.

A few other paintings are to be found elsewhere. Those on the walls of the veranda of a cave at Bagh, some hundred miles to the North of Ajanta, depict a procession of elephants, perhaps more, impressive in composition than anything Ajanta has to offer and, a lovely scene of a dancer and women musicians. Traces of paintings in the Ajanta style are to found in other Deccan caves, notably at Badami and Ellora. Further south, in the Tamil country, a Jaina cave at a place called Sitannvasal has yielded a fine, though much decayed, mural.

Some of the best-preserved paintings of these schools are to found in Ceylon. In the centre of the island a great rock, Sigiriya the "Lion Mountain", rises sharply for 600 feet above the surrounding plain. Here, at the end of the 5th century, the parricide king Kasyapa I built a palace and a fortress. Kasyapa, evidently a megalomaniac, was so convinced of his own divinity that he tried to identify his rock-fortress with heaven, and had demigods and heavenly beings painted on the bare walls of the rock, to show his subjects that he transcended them all. Nearly all these paintings have vanished under the hot sun and driving monsoon rain, but half way up the rock face, preserved by an overhanging ledge, are the figures of twenty one apsarases immersed from their hips downwards in banks of cloud.93 These charming ladies, toying with flowers in languid poses, are so freshly preserved that one can hardly believe that they were painted 1,500 years ago.

The surviving traces of medieval Hindu painting, at Tanjore, Vijayanagara Polonnaruva in Ceylon, and elsewhere, indicate that there was some technical decline after the 8th century. Outlines become sharper, and the delicate modelling of the earlier period is lacking, but the achievement is still considerable. Scarcely anything survives from this period in good enough preservation to make a

93 Until recently these figures were thought to be portraits of Kasyapa's queens and concubines, and some of the faces seem to show individual character. Some authorities might still support the older theory, but the context of the paintings leaves little doubt that the above interpretation is correct.

satisfactory reproduction, but what can still be seen shows that the tradition of mural painting continued down to the Muslim invasion.

After the spread of Islamic influence the Indian painter turned his attention mainly to miniatures and book illustration, deriving much inspiration from Persian models. Literary evidence shows that miniature painting existed long before the coming of the Muslims, however, and a few examples have survived from the 11th and 12th centuries from Bihar, Bengal and Nepal. These little pictures show great delicacy and skill, but they lack the comparative realism of Ajanta, and the figures are almost unmodelled. They are the products of a formalized Buddhism, the religious inspiration of which was languishing, and which was largely detached from contact with everyday life. Unlike the Ajanta murals, they are probably the work of monks, and not of secular craftsmen.

The city made of Central Asia have preserved paintings which, though not strictly Indian, owe much to Indian inspiration. The earliest of these surround a colossal rock-cut Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan and are older than most of the paintings at Ajanta. The many murals and paintings on boards found at sites, in Chinese Turkistan and other parts of Central Asia are mostly somewhat later, and show greater deviation from Indian models, though their debt to India is quite evident. They date from a, period when the trade route to China was wide open, and give proof of the debt which Chinese art, despite its very individual character, owes to India.

MINOR ARTS

The excavations at Taksasila and other sites of the North-West have revealed fine jewellery, with semi-precious stones set in gold filigree, much in the manner of the Indian jewellery of the present day. The Bimaran Casket, and a few other objects in gold and silver are delicately worked, as are the crystal relic caskets found in Buddhist sites in many parts of India. Engraved intaglio gems from the Northwestern sites are usually of no great artistic merit, and nearly all these small objects of art show the influence of western models, while some may well have been imported.

Though little survives, much beautiful work was done in ivory. Guilds of ivory carvers are mentioned in inscriptions and their profession was evidently a well-patronized and honourable one of surviving ivory work the most interesting if not the most beautiful specimen is a small statuette of a goddess, found at Herculaneum, no doubt imported with spices and fine textiles via Egypt. More beautiful are the ivory plaques, originally fastened to the lids and sides of boxes, found at the Kusana sites of Begram, some fifty miles west of Kabul. Though discovered in the region most open to Western influence, the designs of these plaques are peruely Indian in inspiration, and they were either imported from India proper or mad by craftsmen who had learnt their trade from Indian masters. The figures are outlined with deep-

cut lines, ant although only lightly modelled, give a wonderful impression of depth. Their delicacy and grace are unexcelled in any work of art of ancient India. The art of Ivory carving has continued down to the present day both in India and Ceylon, but it has never again produced works as lovely as these.

Since they delighted in minute detail and gave great care to the finish of their productions it is surprising that the Indians did not develop their coinage artistically. Ancient Indian coins are generally crude and ugly. Only under the Gupta emperors did they approach the status of works of art, and even the Gupta gold coins are but work of art of the second order. They have originality and charm, how, ever. Thus Chandra Gupta I lovingly gazes at his chief queen Kumaradevi; Samudra Gupta, enthroned, performs on the harp; Chandra Gupta II slays a rhinoceros; and Kumara Gupta I rides on splendid elephant. After this, however the gold of coin production deteriorated rapidly, and medieval kings who patronized great artists and craftsmen were satisfied with coins of the crudest type.

Exceptional are the lovely large silver coins minted by the Greek kings of Bactria which bear some of the finest numismatic portraits in the world; but the inspiration of these coins is purely Hellenistic, and they were no doubt designed by Greek craftsmen. It is unlikely that they circulated widely in India, where the Greek kings issued cruder bilingual coins, in a style followed by the later Sakas and Kusanas.

MUSIC

There is some evidence to show that the Aryans knew the heptatonic scale, and the instructions for intoning the hymns of the Sama Veda show that the style of liturgical singing in Vedic times was rather like that of medieval plain chant and has been preserved fairly accurately by the brahmans down to the present day. Between this and the early centuries of the Christian era we have little knowledge of the Christian era we have little knowledge of the progress of Indian music, but in the latter period an anonymous writer composed a textbook on drama, music and dancing, which, accordance with the custom of the time, he attributed to the ancient sage Bharata, and which has survived to this day. The Bharata Natyasastra is our earliest Indian authority on these three arts, al shows that by this time India had a fully developed system of music which, differed little from that of present-day Indian "classical" music. Anyone who has heard a performance on the vina by a good South Indian musician has probably heard music much as it was played over a thousand years ago. For this reason, and because of the highly technical nature of the subject, we treat ancient Indian music briefly.

The basic scale is heptatonic its seven notes94 corresponding approximately to those

94 Called Sadja, rsabha, gandhara, madhyama, dhaivata and nisada, nowadays generally abbreviated to sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, Dha and ni.

of the Europena major scale. They may be elaborated with half-tones or quarter-tones (Sruti). There are twenty-two quarter-tones in the octave, which occur in the following order:

Sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa

From this diagram it will be seen theat the notes sa, ma and pa (approximately the European do, fa and so) may have as many, there degrees of sharpness. The quarter-tones of Indian music are chiefly noticeable in ornamentation, when they are used with striking effect, but they also occur to some extent in melody, so that the untutored Westerner may well think the singer or musician is out of tune.

As well as the scale based on the note sa, corresponding to the Eurpean major, other scales may be based on other notes of the seven, thus resembling the modes of ecclesiastical music.

Besides the grama, which we have translated "scale", there are other basic classifications of tune-types, chief of which is the raga. A raga is a series of five or more notes, upon which a melody is based. Over thirty ragas are mentioned in the Bharata Natyasastra, and the total has since grown considerably until now hundreds have been enumerated. According to orthodox theory there are six basic ragas, the others being raginis, personified as the wives of the masculine ragas. The six original ragas are variously given, the oldest list, that of Bharata, being as follows.

Bhairava: C, Db, E, F, G, Ab, B, C.
Kausika: C, Eb, F, Ab, Bb, C.
Hindola: C, E, F*, A, B, C.
Dipaka: C, Db, E, F*, A, B, C.
Sriraga: C, Db, E, F*, G, Ab, B, C.
Megha: C, D, F, G, A, C.

The ragas are classified according to the time of day or night for which they are most appropriate. Thus, of the examples above, Bhairava is suitable for performance at dawn, Megha in the morning, Dipaka and Sriraga in the afternoon, and Kausika and Hindola at night. Bhairava is associated with awe and fear, Kausika with joy and laughter, Hindola, Dipaka and Sriraga with love, and Megha with peace and calm. It is interesting that the raga most closely corresponding to the European major scale, Pancama, is associated with the night and love in the Indian system.

There is no harmony in Indian music, and the melody, which usually proceeds by conjunct intervals (i.e. adjacent notes on the keyboard), never suggests a harmonic basis, as do many European melodies; The tune is sustained by a drone note and by drumming. The subtle and complex cross rhythms of Indian music take the place of

harmony and counterpoint in the ear of the trained listener. Like the ancient Greeks the Indians delighted and still delight in unusual times, such as 5/4 and 7/4. The tala, or rhythmic figure is, after the raga, the most important element of Indian music. Bharata recognizes twenty-two talas, and since then many more have been introduced.

The Indian musician was, and still is, an improviser. While a smile melody could be recorded in alphabetic notation India never devised a true musical notation and the music of her ancient masters has vanished forever. As at the present day, every performance was virtually a new composition. The musician would choose his raga and tala and, often starting from a well-known melody, would elaborate his theme in the form of three variations, working up to a climax of complex and rapid ornamentation.

The chief musical instrument was the vina, usually loosely translated "lute". The term was originally applied to the bow-harp often with ten strings, of a type very similar to the small harp used in ancient Egypt and the early civilization of the Middle East. By the end of the Gupta period this instrument had begun to go out of fashion, and its place was largely taken by a lute with a pear-shaped body, played either what the fingers or with a plectrum. This in turn was superseded in the 8th century by the early form of the modern vina, with long finger-board and small round body, often made of a dried gourd. Bowed instrument may have been known, but seem to have been little used in polite circles until the coming of the Muslims. Flutes and reed instruments of various kinds were widely played, but instruments of the trumpet type were rarely used except as signals. Of these the most mentioned was the conch, the shell of a large molluse, clown through its sawn-off point before battle, as an invocation to a deity, and on important occasions generally; its sound was very auspicious. Percussion instruments were numerous and varied. The smaller drums, played in pairs with the fingers as at present, were looked on as almost essential for any musical performance. Larger drum were used for state occasions, and there was a wide range of cymbals, gongs and bells.

The evidence of Bharata shows that, as at the present day, the Indian of two thousand years ago preferred the throaty, rather nasal type of singing, which comes more naturally than that which Europe has learnt to appreciate. The singing voice was often treated as a musical instrument, the vocalist performing long impromptu variation on a simple melody, sung to a single phrase, often an invocation to a deity.

In the late medieval period music became largely the preserve of professionals, who though much in demand by the well-to-co-people who employed them, were of low caste. This was not the case in India's greatest days, when a knowledge of music was looked on as an essential attribute of a gentlemen. "The man who knows nothing of literature, music or art," runs an ancient Indian proverb, "is nothing but a beast without the beast's tail and horns".

Like music, Indian dancing has changed little with the centuries, and the best modem Indian dancers, such as Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal, still dance according to the rules of the Bharata Natyasastra. Dancing (natya) was closely connected with acting (natya); in fact both are forms of the same word, the latter being a Prakritism, and gesture, the dance chiefly music and gesture. As in most other civilizations there is little doubt that the Indian drama, which we consider in the following chapter, developed from ritual miming song and dance.

Indian dancing is not merely a thing of legs and arms alone, but of the whole body. Every movement of the little finger or the eye-brow is significant, and must be fully controlled. The poses and gestures are classified in detail, even as early as the Bharata Natyasastra, which mentions thirteen poses of the head, thirty-six of the eyes, nine of the neck, thirty-seven of the hand, and ten postures of the body. Later texts classify many more poses and gestures, every one of which depicts a specific emotion or object. With so many possible combinations the dancer can tell a whole story, easily comprehensible to the observer who knows the convention.

The most striking feature of the Indian dance is undoubtedly the hand-gesture (mudra). By a beautiful and complicated code, the hand alone is capable of portraying not only a wide range of emotions, but gods, animals, men, natural scenery, actions and so on. Some hundreds of mudras are classified in later textbooks, and they are used not only in the dance, but, as we have seen, in religious worship arid iconography.

This highly developed dance style demanded years of training, and was probably always; chiefly performed by professionals, though there are references in literature to princes and their ladies dancing in their palaces. Ancient India was rich in folk-dances, which were performed at festivals. In later years only low caste people would think of dancing in public, but there seems to have been no social taboo on the art in ancient times, except perhaps for practising brahmans.

INDIAN PAINTING

The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of pre-historic times, the petroglyphs as found in places like Bhimbetka, and some of them are older than 5500 BC. Such works continued and after several millennia, in the 7th century, carved pillars of Ellora, Maharashtra state present a fine example of Indian paintings, and the colors, mostly various shades of red and orange, were derived from minerals. Thereafter, frescoes of Ajanta and Ellora Caves appeared. India's Buddhist literature is replete with examples of texts which describe that palaces of kings and aristocratic class were embellished with paintings, but they have largely not survived. But, it is believed that some form of art painting was practiced during that time.

Indian paintings provide an aesthetic continuum that extends from the early civilization to the present day. From being essentially religious in purpose in the beginning, Indian painting has evolved over the years to become a fusion of various cultures and traditions. The Indian painting was exposed to Greco-Roman as well as Iranian and Chinese influences. Cave paintings in different parts of India bear testimony to these influences and a continuous evolution of new idioms is evident.

Sadanga of Indian painting

Around 1st century BC the Sadanga or Six Limbs of Indian Painting, were evolved, a series of canons laying down the main principles of the art. Vatsyayana, who lived during the third century A.D., enumerates these in his Kamasutra having extracted them from still more ancient works.

These 'Six limbs' have been translated as follows:
Rupabheda The knowledge of appearances.
Pramanam Correct perception, measure and structure.
Bhava Action of feelings on forms.
Lavanya Yojanam Infusion of grace, artistic representation.
Sadrisyam Similitude.
Varnikabhanga Artistic manner of using the brush and colours.
The subsequent development of painting by the Buddhists indicates that these 'Six Limbs' were put into practice by Indian artists, and are the basic principles on which their art was founded.

Genres of Indian painting

Indian Paintings can be broadly classified as the murals and miniatures. Murals are huge works executed on the walls of solid structures, as in the Ajanta Caves and the

Kailashnath temple. Miniature paintings are executed on a very small scale on perishable material such as paper and cloth. The Palas of Bengal were the pioneers of miniature painting in India. The art of miniature painting reached its glory during the Mughal period. The tradition of miniature paintings was carried forward by the painters of different Rajasthani schools of painting like the Bundi, Kishangarh, Jaipur, Marwar and Mewar. The Ragamala paintings also belong to this school.

Murals

Early examples of murals are found in the caves of Ajanta and Bagh. Fragments of mural paintings are also found in the contemporary Pitalkhora Caves. Early evidences of the tradition of mural paintings in southern India are found in the sites of Badami and Sittanavasal. Evidences of mural paintings are also found in the Kailasnatha temple in Ellora.

Miniature painting

The pattern of large scale wall painting which had dominated the scene, witnessed the advent of miniature paintings during the 11th & 12th centuries. This new style figured first in the form of illustrations etched on palm-leaf manuscripts. The contents of these manuscripts included literature on Buddhism & Jainism. In eastern India, the principal centres of artistic and intellectual activities of the Buddhist religion were Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramshila and Somarpura situated in the Pala kingdom (Bengal & Bihar).
Eastern Indian painting

in eastern India miniature painting developed in 10th century. These miniatures, depicting Buddhist divinities and scenes from the life of Buddha were painted on the leaves (about 2.25 by 3 inches) of the palm-leaf manuscripts as well as their wooden covers. Most common Buddhist illustrated manuscripts include the texts Astasahasnka Prajnaparamita, Pancharaksa, Karandawka and Kalchakrayanatantra. The earliest extant miniatures are found in a manuscript of the Astasahasrika Prqnaparamita dated in the sixth regnal year of Mahipala (c. 993), presently in the possession of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. This style disappeared from Indian in the late 12th century.

Western Indian painting

In western India between the 10th to 12th century miniature painting developed. These small paintings were part of manuscripts written at the time and illustrate the subjects of the manuscripts. These miniatures are found in some Jaina manuscripts and are of 2 to 4 inches in size. Earliest Jaina illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts include the texts Ogha-niryukti and Dasavaikalika-ttka. Another surviving example of early illustrated Jaina palm-leaf manuscript is the Savaga-padikkamana-sutta-cunm

written by Pandit Ramachandra (13th century).

It was in the 14th century, that paper replaced the palm leaf. Most common Jaina illustrated paper manuscripts include the Kalpasutra of Bhadrabahu and the Kalakacharyakatba. The Jaina style of paintings attained a high degree of development by the late 15th and 16th century. In the 16th century, a number of Hindu illustrated manuscripts appeared in western India which included the texts, the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva and the Bhagavata Purana.

Mahva, Deccan and Jaunpur schools of painting

A new trend in manuscript illustration was set by a manuscript of the Nimattama painted at Mandu, during the reign of Nasir Shah (1500 - 1510). This represent a synthesis of the indigenous and the Persion style, though it was the latter which dominated the Mandu manuscripts. There was another style of painting known as Lodi Khuladar that flourished in the Sultanate's dominion of North India extending from Delhi to Jaunpur.

The miniature painting style, which flourished initially in the Bahmani court and later in the courts of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golkonda is popularly known as the Deccan school of Painting. One of the earliest surviving paintings are found as the illustrations of a manuscript Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi (c.1565), which is now in Bharata Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala, Pune. About 400 miniature paintings are found in the in the manuscript of Nujum-ul-Ulum (Stars of Science) (1570), kept in Chester Beatty library, Dublin.

Mughal Painting

Mughal painting is a particular style of Indian painting, generally confined to illustrations on the book and done in miniatures, and which emerged, developed and took shape during the period of the Mughal Empire 16th -19th centuries).

Mughal paintings were a unique blend of Indian, Persian and Islamic styles. Because the Mughal kings wanted visual records of their deeds as hunters and conquerors, their artists accompanied them on military expeditions or missions of state, or recorded their prowess as animal slayers, or depicted them in the great dynastic ceremonies of marriages.

Akbar's reign (1556-1605) ushered a new era in Indian miniature painting. After he had consolidated his political power, he built a new capital at Fatehpur Sikri where he collected artists from India and Persia. He was the first monarch who established in India an atelier under the supervision of two Persian master artists, Mir Sayyed Ah and Abdus Samad. Earlier, both of them had served under the patronage of Humayun in Kabul and accompanied him to India when he regained his throne in

1555. More than a hundred painters were employed, most of whom were Hindus from Gujarat, Gwalior and Kashmir, who gave a birth to a new school of painting, popularly known as the Mughal School of miniature Paintings.

One of the first productions of that school of miniature painting was the Hamzanama series, which according to the court historian, Badayuni, was started in 1567 and completed in 1582. The Hamzanama, stories of Amir Hamza, an uncle of the Prophet, were illustrated by Mir Sayyid Ali. The paintings of the Hamzanama are of large size, 20 x 27" and were painted on cloth. They are in the Persian safavi style. Brilliant red, blue and green colours predominate; the pink, eroded rocks and the vegetation, planes and blossoming plum and peach trees are reminiscent of Persia. However, Indian tones appear in later work, when Indian artists were employed.

After him, Jahangir encouraged artists to paint portraits and durbar scenes. His most talented portrait painters were Ustad Mansur, Abul Hasan and Bishandas. Shah Jahan (1627-1658) continued the patronage of painting. Some of the famous artists of the period were Mohammad Faqirullah Khan, Mir Hashim, Muhammad Nadir, Bichitr, Chitarman, Anupchhatar, Manohar and Honhar. Aurangzeb had little taste for fine arts. Due to lack of patronage, artists migrated to Hyderabad in the Deccan and to the Hindu states of Rajasthan in search of new patrons.

Rajput painting

Rajput painting, a style of Indian painting, evolved and flourished, during the 18th century, in the royal courts of Rajputana, India. Each Rajput kingdom evolved a distinct style, but with certain common features. Rajput paintings depict a number of themes, events of epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Krishna's life, beautiful landscapes, and humans. Miniatures were die preferred medium of Rajput painting, but several manuscripts also contam Rajput paintings, and paintings were even done on the walls of palaces, inner chambers of the forts, havelis, particularly the havelis of Shekhawati.

The colours extracted from certain minerals, plant sources, conch shells, and were even derived by processing precious stones, gold and silver were used The preparation of desired colours was a lengthy process, sometimes taking weeks. Brushes used were very fine.

Mysore painting

Mysore painting is an important form of classical South Indian painting that originated in the town of Mysore in Kamataka. These paintings are known for their elegance, muted colours, and attention to detail. The themes for most of these paintings are Hindu Gods and Goddesses and scenes from Hindu mythology. In modern times, these paintings have become a much sought after souvenir during

festive occasions in South India.

The process of making a Mysore painting involves many stages. The first stage involves the making of the preliminary sketch of the image on dr. base. The base consists of cartridge paper pasted on a wooden base. A paste made of Zinc oxide and Arabic gum is made called "gesso paste". With the help of a thin brush all the jewellery and parts of throne or the arch which have some relief are painted over to give a slightly raised effect of carving. This is allowed to dry. On this thin gold foil is pasted. The rest of the drawing is then painted using watercolours. Only muted colours are used.

Tanjore painting

Tanjore painting is an important form of classical South Indian painting native to the town of Tanjore in Tamil Nadu. The art form dates back to the early 9th century, a period dominated by the Chola rulers, who encouraged art and literature. These paintings are known for their elegance, rich colours, and attention to detail. The themes for most of these paintings are Hindu Gods and Goddesses and scenes from Hindu mythology. In modem times, these paintings have become a much sought after souvenir during festive occasions in South India.

The process of making a Tanjore painting involves many stages. The first stage involves the making of the preliminary sketch of the image on the base. The base consists of a cloth pasted over a wooden base. Then chalk powder or zinc oxide is mixed with water-soluble adhesive and applied on the base. To make the base smoother, a mild abrasive is sometimes used. After the drawing is made, decoration of the jewellery and the apparels in the image is done with semiprecious stones. Laces or threads are also used to decorate the jewellery. On top of this, the gold foils are pasted. Finally, dyes are used to add colours to the figures in the paintings.

Madhubani painting

Madhubani painting is a style of uttradi mutt painting, practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar state, India. The origins of Madhubani painting are shrouded in antiquity, and a tradition states that this style of painting originated at the time of the Ramayana, when King Janak commissioned artists to do paintings at the time of marriage of his daughter, Sita, with Sri Rama who is considered to be an incarnation of the Hindu god lord Vishnu.

Bengal school

The Bengal School of Art was an influential style of art that flourished in India during the British Raj in the early 20th century. It was associated with Indian nationalism, but was also promoted and supported by many British arts administrators.

The Bengal school arose as an avant garde and nationalist movement reacting against the academic art styles previously promoted in India, both by Indian artists such as Ravi Varma and in British art schools. Following the widespread influence of Indian spiritual ideas in the West, the British art teacher Ernest Binfield Havel attempted to reform the teaching methods at the Calcutta School of Art by encouraging students to imitate Mughal miniatures. This caused immense controversy, leading to a strike by students and complaints from the local press, including from nationalists who considered it to be a retrogressive move. Havel was supported by the artist Rabanindranath Tagore, a nephew of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore painted a number of works influenced by Mughal art, a style that he and Havel believed to be expressive of India's distinct spiritual qualities, as opposed to the "materialism" of the West. Tagore's best-known painting, Bharat Mata (Mother India), depicted a young woman, portrayed with four arms in the manner of Hindu deities, holding objects symbolic of India's national aspirations. Tagore later attempted to develop links with Japanese artists as part of an aspiration to construct a pan-Asianist model of art. The Bengal school's influence in India declined with the spread of modernist ideas in the 1920s.

Modern Indian Painting

During the colonial era, Western influences started to make an impact on Indian art. Some artists developed a style that used Western ideas of composition, perspective and realism to illustrate Indian themes. Others, like Jamini Roy, consciously drew inspiration from folk art.

By the rime of Independence in 1947, several schools of art in India provided access to modern techniques and ideas. Galleries were established to showcase these artists. Modern Indian art typically shows the influence of Western styles, but is often inspired by Indian themes and images. Major artists are beginning to gain international recognition, initially among the Indian diaspora, but also among non-Indian audiences.

The Progressive Artist's Group, established shortly after India became independent in 1947, was intended to establish new ways of expressing India in the post-colonial era. The founders were six eminent artists - K. H. Ara, S. K. Bakre, H. A. Gade, M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza and F. N. Souza, Though the group was dissolved in 1956, it was profoundly influential in changing the idiom of Indian art. Almost all India's major artists in the 1950s were associated with the group.

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Indian Classical Dances

- By Shovana Narayan

India is rich not just in terms of theatre traditions, but within the field of classical dance too, where it boasts of eight distinct forms. All eight classical dance forms trace their roots to the Natyashastra. As most of them are solo ('ekapatra') in nature, the utilization of various categories of 'angika', Vacika', aharya' and 'sattvika' abhinaya is clearly evident. The application of 'mandalas', 'caris', 'gatis', hastes' is clearly seen in the domain of classical dance as also is the understanding of categorizations of 'nayaks' and 'nayikas' in terms of 'uttama', 'madhyama' or 'adhama'. Rasas, bhavas and sancharis from the basis of textual interpretations. The 'ashtanavikas' forms a full item In the repertoire of all classical dance forms.

Apparent too is the similarity in the method of flowering of their repertoire. Being spiritual in nature, all forms have opening benedictions followed by the introduction of movements of the limbs to rhythmic accompaniment, progressing from simple patterns to complicated ones that culminate in the enactment of various stories from mythology.

For all classical dance forms, temples were the places of origin. The system flourished due to the patronage given by the niters and society at large. However, owing to the exploitation of women practitioners, the art forms degenerated and so did the status of dancers in all parts of India. In certain areas, because of political changes, social customs underwent a sea change and all the dance forms took a back seat, surfacing only when a local ruler or a feudal lord displayed a personal interest in patronising the art form. In some areas there were no visible political and social upheavals and the place remained untouched by Muslim rule; a large number of dancers performed in the temples and also in the courts and were patronized by the local ruler besides the priests and society at large. As a result of the social renaissance that has been going on over the last two centuries, the twentieth century also witnessed a cultural renaissance. Not only did the dance forms and their practitioners regain their earlier status and glory, many innovations and inter-regional and cross-cultural influences too were seen, resulting in further development within the various forms.

All four categories of musical Instruments are utilized by all dance forms, with music following the style of the region, namely Hindustani or Carnatic. A vocalist is a must in all dance forms for dancers of all styles rely heavily on interpretation of lyrics that are sung. Even in terms of 'aharya' or ornamentation, the precepts of the Natyashastra are dearly visible.

Stories from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, verses from the Upanishads and tales from the Puranas form the central theme of all dance representations.

These are furthered by pieces based on the works of local saints and poets of the area.

North, West and Central India

Kathak

Kathak is the only classical dance form of the entire Indo-Gangetic belt It is rooted in brahminical Hinduism; so much so that even today, the hereditary Kathaks of the region are Brahmins belonging to families of temple priests.

Kathak, as the name suggests, is derived from the word 'katha' (story) or 'kathakar (storyteller). It races its origin to the Brahmin priests in temples who, in a state of rhapsody, broke out in dance, making use of gesticulations and mime to embellish their sermons. Thus, Kathak' was born. Kathaks, as a group of priests, who enacted stories from Hindu spies and mythology, have been mentioned in two of the verses from Mahabharata.
kathakascapare rajan sramanasca vanaukash/
divyakhyani ye capi pathanti madliuramdvijah//
(verse 1.206.2-4, Adiparva)

The 'pathaka' stream of Kathaks who conduct rituals and give sermons, consider themselves higher than the 'dharaka' stream as the latter have taken to dance as a profession.

Kathak was prevalent among women too. References to talented and skilled women dancers such as Vasihali's Amrapali (also known as Ambapali), Magadha's Salvati and Padmavati, all contemporaries of Lord Buddha (6th Century BC) followed by Ghosha from Pataliputra a few centuries later, indicate the exalted state of dance among women of the Indo-Gangetic region. Sylvain Levi, Schlaginweit and Arthur Berriedale Keith have made references to Kathaks while commenting upon bas-reliefs of Sanchi and other sculptures. Prehistoric cave paintings and figures and figurines of the pre-Christian era point towards the 'natural vertical stance' of the dancers, as seen in Kathak. Even sculptures from the Maurya period (3rd BC) like that of the 'pirouetting nati' and the 'nati with a damaru' or the sculptures of 10th century AD of the Gangetic belt show remarkable similarities to Kathak postures and costumes, including the lehenga-choli (3rd century BC Pataliputra, 5th century AD Bikaner) as well as the 'kurta-payjama' (3rd BC, Pataliputra and 5th century AD, Sanchi, Bharhut Deogarh).

There are references to women temple dancers called 'kalavangti' and 'bhagtan' in

the Sun temple at Multan as well as in a few temples of Benares and Rajasthan. Kalhan's Rajatarangini and the comments of Abul Fazi form some of the major sources.

The medieval period saw the introduction of the 'purdah' and therefore the withdrawal of women from public life. Kathak confined itself to temples only to emerge when royal patrons required it to do so. Predominant among the patrons were Jodhabai, Hindu Rajput wife of Emperor Akbar and later the Nawab of Oudh (Awadh). Besides the royal courts of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Raigarh and Benaras also provided patronage to Kathaks for quite a few of them were on the payrolls of their 'gunijan khana'. Women who danced in Mughal courts were usually courtesans (tawaifs') who had learnt a few Kathak nuances from Kathak gurus; however, the true Kathaks continued to be traditional Brahmin Kathaks for they were the inheritors of the hereditary art References to Kathaks in court mentioned these Brahmins. The census figures of William Crookes (1891), James Prinsep (1825) and Buchanan (1614) of small regions of eastern Uttar Pradesh indicate a large number of Kathaks.

The 'Raas-Leeia' tradition of the 'rasadharis' of Vrindavan and the 'bhaktiyas', the 'nrityakalis' and the 'jhumariyas' of various regions of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, which had their birth during the 'Bhakti Movement' (religious renaissance) sometime in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, are based on the Kathak tradition. The first production of, 'Raas-Leela' was staged in Vrindavan by Vrthalnath, son of Vallabhacharya, on the encouragement of Swami Haridas. Thus the choreographers of this first production were Narayana Bhatt and Ghamand Deva, two Kathaks from neighbouring Alwar. Herein, young boys before attaining puberty, dress up as Radha-Krishna and dance pieces based on mythological tales. This was as a result of the Bhakti Movement that swept the Indo-Gangetic belt in the wake of establishment of Muslim rule. The rise of Vaishnavism as a consequence of the Bhakti Movement, witnessed growth not only in literature and poetry but also in the, development of dance in the area.

Kathak Prakashji Mishra, grandfather of Maharaj Bindadin, moved from Hariya in Allahabad district into the court of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah and provided the first formal introduction of Kathak in a Muslim court. His son Thakur Prasad became me guru and mentor of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in the art of Kathak. The Nawab ruled for a short period, from 1847 to 1856, yet he laid the foundation for the patronization of Kathak and the formalization and stylization of the art. Thus the seeds of the Lucknow gharana were sown. The Jaipur Gharana, another prominent Kathak gharana, has more than one lineage in Rajasthan. It also boasts several Kathak stalwarts. The Benaras and the Raigarh gharanas are the other well-known schools of Kathak.

The dilemma facing a Brahmin Kathak used to dancing before the idol of a Hindu

deity, when asked to perform before an idol-hating Muslim ruler, was resolved by placing an inoffensive 'tulsi' garland symbolic of Lord Krishna or a 'rudraksha' garland symbolic of Lord Shiva and dancing before it.

Mythological tales revolving around Hindu deities and the works of poets of the Bhakti Movement and of later periods ('ritikal') form the central pillar of all 'abhinaya' pieces. Dancers of the Lucknow gharana lay emphasis on the poetic works of Bindadin Maharaj.

A Kathak meditates through his dance and his practice of 'jnana mudra' is reflected in Kathak's basic pose. The attitude that dance is but a medium between the Almighty and the people has resulted in another characteristic pose of Kathak. A Kathak believes in life1. Therefore the basic stance is 'samabhanga'. As man goes through all 'bhangis' and 'mandalas' in real life as movements in transition and not as frozen postures, so does a Kathak. Sculptures from the 3rd century BC to 5th century AD are largely in 'samabhanga', position with hardly any 'tribhangi' (body position that employs exaggerated hip deflection) or the 'ardhamandali' (half sitting posture with out-turned knees). But these positions are evident in the sculptures of 5th century AD to 12th century AD, after which the paintings show a coexistence of all three positions. The influence on Lucknow Gharana of the flavour of Awadh Culture saw delicacy in movements as well as in positioning of body and legs.

A Kathak performance usually sees the opening benediction to the Lord, being followed by a pure rhythmic piece where celebration of rhythm is witnessed. The mood, nature and range of the tala are brought out in this section as the dancer 'dances the tala' rather than 'dancing to a tala'. This is followed by, 'gat nikas', an item that mirrors the gaits as classified in the Natyashastra, indicating deep knowledge of the treatise. Following it is the 'gat bhava' in which a story is enacted utilizing hand gestures arid the entire range of mimetic dramatic 'abhinaya' capabilities, for it is performed without the familiar accompanying song. These stories are taken from Hindu mythology. Next follow 'abhinaya' sequences with song accompaniment. These could be thumris that revolve around Radha-Krishna tales or 'ashta-nayika' or bhajans (devotional songs). The finale is usually performed with the 'tarana' that culminates in breathtaking footwork.

A few characteristic features of Kathak are dazzling pirouettes and intricate footwork as well as the recitation of rhythmic syllables by the Kathak himself before dancing them. The latter is a legacy of the origin of the Kathak form itself where narration preceded enactment. One notable feature is the 'ghunghuroo' donned by the Kathak for he follows the precepts of the ancient treatise that requires a dancer to wear at least 100 to 200 'kinkinis' (ankle bells) around each ankle that are strung together on a string. Such a practice is attributed to the dance of the Kathaks' as temple priests inside the sanctum sanctorum.

susvarasca surupasca suksma naksatradevatah/
kinkinyah karnsyaracita ekaikangulikamtaram // badhniyannilsutrana granthibhisca dricdham punaih //
satadvayam satam vapi padyomapjakarini//
(Abhinaya Darpanam)

The table forms the main percussion accompaniment It has replaced the toadrtional pakhawaj the latter occupying a secondary position in a performance. Mucicians include the vocalist, the sitar player and the flautist. As regards costume the Kathak has the choice of the lehenga-choli or the 'kurta-payjama' in other words, the angarkha-churidar.

South India

(1) Bharatanatyam

The dance that developed in the regions of Tamilnadu, Andhra and Kamataka was known as Dasiattam, that signified 'Dance of the Servants of God'. Deriving its name from the dance of the devadasis, the name was changed to 'Bharatanatyam' sometime in the mid-thirties of the twentieth century. The devadasis were women who had been dedicated to the temples. The verses from Padma Purana arid Bhavishya Purana indicate the patronage of rulers in dedicating women to serve in temples. Their service included fanning idols of deities, carrying the sacred lamp, 'kumbarati', in a procession while some were also required to sing and dance before the Gods.

However the tradition of dance was not new. The second century AD Tamil work, Sitappadikaram, revolves around the story of a dancer ('natya ganika'). Though such references indicate the existence only of women dancers, words such as 'kootar' in early Tamil works are pointers to male dancers who performed chiefly on social occasions. That male dancers were discouraged emerges from the southern treatise, Natanathi Vadya Ranjanam. One of the chief reasons for encouraging women dancers was the fact that as they were considered married to God, they were therefore believed to be harbingers of luck for they could never be widowed.

The Chola rulers of tenth century AD to fourteenth century AD especially Rajaraja-I provided the much-needed patronage for the growth and development of the form. Temples with nata mandirs sprung up. Sculptures in various temples such as the Brihadeswara temple at Tanjavur, Gangaikonda-choliswaram temple at Cholapuram, Meenakshi temple at Madurai and the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram bear evidence of this. Knowledge of the Natyashastra is evident from the effort made in capturing the 108 'karanas' as temple sculpture on the 'gopurams' (canopies or domes) at the gateways of Chidambaram. The rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire

followed suit in providing patronage. In the days of yore, Queen Santala danced in the pillared halls of Halebid and Belur nine hundred years ago. The Bhagavata Mela Natakams also played a predominant role in the development of the dance form.

The interest of the Deccani Sultans saw to the further flowering of 'daslattam;. This period saw the introduction of items such as the 'salamu' and 'tillana;. Of the two, 'salamu' has been discarded in the last five decades as a result of the process of purification that had started in the thirties of the last century.

As a result of its performance in courts and on social occasions, dasiattam also came to be known as 'sadirattam'. Such devadasis were sometime referred to as 'rajadasis' or 'alankaradasis'. Unfortunately, the devadasis came to be exploited, as rulers, noblemen and temple priests took advantage of them. Their association with temple prostitution saw a decline in their status and dignity and was responsible for their marginalization in society. It was perhaps this situation that led to the re-christening of their dance form as one of the first steps taken when the process of reform and restoration commenced. The new name Bhartanatyam was derived from the then recent discovery of the theatrical treatise, Bharata's Natyashastra. This proved to be a brilliant psychological measure. E. Krishna Iyer, Rukmini Devi Arundale and other enlightened members of society dedicated themselves to the task of redefining the content and formalization of the repertoire of 'dasiattam' had been started by the four Tanjore brothers known as the 'Tanjore Quartet'. They were Chinnaiah, Ponniah, Vadivelu and Shivanandan. To Rukmini Arundale goes the credit of being the first Brahmin lady dancer hailing from a noble and enlightened family background.

However what was important was the nurturing of the fine arts in the hands of all these dedicated persons through the ages. Much has been written about their talent, wealth, customs and training by several foreign travelers and writers such as Methwold, Domingo Paes, a Portuguese diplomat to the court of the Vijayanagar Empire, Fernao Nuniz and Abbe Dubois.

Bharatnatyam perceives the body in terms of triangles. The opening, 'samabhanga' (linear) position quickly descends into the familiar 'ardhamandali' or the 'araimandali' (half-sitting position with outstretched knees) imparting the imagery of triangles. The hand movements are linear in nature and the mood of the dancer is grave and serene. As the right side is considered to represent 'tandava' and the left side 'lasya', all movements on the right are required to be mirrored on the left.

The literary content of Bharatanatyam has been provided by t he Nayanmars (Shaivites), devotees of Lord Shiva and by the Alwars, devotees of Lord Krishna. The saint-poets of the later medieval period and of the early modern period of Indian history further enriched the literary repertoire. All these works laid the foundations of the present repertoire of the dance form.

A Bharatnatyam recital begins with an 'Alarippu' derived from the Telugu word 'alarimpu' (to decorate with flowers). This is an offering to the Lord through pure dance and is danced to the recitation of the 'sollu-kuttu' of rhythmic syllabus as it unfolds some of the basic movements of the dance form from the familiar 'araimandali' position where the feet are placed slightly apart and the knees are bent outwards. The 'alarippu', generally short ends with a crisp, 'tirmana'. The next Item 'Jatiswaram' is again a pure dance sequence involving rhythmic patterns, 'adavus' that are accompanied by a melodic structure. 'Sabdam' is an expressional piece interpreting the text in adoration of the deity that ends in a 'charanam', earlier known as a 'salamu'. 'Sabdam' is a prelude to 'Varnam' that usually consists of four parts. The 'Varnam' tests the interpretative and rhythmic skill of the dancer and is the focal point of a dancer's recital.

A purely expressional piece, 'Padam', follows next. This is usually a seven-line lyrical song on the theme of love. Here the 'pallavi' or the theme line is repeated many times as the dancer emotes the 'sanchari bhavas' (series of pictures or conceptions to elaborate the main theme). Other expressional items include the 'Javali' (expressional piece dealing with anger and frustration of a person in love) and the 'kirtana' (emphasis on devotional text). Most of the items are usually performed at medium tempo. For the finale, a brilliant abstract pure dance based on rhythm and melody known as 'tillana' is performed. Sculptured poses and footwork are its hallmarks. The performance ends with a short 'slokam', a concluding prayer to the Lord.

The mridangam provides the basic rhythm while sometimes a ghatam may be used in addition. The 'nattuvanar' is the conductor who recites rhythmic patterns, often wielding a pair of cymbals that strike out beats (talams') and rhythmic patterns. The singer provides the much-needed songs for interpretation. Other accompanists include the flautist and violinist. The accompanying music follows the Camatic styie of rendering. About 30 ankle bells are worn around each ankle.

The costume is rich and is a modem-stitched adaptation of the sari worn between the legs. The dancer is heavily be jewelled while the hair is usually / worn in a long braid decked with flowers. A belt of 30 to 40 ankle bells is tied around each ankle.

(2) Kuchipudi

Andhra was home to various dance traditions. The existence of dance dramas around legends pertaining to Lord Shiva, known as 'Shiva Lila Natyam', was known in earlier times. 'Brahma Melas' were performed around tenth century AD that included various religious dance dramas. Ritualistic dances corresponded to the Aradhana mitya described in the treatise Nrittaratnavali by Jayapa Senani (thirteenth century) of Warangal, Bahunatakas and Brahmanamelas. The rise of Vaishnavism

saw the evolution of Bhagavata Mela. In 1675, impressed with the performance of 'Parijatapaharana' by Kuchelapuram Brahmins, the Nawab of Golconda, Abdul Hassan Tahnisha, of Islamic faith, became a patron of this Hindu art form. He encouraged and fostered its growth by granting the surrounding areas of the village Kuchipudi to the dancers, with the stipulation that the practice should carry on.

With the deterioration of the then prevailing system of dance by devadasis, concerned Brahmin gurus and experts assembled at Village Kuchipudi and formed groups that came to be known as 'Brahmana Melas'. Over a period of time, the practitioners of this art came to be known as 'bhagvatulus', well versed in dance, scholarship and music. Predominant among the 'bhagvatulus' was Bhakta Siddhendra Yogi whose verses became themes for enactment of various dance dramas in the style of dance that developed in this village.

These dance dramas culminated in a dance form, Kucrapudi that derived its name from the village that formed the fulcrum in the annals of dance tradition of the area.

In its development there was an unceasing interaction of the 'bhagvatulus' with the 'devadasis' and the 'raja nartakis' (court dancers) the latter being influenced by the Yakshagana tradition. Keeping the tradition of presentation as laid down in ancient treatises, 'daruvus' or 'darus' that introduced each character of the dance drama, were followed by pure dance interludes that were accompanied by the recitation of rhythmic patterns called 'sollakath'. Thereafter , the performance saw the expressional delineation of the 'sabdas' (verses) that were dramatic lyrics based on a theme and rendered in the 'pathya' musical style in the Carnatic system of music. In this manner, the full scope of utilization of the four branches of 'abhinaya' ('angika', 'vacika', 'aharya' and 'sattvika') was visible. Traditionally, the conductor or 'sutradhar' conducted the entire play.

Even though there are similarities between Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam in terms of body positions and the employment of 'ardhamandali' or the half-sitting position with outstretched knees, it is the mood of delineation that distinguishes the two styles. While Bharatanatyam is performed in a grave and somber manner, Kuchipudi is light and effervescent, bringing with it the fresh spontaneous aura of village life.

An evening's performance today begins with an invocatory number that is followed by a number of interpretative pieces such as padams, varnamas, sabdams and slokams, similar to what has been stated for bhartanatyam. Some of the favourite items in the Kuchipudi repertoire are legacies of the Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition. These include the Bhama Kalapam, Tirtha Narayan Yati's Krishna Lila Tarangini, padams written by Kshetrayya of Muvvu, Kritis of Thyagaraja, Gola Kalapam of Ramaiah Shastri, and of course verses from Jayadeva's Gitagovinda.

The final piece de resistance is the 'Tarangam', an item that is melodic and rhythmic

in character. This item is performed at a fast tempo, punctuated by statuesque poses, and finally showcases the dexterity of the dancer, who executes complicated rhythmic patterns while balancing on the edge of a brass plate. Sometimes an ornate brass pot is also balanced on the head while dancing.

Traditionally a male dance form, it was customary to find the roles of female characters of the story being performed by men. The cross-gender histrionics associated with this gave the dance its uniqueness in terms of 'abhinaya' renderings. However, women have entered the domain and have become the new torchbearers of the tradition.

The traditionally costume of a Kuchipudi male dancer was a 'dhoti' for male characters and a 'sari' for female characters: but today, female dancers use a costume similar to that employed by their sex in Bharatanatyam, namely loose flared stitched pants with a pleated fan in the front. It however has one subtle difference. Unlike the Bharatanatyam costume, this 'dhoti'-like Kuchipudi costume has a 'laangh' or a folded pleat at the divided portion at the back of the costume.

A Kuchipudi performance is usually accompanied by a mridangam (percussion) player, singer, a nattuvanar or conductor wielding cymbals, a viollnist and/or a stringed or wind instrument player. The compositions, follow the Carnatic style of music prevalent in southern India.

(3) Kathakali

Whether it was owing to the Aryans who had gradually filtered down to the coastal region of Kerala or the Bengali Brahmins who settled along the south-west coast of India to escape Muslim persecution, the fact remains that there was a marriage of pre-Aryan and Aryan dances. The worship of nature, of the benevolent Earth Mother Bhagavati and the propitiation of the spirits of the ancestors are still to be seen in themes of folk dance theaters of the region such as Teyyam, Mutiyettu and Tiryattam. The Aryan influence of story telling was seen in the recitation known as Chakyar-koothu, by the Chakyars who claimed descent from the 'sutas' of the Mahabharata. This tradition is mentioned in the second century literary work, Silppadikaram (Epic of the Anklet). Chakyar-koothu culminated in the development of Koodiyattam. This new dance drama received patronage from most of the rulers, notable being the Perumal dynasty. Accompanying a Chakyar recitation was a drummer belonging to the Nambiar caste. The performers of Koodiyattam could be both men and women.

All these developments laid the foundations for the emergence of Kathakali, the classical dance form of Kerala.

Kathakali, actually means "story-play" for it is, derived from the words 'katha' (sory)

and 'kali' (play- as in playing a game). This dance form is a synthesis of pre-Aryan and Aryan arts and traditions within the framework of the Sanskrit theatre. The position of the knees and of the soles of the feet that is employed in Kathakali seem to be derived from 'kalari', the martial art of the Nayars. This position was an extension of the combat position for it served to absorb the shock of landing. By this, there was a waning need for self-preservation and the extended practice of 'kalaris' had become increasingly a matter of stylization and entertainment It was nonetheless the Nayar warrior clan that kept the knowledge of kalari and Kathakali alive.

The origin of Kathakali is attributed to the Zamorin of Calicut In the17th century for his having designed Krishnattam plays and to the Raja of Kottarakara who designed the Ramanattam plays. In 1650, the Zamorin of Calicut, inspired by a vision of Lord Krishna, authored a play around Lord Krishna titled 'Krishnapadi' that later came to be known as Krishnattam.

The refusal of the Zamorin of Calicut to allow the staging of his play in neighbouring Kottarakara, led to the designing of Ramanattam, plays woven around Lord Rama, by toe Raja of Kottarakara. The ruler of Kottayam, Tampuran, later added other themes to the repertoire such as themes from the Mahabharata the Shiva Purana and the Bhagavata Purana. Because of the expanding repertoire, the name was changed to is the more comprehensive term 'Kathakali'. All these plays were written in the Malayalam language, a language that was understood by the common man unlike the Sanskrit recitation by the Chakyars, and were performed over eight nights.

Performing in the open under the canopy of the starlit night, the light from the shining brass oil lamps gives the character of the dance play a supernatural look. This is highlighted by the elaborate costumes, facial make up and headgear that are so characteristic of this dance style. In terms of the colour of the base make-up and costume Inclusive of headgear ('mudi') and beard ('tadi') and the characterization of the characters, all precepts of Natyashastra are followed to the fullest The colours are important for they lend a meaning. Green suggests a godlike character, red, a demonic character and yellow, a wondrous character. Some characters are seen sporting a ridge-like white beard, made of 'cutti' or rice paste and lime and looking like layers of paper that is glued to the face. Realistic make up is used to suggest female characters or the common man.

The costume of Kathakali is as unique as its make-up. The dancers wear full skirts that are multi-layered, reaching just below the knees while the top is a full-sleeved, high-necked jacket with jewellery covering the entire front up to the waist. The skirts are normally white and have a striped border while the colour of the jacket depends on the character being depicted. Only the skirts of demonic characters are either black or dark coloured.

The basic position adopted by dancers is the 'ardhamandali' or the 'ukkara' (half-

sitting) position. The feet are placed apart with outer soles touching the ground, with the toes curled, in a position known as toe 'mandalasthana'. The dancer usually moves in rectangles and squares with clear extensions of the leg. In no other dance is toe classification of the glances as visible as in Kathakali. It emphasizes 'netra-abhinaya' for here not only should the eye be able to remain open and unblinking for incredibly long periods without blinking, albeit should also be possible for the dancer to Interpret passages through the eyes alone.

Being a highly stylized form, Kathakali is heavy in dramatics. Drumbeats herald the staging of the dance drama which usually lasts the entire night. At the start of the dance play, a wick lamp is lit and the curtain removed to reveal the supernatural character. Slowly, various characters of the story appear. Traditionally, only male dancers enact all roles, whether that of male or female characters.

The invocatory dance, 'todayam' is followed by the 'puruppadu', 'Manjutara' from the Gitagovinda is now sung after which the play unfolds as each character is delineated with detailed interpretation of the text. This is interspersed with short bursts of rhythmic patterns, 'kalasams'. Rhythmic sequences also include the 'adakkam' or 'tomakaram'. The play ends with the last verse ('sloka') when the curtain is slowly re-introduced as the dancers dance their way out.

It is another version of Sanskrit Drama that comes alive in a Kathakali presentation.

The musical instruments accompanying a Kathakali performance are three kinds of drums called the 'chenda', 'maddallam' and 'edakka', large cymbals and the metal gong struck by the vocalist. The 'sopana' style of music of the Carnatic musical system is predominantly used.

(4) Mohiniattam

Mohiniattam literally means the Dance of the Enchantress (Mohini). It is believed that this was the dance performed by Lord Vishnu who had taken on the form of the enchantress Mohini in order to kill the demon Bhasmasura, who had been granted the boon of invincibility by Lord Shiva. Not surprisingly, this dance of Kerala is performed only by women.

Mohiniattam has been traced to Nangyar Koothu of second century AD that was the female presentation of the Chakyars dance. The existence of 'lasya anga' or the graceful female dance, Nangyar Koothu, is gleaned from the literary work Silappadikaram. According to other scholars, the dance was supposed to have been created in the middle of the eighteenth century in the court of Maharaja Swati Tirunal of Travancore, Kerala.

Though it neighbours Tamilnadu, Kerala's distinct cultural identity had evolved by

the eighth century AD. Thus, it is not surprising to find the 'lasya anga' of Mohiniattam to be distinct from that found in the temples of neighbouring Tamilnadu. Kerala's swaying palm trees and winding backwaters seems to have inspired the development and growth of Mohiniattam, reflecting the sensuous beauty and captivating grace of the women of the area.

The tenth century Chollur inscriptions bear out the presence of women temple, dancers in such references as 'Nangyar Tali' wherein 'Nangyar' refers to a 'woman' and 'Tali' stands for temple. The Tripunithura and the Suchindram temples likewise bear this out. Literature of the Manipravala era (14th century AD) dwells upon the celebrated and exalted status of the courtesan, Unnaichi or Cherukarakutthatti, who was also an accomplished dancer. 'Vyavaharamala' by Narayana Namboodiri (16th century AD), mention payments that had been made to such dancers. Similarly, other literary works such as 'Goshayatra' and the 'Balarama Bharatam' by Kunchan Nambiar, contain references to the dances performed by women that were essentially 'lasya' in nature.

The art form received great patronage from the Raja of Travancore some four centuries ago. This was furthered by Maharaja Swati Tirunal in the eighteenth century. The Maharaja is accredited with its popularisation and further development in terms of text and musical compositions. The next major landmark came with the efforts of Vallathol and the establishment of the Kerala Kalamandalam.

Even though Mohiniattam makes extensive use of the 'araimandali' namely the half-sitting position, here the feet are kept apart. This helps in imparting a certain characteristic sway in the movements that follow. The movement of the torso, hands and limbs are curving, giving it its distinctive languid quality. While moving, there is elaborate use of the serpentine gait along with langorous dips and swaying of the body, adding to its sensuous charm. The dance is performed in slow or medium tempo.

One of its characteristic features is its deceptive simplicity and the apparent 'internalization' of movements as each movement unfolds from the centre of the body as it traverses to the periphery. In terms of techniques, it seems to be inspired by 'Kalaripayettu', the martial art form of the area whereas for 'abhinaya' (expression), it seems to draw inspiration from Koodiyattam. But the eye movements are subtle.

As in all other dance forms, the opening invocation is to Lord Ganesha and this is followed by the 'mukhachalam' and 'cholakettus' that signify unfolding of rhythmic patterns. These are followed by 'abhinaya' sequences displayed through 'padams' and 'ashtapadis', testing the subtlety of the dancer's histrionic skills. Maharaja Swati Tirunal's poems form the most popular text for the 'padams' in a Mohiniattam repertoire. Jayadeva's works form an important part of this dance's repertoire.

'Tharattu', also known as 'Omanatingal', is an 'abhinaya' item based on verses written and composed by Iryamman Thampi as a lullaby to his nephew, Swati Tirunal. It is recent addition to the repertoire.

The finale item of Mohiniattam is 'Jeeva' which is the ultimate intensification of the dancer's spiritual experience. At times 'Touratrika', with elements of 'gitam' (melody), 'vadyam' (rhythm) and 'nrityam' (dance) is danced thereafter.

The "tala" structure followed in Mohiniattam is complex and belongs to a genre of its own. The accompanying music, 'sopana', even though belonging to the family of Carnatic system, is unique to the area. In keeping with the literal meaning of the word 'sopana' ('step') there is a slow and deliberate elaboration of dance movement and vocabulary as well as music at every step.

In terms of costume, inspired by the 'kasava mundu' or the gold bordered, saronglike attire, the dancers are always dressed in ivory silk costume with gold brocade borders. The front sports a wide pleated fan resembling a large palm leaf with pleated ribs. Gold ornaments add to the gorgeous luster of the costume. The hair is tied in a bun tilted on one side of the crown and is bedecked with flowers Ankle bells numbering about 25 to 30 adorn the ankles.

The percussion accompanying a Mohiniattam performance is usually on the 'edakka', 'maddallam', 'mridangam' and the cymbals. Of these, the 'edakka' has pride of place as n is capable of emitting all the seven notes of the musical scale The other musicians making up the orchestra are the vocalist, the veena player and the flautist.

East India

Odissi

Orissa in the eastern region of India abounds in temples, a tradition that can be seen in its heritage. Frescoes and friezes such as those seen in the sculptures of the Ranigumpha caves, indicate the existence of a thriving temple art including dance that was known as the Odhra Magadhi style of art. This living dance tradition of the area has been kept alive by the Maharis (devadasis) and the Gotipuas (dance of the male dancers dressed up as girls). From the time of the Bhakti movement, the lyrics of the poet Jayadeva's Gitagovinda Jayadeva became the main repertoire of Odissi dancers.

The institution of 'maharis' received great patronage from rulers such as Chodaganga Deva. In the eleventh century and latter-day rulers such as King Kapilendra Deva. The latter is accredited with the building of the Nata Mandir in the Jagannath Temple at Puri for enabling devotional dancing by the 'maharis'. He is also stated to have defined the duties of the 'maharis' that included dancing twice a day as part of the

ritual. Those who danced in the Nata Mandir during God's meal times ('bhoj') came to be known as 'bahari maharis', 'baharjanis' or 'bahari-gauni maharis', while those who danced in the inner shrine when the deity was adorned in the morning and in the evening, were known as the 'bhitari maharis' or 'bhitarjani' or 'bhitari-gauni maharis'. The duties of 'maharis' included dancing in the chariot procession of the idols.

Usually the male offspring of these 'maharis', before reaching the age of puberty, dressed themselves as women and imitated the dance of the 'maharis'. It was therefore rich in exaggerated movement of the torso and acrobatic feats. These young male dancers came to be known as 'gotipuas'. Owing to the suppleness of their young bodies and their imitation of a woman's gait the dance of the 'gotipuas' had a unique elfin quality. On attaining puberty, they had to leave the temples and continue with their art outside, either as performers or teachers.

The Institution of 'maharis' saw disrepute and decline owing to its abuse by society. The post-Independence period saw its rejuvenation. In this effort, the name of toe dance form was changed to Odissi. The costume was standardized and the repertoire was expanded to include many more items. Most of the changes incorporated were inspired by similar changes that had been adopted by Bharatanatyam.

Even though the Natyashastra, the Abhinaya Darpana and the Abhinaya Chandrika all form sources of inspiration for Odissi, it is the Abhinaya Chandrika that forms its real backbone. The significant feature of the dance form is its extensive use of the 'tribhanga' position where the body is broken into three deflections emphasizing the 'lasya' (graceful) tenor of the dance form. The 'samabhanga' position of the dancer quickly descends into the 'chowka' position where the feet are placed apart in 'ardhamandali' position or the half-sitting position. The 'bhasa' (alternating movement of the torso from left to right to maintain the image of 'tribhanga'), the 'burha' or 'borrho' (quick movement with small leaps and quick foot contacts), 'gothi' (foot contacts on heels) and 'cari' (weaving 's' patterns of) are some identifying features of Odissi.

Beginning with a 'bhumi pranam' (prayer to mother earth), Lord Ganesha is propitiated through 'bighnaraja puja'. This is followed by a rhythmical melodic piece, 'batu nritya' that is followed by 'swara pallabis' or 'swara-pallavis'. Thereafter a series of interpretative items are performed, known as 'glta-abhinaya' or 'sa-abhinaya'. Compositions and verses from the Gitagovinda, written by the twelfth century poet, Jayadeva, form the central pillar of interpretative texts. Verses of other poets such as Banmali Das, Surya Baldev Rath, Upendra Bhanj and others also form part of the repertoire. For the finale, the 'tarajan' and the 'moksha' are performed and these topped by a closing, 'sloka' or verse in thanksgiving.

The present-day costume has been inspired by the newly developed costume of Bharatanatyam. However, in terms of material, the Orissa 'patta' or 'patola' sari is used. Only silver ornaments are worn by the dancers.

Musical accompaniment includes the percussion drum known as 'mardala' or 'pakhawaja', vocals, the sitar, violin or other stringed instrument, flute and cymbals. The guru or the 'mardala' player usually delivers the recitation of rhythmic syllables. On her ankles, the dancer sports ankle bells, about 30 to 40 in number, plaited on a string. The style of music is 'raga'-based and forms a bridge between the Hindustani and Carnatic music systems.

Northeast India

(1) Manipuri

Manipuri dances incorporate within their fold three distinct dance streams, all mirroring the envelopment of culture and the trajectory of faith. These are Pre-Vaishnav dances such as Jagoi, Lai Haroba, Khamba Thoibi; Vaishnav dances such as the various Raas dances; and the martial dances. Thus the very name Manipur or the Jewelled City also refers to the cultural gems of that area.

An early copper plate inscription shows King Khowai Tampak as a great patron of the arts who has been credited with the introduction of the drum and the cymbals as dance. He has also some of his successors patronized the institution of 'loisangs' or art guilds by heading these guilds. These 'loisangs', established by King Khowai Tampak, became the highest committees of experts on various aspects of Manipuri dancing. Among the various 'loisangs', the one devoted to dance was known as 'Palaloisang'. It had an important role to play in recognizing an artiste and continues till date as most of the present-day gurus are found to be members of the Palaloisang.

(a) Pre-Vaishnav Dances

The legend of Shiva dancing with Parvati in this region beside a lake, nestling among the hills, lit by the brilliance and sparkle of the 'mani' (gem) on the forehead of Shiva's serpent gave rise to the Jagoi dance, performed by Meiteis, followers of the Bratya religion that had inputs of Shaivism, the Shakti cult and other primitive beliefs. This led to ritualistic dances dedicated to Lord Shiva, Nongponkningthu, and Parvati, Panthoibi. 'Chingkheirol' namely Dance of Usha (Dance of Dawn) is also considered to be amongst the oldest Manipuri dances for it is believed that the people of Manipur regard themselves as descendants of Usha, the Goddess of Dawn. Similarly, the hill people on the eastern border of Manipur, the Tanghkus, regard themselves as descendants of Sage Tandu, disciple of Lord Shiva who had taught the art of dance to Sage Bharata, the author of Natyashastra. The word Tangkhu is supposed to be a derivative of Tandu.

The tragic love story between Khamba and Thoibi, based on a Manipuri epic, Moirang Parba, a semi-historical legend written in the eleventh or twelfth century, forms an important part of Pre-Vaishnav repertoire. Another dance drama of the Meitei culture, mirroring the tantric and early Hindu cultures is the Lai Haroba or The Festival of Gods, wherein Lai stands for God. Danced during the month of Chaitra (spring), a performance usually spreads over several days and nights. This dance drama is based on the Meitei concept of cosmology, which believes that the earth was brought down from heaven by nine gods and seven goddesses. In this, the love duets between Nongpokningthou and Panthoibi are reminiscent of the love sport

between Lord Krishna and Radha.

The principal male and female dancers are known as Amaibas and Amaibees or sometimes shortened to Maibas and Maibees. Both Maibas and Maibees were temple dancers. Unlike the devadasis of southern India, women temple dancers of Manipur namely Maibees could lead a normal married life even while sanctified as temple dancers. The Maibas and Maibees are usually dressed in distinctive white costume.

The costume for the Lai Haroba is the traditional Meitei costume consisting of the Phanek, a sarong-like skirt with black and red stripes sporting a border with the traditional pattern of a lotus and bee with the upper part of the body being covered by a tight-fitting blouse. In Khamba Thoibi dance, Princess Thoibi is usually in a red Phanek with an emerald green velvet blouse with gold and silver embroidery while Khamba is attired in a purple and gold dhoti and a green velvet jacket with gold trimmings. On his head he sports a white turban with red and gold embroidery and a peacock feather.

Cholam Dances

Responding to the needs of providing protection and also as measures of self defence, acrobatic exercises and training with self-defence weapons such as spears and swords, were part of society's occupations. This slowly emerged into a distinct art form. As even training was a ritual in itself, the exercises were accompanied by the beating of drums. Some scholars opine that the origin of Cholam dances lay in "Sangkeertana" when these dances accompanied rituals. Thus, there was a blend of the ritual, the devotional, the occupational, the social and the artistic in the Cholam dances, which were masculine and virile in nature. These 'tandava' dances came to belong to the Chalanam group and were danced by men alone. The tradition continues till date.

The two most well known Cholam dances are the Pung Cholam and the Kartal Cholam. However, there are also the Duff Cholam and the Dhol Cholam. In the Pung Cholam, the male dancers attired in spotless white dhotis, white turbans and a folded shawl over the left shoulder, with a 'pung' or 'mridanga' drum hung horizontally in front with a strap going over the shoulder, play incredible rhythms while executing some of the most difficult leaps and pirouettes and maintaining an effortless grace. The other Cholams are similar yet the instruments used are according to the names. For example, Kartal Cholam would employ large cymbals, the Duff Cholam, a kind of tambourine and the Dhol Cholam, a kind of large drum usually seen played with folk music. These Cholams can be performed all through the year and on important religious occasions too. The Mandilla Cholam is performed by women alone who dance decoratively, using cymbals as accompaniment to devotional songs.

Post-Vaishnav Dances -Raas Dances:

The Raas dance owes its origin to King Bhagyachandra who ruled in the eighteenth century. Influenced by Vaishnav missionaries from Bengal who were worshippers of Lord Krishna, King Pamheiba converted to Vaishnavism and made it the State religion. In 1764, Maharaja Bhagyachandra, grandson of King Pamheiba, adopted Gaudiya Vaishnavism, the cult of devotion to Lord Krishna, as advocated by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Inspired by a dream of Lord Krishna dancing the Raas dances with the 'gopis' or cowherdesses, King Bhagyachandra composed three of the six Raas-Leela dances. These, Maha Raas, Vasant Raas and the Kunj Raas, were first performed at the Govindji Temple at Imphal wherein the main idol of Lord Krishna was carved out of a particular wood, again based on a vision. He is also accredited with the authorship of Govinda Sangeetalila Vilasa, an important text on the details and fundamentals of Raas dances of Manipur.

The box-like costume called the 'kumil', result of Bhagyachandra's vision, enhances the effect of gliding on stage! Unlike performers in other dance forms, the Manipuri dancer is hardly ever seen to sport ankle bells. On the other hand, the feet of women dancers are adorned by an elaborate piece of ornamentation.

Manipuri. dancers weave figures of eight, 's' shapes, circular and serpentine patterns, with graceful movements of the hand, that impart lyricism and unparalleled fluidity. The arms are never stretched out to the fullest nor are the hands ever raised far above the head or very low. The women never jump while the men are known for their swift movements, leaps and sudden sitting positions. The facial expressions are supremely controlled displays of emotion, cloaked in serenity, for all feelings seem to emanate from the movements of limbs. The predominant mood that seems to emanate is that of 'shringara' or love in its two counterpoints of 'viyog' (separation) and 'sambhog' (union).

Within the Manipuri dancer's repertoire are short musical compositions known as 'swarmalas', compositions with four different combinations of music, rhythmic pattern, poetry and text known as 'chaturangs', songs with rhythmic sounds called 'kirtiprabandhas' or texts or verses recited to the accompaniment of drums, known as the 'sheigonnabi'. The musical accompaniment is usually provided by the percussion instrument called the 'pung' in addition to other varieties of drums, the flute, cymbals, conch shell, the trumpet-like horn and vocals. The style of music rendered is typical of the north- eastern region.

(2) Sattriya

Hailing from Assam, Sattriya is the latest addition to the classical dance panorama. The name is derived from the 'sattras' (monasteries) that had ritual dancing performed by celibate priests. This ritual was later incorporated into the practices

followed after the adoption of Vaishnavism in 16th century AD. Further theatrical elements were incorporated from Ankia Nat Theatre, Ojapali traditions and Sankaradeva's 'Chinha-yatra'. The legend of Radha does not play a dominant role in the traditional Anika Nat. Verses of Shankaradeva, a devotee of Lord Krishna (15th century AD) provide the bulkl of textual content for interpretation.

With the introduction of women artistes, this stylistic ritual dance has undergone a subtle change in the nature and treatment of movement. In its journey to the proscenium, the ritualistic core has been further elaborated upon and many items from mythology have also been added. Rhythmic patterns have been further developments and are more visible in their renderings. Performances demonstrate the defined 'ora' that is different for the 'purusha' (male) and 'prakriti' (female). The genesis of teaching methodology is attributed to Mahadeva, disciple of Sankaradeva. The movements employed in Sattriya are basically circular in nature with a number of leaps and jumps being frequently employed. The impact of other dance forms in the ever-expanding repertoire, music and development of the form is visible.

Following the 'Dhemali', a musical prelude in a traditional Sattriya dance drama, there is a dramatic entry by the 'sutradhar' or narrator, from behind a curtain, to the accompaniment of rhythmic drums and clashing of cymbals, as is the requirement of a Sanskrit Drama. The 'sutradhar' plays a crucial role for he is the one who links the various limbs of the evening's play. Some of the traditional items of the repertoire are the Gosai Pravesar Nritya or 'Dance of the Lord' describing the valorous deeds of the hero, the Gopi Pravesar Nritya, Jhumuras, Yuddhar Naach, Nritya Bhangi, Naach of the Natwas and the Sattra Raas.

A traditional Sattriya was performed only by young pre-pubescent boys who also danced female roles. But today, with the entry of women dancers, a Sattriya classical dance evening follows a format of presentation that is similar to other classical dance forms. The women sometimes wear the traditional white 'kurta-dhoti' with white front-peaked turban of male Sattriya dancers with a 'tulsi mala' (rosary) adorning the neck, but the majority dress in traditional Assamese long skirts with floral motifs and stiff fans adorning the front center as well as on two sides of the waist.

The musical system followed by Sattriya dancers is the characteristic music of the northeast that also follows the 'raga' cycle with its own distinctive variation. The 'tala' (rhythmic cycle) structures employed in Sattriya are mixed, for a cycle could contain an arrangement of a series of different 'tala' patterns. The rhythmical accompaniment is chiefly given by a horizontal drum from the 'mridanga' family known as the 'khol'. Other musical accompaniments include a pair of cymbals, vocals and stringed instruments.

Social Influences on Development of Performing Arts

Any discussion on the repertoire of the performing arts automatically presupposes it to be far removed from the prevailing social environment. This is because performing arts to a common man are synonymous with representation of beautiful imagery. But the evolution and the growth of the performing arts have themselves been conditioned by social atmosphere and the prevailing conditions during the period through which they have passed. It is only when such changes have withstood the test of times that these have become traditions within the different areas of arts. The influence of social environment reflects itself in the development, style and repertoire of music and dance, themes sung and enacted, material and fashion of costumes used as well as the growth of musical instruments.

The world of classical dance could not remain untouched by society. Its very birth is in the womb of society, for how can be forget that all the Indian classical dance forms originated in the temples of different regions of eh country where devotees gathered and sang and danced in reverence to the Lord. It is interesting to note that most of the stories have their origin in the social matrix. It is only wit 11 the distance of time that these stories, based on the happenings of earlier periods, became romanticized and sanctified myths. The same themes, if done in their present social context today may lead members of society and the dance world to raise questions as to whether such issues should be performed by the artistes. A comparison of some of the happenings of today would find similar parallel comparison of some of the happenings of today would find similar parallel projections of emotions in the happenings illustrated in various mythological stories. Quite a few dancers today are choosing to depict 'abhinaya' through items and themes which range from the abstract to depiction of concern for happenings in society, largely with modern interpretations of age-old mythological legends.

During the Bhakti Movement when there was a resurgence of religious philosophy. It manifested itself not only in the poetry of the Ashtachhap poets, but also in the emergence of the Rass-Leela tradition of Vrindavan that has been nurtured carefully till today. Parallel to the growth of music, influenced by social change of the time, the 'tarana' also became part of the dance repertoire. The 'purdah' (veil) which came into prominence in the medieval period of Indian history, finds echo in the various 'ghunghat gats' of Kathak besides forming an important part of poetry. It also conjures flavours of romanticism.

Languages and regional dialects have also their influence on the language of the performing arts. Elitist Sanskrit gave way of to Pali and then again to a number of local dialects, such as Brijbhasha, Avadhi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Bundelkhandi, to name a few that entered the repertoire of the dancers of the Indo-Gangetic region over succeeding ages.

The twentieth century with its modern, impersonal and large auditoria equipped with the latest sound and light technologies has also influenced the presentation of the performing arts. In yesteryears, they were performed on a smaller scale in the temple courtyard or the court of a local ruler. Today the dancer has to take into account the vast less of space available and consequently re-orient movements of dance and patterns of group compositions. Surrounded by modern technology, performing artists have now the opportunity of exploiting available electronic and other aspects of visual media.

Though the arts remain steeped in Indian classical music traditions, the instruments utilized in the music and dance scenario have been keeping pace with changing times. The violin, the gift of the British period in India, has now become part of the classical music and dance scene. With the emergence of various kinds of electronic instruments, these have also found their way into the world of classical performing arts. Thus, the development of the performing arts is closely interlinked with social changes, and the two cannot be divorced from each other.

Communalism and the National Movement

- By Bipin Chandra

The strong Hindu tinge in much of nationalist thought and propaganda, in spite of the basically secular approach and programme of the Indian National Congress, tended to develop a communal outlook with the feeling that the success of such a national movement would mean "a Hindu supremacy in Indian politics". This was particularly true of the strong Hindu religious element in the extremist thought and propaganda from 19005 to 1909. Many of the Extremists identified nationalism with the revival of Hinduism and saw nationalism as religion - which was invariably in the nature of thins, Hinduism95. They tried to provide a Hindu ideological underpinning to Indian nationalism or at least a Hindu idiom to its day-to-day political agitation.

Also important in this respect was the role of a certain type of modem literature in Bengali, Hindi, and other Indian languages whose tone was often communal. Representative of this were the novels of Bankim Charterjee, which became prototype of much of later Indian literature of this genre. Bankim treated Muslims as foreigners and identified nationalism or Indianhood or indigenousness with Hindus. The former were usually cast in the role of oppressive and lecherous tyrants, while Hindus were portrayed either as heroes struggling for positive values, including freedom or as traitorous collaborators. This type of literature inevitably led to resentment among literate Muslims and alienated then from the emerging national movement96.

Of course, any intellectual or writer may adopt what may be described as Bantam's approach as part of writer's license, especially when the process of nation-in-the-

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95 Aurobindo Ghose, for example wrote in 1908: "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God.... If you are going to be a Nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of Nationalism you must do it in the religious Sprit. And again in 1909: "I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion a faith: I say that it is the Sanathana Dharma, which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanathana Dharma; with it, it moves and with it, it grows". Similarly, Bipin Chandra Pal said in 1910 "Behind the new nationalism in India stands the odd Vedantism of the Hindus". Quotedin K. P. Karunaskaran continuity and Change in Indian Politics, 1972, New Delhi, pp. 97-8.

96 Thus, for example, in 1917, the Bengali journal the Al-Islam, criticized the absence of Muslims in the national song Banga Amar composed by D. L. Rove, and wrote: "It mentions Ashoka, Nimal, Rasumai, Pretapditya - but contain to trace of Muslim heroes like Gyasuddin Khan, Isa Khan, and so forth. The population of Bengal is seven crores - more than half of these are Muslims. Why then were Muslims excluded from a national song composed for this vast Bengali nation constituted of both Hindus and Muslims"? In 1918, the Al-Islam wrote that a major ground for Hindu-Muslim ruction was that "Hindu unjustly and unfairly attack Muslims in literature". Similarly, in 1926, the Ahmadi complained that "Hindu cultural media still bred anti-Muslim feelings". Quoted by M. N. Islam, Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as Reflected in the Bengali Press, 1901-1930, Decca, 1973. Pp. 118,128.

making was in its initial stage. And Bankim had no strong national sentiment to guide him. More important was the use to which he was put later. He was hailed as a great nationalist writer precisely for the wrong reasons; some of his novels were proclaimed as genuine historical novels. His role became reactionary and communal not so much in his own times and not so much in terms of his own writings, but because of the manner in which their "communal" parts were hailed to serve chauvinism and communalism. It is interesting to note that, as modem intelligentsia began to arise among Bengali Muslims and national sentiment spread among them they tended to accept Bankim as a great Bengali writer, in spite of his negative portrayal of Muslims. But the semi-communal Hindu writers insisted that he was great precisely because of this portrayal. Consequently, the nationalist Muslim intellectuals gradually yielded to the pressure of the loyalist and communal Muslim writers97.

Tilak too encouraged the growth of the Hindu tinge in Indian nationalism through the revival of Ganesh Puja and Shivaji Festival with their Hindu religious overtones. It Is true, however, that his basic political propaganda and agitation's were organized around political and economic issues and contained little appeal top Hinduism, and certainly much less in the case of Aurobindo Ghose and B. C. Pal. He glorified Shivaji because the Maratha ruler was a popular hero in Maharashtra. In northern India, he said, he would have adopted Akbar as the common hero of Hindus and Muslims98. But while Tiak's politics, ideology and agitational methods were not communal, and a large part of the "communalism" imputed to his is the result of large-scale falsification of history by imperialist writers like V. Chirol and by the later Hindu and Muslim communists, there is no doubt that because of the Hindu tinge they bread, communalism among both Hindus and Muslims and antagonized the latter.

As pointed our earlier, many extremist leaders like Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lajpat Pal used Hindu symbols, idioms and myths in their political speeches and writings, India was often referred to as Mother Goddess, or compared with Kali, Durga and other Hindu goddesses. The revolutionary terrorists aware by the Gita and Kali, and some even saw in the Hindu tinge a revolutionary feature.

All this caused unease and apprehension in the minds of the educated and politically conscious Muslims during the 1890s and 1990s: they viewed the National Congress as a Hindu movement. It created, as S. Abid Hussain has rented out, "general unrest, panic and doubt" and "an atmosphere of fear and suspicion" among them, especially in northern India. Till then, "the secular rationalism of the Congress had a great appeal" for Muslims. But now circumstances became extremely unfavorable for secular nationalism among Muslims and it received a great setback99.

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97 See M.N. Islam.
98 Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, Bombay, 1959. P. 88.

99 S. Abid Hussain, The Destiny of Indian Muslims, Bombay, 1965, pp. 50-3.

A contemporary Muslim intellectual, who was otherwise oriented towards vigorous nationalism, expressed these feeling in words, which bear reproduction in full. In an article in the Comrade under the heading "Communal Patriot", Mohamad Ali wrote in 1912.

"Whatever may be the inspiration of Hinduism as a religious creed, the educated Hindus made it a rallying symbol for political unity... Past history was ransacked for new political formulas, and by a natural and inevitable process 'nationality and 'patriotism' began to be associated with Hinduism. The Hindu 'communal patriot' a prang into existence with 'Swaraj' as his war cry ... He knows, of course, the use of words like 'India' and "territorial nationality' and they ... form an important part of his vocabulary. But the Muslim weighs on his consciousness all the same, as a troublesome irrelevance; and he would thank his stare if some great exodus or even geological cataclysm could give him riddance ... The spectacle of a go-head Hinduism, dreaming of serf-government and playing with its ancient gods clad in the venture of democracy, dazed the conservative Muslim ... He felt as if he was being treated as an alten, as a meddlesome freak, who has wantonly interfered with the course of Indian history. Strange incidents were ranked up from his long and eventful career, which he was called upon to justify... With the lose of empire he felt as if he were to lose him self-respect as sell. The 'communal patriots' among the Hindus treated him as a prisoner in the dock, and loudly complained of him as an impossible factor in the scheme of India's future100.

Later, in post-1909 period, the Hindu tinge was not so strongly etched. Even so, a vague Hindu aura pervaded much of Congress agitation or at least the idiom of Congress political expression.

Gandhi's religiosity made its own contribution in this respect, Gandhi's politics was, of course, fully secular, and he appealed to the people on economic, political and moral grounds, and never on religious grounds. His political thought, however, was permitted with religiosity. Moreover, he often employed Hindu symbols, though their use by him was seldom offensive to the followers of together religious. The best example of his use of a religious symbol was his interpretation or independence as Ram Rajya. Similarly, his definitions of non-violence and truth were steeped in Hindu religious traditions. His notions of 'Spiritualizing politics' inner voice' were also rotted in a religious ideology and tended to create a religious aura around politics. He also used cow protection and many other Hindu religious ideas, though his ideas on cow protection were very different form contemporary aggressive, communal versions.

Moreover, as if replying to accusations of Hindu religiosity, Gandhi encouraged similar religiosity among Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. He also tended to

100 Mohamad Ali, Selected, writings and Speeches edited by Afzal Iqbal, Vol-I, p. 77.

compromise with the religious tinge being imparted by communal nationalists among Hindus and Muslims. Thus his secularism came to represent the confluence of several religiosities or what Mohamad Ali described as 'federation of religions"101. Gandhi's approach was paralleled for example by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who is his early years simultaneous! promoted nationalism and religiosity among Muslims102. The culmination of this trend was the Khailafat movement which represented anti-imperialism through a religious issue.

Apart from Gandhi, leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose as well as marry Congress workers freely used Hindu symbols, myths and idioms: they found it difficult to bypass religion in their daily political practice. The only exceptions were Jawaharlal Nehru, the different Marxist parties, and a handful of liberal intellectuals and politicians. It is therefore not surprising that, during the 1930s, many young Muslim intellectuals were attracted by left nationalism and not by the conservative, Hindu-tinged nationalism103.

Inevitably, some of the Hindu tinge was carried into the functioning of toe Congress Ministries from 1937-39, especially at the level of the tower cadres.

The secular aspects of the national movement were distorted by several other features. A large number of nationalist leaders assumed a dual socio-political role; they were simultaneously religious-social reformers within the circle of their religionists and political leaders within the wider national political arena. This duality started with the very founders of the National Congress, or earlier still. Even Dadabhai Naoroi was till the 1870s both a vigorous, secular nationalist and a Parsi socio-religious reformer. This often led the nationalist leaders to talk of' we with different meanings in different contexts, sometimes meanings Hindu or Muslim and sometimes Indian. While in theory it could be maintained that there was nothing wrong in a person being a good Indian and a good Hindu or a good Muslim, in practice this could apply only to their personal lives. It was neither possible nor desirable to have such dual public roes in a multi-religious country where communal elements were active with the full backing of the Government. This invariably spread confusion among the people, which was freely taken advantage of by the communal leaders.

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101 For the danger of this approach so far as secularism and nationalism were concerned, see the following comment of Beni Prasad. "It may be that all religions, if properly understood, would exert unifying and a hormones influence but the crucial feet is that religions are not likely to be properly understood in a word where everything is likely to be misunderstood". The Hindu-Muslim Questions, Allahabad, 1941, pp. 50-1.

102 In 1921, Hakim Ajmal Khan asked Hindus to form, as a complement to the Jamat-ul-Ulama-l-Hind, their own Jamai-I-Panditan: Sharaddananda, Hindu Sanghathan, Delhi 1926, p. 118.

103 It may also be remembered that more young Muslim intellectual moved to the nationalist (and the socialist and communist) stream during the 1930s than into the communal stream.

At the best, this dual socio-political role produced individuals like Ranade, Gandhi and Maulana Azad. At its worst it, led many Congress leaders to participate in the downright communal movements of Sangathan'and Shuddhi on one side and Tabligh and Tanzim on the other. In any case, it encouraged the good Hindu good Muslim friendship' approach towards national integration.

Much more damaging was the presence of 'communal nationalists' or even plain communalists in the ranks of the National congress. The Congress leadership permitted openly communal elements or those whose ideological and political make-up contained a large does or communalism to join the Congress and even occupy positions of leadership in its form the local to toe all-India plane. Such communal nationalists often Jell the congress and opposed it from communal platforms. But soon after they would be readmitted into the Congress fold and leadership without any disavowal of their recent politics or even current communal or semi-communal ideology.

Till the early 1930s several leaders were simultaneously members and leaders of toe Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League104. It was only in 1938 that the Congress barred its doors to members of the communal organizations. Both in Punjab and Bengal, many a Congress leader had no difficulty in, simultaneously within nationalism, championing the 'Hindu cause' in respect of jobs or constitutional discussions or communal riots. But, while a communal Muslim joined the Muslim communal organizations, only the very rabid Hindu communalist would join the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS in the 1930s; the ordinary one tended to remain in the Congress, creating unease among the Muslims105.

A large number of newspapers such as the Tribe, Amrita Bazar Patrika and the Leader, know as nationalist newspapers and serving as the main printed vehicles for nationalist propaganda, simultaneously championed Hindu communal causes.

In case of communal riots, for example, their editorials roundly condemned the riots, preached Hindu-Muslim harmony and usually blamed the Muslims as the initiators106. Their reportage was invariably loaded on the side of the Hindu

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104 The prominent role-played by Madan Mohan Malaviya in the Congress during the 20s and 30s constantly baffled and annoyed Muslims. 'See for example, Mohamed Ali to Jawaharlal Nehru, June 15, 1924. In Nehru. A Bunch of Old Letters, Bombay 1958, p. 37-9.

105 Thus, in 1987, Ambika Charan a Congress worker complained to the central leadership that an Arya Samaj preacher had become President of the Tehsl! Congress Committee at Barirampur and was advocating Shunddhi and Hindu-Muslim unity simultaneously. This, he warned, would produce, "great conflict, collision and misrepresentation". Similarly a Congress worker of Bulandshar complained in a letter to the AICC in September 1937 that the Muslims looked upon the District Congress Committee with suspicion because its members "take prominent part in the communal affairs". Quoted in Anita Singh, Nehru and the Communal Problem 1936-1939. Unpublished M Phil Dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, p. 240.

106 Muslim communal newspapers took a similar approach, but they did not claim to be secular ad

communalists. These newspapers reached nationalism in one breadth and complained of Hindus -losing government jobs to Muslims in another. The average Muslim reader could hardly be blamed for being suspicious of such nationalism for falling t distinguish between their two roles and for becoming embittered.

The Congress leadership failed to take notes of and struggle against the communal elements within the nationalist ranks, especially in the local and middle level leadership. There was also the wider failure to wage any real, active consistent and principled political and ideological fight against Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalism.

It would of course be preposterous to suggest toe because of the Hindu tinge and other weaknesses discussed above the National Congress became a communal body and the national movement can be characterized as a Hindu national movement. Nor were there the 'causes' of the birth of communalism in modem India. They were rather a cause of the failure to check the rise and growth of communalism. The made, it difficult to win over the Muslims to the Congress. Moreover, they put a powerful weapon in ht hands of the Government and the communalists who used it effectively to turn away the Muslims from the national movement and- to instill the feelings among them that the success of this movement would mean Hindu domination. Even Gandhi could be portrayed not as an Indian leading all Indians but as a Hindu leading all Hindus.

The Hindu tinge also made it difficult to ideologically oppose toe Hindu communalists; and its helped toe spread of a Muslim tinge among the Muslim nationalists.

A few other relevant points may be clarified here:

(a) Uses of religion and the traditional religious-cultural idioms or the glorification of the past was not a special feature of the Indian national movement. They have been a very common feature of the 19th and 20th century national movements from that of the Greeks and Italians to that of the Irish. They have been used both as an easy method to reach toe people with the new ideology of nationalism107 and to restore among the oppressed end dominated peoples feelings

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nationalist.

107 The defence of new Institutions and the dissemination of new ideologies and outlooks by appealing to the past and claiming to be restoring or reverting to the earlier Ideologies and institutions is again very common. As Marx has put it: The tradition of the dead generation weighs like a nighmate on the minds of the living. And, just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not yet exist, precisely in such epoch of revolutionary, crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in

of self-respect and self-confidence. Even the Soviet leadership appealed to the past and used traditional (pre-1917) symbols and idioms to mobilize the people during the Second World War. In fact, in India the process of appealing to the past was initiated by the entirely secular leadership of the Moderate period -Surendranath Banerjea was the first to glorify Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh as national heroes during his 1877-78 speeches – and the same move more Hindu-tinged leadership of the Extremist period as a conscious imitation of the nationalist movements of the Greeks, the Italians and the Irish. The inculcation of self-respect and self-confidence was even more necessary in India because their destruction was one of the basic features of colonial ideology.

But the Indian national movement had to be different in this respect because Indian were a different type of people. It was essential not to follow Italy and Indians were a different type of people. It was essential not to follow Italy and Greeks here, as Aurobindo Ghosh and others did, because a multi-religious, multi-caste and multi-culture country like India could not afford to exalt, or claim to restore, any one religion, caste, culture or historical tradition; it could not afford to build the new by appealing to the past or by pretending to be restoring or reviving it108.

The task of the national leadership here was not only different but stiffer, more difficult, requiring immense patience, ideological clarify, and boldness. Here the appeal had to be entirely modern, secular and democratic. Here nationalism required 'a fundamental change in the system of values'. Here a national movement had to base itself on an entirely modern political, economic, social and cultural programme as the Moderates had done and Nehru and the Left were doing, and not on a programme of cultural revival or 'cultural nationalism' as the Extremists and the later conservatives did. The latter would invariably divide, for it was basically and perhaps inevitably based on the dominant Great Tradition of the upper caste. Hinduism of northern India. Nor was it a question merely of the division fostered by communalism. In time, it produced or would produce regionalism, casteism and tribalism.

Upper caste Hindus, among whom nationalism first arose, could identify cultural consciousness based on the Great Tradition with nationalism, but followers of other religions, members of the lower castes and tribal peoples would awaken. Whenever

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this venerable disguise and borrowed language. Luther put on the mask of the apostle Paul; the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman empire; and the revolution of 1848 knew no better than the parody at some points 1789 and at others the revolutionary traditions of 1793-95. In the same way, the beginner who has learned a new language always retranslates into his mother-tongue he can only be said to have appropriated the spirit of the new language and to be able to express himself in it freely when he can manipulate it without reference to toe old, and when he forgets his original language while using the new one. The Eighteenth Brumetre of Louis Bonaparte, in Surveys from Exile, Penguin Books, 1973, pp. 146-7.

108 Even Ireland got divided because of the Catholic religious base of its nationalism.

cultural and political awakening came to them, to other cultural, social and religious traditions. They would rebel against any nationalism based on the culture of caste hierarchy. Then either nationalism would transform itself to respond to their social and cultural ethos or they would take to communal, casteist, or other forms of divisive politics. Even women would not work actively for a movement that glorified and aimed at the restoration of the culture of their utter degradation and domination.

(b) A major dilemma faced by the Indian national movement, as any other movement was that any 'massization' politics would also tend to bring in the masses backward cultural and social outlook and ideology. As a recent author has pointed out, any nationalist attempt to come closer to the mass of population was in the nature of things likely top adopts a Hindu for Muslim or Sikh idiom109.

So long as the national movement was confined to the intellectuals, as in the Moderate phase in the 19th century, it could maintain a certain balance in keeping religion out of political vocabulary and trying to build and entirely modern nationalist ideology. But as the social base of the movement shifted to the lower middle classes, most of whom enter socially and culturally conservative and intellectually narrow and limited, its ideological modernity began to get compromised. As the movement reached down in the masses, religious idioms, myths, symbols, entered its language, for in the language, cultures way of life and worldview of the Indian people religion played an important part.

In India, therefore, simultaneously with modern mass politics, it was necessary and urgent to have a Cultural Revolution or complete modernization. India, more than any other country, needed all-round radicalism base on a socially radical mass ideology and not merely political radicalism. Otherwise, even mass politics, depending of the existing backward social and cultural consciousness of the masses, had this reactionary aspect that it would tend to strengthen socially backward ideologies and outlook.

Finding the radical process more slow, tedious and difficult, and not having a ready-made consciousness to appeal to the nationalist leadership found it easier, and tended to some extent, to appeal to the existent religious consciousness in order to create a national movement which would gradually help make India a nation and in time create at the more advanced and modern secular consciousness. But in the process, however unconsciously, it left space for communalism, and casteism. This failure of traditional leadership was in one respect shared by the rising leftwing leadership. The latter, too, with some exceptions as in Kerala, did not actively propagate modern culture and value systems among the people, let alone initiate a Cultural Revolution. It also did not mobilize it followers actively against communal and chattiest forces and ideology.

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109 P. Hardy, The Muslims of British India, Cambridge 1972, p.227.

(c) A sharp distinction has, however, to be made between religious consciousness and communalism. Use of religious myths, symbols, idioms, etc, is not communalism though, it creates an opening for communalism. Communalism arises for other reasons, though ft uses religion for toe purposes; and to that extent any intrusion of religious consciousness, etc, into nationalism contributes to the growth of communalism.

Not only Gandhian but even Tilak cannot be placed in the communal carp, though the latter's appeal to hindu culture and an extremely narrow historical tradition proved harmful in the Indian context. In particular, the entire criticism of the Hindu tinge should be put in tits proper historical setting so far as the post – 1918 nationalists are concerned. There use of the Hindu political idiom was very different from theat of Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal. To brand Indian nationalism since the 1970s as Hindu nationalism is absurd it is also wrong to say that in the Gandhian era one of the basic elements of nationalism had been 'orthodox and revivalist varieties or Hinduism'. Gandhi, not to speak of Nehru and the Left Wing, was fully secular and free of religious narrow mindedness. Even when couched in the language of religion-which was much less common than is asserted by his critics - his appeal was to modem, secular, economic, political and social principles.

It is true that the leaders of the national movement and the intellectual generators of national consciousness were predominantly Hindu. It is also, that not all of them would measure up to the highest standards of secular nationalism. But it is equally true that in politics they did not act as Hindus; that they produced as basically non-communal, secular national movement. The nationalist intelligentsia was limited by class but not by communalism or religion. As G.C. Shah, one of the most profound Indian writers on nationalism and communalism, has remarked, "non-communal bourgeois nationalism has always been the political ideology of the Indian National Congress and the Nationwide political movement it organized[110].

110 G.C. Shah, Maexism, Gandhism, Stalinism, Bombay, 1963, pp. 173-4, On the other hand, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS were not only communal, they were not bourgeois nationalist at all. They did not represent nationalism, whether Muslim or Hindu. They were just communal, and objectively allies of colonialism.

(Extract from " Modern India- The Origins of an Asian Democracy "Judith M. Brown, part of " The Short Oxford History of the Modern World")

M.K. Gandhi and the enterprise of swaraj

M K. Gandhi and the enterprise of swaraj

Such is the mythology now surrounding Gandhi that it is hard to realize bow unlikely a candidate he was for all-India political prominence in the early twentieth century and, indeed, how strange and unprepossessing a figure he was to his contemporaries. He was born in 1869 into a western Indian family who were grocers by caste, though its men had for several generations been in the administrative service of minor Indian princes in Gujarat. The young Gandhi was awkward, shy, and barely able to follow English: but when as a teenager (but already married) he lost his father, his family decided, to send him to England to become a lawyer. His English experience was an emotional and social ordeal; and he soon abandoned his early attempts at being a late-Victorian dandy, and lived in London as quietly and cheaply as possible. His only "public" venture was activity in the Vegetarian Society! Gandhi returned to India a barrister in name, but failed in practice in Bombay because he was too tongue tied to speak in his first case. A year's legal contract with an Indian firm in South Africa was a welcome relief from professional failure and dependence on his family. He went in 1893 and stayed until 1914, becoming the main spokesman for Indians in their struggles against white settler racial policies. He had none of the advantages which helped to make the all-India leaders of his vintage. He was from an area undistinguished in Congress politics; he was not a Brahmin or even from a traditional writer1 caste. Nor did he have the education the Presidency towns could provide, the professional status and expertise of a Surendranath Banerjea, a Pherozeshah Mehta or a Gokhale; nor the connections which such men had acquired by legal practice or educational work, and long involvement in politics, and a range of voluntary associations. He had to make his mark in 1915 as middle-aged stranger lacking powerful backers and allies, and without institutional standing in local, provincial or all India politics.

South Africa was a crucial experience in fashioning Gandhi into a potential national leader. It prepared him internally to take a public role in his homeland by giving him a new confidence in his ability to handle public issues, deal with large numbers of Indians, and both confront and co-operate with men in authority. As he tried to help Indians in Africa he taught himself the rudiments of political organization and publicity, and launched his first journalistic venture, Indian Opinion, to publicize immediate political issues, rally support, and suggest strategies for coping with the situation. It also educated Indians in English and several vernaculars in a wide range of social and religious issues. It was the start of an immense literary outpouring. Papers, pamphlets books, and a vast personal correspondence were one of the

hallmarks and mechanisms of Gandhi's public influence in India. His championship of Indian rights also gave him a public reputation in his homeland, but as a social worker rather than as a potential politjcal leader. The Government of India recognized his services to Indians abroad by awarding him a Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal in 1915. His name had become known in Congress circles, and he had forged a close friendship with Gokhale, who visited him in South Africa, and whom he called his political guru. It is significant that Gokhale, realizing how out of touch Gandhi would be with India, advised him to observe a year's silence on public matters when he returned.

Gandhi's South African experience enriched him in ways which were to give him a potential very different from mat of men already established in the all-India political arena. The variety of Indians in Africa, ranging from Muslim traders to low-caste indentured labourers, and the diversity of their problems, drew him into contact with a wider range of his compatriots than his contemporaries in India would have had occasion to meet, let alone weld into a co-operating political group. They included men from southern and western India, Hindus and Muslims, people of very little education, traders and labourers; and women -whose marital and therefore moral status was threatened by a court judgement which would have invalidated all non-Christian Indian marriages. In helping them Gandhi learnt and experimented with different techniques for putting pressure on the authorities in Africa and London, and for binding Indians together. These included the conventional political methods of the public meeting, the petition, visits to government officials, including the Colonial Office in London, and press campaigns. But when it came to challenging registration laws and bans on entry into different provinces because of racial identity when such decorous methods had railed, Gandhi took Indians into direct but non-violent confrontation with authority; as when he organised bonfires of registration documents or an Indian march into prohibited territory. Yet this method of non-violent resistance which he used from 1907 was not just passive resistance as known to the English speaking world. For him it was a moral force, a mode of conducting unavoidable conflict which was integral to his religious vision of life. He called it 'satyagraha' (truth-force or soul force), to distinguish it from passive resistance the pragmatic response of a weak group to a situation in which they had no other means of redress.

It is crucial to try to understand Gandhi's religious sense and to see something of his vision of the meaning of man and his world. Otherwise the historian can fall victim to a cynical analysis of Gandhi as using- religion to clock political ambition and manoeuvre; an altitude common among British officials and even his Indian contemporaries, who found him at times exasperating and unpredictable, and could not conceive politics in the religious and moral language in which he frequently discussed it. This should not lead to unthinking acceptance of Gandhi's claims, and uncritical adulation, as occurred among some of his devotees. Gandhi's vision dawned on him gradually in Africa, particularly in the first decade of the century, though he continued to explore its ramifications in changing situations, and saw

himself as a pilgrim in search of deeper truth.

Gandhi saw people as spiritual beings created to search for the abiding truth which was their own deepest nature and underlay the whole universe. He believed passionately that there were as many religions as there were individuals, because each person to be fully a person had to reach truth in his or her own way. In his autobiography he expounded this conviction.

...for me, truth is the sovereign principle.... This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative bum of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest... Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal.

Later in his life he felt he could say not that God was Truth but that Truth was God,

However, as each individual at a particular point time would only have a partial or relative grasp of and relationship with truth, non-violence in all relations between people and groups was essential: in any situation of conflict only non-violence would safeguard the integrity of all those concerned, rather than forcing the weaker to accept the views of the stronger against his own deepest convictions. Gandhi's commitment to non-violence had deep roots, in the Hindu and Jain heritage of his western Indian homeland. Just as ahimsa, non-violence was a powerful strand in Indian religious tradition, so the wider Hindu understanding of truth and man's dharma or duty in relation to it undergirded Gandhi's conception of ultimate meaning.

The primacy of non-violence in relationships had wide implications in Gandhi's social and political concerns. It drove him in his later African years to total disillusion with western society as basically materialistic, indoctrinating false ideals of merit and wealth, and gripping its members in relations which were predominantly violent because they woe competitive. In contrast, and as a remedy, be looked to what he perceived (though often inaccurately) as India's traditional society based on spiritual values. He preached a life of simplicity in which people worked not for conspicuous consumption and ever-improved status, but for the satisfaction of their essential needs. He spoke of the need to limit wants and desires, of the dignity of labour, of the trusteeship of wealth on behalf of all by those whose accident of birth had made them richer than their fellows. He felt that the one social framework where this was possible was the village, where interdependence and co-operation were the guiding principles of relationship. He shunned the idea of urban industrial society, fraught

with Opportunities for exploitation of man by man, and for conspicuous gain by some at others expense.

Non-violence also shaped Gandhi's notion of the ideal polity-one with as little government as possible. He believed this would guard against the misuse of public power, and thought that truthful individuals leading a simple, co-operative life would need little outside regulation, and as truth-seekers would be able to manage their own affairs harmoniously. He seems to have visualized a loose linkage of independent village republics as the ideal form of the state. In sense he can therefore properly be called and anarchist. Where conflictTjfopinion4- and interests occurred the right response was peaceful persuasion of the opponent of the lightness of one's cause, always being prepared to compromise except on vital principles, culminating as a last resort in action to rouse the opponent's conscience, to defend one's own integrity and suffer the consequences that is, through satyagraha. This could take various forms, as it had in Africa. Its most extreme and dramatic form was civil resistance to unjust laws. Satyagraha was peculiar to Gandhi's total religious vision, although forms of self-suffering to convert an opponent had long been known in Gujarat; just as passive resistance was well established in western political thinking. But Gandhi seems to have cone to it without any conscious reflection on either tradition. For him satyagraha was the last resort of those strong enough in their commitment to truth to undergo suffering in its cause. It solved the perennial dilemma of ends and means, because it was both means and end: its operation created stronger, more dedicated followers of truth, while converting their opponents to a deeper vision of truth. Gandhi has an apocalyptic belief in its virtue, for in all situations of injustice and conflict he believed it could only generate truth and never evil oraisehood.

Gandhi worked out his ideals in the several communities he founded in Africa and in India. In his ashrams in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) and Wardha (CP) he trained his followers to practise and preach satyagraha, considering these community experiments to be perhaps his most significant work. For him a precondition of 'seeing truth' was serf-purification from baser desires: while the preliminary to exercising 'truth force' was to strengthen oneself through self-discipline and persistent adherence to non-violence. So men and women in his communities were dedicated by a series of vows to a highly disciplined life of labour and prayer, simplicity and non-violence. They performed all domestic chores without respect to personal, status and tried to produce their own food and spin the material for their clothes. They were also to refrain from sexual intercourse, even if married, following his example. Such restraint, brahmacharya, was deeply embedded in Hindi tradition as essential for anyone pursuing a course which demanded special energy and dedication, in his ashrams men and women had equal importance: and people of all religious, social and racial background were welcomed, conventional caste distinctions being disregarded.

Gandhi was therefore in the tradition of the guru, the Hindu holy man who taught toe followers who clustered round him, attracted by his personal sanctity. However, his relationship with Hindu tradition and current practice was highly ambiguous, reflecting his conception of religious truth and authority. Placing reason above scripture as authoritative where the two conflicted, and relying finally on his experience of an 'inner voice', he could advocate radical reform, as in his rejection of Untouchability which he considered an accretion on earlier and purer tradition and a deforming blot on Hindus' religious heritage, Gandhi's attitude to authority set him at loggerheads with the orthodox who gave overwhelming significance to the ancient Sanskrit scriptural texts. His ignorance of Sanskrit and treatment of textual sources also set him apart from the traditional pundits who expounded scripture. Yet he followed the longestablished Hindu pattern of syncretism, and 'imported' from the West the notions of the dignity of labour and equality of the sexes, without any sense that he was threatening the Hindu heritage, rather that he was enriching it.

Gandhi's return to India forced him to sharpen his perception of how his vision could be applied in practice. Before 1915 he had considered India's position and problems m the light of his changing ideas. It was clear from his pamphlet, Hind Swaraj(l909), that he did not envisage a westernized, industrialized India whose j way would be mere freedom from the British. He maintained that swaraj could never be granted to Indians by their rulers, however radical the constitutional reforms they could be induced to grant. It was a state of being which had to be created from the roots upwards, by the regeneration of individuals and their realization of their true spiritual being and goal. Therefore to him swaraj was far wider than mere constitutional arrangements: indeed he argued that India would be m no better state if Indians merely replaced Britons in toe existing seats of government. His swaraj bore three hall-marks-unity among Indians of all religions, but particularly between Hindus and Muslims; the eradication of Untouchability; and the practice of swadeshi. The first two would indicate that Indians recognized their equality and unity as spiritual beings and were tolerant, as befitted those who realized how partial was their own vision of truth. The practice of swadeshi would signify self-limitation of wants and simplicity of lifestyle, simultaneously eroding of the benefits of India to Britain and thereby weakening the imperial commitment to the existing form of raj. It demonstrated the dignity of manual labour; and one of its elements, hand-spinning, became part of Gandhi's daily routine and that of his closest followers. It had other practical benefits, such as helping to alleviate rural poverty and under-employment, and uniting educated and uneducated in a shared experience.

One of India's great figures, Jawaharlal Nehru, remembered that Gandhi was 'delightfully vague' about the actual form of government to be aimed for. In Hind Swaraj Gandhi had harshly criticized Britain's parliamentary government, but back in India he was prepared to work for some form of parliamentary government as an interim measure until India was ready for radical self-rule at village level. For most of his contemporaries the departure of the British was an essential part of self-rule as

they saw it solely in terms of controlling the machinery of government; though they differed on the time-scale they envisaged for colonial withdrawal, and were often prepared (as a political strategy) to pitch their demands higher than they thought possible. At least until 1920 Gandhi does not seem to have seen any urgent need to eject the British. The conversion of his compatriots was a far more pressing problem. He felt mat despite the disadvantages of British rule as the bearer of corrupting civilization, despite the humiliation of being a subject nation, there were certain ideals in British imperialism such as justice and equality which were valuable for India, if only their rulers would rule in accordance with them. He was even prepared to recruit soldiers to defend the empire at war, partly to teach Indians courage and self-respect, essential qualities for potential adherents of satyagraha; but partly because he still felt that there was a future for Indians as equal partners in the British Empire. Because Gandhi approached the problem of the right society and political order from his distinctive moral standpoint he was able quite consistently to say mat he never hated British people, however much he disliked their raj; and he hoped for as radical a 'change of heart' among them as among Indians.

On his return to India Gandhi did not see himself as a potential rebel or as leader of a nationalist movement, but as a social worker in the tiny area of western India where he had family roots. Furthermore, he disliked the status of Mahatma which people increasingly accorded him, experiencing pain and embarrassment in its connotations and the outward veneration which began to accompany it. Yet despite his intention to limit his sphere of work and his studied political silence in 1915, he became involved in political life, in Gujarat and other localities, and ultimately at the all India level. Even then his inner compulsion seems to have been the religious conviction that if he was to follow truth he must serve his compatriots and right 'wrongs' wherever he saw them. He maintained that all his speaking and writing, all his 'ventures in the political field' were part of his striving after moksha, salvation; and that anyone who sought truth could not 'afford to keep out of any field of life'.

That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, mat those who say mat religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

Although Gandhi was deeply committed to political action he was never a career politician. He always retained great flexibility in his approach to his work, being prepared to 'opt in and out of politics (as his contemporaries understood politics) whenever he felt there was a task for which his capacities fitted him and which was likely to further the cause of true swaraj. His vocation was not to a political career but to the building of a new by a variety of moans- personal contacts, writing, life in his ashrams, social work, prayer, as well as obviously political action and the use of satyagraha in a political context. Believing that satyagraha was the sovereign remedy" for India's ills he was committed not only to spreading its message and training exponents of it; but equally to preserving it from misuse and that meant

being prepared not only to launch satyagraha campaigns but to end them if he felt satyagraha was being manipulated or prostituted by the weak or irreligious.

From 1915 to 1922 Gandhi began to grapple with the real India and its problems as distinct from the India of his imagination and limited experience. In 1922 he began his first term in an Indian jail following attempts to give his countrymen a radical; alternative to the official design for a new order as offered in the 1919 reforms. The dramatic transition from social worker honoured by government to a jailed rebel, leader of a Congress campaign of non-co-operation, and preacher of swaraj within a year came in stages through involvement in different levels of political life.

Gandhi's first essays in public action were in three local areas, each with a distinct problem which he felt called to rectify through satyagraha. In Champaran district of Bihar he took up the cause of peasant tenants forced to grow indigo at disadvantageous terms by white planters who dominated the locality and harassed the recalcitrant by means which even the government admitted to be dubious and disruptive of rural peace. There satyagraha took the form of individual action by Gandhi when he refused to obey an order to leave the district. The next year (1918) he championed two groups in his home territory, Gujarat - the substantial owner-cultivators of Kaira district who disputed with the government the enhancement of their land revenue; and the workers in the Ahmedabad cotton mills whose problem was low pay. In Ahmedabad Gandhi fasted as a personal part of satyagraha, and organised a workers' strike against the Indian mill-owners. In Kaira satyagraha's form was refusal to pay land revenue. Only in Champaran and Ahmedabad did the campaigns achieve a real solution to the original problem: and though the opponents shifted their position it was not the result of a 'change of heart' or a new perception of truth, but because they were in some way vulnerable to pressure generated by Gandhi's campaign. In Bihar the planters were not converted, but pushed by the provincial government, which in rum agreed to an official enquiry because of pressure from Delhi where the Government of India's priority was war time peace. In Kaira by contrast the Bombay administration and the Government of India saw eye to eye: satyagraha was not able to drive a wedge between them and so weaken the local government's hand in dealing with Gandhi. Although satyagraha may have generated real local enthusiasm and support, it did little to alter the basic structure of relationships between Indians, which for Gandhi was crucial to swaraj. In Champaran the campaign for village uplift and education soon ebbed; and his ashram followers imported from Gujarat were among the only ones to engage in rural reconstruction. In Kaira Gandhi's supporters among the locally prestigious Patidar farmers contained in treat their low caste neighbours and labourers with disdain.

Yet these local actions were important for Gandhi personally and for his public standing. They gave him a confidence that he could and should act beyond the restarted area he had at first envisaged for himself. They broadened his geographical

experience of the sub-continent, and brought him into contact with social groups whom established provincial and national politicians had rarely touched. Moreover in these three campaigns Gandhi recruited men from regions which had carried little weight in Congress politics, but who now became his committed allies. As small-town lawyers, teachers or prosperous peasants they had little interest in existing all India politics; but Gandhi's impassioned declaration of this vision of swaraj and his training of them in a new and more accessible political style opened for them new horizons in terms of perception and action. Rajendra Prasad from Bihar, and Vallabhbhai Patel from Gujarat, for example, were to work with him until the end of his life, giving him access to networks of local supporters and themselves achieving all India political careers of distinction. Gandhi's satyagrahas also gave him a continental reputation though responses to him were ambivalent. Peasants in Champaran flocked to venerate him as a saviour, but educated Indians were disquieted by his primitive' habits such as sitting on the floor, his hostility to English as a medium of conversation and education, and by the potential disruption of established conventions of political action and the lawlessness which Satyagraha seemed to threaten. Officials began to think that the religious enthusiast and social worker was becoming a dangerous agitator, capable of string up discontent precisely because of his unwestern style and his grass roots contracts. Yet Gandhi was still politically isolated. He had found no permanent allies in the Home Rule leagues, nor even in the Servants of India Society founded his political guru, Gokhale, whose death m 1915 deprived him of his closest friend in the political world. As late as mid 1919 he told an old friend that he felt lonelier in India than in Africa and lacked the depth of rapport which he had had with his co-workers there.

By that time Gandhi had begun to make his mark in the all India political arena, not consciously planning the expansion of his political connections and influence, but still taking up specific 'wrongs' which seemed rectifiable through satyagraha, and working to lay the foundation of true swaraj. In the summer of 1917 he urged Mrs. Besant's sympathizers to take up satyagraha as a protest against her internment, suggesting the drama of a march from Bombay to her place of restriction. Her release in September by a Delhi government anxious to secure a co-operative atmosphere for Montagu's tour of inquiry enabled Congressmen to shelve a decision over a strategy which divided them bitterly. The following year Gandhi spent much energy exhorting the government to release the Pan-Islamist politicians, the Ali brothers. In their case he only advised that they should break their own internment order when the government proved adamant, not contemplating any wider use of satyagraha. He made it clear that his championship of them was integral to his pursuit of Swaraj, one of its foundations being Hindu-Muslim unity which he hoped to further by this concern. Late in 1918 he told Mahomed Ali, 'my interest in your release is quite selfish'. We have a common goal and I want to utilize your services to the uttermost, in order to reach that goal. In the proper solution of the Mahomedean question lies the realization of Swarajya. But the brothers proved unstable allies, willing only to accept Gandhi's advice and insistence on non-violence when it was clear that they had no other viable option. Yet even their erratic co-

operation was highly significant for Gandhi and for the course of Indian politics. It gave Gandhi the personal sense of leading and championing Muslims, as he had done in Africa; and it gave him leverage in Congress politics because he appeared to be a lynchpin between Hindu politicians and those Muslims who because of their Pan-Islamic concerns would be most likely to join across communal barriers in an anti-government alliance. It also gave this small group of Muslims a hold over Gandhi, as he sought occasions and issues to unite Muslims and Hindus. Consequently it blinded him to the interests of millions of other Indian Muslims, particularly those who were provincial majorities and saw little profit in anti-British action when their local numerical weight would advantage them under the reformed constitution.

Gandhi's breakthrough into all-India politics occurred in 1919 on the issue of the Rowlatt Bills. When conventional political protest and the unanimous Indian vote in the Imperial Legislative Council failed to stop the Rowlatt Act Gandhi offered an escape from the politicians impasse, with a new method of direct action which did not take the terrorists' way of violence. He himself felt the Act was unjust and oppressive, and believed that satyagraha on this issue would 'purify the atmosphere and bring in real swaraj.' So for him this continental plan was novel only in scale, not in basic motivation. But it forced him to tackle the problem of offering satyagraha when there was not an 'unjust law' which could easily by broken. (Indians would have to be suspected conspirators and terrorists to fall foul of the actual provisions of the Rowlatt Act!) His solution in this case was to adapt to a new purpose a traditional demonstration of protest and mourning-the hartal, or stoppage of work. He advised all Indians on a specified day to stop work and devote themselves to fasting and prayer. Later he expanded satyagraha to include disobedience to the 1910 press Act, because this would be peaceful and educative. (The banned books chosen for illegal sale included his own Hind Swaraj!)

The Rowlatt satyagraha failed in that it neither changed the government's policy nor began the radical reconstruction of Indian society which was Gandhi's goal. He called it off because in April it erupted into violence in his own Gujarat and in the Punjab. Yet it was a remarkable breakthrough for a middle-aged stranger in Indian politics. His campaign became known throughout India, and in all provinces hartal was at least partially observed, though observance tended to be urban rather than rural, and varied greatly from region to region. Bengal and Madras were at the 'quiescent' end of the spectrum. But there was dramatic response in Bombay city and parts of Gujarat where Gandhi had established local prestige and the beginnings of an organizational base in the local Home Rule league branches and in a Satyagraha Sabha he founded in February 1919. On 6 April, the hartal day, a large proportion of shops in Bombay city were shut, and local transport was much reduced; and the police admitted that the whole effect was a strategic success for Gandhi, But the enterprise also showed that Gandhi, like any other Indian politician before or since, found his plan for national action manipulated, distorted or even wrecked by the forces of provincial and local political life.

Where there were particular economic and communal strains, as in Punjab, these generated support for agitation but undermined Gandhi's careful strategy of non-violence. Where established leaderships in provincial or local politics saw no fixture in Gandhi'a style of protest, as in CP, satyagraha hardly happened. Without a powerful countrywide organization, having only a limited regional standing in western India, Gandhi was at the mercy of those who chose to collaborate with or ignore him. 1919 showed that many educated Indians were still wary of the Mahadna, unconvinced by his vision of swaraj, and drawn more to co-operation in the raj's design for reordering public life. But just when Gandhi came hard up against the realities of Indian politics he became utterly convinced that he had a continental vocation which lie could only pursue by permanent involvement in those politics. He dated his real entrance into Congress affairs from the annual session at Amritsar in 1919, and from then was prepared to challenge the established Congress politicians if he felt that their vested interests and their strategies were blocking the enterprise of true swaraj.

The Mahatma's challenge came in 1920, when he confronted the Indian public with a plan of non-co-operation with the raj, designed to achieve swaraj in one year. He posited the enterprise of swaraj in a year at the special Congress session in Calcutta in September 1920, and in a subsequent article in his newspaper, young India, reminding his compatriots of the humiliating fact that so few British were able to rule so many Indians. If they could only co-operate they could dispense with the British, and he urged them to withdraw from government schools, courts, and councils as a preliminary to non-co-operation in government service and payment of taxes; and to practise swadeshi as a means of ending their 'economic slavery'. Such 'self-purification' rather than armed rebellion was for him the core of India's destiny and her mission to the world. 'All this means discipline, self-denial, self-sacrifices, organizing ability, confidence and courage...Our salvation and its time are solely dependent upon us.' On the precise form of government to be aimed at he was vague and apocalyptic: to him the details of a political programme still mattered little compared with a reformation of attitudes and relationships.

Although swaraj had been Gandhi's ultimate goal for over a decade, his decision actually to launch the enterprise was a startling contrast to his position at the end of 1919. Then he had urged Indians to co-operate in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, believing that in conjunction with a Royal Proclamation appealing for Indian co-operation they were a sign of British intentions to act justly towards India, and could be the basis of a new relationship between rulers and ruled. Gandhi moved to this new stance of overt disloyalty because in the intervening six months he felt he had proof feat the supposed new order based on co-operation was a mirage arid that the British would never live up to their imperial ideals in India. Proof to him lay in the treatment of defeated Turkey after the war by the British and their allies and British

disregard for Indian Muslim fears for the Khalifah's status, and in British reactions to the Punjab violence Airing the rowlatt satyagraha.

In 1919-20 a strident campaign on behalf of the Turkish sultan developed among a small group of Indian Muslims; the activists were mostly younger politicians and some ulema, particularly in UP, Bihar, and Sind. Yet Muslim unease on the issue was widespread, and deepened and broadened as the ulema took up the cause. Gandhi concerned himself with the Khilafat question because he felt it was a 'wrong' done to Muslim religious stabilities, and provided occasion for promoting various causes central to his vision of a transformed India, including the achievement of communal harmony and the demonstration of satyagraha as the perfect action in situations of conflict and injustice. Rapidly he became the most prominent protagonist of the Khilafat case, the master-mind behind a Khilafat Day when he again urged the tactic of hartal, and eventually the formulator of a plan of non-co-operation with the raj if Muslim whishes were not respected. (In March 1920 the plan held in reserve by the Central Khilafat Committee, of which Gandhi had been the main architect, included staged relinquishment of titles and honours, and withdrawal from the legislatures, from private and public service with the British, culminating in refusal to pay taxes.) However, such a specifically Muslim issue had little appeal for most Hindus; and many Hindu public men were seriously worried at the prospect of a gandhi-style campaign and the possibility of violence if mass Muslim feeling was stirred up by religious and political leaders.

Fortuitously at Gandhi's disposal lay the problem of Punjab. His handling of this in conjunction with the Khilafat question enabled him to appeal to a real sense of outrage among moderate-minded politicians, and to Hindu and Muslim sentiment simultaneously. During the 1919 violence martial law had been declared in the Punjab city 9of Amritsar. On one occasion the British General Dyer had ordered his men to fire on a crowd which had gathered, despite the current prohibition on large gatherings, in Jallianwalla Bagh, a walled area with limited shelter and exits. Over 300 were killed and 1,000 injured; and London and Delhi both condemned Dyer's action, done more to display power than actually to control disorder. Nonetheless Indian politicians accused the British of 'whitewashing', and were outraged by public support for Dyer in England when he was required to resign from the Indian army. Gandhi became the key figure in a Congress counter-inquiry to the official investigation into the Punjab disturbances. By June 1920 he considered British policy in this matter to be 'an insufferable wrong'-to which Indians should respond with satyagraha. This and the khilafat question made him proclaim in July 1920, to my amazement and dismay, I have discovered that the present representatives of the Empire have become dishonest and unscrupulous. They have no real regard for the wishes of the people of India and they count Indian honour as of little consequence... I can no longer retain affection for a Government so evilly manned as it is now-a-days

These two issues changed Gandhi's assessment of and relation to British raj. His handling of them gave him access to new sources of support in politics and institutional political leverage which he had so far lacked. He now had the support of the Central Khilafat Committee, though he found his Muslim collaborators on it hard to control and convince of the necessity of non-violence and the sincerity of Hindu support. As the main author of Congress's report on the Punjab issue he acquired new standing in Congress itself Furthermore, he bad realized his need of institutional position if he was to advance the causes dear to him; for this reason he was prepared to accept office as President of the All-India Home Rule League in place of Annie Besant in April 1920, thus losing what he called his 'splendid isolation' in politics.

It is less clear why Congressmen agreed to non-co-operation in the last quarter of 1920. In December 1919 Congress had promised to co-operate in the new constitution, though to conciliate those who wished for more radical steps it called the reforms 'disappointing'. Given the peculiar nature of the British ray-dependent as it was on Indian taxpayers, co-operation and on Indian allies inside and outside the formal structures of government -non-co-operation made good tactical sense. If thoroughly pursued by enough strategically placed Indians it could bring the British to their knees when petition or violence proved ineffective. But withdrawal from the reformed councils shut those interested in political power off from a wealth of new resources: and non-co-operation in law courts and schools threatened the position and purses of many of the educated, and the future of their children. There is no simple reason for the apparently dramatic change of Congress policy and Gandhi's dominance in its decision-making. Taking the evidence of the months August to December 1920 and the two crucial Congresses (at Calcutta in September and Nagpur in December) the one simple conclusion is that there was no large-scale conversion to Gandhi's vision or style; nor was there among Indians any real anticipation or hope of making a rapid end to the raj. Rather, the eventual Congress support for non-co-operation seem to have been the outcome of calculations by a range of groups of its advantages, often in terms of local and provincial politics. (For example, whether the actual distribution of seats in a particular legislature made it worthwhile for Hindu groups to contest seats, or whether they would be outweighed by special interests with separate representation. Another consideration was whether in a given local situation one faction found it temporarily attractive to appear 'extreme' under Gandhi's banner). Furthermore, decisions were not seen as final. Many politicians envisaged temporary withdrawal from legal practice, and counted that they could stand in the next legislative council elections even if they stood aside in 1920.

One reason for the success of Gandhi's challenge to existing Congress policy was the absence of any other major all-India political leader or group who could organize opposition to him or provide a dynamic alternative. Mehta and Gokhale had been dead five years, Annie Besant was already being seen as a tiresome old lady; and death removed Tilak on 1 August, the very day Gandhi launched non- co-operation.

So divided were Congressman by region and faction that they could lot orchestrate their fears about the course Gandhi was proposing. Some accusations of 'packing' the two meetings with local men who supported him were hurled at Gandhi by the disgruntled after the voting at the two Congresses. As there was no limit to the number of delegates this was a common enough phenomenon and had for decades made the choice of Congress venue particularly significant. But Gandhi did not have the material resources for such a venture; and Calcutta in September was not a location in which he could have felt confident of local support. It soon became clear that much of his backing in Congress and the country was from areas, and from social and religious groups which had previously carried little weight in Congress. They now not only swayed the vote but altered the political environment in which existing political leaders and established groups had to decide on their response to Gandhi.

Particularly significant were the Muslims engaged in the Khilafat campaign who came in large numbers to Congress itself to vote for non-co-operation. This was clear at Calcutta, as was support for Gandhi from a bloc of Marwaris, those prosperous business men who were prominent in Calcutta's trade yet had no local roots. In terms of regional support Gandhi at Calcutta also drew on votes from areas which had been 'backward' in terms of Congress politics; not because they were 'unpolitical' but because the particular Congress style of all-India cooperation offered little to local men, except on rare occasions when local issues dovetailed neatly with a Congress session held locally, or with a particular continental issue. Among them were UP, Bihar and Punjab; and within the Presidencies themselves such areas and Sind and Gujarat (Bombay) and the Andhra region of Madras. At the Nagpur congress there was similar evidence of Muslim support for Gandhi; voters for him from backward' regions including Gujarat and Central Provinces; and people whose social origins in previous decades would have confined them to local politics. The Government of India noted this change of style and participation compared with the decorum of earlier Congresses which only the western educated had attended, and was considerably alarmed by it. 'As regards the class of persons attending, whilst many of the prominent politicians were present, the Bengal contingent included hundreds of ex-detenus and the intelligentsia, which dominated earlier Congresses, seems to have been swamped in a mass of semi-educated persons swept up from all parts of India.' The reasons for this wider social and geographical span of support for Gandhi varied according to the group involved. Gandhi's religious reputation was an element in his appeal. The Marwaris in Calcutta, for example, were drawn by this as well as his western Indian origins. But far more often men revered or followed Gandhi because he had personally conducted a local campaign m an area such as Gujarat or Bihar where they had come under his influence and seen what he could offer them, or because he had championed a particular cause of significance to a group such as the Muslim sympathizers of the Khalifah. Or his style and programme offered an opportunity for local and all-India influence to local leaders who had had little access to or interest in Congress because they came from areas where educational opportunities were limited.

The shift of a large segment of Indian opinion in Gandhi's favour created a crisis for the established political groups in provincial and all-India politics, particularly in the Presidencies. They were so divided among themselves mat the appearance of Gandhi in Congress with country-wide support, coming partly from within their own regions, made those who hoped to appear the most extreme or nationalist consider that alliance with Gandhi, at least temporarily, was a better way of safeguarding their home bases as well as their repute in Congress, than coming to terms with their local opponents in joint hostility to this enigmatic new political force. This was true of the prominent Bengali, C.R.Das, and of Tilak's former followers in Bombay. It is also significant that Gandhi's policy victories in the Subjects Committee at the two sessions further increased their difficulties by producing the crucial resolutions put before the open congress, and thus giving Gandhi's outright opponents no real chance to vote down his plans. At Calcutta he swayed the Subjects Committee by a very small margin; but that was enough to determine the pattern of the open Congress. By the Nagpur session his standing was such that most established leaders judged him a profitable ally and a formidable opponent and preferred to make early terms with him rather than be seen in open conflict with him. As the elections to the new legislatures were now over they were prepared to give non-co-operation a trial, provided that they could influence its pattern and tinting. In this Gandhi agreed, wishing to achieve as great a unity as possible as the prelude both to satyagraha and swaraj. He had no other implement than Congress, no other 'party'; and collaborators who had their fingers on the pulse of local life were crucial to him (as they were to the government) if his enterprise of swaraj was not to founder as had the Rowlatt satyagraha.

Non-co-operation lasted from 1 August 1920 to February 1922, when Gandhi called off the campaign because of a vicious attack on a police station in UP. Swaraj within the year had not been achieved, either in Gandhi's terms or according to the limited political definition of most Indians. Furthermore government was well able to cope with the unprecedented attack on its framework and prestige; shrewdly combining firmness at local level and restraint at all-India level combined with delaying tactics before taking what could be interpreted as provocative steps, particularly ones which would alienate more moderate political opinion. It retrained from arresting Gandhi to avoid giving him a martyr's halo until 1922. The revenue never dried up (though several provincial governments were embarrassed when temperance movements cut their excise revenue): nor did government's collaborators in the services and informal networks of support withdraw their co-operation. The raj only faced real crises of control in restricted areas at particular times, such as the outbreak of violence among the Moplah Muslims on the south-west coast, where rural disturbance was endemic, or in Calcutta and Bombay city in November 1921 when rioting erupted most disturbingly just before the goodwill visit of the Prince of Wales.

Nonetheless, non-co-operation marked a major change in the depth and dimensions of concerted political hostility to the raj. Never before had the British faced a continental campaign against their rule, masterminded by Congress, drawing support from deep within the provinces. The campaign clearly affected the November 1920 elections to the new legislatures. The polls occurred peacefully, and only in six cases out of 637 was an election impossible because there was no candidate. But most of the prominent Congressmen who would naturally have stood withdrew. The polls also varied wildly, form over 50 per cent in parts of Madras, down to 8 per cent in Bombay city and even lower to 4.4 per cent among Bombay Presidency's urban Muslims. In one UP village where Gandhi had spoken the day before the election there were no voters at all. Resignation of titles was the part of the 1921 plan which had the least success. By the end of January only 24 out of 5,186 Indian titleholders had resigned their honours. Few government servants withdrew their services: but in some places their work was hindered by passive public hostility, and their private lives made disagreeable by social harassment. Law courts continued to function normally, though nearly 200 lawyers gave up their practices-if only temporarily. A crop of informal courts, panchayats, sprouted early in 1921, but they soon withered, because of the curious justice they dispensed and their lack of sanctions apart from social boycott and violence. There was, however, a very marked and longer-lasting drop in attendance at government secondary schools and colleges, and the emergence of a range of 'national' educational institutions. But the educational boycott did not last because Indians realized that literacy and educational qualifications from recognize establishments meant profit, power, and prestige. Similarly they declined to cut themselves off from the resources available in the municipalities: and while boycotting provincial elections and legislatures they were anxious to stand in local elections and work the local government institutions whose value they had rapidly learnt in the previous decades. Later in 1921 Gandhi and the All-India Congress Committee emphasized the swadeshi campaign, and encouraged the use of charkhas, spinning wheels, both as a propaganda symbol and an economic strategy against poverty and some of the economic interests behind the raj. Imports of cloth decreased dramatically in 1921-2, though the swadeshi campaign was fortuitously strengthened by the bleak facts of reduced Indian purchasing power and a fall in the exchange rate in the disturbed economic conditions following the war. Indian merchants showed themselves to be shrewd and levelheaded in the context of economic dislocation; and many of those who actually traded in foreign cloth refused to give it up, including Gandhi's Marwari supporters in Calcutta.

Although the all-India plan of non-co-operation had limited effects, some of the most striking manifestations of political unrest and the worst challenges to order occurred where pre-existing local tensions found an outlet in the all-India campaign and moulded it locally into patterns quite unpremeditated-nor indeed welcomed-by those who had planned non-co-operation at Nagpur. In a sense non-co-operation 'succeeded' most where it was least planned or controlled. Ultimately it was such local variations and the tensions which created them which broke apart the

movement and wrecked anything approaching an authentic Gandhian satyagraha. In south India, for example, four distinctive campaigns contributed to non-co-operation though all had origins in local conditions predating Gandhi's national call for Satyagraha. They included hostility to government's forest regulations; temperance campaigns which stemmed more from opposition to the government's organization of the liquor trade than Gandhian or even orthodox Hindu morality, a brief stoppage of land revenue collection because of the resignation of some Indian district officials who were uneasy about their diminishing local position; and urban demonstrations which similarly were manifestations of preexisting local problems. Far off in Assam non-co-operation was fuelled by the economic distress of plantation labourers who had migrated to work in the tea gardens. In U.P. it became interwoven with a peasant agitation against landlord pressure, to the embarrassment of the Congress leaders who could not control it and its wilder spokesmen, and found that it alienated some of Congress's members or allies, including some of the smaller Muslim zamindars. In Punjab many non-co-operators were Sikhs who latched on to the campaign as they battled for control of Sikh religious resources against a group of their co-religionists who had legal rights to religious property and were therefore supported by the government. Ultimately these local conflicts, among Indians as much as against government and its institutions, led to increasing violence: and in February 1922 Gandhi advised that the campaign should be called off. The eruption of new group and regions into national politics had turned out to be a double-edged weapon. Moreover it was becoming clear that Gandhi's Muslim allies were becoming restive and reluctant to observe his idiosyncratic policies; while his uneasy colleagues among the Presidency politicians were re-thinking the value not only of the Mahatma but of his strategies which seemed to have produced so little permanent political benefit after the year which was supposed to bring in swaraj. When the government jailed Gandhi in March it saved him from recognizing that the bases of his dramatic influence in Congress affairs in 1920 had weakened to the point of collapse. Yet this first national episode in Gandhi's presentation of a radical alternative for India was of considerable significance. Most obviously it demonstrated that Gandhi was now a national figure. British and Indians alike could no longer ignore or ridicule him: his saintly politics were proved to have powerful practical repercussions. Non-co-operation also elicited from the British a changed attitude to political agitation which posed them a new problem because it was non-violent and so wide-scale, and because it erupted just when they were playing for wider political co-operation in the reformed constitution. In response they demonstrated skill in achieving a delicate balance of control and continuing solicitation of collaboration. But conflicts of opinion within the government and the near-failure of the policy at certain junctures (as when they nearly lost 'Moderate' political support late in 1921) showed, too, how the preservation of the raj would require continual re-formulation of political strategy in a rapidly changing context Gandhi's enterprise also demonstrated both the possibility of Hindu-Muslim co-operation in action against the government, and the ambivalence of such co-operation in action against the government, and the ambivalence of such co-operation. But in the Perspective of India's political development and eventual

achievement of nationhood and democratic independence, perhaps the most significant aspect of no-co-operation is the way it displayed the unprecedented disturbance of interests and senses of identity at different levels of public life. The dislocation of older patterns resulted from the economic and ideological pressures of the war, from the actions of government particularly its restructuring of the official framework of collaboration with its subjects, and from the deliberate actions of those with diverse political interests who reached out across old barriers of region, district, and community to generate support and find allies.

The actual programme of satyagraha enabled changes in interaction between different types of politics. As a new and infinitely flexible mode of expressing grievances and pressurizing opponents it gave new political opportunities to people whose political vision and capacities had hitherto been restricted. It enabled some temporary mobilization of people who had never before been involved in a 'national' campaign, as in the case of those who flocked to Gandhi's meetings or participated in hartal. It gave opportunities for new aggregations of political awareness and action, when specific or local problems found an outlet in an all-India campaign, as in southern India or UP, or the Punjab. Temporarily the politics of different provinces and smaller localities might be synchronized and welded into a campaign which was national in spread if not in its basic motivation. The novelty of the situation lay in the synchronization rather than the actual content of those politics. Work on south India and on Allahabad, for example, has shown the degree of continuity in ideas, interests, and people, before, during, and after Gandhi's campaign. His plans and preaching did not change the components of more local politics, but permitted them to be re-expressed in conjunction with the politics of other regions. But this experience was educative: it demonstrated to Indians the possibilities and value of interregional co-operation. While Gandhi in his speeches and writings publicized the ideological content of a new national identity, his satyagraha was instrumental in effecting it, if only temporarily.

Satyagraha was a new bonding action and ideology in Indian political life. Under its impetus Congress became in a new way a bonding institution compared with its older role as the informal talking-shop of local political notables from restricted areas and social backgrounds. Gandhi was determined that Congress, if it was to be an instrument of swaraj, must be representative of the whole nation in terms of geography and society, rather than of an educated minority whose politics he believed were de-nationalizing India. He also insisted on efficiency in any organization in which he was involved. These convictions found practical expression in the new constitution Congress accepted at the close of the Nagpur session, of which Gandhi was the main architect. Under it Congress was to have a permanent and small executive in its Working Committee, while the loose and ineffective A1CC of previous decades was relegated to a secondary position. Congress was also reorganized at provincial level; the Provincial Congress Committees (PCCs) now representing language areas. Local organization was extended to sub-divisional and taluka level, at least in theory. Both these developments were strategies to broaden

Congress's geographical and social base. Furthermore, at annual sessions provinces were to send fixed numbers of delegates in proportion to their population, to guard against swamping or packing of sessions by men from one area. Some results of these changes can be seen in the expansion of Congress membership and the greater participation of rural men in the AICC immediately after Nagpur. Clearly, though changes threatened older modes of using and controlling Congress politics, they also made good sense in the context of wider agitational and electoral politics, when leaders needed to forge new links with potential voters and backers.

Thus reconstructed Congress became a far more significant organizational resource in politics. Despite violent fluctuations in membership and the actual operation at grass-roots of the organization prescribed for local units, it was becoming a regular political institution which those concerned with political influence could less easily ignore. Congress as a body also began to control more funds for political work in comparison with its earlier poverty. Between April and June 1921 Rs. 10 million were collected for a Tilak Memorial Fund; and from 1921-3 the total funds available to Congress exceeded Rs. 13 million This enabled a wider range of political and allied activity as, for example, the new Khadi organizations to promote Gandhi's swadeshi plans, which were aligned with Congress. Expanded financial resources also heralded the rise of the permanent political worker who could make a living and a career within the Congress structures. It is noteworthy that areas such as Bihar, Sind, UP Gujarat and Punjab, which would once have been called backward in Congress politics, were now prominent in their financial contributions, as were Gandhi's Marwari supporters, and a range of quite ordinary people who contributed to Congress collections in streets and cafes. As Congress planned and helped to finance nonce-operation it gained m prestige as the major national political body which could take on the raj. Its repute further added to its importance at different levels of public life, and its name became an increasingly significant asset This, combined with its finances and organization, gave it a new potential both as a structure enabling interaction between levels of politics and as an institution which could bond India's political diversities into a national unity.

However the 1920 -2 non-co-operation movement demonstrated the difficulties in toe way of creating a new sense of national awareness and mutual interest across the subcontinent, and co-ordinating a political campaign which was national even m simple geographical terms. The problems of unity which had confronted early Congressmen were deepened now, precisely because the different levels of political understanding and action had been drawn into new and closer contact because different modes of politics were not so disaggregated, and because Congress was no longer dominated by the western educated. No all-India leader after the First World War could exercise continental influence in the same way as a Surendranath Banerjea or a Pherozeshah Mehta. All concerned with all-India political power, whether they were in the ranks of the raj or among Congressmen, needed deeper and wider networks of communications and alliances to achieve success in the changing political environment.

As non-co-operation generated new linkages between political arenas, regional differences became marked. There was growing hostility of men from some areas to India-wide strategies which appeared to conflict with their local interests or political style. The social elite among Bengali Hindus who had prospered in the new education and professions, for example, found the Mahatma's idiom uncongenial; while non-co-operation boded ill for them as a minority already politically threatened by Congress's all-India strategy at Lucknow in 1916 which had been written into the 1919 reforms. Strategic reasons led C.R. Das to make a pact with Gandhi at Nagpur in December 1920, but his hostility surfaced within the 1921, offered a Round Table Conference in an attempt to prevent embarrassing demonstrations when the Prince of Wales arrived. Non-co-operation could also underline caste hostilities where certain groups felt they were disadvantaged. The Justice party in Madras, for example, claimed to represent non-Brahmin interests. It resolutely avoided non-co-operation, and formed a ministry under the new constitution after successfully contesting the 1920 elections. For its members the fruits of office were far more significant as a strategy for consolidating power locally than any allegedly national call for self-denial by a Gujarati who seemed to be aligned with the Madras Brahmins who managed the local branch of Congress.

Even more destructive of non-co-operation as a mode of national action and regeneration were the communal and socio-economic strains which erupted under its banner, or were triggered by its propaganda. In the Punjab Hindu-Sikh relations deteriorated as the more puritan wing of the Sikhs in actual possession whom they accused of being 'Hinduized'. In Bihar non-co-operation brought to prominence long-standing issued between Muslims and Hindus, particularly cow-killing. That specific rift widened and seriously hampered the recruitment of volunteers and collection of funds for non-co-operation, despite Gandhi's request to leaders to stop discussing the question. A Hindu picture of Gandhi as Krishna above a Muslim flag deeply disquieted Bengali Muslims, as a local paper explained. The manner in which Mr. Gandhi is being worshipped in the country makes it impossible for the Moslem community to pull on with him. We are ready to work with the Hindus as their brethren; we can even forego korbani [cow-sacrifice] for their satisfaction, but we will never allow the holy crescent to lie low at the feet of Sri Krishna.

The worst communal outbreak occurred on the Malabar coast, where the latest in a succession of Muslim peasant uprisings against Hindu landlords broke out in the wake of non-co-operation propaganda. There communal strains and socioeconomic differences reinforced each other, precipitating a conflict disastrous alike for government and for Congress. Elsewhere class tension within communities was exacerbated by non-co-operation's particular local pattern. UP's Peasant movement, loosely and ambivalently linked to Congress's name and campaign, was the most obvious case. Non-cooperation in action uncovered many of the building blocks out of which a new order for India would have to be constructed. But despite Gandhi's insistence on non-violence, communal and class harmony, his campaign gave little indication that the groups and interests it brought together in new relationships

would actually reinforce each other in the attainment of swaraj.

Followers, too, deserve a formula. Whatever motivation or conflict followers may have in common as they join a leader and they are joined together by him has to be studied in all the complementarily of
their personal lives, that is
the moment when they met the leader, their state of mind, and their stage of life;
the place of that moment in their life history, especially in lifelong themes transferred to the leader;
their communities, insofar as these are relevant to their search for an Identity by participation, that is
their generation's search for leadership
Traditional and evolving patterns of followership.

As to the last point, Gandhi, as we saw, was a master not only in the selection and acquisition of co-workers, but also in assigning them to or using them in all manner of different tasks and ways of life - from the position of elected sons and daughters in his ascetic settlement to that of revolutionary organizers all over India and of aspirants for highest political power, including the prime ministership, for which he "needed a boy from Harrow."

But any explanation, psychoanalytic or other, of how followers became singly what they proved to be together, is relative to - well, to the historical moment. The first Satyagrahi was, of course, unique in the manner of his ascendance and comparable only with equally unique individuals, his followers, however, were characterized primarily by the fact of having found this particular unique man among their contemporaries at a crucial moment in their own lives as well as in history - and of having been selected by him. My data may offer a fleeting glance into the mutual assimilation of motives, which might take place in a self-chosen group making history together.

Epilogue

Why India Survives

The Sikhs may try to set up a separate regime. I think they probably will and that will be only a start of a general decentralization and break-up of the idea that India is a country, whereas it is a subcontinent as varied as Europe. The Punjabi is as different from a Madrassi as a Scot is from an Italian. The British tried to consolidate-it but achieved nothing permanent. No one can make a nation out of a continent of many nations.

General S.r Claude Auchinlkck, ex Indian army C-in-C, 1948

Unless Russia first collapses, India – Hindustan, if you will - is in grave danger of becoming communist in the not distant future.
Sir Francis Tuker, ex Indian army General, 1950

As the years pass, British rule in India comes to seem as remote as the battle of Agincourt.
Malcolm MugGERIDGE, broadcaster and author, 1964

Few people contemplating Indira Gandhi's funeral in 1984 would have predicted that ten years later India would remain a unity but the Soviet Union would be a memory.
Robin Jeffrey, historian, 2000

I

In its issue for February 1959, that venerable American magazine The Atlantic Monthly carried an unsigned report on the state of Pakistan. General Ayub Khan had recently assumed power via a military coup.

What was missing in Pakistan, wrote the correspondent, was the politicians. They have been banished from public life and their very name is anathema. Even politics in the abstract has disappeared. People no longer seem interested in debating socialism versus free enterprise or Left versus Right. It is as if these controversies, like the forms of parliamentary democracy, were merely something that was inherited willy-nilly from the West and can now be dispensed with.

The Atlantic reporter believed that 'the peasants [in Pakistan] welcome the change

in government because they want peace'. He saw law and order returning to the countryside, and smugglers and black-marketeers being put in their place. 'Already the underdog in Pakistan' is grateful to the army, he wrote, adding: 'In a poor country ... the success of any government is judged by the price of wheat and rice', which, he claimed, had fallen since Ayub took over.

Foreign correspondents are not known to be bashful of generalizations, even if these be based on a single fleeting visit to a single unrepresentative country. Our man at the Atlantic Monthly was no exception. From what he saw - or thought he saw - in Pakistan he offered this general lesson: 'Many of the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa have tried to copy the British parliamentary system. The experiment has failed in the Sudan, Pakistan and Burma, while the system is under great stress in India and Ceylon. The Pakistan experiment [with military rule] will be watched in Asia and Africa with keen interest.'

Forty years later the Atlantic Monthly carried another report on the state of Pakistan. Between times the country had passed from dictatorship to democracy and then back again to rule by men in uniform. It had also been divided, with its eastern wing seceding to form the sovereign state of Bangladesh. And it had witnessed three wars, each one initiated by the generals whom the peasants had hoped would bring them peace.

This fresh Atlantic report was signed, by Robert D. Kaplan, who is something of a travelling specialist on ethnic warfare and the breakdown of nation-states. Kaplan presented a very negative portrayal of Pakistan, of its lawlessness, its ethnic conflicts (Sunni vs. Shia, Mohajir vs. Sindhi, Balochi vs. Punjabi etc.), its economic disparities, and of the training of jihadis and the cult of Osama bin Laden.

Kaplan quoted a Pakistani intellectual who said: 'We have never defined ourselves in our own right — only in relation to India. That is our tragedy.' The reporter himself thought that Pakistan 'could be a Yugoslavia in the making, but with nuclear weapons'. Like Yugoslavia, Pakistan reflected an 'accumulation of disorder and irrationality that was so striking'. Kaplan's conclusion was that both military and democratic governments in Pakistan have failed, even as India's democracy has gone more than half a century without a coup.

Kaplan doubtless had not read the very different prognosis of Pakistan offered in his own magazine forty years previously. What remains striking are the very different assessments of India. In 1959, the Atlantic Monthly pitied India for having a democracy when it might be better off as a military dictatorship. In 1999 the same magazine thought this very democracy had been India's saving grace.

Two years later the Twin Towers in New York fell. As attempts were made by Western powers to foster democracy by force in Afghanistan and Iraq, India's record

in nurturing democracy from within gathered renewed appreciation. When, in April 2004, India held its fourteenth general election the contrast with Pakistan was being highlighted by Pakistanis themselves: 'India goes to the polls and the world notices, wrote the Karachi columnist Ayaz Amir. 'Pakistan plunges into another exercise in authoritarian management - and the world notices, but through jaundiced eyes. Are we so dumb that the comparison escapes us?' 'When will we wake up?' continued Amir, 'When will we learn? When will it dawn on us that it is not Indians size, population, tourism or IT industry [that is] making us look small, but Indian democracy?

II

In those elections of 2004 some 400 million voters exercised their franchise. The ruling alliance, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, was widely expected to win by a comfortable margin, prompting fears of a renewal of the 'Hindutva' agenda. As it happened, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance defied the pollsters and came to power. The outcome was variously interpreted as a victory for secularism, a revolt of the aam admi (common man) against the rich and an affirmation of the continuing hold of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty over the popular imagination. In the larger context of world history, however, what is important is not why the voters voted as they did but the fact that they voted at all. Ever since the 1952 elections were described as the 'biggest gamble in history', obituaries have been written for Indian democracy. It has been said, time and again, that a poor, diverse and divided country cannot sustain the practice of (reasonably) free and fair elections.

Yet it has. In that first general election voter turnout was less than 46 per cent. Over the years this has steadily increased; from the late 1960s about three out of five eligible Indians have voted on election day. In assembly elections the voting percentage has tended to be even higher. When these numbers are disaggregated they reveal a further deepening. In the first two general elections, less than 40 per cent of eligible women voted; by 1998 the figure was in excess of 60 per cent. Besides, as surveys showed, they increasingly exercised their choice independently, that is regardless of their husband's or father's views on the matter. Also voting in ever higher numbers were Dalits and tribals, the oppressed and marginalized sections of society. In northern India in particular, Dalits turned out in far greater numbers than high castes. As the political analyst Yogendra Yadav points out, 'India is perhaps the only large democracy in the world today where the turnout of the lower orders is well above that of the most privileged groups.'

The Indian love of voting is well illustrated by the case of a cluster of villages on the Andhra/Maharashtra border. Issued voting cards by the administrations of both states, the villagers seized the opportunity to exercise their franchise twice over. It is also illustrated by the peasants in Bihar who go to the polls despite threats by Maoist

revolutionaries. Dismissing elections as an exercise in bourgeois hypocrisy, the Maoists have been known to blacken the faces of villagers campaigning for political parties, and to warn potential voters that their feet and hands would be chopped off. Yet, as an anthropologist working in central Bihar found, 'the overall effect of poll-boycott on voter turnout seems to be negligible'. In villages where Maoists had been active for years, 'in fact, election day was seen as an enjoyable (almost festive) occasion. Women dressed in bright yellows and reds, their hair oiled and adorned with clips, made their way to the polling booth in small groups.' Likewise, in parts of the north-east where the writ of the Indian state runs erratically or not at all, insurgents are unable to stop villagers from voting. As the chief election commissioner wryly put it, 'the Election Commission's small contribution to the integrity of the country is to make these areas part of the country for just one day, election day'.

That elections have been successfully indigenized in India is demonstrated by the depth and breadth of their reach - across and into all elections of Indian society - by the passions they evoke, and by the humour that surrounds them. There is a very rich archive of electoral cartoons poking fun at promises made by prospective politicians, their desperation to get a party ticket and much else. At other times the humour can be gentle rather than mocking. Consider the career of a cloth merchant from Bhopal named Mohan Lal who contested elections against five different prime ministers. Wearing a wooden crown and a garland gifted by himself, he would walk the streets of his constituency, ringing a bell. He unfailingly lost his deposit, thereby justifying his own self-imposed sobriquet of Dhartipakad, or he who lies, humbled, on the ground. His idea in contesting elections, said Mohan Lal, was 'to make everyone realize that democracy was meant for one and all'.

That elections allow all Indians to feel part of India is also made clear by the experience of Goa. When it was united - or reunited - with India by force in 1961 there was much adverse commentary in the Western press. But where in 400 years of Portuguese rule the Goans had never been allowed to choose their own leaders, within a couple of years of coming under the rule of New Delhi they were able to do so. The political scientist Benedict Anderson has tellingly compared India's treatment of Goa with Indonesia's treatment of East Timor, that other Portuguese colony 'liberated' by armed nationalists:

Nehru had sent his troops to Goa in 1960 [sic] without a drop of blood being spilt. But he was a humane man and the freely elected leader of a democracy; he gave the Goanese their own autonomous state government, and encouraged their full participation in India's politics. In every respect, General Suharto was Nehru's polar opposite.

Considering the size of the electorate, it is overwhelmingly likely that more people have voted in Indian elections than voters in any other democracy. India's success in

this regard is especially striking when compared with the record of its great Asian neighbour, China. That country is larger, but far less divided on ethnic or religious lines, and far less poor as well. Yet there has never been a single election held there. In other ways to China is much less free than India. The flow of information is highly restricted - when the search engine Google set up shop in China in February 2006 it had to agree to submit to state censorship. The movement of people is regulated as well - the permission of the state is usually required to change one's place of residence.

In India, on the other hand, the press can print more or less what they like, and citizens can say exactly what they feel, live where they wish to and travel to any part of the country.

India/China comparisons have long been a staple of scholarly analysis. Now, in a world that becomes more connected by the day, they have become ubiquitous in popular discourse as well. In this comparison China might win on economic grounds but will lose on political ones. Indians like to harp on about their neighbour's democracy deficit, sometimes directly and at other times by euphemistic allusion. When asked to put on a special show at the World Economic Forum of 2006, the Indian delegation never failed to describe their land, whether in speech or in print or on posters, as the World's Fastest Growing Democracy'.

If one looks at what we might call the 'hardware' of democracy, then the self-congratulation is certainly merited. Indians enjoy freedom of expression and of movement, and they have the vote. However, if we examine the 'software' of democracy, then the picture is less cheering. Most political parties have become family firms. Most politicians are corrupt, and many come from a criminal background. Other institutions central to the functioning of a democracy have also declined precipitously over the years. The percentage of truly independent-minded civil servants has steadily declined, as has the percentage of • completely fair-minded judges.

Is India a proper democracy or a sham one? When asked this question, I usually turn for recourse to an immortal line of the great Hindi comic actor Johnny Walker. In a film where he plays the hero's sidekick, Walker answers every query with the remark: 'Boss, phipty-phipty'. When asked what prospect he has of marrying the girl he so deeply loves, or of getting the job he so dearly desires, the sidekick tells the boss that the chances are roughly even, 50 per cent of success, or 50 per cent of failure.

Is India a democracy, then? The answer is well, phipty-phipty. It mostly is when it comes to holding elections and permitting freedom of movement and expression. It mostly is not when it comes to the functioning of politicians and/political institutions. However, that India is even a 50 per cent democracy flies in the face of

tradition, history and the conventional wisdom. Indeed, by its own experience it is rewriting that history and that wisdom. Thus Sunil Khilnani remarked of the 2004 polls that they represented the largest exercise of democratic election, ever and anywhere, in human history. Clearly, the idea of democracy, brought into being on an Athenian hillside some 2,500 years ago, has travelled far -and today describes a disparate array of political projects and experiences. The peripatetic life of the democratic idea has ensured that the history of Western political ideas can no longer be written coherently from within the terms of the West's own historical experience.

III

The history of independent India has amended and modified theories of democracy based on the experience of the West. However, it has confronted even more directly ideas of nationalism emanating from the Western experience.

In an essay summarizing a lifetime of thinking on the subject, Isaiah Berlin identifies 'the infliction of a wound on the collective feelings of a society, or at least of its spiritual leaders, as a 'necessary' condition for the birth of nationalist sentiment. For this sentiment to fructify into a more widespread political movement, however, requires 'one more condition', namely that the society in question must, in the minds of at least some of its most sensitive members, carry an image of itself as a nation at least in embryo, in virtue of some general unifying factor or factors - language, ethnic origin, a common history (real or imaginary). Later in the same essay, Berlin comments on the 'astonishingly Europo-centric' thought of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century political thinkers, where 'the people of Asia and Africa are discussed either as wards or as victims of Europeans, but seldom, if ever, in their own right, as peoples with histories and cultures of their own; with a past and present and future which must be understood in terms of their own actual character and circumstances.

Behind every successful nationalist movement in the Western world has been a certain unifying factor, a glue holding the members of the nation together, this provided by a shared language, a shared religious faith a shared territory, a common enemy - and sometimes all of the above! Thus, the British nation brought together those who huddled together on a cold island, who were mostly Protestant and who detested France. In the case of France, it was language which powerfully combined with religion. For the Americans a shared language and mostly shared faith worked in tandem with animosity towards the colonists. As for the smaller east European nations - the Poles, the Czechs, the Lithuanians etc. - their populations have been united by a common language, a mostly common faith and a shared and very bitter history of domination by German and Russian oppressors.

By contrast with these (and other examples) the Indian nation does not privilege a single language or religious faith. Although the majority of its citizens are Hindus,

India is not a 'Hindu' nation. Its constitution does not discriminate between people on the basis of faith; nor, more crucially, did the nationalist movement that lay behind it. From its inception the Indian National Congress was, as Mukul Kesavan observes, a sort of political Noah's Ark which sought to keep every species of Indian on board. Gandhi's political programme was built upon harmony and co-operation between India's two major religious communities, Hindus and Muslims. Although, in the end, his work and example were unsuccessful in stopping the division of India, the failure made his successors even more determined to construct independent India as a secular republic. For Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues, if India was anything at all it was not a 'Hindu Pakistan'.

Like Indian democracy, Indian secularism is also a story that combines success with failure. Membership of a minority religion is no bar to advancement in business or the professions. The richest industrialist in India is a Muslim. Some of the most popular film stars are Muslim. At least three presidents and two chief justices have been Muslim. In 2007, the president of India is a Muslim, the prime minister a Sikh, and the leader of the ruling party a Catholic born in Italy. Many of the country's most prominent lawyers and doctors have been Christians and Parsis.

On the other hand, there have been periodic episodes of religious rioting, in the worst of which (as in Delhi in 1984 and Gujarat in 2002) the minorities have suffered grievous losses of life and property. Still, for the most part the minorities appear to retain faith in the democratic and secular ideal. Very few Indian Muslims have joined terrorist or fundamentalist organizations. Even more than their compatriots, Indian Muslims feel that their opinion and vote matter. One recent survey found that while 69 per cent of all Indians approve and endorse the ideal of democracy, 72 per cent of Muslims did so. And the turnout of Muslims at elections is higher than ever before.

Building democracy in a poor society was always going to be hard work. Nurturing secularism in a land recently divided was going to be even harder. The creation of an Islamic state on India's borders was a provocation to those Hindus who themselves wished to merge faith with state. My own view - speaking as a historian rather than citizen -is that as long as Pakistan exists there will be Hindu fundamentalists in India In times of stability, or when the political leadership is firm, they will be marginal or on the defensive. In times of change, or when the political leadership is irresolute, they will be influential and assertive.

The pluralism of religion was one cornerstone of the foundation of the Indian republic. A second was the pluralism of language. Here again, the intention and the effort well pre-dated Independence. In the 1920s Gandhi reconstituted the provincial committees of the Congress on linguistic lines. The party had promised to form linguistic provinces as soon as the country was free. The promise was not redeemed immediately after 1947, because the creation of Pakistan had promoted fears of further Balkanization. However, in the face of popular protest the

government yielded to the demand.

Linguistic states have been in existence for fifty years now. In that time they have deepened and consolidated Indian unity. Within each state a common language has provided the basis of administrative unity and efficiency. It has also led to an efflorescence of cultural creativity, as expressed in film, theatre, fiction and poetry. However, pride in one s language has rarely been in conflict with a broader identification with the nation as a whole. The three major secessionist movements in independent India - in Nagaland in the 1950s, in Punjab in the 1980s and in Kashmir in the 1990s - have affirmed religious and territorial distinctiveness, not a linguistic one. For the rest, it has proved perfectly possible - indeed, desirable - to be Kannadiga and Indian, Malayali and Indian Andhra and Indian, Tamil and Indian, Bengali and Indian, Oriya and Indian, Maharashtrian and Indian, Gujarati and Indian and, of course, Hindi-speaking and Indian.

That in India, unity and pluralism are inseparable is graphically expressed in the country's currency notes. On one side is printed a portrait of the 'father of the nation', Mahatma Gandhi; on the other side a picture of the Houses of Parliament. The note's denomination – 5, 10, 50, 100 etc - is printed in words in Hindi and English (the two official languages), but also, in smaller type, in all the other languages of the Union. In this manner, as many as seventeen different scripts are represented. With each language, and each script, comes a distinct culture and regional ethos, here nesting more or less comfortably with the idea of India as a whole.

Some Western observers - usually Americans - believed that this profusion of tongues would be the undoing of India. Based on their own country's experience, where English had been the glue binding the different waves of immigrants, they thought that a single language - be it Hindi or English - had to be spoken by all Indians. Linguistic states they regarded as a grievous error. Thus, in a book published as late as 1970, and at the end of his stint as the Washington Post's man in India, Bernard Nossiter wrote despairingly that this was 'a land of Babel with no common voice'. The creation of linguistic states would 'further divide the states from each other [and] heighten the impulse toward secession'. From its birth the Indian nation had been 'plagued by particularist, separatist tendencies', wrote Nossiter, and 'the continuing confusion of tongues ... can only further these tendencies and puts in question the future unity of the Indian state'.

That, to survive, a nation-state had necessarily to privilege one language was a view that the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin shared with American Liberals. Stalin insisted that 'a national community is inconceivable without a common language', and that 'there is no nation which at one and the same time speaks-several languages'. This belief came to inform the language policy of the Soviet Union, in which the learning of Russian was made obligatory. The endeavour, as Stalin himself put it, was to ensure that 'there is one language in which all citizens of the USSR can more or less

express themselves - that is Russian'.

Like Bernard Nossiter, Stalin too might have feared for the future of the Indian nation-state because of its encouragement of linguistic diversity. In fact, exactly the reverse has happened: the sustenance of linguistic pluralism has worked to tame and domesticate secessionist tendencies. A comparison with neighbouring countries might be helpful. In 1956, the year the states of India were reorganized on the basis of language, the Parliament of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) introduced legislation recognizing Sinhala as the sole official language of the country. The intention was to make Sinhala the medium of instruction in all state schools and colleges, in public examinations and in the courts. Potentially the hardest hit were the Tamil-speaking minority who lived in the north of the island, and whose feelings were eloquently expressed by their representatives in Parliament. 'When you deny me my language', said one Tamil MP you deny me everything. 'You are hoping for a divided Ceylon', warned another, adding: 'Do not fear, I assure you [that you] will have a divided Ceylon.' A left-wing member, himself Sinhala speaking predicted that if the government did not change its mind and insisted on the act being passed, 'two torn little bleeding states might yet arise out of one little state'.

In 1971 two torn medium-sized states arose out of one large-sized one. The country being divided was Pakistan, rather than Sri Lanka, but the cause for the division was, in fact, language. For the founders of Pakistan likewise believed that their state had to be based on a single language as well as a single religion. In his first speech in the capital o East Pakistan, Dacca, Mohammad Ali Jinnah warned his audience that they would have to take to Urdu sooner rather than later. 'Let me make it very clear to you', said Jinnah to his Bengali audience, 'that the State-Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one State language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function.

In the 1950s bloody riots broke out when the Pakistan government tried to impose Urdu on recalcitrant students. The sentiment of tang discriminated against on the grounds of language persisted and ultimately resulted in the formation of the independent state of Bangladesh.

Pakistan was created on the basis of religion, but divided on the basis of language. And for more than two decades now a bloody civil war has raged in Sri Lanka, the disputants divided somewhat by territory and faith but most of all by language. The lesson from these cases might well be: 'One language, two nations'. Had Hindi been imposed on the whole of India the lesson might well have been: 'One language, twenty-two nations'.

That Indians spoke many languages and followed many faiths made their nation unnatural in the eyes of some Western observers, both lay and academic. In truth,

many Indians thought so too. Likewise basing themselves on the European experience, they believed that the only way for independent India to survive and prosper would be to forge a bond or bonds that overlay or submerged the diversity that lay below. The glue, as in Europe, could be provided by religion, or language or both. Such was the nationalism once promoted by the old Jana Sangh and promoted now, in a more sophisticated form, by the BJP. This reaches deep into the past to invoke a common (albeit mostly mythical) 'Aryan' ancestry for the Hindus, a common history of suffering at the hands of (mostly Muslim) invaders, with the suffering tempered here and there by resistance by valiant 'Hindu' chieftains such as Rana Pratap and Shivaji.

A popular slogan of the original Jana Sangh was 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustani'. The attempt was to make Indian nationalism more natural, by making - or persuading - all Indians to speak the same language and worship the same gods. In time, the bid to impose a uniform language was dropped. But the desire to impose the will of the majority religion persisted. This has led, as we have seen in this book, to much conflict, violence, rioting and death. Particularly after the Gujarat riots of 2002, which were condoned and to some extent even approved by the central government, fears were expressed about the survival of a secular and democratic India. Thus, in a lecture delivered in the university town of Aligarh, the writer Arundhati Roy went so far as to characterize the BJP regime as 'fascist'. In fact, she used the term 'fascism' eleven times in a single paragraph while describing the actions of the government in New Delhi.

Here again, Indian events and experiences were being analysed in terms carelessly borrowed from European history. To call the BJP 'fascist' is to diminish the severity and seriousness of the murderous crimes committed by the original fascists in Italy and Germany. Many leaders of the BJP are less than appealing, but to see the party as 'fascist' would be both to overestimate its powers and to underestimate the democratic traditions of the Indian people. Notably, the BJP now vigorously promotes linguistic pluralism. No longer are its leaders from the Hindi heartland alone; and it has expanded its influence in the southern states. And it is obliged to pay at least lip service to religious pluralism. One of its general secretaries is a Muslim; even if he is dismissed as a token, the ideology he and his party promote goes by the name of 'positive secularism'. The qualifier only underlines the larger concession - that even if some BJP leaders privately wish for a theocratic Hindu state, for public consumption they must endorse the secular ideals of the Indian Constitution.

Finally, despite all their best efforts, the BJP was not able to disturb the democratic edifice of the Indian polity. A month after Arundhati Roy delivered her speech, the BJP alliance lost power in a general election that it had called. Its leaders moved out of office and allowed their victors to move in instead. When was the last time a 'fascist' regime permitted such an orderly transfer of power?

The holding of the 1977 elections - called by an individual who had proven dictatorial tendencies - and of the 2004 elections - called by a party unreliably committed to democratic procedure - were both testimony to the deep roots that democracy had struck in the soil of India. In this respect, the country was fortunate in the caliber of its founding figures, and in the fact that they lived as long as they did. Few nations have had leaders of such acknowledged intelligence and integrity as Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and B. R. Ambedkar all living and working at the same time. Within a few years of Independence Patel had died and Ambedkar had left office; but by then the one had successfully overseen the political integration of the country and the other the forging of a democratic constitution. As Nehru lived on, he was kept company by outstanding leaders in his own party - K. Kamaraj and Morarji Desai, for instance - and in the opposition, in whose ranks were such men as J. B. Kripalani and C. Rajagopalachari.

Jawaharlal Nehru served three foil terms in office, a privilege denied comparable figures in the countries of South Asia, where, for example, Aung San was murdered on the eve of the British departure from Burma, Jinnah died within a few years of Pakistan s freedom, Mujib within a few years of Bangladesh's independence and the Nepali democrat B. P. Koirala was allowed only a year as prime minister before being dismissed (and then jailed) by the monarchy. What might those men have done if they had enjoyed power as long as Nehru, and if they had had the kind of supporting cast that he did?

Of course, there has been a rapid, even alarming, decline in the quality of the men and women who rule India. In a book published m 2003 the political theorist Pratap Bhanu Mehta wrote feelingly of the corruption, mediocrity, indiscipline; venality and lack of moral imagination of the [Indian] political class'. Within the Indian state, he continued, 'the lines between legality and illegality, order and disorder, state and criminality, have come to be increasingly porous'.

That said, the distance - intellectual or moral - between Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, or between B. R. Ambedkar and Mulayam Singh Yadav, is not necessarily greater than between, say, Abraham Lincoln and George W. Bush. It is in the nature of democracies, perhaps, that while visionaries are sometimes necessary to make them, once made they can be managed by mediocrities. In India, the sapling was planted by the nation's founders, who lived long enough (and worked hard enough) to nurture it to adulthood. Those who came afterwards could disturb and degrade the tree of democracy but, try as they might, could not uproot or destroy it.

IV

Indian nationalism has not been based on a shared language, religion, or ethnic identity. Perhaps one should then invoke the presence of a common enemy, namely European colonialism. The problem here is the methods used to achieve India's freedom. The historian Michael Howard claims that 'no Nation, in the true sense of the word . . . could be born without war ... no self-conscious community could establish itself as a new and independent actor on the world scene without an armed conflict or the threat of one'. Once again, India must count as an exception. Certainly, it was the movement against British rule that first united men and women from different parts of the subcontinent in a common and shared endeavour. However, their (eventually successful) movement for political freedom eschewed violent revolution in favour of non-violent resistance. India emerged as a nation on the world stage without an armed conflict or, indeed, the threat of one.

Gandhi and company have been widely praised for preferring peaceful protest to armed struggle. However, they should be equally commended for having the wisdom to retain, after the British left, such aspects of the colonial legacy as might prove useful in the new nation.

The colonialists were often chastised by the nationalists for promoting democracy at home while denying it in the colonies. When the British finally left, it was expected the Indians would embrace metropolitan traditions such as parliamentary democracy and Cabinet government. More surprising perhaps was their endorsement and retention of a quintessentially colonial tradition - the civil service.

The key men in British India were the members of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). In the countryside they kept the peace and collected the taxes, while in the Secretariat they oversaw policy and generally kept the machinery of state well oiled. Although there was the odd rotten egg, these were mostly men of integrity and ability. A majority were British, but there were also a fair number of Indians in the ICS.

When Independence came, the new government had to decide what to do with the Indian civil servants. Nationalists who had been jailed by them argued that they should be dismissed or at least put in their place. The home minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, however, felt that they should be allowed to retain their pay and perquisites, and in fact be placed m positions of greater authority. In October 1949 a furious debate broke out on me subject in the Constituent Assembly of India. Some members complained that the ICS men still had the 'mentality [of rulers] lingering in them'. They had apparently 'not changed then manners', not reconciled themselves to the new situation. They do not feel that they are part and parcel of this country, insisted one nationalist.

Vallabhbhai Patel had himself been jailed many times by ICS men, but this

experience had only confirmed his admiration for them. He knew that without them the Pax Britannica would simply have been inconceivable. And he understood that the complex machinery of a modern independent nation-state needed such officers even more. As he reminded the members of the assembly, the new constitute could be worked only 'by a ring of Service which will keep the country intact'. He testified to the ability of the ICS men, but also to then sense of service. As Patel put it, the office had 'served very ably, very loyally the then Government and later the present Government'. Patel was clear that these people are the instruments [of national unity]. Remove them and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country.

In those first, terribly difficult years of Indian freedom, the ICS men vindicated Valabhbhai Patel's trust in them. They helped integrate the princely states, resettle the refugees and plan and oversee the first general election. Other tasks assigned to them were more humdrum but equally consequential - such as maintaining law and order in the districts, working with ministers in the Secretariat and supervising famine relief. In 1950 Patel inaugurated a new cadre modelled on the ICS but with a name untainted by the colonial experience. This was the Indian Administrative Service, or IAS.

In 2007 there are some 5,000 IAS officers in the employment of the government of India. The IAS is complemented, as m British days, by other 'all India' services, among them the police, forest, revenue and customs services. These serve as an essential link between die centre and the states. Officers are assigned to a particular state; they spend at least half of their service career in that province, the res, in tine centre. To the older duties of tax collection and the maintenance of law and order have been added a whole range of new responsibilities. Conducting elections is one; the supervising of development programmes another In the course of his career an average IAS officer would acquire at least a passing familiarity with such different and divergent subjects as criminal jurisprudence, irrigation management, soil and water conservation and primary health care.

This, like its predecessor, is truly an 'elite' cadre. The competition to enter the higher civil services is ferocious. In 1996, 120,712 candidates appeared for the examination, of whom a mere 738 were finally selected is of a very high order. However, there are complaints of increasing corruption among its members, and of their succumbing too easily to their political masters. Perhaps if the IAS is abolished at one stroke the country will not descend into chaos. But as it stands IAS officers play a vital role in maintaining its unity. In times of crisis they tend to rise to the challenge. After the tsunami of 2004, for example, IAS officers in Tamil Nadu were commended for their outstanding work in relief and rehabilitation.

It was an ICS man, Sukumar Sen, who laid the groundwork for elections in India, and it has been IAS men who have kept the machinery going. The chief election commissioners in the states are drawn from the service, junior officers supervise

polls in their districts; those in the middle ranks serve as election observers, reporting on violations of procedure. More generally, the civil services serve as a bridge between state and society. In the course of their work, these administrators meet thousands of members of the public, drawn from all walks of life. Living and working in a democracy, they are obliged to pay close attention to what people think and demand. In this respect, their job is probably even harder than that of their predecessors in the ICS.

A colonial institution that has played an equally vital role is the Indian army. Its reputation took a battering after the China war of 1962 before it redeemed itself through its performance in successive wars with Pakistan. The blows inflicted by Tamil insurgents in Sri Lanka in 1987-8 dented the army somewhat, but then honour was restored by the successful ousting of the Kargil intruders a decade later. While its reputations a fighting force has gone up and down, as an agency for maintaining order in peacetime the Indian army has usually commanded the highest respect. In times of communal rioting, the mere appearance of soldiers in uniform is usually enough to make the rioters flee. And in times of natural disaster they bring succour to the suffering. When there is a flood, famine, cyclone or earthquake, it is the army which is often first on the scene, and always the most efficient and reliable actor around.

The Indian army is a professional and wholly non-sectarian body. It is also apolitical. Almost from the first moments of Independence Jawaharlal Nehru made it clear to the army top brass that in matters of state - both large and small - they had to subordinate themselves to die elected politicians. At the time of the transfer of power the army was still headed by British genera, who had ordered that the public be kept away from a flag-hoisting ceremony to be held on the day after Independence. As prime minister, Nehru rescinded the order, and wrote to the general as follows:

While I am desirous of paying attention to the views and susceptibilities of our senior officers, British and Indian, it seems to me that there is a grave misunderstanding about the matter. In any policy that is to be pursued, in the Army or otherwise, the views of the Government of India and the policy they lay down must prevail. If any person is unable to lay down that policy, he has no place in the Indian Army, or in the Indian structure of Government. I think this should be made perfectly clear at this stage.

A year later it was Vallabhbhai Patel's turn to put a British general in his place. When the government decided to move against the Nizam, the commander -in-chief, General Roy Bucher, warned into Hyderabad might provoke Pakistan to attack Amritsar. Patel told Bucher that if he opposed the Hyderabad action he was free to resign. The general backed down, and sent the troops as ordered.

Shortly afterwards Bucher retired, to be succeeded by the first Indian C-in C, General K. M. Cariappa. At the beginning of his tenure Cariappa restricted himself to military matters, but as he grew into the job he began to offer his views on such questions as India's preferred model of economic development. In October 1952 Nehru wrote advising him to give fewer press conferences, and at any rate to stick to safe subjects. He also enclosed a letter from one of his Cabinet colleagues which complained that Cariappa was 'giving so many speeches and holding so many Press Conferences all over the country'; giving the impression that he was 'playing the role of a political or semi-political leader'.

The message seems to have gone home, for when Cariappa demitted office in January 1953, in his farewell speech he 'exhorted soldiers to give a wide berth to polities'. The army's job, he said, was not 'to meddle in politics but to give unstinted loyalty to the elected Government'. Nehru knew, however, that the general was something of a loose cannon, who could not be completely trusted to follow his own advice. Within three months of his retirement Cariappa was appointed high commissioner to Australia. The general was not entirely pleased, for, as he told the prime minister, 'by going away from home to the other end of the world for whatever period you want me in Australia, I shall be depriving myself of being in continuous and constant touch with the people'. Nehru consoled the general that as a sportsman himself he was superbly qualified to represent India to a sporting nation. But the real intention, clearly, was to get him as far away from the people as possible.

As the first Indian to head the army, Cariappa carried a certain cachet, which lost its luster with every passing month after he had left office. By the time he came back from Australia Cariappa was a forgotten man. Nehru's foresight was confirmed, however, by the statements the general made from time to time. In 1958 he visited Pakistan, where army officers who had served with him in undivided India had just effected a coup. Cariappa publicly praised them, saying that it was 'the chaotic internal situation which forced these two patriotic Generals to plan-together to impose Martial Law in the country to save their homeland from utter ruination'. Ten years later, he sent an article to the Indian Express, in which he argued that the chaotic internal situation in West Bengal demanded that President's Rule be imposed for a minimum of five years. The recommendation was in violation of both the letter and the spirit of the constitution. Fortunately, the piece was returned by the editor, who pointed out to the general that 'it would be embarrassing in the circumstances both to you and to us to publish this article'.

The pattern set in those early years has persisted into the present. As Lieutenant General J. S. Aurora notes, Nehru 'laid down some very good norms', which ensured that 'politics in the army has been almost absent'. 'The army is not a political animal in any terms', remarks Aurora, and the officers especially 'must be the most apolitical people on earth!' It is a striking fact that no army commander has ever

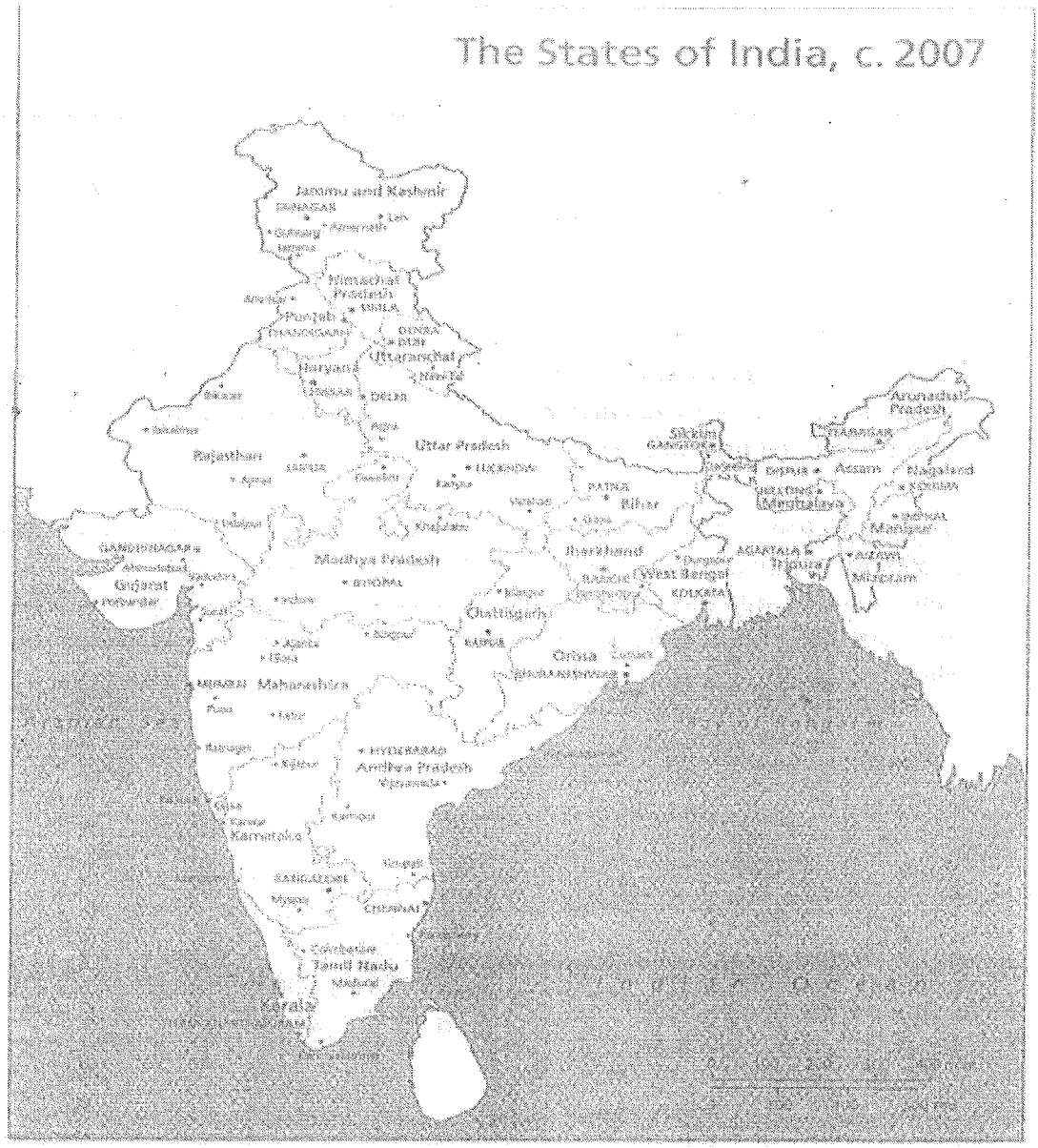
fought an election. Aurora himself became a national hero after overseeing the liberation of Bangladesh, but neither he nor other officers have sought to convert glory won on the battlefield into political advantage. If they have taken public office after retirement, it has been at the invitation of the government. Some, like Cariappa, have been sent as ambassadors overseas; others have served as state governors.

The army, like the civil services, is a colonial institution that has been successfully indigenized. The same might be said about the English language. In British times the intelligentsia and professional classes communicated with one another in English. So did the nationalist elite. Patel, Bose, Nehru, Gandhi and Ambedkar all spoke and wrote in their native tongue, and also in English. To reach out to regions other than one's own, its use was indispensable. Thus a pan-Indian, anti-British consciousness was created, in good part by thinkers and activists writing in the English language.

After Independence, among the most articulate advocates for English was C. Rajagopalachari. The colonial rulers, he wrote, had for certain accidental reasons, causes and purposes ... left behind [in India] a vast body of the English language. But now it had come there was no need for it to go away. For English 'is ours. We need not send it back to Britain along with Englishmen.' He humorously added that, according to Indian tradition, it was a Hindu goddess Saraswati, who had given birth to all the languages of the world. Thus English 'belonged to us by origin, the originator being Saraswati, and also by acquisition'.

On the other hand, there were some very influential nationalists who believed that English must be thrown out of India with the British. In Nehru's day, fitful attempts were made to replace English with Hindi as the language of inter-provincial communication. But it continued to be in use within and outside government. Visiting India in 1961 the Canadian writer George Woodcock found that, despite India's strangeness, its 'immense variety of custom, landscape and physical types', this was 'a foreign setting in which one's language was always understood by someone nearby, and in which to speak with an English accent meant that one was seen as a kind of cousin bred out of the odd, temporary marriage of two peoples into which love and hate entered with equal intensity'.

After Nehru's death the efforts to extinguish English were renewed. Despite pleas from the southern states, on 26 January 1965 Hindi became the sole official language of inter-provincial communication. As we have seen, this provoked protests so intense and furious that the order was withdrawn within a fortnight. Thus English continued as the language of the central government, the superior courts and higher education.


The States of India, c. 2007
Jammu and Kashmir
Himachal Pradesh
Punjab
Haryana
Uttaranchal
Rajasthan
Uttar Pradesh
Sikkim
Arunachal Pradesh
Assam
Nagaland
Meghalaya
Manipur
Tripura
Mizoram
Bihar
Jharkhand
West Bengal
Madhya Pradesh
Gujarat
Chattisgarh
Orissa
Maharashtra
Andhra Pradesh
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

Over the years English has confirmed, consolidated and deepened its position as the language of the pan-Indian elite. The language of the colonizers has, in independent India, become the language of power and prestige, the language of individual as well as social advancement. As the historian Sarvepalli Gopal observes, 'that knowledge of English is the passport for employment at higher levels in all fields, is the unavoidable avenue to status and wealth and is mandatory to all those planning to migrate abroad, has meant a tremendous enthusiasm since independence to study it'. But, as Gopal also writes, English 'may be described as the only non-regional language in India. It is a link language in a more than administrative sense, in that it counters blinkered provincialism.'

Those, like Nehru and Rajaji, who sought to retain English, sensed that it might help consolidate national unity and further scientific advance. That it has done, but largely unanticipated has been its role in fuelling economic growth. For behind the spectacular rise of the software industry lies the proficiency of Indian engineers in English.

V

If India is roughly 50 per cent democratic, it is approximately 80 per cent united. Some parts of Kashmir and the north-east are under the control of insurgents seeking political independence. Some forested districts in central India are in the grip of Maoist revolutionaries. However, these areas, large enough in themselves, constitute considerably less than a quarter of the total land mass claimed by the Indian nation.

Over four-fifths of India, the elected government enjoys a legitimacy of power and authority. Throughout this territory the citizens of India are free to live, study, take employment and invest in businesses.

The economic integration of India is a consequence of its political integration. They act in a mutually reinforcing loop. The greater the movement of goods and capital and people across India, the greater the sense that this is, after all, one country. In the first decades of Independence it was the public sector that did most to further this sense of unity. In plants such as the great steel mill in Bhilai, Andhras laboured and lived alongside Punjabis and Gujaratis, fostering appreciation of other tongues, customs and cuisine, while underlining the fact that they were all part of the same nation. As the anthropologist Jonathan Parry remarks, in the Nehruvian imagination 'Bhilai and its steel plant were seen as bearing the torch of history, and as being as much about forging a new kind of society as about forging steel'. The attempt was not unsuccessful; among the children of the first generation of workers themselves born and raised in Bhilai, provincial loyalties were superseded by a more inclusive patriotism, a more cosmopolitan cultural style.

More recently, it has been the private sector which has, if with less intent, furthered the process of national integration. Firms headquartered in Tamil Nadu set up cement plants in Haryana; doctors born and educated in Assam establish clinics in Bombay. Many of the engineers in Hyderabad's IT industry come from Bihar. The migration is not restricted to the professional classes; there are barbers from Uttar Pradesh working in the city of Bangalore, as well as carpenters from Rajasthan. However, it must be said that the flow is not symmetrical While the cities and towns that are 'booming' become ever more cosmopolitan, economically laggard states sink deeper into provincialism.

VI

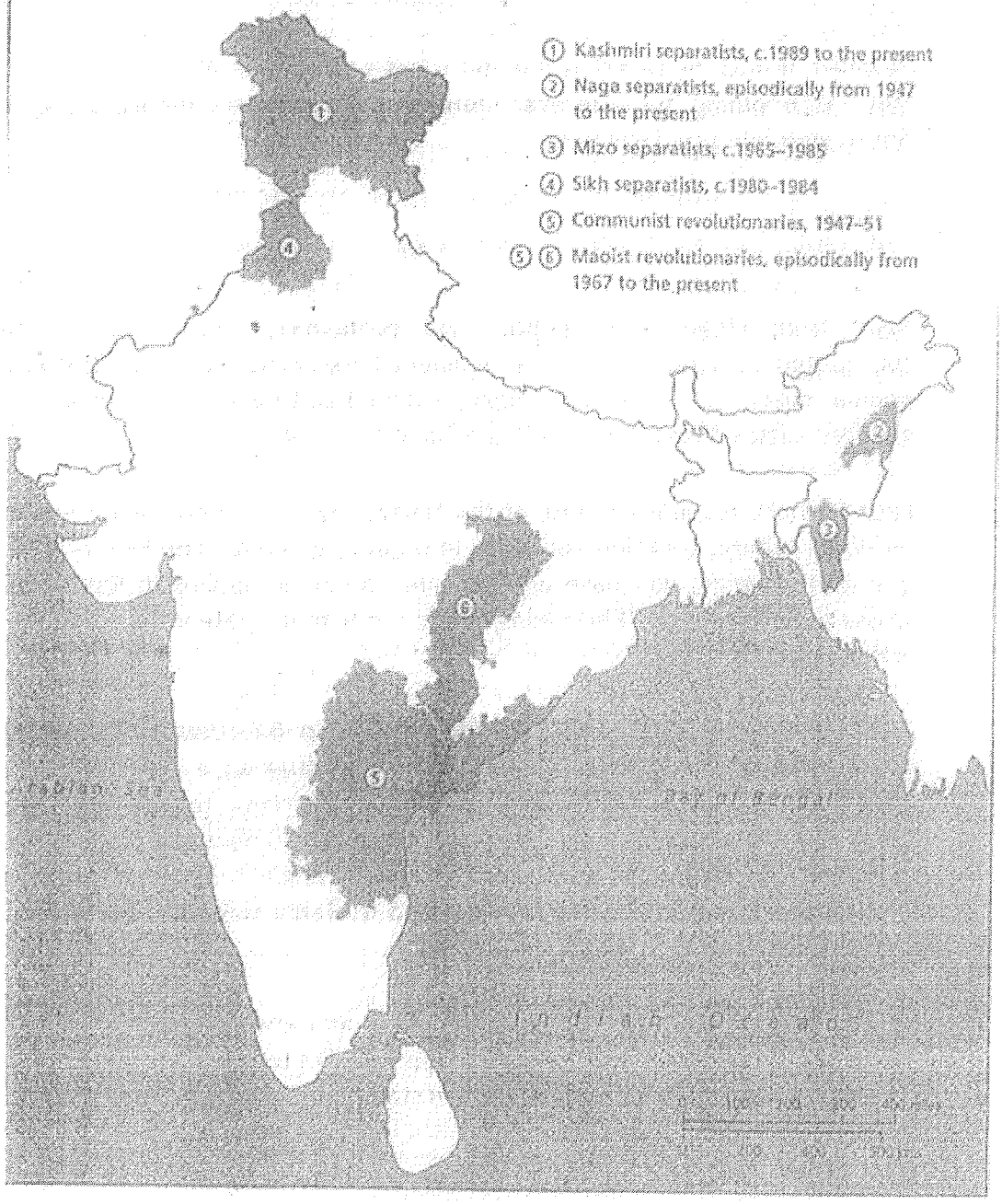
Apart from elements of politics and economics, cultural factors have also contributed to national unity. Pre-eminent here is the Hindi film This is the great popular passion of the Indian people, watched and followed by Indians of all ages, genders, castes, Masses, religions and linguistic groups.

Each formally recognized state of the Union, says the lyricist Javed Akhtar, has its different culture, tradition and style. In Gujarat, you have one kind of culture, then you go to Punjab, you have another, and the same applies in Rajasthan, Bengal, Orissa or Kerala. Then Akhtar adds, there is one more state in this country, and that is Hindi cinema.'

This is a stunning insight which asks to be developed further As a separate state of India, Hindi cinema acts as a receptacle for all that (in a cultural sense) is most creative in the other states. Thus its actors musicians, technicians and directors come from all parts of India Thus also it draws ecumenically from cultural forms prevalent in different regions. For example a single song may feature both the Punjabi folk dance called the bhangra and its Tamil classical counterpart, bharata natyam.

Having borrowed elements from here, there and everywhere, the Hind, film then sends the synthesized product out for appreciation to the other states of the Union. The most widely revered Indians are film stars.

Major seccessionist and extremist movements in India, c.1947–2007



Yet cinema does not merely provide Indians with a common pantheon of heroes; it also gives them a common language and universe of discourse. Lines from film songs and snatches from film dialogue are ubiquitously used in conversations in schools, colleges, homes and offices - and on the street. Because it is one more state of the Union, Hindi cinema also speaks its own language - one that is understood by all the others.

The last sentence is meant literally as well as metaphorically. Hindi cinema provides a stock of social situations and moral conundrums which widely resonate with the citizenry as a whole. But, over time, it has also made the Hindi language more comprehensible to those who previously never spoke or understood it. When imposed by fiat by the central government, Hindi was resisted by the people of the south and the east. When conveyed seductively by the medium of cinema and television, Hindi has been accepted by them. In Bangalore 2nd Hyderabad Hindi has become the preferred medium of communication between those who speak mutually incomprehensible tongues. Finally, one might instance the banning of Hindi films, DVDs and videos by insurgents in the north-east: this, in its own way, is a considerable tribute to the part played by the Hindi film in uniting India.

In 1888 John Strachey wrote that he could never imagine that Punjab and Madras could ever form part of a single political entity. But in 1947 they did, along with many other provinces' Strachey regarded as distinct 'nations'. While in 1947 the unity might have been mostly political, in the decades since it has been shown also to be economic, cultural and, it must be said, emotional. Perhaps many Kashmiris and Nagas yet feel alien and separate. And perhaps some revolutionaries believe that India is a land of many nationalities. But the bulk of those who are legally citizens of India are happy to be counted as such. Some four-fifths of the population, living in some four-fifths of the country, clearly feel themselves to be part of a single nation.

VII

One might think of independent India as being Europe's past as well as its future. It is Europe's past, in that it has reproduced, albeit more fiercely and intensely, the conflicts of a modernizing, industrializing and urbanizing society. But it is also its future in that it anticipated, by some fifty years, the European attempt to create a multilingual, multireligious, multiethnic, political and economic community.

Or one might compare India with the United States, a country justly celebrated as 'the planet's first multiethnic democracy'. Born nearly two centuries later, the Republic of India is today comfortably the world's largest multiethnic democracy. However, the means by which it has regulated (and moderated) relations between its constituent ethnicities have been somewhat different. For, as Samuel Huntingdon

has recently argued, the American nation has been held together by a 'credal culture' whose 'central elements' have included' the Christian religion, Protestant values and moralism, a work ethic, the English language, British traditions of law, justice, and the limits of government power, and a legacy of European art, literature, philosophy, and music. Indeed, 'America was created as a Protestant society just as and for some of the reasons Pakistan and Israel were created as Muslim and Jewish societies in the twentieth century.'

The United States is, of course, a nation of immigrants. For much of the country's history the new groups that came in merged themselves with the dominant culture. 'Throughout American history', writes Huntingdon, 'people who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have become Americans by adopting America's Anglo-Protestant culture and political values'. Of late, however, newer groups of immigrants have tended to maintain their distinct identities. The largest of these are the Hispanics, who live in enclaves where they cook their own food, listen to their own kind of music, follow their own faith and - most importantly - speak their own language. Huntingdon worries that if these communities are not quickly brought into line, they will 'transform America as a whole into a bilingual, bicultural society'.

The older American model of assimilation was called 'the melting-pot' Individual groups poured all their flavours into the pot, then drank a single, uniform - or uniformly tasting - drink. Now it appears that the society and nation are coming to resemble a 'salad bowl', with each group starkly standing out, different and distinctive in how it looks and behaves.

Huntingdon himself is less than enthusiastic about the idea of the salad bowl. For him, America has long been, and must always be, a 'society with a single pervasive national culture'. He observes that Americans identify most strongly with that culture when the nation is under threat. War leads not merely to national consolidation, but also to cultural unity. The original American Creed was forged as a consequence of the wars against the Native Americans, the English colonists and the Southern States. The events of 9/11 once more brought patriotism and national solidarity to the fore. Concerned that these energies will dissipate, Huntingdon urges a more thoroughgoing return to the creed that, in his view, was responsible for 'the unity and strength of my country'.

Interestingly, Huntingdon's views find an echo in recent statements by the prime minister of Australia, John Howard. That country too has been subject to successive waves of immigration, mostly or wholly European to begin with, but more recently of a markedly Asian character. Howard rejects the possibility of a plurality of cultures co-existing in Australia. 'You've got to have a dominant culture', he says, adding, 'Ours is Anglo-Saxon - our language, our literature, our institutions.'

The Huntingdon-Howard line of reasoning is, of course, quite familiar to students of

Indian history. It has been made in India by political ideologues such as M. S. Golwalkar and by political parties such as the Jana Sangh and the BJP. They have argued that India has 'got to have a dominant culture', and that this culture is 'Hindu'. As it happened, those views were not endorsed by the founders of the Indian nation, by those who wrote the Indian Constitution and led the first few governments of independent India. Thus India became a salad-bowl nation rather than a melting-pot one.

And it has stayed that way. It has sustained a diversity of religions and languages, precisely the diversities that the likes of Howard and Huntingdon deem inimical to national survival and national solidarity. It has resisted the pressures to go in the other direction, to follow Israel and Pakistan by favouring citizens who follow a certain faith or speak a particular language.

VIII

The most eloquent tribute to the idea of India that I have come across rests in some unpublished letters of the biologist J. B. S. Haldane. In his native Britain, Haldane was a figure of considerable fame and some notoriety. In 1956, already past sixty, he decided to leave his post in University College London and take up residence in Calcutta. He joined the Indian Statistical Institute, became an Indian citizen, wore Indian clothes and ate Indian food. He also travelled energetically around the country, engaging with its scientists but also with the citizenry at large.

Five years after Haldane had moved to India, an American science writer described him in print as a 'citizen of the world'. Haldane replied:

No doubt I am in some sense a citizen of the world. But I believe with Thomas Jefferson that one of the chief duties of a citizen is to be a nuisance to the government of his state. As there is no world state, I cannot do this ... On the other hand I can be, and am, a nuisance to the government of India, which has the merit of permitting a good deal of criticism, though it reacts to it rather slowly. I also happen to be proud of being a citizen of India, which is a lot more diverse than Europe, let alone the USA, USSR, or China, and thus a better model for a possible world organisation. It may of course break up, but it is a wonderful experiment. So I want to be labelled as a citizen of India.

On another occasion Haldane described India as 'the closest approximation to the Free World'. An American friend protested, saying his impression was that 'India has its fair share of scoundrels and a tremendous amount of poor unthinking and disgustingly subservient individuals who are not attractive'. To this Haldane responded:

Perhaps one is freer to be a scoundrel in India than elsewhere. So one was in the USA in the days of people like Jay Gould, when (in -my opinion) there was more internal freedom in the USA than there is today. The 'disgusting subservience' of the others has its limits. The people of Calcutta riot, upset trams, and refuse to obey police regulations, in a manner which would have delighted Jefferson. I don't think their activities are very efficient, but that is not the question at issue.

Forty years down the line, what Haldane called a 'wonderful experiment-might be counted as a success, a modest success. Poverty persists in some (admittedly broad) pockets, yet one can now be certain that India will not go the way of sub-Saharan Africa and witness widespread famine. Secessionist movements are active here and there, but there is no longer any fear that India will follow the former Yugoslavia and break up into a dozen patricidal parts. The powers of the state are sometimes grossly abused, but no one seriously thinks that India will emulate neighbouring Pakistan, where the chief of army staff is generally also head of government.

As a modern nation, India is simply sui generis. It stands on its own, different and distinct from the alternative political models on offer - be these Anglo-Saxon liberalism, French republicanism, atheistic communism, or Islamic theocracy. Back in 1971, at the time of the Bangladesh crisis, when India found itself simultaneously at odds with communist China, Islamic Pakistan and America, an Indian diplomat captured his country's uniqueness in this way:

India is regarded warily in the West because she is against the concept of Imperialism and because she 'invented' the 'Third World'.

India is looked on with suspicion in the 'Third World' because of her (subversive) sentiments for democracy, human rights, etc.; the Muslim world is wrathful because of our secularism.

The Communist countries regard .India as. insolent - and potentially dangerous - because we have rejected Communism as the prime condition for Progress.

We are, of course, on the side of God. But is God on our side?

The writer whose lines open this book, the nineteenth-century poet Ghalib, thought that God was indeed on the side of India. All around him were conflict and privation, but doomsday had not yet come. 'Why does not the Last Trumpet sound?' asked Ghalib of a sage in the holy city of Benares. 'Who holds the reins of the Final Catastrophe?' This was the answer he got:

> The hoary old man of lucent ken Pointed towards Kashi and gently smiled. 'The Architect', he said, 'is fond of this edifice Because of which there is colour in life; He Would not like it to perish and fall'.

Ghalib and his interlocutor were speaking then of India, the civilization. Speaking now of India, the nation-state, one must insist that its future lies not in the hands of God but in the mundane works of men. So long as the constitution is not amended beyond recognition, so long as elections are held regularly and fairly and the ethos of secularism broadly prevails, so long as citizens can speak and write in the language of then-choosing, so long as there is an integrated market and a moderately efficient civil service and army, and - lest I forget - so long as Hindi films are watched and their songs sung, India will survive.